

Cover Story



Dire Straits

Number One And Still Climbing

By David Adelson

LOS ANGELES — In June of 1977, the name Dire Straits represented more than just the name of a multi-platinum band from the U.K.

For four young men sharing a flat in South London, Dire Straits was a financial way of life.

It was the summer of '77 that Mark Knopfler, his brother David, John Illsley and Pick Withers formed what was to be the first incarnation of Dire Straits. During that time the band scraped together a demo tape that featured such tunes as, "Sacred Loving," "Wild West End," "Water Of Love" and a Mark Knopfler penned song about a group of veteran musicians relentlessly clinging to their art. He named the song "Sultans Of Swing."

Illsley delivered the tape to London DJ Charlie Gillett and unknown to the band, an impressed Gillett played the tape on his "Radio London" show.

Among several record executives listening to that show was John Stainze of Phonogram who tracked the band down. There was a bidding war among several labels and Stainze emerged with Dire Straits signed to a worldwide deal. It wasn't long after that a publishing deal with Rondor Music was signed.

In November of 1978, the band released its debut, self titled LP in the U.S. The disc would eventually go gold in many European countries and reach number one in Australia. But United States audiences were not as quick to embrace Knopfler's sparse, raw melodies. It wasn't until Warner Bros. released "Sultans Of Swing" as a single that the U.S. consumer began to bullet both the single and the album up the charts.

Following successful tours with Talking Heads, Climax Blues and Styx, the band flew to Muscle Shoals, Alabama to begin work on "Communique." Before the release of Communique in May 1979, the first album became a worldwide success. It was at this time that Knopfler and

Withers collaborated with Bob Dylan on the latter's "Slow Train Running." It was a relationship that would endure as Knopfler would eventually step behind the board to produce Dylan's critically acclaimed "Infidels."

With "Communique" following in the successful footsteps of the band's debut, a huge European and North American tour was launched that would propel the band even further into the limelight.

In July, 1980, David Knopfler left the group right after the completion of "Making Movies," the band's third studio LP and the first with producer Jimmy Iovine. Guitarist Hal Lindes and keyboardist Alan Clark were chosen to replace him.

Following yet another extensive European tour, the band began to rehearse for its next studio LP, "Love Over Gold." It's at this point that Knopfler is enlisted to compose and perform the soundtrack to *Local Hero*. He recorded the score just one month before the release of "Love Over Gold." Both the soundtrack and Dire Straits project were critical successes and Knopfler opens up a new career for himself in film music.

"Being a singer and a songwriter is a pretty selfish occupation in many ways," said Knopfler. "One of the nice things about film music is it is designed to support and enhance somebody else's vision. That aspect of it appealed to me greatly."

Knopfler expanded his experience in film music with scores for David Puttnam's *Cal* and Bill Forsyth's *Comfort and Joy*. If Dire Straits ever disbanded, Mark Knopfler would not be hard pressed for a job.

Following a break, Dire Straits released a four-song EP of dance songs reminiscent of the tunes from every beach party movie ever made. Though the sales of the disc never matched those of its predecessors, the project maintained the band's public profile and demonstrated

(continued on page 36)

EAST COASTINGS

INK ABOUT INDIA — "The Festival of India," which will bring all the arts of the sub-continent to New York over the next year, will kick off next week with an impressive pair of New York Philharmonic events. Sept. 11, in a special benefit performance, Bombay native **Zubin Mehta** will lead the orchestra through **Ravi Shankar's** "Sitar Concerto No. 1," with the composer at the sitar. The next night (and again on Sept. 13, 14 & 17), the Orchestra, with Mehta still at the podium, will present the world premiere of **L. Subramaniam's** "Fantasy on Vedic Chants for Indian Violin and Orchestra," with the composer at the violin. L. Subramaniam, along with his violin-playing brother, **L. Shankar**, has done quite a lot in advancing the fusion of jazz fusion and Indian classical music; it'll be interesting to hear how he melds the European classical orchestra with his various influences.

TANGO (TAKE TWO) — *Tango Argentino*, the extravaganza of the popular music and dancing of Argentina which pulled in for a well-received week this summer, will open up an extended run on Broadway, Oct. 8, at the Mark Hellinger Theatre. Other soon-to-happen Broadway happenings (after a dismal last season) include **Andrew Lloyd Webber's** latest, *Song and Dance* (previewing as we speak), a **Lily Tomlin** one-woman show, and the moving to the Great White Way (in Dec.) of **Rupert Holmes's** musical adaptation of Dickens' *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, just coming off a successful free Central Park run.

NEXT WAVE — The Brooklyn Academy of Music's influential "Next Wave" Festival — which has given the world such things as **Laurie Anderson's** complete *United States* and last year's sold-out revival of **Philip Glass** and **Robert Wilson's** *Einstein on the Beach* — is ready to dazzle eyes and bend ears with this fall's schedule. Musically speaking, there'll be such events as **Pina Bausch's** staging of **Weill and Brecht's** *The Seven Deadly Sins*, with **Michael Tilson Thomas** conducting the **Orchestra of St. Luke's**; music for various dance ensembles (**Nina Wiener, Laura Dean, Margaret Jenkins**) by the likes of **Terry Allen, Anthony Davis** and **Steve Reich**; *The Alchemedians*, a show featuring contemporary clowns **Bob Berky** and **Michael Moschen**, with music by **David Van Tieghem**; and concert performances by **Peter Gordon** and **Love of Life Orchestra, Cecil Taylor**, and the **World Saxophone Quartet**. Info, tickets, and whatnot can be had from BAM (718-636-4100).

CREATIVE TIME TIME — "Art on the Beach," that N.Y. summer tradition that brings together artists of all stripes, presented by Creative Time, will close with a day-long concert and party, Sept. 14, featuring, among many, many others, the **Lounge Lizards, 14 Karat Soul, Billy Bang, the African Connection, and David Murray**. See you at the Battery Park City Landfill!

COMING AND GOINGS — Viking/Penguin has signed a two-book deal with poet/rock musician **Jim Carroll**; look for *The Book of Nods* early next year . . . Another warbler/writer is **Toni Tennille**, who will be interviewing a number of popular vocalists for a projected book on the subject . . . **Pat Moraz** and **Bill Bruford** team for a Sept. 21 Town Hall gig . . . **Gary U.S. Bonds**, who, you'll recall, was rescued from the ashes of revival shows by **Bruce Springsteen**, is doing his altruistic bit; all the proceeds from "Summertime Fun," Bonds' latest Phoenix Records 45, will go to the Community for Creative Non-Violence, which aids the starving and homeless in the U.S. . . . Support systems: 415/Columbia's **Translator** is on the road opening for the **Kinks**, but don't look for them at the Kinks' Sept. 12 & 13 Pier shows (they'll be headlining at Irving Plaza on the latter night); **Chrysalis' The Adventures** are on the road with **Tears for Fears** and, yes, they will be making the N.Y. gigs — Oct. 4-6 at Radio City . . . Stop holding your breath; GNP Crescendo



T. HANKS FOR THE MEMORY — **Robey**, the *Silver Blue*/CBS recording artist whose debut LP was just issued, will appear with **Tom Hanks** in the coming flick, *The Money Pit*. Here the two hang out on the set at Astoria-Kaufman studios.

Charlie Santiago and **Yomo Toro**, a master of the Puerto Rican string instrument, the *cuatro* . . . *Sister Suzie Cinema* is the name of an ambitious half-hour musical video production that just finished shooting (taping?) in N.Y.; 14 Karat Soul perform the score, **Lee Breuer** and **Bob Telson** wrote the thing (they gave us *Gospel at Colonus*, which premiered at BAM's "Next Wave" festival); it'll air next season on PBS' *Alive From Off Center* series . . . Mixmaster **John "Jellybean" Benitez** has just wrapped up the 12" remix of **Huey Lewis and the News'** "Back In Time," from the *Back to the Future* soundtrack . . . "The most recognized voice in the country," **Frankie Valli** (isn't that what they call him on those commercials?), has just finished filming his first dramatic role, for an upcoming episode of *Miami Vice*, and a video for his new MCA curb single, "Streetfighter." **Lee Jeske**