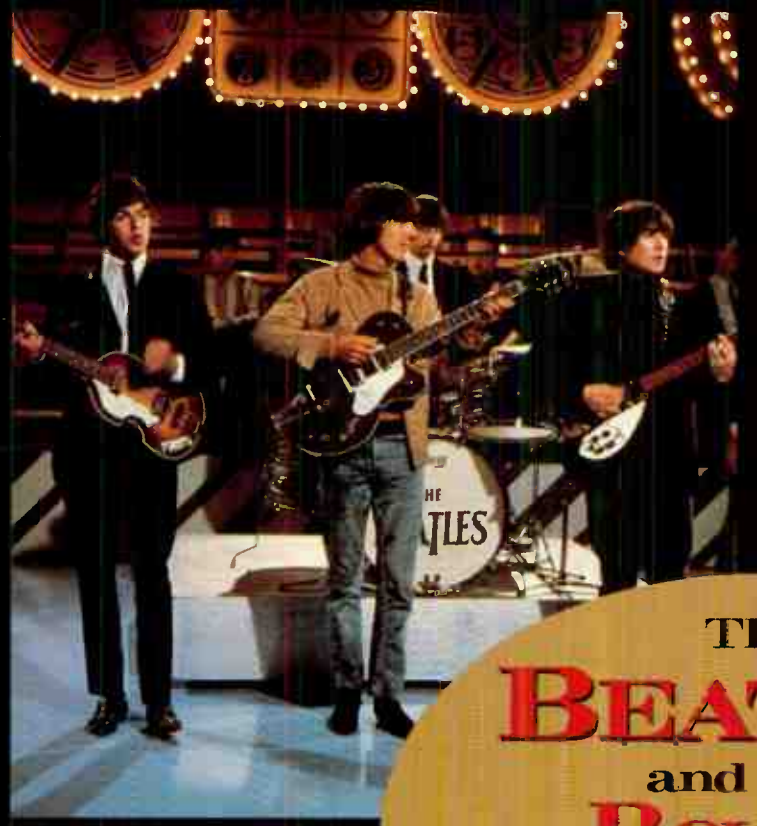


MUSICIAN

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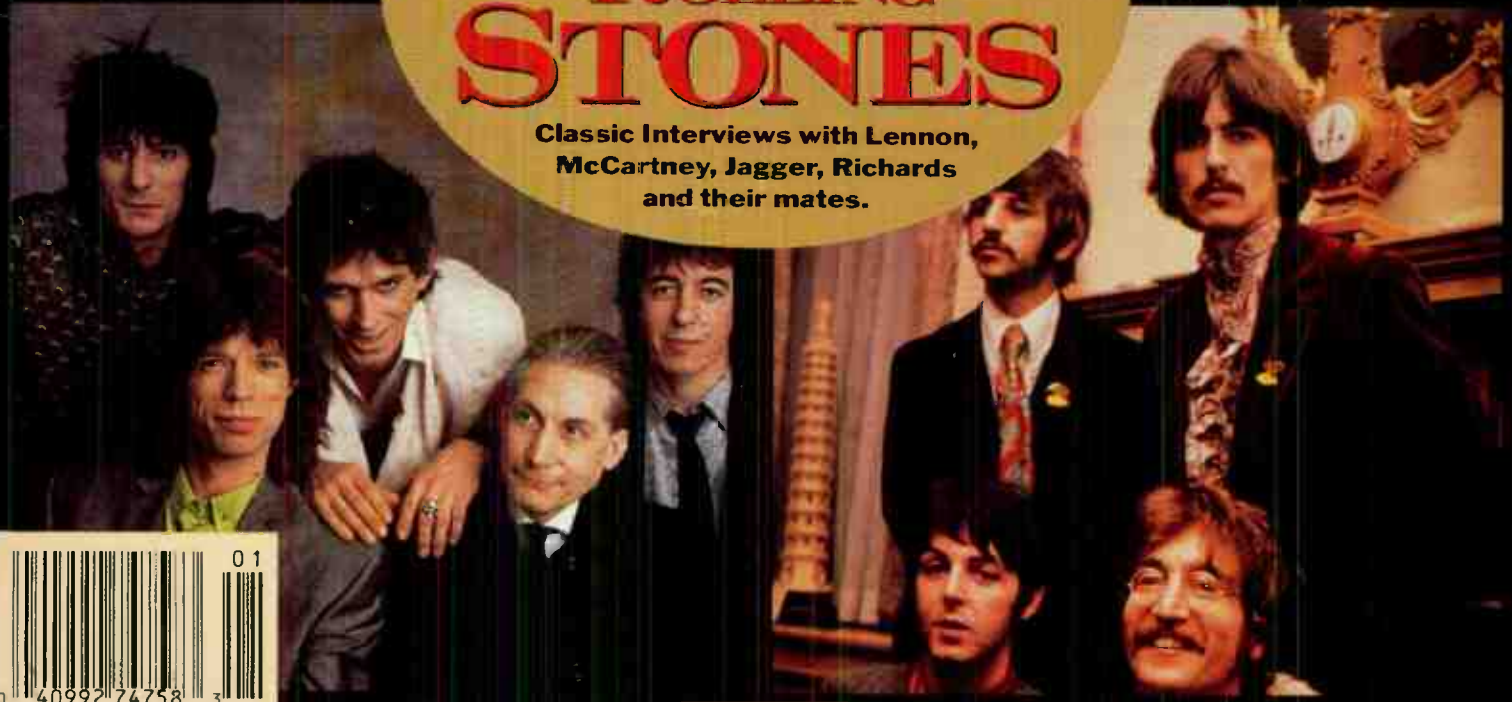
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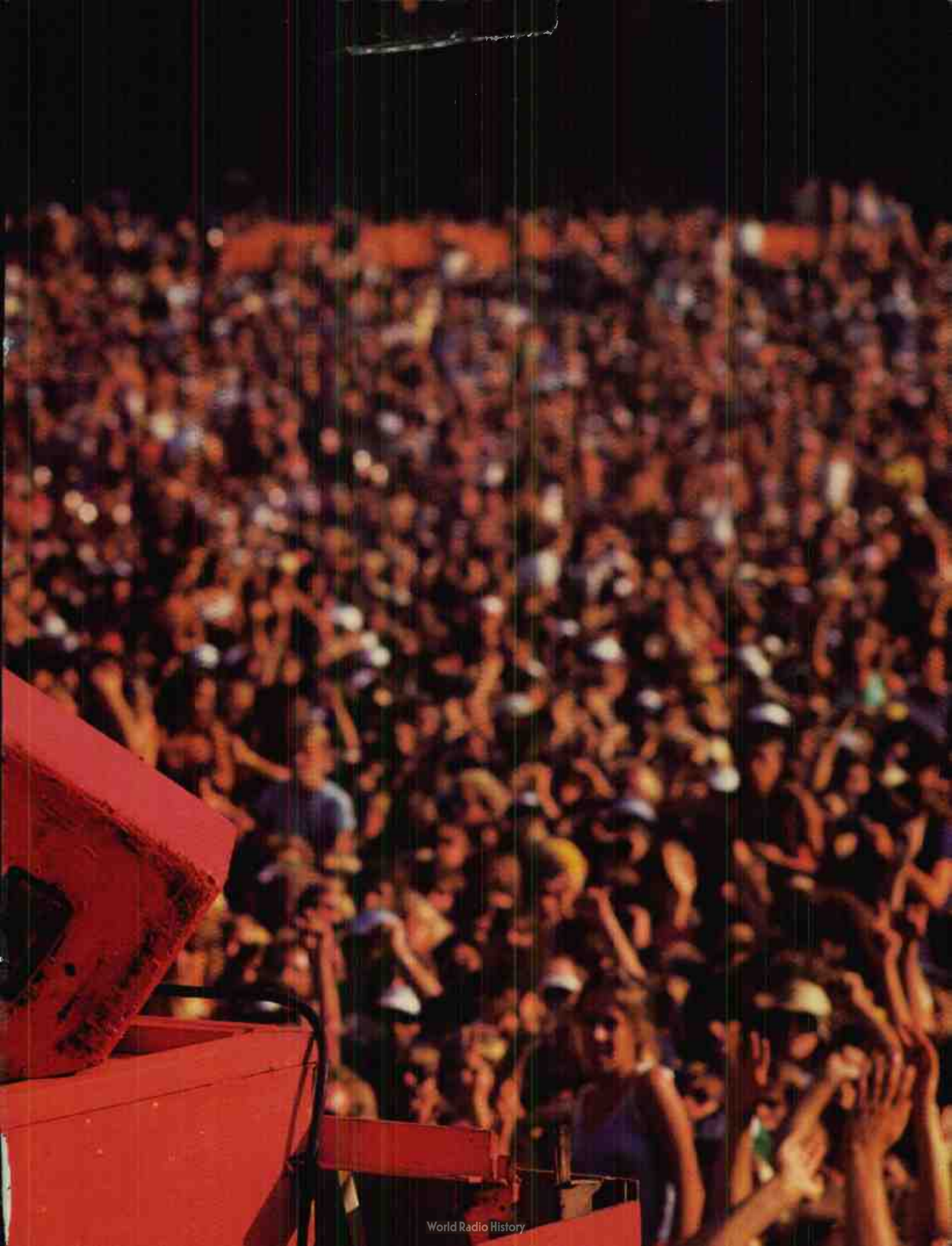


The
BEATLES
and The
ROLLING STONES

Classic Interviews with Lennon,
McCartney, Jagger, Richards
and their mates.









Paul McCartney

never wanted to talk about his past until he put on his old Beatle suit for some promo pictures. In an historic, Grammy-nominated interview, Paul breaks his silence on the Fab Four from Hamburg to Abbey Road.

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John Lennon's

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The BEST OF MUSICIAN

It was over 25 years ago today that the sound of pop music changed forever, and no two bands in the history of rock have had a more continuous impact than the Beatles and the Stones. They dominated the airwaves throughout the '60s and early '70s and continue to make band and solo recordings that consistently find their way to the top of the charts.

It was 13 years ago that MUSICIAN magazine started publishing. During that time, we've followed and written about all kinds of music, from free jazz to heavy metal, from arcane reggae to mainstream rock. But for many readers, our most memorable stories have been about the Stones and the Beatles.

The interviews featured in this first edition are unedited and in their original form. Whether you are the ultimate collector or casual fan, we know you'll enjoy their words as much as their music.



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World Radio History

PAUL McC

*LIFTING THE VEIL
ON THE BEATLES*



CARTNEY



By Vic Garbarini

I'm sitting in a large, sparsely furnished apartment somewhere in north London. Paul McCartney is seated across from me, patiently sipping a cup of tea as he waits for me to set up my tape recorder. Finally, I'm ready to go. I'm just launching into my first question when McCartney suddenly turns toward the door and smiles. I watch in amazement as both John Lennon and George Harrison enter the room. "Ringo couldn't make it," says McCartney, still smiling. I open my mouth to answer him, but instead of words only a ringing bell-like noise came out...

Woke up, fell out of bed, Dragged a comb across my head. Shit. It's 8:20 already. I wearily grope for the clock, making a mental note to ask my dad to fix the alarm. As I stagger into the bathroom I remember about the geometry test. *The geometry test!* I'd forgotten all about it! Two minutes of pure panic ensue

as I feverishly search my memory: *relief.* I sit behind Mraz in geometry. The math freak. The guy I loaned last month's copy of *Playboy* to. *Good ol' Mraz. ... Found my coat and grabbed my hat, Made the bus in seconds flat. Found my way upstairs and had a smoke, Somebody spoke and I went into a dream...*

"Sugar?"

"Huh?"

"Sugar," repeats Paul McCartney. "Do you want sugar in your tea?"

"Uh, right. Sorry. Drifted off there for a minute." Be cool, thinks I. Engage the critical faculties. He's just another bloke. Wrote a lot of good songs. *Transformed my generation.* Hasn't done much interesting lately. Sure, he's talented and his music changed my life. But he's only human. *So why do I feel like I'm having a conversation with my own childhood?* Hold on now.

Let's get some perspective here: Carl Jung actually had conversations with his archetypes. *Yeah*, responds a tiny voice, *but did one of them ever put sugar in his tea?* Point taken. *When I get older, losing my hair, Many years from now...*

Natural. Unpretentious. Those are the words that best describe James Paul McCartney at 38, 10 years after the breakup of the most influential pop group the world has ever known. The boyish good looks are still remarkably intact (no hair loss, though most of the babyfat is gone), but what impresses most is his relaxed, open manner. He seemed totally at ease during our two-hour conversation at his London offices. He was charming, frank and surprisingly willing to talk at great length about the Beatles experience. Willing isn't the right word—he seemed positively *eager* to discuss it, for reasons he explains fully in the interview. Paul claims he wants to be just an ordinary guy, and I believe him. He's anchored himself in normalcy, reasonably secure in the nest he's created with his family and farm. As a result, his work with Wings has sometimes lacked creative tension—a problem which many critics, myself included, find irksome. Great art often requires friction—something to struggle against, an inner or outer obstacle to overcome in order to get the creative juices flowing and provide energy. Externally, there's little for McCartney to rub up against these days, and he doesn't seem to harbor the kind of inner demons that can drive John Lennon to tantrums and transcendence. But when he's offered a challenge, as in the case of the nearly disastrous *Band on the Run* sessions—or in a concert situation, as captured on the excellent *Wings over America* live set—McCartney has proven that he can still turn out material that rivals his work with the Beatles. His creative potential may be somewhat underutilized at times, but his powers seem relatively undiminished. In fact, his new solo album, *McCartney II*, contains some of his best material since *Abbey Road*. True, there's relatively little tension here, but in this case it hardly seems to matter: This is pure, distilled, essence of McCartney—gorgeous, dreamlike melodies floating through Eno-esque electronic textures, ranging from the Bach-like elegance and soothing ethereality of “Summer Day Song” to the poignant romanticism of “Waterfalls.” His work may occasionally be disappointing, but I'm heartened that a man who's been through what McCartney has can remain so open and unspoiled and still capable of creative work of this caliber.

*They've been going in and out of style
But they're guaranteed to raise a smile.
So may I introduce to you
The act you've known for all these years...*

MUSICIAN: *Let's just skip over the whole Japan thing. I'm sure you're sick of answering questions about it by now. Needless to say, you won't have a Live at Budokan album coming out this year.*

McCARTNEY: [deadpan] Good joke.

MUSICIAN: *Thanks. I've been saving that one for weeks. Moving right along: Why another solo album now?*

McCARTNEY: Well, actually I was trying *not* to do an album. It was just after *Back to the Egg*, and I wanted to do something totally different. So I just plugged a single microphone into the back of a Studer 16-track tape machine; didn't use a recording console at all. The idea was that at the end of it I'd just have a zany little cassette that I'd play in my car and never release. In the end I had a few tracks, played them for a couple of people, and they said, “I see, that's your next album.” And I thought, “Right, it probably is.” So then I got a bit serious about it and tried to make it into an “album.” That was the worst part of

it—I was having fun till then.

MUSICIAN: *It's interesting the way you describe your approach. It reminds me of the way Eno goes about making an album—creative play. The other person who came to mind when I first heard it was Stevie Wonder...*

McCARTNEY: I like Stevie a lot. It's probably because he's the only other person who's done this kind of recording... doing it all yourself.

MUSICIAN: *You're also the only two people who've combined avant-garde electronic textures with an unerring sense of melody.*

McCARTNEY: Well, I can't help that. I'm glad I can't help that. When I was doing this album I thought I'd make something that didn't sound anything like me. The first three tracks I made were the two instrumentals on the album and a third one which I later put lyrics on. I wanted something that sounded nothing like me, but inevitably you start to creep through even that, your sense of tune or whatever it is.

MUSICIAN: *Have you ever consciously tried to do a melody that was non-diatonic, not based on a major or minor motif or something?*

McCARTNEY: Well, I don't understand that in music. I'm not a technical musician.

MUSICIAN: *Something discordant, something that isn't normal tonal melody.*

McCARTNEY: Yes, on some of the tracks. I had enough for a double album and most of the tracks that came off to make a single album were a bit more like that. One was kind of sequences of wobble noises, a crazy track, probably not worth releasing, it's just for the cassette in my car. There are people who like it but it's just experimental. I like it, but... zoning in on which ones we were going to release, I asked a lot of people which were their favorites, and the ones that got dropped off were probably the least me. I've got one 10-minute instrumental that just goes on forever and forever.

MUSICIAN: *And you left off the ones that were less melodic. Could you ever conceive of putting out the experimental stuff?*

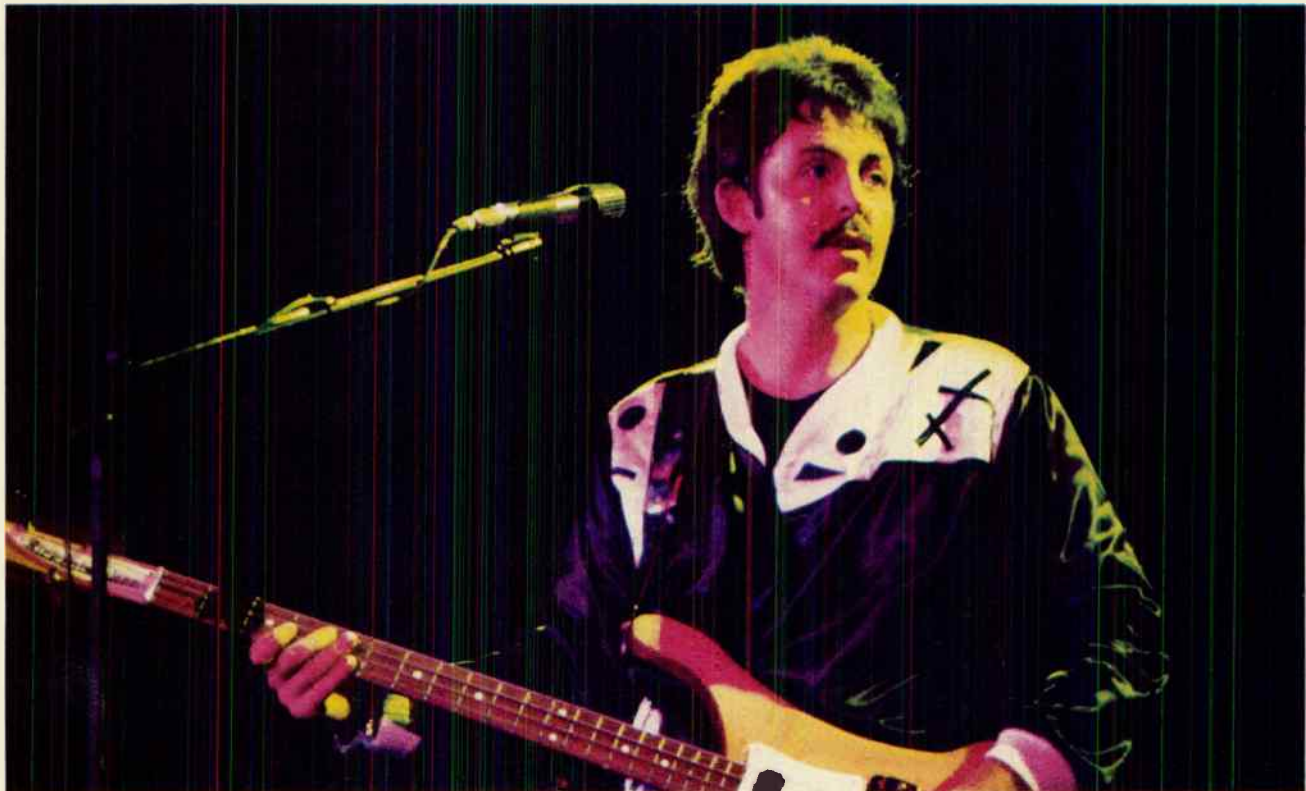
McCARTNEY: I wouldn't mind it. The thing is, I go through record companies and record companies want to have a say in it. If I bring them an album which they think is totally uncommercial, and I say, “Look, artistically I've got to do this,” you have to agree with them in the end when they say, “Look, it's very nice but we'd rather have this please because we're the company that's going to release it.” I'm not going in an avant-garde direction particularly—it's just for my own interest, that sort of stuff—but still I get certain decisions creeping in that wouldn't necessarily be my decisions.

MUSICIAN: *You're forgiven. Were you very disappointed or surprised by the negative critical reaction to Back to the Egg?*

McCARTNEY: I'm used to all that now. Nearly everything I've ever done or been involved in has received some negative critical reaction. You'd think the response to something like “She Loves You” with the Beatles would have been pretty positive. It wasn't. The very first week that came out it was supposed to be the *worst* song the Beatles had ever thought of doing. Then *Ram* was supposed to be the *worst* thing I'd ever done. And so the criticism continues.

MUSICIAN: *But was the harder rocking approach on Back to the Egg a reaction to criticism of your work as too poppy? Were you influenced by the emergence of new wave?*

McCARTNEY: It was just what I was into at the time. The new wave thing was happening, and I realized that a lot of new wave was just taking things at a faster tempo than we do. “We” being what I like to call the *Permanent Wave* (little joke there...). So you get something like “Spin It On” out of that. I'm always getting influenced. Most of the songs I've written can be traced to some kind of influence—Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Chuck



"I recently did Beatle Paul for a video clip. I put on my old uniform and got out the old Hofner violin bass—which still had a Beatles song list taped to it—and I didn't realize till later that I'd broken the whole voodoo about talking about the Beatles. 'Cause I'd been him again and it didn't feel bad."

Berry, to name a few. Even some of the '30s-type tunes like "When I'm Sixty-Four" or "Honey Pie." That's influenced by Fred Astaire and people like that.

MUSICIAN: *Can you look at your own work with any degree of objectivity or impartiality? I mean, can you listen to an album you've just made and trust yourself to be able to see what its strong and weak points are?*

McCARTNEY: When they first come out, I'm totally confused. It takes a few months for me to warm up to them. Sometimes I'll be at a party, and I'll hear music coming from the next room. Immediately I'll get jealous and think, "Who's that?" So I go into the other room and it's us. And I think, "Hey, I like this group—we're alright after all!" Because everyone's a bit paranoid.

MUSICIAN: *Band on the Run was probably the most successful Wings album from both a commercial and critical standpoint. Was it the most satisfying one for you?*

McCARTNEY: I like *Band on the Run*. That was going to be a normal Wings album originally, but then our guitarist at the time, Henry McCullough, and Denny Seiwell failed to turn up. It was one of those numbers where they said, "We don't want to go to Lagos and record this album, sorry." I was left in the lurch at the last minute—literally an hour before the flight. So there was just Denny Laine, Linda and myself in Nigeria. I played drums, bass and a lot of guitar myself—I took a lot of

control on that album. It was almost a solo album.

MUSICIAN: *Why Lagos?*

McCARTNEY: I just fancied going to Africa; I'm into African rhythms. While we were there I saw the best band I've ever seen live. Fela Ransome Kuti, it was. I think he's in jail, now; he's too political for the local authorities. We saw him one night at his own club and I was *crying*. A lot of it was just relief. There were a lot of crazy circumstances and weird things happening. At one point we got held up at knifepoint. It was a real fight to make that album.

MUSICIAN: *Do you find in your experience that friction like that can actually help the creative process?*

McCARTNEY: Unfortunately, yes, it does help. It's unfortunate because who wants to go around having stress all the time just to aid creativity? But when it happens it does actually seem to help. It's a drag because the logic then follows is that we should all walk around even more stressed to make better albums. Who needs it? I'd rather not make albums than do that. But it did help on *Band on the Run*; it gave us something to fight against. At first I was worried. But then I thought, "Wait a minute, I love playing drums." So the positive side started to creep in, too.

MUSICIAN: *I've heard that with the Beatles you sometimes gave Ringo directions regarding what he should play.*

McCARTNEY: We always gave Ringo direction—on every single number. It was usually very controlled. Whoever had written the song, John for instance, would say, "I want this." Obviously a lot of the stuff came out of what Ringo was playing; but we would always control it.

MUSICIAN: *Did musical disagreements or conflicts have anything to do with the breakup?*

McCARTNEY: They were some of the minor reasons, yeah. I remember on "Hey Jude" telling George not to play guitar. He wanted to echo riffs after the vocal phrases, which I didn't think was appropriate. He didn't see it like that, and it was a bit of a number for me to have to *dare* to tell George Harrison—who's



"In Hamburg we literally worked eight hours a day, a full factory day; other bands never worked that hard. Eventually we realized it was going to get very big. In England, there was this incredible excitement. The papers were saying, what's left, you've conquered everything, and we'd say AMERICA. We were cooking up this act, the Beatles, and we knew... We'd distilled our stuff to an essence, we weren't any old band."

one of the greats, I think—not to play. It was like an insult. But that was how we did a lot of our stuff.

MUSICIAN: *We were talking about creative tension, and how even if it's a pain in the ass it can be useful. Are there any particular Beatle albums that...*

McCARTNEY: The *White Album*. That was the tension album. We were all in the midst of the psychedelic thing, or just coming out of it. In any case, it was weird. Never before had we recorded with beds in the studio and people visiting for hours on end; business meetings and all that. There was a lot of friction during that album.

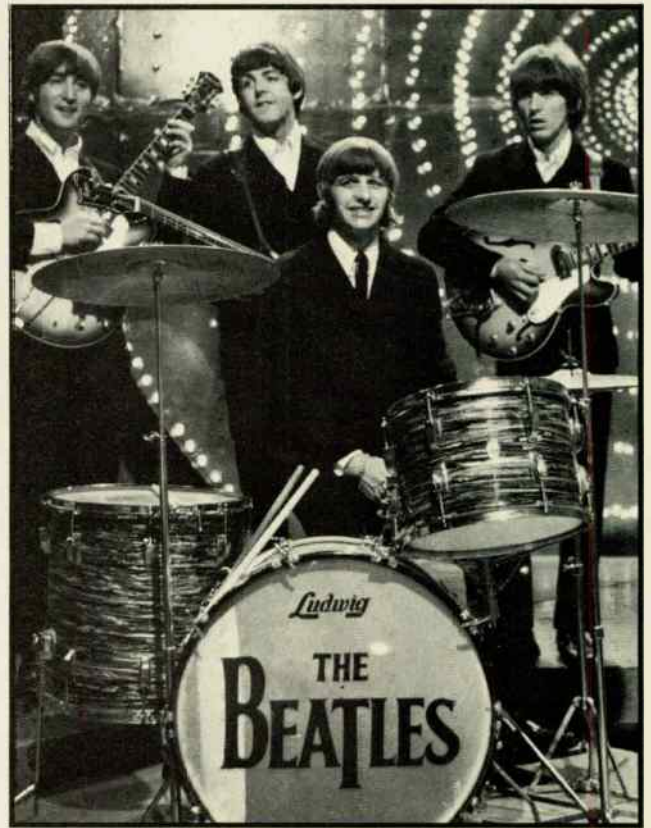
MUSICIAN: *That was the one that sounded the most fragmented to me, whereas Abbey Road sounded the smoothest. Yet I imagine there was a lot of tension at that point, too.*

McCARTNEY: No, not really, there was...no, come to think of it there *was* actually, yes. There were one or two tense moments. But it didn't feel like a tense album to me; I was busy getting into a lot of new musical ideas, like the medley thing on the second side. I think the *White Album* was the weirdest experience because we were about to break up. And that was just tense in itself.

MUSICIAN: *I want to ask you about your bass playing. To me you've always played bass like a frustrated guitar player. Those melodic lines that started to show up on Sgt. Pepper—there was no precedent for that in rock music. How did that style of playing come about?*

McCARTNEY: I'd always liked those little lines that worked as support, and yet had their own identity instead of just staying in the background. Also, bass was beginning to come to the fore in mixes at that point. If you listen to early Beatle mixes the bass and bass drum aren't there: We were starting to take over mixing ourselves, and to bring those things out, so I had to do something with it. I was listening to a lot of Motown and Stax at the time, Marvin Gaye and people like that.

MUSICIAN: *How did Sgt. Pepper come about?*



McCARTNEY: I think the big influence was *Pet Sounds* by the Beach Boys. That album just flipped me. Still is one of my favorite albums—the musical invention on that is just amazing. I play it for our kids now and they love it. When I heard it I thought, "Oh dear, this is the album of all time. What the hell are we going to do?" My ideas took off from that standard.

MUSICIAN: *Wasn't the initial concept some kind of fantasy thing?*

McCARTNEY: Yeah, I had this idea that it was going to be an album of another band that wasn't us—we'd just imagine all the time that it wasn't us playing. It was just a nice little device to give us some distance on the album.

MUSICIAN: *I remember listening to it and thinking it was the perfect fantasy album; you could put yourself into a whole other world. That's really the way you went about creating it, then.*

McCARTNEY: Right. That was the whole idea. The cover was going to be us dressed as this other band in crazy gear; but it was all stuff that we'd always wanted to wear. And we were going to have photos on the wall of all our heroes: Marlon Brando in his leather jacket, Einstein—it could be anybody who we'd ever thought was good. Cult heroes. And we kind of put this other identity on them to do it. It changed a lot in the process; but that was the basic idea behind it.

MUSICIAN: *Thinking back on that period, which album would you say caught the feeling of expansion and creativity that was going on at its height?*

McCARTNEY: *Pepper probably...*

MUSICIAN: *What about Rubber Soul? That was a real departure...*

McCARTNEY: All I can remember is that it was a kind of straightforward album...

MUSICIAN: *It was so acoustic though, compared to the previous stuff.*

McCARTNEY: Those were the sounds we were into at the time. "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away" is just basically John doing Dylan. Dylan had just come out and we were big



"I remember many times just sitting outside concert halls waiting for the police to escort us inside and thinking, 'Jesus Christ, I really don't want to go through with this. We've done enough, let's take the money and run. Let's go down to Brighton.'"

fans of his. *Rubber Soul* was just a catchy title; that's the bit I remember most about it. A lot of people liked that as an album.

MUSICIAN: *Among connoisseurs it's considered one of the early high points. Revolver too...*

McCARTNEY: Just to show you how wrong one can be: I was in Germany on tour just before *Revolver* came out. I started listening to the album and I got really down because *I thought the whole thing was out of tune*. Everyone had to reassure me that it was okay.

MUSICIAN: *Robert Fripp wrote a piece for us recently in which he talked about an artist's image, and how it can have a life of its own. In the sense that you're Paul McCartney, a human being with tastes, talents, faults and all that, and yet you also have a public image—as Johnny Lydon would say—that has a life of its own that's almost independent of you. Sometimes people relate to that image instead of to you as a person. How did you deal with this when you first encountered it with the Beatles? Did it bother you? Was it enjoyable? How did it feel from the inside?*

McCARTNEY: At first you're just an ordinary Joe rockin' around trying to make a living. Then you get famous; you get your first hit and you love it. There's nothing you'd like to do more than sign autographs: *You got 'em—I'll do 'em*. That wears off after three or four years. You start to think, "Wait a minute, what am I bloody signing for you for?" At this point I've come to another phase where I think it's all okay again. So I've been in and out of that.

MUSICIAN: *Have you ever wished you could just chuck it all and fade into obscurity?*

McCARTNEY: I remember thinking at one point that I've come to a point of no return; that even if I say now that I don't want to be famous anymore, I'll be like Brigitte Bardot or Charlie Chaplin: a recluse but still very famous. And that's no use—they'll be after me even more.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think that was John's reaction?*

McCARTNEY: I really don't like to speak for John. But seeing's

how you've asked me, my theory is that he's done all the things he wants to do except one—being himself. Now he's just turned on to actually living his own life—sod everyone else. But it's not an aggressive thing, from what I can see.

MUSICIAN: *Musically you're the most active of the former Beatles. You maintain a band and still tour pretty consistently, which the others don't. I don't want to get into a comparison trip, but after being with the Beatles, where do you go?*

McCARTNEY: It's rather difficult to top, yeah.

MUSICIAN: *All of you must have felt some trepidation at the thought of going out on your own, but you didn't seem to worry...*

McCARTNEY: I didn't seem to, but that's one of my features: I may seem to not do a lot of things, when in fact I can be just as bad as the next guy. The first gigs we did with Wings were frightening; it was so scary coming out with a new band knowing the Beatles was what was expected. But it was just a question of knowing I had to run that gauntlet—go through that thing, and that once I came out of it I'd feel better and be glad I'd gone through it.

MUSICIAN: *Did you ever experience that kind of fear with the Beatles?*

McCARTNEY: Sure. I remember many times just sitting outside concert halls waiting for the police to escort us inside and thinking, "Jesus Christ, I really don't want to go through this. We've done enough, let's take the money and run! Let's go down to Brighton, or something." Linda and I felt like that when she was having our last baby. We were driving to the hospital and there was this terrible desire to say, "Let's go to Brighton instead." If we could have gotten away with it, we would have.

MUSICIAN: *Those early tours with Wings were pretty innovative for the time: showing up unannounced at colleges in a van and charging only a dollar admission. Exactly the kind of impromptu "small is beautiful" philosophy that a lot of the new wavers are beginning to espouse, only you were doing it eight years ago. What led you to take that approach?*

McCARTNEY: Instead of doing what was expected, I asked myself, "What do I really want to do?" What have I missed being with the Beatles? What is it time to do? It was silly little things, like with the Beatles you used to get paid massively, but you never saw it because it always went straight into the company. You had to draw on it. So for me one of the buzzes of that first tour was actually getting a bag of coins at the end of the gig. It wasn't just a materialistic thing—it was the feeling of getting physically paid again; it was like going back to square

one. I wanted to take it back to where the Beatles started, which was in the halls. We charged 50p to get in—obviously we could have charged more—and gave the Student Union a bit for having us there. We played poker with the money afterwards, and I'd actually pay the band physically, you know, "50p for you... and 50p for you." It brought back the thrill of actually working for a living.

MUSICIAN: *Can you empathize with this new wave thing? Did you feel that same explosive force with the early Beatles in Hamburg and elsewhere?*

McCARTNEY: Yes, I think it's the same thing, and will always be the same. It's just a question of age: When we were 18 we were doing it and getting exactly the same reaction, only 20 years earlier. It's the energy. I don't care where they got it from, if it sounds like a great piece of music—the Sex Pistols' "Pretty Vacant," for instance—then I'm all for it.

MUSICIAN: *Some of the early Beatle material was obviously coming out of Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly, but most of it seemed strikingly original. How did that Merseybeat sound come about?*

McCARTNEY: When we started the Beatles, John and I sat down and wrote about 50 songs, out of which I think "Love Me Do" is the only one that got published. Those songs weren't very good because we were trying to find the next beat—the next new sound. *New Musical Express*—which was a much gentler paper at the time—was talking about calypso, and how Latin rock was going to be the next big thing. The minute we stopped trying to find that new beat the newspapers started saying it was us; and we found we'd discovered the new sound without even trying. That's what made me suspicious of categories like heavy metal or pop. My musical tastes range from Fred Astaire to the Sex Pistols and everything in between: Pink Floyd, Stevie Wonder, the Stones...

MUSICIAN: *A lot of the criticism you've come in for seems to be because you use pop as a medium. What is it about pop you're attracted to?*

McCARTNEY: I just like it. I'm like a lot of people—when I get in my car and turn on the radio I want to hear some good sounds. So whatever I write, I write for that. What are the alternatives? To write a "serious" piece of music. Or modern classical music? No thanks. I'd bore myself stiff after a couple of bars.

MUSICIAN: *The first major cultural experience of my generation was in February 1964 when we saw you on "The Ed Sullivan Show." It was like something just swept over the whole country, a new, open energy...*

McCARTNEY: It was strange, wasn't it?

MUSICIAN: *What the hell was it all about?*

McCARTNEY: I don't know. I personally think that in America there was a standard way of doing things. The only freaky people were Hollywood writers, jazz musicians and pop stars; but even they were tied to a framework. Meanwhile we had cooked up this whole new British thing; we had a long time to work it out and make all our mistakes in Hamburg with almost no one watching. We were very different, having taken all the American influences and stewed them up in a British way. A lot of things had been happening with our own chemistry. 'Cause John and I were strong writers, George was like a third writer, Ringo who had a good head on his shoulders and was by no means thick... We'd put in a lot of work. In Hamburg we'd work eight hours a day, which most bands never worked that hard. We literally worked eight hours a day, it was a full factory day. So we had developed our act by the time we came to America; we had worked all that out. All the success we'd had in Britain—the British newspapers were saying, well, what's left to do, you've conquered everything, and we'd say AMERICA.

We got the number one, did "Ed Sullivan"... by then we'd distilled our stuff down to an essence, so we weren't coming on as any old band. We had our own totally new identities...

MUSICIAN: *Did you feel that among you, was...*

McCARTNEY: Yes, we knew it. People were saying, "What's this with the haircut?" If I go back on the haircut thing I know it was actually because we saw some guy in Hamburg whose hair we liked. John and I were hitching to Paris and we asked him to cut our hair like he did his; he didn't do it quite the same and it fell down in a Beatles cut. He was a very sort of artsy guy, this guy, great guy called Jergen. He cut our hair, we came back to England. All the people in England thought we were German, 'cause the newspapers said *Direct from Hamburg*. All the kids were surprised when they saw us. We had leather jackets and blue jeans. We thought we won't have corny suits, we'll have new things, Cardin jackets. So by the time we got to the States, for instance... the hair, which was really a bit of an accident, and was really what a lot of artsy people were doing anyway, we were the first with it in the States so it looked like we'd invented it. Actually the story was a lot more ordinary. Like life is. But by the time it got to be presented on "The Ed Sullivan Show," the biggest show in the United States, and there we were with these funny haircuts, it was us. Everybody said, "You started the Beatle haircut." So it was like distilling the essence of what we were going through and laying it all on America in one big move. That's why it was such a big shock and had such a big effect on them.

MUSICIAN: *Was it apparent to you that something was going on that was more than just another very big group—that this was a cultural phenomenon?*

McCARTNEY: You don't get into that. I don't think that when Muhammad Ali was shouting he was the greatest that he actually *knew* he was—it was bluff. Show biz. He *suspected* he was; we suspected we were. But a lot of what you did was just bluff, because if you want to be number one you *tell* everyone you're number one.

"The White Album. That was the tension album. In any case it was weird, beds in the studio and people visiting for hours on end. We were about to break up, and that was tense in itself."

MUSICIAN: *But when did you realize, "My God, it worked!" This is more than just a musical event; this is a whole generation...*

McCARTNEY: Very early on. When we started off in Hamburg we had no audience, so we had to work our asses off to get people in. People would appear at the door of the club while we were onstage, and there would be nobody at the tables. We used to try to get them in to sell beer. The minute we saw someone we'd kick into "Dancing in the Streets"—which was one of our big numbers at the time—and just rock out, pretending we hadn't seen them. And we'd find we'd got three of them in. We were like fairground barkers: *See four people—have to get them in*. We eventually sold the club out, which is when we realized it was going to get really big. Then we went back to England and played the Cavern; same thing happened there. First nobody came; then they started coming in; finally they came in droves. There was this incredible excitement. So we knew something we were doing must have been right. By the time we started playing tours it really didn't surprise us anymore, though we were still thrilled by it all. When we were on the Chris Montez tour he was on the top of the bill; halfway through they switched it and put us on top. It was embarrass-



“The big influence on Sgt. Pepper was Pet Sounds by the Beach Boys. When I heard it I thought, ‘Oh dear, this is the album of all time. What the hell are we going to do?’”

sing as hell for him—I mean, what could you say to him? Sorry, Chris? He took it well and stuff, but we expected it by then. Everywhere we’d gone it’d seemed to work.

MUSICIAN: *At that point no European group had ever really conquered America—no pop group. How did you determine when you were ready to take the plunge and come to the U.S.?*

MCCARTNEY: The thing we did—which I always think new groups should take as a bit of advice—was that we were cheeky enough to say that we wouldn’t go to the States until we had a number-one record there. We were offered tours, but we knew we’d be second to someone and we didn’t want that. There was a lot of careful thought behind it. There were a lot of artists from here who’d go over and vanish. Cliff Richard’s still trying to make it in the States. We always looked at it logically and thought, well, that’s the mistake. You’ve got to go in as number one. So there was a lot of careful thought there, we were cooking up this act, the Beatles. It was very European, very British as opposed to the standard American way of doing things, Ed, couple of jugglers, Sinatra, Sinatra Jr., even Elvis from the waist up. The American Dream.

MUSICIAN: *Can you remember what it was like when it finally happened?*

MCCARTNEY: When we heard that our first record went number one in the States? Yeah. We were playing Paris at the time. The telegram came and we all jumped on each other’s backs and ran around everywhere. Big Mal the roadie gave

everyone piggyback rides—we were just so excited. So we went to America; and it was all like we’d planned might happen. But we were lucky; it went much further than we’d ever imagined.

MUSICIAN: *What was it that made the group able to weather the incredible pressure of all that and stay together as long as it did?*

MCCARTNEY: It didn’t feel like pressure—it wasn’t pressure for a long time. At American press conferences, they used to ask, “What will you do when the bubble bursts?” There used to be a guy like yourself who we’d take around with us ‘cause he was so funny. We used to ask him to ask that question every time—it was the only question he ever asked on the whole tour. He got to be like a court jester.

MUSICIAN: *So how did you answer him?*

MCCARTNEY: I don’t know—we’ll blow up or we’ll fall out of the sky or whatever. . . But it was never a serious question to us.

MUSICIAN: *When and why did the bubble burst?*

MCCARTNEY: I don’t know, really. Just about a year before the Beatles broke up. You could say the seed was sown from very early on. I don’t know—it just did. Friction came in; business things; relations between us. We were all looking for people in our lives. John had found Yoko; it made things very difficult. He wanted a very intense, intimate life with her; at the same time we’d always reserved that kind of intimacy for the group. You could understand that he had to have time with her. But does he have to have *that* much time with her was sort of the feeling of the group. So these things just started to create immovable objects and pressures that were just too big. After that—after the breakup—then the idea of when-will-the-bubble-burst came home. So I thought, “Oh, *that* was what that guy was talking about at every bloody press conference!” We weren’t aware of that much pressure while the Beatles were happening because we were a very organized group—a well-rehearsed

unit. But eventually I started to realize what they were talking about. When you start to grow up you realize, "Wait a minute, I really am holding down a job here and if my paid gig goes down..."

MUSICIAN: *I'm impressed by how easily you can go back into that period and pull out all these amazing things. I was afraid you might not be willing to talk about the Beatles; it seemed like a forbidden topic for so long...*

McCARTNEY: Well, I recently did this video clip on which I play all the instruments like I do on the album. We had to think of someone to make the bass player like. So I told the director I could do Beatle Paul. And he said, "Yeah, you've gotta do it." I almost chickened out in the end. But I did it and put on my old uniform and got out the old Hofner violin bass—which still has a song list from the Beatles taped to it—and I didn't realize till a few days later that I'd gone and broken the whole voodoo of talking about the Beatles... 'Cause I'd been him again and it didn't feel bad. I mean if someone else is going to impersonate me, I might as well do it myself. And it was such a ball among the studio technicians—they really got off on it.

MUSICIAN: *Did it feel like you were stepping back into that old image for a minute?*

McCARTNEY: Yes. I felt great. It felt like I was on a TV show 20 years ago—exactly the same. The bass was the same weight—the whole thing about the Hofner bass is that it's like balsa wood. It's so comfortable after a Fender or a Rickenbacker. I now play a Rickenbacker or a Yamaha, which are quite heavy.

MUSICIAN: *Why did you switch?*

McCARTNEY: It was given to me. Back in the mid-'60s Mr. Rickenbacker gave me a special left-handed bass. It was the first left-handed bass I'd ever had, 'cause the Hofner was a converted right hand. It was a freebie and I loved it; I started getting into it on *Sgt. Pepper*. And now I'm playing a Yamaha.

MUSICIAN: *How come?*

McCARTNEY: Because they gave me one—I'm anybody's for a free guitar! Sometimes I think I should research what instrument I like to play best. But generally I seem to play stuff that's been given me. Naturally I only play the stuff that I like—I've been given stuff that I don't care for—but I like it like that. I don't like things to be too thought out and logical. If someone asked me what strings I used I honestly couldn't tell you—they come out of a little bag. To me these things are just vehicles.

They're beautiful and I love them, but I don't want to find out too much about them. It's just the way my mind is; I'd prefer to be non-technical.

MUSICIAN: *What about your composing and writing? Do you have a set way of going about putting together a song, or is it all pretty free-flowing?*

McCARTNEY: I'm suspicious of formulas; the minute I've got a formula I try and change it. People used to ask us what comes first, the music or the words? Or Lennon and McCartney, who does what? We all did a bit of everything. Sometimes I wrote the words and sometimes John did; sometimes I'd write a tune and sometimes he would.

MUSICIAN: ... were you the Walrus?

McCARTNEY: Yeah. I'm still the Walrus. That was a nothing thing, really, didn't mean anything. What happened was that during *Magical Mystery Tour* we did a scene where we all put on masks... it happens to be me with the Walrus mask... we just picked up a head each; no thought behind it. Then there was all that stuff about me being dead...

MUSICIAN: *I think it's amazing that your bass playing continued to improve after you died. Very impressive.*

McCARTNEY: Hmmmm... yes. Then there was that whole thing about me wearing a black carnation. I had a black carnation because they'd run out of red ones. So there was this *hugely* significant thing of me wearing a black carnation. Or turning my back on the *Sgt. Pepper* cover—it was actually just a goof. When we were doing the photos I turned my back... it was like a joke or whatever.

MUSICIAN: *Are your good feelings about new wave because you recognize the same kind of creative element you cultivated with the Beatles?*

McCARTNEY: I think the nice thing about new wave is that it's gotten back to real music, rather than pop. I don't like a lot of it... a lot of it I do like. I can see where it's all come from. A great deal of it you can trace back to the Doors, Lou Reed, Bowie and Bryan Ferry. But that's great. I was influenced by Elvis, I still do an Elvis impersonation at a party, "Love Me Tender." I recognize that we're all these very frail... no matter who puts on the great show out front, basically we are all imitators. We used to nick songs, titles, John and I. I've even been inspired by things in the press. "Helter Skelter" came about because I read in *Melody Maker* that the Who had made

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ABBEY ROAD BEATLES

McCartney is at his best when he eschews security and 1) takes a risk (as on *Wild Life*—recorded in a few days à la Dylan), 2) is challenged (the stressful *Band on the Run*), 3) is caught off guard (*McCartney II*—an informal home studio project not originally intended for distribution). Just how much he values a secure environment can be gleaned from the following example: McCartney had planned to use Abbey Road (where the album of the same name and other Beatles albums were recorded) last year to record *Back to the Egg* with Wings, but found it to be already booked during the dates he needed. Since Abbey Road was his favorite studio he decided to take drastic measures. In the basement of his offices in London's Soho Square he actually built an exact replica of his favorite room in the Abbey Road studio. It was precise in every detail. There's even a large security door against a wall which leads nowhere—simply to duplicate one in the original studio. A massively enlarged photograph depicting a larger room full of

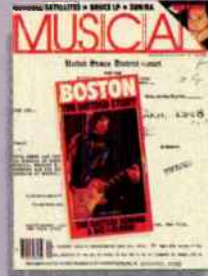
recording equipment, musical instruments and other electronic gear covers one entire wall. This is precisely the view you'd have in the real Abbey Road studio. The clock in the photo showed the time to be 1:35 p.m., which was an interesting coincidence, as my own watch read 1:35 also. We completed our tour of the building and were passing through the same room again when I happened to glance at the clock in the photo. *The hands had moved.* The time now read 10 minutes to two—the correct time! A representative of McCartney's explained: "After finishing the replica studio, we invited Paul down for a look. He was delighted by everything but stared a long time at the photo. He turned and said, 'The clock doesn't work.' We laughed but he said, 'No, I'm serious. *I want the clock in the photo to work.*' So we had them hollow out the wall and install real hands on the photo clock and watchworks behind the wall. Tells excellent time, actually." I'll bet. Talk about controlling your environment.



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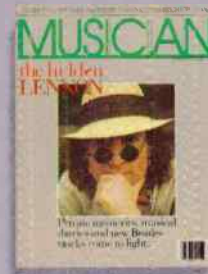
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JOHN LENNON

By Vic Garbarini, Interview by Barbara Graustark

We

've got to come up with a better word than tragedy to describe the death of John Lennon. It's not just that it doesn't begin to convey the scope of our loss, sorrow and pain—there's so much that

needs to be said that it ignores, or even misrepresents. In the classic Shakespearean sense, tragedy implied that the victim had a hand in his or her own demise by means of some fatal flaw or action. I fail to see that here. The word also suggests a sense of incompleteness, of promises unkept, of potential unfulfilled. Elvis Presley's death was tragic. So was John Bonham's, I guess, and maybe even Tim Hardin's. But as anyone who reads this interview with a clear head (and heart) must see, there was just too much damn joy, hope and triumph crammed into John Lennon's 40 years on this planet for us to speak of him in terms of an unfulfilled life. The kind of triumph I'm talking about had nothing to do with his fame, his music or what he accomplished, but with how he handled them—what he did with the fruits of his labors. It's not just that he'd freed himself from the oppression of governments, the music industry and other institutions of that ilk. His was a much greater victory. By the end, through struggle, perseverance and determination (and a little help from his friends), John Lennon had begun to free himself from the biggest obstacle any of us ever encounters. Himself.

The Beatles were our means of self-discovery. They were true catalysts, the agents of our generation's awakening, helping to reveal to us our potential as individuals and as a community. Like modern-day shamans, they became vehicles through which we contacted our own deeper nature, our collective unconscious or whatever you choose to call it. But as John stated in his last interview, the Beatles weren't apart from society, they *were* society. It was a self-liberation, and they became the instruments through which we discovered our birthright. It's important that we begin to understand this whole process, as John had finally done. Certainly, we owe him that much. Unlike most people who become mediums for that kind of cultural transformation, John resisted the temptation to let his ego take credit for what was happening, to spoil it by clogging that creative opening with his own greed and egoism. He struggled to transform his anger, pain and frustration into a force for his own and others' liberation, striving to maintain contact with the source of his inspiration. In the process he came to the inner realization that it was indeed true, as all the sacred texts had told him, that creativity was a gift. That he didn't really own his songs any more than he owned the wind. Reaching that kind of freedom is not easy. It requires a painful process of stripping away illusion, of letting go of "Elvis Beetle" to find John Lennon. The real John Lennon. It also requires commitment, the courage to take risks, and yes, even a willingness to make a fool of oneself on occasion. And it *was* a true liberation—not total by any means; the man was riddled with faults like all of us—but true in the sense that it occurred on an essential level. The action the Beatles initiated in us had such force because it, too, touched us in our depths, in the place where we all touch each other, where there's a true



oneness, where it's not a sentimental cliché to say, "I am he as you are me as we are all together." We'd forgotten about that place, lost touch with it until it became crusted over and the connections atrophied, until that network of intuitive unity was only an embarrassing memory. Maybe we really never understood the process in the first place. We're not a civilization that's learned to understand the laws and forces that determine our creative potential, our art and our lives. Maybe we didn't know, but somehow we instinctively understood.

On December 8, 1980 that common space, that long-forgotten sanctuary was jolted awake again in many of us, and we found we were still part of the same nervous system. It continued all that week, culminating in Sunday's vigil, described so simply and clearly by Yoko: "I saw we were one mind." And we were. In such moments we move closer to being truly human, to a place in all of us that's outside of time and space, and from which flows all that we value in our inner world: creativity, joy, music itself:

When the real music comes to me—the music of the spheres, the music that surpasseth understanding—that has nothing to do with me, 'cause I'm just the channel. The only joy for me is for it to be given to me, and to transcribe it like a medium... those moments are what I live for. — John Lennon

What's touched in us at such times is not just emotion, but something far greater and more satisfying. It's our own potential, the future urging us forward, and we have to learn to respond to it, cooperate with that higher part of ourselves if our lives are to be anything more than just mechanical exercises in the worship of quantity over quality. We have to be active in this process of transformation, and through his example John Lennon showed us how to begin to empty ourselves of all the crap that blocks our contact with that inner strength, to prepare ourselves to let that part of ourselves awaken and flourish, and to establish and maintain contact with that inner strength that "surpasseth understanding."

We need all the help we can get with this kind of endeavor, and certainly the most important factor in John's growth was Yoko Ono. Some thought of her as the Dragon Lady—an unhealthy, domineering influence on their hero. Recently she's emerged as a kind of Lady Madonna, his main source of strength and sustenance. Which is the real Yoko? Well, it depends on what level we're looking at. On the surface, John's mother fixation seemed an unhealthy regression, and Yoko's somewhat cool and uncompromising personality made her an easy target for those who disliked her. That may all be partly true, but it misses the essential point. In a deep and profound way, Yoko became a mother to him in the true sense of the word. She constantly nurtured his inner being, and far from protecting him from the world, she forced him to face both it and himself—to drop the masks, illusions and ego trips and find out who he really was. His true nature. I sometimes feel that as Americans we've missed some of the point about women's liberation. How can we liberate what we don't understand? We have much to thank John and Yoko for, and much to learn from the depth, understanding and commitment evidenced in their Heart Play.

In the end there was a sense of wonder and hope amidst the pain and grief as he passed from us not as a flame snuffed out, but more like a comet illuminating our lonely night, showing us once again parts of ourselves that we weren't sure we still believed in. He had been part of the instrument of our original awakening in the '60s, and his death was a final, ironic gift that enabled us to reaffirm our unity. Some spoke of losing a part of

themselves, but it wasn't like that. We'd rediscovered something we no longer dared believe in, the power and grandeur of our own spirits. We glimpsed that space before, on the "Ed Sullivan Show" in '64, at Woodstock, at the Fillmore, and felt ashamed of our naïveté when we dared to embrace the vision. Our naïveté was not in believing in the reality of those events, but in thinking that these glimpses into another reality could sustain themselves indefinitely. We're still a long way from becoming citizens of that world, and it's going to take a lot of struggle and work to get there, if we do. This is no longer just a question of utopian daydreaming, as our lack of contact with the inner reality of things has resulted in a hollow civilization that's crumbling before our eyes, and it's going to get worse before it gets better. Much worse.

*You say you want a revolution
Why don't you free your mind instead?*

By the end, John Lennon knew that any society or system could only be as strong and conscious as the individuals comprising it. And unlike most of us, he had the guts to put into practice what he'd begun to realize in his own inner searching: to strive to maintain contact with the inner sources of transcendence and reality that had touched him, to learn what was required of him in order to play his role as an active agent in his own transformation and to pursue that path, wherever it led him, and in spite of whatever obstacles, inner or outer, stood in his way.

The following excerpts were taken from an interview with John Lennon and Yoko Ono originally done for *Newsweek* magazine by Barbara Graustark in September 1980. This expanded version is from the recent book *Strawberry Fields Forever: John Lennon Remembered*, an appreciation of John and Yoko's life and music by *Musician* staffers Vic Garbarini and Brian Cullman, with Barbara Graustark.

Withdrawal

"I'd been under contract since I was 22 and I was always supposed to, supposed to. I was supposed to write a hundred songs by Friday, supposed to have a single out by Saturday, supposed to do this and do that. It dawned on me that the reason I became an artist was freedom; because I couldn't fit into the classroom, the college, the society. I was the outsider. And that freedom was what I cherished—that was the plus for all the minuses of being an oddball... that I was free, and everybody else had to go to the office. But suddenly, it was exactly the opposite of what I had set out to be. I was obliged to a record company, obliged to the media, obliged to the public, obliged to the American immigration, obliged to go to court every time some asshole bumped into me on the street.

"So I said, 'What the hell is this? I'm not free at all.' I know freedom is in the mind but I couldn't clear my mind. So it was time to regroup.

"The fear in the music business is that you don't exist if you're not in the gossip columns, or on the charts, at Xenon with Mick Jagger or Andy Warhol. I just wanted to remember that I existed at all.

"At first it was very hard not to be doing something musical because I felt I ought to be. But musically my mind was just a big clutter. It wasn't a question of not having anything to say—if you listen to my early records, there's a dumb song on *Sgt. Pepper* called 'Good Morning.' There's absolutely nothing to say—just descriptions of paintings of what is. I never have illusions about having something to say but, 'It's okay, good morning, good morning, good morning,' as the dumb song goes. Quack, quack, quack. It wasn't a matter of nothing to



say—it was a matter of no clarity and no desire to do it *because I was supposed to*. There was a hard withdrawal period, what people must go through at 65, and then I started being a househusband, and swung my attention onto Sean. Then I realized, I'm not supposed to be doing something—I *am* doing something. And then I was free."

Getting Free

"I was a working-class macho guy that didn't know any better. Yoko taught me about women. I was used to being served, like Elvis and a lot of the stars were. And Yoko didn't buy that. She didn't give a shit about Beatles—what the fuck are the Beatles? 'I'm Yoko Ono! Treat me as me.' That was the battle. She came out with 'Woman Is the Nigger of the World' in 1968 as the title of an article she wrote for *Nova* magazine. Because things were like they were, I took the title and wrote the song.

"But it was her statement and what she was saying to the world she was saying to Lennon in spades. I had never considered it before. From the day I met her, she demanded equal time, equal space, equal rights. I didn't know what she was talking about. I said, 'What do you want, a contract? You can have whatever you want, but don't expect anything from me or for me to change in any way. Don't impinge in my space.' 'Well,' she said, 'the answer to that is I can't be here. Because there is no space where you are. Everything revolves around you. And I can't breathe in that atmosphere. I'm an artist, I'm not some female you picked up backstage.' Well, I found out. And I'm thankful to her for the education.

"I was used to a situation where the newspaper was there for me to read, and after I'd read it, somebody else could have it. It didn't occur to me that somebody else might want to look at it first. I think that's what kills people like Presley and others of that ilk. So-called stars who die in public and lots of people who die privately. The king is always killed by his courtiers, not by his enemies. The king is overfed, overdressed, overindulged, anything to keep the king tied to his throne. Most people in that position never wake up. They either die mentally or physically or both. And what Yoko did for me, apart from liberating me to be a feminist, was to liberate me from that situation. And that's how the Beatles ended. Not because Yoko split the Beatles, but because she showed me what it was to *be* Elvis Beatle and to be surrounded by sycophants and slaves who were only interested in keeping the situation as it was. And that's a kind of death.

"She said to me, 'You've got no clothes on.' Nobody had dared to tell me that before. Nobody dared tell Elvis Presley that, and I doubt if anybody ever dared to tell Mick Jagger, Paul McCartney or Bob Dylan that they had no clothes on. I didn't accept it at first. 'But I *am* clothed! Everything is perfect—you're crazy. Nobody tells me—I'm God. I'm King John of England. Nobody tells me nuthin'.' Because nobody had. She told me, 'You absolutely have no clothes on, and that man whisperin' in your ear is Machiavelli.' 'But he's been with me for 20 years!' 'Then he's been screwin' you for 20 years.' 'Really?' I couldn't face any of that. She still tells me the truth. It's still painful."

Leaving the Beatles

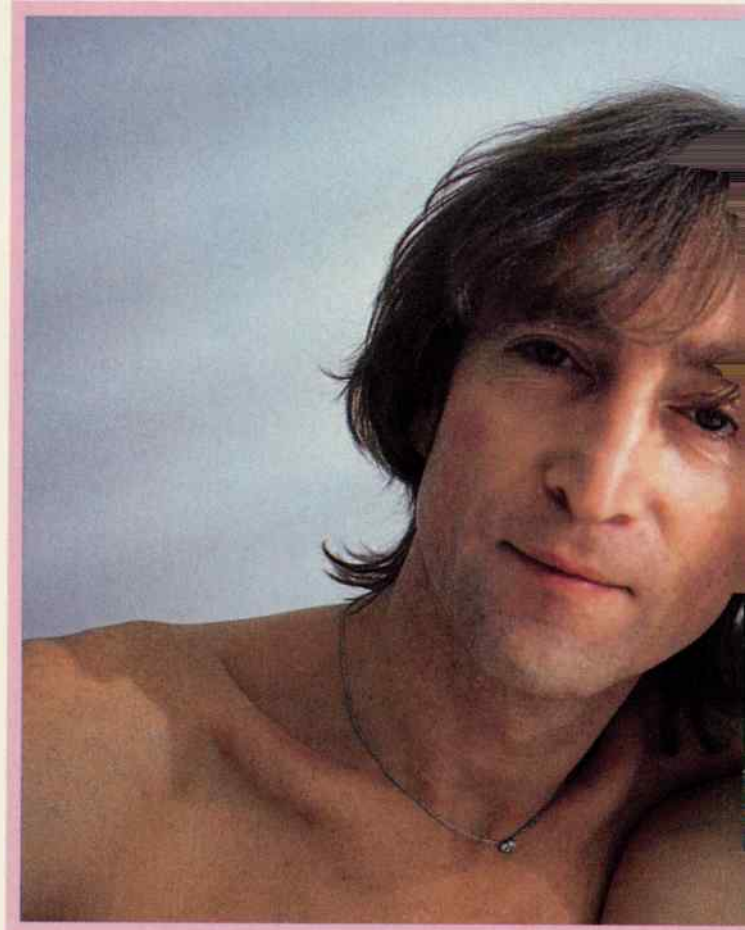
"I was always waiting for a reason to get out of the Beatles from the day I made *How I Won the War* in 1966. I just didn't have the guts to do it, you see. Because I didn't know where to go. I remember why I made the movie. I did it because the Beatles had stopped touring and I didn't know what to do. So instead of going home, and being with the family, I immediately went to Spain with Dick Lester because I couldn't deal with not being continually onstage. That was the first time I thought,

'My God, what do you do if this isn't going on? What is there? There's no life without it.'

"And that's when the seed was planted that I had to somehow get out of this, without being thrown out by the others. But I could never step out of the palace because it was too frightening."

Creativity

"I used to go through hell thinking I don't own any of my songs, and then it dawned on me that I never owned them in the first place. I don't own the copyright to anything I wrote up until *Walls and Bridges*. So I don't own any of the old so-called Beatles songs. I get writer royalties from them, but I don't own the copyright. I have to ask permission to do things to it, or whatever, and that used to make me suffer, and think I'd been



robbed. I might have read that somewhere, that people don't own music, and I read it a hundred times, but it didn't make sense to me until it dawned on me that I'd have known it myself, you know what I mean? Because you can't own—how can you own it? It's insane. I can't believe that I would think that I owned it before—that's what's so strange. It's an illusion—ownership is an illusion. Like possession. Ownership is the same as possession. It's impossible."

Yoko and Children

"*Being with Yoko* makes me free, you know. Being with Yoko makes me whole. I'm a half without her. Male is half without a female. We're like spiritual advisers to each other. You can do it correct, but there's something not there, only somebody close to each other like this can tell each other what it is. But the spirit is in the way it's being performed.

“That Judeo-Christian story that we’ve been living by for 2,000 years, is that God and everything is some other thing outside of ourselves—that continual us-and-them relationship with God, with children, with animals, with nature, the environment, where we’ve conquered nature, worshipped God, we deal with children, it’s this separation business that I don’t believe exists. It’s just an idea and so I cannot separate Sean from the environment or from me or from the other end of the universe, whatever that may or may not be. That it is one living organism. So therefore however I deal with you, I deal with Sean, and vice versa. But he’s not separate from me. I don’t deal with my left leg any different from my right ear. I deal with the reality of the shape, and where it’s placed, and how I look after, or wash different parts of the body, but I don’t consider them separate. The first thing I noticed about Sean in

idiots going to Maharishi, but I was sitting still, as they call it in the *I-Ching*, for three months in the Him... Once when we got back from Hamburg when we got deported and George had gotten deported, I didn’t contact the other four for a month... that’s a long time at 18 or 19. Because I withdrew to think whether this is worth going on with. Now when George and Paul found out, they were mad at me. Because they thought we could have been working. But I just withdrew. So part of me is a monk. And part of me is a performing flea. Knowing when to stop is survival for me. It’s like breathing in and out for me. It happened in many forms... Maharishi, Janov. The sneering and the sniggering about Maharishi from the public and the press was incredible but now they’re all doing it... But now I’m old enough not to need to go somewhere with somebody to withdraw. Okay? So now I withdraw on my own.”



The Creative Spirit

“To be creative... is to receive a gift. And I’m a craftsman who can fake it... like a lot of artists do. And I can reap from what I’ve sowed already for the rest of my life by just being a craftsman, by keeping my mouth shut and being a good boy. And I might get honored by every show-biz group and be in the Guinness book of records and get knighted. It wouldn’t interest me to get it for being other than... for something *real* I created. For the creative spirit, the way I like it, where it’s given to me, not where it’s something I’ve made, cannot come through if the air is cluttered. The mind is cluttered. You can fake it and be a craftsman and put out paintings like Picasso, or records if you’re a pop singer. And you might get away with it. And the business will let you get away with it. You know, inside. So in order to get that clear channel open again I had to stop picking up every radio station in the world, in the universe. So my turning away from it is how I began to heal it again. I couldn’t see the wood for the trees. Or I couldn’t hear the music for the noise in my own head... You know, Einstein or Newton, anything that was discovered was discovered by accident, by creative spirit or they were tuned into whatever came down at that moment, right? What did Einstein do? He spilled the theory of relativity when he was working on something else. He spent the rest of his life trying to prove something else, which you can never do. So what he did was really live off that record for the rest of his life. Not taking away from his brilliance or his natural native ability, but the real creation came when he sat there and something came to him or when the apple fell on his head. Newton would never have had the apple fall on his head and conceive of what it meant had he not been sitting under the tree. Day-dreamin’. So for me, it’s the same with music. The real music comes to me, the music of the spheres, the music that surpasses understanding, that has not to do with me, that I’m just a channel... So for that to come through, which is the only joy for me out of the music, is for it to be given to me and I transcribe it like a medium. But I have nothing to do with it other than I’m sitting under this tree and this whole damn thing comes down and I’ve just put it down. That is the only joy for me. Getting into the involvement, the pretending I’m this genius who creates things or owns the rights to them, that’s when it’s garbage. When I’m in that illusion of thinking that somebody owes me something because I was gifted—occasionally gifted, not permanently gifted, nobody is, occasionally gifted with this music or the words and pretending that they own it and that they should get a gold record for doing it (not that I don’t appreciate adulation and awards and everything else)—but to believe it is another matter. To believe that’s why I’m doing it, because as we’ve proved in the last five years, there’s many other ways of making money. I don’t have any doubt of our ability to always

the hospital was that when the black nurses came to feed him they put the radio on; they’re not supposed to, but they do. The radio would be on all the time... usually off the station blaring into these intensive-care kids who are dying like little shriveled rabbits. Anyway, black nurses had on station WBLB, and when she fed the baby, she would hold him and give the bottle... like the whites would come in, switch it to the country-and-western, sit down, sit there like this, smoking. So the first thing I did was... got to get the rhythm. Whenever I fed him, I put the music on. Bumm, bumm dee dummm. Now he moves like this! So in that way he was trained in music and he has my jukebox in his playroom.”

Withdrawal II

“I’ve withdrawn many times. Once to the Himalayas with Maharishi, and all the press wrote about was look at those

make money. So it's nothing to do with money. But for the joy of having the apple fall on my head every 10 years or so... that's what I'm living for besides trying to keep the little family going, happy and progressing together. And the rest can be fun or not fun. Like this is okay. We're having fun. We're having coffee. We're talking. We're bringing up stuff that I remember... You're enjoying it, I'm enjoying it. And we call it work. But believing in it that I own it, I created it. My record label. And my company. And my picture. Someone's stealing *my* song... or they're singing my song... garbage. When I start believing that, that's when I'm in trouble. And that's when the gift just goes to somebody else. And one becomes a craftsman. I have nothing against craftsmen but I have no interest in being a craftsman."

Friction and Art

"The friction is in living. In waking up every day. And getting through another day. That's where the friction is. And to express it in art is the job of the artist. And that's what I can do. To express it on behalf of people who can't express it or haven't the time or ability or whatever it is. That's my job. My function in society. There's a reason for everything living. The gods that work in mysterious ways, their wonders to perform. And there's a job for flies, I'm not sure but there's a reason for it. And there's a reason for artists and musicians and it's to just do what we do. To better or lesser degrees, depending on whose opinion you follow. It's no more important or less important than anything else going on. See? But it is for the people who receive it later on. But it's for me basically and then the so-called audience second. And it's just why I'm here. Just my game. Everybody else thinks in such short time spans. The same as when the record company used to think each Beatle record was the last one. Only the Beatles knew it wasn't. And only the Beatles knew that they would be as big as they were. The record company never caught on. They still treated them as if 'We better fuck them over now in case they don't produce anything else.' But I don't think like that. I knew that if I was to do it, I would do it in my own good time. Life is long. It doesn't last in terms of three months on the charts or just having a movie out or not having a movie out. So that insecurity wasn't my problem. The problem was only with wanting to have the ability to express it in my terms, the way I wanted to. So that's all. Five years. It could have been 20 years. Some guys write only one book every 20 years, other guys produce 15 a month... and I don't think one's better than the other. I'm just a different kind of guy. I don't produce them every week."

Pop Music

"I love commercial music! I like commercials on the TV. I don't sit and watch them, but as a form, if I had to do anything on TV, it would be in the style of the commercial. I like pop records. I like Olivia Newton-John singing 'Magic,' and Donna Summer singing whatever the hell it is she'll be singing. I like the ELO singing 'All Over the World.' I can dissect it and criticize it with any critic in the business. And put it down or praise it or see it from a sociological point of view or anthropological point of view... or any fuckin' point of view, whatever. But without any thought, I enjoy it. I just enjoy it! That's the kind of music I like to hear. It's folk music. I always said it and it's true. It's folk music. That's what I'm doing, folk music. I'm not intellectualizing it. I'm not arranging it into a symphony and making it into a phony art form and calling it pop opera. Right? I'm just doing the music I enjoy. And now I'm enjoying it and it comes in the form of pop music to me. If it came in the form of painting, I'd be painting.

"*Walls and Bridges* was the last record I made. I've already

compared it. It's light-years away. Because *Walls and Bridges*... it's the same as cooking... anybody can cook rice but few can cook it well. And cooking is a manifestation of your state of mind. So is the music. There's craftsmanship in *Walls and Bridges*. There's some good. And there's the semi-sick craftsman who put together the thing. But there's no inspiration and there's misery. It's miserable. It gives off an aura of misery. Because I was miserable. So now I'm not miserable so this album will give off an aura of not being miserable."

A Beatles Reunion

"I never wanted to talk about it, you know. None of us did, really, so we would just say something glib or something just to shut people up. We couldn't say 'never,' because then it would be like Ringo said once, 'You're a bad guy if you're the one that says "never,"' and God knows what would have happened anyway, right? Nobody knows what's never, it's a long time... but then it goes 'RINGO SAYS NEVER,' big headlines, or 'JOHN SAYS NEVER' or 'PAUL SAYS NEVER,' so nobody wanted to be the one to say 'maybe' because then every time you said 'maybe' somebody took an ad out in the paper saying, 'I'm the one who's bringing them back together.' So there was nothing to be said about the Beatles—it came to a point where you couldn't say a damn thing—whatever you said was something wrong—it's like being in a divorce situation, you know, you can't say anything about your ex-wife because you're in court and anything you say can be held one way or another against you or for you—so that was the situation. And the point about the Bangladesh concert or any of these events is that if the Beatles wanted to get together, *they* would be the first to know, not the last to know. And they would be the ones that ran it, promoted it and owned it, and it would not come from some third party outside of the four guys themselves. Whatever it was that made the Beatles the Beatles also made the '60s the '60s. The Beatles were whatever the Beatles were. And I certainly don't need it to do what I'm doing now. It could never be. Anybody that thinks that if John and Paul got together with George and Ringo the Beatles would exist, is out of their skull! The Beatles gave everything they've got to give and more, and it exists, on record, there's no need for the Beatles—for what people think are the Beatles—the four guys that used to be that group can never, ever be that group again even if they wanted to be. You mean if Paul McCartney and John Lennon got together, would they produce some good songs? Maybe, maybe not. But whether George and Ringo joined in again is irrelevant. *Because Paul and I created the music, okay?* Whether it's relevant whether McCartney, Lennon and McCartney, like Rodgers and Hammerstein—instead of Rodgers and Hart or instead of Rodgers and Dingbat or whoever else they worked with—should be limited to having worked together once, to always have to be referred back to that is somebody else's problem, not mine—I never think about it. What if Paul and I got together? What the hell would it... it would be *boring*."

Coming Home

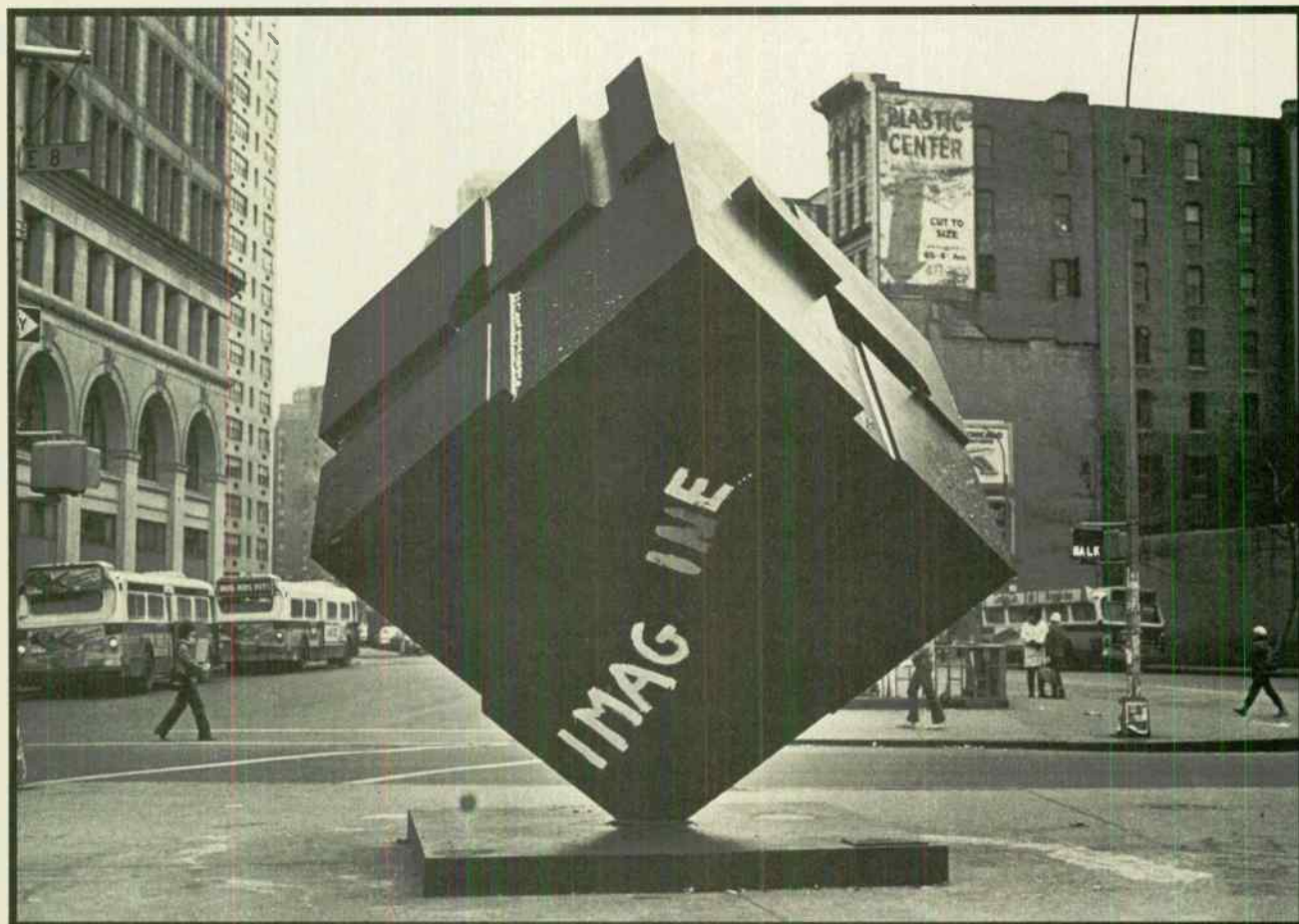
"I never know what I'm talking about until a year later when I see what I'm writing. Some of it, even the Beatles stuff, when I hear it now, I think, 'Oh, that's what'... and I think Dylan once said it about his work—he was really talking about himself—a lot of it in the early days, it was 'him' and 'you' and 'they' that were doing things, but really when I look back on it, it's *me* that I'm talking about. And so, yes, you could say it was overwhelming, that I actually felt out of the universe, you know, disconnected, and so I converted it into that ["I'm Losing You"]. But it also could be a short story about when we were

physically separated in the early '70s, you can apply it to that too—although I wasn't thinking that at the time. It described that situation, too, of being kicked out of the nest and being dead. Or being not connected is like being dead. There's that difference—being alone and being lonely is two different things. Something I've learned in the past 10 years. What I did in the past 10 years was rediscover that I was John Lennon before the Beatles, and after the Beatles, and so be it.

"One moment—the actual moment when I remembered who I was—completely, not in glimpses—I never really lost complete touch with myself—but a lot of the time I did, for long periods of time... I was in a room in Hong Kong, because Yoko had sent me on a trip 'round the world by myself, and I hadn't done anything since I was 20. I didn't know how to call for room service, check into a hotel—this sounds—if somebody reads this and they think, 'Well, these fucking artists,' or 'These bloody pop stars,' or 'These actors,' you know, and they don't understand... the *pain* of being a freak... Yoko said, 'Why don't you do this?' I said, 'Really? By myself? Hong Kong? Singapore?' I said, 'But what if people bother me?'—and, well, I had a big excuse for it, you see, I had to isolate using Being Famous as an immense excuse. An incredible excuse. For never facing anything. Because I was Famous—therefore I can't go to the movies, I can't go to the theater, I can't do anything. So sitting in this room, taking baths, which I'd noticed Yoko do, and women do, every time I got nervous, I took a bath. It's a great female trick, it's a great one. I must have had about 40 baths... and I'm looking out over the Hong Kong bay, and there's something that's like ringing a bell, it's like what is it?

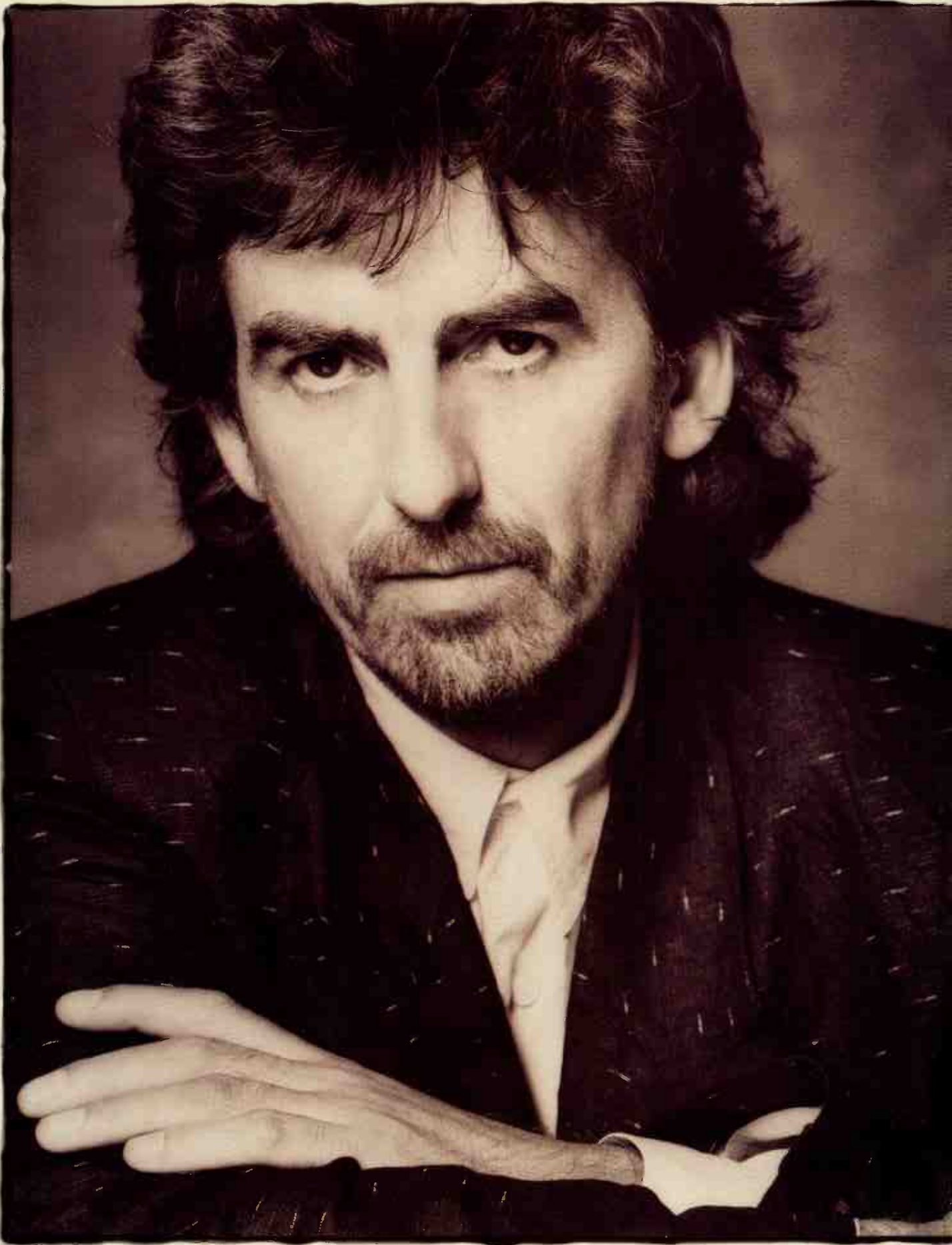
What is it? And then I just got very very relaxed. And it was like a recognition. God! It's me! This relaxed person is *me*. I remember this guy from way back when! This feeling is from way, way, way back when. I know what the fuck I'm doing! I know who I am—it doesn't rely on any outside agency or adulation, or nonadulation, or achievement or nonachievement, or hit record or no hit record. Or anything. It's absolutely irrelevant whether the teacher loves me, hates me—I'm still me. *He* knows how to do things—*he* knows how to get around—*he* knows how to form a group—*he* knows how to do everything he wants to do—*wow!* So I called, I said, 'Guess who, it's *me!* It's *me* here.' I walked out of that hotel, I just followed the workers onto the ferry, nobody noticed me... this is an aside thing: Somebody asked a very famous actress, and I've forgotten who it was, somebody like Carole Lombard, somebody really big from way back, and maybe this story came over Johnny Carson—but they asked her how one actress couldn't get down the street without being recognized and the other could, when they were both equally famous. And she said, 'This is how I do it,' and she demonstrated. She walked down the street as Carole Lombard, and everybody turned their heads—and then she walked down the street as nobody. And that works. I *can* get around. If I'm super-nervous, I send out a vibe, 'Here's a nervous person coming!', so they're going to look 'round because of this vibration that's walking past, and then afterward say, 'It's somebody famous.' Because some people are like that anyway. So I got out, and I got on the ferry. Looking around. It's like a thrill, I'm walking

CONTINUED ON PAGE 79



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

1940–1980



George Harrison

◆ Reconsidered

After all those years of mania and mop-tops, dark suits and deep blues, here comes the fun.

He came as soon as he heard. It's 10:37 a.m. on Tuesday, August 25, 1987, in Burbank, California, and although he's been missing for five years, nobody minds. Because today he swore he'd deliver.

George Harrison arrives alone at the headquarters of Warner Bros. Records, carrying the master reference disc of his new album direct from Bernie Grundman Mastering, where he's spent the last 24 hours facing the music and deciding it was finally time to share it. No one at the company has listened to the finished version of *Cloud Nine*. And no one was invited to—until this moment.

He strides through the morning haze, his pale fingers gripping the plain white cardboard sleeve that holds the end product. Dressed in a raven tweed jacket, white silk shirt, charcoal slacks, black bucks and red-and-gray argyle socks, he takes the tiled front steps with a tread as heavy as his attire.

Lenny Waronker, bashful and boyish president of Warner Bros., meets him at the threshold of his office with a warm smile and a wary electricity in his gaze. Two literally trembling hands present the perspiration-pocked dust jacket, *George Harrison* inscribed across it in careless script from a felt marker. Waronker cups the prize at its lower corners, holding it against the front of his short leather driving jacket as if it were a citation.

"George!" calls a voice over Waronker's shoulder, and from an adjoining office suite appears Mo Ostin, chairman of the board of the Warners record group. Balding,

By Timothy White

Photograph by Chris Cuffaro

beaming, his white sport clothes and bronze skin telegraphing an easy zeal for the unfolding ceremony, Ostin beckons the two principals and a guest inside. Two chairs are angled before Waronker's desktide turntable for the private listening session. Mo reclines on a couch behind them.

In the instant before the stylus finds the pressing, there is no sound in the room but that of George Harrison, 44, sipping sharply from a cup of tea. Lenny leans forward, his eyes now closed. Mo contemplates the ceiling.

The first track, "Cloud Nine," descends upon the paneled room with absolute authority, an unmistakably reverberant vocal suffusing its space with biting, angular grace. The arrangement is rich but focused, pretty but austere, and when it surprises at the bridge with an exquisite upward spiral of harmonies, the composer makes his opening comment. "I put," he states above the surging music, "some 'Beach Boys' at the bridge." Mo manages a horizontal nod. Lenny places his palms over his sealed eyelids.

"That's What It Takes" bursts forth, attacking the ears as if from a windswept dashboard radio. "Fish on the Sand" is next, heightening the sense of breeze-tossed forward dispatch. The singer is biting the words, snapping them off with an aggressive drive. "Just for Today," a ballad of bottomless sadness, takes hold. Then "This Is Love" builds a case for new promise, the vocals full of yearning. Quickly, a fresh aural landscape approaches with "When We Was Fab," the tantalizingly familiar filigrees acting as magnets for the arrangement's sly twists.

As the song fades, Waronker looks up from his cradled hands. "That was," he says, "a killer sequence of tracks."

"I can't wait," Ostin giggles, "to catch the second side." And "Devil's Radio" is worth the anticipation. The ferocious rocker is an unearthly delight. Harrison permits himself the merest smile of impish satisfaction, which widens as whoops erupt from his audience.

"I had to rescue this song, redo it to give it a better chance," he volunteers, his dense Liverpool diction slicing through the speaker's throb, as the ethereal "Someplace Else" begins. "This was wasted on a soundtrack to an unsuccessful Madonna-Sean Penn film I produced."

The tough, tart "Wreck of the Hesperus" is the third track on the second side, its witty vocal parries a neat counterpoint to the stabbing guitar. The lush "Breath Away from Heaven" provides an atmospheric slice of intrigue. Then, as the finale, "Got My Mind Set on You," kicks in with a primitive rock 'n' roll wallop, George Harrison reveals his glee with the wry ode to checkbook romance. "This'll teach the yuppies!" he crows.

"This album'll teach a lot of people something," Mo Ostin rejoins, on his feet and radiant with relief. "We'll give them 'Got My Mind Set on You' as the first single!" "And then for the second single," adds a jubilant Waronker, "we can choose from 'That's What It Takes,' 'This Is Love' or 'When We Was Fab.' The 'Fab' track is like a movie, it's so vivid, and it's a graceful and riveting acknowledgement of the past. This whole album's got the good rock roots and new excitement radio has been needing."

Harrison's jaw drops: "Then you mean that I passed the final

examination? Well, hooray for that much!" A hearty round of backslapping and guffaws erupts as the former Beatle is reminded of an incident way back in his Liverpool origins, when 16-year-old George burned his report card (he'd failed every subject but art) in 1959 and quit school. By that time George, John Lennon and Paul McCartney had already played together in the Casbah Coffee Club, a cellar cafe owned by future drummer Pete Best's mum, Mona.

You likely know the rest: The Beatles fire Pete Best in August 1962 and hire Rory Storm & the Hurricane's drummer, Ringo Starr. Whereupon irate Pete Best fans enter the Cavern Club and blacken George's eye in a fracas. That September the Beatles cut their first single, "Love Me Do," in EMI's Studio 2 in St. John's Wood. Producer George Martin asks the lads, "Anything you're not happy about with us?" "Yes," George quips, "I don't like your tie."

Several hundred million records later, on November 1, 1968, the first outside LP project by a Beatle, George Harrison's *Wonderwall Music*, is issued on Apple Records. In 1969, shortly after the Beatles notch a number one U.S. hit with Harrison's "Something" from *Abbey Road*, dissension in the group grows grievous. In early 1970 the Beatles disassemble. George Harrison, after releasing the experimental *Electronic Sound* on the Zapple subsidiary, makes a massive individual impression in 1970 with the three-record set, *All Things Must Pass*, and thereafter plots a new path for himself.

Cloud Nine, produced with Electric Light Orchestra maestro Jeff Lynne, is George Harrison's thirteenth solo album (if you count *The Concert for Bangla Desh* and a Capitol greatest hits collection). It's the fifth of his Warner Bros. albums in the States, and his only LP since the unjustly ignored *Gone Troppo*, a genial 1982 gem. Moreover, in Lenny Waronker's estimation, "*Cloud Nine* is the finest album George has made since *All Things Must Pass*, and probably his best ever."

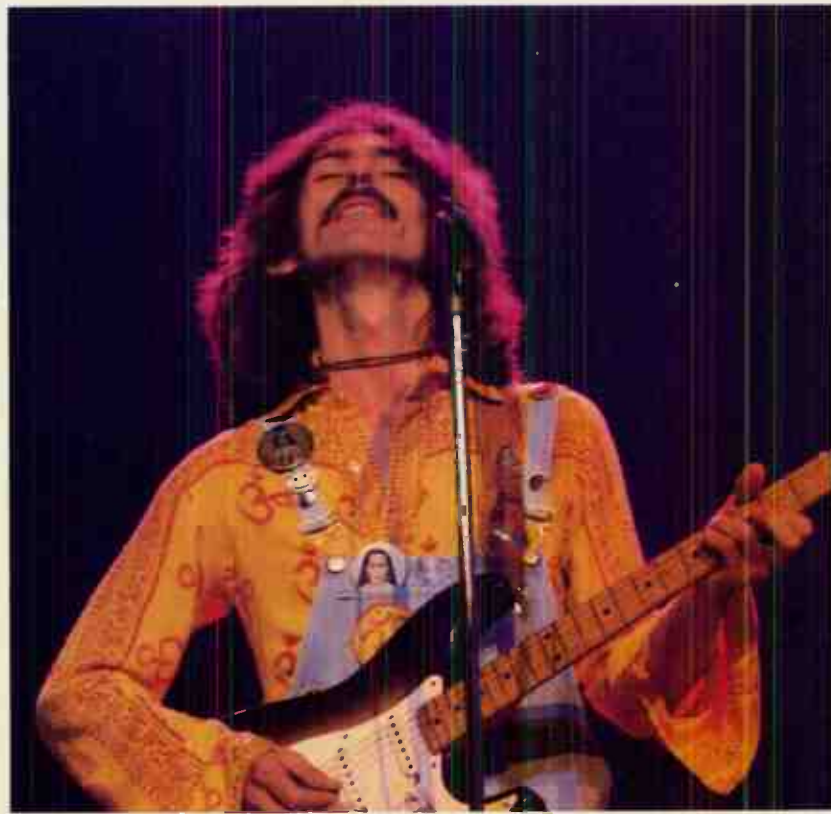
Harrison's core band for the record consists of George on guitars and sitar; Jeff Lynne on bass and guitar; Ringo, Jim Keltner and Ray Cooper on drums and percussion; Elton John and Gary Wright on keyboards, and Jim Horn on horns. Also featured is Eric Clapton, still George's best friend after fabled misadventures, principally luring away wife Patti Harrison in the mid-'70s—"but I also pulled a chick on him once," George has noted. Indeed, Harrison was such a forgiving soul that he, Paul and Ringo performed "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" at Eric and Patti's wedding reception.

"You've come a long way from Liverpool Technical Institute," I observe, after Harrison and I bid goodbye to the Warners brass and press on to our appointed lunch/interview. "Well, yes and no," George assures with a mischievous blink of his brown eyes, "because the Gretsch guitar I got several months after splitting from Liverpool Tech is the very same one I'm holding on the cover of *Cloud Nine*!"

MUSICIAN: How did you hook up with Jeff Lynne?

HARRISON: I'd been trying to imagine, for a few years, somebody who could co-produce my albums. I'm sure there's plenty of talented people out there, but I haven't really worked

"For two or three years I only played sitar. After I got back to guitar, I found I couldn't really play solos or get a good sound. I started playing slide, thinking, 'Maybe this is how I can come up with something half-decent.'"



In the presence of the Lord Buddha, 1974.

with many people on the production line. In the old days we just had George Martin working with us. And after that, well, I worked a little while with Phil Spector. That became more trouble than it was worth, and I ended up doing most of the work myself.

MUSICIAN: *People sometimes forget Spector was involved in All Things Must Pass and The Concert for Bangla Desh.*

HARRISON: Well, on *All Things Must Pass* Phil came in and we did half the backing tracks. Then, because of the condition he was in, he had to leave and I completed the rest of the backing without him. And did maybe 50 percent of the overdubbing, all the backing vocals and all the guitar parts. Then he came back when I was mixing it. All of this was over a four, five-month period. But he still had to keep going to the hospital, seeing a doctor. He was going through a bad time with drinking and it made him ill.

MUSICIAN: *What was his role in recording Bangla Desh?*

HARRISON: Phil was at the concert dancing in the front when it was being recorded! There was a guy, Gary Kellgren, who did the key work in the live recording. Then when Phil came to the remix, again Phil was in and out of the hospital.

Phil worked on the second solo album, *Living in the Material World*, but by that I mean he was around. Again, he kept falling over and breaking his ankles, wrists. The guy who was his helper was having heart attacks.

Phil was never there. I literally used to have to go and break into the hotel to get him. I'd go along the roof at the Inn On The Park in London and climb in his window yelling, "Come on! We're supposed to be making a record!" He'd say, "Oh. Okay."

And then he used to have 18 cherry brandies before he could get himself down to the studio. I got so tired of that because I needed somebody to help. I was ending up with more work than if I'd just been doing it on my own.

MUSICIAN: *Wasn't "Try Some Buy Some" from Living in the Material World supposed to be on a Ronnie Spector album?*

HARRISON: That's right. It didn't come out, because Phil couldn't last in the studio for more than a few hours. We did about four very rough backing tracks. A couple of the songs Phil had written. One of them was very good in his pop vein.

He liked my "Try Some Buy Some" so we orchestrated it and knocked off a B-side for a Ronnie single on Apple in '71. The B-side's a killer, "Tandoori Chicken." It's a 12-bar thing done on the spot with Mal our roadie and Joe the chauffeur—"I told Mal/ my old pal/ to go with Joe/ and they should go/ and get some tandoori chicken." And a great big bottle of wine! [*laughter*] We did it one-take, with a lot of improvised scat singing in the middle. It's hysterical.

We also did a song which I later used on *Extra Texture* called "You." It was high for me, singing it, because I wrote it in Ronnie Spector's key and put my vocals on the instrumental track we'd completed.

I loved those Ronettes records and those Phil Spector records. I still do.

And I love Phil. He's brilliant. There's nobody who's come close to some of his productions for excitement. Tina Turner's "River Deep Mountain High" probably was one of the only Cinemascope-sized records ever. But Phil didn't have enough energy with me to sustain an album for Ronnie. Still, he had a sense of humor, and if you're reading, Phil, I still think you're one of the *greatest*. He is, you know, and he should be out there doing stuff right now—but not with me!

After that I just worked on my own, although during 1978 I did one album, *George Harrison*, with Russ Titelman, who was a great help. At that time I felt I didn't really know what was going on out there in music, and I felt Russ, who was in music day by day, would give me a bit of direction. I didn't do an album until *Somewhere in England* in 1980-81 and then *Gone Troppo* the next year. The problem is that when you write, perform and produce there's a good chance of getting lost.

So recently I thought, "Who could I possibly work with?" I don't really know many people who would understand me and my past, and have respect for that, who I also have great respect for. And then I hit on Jeff Lynne, thinking he'd be good—if we got on well.

I'd never met him, but I was talking to Dave Edmunds and he said he knew and had just worked with Jeff. "Well," I mentioned, "if you talk with him, tell him I'd like to meet him." Dave called me back and said Jeff was going to be down in London, and I said to ask him if he wants to come over the house. So I met him like that and we had a nice dinner and a couple of bottles of wine and I got his phone number.

We hung out a bit. It's been two years now since I met him,

and the more we got to know each other it just evolved into this thing. Jeff was fantastic, the perfect choice. I couldn't have worked with a better person.

MUSICIAN: *You and Jeff cooked up "When We Was Fab" as a homage to your formative years.*

HARRISON: I got this idea for a few chords, and I started the tune while Jeff and I were messing around in Australia last November at the Australian Grand Prix. I began the song on a little guitar someone loaned me, and I got three or four chords into it when the string broke. We had to go to dinner but luckily there was a piano at the person's house where we went, so with people frying stuff in the background, we got on the piano and pursued three chords. They turned into the verse part of "When We Was Fab."

The first thing I constructed was a tempo announcement, with Ringo going, "One, two, *da-da-dum, da-da-dum!*" Next we laid the guitar, piano and drum framework, and I wasn't too sure what it was gonna turn into. But the idea was that it would evoke a Fabs song. It was always intended to be lots of fun.

MUSICIAN: *Maybe it's this California setting, but the first bygone Beatles track it made me think of was one you wrote for Magical Mystery Tour based on your temporary 1967 L.A. address between Beverly Hills and Laurel Canyon.*

HARRISON: "Blue Jay Way." It's in there. And also this funny chord, an E and an F at the same time, like one I had on the old Beatle record, "I Want to Tell You." It also has that chord in John's "She's So Heavy."

Anyway, every so often we took the tape of "Fab" out and overdubbed more, and it developed and took shape to where we wrote words. This was an odd experience for me; I've normally finished all of the songs I've done—with the exception of maybe a few words here and there—before I ever recorded them. But Jeff doesn't do that at all. He's making them up as he goes along.

That to me is a bit like, "Ohh nooo, that's too mystical. I wanna know where we're heading." But in another way it's good because you don't have to finalize your idea till the last minute. We put wacky lyrics in the last line of each chorus like, "Back when income tax was all we had." Another one says, "But it's all over now, Baby Blue." It's tongue-in-cheek and shows how Jeff could assist my muse. To do it live, we'd need the Electric Light Orchestra for all those cellos!

MUSICIAN: *The Beatles were a huge influence on ELO, but a nice thing about Cloud Nine is that it doesn't sound like Jeff Lynne, but rather like George Harrison saying, "I'm back!"*

HARRISON: That's the great thing about Jeff. He wanted to help me make my record. But there's so much in there Jeff contributed to. "Fab" was a 50-50 contribution, but "This Is Love" was a song where I said, "Why don't you write me a tune?" So he came down with lots of bits and pieces on cassette, and almost let me choose. I routined that song with him, and we wrote the words together. In fact, he had so many permutations of how that song is, he can still write another three songs out of the bits left.

I think he's one of the best pop songwriters around. He's a craftsman, and he's got endless patience. I tend to feel, "Okay, that'll do," and go on, and Jeff'll still be thinking about how to tidy what's just been done.

MUSICIAN: *Are you a Jeff Lynne-like saver of tracks and ideas?*

HARRISON: Not consciously, but I think all experiences go in here [*taps his head*] and our nervous systems compute them. If something's good, you tend to remember it, [*smiles*] and sometimes if it's bad, too. I don't think you can get away from your past, if you want to put it like that.

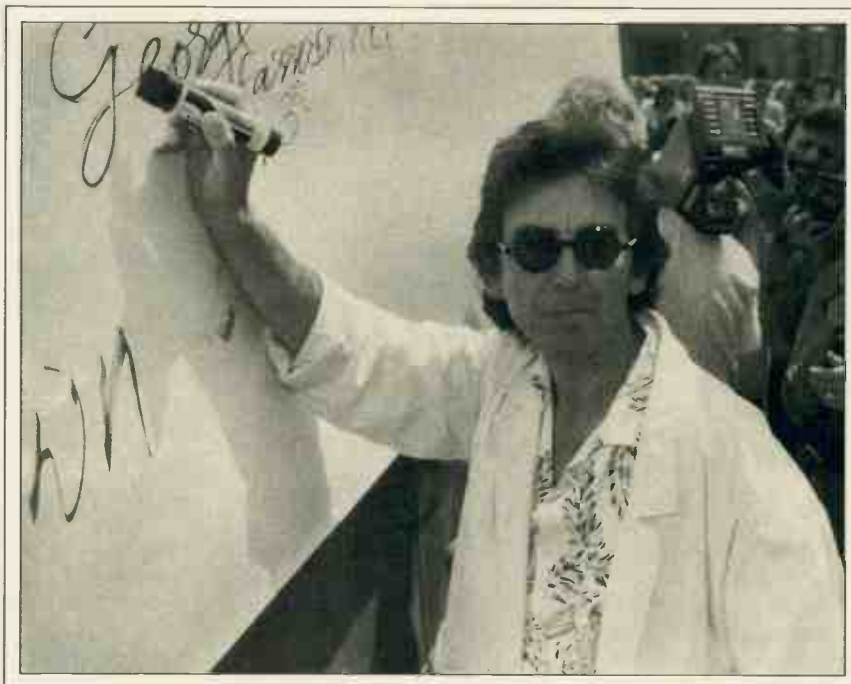
MUSICIAN: *Tell me the story behind "Got My Mind Set on You."*

HARRISON: That's something that I've just had in the back of my head for 25 years. It's a very obscure song, and I had it off an old album by this guy James Ray. In the very early '60s our manager, Brian Epstein, had his two NEMS—North End Music Stores—shops at Charlotte and Whitechapel Streets in Liverpool, and he made it his policy to have at least one copy of every record that came out in England. We used to go through all the records in the two shops, and that's why the Beatles records in those very early days were made up of both all the obvious things we liked, like Chuck Berry and Little Richard, but also things which were obscure. Most of them were American records, but a lot were not even known there!

We did a James Ray song, "If You Gotta Make a Fool of Somebody," in our show for years. When we started making records we did a lot of covers but we never covered that one—although we might have done it live in some BBC recordings. But all these North of England bands started doing a lot of the tunes we used to do, and actually had hits with some of the tracks. The Swinging Blue Jeans took Chan Romero's "The Hippy Hippy Shake" from what we used to do.

So I came here to America in 1963—before the Beatles came here—and I bought that James Ray album that had "If You Gotta Make a Fool of Somebody." The album itself was really terrible, but the best three songs were written by this guy who

In London: signing against apartheid.



“I was pissed off at Lennon and McCartney for the grief I was catching during the making of the Beatles’ white album. I said I wasn’t guilty of getting in the way of their careers.”

discovered James Ray, a former mailman named Rudy Clark. Clark wrote “It’s Been a Drag,” and “Got My Mind Set on You Part One/Part Two”—although it didn’t have any break in between. If you listen to the song now it’s very different from how I’ve done it. I’ve updated it and changed the chords, because I preferred it the way I heard it in my head. Clark and Ray’s version of it was coming out of the old jazz/swing era, and it has these horrible screechy women’s voices singing those backup parts.

I did that song because Jim Keltner got this drum pattern going one day that was a cross between swing and rock. Gary Wright turned around and said, “Hey! Doesn’t that remind you of that song, ‘Got My Mind Set on You?’” [laughter] I was so surprised that anybody else had ever heard that tune!

MUSICIAN: *You’ve covered some rare chestnuts on your own. On Gone Troppo, you cut “I Really Love You,” a bouncy R&B number that was a hit for the Stereos in 1961.*

HARRISON: Yes! And if you remember that song then I’ll tell you that the Beatles wrote a song that I think was actually a nick, a bit of a pitch off that one. It was a song that John wrote and I sang on the very first Beatle album called “Do You Want to Know a Secret.” If you check that against the song you’re referring to on *Troppo*, that’s round two of where “Secret” came from [laughter]. It’s a fun track.

MUSICIAN: *What was it like working with John on Imagine in 1971? You contributed slide guitar or dobro to “Crippled Inside,” “How Do You Sleep?” “I Don’t Want to Be a Soldier Momma,” “Gimme Some Truth” and “Oh My Love.”*

HARRISON: It was nerve-wracking, as usual. Previously I’d worked on “Instant Karma.” At that time very strange, intense feelings were going on. Sometimes people don’t talk to each other, thinking they’re not going to be the one to phone you up and risk rejection. With John, I knew Klaus Voorman, the bass player, so I could at least ask what was going on over at his little 8-track studio in his house at Tittenhurst Park, and how Klaus was doing. John said, “Oh, you know, you should come over,” so I just put me guitar and amplifier in the car.

I turned up and he was openly pleased I came. I enjoyed “How Do You Sleep?”; I liked being on that side of it with Paul [chuckles] rather than on the receiving end. Moreover, I was earnestly trying to be a slide guitar player at that time but I always blacked out at solos, especially live ones. I seemed to have no control over what was happening and my mind’d go blank. That was one of them where I hit a few good notes and it happened to sound like a solo. We did all that work in one day.

MUSICIAN: *Just as “How Do You Sleep?” and “Crippled Inside” were John’s snipes at McCartney, your song “Wah-Wah” on All Things Must Pass was aimed at Paul during Let It Be.*

HARRISON: [nods] I’d left the band at that period. Everybody’s seen that film [Let It Be] now, and what was supposed to be us rehearsing new material. They were going to film us recording it live, but the rehearsal became the movie. After we got over all the rows we had, us recording it live just ended up in Apple Studio and on the roof.

I just got so fed up with the bad vibes—and that arguments with Paul were being put on film. I didn’t care if it was the Beatles, I was getting out. Getting home in that pissed-off

mood, I wrote that song. “Wah-Wah” was saying, “You’ve given me a bloody headache.”

Further on, the song worked well live at the Bangla Desh concert, considering there was no rehearsal. That whole show was a stroke of luck. I’d rehearsed some with Ringo, the horn players and the guys from Badfinger, but it was all happening so fast it’s amazing we managed to get anything on tape.

MUSICIAN: *“Not Guilty,” on George Harrison, written during the sessions for the Beatles’ white album, was a pointed barb at your old bandmates.*

HARRISON: It was me getting pissed off at Lennon and McCartney for the grief I was catching during the making of the white album. I said I wasn’t guilty of getting in the way of their careers. I said I wasn’t guilty of leading them astray in our all going to Rishikesh to see the Maharishi. I was sticking up for myself, and the song came off strong enough to be saved and utilized.

MUSICIAN: *You’ve drawn some strong statements from sorrow. “Deep Blue” was very affecting, and since it was on the flip side of the “Bangla Desh” single, it became a jukebox favorite in bars in the States.*

HARRISON: I’m glad you noticed that one. You’re sure they weren’t just punching up the wrong side of the record? I got the impression people never heard a lot of these songs.

When I was making *All Things Must Pass* in 1970, not only did I have Phil Spector going in the hospital and all this trouble, besides organizing the Trident Studios schedule in London with Derek & the Dominos—who many forget got their start on that record—but also my mother got really ill. I was going all the way up and down England to Liverpool trying to see her in the hospital. Bad time.

She’d got a tumor on the brain, but the doctor was an idiot and he was saying, “There’s nothing wrong with her, she’s having some psychological trouble.” When I went up to see her she didn’t even know who I was. [voice stiffing with anger] I had to punch the doctor out, ‘cause in England the family doctor has to be the one to get the specialist. So he got the guy to look at her and she ended up in the neurological hospital. The specialist said, “She could end up being a vegetable, but if it was my wife or my mother I’d do the operation”—which was a horrendous thing where they had to drill a hole in her skull.

She recovered a little bit for about seven months. And during that period my father, who’d taken care of her, had suddenly exploded with ulcers and he was in the same hospital. So I was pretending to both of them that the other one was okay. Then, running back and forth to do this record, I wrote that song. I made it up at home one exhausted morning with those major and minor chords. It’s filled with that frustration and gloom of going in these hospitals, and the feeling of disease—as the word’s meaning truly is—that permeated the atmosphere. Not being able to do anything for suffering family or loved ones is an awful experience.

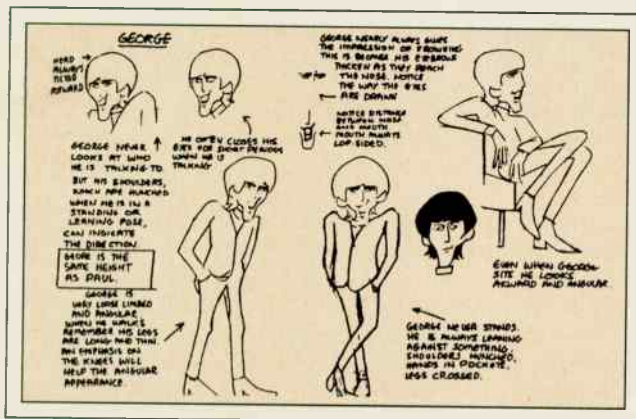
MUSICIAN: *Let’s talk about “Devil’s Radio,” a raging track!*

HARRISON: That was a tune I hit on accidentally. I passed a little church in England near where my boy Dhani, who’s now nine, goes to school. There was a poster on the side of this church saying, “GOSSIP! THE DEVIL’S RADIO! DON’T BE

“My mother got a tumor on the brain, but the doctor was an idiot and he was saying, ‘There’s nothing wrong with her, she’s having some psychological trouble’...she didn’t even know who I was. I had to punch the doctor out...”

A BROADCASTER!” I just thought it was a dead ringer for a rock tune. At that point I’d just been to see Eurythmics a couple of times and I’d forgotten about that kind of straightforward rock ‘n’ roll song that they go for so effectively. Somewhere down the line I’d gotten into all these thick chord songs and I forgot, until I was watching Eurythmics, how great that straight-from-the-gate force in rock rhythm is. I thought, “God, I can do this!” So the song was the result of seeing that poster and then the Eurythmics. The only thing missing is that it should be Bob Dylan singing it. [laughter]

That song starts out like a voice from on high: “I heard it in the night/ words the thoughtless speak/ like vultures swooping down below/ on the Devil’s Radio/ I hear through the day/



Peter Sander's 1965 storyboard characterization for *The Beatles* TV cartoon series

airwaves getting filled with gossip broadcast to and fro/ on the Devil’s Radio.”

MUSICIAN: *There’s a line that seems to refer to your reclusive profile of late: “You wonder why I don’t hang out much.”*

HARRISON: Yeah, it’s something about [haunted-house voice]: “It’s wide and black/ like industrial waste/ pollution of the highest degree/ you wonder why I don’t hang out much/ I wonder why you can’t see/ it’s in the films and song/ and on your magazines/ it’s everywhere that you may go/ the Devil’s Radio!” Boo!! [laughter]

But really, gossip is a terrible thing. We all do it and all our minds are polluted by it. You know what I mean? Somebody said, “The next time you gossip, gossip about yourself and see how you like it.” It just creates a mud of negativity, false information, and puts bad atmosphere out. Like the church poster said: “Don’t be a broadcaster.” I like to remind myself of this, because I’m just as bad as everyone else.

MUSICIAN: *Recently in Rolling Stone, they had a rock trivia quiz in which John Lennon’s Two Virgins was said to be the first Beatle solo album. But that’s wrong. You stuck your neck out four weeks before the November 29, 1968 release of Two Virgins with Wonderwall Music.*

HARRISON: [grinning] And it’s not trivia, it’s history! I remember doing it in London at the end of 1967, and then went

to Bombay and recorded part of it in a studio there. There was this guy who directed the movie, *Wonderwall*, called Joe Massot. I don’t know where I met him, but he said he wanted me to do the music to this movie—which didn’t come out until 1969. I said, “I don’t know; I haven’t got a guess of how to write music for a movie.” He said, “Aw, we’ve got no budget for the music anyway, so whatever you give me, I’ll have it!”

I was real nervous with the idea, because he wanted music running through the whole film, but he kept on with me. What I’d do was go into the film studio with a stopwatch—it was really high-tech stuff, eh?—and I’d just be what they call “spotting” the scene to see where the music was going to go, doing click-click with the watch. I’d go back into my studio and make 35 seconds, say, of something, mix it and line it up with the scene.

It gave me a great opportunity. I was getting so into Indian music then that I decided to use the assignment partly as an excuse for a musical anthology to help spread it. I used all these instruments that at that time weren’t as familiar to Western people as they are now, like shanhai, santoor, sarod, surbahars, tablatarangs. I also used tambura drones and had Eric Clapton playing blues guitar backwards over them. And loads of horrible mellotron stuff also.

MUSICIAN: *I got a kick that there was a snatch of “Crying” from Wonderwall Music spliced in, 13 years later, at the close of Somewhere in England’s “Save the World.”*

HARRISON: You spotted that? Three points for you! The whole “Save the World” song blows up in the middle, where we all get nuked, with babies crying. That latter song is very serious, but at the same time is hysterical. The lyrics have got a lot of funny things about “dogfood salesman” and “making your own H-bomb in the kitchen with your mom.” At the end, I just wanted to let the whole song go out with something sad, to touch that nerve and maybe make you think, “Ohhh shit.”

I thought of that instrument I used on *Wonderwall Music* called the thar-shanhai, which means “string” shanhai. It’s like a one-string fiddle, a bowed instrument with the sympathetic strings resting over a stretched skin, so it has that hollow, echoey resonance, a wailing, crying sound.

MUSICIAN: *Electronic Sound, released on the Zapple label in May 1969, was your second solo album. How’d you go from touting these esoteric acoustic Indian instruments to creating that dense mass of synthesizer gizmo effects?*

HARRISON: All I did was get that very first Moog synthesizer, with the big patch unit and the keyboards that you could never tune, and I put a microphone into a tape machine. I recorded whatever came out. The word avant-garde, as my friend Alvin Lee likes to say, really means, “Aven’t-got a clue!” So whatever came out when I fiddled with the knobs went on tape—but some amazing sounds did happen.

MUSICIAN: *Only two albums appeared on Zapple, Electronic Sound and John Lennon’s “Life with the Lions: Unfinished Music No. 2.” The third scheduled release, Listening to Richard Brautigan, was never issued.*

HARRISON: See, we conceived of an offshoot of Apple Records that would be arty music that wouldn’t normally gain an outlet, a series where people could talk or read their work, as with the

Brautigan thing. The intention was to get Lenny Bruce and all these kinds of people. But as with so many other things at Apple, it seized up before it really got going. Both of the albums that *did* come out are a load of rubbish, yet they're interesting from a collector's point of view. The theory was, we wanted to let serendipity take hold.

MUSICIAN: You told Mitch Glazer in *Crawdaddy* in 1977 about the entirely happenstantial origins of Cream's "Badge" in 1968: Eric Clapton mistook your scribbled note about the song's "bridge" for the title "Badge," and the lyric "I told you 'bout the swans, that they live in the park" was just a drunken mumble from Ringo.

HARRISON: Uh-huh. Nobody'd asked me about "Badge" before. That whole song was quite silly. Ringo was sitting around drinking, out of his brain, saying anything. The part about "Our kid, now he's married to Mabel," well, "our kid" is a common Liverpool expression that usually means your younger brother. We were amusing ourselves. And my "L'Angelo Misterioso" credit must have been thought up by Eric. I just saw it on the back of the album when it came! In those days, of course, if you played on anybody else's album or even one track, EMI used to get funny about it, thinking, "Oh, the fabulous Beatles publishing catalogue," and try claiming royalties on it. So if we did that we always had to make up names. Ravi Shankar used to put on "Hari Georgson" or "Jai Raj Harisein." John preferred "George Harrison."

MUSICIAN: What were the influences on your slide guitar playing over the years? It's an incredibly distinctive signature.

HARRISON: I'm not sure of the influences. The first time I ever played slide was in 1969. I suppose I stuck one of those things on my finger somewhere before that, but in 1969 Eric Clapton

got his manager to bring Delaney and Bonnie over to England, and Eric was in the band. I went to see the first show in December. It was such a good rocking crew; I figured it'd be nice to be in it. They said, "Okay, we're coming to your house in the morning." And they pulled up the bus outside my house, and said, "Come on!" I just grabbed a guitar and an amp and went on the road with them.

They had a song out called "Comin' Home," which Dave Mason had actually played slide on. Delaney gave me this slide bottleneck and said, "You do the Dave Mason part." I'd never attempted anything before that, and I think my slide guitar playing originated from that.

I started writing some slide songs on that tour, one of which later came out on 33 $\frac{1}{3}$, called "Woman Don't You Cry for Me." Then I started playing that way at home, and I suppose I was always trying to pretend to be a blues player in my style. Another thing that influenced me was, during the '60s, I played the sitar and got heavy into Indian music. That may account for some quality that you can't quite put your finger on; it's in there somewhere and comes out. For two or three years I was only playing the sitar.

After I decided I'd better get back to playing the guitar and writing pop tunes in the late '60s, I found I couldn't really play these solos or get a good sound, because I hadn't touched the guitar other than the Beatles sessions for records; I started playing slide, thinking maybe this is how I can come up with something that's half-decent. I got into doing corresponding guitar harmonies to the bedrock slide parts, double-tracking them, like on "My Sweet Lord" and other portions of the *All Things Must Pass* album.

MUSICIAN: Is there a certain guitar you use for slide playing?

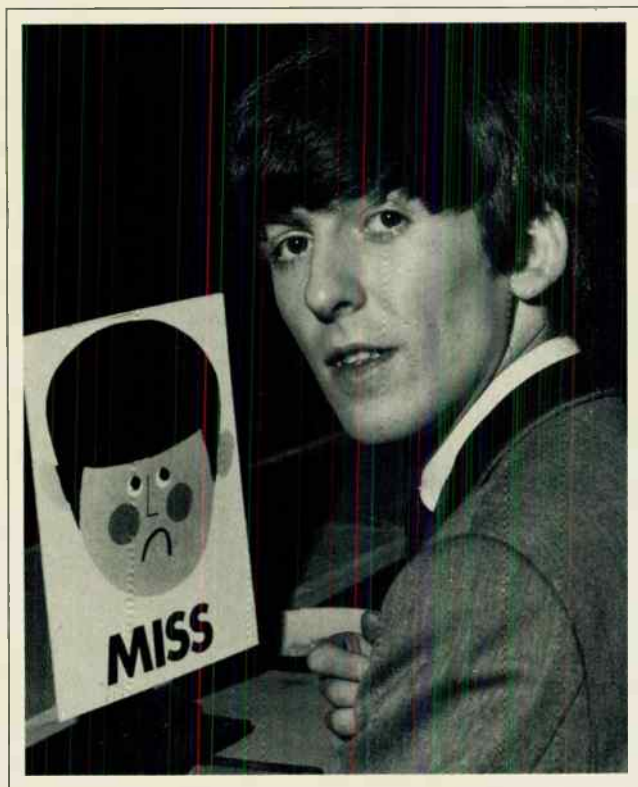
HARRISON: I used to use anything; I didn't understand how to do it properly. Eventually I found the best way: Ry Cooder, who is my favorite guitar player in that vein, has his bridge cranked up high, with heavy-gauge strings. That's what you really need, otherwise you get all that rattling on the frets. Ry's got a good touch and a good ear for melody. It's one thing to be able to play slide efficiently, but if you can't get a tune out of it, too, it's not very likeable.

I set up this Strat, an early-'60s model that was originally pale blue, for slide play before we did "Nowhere Man." In the late '60s I painted it psychedelic—it was the one I used for the '67 satellite thing for "All You Need Is Love" and also on "I Am the Walrus" on *Magical Mystery Tour*.

But I've never had the technique that Ry Cooder has with finger-style picking. I've tried to get this without a flat pick, using your right hand so that you can dampen down all the notes. But if you were to isolate my slide tracks on some of the old records there's all this *racket* going on behind. Whereas, I'm sure if you were to do the same thing with Cooder you could hear just what he's playing—it's really clean.

I've got two slides, and the main one I've used is actually a piece off the old Vox AC-30 amplifier stand. I asked the roadie we used to have in the Beatles, Mal Evans, if he could get me one, and he just got a hacksaw out and sawed through a piece of the amp stand. I used that a lot, and I had some glass slides made also. I find the glass slide tends to be a warmer sound, whereas the metal one is more slippy and is brighter. But I couldn't tell you which one I've used where [*chuckles*], because I don't make notes on it.

MUSICIAN: Do you have any hobbies besides film-producing and being a Grand Prix buff? On *Somewhere in England* you were shown on the cover in front of a Mark Boyle painting. Do you collect art?



Beatle George evaluates Bobby Vinton.

“I like certain artists, but by the time I got to like them they were too expensive to collect. Paul’s got a bunch of Magrittes. He bought them for, like, 50 dollars each. Now they’re worth millions.”

HARRISON: That painting was wonderful. He’d done a cast of the pavement and the gutter and a piece of the road. It’s quite an amazing process, like a sculpting of the street. I like certain artists, but by the time I got to like them they were too expensive to collect, like Dalí and Magritte. Paul’s got a bunch of Magrittes. He bought them for, like 50 dollars each. Then the guy died in 1967 and now they’re worth millions.

MUSICIAN: *Whatever happened to the four songs—“Lay His Head,” “Tears of the World,” “Sat Singing” and “Flying Hour”—that Warners dropped from Somewhere in England?*

HARRISON: Funny you should ask that, with us discussing art. I’m doing another book with Genesis Publications, who did my 1980 book, *I, Me, Mine*. For some reason, and I don’t remember why, *I, Me, Mine* later came out in a cheap version, but it was only really made as a limited edition, because how it’s made was almost more important than what’s inside.

But there’s this new book I’ve been working on with an artist, Keith West, for about two years now. He’s illustrating the lyrics to my songs. It could only be done in a limited edition because if you printed it cheap, you’d lose the value of it. We’re making it two volumes.

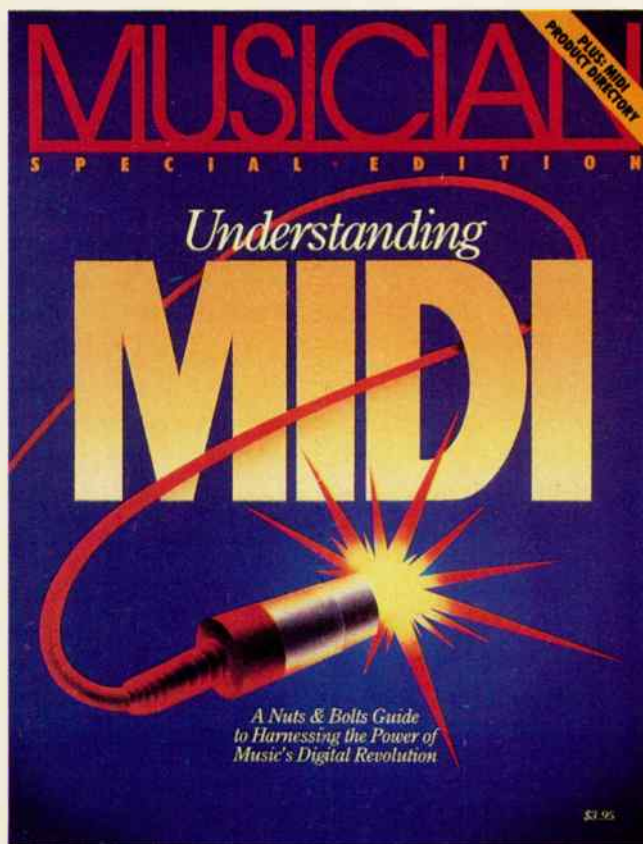
To answer your question, we decided to put a free record inside the books of some songs that have gotten left out over the years. I finished the record for the first book just before I

came here, and it’s of those four songs you just mentioned—and a live version of “For You Blue.” It all comes in a big leather box with a little drawer for the record. It’s called *Songs by George Harrison* and it should be out by Christmas, but there’s only 2,000 copies being done, and it does cost 200 pounds. It’s expensive, yes, but in a world of crass, disposable junk, it’s meant to be a lovely thing.

MUSICIAN: *That anticipates my next question. Now that the surviving Beatles are suing Nike for the “Revolution” sneaker ad, what’s your view of the commercial-abuse controversies regarding the Beatles’ recorded legacy?*

HARRISON: Well, from our point of view, if it’s allowed to happen, every Beatles song ever recorded is going to be advertising women’s underwear and sausages. We’ve got to put a stop to it in order to set a precedent. Otherwise it’s going to be a free-for-all. It’s just one of those things, like the play *Beatlemania*. We have to do certain things in order to try to safeguard the past. The other thing is, even while Nike might have paid Capitol Records for the rights, Capitol Records certainly don’t give us the money.

It’s one thing if you’re dead, but we’re still around! They don’t have any respect for the fact that we wrote and recorded those songs, and it was our lives. The way I feel, I don’t care who thinks they own the copyright to the songs, or who thinks



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they own the masters of the records. It was our lives, we set it, and they should have a little respect for that.

MUSICIAN: Dark Horse, the album and the single, made for a powerful but pessimistic image of desperate competition with your former bandmates and with yourself.

HARRISON: That album had some good material but the pressure I got under that year was ridiculous. I went through so many things: produced two other albums, *Shankar Family and Friends*, and *The Place I Love* by Splinter. And I produced an Indian music festival, which had taken me years to get together, with 15 or 16 classical Indian musicians all playing ensemble, like an orchestra—which they never do. In India you see solo players or two performers with a tabla player. In 1974 I went to India, got them all together, they came to Europe, Ravi wrote all the material. It *rocked*. Then came my own album and this tour I had lined up. And I also met my wife Arias around then.

I wrote the song "Dark Horse" in the studio with Ringo and Keltner and I never got to finish it. I took this half-finished album with me to tour rehearsals in Los Angeles and got my voice blown out by singing all day long. I decided, because I had to teach the band the songs anyway for the tour, that we'd mike up the soundstage in one of the studios at A&M and record it live. If you listen now, it's *sort of* okay. It was all done in a rush, with rehearsals by day and mixing at night.

For the artwork on the inner sleeve. I was so behind that moments before we went on the road I got a blank dust cover and wrote out all the credits by hand, put a few thumb prints on it and gave it to the record company for the printers. The cover shot was my high school class photo from Liverpool Institute, with lots of gray students who all look the same, and this big

gray building in the background. I positioned the blown-up photo so that I'd be in the middle, put an album cover over the length of it and cropped it off. I moved the headmaster, who never liked me anyway, from where he was in the photo and I put him in the middle with a bull's eye Capitol logo on his chest. I got the art guy to paint the Himalayas in the background with a few yogis in the sky, and put exotic T-shirts on everybody.

MUSICIAN: Is that Peter Sellers you're with on the inside shot?

HARRISON: Sure, that's us strolling 'round Friar Park. I was quite close with Peter. Long before I met him I was a fan of *The Goon Show*, and then I used to see him at parties. I got to spend a lot of time with him in the '60s when I was with Ravi Shankar, because Peter liked Ravi a lot.

Once Peter Sellers, Ravi and I all went to Disneyland in 1971. Can you imagine all of us going on the Pirate and the Haunted Mansion rides together? Peter was a devoted hippie, a free soul. He came on tour with me in 1974, flew on the plane with us. When Peter was up, he was the funniest person you could ever imagine; so many voices and characters. But that was his problem: When he wasn't up, he didn't know who he was supposed to be.

He was a considerable influence on my getting into the film world. Peter used to come to my Henley house with all these 16-millimeter films and we'd sit 'round and have dinner and watch. His favorite picture—which has been mine ever since Peter showed it to me—was Mel Brooks' *The Producers*. He kept saying, "You've got to see this movie!" Eventually we put it on, and I've never taken it off.

The bubble caption in the photo of Peter and me on the *Dark Horse* jacket is from *The Producers*, from Max Bialystock's line to his partner Bloom: "Well Leo! What say we promenade

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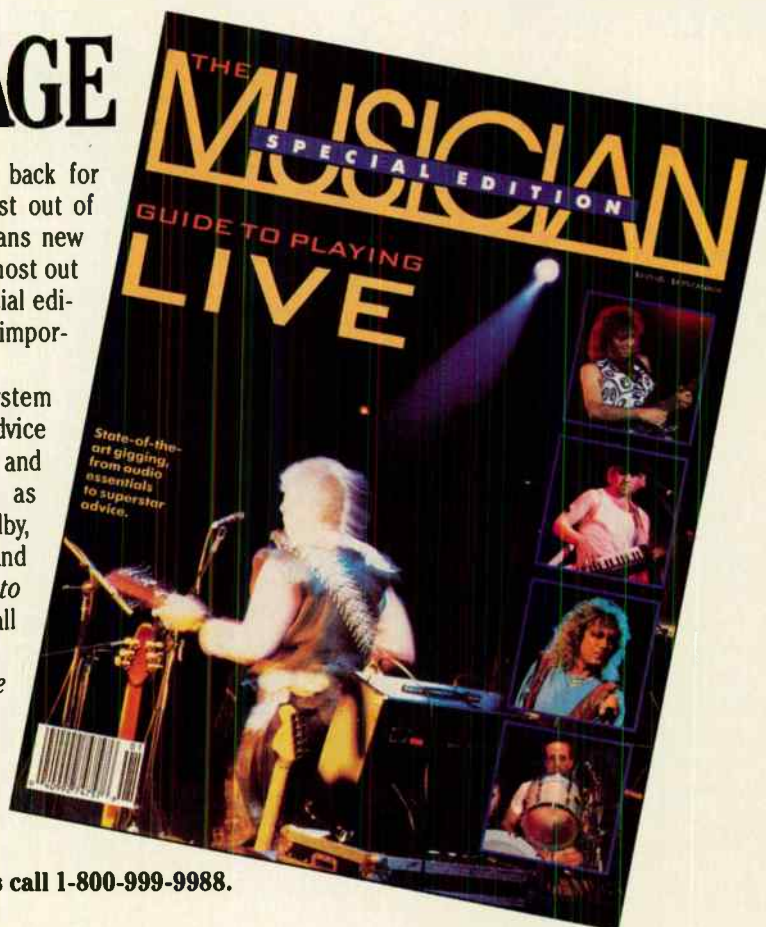
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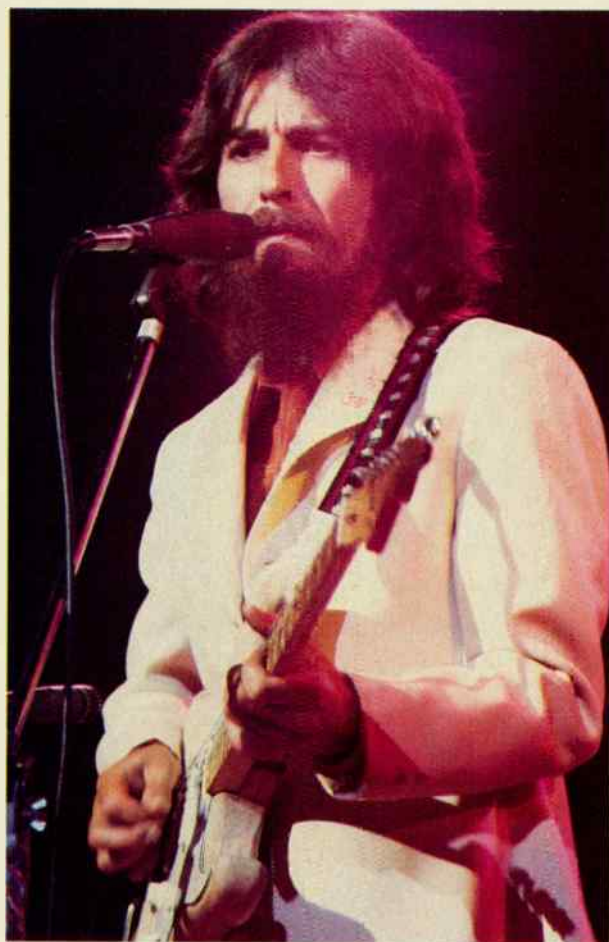
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Singing for Bangla Desh, 1971.

through the park?"

MUSICIAN: People always say you're so serious and broody, but I'd say you have a ready sense of humor.

HARRISON: Me too! I've always had a sense of humor—and I think it's absolutely necessary. I think what happened is, I was tagged as somber because I did some spiritual things during a sizable phase of my own career, and sang a lot of songs about God or the Lord or whatever you want to call Him. You can't be singing that material laughingly, but if you're not smiling people draw that conclusion of *seriousness*.

I don't think anybody's all serious or all comical, and I've seen comedians who are deadly serious when they're offstage. Frankly, I always thought it was very funny when people thought I was very serious! Maybe it's also because the last time I did interviews back in the 1970s it was all that heavy hangover from the hippie '60s, when everybody was into this discipline, that doctrine and the other. I've got a very serious side of me, but even within that, I always see the joke too. That's why I always liked Monty Python.

MUSICIAN: Which brings up *The Life of Brian* and your other film production. It's a great body of work—from *Time Bandits*, on through *Mona Lisa* and *Withnail And I*—that you've done with partner Denis O'Brien for your *Handmade Films*.

HARRISON: It's my hobby! It's taken time, but we've gained a little respect from film people. We try to be nice to people—it's

not always easy—and most of the things we've done were films nobody else wanted to do; they were rejects. The only film that was *not* enjoyable making was the only one on which we've ever been involved with anybody from Hollywood: *Shanghai Surprise*. We were a day away from scrapping that when suddenly Sean Penn and Madonna got involved. But that was such a pain in the ass!

We've got good relationships with other people we've worked with, however, like Michael Caine, Maggie Smith and Bob Hoskins. *Withnail and I*, the first film Bruce Robinson's directed, was a chance to support a project everybody else turned down. It's the same right now with a movie we're shooting about a band of gypsies in Czechoslovakia that Bob Hoskins has written, directed and is acting in himself. It's called *Raggedy Rawny*.

I'd like to think we help people achieve some of their ambitions. At the same time, when we took on *The Life of Brian*, I was so into Monty Python I didn't care what anybody thought. In those days we had to put up all the money, didn't get any advances from studios—nothing.

MUSICIAN: When you produced *Life of Brian* many people questioned why the man behind "My Sweet Lord" would produce a supposedly sacrilegious biblical farce.

HARRISON: Ah-hah! Actually all it made fun of was the *people's* stupidity in the story. Christ came out of it looking good! Myself and all of Monty Python have great respect for Christ. It's only the ignorant people—who didn't care to check it out—who thought that it was knocking Christ. Actually it was upholding Him and knocking all the idiotic stuff that goes on around religion, like the fact that many folks often misread things and will follow anybody. Brian's saying, "Don't follow me. You're all individuals."

It's like Christ said, "You'll all do greater work than I will." He wasn't trying to say, "I'm the groove, man, and you should follow me." He was out there trying to, as Lord Buckley would have said, "Knock the crows off the squares," trying to hip everybody to the fact that they have the Christ within.

MUSICIAN: You're a fan of hipster comedian Lord Buckley, which is where your 1977 hit "Crackerbox Palace" came from.

HARRISON: I was down at that MIDEM music publishing convention in France in 1975, and I was stuck at some boring dinner when I saw Dylan's manager, Albert Grossman. I went over to him and he was with this fella George Greif, who was himself a manager. We got talking and I said to Greif, "I don't know if this is a compliment or an insult, but you remind me of Lord Buckley." He said, "I managed him for eighteen years!"

I couldn't believe it, so we spent a few hours talking and he said that Buckley lived in this little shack he called Crackerbox Palace. I wrote that down on my cigarette packet and, again, like Devil's Radio, it was a good phrase for a song. Near the end of the single there's a line in it in direct relation to Lord Buckley: "I met a Mr. Greif/ and he said/ I welcome you to Crackerbox Palace/ was not expecting you/ let's rap and tap at Crackerbox Palace/ know that the Lord is well and inside of you." I made the raw input into a story about getting born and living in the world, but again, everybody thought I was talking about the *other* Lord.

MUSICIAN: You mention knowing Albert Grossman. I always wondered how the Band came to invite you up to Woodstock in November 1968. You wrote "I'd Have You Anytime" with Dylan during that visit.

HARRISON: I wrote "All Things Must Pass" there as well. To this day you can play *Stage Fright* and *Big Pink*, and although the technology's changed, those records come off as

beautifully conceived and uniquely sophisticated. They had great tunes, played in a great spirit, and with humor and versatility.

I knew those guys during that period and I think it was Robbie Robertson who invited me down. He said, "You can stay at Albert's. He's got the *big* house." I hung out with them and Bob. It was strange because at that time Bob and Grossman were going through this fight, this crisis about managing him. I would spend the day with Bob and the night with Grossman and hear both sides of the battle.

Artistically, I respected the Band enormously. All the different guys in the group sang, and Robbie Robertson used to say he was lucky, because he could write songs for a voice like Levon's. What a wise and generous attitude. The hard thing is to write a song for yourself, knowing you've got to sing it. Sometimes I have a hard time singing my own stuff.



"Ringo can't wait to tour, and Eric tells me he's going to be in the band."

MUSICIAN: You once remarked that you were trying to write a Robbie Robertson kind of song with "All Things Must Pass."

HARRISON: "The Weight" was the one I admired, it had a religious *and* a country feeling to it, and I wanted that. You absorb, then you interpret, and it comes out nothing like the thing you're imagining, but it gives you a starting point. We used to take that approach with the Beatles, saying, "Who are we going to be today? Let's pretend to be Fleetwood Mac!" There's a song on *Abbey Road*, "The Sun King," that tried that. At the time, "Albatross" was out, with all the reverb on guitar. So we said, "Let's be Fleetwood Mac doing 'Albatross,'" just to get going. It never really sounded like Fleetwood Mac, just like "All Things" never sounded like the Band, but they were the point of origin.

MUSICIAN: What was it like writing with Dylan? He was still a hermit from his motorcycle accident of July 1966. Was he shy?

HARRISON: We were *both* shy. He'd been out of commission socially since his accident. I was nervous in his house and he was nervous as well. We fidgeted about for two days and only relaxed when we started playing some guitars. The song "I'd Have You Anytime" was an accident. I was just saying, "Hey, man, how do you write all these words?!" Which people probably said to him all the time.

I kept thinking he would come pouring out with all these lyrics! He wrote the middle—"All I have is yours/ all you see is mine/ I'm glad to hold you in my arms/ I'd have you anytime"—and it was *simplicity* itself. [smiles] Meantime he was saying, "How do you get all them chords?" I showed him some weird

SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE

Of all the former "Fabs," to use his customary term, George Harrison has remained the greatest creative homebody. While Paul McCartney, for example, has gone from New Orleans to Nigeria to a yacht anchored in the Virgin Islands in search of ideal studio settings, George has rolled out of bed and returned again and again to Friar Park Studios, Henley-on-Thames (or F.P.S.H.O.T., for short) to tinker, compose and do his formal recording.

George bought Friar Park, his 30-room castle in Oxfordshire, on January 14, 1970. Built in the 1870s by Sir Francis Crisp, the spired and turreted mansion was used as a Roman Catholic convent until 1969. Besides *Cloud Nine*, George recorded the *Dark Horse*, *33 1/3* and *George Harrison* albums in his F.P.S.H.O.T. atelier, located in what was formerly a ballroom of the house.

"The studio was installed 'round 1971 and there's been a few updates, 'cause when I originally put the studio in it was a 16-track. In terms of the monitoring system, after all those years in the Abbey Road EMI Studios, I put in Altec speakers. My experience in Abbey Road was that whenever the Beatles worked there and we thought we had a great sound, we'd play it back on the Altecs and it sounded terrible—ordinary. So they're very boring in a way—and this must sound strange—but they're also accurate!

"See, the Altecs don't flatter the sound; it's not easy to get good bass and drum sounds with them. But when I built my studio I didn't want hype. I wanted what I'm hearing to be what it is. That way, when you play it back anywhere else it sounds fantastic!

"At that time people were talking about quadrophonic sound, and while I didn't think it'd catch on—since you do only have *two* ears—I figured I better have that just in case. Those old quad pan pots [stereo channel potentiometers] are the main giveaway of the board's vintage, but I've taken the four speakers down. Never found them useful anyway.

"I've since made F.P.S.H.O.T. into a 24-track board. Unlike the old EMI board, it's got the newer carbon faders. I've added different outboard equipment as the years have gone by, but it's basically Cadac [British console] components.

"In other studios, I could never understand it when you had to rough mix the record but you still had more work to do it. You'd have to break all the board settings down to put it back through to mix it. So I had them build me a board that's really two boards—now everybody probably uses it—where you have your input section, and when it's playing back, it comes up through the remix section. So you've got all the echo, pan pots, EQ, and can just make a proper mix, even though it's a re-mix. Or the producer can screw around with the EQ and effects without affecting what's on tape.

"I'm thinking of having a few variations on the equalization because, to tell you the truth, it's very subtle. *Maybe* a really great engineer can distinguish between the settings. In comparison, Jeff Lynne has a little old board up at his house and it's got such radical EQ, when you turn on the knob you really *hear* the change.

"Still, the studio is a versatile place, and I'm not the only one who seems to like working there. At the end of January/beginning of February, Duane Eddy came to England, because Jeff had promised him he'd produce a couple of tracks. So we did them in my house right after we finished the drum tracks on my album. One was a really nice song Jeff wrote called 'Theme for Something Really Important,' which sounds like it should be on a movie, and the other was something Ravi Shankar sang to me once called 'The Trembler.' They're funny titles but serious work! And everybody was comfortable and satisfied with my equipment, which pleased me. I'm going to get a few different choice modules made soon, but I don't really want to go for a brand new SSL board and all that. Automation is nice in some respects, but I got my first skills at Abbey Road, so I prefer the old components, and spending a friendly weekend getting the manual mix you want. Just as I much prefer my ancient Fender Strat."

RINGO

Our hero Richard Starkey graciously avoids plugging his new album and ruminates on the musical magic, the fortunate accidents and sublime disasters of life in the world's biggest fishbowl, the Beatles.

By Vic Garbarini

He's remembered as much for his personality as for his percussion. His droll humor, cheerful easy-going nature, and unflappable, down-to-earth disposition helped ground the Beatles psychologically as surely as his rock-steady, understated backbeat anchored them musically. But his very willingness to accommodate sometimes obscured Ringo Starr's own creative talents — the slow tom fills he introduced on *Sgt. Pepper* were a major, and often unacknowledged, innovation in rock drumming. All well and good, you say. But what's he done lately? *Ringo* and *Goodnight Vienna* weren't half-bad as Beatle solo albums go, but that was seven or eight years ago. Subsequent albums evidenced a steady decline in both quality and sales, possibly reaching a nadir with 1979's *Bad Boy*. Lately he's shown more interest (and garnered more critical and commercial kudos) with film ventures like *Caveman*, than with rock 'n' roll. That kind of Hollywood flash lands you on the cover of *People*, not *Musician*. But the publicity team was on the phone again, insisting that Ringo had just finished, with a little help from some famous friends, a new album that was a straightforward reaffirmation of his love for, and commitment to, rock 'n' roll. What's more, he was willing and anxious to sit down and talk about his music, including his time with the you-know-Whootles.

Two weeks later I'm standing in the fashionable lobby of the fashionable Beverly Wilshire Hotel (whose design, I am convinced, was the result of some unholy collaboration between Bernini and Zsa Zsa Gabor) trying to reason with a stone-faced desk officer:

"I'm sorry, but there is no Mr. Starr — or Mr. Starkey — registered here."

"Oh, yeah, I know, but I'm here to interview him...he's expecting me."

"We have no record of any such person here. *I'm sorry, sir!*"

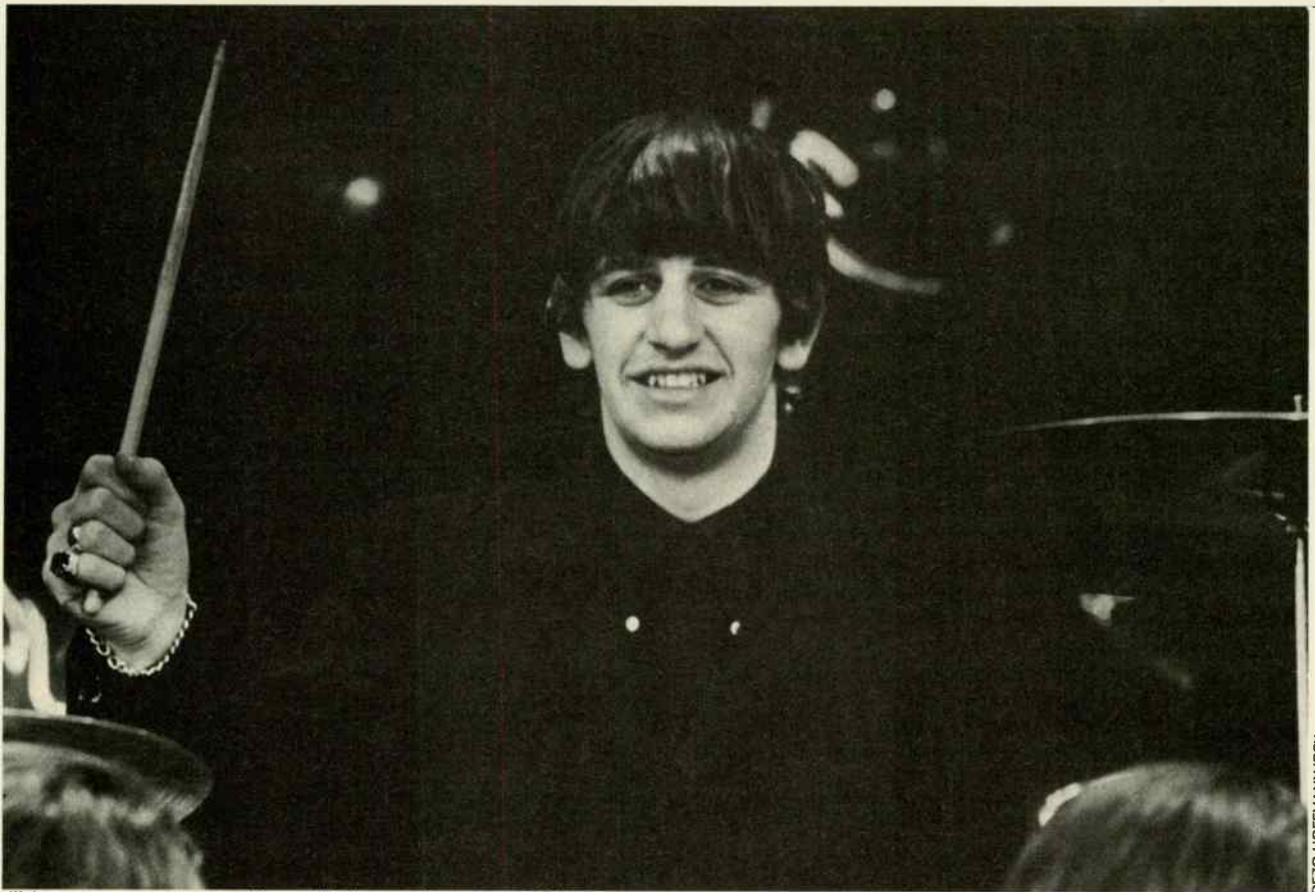
"Right. Well, I'll just knock on each door till I find him. Where's room #1?"

"Why don't you just leave your card and we'll see if..."

The first thing you notice are the eyes: they're a startlingly bright, vibrant shade of Cote d'Azur blue — a tint no photograph can do justice to. (Sounds like *People* already, doesn't it?) I'm pleased, but not really surprised to find him alert, friendly, humorous — and quite intelligent. (As Paul McCartney put it last year, "Ringo's got a good head on his shoulders — he's by no means thick!") He was a man seemingly at ease with himself and his circumstances — still sensitive to criticism of himself or his "three brothers" — but secure in his role as husband, actor and musician. This confident demeanor takes on added significance when you consider that by all accounts the last few years haven't been the easiest of his life. *Bad Boys* had been a discouraging experience that convinced him to take a break from recording for a few years. By his own admission, some of that time had been squandered "getting drunk every night" with friends, but last year things began to turn around. His movie, *Caveman*, scored both with the critics and at the box office, and it was while making that film that Ringo met the person who has probably had a greater influence on him than anyone since the three scruffy Liverpool rockers spirited him away from Rory Storme & the Hurricanes, his new bride. Don't let the *Playboy* image fool you; Barbara Bach is an intelligent, perceptive woman and they're both obviously very much in love. As Ringo acknowledges, it was Barbara who roused him out of bed and inspired him to go back into the studio. If all this — the decision to stop making albums, the bouts of drinking, and the sensitive, supportive mate who helped revitalize flagging spirits — sounds curiously close to the story of another ex-Beatle, well...

Next to John Lennon, Ringo was always the most rock 'n' roll oriented member of the Fab Four — a fact that's repeatedly confirmed in the following interview. As the beat behind the Beatles, Ringo was the solid, no-frills pulse that helped maintain the connection with their rock 'n' roll roots. For Ringo, the band was everything. It was that singular chemistry that





DEZO HOFFMANN/REX

"I hate drum solos! I really do." Ringo strives for solidity, keeps exact time and fills carefully.

resulted when the four of them played together that made the magic possible, and kept the creative channels open. It's also that same simple, uncomplicated approach that makes *Smell The Roses* a successful comeback. Wisely, co-producers McCartney, Harrison, Stills et al, eschew Ringo's Spectorish waif-singing-in-a-cathedral production style, opting instead for a direct, stripped-down, band-oriented sound that highlights Ringo's upbeat vocals and reborn enthusiasm for his craft, as well as Paul and George's spirited melodies. The lyrics, particularly McCartney's, are another matter. The title tune and "Drumming Is My Madness" (which the *New York Times* called "moronic") seem at first like quirky throwaways, but on closer examination appear more like self-therapy. Each solo Beatle evolved his own form of musical exorcism: Paul crooned silly love songs, and George got cosmic. True to his own nature, Ringo has a good-natured look-out. Whatever gets you through the night. In any case, the Mad Drummer is back, having stopped to take the time to cut this album, and talk thoughtfully and perceptively about the music he helped create all those years ago. It's heartening to have him back.

RINGO: I'd rather not turn this into "Unveiling The Beatles Part 2." Instead, I'd like to talk about our new album (leans into microphone) *CALLED STOP AND TAKE THE TIME TO SMELL THE ROSES, FEATURING THE HIT SINGLE...* (aside to MUSICIAN) When will this be on the newsstands?

MUSICIAN: Late December and January.

RINGO: Right. The former hit single, "Wrack My Brain."

MUSICIAN: I'm sure you're sick of people asking gossipy questions about the Beatles; trying to dig up dirt...

RINGO: I'm bored with it, and so is everyone else.

MUSICIAN: I agree, but that's not what we're after at all. What we're interested in is the music — how you actually put together the medley on *Abbey Road*, for instance; how you developed those trademark tom fills around the time of *Sgt. Pepper*; how you guys coordinated playing live with all that screaming going on... from a musician's point of view.

RINGO: That's different. I'd be glad to talk about the music for

a change. Some of these interviews we've had... I told this one reporter that I'd done a few tracks on Paul's new album, and he says, "Gee, that's fantastic, Ringo!" Then there's a long pause and he says, "By the way, *what's a track?!*"

BARBARA: And there are some who'll act very friendly for the first ten minutes or so, and then just when Ritchie's comfortable they'll try and dredge up something.

MUSICIAN: I understand. Well, we'll try and keep the center of gravity on music, and if we get into anything you're uncomfortable with, just let me know.

RINGO: That's fine. I have no problems with getting into the music.

MUSICIAN: You've had a great deal of success working in films over the last few years. Could you ever see yourself putting aside music completely at some point?

RINGO: Never. If I had to be put on a desert island with only one thing to do, it would be drumming. Like the song says, it's still my madness. There's just nothing that can compare with that magic moment when a whole band just comes together as one — the guitar, the drums, the piano — and it all fits in and clicks. Unless you're a musician, I don't think you'll ever understand that feeling.

MUSICIAN: What would you say is your greatest strength as a musician?

RINGO: I'm solid. Also great timing and good fills. With some players it's like holding a race horse, because they try and gallop off. Being a good time keeper, I try and hold it all together rather than getting excited and dashing off with the pianist or someone, and the track ending up twice as fast as when you started.

MUSICIAN: Some drummers intentionally play a little ahead or a little behind the beat...

RINGO: No, I try and play exactly on time. I seem to have this thing where my body clock keeps accurate time. I just stay dead on it...okay, I've been known to race a few fills — or even get lost in a few fills now and then — but I always seem to come back out of it at the right spot. But while I'm in the middle of it all, it's a total blackout.

MUSICIAN: Going back to the beginning, how did you get started with drums?

RINGO: Drums have always been my instrument. My grandparents played the banjo and mandolin, which they gave me ... had no interest. Then my grandfather bought me a harmonica ... had no interest. Finally, they got a piano ... and *that* got my interest.

MUSICIAN: Did you learn to play it?

RINGO: No, I used to walk on it — up and down the keyboard! Then at thirteen I went to hospital, and once a week they'd have the ward band, which I wouldn't play in unless I got the drums. And there were yellow dots for the triangle, and green dots for the cymbals, and I guess that's what started it all. Then I started playing on the bedside table with bits of wood or anything. When I got out I bought a cheap five-dollar bass drum and a skin that I'd use as a snare drum.

MUSICIAN: What about technique? Were you taking lessons?

RINGO: No, I'd just lay them down on the floor, take two pieces of firewood, and bang the shit out of 'em. Then my stepfather bought me this great old \$30 mish-mash drum kit. I didn't have a car; I had to go to my first gigs by bus. So I ended up only carrying the snare and cymbals with me. I used to beg some other drummer on the bill with a full kit to lend me his for my set. Sometimes they would, and sometimes they wouldn't. But it didn't matter all that much when I started, because it was skiffle, and a snare and cymbals were really all you needed.

MUSICIAN: They were also the only parts of your kit that were audible on those early Beatles albums.

RINGO: Yeah, they never knew how to mic the bass drum in those days. Maybe the bass drum caused too much roll-off — made the needle jump — when they went to press it. Most records in those days were like that; the highs would come through, and little else. Then Motown came along with great highs and a great bass sound, because the technology became available to capture those deeper lows.

MUSICIAN: That was around the time of *Sgt. Pepper*, when you and Paul suddenly came forward in the mix. Paul told us that the fact that the bass and drums could now be recorded realistically inspired him to perfect his style. Was that leap in technology also what moved you to develop those slow tom fills? I've always felt that you effectively changed the direction of popular drumming at that point.

It was time for the Beatles to end. You can only mine a gold mine until the seam runs out; you'll search a little bit more, and that's what we were determined to do, because after eight years it's hard to stop, but it still took us a year to say "stop."

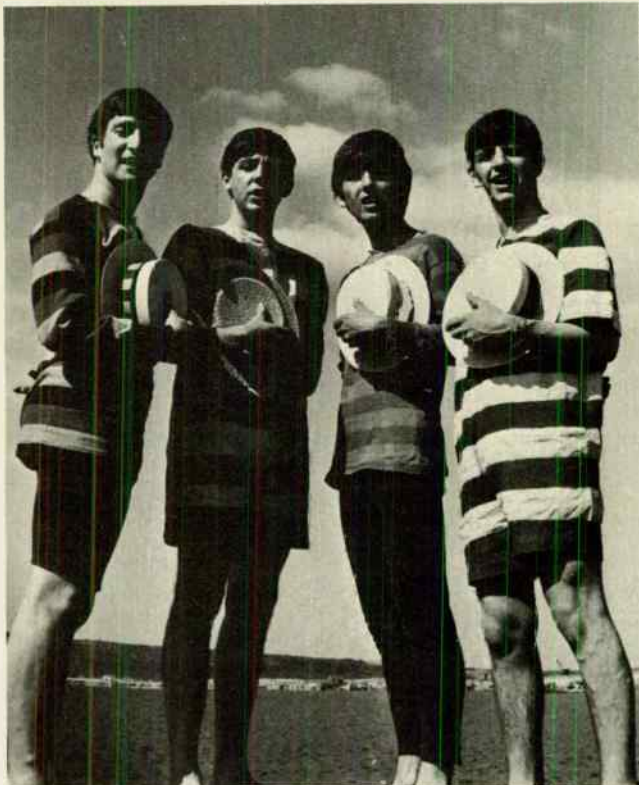
RINGO: You may not know it, but that style was put down all over the world! Like, "Oh, that's just Ringo and his funny fills." All that came about because I was getting back into calf skins and out of plastic ones when we were in the studio, and the toms just sounded so *deep*. Plus, there were more of them now that I was back to using a full kit instead of the mini-kit I'd used on tours.

MUSICIAN: The smaller kit was more convenient on the road?

RINGO: Nah, we used it so I'd look a bit taller ... little English joke there, folks! But back to the funny fills: They were funny because I can't just sweep around the kit, dubba-dubba-dub, like a lot of drummers. I found I had to come off with my left hand, even though I'm right-handed, and so I wound up working my way up the kit backwards, and that's how the "funny fills" thing started.

MUSICIAN: You keep referring to them as "funny little fills", which I think is being a bit overly modest. That was an innovation that really influenced almost everyone...

RINGO: Yeah, but I didn't know that until I came to America



DEZO HOFFMANN/REX

Quartet in search of a barbershop: the Beatles' vocal ability most impressed Ringo when he first saw them in Hamburg.

and started meeting drummers like Snakey Keltner and Jim Gordon. They said, "Hey, we're sick and tired of being asked to play like Ringo every time we do a session!" So I only call them "funny little fills" because that's how the critics referred to them at the time. They were never "funny little fills" to me; they were always VERY SERIOUS LITTLE FILLS! Maybe they were funny, but everybody wanted to do them.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of fills, is it true George Martin didn't want to use you on the "Love Me Do" sessions because he felt you couldn't do a roll?

RINGO: I *still* can't do a roll. I think I freaked George out because of the way I played the demo on "Please Please Me" There I was playing the full kit with bass drum, snare, toms, high hats, and at the same time I had a tambourine in one hand and a maraca in the other. I could see George in the control booth shaking his head and thinking, "NOOOOOOOOOO, I DON'T THINK THAT'S VERY PROFESSIONAL," or whatever he thought. Then he brought in a professional drummer, Andy White, who plays on the single of "Love Me Do", and I play on the album version.

MUSICIAN: Were there any other Beatle tracks that you didn't play on?

RINGO: Only two: Paul played drums on "The Ballad of John and Yoko" and on "Back In The U.S.S.R." I did all the rest. But as George Martin said later, and I quote, although he didn't want me in the beginning, now he'd like me to play on any session he has. So he's changed.

MUSICIAN: You were with Rory Storme & the Hurricanes in Hamburg at the same time as the Beatles. How important was that experience to your musical evolution and that of the rest of the Beatles?

RINGO: Hamburg is really where we got our stuff together. If we hadn't gone there, I don't know how — or even *if* — I would have continued playing. Up 'til then we'd been gigging just a couple of nights a week in clubs around Liverpool. But in Hamburg our two groups played twelve hours a day between us. You can't play "Johnny B. Goode" for six hours a night, so we had to stretch and play anything we could think of — experiment and try new things; throw in waltzes and all kinds of madness. The Beatles and Rory both wanted to be the top band, and we'd battle to win the audience. We'd do any crazy-

ness to get them going: if it was a rock number, we'd really rock and if it was a slow tune, we'd really slow it down. The competition and all those hours really forced us to learn our craft. It was like a cram course.

MUSICIAN: Did the Beatles impress you as musicians at the time?

RINGO: They impressed me more as vocalists. Paul wasn't actually playing an instrument, he was strumming a two-string guitar just so he could hold something. They could rock as a band, but I mostly remember Paul up there just singing his balls off with this two-string guitar.

MUSICIAN: Just before you all came to America, you were reported as saying that "I'm not really a Beatle yet, I'm still on salary." Were you initially a hired hand?

RINGO: No, I was never on salary; I was always an equal partner. It's just that the tracks I sang on the albums were never singles. I was in the back as the drummer.

MUSICIAN: Were you anxious to sing, or did the others nudge you into it?

RINGO: No, I used to do a twenty-minute set with Rory where I'd do all the vocals. It was a natural thing for me to have a track.

MUSICIAN: You usually seemed to wind up doing cover tunes, like "Boys" or "Act Naturally"...

RINGO: We did those cover tunes in the early days simply because we didn't have enough material. We were trying to build up to where it was just our original songs, but when you do your first album, you do exactly what you do on the road. There was very little new stuff on that first album, which is how we managed to make it in twelve hours from start to finish, ending with "Twist and Shout".

MUSICIAN: It must have been a little frustrating working behind two or three of the greatest songwriters in history.

RINGO: Yeah, I had problems with that as a writer, because when I'd present my songs they'd all fall about on the floor laughing. Not good for the ego, you know.

MUSICIAN: Were they *that* bad?

RINGO: No, it was because I'd unconsciously steal old songs and re-write them and not realize it. So they'd fall about laughing and tell me "Oh, you've just rewritten *that* again".

MUSICIAN: When we talked to Paul last year, he said that the others always gave you directions on every single number...

RINGO: That's right. They wrote the songs and knew the direction they wanted to go in. Basically, I was dealing with three frustrated drummers, so they'd all have their say. I remember John and I having these great discussions about it. He'd put on some record and say "That's what I want — play it like that!" And I'd say, "But John, there's two guys playing drums on that record!" — 'cause in those days they started using two drummers at some sessions. And John would argue, "NAAAH, there's only one!" "No," I'd say, "there are *two* of them! THERE'S TWO BLOODY SNARES AND FOUR CYMBALS AND EIGHT TOMS... LISTEN TO IT!" I remember going through that conversation more than once! But as I say, every track they wrote, they had an idea how they wanted it. If it was Paul, he'd come to me and say, "I want the drums something like this," and we'd all give what we could to help. Naturally, within that general framework you would express your own personality. Sometimes I would come up with something completely different than what was asked for.

MUSICIAN: Did that cause problems?

RINGO: Never. That was the great thing about the Beatles: it didn't matter who came up with it, if you had a better idea it was used. No one stood on their ego. Hell, even our roadies like Mal contributed some lyrics or came up with titles for our albums. We weren't going to stand there like four big babies and say, "Well, we didn't think of it so we won't use it." We were always open to any good suggestion that was better than ours. Our egos didn't get in the way of the music.

MUSICIAN: Maybe it didn't affect the music directly, but there were obviously personality problems in the band by the time of *The White Album*. Paul claimed that that was the tensest...

RINGO: ...it was so tense I left the group.

MUSICIAN: What went wrong?

RINGO: We were going through madness. Everyone thought everybody else was okay — that the other three were friends — and it turned out that none of us were getting along with each other. We were all paranoid and crazy at the time. So I left for a few weeks and went on holiday because I just couldn't take it anymore. When I came back George met me with a horseshoe of flowers, and it was all beautiful again.

MUSICIAN: Is it possible that the friction may have somehow helped to get your collective creative juices flowing again? Musically, it had to be one of your best efforts.

RINGO: As a band member, I've always felt *The White Album* was better than *Sgt. Pepper*, because by the end it was more like a real group again. There weren't so many overdubs like on *Pepper*. With all those orchestras and whatnot we were virtually reduced to being a session group on our own album. So *The White Album* I really enjoyed, because we were playing like a real band again.

MUSICIAN: Paul seems to get blamed more than the others for the craziness that went down at the time. Some people say he tried to take over the band after Brian died. Did the Beatles need a musical director or leader at that point?

RINGO: Paul wasn't a musical director. Paul just likes to work — he's a workaholic. We'd all be wandering around the garden on a summer's day and there'd come this phone call, and it would be Paul saying "I think it's time we went back to work, lads!" So he would call us in, but not as musical director, because if, for instance, George wrote a particular track, then he'd be director on that, and so on.

MUSICIAN: As a drummer, was it difficult working with a bass player as busy and innovative as McCartney?

RINGO: It was always interesting, because Paul is one of the finest and most melodic bass players in the world. We'd always work out the bass and bass drum parts together to complement each other, and so we wouldn't get in each other's way. Going back to your earlier question, I think that's when we started to be brought forward in the mix. We were playing a very strong rhythmic mix of bass, snare, toms, and bass drum, and it was becoming an important element in our overall sound. So we'd work on that, and I still to this day always work closely with the bass player.

MUSICIAN: Were you thoroughly disgusted with touring by the time you stopped?

RINGO: The main thing about the road was that no matter how good or bad we played, we got the same reaction. When we came off stage we were the only ones who knew how well or poorly we'd actually played. It didn't matter if we'd just done the worst show in the world, they'd scream and applaud anyway. That doesn't help you.

MUSICIAN: Steve Winwood told us that he left Blind Faith for just that reason; he felt they were losing touch with reality because there was no reliable feedback. People cheered anything...

RINGO: That's exactly right, and it was screwing our brains over! After a while we figured we could probably go out there and just fart and we'd still get the same manic response. It wasn't appreciation for the act anymore, it was just a reaction to the phenomenon.

MUSICIAN: So you felt they weren't really listening...

RINGO: Well, they couldn't even hear it at that point. They didn't come to our shows to listen to music — they came to watch four guys *mime*. It must have looked like miming, because nobody could hear anything — including us!

MUSICIAN: I've always wondered how you managed to coordinate your playing in the middle of all that pandemonium?

RINGO: I couldn't do any fills, for one thing. If I did, we'd all lose track of the whole song. I used to lean over and try to read Paul's lips to keep track of where we were at, because I simply couldn't hear anything. I was actually lip-reading the songs to see where we were! So if I ever went off into a fill you could feel everybody get a little nervous and start to wonder, "Where the hell are we?"



Billy Shears and band: Ringo felt like a session player on *Sgt. Pepper* and far preferred the simplicity of *The White Album* and *Let It Be*.

As a band member, I've always felt the "White Album" was better than "Sgt. Pepper" because, by the end, it was more like a real group again. With all those orchestras and overdubs on "Pepper" we were virtually reduced to being a session group on our own album.

MUSICIAN: Is it true that you were just playing on the off-beat most of the time?

RINGO: Sure. The bass and guitars were off on the other end of the stage where I could hardly hear them, so I'd wind up just doing off-beats. And then we'd have days where we'd entertain ourselves, and I'd wind up playing "Love Me Do" as a rumba, or do a waltz-time while the rest of the band was playing in 4/4. That was one of our favorite little variations...we used to think we were soooooo clever! No one knew; we'd just do it for ourselves — to have a little laugh.

MUSICIAN: In the early days, one of the most striking things about you guys was the incredible good humor and cheerfulness you communicated. In these cynical times some people might wonder if you were really enjoying yourselves up there.

RINGO: Sure, it was satisfying. I mean, look at the footage from the Shea Stadium Concert. John's just going over the edge with the organ, laughing hysterically. You don't fake that. We used to love to make each other laugh; we enjoyed it. Not all the time, of course. If we had a bad day we might only do a half-hour show. And if we *really* didn't like the place we'd race through the set and get off in twenty-five minutes.

MUSICIAN: What was the worst experience you had touring with the Beatles?

RINGO: The worst experience was Montreal, where they threatened to shoot me. They said they were going to get the "little English Jew."

MUSICIAN: You mean someone wanted to kill you because you were an English Jew?

RINGO: Yeah, in Quebec they were against the Queen and all, so that explains the English part. But the weird thing is, I'm not even Jewish!

MUSICIAN: Did you take any precautions that night?

RINGO: They had a plainclothes detective on stage with me ready to catch the bullets...and at the end of every number I'd come down hard on the cymbals and then grab them at the bottom and tilt them up like two shields to protect me. But we always managed to get to the limo or the van after the shows and get away. We never got hurt once by the crowds.

MUSICIAN: Didn't you get roughed up a bit in Manila?

RINGO: Oh, Manila I *hated!* When we arrived at Manila airport there was this impressive motorcade with a thousand policemen on motorbikes. Then we did the concert at the stadium, which was fine. When we got back to the hotel we switched on the TV to see how the concert was being reported. But instead of concert footage, the camera showed all these glum-faced little kids at the Presidential Palace looking real down. And there was the President's wife, Mrs. Marcos, looking real angry, and talking about how we were supposed to have come to this special luncheon for all these children, and how we just didn't show up. Then there's the camera again panning across these sad little faces, and they showed the food that had been prepared and their little party hats... We were completely confused by all this, we couldn't figure out what had happened. So we got up and got dressed and wandered out and our road manager says, "HURRUMMPH, WELL, THERE'S BEEN A BIT OF TROUBLE, LADS." What happened was we'd been invited to this luncheon, but our people told them we couldn't come because we'd been travelling and playing for days and needed a break. Meanwhile, Mrs. Marcos is on the TV saying we'd promised to come, and then didn't show up, even though we'd really said no. So the next morning John and I ordered some newspapers to see what was happening. They never came. We asked for some breakfast — that never came either. So we had to leave for the airport, and downstairs there was this big crowd waiting for us — only this time they didn't want autographs, they wanted to kill us! We'd come in with a thousand police escorts — we left with one car. When we got to the airport, it got really tense — people were shouting and spitting and cursing at us. Boo! Hiss! Then they tried to kick us as we headed for customs — there seemed like millions of them trying to get at us.

MUSICIAN: So what did you do?

RINGO: John and I spotted a group of nuns, so we went and hid behind them, thinking we'd be safe. We figured they wouldn't hit us in front of *nuns*... We finally got on the plane and thought well, *that's over*. The next thing we knew they were calling us off the plane by name, one by one! We thought if we got off, we'd never be seen again, so we sat there. Luckily, it was a British Airways plane. So we took off for India and tried to straighten out our brains. That was probably the most frightening experience — a whole country hating you for something you didn't even do.

MUSICIAN: What about the other side of the coin... what were the best experiences?

RINGO: Oh, no... that's just too hard... there isn't any one or two "bests," there were so many of them, all around the world.

MUSICIAN: Okay, how about in terms of your recorded work. Which tracks or albums were you most satisfied with?

RINGO: I've always thought that "Rain" is the finest drumming I've ever done; "Strawberry Fields" is another favorite. I enjoyed the little weird ones more than the nice ones...

MUSICIAN: ... Mostly John's?

RINGO: Mostly John's, yeah. "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" is a really beautiful piece, but for my own work, I've always liked "Rain." That, and the second side of *Abbey Road* where we had all those bits strung together with tom-toms and madness and Polyethylene Pams coming through bathroom windows and all the rest. I really enjoyed doing that.

MUSICIAN: How were they all stitched together?

RINGO: They were all done separately. When we finished one segment, we'd play along with the end of the completed tape of that bit to synchronize our timing and then we'd come into the next section. Some of them were just complete edits, though.

MUSICIAN: What tracks or albums would you say the group as a whole seemed most satisfied with?

RINGO: Funnily enough, we felt that a lot of the cuts on the *Let It Be* album worked well, even though it was the last one... well, the next to last one; it only came out later than *Abbey Road* because of the movie. What was that track of John's? (taps on table) bump-bump didila-didila ah, "Come Together," that felt quite good. I'd found that little drum riff and it seemed to fit that track well.

MUSICIAN: How did the group feel about *Sgt. Pepper*?

RINGO: With *Pepper* the backing tracks were fine, but there was so much to be put on top of them that you couldn't tell how good they were until we finished six months later. Something like "The One After 909" on *Let It Be* was done in just one or two takes, a simple skiffle tune. But everybody felt good about it because we were back to being a band again.

MUSICIAN: What about the earlier albums — any standouts for you?

RINGO: *Please, Please Me* felt good to everybody — because we finally had a piece of *plastic* in our hands! Then *Rubber Soul* was a turning point for us; it was the first record that was totally under our direction.

MUSICIAN: I think both Paul and John later said that Dylan was a major influence at the time.

RINGO: Well, maybe so. But it's very hard for a drummer to be influenced by Dylan!

MUSICIAN: Also, those were the first songs that were obviously drawn from real-life experience.

RINGO: And all written by some artists named John, Paul and George.

MUSICIAN: I want to ask you about Brian Epstein. I think it was John who was quoted as saying that by the time you had arrived in the states, Brian had sanitized your act to the point where a lot of the magic was wrung out of it. Was that true?

RINGO: We weren't playing like in Hamburg. It's the old story that Brian was the one who made us put on ties...

MUSICIAN: But did that really affect the music?

RINGO: Well, no, it affected our attitude.

MUSICIAN: What had your attitude been like up till then?

RINGO: We were drunken slob! Just drunken slob smoking and drinking onstage and having fun. And then it turned into a

business. From saying things like "AH, PISS OFF!" to the audience, we became a professional group. It became a little... nice.

MUSICIAN: Just an off-the-wall question: did you guys ever feel you had any serious rivals?

RINGO: Well, as Paul said, the Beach Boys did that record (*Pet Sounds*)... but no, I never thought we had any.

MUSICIAN: What about the Stones?

RINGO: We were always friends with the Stones. Whenever we did anything special they'd always come along, and vice versa. The only battles we had were in the press, it was never anything else. Anyway, we were appealing to totally different audiences. They were full on teenagers, while we were trying to cover everyone from children to old ladies.

MUSICIAN: I'm sure it's significant that the two best rock 'n' roll bands in history both had drummers that were solid, straight-forward, and in the pocket.

RINGO: I've always said that Charlie's an amazing musician, and very underrated. He's the only one who holds out on doing fills longer than I do.

MUSICIAN: What was it about England in the early sixties that made it such an incredible breeding ground for great bands?

RINGO: I always thought it was because National Service (the draft) ended, and so at 18 you weren't regimented. Everyone was wondering what to do, and people were picking up instruments instead of guns. There were so many kids, so many bands, so many places to play — it just mushroomed. Then we landed a contract and the next thing you know this record company comes to Liverpool and signs 80 groups — 80 groups! Maybe two of them wound up doing something. Then the German scene opened up, and all the Liverpool groups were being shipped across the channel to Hamburg.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of crossing oceans, were you surprised when you went over so well in America? What were you thinking as you stepped off the plane?

RINGO: We were really worried about America. The whole thing came off by chance, you know.

MUSICIAN: Your coming over?

RINGO: Yeah. The story is that Ed Sullivan happened to be getting off a plane in London just as we were arriving back on a flight from Sweden. We were known all over Europe at the time, but nobody knew us in America. And so there's 10,000 kids screaming and greeting us at the airport, and Ed Sullivan saying, "What the hell is this?" and he booked us on the spot.

MUSICIAN: Hadn't one of you come over for a brief visit the year before?

RINGO: Right. George had a sister who lived in the Midwest who he came to visit six or eight months before. He'd been going into record shops there and asking, "Have you, uh got anything by the, uh, Beatles?" And they'd say, "Are you kidding?! We never even heard of them!" So George came back saying (knits brows, shakes head), "AWWWWWWWWWW, I don't know what this is going to be like, I just don't know; they've never heard of us!" And we all said, "WHOOOOAAHH MY GOD, I HOPE IT WORKS!!!" Because for any group, America's the place to make it. You can be as big as you like in Australia or England, but you have to make it here to actually make it.

MUSICIAN: I can still remember the every detail of what I was doing the first time I heard "I Want To Hold Your Hand" in December of '63. Cynics at the time said it was a mass hallucination but it wasn't. It was the exact opposite — it was like everybody woke up for the first time. It was a real taste of our potential as individuals and as a community — that there were deeper joys and a fuller understanding available to us than what we'd been taught. Could you feel any of that at the time? Did it make any sense to you?

RINGO: Sure, it made complete sense to us. It was like everyone was getting together, and we were the catalysts for it. And it seemed a whole generation was suddenly singing the same song.

MUSICIAN: Did you ever ask yourself, "Why us?"

RINGO: No, no! (rolls eyes towards ceiling, smiles and

shrugs) I mean, WHHHHHHHHHYYYYY US?! We just always had the attitude that we were going to the top.

MUSICIAN: And where was "the top"?

RINGO: It changed as we went along. At one time the top was the London Palladium. My mother was always a great supporter, even in the early days, and she'd always say, "One day your name will be in lights and I'll see you at the Palladium."

MUSICIAN: After you'd conquered Liverpool, how long did it take the rest of England to catch on?

RINGO: We used to get laughed at in England when we got started. The audiences used to think a bunch of clowns were coming on — what with these new songs and weird clothes and drinking and being silly, and they'd laugh at us. Then we'd finally start playing, and three or four songs into it they weren't laughing anymore! They'd all crowd down around the center and say, "Hey, something's happening here!", and you'd know you'd got 'em. Even as far as the Outer Islands and Scotland they'd all be coming in their Wellington boots and Mac raincoats and going nuts.

MUSICIAN: When did you begin to suspect that this was something more than just another good rock band?

RINGO: We knew it when our first record came out, because that gave us so much scope. Before that we were mainly playing in Liverpool and the outlying districts, with maybe an occasional odd gig a hundred miles away or so...

MUSICIAN: Still regional favorites...

RINGO: Right, and then after the record we started getting calls from all over Europe, even Paris.

MUSICIAN: But you reportedly didn't want to go to Paris...

RINGO: ...because I didn't like the French!

MUSICIAN: Is that really why you didn't want to go?

RINGO: No, I don't know...we were booked into this club in Paris and it was a variety show thing with Sylvie Vartan and a couple of poodles who did tricks...

MUSICIAN: It didn't work out very well, anyway, did it?

RINGO: Well, it was strange because it was a male audience there, unlike England and America where there are a lot of females at rock shows. By then we were getting used to the high-pitched screams and suddenly there were these deep voices going (in deepest *basso profundo* voice), "RAH RAH BEATLES!!!" And we'd be walking up the boulevard and you'd hear these boys saying (like a teenage Maurice Chevalier), "ALLO ZARE BEATLES!" But the kids weren't against us in Paris, it was just the press that got weird, and that was because our press agent got into some... I don't know, some madness came down and the press just turned against us.

MUSICIAN: How do you feel about the press today? Do they treat you fairly?

RINGO: I do what I do and they do what they do. Whatever I say to you today you're going to put down whatever you want. As honest as you may be, I have no control over what you may say. Sometimes it seems to be going fine, and then you find out later that the guy really hates you. The press can make you out to be biased one way or another. Sometimes I'll make a little joke while the tape is running, but when it's written down it seldom looks funny.

MUSICIAN: Don't worry, I'll duly note that.

RINGO: I'm mostly talking about newspapers now. Sometimes it's not the writer's fault — it's the editor who gashes it up.

MUSICIAN: I know — I'm an editor, too!

RINGO: Okay, here's a funny story for you. As I said before, I went down to Montserrat to work on Paul's new album — but *not* to do a tribute album like the press was saying. So Barbara and I get back to L.A. and we're watching the evening news at a friend's house and this newswoman... what's her name, Connie... Toyota?

BARBARA: Connie Chung, on CBS.

RINGO: That's it...so Connie Chung's there on the evening news saying, "We've confirmed that Ringo Starr has just been in Montserrat with Paul McCartney doing this tribute album..." So I grabbed the phone and called the station, and finally got her just after the news finished. I said, "Look, you've got it all wrong, I've *denied* over and over that it's a tribute, and I'm sick



LEI/PRETTA LTD

Jealous of real talent, John and Paul would fall on the floor laughing at Ringo's songwriting attempts.

of this bullshit. So please do me a favor and go back on the air right now and tell them you heard from me and it's not true!" And she says (in his best Monty Python-in-drag voice), "WHAAAAAT?! AND TAKE OFF THE JEFFERSONS?! I CAN'T TAKE OFF THE JEFFERSONS!!!" (loudly laughs) I said, "Oh no, don't do *that*."

MUSICIAN: One thing that probably sparked that rumor was the fact that Paul had shelved Wings and was bringing in all these superstar types.

RINGO: I think after all those years with Wings, Paul just wanted a change, like I did. Stevie Wonder had come down; when I got there, Steve Gadd was around and Stanley Clarke had already been through. Denny Laine was playing guitar, though they've since split. He just wanted a different sound and emotion on his record.

MUSICIAN: How did he handle all the press hanging around down there?

RINGO: He drove his jeep into a group of them! You do get pissed off, you know. So I understood that, but it's also the surest way to get your picture in the papers, which is what you're trying to avoid.

MUSICIAN: If all the craziness dies down eventually, would you enjoy playing with Paul and George again in a live situation?

RINGO: I always enjoy playing with them, but none of us have the desire to get together again because of all the aggravation and bullshit that would go on around it. And it would only be classified as the Beatles, even if we called it something else. Besides...there's only three of us now, anyway. There's just no incentive. But we do get to work together in the studio.

MUSICIAN: Was it a hassle getting all of you together to work on your new album? You've got five people listed as producers, including Paul and George.

RINGO: That's exactly the way I wanted to do it; I didn't want to get stuck with any one producer. What happened was that my last album, *Bad Boys*, was, well, all right, I guess — but that's about all. I just didn't want to go in and make another album, repeat the formula and all that, so I let it go for two years. Then Barbara, who really loves music, said, "You've got to get back in the studio again." As it says on the back of the album, she kicked me out of bed and made me go to work



DEZO HOFFMANN/REX

While George Martin (behind Paul) was invaluable in arranging horns and strings, it was really John and Paul who produced.

again. When someone has that enthusiasm for what you're doing, it really helps. We decided to do it travelling around the world — to have a holiday and work at the same time. We bumped into Paul in Cannes where he and Linda were showing one of their cartoons that won the competition. So I told him I was thinking of doing this album with all different producers, and would he do two or three tracks? He said fine, and we agreed we'd do it sometime later in France. Two days later he calls back, "Well, set up the studio, the band'll be there, everything's ready, I want you there on such-and-such..." Like I said, Paul's an alcoholic and...no, I mean *workaholic* and...

MUSICIAN: Not so fast, I heard that! (jumps up, grabs microphone) STOP THE PRESSES!! RINGO CLAIMS PAUL IS AN ALCOHOLIC!!! FILM AT ELEVEN!!

RINGO: (leaps up, waving arms, grabs microphone, imitates radio) BEEP BEEP BEEP NEWSFLASH! NEWSFLASH! CALLING ALL STATIONS! SPECIAL BULLETIN!!

MUSICIAN: See, I told you you could trust me...

RINGO: (laughs) He's a *workaholic*, folks. Honest!

MUSICIAN: Special report tomorrow: DOES GEORGE REALLY HAVE WEBBED FEET? Speaking of George, he helped produce two tracks on your album while you appeared on his single, "All Those Years Ago"...

RINGO: Actually, that track was originally done for my album. We did three tracks, initially: "Wrack My Brain," the oldie "You Belong to Me" and an early version of "All Those Years Ago," but it didn't work for me; vocally it was a bit too high. I could have gotten it in the end, but I really didn't like the original words. So I told George I didn't feel comfortable with it, let's forget about it. Later he put new words on it and Paul dropped by and wound up adding background vocals. But as I say, it started off as my track and wound up with him doing it.

MUSICIAN: I've always had the feeling that George was the most frustrated member of the group. George Martin reportedly gave him a hard time, telling him what to play, and then he had to wedge his songs in there among John's and Paul's...

RINGO: In the end he was in the most difficult position, because John and Paul even wanted to write his solos. Paul was very definite about how he wanted his solos and George was very frustrated. There was some friction, but it all got

cleared up. I never really had that problem; once we'd set up the general rhythms I would add fills and things where I wanted.

MUSICIAN: George Martin obviously played a very crucial role as a producer and arranger, particularly in the early days. Did any of you feel any resentment towards him at any point?

RINGO: No, George was very helpful. In the beginning he was in charge, but in all honesty — and I think George himself would admit this — he didn't actually produce the records; John and Paul did. For instance, they'd be sitting at the board and I'd be out in the box playing drums and then Paul would come out and play bass and the rest of us would be at the board trying to get the right sound — but mainly it was John and Paul. George was really needed when we'd come to put strings on or something, because none of us could write music. John would come up and say, "George, the horns should go dah-dah-doo-dah," or whatever, and George would write out the charts.

MUSICIAN: How did you actually go about working through a song around the time, say, of *The White Album*? Did you do your parts together or separately, was there a lot of overdubbing?

RINGO: No, we'd always lay down the bass, drums and guitars together. Sometimes they'd play each other's instruments at first, with Paul maybe playing piano on the track and John playing bass. But then Paul might come back later and overdub his own bass lines, because he'd find somewhere else to take it.

MUSICIAN: How did you go about working out your own parts? Did you work them out on the spot? Did you ever take a tape home to experiment with?

RINGO: No, we did it all in the studio. I never took anything home... (laughs) we never had homework in the Beatles. It went like this: If Paul had written it, he'd sit with his guitar and play the basics for us. Then we'd play along with him, after which we'd all discuss it and make suggestions about how we might play it. I'd say, "I'll do a 4/4 there — or we might do several versions with me playing a straight four on one, and maybe a shuffle or waltz on another. Sometimes we'd sit on a track for a few weeks. I know a lot of groups don't have that much time, but I feel we earned it.

MUSICIAN: What would you do when you hit a snag?

RINGO: We'd struggle with it, sometimes well into the night, and then we'd break for a cuppa' tea or something, or walk around the room or go up on the roof. Then we'd come back in and it would all just magically mesh together — just like that. You'd be struggling for six hours and then suddenly everyone came together and it fell into place.

MUSICIAN: Wasn't *Let It Be* supposed to involve "getting back to the roots" — recording live in the studio?

RINGO: Well, everything changes. I mean, *Sgt. Pepper* was supposed to have been this complete musical montage with all the songs blending into each other. That idea went out the window two tracks in, after "Sgt. Pepper" and "Little Help From My Friends." We *did* get back to being a band again on *Let It Be*. We were playing live on top of this building and that's what was being recorded. But it was getting too late then...

MUSICIAN: Why?

RINGO: We all wanted to do a lot of other things. We were all grown up, had families, and everybody was working on their solo albums. The full force wasn't coming into the group anymore.

MUSICIAN: Was the breakup inevitable?

RINGO: It was time. You can only mine a gold mine until the seam runs out. Oh, you'll search for a little bit more then, and that's what we were determined to do, because after eight years it's hard to stop. Even though inside we felt it had ended, it still took a year for us to say "stop."

MUSICIAN: Anything you wish you could go back and change?

RINGO: Looking back on it ten years after we split — even though it wasn't all good — there's nothing major I'd really change...even the bad days were good.

MUSICIAN: I was just thinking that *Abbey Road* was a pretty extraordinary swan song for a group on its last legs.

RINGO: That's because no matter what was going down we all still loved to play, and once we were sitting there as four musicians it all came together again — the magic was there.

MUSICIAN: On *Abbey Road* you finally stepped out and did a drum solo. Why hadn't you done one before?

RINGO: BECAUSE I HATE DRUM SOLOS!!! I really do. I think they're boring, and I haven't heard one yet that's got me. But people always applaud them because it's the drummer having his day. And, of course, a lot of drummers like to do them because it's their one big spot. So I never liked drum solos, but when we were doing that track at the end they ganged up on me and said, "C'mon, give us a solo!" And I said, "NAAAAH, I'm not gonna do it, I never do 'em." Finally I gave in. I think it lasts only 13½ bars because I just went off and did my "funny little fills" and ended it. We were all laughing with each other, so I guess they caught me in a good mood.

MUSICIAN: Do you ever get the urge to put a band together and go out on the road?

RINGO: No. The only time I play live is for special shows like Rolling Thunder, Bangladesh, the Last Waltz — things like that where it's a group that'll never be together again. The thing about putting a band together I go through every year, but I'm not really a front man — I don't want to try and sing and play drums at the same time and organize the whole thing.

MUSICIAN: A quick one for the tech people: what kind of traps are you using?

RINGO: You mean like for catching mice?

MUSICIAN: Exactly. RINGO TORTURES SMALL ANIMALS — DETAILS AT ELEVEN!!!

RINGO: No no, I'll tell. I use Ludwig drums. Always have. I think they're the finest. My kit includes a snare, bass drum, two tom-toms, and two cymbals, a ride and a crash. All Ludwigs. And a Speed King pedal. As for sticks, I can use anything. I used to use the Ringo Stick, but they went out of production.

MUSICIAN: Gee, just like Billy Beer...

RINGO: I did try the fiberglass stick but they're too heavy; they don't play right for me.

MUSICIAN: Some people may think it's strange that we've talked this long and I haven't asked you about John, directly. I

can imagine all the questions you've had to answer — you must have said everything that you thought was appropriate...but let me put it simply: how would you like John to be remembered?

RINGO: The way he *will* be remembered — for his music. He was an honest human being who always laid his soul on the line for the public...he was a very open man. He stood up more times than anyone I can think of and said, "This is what I think." And what he thought was mainly the truth...he was my friend, and I miss him.

MUSICIAN: When you get together to work with the others — and John too, when he was alive — is it very different from the old days?

RINGO: We still have a natural rapport because of the last 20 years of playing. It was like mental telepathy when we'd play — you *knew* when someone else was going to do something. We'd all do things together without anyone saying anything. Things would happen like...magic. It was magical all the time.

MUSICIAN: Did that fall apart at the end, or was it still there?

RINGO: When we played, it was there.

MUSICIAN: Even on the roof?

RINGO: Even on the roof. We all had a great time.

MUSICIAN: That whole scene seemed so beautiful and sad at the same time. It was so joyous and liberating to see you all playing live again, but so ironic and sad in a way that you had to go up on a roof to do it.

RINGO: But look at it this way — we were playing for the whole of London! Then the bank next door complained so the police came up and told us we were "disturbing the peace" and we had to stop.

MUSICIAN: I remember you telling them off while you were playing.

RINGO: But I wasn't telling them off!

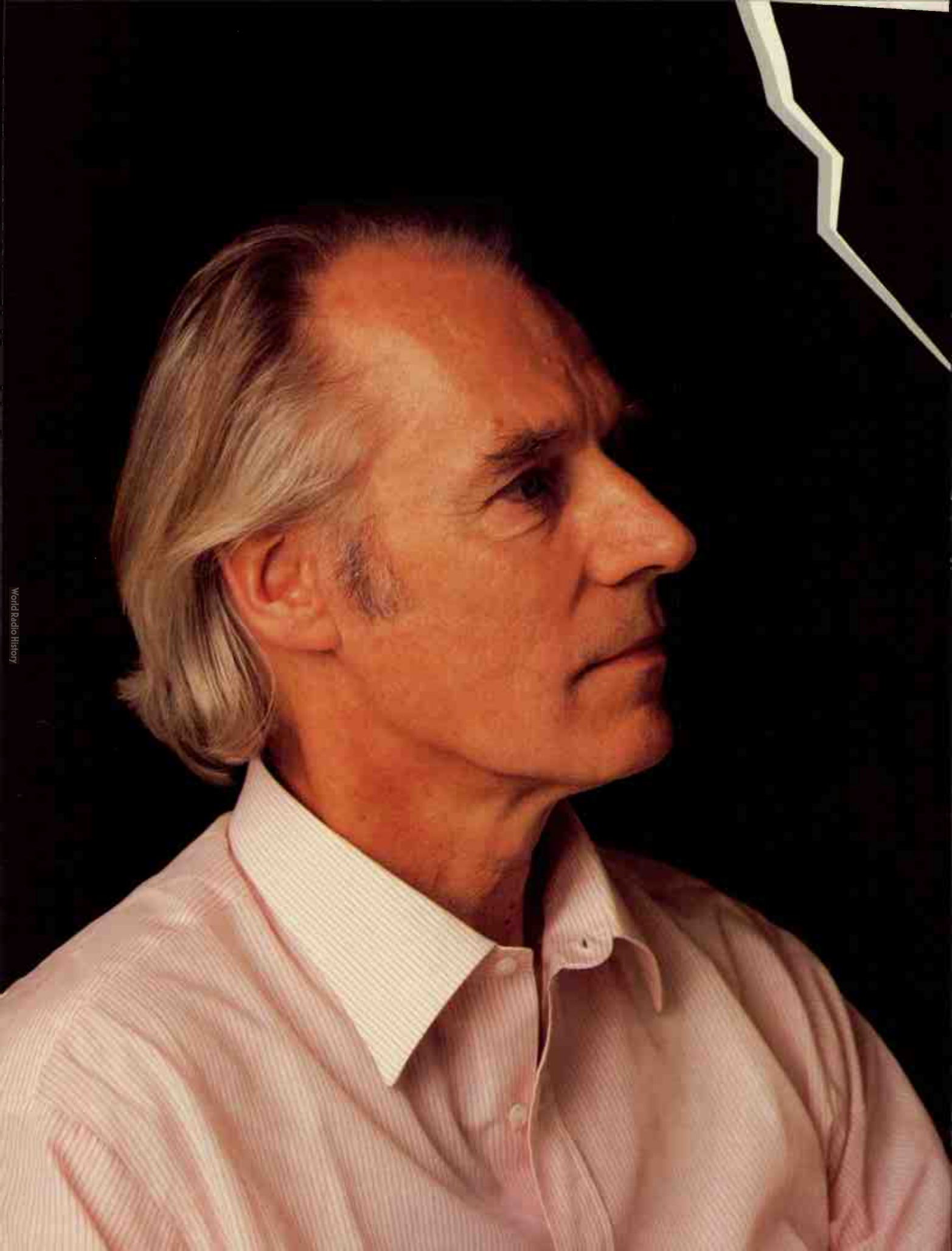
MUSICIAN: Then what were you saying?

RINGO: I was begging them to drag us off! "HEY, COME AND GET US, TAKE ME AWAY!" We couldn't figure out how to end the film, and I thought it was a wonderful solution to that problem — it would have made a fabulous ending for the movie, them just dragging us away... (smiles and shakes head slowly)...yeah, that would've been a wonderful way to end it.



Actress Barbara Bach and Neanderthal hubby.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA LTD



By Richard Buskin

Jogging George Martin's Memory

As far as the music was concerned, John Lennon was always looking for the impossible, the unattainable," says George Martin, the Beatles producer. "He was never satisfied. He once said to me, in one of our evenings together when we were reminiscing, 'You know, George, I've never really liked anything we've ever done.' I said, 'Really, John? But you made some fantastic records!' He said, 'Well, if I could do them all over again I would.'"

Few would agree with John Lennon's opinion of the Beatles' recorded output. From New York to Moscow, London to Adelaide, Tokyo to Rio, their records continue to sell in the hundreds of thousands, inciting, inspiring, infusing and seducing. The long-awaited transfer of the Beatles catalog to CD and the twentieth anniversary celebration of *Sergeant Pepper's* release have only fanned the flames of Beatlemania higher. George Martin, who

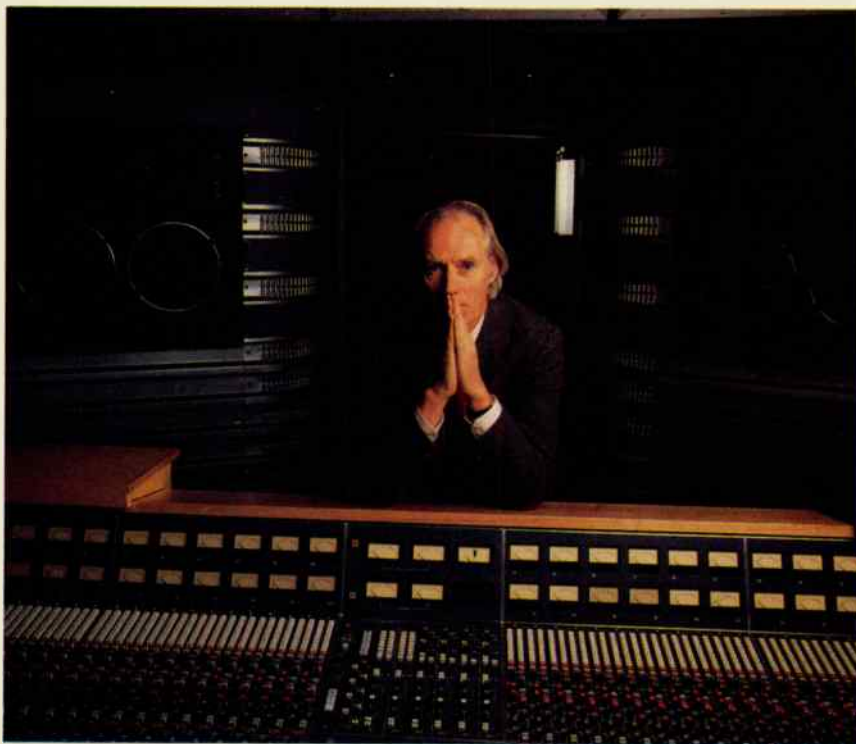
produced the Fab Four throughout their seven explosive studio years together, was drawn into the festivities last December when EMI Records' all-powerful Beatles Committee asked

him for help in preparing the old Beatles masters for digital. Since this was fairly late in the process, his main contribution to the first two CDs was to talk EMI out of using the "fake" stereo mixes and to go back to mono.

"I was, however, asked to look at the next three: *Help!*, *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*," Martin picks up the tale. "These obviously had to be stereo, and when I listened to them—particularly *Help!*—the stereo was not very good at all. So I went back to the original 4-tracks, and I actually did remix *Help!* and *Rubber Soul*. *Revolver* and *Pepper* didn't require remixing, however, as by that time I was getting better, along with the technology. I was tempted to right certain wrongs, but the Beatles Committee wanted it to be exactly as our original issue, and I thought, well, perhaps I shouldn't indulge in retrospective thoughts after twenty years, perhaps I should leave what I did all that time ago and say, 'Well, that's what I did, folks, and I'm not changing it now!' What I did do, however, was to clean

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PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVIES & STARR



"I was out to get *performance*, the excitement of the actual live action."

up the individual sounds, going back to the original 4-track source, and I have, in fact, brought the image in a little bit."

This is not the only occasion Martin has preferred to not "indulge in retrospective thoughts". Within the last year he had let it be known he would be interviewed only on the condition he would not be asked about the Beatles. Which was fair in that Martin had already been thoroughly debriefed on the subject and tended to repeat the same stories. But his recent experience cleaning up the sacred master scrolls of Beatledóm has jogged loose a whole batch of new memories which Martin is ready to share. And what he remembers best was not the technical details, but the feeling.

"Looking back, some of the plops that we got on the mikes were pretty awful, but I was out to get *performance*—the excitement of the actual live action—and technical things like that didn't worry me too much. Sometimes the engineers would express disdain that I wasn't worried, but it was important to get the feeling rather than anything else."

Two more obvious examples of the errors and imperfections that crept in were small vocal discrepancies between John and Paul on the last verse lyrics of both "Please Please Me" and "Drive My Car." "That was never intended, but

they did it that way," smiles Martin. "It was live, and things such as that slipped my attention. Once it went through and I saw it was there, I didn't think it was worthwhile calling them in again to replace a line; life's too short!"

Martin instead used his influence as producer for more weighty musical recommendations. It was his idea that "Please Please Me" should be an up-tempo number, rather than a Roy Orbison-type ballad as originally conceived by John and Paul. It was his idea to commence "Can't Buy Me Love" with the chorus, he who orchestrated the "pop" song "Yesterday" and who generally translated John, Paul and George's fanciful far-reaching ideas into usable musical form.

"We didn't set out to specifically give an album a different sound from the last one, but there was this eternal curiosity that the boys had to try something new. They were growing up, and they were like plants in a hot-house. When I first met them, George and Paul were nineteen and twenty years old: kids. In just over a year they became world stars, and so their normal kind of growing-up period was taken away from them by the pressures of fame. They therefore grew up in the studio with me, and up to the point of *Pepper* they were expanding

their ideas. Consequently, they were thirsty for knowledge, curious to find out what else they could have, and with their fame came the opportunity to experiment. So George heard of a Rickenbacker twelve-string, wanted to have one and he got one. Then everybody wanted one.

"Once you started something, for a while it almost became the fashion. For example, once I'd turned John's voice around on 'Rain,' played his voice backwards to him and put it on the track, it was 'Great! Let's try everything backwards!' So George started doing backwards guitar solos, there was backwards cymbal on 'Strawberry Fields,' until that was exhausted and it was on to the next gimmick. It was a healthy curiosity to find new sounds and new ways of expressing themselves.

"In order to record the backwards guitar on a track like 'I'm Only Sleeping,' you work out what your chord sequence is and write down the reverse order of the chords—as they are going to come up—so you can recognize them. You then learn to boogie around on that chord sequence, but you don't really know what it's going to sound like until it comes out again. It's hit or miss, no doubt about it, but you do it a few times, and when you like what you hear you keep it."

Martin often lent a hand on the solos when required, especially keyboards. One of the most notable examples of this was the Elizabethan harpsichord break on "In My Life." A gap had been left in the song for an unspecified solo, and Martin decided to experiment with the idea of Elizabethan keyboard while the Beatles were out of the studio. This was successful, but the only problem was that he was not quite able to play the fast tempo required. He therefore played the entire piece at half-speed, and the tape was sped up to produce the desired sound.

Drum sounds were another matter. George Martin was, in effect, turned on to drums by Ringo Starr, and was initially quite surprised by Ringo's care and assistance in ensuring that they sounded as he perceived they should. Though proponents of technique would wince, on several occasions Paul McCartney has stated that Ringo was the best drummer in the world for the Beatles; Martin agrees and explains why.

"When I recorded the *Tug Of War* album in Montserrat with Paul and Stevie Wonder, we had Ringo playing drums and we also had Steve Gadd. Now

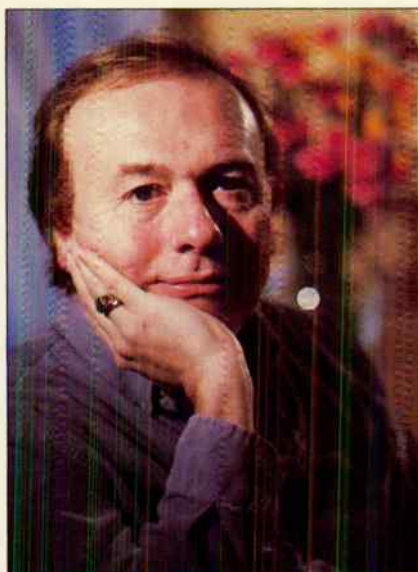
Steve Gadd is a great technical drummer—one of the best in the world—he's done everything, and he's meticulous. We actually had the two drum kits in the studio, and Ringo and Steve playing together. First of all it was most interesting that for the same mike setup the sounds were so completely different. I mean they were light years apart! I was shaken by it. Ringo gets a sound out of his drums which is all Ringo.

"Secondly, although his time-keeping isn't rigid, clinical and of quartz-controlled accuracy, he's got tremendous feel. He always helped us to hit the right tempo for a song, and gave it that support—that rock-solid backbeat—that made the recording of all the Beatles' songs that much easier. He was sympathetic. His tempos used to go up and down, but up and down in the right way to help the song. His use of toms was also very inventive. The 'A Day In The Life' timpani sound on the toms was very characteristic.

"Obviously in those days we never had the studio effects that there are now," says Martin, "but we used to try different things. That was always fun, and it made life a little bit more interesting. The most notable case was 'Yellow Submarine,' of course, where you can hear the noise of bubbles being blown into tanks, chains rattling and that kind of thing. We actually did that in the studio. John got one of those little hand mikes, which he put into his Vox amp and was able to talk through. So all of that 'Full steam ahead...' you hear was done live while the main vocal was going on, and we all had a giggle.

"We weren't averse to putting recorded effects in, too. There were all sorts of sound effects that you could get on record, so in the case of 'Good Morning, Good Morning,' for instance, there was a whole farmyard of animals dubbed in from a disc."

Martin went even further for Lennon's acid-filled, quasi-religious masterpiece, "Tomorrow Never Knows." "John Lennon never liked his own voice," notes Martin, "and I could never understand this because I thought his voice was terrific. He always wanted it to be mixed down, and on 'Tomorrow Never Knows'—which borrowed lyrics and inspiration from the Tibetan Book of the Dead—he wanted me to make him sound like a 'Dalai lama singing from the highest mountain top,' while still being able to hear what he was singing. Of course it was an impossible task, except that he obviously wanted a kooky effect,



Engineer-as-Sancho: Geoff Emerick

and Artificial Double Tracking was the only thing we could think of. Needless to say, in those days we didn't have machines like harmonizers or anything like that, so what I did was to put his voice through the Leslie rotating speaker of the Hammond organ. That gave it the effect you can hear, and to my knowledge that was the first time anyone ever did that." Lennon would later opine that the song would have sounded better with monks chanting in the background as he had originally wanted.

Not all Martin's newfound recollections involved major alterations. For instance, Martin noticed that he had overdubbed a part of Paul McCartney's vocal on "Yesterday." This helped explain his mistaken notion that a small part had been double-tracked: "Originally I recorded Paul singing and playing at the same time, miking up both guitar and voice. Then later on I wrote and overdubbed the strings, and on my fourth track I got Paul to have another go at recording the voice, just in case we got a better performance. Well, we didn't—not in my opinion anyway—except in one particular part which was at the end of the first section. [*I said something wrong, now I long for yesterday...*] So I used that as an alternative voice, and during the past twenty years I've forgotten about it and have always thought that is where I decided to double-track the voice. But it's not double-tracked, because in fact it's voice with leakage from a speaker as we didn't use headphones."

Prior to meeting the Beatles, George Martin was completely responsible for EMI's Parlophone Records label, involving himself in the recording side and in all financial and contractual negotiations. As head of A&R he signed the Beatles to their first contract in the summer of 1962, which allowed for the generous royalty of one British penny per single sold, divided between the four of them and manager Brian Epstein.

As the Beatles and the other "Merseybeat" acts in Epstein's stable prospered, Martin was able to gradually distance himself from purely business concerns and concentrate on studio work. Matters reached a head in the monumental year of 1963 when records that he produced spent thirty-seven weeks at the top of the British singles chart. Matters also reached a head with EMI when, after monetary disagreements, he departed in August 1965 to form his own company—Associated Independent Recording (AIR)—along with some industry colleagues. Thereafter a production deal was struck between AIR and EMI, and in this way Martin continued to produce the Beatles.

Yes, what they say about all those classic Beatles LPs being done on 4-track is true: "The 1-inch 4-track system lasted right through *Pepper* up until *Abbey Road*. We experimented with 8-track in one case on the *White Album* at another studio, but *Abbey Road* didn't have 8-track until *Abbey Road* itself. EMI always tended to be a bit behind independent commercial studios."

At first, studio time was not very forthcoming; it was EMI's policy during the early 60s to allocate a maximum of three recording sessions to each album. It was also generally expected that two single A-sides and two single B-sides be produced from a three-hour session. The Beatles' first album, *Please Please Me*, was recorded in a single day, from ten a.m. to eleven p.m. By the time sessions for what turned out to be the *Sergeant Pepper* album commenced in December 1966, though, things had changed quite drastically. Apart from the band members' elevated positions as recording artists, Martin was in a strong enough position to determine the budget and duration of a project largely by himself.

"I was always very much my own boss at Parlophone," Martin points out, "and always a bit of a maverick; and although I never had much money I did have my own way—and I will say that EMI let me

CONTINUED ON PAGE 80

A DISCOGR.

BEATLES

All the Parlophone/EMI records up to 1966 are the original (British) records, released with the packaging, songs and programming order that the Beatles intended. (They are also the ones that were digitally remastered; the American versions are not available on CD.) Until 1967 and *Sgt. Pepper*, Capitol, eager to cash in on the Beatles phenomenon, cut up the original releases they were given and repackaged them in order to get more Beatles albums in the stores, in the process creating American-only albums like *Beatles VI*. Little attention was paid to the Beatles' original album conceptions by the album amputators. For example, the American *A Hard Day's Night* contains only eight actual Beatles songs (the seven used in the movie plus "I'll Cry Instead"), and is padded with background Muzak from the soundtrack, whereas the British *A Hard Day's Night* contains those eight songs and five more not used in the film, most of which were repackaged by Capitol in the deceptively titled *Something New*. In a case like this, the British version is preferable, but certain American versions have their virtues, and they are all still in the stores. (Post-1966 Beatles albums are pretty much the same on both sides of the Atlantic.)

In the Beginning—Circa 1960 Polydor 1970
Live! At the Star-Club in Hamburg, Germany Lingasong 1977
The Decca Tapes Circuit 1979
Please Please Me with Love Me Do and 12 other songs Parlophone/EMI 1963
Introducing the Beatles Vee-Jay 1963
With the Beatles Parlophone/EMI 1963
Meet the Beatles Capitol 1964
The Beatles' Second Album Capitol 1964
A Hard Day's Night (Am.) Capitol (originally United Artists 1964)
A Hard Day's Night (Brit.) Parlophone/EMI 1964
Something New Capitol 1964
Live at the Hollywood Bowl Capitol 1977
Beatles for Sale Parlophone/EMI 1964
Beatles '65 Capitol 1964
The Early Beatles Capitol 1965
Beatles VI Capitol 1965
Help! (Am.) Capitol 1965
Help! (Brit.) Parlophone/EMI 1965
Rubber Soul (Am.) Capitol 1965
Rubber Soul (Brit.) Parlophone/EMI 1965
Yesterday... And Today Capitol 1966
Revolver (Am.) Capitol 1966
Revolver (Brit.) Parlophone/EMI 1966
Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band Capitol 1967
Magical Mystery Tour Capitol 1967
The Beatles (White Album) Capitol or Apple (originally Apple 1968)
Yellow Submarine Capitol or Apple (originally Apple 1969)

Abbey Road Capitol or Apple (originally Apple 1969)
Hey Jude Capitol 1970
Let It Be Capitol or Apple (originally Apple 1970)
The Beatles 1962-1966 Capitol or Apple (originally Apple 1973)
The Beatles 1967-1970 Capitol or Apple (originally Apple 1973)
Rock 'n' Roll Music Capitol 1976
Love Songs Capitol 1977
Rock 'n' Roll Music, Vol. II Capitol 1980
Rarities (Am.) Capitol 1980
Rarities (Brit.) Parlophone/EMI 1980
Reel Music Capitol 1982
Past Masters Vol. I Parlophone/EMI 1988
Past Masters Vol. II Parlophone/EMI 1988

SOLO BEATLES

John Lennon and Yoko Ono
Unfinished Music No. 1: Two Virgins Tetragrammaton/Apple 1968
Unfinished Music No. 2: Life with the Lions Zapple 1969
The Wedding Album Apple 1969
Live Peace in Toronto 1969 Capitol (originally Apple 1970)
Some Time in New York City Capitol (originally Apple 1972)
Double Fantasy Geffen 1980
Milk and Honey Polydor 1984

John Lennon
Plastic Ono Band Capitol (originally Apple 1970)
Imagine Capitol (originally Apple 1971)
Mind Games Capitol (originally Apple 1973)
Walls and Bridges Capitol (originally Apple 1974)
Rock 'n' Roll Capitol (originally Apple 1975)
Shaved Fish Capitol (originally Apple 1975)
Live in New York City Capitol 1986
Menlove Ave. Capitol 1986

Paul McCartney
The Family Way (original soundtrack) London 1967
McCartney Columbia (originally Apple 1970)
Ram Columbia (originally Apple 1971)
McCartney II Columbia 1980
Tug of War Columbia 1982
Pipes of Peace Columbia 1983
Give My Regards to Broad Street Columbia 1984
Press to Play Capitol 1986
All the Best Capitol 1988

Paul McCartney and Wings
Wild Life Columbia (originally Apple 1971)
Red Rose Speedway Columbia (originally Apple 1973)
Band on the Run Columbia (originally Apple 1973)
Venus and Mars Columbia (originally Capitol 1975)
At the Speed of Sound Capitol 1976
Wings over America Capitol 1977
London Town Capitol 1978

APHY *THE BEATLES* *and STONES*

Wings Greatest Columbia 1978
Back to the Egg Columbia 1979

George Harrison
Wonderwall Music Apple 1968
Electronic Sound Zapple 1969
All Things Must Pass Capitol (originally Apple 1970)
The Concert for Bangla Desh Capitol (originally Apple 1972)
Living in the Material World Capitol (originally Apple 1973)
Dark Horse Capitol (originally Apple 1974)
Extra Texture Capitol (originally Apple 1975)
33 & 1/3 Dark Horse 1976
The Best of George Harrison Capitol 1976
George Harrison Dark Horse 1979
Somewhere in England Dark Horse 1981
Gone Troppo Dark Horse 1982
Cloud Nine Dark Horse 1987

Ringo Starr
Sentimental Journey Capitol (originally Apple 1970)
Beaucoups of Blues Capitol (originally Apple 1970)
Ringo Capitol (originally Apple 1973)
Goodnight Vienna Capitol (originally Apple 1974)
Blast from Your Past Capitol (originally Apple 1975)
Ringo's Rotogravure Atco 1976
Ringo the 4th Atco 1977
Bad Boy Portrait 1978
Stop and Smell the Roses Boardwalk 1981
Old Wave RCA Canada 1983
Starr Struck Rhino 1989

ROLLING STONES

The Stones were also victims of American record companies' realbumization in the '60s. But although the Beatles' case has been put right by George Martin and EMI, the Stones' problem still has not been remedied in the '80s. The new, digitally remastered Stones albums have stayed with the old U.S. names, packaging and formats (though imports are available, at a higher price, for those who want the original, intact British albums).

The Rolling Stones Abkco/London 1964
12 x 5 Abkco/London 1964
The Rolling Stones, Now! Abkco/London 1965
Out of Our Heads Abkco/London 1965
December's Children (And Everybody's) Abkco/London 1965
Big Hits (High Tide and Green Grass) Abkco/London 1966
Aftermath Abkco/London 1966
Got Live If You Want It! Abkco/London 1966
Between the Buttons Abkco/London 1967
Flowers Abkco/London 1967
Their Satanic Majesties Request Abkco/London 1967
Beggars Banquet Abkco/London 1968
Through the Past, Darkly (Big Hits, Vol. 2) Abkco 1969

Let It Bleed Abkco/London 1969
Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out! The Rolling Stones in Concert Abkco/London 1970
Hot Rocks 1964-1971 Abkco/London 1972
More Hot Rocks (Big Hits and Fazed Cookies) Abkco/London 1972
Metamorphosis Abkco 1975
Sticky Fingers Rolling Stones 1971
Exile on Main Street Rolling Stones 1972
Goat's Head Soup Rolling Stones 1973
It's Only Rock 'n' Roll Rolling Stones 1974
Made in the Shade Rolling Stones 1975
Black and Blue Rolling Stones 1976
Love You Live Rolling Stones 1977
Some Girls Rolling Stones 1978
Emotional Rescue Rolling Stones 1980
Sucking in the Seventies Rolling Stones 1981
Tattoo You Rolling Stones 1981
Still Life Rolling Stones 1982
Undercover Rolling Stones 1983
Rewind Rolling Stones 1984
Dirty Work Rolling Stones 1986

SOLO ROLLING STONES

Mick Jagger
She's the Boss Columbia 1985
Primitive Cool Columbia 1987

Keith Richards
Talk Is Cheap Virgin 1988

Bill Wyman
Monkey Grip Rolling Stones 1974
Stone Alone Rolling Stones 1976
Bill Wyman A&M 1981
Green Ice Polydor 1982

Charlie Watts
The Charlie Watts Orchestra Live at Fulham Town Hall Columbia 1987

Ron Wood (We're only including here the albums Wood made after he became a full-fledged Stone; although *I've Got My Own Album to Do* [1974], his first solo endeavor, now out of print, does feature a guest appearance by two gentlemen named Jagger and Richards. Prophecy, perhaps?)

Gimme Some Neck Columbia 1979
1234 Columbia 1981

And let's not forget *Brian Jones Presents the Pipes of Pan at Joujouka*.

BY MAC RANDALL

MOSS?

The Stones may or may not be rolling, but Mick Jagger's not letting the grass grow under his feet.

By Mark Rowland

S

ummer passed briefly through London during the middle of August, but its arrival could manage only a poor third as a topic of conversation—trailing well behind the mass murders in nearby Hungerford, and the mass genuflection before the vision that is Madonna. English tabloids, which for pure sensationalism make the *National Enquirer* look like the *Paris Review*, were chock-full of pix of Her Virginity, while tickets for her three shows at London's 70,000-seat Wembley Stadium sold out weeks ago. Everyone, it seemed, had Madonna on their mind, and Mick Jagger was no exception.

"David Bowie and I decided to chat her up," he says. "So we went to this party, and the first person we saw when we walked in was Sean." He flashes the famous devilish grin. "David started talking to Sean," he goes on confidentially, "while I chatted up Madonna, and after about 45 minutes, we switched places: I talked to Sean and David chatted up Madonna. I don't think Sean ever noticed," he laughs.

"And I liked her," he continues more seriously. "Except that she seems so obviously...aggressive. Over here," he smiles, "the whole trick is to make a success without really looking like you're trying."



It's a style Mick Jagger has honed to perfection. Few stars in any field have been scrutinized so assiduously for 25 years, and no one has proved more adept at parrying what "enquiring minds want to know" with a wisecrack or dismissive, baleful glance; he's managed the illusion of seeming accessible without really giving himself away. Perhaps that simply reflects the dual impulses of his larger art, the introspection and mystery of a songwriter whose work stands up to any in rock, and the sleight-of-hand of a natural vaudevillian who likes to leave 'em asking for more.

In the last couple of years, however, Jagger has taken one of the riskier turns in a storied career: attempting to create a music and persona apart from the Rolling Stones. His first solo effort, *She's the Boss*, more or less bombed. But instead of licking his wounds and hobbling back to the world's greatest (or at least oldest) rock 'n' roll band, Jagger has now upped the ante by putting together a considerably more ambitious followup. On *Primitive Cool* he's assisted by Sugarhill Gang sessioneer Doug Wimbish on bass, drummer Simon Phillips, guitarist G.E. Smith and ringer Jeff Beck.

Musically, *Primitive Cool* is a mixed bag, from familiar groove-rockers ("Shoot Off Your Mouth") to funky shuffles ("Peace for the Wicked") and a personal manifesto slyly disguised as a dance track ("Let's Work"). Jagger happily revives his penchant for well-crafted melodies on such adulterated pop as "Throwaway," "Say You Will" and "Kow Tow" (the last two co-written with Eurhythmic Dave Stewart), and cadges a tear from your eye with "Party Doll," a gorgeous country weeper. But it's the song "Primitive Cool" and the record's finale, "War Baby," which explore musical frontiers inconceivable on a Rolling Stones record, essaying contemporary culture from Jagger's personal vantage point—as a '60s icon, but also as a father in his 40s whose earliest memory was the sound of bombs exploding in war-torn London.

One suspects the relative failure of *She's the Boss* was a kind of liberation for Jagger. Having outgrown his image as rock's bad boy, he's ready to let his music and lyric interests mature as well. Though *Primitive Cool* is not the kind of album necessarily destined to rule the charts, as a declaration of independence from the myths and expectations which have long surrounded Jagger, it is a triumph.

Emblematic of that confidence, he had begun rehearsals with his new bandmates in anticipation of a fall tour through Europe and eventually America. After three weeks of practice, however, Jeff Beck walked out, reportedly upset with his limited role on the album and the possibility that singers and dancers might be added to the tour group—"turning it into a circus," in the words of one Beck associate. Rehearsals ground to a halt, concert bookings were postponed indefinitely. At this writing, Beck has returned to the group, guitarist G.E. Smith has left, and singer/violinist Soozie Tyrell, of Buster Poindexter fame, is a definite maybe. Nobody ever said life without the Rolling Stones would be easy.

In the course of this tumult, we met for lunch at an

unobtrusively upscale Chelsea cafe. If Jagger seemed anxious about the events unfolding about him, he never showed it; then again, for a guy who has been around the block this often, maybe it wasn't worth worrying about. For all his gossip-titillating experience, he remains a canny and surprisingly sane character. He can be either charming or off-putting on cue; a group at the next table who had the temerity to gaze at him too long were rewarded with a nasty-looking pout that reduced them to staring at their plates. He owns a quick wit, but his opinions on topics from songwriting to the '60s to contemporary global politics are serious and well-considered. At 44, Jagger seems healthy and happy; no doubt his reasonably steady relationship with Jerry Hall, which included the birth of a son last year, helps. But he's one artist who still chooses to reveal himself more deeply through his art. Some might consider that a virtue.

"Rock isn't just for teenagers. If you're a mature singer/songwriter you can't just leave rock behind and do schlock."

MUSICIAN: For fans of the Rolling Stones, warming to you as a solo artist has perhaps prompted some adjustment. Has it been difficult for you to adjust as well?

JAGGER: It's difficult analyzing yourself; it's much easier having others do it for you. But I'd like to explore as many areas as I can, and at the moment I thought I should do more solo work. In a band, everyone is supposed to contribute, which is a wonderful way of making records, but there are other ways of making music. And I had a very clear idea of what I wanted to do and should sound like. The other musicians are very talented and they had ideas, but most of the things came out as I planned them on demos. The Rolling Stones rarely did demos. We expected things to happen in the studio.

MUSICIAN: How is this going down with the rest of the Stones?

JAGGER: I think they've all got lots to do. I hear Keith's working on his album in Canada. I won't even go to Canada! [laughs] My tour's not going to be anything like a Stones tour, so I don't think anyone should feel threatened.

MUSICIAN: You still view the Stones as an ongoing entity?

JAGGER: Yes I do, very much. And I think the Stones should go on the road, and so on. I don't believe in forcing things when they're not right, though. It's a mistake, 'cause they tend to really fall apart.

I saw the last Who tour in Philadelphia, and that was a classic example. They did the tour for money, and they weren't getting on; they were hating each other, and it came across onstage. I was upset, as a member of the audience. And then it was the end. It taught me a lesson. I didn't want to be in that situation of not getting on with people but being forced into this intensive situation of working and living together. If we had done our tour and someone had said, "Is this the last time?" we probably would have said, "Yeah!"

You've got to be in harmony when making music, you really must. It's bad enough to work in an office with someone you don't get along with. You can have a bit of an edge, and obviously there are disagreements. But if someone in the band wants to go on the road, everyone has to agree. It's not just the money. As a prime member of the band, I felt that if I wasn't



Mick hard at work discouraging his myth...

totally happy, my opinion should be respected because I had valid reasons. Even if they weren't, I still have an opinion.

MUSICIAN: *But it sounds like the rest of the band may have been scared that you were really calling it quits without saying so.*

JAGGER: Yeah, they were! But I wasn't. I don't think they believed me then, but I think they do now.

MUSICIAN: *Primitive Cool sounds a lot less like a record you'd make with the Stones than She's the Boss. But you also seem more in control on this record, more sure of what you want to do.*

JAGGER: I was less clear before; it was very much a learning experience. Though the first album has validity, I think. You have to have that first experience. But this time I felt more confident. I wanted to have the same center on this record, for the bass and drums to be the same people. I had different keyboard players, different textures and so on, but I didn't think the core should shift. I shifted that around on the first album and it didn't work as well as it could have.

MUSICIAN: *You certainly seem more comfortable with the songs, and your voice sounds more relaxed.*

JAGGER: I knew the songs better, I'd demoed them more, sung them longer. A lot of times when you're working in the studio, you don't get inside them and work them out as well as you should.

MUSICIAN: *Are you still discovering ways to use your voice?*

JAGGER: Oh yeah. When Dave [Stewart] and I wrote "Say You Will," I said, "I'm never gonna be able to sing like that because he's got this chord sequence running up to the sky," and I just about managed it. I'd like to hear someone with a real amazing voice do it. Working with Dave was stimulating because we were into things that neither of us had done, we were up for anything. I'd certainly never written a song like "Say You Will." But we wanted to surprise people.

MUSICIAN: *People describe this record as unusually personal...*

JAGGER: People con themselves, they think a solo album has to be personal. The music's personal, it's full of your life's efforts and sweat. I don't think it's more or less personal than a lot of the other work.

MUSICIAN: *But every record has its own gestalt, so to speak. And the perspective here does seem different from what you were singing about three or four years ago.*

JAGGER: It's pretty grown up? [laughter] I think it is very important to be able to mature. This is what everyone's been going on about: "How are you going to live in the rock music world?" Rock isn't just for teenagers, you have to cover everybody without condescending and you can do that in an album. If you're a mature singer/songwriter you can't just leave rock behind and do schlock. You've got to make the music grow with you, as well as sticking with the good, exciting basics, what's good in your work—and still try to push the genre. The subject matter doesn't have to be tedious or boringly complicated, I don't mean that. But I wouldn't have done "Primitive Cool" or "War Baby" before. The Stones have their own history and there are things perhaps they wouldn't attempt. So I have to attempt it in my own way. I shouldn't be so defensive about it [laughter]. But this is new ground; I don't know where it comes from, but there it is!

MUSICIAN: *The other night I was watching an old World War II movie on TV. I was thinking how that war was still such recent history when I was a kid; for kids growing up today, it must seem like sheer fantasy.*

JAGGER: A lot of children, like in the United States, don't remember the real horror of it, because they never had to, as they do in Europe and Russia and so on. I'm not saying America didn't have a terrible experience, but it never came home to them that way. You had rationing and shortages, and people got killed and coffins came home. But you didn't have the experience of the block opposite being destroyed when you got up in the morning. So "War Baby" is kind of a reminder.

MUSICIAN: *I suspect that's a root cause of a lot of political misapprehensions today between the U.S. and Europe.*

JAGGER: We disassociate the idea from the reality, whereas in Europe you've got places like Poland, that have been constantly invaded for hundreds of years, merely because it's "in the way."

MUSICIAN: *We want to cling to the myth of simple solutions.*

JAGGER: Short-term solutions in Central America. From the way they run the small countries beneath the guise of large corporations. Did it in the Philippines, supporting these people like Marcos and Somoza right up to the brink, when we shouldn't have been supporting them, probably ever. And then we wonder why we're getting unpopular. They were terrible people! There's not one person



...and tuning Keith's guitar.

in the contras who has any political force at all [in Nicaragua]. They're dreadful. It's a self-destructive policy. I don't think I'm being totally naive in thinking that if America had taken the right tack in their revolution, we would have more control now, just in real political terms.

MUSICIAN: *Though in your song "Indian Girl" you imply a certain skepticism about the Sandinistas as well. All of which*

makes you wonder what effect, if any, the '60s have really had on people's thinking. What do you think?

JAGGER: It's a broad question. But I think the effects were very great, just on social terms. It's hard to remember just what that period was like, but I can assure you it was extremely different from now. There was attitude, things you take for granted now they wouldn't then: social values, the way people mix, racial segregation, sexual segregation and orientation, the opportunities people would or wouldn't have, class and money. And the list goes on. Each period takes off from the last, nothing happens in a vacuum. The '50s were the beginnings of a consumer revolution. A few books like *Absolute Beginners* give a reasonably accurate flavor of the period if you weren't there or can't quite remember; I was very young.

MUSICIAN: *The emergence of Elvis seems like a demarcation.*

JAGGER: Yes it was. And over here Frankie Lymon and Gene Vincent, all those people who were playing here a lot, where Elvis didn't... Jerry Lee Lewis was huge, Buddy Holly was the biggest thing ever. So that was the beginning of [the '60s], a dry run or rehearsal if you like. And all the people we mentioned, the entertainers were American, their styles were absorbed, and the explosion of British music was obviously founded on those hero figures, Chuck Berry and the like.

MUSICIAN: *I think everyone understood that freedom, subconsciously at least—which put the Stones on the cutting edge.*

JAGGER: People recognized it as a social force. It already was, of course; it's just that some journalists and parents didn't realize it. But the rebellious thing, the identification with certain songs... If you look at percentages, say the Stones and the Beatles, the so-called serious material was few and far between. There are songs that break new ground, and an awful lot that don't. Some did, like "Goin' Home," but no one ever thought about it when we did it. In a lot of ways the ground was easy to break. In "Primitive Cool" there's that line, "Did you break all the laws that were ready to crumble?" They were just sitting there, waiting.

MUSICIAN: *But people were startled nonetheless.*

JAGGER: Yes, slightly. America loved the norm—still does—and didn't like non-conformist patterns. They didn't like them here either. I really never set out to, but it was very easy to shock people [smiles]. After a while one just did it for fun, once you found out how easy it was. And of course the press would exploit that.

MUSICIAN: *It's amazing to remember that "Let's Spend the Night Together" was banned from the radio for risqué lyrics. And when the Stones appeared on The Ed Sullivan Show you were supposed to change the words to "Let's Spend Some Time Together."*

JAGGER: I refused to change them, though. So they revved up the screams and crowd noise from the audience so you couldn't hear it anyway.

MUSICIAN: *After the Stones first appeared on the show, he claimed he'd never have you on again.*

JAGGER: Yet he had us on again. Ratings, I think.

MUSICIAN: *Is it also true that you began composing the song "We*

Love You" from your jail cell?

JAGGER: [laughs] No! Oh, no. It's a wonderful image, though.

MUSICIAN: *Have you felt guilty for the consequences people paid who tried to emulate the bad-boy reputation of the band?*

JAGGER: No, not me. I did feel that some people liked to imitate the lifestyle they imagined Keith had, and to a certain extent must be admitted that he did. I think people thought that was very glamorous. And I don't think some of them found out it was.

I'm not into myth-mania. I like to destroy myths. I don't think encouraging myth-mania is fruitful, I dislike it. There are too many myths attached to musicians and their lifestyles. It limits you artistically if you're constantly fighting your myth, or encouraging one. You have to explode it. In this album I just tried to work towards something more real than posing as a decadent rocker. That's something one has to be careful of.

MUSICIAN: *You feel that inhibited your role in the Stones?*

JAGGER: Yeah. I'm not blaming them, 'cause I'm them. I can only blame myself. But I can say I found it rather stultifying 'cause it clings so much. When you move over from it to a new project, you're more able to relax and find new avenues. You're setting yourself apart from it, and maybe people will look at it in a different way.

MUSICIAN: *You're generally associated with an image of hedonism, which obscures the fact you've been writing and performing great songs for so many years. I thought "Let's Work" hinted at that point—that what you've done takes real effort.*

JAGGER: Yeah, it does, a lot of craft, a lot of hours. It's not manual labor, though, except for the singing.

MUSICIAN: *It's not like becoming a miner.*

JAGGER: I'm not saying it is, that's the reason I chose not to be a miner. Too much hard work, guys. This is something I like to do. Every year I like to produce something. And only if it's really shitty would I not put it out. Because I believe you never know how good or bad something is until later. It reflects what you were going through at the time, what you were doing musically, more or less. So unless you think it's really standardish you put it out. Some people wait around forever. I was disappointed with this last Stevie Wonder album, *In Square Circle*. I think he's a great musician. But we waited five years, and when this album finally came out I felt, "He could do that every year, couldn't he?" It wasn't so groundbreaking, so what was he doing spending five years on it?

MUSICIAN: *He set up impossible expectations.*

JAGGER: That's what happens. So I believe in just doing it. I write a lot of songs. I wrote a lot more for this record. It's just that you don't want two that are the same. I found that I was writing better melodies in the country, which seems obvious when you think about it. You need to get away from this constant noise so the melodies you have in the back of your mind can come to you easier. And I find that I write better in the mornings than all this late-night business that I was always into before. And after that you can relax a bit. When I worked with Dave, we'd start pretty early and by three o'clock we'd be

"It was very easy to shock people in the '60s. One did it just for fun, once you found out how easy it was."

done. It was healthy and more fun. And lyrically I got more, though sometimes I woke up in the middle of the night, like when I wrote "War Baby." I woke up with the melody and my tape recorder had run out of batteries, and I was in such a state. Because I was half asleep and I don't really write music; but I remembered the little bit I can do. And fortunately I remembered it in the morning.

MUSICIAN: *Do you set up a schedule when you write?*

JAGGER: I'll put aside certain periods of the day. I've started using drum machines when I get an idea, 'cause I'm a bit of a groove singer. I'll start to play on the keyboard, and get the drums going. It really gets me loose; I can just go with the sequence. Sometimes it's easier that way. And if you're a writer, you learn a lot about what you want, not what the drummer wants to impose on you.

I wouldn't say I'm a great musician. I'm adequate enough to write songs and play simple parts. And I would like to become better, the same as a lot of musicians. My main thing is to sing, but my most enjoyable thing is writing, the buzz when you first write that tune.

MUSICIAN: *You and Keith began writing when your manager Andrew Loog Oldham locked you in a room...*

JAGGER: That's more or less true.

MUSICIAN: *I've always wondered how many other managers since then locked their singers in a room, without much result. But do you think you would have come to songwriting eventually of your own accord?*

JAGGER: I can't imagine I wouldn't. I wish I'd started earlier. I like melodies, and writing lyrics, putting them together.

MUSICIAN: *Why did you start printing your lyrics recently?*

JAGGER: I think if the lyrics stand out, I don't mind them going on. One of the reasons I don't like to explain songs to people, it's nice for people to have their own interpretations. You know how disappointed you are when you read a book and it's made into a rotten movie, and you never imagined the character like that. I don't want to say, look, it's about this, so don't get it wrong. If someone's completely off the track, like "Sympathy for the Devil" is about drugs or "Party Doll" is about getting drunk, then I'd put them right. But I don't want to be dogmatic about it. There's a lot of ex-schoolmasters in the songwriting trade, and they get a bit explanatory sometimes. And I don't like to talk about it in these other magazines where people are not really interested, they're just after some angle. But for a magazine like *Musician*, I don't mind talking about what songs are about or how they get written. It's kind of fun.

MUSICIAN: *My favorite song on the record is "Party Doll," which has a pure country feel and bittersweet sentiment, like a Hank Williams tune.*

JAGGER: Thank you, that's very nice. I'd like to hear it by a country singer, like Dwight Yoakam. But in a way it's also pre-country, or pre-Nashville, because it's got the pipes and fiddle, which is very Irish, or Celtic. It's hard with a song like that to set the right mood.

MUSICIAN: *It's also the one song you produced by yourself.*

JAGGER: Yeah, that time there was no one else around. [laughter] Dave and Keith [Diamond] both had ideas on how to do the song which I didn't agree with. I was hearing it with acoustic instruments. I didn't want it with electric or electronic. They had good ideas, but—sorry, guys.

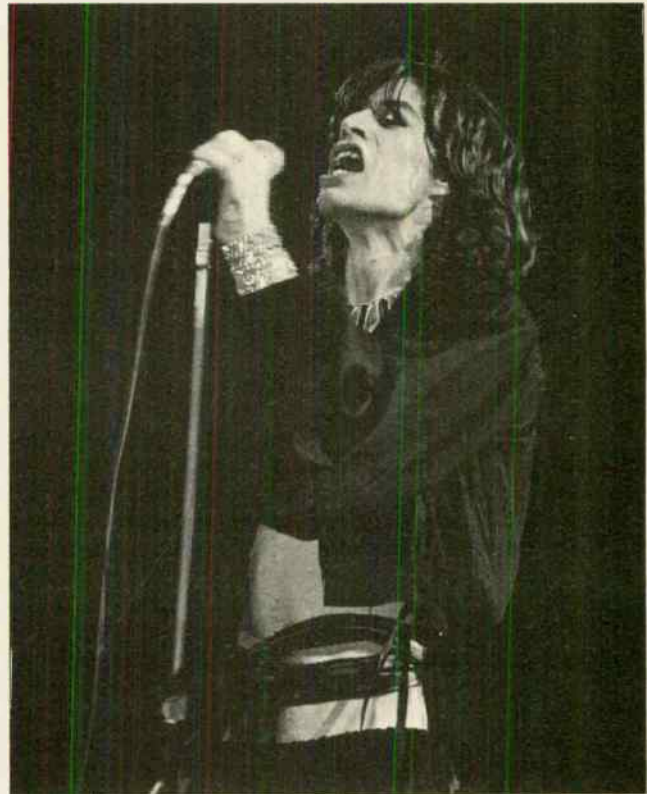
I'd like to do more country songs on tour. I don't know how the punters, as we call them here, the public, will react, but I think it's gonna sound real nice. 'Cause I like that part of me, that music. It's the music of where we are. It's very English.

With the Stones, we just did the odd [country] number. But that's not what the [Stones] are, you understand what I mean? So therefore you can't do it. We'd come out with an acoustic

number and everyone in the audience would yell "rock 'n' roll!" [laughter] We'd play "Far Away Eyes" in the stadiums. remember? And it just didn't work. You should only go to stadiums and play hits, and that's the bottom line, right? Play hits and make a lot of money. That's the name of the game.

MUSICIAN: *John Lennon complained that everyone paid lip service to the Beatles' great body of songs, but you heard only the same 10 hits on radio. Has that been frustrating for you as well?*

JAGGER: Yes, and outside the U.S. it's even more so. It's about four songs: "Jumping Jack Flash," "Brown Sugar," "Satisfaction" and... one of your choice. [laughter] There's nothing you can do about it. If I would go on the road and do



some shows off this album, which I hope to, I'd like to try some of those more obscure Stones songs. If they work. I don't want to pin myself down, but I've messed around with doing "2000 Light Years from Home," "She's a Rainbow," a weird version of "19th Nervous Breakdown." I was also running through other people's songs I've liked: Marvin Gaye, James Brown, Muddy Waters. I don't know what I'll do, but there's a lot of styles in there.

MUSICIAN: *Is there any period of your career you're particularly proud of, or that stands out in retrospect?*

JAGGER: I like *Beggars Banquet* and *Let It Bleed* very much. And the first Stones albums were wonderful. There are others, but they're the ones that come to mind. That period was really fruitful and that 1969 tour was a high point for me. I've always had good memories of it. There were other great tours, but I think that was really groundbreaking. The band played so well, really tight... and the live album [*Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!*] was pretty representative.

MUSICIAN: *Do you worry about falling into a rut?*

JAGGER: Oh yeah, that's why I feel now I have to get out. I'm getting a little stuck. I'm not blaming anyone else; I'm the one who is getting in the rut. Or maybe I wasn't, but thought I was and had to do something. I didn't want to be traveling down the same groove.

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Photograph by Lynn Goldsmith

KEITH RICHARDS

By Vic Garbarini

THE HEART OF THE STONES

I mean, I've got to respect their point of view on this," says Mick. "After all, they're the ones who have to work it." Keith nods slightly as he reaches for the bottle of Jack Daniels on the desk before him and waits for Jagger to continue. "They had this problem with Robert Plant," continues Mick as he paces across the center of the room, hands stuffed in his pockets. "He insisted they release the single he wanted. His album is doing well, but the single is doing shit, and I said, 'Don't worry, we're not really like that. If that's what





you want then we'll put out "She Was Hot" first and leave "Undercover of the Night" for later.' It's not gonna *kill* me."

"Mmm," agrees Keith, tilting back in his chair. "There's nothing worse than cracking the whip over people." The exchange between the two top Stones in the New York office of their record company has been friendly and relaxed, if a bit formal. Are they being slightly guarded because I'm here, or do they normally tiptoe around each other? Beats me. As you've guessed by now, they're discussing which track from their new album will be the first single released upon an unsuspecting public.

Undercover is not only their most musically adventurous album in over a decade, it's actually chock-full of what ya call yer "relevant social content." (Considering the violent, bizarre imagery employed, maybe "redeeming social value" is more apt.) Songs like "Undercover of the Night" (Gabriel Garcia Marquez meets Fellini in hell), "Too Much Blood" (guaranteed to give Stephen King the willies) and "It Must Be Hell" (all the aforementioned people are living in your basement) pick up where "Gimme Shelter" left off. It's a profoundly disturbing piece of work, one that reflects, perhaps a little too vividly, the darker regions of the human psyche circa 1983. Musically it's all hardball rock 'n' roll, though the richness of the mix and spacing of the instruments reflect the influence of Sly and Robbie.

"I said we'd get back to them in 24 hours," concludes Mick, heading for the elevator. "Let's talk about it tomorrow."

Watching him split, I can't help but contrast his antsy, kid-with-a-thyroid-problem extroversion with Keith's gentlemanly grace. Yeah, he may be the self-ravaged Prince of Excess, but he's also a *gentle* man. You get the feeling that there's someone *home* there, someone who's found a measure of inner peace and self-acceptance after a long and often painful apprenticeship. (I'm talking about the man's heart. God knows what his liver and nose think about all this.)

"I've been waiting for the left hook," says a wryly smiling Keith only moments after Jagger's departure. "And *that* was it. We wanted to put out 'Undercover of the Night' as the first single, but Atlantic isn't going for it." So what's the difference, I wonder out loud. Mick played me both cuts and they're not so radically different. "Mick probably played you the *straight* version of 'Undercover,' which does not, uh, suffice," counters Keith, leaping out of his chair and heading for the stereo. "This is the re-mixed dub version that I want to put out." Richards goes into a rubbery dance as a blast of reverb drenched... well, try to imagine standing in a massive tunnel while an express train driven by Sly and Robbie with the Rolling Stones strapped to the engine comes barreling towards your ass at 150 miles an hour. Get the picture? No wonder Atlantic balked. This thing could cause your local dance club to reach critical mass, but the AOR wimps are gonna find it hard to swallow. No wonder they opted for the more conventional (and less inspired) "She Was Hot." "That's the hotter mix I want to substitute for the one Mick played you," explained Richards. I respond that, for all his flamboyance, Mick strikes me as a conservative at heart. "Yeah," agrees Keith, "when it comes down to what you're going to put out, he goes for the safe mix. I'll say it to you because I said it to him, and he damn well knows it... and if

that's the case with this song, then this record isn't finished."

He pauses, reflecting on some inner dialogue, then emits a rumbling, bourbon-soaked chuckle. "And Mick, bless his heart, even agrees with me. He knows he has a problem from that point of view, and he's working on it. He's helped me often with similar situations when I've needed it." If it were totally up to you, Keith, how would the Stones' records differ from what we hear now? "I'm less inclined to go for the typical verse-chorus, verse-chorus approach," responds Keith. "I don't mind a five-minute intro, or knocking out a verse or some vocals. I go for the more aural excitement, whereas Mick very understandably sees most of his work go down the drain if we cut two verses." Another deep chuckle. Another pause. The man is rolling again.

"I mean, we're the ones who brought out our first album without a title, with two or three instrumentals, put out 'Little

Red Rooster,' a real barnyard blues, when everybody thought it was time to bring out a smash hit. Why be conservative now?" Why indeed.

On the way out after our lengthy interview, I stop to thank the young driver from the limo service for waiting so patiently. "Oh, I don't mind waiting for Mr. Richards," he counters. "The other night I took him over to the studio for the first time. He came back out five minutes after I dropped him off and said, 'Hey, you must be really bored waiting out here. Why don't you come in and watch the band record?'" Needless to say, the driver did.

It's reassuring to hear that at the heart of the Stones is a Stone with a heart.

MUSICIAN: *When I tried to ask Mick about the orgy of blood and violence on Undercover, he admitted that even you thought he'd gone a bit over the top this time.*

RICHARDS: Yeah, I told him that on the phone one night because it was like an avalanche of those images, too much gore crammed onto one piece of tape. That was my first impression at the time, though it was totally different then... there was *extra* gore at that point. It was his first bash at it, but through the process of making the record and editing, it got tidied up and I changed my mind once it was finished. So maybe he listened to me a bit...

MUSICIAN: *But did you ever ask him why he was expunging all this stuff?*

RICHARDS: No, we never sit around and ask ourselves why we write a song, although now that it's done we join everybody else in trying to analyze why we did it. I think images just come out; you haven't that much to do with it. If you like an idea that comes along, you sort of carry on writing in the hopes that maybe you'll eventually find out why. There are no answers in the lyrics. They really just raise other questions, which is maybe the point of it.

MUSICIAN: *On one level, it all seems a reflection of the obvious ugliness we see around us today.*

RICHARDS: That was my immediate reaction to the thing. Look out your front door. Look at the news. You tell me. I'm sure Mick and I or anybody else would be happy not to be bombarded with some of these images, but we are supposedly living in a real world, after all.

In a way, this album is a brother to "Gimme Shelter," and

**"IF THERE'S
ANYTHING THAT'S
STOPPED US FROM
BLOWING OUR
LOUDSPEAKERS,
IT'S PROBABLY
EACH OTHER."**

maybe *Beggar's Banquet*, or a mixture of those two records. If we think about the late '60s, it's as if there's been an... ah...

MUSICIAN: ... *Intensification?*

RICHARDS: Yeah, an intensification of that slightly unstable, mad atmosphere that was around then.

MUSICIAN: *I mentioned the "Gimme Shelter" connection to Mick but he didn't really respond. That song would have actually made a much better overture for the '80s than the '70s. From what you're saying, I get the sense that you guys pick up songs from the other, like radio receivers.*

RICHARDS: That's precisely my idea, my favorite analogy being an antenna. As long as you turn the set on and put your finger in the air, if there's any songs out there, they'll come through you. It's *very* easy to get hung up on just the simple mechanics and craft of songwriting rather than the more important thing that real master musicians like the whirling dervishes can tell us about: just letting it go through you and out the other side.

MUSICIAN: *Yeah, but if you ask those guys how to do it, they say that first you have to learn to ground and center yourself so you won't get burned out by the intensity of the current passing through you. So my question is, how does a band like the Stones, with a reputation for dancing a bit close to the edge, keep grounded?*

RICHARDS: Maybe the answer is in the nature of the band itself. Maybe whatever energies we come in contact with—that each person in the band in some way grounds the others. Look at someone like Jimi Hendrix. I mean, he had a couple of boys with him but they weren't a band in the way we've come to know each other over the years. If there's anything that's stopped us from blowing our loudspeakers, it's probably each other; this weird combination which, like the songs, is another thing we never wanted to dissect because if we find out how it works it might stop working. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: *I would imagine that Charlie and Bill are a key element in that anchoring mechanism.*

RICHARDS: Yeah, in that they're both incredibly down-to-earth sort of people. Charlie, after 20 years, still can't stand the thought of having to do even the slightest thing that strikes a false note, like smiling at somebody if you don't want to. He'd rather give them a scowl, so at least it's honest. Bill and Charlie are very similar in that they keep you grounded because you can't really be around people like them and strike any false notes musically or personally, because you'll instantly get locked out of the room. I imagine that if we'd had a couple of totally different guys in their places, we could have collapsed in a very short time. Or Mick and I would have gone totally super-starish, God forbid.

MUSICIAN: *In the past, whenever another guitarist would work with the band, you'd step back and play rhythm. But since Ron joined, the responsibilities seem much more evenly divided.*

RICHARDS: For me, it's very similar to when I started playing with Brian Jones, though Ron is a lot more accomplished. In the early days, Brian, Mick and I worked out a way that we could weave our guitars together so you could never quite be sure who was playing what, rather than just dividing things into straight rhythm and leads.

MUSICIAN: *But you and Ronnie play naturally in the same style. Do you ever trip over each other?*

RICHARDS: The fact is Ronnie can play like me, but I can't play like Ronnie. He's uncanny in that if I was going to make a record by myself, most of what I would try to overdub is exactly what Ronnie would play in that situation. The fact that we've been working intensely together over the last two or three tours has made an awful lot of difference.

MUSICIAN: *What happens when you bring a song to the band? Are you open to their input or do you have a fixed arrangement in mind?*

RICHARDS: When I walk in the studio, I never openly say I've got-a-song-and-it-goes-like-this. In fact, sometimes I don't say anything because I don't *have* a song as I walk through the door. [laughs] Probably over 50 percent of the time I walk in with absolutely no idea of what I'm going to do. So there we are with everybody just looking at each other... somebody's got to take the lead. So I don't let them know I've got nothing. I just start playing and I can always find one or two things back there. Usually, Charlie picks up on the changes and might come in with a totally different beat or rhythm. Before you know it, the song has written itself.

MUSICIAN: *Is your approach different if you're working on somebody else's song?*

RICHARDS: If it's my song, I'll usually show the band the basic rhythm thing first. But if I walk in the studio and Mick's been running down a tune with Charlie and Ronnie for an hour or two, then I'll just come in and start weaving some lines over the top... because I usually can't figure out how the rhythm goes! [laughs]

MUSICIAN: *Sting recently told us that the Police have begun recording with each member of the band in a separate room, which is something I couldn't imagine the Stones doing—or am I wrong?*

RICHARDS: No, the whole band plays the basic track together. People think we're archaic, but we've always done it

like that and that's the only way the Stones *can* do it. Sure, we'll play around with the overdubs and the mix later. But, as Duke Ellington said, "If it ain't got that swing..."

MUSICIAN: *Let's focus in on one or two examples. "Start Me Up," for instance: How did that evolve?*

RICHARDS: "Start Me Up" was a reggae track to begin with, totally different. It was one of those things we cut a lot of times, one of those cuts that you can play forever and ever in the studio. Twenty minutes go by and you're still locked into those two chords... [laughs]

MUSICIAN: *That archetypal "Brown Sugar" riff still hooks you in, eh?*

RICHARDS: Yeah, that's exactly the point. Sometimes you become conscious of the fact that, "Oh, it's 'Brown Sugar' again," so you begin to explore other rhythmic possibilities. It's basically trial and error. As I said, that one was pretty locked into a reggae rhythm for quite a few weeks. We were cutting it for *Emotional Rescue*, but it was nowhere near coming through, and we put it aside and almost forgot about it. Then, when we went back in the can to get material for *Tattoo You*, we stumbled on a non-reggae version we'd cut back then and realized that was what we wanted all along.

MUSICIAN: *There's little actual reggae on Undercover, yet the production values are very Jamaican. The deep reverb, the spacing of the instruments, the accentuation of the bass and*



drums and the obvious dub take on the extended version of "Undercover of the Night"...

RICHARDS: That's it. A lot of Jamaican reggae interests me because they have a lovely, wide-open concept about recording, which the rest of us are slowly coming around to. For them, a console is as much an instrument as a drum or a guitar. They don't have any of the preconceived rules that we have ingrained in us from our earlier recording days: You *must* fade things out slow, very genteel. They'll just go WHACK! BANG! and drop out an instrument. Such a wonderful freedom from preconceived ideas. When we first started working with our engineer Chris Kimsey, we tried to turn him on to some dub records. He was interested but he didn't really get into it until we started working in Jamaica over the last few years.

MUSICIAN: Any particular Jamaican producers who've heavily influenced you?

RICHARDS: Lee Perry, for one. But there are some people you don't normally think of as producers, like Sly Dunbar, who are incredible. I didn't realize how good he was until recently when we were in the same studio in Nassau. He's become a real production whiz; it's a real drama watching him behind the board. Matter of fact, that's him doing percussion on Simmons drums on a couple of tracks on the new album.

MUSICIAN: There's also an African feel on some of those tracks.

RICHARDS: We brought in a couple of guys from Senegal to get that percussive bongo sound. They brought in their own instruments, and an incredible array of primitive African hardware, so there's lots of great percussion throughout the album, a lot of work with rhythms.

MUSICIAN: Looking back, *Some Girls* was a quantum leap in quality over those mid-'70s Stones albums. What happened?

RICHARDS: I ask myself this one sometimes. I think a lot of it was Chris Kimsey. We were also at a point where we asked ourselves, "Are we just going to do another boring Stones-in-the-doldrums sort of album?"

MUSICIAN: So you felt that, too. I have a hard time going back to those albums and finding more than two cuts I can play.

RICHARDS: I know what you mean. First of all, they remind me of being a junkie. [laughs ruefully] What happened was I'd been through the bust in Canada which was a real watershed—or Watergate—for me. I'd gone to jail, been cleaned up, done my cure, and I'd wanted to come back and prove there was some difference... some... some reason for this kind of suffering. So *Some Girls* was the first record I'd been able to get back into and view from a totally different state than I'd been in for most of the '70s. We're talking about that post-*Exile* period; *Goat's Head Soup*, *Black and Blue*, which was really an audition for a new guitar player, and *Only Rock 'n' Roll*.

MUSICIAN: Besides your drug problem, what made that such a fallow period for the Stones?

RICHARDS: We were dealing with a whole load of problems that built up from being who we were, what the '60s were. There was the fact that we all had to leave England if we wanted to keep the Stones going, which we did, and then trying to re-deal with each other when suddenly we were scattered halfway around the globe instead of "see you in half an hour." Also dealing with a lot of success and a lot of money over a long

period. We'd been working non-stop and then suddenly had to deal with a backlog of problems that had built up because nobody'd had time to deal with them. Then there was Brian dying...

MUSICIAN: Why didn't that special chemistry of the band you spoke of before sustain Brian?

RICHARDS: In the coldest analytical terms, Brian didn't foresee the necessity for having a certain inner strength. Because these guys are very strong, very tough.

MUSICIAN: When did you first notice something wrong?

RICHARDS: Well, we were all idealistic kids at the time, just wanted to play the blues. But I remember very vividly once, when we were still playing clubs, the Beatles came to see us. Then when they played the Albert Hall in London, Brian and I went to their show. It was one of their first big concerts. I think

Del Shannon was top of the bill actually, although they obviously were going to steal the show. They were enormous already, as they started coming on. The place went mad, women screaming, and it was astounding 'cause I'd never seen anything like it.

But I remember looking at Brian at that point and he was totally transfixed, absolutely gone. It was as if he was watching the crucifixion. And from that moment on, I felt that Brian wanted to be a star more than he wanted to be a musician. That's what he wanted, and that's what he got, and then he didn't know what to do with it. That hunger sort of took over all his other faculties.

MUSICIAN: And that type of hunger is never going to be satiated.

RICHARDS: No, never. And obviously standing out there in front of 3,000 14-year-old girls is *not* the answer to life, either.

MUSICIAN: Did you feel you were compromising somewhat when you switched from being blues purists to pop songwriters

around that time?

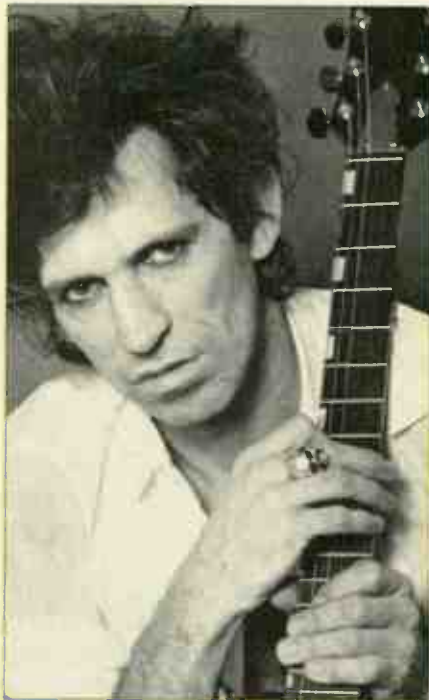
RICHARDS: No, we were making the same mistake as most white kids who get hung up on the blues. We'd become elitist, although we used to despise the so-called purists. So we needed to reconcile all this with our own pasts and where audiences were at. And everything we've done since then has been a reconciliation, because even before Mick and I got together with the Stones we were big rock fans. Mick was in a Buddy Holly vein for a few years and I was roped into a weirdo country band for a while. I was real hung up on Gene Vincent. I used to have to play guitar for this guy who desperately wanted to be Gene Vincent, just to get a ride home on his motorbike. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: You mean you sold your soul for a lift home?

RICHARDS: [laughs] Well, I enjoyed it. It was "all right" at the time. But I'd do *anything* to get a ride home. [laughs] But we were blatant out-and-out rock 'n' roll fans from the start. Little Richard was the first guy that really drilled Mick and I into the wall with "Good Golly Miss Molly." This wasn't pop, though.

MUSICIAN: Did you later find it satisfying to write more pop-oriented tunes like, well, "Satisfaction"?

RICHARDS: The truth is if I'd had my way, it would never have been released. [laughs] We were recording in L.A. at the time at RCA and it just tripped off the end of my tongue, as it were, one night. We needed another track for the album so I threw it



New Grey Whistle Test

in as filler. I mean, the song was basic as the hills and I thought the fuzz guitar thing was a bit of a gimmick. So when they said they wanted it as a single, I got up on my hind legs for the first time and said, NO WAY! I really hadn't grasped what Mick and the band had done with it. You go through that all the time with tracks.

MUSICIAN: *Time for the Cliché Question of the Hour. What comes first: the music or the words?*

RICHARDS: The ideal thing, of course, is when they suddenly appear together. When there's only one phrase that fits and says it all, and all you have to do then is fill in the gaps. But it's not often that it happens.

MUSICIAN: *Can you think of any times it did?*

RICHARDS: "Gimme Shelter" is a classic one. That I just slapped down on a cassette while waiting for Mick to finish filming *Performance*. "Honky Tonk Women" is another. A lot of times you're fooling with what you consider to be just working titles or even working hooks, and then you realize there's nothing else that's going to slip in there and fit in the same way. So you're left with this fairly inane phrase. [laughs] Before recording this album, Mick and I went into a little studio in Paris together for the first time in many years to work together. We wrote "Wanna Hold You" with me singing and playing guitar and Mick on drums. Mick's a real good drummer, but he doesn't play enough so every once in a while he has to stop and take a break. After we'd written it he said, "Wow, this song is very early Lennon & McCartney." It's probably just the placement of certain instruments and the harmonies. In any case, there I was stuck with this working hook of "I wanna hold you." Except that you can't find another hook that's going to fit, so I just went with it.

MUSICIAN: *What about Ron? Is there an unspoken understanding in the band that nobody writes except you and Mick?*

RICHARDS: Oh, no. Ronnie is the main instigator and part writer of "Pretty Beat Up." The chord sequence was his and I came up with the title and Mick added extra lyrics. I play bass on that one and Ronnie's on bass on "Wanna Hold You" and "Tie You Up," and Bill's on synthesizer on "Pretty Beat Up."

MUSICIAN: *For years, there have been rumors that Bill might be kicked out of the band, rumors fueled by the things like him not playing bass on a number of tracks on Exile. Bill told me he had the feeling that you guys were not quite sure of him—not musically, but in the sense that he doesn't live your lifestyles.*

RICHARDS: I can understand his feelings except that I'm sure he also knows that no one is expected to live any particular lifestyle. There are many diverse lifestyles and vicestyles in this band, and we all respect each other's space. True, Bill doesn't live the way Mick or I or Ronnie or Brian used to, but neither does Charlie, and that's the beauty of those guys. And Bill has come on like a ton of bricks in the last few years. After all the things he's been wondering and thinking about and keeping to himself, suddenly he's the busiest guy of the lot, out there making movies and becoming the only one of us who's had a hit record outside the Stones. There's probably nobody I've grown to appreciate more over the years than Bill Wyman. Charlie I've always appreciated, and Mick I've known since I was so young I can't even remember. But Bill is someone I've had to grow to appreciate.

MUSICIAN: *What was the problem with Mick Taylor, then?*

RICHARDS: I was going to ask you that. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: *Bill felt he left because he was demanding more of a voice in the songwriting and couldn't get it.*

RICHARDS: Well, yeah, I guess that's pretty fair. After five years with the Stones you can understand how someone can get those frustrations, whether real or imagined.

MUSICIAN: *Which was it? Did he only imagine that you were*

Back in the early '60s, the Stones were asked to rate current pop and rock records on the BBC's television show, "The Old Grey Whistle Test." They claimed to hate everything they heard that night with one exception: their own new single. Twenty years later *Musician* asked Keith to give it another try. We played for him a selection of the material from the U.K. and U.S. charts and asked him to rate them on a scale of one to 10. Herewith are the results.

Aztec Camera, "Walk Out in Winter" – Nice guitar, white Scottish soul, like a forerunner of the Average White Band. Givin' 'em a good seven.

Graham Parker, "Life Gets Better" – Graham, is it? He's got a nice presence to his voice, real *English* soul this time. Eight going on nine. Let's say eight-and-a-half.

Juluka, "Ijwanasibeki" – I love it. You say they're half Zulus and half white guys? Those spacious African harmonies are great. The only problem with the record is the drum sounds; they all start to sound alike nowadays because there are only three or four standard boards you go through no matter where you record. I could have also used a little more Zulu and a little less of the white guys. Still, the Zulus can always teach you something. Let's give them a good eight.

Stevie Ray Vaughan, "Pride and Joy" – [dryly] Classic white-boy blues, very proficient. He's got a good voice and he can play guitar, but there's only so far you can take that. Of course, you could stick us on doing "Black Limousine" and I could say the exact same thing. If you start talking choice of material, I'd give him a five, but sound-wise, it's fine. Make it a seven.

Paul Young, "Wherever I Lay My Hat" – Kid's got a great voice. This is an old Marvin Gaye tune, but the production sounds like he's already been influenced by "Every Breath You Take." Nice voice, but leaning on the Police a bit. I'd give it a seven-and-a-half.

The Police, "Wrapped Around Your Finger" – Take it off... elevator music. I know it's the Police but it's a blind spot for me. Sounds like Christopher Cross. I like the Police but that track sounds like what they play in my dentist's office. [No rating.]

Shalamar, "Dead Giveaway" – Nice rhythm section, boring song. Soul Train. MTV material. We're going to get rough on the last lot now. I'll say four. I can hear them now [in a high, whining voice], "Should have played mine first, when he was being generous!"

Bananarama, "Shy Boy" – More MTV music, but a kind of nice, naive, dumb sort of feel about it. Sure, you could say they can hardly sing, but since Caruso died, who can? It's more a question of: You have a voice, what do you want to do with it? They have as much right as anyone else. Five.

Joan Jett, "Handy Man" – Thanks, darling, I really needed that. No, she does a good job of it. I'd rather hear myself coming back at me through her than a bunch of guys dressed up funny. There's a genuine enthusiasm behind it; nobody's trying to be artsy-craftsy. Let's go back up into the eights for that one.

Culture Club, "Time (Clock of the Heart)" – Boy George, yeah. He's good, *real* good. He understands how all the parts fit together, too. He deserves eight-and-a-half... in the right place.

Big Country, "In a Big Country" – A bit studied, a little too self-conscious. But there are some nice sounds on there. Seven.

Talking Heads, "This Must Be the Place" – David Byrne. Very clever. There's nothing like a repressed white boy. I get the sense of somebody who's trying to feel something outside his brain, which for him is a big step. I'll give him an eight for breaking out.

Prince, "Little Red Corvette" – Prince trying to be Stevie Wonder... [angrily] Take it off. I wish him luck. He's got a problem with his attitude and it comes across on record. Prince has to find out what it means to be a prince. That's the trouble with conferring a title on yourself before you've proved it. That was his attitude when he opened for us on the tour, and it was insulting to our audience. You don't try to knock off the headline like that when you're playing a Stones crowd. You'd be much better off just being yourself and projecting that. He's a prince who thinks he's a king already. Good luck to him. [No rating.]

turning down his material?

RICHARDS: No, he never really wrote things, in spite of what he said. It's basically imagination. We all know by now that Mick hasn't done anything since he left the Stones that he couldn't have done in his spare time with the band. He just said he wanted to do his own thing. Mick Taylor is an admirable gentleman and a beautiful guitar player, but I don't really think he knew what he was good at and what he wasn't.

MUSICIAN: *How was it working with him as a band member in his capacity as lead guitarist, as opposed to Brian or Ron?*

RICHARDS: He was very reluctant to take any direction. I don't mean from the band, because we don't tell anybody what to play, but from the production end of it. Jimmy Miller used to go through reams of frustration, saying, "Tell the guy not to play there!" Meanwhile Mick is over there and he's just going to do what he's going to do. And so he did it.

MUSICIAN: *For years I went through a lot of frustration trying to get that ringing chordal sound you get on guitar. Finally, someone who worked with you told me the secret was that you used only five strings on your guitar and a special open tuning. What's the advantage of that kind of tuning and where'd it come from?*

RICHARDS: The advantage is that you can get certain drone notes going. It's an open G tuning, with the low E string removed and there's really only three notes you use. My favorite phrase about this style of playing is that all you need to play it is five strings, three notes, two fingers and one asshole. [general merriment] Actually, it's an old five-string banjo tuning that dates back to when the guitar began to replace the banjo in popularity after the first World War. It's called a Sears & Roebuck tuning sometimes because they started selling guitars then. The blacks used to buy them and just take the bottom string off and tune them like their banjos. It's also very good for slide work.

MUSICIAN: *Are there only a limited number of chord shapes to work with?*

RICHARDS: Obviously there's not as many shapes as in concert tuning, but there's an amazing number of augmented and diminished things you can do and basically still keep the same chord going and a lot of the notes ringing. It's roughly the same principle as the sitar without having the sympathetic strings, because you have the possibility, especially when you electrify an open G, of having those hanging notes that go through all the chord changes and still ring. [picking up guitar] See, if I remove this low E and retune from the bottom or fifth string, it's G, D, G, B, D.

MUSICIAN: *Why'd you start using it—boredom?*

RICHARDS: Yeah, in a sense. After playing just about every night for five years, I was no longer getting any "happy accidents." I knew my way around the guitar enough that I was starting to get locked into playing like myself. So open tuning was a kind of therapy in which I had to teach myself the instrument again in a new way.

MUSICIAN: *What was the first thing you wrote in an alternate tuning?*

RICHARDS: I started precisely around the time of *Beggar's Banquet*. "Street Fighting Man" was an early one and just before that "Jumpin' Jack Flash." [plays riff on guitar, shifts it slightly into Chicago blues-style vamp] The Everly Brothers got "Bye Bye Love" from working with that kind of riff, too.

MUSICIAN: *Are there any young bands in the United Kingdom that really impress you today?*

RICHARDS: Mick and I picked up on the Stray Cats before anybody else did and tried to sign them to the Stones' label. Brian Setzer's an excellent player and they're all nice guys. The Police are good old hands; I mean, Andy's from the same

era as I am. I thought their reworking of "Stand By Me," "Every Breath You Take," was a beautiful record. The basic thrust of the song is real Drifters, a classic pop sequence with an extra twist thrown in. And "Roxanne" was one of our big favorites during the 1978 tour.

MUSICIAN: *What about the Clash, who've been compared to the early Stones in terms of raw energy and approach, but who were quick to say they don't want to wind up like the Stones?*

RICHARDS: I don't know. I mean, I wouldn't want to end up like the Rolling Stones. Then again, I don't want to end up like the Clash, either. But the Rolling Stones haven't ended up yet. And we've never kicked anybody out of our band for ideological reasons. If that's the way they think, they should go back to the Politburo. That's my beef with the Clash. I don't really listen to them because I can't stand that kind of pseudo-intellectualism being wound into music. It's got nothing to do with essence.

MUSICIAN: *It's a shame that they may wind up spoiling something special through their self-righteousness. I agree.*

RICHARDS: You can even see people doing the opposite. Look at Jerry Lee Lewis. Here you're talking about a very religious man, a guy who grew up in church, and worries if he's the guy who took the left-handed path to show everybody how not to do it.

MUSICIAN: *The tragic thing is that he doesn't realize that many spiritual musicians from Asia and Africa consider rock and jazz to be some of our most effective connections with the sacred in mankind. With that premise in mind, what do you, in your heart, believe the role of the Stones to be in the greater scheme of things, if anything? What do they stand for, what contribution do they make?*

Stones Age Implements

Keith started out on Gibsons, but switched to Telecasters around the time of *Exile on Main Street*. "It's a real comfortable guitar for me, nice size and weight. And with the right one I can get the range I want because electronics have become sophisticated today." The "right one" is usually his black '75 Custom Telecaster, which Keith claims Meters guitarist Leo Nocentelli turned him on to in San Antonio. "He took me to this music store and there it was, a real gem amid all those late CBS models and Fender copies. It could have been made by Leo himself." He and Ronnie Wood have also gotten into using ESP Navigators, "because the balance between the nut and the bridge means you can really waggle 'em and they don't go out of tune." But his current fave is a brand-new, leather-covered custom job by Joseph Giselli. "He's an incredible craftsman," enthuses Keith. "The leather may seem a bit rockish, but it's not gonna take scratches or ruin like wood." There's also a slew of black Les Pauls from the '60s, a blonde '54 Telecaster and some Ted Newman Joneses and Dobys by Doug Young in the arsenal, as well as a few old Martin acoustics and Gibson Hummingbirds. "I've actually been using the Les Paul Junior more lately," he adds, "the three black Les Pauls being in the shop." Strings are Ernie Ball Regular Slinkys ("Sometimes in the studio I'll use a heavier gauge to get that nice, beefy tone for chord work"). Effects are by MXR, principally the Phase 100 and analog delay ("for that rockabilly feel"). Keith goes wireless onstage via Nady, with those crazy signals eventually emerging from Mesa Boogie amps. (Or, as Keith calls 'em, "Mesa BEW-gies.") Mick Jagger plays Adamas acoustics and early-'60s Gibson SGs and Les Paul SGs.

RICHARDS: That's a good question, and one I don't know if I can really answer. Looking at it over the years, I suppose that the Rolling Stones somehow reverberate to some currently universal vibrational note. And the basic thing is for us to respond to it and therefore have the response come back to us. It's difficult for those of us in the band to say what the Stones mean, because our view of the Stones is the most unique you can get. We've never seen ourselves play; we've never been able to sit back and say, "Ah, let's go see the Stones." Or even just buy a Stones album, and hear it fresh, 'cause we'd just sit around and say, "We should have done this or that."

MUSICIAN: *Do you see yourselves mirroring society at some level?*

RICHARDS: Yes, but something gets processed through the machinery of us being the Rolling Stones, of being thrown into the arena as public figures.

MUSICIAN: *One of the hazards of being a public figure for you seems to be getting punched out by Chuck Berry.*

RICHARDS: Oh, yeah, he gave me a black eye backstage in New York. I'd come up behind him and said, "Berry, what's happening?" And BAM, he turned around and let me have it. I saw him in the L.A. airport recently and he said, "I'm real sorry about all that; I didn't recognize you." I was just very proud of the fact that I hadn't gone down.

MUSICIAN: *Your vocals have gotten stronger and more confident over the years. Would you like to sing more often with the band?*

RICHARDS: I've always enjoyed singing, but that wouldn't leave Mick with much to do.

MUSICIAN: *True, the tambourine is a limited medium of expression. Did you ever have any formal vocal training?*

RICHARDS: I used to sing in a choir at Westminster Abbey.

MUSICIAN: *Right, Keith Richards, the choir boy. They'll never buy it, Keith.*

RICHARDS: No, I'm serious! I was a soprano in a hot choir for four or five years. We used to get off from school and get free trips to London to play festivals. The three of us who were sopranos used to do the solo down the aisle of Westminster Abbey with the cassocks and the whole bit. And the funny thing is that all three of us were the biggest hoods in the school. Then my voice broke and they kicked me out. That was my first taste of show business. [chuckles]

MUSICIAN: *Another thing Bill Wyman told us was that you were nicer and more introverted than your image would indicate.*

RICHARDS: [shyly] We all are....

MUSICIAN: *Is there a "Keith" you project, maybe subconsciously, so the world can focus on that while you live your own life?*

RICHARDS: No, at least not consciously. There is an image projected that people come for and take away with them and give to their readers if they're journalists, and obviously there's a lot of me in that image. I've never tried consciously to project it, but there's not really much you can do about it. It's like a little shadow person that you live with. In some situations, I'll realize, "Uh, no, these people expect me to do a real Keith Richards..." and sometimes it's quite funny.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever worry about...?*

RICHARDS: As long as you're aware of it, it's something to play with. I'd only get worried if I really became like Keith Richards... whoever he is. [laughs] ☐

JAGGER from page 59

Though you can't be totally new all the time. I like to graft the new onto the old. I don't wanna be a dinosaur, stuck in one era. I don't wanna be in 1969, because we're not living in 1969. I did some great things then, there was a great movie. But you can't recreate that. I don't want to recycle those memories. Not in new material.

MUSICIAN: *What would you say is your greatest gift or talent?*

JAGGER: I think one of the contributions of myself and Keith, and the Rolling Stones, was that maybe we helped build or expand the framework of pop that the music sits on today. That's the long term. Short term, it's probably as a performer that people think of me.

MUSICIAN: *You once said that onstage you could become 11 or 12 years old. Do you still feel that way?*

JAGGER: I think you can be the whole audience. You have to grasp that mentality, and the idea of having fun, run the gamut of emotions—what they feel and are thinking. Of course, as you get more experience and as they know you from other incarnations, you have to be all those things too.

MUSICIAN: *Do you consider yourself spiritual or religious?*

JAGGER: Spiritual, but not a deep born-again Christian or a Buddhist who rings bells or anything. I do have moral and spiritual standards that I don't want to transgress, though I might have pushed them a little when I was younger [smiles] and didn't realize what they were. I wouldn't do it now.

I mean, I'll go for almost anything in a song if I think it's good—'cause I'll write it from the standpoint of someone else. Then I can show the subject in its bad light. There are uncomfortable subjects, but you don't have to imply that you're endorsing it. You have to be able to write around it, from the point of view of someone else. There were certain songs on *Dirty Work* that were done that way.

But I don't see the point of endorsing things for shock value. There are lots of writers, young writers in England who like to do that. Well, good luck—when you're young that's what you do—but I don't have to. Shock value can be useful, but it has to be written from the right standpoint. And without condescending to your audience, you have to realize that they don't always want to listen to what the song is always about—like "Let's Spend the Night Together."

MUSICIAN: *In recent years it seemed as if you were getting more interested in movies than in music. But some of those projects fell through, and now you've refocused your energy toward music.*

JAGGER: Movies are very fragile. I'd like to do those projects but they're very time-consuming. Probably this album refocused me a lot toward developing musically and concentrating on one thing. I'll probably continue pretty intensely with music for the next year, and after that if I could have a break I will. I'd like to be other things besides a rock musician. Not that it's a bad thing. But as to what, I'd rather not say, because until you do it it's rather all froufrou. [mimics a bore] "Yes, I'd like to breed hunting birds in Saudi Arabia."

MUSICIAN: *You once said you were born happy. Do you believe in genetic fate?*

JAGGER: I think you're influenced by a very strong genetic makeup—a sense of humor, for instance—if you're not scarred early on. If you are, there's not much you can do. Some people seem to be genetically untogether, or unhappy. I'm kind of lucky, really.

MUSICIAN: *What I mean is, do you feel this is what you were meant to do?*

JAGGER: I think I would have been capable of doing other things, but probably in the same vein, writing and performing. If rock 'n' roll hadn't existed, I probably would have been an actor, or a writer, a movie director or something. It would have involved similar things. But, you know, rock 'n' roll got me very hooked, very young. [laughs] So there I was.

MUSICIAN: *What's your motivation at this point?*

JAGGER: I have a lot of interests but music is the main thing. And I like performing, which I haven't done a lot of recently. I like creating. And I do it for fun, and I get lots of fun out of it and... dare I say, "satisfaction"? ☐



BILL WYMAN
ON
THE LIFE AND
TIMES OF
THE

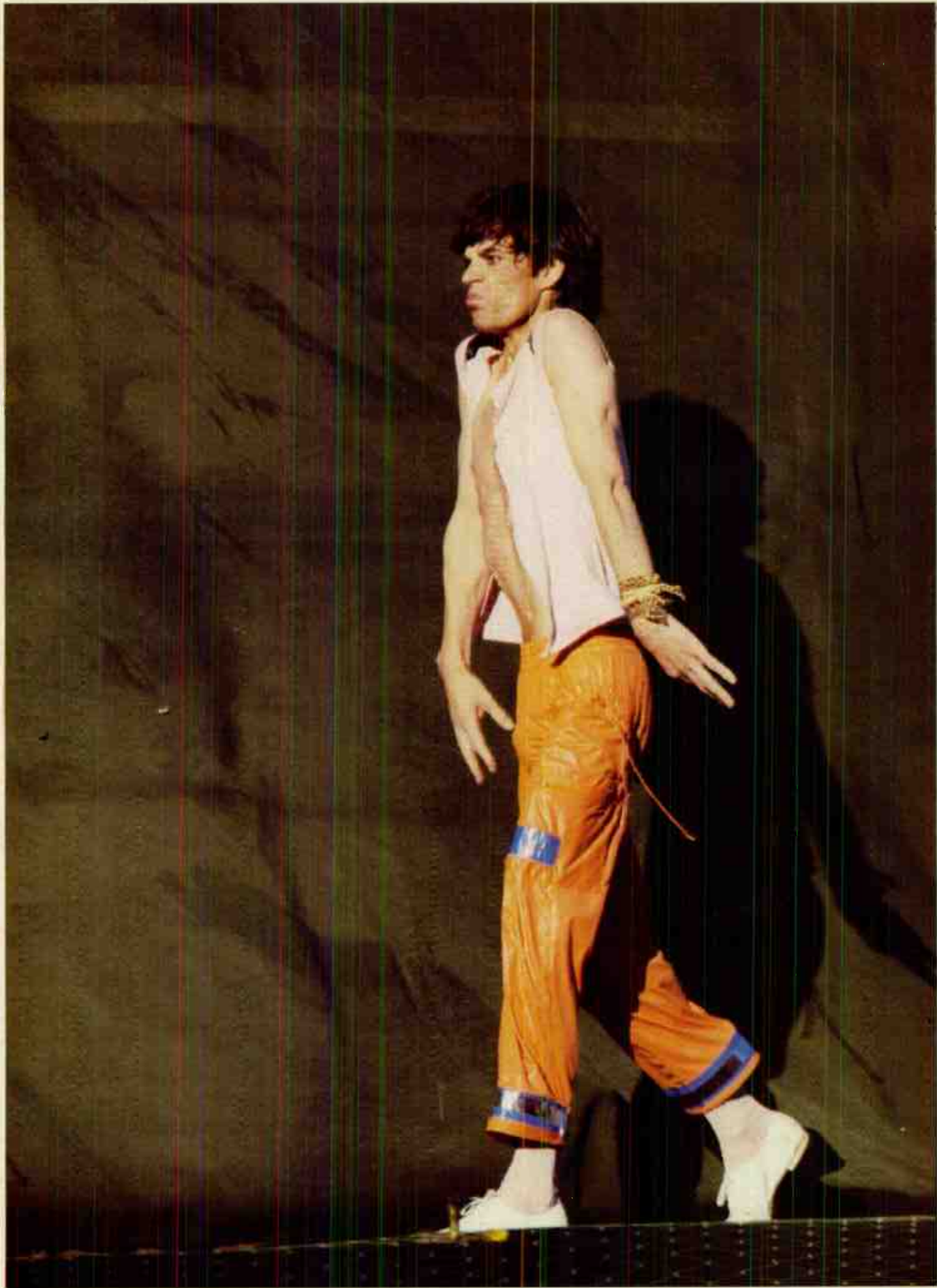
ROLLING STONES

By Pete Fornatale and Vic Garbarini

I guess the last thing most of us expected at this point was a great Stones album, but it looks like that's what's come along. By now it's apparent that *Tattoo You* is easily their best effort since *Exile on Main Street*—though in terms of style and direction it can more readily be seen as a stripped-down, modernized successor to *Sticky Fingers*. In either case, that leaves almost a decade during which the World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band spent an inordinate amount of time wandering in the deserts of disco and decadence. But why

quibble? The Stones are back with an album that reaffirms the rock 'n' roll verities of directness, intensity and simplicity that earned them the title in the first place. But amidst the hosannas a few sour notes can be heard: Mick and Keith were reportedly feuding in the studio again, while persistent reports in the English press had bassist Bill Wyman exiting the band in the near future. Jagger himself was seen by more than one member of the press speaking with Busta Cherry Jones about handling the bass chores on the current tour. By his own

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA



MICHAEL ZAGARIS

admission, Wyman has always been somewhat of an outsider as far as the rest of the band is concerned. Long known as the “quiet Stone,” Bill has been branching out recently with a number of projects, including: a solo album on A&M which yielded a hit single, production chores on two blues and jazz records, and a book of photographs about his neighbor, Marc Chagall. In the following interview Wyman delivers on his promise to “set the record straight on a few things.” It’s a remarkably candid conversation that offers a revealing glimpse into the seclusive, often reclusive, world of the Rolling Stones.

As you will learn in this interview, Bill considers himself the historian of the band. As such, his reminiscences have a detachment and objectivity that are surprising as well as revealing. At the end of our conversation, I couldn’t imagine how Bill ever earned his reputation as the “quiet Stone.”

MUSICIAN: *Tattoo You is being hailed as your best work since Exile on Main Street. Being on the inside, can you feel it as a clear step forward?*

WYMAN: I think of it as the culmination of a process that began with *Some Girls*, and continued on through *Emotional Rescue* to this album; we’re pretty well grounded now.

MUSICIAN: *What was it that initiated this process?*

WYMAN: Well, *Some Girls* was a kind of revitalization, what with Woody [Ron Wood] joining and giving all that bubble and bounce that he’s got. *Emotional Rescue* wasn’t really a step forward or backward... it was moving along in the same line, but there were a few things on there, as well as on *Some Girls*, that I wasn’t keen on. But as I say, the new album is basically a consolidation of the gains made on the previous two.

MUSICIAN: *For me, Tattoo You works because it’s such an effective reaffirmation of rock ‘n’ roll basics and values that you guys have always stood for. How have you managed to stay in touch with that over the years?*

WYMAN: It’s probably because we listened to and played so much early blues material. Musically it was very simple, so you had to put a lot of feeling into it to make it work. Whenever we rehearse and learn new numbers, every other thing we play is a jam on an old Elmore James or Muddy Waters or Chuck Berry thing. I know a lot of people say, “What are you playing that old stuff for?” But we’re not doing it for sentimental reasons—we’re doing it to retain the feeling of those blues and R&B things.

MUSICIAN: *So putting that kind of quality into the basics is the key?*

WYMAN: Yeah, you can’t have everybody flying off everywhere and showing off your chops. Besides, our chops aren’t always that good! I think the great thing about the Stones is the simplicity of it—that slightly ragged rhythm that always sounds like it might fall apart by the next bar, but never does. We always have scrappy endings; we play with a kind of pulse that fluctuates between being slightly behind and slightly in front of the beat, but it swings like that. And it works for us. I hate bands that play on eighths or sixteenths; there’s no feel there, nothing seems to be coming from inside them.

MUSICIAN: *That’s why jazz fusion rarely works for me: It misses the essential power of rock on one hand, and the transcendence of great jazz on the other.*

WYMAN: Like the bands Chick Corea puts together: They’re wonderful musicians—great solos and all that—but when it’s all over you don’t give it a second thought. That’s always been apparent in a lot of those technically brilliant bands—like Emerson, Lake and Palmer—that I never really dug... there’s nothing to grab on to.

MUSICIAN: *Meanwhile, your own single “Je Suis Un Rock Star” is topping the charts in Britain and Europe, and is due for release*

here shortly. How does it feel to have a hit single as a solo artist after all these years as a Stone?

WYMAN: It’s really exciting—it’s like the first time we as a group had a hit; everything feels new again. We all have our insecurities and doubts about whether we as individuals are as good alone as our position in a famous band implies we should be. We all feel this way—Mick, Keith, Charlie, Ron—so you always try to do something outside the band to build your confidence and assuage those doubts. I’d attempted that before with two solo albums, but they were done much more just for the fun of it, and to learn a bit about producing and arranging.

MUSICIAN: *Were you discouraged by the lukewarm reception they’d received?*

WYMAN: Yeah, after that I said, “Let’s just forget about this; I’m not meant to be doing solo stuff.” I didn’t want to face that same non-response again. But then this song came up and I did a demo, and everybody said, “You’ve got to record that.” So I did... reluctantly, I might add!

MUSICIAN: *Why don’t you contribute material to the Stones? You can obviously write, but I can’t recall anything of yours appearing on a Stones album since Their Satanic Majesties Request.*

WYMAN: Firstly, I don’t think I write songs that are appropriate for the band. And secondly, we only record once every 18 months or so; and Mick and Keith have such a tremendous amount of material that there really isn’t much room left over. Woody gets a bit in here and there, but he lives in the same country as they do, so he hangs out a bit more; I live in the south of France.

MUSICIAN: *Was the new album recorded live in the studio, or did most of you lay down your parts separately?*

WYMAN: No, we never do that. We always lay down the backing tracks together, meaning drums, bass, two guitars and piano; and then do the overdubbing later.

MUSICIAN: *There were some reports in the press recently about Mick and Keith feuding in the studio, and even erasing each other’s tracks. Insiders tell me this kind of thing has happened at least once before, at the time of Let It Bleed when Keith allegedly erased Mick’s vocal on “You Got the Silver” and replaced it with his own. He then supposedly told Jagger that the tape had been lost. I’ve heard the “lost/erased” version with Mick singing “You Got the Silver,” but that doesn’t really prove anything. So I have two questions: Does this kind of craziness go on, and who has the final say as producer of a Stones album?*

WYMAN: The story is that Mick and Keith are the producers. They work together on the basic tracks, but from then on they work separately and form their own opinions. So you end up with various mixes that Keith’s done, as well as alternate mixes that Mick has done of the same material. At that point they haggle out which versions of each tune are best. I’ve never heard of them erasing each other’s tapes [chuckles]—it’s more a question of fighting it out over which version of any given song will appear on the album.

MUSICIAN: *Incidentally, your bass playing on the new album is superb, especially those lines on “Hang Fire”...*

WYMAN: Yeah, it’s nice that they turned me and Charlie up for a change! During the last few albums they’ve really pulled out the rhythm section much more. It used to be that only the bass drum would stand out of that mono-ish mix they’d go for.

MUSICIAN: *Isn’t that because you’ve been bringing in someone to re-mix the tracks who used to work in disco?*

WYMAN: Yeah, but I can never remember his bloody name... and we’ve also been using Chris Kimsey from *Some Girls* on forward. He’s considered an expert on recording bass and drum sounds, and it’s been such a relief to have an engineer like Chris around, because there’s nothing more frustrating



Although he has a hit in Britain and Europe, Wyman says press accounts of his retirement from the Stones are overinflated.

“They think I’m not as interested in the band as they are because I don’t want to hang out all night long jamming or listening to records. I can’t live like that. I get frustrated and tense just hanging out in a room getting drunk.”

than coming into the studio after playing what you thought was a great track and then hearing a muddy, blurry sound that doesn’t cut it. Oh—Bob Clearmountain—that’s the guy I was trying to remember before. We’ve been using him to mix because he seemed to get that little extra something out of each track.

MUSICIAN: *Can you clear up this confusion in the press about the possibility of your leaving the band? Did Mick actually ask Busta Cherry Jones to replace you?*

WYMAN: When that original story came out I let everybody know it was a misquote, and that I was very upset about it. But then every few months another magazine would mention it, and then about four months ago a magazine claimed they had just done an exclusive interview with me—which was completely unfounded—and reported exactly the same thing from 18 months previous. So I slapped a writ on them, and they apologized to me personally, but of course that raised doubts in the band once more. As for the band talking to other bass players: I was informed that when those rumors were spreading various people phoned the band to see if a replacement was needed; and that once the band was assured that I

was still in the band—that I wasn’t about to leave and I never was—then it was all forgotten about. Mick said he had a conversation with the guy, but that he contacted Mick first. That’s the way I was told it. . . maybe people are telling fibs, I don’t know. If it was done, it was done under cover. You have to ask Mick.

MUSICIAN: *I get the impression from people I’ve talked to who’ve worked with the band over the years that this kind of thing has happened before. For instance, I was told by an eyewitness that Mick came into the Stones office one day in 1969 and announced that both Brian Jones and you were leaving the band—it wasn’t clear from the way it was told whether you two were quitting or being fired—and that Mick was looking for a black Motown bass player as a replacement. Is that story true? Is your reputation as an “outsider” in the band justified?*

WYMAN: I don’t know about that incident you mentioned, but I think it could possibly be true. I’ve always had the feeling—whether it’s actually true or false—that other members of the band have been unsure of me.

MUSICIAN: *Unsure of you in what sense?*

WYMAN: Because I live and treat things very normally, and they often misinterpret that as detachment. They think I’m not as interested in the band as they are because I don’t want to hang out all night long jamming or listening to records. I can’t live like that; I get frustrated and tense just hanging out in a room getting drunk. They always regarded it as a threat in a way, and weren’t sure about me. It sounds silly after all these years, but we still don’t really know each other. . . Within the band there’s always been an element of uncertainty: Is Mick going to go into movies? Is Charlie going to join a jazz band? So because I detach myself from them they think I’m not



Disillusioned by the excesses of stoned arena fans, the Stones included more intimate dates at small clubs on their last tour.

interested or don't want to be part of them, which is totally untrue. I just want to have the "other" part of me separate from that, but they always saw that as a threat.

MUSICIAN: *Still, there have been periods where you seemed to become dissociated with the band musically as well. I'm thinking of Exile on Main Street in particular, where you didn't play bass on almost half the album.*

WYMAN: Actually, there were only four cuts that I wasn't on. Out of 20 tracks. Mick made a mistake with the credits on two of the cuts, he listed Mick Taylor or somebody as playing bass on "Loving Cup" and one other track. It was really me.

MUSICIAN: *What happened with the other four?*

WYMAN: It's quite simple really: We were working in France and the studio was in Keith's house. So when Keith would suddenly get an inspiration for a song on a day we weren't recording, like he did with "Happy," he'd just record it then and there with whoever was around, or do the parts himself. Then when we were all together and we listened to it, we decided it was fine as it was, and there was no need to do it over. So there was no exclusion involved. We tend to fill in for each other; and the bass is easy to fill in for. If Charlie wasn't there it'd be difficult. If Mick isn't around he can always add his vocals the next day. If Keith isn't there—as he isn't on many tracks—he can overdub his parts later. I can never overdub, because you've got to get that rhythm track down with bass and drums together. So I'm at a disadvantage in that my instrument has to be present to build the foundation whether I'm there to play it or not. Yet if someone has filled in for me, I can't change it or overdub later on. Often when that happens I shift over to another instrument like keyboards or synthesizer. Brian and I used to do that all the time in the old days—and come to think

"You can't have everybody flying off everywhere and showing off your chops. Besides, our chops aren't always that good! I think the great thing about the Stones is the simplicity of it."

of it, I play synthesizer and three other instruments on "Heaven" on the new album. That's just me, Mick and Charlie on that track—only nobody realizes it because there are no credits on the album.

MUSICIAN: *Why not? It seems a shame that you'd get someone of the caliber of Sonny Rollins to guest on sax, and then not bother to credit him. Whose idea was it to get him involved?*

WYMAN: Yeah, I asked Mick about that and he said he just hadn't got around to doing it this time. As for Sonny, I think that was Ian Stewart's idea basically, though I think Charlie had a hand in there, too. He plays some wonderful notes on those chords. There's some talk that he may appear onstage with us a few times during the tour.

MUSICIAN: *You've been described to me, on more than one occasion, as the historian of the Stones. Is that an accurate description?*

WYMAN: Yeah, I am, because I'm the only one who really cares about it; no one else gives a damn, really. Charlie Watts gives his gold records away to his chauffeur, or to the taxi driver who runs him to the airport; he doesn't care about those things. So I've compiled this whole mass of stuff which I store in various

places and refer to occasionally, because it really pisses me off that every time a book or article comes out the dates are wrong... the facts... everything's wrong! And one of these days I'm going to put the record straight.

MUSICIAN: *In that case, I'd like to ask you about the Stones, present and past. What's your perception of the difference between the public image of Mick Jagger and the real person?*

WYMAN: Well... I... [phone rings]

MUSICIAN: *Saved by the bell.*

WYMAN: Alright, Mick. It's difficult because I know both, and they both merge into his character for me—the sublime and the ridiculous! [laughs] He is totally different in public than he is in private life. Unfortunately, he seems to think—as most of us probably do—that there's a way you react in public, and a way you react at home. Sometimes he carries his public persona over into his private life, which gets to be a real pain in the ass, because you know he's full of shit. So you have to remind him and bring him down... *Come on, Mick!* And then he comes back to normal.

MUSICIAN: *Specifically, how does it manifest?*

WYMAN: His voice changes, for one thing, and he starts talking with that pseudo-Southern accent. And sometimes in private he starts using a very rough, Cockney accent, which also is not his real voice. It's actually more like the way Charlie and I talk, dropping the h's and all that. He never talked like that before, because he came from a middle-class family and went to middle-class schools. I've got interviews with him on radio and television from the '60s where he's talking like the Queen does—"Oh, well, it's quite interesting to..." He's getting a bit like Peter Sellers: I don't think he knows which one is the real Mick Jagger. [laughs] It keeps the mystery going.

MUSICIAN: *I'd think that must be fortified by the fact he's surrounded by so many images of himself that at this point...*

WYMAN: Yeah, if one person walks into a crowded room he can change without even thinking about it. Keith can as well. I suppose we all do. Charlie doesn't.

MUSICIAN: *Speaking of Charlie, there was an article in the paper last year which had this banner headline about Charlie Watts hating rock 'n' roll! Do you buy that?*

WYMAN: That was taken from an English article a few days before. They always misquote and sort of "overdo" what you say. He probably said something like "I don't like rock 'n' roll," but he didn't mean like rock 'n' roll music. He meant he didn't like all the things that go with rock 'n' roll—living in a hotel, constant traveling, etc. He much prefers to play jazz, where he can just get dropped off at a club and jam with some people, and then go home. That's what he does a lot of now. But I know he does like rock 'n' roll as music, because he listens to a lot of it, a lot of new-wave stuff and everything. English papers are terrible that way. They just abbreviate what you say, and précis it down to such little pieces that it becomes totally different from what you intended.

MUSICIAN: *Is that how that rumor about you retiring got started last year?*

WYMAN: The thing I said about retiring? Yeah, it escalated into something amazing. What actually happened was the guy said, "How long do you think the band is gonna last?" And I said, "Well, probably a couple of years." We've been saying that since '62. So he says, "How long do you think you're gonna go on?" And I answered, "Well, if we do last a few more years we'll be at our twentieth anniversary in December of '82, and if the band is still functioning then—which it may not, I don't know—then I think that would be a good time to stop, while we're still up there, and then start to do something else. Because you can't play rock 'n' roll forever." Then that escalated into how I was quitting the band on *that* day in '82, and I didn't like Mick

and Keith and so on. I felt a bit rotten, you know, the way it was put; it looked like I was being bitchy... and we're not like that.

MUSICIAN: *I'm entitled to one clichéd question this afternoon, and here it is: What is Keith Richards really like?*

WYMAN: Shy, introverted. He's very nice, really. He can be a real bust, though. [laughs] If he's in his regular mood, he's great. But if he's in a bad mood you can't be in a good mood with him, because he kind of dominates the mood of the room. Maybe he had a hard couple of hours at home, or his car broke down, or he lost his favorite cassette and he doesn't really want to talk, so you just leave it for a few hours and then he's all right. As I say, he's very introverted and to overcome that he makes the appearance of being very carefree and brash, flailing his arms and rubbing his hair when he comes into the room. He's a bit insecure, I think.

MUSICIAN: *Fans tend to worry about him. Is that worry misplaced or...*

WYMAN: No, I tend to worry about him sometimes! So I don't think it's misplaced at all. But we're not entitled to worry about him, really, because he doesn't worry about us worrying about him, does he? He's his own man—he is what he is. Sometimes it's a little difficult to communicate with him, that's all. Because he does keep things inside and burn them up inside himself. It's a bit too personal to go digging in there, because he won't talk about personal things.

MUSICIAN: *Has he always been like that?*

WYMAN: Yeah, except for the first three years of the band he's always been a little bit difficult to relate to. Maybe because we're totally different people. For instance, Keith will come into a hotel room and in 15 minutes it looks like it's been a gypsy

Brian Jones, who originally formed the Stones, found it difficult to deal with the public's growing preoccupation with Mick.





England's Newest Hitmakers: "I'm going to make you Rolling Stones wish you'd never come over here," said James Brown.

camp for the last 20 years. He just *makes* things look like that. He throws things around. I couldn't live like that. I could stay in a hotel room 20 years and it would still look like it did the first day I got there. And Woody's exactly the same as Keith.

MUSICIAN: Was Woody destined to be a Stone? How's he doing from a group standpoint?

WYMAN: I think he's getting too much like Keith. And one Keith's enough. To have a Keith in the band is great, but to have a Keith *and* a Keith Mark II gets a little strange for me. Musically, he's fine. But it's like Keith and the shadow, in a way. Woody wasn't quite like that when he joined.

MUSICIAN: How was he different then?

WYMAN: He was just all fun and games and laughing. He united the band much more when we were kind of drifting apart, personality-wise. It's very frustrating to be in the same band that *long*, because what you liked in 1963, you don't necessarily like in 1981. So there's a lot of things that get left out, that you can't deal with in the same band. That's why Woody does solo albums, and Mick Taylor probably got very frustrated, and Brian Jones, too. So Charlie has to play with a jazz band, and I had to do some solo albums and some producing, and Mick did movies. You *do* have other things that you want to do. When we all came into this band, we probably never thought it'd last more than two or three years, and suddenly it's a third of your life. That's the whole thing about leaving after 20 years, because it's enough for me. No matter how great it is. Wonderful to do it, and be in that band, but I've got so many other things that I want to do in my life. I don't want to still be going out on a stage in a wheelchair in 10 years' time.

MUSICIAN: Chuck Berry still seems to be going strong...

WYMAN: His composing, yeah. But he hasn't done many really

"Sometimes Mick carries his public persona over into his private life, which gets to be a real pain in the ass, because you know he's full of crap. So you have to remind him and bring him down."

good ones lately. I haven't really bought his records in the last 10 years, because they always seemed like lazy attempts to rehash, unfortunately. But he's still great onstage. And I do hear he uses good musicians these days to back him sometimes. That was always the failing with him; he was always so fantastic, and yet he wouldn't pay that extra little bit of cash to get some good musicians behind him, so that he could have a *great* show. He'd just grab anybody for 10 bucks a night. It focused everybody's attention on him, because the rest of the band was no good. I've always found that top people have always wanted to produce the best show that they could, and not just knock it off like that.

MUSICIAN: I think he has a lot of anger and resentment...

WYMAN: Yeah, absolutely. He's another person who's very hard to talk to. One day he'll be very nice; the next day he won't even speak to you. We must have earned him a few dollars... as he probably earned us a few, I'm sure! *[laughs]* I mean, he's always been an idol and a god of ours, and sometimes he's not polite enough even to say hello. And when Keith wanted to play with him—when he went onstage with Ian Stewart and a few people in California somewhere to back him—Chuck Berry threw 'em all off... because they were playing better than he

was, probably. Physically, he told 'em to leave the stage. What a downer that must have been. I think he was a bit resentful of the applause that Keith was getting.

MUSICIAN: You mentioned Mick Taylor earlier. Do you think he regrets having left the band?

WYMAN: Oh yeah, he wanted to rejoin a year later. He kept ringing up and asking if we wanted another guitarist to tour.

MUSICIAN: Why did he leave?

WYMAN: I think he was resentful about not being able to contribute songs, or getting credits on things that he thought he had contributed to. He was trying to assert his strength a bit more than it really was. He was a new member and therefore obliged to accept things in a certain way, because they had been like that for 10 years. And I think he was being pushed by some people to be a stronger member of the band, rather than laid back like Charlie and I are. It was like a poker game, where you only had a pair, and you bluffed. And the bluff was called, and that was the end of it, because once someone says, "I'm leaving," you don't reinstate them again when they feel like it. It was a very inconvenient time he did it, and I don't think he did it very politely.

MUSICIAN: It was just before you went into the studio. . .

WYMAN: It was the day before we went in to cut an album, yeah. We finished up that album using all kinds of people that just dropped by; it was very inconvenient for us. We all really liked him a lot, but he did tend to get very, very moody and frustrated. It's the frustration that he didn't deal with outside the band, you see. Like I was saying before, I had many frustrations, but I dealt with them by doing other things outside the band. You have to do that. He didn't, and in the end he had to leave to do some of the things that he wanted to. . . which he

could have done within the band, with no effort at all. And it shows, because it took him three, four years to cut an album, which was the first thing he was gonna do as soon as he left the band. And then it wasn't a success, so I'm sure he wished he hadn't left. I dunno. Maybe. . .

MUSICIAN: These days how do you view his overall contribution to the band?

WYMAN: It was a great period in our history because he brought something fresh and new—some brilliant playing—to the band.

MUSICIAN: How was the band different from when Brian Jones was alive?

WYMAN: Brian was an experimenter. He could pick up any instrument that was lying around the studio and figure out how to use it. He managed to get "Paint It Black" out of a sitar, and "Lady Jane" from a dulcimer. Marimbas, dulcimer, stand-up harp—he'd find a line on them that sounded reasonably correct, and he'd just do it. He and I in particular liked to experiment with whatever we could find. I used to play organ pedals for the bass, vibes, marimbas and more recently some synthesizer things, like "Heaven" on the new album. Just little touches. So Brian could do all that, but he lost the ability to progress on his original instrument, rhythm guitar, and sometimes lead. He compensated by playing other instruments, but suddenly we only had one guitar player. And there was no interplay between Keith and Brian, which was really funky in the early days. When Mick Taylor came he could also play just about anything, but he didn't want to because he wanted to be a lead guitarist. Besides, we didn't need him to because by that time we were using people like Nicky Hopkins and Billy Preston on piano or Ray Cooper on percussion. We

Each member of the Stones has done other projects outside the band, venting possible resentments or artistic frustrations.



were bringing in really good people to do the things that we used to have to do. You never thought of using session musicians in the early days, just like you never thought of jamming with people onstage.

MUSICIAN: *Why not?*

WYMAN: It just wasn't done in our band. It was in America but not in the Rolling Stones. Just our concept of things. So, Mick Taylor came along and played fantastic guitar, but he wanted to do other things and he didn't have the facilities to do it within the band at that time.

MUSICIAN: *Did you find yourself in the same predicament?*

WYMAN: Yeah, I wasn't playing other instruments and messing around anymore. So I had to work out some of my own things on the side. Successful or not, it didn't matter; it was just a question of getting them out of my system.

MUSICIAN: *When you think about Brian Jones now, is it likely to be a happy or a sad memory?*

WYMAN: Happy, definitely. He was an innovator in England in '62-'63 when no one knew about blues... I mean *real* blues like Elmore James and John Lee Hooker. He was the first guy to play bottleneck slide guitar in England; nobody knew anything about that there before Brian. And he was quite good at it—he knew every Jimmy Reed and Howlin' Wolf record. He and Keith would sit around and listen to those albums and work out every last note perfectly, and that's what we used to play.

MUSICIAN: *Did Brian reach his own point of frustration within the band?*

WYMAN: There came a time when he wanted to write for the band, but he couldn't. He was just not able to produce a song for the Rolling Stones, which frustrated him. Remember, he was the leader of the band in the beginning: Brian Jones formed the Rolling Stones, not Mick Jagger. And Brian got more fan mail during the first year-and-a-half than anybody else. When the limelight went away from him and Mick started getting all the attention, Brian found it difficult to deal with.

MUSICIAN: *When did the attention start to shift to Mick?*

WYMAN: When we went to America. In the U.S. the public goes straight for the singer; it's the only place in the world where they say "Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones." In the rest of the world it's simply "the Rolling Stones." The band. So Mick got the attention and became the "leader," as it were. Because he was a bit... egotistical in that way. Anyway, I have good memories of Brian because I always used to hang out with him. In the early days we were always the ones who went back to the clubs and were pulling girls, while the others just stayed back in the hotel and went to bed or something. Yeah, Brian was all right... he could be a real pain in the ass, as well, if he didn't have his way. But everybody's got their bad side.

MUSICIAN: *I guess it goes with the territory. I mean, I imagine that you can very easily start believing your press.*

WYMAN: Sure, lots of new bands do that. They have one hit and they have to walk into a rock club and find some way to announce themselves. They wear flamboyant clothes, shout about, knock a table over, so you'll look around and say, "Oh, yeah, that's So-and-So from What's-Their-Name." They think they have to do that to gain attention. It happens to everybody to some extent; it just depends on how you handle it.

MUSICIAN: *So how did the Rolling Stones deal with celebrity when it arrived?*

WYMAN: The first time we ever had an article in an English music paper was March or April of '63, in the *New Record Mirror*. We were in town shopping one day and we bought one and there was our picture with the headline, "New Rhythm and Blues Band in Richmond Driving People Crazy," or whatever it was. So when I went home on the train that night I neatly folded the magazine so that the picture was uppermost, and I sat

there with it on my lap waiting to be recognized. That's how naive I was!... And it didn't happen. [*laughs*] And then when it finally did start happening I wished to hell it hadn't because it's so boring, with people bugging you all the time for this and that.

MUSICIAN: *At least you had the sense to be cool about it.*

WYMAN: Yeah, I guess some people in that situation would have run up and down that platform saying, "Ey!!! This is me, everybody, this is me!!!" And some people would have just folded it up, put it in their pocket, and looked out the window at the view and not even thought about it. It's just in the way it gets to you.

MUSICIAN: *July 5, 1969 must have been an emotional day. On the one hand, you were introducing a new guitarist at that Hyde Park Free Concert, and on the other hand, it was just two days after Brian's death...*

WYMAN: We came very close to canceling the whole thing. Brian had left the band about a month before, and he'd come around to tell us that he was getting a band together with Alexis Korner. He was really excited about his new project, and he was kind of hanging out with us a bit. Then we got the news while we were recording in London and, of course, we all thought we should cancel the Hyde Park thing. Then we realized that Brian would have probably wanted us to go on—it had been announced for weeks in the papers, and they were estimating there'd be half a million people there. So we went ahead, basically to keep our minds off what happened, I suppose. We had a photo of Brian on the stage and... it was exactly like he was there. There was a special atmosphere, and Mick said that poem and they released 10,000 butterflies. It was the most peaceful concert—there was no trouble, no problems. And afterwards gangs and gangs of kids went around and cleaned up, and we promised everyone who came back with a sack of litter a free album. By the next morning, apart from a few broken branches, you wouldn't have known anything about it, it was so well done. It was just the complete opposite of Altamont, which was the other end of the scale.

MUSICIAN: *Well, it's an obligatory question, so we might as well deal with it. What does hindsight bring to mind about that horrible day? Was there a lesson to be learned?*

WYMAN: Don't do free concerts in America. [*laughs*] Don't say thank you... just jump on the plane and wave. We'd had such a good tour that we felt we'd make a gesture to the American people and just do a concert for all the people that couldn't make the concerts and wanted to, and could hitchhike there, and didn't have to pay money and all that. It was a shame that that became the focal point of the entire tour, because if you ever talk about the '69 tour, all anybody remembers of it is not all the great shows we had for seven or eight weeks, it's the Altamont program. And even that's out of all proportion, because there were an estimated 400,000 people there—some people say more—and the trouble was all in the front. I would say 80 percent of the audience didn't even know anything about the trouble, because they couldn't see it, they weren't aware of it, except that we kept starting and stopping playing. But it was focused around 40 people in a crowd of 400,000, so that was really out of proportion, too. It was just very unfortunate.

MUSICIAN: *Why did it become such a media "execution"?*

WYMAN: American kids can't just go and listen to music, can they? They have to get stoned. Or they have to get drunk. They can't just go and have fun. And you get the violent ones, you see a few of them all the time before you go on the stage. Then they're on a stretcher out in the back there having OD'd on something, and they never even see the concert. It's like the kids that go to rock concerts in Germany and Holland and just start fighting. They're not interested in the music, and it's

a shame, because it always spoils it for everybody else—the good people.

MUSICIAN: *Was it a disillusionment with arenas and stadiums that led to those club appearances in '76 at El Macombo in Toronto?*

WYMAN: We wanted to do some live music, of a really different nature, in a club where we could get a really good atmosphere and a bit of audience reaction. Just basic blues stuff like we did in the early days on our live album. It was an idea that we'd had for some years, but we found it very uneconomical to tour America and play small places. In the old days, when you traveled in a van and you lived in tiny hotels two in a room, you could afford to do small clubs. But touring America and staying in suites at the Plaza, and having the best food and good wine and restaurants, means your expenses can reach \$5 million—and you lose \$100,000 or \$200,000 each. But it's the only place in the world where you can actually make some money from touring: Europe you can't. England you can't. Australia's really hard, and... we *have* to make some money, especially Charlie and me, because we don't write songs. So the only money we physically earn is from record royalties, which I can't complain about, but if you only do one record every two years, that cuts it down. It sounds very mercenary, but it's the facts of life. It's essential that we make some money on *some* tours, and as we only tour America every three years, it's difficult to do little clubs. But what we did in '78 was we split up. We did Philadelphia, J.F.K. Stadium with 110,000 people, then we came into New York and did the Palladium with 3,000. That worked on that tour, and we had a lot of fun jumping from big to little all the time.

MUSICIAN: *What is the difference between being onstage at the Capitol in New Jersey, and the Palladium in New York, or some baseball stadium somewhere?*

WYMAN: First of all, you *know* that three-quarters of the kids are using binoculars in a big stadium, and you're just dots on the horizon. So you have to wear clothes not because they look good, but because they stand out—a *brilliant* red jacket—so that they can make out you're not an amplifier or something. When you're in a club it's smoky, and it's intense, and very personal. Like, in the El Macombo, the girls were grabbing our legs and crotches while we're playing, which adds a little bit to the show from our side. [chuckles]

MUSICIAN: *On the subject of records: In 1971, the band formed Rolling Stones Records. What was your hope for the label at the time, and do you feel that you've achieved it?*

WYMAN: At first we were not thinking of building a label that we could use for the other artists, but just one that we could control our own destinies with. Since then we've signed a couple of acts, but very sparingly because we haven't got the time to get involved. Mick and Keith wanted to sign Peter Tosh, and he was looking for a label. Fine. But just a few months after that I met someone in Barbados who was looking for a label, and I listened to a couple of records of his, a single and an early album. I was very excited about him, and I got in touch with Keith and Mick, and asked them what they thought about this guy. Keith loved him, but Mick said, "No, we don't really want another... reggae act." Or, "We can't have a reggae act on the label, because we just signed Peter Tosh." Which is a valid statement, right? I was very psyched about this guy, but we didn't sign him. And now he's having lots of big, big hits, in England—Eddy Grant. "Living on the Front Line" was a song he did, and "Hello, Africa"... oh, he's had three Top 10 records in England last year. Which is a kind of a shame, because there really is room for two acts...

MUSICIAN: *On May 1, 1975, you chose a rather unique way of announcing the tour for that year.*

WYMAN: The truck, yeah. [laughs]

MUSICIAN: *How did that happen?*

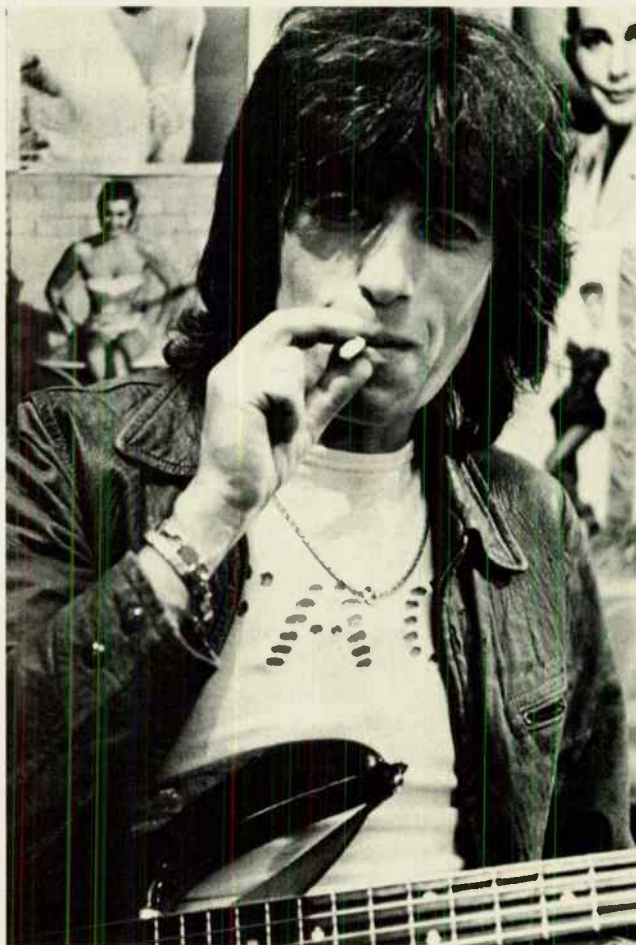
WYMAN: I don't know whose idea that was. Probably Mick's—he always comes up with these bad ideas that work. But it was quite fun to do. The sad thing was, when it came on TV they said we *obviously* weren't playing live—we were miming, to a record. Now, that was very annoying because we *were* playing live! It was raining and we were taking the risk of being electrocuted to *death*.

MUSICIAN: *While we're on the subject of television, how did you feel about those yearly ritual appearances by the Stones on the "Ed Sullivan Show"?*

WYMAN: Well, I think Ed Sullivan can be summed up really easily: Do you remember when the Supremes came on his show and it came time for him to make the announcement? He said, "Ahnd naow, ladies and gen'lmen, for your enjoyment, the... the... the..." and the curtains open and he says, "The *Girls!*" He had only one line to say every 10 minutes, but he couldn't handle it. Every time we were on the show he had to

Bill Wyman Equipment

"I used a wooden Dan Armstrong model onstage for the '75 and '78 tours—it's a light guitar that I feel comfortable with. I've been playing a Travis Bean bass in the studio since *Some Girls*. It's a specially made short-scale model, since I've got small arms and short arms. That's why I hold the instrument upright like I do—so I can reach the first fret without even having to bend an elbow; otherwise it's a real stretch. My strings are Rotosound, and I use a Mesa Boogie bass amp in the studio. We've all been using Ampeg amps in concert on the last few tours."



do four re-takes of whatever he was saying, "Heeeers the Rolling Stones with their new record...er...uh..." He must have been all right at one time. Otherwise he never would have gotten the show, right?

MUSICIAN: Was it difficult to put up with the censorship at the time? I'm thinking of the trouble they gave you about "Satisfaction" and "Let's Spend the Night Together."

WYMAN: If it was England we probably wouldn't have bothered to go through with it. But the "Sullivan Show" was quite important at the time, reached 60 million people or so, and it was our only shot since you had to agree not to do another big show one month before or after being on it. So they wanted to beep out a word in "Satisfaction," and they just wound up making everything that much worse. We were miming to the record and Mick was singing live, and when he came to the line, "Trying to make some girl!" they beeped it so it came out, "Trying to BEEP some girl," which made it so much worse because everybody's vivid imaginations were trying to figure out what he really said. [laughs] "What did he say?" "Did he say...fuck?" In the end it kind of helped our image in a way. [laughs] I mean, it's still talked about now, right?

MUSICIAN: Whatever happened to the now legendary Rock and Roll Circus film?

WYMAN: We weren't really satisfied with our performances on that—Mick, in particular, wasn't happy. We thought about reshooting our sequence, but it would have involved redoing the whole three- or four-day spectacle to preserve continuity, or else you would have seen the differences in lighting or whatever. And then we broke with Allen Klein, and to have done anything about *Rock and Roll Circus* at that point would have involved enormous legal hassles and negotiations about ownership. So in the end it was just shelved. Permanently.

MUSICIAN: It occurs to me that when it's the Stones' turn to do your version of *The Kids Are Alright*, you'll be the one to put it together.

WYMAN: No, because Mick doesn't like people to have that kind of freedom. He'd much rather be on top of all the Rolling Stones projects. Oh, I was involved in a project doing "The Black Box," which involved releasing some old material, but that was because Mick was too busy. So I took that over... a little thing like that.

MUSICIAN: Was the *TAMI* show a pivotal experience?

WYMAN: Yeah, there were an awful lot of black artists, which was great for us, but it wasn't the accepted thing at the time. We were hardly known in America at the time—we'd never had a big hit—and they put us on top of the bill in front of people like Chuck Berry, Marvin Gaye, the Supremes, James Brown, the Miracles...

MUSICIAN: Were you pleased about that?

WYMAN: No! We wanted James Brown to top it. Especially after we saw him. [laughs] But they insisted that we top it, and before he went on James Brown came over to us and said, "I'm going to make you Rolling Stones wish that you'd never, ever come here to America!" Then he went on and did this incredible 20-minute set and scared the shit out of us. We were literally shaking in our boots; we couldn't face it. We went out there and somehow or other it worked; everybody gave it everything they had—Keith and Mick were fantastic. They really tried. Then afterwards James Brown came over and congratulated us, and we were all mates after that. We saw quite a bit of him over the next two years. But anyway, that show captured, all in one shot, where music was at in '63-'64, and you can always go back and see those acts doing their hits and get an idea of how exciting it all was. Since then I don't think I've really seen anything comparable to that—where you've had 15 top acts on the same show, and it's come off as well as that.

MUSICIAN: We were talking about people like Chuck Berry and Howlin' Wolf before, and I remembered that you did a session with Wolf, Clapton and Winwood. How did that go?

WYMAN: Very nice, actually. Except Wolf had just had a kidney operation and he wasn't feeling too well at the time. I remember on some of the tracks there was someone standing behind him whispering the lyrics into his ear because he was getting blanks which he couldn't remember. But it was a good session—he showed us how to play "Little Red Rooster." We cut the tune and then he says, "No, it shouldn't go like that." We were playing it kind of backwards—the way white kids would play it, but the way we felt it. He started to show us the right way to do it, but the Chess people wound up using the old "backwards" take anyway.

MUSICIAN: Can you get detached from your new albums after they're released? Can you view your new albums from a detached perspective, or are you too close?

WYMAN: I'm excited about them while we're working, but once they're out I'll probably just play it once or twice and that's it, because I've already heard it a hundred times or whatever. It's in the past. See, I can never buy a Stones album, put it on and just listen and say, "Wow! That's good," or "That's bad," because before it even goes in the shops I know the whole thing by heart... it's like I've never seen a Rolling Stones concert, which might be a good kick one day... if they're still going in January '83, I might well do that! ☐

Pete Formatale is an on-air personality at WNEW FM and co-author of Radio in the Television Age and The Rock Sourcebook.

MCCARTNEY from page 16

some track or other that was the loudest, most raucous rock 'n' roll, the dirtiest thing they'd ever done. I didn't know what track they were talking about but it made me think, "Right. Got to do it." And I totally got off on that one little sentence in the paper, and I said, "We've got to do the loudest, most raucous..." And that ended up as "Helter Skelter." But that's great. We were the greatest criminals going.

MUSICIAN: Getting back to your own writing, I've noticed that with *Wings* your writing often centers on themes having to do with the home, domesticity and the family. Is that a reaction to the craziness of the Beatles and the '60s in general?

MCCARTNEY: It came out of getting married. Everything changes in the way you look at things. I started realizing that I liked the warmth of a family—the no-hassle thing of having a family you can relate to intimately without really trying. When you're 18 you sneer at all that kind of thing. But when you're 30 you start to reconsider: *What do I really think about all that?* When my dad used to hit me as a kid he'd say, "When you've got kids of your own you'll understand." And I thought, "You're a lunatic! You're hitting me and I'll never understand that." Then you get a few kids and you realize what he was talking about. Only time can do that. The word *home* changed its meaning after I'd gotten married. I'd never really had a home for a long time. I started to realize that it's important to investigate your feelings instead of hiding them.

MUSICIAN: Looking back over your career do you feel satisfied? Do you feel content when you consider your musical legacy?

MCCARTNEY: I'd say I've done some songs that I think are really good; some that I think didn't quite come off; some I hate. But I've done enough to satisfy myself that I'm okay. That's basically all I'm looking for. Like most people.

MUSICIAN: As long as you stay in touch with your creativity, and keep going through this reviving, refreshing process.

MCCARTNEY: Yes, as long as there's still some good music coming out. There'll be a wave of bad music out there and then something'll come along and kick it. They may be swearing and picking their noses and cutting themselves but if they bring out good... if the energy is there regardless of the form... if it's Merseybeat or Potatobeat it makes no difference to me, as long as there's something there. There's a great trick about records, it has to leap off the plastic and if it does, it's magic. How is it that some leap off the plastic and some don't? I don't care who does it, or how. It can be Segovia or Johnny Rotten as long as they're communicating.

MUSICIAN: *To me, the deepest song you've done since the Beatles is "One of These Days" on the new album. What's going to happen one of these days?*

MCCARTNEY: But doesn't everyone have this kind of thing in them, since they're a kid, that one of these days I'll get round to it? I've always wanted to be a friendly person, well, one of these days I'm going to *be* a friendly person. But in the meantime life gets in the way and you don't always find yourself being friendly... It's just groping in the dark really, but a lot of what I do is like that, and I don't see any alternative to it. But I think of that as a positive thing. I don't know what I was before I was born. I was the sperm that won out of those 300 million; I can't remember that far back but there was something working for me, some incredible thing that did it. So for me the wonder of that, of knowing that something got on with it before my conscious memory existed, leads me to believe that when you die maybe something gets on with it, too. Which gives me this vague faith that I can't pinpoint. I don't say it's so-and-so doing it. But it's just IT, and whatever IT is I have an optimistic view about it. Based on the record that it got me this far it can't be *that* bad, right? ☐

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around all by myself, and I'm in the middle of the Far East, and all these people are going to work, you know there's Europeans and Chinese and everybody and they're all just going to work and we get along over to Kao Lung, and I just followed the crowd because I didn't know where the hell I was, having never seen anything—I've just been in a hotel in Hong Kong, and I just wandered around, and when I saw them dispersing into offices or different things, I just went into the little cafes and ate [*gestures*] this and that, 'Give me two' and all that bit, then I went to the stores and I bought things—I did that for a few days because I didn't try and adjust to their time, I was always up at five o'clock, watch the sun come up and walk out and wander 'round. Hong Kong at dawn. It was just fantastic.

"I loved it! I loved it—that's what I rediscovered, the feeling that I used to have as a youngster. I remember another incident in my life when I was walking in the mountains of Scotland, up in the north. I was with an auntie who had a house up there, and I remember this feeling coming over me, you know, I thought, 'This is what they call poetic, or whatever they call it.' When I looked back I realized I was kind of hallucinating. You know, when you're walking along and the ground starts going beneath you and the heather, and I could see this mountain in the distance, and this kind of *feeling* came over me—I thought, 'This is *something*. What is this? Ah, this is that one they're always talking about, the one that makes you paint or write, because it's so overwhelming that you want to tell somebody, and you can't describe it, you can't say, 'There's this feeling that I'm having and the world looks like... and it's sort of glowing... and there's a...' so you have to try and paint it, right, or put it into poetry or something like that.' Well, it was that same kind of thing. But it was recognition that the thing

had been with me all my life. And that's why maybe I got a little like that when you said about Putting the Boys Back Together Again—it's irrelevant, you know! Because the feeling was with me before the Beatles and with me after."

Watching the Wheels

"That's what I'm saying—what 'Watching the Wheels' is saying—all these teachers, which you can call critics, media, friends-in-the-business, other singers—that have all been commenting about me for eight years, they've all had something to say about me. I'm thrilled that they're all so concerned, but there isn't one of them that hasn't made some remark about one way or the other—so they're all talking. Now to me, it just sounds like the teachers—if I look through my report card, it's the same thing. 'Too content to get a cheap laugh hiding behind this,' or 'Daydreaming his life away.' Am I getting this from those rock 'n' rollers and these rock 'n' roll critics? And the do-gooders and the rest of them? Well, it's ringing a bell in my head, I'm sitting there picking this up, because I ain't doing nothing, I'm watching the wheels, everyone's talking about me, I ain't doing nothing. 'Lennon, sit up,' 'Lennon, sit down,' 'Lennon, do your homework,' 'Lennon, you're a bad boy,' 'Lennon, you're a good boy,' what the hell is this? I heard this before somewhere... I heard it at school! So this period was that—to reestablish me as me, for myself. That's why I'm free of the Beatles. Because I took time to free myself. Mentally from it, and look at what it is. And now I know. So here I am, right? That's it! It's beautiful, you know, it's just like walking those hills." ☐

"Some people are saying that this is the end of an era, but what we said before still stands—the '80s will be a beautiful decade. John loved and prayed for the human race. Please tell people to pray the same for him. Please remember that he had deep faith and love for life and that, though he has now joined the greater force, he is still with us."

— Yoko Ono, December 1980

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ones and happened to hit those two major sevenths, one after another. They turned into that melody. Understand, I sang that opening lyric off the top of my head to try to communicate with him: "Let me in here/I know I've been here..."

MUSICIAN: *The man who built your Henley Castle, Sir Francis Crisp, was both a prominent lawyer in the 1800s and an architect. I've heard that inscriptions and artwork he added to the interior inspired such songs as "The Ballad of Sir Frankie Crisp (Let It Roll)," "The Answer's at the End" and "Ding Dong."*

HARRISON: It's a Victorian house, and when I bought it, it was about to be demolished, so I got it in its roughest state. Over the years I've fixed it up and it's a fabulous place, a treasure of Victorian artifacts, even though a lot of things originally made for the house had been sold before I bought it. But there are inscriptions all over the place: some in Latin, some in Old English, many of them poetry of obscure authorship.

"Ding Dong," which I wrote in five minutes, came from some Tennyson carved over either side of the fireplace with little bells: "Ring out the old/Ring in the new/Ring out the false/Ring in the true." Outside in the building where the gardener's sheds are, carved over one window is: "Yesterday—today—was tomorrow." The adjacent window has: "Tomorrow—today—will be yesterday." And those parts became the middle eight of "Ding Dong."

The quote above the entrance hall says: "Scan not a friend

with a microscopic glass/You know his faults, now let his foibles pass." Opposite, it reads: "Life is one long enigma true my friend/Read on, read on, the answer's at the end." *Extra Texture*, where that was used, was a grubby album in a way. The production left a lot to be desired, as did my performance. I was in a real down place. Some songs I like, but in retrospect I wasn't very happy about it. "Grey Cloudy Lies" described clouds of gloom that used to come down on me. A difficulty I had. I've found over the years that I'm more able to keep them away, and am quite a happy person now.

MUSICIAN: *The flip of "Ding Dong" displays the cloudy side of you. "I Don't Care Anymore" never appeared anywhere else.*

HARRISON: I had to come up with a B-side and I did it in one take. The story was in the attitude: I-don't-give-a-shit!

MUSICIAN: *Yet you often seem to care a great deal about the care and feeding of many of your songs, to where you've done sequels to several. Extra Texture's "This Guitar (Can't Keep from Crying)," and "Here Comes the Moon" on George Harrison, are dramatic examples.*

HARRISON: Concerning my "Guitars" songs, if you're a guitar player, guitars have a genuine fascination and it's nice to have songs about them. I recently saw a guitar program on TV in England and it got into how it's phallic and sexual. Maybe that's so. I don't know in my case, but ever since I was a kid I've loved guitars and songs about them, like B.B. King's "Lucille." But the sequels in this case had to do in large part with me not enjoying "Guitar Gently Weeps." I love what Eric did on guitar for the original, but versions I did live are better in some respects. See, in the Beatles days, I never liked my singing. I couldn't sing very good. I was always very paranoid, very nervous, and that inhibited my singing.

"This Guitar (Can't Keep from Crying)" came about because the press and critics tried to nail me on that 1974-75 tour, got nasty. I had no voice on the road and I was shagged out, knackered. I had a choice of canceling the tour and forgetting it, or going out and singing hoarse. I always think people will give others more credit than they do, so I assumed they'd know I'm in bad voice but still feel the music's plentiful and good. I wrote that song about being stuck on a limb, and being down, but not out.

For "Here Comes the Moon," I think I was on LSD or mushrooms at the time and was out sunning in Maui. The sun was setting over the ocean and it gets pretty stunning even when you're not on mushrooms. I was blissed out, and then I turned 'round and saw a big, full moon rising. I laughed and thought it was about time someone, and it may as well be me, gave the moon its due.

MUSICIAN: *Did "This Song," the single about the "My Sweet Lord"/"He's So Fine" suit, provide you with any catharsis?*

HARRISON: It did get it all off my chest; it was a laugh and release. Saying "This song's got nothing Bright about it" after Bright Tunes Publishing sued me, was amusing, at least to me. I also cracked, "This song could be 'You,'" meaning the Ronnie Spector song, and then had Eric Idle of Monty Python dub in two arguing voices saying, "Sounds like 'Sugar Pie Honey Bunch'"; "Naw! Sounds more like 'Rescue Me!'" I see now where everybody's doing videos with courts and judges like I did for that single—not to mention Madonna helping herself to "Living in the Material World" for "Material Girl." I was ahead of my time. [chuckle]

MUSICIAN: *Living in the Material World, the album after All Things, was a smash hit in America. It was number one for five weeks in the summer of 1973, with the "Give Me Love" single on top simultaneously, and it's sold over three million copies.*

HARRISON: Yes, but they [Capitol-EMI] still never gave me the royalties, did they? No! Ugh!*

*According to a Capitol-EMI spokeswoman, "All recording royalties due him since 1973 have been paid to date."

MUSICIAN: *Cloud Nine rescues two worthy songs, "Someplace Else" and "Breath Away from Heaven," that you wrote for that Madonna/Sean Penn movie, Shanghai Surprise.*

HARRISON: I never did a soundtrack album, because the film got slagged off so bad and we had such a rotten time with them while making it. I didn't want to lose the songs, especially "Breath Away from Heaven," which has nice words—although I haven't included the lyrics to any songs on this album. I always did before, but I thought that the practice is getting passé. Maybe I'm looking for a few new leaves to turn over.

MUSICIAN: *Could they include a return to touring?*

HARRISON: It's a possibility. Ringo can't wait to go out, and Eric Clapton keeps telling me he's gonna be in the band. Eric's such a sweet cat. I caught one of his own shows in the Los Angeles Forum just before Easter of this year. I stood at the side of the stage, holding up my cigarette lighter for the encore. [laughter] Really! I love him that much!

Through the thick and the thin, Eric and I have always preserved and protected our friendship. One of the only things that Eric's ever held against me is that I met Bob Marley while I was out here on the West Coast in the late '70s, and Eric's always wished he'd been the one. He's never forgiven me for not taking him along to meet Bob Marley.

[Sighs] It's hard to see the greats go, and I'm a big fan of so many kinds of rock and popular music, from Bob Marley to Cole Porter to Smokey Robinson to Hoagy Carmichael. I mean, I wrote "Pure Smokey" on 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ as my little tribute to his brilliant songwriting and his effortless butterfly of a voice. The Beatles did Smokey's "You Really Got a Hold on Me," and there was a song John did that was very much influenced by Smokey—"This Boy." If you listen to the middle eight of "This Boy," it was John trying to do Smokey. It suddenly occurs to me that there's even a line in "When We Was Fab" where I sing, "And you really got a hold on me!"

As for Hoagy Carmichael, I've been nuts for him since I was a kid. I cut his "Hong Kong Blues" on *Somewhere in England*, and there's still a few more of his I wouldn't mind doing, like "Old Rocking Chair." Maybe one day—not just yet, but one day when I get a bit older—me and Eric can sing "Old rocking chair has got me...."

There seems to be a running thread here about music and its powerful hold, eh? And it's that way, too. We who love music, we love the people who make it, we love the sound of it, and we love what it does to us, how it makes us feel, how it helps us love.

When I was writing "Cloud Nine" I had these ideas in mind. I'd read once in some spiritual context that the bad part of you is your human limitations, and the good part of you is God. I think people who *truly* can live a life in music are telling the world, "You can have my love, you can have my smiles. Forget the bad parts, you don't need them. Just take the music, the goodness, because it's the very best, and it's the part I give most willingly." ❑

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have my own way. So when it came to planning anything I had the final word. If I wanted to spend five months on doing an album, that was up to me. My neck was on the chopping block if I didn't make it, but I did make it, so there was no problem. I'm sure there was panic in the offices of EMI when we took four months to record *Pepper*, but nobody could say anything to me or threaten me because it was in my charge."

Over the years quite a few different engineers worked sporadically with Martin on the Beatles sessions, but only two filled this role on a consistent basis. The first was Norman

Smith, who engineered on the recordings prior to the *Revolver* album, and who then decided to become a producer himself and pursue work with a new up-and-coming group that had attracted his attention: Pink Floyd. Thereafter, the man who engineered all of the Beatles' albums—with the exception of the troubled *Let It Be* project—was Geoff Emerick. He was an 18-year-old tape-op when Martin offered him the chance of a lifetime.

"At first, working with Geoff was a case of telling him what I wanted and getting it," notes Martin. "Then, not very long after, he knew what I wanted, so I didn't have to say much. To this day, I can work with Geoff and I will know that what I'm getting is what I want."

"It was a great working combination, just incredible," agrees Emerick. "In fact, everyone used to think it was a little bit odd because of the way we'd virtually go through a session without saying two words to each other."

"If there was a new thing Geoff wanted to try out, I'd listen to it and then give him my judgment," says Martin. "On the other hand, it also eventually got to the sort of cooperation where he would say to me, 'Have you noticed that harmony of George's doesn't quite work?' He would overspill into my area, but that was fine, it was a good formula. I think it's much better than a producer/engineer, who's worrying whether that note's in tune at the same time as worrying about what the spill is like on the drum mike. You shouldn't have to do those two things together."

Emerick well remembers "the way Ringo's bass and snare drums sort of thunder out on the 'Sergeant Pepper' theme and the reprise—no one had heard that in those days. The bass drum was just padded with woolen articles; later on we would take the front skin of the bass drum off. Before that, people recorded bass drums purely for the note and the beat value. So it became quite exciting to actually have it right up front and sort of slapped in your face. I used to position the mike about six inches away from the front, angled towards the floor a little bit to stop the wind-blast bashing the diaphragm. Later, when we took the front skin off the bass drum, we would normally place the mike inside, of course. We wanted to get the snap of the hammer hitting the skin, and again we'd stuff the drums with cushions or rags to deaden it and make a solid note within there. That's now normal practice, but it wasn't then."

By *Sergeant Pepper*, the Beatles were getting Martin and Emerick to go even further. "Everything—vocals and instruments—was doctored in some way on *Pepper*," laughs Emerick. "The technical approach up until that time had roughly been that you can't do it, because on paper it looked horrendous! We used to liken it—without any disrespect—to the BBC approach; if a vocal happened to be sibilant on a broadcast, someone would be told off for it! Things we were doing at the time of *Pepper* were horrendous, and would never have been allowed by EMI 18 months prior. We were driving the equipment to its limit."

"Like Lennon's voice on 'A Day in the Life'—that was achieved with tape echo. We used to send the feed from the vocal mike into a mono tape machine. They had separate record and replay heads, so we'd be recording the vocal on the tape, taking the replay and feeding it back through the machine itself. There was a big pot on the front of the machines, and we used to turn up the record level until it started to slightly feed back on itself, and gave this sort of twittersy vocal sound. Of course John was hearing that echo in his cans as he was singing—it wasn't put on after—and he used that as a rhythmic feel for singing. That tape echo on the vocal always suited John's voice, because he had a cutting voice that used to trigger it so well. For certain things, such as the background vocals on

'Yellow Submarine,' we always used to use live chambers. EMI did have echo plates then, but we never used them.

"Technically *Pepper* still stands up as the best album, knowing what we were going through," Emerick continues. "I mean, although it was a bit laborious and it can't be done today, every time we either changed tape or we copied something, everything was meticulously lined up and re-biased—you can't do that now with 20 tracks of analog; no one's going to line up 20 tracks every time you throw another tape on, even though the Ampex machine does it automatically. No one bothers anymore. But you just had to be disciplined—it wasn't that hard—and that's the only way we kept that quality maintained throughout the album. It's still the work I'm most proud of and get the most excitement from."

"On *Pepper* we were using the luxury of utilizing one track for bass overdub on some of the things. I can't quite remember what tracks we did that on, because some of the time we actually did four to four, but not on all of them. We used to stay behind after the sessions, and Paul would dub all the bass on. I used to use a valve C12 microphone on Paul's amp, sometimes on figure-eight, and sometimes positioned up to eight feet away, believe it or not. DI wasn't used on the guitars until *Abbey Road*—I've always been against direct injection; it sounds wishy-washy to me and you don't get the power of the amp. Although it's rich in content it's also feeble, but I suppose it goes with the transistorized sound of today."

Tracks such as "Within You Without You" presented problems in the recording technique, due to the concern then caused to musicians when hearing their gentle, quiet instruments—such as tabla, dilruba and tambouras—being amplified much like electric guitars. Close miking, compression and equalization were required, and for the latter the top of the REDD console lifted up and an EQ box was plugged in. This had the settings "pop" and "classical"; the assumption then was that the high top-end reached by orchestras could not be attained on pop records.

Emerick is especially proud of his contribution to "A Day in the Life": "On the orchestral rush at the end of the track, by careful fader manipulation I was gradually building the crescendo to a peak. My technique then was a little bit psychological, because I would bring it up to a point and then slightly fade it back in level, as I had a long time to do so. It was just a case of really feeling the music, more than the technical side."

Peter Vince, who engineered on the track "Getting Better," mainly remembers the *Pepper* sessions for their occasional state of pandemonium: "Lots of their friends would come in, dressed in the beads and bells of the time, and would just be sitting around playing sitars, tablas, you name it! They would all be playing together, there would be no screening between the individual instruments, and everything would be drowning everything else out!"

George Martin states that he never seriously lost his nerve at any point during the *Sergeant Pepper* project, but admits to having harbored very slight reservations about the orchestral sequences on "A Day in the Life."

"One part of me said, 'We're being a bit self-indulgent, we're going a little bit over the top,' and the other part of me said, 'It's bloody marvelous! I think it's fantastic!' I was then thoroughly reassured before I put the thing together, when I actually let an American visitor hear a bit of 'A Day in the Life.' When that happened he did a handstand, and I then knew my worries were over."

"After the project was finished, I felt we could extend that. I thought we could make another album that would be a little bit more controlled, in fact, while still allowing for the Beatles'

originality and ingenuity. I tried to get the boys to accept that there had to be a definite form in the records, and Paul would listen to me but John wouldn't."

In musical terms, the real parting of the ways within the Beatles was signified by the *White Album* in 1968. Thirty-two songs, largely composed while the group was in India, were mostly recorded in piecemeal fashion by artists who were working increasingly apart, utilizing three separate studios within the same building at the same time. Both Martin and Emerick thought that many of the songs should be rejected in favor of releasing a single album, but neither was aware at the time that the Beatles' new contract with EMI stipulated that it would terminate either after a specific number of years, or after a specific number of songs had been recorded.


Emerick now confesses to having "hated" the *White album*. Tensions were rife, and Ringo was the first member to quit the band. Before he rejoined a few days later, Paul played drums on "Back in the USSR."

Emerick was absent for the *Let It Be* fiasco, co-produced by George Martin, Glyn Johns and Phil Spector, but returned for the Beatles' swansong, *Abbey Road*, considered by many to be the band's crowning achievement. It is George Martin's personal favorite among all their albums.

"I never thought we would get back together again, and I was quite surprised when Paul rang me up and asked me to produce another record for them. I said, 'If I'm really allowed to produce it, I will. If I have to go back and accept a lot of instructions I don't like, I won't do it.' But Paul said they wanted me to produce it as I used to, and once we got back in the studio it really was nice.

"*Abbey Road* was kind of *Sergeant Pepper Mk. II*—the last thing we ever did—and Paul went along with the idea, but John didn't. So it became a compromise, with one side of the album very much the way John wanted things—'Let it all hang out, let's rock a little'—and the other being what Paul had accepted from me: to try to think in symphonic terms, and think in terms of having a first and second subject, put them in different keys, bring back themes and even have some contrapuntal work. Paul dug that, and that's why the second side sounds as it does. It still wasn't quite what I was looking for, but it was going towards it."

After the Beatles officially split up in 1970, George Martin fully expected never to work with any of them ever again. Although McCartney later sought Martin's critical ears for *Tug of War*, Martin doesn't feel any of the foursome needed his services: "They each learned a great deal in the decade we were together, and every one of them became excellent producers. George and Paul made very good recordings, and John had tremendous invention. In terms of their music, over the past 25 years they really have been remarkable in every sense."

What, finally, did Martin think was the most important thing he brought to the Beatles' music? Martin smiles, "When you get as rich and famous as the Beatles, everyone thinks you're fantastic—and you are, of course—and everybody tells you so. A lot of people don't mean to be sycophants but they are, and they wouldn't dream of saying anything untoward. There aren't very many people who are able to say to the emperor, 'You aren't wearing any clothes, Jim,' but that's one thing I've always been able to do." 

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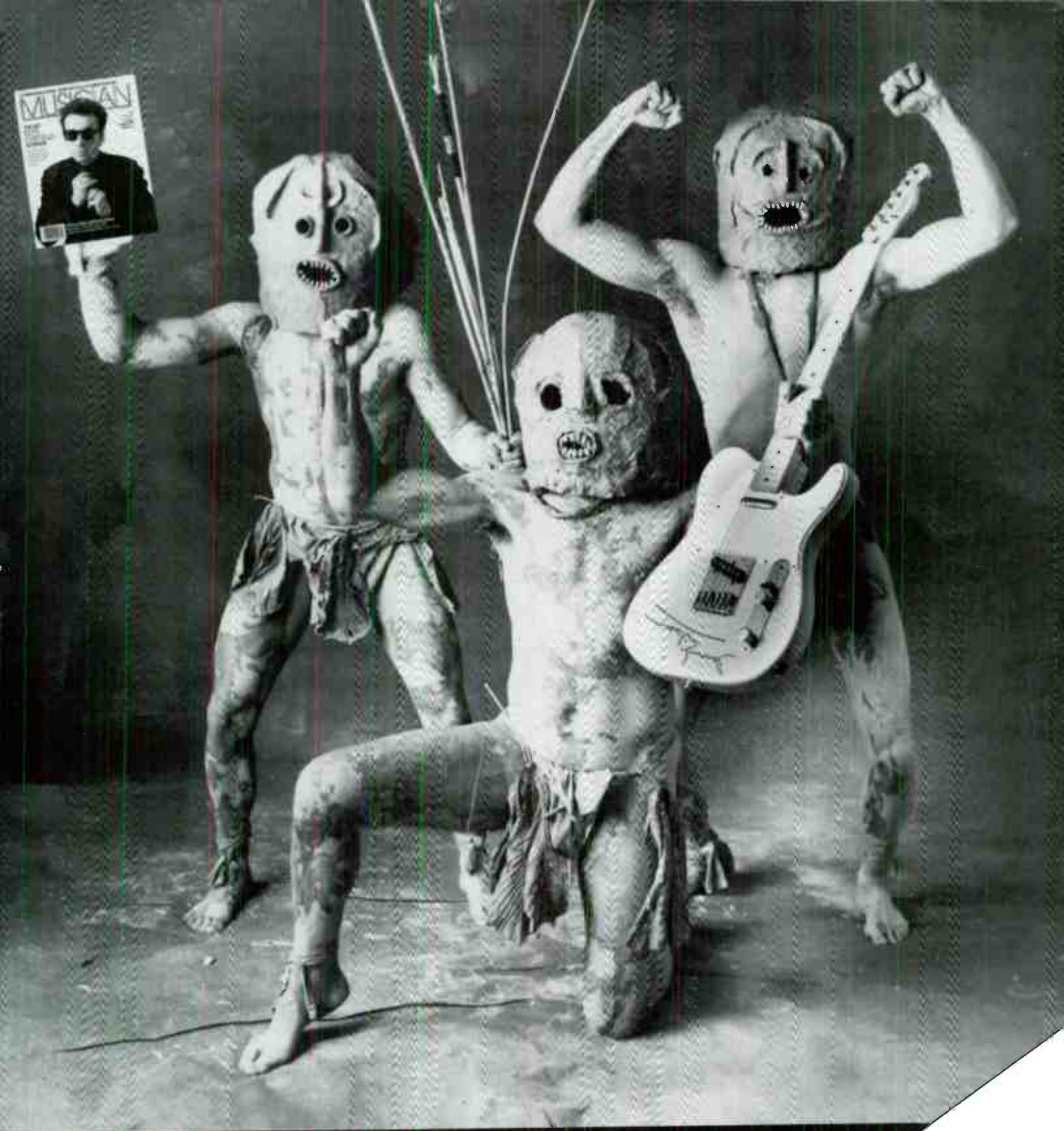
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