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OF THE
DEAD

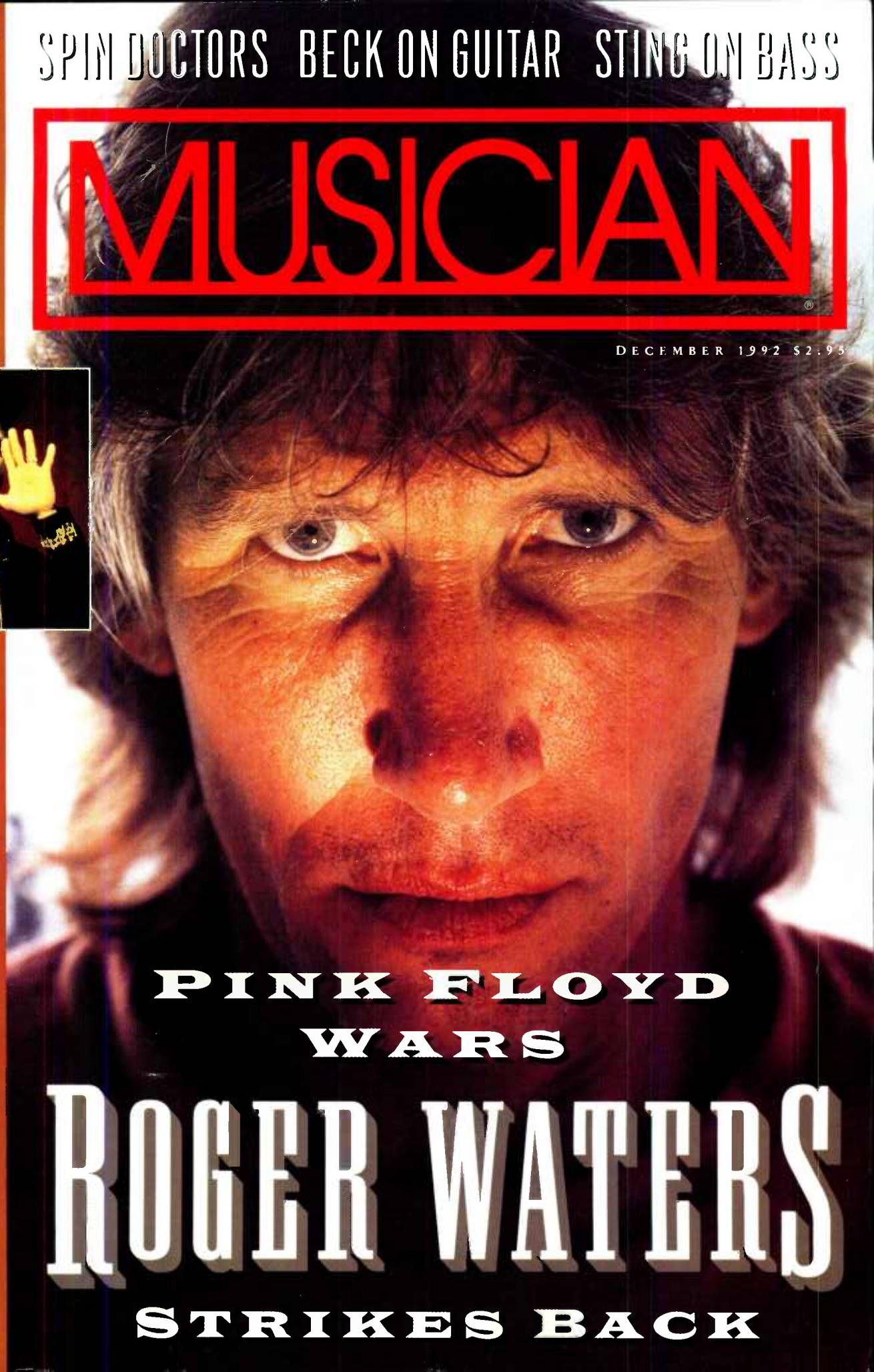
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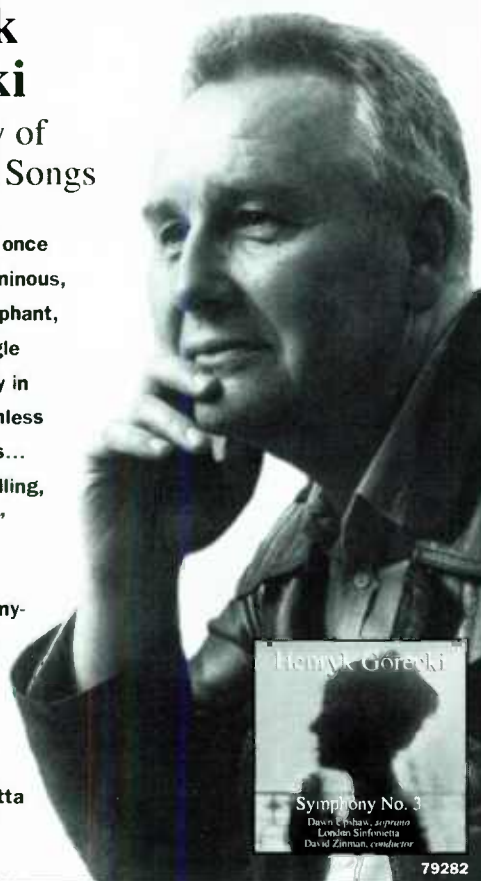
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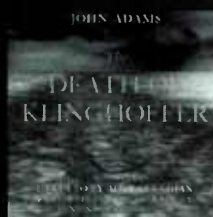
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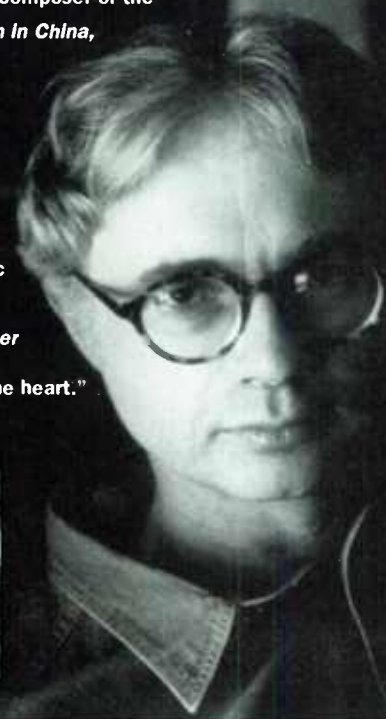
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San Francisco Examiner

“...a work that fires the heart.”
Newsweek



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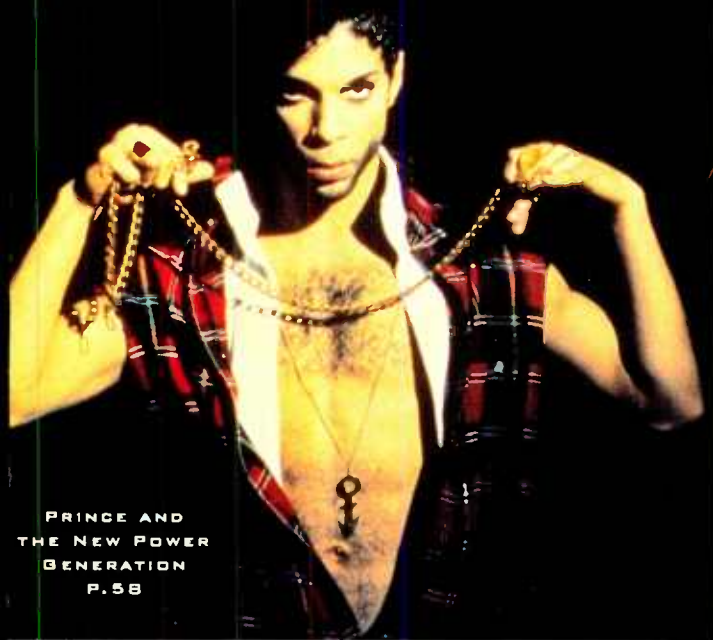
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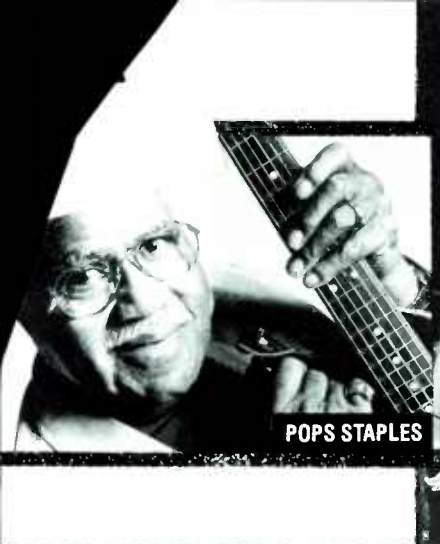
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Her first album, *Raw Like Sushi*, set the world on its ear. Neneh took a long time making her second—she had other things to do.

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What musician would not want to join Prince's band? You get to go around the world, ride in limos, wear wild clothes and play fantastic music. It's a nonstop party—but there's a downside, too. BY BILL FLANAGAN



POPS STAPLES



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THE KINSEY REPORT

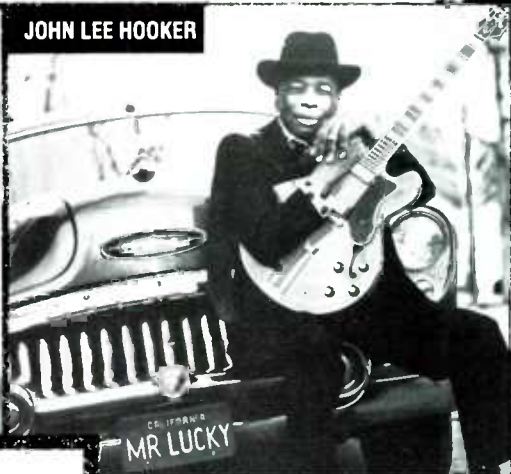
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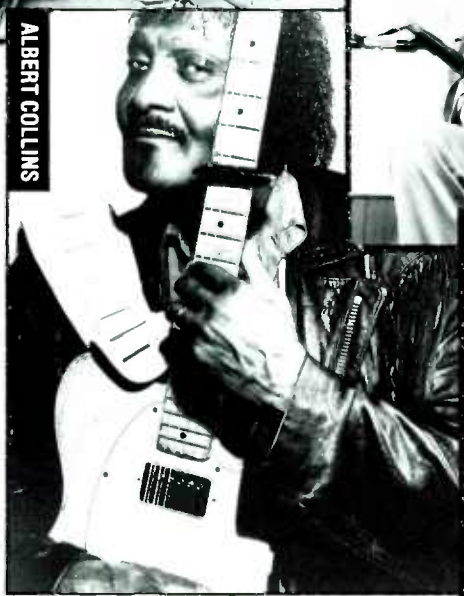
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PETER GABRIEL

FRONT MAN

Your new album, US, deals in part with the breakup of your marriage, separation from your children and the failed love affair that followed.

There's a lot of relationship stuff in there, all mixed up, all the emotions and ideas you have going on inside come out, perhaps inevitably. After my divorce and this other relationship breaking up so badly it was a time of real confusion. I was doing a lot of therapy to try and work out that destructive side of myself. Work out why things went the way they did. That shaped the lyrics and a lot of the music too. I find I can say a lot with the music that I maybe find difficult to say with words. With the therapy and in my music I suppose I'm acknowledging the monsters that get strong and menacing when they're buried deep inside, and once you do that you begin to wonder why they ever haunted you in the first place.

Therapy helps you understand how you work, and more importantly why you do things. Your life, all your relationships, especially ones as close as marriage and breakups, are all governed by these undisclosed agendas that you have to deal with or at least understand if you really want to know why things go wrong or why you can't cope. For me it's been a very powerful influence, an opening experience. It doesn't change you fundamentally but it ends up with you running it rather than it running you. Sometimes it was like I was doing things and behaving a certain way without even knowing why. That's frightening.

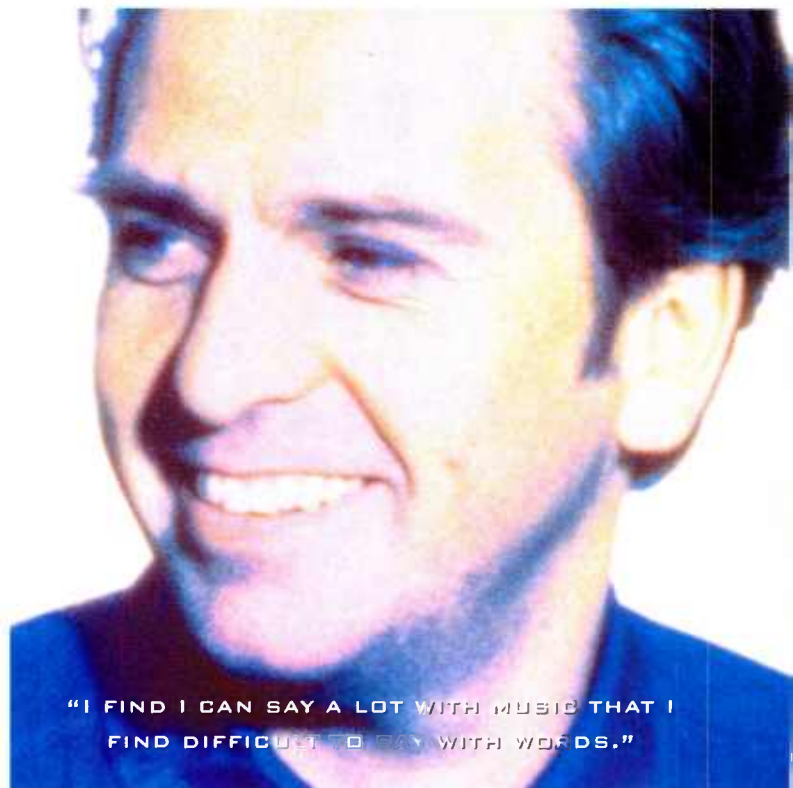
Do you worry that people dismiss you as a bleeding heart?

I think it's good to put yourself and your emotions on display. I know people get sick of yet another musician pouring his damaged heart out, but you really have to give of yourself. It comes back to the soul thing. If my soul was in a certain space when I wrote the song, then that's how it should come through. Besides, people put their own meanings to things anyway. To them it may be about one person in their life whereas, as with a song like "Come Talk to Me," it's about a few different relationships I have. It's basically a mixture of stuff about not being in touch with my youngest daughter, wanting her to be able to talk to me, all the sorts of things that fathers go through, plus wanting to talk to the people I love and finding it difficult. "Blood of Eden," that's about the sense of looking for your other half and feeling bereft without it. At one point in Eden, man and woman were joined in union in one body, one mind, then they fell apart as the world grew. That idea that we spend time seeking this spiritual soulmate, the other half. It's also about the loss, having once achieved what you thought was union. All the songs are rooted in my experiences but they may have become a little removed from the original ideas over time.

There's still that embarrassment, that nervousness about a part of you and what you say in a lyric. It really is me and me alone. I can't disguise it. It's the most vulnerable point to me. I find I get drawn to the emotions of childhood a lot. They manifest themselves in many different ways, but to understand yourself, look at the child.

It's a long way from Genesis. How do you look back on that now?

I find when I do look back I get a mixed feeling of love and loathing towards it. Sometimes I think, "Yes, that was okay for the time," sometimes I think, "No, that was hideously embarrassing." The dividing line is always whether it had the right emotion. Was it done with some genuine



"I FIND I CAN SAY A LOT WITH MUSIC THAT I
FIND DIFFICULT TO SAY WITH WORDS."

passion, however naive it may seem, or was it just a shot at writing another song? I cringe a lot when I see some of the pictures. I don't think dressing up in flowers onstage, painting my face and wearing masks is particularly good if you want to be taken seriously, but I think people missed the point. To me a lot of that was emotion being expressed, however simply and bizarrely it may look now.

People missed a lot of humor too. For people who came to see *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* there were a few laughs during the evening, I'm sure. It wasn't so much that I don't think what we did was good, it's that a lot of the time we lost sight of the real reasons for making music. We'd write songs on the piano and try and match it to some groove we had already and it didn't gel. To try and piece things together like that just led to songs that didn't really work.

What's next, Peter?

I've got this little house in Dakar that I want to spend some time at, my daughter is just about to start college in London, so I think I'll be spending some time in the city, and I'm going on a world tour that's going to all these out-of-the-way countries. They don't get to see much of this sort of music and I know it'll go down well.

I also hope to do a film with the director who made *Salaam! Bombay* [Mira Nair]. She's going to make a film about the life of Buddha and wants me to score the music. After doing *The Last Temptation of Christ*, there's Buddha, and I hope to get Mohammed in before I go. Just hedging my bets, you understand, backing a few horses.

CLIFF JONES

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Bill Flanagan has produced some outstanding articles in his time, but he outdid himself with the U2 interviews (Sept. '92). It's articles like this that should encourage tabloid-shy musicians to talk about themselves and their art. Besides, you've gotta admire a guy who's willing to risk radioactive testicles for the sake of a story!

Janine Mendes
Diego Martin, Trinidad

Damn it, Bill! Hanging with Prince, U2 and George Harrison all in one issue. You got a neat job.

Marc Nichol

Thank you for waking me up from this nightmarish disappointment over *Achtung Baby*. It was not the music that had upset me but rather the band's attitude. It was awkward to hear such change after they had revealed so much on *The Joshua Tree*, but I realize that breaking the surface was and has been the band's most challenging aspect and this time I forgot to follow through.

Nina Hussain

I've liked U2 since the *War* days—now I know why. The intentional risk of radiation contamination is beyond the calling of a rock band. Greenpeace and U2 have left me awestruck by their commitment and sacrifice.

Ann Arbor, MI

Oh nooo! Bono, not you too! Not another rock star that thinks he knows what it's like to be a "babe" (Pete Townshend—the first to admit it). Not until they have their period every month for about 30 years will either of them know what it's like!

Jayne
New York, NY

After Bill Flanagan's article, I can honestly say my view of U2

LETTERS

from here has changed. I still don't fully understand what makes them tick, but I do have a strong conviction of what their music means. Ironically I also realize that half the time they're full of crap. Which is really okay, because half the time we're full of crap too.

Paulina Garcia
Denver, CO

U2 has fallen into the "Who trap": They have become something that in their youth they preached against.

Thomas Maton
Fort Smith, AR

HIGH PRAISE

It was interesting to contrast the David Gilmour interview (Aug. '92) with the Bill Nelson/Robert Wyatt interview in the same issue. Gilmour talked more about finances and about Roger Waters than he did about music. Must be nice just to sit on your houseboat next to Townshend's place and leisurely think about your next project, eh? In contrast, Wyatt and Nelson, despite their problems, are far more interested and alive to music and to the world than Gilmour.

Mark Saucier
New Orleans, LA

Many young people are singing the praises of Axl and Madonna. Give me Robert Wyatt's "Moon in June," *Old Rottenhat* or *Dondestan* any day.

Billy Baxter
Richmond, VA

Bill Nelson and Robert Wyatt made it very clear that the greatest success in life is personal success—the satisfaction and quality of one's work. For the independent musi-

cian, the music industry is not a beast to be conquered. It's an ox in the road, too stupid to get out of the way.

Carl Weingarten
St. Louis, MO

Mac Randall should be commended for his insightful, intelligent interview of two men whose individual expression takes precedent over everything.

Richard Farquhar
Atlanta, GA

You should be commended for publishing a fascinating interview by two very important artists who compromise nothing.

Mark Rushton
Kansas City, MO

Metaphorically, in the music biz supermarket you'll find the glossy romance novels (Madonna, C&C Music Factory) in the checkout lane alongside the comic books (Van Halen, Bon Jovi, etc.). The classic literature (R. Wyatt, B. Nelson), on the other hand, is on the dusty, private library shelves and in the unpublished manuscripts.

David Hawkes
Ripley, NY

FAVORITE SOLOS

Our Sept. '92 feature, "The 25 Greatest Guitar Solos," drew a wide response, with most readers suggesting their own "Greatest." Here's a sample:

"Crossroads"—Eric Clapton; Matthew Wester, Rohnert Park, CA; "Free Bird"—Lynyrd Skynyrd; Neil Bennett, South Pittsburg, TN; "Statesboro Blues"—Duane Allman; Tom Heany, St. Petersburg, FL; "Evil Woman"—Spooky Tooth; Gary R. Ortleib, Detroit,

MI; "Sympathy for the Devil"—Keith Richards; Mike Laskavy, Sun Valley, CA; "Let It Be"—John Lennon; Michael Macchi, Quincy, MA; "Sign Language"—Robbie Robertson; Stephen Robinson, Washington, DC

PARKER RESPONDS

Your review of my record (*Burning Questions*, Sept. '92) had some nice moments but also a few dodgy ones I must revile in print. Firstly you say this is a surprisingly strong album—surprisingly strong? From moi? Are you kidding? Then of course you have to drop that other songwriter's name, a wearisome example of lazy journalism made worse when you say that on "Platinum Blonde" I "recreate" something by somebody I preceded by two albums, a fact you of course neglect to inform the reader.

The last paragraph of your piece was a beauty, though, showing your enormous misjudgment of the depth of this record. To suggest I should stick a couple of throwaway songs on an album like this is like saying that the Sex Pistols should have done a few vaudeville tunes on *Never Mind the Bollocks*. What a strange idea! I'm sure neither my record company nor my fans would appreciate a couple of bananas popping up amidst the mayhem. Still, thanks for the thought, maybe it will be appropriate on the next one.

Graham Parker
London, England

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L TO R: MICHAEL GURLEY, JOIE CALIO AND PHIL LEAVITT

DADA: THE ART OF JAMMING

Numerous rockers have expressed interest in the early-twentieth-century artistic movement known as dada, but Joie Calio, singer and bassist for the group that bears the name, explains that he and his bandmates "are into art, period—not just dada, but all art." Calio says that he, singer/guitarist Michael Gurley and drummer Phil Leavitt chose "Dada" because, "as Mike says, it's anti-anti-anti. It really doesn't mean anything specific, and we wanted a name that would let the music kind of absorb it—rather than, like, the Aspiring Flaming Monkeys."

Calio and Gurley met in grammar school and played in rival bands before joining forces in Louis & Clark, a group that also included Mary's Danish guitarist Louis Gutierrez. When Louis & Clark split up, Calio says, "Mike and I spent a year writing songs, playing acoustic guitars and harmonizing. We met Phil during that time. He had a better-paying gig, but we jammed, and all three of us knew it was heaven." The trio's debut album, *Puzzle*, features songs that, though thriftily arranged, are structured in an open-ended manner that encourages such heavenly jamming. "We don't actually have to re-arrange stuff that much when playing live," Leavitt says, "because the recorded versions are so loose."

Having played for the alternative set as an opening act for Mary's Danish, the members of Dada are tickled to now be hearing their single, "Dizz Knee Land," on various AOR stations. "We were coming home from Portland the other day," Gurley recalls, "and we heard our song on the radio, between Led Zeppelin and the Black Crowes. We pulled over and celebrated."

ELYSA GARDNER

CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR, AND that's way too often for Jimmy Iovine. Only now is the producer releasing the follow-up to his all-star album, *A Very Special Christmas*, from 1987.

"If anything, it was harder than it was the first time" to make *A Very Special Christmas 2*, Iovine laughs. The new album took a good 18 months to assemble; this time Iovine received considerable help from his wife Vicki and Bobby Shriver. The latter's mother Eunice Kennedy Shriver founded the Special Olympics, which

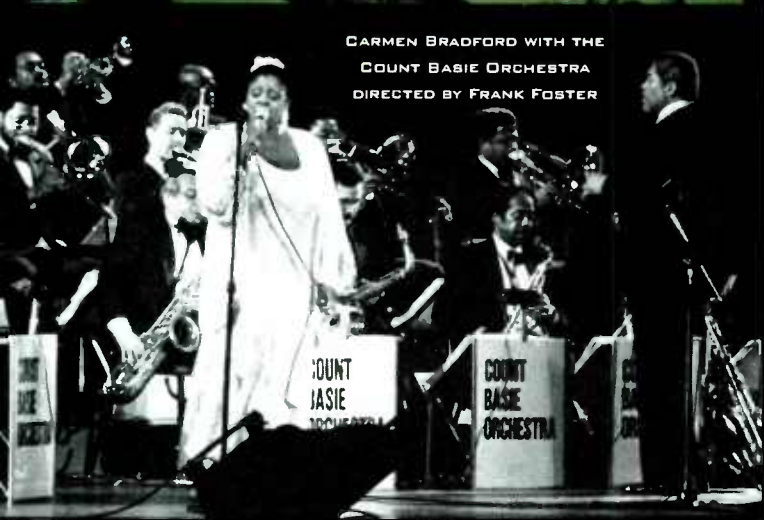
JIMMY IOVINE *Another Special Christmas*

both recordings benefit. ("When was the last time you took a year off to work just for your mother?" Iovine asks rhetorically.)

It was worth the wait. As before, the line-up on *A Very Special Christmas 2* is a staggering array of current pop talent (Tom Petty, Luther Vandross, Randy Travis, Jon Bon Jovi, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Phillips, Bonnie Raitt and Charles Brown, and Sinéad O'Connor, among many others). "It wasn't mailing in a track," Iovine says. "I *guarantee* you very few people take a year and a half to record a Christmas album. We do 'cause they're very important to me. The fucking world is upside-down. This is our bit."

SCOTT ISLER

PHOTOGRAPH BY JANE LANS



CARMEN BRADFORD

Born to Swing

Carmen Bradford, 30, has released *Finally Yours*, her diverse debut album. It showcases her full-bodied pipes on standard chestnuts, early '70s R&B covers, Brazilian-flavored originals and knockout big-band swing tunes arranged by Frank Foster, the current musical director of the Basie Orchestra.

"My experience with Basie was a great education," the belting Bradford remarks in a hushed speaking voice. "But it was still very hard-traveled. I was on the road for 50 weeks a year but I only was onstage for 14 minutes during the show. It was definitely time for me to go. Singing solo now feels like a breath of fresh air."

Her current solo status has also

allowed Bradford to share her soul and ballad stylings with the world. "Working with a big band has influenced my sound a great deal. But growing up, my first loves were Motown, Aretha and Chaka Khan. I actually didn't learn to appreciate jazz standards until I was 13. It's funny, when I first started singing with Basie I would riff and run anywhere. But one night, Joe Williams, who was on the bill with us, said to me, 'You've got to make up your mind whether you're doing jazz or gospel, girl.' So, now when I'm doing blues I go to my R&B riffs, but if I'm doing serious ballads, I don't fool around. I try to tell the story."

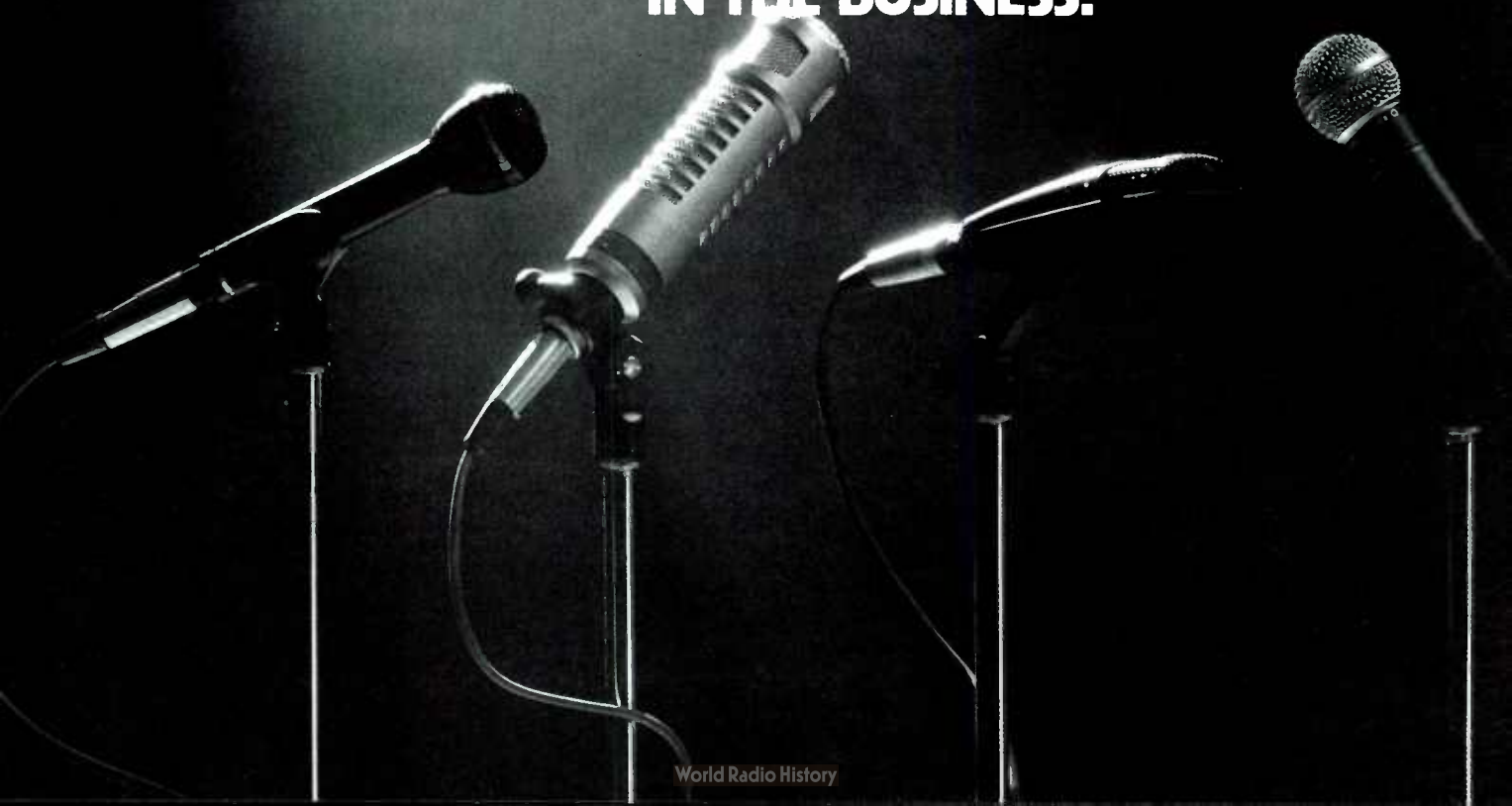
GORDON CHAMBERS

When the legendary Nancy Wilson yells out, "Sing 'chall!" to your every inspired phrase during your record party showcase at the Blue Note in New York and writes your debut album's liner notes, when jazz trum-

peter Bobby Bradford and song stylist Melba Liston are your parents, and when your first professional singing gig is with the Count Basie Orchestra, you're obviously born to swing.

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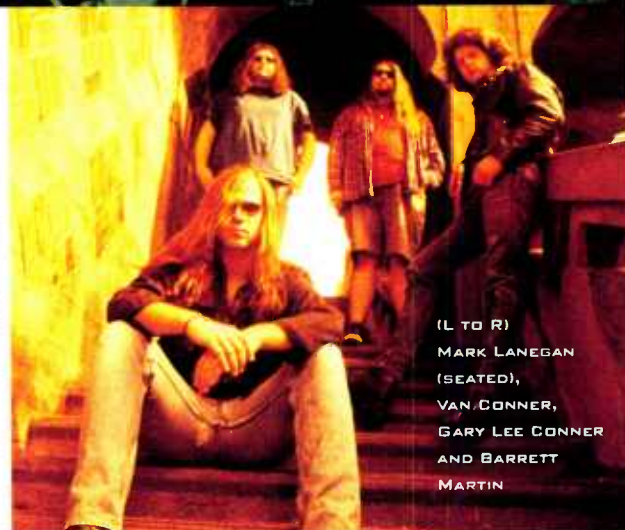
The Aesthetics of Oblivion

Now that everyone in the music business is looking to Washington (State) for direction, the Screaming Trees may finally get their due. With their sixth album, *Sweet Oblivion*, these eight-year veterans of the Seattle scene have produced their finest work yet. "We actually thought it might be our last record," singer Mark Lanegan says, "cause everyone was getting burnt. But now it feels like a new band." Bassist Van Conner agrees, but hopes any new converts will be drawn by the music itself rather than where it comes from. "This 'Seattle sound' thing is so uninformed; I just read some paper say-

ing *Sonic Youth* were from Seattle."

The Trees are different. Yes, they can summon up just as much distorted grandeur as any of their lumberjack-shirted counterparts, and Lanegan's weathered voice slightly resembles Kurt Cobain's. Yet songs like *Oblivion's* "Dollar Bill" have a vulnerability and sense of drama that set them apart from the grunge pack. A love of '60s pop is also evident on the first single, "Nearly Lost You", while for a B-side, the Trees pull out a faithful cover of the 1968 Small Faces classic "Song of a Baker." "We've ripped that song off so many times," Lanegan quips, "we felt we ought to do it."

While making *Oblivion*, the



(L TO R)
MARK LANEGAN
(SEATED),
VAN CONNER,
GARY LEE CONNER
AND BARRETT
MARTIN

CHRIS CUFFARO

band broke with tradition, recording in New York rather than the West Coast, using a real producer (Don Fleming) and writing songs together—"all in one room, the *Ishtar* method," explains Lanegan. "It's good to get past everybody's egos and make a group effort,"

Conner says. "All four of us were more involved this time, and we decided, 'Let's forget about what we've done before and try a new approach.' The songwriting was important, but just being friends again was important too."

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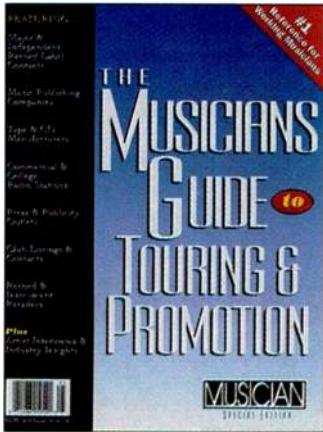
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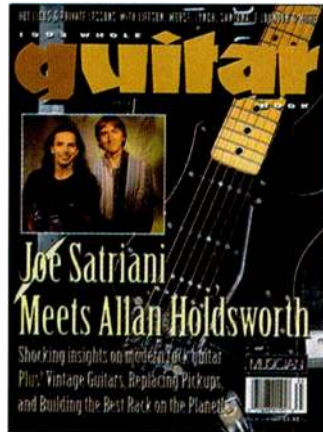
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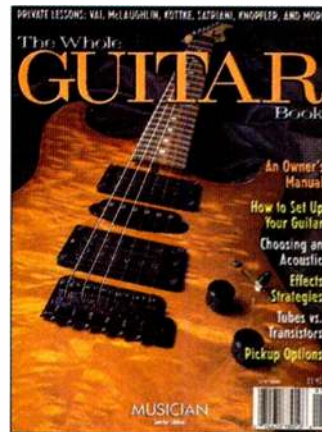
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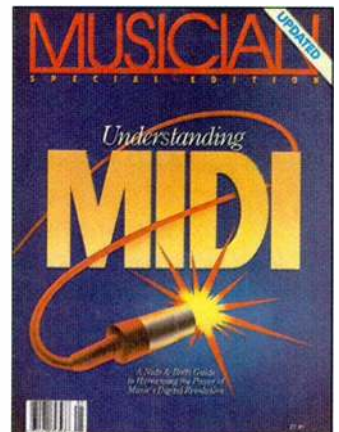
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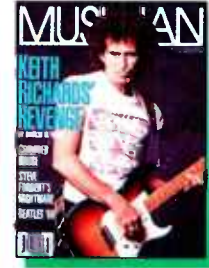
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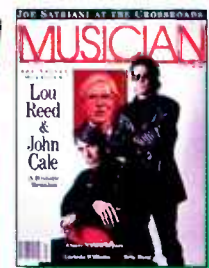
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LEFT: JOHN GARCIA, SCOTT REEDOR, BRANT BJORK AND JOSH HOMME

KURT MUNDABL

KYUSS

Iron Butterfly

show it around...it's gone."

It may already be too late for Kyuss to keep that butterfly. *Blues for the Red Sun*, their second album, could have A&R men combing the cacti for Kyuss Jr. With the aid of producer Chris Goss, otherwise guitarist of Masters of Reality, they've come up with an original sound at an age (they range from 19 to 22) when most bands are still lost in their influences. Goss has given some shape to the metallic barrage that characterized their first album *Wretch*, and together they've created a huge wall of mud, like a rainstorm in the desert washing a mountain onto your town. A number of critics have heard a

Black Sabbath precedent. "Sabbath had an interior sound," says singer John Garcia. "They were on that eerie Gothic trip. We're into heat, the earth. We're more affected by the environment."

An environment of big bikes and mythic highways, not ecological admonitions. They also like irony. The album's slowest cut, "Thong Song," echoes the refrain, "I hate...slow songs."

"Lots of Josh's lyrics have that John Lennon touch," says drummer Brant Bjork. "'Thong Song' is about the dumb kid with the Iron Maiden T-shirt who swears he hates slow songs, when that would be his favorite one."

TIM TOMLINSON

"We sounded like this when Soundgarden still had their amps on 2," says Josh Homme, guitarist of Kyuss (rhymes with pious), a non-grunge quartet from Palm Desert, California. So, even if you haven't heard of them yet, Kyuss precedes Seattle, and they dread the prospect of

their desert idyll suffering the same *Day of the Locust* descent of under-assistant West Coast promo men and the attendant corruption of a prematurely hyped scene.

"If you have a butterfly in your hand," says Homme, "and you yell to your friends, 'Hey, come here, I've got this beautiful butterfly,' then you open your hands to

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ON STAGE



MORRISSEY IN MANHATTAN

THOSE WHO LOVE MORRISSEY love him with such whole-hearted devotion that no criticism could dissuade them and no praise could further encourage them. In September I went to the Paramount in New York City to see Morrissey for the sake of the rest of us, rock fans who have never been able to reconcile Morrissey's pose of mopey ennui with our preconceptions about the minimum requirements of rock 'n' roll. We all know great rock can be nerdy—

but the great nerd rockers have always been angry. We know great rock can be homo-erotic, but the great gay rockers have been extroverted. Morrissey confuses us because he adopts a languid, self-pitying "I'm going out in the garden and eat worms" pose that we associate with people who disdain rock 'n' roll and all us unwashed thugs who like it.

So why is Morrissey held a rock hero in the hearts of half the population of England's disaffected bohos and America's freshman dorms? I have been to the Paramount and now I understand. Morrissey, who in his lyrics, on his albums and in his interviews shows self-immolating weariness with the insensitivity of the world, comes alive in concert as a stomping, rocking, posing, [cont'd on next page]

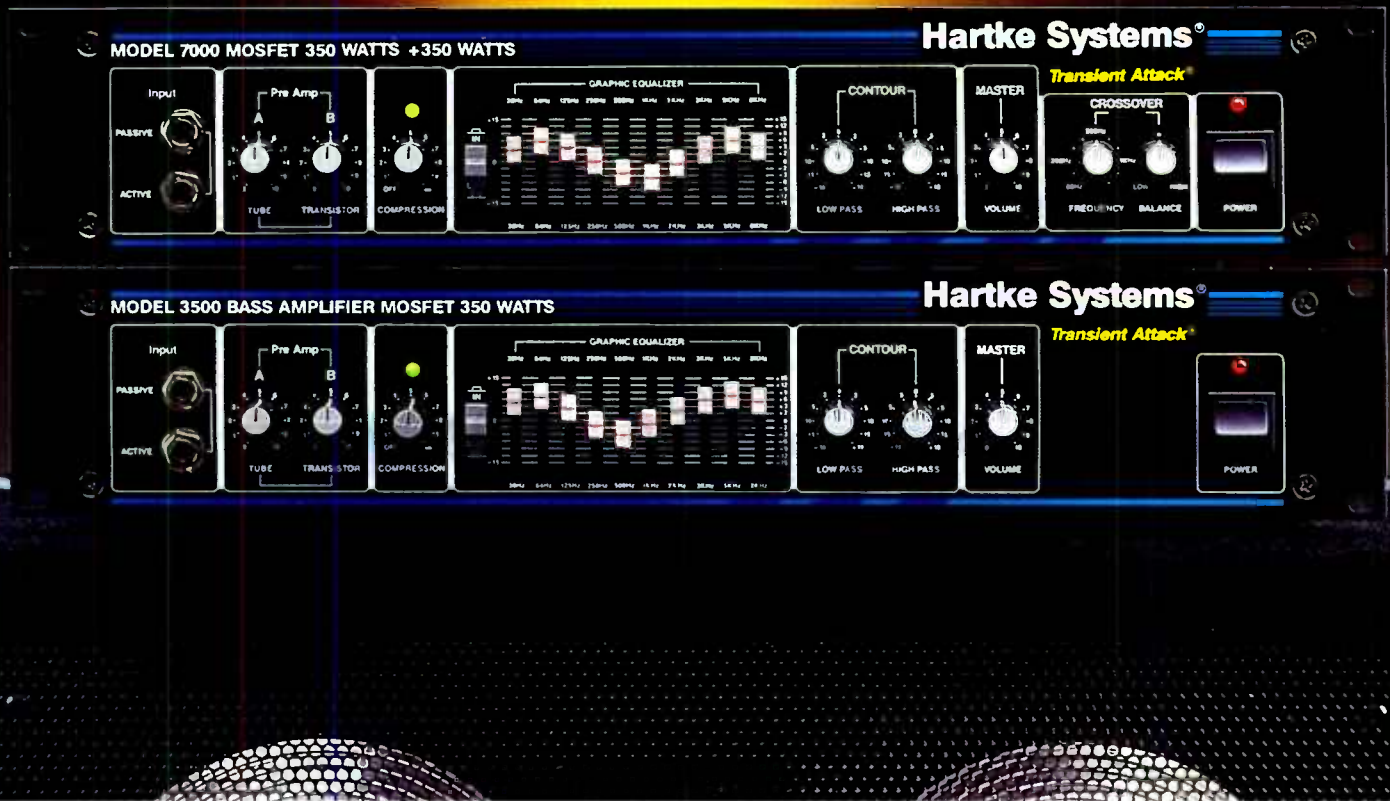
MICHELLE SHOCKED



MICHELLE SHOCKED MADE one of the best albums of 1992, *Arkansas Traveler*, and it didn't dent *Billboard's* Top 200, despite the fact that Mercury Records asked Shocked to write a pop single to sweeten what the execs no doubt recoiled from when they heard it, an albumful of *fiddle* tunes forchrisssake. Never mind that they were shrewdly rewritten, the point being to replow the heartland, to nurture tradition by reimagining it.

At least Shocked managed to get her *Arkansas Traveler Revue* on the road, and into Carnegie Hall in October, in pretty good style. Taj Mahal was there, and a tight backup band, and folk-rockers Uncle Tupelo. Despite what must've been a trauma—the pull-out of the Band, a big part of the *Revue*—Shocked was unfeignedly delighted to be at Carnegie Hall and responded with unphonily delightful music: the Texas reel "Cotton Eyed Joe" recast as "The Prodigal Daughter" to put some sharp questions to the old Bible story ("What's to be done with the prodigal son/Welcome him home with open arms/But when a girl goes home with the oats he's sown/It's draw your shades and your shutters"); the breakdown "Soldier's Joy," now a dirge about morphine-addicted Civil War veterans called "Shaking Hands"; "Custom Cutter," a new song [cont'd on next page]

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SHOCKED

about a farmer waiting, half-nuts with impatience, for the harvester to come. You can see why Shocked was so pissed when the execs weren't satisfied with the *Arkansas Traveler* songs; only, the one they asked her to add, "Come a Long Way," is the strongest of all, maybe the best she's ever written, a natural hit somehow blown.

Shocked's a charismatic performer: boyishly sexy, with a beautiful full-throated old-timey voice she can unleash into a yowl; gawky in a

charming way—the real thing. You'll always hear artists gush about playing Carnegie; Shocked managed to do it touchingly. Not only that, she pulled off a non-sickening family reunion when she hauled out her mandolin-picking father, a little dude named Dollar Bill, and her fiddling brother, and announced that her grandma, convalescing from major surgery, had insisted on flying in: "She's seen me a million times, but she's never been to Carnegie Hall!" (After the show I spotted a very small lady backstage, clutching about a dozen programs.)

Taj Mahal was a pleasure, too. I've seen this

complicated man give angrily perfunctory shows, but tonight he was on, hopping from piano to guitar, recycling the blues with flair (he, too, is a rewriting fool, not too shy to rework Robert Johnson, and that's what folk music's all about, right?). He couldn't have ended his set in a more nakedly emotive, affecting way, bawling one word—"Corinna"—up into Carnegie's depths, over and over, as he faded out.

The audience was once young with Taj Mahal, now they're not so young with him. Can folk music survive in the post-rock era? (Which is what I decided we're now in, watching Faith No More and Helmet the next night.) There were no kids at Carnegie, none; at 30, Michelle Shocked is younger than her fans. I hope her embrace of tradition doesn't land her in the margins, cynical and drunk and peddling homemade tapes in some dark cafe.

—TONY SCHERMAN

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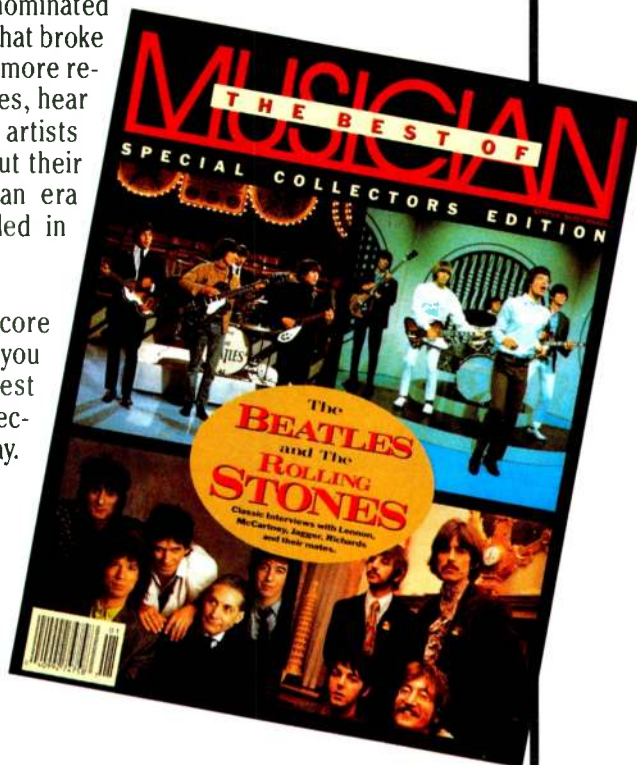
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MORRISSEY

sweating, handsome and scream-inducing star. This is powerful stuff. If I were a freshman writing a term paper I'd say, "The physical catharsis of the rock show is excused and justified by the elitism of the nominal subject matter." But as a rock critic trying to squeeze somebody else's fun into the toothpaste tube of rock's narrow tradition, let me instead say, "It was like the Kinks!"

No matter how pained and precious "You're the One for Me, Fatty" or "November Spawned a Monster" sound in the privacy of your bedsit, when they are played onstage with loud amps and frenzied fans, they turn into party music. That's especially potent for kids who rarely get invited to parties.

The day after the Morrissey show I went to the football game with my colleague Charles M. Young. "How was Morrissey?" he asked as a 49er rammed his elbow into the neck of a Jet.

"Strange," I said as a player was carried off the field. "The wimpy kids stood on their chairs and pumped their fists in the air and screamed and the wimpy singer ripped off his shirt. All the people who usually mock the big hairy-chested rock show had a big hairy-chested rock show of their own. It was touching. Like the Special Olympics."

A 49er smashed into a Jets receiver before he had the football. We could hear bone snap. "Are you gonna put that in your review?" Young asked.

"Nah, I'd never say that in print," I said as we stood up to get a look at the injury. "It's too mean."

"If you don't write it," Young said, "you're the wimp."
—BILL FLANAGAN

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BOB WEIR: THE DEAD ARE ALIVE

"When Jerry comes onstage next time, there will be rumors it's not him."



THE OSTENSIBLE PURPOSE OF THE NEW YORK EVENT WAS A PRESS screening of the Grateful Dead's new video documentary, *Backstage Pass*, with Bob Weir and director Justin Kreutzmann in attendance. But the question hung in the air, thick as pot smoke at a Dead show. Unasked, it was so deafening that Dead spokesperson Dennis McNally felt he had to address the issue even before the screening began. Jerry Garcia is alive and well, he told the invited audience, and that's that.

Well, not quite. You can't just defuse four weeks of intense anxiety with a pat statement. After all, we're not talking here about the President of the United States; we're talking about the idolized lead guitarist of a legendary band—a band that lives by its touring and had recently cancelled dates due to Garcia's "exhaustion"—and a band that wouldn't confirm whether the 50-year-old guitarist's condition was serious.

There was an eerie *déjà vu* to the situation. Almost six years earlier to the day of Garcia's August 4 collapse, he had suffered a diabetic coma. And *that* was not long after he reportedly cleaned up from eight years of heroin use. (The incen-

tive was a drug bust.) It's been a while since the stocky, gray-bearded Captain Trips looked like he was capable of navigating anything other than a reindeer-driven sleigh.

Backstage Pass itself reinforces what a precious cultural resource Garcia and the Dead are. Although an un*Deadly* short 35 minutes, it manages to traverse the band's career in six songs and a welter of footage. The newest performance shows Garcia and Weir, both on acoustic guitars, and electric bassist Phil Lesh all seated while playing Bob Dylan's "She Belongs to Me"—the Grateful Dead unplugged.

Official reassurance notwithstanding, the media still had Jerry questions for Weir after the screening. "He's really in much better health than he's had for a long time," the rhythm guitarist patiently responded. "When you see him next time you won't recognize him." This remark may not have had its intended effect.

Part of the mystery is that Garcia hasn't been heard from since before his illness. Wouldn't a statement from the guitarist himself help douse the rumors?

"I think he just doesn't want to hassle it," Weir says after the media *menschen* have shuffled out of the screening room. "I think he'd just rather let his actions speak for themselves when he comes out and plays and looks good."

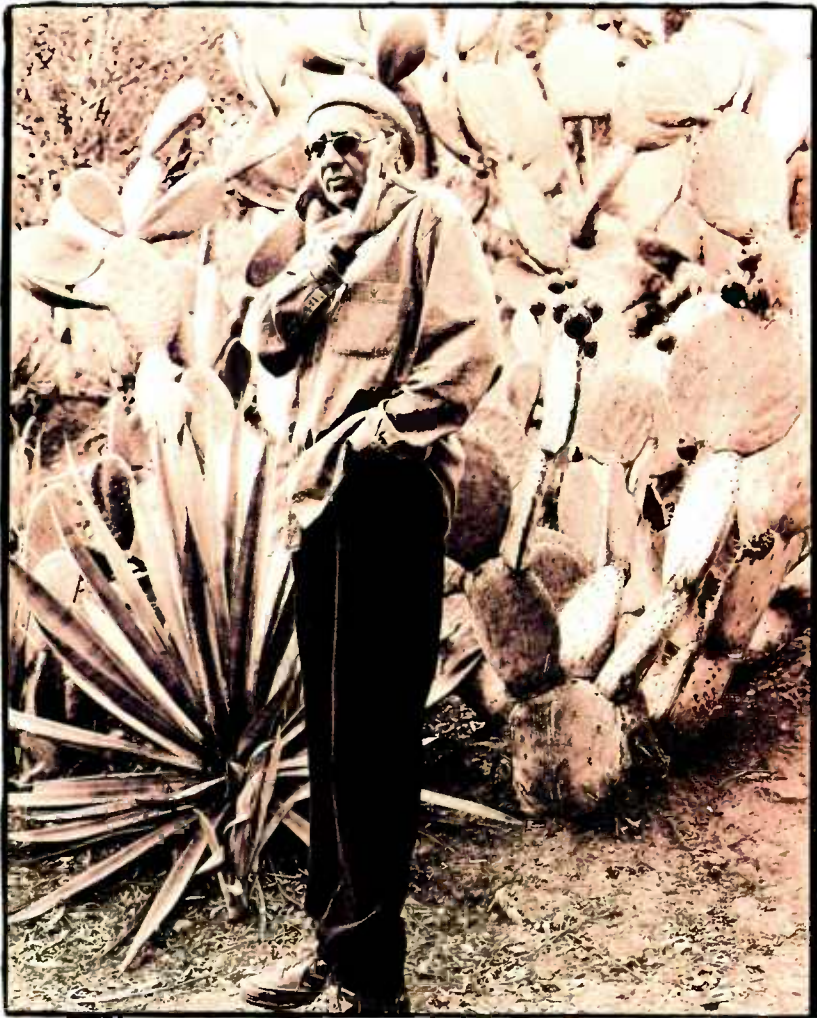
In the meantime, however, speculation is likely to run riot. "People are going to say what they're going to say," Weir sighs fatalistically. "I've heard some amazing rumors. When Jerry comes out onstage next time, I'm sure there will be rumors going around that that's not him. The more outrageous the rumor, the more believable it is to certain people."

Weir had just wrapped up his own tour in August when he called the Dead office and learned Garcia was sick. "A lot of people in our office were inclined to take it a little more seriously than I am. I've been there. We've been through this before. For some reason this is the kind of thing I don't take particularly seriously. There's nothing you can do about it. But also I have a great deal of faith in Jerry's constitution. I just don't see him disappearing in the near future."

Such optimism flies in the [cont'd on page 30]

BY SCOTT ISLER

THE RESURRECTION OF CHARLES LLOYD



*People thought,
“He’s too far out to
think about.”*

pop—in the late '60s, and helped launch the career of a restlessly gifted young pianist named Keith Jarrett? For after disbanding that '60s quartet at the height of its popularity, Lloyd seemed to simply disappear from the jazz scene. And while his re-entry actually began in 1981, when the 17-year-old French prodigy Michel Petrucciani knocked on his door in Big Sur, and Lloyd has gone on to record two albums with Petrucciani and two others under his own name, until the Coltrane tribute few fans seemed to be paying attention.

This makes Charles Lloyd smile. “All people know is what Freddie Hubbard said: ‘Charles Lloyd? He’s up on a hill meditating somewhere,’” he says. “People thought, ‘He’s too far-out to think about.’ But I never lost my humor about it. Because sometimes, from a far place, from a place of quiet, you can get a lot done.”

Today Lloyd lives much of the year on a hilltop property in Montecito, California—an affluent burg adjacent to Santa Barbara—in a modest hacienda of a house on 10 acres. The panoramic view, with the Pacific Ocean spread out below, is to die for, or to live for. Here, Lloyd meditates and acquiesces to his spiritual guru, Rama Krishna; he practices his tenor and writes music; he does business and checks on the real estate investments which have secured his future; he lives quietly with his wife, the artist Dorothy Darr, and his dog Josie.

The call for Lloyd's JVC fest appearance came from organizer Bill Cosby, a longtime fan, who thought the saxophonist would “bring something special” to the affair. It's an understandable conceit, for at his best, Lloyd taps into the Coltrane canon for his rubato extrapolations and impressionistic modal washes over sustained, suspended chords. His playing is gauzy, but energized with harmonic tension and musicality.

UNTIL A FEW MONTHS AGO, CHARLES LLOYD HAD AN IDENTITY PROBLEM, at least among jazz fans. The problem was that no one was paying attention to him anymore. Then came his fateful performance at the John Coltrane tribute during the 1992 JVC Jazz Festival in New York, where his volcanic, telepathic playing alongside Coltrane vets Elvin Jones and McCoy Tyner was generally regarded as an apex of the event. Stirring a steamy lather of ideas and intensity, swaying as if in a gust of inspiration, closing his eyes but not his ears, he provoked thunderous reactions from both listeners and press. Suddenly Lloyd was back among the living, anointed with the holy mantle of a “comeback.” Thus saith the *New York Times*, even.

But what has Lloyd been doing since he shook the music world—both jazz and

BY JOSEF WOODARD

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Yet at first Lloyd was reluctant to attend. "I've had this association with people who said I was a Trane clone or a Trane this-or-that," he explains. "That's not true. Obviously, as far as my major heroes go, he's certainly one of them, just like Rama Krishna is now. I just go for the highest, and for me Coltrane is right up there with J.S. Bach. In modern music, Trane smashed atoms. Someone said that at the end, he was thinking about putting the old quartet together again. He was doing some serious research."

Lloyd was born in Memphis in 1938, with a family tree that includes African, Cherokee, Irish and Mongolian branches. In the '50s, Lloyd studied composition at USC and became part of an L.A. jazz crowd which included Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, Don Cherry, Charlie Haden and Scott LaFaro.

He joined Chico Hamilton's group in 1960, stepping into the spot vacated by Dolphy, played with Cannonball Adderley in 1964 and two years later formed his own quartet, with newcomers Jarrett, drummer Jack DeJohnette and bassist Cecil McBee.

That band's free-wheeling improvisations, extended song structures and general intensity caught on in wildly unexpected ways. The group often appeared on bills with rock bands and slipped easily into the eclectic airplay patterns of the free-form radio movement. Lloyd earned a gold record with *Forest Flower* (which eventually sold a million copies, virtually unheard-of for a jazz album). His became the first jazz group to play in the Soviet Union by invitation of the Soviet people.


But in 1969, Lloyd stepped off the bus. "I came to a realization when my mom died, when I was 30, that what I best better be about is changing myself, because I saw mortality right before me." The '70s were a transition period, during which he retreated almost completely from public life. "I always listen to my own bells and the drummer within. Even in my deep exile in Big Sur, I really wanted to share music with people, but I realized that there is something about culture in silence. I had to reflect on all of that."

Though hardly new age, there is a wondrously airy, languid spaciousness in Lloyd's two newest albums for ECM, *Fish Out of Water* and *Notes from Big Sur*. But for his next album, Lloyd predicts a more aggressive sound than those records suggest. "There's a side of me that's a kind of poet-in-the-tower thing," he admits, "but there's something about me that's visceral, too. Manfred Eicher has the idea of the north, not unlike Glenn Gould—they're looking for something that's really gray. But the next record has to have fire."

As we're sitting on the front porch, Dorothy Darr arrives with a copy of Lloyd's peculiar foray into vocal music, *Moon Man*, an album that came out in 1970. Lloyd grabs the album and, suddenly transfixed, starts singing some of its lyrics as if he had written them yesterday. He bellows down the hillside as his dog cocks a curious ear: *Moon man, don't you take my place now way in space like you done before...they know you killed Geronimo, they know you done took the gold...*

"Hendrix loved this album, man," he says. "Jazz is a music of wonder. I always received that from the old guys. There's something about that synergy, the sharing with other generations.

"I feel that my music is strong and blessed. I have something to say and something to share, and I think it's my mission to do that. Staying home and living a quiet, ascetic life, I've had great blessings.

"See, I hooked my music in with jazz, because each time you play, it's another chance to tell the truth with freshness. You can't just go out there playing your slick hip licks. Because without freshness, it's not jazz." 

WEIR

[cont'd from page 27] face of more than vague rumors. The most serious printed report, in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, referred to Garcia's enlarged heart and fluid in his lungs that could lead to heart failure.

Weir chuckles. "It's all true, but he's been living with those conditions for a couple of years now. It's been dire for a long time and he just sort of lives through it. So it's not a big deal. Fact is, I'm real glad it happened because it sorta turned Jerry around, from what I've been able to see. At this point, to look at him you have every expectation of seeing him in another 50 years. It'd be a shame to see him die early. And at this point I just don't see that happening because I think he's more or less made the behavior modification or lifestyle changes it took to turn that whole situation around. Now he's a healthy guy. Or a reasonably healthy guy."

More déjà vu. Didn't we hear six years ago about Jerry changing his lifestyle and his diet?

"Yeah, but he didn't," Weir says. "He made a little effort and it did net him some results. But this time he's really made a serious effort. And the results are much more manifest. He looks to be enjoying himself and getting some amount of fulfillment out of it, so I think he will stick to it. Here's me hoping."

As for persistent tales of Garcia backsliding into drugs—"I'm an addictive personality," he has cheerfully admitted more than once—

Weir's response is properly enigmatic: "Live and learn" is all I can tell you."

If Garcia is on the road to recovery as much as Weir insists, the Dead should be back on the road by early December. "We actually could have played in November but we decided to spend November rehearsing, coming up with new material. It's an opportunity for us to do that. That appealed to everybody."

Presumably including Garcia. He had told his bandmates late last year that he wasn't enjoying the group and wanted some time off. In that light his illness almost appears psychosomatic.

"It's a little bit like a marriage," Weir says of intra-band relationships. "It's a good marriage. But sometimes marriage has that ball-and-chain aspect to it. More than a ball and chain, the Grateful Dead is an opportunity for all of us. Not many people are fortunate enough to have a musical relationship in which they've been playing highly improvisational and interactive music for 25 years or more. We can do stuff that other people just can't do. We can get to places other people just can't go, because of this vehicle. And none of us are gonna walk away from that."

As of September, then, Weir declares that all questions about Garcia "can be answered in two words: Jerry's fine."

Let's hope so.

DEAD SET

BOB WEIR's tool of choice is still his signature-model Modulus Black Knife guitar synthesizer. He's having a new one made, though, with pickups developed by EMG's Rob Turner, a Wilkerson tremolo bridge and an additional knob "to work like an Aphex." (He also plays a Modulus-converted Casio guitar.) Weir has a t.c. 2290 multi-processing system, and is working with t.c. on a redesign "that's basically five 2290s in one box, which is more processing than I ever expect I'll need." His rack holds a Boogie Mark IV and Soldano head; sometimes Weir switches between them, sometimes he blends the two. From the rack the signal goes into a speaker emulator circuit Weir designed with Tom Paddock of Sound Research in San Jose. The guitarist can dial up speaker "size" and "cabinet"; the circuit has pre-sets for Marshall and Twin Reverb enclosures. Weir favors Dean Markley and D'Addario strings. He used to use the latter's now-unavailable half-rouds; currently he tends toward medium lights. His pick is a Jim Dunlop Jazz.

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"I'm not necessarily interested in working with bands that have got a firm vision of what they want to do," says A&R guru Jonathan Poneman. "It's always good when you can stumble into that situation, but sometimes it's good to hook up with a band that has a few raw strengths and just needs a little time. The fun comes in developing with them, and so what if their first record sucks? You know that somewhere down the line they're going to be great."

"A lot of musicians now see rock music as a career alternative," observes grunge impresario and label founder Bruce Pavitt. "You're seeing more and more kids drop out of school, grow their hair and think that they've got a

BY SANDY MASUO

"We're not looking for pretty faces who'll sing a pop song."

career. They walk into the office and—you can spot people like this a mile away—basically say, 'Mold me. I'll do anything you want, just give me an advance.' Those are exactly the kind of people that we shut the door to."

"We like stuff that's a bit rougher, a little edgier," says Poneman. "And when I say rougher and edgier, I'm talking about emotional content more than guitars being played through a fuzz pedal or whatever. Most of the bands here, we're compelled by their personalities and their confrontational qualities. We're not looking for three or four pretty faces who will sing an innocuous pop song. I mean, to me the Reverend [Heat], apart from being a great guitar player and a great entertainer, has really got an attitude. It's a playful attitude, but it's also mean."

Playful but mean: It all began in 1979 as a fanzine called *Subterranean Pop*, the creation of Pavitt, who was interning at *Op Magazine* (which would later become *Option*) while a student at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. The focus of the 'zine was American regional music scenes, which Pavitt felt were being sorely neglected in favor of the British trends of the day. Shortened to "Sub Pop U.S.A.," it went through two more incarnations as a radio show and a column in Seattle's music monthly *The Rocket* before becoming a label in 1986 with the release of a compilation of Northwest bands called *Sub Pop 100*. The first regional release by the fledgling label was the 1987 *Dry as a Bone EP* by Green River, members of which would later become Mother Love Bone, members of which would later become Pearl Jam. Poneman came on board that same year with Soundgarden, and the operation became a full-time venture on April Fools Day 1988. Initially focusing on indigenous Northwest talent, they gradually gained a national following and began broadening their horizons to include regional talent from coast to coast.

Poneman and Pavitt make all final decisions when it comes to signings, and have had to make certain concessions to the current legal climate. As a general rule, Sub Pop accepts no unsolicited demos, relying instead on recommendations and referrals from an indie grapevine primarily made up of producers, bands [cont'd on page 37]

Tiny Wunderboxes Descend Into Hands Of Astonished Musicians

"I Knew I deserved a miracle, but three is beyond Belief!"

By Mickey O'Callahan

Special Correspondent

Politicians, military, noted scientists, even special plain-

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sent! Yet here we are, in the present, and musicians the world over are coming in with these most which also provide as to the light of their

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Scientists Baffled by Expressive Quality of Flying Wedge 16-bit Stereo Boxes: "Whoever built these little things obviously knows something the rest of us don't."

While musicians rejoice the unexpected arrival of these digital processors, members of the world's scientific community are scratching their heads. How can such tiny parcels produce such expressive tone?

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and others most perplexed is "expressive" to these is that unable

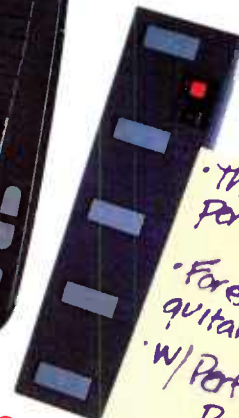


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FIRST SIGHTINGS OCCUR ON MERE COINCIDENCE — OR IS THE MESSIAH TRYING TO SEND A MESSAGE?

Those who remember Elvis Presley fondly tend to dismiss accounts of his recent sightings. But even the most skeptical among us would find it hard to dismiss the miraculous appearance of three different and mysterious boxes—on the anniversary of his demise! Chris Albi and Neil Hamilton, long-time bodyguards for the singer, are featured in their unauthorized biography "Viva Las Elvis," which details their encounters with electronic wonders. "I can still hear him saying 'I'm not dead,'" says Albi, who is "temporarily" in Mexico. Hamilton, a motorcycle

URE UFOs?
rich Schmarco of Germany, points toward me he sighted the first wunderbox, which "zoomed into my hand. It seemed friendly enough, so I just held it right in. Never in all of my days have I or my brothers in Wolfsburg heard such beautiful sounds."

Musician: "I Still Eat Tuna, But Now I Don't Sound Like One!"

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SPIN DOCTORS' ROCK 'N' ROLL REMEDY



L TO R: AARON COMESS, MARK WHITE,
ERIC SCHENKMAN AND CHRIS BARRON

BACK WHEN WE WERE WORKING CLUBS, WE CALLED IT OUR GOOD old days," remembers Spin Doctors guitarist Eric Schenkman. "Now we're playing theaters and trying to bring back that same vibe, so we've christened this the new good old days."

He's entitled to smile. A year after the release of *Pocket Full of Kryptonite*, New York's Spin Doctors recently had the unlikely pleasure of seeing their overlooked studio debut blossom into a hit. Most unproven bands would long ago have given up the album for dead, but this cool quartet has gone from also-ran to headliner. So how does an honorable flop become a gold record? Divine intervention? Satanic bargain? Try good old-fashioned hard work, in the form of endless touring, enhanced by belated radio interest.

"Our record company said right up front that they weren't gonna hype us," explains extra-skinny singer Chris Barron between forkfuls of salad at a Manhattan Italian restaurant. "They put us out on the road and allowed us to build up a following."

An ingeniously simple strategy, because once exposed to the music, anyone with ears can tell Spin Doctors are a superior rock 'n' roll band. Best known for *Kryptonite's* mean-spirited radio hit "Little Miss Can't Be Wrong" (more about that later), the guys twist catchy pop tunes into intriguing shapes. While Barron's warm, sunny vocals stake out the melody, Schenkman alternates fat, chugging chords with lightning-bolt guitar solos, anchored by the uncommonly deft rhythms of bassist Mark White and drummer Aaron Comess. The songs range from three minutes to 10, from spacious '60s psychedelia to curt nouveau funk, but the Doctors always seem to know where they're headed.

It's the day before a big gig at Roseland, unofficially commemorating Spin Doctors' emergence as stars, and the boys are on dinner break, in the middle of rehearsing lesser-known tunes from their

"A crowd has big slow thoughts. I can read its mind."

portfolio of 60 originals. The better to give the hometown crowd a memorable night, notes Schenkman. "We have a reputation now for having a good live show, so people expect a lot. We owe it to them to do the best we can."

Delivering the goods onstage has been the Doctors' credo since they started practicing nearly four years ago. "We didn't want to start by shopping around demo tapes," recalls Schenkman. "This band was designed to pay the rent, if at all possible, so that we wouldn't have to go to work in the morning. We knew we had to gig to survive, and within about a year we weaned ourselves off our day jobs.

"I remember us saying, 'Do you think we have a sound?' We were freaking out because we thought we had a sound. It's hard to describe how amazing that feeling is."

Artistic fulfillment manifested itself in subtle

BY JON YOUNG

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World Radio History



ways—and required sneaky maneuvers—in those dues-paying days. “We used to play a blues club on Bleecker Street that for economic reasons was a very important gig,” remembers Schenkman. “The owner didn’t want an original band, so for the first set we’d play covers. Then we’d start off the second set with a few more covers, followed by some of our own stuff. By that time there were enough people who knew us, and were buying drinks, for us to keep the job.” Anyway, augmenting the arsenal with Stones or James Brown songs isn’t such a bad idea when you’re playing three or four sets

a night, working till four in the morning.

Tireless gigging allowed Spin Doctors to refine their craft while building up a New York clientele. Impressed by the quartet’s insatiable appetite for the stage, Epic Records signed the band and took the unusual move of leading off with the six-track, 45-minute live EP *Up for Grabs...Live*. Setting the stage for *Kryptonite*, the record featured the original version of “Little Miss Can’t Be Wrong,” which begins with the acid couplet “Been a whole lot easier since the bitch left town/Been a whole lot happier without her face around.”

Christopher Barron’s lyrics tend to be more intelligent, not to mention benign, than that, and he hastens to emphasize that he is not another Axl Rose. “It’s not about women in general. It’s about one woman only, a really vindictive person who hates my guts. It’s funny that it’s on the radio, because she still has no idea it’s her.”

The band thinks a lot about the messages they send out these days. Like their friends in Phish and Blues Traveler, Spin Doctors have always given the crowd its money’s worth live, inspiring the kind of cult following that prompts glib comparisons to the Grateful Dead. Now they’ve grown beyond that close circle of friends and Barron wants to put the higher profile to good use. “We’re trying to show people a philosophy and uplift them. There’s more to life than the concrete things our sense can perceive. It’s a very beautiful world. Sometimes I think we’re poised between apocalypse and renaissance. Maybe a few artists and poets can tip things in the right direction.”

On a more practical note, the Doctors worry about the hazards of larger live audiences, especially when slam dancing enters the mix. “We were into punk in the late ’70s and early ’80s and back then slam dancing was cool, because everybody looked out for each other,” says Barron. “Today there are a lot of inconsiderate people, mostly guys, who wear big boots and clobber others in the head without realizing they’ve hurt them. I actually stopped the music once and made somebody apologize to a girl.”

Risky behavior? Not if you’re in command of the situation, as Barron usually feels he is. “I can read a crowd’s mind,” he grins. “I almost always know what they’re thinking. Crowds have big, slow thoughts. You can see them change their minds.”

“I *don’t* believe he can read the mind of an audience all the time,” interjects Schenkman, a skeptical smirk punctuating his remark.

“I *can* do it,” insists Barron. “It’s pretty simple. You can see it in their faces and body motion. It’s easy if you really look and listen with your heart.”

With the Roseland gig launching the band’s first tour as a bona fide name act, Barron will get ample opportunity to test his observational skills, while all concerned look forward to cutting loose for the masses. After a year of performing relatively brief shows, the Doctors plan to take advantage of their new popularity to play longer sets, returning to the improvisation and risk-taking that characterized their original good old days. “It’ll be interesting to see how people react when we stretch out more than we do on the record. I know *we’re* gonna like it,” says Schenkman.

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If the subsequent Roseland gig is any indication, the fans should too. Bigger and tougher onstage, the lads present a generous selection of familiar and unrecorded songs in a two-hour romp, generating the kind of electricity that's elusive in the studio. Their bar-band apprenticeship pays dividends in the collective confidence: Never straining for effect, the Doctors groove rather than attack. Schenkman cranks out dazzling licks, constructing lengthy, gripping solos, while White's speedy popping bass makes a powerful foil. As Comess thrashes with authority, Barron proves an unfailingly musical singer amidst the fury, not to mention a genial presence. During instrumental breaks, he bobs around the stage, loose-jointed, like a jivin' marionette. "The stage is our house. We acknowledge the crowd but we feel at home," explains Comess the day after the show.

Once the latest round of live dates is complete, Spin Doctors plan to spend a week in Memphis recording with hip legend Jim Dickinson, of Replacements and Big Star fame. But that's a story for farther up the road. For now, believing the group has a mind of its own, they're content to marvel at the phenomenon of themselves.

Says Barron, "Sometimes, when we're all together, not playing, but just hanging out, I'll look around and feel there's another member who should be there. And it's *the band*, the four of us." Schenkman adds, "We've had this joke for a long time—'Where's the other guy?' Now I realize that it's true."

Back on earth, Comess says, "It's been so much fun. I'm so glad my life went this way."

Aren't happy endings swell? 

WHAT THE DOCTORS ORDERED

CHRISTOPHER BARRON pursues a higher plane of consciousness through a Beyer Dynamic M88 microphone, while ERIC SCHENKMAN's tools of choice include a Pensa-Suhr guitar and a custom model built by Rich Coerner at Time Electronics, which he plays through Marshall and Hourglass amps with 4x12 Marshall cabinets. He accessorizes with a Cry Baby wah-wah, an Ibanez overdrive and a Boss echo. In the rhythm section, MARK WHITE relies on a Basstar bass and a Fender sunburst Jazz bass, amplified by a Crest 7001, a Demeter tube preamp, two 4x10 SWR Goliath II cabinets and two 1x15 SWR Triad cabinets. AARON COMESS commands a Brady set that includes five toms, two snares (one piccolo and one 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14) and Zildjian cymbals.

[cont'd from page 32] and associates at other labels. Eminent underground producer/mogul Kramer recommended Florida's Rein Sanction, while the Fluid and Codeine arrived through Glitterhouse Records in Germany, Sub Pop's European distributor. So the best recourse for anyone interested in Sub Pop is to figure out how to tap into the network. That means doing some research, connecting with your local indie scene, establishing a following, putting out a single or two and generally doing the stuff that

got Sub Pop itself started.

"We want the business to reflect our ideals," Poneman explains. "Although there's a certain lack of humanity and a certain zealotry when it comes to unearthing the-next-big-things and pushing them in people's faces, we're really trying to go for much more of a Ben & Jerry's approach to doing business. We want more of a family. I mean, we go for social irresponsibility as much as the next person, but we want it in the context of our greater values, if that makes any sense. Like *Blood, Guts and Pussy* by the Dwarves. If people take that [cont'd on page 103]

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ROGER AND ME

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE
PINK FLOYD STORY

“Roger gave you an interview?” ❁ There was a slight lilt of surprise in Dave Gilmour’s customarily baronial tone. ❁ “Well, yeah,” I said, “he has a wonderful new album about media desensitization and the self-destruction of the human race.” ❁ “Had he seen the article you did about me?” ❁ “He had. He was a bit miffed by some of the things you said, in fact.” ❁ “If someone said such things about *me*,” Dave laughed, “I’d sue them.” ❁ Such things would have burned Roger’s ears off even if he’d never seen them. Of course, he had. I’d faxed him some pre-publication excerpts as an invitation to rebut the tales

BY MATT RESNICOFF

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANK W. OCKENFELS 3

of London—I'd have been in with them breaking heads, and if I could destroy their right to free speech I would have. There comes a time when you have to stand your ground and say, 'What that guy's printing is wrong.' You can't climb onto cattle trucks shouting 'Everybody's entitled to their opinion.' No fuckin' way—they're *not* entitled to that opinion. However, I'm very anti-*People Who Try And Stop Us Saying 'Fuck' On The Radio*, because that is smokescreening.

"I was in L.A. for the riots. I didn't watch TV much, but I watched occasionally to see people having dialogues in the streets. I found it *fantastic*."

"I thought the dialogues were disheartening," I said. "In front of the smashed stores, people blithely looting and smiling."

"That didn't worry me. What was interesting was that they would take *anything*—it didn't matter what—and then come out and wave at the cameras on the way to the car. I thought that was actually rather *heartening*."

"Jeez..."

"Because it showed you they weren't ashamed; it was like they were *shopping*, they just weren't spending any money. It made you realize their lives were such that they didn't feel any guilt, at the time. Apparently a lot of them did later on: 'Hang on, maybe that was stealing.' Maybe I'm talking out of my ass, but I get a sense that in tough, downtrodden communities like south central L.A., a large part of the population have adopted some Christian ethic, and are very moral, proper American people who probably hang onto church and what that means in far more Christian ways than George Bush does. George Bush says, 'Jesus *wants* us to go murder people in Iraq. I happen to know that. We can go do whatever we like, secure in the knowledge that Jesus is on our side.' What a load of crap. A lot of those people are going, 'I don't think Jesus wants us to rob. Jesus wants us to help people,' all that passive stuff. So I had a lot of respect for the people stealing stuff and waving at the cameras.

"What happened with Rodney King was just a bunch of bullies beating somebody up. It was pure, simple *West Side Story*. It had nothing to do with the *law*. L.A. is an unbelievably racist town, and it's exacerbated by the influx of a recently arrived, economically strong Asian community. I had people not too far from the making of this record complaining about all the Japanese in their kid's school. Whose land is this? Is it any more yours than it was the Indians'? And why is it any more yours than the Japanese's, just because you're of European descent? You're all Americans. There's a weird thing developing about the Japanese just because they're good at making cars. Well, wake up! You taught them! You went in there after World War II and said, 'Guys, this is how you do it.' You destroyed their ancient culture, if you like. All right, they were a warlike people; they were expansionist—it's *inevitable*. That's what happens when you get a powerful and intelligent people who live on a tiny island. They learned how to do it, and they're doing it within the law. So just swallow it!"

"Well," I said, swallowing, "forgive me, but the same argument can be used to justify the recent actions of Gilmour, Mason and Wright."

"How?"

"You taught them, you introduced the industry, they're expanding within the law.' Look at Pink Floyd as an industry, an institution; it continues, takes its lumps, absorbs your disdain. That you see it as a fraud parallels American prejudice against a cheap Japanese product. Slicker version, cheaper price."

"I don't...for you to work for a magazine called *Musician* and attempt to make that connection shows how desperate you are to get me to talk about Pink Floyd. I can't make a connection between what I do...writing songs

and recording them, making films, putting on rock 'n' roll shows, whatever it is I might want to do—I started writing poems and a bit of prose as well—I think that's intrinsically different than making automobiles. I don't see Dylan Thomas and Henry Ford as being in the same business. One tries to explain our condition, and by virtue of explaining it to himself, explains it to the rest of us, and the other is making motorcars, which explain nothing."

WHAT NEED HAS Roger Waters for subjection to such "journalism"? Like Benny, a put-upon character from his second solo record *Radio K.A.O.S.*, he's been treated somewhat unjustly; Benny throws a rock in protest and goes to prison, while his crippled brother, who can receive radio waves telepathically, prevails and changes the world. In this futuristic



sketch, the innate desire to communicate is rewarded, if not with approval, then with peace. Waters' most optimistic, stylized statement was rewarded with the distinction of being the least memorable thing he's ever done.

"You're absolutely right," he said. "I allowed myself to get pushed down roads that were uncomfortable for me. I should never have made that record, Matt. I love some of the songs—'Home' is one of the best things I've ever written. 'The Powers that Be' is great. And it comes out icky-prissy, because it's sequenced. I remember the producer saying one day, 'Oh no—that sounds old-fashioned,' and alarm bells went off in my head.

"After my experiences with *Pros and Cons* and *K.A.O.S.*—I would play in Cincinnati to 2,000 people in a 10,000-seat hall while my colleagues were playing in a football stadium down the road to 80,000 people, and it was a bit galling. But what I cling to from that *K.A.O.S.* tour is kind of like Henry V—'The fewer guys in the battle, the greater share of glory.' I like the fact that to those 2,000 people in that hall—and there were *loads* of them all over the middle west—it was kind of a little exclusive club. Because the people who came were fans. There was a strong feeling of connection I got."

Roger's colleagues Dave Gilmour, Nick Mason and Rick Wright—in that order—continued as Pink Floyd after Waters declared the group creatively bankrupt in 1986 and began full-time work on his first solo album *The Pros and Cons of Hitchhiking*. The album's story came to Roger in the same writing spurt as *The Wall* seven years earlier, and though it was the *less* autobiographical, was rejected by the group.

The biggest creative conflict Waters experienced during Pink Floyd's later years was over two versions of *The Wall*'s "Comfortably Numb," one



GET SERIOUS



recorded by Dave to replace the initial, "sloppier" backing arrangement against which the orchestral parts were recorded. "None of us went," Waters says. "They were done in New York by [Bob] Ezrin and Michael Kamen. And when they brought them back, I thought the chart was great; Dave thought it was sloppy. So when Ezrin and I went off to do vocal parts, Dave spent a week rerecording the track. I remember it came over on the 24-track tape and Ezrin and I were both really expecting it to be great, hoping he'd improved it, and we put it on and looked at each other and..." Roger mimes a yawn. "Because it was just awful—it was stilted and stiff, and it lost all the passion and life the original had. And that became a *real* fight. It's most interesting that Ezrin completely agreed with me. But Dave obviously felt very, very strongly about it, and we ended up using the intro from the old one, the first few bars from the new one. That's all we could do without somebody 'winning' and somebody 'losing.' And of course, who *lost*, if you like, was the band, because it was clear at that point that we didn't feel the same way about music."

"At some point along the way," I asked, "did you feel they, or Gilmour, lost the requisite sense of Pink Floyd drama? There obviously *was* a time when the music was fully realized and intriguing. Or was it, as he explained to me, that you finally just didn't want to write with him?"

Roger paused. "Dave and I never wrote together. I don't ever remember writing with Dave. Sometimes he'd bring in a chord sequence and I'd then make a song out of it. Or he'd bring a guitar riff in and I'd make a song out of it, like 'Wish You Were Here.' I love that riff, it's fantastic. But we never wrote together, ever. Never. And Dave was never interested in drama, ever. In my experience. He never showed any interest at all, *ever*, in drama. Of

any kind. Certainly not."

"I posed to Dave, 'Perhaps Roger didn't think the band should continue after his departure because he thought it wouldn't do justice to "Gilmour/Waters," not just because it wouldn't do justice to "Waters."' His response was that he didn't think you wanted to work with him."

"Look, I read that piece that you did with him in your magazine, and...what do you want me to do, shoot him in the other foot?"

"No, my interest is in exploring misconceptions of how the band made its music; if *that* wasn't beloved, the interaction between its creators wouldn't make much difference to anyone."

"All right," Roger said sharply.

"I think I took a pretty nonpartisan stance. In fact, when I apologized to you about all the brouhaha at the premiere of *Amused to Death*, you said, 'No problem—everybody's got to make a living.' I thought, 'Gee, is that venom for me or Dave?'"

"That was directed at you. Why is that venomous? I mean, you only do that article...you want to sell copies of the magazine. If I sit here and give you the same kind of interview that Dave gave you, it's...I'd rather not talk about it. I take your point about students of the music being interested in where it came from. In order to answer those questions, it brings up all the other questions, and I'd rather not talk about it. *I am* interested in drama, I like my new record, I hope to go on tour with it. People can listen to *Momentary Lapse of Reason* and to what I do, and to the old stuff, and if there are questions, well, just listen and make your own mind up about what it's all about. And that history will never be written because I'm not going to waste my life writing it. It gets written by *other* people, none of which I authorized, and

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most of which, I have to say, is a load of shit. I don't accept the view painted of me in any of it, but I understand why it's painted. I feel okay about myself and my work. I know what I did and didn't do. I made my position very clear in 1987 about how I felt about the use of the name, and my position hasn't changed. But the name is owned by other people and that's all there is to it. There's nothing I can do about it. So I'd rather *not* do anything about it, you know? There are certain fights worthwhile to fight whether you can win them or not, and this isn't one of them. God forbid that we should all be put through *two* of those interviews!"

"But I don't want to get off Pink Floyd yet because there's so much..."

"I don't mind talking about Pink Floyd at all," Roger said. "For instance, I don't mind answering your 'Comfortably Numb' question. But I'm not interested in a debate with Dave Gilmour. I'm not interested in a private debate, I'm not interested in a public debate. If you are representing people who read your magazine who are interested in the work I did when I was in that band, well then, I'm happy to talk to you about that, because I have a connection with them: They're interested because they like my work, and I'm interested in talking through you to them. What I don't want to get into is, 'Dave said this' or 'Dave said that.' I don't want to butt heads with anybody."

DAVE SAID JUST yesterday that among Roger's allegations against Gilmour's "fake" Floyd is that there was a lunch over which a record man chided Gilmour about his music "not sounding Floyd enough" to be released under the group's name. After self-consciously repairing the tracks, the story goes, Floyd released *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*.

"Did Roger tell you about that? Absolute fantasy," Dave said drily. "They

got the date correct, October of 1986. October '86 is when I was doing the very first demos, and Bob Ezrin and I were still at the stage where we hadn't even made decisions about doing a group album or a solo album—we were at the beginning of *thinking* about doing a *record*. Nothing could have been projected from hearing the stuff. So the date itself disproves him right there. The guy said he was going to see Roger that afternoon; we said, 'Give him our best.'" Those present at the lunch, however, corroborate Waters' claims.

Gilmour's Floyd prevailed at the box office, but the band simply can't escape Waters—they still perform under a giant pig, Dave still sings about dogs and war. Five years later, neither Dave nor Roger wants to surrender the legacy, though Waters was appeased eventually with a hefty buyout, and a heftier confidence he brings to his solo work. Both have me convinced that they work because they love to work, and their work has convinced me that either can do quite well without the other. All of *that* convinces me that egos, not a want of inspiration, are what destroyed their partnership.

"Your voice has many timbres," I told Roger that afternoon, "though I'm surprised that *Amused* has a collection of guest vocalists. Did you feel Dave was the best conduit for your lyrics, or was that transference just a necessary evil of playing in a band with another very talented musician?"

"No, there's nothing evil about it. When we were both in Pink Floyd, we were both vocalists: I sang some songs and he sang some songs."

"As in 'Dogs,' there was nice counterpoint between your characters that..."

"Well, yeah, was there? Yeah, good. I mean, great. One thing about *being* in a group is that you have different elements and you give different things to it, and if two of you can sing, great. *Rick* used to sing too, you know. He

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used to sing harmonies, but rarely sang any lead on his own. So the three of us sang. That's what being in a group's about: You all do what you can for the greater good. That's the buzz, as anybody who's ever been in a group will tell you. Of course he had to sing my stuff, because he doesn't write...but that's okay. It's all right for somebody to write and several people to sing."

"When Rick was expelled in 1979," I said, "the band dynamic changed; a rock quartet losing its keyboardist leaves a very crucial element of its sound to an outsider, like a session player. That alone is a real indication that you were

effectively disbanding the group even then."

There was a very, very long pause.

"I think you could say that 'Wish You Were Here' was written, partially specifically about Syd, but largely about my sense of the absence of one from another, and from the band. So as far as I'm concerned, *Wish You Were Here* was the last Pink Floyd album. *The Wall* was my record and so was *The Final Cut*, and who played or didn't play on it—though I don't want to belittle Dave's contribution to *The Wall*. He played some great stuff, and wrote a couple of great guitar riffs as well: 'Run Like Hell,' the intro to 'Young Lust.'

But by and large, those records were nothing to do with anybody but me. And certainly Ezrin's contribution to *The Wall* was far greater than anybody in the band. He and I made that record together. And he was a great help. You know, Rick had drifted out of range by that point.

"In 'Wish You Were Here,' we weren't there. All of us at different points had left, and I think in a way that's why it's a good record, because it honestly expresses that. The reason *The Wall* is a good record is because it's an honest autobiographical piece of writing of mine. And the machinery in place that enabled me to make that record was good. But it was only machinery by then; there was no question of there being a group anywhere. And the same with *The Final Cut*. And with the next one. And clearly, the problem with the next one is that it's a lot easier to replace a keyboard player than a writer. And if you don't write, it's very hard to produce art. You can do it, but it's really hard—you have to get other people to write it for you. And then it becomes really, really difficult. I suspect. That's not something I've had to do, because I write. That's the only way I can answer this specific question about Rick. You know, Rick had left long before the summer of '79—long, long before. He was gone. We split up years before. And it wasn't the unilateral and heinous, wicked thing that gets described in the unofficial histories."

"Do you take solace in the fact that a band shaped by your writing could continue so successfully as an institution?"

"What's all this about an institution wanting to continue? How does the institution suddenly develop a personality and an ego? Do institutions make decisions about what they want to do? Institutions are controlled by individuals. It's not an institution. Pink Floyd has no feelings—it's two words. I mean, it only exists as a label to describe something. I would prefer that it was used to describe what happened between 1965 and 1977, but that's not the case. It is being used to describe other things. Well, so be it. I made an attempt to stop that happening. I thought it was wrong that that label be used to describe something other than what I felt was the real deal, which was a group that Dave Gilmour and Nick Mason and Rick Wright and myself and Syd Barrett, in one form or

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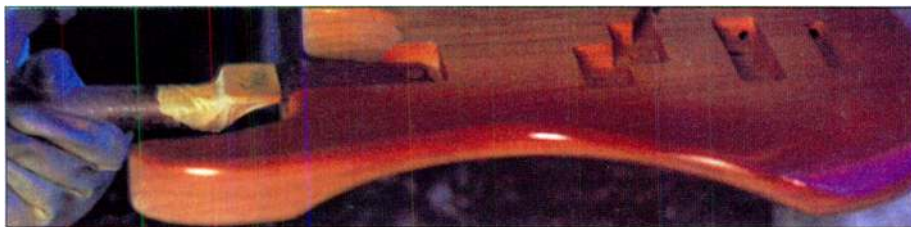
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another, were all part of over a period of 20-odd years. That's all. The institution hasn't decided anything. Various other *institutions* have."

ROGER TOOK A break, returned to the den and asked to run the recorder. "You can draw a line between what I'm interested in and what I'm not interested in," he said. "On one side you can name Dylan and Lennon, who observe the world and have *feelings*, and write songs directly from those feelings. On the vapid side you have pop groups who need material and write songs to fill the hole, rather than getting somebody else. But they might

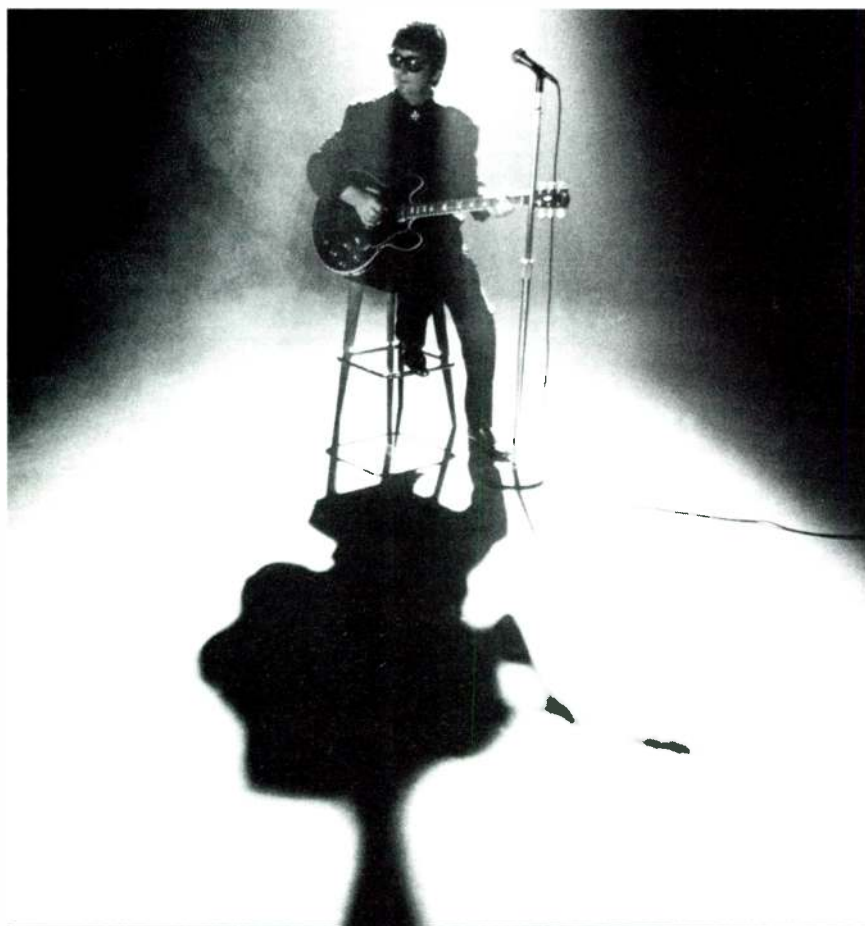
just as well get somebody else, because it's a manufacturing process. It's not poetry, because it doesn't spring from their heart or guts or wherever John Lennon's or Dylan's songs came from. And in my view—I seem to always wind up attacking poor Phil Collins," he laughs, "but it's only because he's so visible—he's symptomatic of an awful lot of it. He might well disagree and so might his fans, but the *feeling* I get is that he's pretending to be a songwriter or a rock 'n' roller. It's an act. That's why it's unsatisfying. And those videos underscore that feeling. If you cared about what you were doing, you would *not be able* to do

that silly walk, one behind the other, because you would find it impossible to ridicule your work in that way. 'Mister Picasso, we think it would sell this work if you hung by your heels from a crane and held it upside-down with your trousers down.' Pablo's not gonna do that because he's serious about what he does. Just a passing thought. That's taken over an awful lot of the business. You could say, 'Well, why shouldn't it?' Absolutely *no* reason, so long as it doesn't take over and *squeeze* out the Lennons and Dylans because they're too good for it. They *won't* take their trousers down and do silly walks on the beach."

When Roger sings "God wants Semtex," it sounds like "God wants subtext," which could just as well be the pivot for his concept, and the last five years of his career. "Semtex" is, in England, almost in common usage like 'Hoover,'" he said. "It's the most popular plastic explosive. Semtex was used to blow down Pan Am 103, and set against the other lyrics, 'sedition,' 'sex' and 'freedom,' it's shocking. But with all due respect to the people who lost relatives on the flight, what's really shocking is that the guys who put the Semtex on the plane were also doing *what God wanted*. They were fighting for freedom and for God in the same way as the American pilots who incinerated those people fleeing on the road to Basra. I can't turn my camera, or my brush, away from those ironies. They become the stuff of news stories, we assimilate them and we become inured to the horror. Of course, the women and children on Pan Am 103, and all the soldiers and their families on the road to Basra—maybe 2000 families—are completely fucked, for the rest of their lives. And who gains? What's the point? It confuses me."

"Is it less cathartic to write about subjects that present themselves so clearly, that can't really be transmuted by your art?"

"I don't know. I like working. Not all the *time*—I like fishing as well, and all kinds of other things. But I enjoy the process. As I said, I've been writing some poetry and prose, and what a surprise *that* is: You write, you read it, you say, 'This is all right, I think. I don't know; maybe it's not.' I always question stuff I do. There's a moment after making a demo of a song and sticking it on in the car when I really get off on it, but it doesn't last very long. And then when it's in a finished record and you listen to it once or twice, it's there, but again, it doesn't last. I think it is in the nature of all people who do these things—in the Lennon, the Dylan, the Pete Townshend manner, that come from the heart—that the gratification doesn't stay with you and you feel compelled to go start the process all over again. I think that is the burden all artists carry around."



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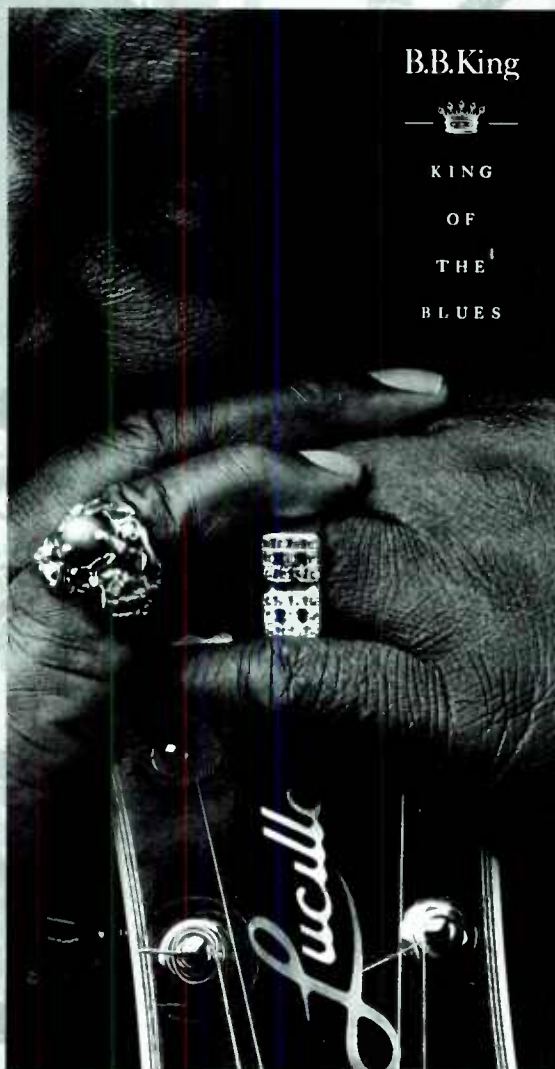
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album was Raw Like
Sushi. Her new one
is well done.*

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N

ENEH CHERRY LEFT school at 14, joined a band at 16 and had her first child, Naima, at age 19. Now 28, she's performed and recorded three albums with the British avant-funksters Rip Rig and Panic, lived in London, Sweden and New York, put together an international smash hit, "Buffalo Stance," that deftly fit rap's political brain into hip-hop's dancing shoes, enjoyed critical and commercial kudos with her debut



BY MARK ROWLAND

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS CARROLL

album, *Raw Like Sushi*, and brought into the world a second daughter, Tyson, whose father, Cameron McVey, a.k.a. Booga Bear, is Cherry's closest musical collaborator and the co-producer of her brand-new record, *Homebrew*.

So Neneh, do you ever get the feeling you're moving at a faster pace than everyone else? "No, I feel a lot slower!" she laughs. "Cause I'm a Pisces and I really vague out. I don't always do the amount of things I should; sometimes I don't even read for months. And I'm definitely not the most serious person in the world.

"But I also feel I've got to get on with my stuff here, 'cause time is short. In this last period two dear friends of mine have died. Giving birth and losing people created a sense of calm, but also urgency. I think sometimes I'm 'in search,' like I'm on a mission, but something must have happened in the course of making this album—all of a sudden I really feel grounded. Probably temporarily," she laughs again. "But I'm feeling like, 'Let things be.'"

Cherry is taking in the palmy afternoon air at a patio table near the pool at a West Hollywood hotel; last night, having flown here from London for the MTV awards, she was introduced to "shooters," a drink from which she's mildly recovering. So if she's feeling less wired than usual today, she's got her reasons. Cherry's personality isn't all that different from her music: Both boast a wide range of expression, yet always seem to find their natural pulse.

In that respect it's no accident that her new record arrives an unhurried three years after the startling success of *Raw Like Sushi*, with a sound and with songs that feel as lived in as Cherry's home, where the music was recorded.

"That's why we called it *Homebrew*," she says. "It *had* all gone down at home. Behind closed doors, me banging my head trying to get lyrics out, asking people for words—it's been a real knitting session. Obviously there was pressure: 'People are gonna forget who you are!'" she exclaims, lightly mimicking an anxious marketing executive refrain. "But we knew we couldn't rush it, and if we had it would have been blood, sweat and tears that wouldn't have been worth anybody's time. And if people are gonna forget who we are that quick, then we'll remind them—later."

Most fans won't need a reminder, but they may be surprised. "Buffalo Stance" came on like a bombshell, and the video provided ample evidence that Cherry was one too, while *Homebrew* suggests a character who has gained more focus and depth. Her first album was the latest fresh tip in a hip-hop scene where freshness was what really mattered. But *Homebrew* arrives at a moment when hip-hop and rap are taking greater stock of their cultural traditions, and Cherry's new batch brings to mind the classic '70s sound of artists like Curtis Mayfield and Minnie Riperton.

"Wow, what a compliment!" she responds to the comparison. "Well, those are records I will live and die by. I've been listening to Minnie Riperton all summer, she was a fantastic woman. But I think what it is, we've just expressed ourselves a bit better this time. And that's what made those records timeless, there was something about them that always made sense. That's why we didn't want to make just a dance album."

Cherry's frequent use of the word "we" when describing her work isn't English modesty; the album was deliberately conceived in a communal atmosphere, and fed off a disparate collection of local



"There are a lot of people hungry for simplicity. Things get over-manufactured and by the time they reach you there's nothing left that relates to you."

and far-flung talents. "The big part of this trip was being around Massive Attack—they were literally working on our landing at the top of the stairs—and watching them put their album together. We worked with people we met and liked as well as people who were well-known, to give it a different edge." The result is a record that includes collaborations with Michael Stipe ("Trout") and Guru from Gang Starr ("Sassy"). But there are also contributions from relatively untested talents like Geoff Barlow and Twilight Firm, who helped construct

"Somedays" and "Twisted," respectively two of the album's more nuanced and sophisticated arrangements.

"I think we just traveled with it," she notes of the record's mostly unplanned twists and turns. "We took the time out we needed to soak up some inspiration, look around the world—so there'd be something to say! Then we let time take its course. We didn't spend months on every song taking it apart and changing it; we'd get to a certain point and then go off someplace else, and come back with a fresher perspective. 'Cause it's easy to get fed up with that bassline, you know, and then you want to change it and you lose it.

"I remember my daddy trying to teach me piano and I couldn't do it. Then I'd come back and it would all fall into place. This album was like that. It's more digested. I've grown the way anyone does, and so the album becomes a vehicle to move on to the next thing. You laugh and you cry...and now that the record is done it's like sending your kid off to school."

Cherry has a warm, down-to-earth manner. Dressed in red overalls and with little makeup, she has a casual yet dignified bearing, although as fashion spreads and videos indicate, she's not averse to playing the glamorpuss, either. "I come as I am—I can't play the game really," she avers. "But I can be in a situation and make the best of it, even if it's to get out of there quicker. That's when I'm working—it's a job, right?" She smiles at the thought. "It's not always easy. But everyone has that problem."

Certainly Cherry's musical choices have been anything but slick. After "Buffalo Stance" she resisted crafting another dance tune—even another dance tune with a message—and felt relieved when the brooding "Manchild" was released in England as a followup single:


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"'Buffalo Stance' was a good calling card, but we wanted it known that the album wasn't gonna be like that." Cherry's inventive mix of raps with straight-on singing, which seemed radical at the time, has since become part of the mainstream, a development she terms a "relief." But *Homebrew* still has its share of musical quirks. A couple of rough monitor mixes, replete with tape noise, have been left on the record. Songs and raps end abruptly, or segue from one to the other without a pause for breath. Odd sonic clicks jar the atmosphere of carefully constructed

musical moods. It's all part of what Cherry calls her search for naturalness and "doing something that's from the heart."

"I think there are a lot of people hungry for that simplicity," she says. "I think things get over-manufactured and by the time they reach you there's nothing left that really relates to you. I mean, we can enjoy the campiness of something that doesn't take itself seriously, that ABBA-esque kind of drama. But at the end of the day there's something that strikes a chord where you can't help but be moved by it."

"I saw Bruce Springsteen at the Amnesty International show in London. And having lived in New York, it was like all the white kids were into 'the boss,' you know?" she laughs. "That bandana posse thing. But he got up onstage and he was really pumpin' and his veins were bustin' out and you know—I liked it! I wouldn't buy the record but I liked it. And that's the power of real communication. If you're open enough to take it in, it'll get through to you, no matter what it is."

"I think Prince was one of the first people to break into the pop world with a twist. He wasn't just soul, there was a bit of Jimi and Sly Stone, and the rock thing...now you see hip-hop relating to jazz, and that's great. Because I think a lot of people have felt rootless. There's a wicked thing in America, which is that you have to deny who you are to be completely 'American.' I see it in Sweden now too, people are coming there from all over and there's this pressure to be 'Swedish.' And when people ask me where do I come from, I'm never really sure what to answer," she says drily. "I go, 'Well...that's really complicated.'"

Cherry is half-Swedish, on her mother's side. Her father is an African percussionist, but the couple separated when Neneh was young. Mostly she was raised by her mom and step-dad, the well-known jazz composer and trumpeter Don Cherry, with whom she retains an emotionally close if geographically distant relationship. The odd thing, she observes, is that growing up, "I had a trip where I didn't see myself as musical. My dad would try to teach me stuff and I would say no, I can't. I tried playing the bass for a while and didn't have the concentration...I was trying to get into it but I just didn't know what I was gonna end up doing. And then, I kind of found my way into it, and all the different ingredients that were handed down came into my life later."

As Cherry unfolds her story, it seems evident that her musical and social visions were influenced more by other members of the

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NENEH CHERRY's mike of choice is an **AKG C12**. *Homebrew* was recorded at Cherry Bear Studios in London on a Soundtrax Quartz 48 desk and Yamaha DMR 8 mobile. Electronic instrumentation included Akai MPC60 and S1100s, a Roland JD 800, JX3D, TR909 and D50 and a Yamaha RX7 and SY22. It was mixed on a Neve desk.

family. "My mother is a very, very serious woman," she says with obvious admiration of the Swedish artist Moki Cherry. "She's got a spirit and knack for survival that is really something. She's one of those people that can make a feast with five dollars. For some weird reason she trusted me when I was growing up, so she gave me a lot of space to move in. Then when I left home I found that I could cook food, I could put a house together, I could survive—and I learned it all from her. She's deep."

"And when I brought that little girl into the world—or when Naima *came* into the world—something happened emotionally, something really opened up. It's not just, 'I'll do whatever the hell I want.' You've got this commitment and bond."

Though Cherry voices the standard songwriter disclaimer about her work ("they're not really about me"), there are biographical details, and songs based on persons and situations she's encountered. More telling is Cherry's knack for weaving vignettes together in a way that's at once familial and universal. "Buddy X," which Cherry based on an acquaintance, is a cautionary tale about marital infidelity that touches on larger issues of integrity and self-respect. "Trout," written with Michael Stipe, includes a topical message about the importance of children's education and the invidious effects of state censorship. The album's chilling closer "Red Paint" is another true story in which the victim of a shooting bleeds quietly by the door to a city market, whose patrons continue with their shopping, their shoes dragging his blood across the floor. "I Ain't Gone Under Yet" evokes a woman living in poverty without compromising dignity, and eloquently lancing the arrogance of political figures who preach, as Cherry puts it, "that if you just pull your act together you can get a job."


Through it all runs a consistent if currently underemployed definition of "family values."

"The only real shame is that people have to be personally affected, like you need a war at your back door before you realize that you don't want to send your kids to war," Cherry opines. "But I can't help but hope. Every little thing counts, doesn't it."

On one of Cherry's fingers, almost unseen among a gaggle of elaborate snake rings, is one of those little things, a wedding ring signifying her recent marriage to Cameron McVey. "We really *were* married before," she says. "We just wanted to celebrate it. We'd come out from the album and this work-heavy year and we were still there. We do just about everything

together, though work is a separate thing—well, it is and it isn't," she admits. "If we're working and Cameron touches me accidentally or not, I always get kind of embarrassed, like, 'Don't do that, 'cause I'll melt.' Or I'll get shy if I'm showing him ideas, playing tapes—I feel like a little girl or something."

On "Twisted," perhaps the key song on *Homebrew*, Cherry sings about the tentativeness of a romantic relationship, and by extension the kind of wary optimism with which she tends to view the world. "That song is about him," she says. "'Cause when I met

him it was like he knew me, it was the weirdest thing. He went, I can help you, you know. And I felt something I'd never felt before but at the same time I was trying to brush off. It's that line in the song: 'You pushed your way through my attitude.' My friends were all saying you really need some time on your own, don't be falling into a relationship, and so here I was going against my grain for some weird principle. And at the end of the day it was like, I don't care. If we make it through we make it, and if we don't it'll still be worth it for what it was." 

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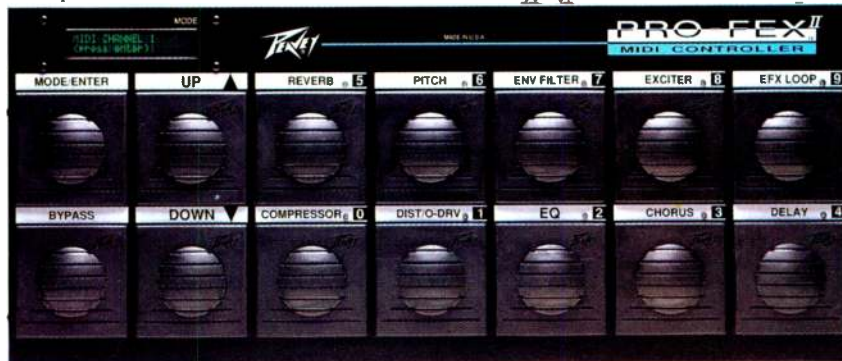
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LIKE EVERY ONE OF THE MILLION BANDS IN MINNEAPOLIS, Doctor Mambo's Combo had known this could eventually happen and were trying to get through it without losing their heads. There he was again. Watching them, listening to them, judging them. Prince had started appearing at the band's gigs with creepy regularity. Clearly he had something in mind. Or somebody. The band tried to keep focused on their playing, but each of them wondered if *he* was the one Prince was considering. Billy Franze, the guitar player, was in his 40s, a lifelong rocker with a red mohawk and better chops than 90 percent of the musicians with record deals. Maybe after two decades devoted to dues paying and music making he was finally going to win the lottery. With Prince there was no way of knowing. He came down from his castle on the hill, studied the peasants at his leisure and then, once in a while, pointed a finger at one of them and said, "You." It was like Prince Charming with his glass slipper. It was like Dracula.

Michael Bland, the drummer with Doctor Mambo, was just a kid, barely out of his teens, playing in the band for fun while he finished college. Michael was majoring in theology, reading Nietzsche in his spare time, and was not about to peg his life to music and

By **BILL FLANAGAN**

Photographs By **JEFF KATZ**



NPG (L-R): MICHAEL BLAND, SONNY THOMPSON, KIRK JOHNSON,
PRINCE, LEVI SEACER JR., TONY M., TOMMY BARBARELLA AND
DAMON DICKSON FLANKING MAYTE GARCIA—
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end up playing in bars in 20 years. One Sunday afternoon his phone rang. It was Prince. Would Michael like to join Prince's band? The glass slipper.

"The way Prince honors people is, he chooses them," Michael explains. "I was chosen by Prince, I didn't have an audition. He just called me and asked me to do it and I said, 'Yeah!'" Three years after being chosen, Michael is dressed in flowing black robes and a big jeweled hat. He is here in London with Prince for a week of concerts at Earls Court. He is part of the New Power Generation. It is a wonderful and terrible honor.

Ricky Peterson must be a man of either remarkable integrity or lunatic ego. Any musician who spends years working in bars a thousand miles from the nearest major record label knows that a shot at playing with a superstar comes, if you are very, very lucky, once in a lifetime. While populating the New Power Generation with musicians from the same scene that spawned him must offer Prince an extra level of comfort and ease of communication, it also (intentionally or not) gives Prince a lot of control over his band. After all, if Prince hired some top gun like Doug Wimbish or Nils Lofgren or Nathan East and one day the top gun didn't feel like wearing his black robes

"THE VISION is really left up to PRINCE. We're the MUSICIANS. We're just DOING OUR PART. It's like the MANHATTAN PROJECT. You don't know what you're working on."

Michael still thinks of Billy and the other musicians he left behind. "Billy's a real musician," the drummer says. "I just wonder why he didn't get his chance. If I ever get enough leverage in the industry he'll be one of the first people I make sure gets to be heard. I owe him that much. I don't know what it's like for them to be still there. I don't know what goes through their heads when I'm out here doing this and they're back at home doing...that."

Michael heads down the backstage corridor at Earls Court. It's a couple of hours before showtime and the dressing rooms are buzzing. Diamond and Pearl, the pretty dancing girls, hurry by looking a little less otherworldly than they will when the spotlights and makeup kick in. Organist/singer Rosie Gaines sits quietly chatting with a friend. Prince himself glides by rapper Tony Mosley in some sort of white superhero suit and extremely high heels. Michael heads into one of the band rooms, where he joins bassist Sonny Thompson, guitarist Levi Seacer and keyboard player Tommy Barbarella.

Sonny and Tommy used to play in a part-time band with Michael called the Flash, but their main gig was with the Steeles. They were pulled into Prince's orbit when the Steeles contributed to the soundtrack for Prince's movie *Graffiti Bridge*. Since losing Sonny and Tommy, the Steeles have not been the same.

"Basically, Prince goes after whatever he wants," Michael says. "He makes the call and if you want the gig, it's yours."

So if a Minneapolis band starts to happen, there's a chance Prince will appear and pull the best people out?

"Don't say *pulled*," Levi cautions. "It's like, 'Hey, I like the way you play and if you want to do this thing, it's open.' It's an opportunity. I used to play with Rosie but when I joined Sheila E.'s band it was an *opportunity*."

"I always wanted to play with Prince," Sonny adds.

"You can help your friends more from this," Levi says, "than from just staying there, sticking it out."

Did anybody ever tell Prince no?

The four musicians confer. "Didn't Ricky Peterson say no?" Tommy asks.

"Yeah, Ricky Peterson said no," Sonny answers, "but he said no to *Miles*."

Everyone laughs and says, "Ricky Peterson's just one of them *No* dudes, he wants to do his thing."

and big hat, he might tell Prince no. But no one who's been yanked from bar-band obscurity and dropped into the world of intercontinental travel, limousines and screaming fans is going to do anything to risk screwing it up. As one of Prince's employees says when no one else is around, "People disappear around here. One day you come to the gig and you say, 'Where's Joe?' 'Joe's gone.' 'What happened?' 'He must have done something Prince didn't like.' 'What did he do?' 'He doesn't know. Nobody knows. He's just gone.'"

That's the sort of fear that keeps things extremely professional.

TONIGHT, PRINCE DECLARES, is \$150 funk night. That means that whichever member of the New Power Generation—rapper, dancer or musician—comes up with what Prince judges to be the wildest surprise during the show wins \$150. The musicians feel at a disadvantage, because they have to be onstage *playing* the whole time. The dancers get to hang in the wings and plan. Sure enough, the dancers return from one break wearing some sort of bizarre Egyptian robes. Prince likes it. \$150 to the dancers!

The show is spectacular on every level. Prince does songs from his new album (the official title is a combination of the symbols for "Man" and "Woman"; for the sake of convenience we will refer to it here as *Hermaphrodite*) as well as crowd-pleasers dating back to "1999." After the house lights go up Prince lurks unseen under the stage, sending roadies to warn the band that they are going to go back on as soon as the house is half-empty. Prince crouches, he waits and then he springs, pounding out a roof-burning funk jam while kids trample each other rushing back into the hall. After that finale finishes the band buses squeeze through a street-strangling knot of British fans and back to their hotel. Time to relax, hit the bar and—news flash—Prince has decided to do a recording session! All hands on deck!

Obviously being in the New Power Generation is a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day commitment. "Oh yeah," Michael smiles, "if you're in there, you're in there. Like the fire department."

Levi finds that hilarious. "Fire department!"

"You get time off," Michael shrugs. "You just don't know when you're gonna get it. You have to just...risk it."

Levi adds, "And then either get cussed out for not being around or say, 'Whew, I made it.'"

How long can you maintain a commitment to something so demanding?

"Maybe another couple of weeks," Levi says, then he laughs. "No. The tour's got a couple of weeks to go. It's not like torture. We're in a very unique situation and I think everyone in the band feels lucky to be here. We get a chance to play every style of music. Nobody even puts a name on us. I think everybody feels, 'Hey man, as long as there's some wood to burn to keep this train going, let's go.'"

ONE REASON the New Power Generation comes up with music that doesn't sound exactly like anything anyone's heard before is that each member of the band hears music slightly differently. When they throw their ideas together they are sometimes blessed with a healthy *miscommunication*.

Take "Willing and Able," a tune on *Diamonds and Pearls* that might strike the listener as Prince's tribute to *Superfly*-era Curtis Mayfield. Michael describes that song originating with a spontaneous studio jam in Japan, when he began playing a drum pattern he remembered from an old Rockpile record. Levi had the bass in his hands and joined in, but he wasn't thinking Rockpile—he was thinking ska. Tony M. got the idea of rapping over the track—which he, focusing on the chord changes, thought of as Mississippi delta music. Talk to Michael, Levi and Tony separately and you'll discover that each of them still hears "Willing and Able" through the ears he brought to it at the beginning. The listener, though, hears something else, the sound of all those ideas working together to make something new.

"With Prince," Levi says in the hotel restaurant on a very sleepy Sunday afternoon, "you try everything. That's the biggest thing I've learned from him. If it doesn't work you can always take it out, but if it *does* work... There's no limit."

"It's constant surprise," Michael says, landing in a chair across from Levi. "He's always thinking of something I've never thought of before, so of course it sounds wrong to me at its conception. For a lot of people, every record that he comes out with they go, 'I hate this thing! I don't know where he's coming from now!' Then half a year



degree addressing the possible reconciliation of apparent opposites—rich and poor, black and white, east and west, love and violence, and—most of all—man and woman.

"We don't really talk that much about concept," Michael says. "The vision is really left up to him. We're the musicians. We're here to help him focus on that vision, to get it a little clearer. We're just doing our part. To use a terrible analogy, it's like the Manhattan Project. We're just working on one piece at a time. You don't know *what* you're working on, really."

"Until it's done," Levi adds.

"Until it's done," Michael agrees. "And then we see, 'Oh right—there *are* some dualisms there.' But we never know until later on."

The E Street Band used to say that they would record a song like "Fire" or "Because the Night" and figure, boy, that one's a hit—and then the album would come out and those songs would be replaced by something like "Factory" that was far less compelling musically, but which fit Springsteen's theme. The New Power Generation say they identify with that.

"We see a lot of material going past," Levi says. "It either goes down to the vault or to somebody else. I'm sure it's important to have a hit all the time, but I think with artists of the stature of Bruce or

"IN BLACK MUSIC a kid won't go out and BUY A GUITAR or a set of DRUMS. He's gonna buy a MACINTOSH. Prince thinks that if kids knew HOW MUCH FUN it is to play, they'd probably play."

passes and they say, 'I really dig that.' I was that way for a long time. I didn't dig Prince till '87, man. Till 1987 I never liked anything he did. Then *Parade* came out and I was like, 'Wow, he can do *that*?' It was totally different. *Purple Rain* was a mainstream success, then *Parade* came out and I was floored." He adds diplomatically, "Then I went back and bought everything."

Prince's shows operate at so many levels—from circus to symbolism—that the viewer can remain detached and enjoy the spectacle, or start pondering the big themes and enjoy the speculation. Although Levi warns that Prince is a sharp enough showman to make people think there is more subtext to his work than there may really be, Michael agrees that Prince's recent music and concerts are to some

Prince you come to a point where you *know* what it's like to be at the top. Now you want to do something for your own soul. You can say, 'I don't know what everybody else will say, but I think this is great.'

"I think that's something the public doesn't understand. They always want a number one, they always want hits. Now Prince can do that. Prince can do a number one any time he wants to. But it's a journey, man, it's a journey. And if you want to go on the trip then you gotta go wherever the train is going."

Tonight the train is going to a private party at a small London club. Too small, as it turns out. The band had hoped to have a jam session for their friends and guests, but the club, Tramps, is so tiny that there's no room to set up gear. It's just an entry hall with a couple of couches

and two posh rooms not much bigger than any rich guy's study. After recording all night and sleeping all day, getting tarted up and marched to an enforced festivity is not the NPG's idea of fun. But this is their job, so at 9:30 p.m. the group—in full flash gear—begin assembling in the hotel lobby. Mike Pagnotta, Prince's principal publicist, is getting an ulcer. He told them they had to *leave* at 9:30! Pagnotta starts calling the rooms, telling procrastinating NPGs to get the hell down here. Once he's roped everybody in, he splits them into two groups—New Power

Generation in the first limo, dates and friends in the second. There will be photographers outside the club, Pagnotta explains, so the NPG has to get out of the same car and enter in one group. Their friends can catch up later.

One thing you pick up on after spending a few days in Prince's world is that everything is work. Since Prince is not good at giving interviews—but does want publicity—his publicists have to hustle all the time to create events to get Prince's name in the papers. So a phony story about one of Prince's new protégées being pregnant with his child shows

up in the gossip columns; then Prince puts out a single called "Sexy Motherfucker" which stirs up enough controversy to get him in the news pages; then the loony claim that Warners has just given Prince a \$100 million contract gets his name in the financial section. It's all nonsense, but if the media have gotten so greedy (or so gullible) that they are willing to repeat hype, whose fault is that? Not Prince's and not the publicists'. The only suckers who believe that baloney are suckers who want to believe it. The New Power Generation treat such PR duties with the *let's get it over with* resignation of kids being dressed up for a school portrait.

En route to the club William Graves, the NPG DJ, lets out a howl. "Guess what I forgot!" he yells. He forgot "My Name Is Prince," the surprise new track he is supposed to debut at tonight's party. The band tells the driver to turn the car around and go back to the hotel. They know that Mike Pagnotta's ulcer just got worse. When the NPG-mobile finally pulls up at Tramps, the sidewalk is filled with snapping paparazzi and squealing fans. The band jumps out of the car, smiles, waves and rushes through the velvet ropes into the basement club. The wood-paneled walls and Victorian furniture aspire to old-world elegance but, as Sonny points out, "This place looks like a haunted house! I expect to see ghosts comin' through the walls!"

Hey, Sonny, that's not a ghost, that's Boy George. And—call the exorcist—there's Tom Jones! This is one exclusive party. Rod Stewart wafts in with Rachel Hunter on his arm, Malcolm McLaren appears and starts cadging free drinks, and Mick Jagger floats in with Jerry Hall. Michael Bland lights up: "Hey, I met Mick once before!" he says, "I gotta go say hello." The drummer walks up to greet Jagger, who brushes right past him. Michael comes back to the NPG table ripping. "He blew me off, man! Mick Jagger blew me off!"

Well, Michael is reminded, you know how cold Prince sometimes has to be just to get through a room—you've seen him cross a whole hotel lobby ignoring a small child tugging on his coattail and calling his name. "Yeah, I know," Michael fumes, "but Mick's coming to *my* party!"

Sonny takes a seat at the foot of the stairs with Diamond and Pearl. As time drags along they begin to wonder if Prince is perhaps not coming. Sonny asks Pagnotta for permission to leave. NO! Sonny sits down. Two big security men with genuine Secret Service earphones come down the stairs,

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blazing a trail. Then, like Scarlett O'Hara descending her staircase, comes Prince.

And it's funny. He doesn't seem any more comfortable or in charge here than anybody else. He makes small talk with Sonny and the dancers, he wanders around the small rooms. He nods politely when Tom Jones comes up and gladhands him (just two randy blokes in tight trousers who had hits with "Kiss"). Prince really is just a guy. His reputation, however, is so huge that the other stars at his party swirl around him in a Rolex vortex. Prince can say *anything* and people throw their heads back and howl with laughter and go, "HA HA! 'Nice place!' Great one, Prince! 'Nice place!' Did you hear what Prince said? HO HO HO!" At one point Prince is standing in a small group saying nothing remotely interesting when Mick Jagger comes up and starts talking and the first thing you think is, "Gee, I wish Mick would quit interrupting Prince." Then you realize how nuts that is. *He's got YOU doing it.* But that's star power, and Prince works to maintain it like some throwback to Hollywood's golden age.

Prince goes and sits in the corner with Kate Bush. He's a big fan of her album *Hounds of Love* and she sent him one of her songs, which Prince rewrote and re-recorded and returned to her for use on her next album. The musical team-up thus succeeded far better than Prince's similar attempts to collaborate with Joni Mitchell and Bonnie Raitt, both of whom ended up saying something along the lines of, "Hey, Junior, I've been in this business a long time—I'm not Trilby and you ain't Svengali." Prince makes small talk with Kate, Rod and Rachel on one side of them, Mick and Jerry on the other, and the DJ cues up "My Name Is Prince." Whoops, go the New Power Generation when the song comes on, time to get to work. They all put down their drinks and go onto the tiny dance floor, where for the duration of the track they move with the stylish interracial high-fashion grace of an MTV video come to life. Prince acts like he doesn't notice, but the effect is striking. As soon as the song is over the NPG all go back and sit down and return to what they were doing.

It's important that you understand how this stuff works in case you get home tomorrow night and the phone rings and it's Prince asking you to join the New Power Generation. Prince is a great bandleader, a brilliant singer and songwriter, a fine musician, innovative record producer and one of the world's greatest performers. Let's face it, he's

probably the most talented rock musician of his generation; of course you're going to accept. But as you pack your bag you might ask yourself, "What do I need to bring with me?" You won't need your instrument—Prince will supply you with great new gear. You won't need your clothes—Prince will have you tailored and dressed like a Mardi Gras queen. You certainly won't need money—Prince will take care of all your material desires. No, if Prince calls and asks you to join the New Power Generation you will need only two things—a Mack truck

filled with Wonder Bread and a U-Haul of mayonnaise. Because working for Prince means going through a ton of baloney.

IT WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS. Sonny Thompson met Prince when Sonny was 15 and Prince was 13. Sonny waited 20 years for his callback. Growing up in Minneapolis, he and Prince both led groups. "He had a band called Grand Central," Sonny says. "I had a band called the Family. We'd play the same places. We used to hang out and jam and play all night. I had all the equipment in my base-



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ment. He'd come over and play the drums, play the keyboards. He was talented for years, people just didn't know it. I mean, everybody on the north side of Minneapolis knew it...

"We would play the standard grooves: some Clinton, some Sly, James Brown, Earth, Wind & Fire. We'd work some original stuff and just try it, see what happens. We were playing places like the Cozy Bar, Peacock Alley, the schools, the WMCA, the Black Community Center. We'd throw dances and everybody could come in and

party. It was cool back then. It's a lot different now. Minneapolis has changed so much, 'cause so many people have come in from different places. You've got gangs now. There were no gangs back at that time. It's a weird place now." Sonny catches himself and amends, "I love it, but it's a weird place.

"At one time Prince played in my band. Maybe for about a month. He was trying to go to New York at the time. We hired him, we paid him straight out. We were saving our money so we could buy equipment. He played guitar and keyboards."

Sonny played on Prince's demos, and then while Sonny's band and all the other local groups worked on upgrading their equipment and getting better bar gigs, Prince took his tape to New York and got a record deal.

"A lot of people were shocked," Sonny says. "But I always believed he was going to do it, 'cause we always talked about what we were going to do; 'I'm gonna have real strings on my album!' Prince always had the vision of really wanting to be big in the industry.

"Most of the guys were shocked, though. They were like, 'Man! Prince has got an album out!' I said, 'I told you he was gonna do it!'" Sonny pauses and asks, "What else could he do? He just worked around the

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L EVI SEACER plays a Gibson Epiphone ("Because my stuff is *clean stuff*") straight into the board. He has a rack-mounted Zoom unit 9010, a Cry Baby chorus pedal, a Roland GP8 and a Boss digital delay pedal. On "Thunder" and "Live for Love" Levi pulls out an Ibanez guitar with double humbucking pickups. Levi uses D'Addario strings. When TONY M. reaches for a guitar, it's either a Charvel or a hollowbody Epiphone. Tony's strings are either GHS lights or Dean Markleys. He has a Zoom effects processor. SONNY THOMPSON plays an Oswald bass (though he admits his favorite is an Alembic, "a great bass") with a GBS effects processor, an Akai Octaver and a Boss Octaver. Sonny uses a Heavy Metal distortion pedal and plugs into a Trace Elliot amp. He prefers GHS heavy strings because "they seem brightest—they keep the *being longest*."

ROSIE GAINES plays a Hammond organ onstage, and has a Korg and Roland O-50 MIDI'd to the Hammond. Rosie sings through Shure microphones. Rosie is also leaving the NPG to go out on her own. TOMMY BARBARELLA plays a Roland A80 and an A50 controller, a Korg T3, an old Prophet which he uses on "Kiss" and a few others "for that old analog sound." Tommy also carries a new Roland JD800, a couple of E-mu E-max 2s, a Proteus 1 and Proteus 2, and a Roland O550. MICHAEL BLAND's drums are a combination of Sonor, Yamaha and Gretsch, with Zildjian cymbals and Vater sticks. Trying to get more details out of Michael is useless. "I abhor shop talk," he says. "I don't know when we change heads, I don't know when we get new cymbals. I don't have any emotional attachments to gear at all."

clock, always writing tunes and playing. It was just inevitable.

"There was some feeling like," Sonny adopts a nasty, jealous voice, "'Ahh! Prince! So what? He got a deal, huh? I can do that!' There were people like that. And there were people who were glad. I was really happy for him because I knew what he went through. It wasn't a piece of cake. It was long hours. He put a lot of work into it."

Asked if he saw Prince in the long years between those demos and Sonny's invitation to join the New Power Generation, the bassist looks away and says vaguely, "Oh yeah, I seen him from time to time out in clubs. Or I'd see him on the street."

Did you feel bad he didn't invite you to join any of his projects?

"Not really. I was trying to explore my instrument at the time. I really didn't feel I was ready. I was still learning all my scales and technique and playing with jazz groups and just discovering other music." Sonny's face brightens. "But I was damn happy when he called me! Like, I'm ready! I'm ready!"

Pretty amazing to play with someone when you're kids, go separate ways for years, and hook up with him again when he's an international success.

"Oh yeah, it's amazing," Sonny says. "I think about that a lot. He's just grown into this mega-musical monster. He was great then, but some of the stuff I hear him play now I'm like, 'Where did you get that from, man?' It's like he's got a pipeline, stuff just being piped in." Sonny shakes his head and says, "It's great."

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER New Power Generation Promotional Event. This time the band's making an in-store appearance at a London record shop. In the cab on the way, Michael Bland talks about Prince's pipeline to the muse: "He's most fluid improvisationally on piano, I'd say. But, man, he's one of the *greasiest* bass players on the planet. He really is an intense bass player. His feel's recognizable instantly. But he seems to have his own voice on every instrument, really. What's funny is he reminds me a lot of Thelonious Monk on all of them. It's just that combination of a sense of humor and a sense of adventure in his playing. On every instrument he thinks, 'Okay, what's missing?' He plays like a composer all the time."

Rosie said that what the members of the New Power Generation have in common is that they are "all goofballs." Anything deeper?

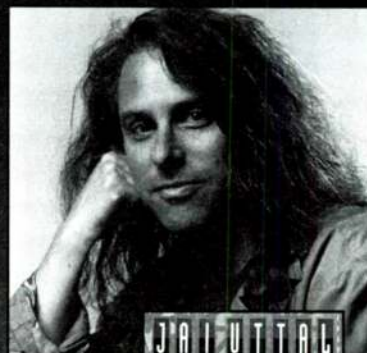
"Oh gee," Michael says, looking a little embarrassed. "We have our sense of community, but it's more *upholding* something. We really feel—whether or not this is true, and in no way do I mean to sound condescending—like we're the only ones doing what we're doing. In black music things have gotten to a point where a kid won't go out and buy a guitar or a set of drums. He's gonna buy a Macintosh. Almost every track on *Diamonds and Pearls* has real drums. Prince has, we all have in the back of our minds that if kids knew how much fun it is to play, they'd probably

play. But they don't know so it's going to take somebody like Prince to bring playing back. We feel we're doing our share of bringing back the live thing—no DAT, no sequencers, no nothing. We have our share of electronics but everything is done live, for real. That's the thing that's missing in black music now."

Lately Prince has allowed two other voices to share his songs with him—singer Rosie Gaines and rapper Tony Mosley. Backstage before that night's concert, Rosie talks about the remarkable amount of freedom Prince has granted her: "At rehearsal or soundcheck

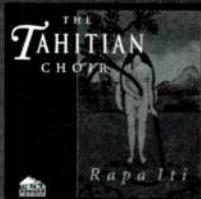
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we'll just create certain things or jam on a song. All of a sudden I can sing something or Tony will rap something and Prince will say, 'Hey, that's funky! Let's use that.' He told me, 'The stage is yours. Do what you want to do. If you feel like singing, then sing.' That's what keeps it so interesting up there. He gave me that kind of freedom and I think he gave the same to Tony. I can go way out in left field if I want to, as long as I get back to the base."

Ever get out there and then wonder how you're going to get back?

Rosie laughs. "Oh yeah! I have those

nights! I think Prince also has those nights. Sometimes we don't know exactly what he's going to do. He does 'Purple Rain' different each night. We don't know if he's going to say, 'I want the solo to go for another 16 bars,' or if he's going to cut it and go back into the song. So it's being aware of each other and being in tune with each other. This band is like fitting into a glove."

And the "goofball" criteria?

"Having that sense of comedy is what makes everybody get along together. Each individual in this band is extremely talented

and locked together. It's a spiritual thing to me. We have nights where everybody is positive and everything just works. We have had nights when nothing works at all, because people are in a different frame of mind."

Occasionally Prince's sense of humor—and NPG camaraderie—comes at the expense of musicians Prince sees as rivals. When Guns N' Roses come to one concert Prince plays his ass off on guitar and then announces, "This is NOT rock 'n' roll." When George Michael shows up another night Prince leads the band through the thickest funk they can cook up and then yells, "George Michael has LEFT the building!" Prince seems to have a particular burr up his butt about U2; in the studio he comes up with a difficult, technically impressive part and then asks, "What do you think U2 will do when they hear *that*?" His greatest antagonist, though, is the *other* enigmatic singing/dancing/crotch-grabbing superstar—Prince takes shots at Michael Jackson all the time. His main dig at the King of Pop is the couplet "Come to your senses/ There are no Kings—only Princes," which hangs at the backstage entrance on a sign, leaps from Prince's lips during the concerts and is faxed to the press by his publicists. Public feuds, too, are good PR.

But if Prince takes no prisoners among his peers, he has backflipped regarding the most popular genre in black music. These days, as the presence of Tony M. makes clear, Prince is making room for rap. The hip-hop community took umbrage at what were considered Princely put-downs of the form on the unreleased but much bootlegged *Black Album*. According to Tony M., that was all misunderstanding.

"It's a misconception a lot of people had," Tony says while getting ready for the next show. "A lot of people thought 'Get On It' was very derogatory. That wasn't it at all. In the mid-'80s rap wasn't saying anything but, 'Yo, baby! Party all the time! I got this, I got that.' In the late '70s and early '80s Grandmaster Flash and Grandmaster Melle Mel were *saying* something, but then it went back to strictly party stuff. Then, after that, we got KRS-One, Chuck D, Heavy D., saying things that maybe people didn't want to hear, but a lot of things they predicted are going on today—such as the riots in L.A. Prince doesn't stick me into boundaries of 'Talk politically all the time,' or 'Talk socially all the time.' We can have fun with the rap, I can be angry—he lets me run the gamut.

"When I came into this [*cont'd on page 103*]

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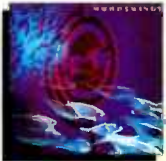
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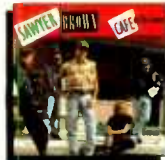
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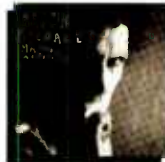
325 Commodores
"Christmas"
Sound Barrier



326 The Wallflowers
"The Wallflowers"
Vega



327 Neneh Cherry
"Neneh Cherry"
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328 Keith Richards
"Main Offender"
Vega



329 Roy Orbison
"King Of Hearts"
Vega

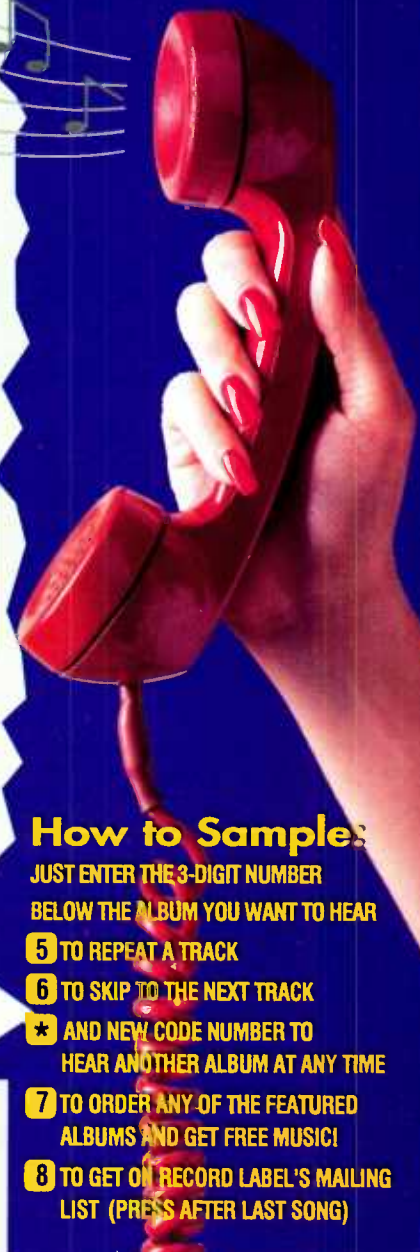


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IN A DECAYING URBAN ECONOMY

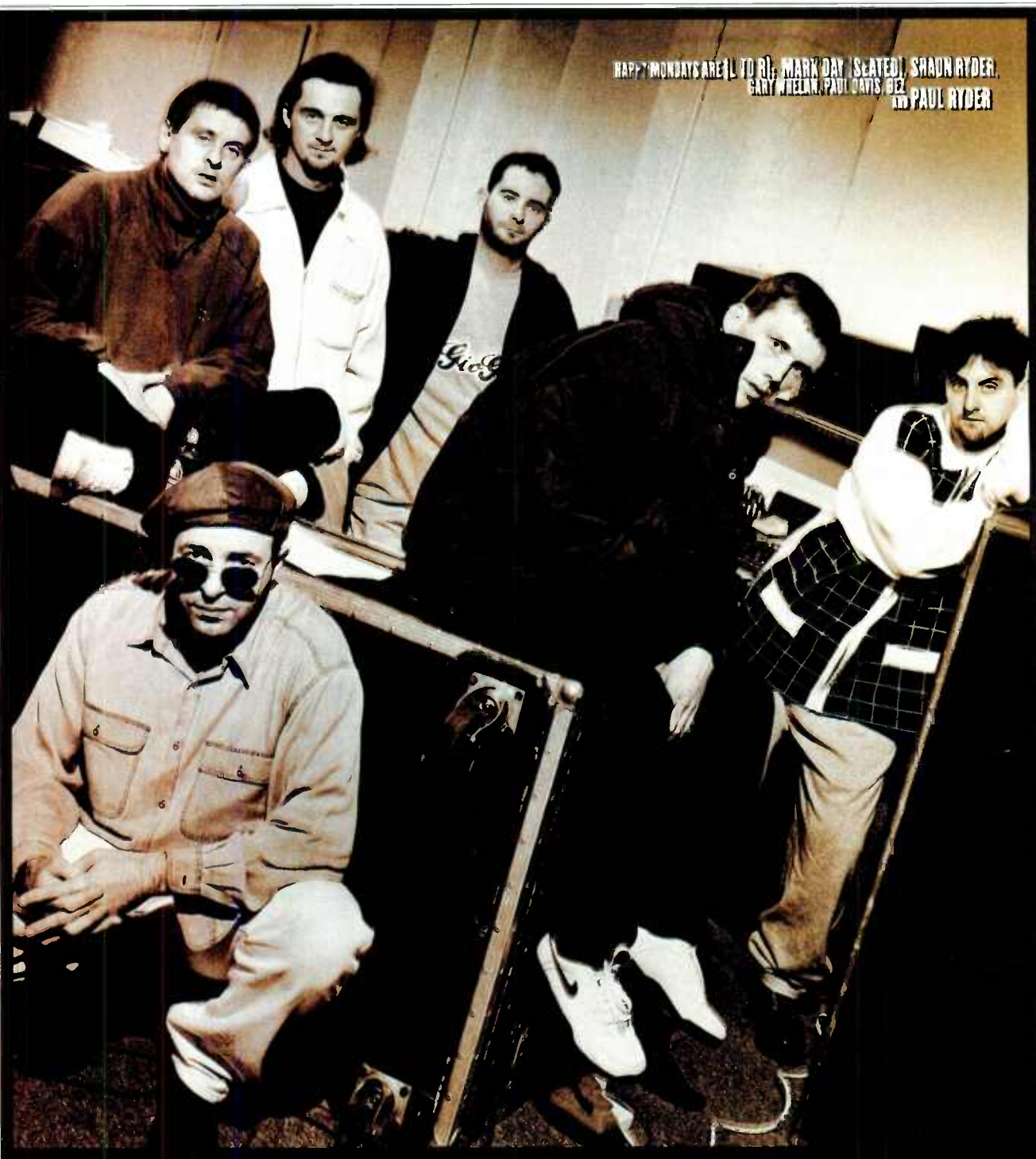
BROKE AND JOBLESS

THEY WERE UNEDUCATED TEENAGERS

RAMBLERS

BY JON PARELES

HAPPY MONDAYS ARE (L TO R): MARK DAY (SEATED), SHAWN RYDER,
GARY WHEELER, PAUL DAVIS, RIZ,
AND PAUL RYDER



FOR CASH THEY STOLE WALLETS. And when a new drug became available, they became some of its first local dealers.

Around 1982, they started to dabble in music, building songs on bits of old hits, gradually moving out of basements to rock local parties and clubs. Despite their own casualness, and a gift for drugged-out self-destruction, their music caught on, making them famous across the country. Yet even now, says the band's singer and leader Shaun Ryder, "We're still a gang." ■ That may sound like the resume for any number of hard-core hip-hoppers. It's not. It's the story of Happy Mondays, the band from Manchester, England that crawled out of the slums to take over Britain's pop charts and reinvent the rock concert as a rave: an all-night dance party with thousands of revelers in Ecstasy-fueled motion.

Happy Mondays (along with the folk-rock-redux Stone Roses) made Manchester the capital of English rock in the late 1980s.

"PEOPLE SAY CRIMINALS AND DRUG DEALERS ARE ALL BAD GUYS. BUT IF YOU MEET A LOT OF THESE PEOPLE, YOU FIND SOME ARE ALL RIGHT."

For Happy Mondays, every kind of pop that ever made people dance was fair game. A pounding beat echoed house and disco and old-fashioned funk, while guitars and keyboards floated and rippled with the liquidity of psychedelia and the futuristic swoops of electro-pop. Although the band was fond of swiping the odd couplet or bassline, by the time it was through with them, the music sounded like nothing but itself.

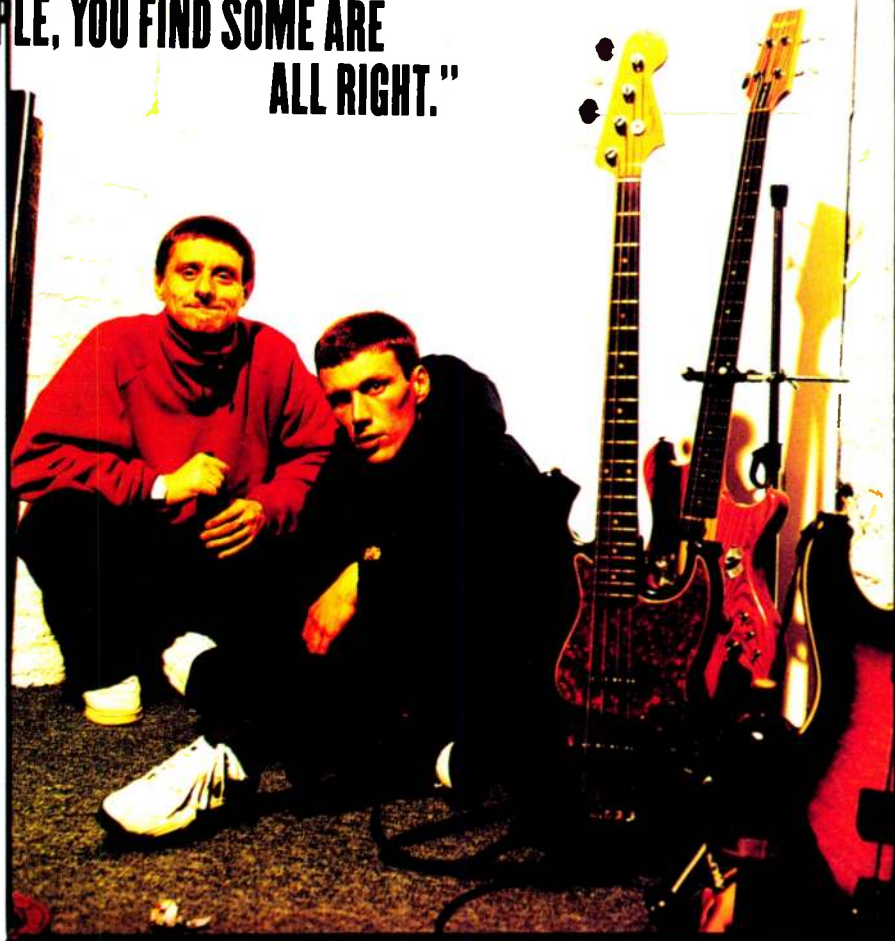
Amid the music's fun, fun, fun, Shaun Ryder's singing was true to the Manchester tradition of bad-news bearers like Joy Division or the Smiths. "Kiss me for screwing everything in sight," he murmurs in the band's mock-romantic new single, "Stinkin' Thinkin'"; in "Angel," he chants, "Where did the pain start? When did the symptoms begin?"

In the United States, Happy Mondays' music faced translation difficulties. Although the band has released three albums and an EP on Elektra—*Bummed* (1989), *Pills 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches* and the EP *Hallelujah* in 1990 and *Live* (1991)—its following was limited: *Pills* peaked with sales of 180,000 copies. Between the band's blurry swirl of guitar and keyboards and Ryder's thick accent, most American listeners couldn't get a grip on the songs.

When Happy Mondays opened in the U.S. for bands like the Pixies and Jane's Addiction, they recruited a few fans and bewildered others. As Ryder bawled, Bez, the band's silent member, jittered and flailed across the stage. ("He's there solely for us," says Ryder. "It's like we're the band in the porno movie, and he's the action.")

In Great Britain, meanwhile, Happy Mondays became famous as the band for whom the party never ends: an unpredictable, late-to-interviews, gig-skipping, marijuana-puffing, Ecstasy-dropping (and, early on, dealing) kind of group, with big hits and no apologies.

To make its new album, *Yes, Please*, Happy Mondays went to Barbados to record at Eddy Grant's Blue Wave studios. One reason was to keep band members away from hometown temptations, notably heroin, which Ryder says he had been using for 12 years. But in Barbados, the British pop magazine *Select* reported, the Mondays racked up "two crack habits [for Shaun Ryder and his younger brother Paul, on bass], eight car crashes, a shattered arm, [and] a £10,000 rehab bill." And the songs weren't even finished.



"When people told us they were wild and out of control, we assumed that was an exaggeration," says Chris Frantz, who co-produced *Yes, Please* with Tina Weymouth; they're the drummer and bass player for Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club. "We didn't really know that they were what Guns N' Roses are only supposed to be. They just didn't know how much trouble they were getting themselves into. In the end, we were lucky that nobody died."

Amid the turmoil, however, Happy Mondays went through a metamorphosis. "They were afraid that if they made another Manchester-sounding record, everyone would say, 'No new story to tell,'" Frantz says. "What it boils down to is that they want to be remembered as having some artistic value and not just being a fashion thing."

Pills was a fabrication of computerized samples and effects; *Yes, Please* is the work of a hands-on band, closest to the band's import-only debut album, *Squirrel and G-Man 24 Hour Party People Plastic Face Carny Smile (White Out)* (Factory, 1987), which was produced by John Cale. "We've gone back to playing live in the studio rather than relying on loops," says the band's guitarist, Mark Day. "We've gone back to basics." And the mix peels away just enough of the trippy layers to let Americans appreciate what Ryder is bawling about.

"Their management told us, 'The last time, we sold this amount of records in America,'" Frantz said. "This time we want to sell more or we might not get another chance."

MANCHESTER WON'T MAKE any list of England's most picturesque places. The formerly industrial city no longer has its old textile industry; it looks like Poughkeepsie with mullioned windows. But its chronic unemployment breeds bands.

"We got into jamming around with music because the only thing to do was sit around and smoke spliffs," Shaun Ryder says. "It's a bleak city and the jobs that was there wasn't worth doing, because the pay was crap anyway. You sit around smoking pot and then you start playing your own songs."

Like Leeds, Manchester has a university that serves a student population, and a football team that brings out the roadies. (While students would go hear live bands, Shaun Ryder once explained, the band members would go to clubs, which gives the band's music its danceable bottom.) Like Liverpool, 26 miles away, Manchester has docks where licit and illicit materials arrive from afar. But Manchester is also the home of Factory Records, the independent label that released some of the most important albums of the last decade.

In the 1980s, Factory expanded its local empire to include the Hacienda, a dance club that was the cradle of the British rave. The scene was hyped to the skies at the turn of the 1990s, and A&R hordes poured in to sign bands from Inspiral Carpets to 808 State. By now, Manchester is proud of its music. In September, the Corner House, "Manchester's Cinema and Visual Arts Center," mounted an art exhibition of album covers and posters called "Manchester Music and Design, 1976 to 1992."

Happy Mondays' new Manchester headquarters is a one-story loft building, a former mill next to an industrial-gases plant. Inside, past an iron gate and a thick metal door, is a big open room recently painted white. The band's equipment is set up in a rough U shape; the Mondays' five musicians, minus Shaun Ryder, are jamming through the new material.

It's not a Just Say No rally. Mark Day, on guitar, offers me a head-spinning toke of pot; Paul Ryder, before showing me his bass setup, disappears into the bathroom and emerges minutes later, glassy-eyed. "I'm in a band because I love music, not because I love drugs," he tells me when he reappears. "I also like drugs sometimes. But we take great pride in our music."

Around the rehearsal hall, work is being accomplished. Paul "P.D." Davis, on keyboards, and the band's programmer and sound engineer Simon Machan are assembling samples and sequences, mostly percussion. Unlike most live sound engineers, Machan works with the band as it records, collecting samples and programming keyboard sounds instead of trying to reconstitute them later.

As Davis pumps out the organ/keyboard hook of "Cowboy Dave," Day, Paul Ryder and Gary "Gaz" Whelan on drums ease their way into the funk. Onstage, Whelan generally plays to a click track in sync with computerized percussion and effects. But at the rehearsal, he doesn't need a metronome to keep a rock-steady beat. "When I'm

using the click track, I'm playing on the same beat, so I never hear it," he says.

The rehearsal is inconclusive; having a journalist around has thrown things off. But it's obvious that the band has the syncopated snap of a working unit—hardly the vision of computer-crutched incompetence their reputation might suggest. Making *Yes, Please* seems to have toned up the musicians.

"The album was all of us playing together," Paul Ryder says. "We went down to Barbados with about three-and-a-half songs, grooves really. For the first three weeks we just settled in a studio and banged away, which we hadn't done for ages. We jammed for three, four weeks, and later, as we got the grooves we'd sit down and work on one song at a time and structure it. We obviously had a beginning, and we needed a middle eight, and a breakdown.

"Chris and Tina taught us things like that. Usually we don't know when to start or finish, we just go, and we end when we can feel it ending. It was good to structure songs, which we've never done before. Next time we come down to writing we'll know how to do it.

"We were actually writing songs and jamming—me, Mark, Gaz and P.D.—starting in the studio at 11 in the morning and finishing at nine at night. It was really hard work, but really enjoyable. We didn't realize this crazy madness was going on.

"The studio was purely work. But after we finished work, we'd go for a drive, and the next thing, we'd find a fucking crack den. We went looking for a bit of adventure—and we found it. When you've got six lads together, man, things just happened."

WHAT HAPPENED WAS slapstick mixed with disaster. Bez overturned a jeep, breaking his right arm, and broke it again when he tried water sports too soon; the metal superstructure that eventually held his arm together is prominent on the album art. Shaun Ryder also totaled two jeeps, though he emerged unharmed, and Shaun and Paul Ryder started smoking crack, with Shaun up to 50 rocks a day. "I'll deny everything," Paul says.

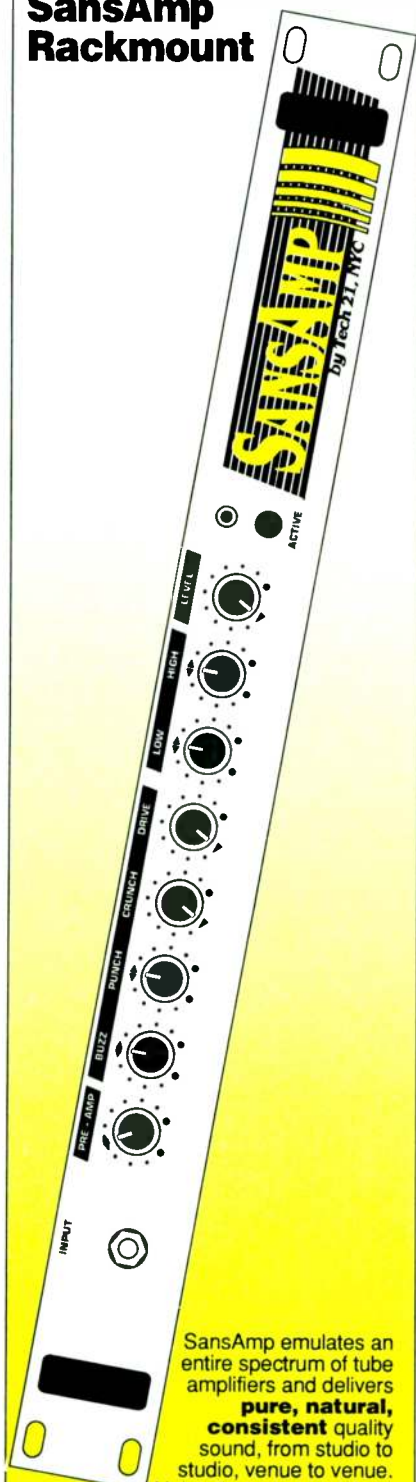
"There was a point," Chris Frantz says, "where we had the music going along just fine, but no lyrics were being written and no ideas were forthcoming. There was so much lack of discipline on the part of the band that we were just, like, 'What do we do here? We can't play it ourselves, that wouldn't be right.'

"It got to the point that if it were the bass player's day, we'd go to his apartment, wake him up, make sure he had a cup of tea, take him to the studio, make sure his bass was in tune, show him how to play the part and make sure he learned it."

Frantz and Weymouth also guided the band in songwriting. "One day when they said, 'Oh no, we have to write another song,' I said, 'Okay, it's soca day,' and we took them out to hear soca," Frantz says. "As a drummer I've been trying to play that soca beat for years, but one day Gary just came back and did it. He plays like a drum machine, because he grew up learning how to play drum-machine songs."

When the Barbados sessions ended up with tracks but no songs, the band returned to England. After some rehab Shaun got down to work, writing lyrics and recording vocals in Surrey. The producers helped him with lyrics, giving him a list of words and suggesting he work them into a song, even casting the I Ching at one point.

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"Eventually they came to their senses," Frantz says. "Shaun in particular realized that, 'Gee, I should really take responsibility for myself and not just be a self-indulgent rock star.'"

"It ended up with everybody really happy with each other," Frantz concludes. "They're great guys, they have a great spirit. Shaun of his own free will checked into a detox place and cleaned himself up. I'm hoping he'll stay that way. But I don't know how it turned out to be such a good record. It's a miracle."

FINDING THE BAND in Manchester was the easy part. Finding the singer—well, that takes a little more time. Nathan McGough, Happy Mondays' manager, phones Shaun Ryder at his house a few miles out of town, and asks him to come do an interview. Ryder will call a cab, he relays, and should arrive within the half-hour.

Two hours later, McGough phones him again. Apparently waiting for Shaun is a familiar pastime. "You get used to it," McGough says. "I like anything chronic."

Shaun eventually arrives, grumbling. He'd just been having a day off with his wife and toddler, smoking "some nice sensi," and now he had to do an interview, and...

But as he sips a lager and lights the first of many cigarettes, he quickly warms to his task. His songs, he says, don't have much to do with his life. "All I do is put together puzzles," he says. "I'm good at picking phrases so all these things sound like pure nice good entertainment."

"I haven't got all this pain that I have to pour out," he insists. "Obviously things will pop out. But something that to somebody outside might sound like a heavy line, to us it's just our sick sense of humor. It's like taking the piss out of a cripple, it makes us laugh. Afterwards you can look at it and see it's really a dark, heavy line."

"I get one line, things out of the papers, a bit of something I did, a bit of my own experience and then put them together. Afterwards, you can read 'em and you could say, 'Oh, this could be autobiographical,' but it's not really."

Or not entirely. "Stinkin' Thinkin'," he says, is a phrase he got during his time in rehab. It means "bad thoughts, when you start getting paranoid about some of the stunts you've pulled. I could never really sit down and write what it's like to be in a

rehab—it was corny old crap—but when I saw those two words on a blackboard, I thought: song."

How about the soca tune, "Cut 'Em Loose Bruce," with lines like "Get wired with the boys and shoot the place down"? "It's a folk song," Ryder says. "Dustman," about a "bug-eyed mung worm at the bottom of a bottle"? "That does sound a bit alcoholic, but I was actually conjuring up some kind of mung worm that lived in the bottle, not me."

"Cowboy Dave," he admits, is about a Manchester character, a sometimes music-business figure and pimp who was briefly associated with the band. When he was murdered, some news programs reported that a member of Happy Mondays had been killed. "So Bez rings up," Ryder recalls, "and he says, 'Who's dead?'"

"The way I write is that they get a tune and it gets me going," Ryder says. "I'll just put the recorder on Record, and I'll come out with anything that pops up in my head."

But not in Barbados. "I went over there and came back with nothing," he says. "I just got into, like, partying, because it was a holiday. I was having a bad time out there, I was smoking like shit."

Why? "It was there, and it was very cheap," he says. "I don't mind spending £1000 on a shirt, but to get stoned on rocks when in England, it's \$50 for one, to me it seems like a great big waste. But when we get over there it's like 20 English pence for one, and it was all over the place. I had fun, and I didn't really feel guilty because I wasn't wasting pots of money. But I got myself a habit. Now heroin, it's a very big warm soft thing. Crack, that's the worst."

"So I went to Barbados, partied, came back, had four or five weeks of rehab and tuned up, no booze, really did it right. The doctor said, 'That personality that you have, it's still going to be there, and it's down to you to stay off it.' I got rid of the heroin, and when we went into the studio, Chris and Tina were there, and they know this business of writing songs. Other times, I was stoned when I was writing, but it was a pleasure writing for this album straight."

Is rehab good for his image? "You can still have a good time," he says. "You just don't have to be into an addictive horrible drug. You can still have a drink, have an E [Ecstasy], as long as you don't have that fucking monkey on your back."

"A drug like acid, you can't get a habit—once you've done all your tripping you've done it," he says. "The same with Ecstasy. Me, now, if I want a nice dance on Ecstasy, I'll have a quarter of one, that's all I need."

"Manchester was a place for heroin, and downs, and speed until the E came in. And the E was a love drug, and it was good. Even all the football crowds, instead of wanting to fight, the drug made them just want to have a good time."

By now, Shaun is revved up, and I realize he's the opposite of most rock stars: He's coy about songs, but conceals nothing about his personal life. Out of cigarettes, he idly fishes in the ashtray, picks out a filter and a stub, screws them together and lights up.

He seems to have forgotten the wife and kid; he's raring to go out. We make our way to a brightly lit Chinese restaurant.

He's talking now about Manchester's seedier sections, about serial rapists and gang fights, about a teenager who dropped a slab of concrete sidewalk on a victim's head. "People like that, they just live to do people, go to jail, get out and do people again," he says.

It's not like his scofflaw days. "Even when I've been desperate for money and I've seen some granny collecting a pension, I've never beat up an old person," he says. "People say criminals and drug dealers are all bad guys. But if you meet a lot of these people, you find out some are all right, they're pretty normal. It's just what they do."

Opening a menu, Shaun goes straight for the lobster; when it arrives, he tears into it like Albert Finney as Tom Jones. Two women at the next table, in their 30s or early 40s, recognize him, stare and smile. He wanders over, gets into animated conversation with the blonde, seems to be smooching the brunette. At 1:30 a.m., the night is young; it's time to find a club.

Shaun leads an entourage, now including the women, to the I Don't No Club, a speakeasy-looking basement with a glitter-flecked ceiling, brightly polished brass rails and a dancefloor the size of a doormat, where Chinese and Anglo couples wriggle under flashing lights. As last call is announced, Paula, the blonde, gazes moonily into Shaun's eyes. "I'm not into your music," she says. "I'm into soul, really. But when you meet someone so genuine, well, it changes your mind."

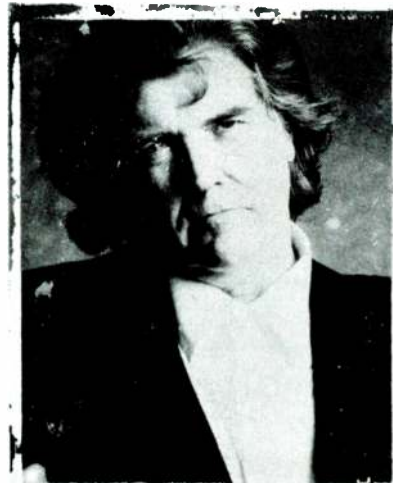
"Guy Clark is better than a good Texas brisket."

Vince Gill

"In my wildest dreams I look like Michelle Pfeiffer and write like Guy Clark."

Pam Tillis

Guy
Clark



boats
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build

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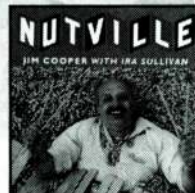
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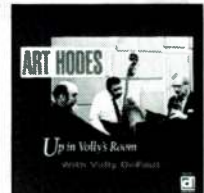
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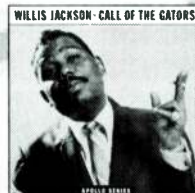
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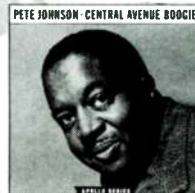
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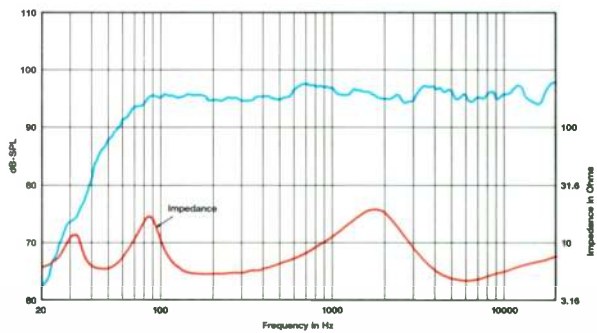
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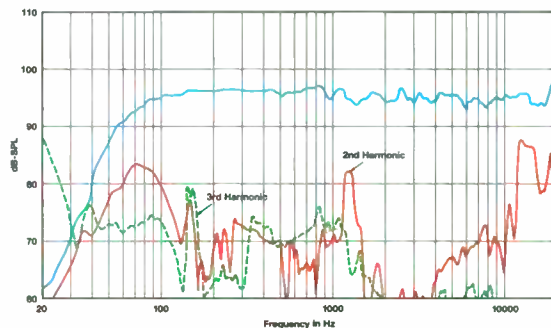
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Jeff Beck Goes Backward & Forward

*From rockabilly
to Roger Waters*

by MATT RESNICOFF



It took almost 30 years for the man who put concept into rock guitar to play on his first concept record. “He had been chasing me for several months,” Jeff Beck says of his sessions for Roger Waters’ *Amused to Death*. “I didn’t really respond because I was busy doing other things, but then he caught me on a good day when I was sort of around town and he said, ‘Look, you don’t have any obligation—I’ll rent

a studio for you for two hours and you can go along and listen, with just an engineer to play you the tapes.’ I heard ‘What God Wants’ and I loved it, so I made the commitment. And I enjoyed it, I really did. It was more like a comedy half-hour every day than hard work.”

It’s a dark comedy with stark twists, but Jeff Beck likes playing on the fringe. He seldom surfaces, and only does when he responds to urgency in the music. Waters said that like most guitarists, Jeff would pick up his instrument and continue to improvise straight through whatever he was overdubbing until asked to stop; but unlike most guitarists, Jeff wanted guidance from his colleagues and left them with performances they’d remember for the rest of their lives. “Roger’s a good musical director,” Beck says. “But when he put me on, the thing was nowhere *near* completed or in any shape

where you could say, ‘Ah, I know exactly what’s needed.’ He would play me only the pieces where he wanted the guitar. I think he tried to prevent me from getting too blown away by the majesty of the whole album, you know? He heard some of the stuff I did on *Guitar Shop* and he liked it a lot, and I think that’s why he thought, ‘I want that element; it would be good for that.’ But he never *told* me that; he just let me play.”

To create the Becknique that would attract Waters and astound many others, Jeff never even touched wood. The melodies from *Guitar Shop*’s “Where Were You” and “Two Rivers” were painstakingly executed by striking harmonics—notes brought out by plucking strings held lightly just over the fretwire—and bending them solely with the vibrato arm. Beck left his Kahler-loaded Jackson Soloist in the case for those tracks, preferring to tough it out on a Fender Strat live and on record. The catch is that he’d often begin with a harmonic already bent *up*, as in “Where Were You,” hit it and have it sink, then move to other natural-harmonic locations on the neck and continue the line, bending in and out with the bar for discrete intervals as small as semitones.

“That’s the song Roger loved the most,” Jeff says, “and he told me, ‘I want you to do *that* kind of stuff on my album.’ I said, ‘Well, that took a lot of writing; we had to spend ages working out where all the harmonics were and then bending the arm to make the tune. I write by inspiration of one note going into another.’ And he said, ‘Well, let’s just throw something at the wall and see what happens.’ [Keyboardist/producer] Pat Leonard hit a few chords just at the tail, the end-of-the-session messaround, and we recorded about five or 10 minutes of that. And then one day, the story goes, at the end of a long recording day, Roger was driving home from the hills and he played this tape of the day’s work, and at the end of it he couldn’t touch the tape machine because he was driving. It ran on and suddenly this stuff came on, and he thought, ‘*Jesus Christ*, what’s this? I want this straight away.’”

The forgotten jam became the intro and backing for the spare album opener “The Ballad of Bill Hubbard”; elsewhere,

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MUSICIAN

Beck places slide-like screams through several reprises of "What God Wants." Hard to believe the guitar odyssey began nearly 30 years ago with Jeff's diehard affection for Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps' brilliant lead player Cliff Gallup. Today Beck is working on an album of note-for-note covers of Gallup's bebop-inflected rockabilly solos alongside the Big Town Playboys. The Playboys are an authentic swing/blues/country-rock band Jeff met with in London and nearly adopted as his own, before discovering how incompatible his current writing was with his initial motivations to be a musician.

"It's a very topical question as to whether it's a 'Jeff Beck project' or not," he says, "because I'm really using another band which exists already to participate with me on it. Packaging is going to be quite a talking point with us, because we need to put the focus where it's going to be effective, you know what I mean? It's really just to prove how advanced the music was, and how exciting it was in '56...but with the modern recording sound that we've got, we're trying to bring out more dynamics and sonics. We used old mikes in some of the tracks, but going through modern SSL desks and stuff, so kids won't be able to complain about the sound not being up to scratch."

Breathing new life into classic forms defines Jeff Beck; his vibrato technique, in its white-knuckled melodic simplicity, extends the legacy into its next phase. And it's the hardest work he's done. "Sure, yeah," he says. "It is, but I feel pretty happy about spending the time with it because the rewards are there; people seem to respond to the emotion that you can get from that style. And the purity of the harmonic note is just another angle of what the electric guitar can do. I mean, people use it all over the place in rock, but not with those sort of nice sweeping melodies. It's kind of my little thing I've got going, you know?"

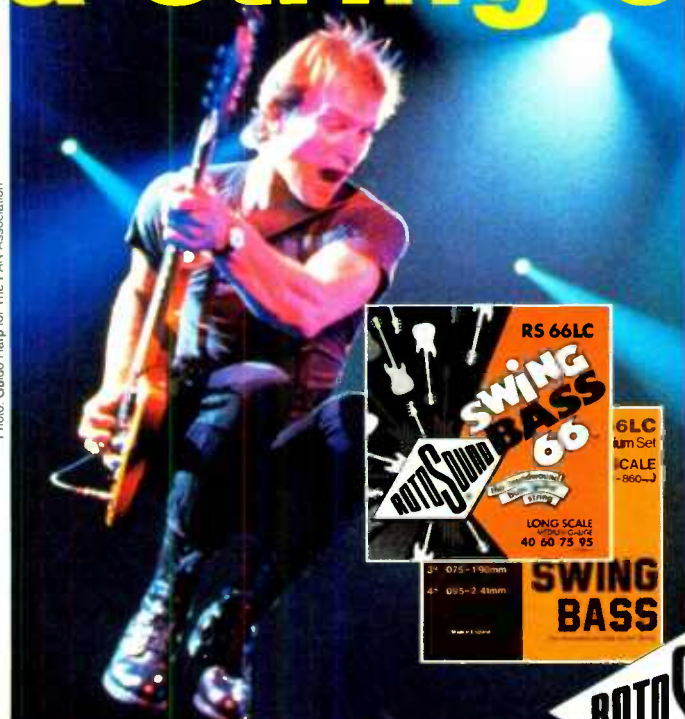
BLOW BY BLOW

The old Bassman amplifier JEFF BECK got from the men at Fender London, autographed by associates Buddy Guy and Eric Clapton, was stolen from the main hallway in his house, where it waited to be loaded and unloaded on trips to and from studios. "I only wanted it for sessions and stuff, where I could keep my eye on it, but," Jeff laughs, "I didn't. It's gone." He's still got tabs on his many Strats and an old Gretsch Duo Jet just like Cliff Gallup's, which he used for all his note-for-note galloping through the Gene Vincent tribute record with the Big Town Playboys.

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Photo: Guido Harp for The FAN Association

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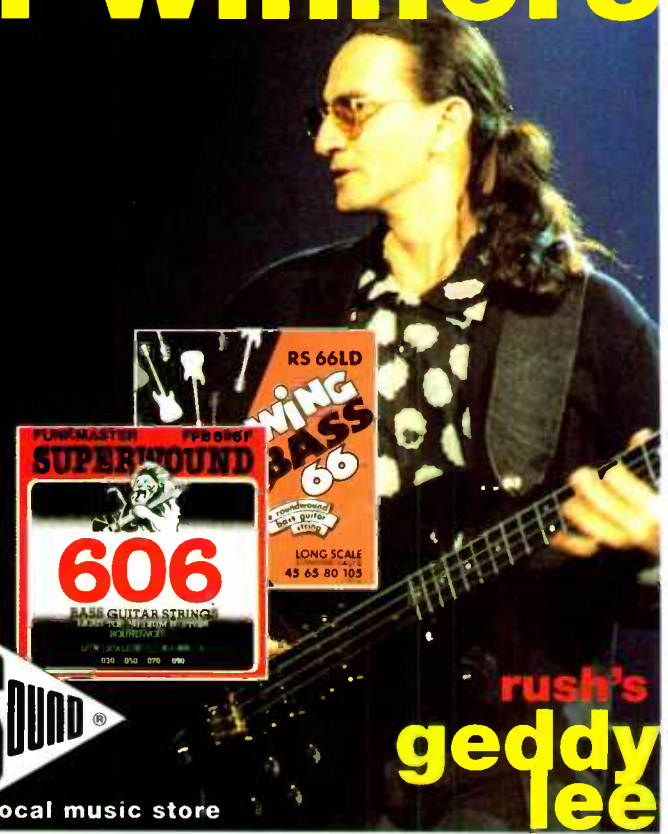
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Sting Puts the Bass in Its Place

*Returning from a
bassman's holiday*

by BILL FLANAGAN



As bass player with the Police, Sting helped revive the old idea (as old as Cream, anyway) of the singer/bassist as bandleader. When he launched his solo career, though, Sting switched to guitar. He strummed through his first two post-Police albums, *Dream of the*

Blue Turtles and *Nothing Like the Sun*, and the tours that went with them. Only on his *Soul Cages* tour last year did Sting return to the bass. We talked to him about the joys and frustrations of his chosen instrument.

"In a way I took a holiday for five years," Sting said. "Playing bass and singing is quite difficult. Strumming along to a song on a guitar while you sing is all the same thing. Often basslines are opposed to the rhythm of the singing. It's contrapuntal, quite difficult, so I just took a holiday, got a couple of really great bass players, sang my songs and strummed along. I enjoyed that holiday. But my instrument is the

bass. I feel affinity with the bass and I feel I have a contribution to make, so I'm playing bass again.

"I mean, I played the bass on the albums. I didn't give it up entirely. In a way, taking the time off from playing onstage refreshed my imagination on bass.

"It's much easier to control the dynamic of the band with the bass than with any of the other instruments. Also, when David (Sancious, the keyboard player) plays a C chord, it's not a C chord until the bass player has put his note in. I can change the chord at will. Therefore I can change the harmonic structure of the song, the dynamic structure of the song, and having the low end with the bass and the high end with my voice, I feel I can really drive this thing without *seeming* to drive it or being dictatorial. So it's ideal for a bandleader, especially in a small group which is trying to have the flexibility of a jazz group without playing jazz."

Although Sting says his basic philosophy of bass playing comes from "Stax and Motown, I love eight beats to the bar," he is nothing if not ambitious. "In a way," he said, "if you're serious about music you become more and more adrift. Musicians are trained to use a part of the brain that most listeners don't. Most listeners to popular music can cope with thirds, fifths, sevenths, simple intervals. Once you get into sixths or thirteenthths... In my case, what I love now is atonal music, I love that bitter sense it gives me. I really find it exciting, it draws the tension out of me. So I suppose my music will eventually veer towards something that will not be to the popular taste. Even though I'd like it to be. In a sense my job is to be a populist, to try to popularize more difficult ideas than you would expect on the radio."

To add to his musical palette, Sting has been studying cello. "It's funny," he explained, "the cello has the same scales as a Fender bass, but tuned in fifths. So it gives you ideas; you play a blues scale and fall into different stuff."

Asked which of his songs were built from bass riffs, Sting said, "'Walking on the Moon' was a bass riff. A lot of the Police songs were. A lot of the *Soul* [cont'd on page 82]

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Henry Butler: Polishing Chestnuts

How to breathe life into an old standard
by TOM MOON



O

in his recent *Blues and More, Volume 1* (Windham Hill Jazz), pianist and vocalist Henry Butler tackles, among other things, that resort-hotel lounge pianist standby “Jamaica Farewell.” It’s not a parody, and it’s not such a distant free-form extrapolation that the

melody vanishes.

But, as is the case with much of Butler’s work, it’s not wholly traditional—in a sneaky, insurgent kind of way. There are powerful tonic chords that swell up into gospel glory. There are little fugue-like turnarounds that tip the hat to Johann Sebastian Bach. There are simple chord vamps for improvisation that help Butler call forth some unorthodox bebop.

And yet, it’s impossible to miss the sing-songy melody. “The melody just kept coming back to me,” Butler said recently, sitting in front of a nine-foot Steinway, his piano of choice. “It occurred to me that it was a challenge—to make this old song unique enough for me to play it and be interested in it.”

A native of New Orleans, Butler is on the faculty of Southern Illinois University.

He says tackling such a shopworn song aligns with what Professor Longhair used to do, and also dovetails with the sermon he preaches to his students. “Before you even start working on a tune, you have to know that every tune you play is yours. If John Doe is playing a piece you like, it’s his piece while he’s playing it. But when you play it, you should be able to adapt it to fit your personality, the way you live and think, the way you approach the piano. It doesn’t matter what people think—when I’m playing it matters what I like. That’s a difficult thing for students to learn.”

Butler faced some serious work to make “Jamaica Farewell” his own. He started with a little figure at the end of each verse that took the song out of its E_b key center, and extended the form. “I used the vi chord (in E_b, a C minor chord) as the pivot for what is essentially a quick modulation. It functions as a dominant chord, and it can take you to F, only for a short time. Then I play another minor vi chord into a G altered dominant, which again has the minor third. Then it goes back to E_b, where there are some very plain-sounding chords to lead into the next verse.”

Butler used the same device at the tag ending—except each ascending whole step is preceded by its dominant, which creates the effect of moving around the cycle of fifths. He believes that by adding measures to the form—for the pianist playing solo, it’s an easy thing to do—he can give this familiar song a challenging (if not progressive) element while remaining true to its folk roots.

Along the same lines, he added a blowing section in the middle of the tune. It’s based on a simple I-IV vamp, and it moves through different key centers—at one point, before returning to the E_b verse, it alternates between D_b and G_b. “I was mostly looking for flavor there,” Butler says, rippling through a stream of New Orleans blues over the changes. “It was just about changing the hue a bit...A lot of guys, they’d be playing the augmented 11 chord there, getting into something almost beboppish. I didn’t want to do that too much, though it definitely can work. Even at the end, I wanted to

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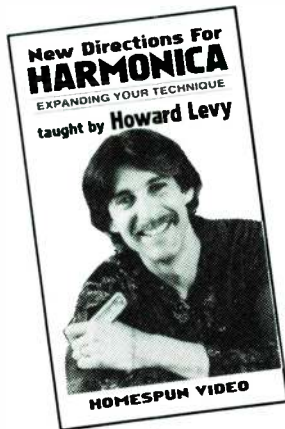


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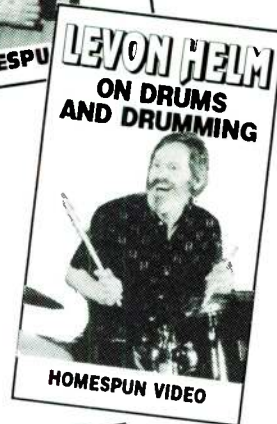
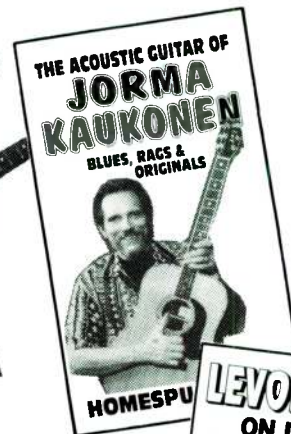
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put just a trace of unusual harmony in, because I was really trying to launch a rhythm thing with the left hand. So my voicing for the V chord is root, 11, flat-7, 9, 13, with no alterations. It's a very straight sound, one that the New Orleans piano players use. It doesn't pull like an altered dominant, but it doesn't just sit there either."

Like the harmony, Butler's "rhythm thing" contains echoes of New Orleans march music and gospel. Butler says it doesn't matter what the right hand chooses to play, as long as the left hand is taking care of business. "If you're playing real Dixieland, like on 'Down by the Riverside' [also on *Blues and More, Vol. 1*], you've got to keep the bass notes on beat one and beat three, and put the syncopations around that. If your rhythmic concept is strong, you can express it in any part of the music. At the end of 'Jamaica Farewell,' you can let the right hand do anything it wants, because the other thing is covered."

But there are some boppish runs between the lines of "Jamaica Farewell." Butler chuckles and says, "I almost hate to use the term, but I do believe in musical gumbo. Playing one style of music is like playing in one key all your life... If you know and are really good at playing bebop, why not take it through a few ideas, a few different styles? I am constantly trying to see what the things I know can do for me—sure, it's possible to play bebop throughout 'Jamaica Farewell,' but why be so limited?"

STING

[cont'd from page 78] Cages stuff were bass riffs 'cause we did it as a band. The previous two albums were written on keyboards, so there were fewer bass motifs.

"The genesis of 'Be Still My Beating Heart' was Trudy, actually," Sting said, referring to his wife. "The title is one of Trudy's phrases, but the bassline was mine. Trudy has yet to receive any royalties."

Asked if he sings differently when he plays the bass than when he plays guitar, Sting said, "No. I probably play the bass differently when I sing; you play more simply when you sing. But if you slow it down you can sing and play anything, you can play a symphony on the bass and sing 'Roxanne' if you slow it way down and practice."

4-STRING STING

S TING plays a '62 Fender Jazz Bass, an Ibanez fretless and a Fender Precision. He uses Carver amps, Rotosound strings and Beyer microphones.

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Kenny Blevins: Staking a Claim without a Big Name

*How to become a
successful journeyman*
by KEN MICALLEF



Kenny Blevins? Sure, his name doesn't spring to mind when you're figuring a list of Top 10 skinmen, but Blevins is a busy drummer who makes his living working in and out of New York City. Not a studio heavy, Blevins has had his share of big tours and recording work, and he doesn't

even read a lick of music.

His favorite job so far was John Hiatt's Goners. On 1988's *Slow Turning*, Blevins' loose playing conjures up a Cajun Ringo Starr; he's a natural musician whose native Louisiana funkiness brings a rollicking punch to songs like Hiatt's "Drive South" and "Paper Thin." He stayed with Hiatt for two years, touring the world twice before moving to New York in 1988.

Blevins' good-feeling groove has also landed him work with the Waterboys, the

Meters' George Porter, Charles Brown and Jo-El Sonnier. One of Blevins' tenets is staying busy: "You've got to stay active in a city like New York. You'll get run over or your landlord will hit you up for the rent and if you don't have it, you're outta here. If you don't stay out there in their face, the other musicians will roll right over you."

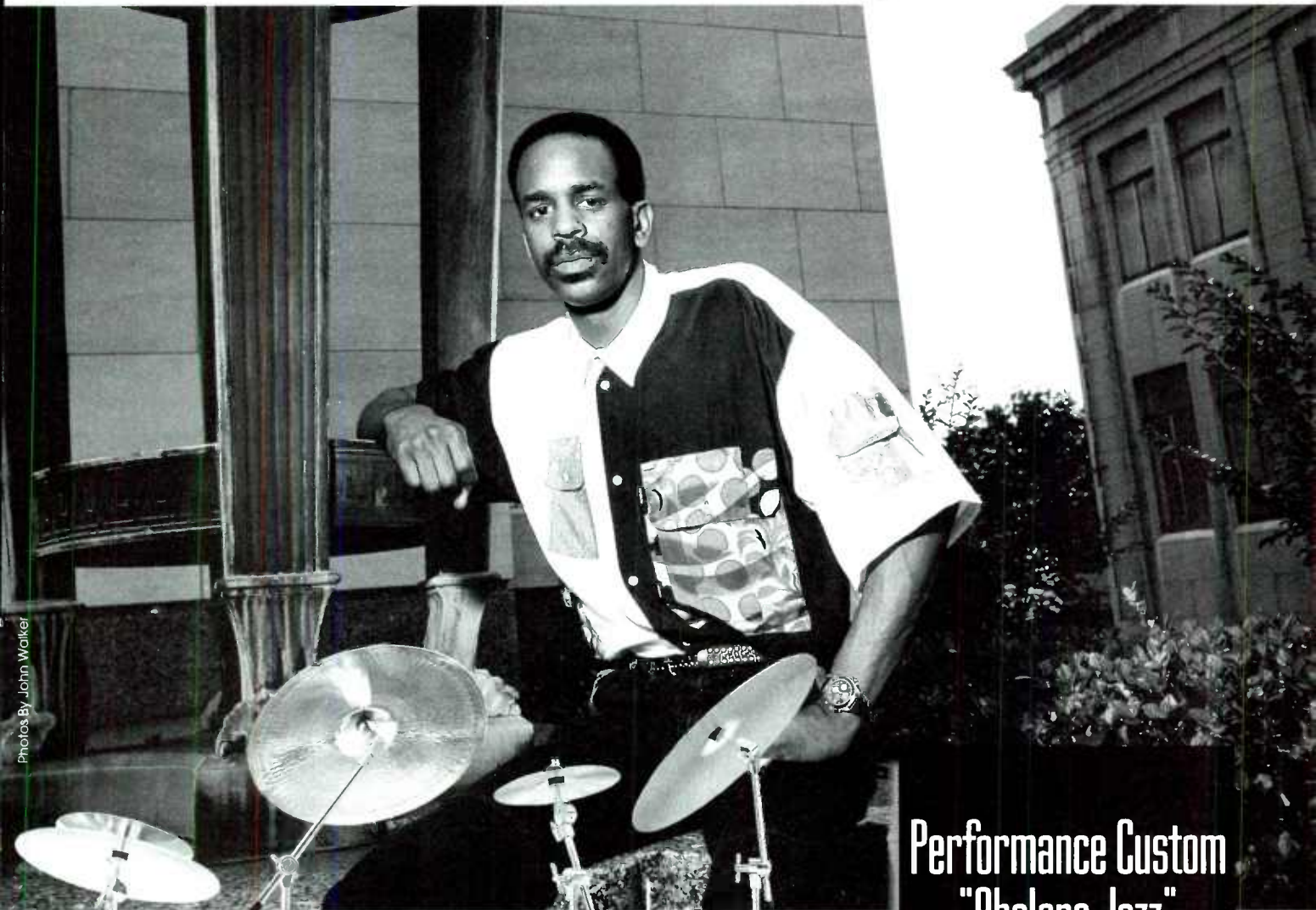
From his first whack on a Maestro "industrial plastic" snare drum in his parents' Lake Charles, Louisiana home in 1965, Blevins was fascinated with the drums. Doing local dances as a teenager with "Christian Youth Organization" bands, later he would hit the after-hours bars in Port Arthur, where he heard blues acts like Johnny and Edgar Winter's group or Jerry LaCroix's White Trash. In 1970 Blevins began working the Cajun circuit between Lafayette and Baton Rouge with fiddle player Michael Doucet's Koto, a souped-up outfit with two drummers. "We kicked it up another level. A two-step became a two-step from hell: hot-rod Cajun music."

From there he took what looked like a dead-end job but actually prepared him, both emotionally and musically, for work he would be doing 10 years later. An R&B house gig in New Orleans' boisterous French Quarter, five nights a week at 50 bucks a night, taught him the art of improvising and gave him the confidence to approach any style. "Playing in New Orleans, you get a lot of schooling. When people call you, you don't ask, 'What sort of music is it?' It's 'Do you want the gig or not?' You better be able to play just about anything.

"I was never a jazz or Dixieland drummer but I've done my share of those gigs. You're faking it at first, but playing with the older guys, they help you so much. After a verse and a chorus you're not faking it, you're in there with them."

But after five years of avoiding bad habits and boredom, Blevins wanted off the circuit. "I was afraid of getting stuck in a \$270-a-week gig in some small Louisiana town. The ambition goes, the drive goes. Those guys in their 50s were all addicts or alcoholics, that little one-foot-square piece of stage was their entire world." A phone call from slide guitarist Sonny Landreth led to Blevins' big break, an audition with Hiatt. That

—Tommy Campbell—



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two-year gig gave Blevins the confidence to move to New York. "To this day my Hiatt association still gets me work. A lot of people saw that band."

He now splits his living between cutting albums and demos, touring and playing Manhattan clubs behind everyone from hopeful singer/songwriters to established artists like Shawn Colvin. As hackneyed as it sounds, working regularly depends on who you know. "Any kind of schmoozing, party- or club-going I do is aimed at making contact. It's hard, 'cause I hate being in a smoke-filled room, but since I know a few people I'll usually be intro-

duced. Then I can strike up a conversation and exchange phone numbers. You write your number on the back of a card and often people will dig it up and call you.

"When I get off a tour, I'm on the phone. If you don't let people know you're back they won't call you. You have to touch base every week."


The amount of money he can make ranges from \$100 plus cartage for showcasing at small venues like the China Club or the Bitter End to \$50 a tune for songwriter's demos to the union minimum recording scale of \$240 ("I always ask for more") for three hours when he's in the studio

with people like Hiatt or Colvin. On a "rock 'n' roll world tour" the salary ranges from \$750 to \$2500 a week. For television appearances like Hiatt on "Saturday Night Live," the ballpark is "five to six hundred for a couple songs. And I got paid more than the bass player because I sang backup. The money goes up the more you can do.

"Negotiating over price is something I'm better at than I used to be. Now I can make calls, haggle, bargain over the fee. Even if they say no and hang up, a lot of times they'll call right back. You have to know when to take that chance. I never ask for too much. I can't demand what Keltner would, I don't have his resume."

Being your own manager, agent and publicist can backfire. In the fall of '91 Blevins was asked to tour and record with the Waterboys, and was even given points on album sales. He'd made a deal. As he was leaving for the airport the band's management called and told him the album was postponed. Tours he'd been offered with Curtis Stigers and Marc Cohn for the same time were lost, leaving Blevins with three blank months to fill. "I'm not the only guy this has happened to. Maybe I should have investigated a little more. I'm a working musician, I'm not a songwriter. I don't have residuals coming in. I'm not an artist, I'm a player. When somebody tells me something I take it at face value. It was a bad experience, but I see it as part of learning."

Blevins has been fortunate: How many drummers would come to New York without knowing how to read music? "I don't think I'd work more if I read. I'm viewed as a drummer from Louisiana with 'that feel' that people seem to like. It helps me to find my own niche. I could play Latin, klezmer—if I can get along with someone, I can play their music."

But does the on/off nature of the music business leave this usually relaxed man biting his nails? "Like a lot of musicians, I have my bouts with feeling bad. You make money for a while, then you're out of work. But coming from Louisiana, where it's so hot you'll bust a vein if you worry, maybe I have an attitude that keeps me calm." It's the same, he says, with working: "It all really boils down to how well you can play and get along with the people you work with." 

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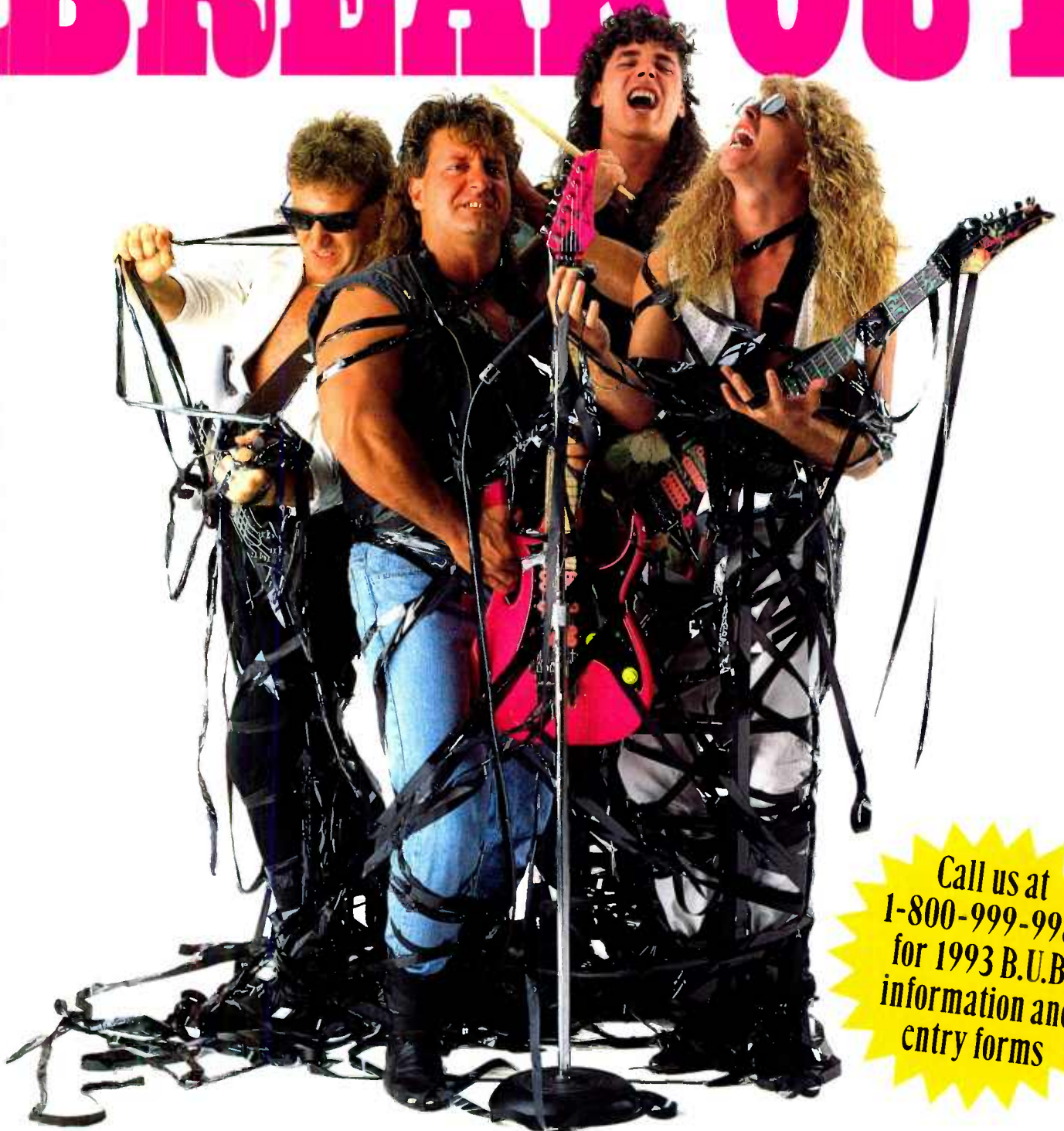
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STOMPIN' WITH ACE AND EDDIE



ACE FREHLEY AND
EDDIE KRAMER
PONDER THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF
THE ZOOM 9000.

PLAYERS CHOICE

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS THE STOMP BOX. Just kick that sucker and it fuzzed or wah'd or whooshed or whatever. Then came the multi-effects processor, forcing players to learn to read a manual. Finally we've evolved to the multi-effects stomp box. That's right folks, two mints in one—a whole bunch of nifty parameters that you can step on. Working as Jimi Hendrix' engineer, Eddie Kramer was helping to invent these sounds long before anyone put them in a box. And Ace Frehley has always gotten his grunge the old-fashioned way. "I can't use these fuckin' things," says the former Kiss guitarist. "I end up smashin' 'em in one show. I just plug into an amp, turn it on 10 and it sounds fuckin' great."

Musician put these two seasoned cynics together with three popular boxes—Digitech's RP1, Zoom's 9000 (with footswitch) and the new A4 from Korg. What we got was an extremely unscientific (and brutally honest) look at a few of the strengths and weaknesses of these units. They're all programmable, but we stuck with the factory settings for this quick test. "The presets on these things are great," says Kramer. "If you want a particular sound quickly, you can just zap it in there. The Korg really surprised me. Both Ace and myself like to create real-time delays in the studio, and these delay sounds hold up very well. Also, it's obvious they've done their homework in the distortion department." Frehley agrees: "The Korg was warmer, more like a tube sound, and the separation between the pedals is a little wider. That makes a difference to a guy with a big foot, like me." Bigfoot Frehley also had a problem with the Digitech RP1's two-tiered design. "I stepped on footswitch 8 and by accident I also stepped on 3," he says. "That's totally fucked! You gotta be a ballerina to use this

thing." Uh *huh*...well, Ace, what *else* do you like about the RP1? "This unit has more gain, and putting the input and output controls right on the front panel keeps things real straightforward. It also gives you more options soundwise. The RP1 has a better variety of sounds than the others, but it's a lot easier to work with your hands than your feet." Fair enough. Now, Eddie, how about this wedge-shaped wonder from Zoom? "It's a nice, compact box, made to fit under the handle of an amp. But who's to say you're going to have a handle?"

"It could be gaffer-taped to your amp," suggests Frehley, "but the problem is these little buttons. None of 'em have any writing on 'em. It's like fuckin' braille. If you were blind, this would be great. Also, I'd have made it bigger, but the Japanese have little fingers."

Kramer plugs in the Zoom and Frehley cranks it up. "This has got some unique little sounds, no doubt about it," says Kramer. Frehley stops shredding long enough to yell, "Bank 3, setting 4 [a monstrous octave-lower distortion patch], I could do a killer solo with that sound. Zoom patch 34 is death."

"Overall, I think we've heard some really interesting sounds," says Kramer. "For pure coolness and availability of sounds at your fingertips, the RP1 is very useful. It also pushes the amp better than the others."

"If I had to use one of these boxes live, I'd take the Korg," says Frehley. "The Digitech is great for the musician who wants to use pedals in the studio. And I'd buy the Zoom for that one sound, I swear to God."

Special thanks to Roy Clark, Victor Moore and everyone at Manhattan Center Studios.
PETER CRONIN & MATT RESNICOFF

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SYNTH I FELL FOR YOU

Mention guitar synthesizers to a roomful of players and the responses will most likely fall somewhere between disinterest and mockery. The new GR-1 from Roland could do a lot to change these lingering perceptions. Touted as Roland's most advanced guitar synth yet, the GR-1 delivers phenomenal tracking and dynamic range in a compact floor unit packed with features. Weighing in at seven pounds, the GR-1 combines multi-timbral, state-of-the-art sampled sounds with a well-designed interface that even novices will find easy to navigate.

The companion GK-2 Synthesizer Driver, which mounts easily on any electric or steel-string acoustic, provides individual string pickups and allows you to merge the guitar's audio signal with digital control information. The GK-2 also provides a synth/guitar/both output switch, a synth volume knob and two data buttons for easy access to GR-1 parameters. User friendliness is critical to wide acceptance of a guitar synth, and the GR-1's footpedal design, coupled with plenty of knobs for direct editing, makes this the best unit I've seen. There are 200 onboard samples, and that number can be doubled using a soon-to-be-introduced wave expansion board (priced in the \$300 range). You can layer two tones per patch and store a series of critical parameters with each patch. My favorites are string sensitivity for each string (critical for style and dynamics, from fingerpicking to tapping), tone assignment to strings (for splits), open tunings, velocity mix of the two tones, and chromatic or smooth bending. Staple digital effects (chorus, delay, reverb) are also provided. The multi-timbral feature allows multi-channel access to three parts and a separate drum set. You can also play a guitar part on top, within a limit of 24 voices. Although tracking with external MIDI modules

isn't quite airtight, the results are impressive.

I found few superfluous tones in the original sound set, with clean, crisp piano and horn samples, great strings and synths, and surprisingly realistic guitars, basses and organs. The editing functions are simple and intuitive, and extensive MIDI features allow the player to perform with complex systems under GR-1 footpedal control. Routing options include Mix Out, Guitar Return, Guitar Out, Volume Pedal and Expression Pedal (assignable to a variety of MIDI control functions). You can program advanced pitch-shift functions, split octaves, add modulation, or hold notes (three types of sustain) by using optional footpedals. Other cool features include a tuner that displays the name of any note played, pitch-offset between tones for harmonization, and a simple four-track, 2000-note sequencer. A well-written manual (hooray!) makes it easy for MIDI beginners to dive in.

At a breakthrough price of \$1295 (about what you'd expect to pay for a good effects unit), this is the guitar synth for everyman. The GR-1 is Roland's seventh-generation model, and proof that their lasting commitment to providing a truly guitaristic controller has finally paid off.

MIHAI MANOLIU



FOSTEX has entered into a licensing agreement with **ALESIS** and will be utilizing the **S-VHS** format and **ADAT** technology. Look for a product introduction from Fostex in early '93. **SWR** has upped the power with the **SM-900**. This 24-pound bass amp squeezes a cool 900 watts into two rack spaces. Also on board are two three-band, sweepable EQs, which can be controlled by footswitch, and an all-tube preamp. Eric Johnson and James Taylor have been

SOUNDBITES

"unplugging" into the Trace Acoustic amp from **TRACE ELLIOT**. Adrian Legg played his Ovation acoustic through one at a recent mini-set in *Musician's* New York office, and if his sound was any indication, this amp is worth checking out. **ZOOM** is going high-end with its new 9200 Advanced Reverb Processor. The unit features 31 effect templates and can be configured to act as one, two, three or four independent digital signal processors. The price? \$2995. **JL COOPER** has unveiled the Datsync MIDI synchronizer for the **ALESIS ADAT** recorder. The unit plugs into a nine-pin port on the back of the ADAT and converts the recorder's sample clock to MIDI time code. That way you don't eat up any tracks. Also from JL Cooper is Softmix. This software allows musicians to automate their **SOUNDCRAFT** Spirit console through a Macintosh, and retails for \$499.95. The folks at **SAMSON** are beginning to attract a lot of attention with their distribution of German-made **BEHRINGER** signal processing gear. Samson has also found the time to introduce the Model 2242 Portable Mixer, featuring 10 XLR inputs, six stereo inputs, four stereo effects returns and onboard phantom power. A lot of stuff for a list price of \$1129.99. **AKAI** is making it easier than ever to get into sampling with the new S01. This easy-to-use sampler delivers 16-bit quality sound and retails for under a grand.

PETER CRONIN

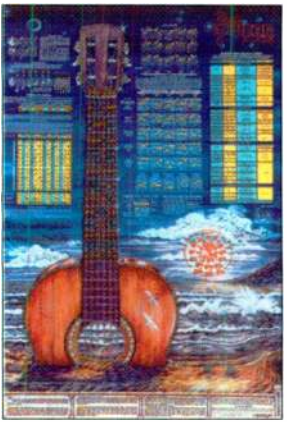
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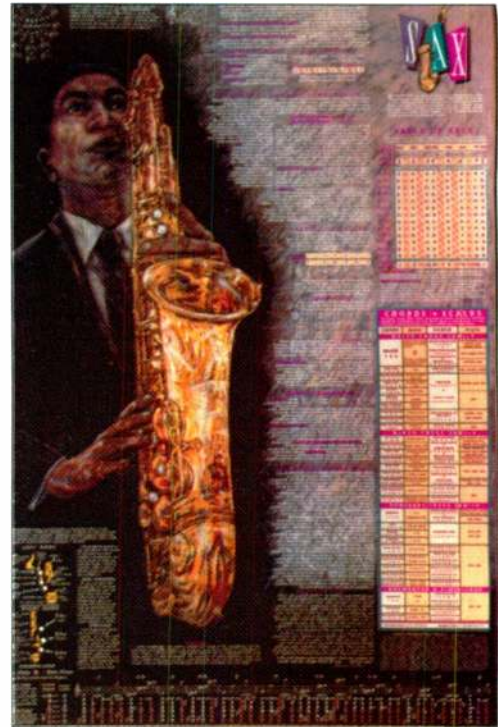
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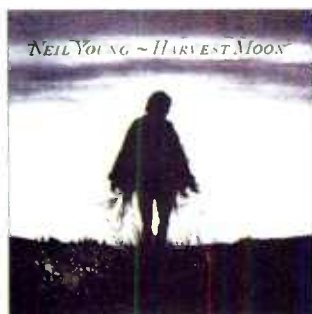
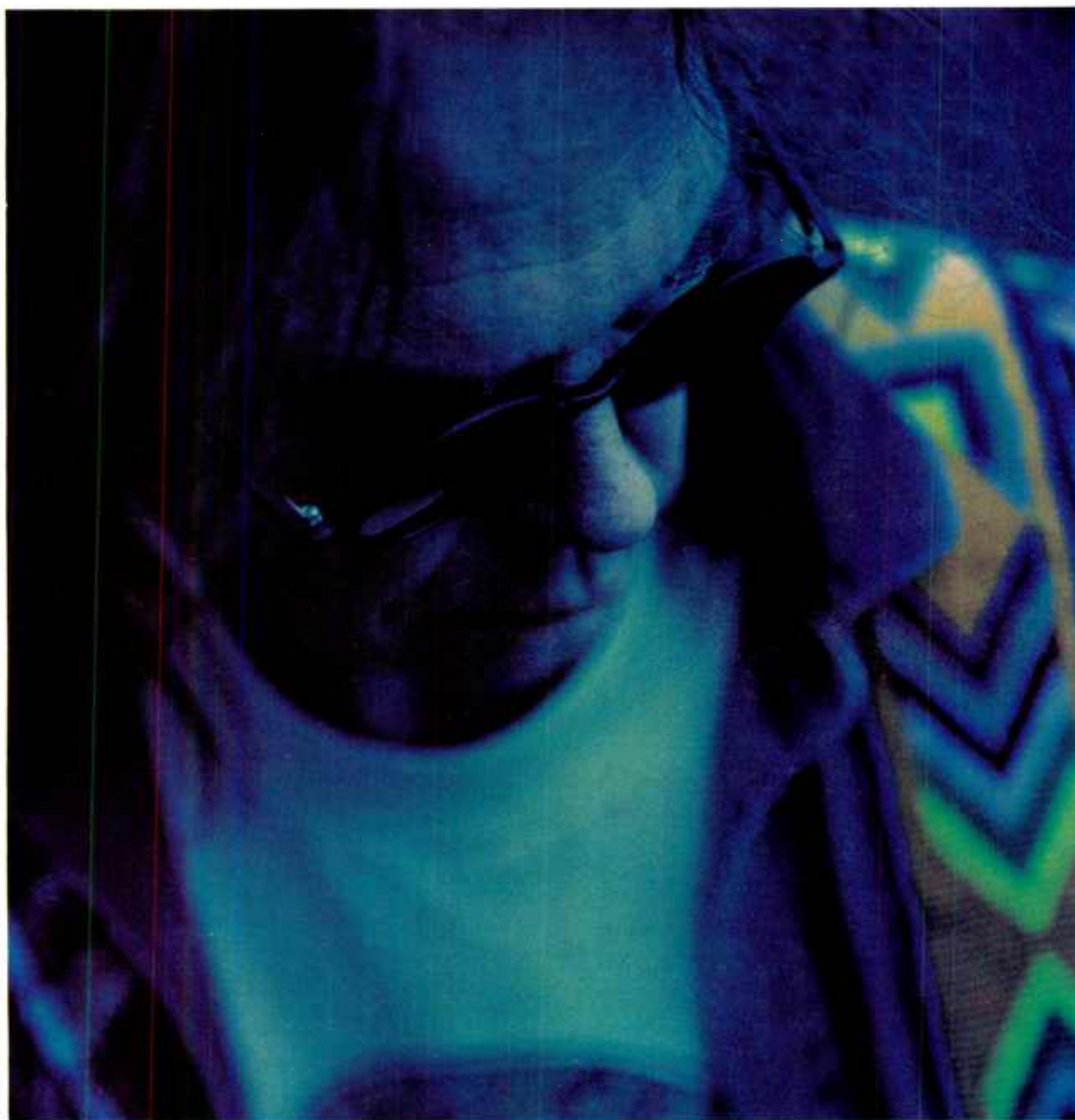
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NEIL YOUNG
HARVEST MOON
(REPRISE)

COMES ANOTHER TIME

This record is being widely touted as a sequel to *Harvest*, Neil Young's greatly loved folk album of 1972. The only one of his albums to yield a Top 10 hit single ("Heart of Gold"), *Harvest* and the style Young blueprinted there have played an important role in this iconoclastic pop hero's ability to continue to fill large arenas on the concert trail.

Young's easily accessible "soft rock" is hardly the most compelling aspect of his sensibility, but it's kept him in the game commercially; for that, we who love his oddball stuff the best can be grateful.

But perhaps because he's traveled so far and wide with his music, has tried on so many stylistic hats and battered down so many doors with scorching rock 'n' roll, this

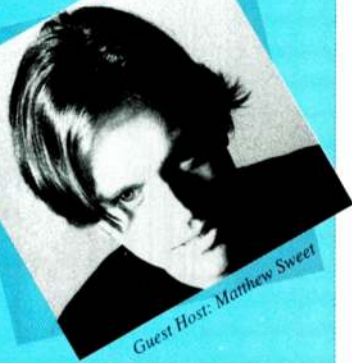
unadorned folk music also exudes real weight. As with *Harvest*, the central theme here is romantic love, but Young has grown up in important ways over the past 20 years and his point of view on the subject has changed considerably. Where *Harvest's* lonely protagonist is driven by a melancholy quest for romantic perfection that's presented as unattainable, *Harvest*

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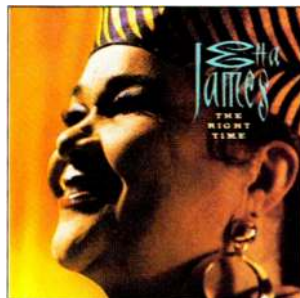
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MUSICIAN

Moon celebrates the love that knows how to bend, forgive and survive in the real world. The best of the songs cut from this cloth is the title track, an achingly sweet ballad of veteran lovers who have succeeded in making their enchantment last. The theme is underscored on "From Hank to Hendrix," while "Unknown Legend," another beautiful song built around an unforgettable hook, pays tribute to the quiet heroism of a small-town waitress.

Not all *Harvest Moon's* love tunes work so well. "Such a Woman" is a weird wash of sound that's all production and no melody, while "War of Man," the LP's requisite anti-war song (has Neil ever left one off a record?), is forgettable. But his wonderfully strange sense of humor takes over on "Old King," a tribute to a beloved dog, and "Dreamin' Man," a candid slice of autobiography that finds him confessing, "I'm a dreamin' man/Yes, that's my problem/I can't tell when I'm/Not being real." The album closes with "Natural Beauty," an enigmatic epic that makes several points, including the thought that we should treat the essence of the human soul with the same reverence with which we regard nature. A wise and loving observation, it's Young at his best. —Kristine McKenna



ETTA JAMES

The Right Time
(ELEKTRA)

ETTA JAMES' CAREER COULD PLAUSIBLY be broken into three phases. First came the fresh-faced R&B ingenue of the '50s and early '60s, exemplified by her early hit "The Wallflower (Dance with Me Henry)"; through the '60s and '70s, a more world-weary but still energetic belter of songs like "Tell Mama" and "Deep in the Night"; and more recently, the blues survivor still able to deliver an essential nuance. Being so capable has encouraged several producers to encumber James with trendy settings and/or au courant repertoire, often with middling results. But on *The Right Time*, producer Jerry Wexler has for the most part stuck to a classic R&B sound—a swinging, punching

horn section arranged by Hank Crawford, a time-tight rhythm section with just enough guitar and organ and at one point harmonica to keep the motion greased (sure, there's a little synth, but it's almost subliminal). The songs are a meat-and-potatoes lot too, by such sure hands as Al Green, Isaac Hayes and Allen Toussaint.

James is up to the challenge set by these tasteful parameters. On "Nighttime Is the Right Time" she gives the old chestnut the needed erotic edge to justify one more version, while "Wet Match," a song about a guy who's all wind-up and no pitch, has enough of the old mocking randiness to remind us that great blues singers often don't get mellow with age, just meaner. "Let It Rock" is the obligatory social-commentary song, but when James adds to her list of modern life's disgraces that "rock 'n' roll music ain't got no feel," it seems pretty ballsy, given that this is the one song aimed most squarely at that market. Also on the commercial tip is a duet with Steve Winwood, whose voice has grown more whispery over the years, just as James' has gained ballast. She just rolls right over the poor guy—all in good fun, of course.

This is a consistently satisfying and unpretentious set, and perhaps that's still faint praise. A record which opens with a song called "I Sing the Blues" and closes with one called "Down Home Blues," and spends the greater part of its time meeting the expectations aroused by those blunt titles, is certainly worth hearing.

—Richard C. Walls



OFRA HAZA

Kirya
(SHANACHIE)

LUSH-VOICED YET LIGHT-FOOTED, Ofra Haza already ruled as Israel's top woman pop singer when *Fifty Gates of Wisdom*, her prescient collection of Yemenite modern traditionals, appeared here in 1987. On that record Benny Nagari's kinetic arrangements introduced her voice with enough juice for Eric B. & Rakim, who sampled her vocals in their utterly unreal "Paid in Full" remixes. Two sub-

sequent albums released on Sire provided much well-crafted dizziness but no U.S. crossover success.

Produced chiefly by Don Was, who may hear her as the Israeli equivalent of the Anglo-Indian sensation Najma, Haza continues to pursue her ancestral concerns on *Kiryā*, with new music woven into folk melodies and lyrics. The title song celebrates, and then laments, Jerusalem; "Horashoot (The Bridge)" uses an ancient love tune to comment on regional disunity. Haza and Benzalel Aloni's originals run to pieces like "Innocent—A Requiem for Refugees" and "Trains of No Return," which try to evoke the human tragedies of Euro-Middle Eastern political conundrums.

But in current "adult" worldbeat fashion, *Kiryā* is slowish, ponderous, little fun; even Iggy Pop sounds lost when he appears strictly out of nowhere on "Daw Da Hiya" to narrate a tale of bucked domestic custom. Was clears away both the kicky traditionalism of *Fifty Gates* and the Madonnasque attempts of its successors to make Haza into a serious pop artist who deals in pleasure. With her voice, rhythms and instrumental solos surrounded by negative space that only results in everything coming across as pretentious, Haza is now all solemnity. The best song on the album is "Don't Forsake Me," where she sings lines like "Don't cast me away/When I start to fade/When my mind's unmade," while Haza's rock-like Middle Eastern orchestrations don't hesitate to *move*. But *Kiryā*, mostly, unfolds as though Haza's outgrown all that.

—James Hunter



KEITH RICHARDS
Main Offender
(VIRGIN)

RONNIE WOOD
Slide on This
(CONTINUUM)

KEITH RICHARDS: *THE BIOGRAPHY*, now in bookstores, paints a paradoxical

portrait of a man with a dysfunctional personality who nonetheless appears to be entirely functional, in his fashion. You could make much the same contradictory case for Richards' rude but charming new album, which doesn't sound like the result of a lot of quality time spent in the studio any more than the artist himself looks like the veteran of a long stint at the health spa. The X-rays be damned—*Main Offender* lives, breathes and rocks a lot better than its looseness gives it any healthy right to. It may just be the best mediocre album of the year.

Richards' second solo effort is built even more around pure riff-ery—of the pre-Slash, slash-'n'-burn sort—than his debut, *Talk Is Cheap*, which had slightly more solid songcraft to recommend it than this followup. The general formula gets laid down with the opening "999," as drummer/co-writer/co-producer Steve Jordan pushes a hard, basic 4/4, joined by a couple of errant chords that eventually form themselves into the cranky guitar figure that defines the tune. This chosen path of casual raw power occasionally gets a little too close to "demo"-graphy for comfort, with some underworked songs that could've used more songwriting flesh on 'em—like "Words of Wonder," six-and-a-half minutes of indulgent reggae doodling that stop the album dead in its tracks early on. But on the meatier and catchier side, the taut rockers "Wicked as It Seems" (with the classic chorus refrain, "Why don't you get over me?") and "Will but You Won't" are primo Keith kiss-offs, while "Yap Yap," "Demon" and the Memphis-style ballad "Hate It When You Leave" successfully try a little tenderness.

Richards' work conveys an effortless quality, like it or lump it: Exile on Easy Street. For proof that trying harder isn't always the best remedy, listen to Ronnie Wood's *Slide on This*, the first solo roll in a decade from the Stones' other guitarist. Wood puts his bluesy pop songs in a far more versatile variety of arrangements—with guests ranging from the Edge, Joe Elliott and Charlie Watts to master orchestrator Michael Kamen—and offers nice, clean mixes. But these extra efforts often heighten awareness of the banality in the songwriting they frame.

It's not a total write-off; Wood loses the fussy stuff and cuts good and loose on a handful of Keith-like barnburners, one of which, "Like It," features the Hothouse Flowers as the Stones-alike backup band; another, "Knock Yer Teeth Out," wins hands-down for politically incorrect love song of the year. On these ingratiatingly inconsequential knockoffs, at least, Wood sounds like he's fol- [cont'd on page 103]



INTERNAL EXILE

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NEW RELEASES

ROCK

BY J. D. CONSIDINE

NENEH CHERRY

Homebrew

(VIRGIN)

WHERE RAW LIKE *Sushi* seemed to walk the line between rap, rock and R&B, *Homebrew* obliterates such boundaries. Some of that is a matter of vocal mannerisms, as Cherry slips so easily from singing to the sing-song cadences of rap that it's barely worth acknowledging the difference. Mostly it's because the music plays by no rules but her own, whether layering punkishly strident guitar over a hip-hop beat and turntable scratches on "Money Love," lending a Caribbean undercurrent to the electro-groove of "Twisted" or borrowing from Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" for "Somedays."

IZZY STRADLIN & THE JUJU HOUNDS

Izzy Stradlin and the Jujus Hounds

(Geffen)

REMEMBER HOW ALL those G N' R profiles painted Stradlin as Brian Jones to Axl and Slash's Jagger/Richards? Turns out that Izzy was the band's true Keithaholic—so much so that his solo album forsakes hard rock for a Richardsonian blend of loose-limbed blues stomps and country-flavored acoustic ballads. Bringing Ron Wood along for guitar-and-vocal support (on "Take a Look at the Guy") may seem a bit much, but when Stradlin gets into gear (as with "Shuffle It All" and "Pressure Drop") his pretensions are far easier to bear.

GARTH BROOKS

The Chase

(Liberty)

SURE, HE DOES a decent "Dixie Chicken" (sings it at least as well as Craig Fuller) and even manages the cowpoke credibility required for "Night Rider's Lament." But do we really need to see him change from Nashville's answer to James Taylor into the new Dan Hill?

ROXETTE

Tourism

(EMI)

IF THE MEASURE of a pop group is found not in the big hits but with its trifles, then *Tourism* ought to be Roxette's most revealing album. A grab-bag of concert tracks, B-sides and new tunes, it offers both pop

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN, *IN THE BEGINNING*, (EPIC)

CAUGHT LIVE BEFORE he'd gotten his big break (or even found Double Trouble bassist Tommy Shannon), the Stevie Ray Vaughan heard here is rough-hewn and flashy, a bar-circuit virtuoso aching to move on to something bigger. Though there are moments that hint of the wondrous heights he'd one day reach—check the tremolo work on "In the Open" or the fills slipped into "Love Struck Baby"—there are also those that make clear how far he still had to go.

competence (the perky "How Do You Do") and puckish wit (a C&W remake of "It Must Have Been Love"). But Roxette's real brilliance isn't apparent until "Fingertips" or "Here Comes the Weekend"—songs they may have tossed off while on tour, but are too damned catchy to count as throwaways.

THE PAHINUI BROS.

The Pahinui Bros.

(Private Music)

EVEN IF YOU leave Don Ho out of the equation, a little bit of Hawaiian music goes a long way for most of us *haoles*. What keeps this album from coming off like a vacation-land curiosity isn't the presence of mainlanders like David Lindley, Ry Cooder and Jim Keltner; it's the way they and the Pahinuis expand the island sound to include credibly exotic readings of songs like "Jealous Guy" or

the Del Vikings classic "Come Go with Me."

BRENDA KAHN

Epiphany in Brooklyn

(Chaos/Columbia)

WHEN FOLK SINGERS begin to take their cues not from Woody Guthrie or Leonard Cohen but from the Violent Femmes, is that a sign of progress? Or merely that the end is near?

JAZZ

BY CHIP STERN

KENNY GARRETT

Black Hope

(Warner Bros.)

A MAJOR JAZZ star ready to bust loose, Garrett straddles sax traditions without succumbing to

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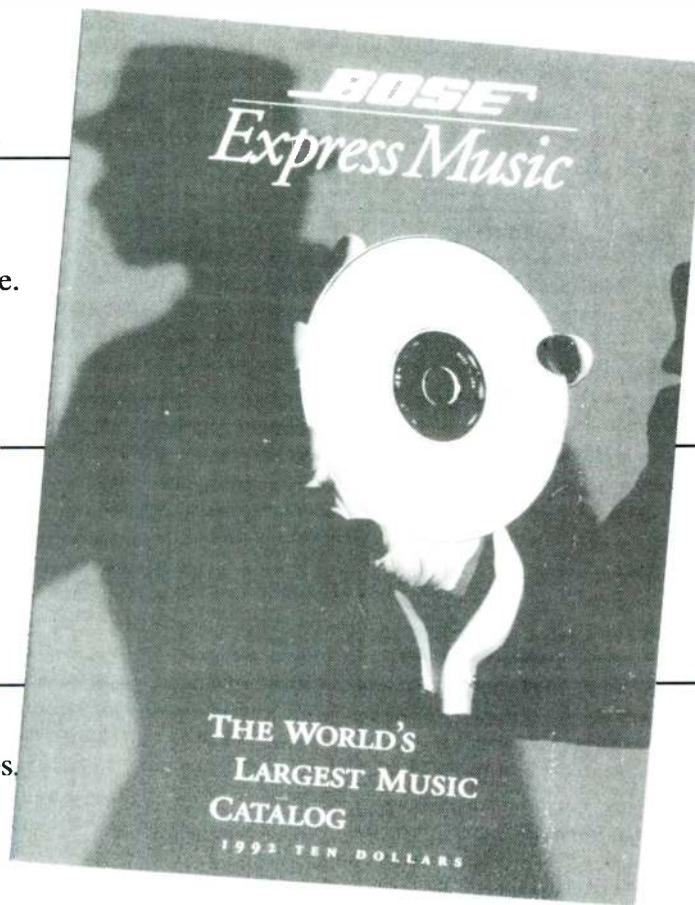
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clichés. His anthemic soprano on the title tune comes across like a jazzy "What's Going On"—all earnest silky soul, while his sanctified alto work on "2 Step" raises the emotional stakes on a popular black radio groove without getting so far out he scares your girlfriend. Swell, but where's the beef? Well, contrast Garrett's enlightened funkjazz sensibility with his throttled alto cries, tart harmonic displacements and epic swing on "Jackie & the Beanstalk" or the blood-and-guts blues exchanges with tenor titan Joe Henderson on the riffing "Computer G." Clearly influenced by Trane, Kenny Garrett has his own story to tell.

JIMMY HEATH
Little Man Big Band
(VERVE)

LITTLE MAN BIG BAND is a celebration of the big band tradition—not what was but what is. Heath's writing has wonderful fluency, particularly his use of reeds to flesh out and extend the implications of his melodies (as on the Latin-tinged "Without You, No Me"). Though there's brassy power aplenty, Heath doesn't generally go in for the big italicized gestures, but uses his sections to emphasize the shifting harmonic and rhythmic crossovers of the modern idiom (bebop, if you will), punctuating the supple drive of an excellent rhythm section (Tony Purrone, Sir Roland Hanna, Ben Brown and Lewis Nash) and allowing the arrangements to breathe with the give and take of a good small group. An altogether classy endeavor.

**BÉLA FLECK &
THE FLECKTONES**
UFO TOFU
(WARNER BROS.)

THERE'S SOMETHING SO amiable about the instrumental prowess of this blackbrownbeige dream team, because the Flecktones don't simply challenge listeners (look, Ma, all hands), they engage them. What other band could visualize a concord between urban black music and hillbilly without an iota of self-consciousness? Or engage in adult contemporary retreats like "After the Storm" without pandering? Or slip in the Monk-meets-Gary Burton post-modern rhythm changes of "Life After Elvis" without creating an aimless hodgepodge? Or employ five-string banjo, harmonica, drumitar and pennywhistle as improvising instruments? *UFO TOFU* is that rarest of birds, a classy fusion outing with brains, style, wit...and heart.

M'BOOM
Live at S.O.B.'s—New York
(BLUEMOON/MR)

THERE'S ALWAYS BEEN something Ellingtonian about the breadth and spirit of Max Roach's

visionary musical quest, never more so than with this sparkling live set from the master thinker's most engaging musical juggernaut. M'Boom is a multi-percussion ensemble that transcends stylistic categories, even as they create a rich body of music immersed in jazz harmony, swing and the ritualistic traditions of Africa, Cuba, India, Indonesia and the Far East. On performances like "Bemsha Swing," "Kuji," "Rumble in the Jungle" and "Caravanserai," they so blur the line between relative pitch and melody with traps and timpani, musical saw and steel drums (province of Ray Brooks, the Lester Young of the pans), congas and mallet instruments, that you'll never listen to rhythm in the same ways again.

DANNY GATTON
New York Stories
(BLUE NOTE)

HANK GARLAND
Jazz Winds from a New Direction
(SONY MUSIC SPECIAL PRODUCTS)

NEW YORK STORIES is ostensibly an all-star date, with Bobby Watson, Roy Hargrove, Joshua Redman, Frank Amsellem, Charles Fambrough and Yaron Israel making strong contributions, while bearing the imprint of the renowned Telecaster virtuoso Danny Gatton. His loping lines, muted right-hand accents, colorful ornaments and driving intensity give the record a downhome blues flavor. The elusive Hank Garland was not only (with Billy Byrd) the inspiration for Gibson's short-scale archtop, the Byrdland, but a legendary Nashville sessionman who could swing his ass off in the right context. On this 1960 John Hammond date it's provided by Joe Benjamin, a precocious 19-year-old Gary Burton and a vibrant Joe Morello (with some of the greatest brushwork ever committed to wax). There's some oddball channel bouncing, and only about a half-hour-plus of music, but the relentless swing and individuality of Garland's chicken-fried Charlie Christianisms make this a must for pickers.

HELEN MERRILL
Clear Out of This World
(EMARCY)

WITH HER DREAMY mentholated cool, Helen Merrill's voice is a unique instrument, like the muted Miles Davis or the pensive Stan Getz. Perhaps we overstate the importance of pipes, anyway, because I can't think of many singers I'd rather cuddle up next to. Not a virtuoso vocalist, Merrill is a great American song stylist, a weaver of moods whose understated emotional urgency belies her fragile, evanescent range—glorifies it, in fact. Playing off of Tom Harrell's shadowy brass with airy

longing, "When I Grow Too Old to Dream" is a concerto of half-remembered kisses, while the title tune and "Willow Weep for Me" find her trading tender phrases with an equally mentholated Wayne Shorter. Haunting.

REISSUES

JIMMY BUFFETT
Boats, Beaches, Bars & Ballads
(MARGARITAVILLE)

ALTHOUGH NEVER THE recipient of much critical accolade, Buffett is a quite capable songwriter and *BB&B* is an impressive 72-song collection. Backed by his able Coral Reefers, he's at his best when chronicling wild escapades to an island sound describable as calypso/Caribbean/reggae/Cuban fusion, with a little country and Tex/Mex occasionally thrown in for flavor. Such exotic tales as "Pirate Looks at Forty" and "My African Friend" hold up well with age, and "The Weather Is Here, I Wish You Were Beautiful" still cracks me up. The accompanying booklet offers nothing new about the Buffett persona, but does provide some interesting background on his songs and inspiration. If you like Buffett, you already own this collection. If you don't, maybe you need to fire one up, take a sip of your margarita, get naked and join the conga line.—Ray Waddell

GEORGE HARRISON
Wonderwall Music
(CAPITOL)

OF ALL THE Beatles-related esoterica, this 1968 soundtrack album is one of the choicest treasures, the first time George Harrison was given license to indulge his experimental muse. What came out was a freewheeling tapestry of music and sound recorded in Bombay and London. The soup base is Indian, liberally spiced with things Western; we also hear snippets of detuned honky-tonk piano, dizzy electric guitar (Eric Clapton and Harrison), manic harmonica blowing, pre-new age flotation devices, cowboy music (with harmonium) and other sound sources that come out of nowhere but define their own logic. Even after all these years, *Wonderwall* is a pastiche-like head trip with a mind all its own.—Josef Woodard

THE PRETTY THINGS
Get a Buzz: The Best of the Fontana Years
(FONTANA)

BACK WHEN MICK 'n' Keith were mere boys, their toughest competition on the British R&B scene came from the sublimely grungy Pretty Things. Led by snotty vocalist Phil May and Stones dropout Dick Taylor on primal guitar, the lads never seemed more than a beat away from chaos,

ripping through vintage covers ("Road Runner," etc.) and wailing originals ("Can't Stand the Pain") with thrilling, frayed urgency. Just hear May squal, "Baby we'll play house," like he's threatening homicide, and you'll agree this is pretty intense trash.—*Jon Young*

DONOVAN

*Troubadour: The Definitive
Collection 1964-1976*

(EPIC/LEGACY)

OKAY, SO HIS trippy musings are a bit dated; however, Donovan's *music* remains among the most gorgeous and ornate of the psychedelic era. This two-CD boxed set begins with only five recordings from his folksinger days of 1964 (including a previously unreleased Tim Hardin song, "London Town") before settling into the heyday of startling studio experimentalism with hits ("Sunshine Superman," "Season of the Witch" and "Hurdy Gurdy Man"), album cuts ("Writer in the Sun," "Happiness Runs") and previously unreleased material ("Breezes of Patchulie"). Even his much-chided '70s work sounds realized. There's no way he's not going to sound a little silly, but the optimism is catchy. Don't be surprised if you find yourself smiling and nodding along.—*Rob O'Connor*

FLIPPER

Generic

(DEF AMERICAN)

GENERIC BELONGS NEXT to those other alienation classics, Black Flag's *Damaged* and the Angry Samoans' *Back from Samoa*. The production's terrible, the attitude stinks, the lyrics range from depraved to depressed, and as a result it's one of the most arresting records ever made. There's also a sense of humor haunting the mix, climaxing with "Sex Bomb," where, for nearly eight minutes, the words "She's a sex bomb/My baby—yeah" are repeated ad nauseam. Great!—*Rob O'Connor*

CANNONBALL ADDERLEY

"Somethin' Else!"

(MOBILE FIDELITY)

AMONG THE CANDIDATES for "greatest Miles Davis record" is this date, which headlines the underrated "other" saxophonist in Davis' classic '50s septet, Cannonball Adderley. Rounding out the group are Hank Jones on piano, Sam Jones on bass and—the key ringer—drummer Art Blakey, a champ quintet with the proper balance of space and power. Blissful cool bop grooves on standards like "Autumn Leaves" and "Love for Sale" give plenty of room for Miles and Cannonball to show off their complementary lyricisms. Separation and presence on this remastered disc are nothing short of extraordinary.—*Mark Rowland*

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CREAM
Fresh Cream
 (DCC CLASSICS)
Disraeli Gears
 (IMFLI)
Wheels of Fire
 (DCC)

BY THE TIME *Wheels of Fire* came out in 1968, Cream was already getting dissed by snotty rock critics for arty frills, literary pretense, derivative blues licks, etc. So let's get this up front: Cream is the greatest power trio in rock history, and for all the imaginative music Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton have produced in the last 25 years, these recordings remain the pinnacle of all three careers. Not to imply the discs have equal weight. *Disraeli Gears*, while featuring greatest hit "Sunshine of Your Love" (like "Wild Thing" or "Louie Louie," it can't be explained, just is), falls two cuts below the others, marred by substandard tunes like "Swaabr" and lacking the musical precision of *Fresh Cream*—the purist's favorite—or the stunning grandeur of *Wheels*. I'm less thrilled by the blues covers, which despite Clapton's fluid

singing tone remain a sincere form of flattery, than by the songs where Cream expands its sonic dimensions—gliding power rock like "N.S.U." and "Sweet Wine" from *Fresh Cream*, or the amazing range and invention of "White Room" and "Those Were the Days," from *Wheels*, where Clapton's intense wah-wah, Bruce's Wagnerian vocals and Baker's tasteful propulsion explode into an amazing kind of jazz. Not to mention their 16 minutes of "Spoonful," the best white rock jam ever. Finally remastered in a way that lets you hear why.—Mark Rowland

CHARLIE PATTON
King of the Delta Blues
 MASTERS OF THE DELTA BLUES
The Friends of Charlie Patton
 (YAZOO)

FOR THE LISTENER whose knowledge of blues is limited to contemporary titans like Stevie Ray Vaughan and Robert Cray, this stuff will sound like blues from Mars. Which isn't to ward anyone off, as these 60-year-old sides are among the most treasured blues recordings in existence. Patton's mind-boggling slide-work was the cornerstone of styles

developed by Robert Johnson, Son House and scores of others, while his roughshod voice was the blueprint for Howlin' Wolf. "King"'s repertoire included blues, hillbilly songs, spirituals and novelties. The second set features Patton's contemporaries Son House and Tommy Johnson, and lesser-knowns like Kid Bailey and Bertha Lee. Both records offer a rare glimpse into a world gone by.

—Thomas Anderson

INDIES

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Watch How You Flex! More Reggae
Dance Hall Killers
 (SHANACHIE)

VISIT NEW YORK City and you may be surprised to hear spare reggae beats pulsing out of car stereos instead of James Brown samples—in rap's cradle, dance hall-style reggae has partially usurped hip-hop's claim to being the music of the streets. If you're wondering why, Shanachie's second dance hall compilation is a neophyte-friendly introduction to a genre known for "slackness" (sex rhymes) and "gun talk"; the hard, minimalist rhythm tracks

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and the aggressive chanting of the DJs (rappers) are offset by soulful vocals on most of the cuts. In what may be a nod to Bob Marley-era reggae fans, veteran crooners Marcia Griffiths, Dennis Brown and Gregory Isaacs make appearances along with Peter Tosh sound-alike Jack Radics. Highlights include the sinuous verbal stylings of Chakademus & Pliers on "Murder She Wrote," throaty Buju Banton—heir-apparent to Shabba Ranks and Super Cat's mainland success—on the title cut, and Jr. Cat's buoyant "Trailer Load of Guns." Pretty massive.—*Nathan Brackett*

FLAMIN' GROOVIES

Rock Juice

(NATIONAL)

LESS A BAND now than a concept, Cyril Jordan and George Alexander soldier on with hired hands to preach their rock 'n' roll gospel: Merseybeat inflected with power-pop and a little Beach Boys on the side. When Jordan's songs overcome their formalism they remind us why we cared about this music the first time around. "Give It Away" is the "Slow Death" for the '90s, and there are 13 other songs. *Still still shakin'.*—*Scott Isler*

CHAINSAW KITTENS

Flipped Out in Singapore

(MAMMOTH)

HAVING DALLIED IN all the debauchery College Town, USA could offer, the Kittens have taken on more exotic locales. Producer Butch Vig builds a couple of walls of guitar noise here, with lead Kitten Tyson Meade's manic wail between. It breaks open long enough for "High in High School," a song Cheap Trick would kill for. One gets the impression that Meade will ultimately evolve into either a homegrown Syd Barrett or a TV evangelist, or that maybe the two weren't that different to begin with. One swell trip.—*Thomas Anderson*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

All Through the Year

(GREEN LINNET)

BILLED AS "A musical calendar," this charity compilation of Celtic/folk artists performing seasonal favorites succeeds best when putting masters of the genre in unfamiliar territory—like Martin Carthy tackling the ancient carol "Christ Made a Trance," or Richard Thompson and Henry Kaiser teaming with Elodea and Raymond Kane for a Hawaiian

version of "Silent Night" ("Po La'i E"). A live Fairport Convention cover of Fotheringay's "Late November" is intriguing if a bit shaky, while Urban Legend's "Summer Is A'Comin' In" is the best folkabilly since French Frith Kaiser Thompson's "Loch Lomond" rave-up. Bonny stuff.

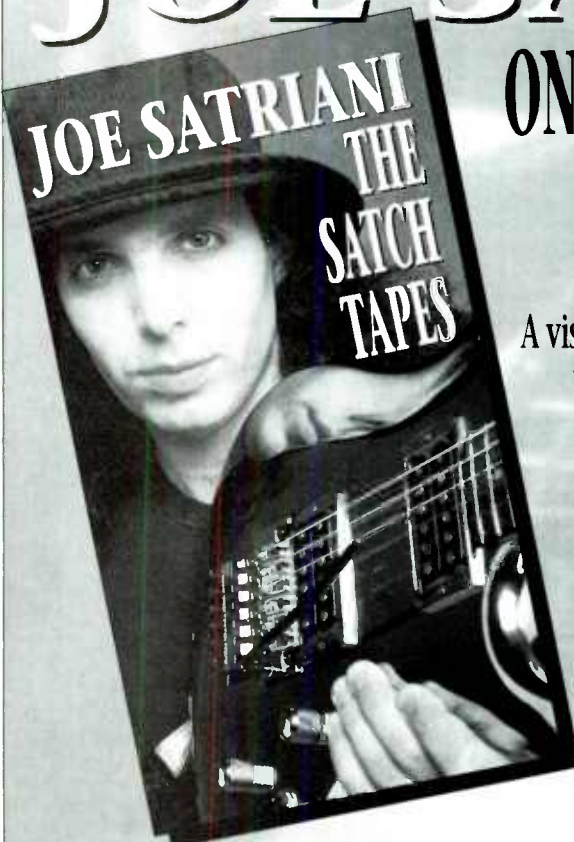
—*Thomas Anderson*

THE FASTBACKS

The Question Is No

(SUB POP)

FOR OVER 10 years, Seattle's Fastbacks have been doing for '60s-style girl-group pop what the Ramones did for Buddy Holly and the Beach Boys. Their penchant for packing mega-amounts of punk energy into snug, catchy melodies has produced a steady stream of vibrant music, synopsisized in this retrospective. "My Letters," "Impatience" and "Everything I Don't Need" are buoyant, gritty and full of vim; "Really" takes a thrasher's tack with rousing shout-along backing vocals; "3 Boxes" chronicles some of the band's highs and lows with music that moves from a wistful stroll to an optimistic romp and back—a mood swing echoed in guitarist Kurt Bloch's witty liner notes.—*Sandy Masuo*



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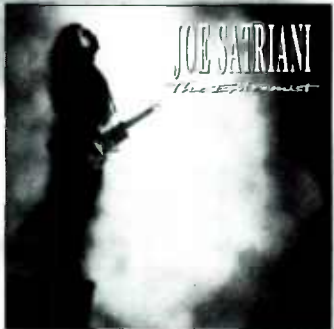
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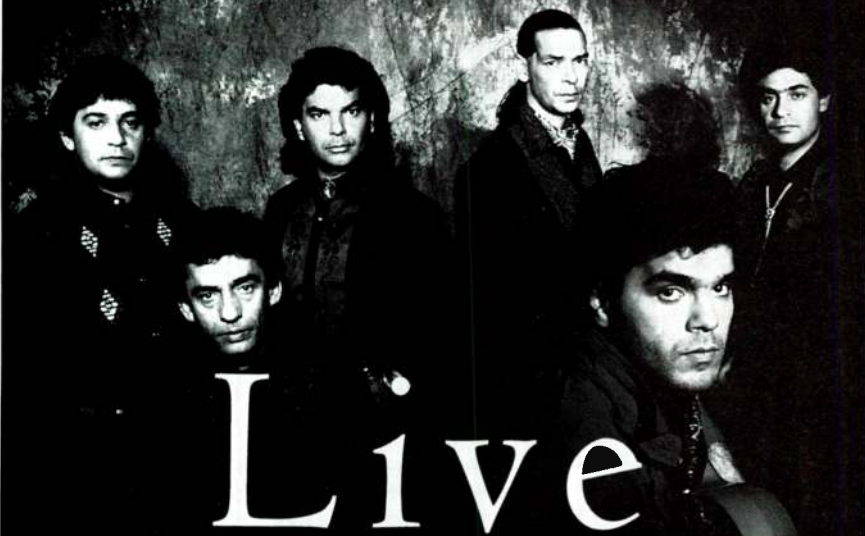
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VIDEO

MARTY ROBBINS

ERNEST TUBB

Country Music Classics, Vol. 2

(SHANACHIE)

MORE MID-'50S TV clips of country giants, here with a young Marty Robbins barreling through proto-rockabilly like "Pretty Mama," while Ernest Tubb smiles his horse-toothed grin and sings honky-tonk classics like "Walking the Floor over You." The performances and barn-dance setting suggest that the shows' makers were hearkening to a simpler time. Which makes these tapes a neat illustration of what country music is all about.

—Thomas Anderson

WEBB PIERCE/CHET ATKINS

Country Music Classics, Vol. 1

(SHANACHIE)

THE TAPE WHICH inaugurates this series features vintage color footage (circa '54 to '56) of country music legends delivering their hits on a haybale-festooned set, with a crowd of square-dancers and farmers' daughters in full regalia. Webb Pierce—looking like Jay Leno in a Nudie suit—breezes through hits like "There Stands the Glass" and brings out Carl Smith and Marty Robbins for his big finale. Chet Atkins, whose sound eventually overtook Nashville, is here cast as the young whiz kid, taking everything from "Mister Sandman" to the flamenco "Dark Eyes" and making it all work as country, while Minnie Pearl nods in approval. A wonderful document of a golden era.

—Thomas Anderson

BOOKS

THE JAZZ CRUSADE

Big Bill Bissonette

(SPECIAL REQUEST BOOKS)

THE CONNECTICUT-BASED AUTHOR caught the New Orleans jazz bug in the '50s. A decade later his activism made a difference: He imported legends for local concerts—as a musician he played with them too—and recorded them for his own record label. The reminiscences and anecdotes are bittersweet; this crusade was a race against time. Proving that death lost after all, *The Jazz Crusade* includes a 72-minute CD drawn from Bissonette's catalog. Some 60 pages of photos further make this labor of love a multi-media bonanza. (585 Pond St., Bridgeport, CT 06606)—Scott Isler

THE VINYL CLOSET

Boze Hadleigh

(LES HOMBRES)

SUBTITLED "GAYS IN the music world," this is a revealing if digressive historical tract by author Hadleigh that brings together an impressive array of gay entertainers and musicians, along with some

"can you guess?" segments designed not to offend those who'd prefer to stay in the closet (or their lawyers). Most interesting are Hadleigh's explications of how the sexuality of well-known performers has been "rewritten" over time to accommodate institutional homophobia. Favorite quote comes from Vladimir Horowitz: "There are three kinds of pianists—homosexual pianists, Jewish pianists and bad pianists." Buy an extra copy for Pat Buchanan. (Box 632729, San Diego, CA 92163-2729)—*Mark Rowland*

PRINCE

[*cont'd from page 66*] I realized that Prince has a lot of hard-core fans who don't give a damn about rap. Coming from the hip-hop/swing community, the people that I'm trying to reach don't give a damn about Prince. If I can mix the two..." Tony's voice trails off and then he says, "It's been rough, but I knew it would be like that."

Subscribing to the NPG's *It's Fun to Play* philosophy, Tony strums rhythm guitar on some numbers and sings harmonies. In the same spirit, dancer Kirk Johnson plays percussion. In the song "New Power Generation" Prince sang of his followers rejecting "your old-fashioned music, your old ideas"—which is pretty ironic considering...

"He keeps the fundamentals," Tony nods. "A lot of kids today—I don't know if you even want to call them *musicians*—just use Macs and sampling and looping. Our thing is to use electronics to enhance the sound rather than to *be* the sound. I definitely think there's a line we're crossing nobody's touched on before—while keeping the fundamentals. From Sly to James Brown, pay homage to that also."

It's watching Prince negotiate that line that ultimately makes following him so fascinating. It makes it worth chomping through the baloney. The New Power Generation understand that better than anyone. But hearing this remarkable band bend the laws of music and gravity one more time, you can't help but wonder if the young kids watching their show will really say, "I want to do that," or if they will be so dazzled that they'll say, "I could *never* do that—bring on the Macs!" That suggestion causes Tony M. to stop and consider.

"You think so?" he asks with a trace of worry. "If you get past the production, strip all that away and look at what's really going on?" Tony thinks about it and then he says, "When I was five-and-a-half or six years old, my mother took me to a James Brown concert at the Minneapolis Auditorium. The

production for that time was big. I was just in awe. But I never thought I couldn't do that." He looks for the right words and then hits on what could be a summation of the New Power Generation message: "It was an inspiration for me. I knew I would like to be that creative." ❧

RECORDINGS

[*cont'd from page 95*] lowing in the dysfunctional footsteps of the right Glimmer Twin.

—Chris Willman

MUDHONEY

Piece of Cake (REPRISE)

WITH ALL THE ATTENTION GIVEN TO Seattle this past year, it's harder to keep in perspective what started the initial attraction. For the mainstream, it's the Louie-Louie fire and brimstone of Nirvana's "Teen Spirit." But those watching closer remember the rude grunge splatter of Mudhoney's first single, "Touch Me, I'm Sick." While Nirvana have made the difficult transition from punk clubs to shopping malls, Mudhoney have stayed in the underground, forever repeating their sophomore year.

Unfortunately Mudhoney have also remained sophomore. After that first single and ultra-dynamic EP, *Superfuzz Bigmuff*, their sound—Stooges-mutated riffs and Blue Cheer sludge—lost its edge. An occasional nice moment aside (usually a lyrical quip), their major-label debut, *Piece of Cake*, never picks up momentum. Slightly cleaner production keeps their grungy air, but highlights an essentially faulty rhythm section. Music this viscerally intended needs a bassist and drummer tight enough to drive home the singer's verbal rage, and from the introductory drum beats of "No End in Sight," it's apparent that Dan Peters' stick style is too suffuse to render singer Mark Arm's inner-sickness-as-beauty world view with authority. So instead of the mesmerizing drone that made the Stooges such a fascinating entity, Mudhoney just sound as if they didn't get around to writing the rest of the song.

Arm, on the other hand, provides Mudhoney with their saving grace: His smoky, broken-throat field holler, matched with lyrics that plainly but truthfully express existential yearnings, enlivens many a musical dry stretch. As Arm puts it in "Ritzille," "My heart on my sleeve/My head on the curb." Or as told in "Suck You Dry," "No time like the present to get ripped apart/Got a burning desire aiming straight for your heart."

Mudhoney lack nothing in conviction. But

unless you're terminally addicted to loud, wah-wahed guitars and boundless rage, you may wish there were more substance to go with the bile.

—Rob O'Connor

SUB POP

[*cont'd from page 37*] at face value, as a literal statement of our beliefs, it could be interpreted differently than if you put it in the greater context of what we are doing as a whole."

Efforts to mesh big promotion with small budgets sent Sub Pop teetering on the edge of bankruptcy several times, generating lots of press and no major label distribution deal. In July 1990, they struck up an exclusive manufacturing/distribution deal with fellow indie Caroline Records and have thrived ever since—thanks, paradoxically, to the departure of their biggest acts. Hit albums by Soundgarden on A&M and Nirvana on DGC created a huge demand for back catalog among rock fans who had never heard of Sub Pop or grunge. *Bleach*, Nirvana's Sub Pop debut, even slipped into the *Billboard* album charts three years after its release. Sub Pop has thus developed some financial breathing room and wrenched some respect out of the major labels.

"They're getting down in the trenches with us and vying for the same bands," Poneman says. "To me the nature of alternativeness in 1992 is not so much the music you put out, but the way you do business. A lot of the music that's coming out on major labels could very easily come out on an indie label and be celebrated. The majors still see us as a clearinghouse to a large degree, but I also think that they realize we're establishing a strength in and of ourselves. Pretty soon they're going to see that bands are not necessarily going to want to be making the leap upwards.

"Rock 'n' roll is becoming a more and more egalitarian medium. You can go out and buy a four- or eight-track Fostex portable machine and essentially make a record in your living room. That's what the punk ethic has always been about. Anybody can and should be a rock star, and it's coming down to that. The cycle of information is moving quicker and quicker and quicker in terms of people being able to interact with each other. There are more and more people participating in the process and I think that the record labels should be facilitating that, as opposed to trying to stomp it out or cling to notions that might have been effective 10 or 20 years ago but have nothing to do with tomorrow. If you have the inclination, you should consider yourself a rock star from the moment you pick up your guitar and let everybody else catch on. This is your opportunity to drive that bandwagon instead of having to jump on it." ❧

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Remember the scene in *Wayne's World* where Wayne, about to buy the guitar of his dreams, begins to pick Jimmy Page's most famous arpeggio and is interrupted in mid-strum by the salesclerk, who points to a sign on the wall reading "NO STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN"? Pure fantasy, right?

Wrong. Though there may not be a sign on the wall, there is a "No Stairway" policy at the Sam Ash store in White Plains, New York. "There's no 'Stairway to Heaven,' no Poison songs, no 'Smoke on the Water,'" explains guitar salesman Rob Knippel. "The keyboard players can't play 'Jump.' No keyboardist who plays a Van Halen tune is allowed in the store."

Seem a little touchy, do they? Well, you would be, too, if you had to hear the same half-dozen songs butchered over and over, day in and day out. "It's not that you get sick of it," avers Knippel, sounding, frankly, sick of it. "It's hard to say. We know a lot of these kids, and we'll rap with them or whatever. The first time they'll play this song, it'll be like, 'Can't play that song.' 'Why not?' 'You can't.' 'Why not?' 'Because we don't like that song.' They'll play three more songs off the list, and we'll say, 'Nope, nope, sorry, no.' Then we give them the generalities. 'I'm sorry, no Poison. You cannot play any Poison tunes. You can't play any Guns N' Roses tunes.'

"I think 'Stairway to Heaven' is up to beheading."

Part of the problem, argues Ralph Perucci, a former Sam Ash salesman who now reps for Paul Reed Smith guitars, is that none of these kids know an entire song. Instead, what they'd wank away on would be a jumble of bits, what PRS general sales manager Mike Dealy describes as "House of the Rising Smoke on the Stairway to Freebird."

"They'd practice all week to come to the music store and try to impress someone," Perucci says. "They'd play their fastest lick over and over again. I'd go over and put a dollar on the counter and say, 'If you can play a song from start to finish, you can walk out with this dollar.' And they'd look at me like I was from Mars, but no one would be able to play it."

There was a time, though, when the sales folk counted themselves lucky if they heard even a whole riff wafting over from the guitar racks. This, of course, was during the Age of the Hammer-On/Pull-Off, when every kid who ever saw Eddie Van Halen felt compelled to rush to the nearest music store and hammer away. One music industry vet reports that these kids were called "typists" (because all they did was tap at the guitars?) by beleaguered guitar salespeople.


Still, there were ways of getting back at them. "We had a guitar that was just strung with one string," recalls Perucci. "People would say, 'I'd like to try a guitar,' and we *knew* they were going to play something that was off the latest hammer-on album of the day. So we'd hand them this guitar with one string, and they'd just look confused."



This seems to be mostly a guitar player's disease, by the way. "With keyboard players, most of them are classically trained to an extent; they can play," says Dave Belzer, a salesman at the Guitar Center in Hollywood. "Drummers, you'd be surprised. A lot of good drummers come through."

"Guitarists are a different breed. A lot of them can't play the songs correctly, or with rhythm. Rhythm is definitely lacking. And it seems the worse they play, the louder they play. The ones who can play, they don't get excessive with the volume. The ones that can't, they'll turn it up as loud as can be." (Reportedly, the noise got so bad at one trade show that a few of the manufacturers were considering installing a neon sign to announce song titles and chord changes, so at least everyone would be playing badly in the same key.)

But if you really want to know what scares music store employees, it isn't the kids who can't play—it's the kids who *can*. "It's amazing how good some of them are," says Knippel. "It's a far cry from when I started. These kids come in at 16 or 17, and they're showing *me* stuff. 'How long you playing, kid?' 'Oh, three years,' and the guy's completely burning."

"Back in the old days, when they used to play the songs, they used to play them bad," he adds, wistfully. "Now they play the songs, and they play them *good*. Those are the ones we hunt down and kill." 

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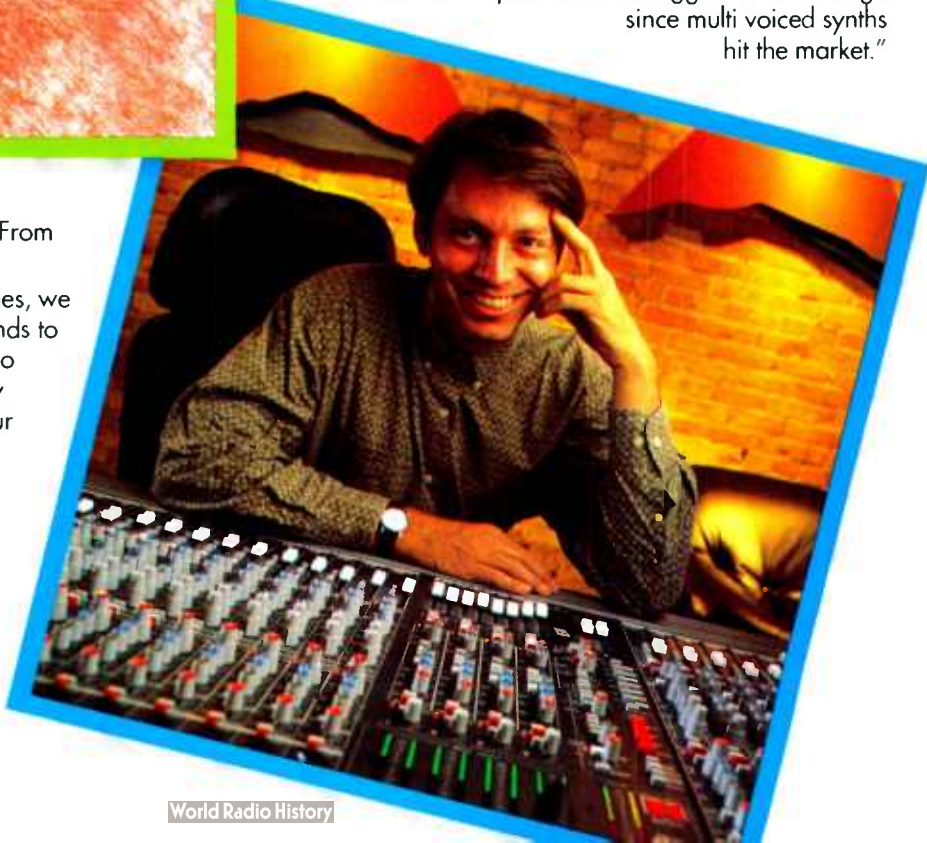
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