

# CANADIAN MUSICIAN

MM 70900

OCTOBER 1987  
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## Platinum Blonde

Musicians Behind  
The Make-up



**Rock Critics**

Do They Really  
Matter Anymore?

**Chalk  
Circle**

Building The  
Mending Wall

Hugh Marsh  
Helix  
Shirley Eikhard  
Dan Hill  
Sonny Greenwich  
Dave Betts  
Bob Weisman  
Steven Gilmore  
NAMM MIDI Report  
John Hazen  
Canadian Brass  
Lee Oskar  
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# INSIDE CM

## The Decline of Rock Criticism

**R**ock criticism has always seemed to me to be a less than honourable profession. After toiling at *The Montreal Gazette* as a music scribe for a year, I was left feeling tainted by the experience.

My motives were laudable as I entered the profession. I felt I could affect change by steering the public's attention toward terrific undiscovered talent, and discourage people from buying records or tickets to concerts with no redeeming value (in my humble opinion).

The job quickly evolved into a mind-numbing barrage of indistinguishable nights in noisy, smokey bars and concert halls. I started hating and resenting the fans, the concerts, the stacks of new records cluttering my living room, and - sadly - the music and the musicians. An ugly bi-product of my frustration was a tendency to lash out in print at unsuspecting performers with irresponsible and inappropriate venom. I was clinically jaded and had lost all perspective. (A common rock critic affliction, I believe.)

It all came to a head for me one day while listening to a CHOM-FM interview with Canadian blues great, Dutch Mason. I had lambasted him in that morning's *Gazette* for a club appearance the night before. It was Mason's first concert appearance after successfully battling a serious drinking problem for close to a year. Essentially, I had suggested in print that he was a more exciting entertainer when he used to be fat and drunk.

Naturally, Mason wasn't impressed and proceeded to tell half a million CHOM-FM listeners that he would be ripping me apart limb by limb next time we bumped into each other. I felt guilty and embarrassed for having attacked him so personally in what was supposed to be a concert review. I stopped writing for *The Gazette* soon after.

This blip in my career came to mind as we prepared to examine the current state of rock criticism for this issue. We chose Jonathon Gross to write the article. Jonathon's poisonous prose used to grace the pages of Toronto newspapers and earned him near legendary status as Canada's most despised rock critic.

Among the many issues raised in Jonathon's excellent article is the evolving irrelevance of the rock critic. Most of the general public will no longer trust the opinion of one rock critic. It is easier today than ever before for music fans to hear new music through

concerts, radio or music television. The fact is, information about music is available everywhere; from *Entertainment Tonight* to *Time Magazine*. A critic can no longer compete with people making informed decisions based on personal experiences; trusting their own eyes and ears.

Despite the public's growing indifference to rock critics, the music industry is relying on press clippings more than ever to promote bands. Major chart action and press clippings are the only tangible proof anyone is paying attention to a group. Very few may have read the article, but it's still there to hold in black and white.

And the bands themselves still take the reviews very seriously. Bryan Adams, despite his success world-wide, is intimidated by critics. He was, clearly, addressing critics of his previous records with the much meatier themes on his new album. From Bryan's point of view, the successful artists that he admires are also media favourites (for now): Sting, U2, Tina Turner, etc. He recognizes it's more than sales that put you at the level of intellectual content.

But why all the fuss? Rock critics spend but one iota of the time and effort developing their craft compared to the average musician. Generally speaking, they have no training, know little about technically making music, and generally devote an excess of verbiage to the lyrics and image of the band. Lyrics and image are important, but they are not everything. As Gil Moore of Triumph sums it up in the article: "Outside the major markets most rock critics hold down the gardening column as a day job."

Our cover story this month, as you already know, takes a look back and forward with Canada's most critically skewered rock band, Platinum Blonde. They are making a comeback of sorts with a new tougher album and a stripped-down new image. In the past the band's obsession with image has made it an easy target for critics.

As Kenny McLean of Platinum Blonde puts it in the article: "We were really sick of that pretty boy image. The whole Platinum Blonde image was just getting in the way of what we wanted to do musically."

Ted Burley,  
Editor

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An Amazing Story!

# THEY LAUGHED WHEN I SAID THEY COULD HAVE PERFECT PITCH—

# BUT WHEN THEY HEARD FOR THEMSELVES...!

It's a universal fact: you need a great ear to make it in music. Keyboardist David L. Burge, 30, tells the true story of how he unlocked the secrets to the Perfect Ear.



World famous for his Perfect Pitch Seminar, Burge explains how to gain Perfect Pitch. His simple teaching is for all musicians.

by David L. Burge

It all started when I was in ninth grade. There was this girl in my school named Linda—she was supposed to have an incredible gift. They said she could name any pitch *by ear!* They said she had "Perfect Pitch."

I tried to imagine it. Do you mean if I play a B $\flat$ , she can tell me *without looking?* It seemed impossible. How would she know B $\flat$  from A, B, or C?

But then again, if there *were* such an ability...it would enhance your entire understanding of music! All musicians—from rock to classical—would want to identify pitches by ear!

It was too fantastic a claim. I doubted it.

## The Challenge

Indignantly I sought out Linda and asked if the stories were true. Could she really name any tone just by hearing it? Casually, she said she could.

I felt more than a little incredulous at this point. I rudely asked, "Do you mind if I test you sometime?"

"OK," she responded cheerfully. It made me all the more curious and impatiently excited. I *had* to get to the bottom of this musical mystery.

At the first opportunity I reminded Linda about my "challenge."

I carefully picked a time when she had not been playing the piano. I had her stand where she could not see the keyboard. I made sure other classmates could not give her cues. Everything was set just right so I could expose this thing as a ridiculous joke.

Inside me the tension was mounting. Linda, however, appeared serenely unaffected. With silent apprehension I chose an obscure note: F#. (This will confuse her!)

I had barely touched the tone. No sooner had it sounded than she *instantly* said, "F#!"

I was astonished! It was so amazing that I quickly played another tone.

She didn't even stop to think. *Immediately* she announced the correct pitch. I played more and more tones here and there on the keyboard, and each time she knew the answer—without any visible effort. Unbelievably, she identified the pitches as easily as colors.

"Sing an Eb," I demanded, determined to confuse her. Quickly she sounded the proper pitch. I asked for more tones (trying hard to make them increasingly difficult), but still she sang every one perfectly on pitch.

"How in the world do you do it?" I exclaimed. I was totally boggled.

"I don't know," she replied. "But I'm sure it's something you can't buy."

The reality of Perfect Pitch hit me hard. My head was swooning with disbelief, yet I knew from my own experiment that Perfect Pitch is real.

## My Musical Quest

"How does she do it?" I kept asking myself. On the other hand, why can't everyone do it?

It dawned on me that most people go

through their entire lives listening to music, yet they seldom know the tones they hear. Most *musicians* cannot tell C from D#, or G major from F major. It seemed odd and contradictory.

I found myself even more mystified than before I had tested her.

Humiliated and puzzled, I went home to work on this problem. At age 14, this was a hard nut to crack.

You can be sure I tried it myself. My brothers and sisters would test me. Each time I would try to carefully determine the pitch by how high or low it was. Almost every attempt failed miserably.

I tried day after day to locate that "mental pitch barometer." I tried to feel each tone. I tried to visualize them. I tried associating things to them. Then I tried to memorize them by playing them for long periods. But nothing worked. The situation proved utterly hopeless.

After weeks in vain, I finally gave up. Linda's gift was surely unusual and extraordinary. But it was for her and a select few like her. Others were not meant to have it. And do not ask me how she does it, because I have no idea.

## The Realization

But just then something miraculous happened. I had stopped *thinking* about the problem. I had stopped *trying*. I had stopped *intellectualizing* all about listening. Now, for the first time, I *STARTED TO LISTEN NATURALLY*.

Suddenly I began to notice faint "colors"

within the tones—similar to the colors in a spectrum of light. But I did not see colors—I *heard* the sublimely delicate “sound colors” which exist in all of music—the pure and natural colors of the *sound* spectrum. They had always been there. But this was the first time I had ever really paused to listen.

Now I could name the pitches by ear! It was simple. An F# sounded one way—a Bb had a different “color sound.” It was as easy as seeing red and blue!

Instantly the realization hit me: THIS IS PERFECT PITCH! This is how Bach, Beethoven and Mozart were able to hear music mentally and sing and identify tones at will—by “color sound.” It’s simple!

I became convinced that every musician has Perfect Pitch in his or her own ear, but the vast majority have never really learned to *listen*.

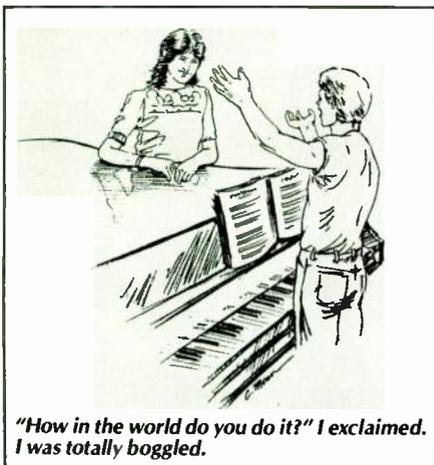
I tried out my theory on my close friend, Ann. She is a flutist. I told her that Perfect Pitch is easy, and that she could do it herself.

“Oh, I could never have Perfect Pitch,” she laughed. “You can develop a good *Relative Pitch* [comparing one tone with another], but you have to be *born* with Perfect Pitch.”

“People feel that way because they don’t understand what Perfect Pitch is,” I explained. “It’s really easy—all you have to do is listen!” I sat down at the piano and showed her my discoveries.

She agreed with everything I showed her. She *had* to, because she heard everything for herself. But she still had a nagging doubt that this was really Perfect Pitch.

The next couple of weeks we dabbled a



bit more. Though hesitant at first, Ann gradually came to identify tones with incredible accuracy. Of course, this is the very definition of Perfect Pitch. It soon became clear she had fully acquired the skill which before was a mere fantasy.

Fame spread throughout our school that Ann and I had Perfect Pitch. We became instant celebrities. Students would often dare us to name pitches, sing tones, what chord is that, how high did she sing, give me an A, etc. Everyone was amazed.

Perfect Pitch allowed me to progress far faster than I ever thought possible. After all, hearing is the basis for all music. Not only did I receive A’s in ear-training (no problem!), but I completely skipped over

required college courses. Most important, I learned that no amount of practice, lessons, or equipment can ever replace the value of your ear.

### Spreading the Knowledge

That’s how it all started. Little did I know that years later I would be teaching seminars on Perfect Pitch.

Actually, I rejected the idea of seminars at first. There were so many misconceptions about Perfect Pitch. People often *laughed* when I said they could have it. Some thought it would bother them if things were out of tune. I guess it’s easy to downplay something when one feels it is beyond reach.

But Perfect Pitch adds a dazzling new dimension to listening. It’s a total artistic sense which promotes tremendous levels of talent in every phase of musical activity—from performing and playing by ear, to improvising, listening and writing, singing, transposing, tuning, better memory—and much deeper *enjoyment* of music. Perfect Pitch means *increased powers of listening*.

I let musicians test me to prove my points, but it didn’t help. They usually felt that I had the knack, but for them it was unattainable.

How was I to calm this skepticism? Remember, at that time I did not have the thousands of students worldwide who are experiencing Color Hearing for themselves.

So I went back to the basics. I would prove my points in just one simple way: by having people *hear for themselves*.

It worked! No amount of lecturing could do it. No amount of testimonials. No amount of logic, persuasion or research would prove it to some. But even “old school” professors were gratefully changing their minds when they *experienced* their “first taste” of real Perfect Pitch. Rock musicians, classical, jazz—they heard for themselves! All talk became unnecessary.

### The Experience

The experience is both subtle and awesome. It’s like switching from a black and white to a color TV. Without Perfect Pitch it’s like “black and white” hearing—all the tones sound pretty much the same, just different shades of “gray.”

Perfect Pitch gives you the *colors* of the tones. Color lets you recognize them—an A over there, a C# here, E major chord there, etc. Each tone has its own unique color sound. That’s why I like to refer to Perfect Pitch as “Color Hearing.”

Perfect Pitch is definitely something you can’t buy. Instead, you unfold it *from within yourself*. I feel fortunate that I’m able to offer the knowledge of how to develop it. It’s ridiculously simple. But you have to hear for *yourself* to gain it. It’s yours—inside you, waiting, free as the air you breathe. And it’s a priceless musical possession.

To start, you just need a few basic instructions. As your ear becomes cultured you begin to enjoy and use these delicate sound colors. You learn to hear beauty you may never have appreciated before. It’s a whole new awareness—once you uncover it you own all its possibilities.

This is Perfect Pitch.

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# FEEDBACK

## My Stick Is Not Collecting Dust

Concerning Terry Gowan's article on the Chapman Stick in your June issue, my hearty felicitations go out to you in your attempts to bring the Stick more public awareness.

About the quote regarding "A lot of sticks collecting dust," I must say that I am not one of them. In the past ten years, I have owned five of them, selling older worn models for new updated ones. I now have a polycarbonate version that sounds just great.

As a recipient of two Canada Council Arts grants for my work on the Stick, I've been able to study the instrument at the Dick Grove School of Music in Los Angeles, with Emmett Chapman and other Stick players in the L.A. area. I have also been able to use the Stick as my main instrument at Capilano College in North Vancouver for the commercial music program.

Currently working on bass/guitar arrangements by Al De Miola and piano works by Chick Corea, I find notoriety eluding me, but you can be assured that I will be Sticking to it and that there are others out there.

Leo A. Gosselin  
Winnipeg, MB

## Two-thirds of Sticks Are Actively Played

Thanks to Terry Gowan of the Canadian group Gowan and to your magazine for including Terry's article about my instrument, The Stick, in your June '87 issue.

I was glad to see the photo and to read a personal account of how the Stick was used on the latest Gowan album, *Great Dirty World*.

Only one thing though - Terry said he gets "the feeling there are a lot of Sticks collecting a lot of dust under a lot of beds out there."

We have built some 2,200 of these instruments, but we keep a data base on almost all of the players, all over the world. We keep in touch with these players, answering their letters, sending our newsletters, and receiving many cassettes of all the different kinds of music being played on the Stick. We have an extensive library of cassettes, and when I receive one I listen to it, usually while driving, and comment by letter.

I'd say that approximately two thirds of all the Stick instruments we've made are actively being played - in bands or solo, in clubs, churches, colleges, and some even to huge concert audiences with well known groups, such as Fergus Marsh's remarkable Stick

work with Bruce Cockburn's group.

Some of the music by various Stick players is outstanding and deserves the light of publicity. Then the dust would blow away.

Emmett H. Chapman  
Stick Enterprises Inc.  
Los Angeles, CA

## Down With David Fostex

Thank you very much! Your article on Rock & Hyde was great! Thanks for revealing the nasty little details and not being afraid to speak out! Especially concerning the Muse Beez and that L.A. slime David Fostex who takes people's money and ruins them! Long live music and down with the over-produced generic crap that Fostex spews out!

John Eric McKenzie  
Vancouver, BC

## Campus Radio Is A Real Alternative

In response to the article about Gold radio squeezing out new artists, it seems almost everyone has succumbed to the pressures of "BIG RADIO" without looking for an alternative route to reach their goals. Everyone wants to be successful, but there is more than one way to get there.

The answer to some degree is campus radio.

Oh, sure we don't provide the sheer numbers that the big guys do but you'd be surprised how many people do listen. Our station has a potential listenership of approximately 70,000 (not including those in the city of Hamilton we reach on cable). Of those 70,000 even if a small percentage gain interest in a new artist, word gets around quickly and "real radio" so to speak will follow suit.

Internationally, campus radio has been light years ahead in the airplay of now popular groups (The Psychedelic Furs, The Cult etc.) and on the homefront we like to feel that such groups as The Spoons or even the Parachute Club would not be on the edge of stardom without some support from us (campus radio, that is).

Therefore, just because "big radio" isn't playing your stuff don't go crying in your vinyl, use the back door, and before you know it their gold might turn to lead.

Clive Boutillier  
Station Manager  
CHMR-FM/Mowhawk College  
Hamilton, ON

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# FEEDBACK

## Mistakes And Omissions In Paul Horn Article

This is to let you know that I was quite disappointed in the way my article turned out in the Woodwinds section of the June issue of *Canadian Musician*. Since this article appeared with my bi-line I would be held responsible for the errors which appeared in there.

One of the worst things that can happen is to have someone's name misspelled. The producer of my record is Fritz Kasten. His name appears in the article as Fritz Dasten. The artist who has equal billing with me on my album *Heart To Heart* is David Friesen. His name appears as David Driesen.

The most upsetting omission was pointed out to me by Attic Records President Al Mair who coordinated this article for me with *Canadian Musician*. He pointed out in a telephone call to me that throughout this whole article not one mention of the album title itself appears anywhere. The whole article refers to this collection album called *Sketches*. The finished draft was titled as follows: "Paul Horn, Sketches: A Collection, Selections From The Golden Flute Series." *Canadian Musician* chose to give this article another title which is alright but you certainly should have used what I gave you as a subtitle. So here we are talking about this whole thing and people don't know what the heck is happening.

How unfortunate.

Paul Horn  
Victoria, BC

(Humble apologies go out to Paul Horn, Attic Records, Fritz Kasten and David Friesen.)

## Always Read The Label

I am a Toronto musician and songwriter as well as an ardent fan of music, particularly Canadian music.

In a past issue a review by Howard Druckman on Lillian Allen's release, *Revolutionary Tea Party* led me to believe that said album was recorded at Comfort Sound in Toronto. After reading Howard's review I went out and bought a copy of the album only to find that according to the album jacket the entire disc was recorded, mixed and mastered at Wellesley Sound Studios in Toronto and not Comfort Sound at all.

Always read the label Howard.

Garry O'Keefe  
Toronto, ON

## Fine Portrait of Our Son Bruce

The cover of your June 1987 issue featured a very fine portrait of my son, Bruce Cockburn. Mrs. Cockburn and I would very much like to obtain a copy of it for framing. Could you please tell me how that might be arranged?

Dr. D.W. Cockburn  
Ottawa, ON

(As you read this a new portrait of Bruce is adorning the Cockburns' mantle.)

## Choose School With Lots of Hands-On Training

After reading the article on choosing a recording school in the August issue of *Canadian Musician*, I'd like to comment on the importance of hands-on training.

As Administrator at the Toronto Recording Workshop, I'd like to mention that anyone seriously considering a career as a recording engineer should select a school that offers a large amount of in-studio training.

The majority of the graduates from our school (who received daily hands-on training in our 24-track studio) are currently working in studios.

Barbara K. Oldfield  
Administrator

Toronto Recording Workshop

## No Backbone

To the company with no backbone: I am saddened to learn that you have withdrawn an advertisement of your product due to a few complaint letters you received from the feminist readers of *Canadian Musician*. (This is with regards to the "controversial" ad in the June 1987 issue.)

I feel that the ad is in good taste and is by no means offensive. I suggest that those who find the ad sexist should simply not look at it.

Once again the few outspoken win. Please don't let the whims of others dictate your future advertisement rights to freedom of expression.

Tom Grant  
Toronto, ON

# THE ADVANTAGES OF A STUDIO CONDENSER WITHOUT A SOUND OF ITS OWN



For all of its virtues, the typical studio condenser imparts a definite character to any recording. These impositions are often considered inevitable technical imperfections: accepted, ignored or tolerated by audio engineers.

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The MC 740's freedom from exaggerated sibilance or graininess and its greatly reduced distortion are immediately apparent to critical listeners. European and American engineers have already commented on the startling

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# RECORDING

## Eikhard Takes Charge With New LP

By Shirley Eikhard

**T**he experience of writing, arranging, performing and producing *Taking Charge*, my first full album in 10 years, was as terrifying as exhilarating. When I realize I completed the project in 3 1/2 weeks with a budget of \$22,000, I still sigh a breath of relief. During that hectic time I felt like I was flying by the seat of my pants more than once, and not only from the pressures of money and time. Proving skeptics wrong and living up to my own expectations were strong considerations. After eighteen years as a performer though, and years of studio experience with many musicians, producers and engineers, I felt confident I could produce the album I envisioned.

My first recording contract was with Capital Records in 1972 where I did an album and several singles. During those early days my country roots earned me two Junos for Female Country Artist and saw my songs covered by Emmylou Harris, Kim Carnes, Chet Atkins and Anne Murray. After switching to Attic Records in 1974, where I recorded three albums, I decided to explore other musical genres including rock, jazz, R&B and pop. Oddly, my most popular record, "Say You Love Me" by Christie McVie, was one of the most difficult experiences for me as a singer because I had a hard time working with the producer. Although I had worked with several good producers in the past, I saw the time was coming for me to take more responsibility, gain more control over my work, and have more input into how my songs end up sounding. So I took five years away from the recording world to assess my future direction and do some songwriting. When people started coming up to me during live dates and asking if they could buy my new material on record, I realized I had to start my own label. Eika Records was born.

Having watched and learned from producers and engineers during countless studio sessions, and with the encouragement from past associations with engineer/Wellesley Studios co-owner Jeff McCullogh and engineer Peter Goodale who has his own studio, I was ready to take the step. In 1982 I joined up with Greg Roberts who was an engineer at Grant Avenue Studios apprenticing with Danny Lanois (Peter Gabriel), to produce "Never Giving Up On You" and "Good News." The single did so well that the next year I teamed up with Peter Goodale, who taught me all I know about computers, to produce three more singles over the next two years for Eika Records. Rather than a care-



fully crafted plan to enter the industry as a producer, I began producing to service the public and the DJs who were asking for product.

When I was ready for my first album with a major label as a producer, I took tapes of my new material to WEA and met with Bob Roper. He loved my voice and liked my songs, but said production values had to be upgraded for WEA to consider releasing an album. I convinced him that using computers and starting fresh, I could trim pre-production time by working at home with my AKAI 12 track digital machine, going into Wellesley Studios with Jeff McCullogh who understood the vocal warmth and dynamics I was going for, and produce the album for \$20,000. Since he liked what I'd done with my Eika releases, he put me in charge of the production and said 'go for it.'

Since studio cost is a major consideration, especially in my case because I'm considered an Adult Contemporary artist by the record company, having basic equipment at home allowed me to save on pre-production studio costs and bring the album in for \$22,000. But it's become a real double edged sword work-

ing with technology today: affording \$20,000 to set up with a DX7 and an Emulator to fit into today's music is hard. I work with a baby Korg 800 that doesn't have touch sensitivity which I write on, and a TX7 which is a module that I MIDI to the Korg. Last summer I bought the AKAI 12 track machine which I used each night during recording at home, ripping apart each song to rework and rewrite.

In the studio I structured a tight session pace. I had chosen Wellesley Studios because I had wanted to do the album with Jeff McCullogh and also to keep the cost down. We'd start at noon everyday and work until six or seven at night, then do five or six hour mixes. The first week I put everything down on Jeff's MacIntosh computer system and click tracks and added all my colours. During all the bed tracks which we did that week, I sang scratch vocals, most of which were used in the final mix. I find my scratch vocals are always my best, because I get an energy from singing with the musicians and even with the errant flat note, they retain that human feel to them. On the entire album there are only two composite vocals.

Opting for analogue technology also preserves much of that human feel. The way we were putting the album together, the way I was making choices based for the most part on intuition, a real spontaneity emerged in the product. It didn't matter that I couldn't afford digital recording, because although digital is state of the art and there's many good things about it, analogue suits my vocal style. The one comment everyone makes about my voice is about its warmth, which I felt I preserved on this album. I also kept technology in its place. Every song on the album can be played by five musicians on stage, with one or two keyboards MIDI'd together. Even on the one song that uses drum programming, I played real time and didn't quantize it 100%, so it retains the variable of human flaw.

Although I feel my creative input as a producer has much to do with personal experience, I owe my technical knowledge to Jeff McCulloch who has been my "dictionary." The more time I spend around computers, the more comfortable I become, but the bottom line is always not to get lost in the technology because cleverness will enter. In the end it's the emotion that has to take priority above all else, and if I can't manipulate the technology to do something, I know I shouldn't do it.

The technical equipment used on *Taking Charge* at Wellesley Studios was a 24 track analogue Sony MCI machine, a CM 4400 Soundtracs Console, AMS digital reverb unit, Lexicon 200 Digital reverb unit, Lexicon

PCM 70, AMS harmonizers, a Yamaha SBX 90 and an APHEX Compellor which is a stereo noise reduction unit. Everything was then passed through the BBE Stereo Mix and we made a digital safety master from the analogue final product. The microphone I chose to use was "the tube", made by AKG. Still, for all the technology at work behind the production album, I made most decisions based on intuition - choosing to retain tracks for their emotion rather than perfect musical interpretation.

In Jeff McCulloch I had an engineer who understood this. I've worked with other engineers before, and I've been in situations where I've had to qualify myself to get what I wanted done. If you're paying them for their time, you shouldn't have to do that. Typically an engineer is responsible for the sound and technical aspects of an album. The producer is the person with the creative ideas. Jeff is not only a good technical engineer, but he's creative and he listens to an artists' views.

When it was time for me to choose the musicians for the studio, I turned to the people I knew through past performing experiences and studio session work. I wanted people who could bring fire and precision to the project. Many musicians are incredible live, but put them in a studio behind a microphone and they freeze. Others are so used to the studio they fall asleep on the job live.

In Dave Gray (guitar), Rob Piltch (guitar), Evelyne Datl (keyboard), Gary Craig (drums), Steve Sexton (keyboard), Randy Kumano (keyboard), Doug MacCaskill (guitar), Dave

Piltch (bass), and Mary Lu Zahalan (background vocals), I surrounded myself with musicians who could come in and do all their parts in a single day. Staying on budget and using studio time efficiently is the best way to keep the record company happy too.

It's a different dimension dealing with your work as a producer. It gives you a new perspective on what you do when you write a song at home knowing the process that brings it to an audience. As a producer you are the medium, not just a singer. If you're true to the song, it's an intuitive process. One of the areas of concern to me and Bob Roper of WEA was the album's cohesive sound. Cohesion is a producer's responsibility. While I consider this album a pop album with touches of MOR and rock, each song requires a different dressing. For example, the song *Secrets* had a personal lyric which required a bit of mystery musically and very sparse dressing. *While We're Still Young* had an urgency to the lyric that suggested using more instruments and big background vocals.

In a very real sense the title of the album, *Taking Charge*, sums up my attitude toward my musical direction, and the song *While We're Still Young* represents the importance of taking charge of your career. For years I had the "wait till tomorrow" attitude, taking a passive role and letting other people do things for me. Now at 31, I'm not afraid to fail and willing to take risks to succeed. In the end, it's the work that speaks for itself anyway, because little else is guaranteed in this profession.

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# RECORDING

## Marsh LP Features DalBello, Palmer and Cockburn

By Ashley Collie

Violinist Hugh Marsh's second album, *Shaking The Pumpkin*, is all about production; not production in the sense of being a producer's album because there was no big name producer involved; and not production in the sense of being overly produced. Although the album began in February 1986 when the first demo from it was cut and ended in June 1987 when the album was released, Marsh says the actual amount of time spent in the studio was less than a month. There also wasn't a lot of preproduction done, other than for Marsh to sit down and meticulously figure out whom he wanted to do the tracks with.

No, this album has more to do with many other things that went on in the studio than with just slick production techniques. For instance, it's not a "violin" album like past offerings from people like Jean-Luc Ponty or even like Marsh's more violin-oriented debut album, *The Bear Walks*. On the other hand, there's a piece called, "How The Violin Was Born", which features a Bruce Cockburn re-

recital and some searing violin play by Marsh. And, the cut "Little Miss Big Kiss", features some absolutely transcendental violin and sax interplay.

The album's cuts, in general, are eclectic with shades of Weather Report's and Miles Davis' jazz fusion among its sources; it's the type of thing you'd expect from a man with his roots in jazz. However, it's not all about jazz/fusion pieces. There's also a knock-out, funkified version of Hendrix's "Purple Haze" and the lead singer is none other than Robert Palmer. Although Palmer sings only on this cut, he adds some superb vocal "cieras" on two of the cuts, "Little Miss Big Kiss" and the love song "Sempre Nel Mio Cuore", and he does a recitation on "Rules Are Made To Be Broken", which also features vocalist Dal Bello.

If Cockburn, Palmer and Dal Bello aren't enough, the album also digs deep into the wealth of musical talent in Toronto. Some of the guest musicians include: Fergus Marsh, Mike Sloski and Jon Goldsmith, who often

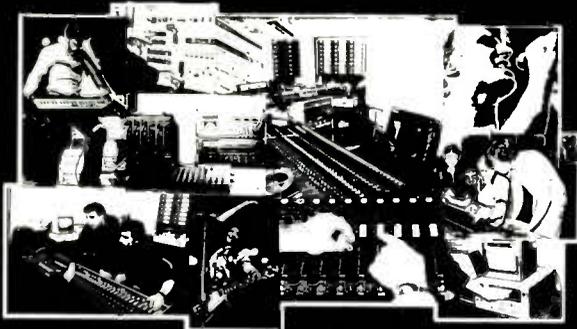
play in Cockburn's band; "The Girls", vocalists Shawne Jackson, Sharon Lee Williams, and Colina Philips; Fairlight programmer, Rob Yale; Le Voce Grande, which was an all-star group of background vocalists; and, The Radio and Loneliness Horns, which featured eight players.

The main players included drummer Kevan McKenzie, bassist Dave Piltch, guitarist Rob Piltch, keyboardist Goldsmith, saxophonist Vern Dorge and Marsh, who explains, "I'd really like to go out on the road with these five guys as a six-piece band including six vocalists, eight horns and one lead vocalist... you know, just for fun. There was an interesting cross-section of players on the album from some veterans to some newer hot players like Perry and Mike White on sax and trumpet respectively. The two groups complemented each other real well."

As for Palmer's thoughts on working with these musicians, Marsh says, "Robert enjoyed the playing right across the board. He loved the studio and I think he enjoys working in Toronto because he has quite a following here. He was fantastic... one cool guy."

Marsh had previously sent Palmer a demo from his *Bear Walks* album and they had spoken about the possibilities of getting together. Then Palmer happened to be in Toronto and Marsh sent him a book called *The Bass Saxophone* by Josef Skvorecky which contained some ideas for a tune Marsh wanted to do about music censorship. The piece ended up as "Rules Are Made To Be Broken", on which

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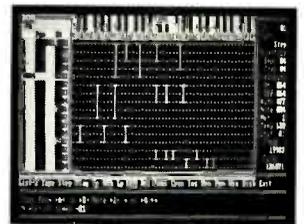
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Palmer does his recitation. The vocalist also stayed around to do the three other pieces.

With so many people involved including the three (Goldsmith and Kerry Crawford did the production, while John Naslen engineered) who worked most closely with Marsh, in retrospect he defines his role as being a "silent persuader". The persuasion worked some magic because *Shaking The Pumpkin* is one terrific summer serving of music by someone who takes a joy in creating it and allowing others around him to create with him: "It's not just my record. It's their record, too."

The album was recorded at Toronto's Manta on a 32-track Mitsubishi X-850 and then mixed down to a X-86 (1/4") Mitsubishi digital. Not only was the album recorded digitally, it was also mixed and mastered digitally; in fact, Marsh explains that there are four Ds (DDDD) on the compact disc, indicating that "the CD contains the exact same info that you'd hear if you plugged some headphones into the Fairlight synthesizer. There's no sound generation loss and the digital purity is maintained." He modestly adds that this sound quality just complements what he considers to be a "pretty hot sounding record".

With regard to putting the pieces together, he uses the example of The "Way Of The Flesh", which features a recitation from Chairman Mao by Marsh. He basically started out with groove and a set of chord changes which he put down at home on his Fender Rhodes piano. Then a basic Fairlight



sketch, which was dumped onto tape, was put together, including Fairlight drums and bass, and three keyboard counterpoints." We wanted to maintain some real spontaneity, so then I brought in the two Piltch brothers to play guitars, with Jon on keyboards and myself doing the recitation. Basically, I got Nas and Kerry to split up the faders on the board, so that each player heard different elements and no one heard the same thing.

"The main focus for everyone was the reading of the lyrics and they'd play according to what the lyric said. We did all of this in one take. After that we added the eight-piece horn section, the violin, and the last thing to go on were the real drums and the violin solo

which were done as a duet over the top of the rest of the band tracks. So what happened, is that we had two completely different bands: we had a Fairlight band and a real band, involving human players, and they move in and out and between each other. The human players and the electronic elements co-exist together."

The album also features some other unique applications of the Fairlight synthesizer. On the instrumental jazz piece, "Pizz Punk", the seeming percussion and drum lines are actually samples of sounds made by Marsh with his mouth and body: "Everybody thinks it's a real bass drum, but it's really a sample of me hitting my chest; in fact, the snare, tom and high hat sounds are all done by sampling my voice."

Although he agrees that the album contains a wide variety of musical pieces, he also feels there's a strong thread that runs through it, namely in its sense of humour and sincerity. Marsh explains, "This may sound weird, but before production started, I listed a lot of albums I liked and tried to figure out what non-musical elements made me like them. They included some very different types of music from Madonna to Robert to Stevie Winwood to Huey Lewis and Miles Davis. What I felt was not so much the music but how sincerely it was put across. I've thought it funny sometimes that I'd like a Madonna tune, but I liked it because she sings it great. So, if there's a common thread that runs through these and my tunes, I hope it's a type of honesty and sincerity."

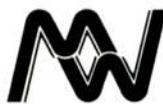
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## Shaping New Bands With Album Graphics

By Stephen Gilmore

Perhaps the most gratifying reward of designing album cover art is the challenge of developing and shaping the image of new artists. For this reason, I prefer to work with emerging acts whose music I personally appreciate. Once that important connection is made, it's easier to become involved with the project because everyone is basically in the same frame of mind. It's ultimately a personal investment by both parties: as a visual artist's medium, it's his statement, for the band, it will determine how the public perceives them. Definitely a two way street. I am almost always approached by acts or record companies who are in tune with my style.

Because I began as a fine art painter who later adapted to translate my craft graphically through the medium of album covers, I am as concerned with producing art which reflects my artistic growth as creating a successful product for the band. I continue to paint as I always have, and to construct art shows in addition to graphic work for the music industry and other commercial jobs for clients who need adventurous, alternative-looking logos for their businesses. And rather than one direction diluting the other, such diverse projects share a common thread through my style. Hopefully, my artwork is as identifiable with certain recording artists as with commercial logos.

My association with Vancouver's Skinny Puppy, the band I am most readily identified with since winning a Casby Award for Best Graphic Design for their LP *Mind: The Perpetual Intercourse*, illustrates the ideal collaborative arrangement between recording and visual artists. The Puppy and I go way back to 1980 when Cevin Key and I worked for the same Vancouver club, Love Affair. During this time he was designing lights for the club and I was DJing until I convinced the owners to bring in live alternative bands from the area. After producing several posters promoting these acts at the club, and producing posters for touring acts such as Wall of Voodoo and Modern English for larger venues around town, Cevin and I became close friends and mutually supportive of each other's talent. Before the Puppy was even formed, signed with Nettwerk Records, or assigned studio time, I had worked out a style for *Remission*, their first release, based on conversations with Cevin.

Cevin's writing suggested macabre imagery and dark tones, which agreed with the moods I addressed in painting. From such in-



fluences as Franz Kafka's book *The Trial*, and the films of David Lynch (*Elephant Man*, *Blue Velvet*, *Eraserhead*) and Orsen Wells' (*Touch Of Evil*), I relate my work to the sense of eternal mystery these artists convey. To represent darkness without gloom and avoid a cult trap, I adopt an abstract, rather than representational, painting or mixed media style. I have always found that keeping things a bit obscure gives people something to think about. Abstract design achieves this as the eye isn't drawn to obvious renderings, but is required to look beyond and think beyond the overall album design. I would hate to think any of my album covers are trendy throw away items. Good design should be as valid today as ten years from now.

From the rough design I created for Puppy's *Remission* in 1984, I prepared the final art in the same fashion I tackle all album covers. I pulled together the appropriate images, textures and colours which both the band and myself felt best represented the album's music and the band's image. Shortly afterward, Nettwerk Records signed the Puppy and I've been producing the band's album art ever since.

But even if everyone is on the same wavelength, there are bound to be some creative differences. Certain points such as lettering styles seem to take much work and discussion. Initially I am contacted and informed of the project and clued into the album's content. In keeping with the previous mood established in earlier album covers (and I know the bands I work for very well), I move from early meetings with rough designs to preparing final art in a variety of media. Applying oils, photographs and textural materials, the final piece is constructed in about three weeks. The process is speeding up though, as I gain more experience and become more comfortable with various graphic design devices and explore more complex techniques.

Today, stripping colours and effecting multi-layered works extend my capabilities and allow me to further enhance product design.

Sometimes the actual ideas which come together to form a completed piece are as unusual as my method of discovery. A perfect example which comes to mind is the cover I created for Skinny Puppy's *Mind: The Perpetual Intercourse* LP. Nettwerk Record's Terry McBride told me I had one week to pull the cover together. During a self promoting trip to New York last year, I happened to be watching TV in my hotel room. From the images of a vintage porn movie on the screen, I began taking pictures out of focus, unclear and uncut. The eventual shot used perfectly meshed with the album's rather dark and macabre feel and presented the hazy woman's image in a radically different context from its film beginnings. Interest was created through this mix up of context, effecting a thought-provoking visual.

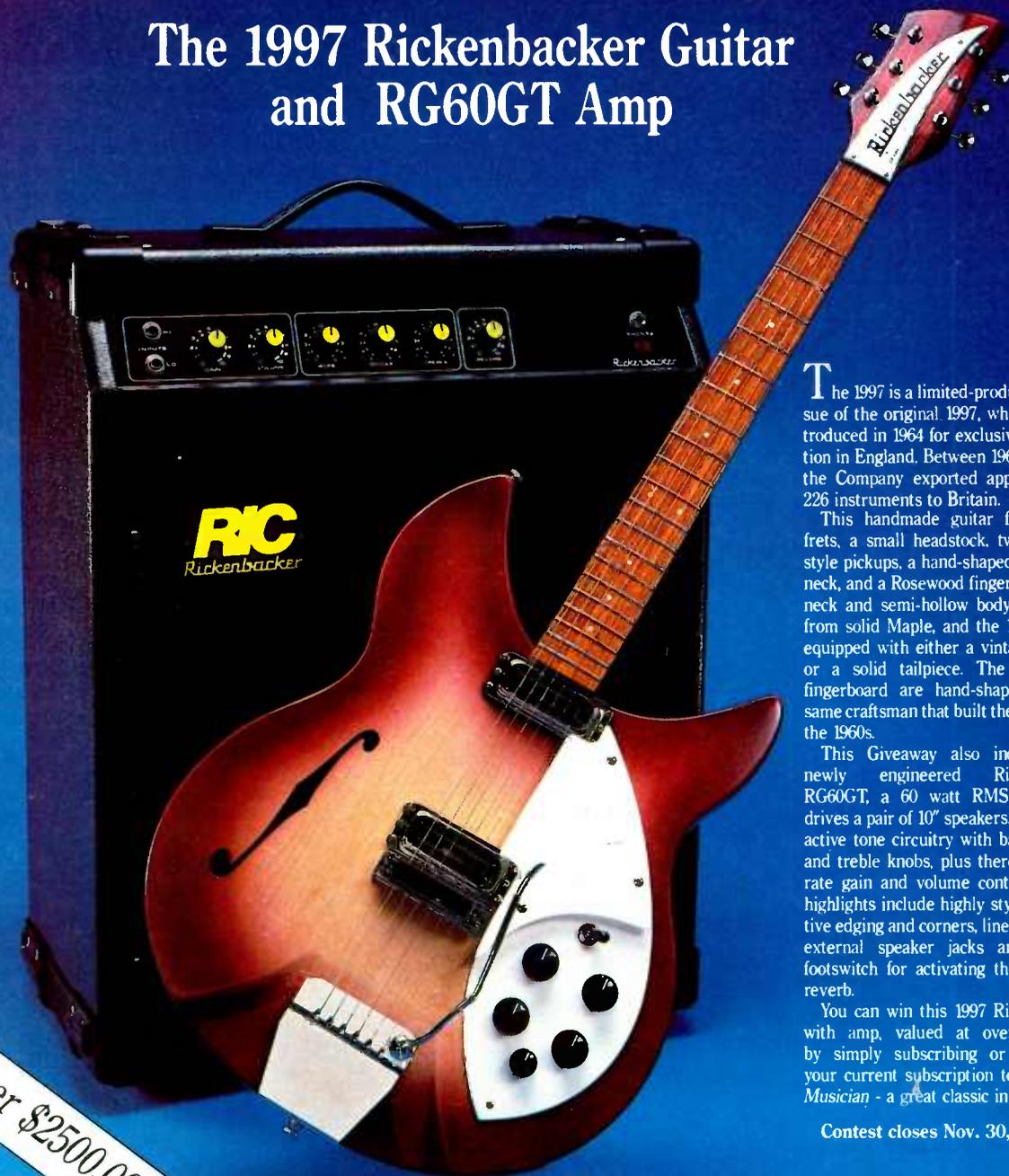
My favourite album art created to date describes my multi-media and abstract style. Produced for Nettwerk's compilation *Sound Sampler*, I feel it sums up what my work is all about: I effected a close up of swirled nail polish, mixed in photos of TV images, added textured backgrounds in deep blues, used purple and yellow lettering. This was just one of the over 20 albums assigned me by Nettwerk, who has kept me busy since I created the first Skinny Puppy cover for them. Most of these alternative bands hail from Australia or England, which has expanded my profile.

Late this past spring I was called in to art direct Images In Vogue's *The Spell*, their first LP since signing with Anthem Records. Gary of Images and I have been friends for some time now, but even though we've worked together before (I won the West Coast Music Award for Best Album Graphics for Images In Vogue's *In The House* record this year), we must now deal with completing a project through long distance communication since the band is now based in Toronto. To achieve the look I'm after, I spent some time in Toronto earlier this year to show my rough designs to the band and the photographer who will be shooting the final work.. Although I usually hate the idea of working around a group photograph, this time I've integrated the mood I feel suits the Images to the medium of photography, extending the usual context of a group shot. The longest project I've been involved in to date, *The Spell* is the result of three months work.

(Steven Gilmore is an award-winning album cover artist.)

# Win An Old Classic

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The 1997 is a limited-production reissue of the original 1997, which was introduced in 1964 for exclusive distribution in England. Between 1964 and 1966 the Company exported approximately 226 instruments to Britain.

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# BUSINESS

## Lawyers Do More Than Just Paperwork

by Len Glickman

In the last issue I discussed the legal issues confronting a new artist and the ways in which legal counsel can assist in resolving these issues. In this article I discuss the ways in which a lawyer can help an Artist in a non-legal manner. These can be set out under two broad headings:

- 1) Putting a team together.
- 2) Marketing Product.

### Putting a Team Together

A new artist will quickly learn that it is difficult to "go it alone" in the music business. The artist will require the expertise and advice of numerous individuals, including managers, producers, engineers, investors, accountants, consultants and publicists.

Lawyers may play a helpful role in assisting artists putting together a supporting team. For starters, an entertainment lawyer who practices in the music field will count among his or her clients' representatives of each of the support groups discussed above and will have easy access to these clients to ascertain their availability for a particular project or artist. This will save the artist much time and expense in finding the right people. For example, as far as managers are concerned, our office has provided legal counsel and continues to provide legal counsel to several managers, including Cliff Hunt (Refugee), Bill Seip (Helix, Kick Axe), Alex Andronache (Regatta), Steve Ship (39 Steps), Steve Glass (Gary O), Buzz Willis (Kinky Foxx), Triangle Management (Portland Brothers) and Neill Dixon (Erroll Starr).

In addition to the managers any law firm acts for, there is access to managers who are not clients of the firm but who manage artists who are clients of the firm. The lawyer will certainly be in a position, based on his personal observations and feedback from his artist client, to recommend or not recommend a particular manager.

manager's efforts and both can work towards the major objective, the success of the artist.

Another important key member of the artist's support group is the investor, without whose financial backing the artist may be unable to launch a successful career. It is helpful to most, if not all artists to know that their essential living expenses i.e. rent, food, clothing, etc. are taken care of, so that the artist can concentrate on what the artist does best - create and perform. Until the artist's career is in full swing, this financial backing is very important. In this area, the lawyer may be useful in locating potential investors, who may or may not be clients of the firm. A recommendation to an investor by a lawyer who has confidence in the career of the artist may go a long way in bringing the investor to the table.

### The lawyer is ideally positioned to put the artist's team together.

Another equally important member of the support group is the accountant. There are several accountants who specialize in the entertainment industry and, more particularly, the music field. A knowledgeable accountant can be most helpful in advising the artist as to how to structure his or her affairs so as to maximize revenues and minimize taxes payable. There are also provisions in the Income Tax Act (including its regulations and interpretation bulletins) which deal specifically with the tax treatment of recorded masters and other music-related issues which the accountant will be able to point out to the artist.

Most music lawyers have worked closely

In the case of a demo tape, the lawyer can assist the artist by sending the demo tape to the various A & R heads at the record companies and/or by setting up meetings between the artist and various record companies. Tapes may also be forwarded to music publishers in an effort to stir up their interest in the material. In most cases, tapes sent in by a lawyer or a law firm recognized by the record companies or music publishers will receive a listen a little quicker than unsolicited tapes. Lawyers are generally very careful not to shop every piece of material that comes across their desks. Only material which is first rate and in the lawyer's view will be of particular interest to a record company are forwarded. This maintains the credibility of the lawyer in the eyes of the A & R people and music publishers and paves the way for quicker turnaround time on future demo tapes.

Many lawyers in the United States and a few in Canada will take a small percentage of any deals put together through the lawyer. Most Canadian law offices, including ours, will bill only the time spent and disbursements incurred (postage, long distance telephone charges, telex, etc.) in bringing the material to the attention of a record company or publisher and in negotiating and finalizing any deals that may result.

An approach commonly taken by artists these days is to go into a studio, record their own masters (be it in the form of a single, EP or LP), and then look to "shop" the finished product with a view to entering into a record production agreement or a master licensing agreement with a record company. Record companies may be more easily persuaded to sign an artist with a finished master in hand since the company need not be concerned about recouping recording costs, at least on the first record.

As far as international territories are concerned, the lawyer can be useful in terms of licensing and sub-publishing agreements.

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Lawyers may play a helpful role in assisting artists putting together a supporting team. For starters, an entertainment lawyer who practices in the music field will count among his or her clients' representatives of each of the support groups discussed above and will have easy access to these clients to ascertain their availability for a particular project or artist. This will save the artist much time and expense in finding the right people. For example, as far as managers are concerned, our office has provided legal counsel to several managers, including Cliff Hunt (Refugee), Bill Seip (Helix, Kick Axe), Alex Andronache (Regatta), Steve Ship (39 Steps), Steve Glass (Gary O), Buzz Willis (Kinky Foxx), Triangle Management (Partland Brothers) and Neill Dixon (Erroll Starr).

In addition to the managers any law firm acts for, there is access to managers who are not clients of the firm but who manage artists who are clients of the firm. The lawyer will certainly be in a position, based on his personal observations and feedback from his artist client, to recommend or not recommend a particular manager.

It is important to note that, in the event an artist accepts a lawyer's referral and engages in a manager-artist relationship with the lawyer's client, the lawyer will be in a conflict of interest position and should refer the artist to independent legal counsel, at the very least for the purpose of negotiating the manager-artist agreement. The lawyer in a conflict of interest position should refer the artist to someone with experience in the music field.

Once a manager is in place, he can assist the artist in locating members of the support group and in marketing or "shopping" the artist's product as discussed below. However, the lawyer may be able to complement the

manager's efforts and both can work towards the major objective, the success of the artist.

Another important key member of the artist's support group is the investor, without whose financial backing the artist may be unable to launch a successful career. It is helpful to most, if not all artists to know that their essential living expenses i.e. rent, food, clothing, etc. are taken care of, so that the artist can concentrate on what the artist does best - create and perform. Until the artist's career is in full swing, this financial backing is very important. In this area, the lawyer may be useful in locating potential investors, who may or may not be clients of the firm. A recommendation to an investor by a lawyer who has confidence in the career of the artist may go a long way in bringing the investor to the table.

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Most music lawyers have worked closely with accountants in the music field and will be able to refer artists in the right direction as far as their accounting needs are concerned.

In short, a quick meeting or telephone conversation with a music lawyer may go a long way in helping the artist to put a team together.

### Marketing Product

Another way in which a lawyer can assist the artist is in the marketing or "shopping" of the artist's material. This material can be in unfinished (demo tape) or finished (recorded and mixed master) form.

In the case of a demo tape, the lawyer can assist the artist by sending the demo tape to the various A & R heads at the record companies and/or by setting up meetings between the artist and various record companies. Tapes may also be forwarded to music publishers in an effort to stir up their interest in the material. In most cases, tapes sent in by a lawyer or a law firm recognized by the record companies or music publishers will receive a listen a little quicker than unsolicited tapes. Lawyers are generally very careful not to shop every piece of material that comes across their desks. Only material which is first rate and in the lawyer's view will be of particular interest to a record company are forwarded. This maintains the credibility of the lawyer in the eyes of the A & R people and music publishers and paves the way for quicker turnaround time on future demo tapes.

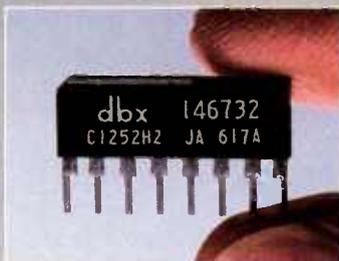
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As far as international territories are concerned, the lawyer can be useful in terms of licensing and sub-publishing agreements. Some music lawyers (including representatives from this office) attend international music conferences or conventions, the largest of which is MIDEM in Cannes, France, to shop product for foreign territories. Over the course of years, contacts are made at MIDEM and other gatherings such as the New Music Seminar in New York City and the lawyer will have a host of foreign record companies and publishers looking forward to receiving first rate Canadian product.

*(Len Glickman is an entertainment lawyer with the firm of Lilly McChintock Bowman in Toronto.)*

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# BUSINESS

## Connection With The Past At Bach Academy

by Perry Stern

**W**hen you enter the halls of the Bach Academy, a school for the performing arts in Hamilton, Ontario, no one will blame you for the sense of *deja vu* you experience. Should an aspiring ballerina

pirouette gracefully down the hallway in front of you, or a young street tough strut past wearing a leather coat and carrying a clarinet case, you won't be blamed for the eerie feeling of familiarity. Yes, it sounds like

Fame, and it's goin' to live forever.

There is, of course, something indisputably eternal about the name of the converted home (built in 1939 by a doctor for his wife, and bought for the school in 1983). The spirit of Johann Sebastian Bach reigns benevolently over the proceedings at the academy, embodied by the bust that gazes benignly from its pedestal by the roaring fireplace in the dance studio. The connection with the maestro is far from tenuous, here, for it is his great-great-great-great-great grandson, David Sebastian Bach, that founded the school.

Bach, the younger, was born and raised in Hamilton, and after nearly two decades as a performer in Europe and across Canada, he returned to his hometown to, "give something back." A natural for the world of entertainment, he jokes that, "with a name like mine it would be hard to be a bricklayer," he began singing and telling stories on a local radio station at the age of four. In the mid-sixties he went off to swinging London to study acting and singing (he eventually appeared in the popular TV series "Space 1999") and enjoyed a successful recording career (in five languages) with hits in France, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Denmark and England. In the late seventies he returned to Canada where he mounted seven cross-country tours, singing jazz, pop, country and rock, between 1978 and '82.

At that point Bach decided to launch the Blue Ox Variety Theatrical Agency, in Hamilton, which still successfully books performers around the world, from the U.S. to the Middle East, for anything from trade shows to weddings to films and commercials. While the Agency supports the school financially, Bach makes it abundantly clear that, "one is not a carrot for the other. That would be morally wrong." He also makes the point that, unlike most music schools, the Bach Academy doesn't sell or rent instruments to the students, "because we feel that compromises our position."

Besides offering courses in almost every musical instrument imaginable (except the harp -- it's "too expensive" and there have only been two requests for it in four years), the school has classes in singing, acting, public speaking, and all manners of dance including jazz, tap, and belly dancing. All the classrooms have been designed for their specific purpose and there is even a state-of-the-art recording studio where students can make demo-quality tapes. The teachers, ten in all, have, "at least a BA, and some have doctorates. The school is approved by the government of Ontario so tuition is deductible," according to Bach.

Readers in the Hamilton area who are interested in taking part in this fascinating (and inexpensive!) school can contact the Bach Academy at (416) 544-5705 or by writing to 268 Main Street East, Hamilton, Ontario, L8K 1A7.

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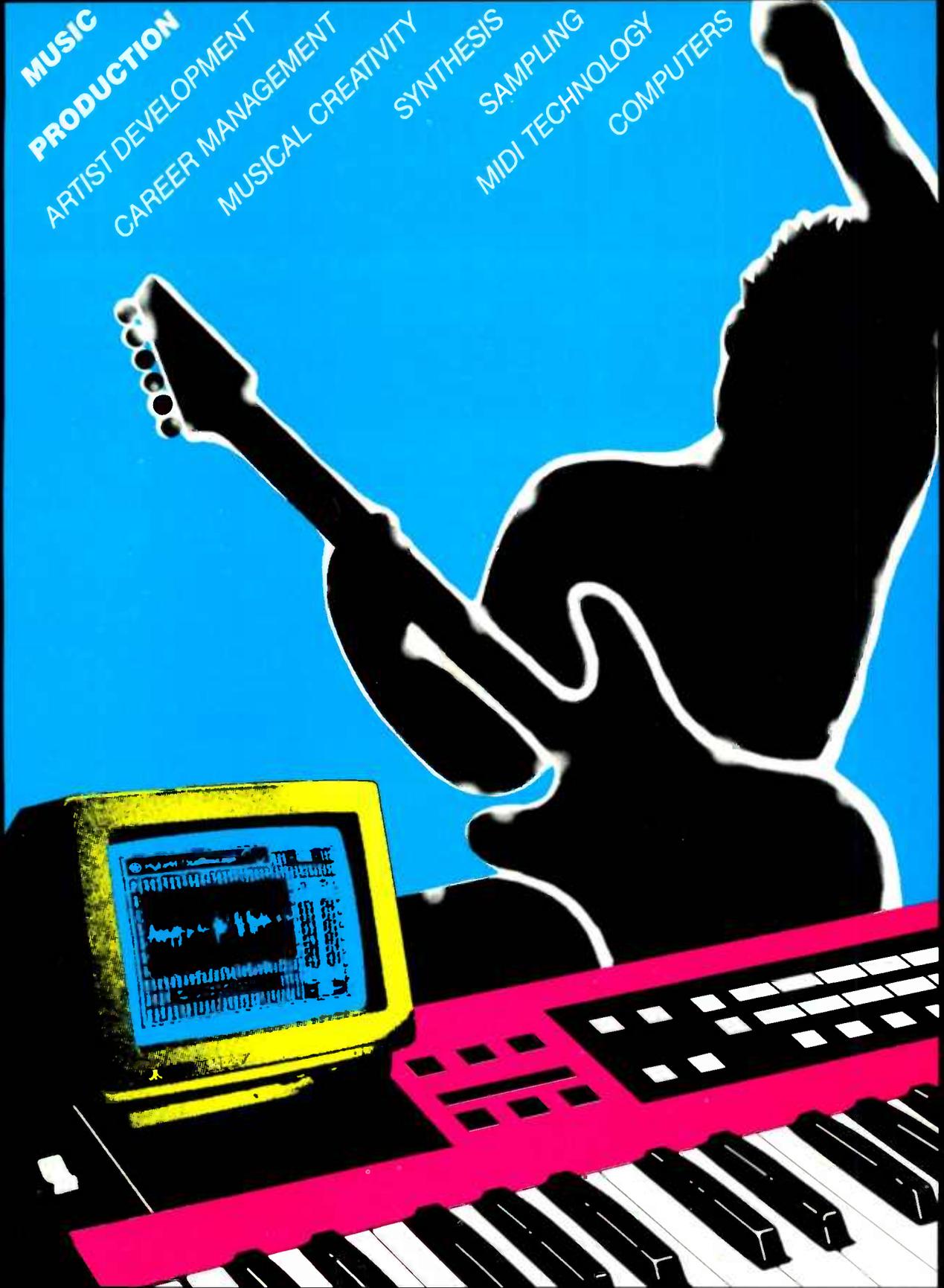
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world Radio History

# LIVE SOUND

## Preparing To Tour With Helix

By Ken Heague

**T**he job of a tour/road manager is to co-ordinate every aspect of a group's tour to achieve a smooth running operation on the road. As tour/road manager for the group Helix, I am presently in the midst of preparing for their upcoming tour. They will be promoting their latest album *Wild In The Streets* which was due to be released August 12th. The following is a brief summary of what I will be doing over the next few months.

### SCHEDULING BAND REHEARSAL

Since each band member has his own personal schedule (be it appearances at functions, recording, writing, personal commitments), it is important to keep each member aware of current and upcoming events. Upon learning of their commitments, I can schedule rehearsal time for the upcoming dates.

We start Helix rehearsals by running over the material and working in new material and new choreography. During the final week of rehearsals, I arrange to have the full stage show set up.

### CREW

At the end of a tour, most crew members are let go to pursue their other commitments. Helix keeps one person (myself) on retainer year round to help the band set up for rehearsals, writing and recording. So therefore, before starting a new tour, I need to hire a crew, negotiate their wages and determine term of employment etc. Because many crew persons make commitments for work months in advance, I begin selecting crew 60-90 days before a tour.

### PRODUCTION

The live sound and lighting requirements (which I've explained in more detail in a previous article) depend on several factors including the size of the venue, the expected attendance, ceiling heights etc.

### TRUCKING

At this point it is necessary to set up trucking requirements for the tour. As a support act, we use a 28' straight truck to carry our stage equipment. When headlining, we lease two trucks: a 48' tractor trailer for production (sound, lights and production) and the 28' truck for the stage gear.

### BAND TRANSPORT

We use a tour bus to transport the band and crew. We specify that the bus sleeps 12 in or-

der to have a bunk for each person. On larger tours, a second bus or motorhome may be rented for the additional crew.

### AGENTS

Since the agents negotiate the dates, they provide me with all the information I need to know about our engagement (date, venue name and address, price, deposit, promoter's name and address, ticket price, and so on).

### PROMOTERS

I contact the promoter of the show approximately one week before the date to ensure that there are no last minute changes to the show. I also confirm that the band's rider requirements are met. Our rider avoids excessive food and dressing room requirements. However, detail is paid to crowd safety, stage access, security and the personal safety of the band and crew.

### RECORD COMPANIES

It is extremely important for an act to have a good working relationship with their record label. Fifty percent of my daily functions revolve around activities set up in advance by the record company, such as co-ordinating record store appearances and autograph sessions or getting the band to daily radio and TV interviews. On the day of the show we have a guest list, part of which is submitted in

advance by Capitol (our record company) for guests they want the band to meet after the show.

### OTHER ACTS

Whether we tour as a headliner or support act, contacting the other acts on the bill in advance helps prevent potential problems. It is critical that arrival and unloading times for each band are co-ordinated to avoid confusion and also avoid paying whopping overtime charges in union venues (I speak from experience). We also need to co-ordinate soundcheck times and lengths so that the crew has the truck unloaded and ready to set up at a moment's notice. In support situations, we have our backline mounted in racks made of aluminum which enable us to move on stage in ten minutes and off in six.

### HOTELS

If we have a day off, we usually travel to the city of our next destination. I supply to the hotel's front desk a rooming list which I prepare in advance. Since it's a time to relax and kick back for the band and crew, I hold all calls to their rooms. I pre-arrange their wake-up calls and departure times for the gig the next day.

Other duties not listed above but also just as important are: settlements with promoters, accounting, overseeing merchandising, arranging catering etc.



World Radio History

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## NAMM Showcases Latest MIDI Gear

By Ashley Collic

Over the last decade, musical equipment trade shows have undergone much evolution. The shows were primarily buying events where music retailers met with exhibiting wholesalers and distributors, and shopped around for the best deals. Now, they're shopping for things other than just price.

Since the advent of MIDI over four years ago, trade shows like the two held annually by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) in the U.S. have increasingly become places where retailers "shop" for knowledge on new musical product -- both hardware and software.

Jim Burgess of Toronto-based retailer, Saved By Technology, is a regular NAMM visitor and he explains, "Every musician now has the means to get involved with MIDI through some interface. In many ways, the retailer has an even greater challenge to cultivate and develop his expertise in MIDI related areas. In fact, if a retailer is involved in MIDI, then it's almost crucial for him to also be involved with computers and music software. More and more retailers are realizing that these areas involve service oriented sales support. While price is always of concern to a musician, the primary concern of the retailer should be to guide the customer to purchase the right product, and then to ensure that he receives ongoing assistance with that product."

NAMM holds two shows annually: the increasingly popular Winter Market is held in California in January or February, while the International Music & Sound Expo is usually held in June in Chicago. At the recent Chicago Expo in June, more than 20 hours of educational programs were made available for visiting music retailers providing them with opportunities to update their knowledge and skills in several areas including MIDI.

Chris Chahley of Toronto's Musicware Distributors, which distributes music software and recently became the exclusive Atari computer sales representative for the music trade, took in the "MIDI time code" seminar at the Expo and explains, "The manufacturers have given their full support to a standard SMPTE/MIDI time code interface, and Jim Cooper of JL Cooper spoke on behalf of the MIDI Manufacturers Association and tried to clear up some confusion about what MIDI time code will and won't do. This is exciting because there's tremendous potential for the average musician on a budget to take full advantage of the video SMPTE standard. JL Cooper, Opcode Systems and Dr. T, among

others, will shortly be offering these MIDI time code interfaces."

Other hardware highlights from the NAMM Expo according to Chahley, included: MIDI processors like Digital Music Corporation's MX8; MIDI mixing systems like the Twister from Twister Engineering; and, MIDI wind controllers from both Akai (EWI) and Yamaha (WX7).

Burgess' hardware highlights, included: the 16-bit Alesis HR-16 digital drum machine which has velocity sensitive pads and 48 samples; and, Sequential's 16-bit, rack mount Prophet 3000 stereo sampler which has a 48 KHZ sample rate.

Like Chahley's Musicware, Burgess' SBT distributes music software to the Canadian music trade.

Burgess is particularly impressed with a relatively new software developer called In-

teligent Music as it plays. Burgess says, "All of these programs take the idea of input and doing improvisations on it. This designer is A.I. oriented and is spearheading its development in numerous fields, including music."

Burgess' other software highlights, include: Digidesign's Q-Sheet, which is a new generation SMPTE/MIDI event control product designed for applications in post production and MIDI automation; Steinberg's U 2.1 (update of Pro 24) sequencer program for the Atari ST, which features intelligent editing; Opcode Systems' Cue which Burgess calls the "ultimate software package for the film composer". Chahley's own software highlights, include: Dr. T's KCS 15, which is a powerful sequencer with "a lot of personalities"; Passport Design's Master Tracks PRO, which is now available for Atari; and, Mark of the Unicorn's Performer 2.0 which is a second generation sequencer which locks directly to SMPTE.

With regard to computer hardware, while both Chahley and Burgess' companies offer product for Macintosh and Atari, they both have different thoughts on hardware. Burgess says, "There's a definite trend for Macintosh being the leading computer for all professional music and digital audio applications, and the reasons are similar to why this manufacturer dominates in other fields: very simply, the system is easy to use especially for those users with little computer background. There's also a consistency in the way the system handles different software applications. Apple, itself, has also encouraged the growth of independent software developers. With the introduction of the Macintosh II, the company could completely dominate the professional music market in the coming years."

While acknowledging Apple's success, Chahley says of Atari, "Take the Master Tracks PRO software: it's virtually identical to the program for Macintosh, which, itself, has received widespread recognition. The big advantage with Atari, however, is that the hardware is about half the dollar value of Apple, allowing a lot more people access to music applications. Now that the Atari ST has a built-in MIDI interface, support from the major software manufacturers like Passport, Dr. T and Digidesign, and a very competitive price position, the manufacturer has everything going for it. I see the market as being at a high quality entrance level, but without excessive start up costs. Because of these factors, I think that music dealers will welcome the Atari with open arms."

For more information of new music software, contact: Musicware at (416) 785-3311 or Saved By Technology at (416) 928-5995.

## Atari takes on MacIntosh for computer music supremacy.

teligent Music: "The company utilises artificial intelligence (A.I.) to offer new angles for music creation. In the not too distant future, music creators will be in the studio's control room speaking to equipment. Voice recognition will be involved in the process as well as the use of A.I. to interpret English language commands and turn them into a series of events. Today, A.I. offers an entirely new role to the computer in the music making process, a role that goes beyond being just a recorder of events to taking part in the process."

Intelligent Music's software offerings at NAMM, included Upbeat which is designed for rhythmic programming and as a software based controller for drum machines and samplers. Jam Factory 1.0 is an improvisation and performance program, while M 1.0 is geared to assist in composition and performs variations of the music (like pitch, accent and dy-

## Ear Training Software Introduced

Music Visions Inc. has been developing music software for MIDI and the music education field since 1985. They are now offering Librarian and DX Editor packages designed exclusively for the Commodore Amiga. They are also introducing an Ear Training package designed for the amateur and professional musician.

The Master Librarian allows you to store, retrieve, and edit Sys Ex data from most MIDI equipment. It also provides:

Each file loaded into the computer with its own data editor; Built-in bank editor for any bank data file; Expansion for new types of instruments or devices; Space for musicians' notes and keywords for disk searches.

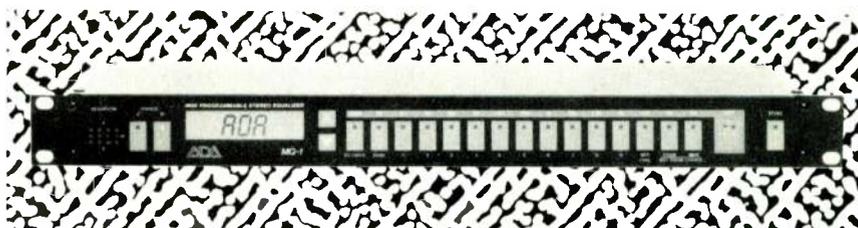
The DX Master Editor stores and edits all DX7, DX9, and TX data files. The editor presents graphic and numeric displays of voice and performance data. It also offers: Amiga mouse or DX keyboard editing facilities; DX keyboard editing which automatically updates the Master Editor; A controllable advanced random voice generator; File management and bank editing features.

The Ear Master provides training in intervals, chords, scales, and rhythmic and melodic

phrases. It also features: Artificial Intelligence; Self-help analysis; Sound generation using the Amiga's hardware or any MIDI instrument.

For more information, contact: Sound Quest Inc., 5 Glenaden East, Toronto, Canada, M8Y 2L2 (416) 234-0347.

## New MIDI Programmable Equalizer From ADA



ADA Signal Processors Inc. of Oakland California has announced the introduction of the new ADA MQ-1 MIDI Programmable Stereo Equalizer. Designed to give more control, unlimited flexibility and studio quality audio, the ADA MQ-1 features 14 frequency bands per channel with 12dB boost/cut, 128 stereo equalization programs, MIDI in, out and thru and precise filter bandwidth with minimum phase distortion, says a

company spokesman.

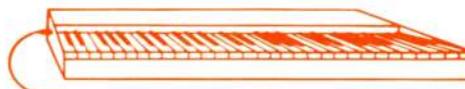
Other features include balanced inputs that accept both instrument and line levels, LED readout that displays boost/cut, MIDI channel or memory selection and front panel security lock-out feature with user selectable ID number.

For more information, contact: The Imaginative Marketing Group, 1444 Hymus Blvd., Dorval, PQ H9P 1J6, (514) 685-2046.



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**MIDI Recording Studio:****89.00**

This eight track MIDI recorder includes most of the advanced KCS ST editing features. Perfect for budget conscious MIDI enthusiasts. MRS files are fully compatible with both the KCS and Copyist ST programs. Don't let the price fool you - the MRS is one of the most powerful MIDI recorders on the market.

**Patch Editors/Librarians:****179.00**

Synthesizers supported include TX 81Z, DX7, TX7, FB01, DX100, 21, 27, Roland D50, Kawai K3, Ensoniq ESQ, Casio CZ series, JX8P, Matrix 6 and Lexicon PCM 70. Most versions feature graphic editing, multiple banks in RAM and include extra patches. Apple, Atari, Commodore and IBM. Soon available for the Macintosh.

**The Copyist:****299.00**

Now available for the ATARI ST and the IBM PC. Enter parts on the computer keyboard or input via MIDI. The COPYIST ST reads and writes KCS and MRS sequencer files. The COPYIST IBM reads and writes TEXTURE. Sequencer Plus and Mastertracks files. Scores can be edited in detail and printed with transposed individual parts. Exceptional quality output on dot matrix, plotter or laser printers. The Copyist represents an attractive solution to all musicians including composers, arrangers, music educators and publishers.

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**Texture II:****499.00**

The definitive IBM sequencer. Version 2.5 features include global note exchange, 684 bars per pattern, audible track editing, multiple MIDI channels per track and a graphic MIDI data display. Convert Texture files into notation using the COPYIST IBM. Texture 2.5 is now available for the Commodore Amiga.

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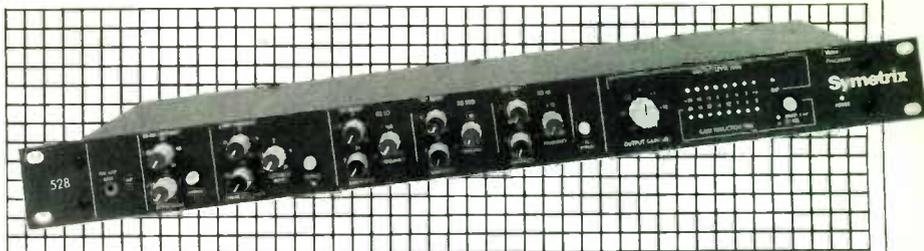
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recording studios: a clean mic preamp, a de-esser, compressor/limiter, downward expander, and a parametric equalizer/notch filter. Balanced and unbalanced inputs and outputs are provided, along with 48 volt phantom powering for professional condenser mics.

LED meters indicate output level, gain

reduction, and de-esser activity. The line input can be used (by itself, or along with the mic input) to put more punch into synthesized sounds and recorded tracks, says a company spokesman.

For more information, contact S.F. Marketing, 3524 Griffith St., St. Laurent, PQ H4T 1A7, (514) 733-5344.

## Softsynth For The Atari ST

Digidesign's Softsynth, is now available for the Atari ST.

Softsynth's graphic programming screens, which can control up to 32 oscillators, allow you to design virtually any sound imaginable. Once synthesized by the computer in clean, 16-bit format, the sounds can be transferred to various sampling keyboards for playback. Supporting both additive and FM synthesis, Softsynth provides precise control over all synthesis parameters; each of the program's 32 oscillators has a 40 stage amplitude and envelope, a 15 stage pitch envelope, a choice of five different waveforms, and variable frequency.

The Main Screen displays the envelopes of all 32 oscillators and provides 32 faders for adjusting the overall level of each oscillator. The sound length, sample rate and frequency are all adjustable. The Single Partial screen gives you full control of all parameters for each partial. The Time Slice screen presents a single master envelope for the entire sound, along which can be placed up to 40 user-defined "Timbre Events" (tonal colours). The Smartsynth function generates sounds based on a list of general characteristics specified by you. FM Patching allows the creation of FM algorithms with up to 32 oscillators. The current version of Softsynth for the Atari ST works with the E-mu Systems Emax, the Sequential Prophet 2000/2002, the Ensoniq Mirage/Multisampler, the Akai S900, S612, S700 and X700, and the Korg DSS-1.

For more information, contact: SBT Marketing, 10 Breadalbane St., Toronto, ON M4Y 1C3, (416) 928-5984.

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# SONGWRITING

## Dan Hill - Champion Of The Big Ballad

By Dara Rowland

When Dan Hill sat down with Lee Aaron last year to collaborate on a ballad for her latest album, he approached the project with the same rationale that predicated his previous joint ventures with Barry Mann, Michael Masser and Donna Summer. "When you're writing with or for someone else, you have to get a sense of what they want, what they are trying to project as an artist. It's a relationship...the key is to get to know their strengths and how to maximize their abilities."

Hill is confident writing in any genre, but it's understood when he's called in, as in the case with Aaron, the artist is looking for "that big ballad." "Dream With Me," the result of the Hill/Aaron collaboration, softens Aaron's heavy metal edges. "Even rock and rollers are having hits with ballads," he recalls of the experience. "They had this vague track from their musicians, chord progressions and a drum loop, and out of that I helped define the melody and figured out the idea and wrote 75% of the lyric. Aaron and her boyfriend John Albani sat down and fleshed out the song from the chord progressions."

Since his first LP release in 1975 at 19, the songwriter has been involved in many such projects, as well as weathering fame and fame through eight of his own albums. He credits his perseverance and driving ambition to succeed, and early musical influences, to his father, Daniel Hill, once Chairman of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, now Ombudsman for Ontario. Long before he would combat the inevitable shadow of his public figure father to establish a folk image at Toronto's Riverboat club, the ballads of Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and Ray Charles would impress his sense of ballad songwriting. He claims their "beautiful poignant lyrics, strong stories and moving emotional melodies crept into my subconscious and waited to get recycled through my way of looking at things when I began to write."

Composing almost exclusively on piano, everyday events, conversational language and the dramatics of human interplay are the sources which suggest the stories he writes. "The key is getting an idea that I think is interesting and not stated in such a way before...that's the hardest part...once I get that it's not hard to build the lyric around the idea." Working from a chord progression, random thoughts get to form the lyric, which in turn helps shape the melody within the chord progression, he explains. "I usually finish the music before the lyric and then spend a lot more time on the lyric: just changing a



phrase makes a difference in the melody."

During the writing process, dynamics emerge to further shape the song. It's his sense of application - when to suddenly decrescendo and get intimate, where drums and strings suddenly drop out leaving vocal and piano track; then suddenly filling back in that, Hill feels, is his strongest talent. Fully realized during recording, it is usually the source of fierce argument between Hill and his mixing engineer who must cope with dramatic and rapid level changes.

Behind Hill's collaborative efforts his structural instincts surface. "When I collaborate I do all the lyrics, I have something to do with the melody and a lot to do with the structure...structure is probably one of my stronger points...knowing when the bridge comes, whether there should be a solo, how long the solo should be, whether the song should modulate out of the bridge into another chorus...there have been exceptions, but especially if (the other person) ends up writing the lyric chorus, it's never as strong."

Writing associations with Mann and Masser (whom Hill considers the best ballad songwriters) have not only profoundly influenced his work, but have afforded him U.S. AC chart success. "Just working with them,

watching them put the melodies together, the modulations and the structure, chord progressions, were the best lessons in the world," he states. "In Your Eyes," his effort with Messer, was a top 10 hit for George Benson in England, and a top 10 AC hit for Jeffrey Osbourne stateside. Between that single and Hill's recently released self-titled LP (first released in the United States), he's been on those AC charts for almost six months.

In the last four years since his *Love In The Shadows* LP, Hill has worked on developing his voice and songwriting acumen. "I'm more aware than ever when writing ballads now of the importance of melody over everything else, and how the lyric has to fit and bring out the strength of the melody. Before I would just write a lyric and that'd be it. Now I'll revise a song - yet won't screw around with it too much because there's an initial passion that's special - and I'll sculpt the melody and lyric until it's perfect." And gone are the days when Hill would refuse revisions. "I think I was afraid. I realized I couldn't improve it...or I didn't think I could do it."

Creating interest within a song's structure through the unexpected diversion of a bridge or rearrangement of its traditional components is part of Hill's songwriting method. While slight deviations catch the ear though, exaggerated tangents disrupt the song's natural flow. "A song has to have a certain seamless quality, and at the same time things should jump out in an exciting way."

The delicate balance Hill strives for between composition complexity, dynamic application, structural arrangement and elemental shading also reflect his perception of the medium of recording and marketing. During recording he is as attuned to the realities of production as he is of radio air play. "What is it that I can do to make this song jump out," he often muses during production, "to make it stand out in some way so that it's not lost in the hundreds of songs a music director may hear in a day? That's one of the reasons you can't be too literal in the text book way of writing...you can inject personality as well as having an understanding of craft and structure, that's when the magic occurs. In 1975 if you made a record that sounded good and was well produced, it was almost guaranteed to be on Canadian radio. Now there are so many well produced records made here and it's much more competitive. It helps breed a strong level of recording...and that's great for someone like me because it just makes me compete and work that much harder to come up with better stuff."

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# SONGWRITING

## Song Demo Presentation Tips

By John Redmond

As a service to you, and with the complete understanding of the money, energy and passion that it takes to create a song and its demo, I have prepared this guide to help you present your songs in the best possible light.

### The Basics

When you are sure that you have a strong song, make the best demo you can afford. Phone the company and ask if they are accepting unsolicited material - none of us likes rejection - so if they're not looking for songs, don't waste your time and money.

If they're looking, go ahead and find out the name of the person you should send the tape to. Ask if there is any special information that you need to put on the outside of your package to insure that it gets into the right hands. Only write "Requested Material" on the outside of the package if instructed to do so.

Your package must contain a tape, typed lyric sheets and a covering letter introducing yourself. Send cassettes only! L.P.s or singles sent by mail usually arrive in bad shape.

### The Particulars

1. Use chrome cassettes. Make sure the demo sounds as professional as possible, regardless of the sophistication of the production. Check your tape copies for clarity.
2. The vocal must be excellent. Not oversung or undersung. Put the vocal out in front of the mix so that the lyrics and the melody can be clearly distinguished.
3. The demo must be your best representation of the song. The feel has to be there no matter how simple the production and arrangement.
4. Do not expect me to hear through an incomplete demo. Try not to leave anything to the interpretation of the listener.
5. Include lyric sheets.
6. Label your cassette.
7. Include a SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) with adequate return postage, if you want your tape returned to you. I don't regard this as a negative cue to me. It should be noted that some people feel a professional songwriter would not ask for his tape back. A good point, but not valid in my case. When comparing costs, it may be cheaper to simply make another tape particularly if you're buying and copying your cassettes in bulk.

### A Special Note On The Number Of Songs Submitted

If it must be three songs...by all means. If it can be two songs ... even better. If it's one song...fantastic.

Be as objective as possible and only send your best. Get another objective, professional opinion if you're unsure of which song(s) to choose. Some A&R departments like three to five songs per submission to enable them to see the musical direction of the artist(s). As a music publisher I'm dealing with songs only, and on an individual basis. So, one to three songs should be the maximum.

### Lyric Sheet

All lyrics must be typed on standard 8 1/2 x 11 paper. The title and authors must be at the top. The chorus should be in capital letters or indented, or both. I prefer the verses to be numbered (for quick reference) and the chorus and the bridge labelled as such and in capital letters. Include your name, address and telephone number at the bottom of the page under the copyright notice. Circle the copyright notice ©. Note: (brackets) are not acceptable. Send one copy of the lyrics per song.

### Cassette Label

The cassette must be labelled. The cassette should be cued and ready to play at the first song.

*(John Redmond is a professional manager at Irving/Almo Music Publishers, a division of A&M Records).*

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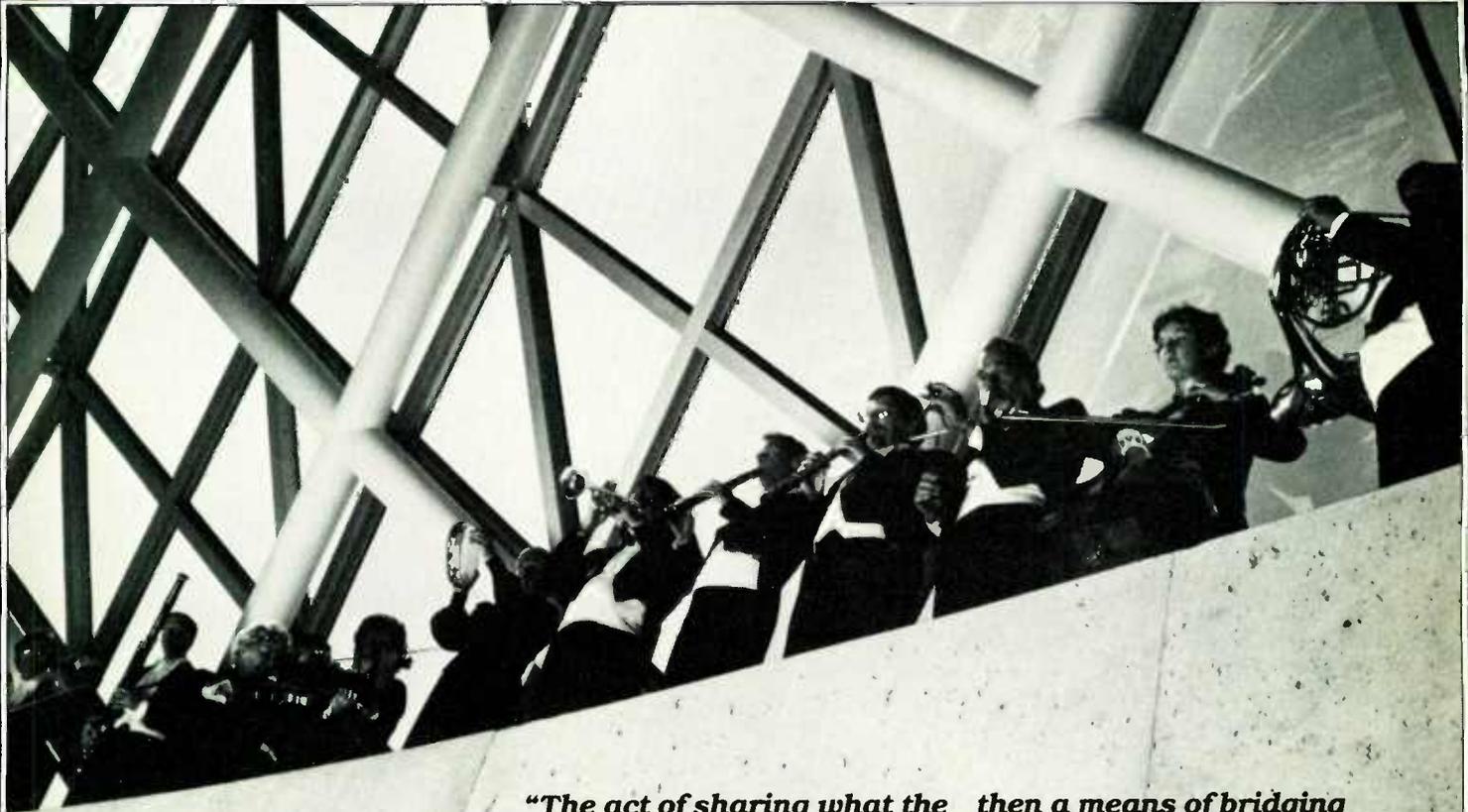
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# ARRANGING

## Tools For The Modern Composer

By John Hazen

The market for the skills of Canadian composers has grown in proportion to the increased volume of post-production work for film and television that is being done in Canada. New technology that fosters sophisticated production and arranging techniques can operate to strengthen the composer's presentation of his or her work in this competitive marketplace.

The studio that Hazen Projects operates is essentially a composer's production workshop, in which the composer most often acts as the overseer and organizer of the production process. Whether the project involves film underscoring, theatre sound effects, or Emulator tracks for television, the approach that I have developed allows the composer to take an active role in ensuring that his or her ideas are accurately reflected in the finished product.

The use of sampling technology allows the composer to realize his thoughts quickly, and access to a vast library of high quality instrument and effects samples makes the production process extremely flexible. The Emulator II+HD used in the studio has over 8,000 sample sounds residing on two CD-ROM disks (500 megabyte CD Read Only Memory). A Mac Plus computer controls the transfer of sample banks to the Emulator II from the CD-ROM. Residing in the internal memory of the Mac Plus are Performer, a MIDI sequencer and editor, the Opcode DX-7 editor/librarian, and the CD-ROM download program. The Apple program Switcher allows any of these three programs

to be activated without closing either of the other two programs. This means that between recording tracks into the sequencer, I can activate the CD-ROM download program to change sounds on the Emulator II, or just as readily activate the editor/librarian for the DX-7 and load or edit one of approximately 300 DX patches. The result is that changes are made without lengthy interruptions in the creative process.

Synchronization is the key to the effectiveness of the composer's production studio. It allows the composers to perform and mix music tracks while locked to a video picture, and the music can be heard against the picture at any point in the production process. Checking the match between the picture and the music is useful in avoiding any surprises in the final mix.

The synchronization package that I use consists of a Panasonic 6300 VHS Video Deck and a Fostex B-16 track tape machine. These two tape machines as well as the Mac Plus are locked together to run in sync with each using SMPTE time code. A synchronizer reads and compares time code from the tape machines, and automatically adjusts the running speed of the multitrack to keep in sync with the video deck. The Fostex 4050 SMPTE to MIDI converter handles the task of telling the sequencer program, Performer, where it should be in relation to the multitrack tape machine. The converter does this by converting SMPTE time code to MIDI song pointer and MIDI timing clock data.

A significant advantage of these synchronization capabilities is that pre-recorded tracks can be transferred from one recording facility to another while maintaining sync to picture.

This point was illustrated in a project that I worked on with Chris Dedrick, a composer for film, television and jingles, whose most recent project involved working on the arrangements for *Jaws IV*, in association with the renowned film composer Michael Small.

Chris approached me to record Emulator tracks for the new dollar coin television commercial that was being produced at Sounds Interchange in Toronto, a 24-track facility at which the recording of the live tracks and the final mix would take place. Our goal was to keep production time to a minimum without sacrificing quality.

The first requirement for this project was to obtain a final edited version of the video cassette with visual and audio time code so that the music and effects would conform to the picture. The approach that Chris and I used was to pre-produce the sound effects and Emulator tracks onto a two track tape with centre track time code. The system for producing the tracks and maintaining sync to picture was in place at Hazen Projects, but we were most interested in determining whether this two track tape with SMPTE time code could be locked into the system at sounds Interchange.

The live recording session was to start at 9:00 p.m. Chris and I arrived at 8:00 p.m., and by 8:15 p.m. we had all five tracks of effects, as well as the click required for the players to keep in sync, in place on the 24-track system. Our approach was effective in terms of both time and cost, and I believe that it will come to be applied to all stages of audio production, as confidence in SMPTE based synchronization is consolidated.

The composer's production workshop can be used to record almost any style of music; its potential is limited only by the skills of the composer or arranger.

The concern is often expressed that recent technology is meant to replace "genuine" composition skills, and that it therefore undermines the creative process. It is my feeling that technology is central to music production; even the simplest of musical instruments is a form of technology. The elaborate computer technology that is currently available simply allows for the very full and fast expression of an idea. The composers and arrangers who create musical ideas are embracing new production techniques because they facilitate effective participation in the growing and competitive market for their skills.

*(John Hazen owns and operates Hazen Projects, a composer's production workshop.)*



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World Radio History

# Platinum Blonde

point, Platinum Blonde was being judged more for their looks - calling them a 'haircut band' for instance - than for their musical abilities."

Now, apparently of their own volition, Platinum Blonde has addressed that issue. "Our record company was getting to hate our image anyways," said Maclean, in answer to the question of corporate disapproval of the image change.

And, said the charismatic Holmes, "The way we look now is a more honest representation of our music at present. And frankly, the material on the third album has more appeal for our record company (CBS) than what we were doing formerly. They're getting exactly what they want."

What is it exactly that they are getting? While the tunes on the new album are still entirely in a pop music vein, they are now distinguished by some notable departures from the established Platinum Blonde sound. Most dramatic here is the incorporation of a strong rhythm and blues groove in the new compositions, a result of a growing desire in all the band members, but especially Mark Holmes, to explore and interpret those rock and roll roots.

Said Holmes, "We all felt the same about doing this kind of music, but there were no heavy discussions or decision-making about it. It all just evolved that way."

Aiding the evolution was producer, David Bendeth, who contributed his production tal-

ents to seven of the 11 tunes and wrote one of the songs on the record. Bendeth, who has amassed a wealth of production experience with rhythm and blues artists such as Billy Newton Davis and Erroll Starr said he recognized a leaning on the *Alien Shores* album and encouraged Platinum Blonde to further their explorations. Said Bendeth, "Mark and I had always liked 'Fire' (the first song on the second side, originally recorded by the Ohio Players) and he had said he would like to record it. That was a sure sign of Mark's changing taste and, I think a part of his growing musically. So we did it."

Fire is arguably the most obvious tip-of-the-hat to the R&B tradition. Recorded at Minot Sound in White Plains, New York, a facility which Bendeth describes as a "great sounding little hole in the wall," 'Fire' features the Uptown Horns, a punchy, four-man horn section that had played on James Brown's "Living In America." Also contributing were three background singers formerly of Chic, including Fonzi Thornton, who had sung for Brian Ferry and Aretha Franklin in the past.

The final touch was the inclusion of the distinctive vocal embellishments - "Say wot?" - provided by former Ohio Players singer, Leroy "Sugarfoot" Bonner.

Said Bruce Barrow, "we really wanted to get Sugarfoot in on that track and it took nearly three weeks of searching to find him. At one point, we found a Sugarfoot Bonner who turned out to be the drummer for Michael Jackson's band and then had to start

searching all over again."

But probably the most significant rhythm and blues initiative was the enlisting of the production wizardry of Bernard Edwards, known for his work with Robert Palmer, Earth, Wind and Fire and Power Station. Edwards came to Toronto's Phase One Studios with journeyman drummer, Tony Thompson (Chic, David Bowie, Power Station) and the dynamic Tower of Power horn section. Thus bolstered, Platinum Blonde laid down possibly the two hottest tracks on the record, "System," and "Tuff Enough."

At least part of the credit for that goes to Edwards for recording the band in its entirety on the studio floor rather than through separate, overdubbed tracks. Augmenting this "live" sound recording technique were actual alterations made to the studio, such as the installation of plywood sheets to "make it sound like a garage in there."

As well, Edwards had some of the studio monitors moved into the accompanying hallways and offices to further increase the impression of a live recording in a large concert hall. The final results, incorporating the superb talents of the Tower of Power horns and the strongly emphasized beat of Tony Thompson's drums, are impressive to say the least.

Not that Platinum Blonde really needed a new drummer for these tracks. They had, in fact, just given their drum technician, Sascha, the job of fulltime band member. The promotion had come in the wake of a mutual decision by Platinum Blonde and former drum-



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mer, Chris Steffler, to part ways, even though Steffler had been an original Blonde from the band's days as a trio.

Said Barrow, "Chris was an important part of Platinum Blonde's original image, as was dictated by Mark. But with the emphasis of the band's image shifting to its musicality and Chris wanting to sing and play the songs he had written, it was determined that there wasn't room in the band for him. He's now pursuing a solo career and we wish him luck."

While Bernard Edwards opted for a more "live" feel on his engineering endeavours, David Bendeth tended to rely more on the flexibility of multi-track recording. But well before anything was committed to 48 tracks, Bendeth was probing the band's inspirations and motivations for clues as how to best proceed on each element of each track.

For instance, Bendeth said he would record a "ghost" track of guitarist Sergio Galli's Lado custom guitar, which would give himself and everyone else an idea of what their rhythm guitar preconceptions sounded like on tape. Said Bendeth, "we would talk about it and often those original concepts would go right out the window."

By the time Galli's rhythm guitar was being added to the mix, the basis of all Bendeth's Platinum Blonde recordings had already been laid down. This included the drums, played on the majority of tracks by new Blonde, Sascha, and the bass and keyboards, handled by and large by Kenny Maclean. Most of this instrumentation was programmed into a Macintosh computer us-

ing the powerful Performer sequencer software.

After Galli's contributions, Bendeth would then have Mark Holmes sing the lead vocals. These would subsequently be embellished by background vocals, horns, Galli's lead guitar licks and some high hat and cymbal accents.

## "Crying Over You" sowed the seeds for *Contact*."

Said Bendeth, "I'm like a surgeon in an operation. I have a very good idea of what could happen in the course of engineering a recording, but until I'm actually in the midst of it, I don't know what is going to happen. There are not any guarantees as to what the final product will sound like until it is finished."

While Platinum Blonde's new frontiers might actually brush the outer edges of the

jazz world, as epitomized by a tasty piano solo performed by Toronto session player, Lou Pomante, on "Diamonds," it should be emphasized that overall, the concept is still very much in the pop genre and accessible to those fans who originally loved the Blondes.

Said Holmes, "the changes aren't really that radical, but more evolutionary. Our original fans are still going to recognize the sound of my voice and the kind of tunes that typify Platinum Blonde."

In fact, Bendeth said the songs on the album have been arranged so as to showcase the most accessible tunes on side one while filling the slightly more adventurous songs on the second side. The first two songs on side one, "Contact" and "Connect Me," were especially written with "the kids and radio play in mind," said Bendeth.

Still, as Barrow says, "the changes realized on this album are quite dramatic - maybe even more so than we first intended them to be." Everyone seems to recognize "Crying Over You," the hit from the *Alien Shores* album, as being the song that sowed the seeds of new musical concerns for Platinum Blonde. Said Barrow, "We just kept moving in that direction."

"Contact" establishes a new lyrical direction for Platinum Blonde as well. Gone are the teenage angst of "Standing in the Dark" and the new world, chariots of the gods speculations of *Alien Shores*. While the most popish singles candidates still hold true to a proven boy wants girl lyric formula, other tunes demonstrate a thoughtful exploration



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## Platinum Blonde

of more painful romantic themes.

Said Barrow, "lyrically, the boys have really come together on this album. It still rocks but there are some interesting things being said in the songs as well."

For the record, it is Mark Holmes who is responsible for the bulk of lyric writing while musical composing is largely the province of Kenny Maclean. But, as Maclean said, "writing a Platinum Blonde tune is almost always a collaborative effort."

Both Mark Holmes and Kenny Maclean are very excited over what they've accomplished and enthusiastic about the potential new Platinum Blonde fan. Said Maclean, "compared to this stuff, our old music is like mechanical riff rock. The new music has so much more soul and feeling to it. This will really open the eyes of those people who wouldn't normally listen to a Platinum Blonde album."

And, said Holmes, "we could have written a straight pop album if we had wanted to, but we didn't. We all felt very strongly about going in this direction. It feels good because it's honest."

Still, Holmes admits to some nervousness as to how the "new" Platinum Blonde will be received. He jokingly wondered if there were going to be any fans left to buy the new record, two and a half years after their last album was released. And, of course, there's no guarantee that a new fan following will embrace the Blondes.

Bruce Barrow says that every effort will be made to ensure that there will be a fan following for the post-blonde Blondes. He says response to previews of the album by Epic Records, which will distribute *Contact* in the United States, have been very positive and that they will initiate their own promotional efforts in concert with the Canadian wing of CBS records. A European/Great Britain release will follow two months later.

Said Barrow, "this record is of paramount importance to the band. We've spent over a year working on it. We're not just going to release it and then wait and see what happens. We will release "Contact," the title track, as a single and then go on tour."

Indeed, Platinum Blonde will hit the road this fall and is now rehearsing in preparation. Expectations created by the album's big production will be reproduced true to form on stage. Kenny says the band's roster will swell to 10 people at some points in the tour and will include a saxophonist, brass section and back-up vocalists.

Meanwhile, Mark Holmes is almost defensive about the uncharted musical waters Platinum Blonde has decided to tackle with "Contact."

Said Holmes, "I don't want to try to appeal to everyone's tastes. I am not the kind of person who has to be liked by everyone. I prefer that the people either love us or hate us. Because a small audience of fans who are really devoted to Platinum Blonde is better than a large group of fans who merely like the band." □



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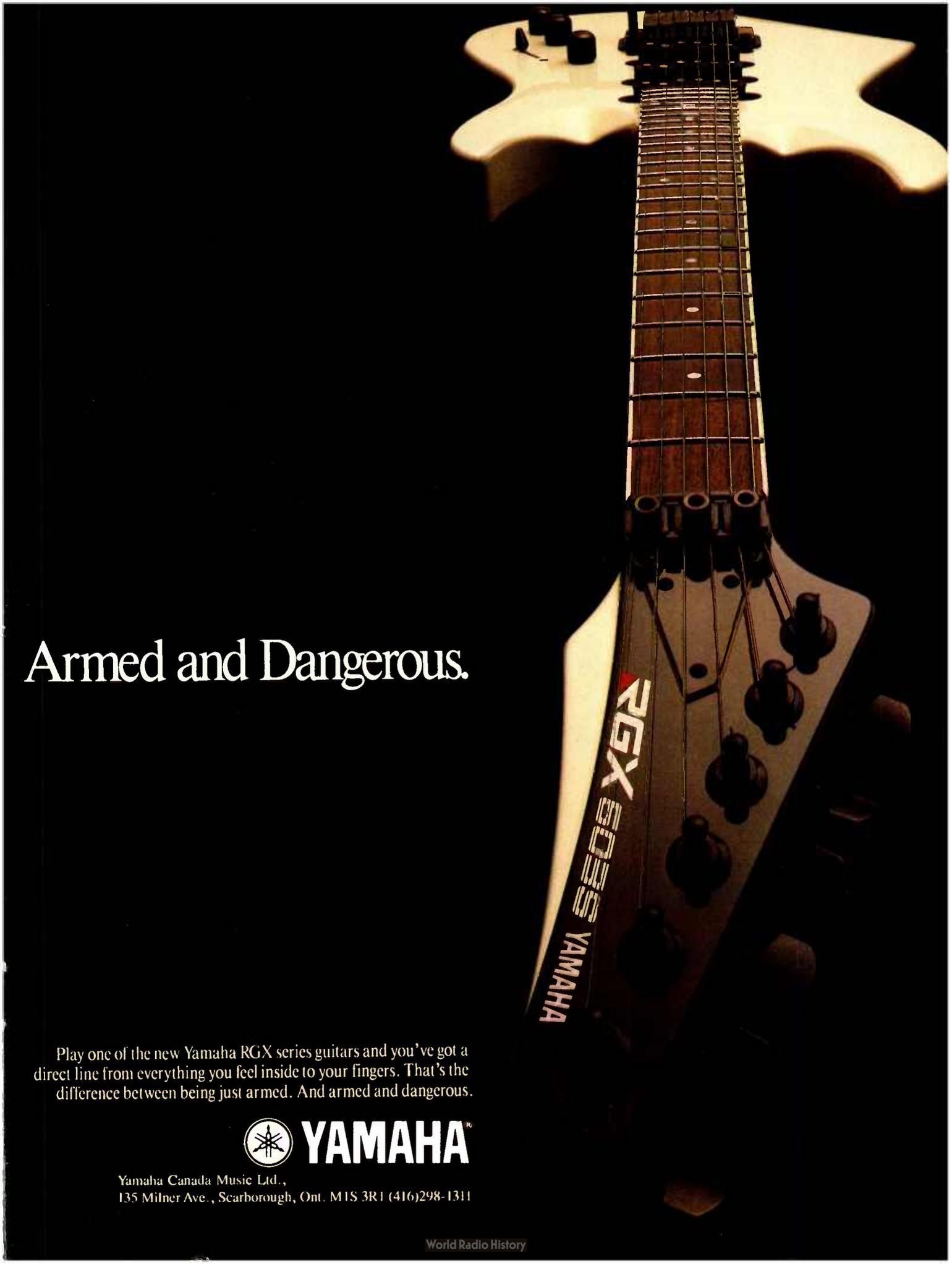
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CHALK

CIRCLE

# BUILDING THE MENDING WALL

PHOTO: ALISON WARDMAN



One of the favourite stories around Duke Street Records these days is the one about Chalk Circle's debut EP, *The Great Lake*. Everybody likes to tell it -- band members, their producer, the publicist, the secretaries. But few take as much pleasure in its telling as Adrian Heaps, the head of Duke Street and its keenest devotee of the almighty bottom line.

"We signed Chalk Circle in April '86," says Heaps, acknowledging the band's 1985 CASBY Award for most promising non-recording artists. "The band had recorded an indie EP at Quest Studios. They paid for it themselves and cut it on 16-track. We bounced it to 24-track at Manta Sound, and completely re-did some things to improve the quality."

Then comes the part that everybody at Duke enjoys. "Our goal was to sell about 5,000 units," Heaps pauses. "We're now past 30,000. *The Great Lake* was the second-biggest selling independent EP in Canada in 1986. It created a niche in the marketplace, introduced the band, and gave them a vehicle to tour across the country. The group certainly established themselves as here to stay."

Both singles, "April Fool" and "Me, Myself and I," became national CHR hits, and the videos were regularly rotated at MuchMusic, and aired on MTV's International Hour. Chalk Circle won a second CASBY, for most promising group. All of which made quite a difference when the Newcastle, Ontario

natives cut the follow-up -- and their first full-length album -- *The Mending Wall*.

"With the EP there were no expectations," says producer Chris Wardman. "But with *The Mending Wall*, there were. Everyone was going 'How are we going to top that?' It was the real world, the first time any of us ever had a big budget. If you wanted it, there was pressure to come up with something amazing."

But both Chalk Circle and Duke Street have mutual, synergetic capacities for being reasonable under pressure. So the budget had jumped from \$40,000 for the EP to \$90,000 for the new album; so it had to sell 50,000 units to maintain momentum. Calm prevailed.

"Duke Street said they'd put out a second record even if the first didn't sell 5,000," says singer/songwriter/guitarist Chris Tait. "I was really impressed with that. They have faith in who they sign, and look at artists' development realistically. Record companies sometimes throw a lot of cash at a new artist, and it's the kiss of death because they expect platinum out of your first album. The philosophy at Duke is that it's better to go step-by-step."

"There's no point in having a platinum album," says Adrian Heaps, "if it costs triple-platinum to produce. In one month, *The Mending Wall's* sales have surpassed the total sales figure for the EP since it was released."

Chalk Circle couldn't have predicted those figures, but then they're moderate, intelligent

young men -- a bit too sober, perhaps. Though he claims band meetings sometimes resemble primal scream therapy sessions, Heaps likes Chalk Circle's adult attitude. "The band is young," he says, "but very mature in their commitment, and their outlook on the industry."

"I'm very slow at songwriting," Chris Tait admits. "I always second-guess myself. I write something I'm happy with at the moment and the next day I'm not. 'Park Island,' for example, was written and re-written and took eight months."

"Musically, too," adds keyboardist Tad Winklarz, "we left it for a long time and then came back to it with new ideas, which we don't do often."

The result is a folk-ish pop ballad, thanks partly to Chris Wardman's production instincts. "Chris Tait and Tad and myself were in the studio alone one day," he recalls. "I was playing drums and Chris just played this acoustic folk song, so we tried to keep that feel."

"The engineer suggested a melodic for the solo. So Tad found one, spent \$100, and brought it in. He wasn't happy with what he played -- and he later learned to play the thing better -- but we all refused to let him re-record it because we liked the quality of it."

Chalk Circle have grown accustomed to the push-and-pull of four individual egos. Gone are the days when Winklarz would storm out of rehearsals if the band wasn't receptive to a

## Chalk Circle

part he'd worked up. But lyricist Tait admits it can still be frustrating.

"Sometimes I'll work on a song at home, sitting up until 6 a.m. going 'Yes! Yes! This is great!' I'll bring it in, we'll jam on it for awhile, and the band goes 'Naaaaah. I dunno, Chris.'"

The music usually comes first; when musical ideas outstrip lyrical ones, Tait sometimes calls on his old friend and former roommate from Newcastle, Dan Hopkins (older brother of bassist Brad Hopkins). "He works at General Motors and has a wife and a son," says Tait. "But he's a huge music fan, and this is his creative outlet. He'll let me do whatever I want to a song, change it around, add my own lyrics. In 'Village,' he gave me an idea and I just interpreted it." Hopkins also wrote "Empty Park" on the new album.

Though Tait is a slow lyricist, he came up with the first single, "This Mourning," in one night. The song describes a paralyzing fear of nuclear apocalypse.

"It was written after I watched the news," he explains. "There's an anxiety, a sense of helplessness (about nuclear weapons) that can be quite frightening at times. Every once in awhile it's like a little twinge at the back of your neck. Even on that level, it does a lot of damage -- kills a lot of hopes and dreams."

"The band was working on that song up to the last minute," says Wardman. "I kept pushing them to let me hear it again, and it

just came together. But a lot of the songs that they'd demo'd needed a lot of arrangement, a lot of work."

Chalk Circle demo'd six songs in one weekend and six more the weekend after. "They were 18-hour days," says Tait. "We tried to put as much into it as we could. We did tons of overdubs on 24-track tape."

The problem, for Chris Wardman, wasn't that the demos were too rough; on the contrary, they were too *smooth*.

"I thought they spent too much time overdubbing," he says. "I wasn't there, but when I heard the demos they sounded almost too finished."

"I think for demos you should just go into your basement with a Fostex and do it live to 2-track. As soon as you start playing with all those ideas you take away the energy that you want in the studio. A lot of the songs got thrown away, and a lot of the best material was stuff they didn't demo -- for example 'Park Island' and 'This Mourning'."

"On some songs," admits Tait, "we exhausted the spontaneity, and we worked to get it back through re-arranging or starting from scratch again."

The band spent six weeks in the studio in pursuit of spontaneity. Re-arrangement duty fell to Wardman, who developed a knack for it while playing guitar in Blue Peter and producing Breeding Ground.

On "N.I.M.B.Y.," a song the band insisted on as a kind of "theme" for the album, Wardman's arrangement is complex and precise, positioning acoustic guitar strums,

congas, minimal piano flourishes, and treated violin plucking at various strategic points in the song.

"We spent a lot of time on that one," he says. "I heard it almost like a David Bowie track from *Young Americans*. So I suggested cutting it with congas to give it more of a groove feel. The original was acoustic guitar, and it just droned along."

"What Counts," a piano-driven rocker, started out as more of a ballad. "We recorded the bed tracks at a slower tempo," says Wardman. "It wasn't going to make it on the record, but at the very end we gave it one more shot. The chorus was turned into a bridge, we dropped the second bridge, and we sped-it up and just rocked it out."

Wardman was partly responsible for this earnest band loosening their proverbial ties enough to record a hilarious version of T. Rex's old glitter-rock chestnut, "20th Century Boy." Kenny Maclean (of Platinum Blonde, who sings backup on the album) suggested the song to Wardman, and a few weeks later Wardman heard that Chalk Circle had been playing it live.

"But they didn't want it on the record," he says. "It was too funny. Still, I insisted from day one that they at least record it, if only for the B-side of a 12-inch." Though the song was initially released only on the cassette of *The Mending Wall*, at press time there was talk of re-mastering the album to include it, and it's sure to be one of the singles.

"I see that fun side to them," says Wardman, "and I don't know that they should

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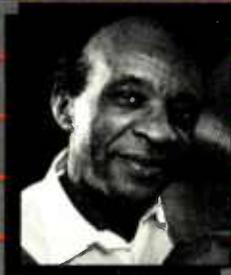
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## Chalk Circle

be so protective about showing it. It's not really out of context for them to do that song."

Wardman's influence is evident in broad strokes as well as small flourishes throughout *The Mending Wall*. The latter include a hugely distorted backwards guitar sample at the end of "20th Century Boy"; a PPG synth for the buzz-saw sound that opens "This Mourning"; a barely audible flute on the choruses of "Park Island." But the broad strokes stand out more consistently.

And more naturally. Wardman and Chalk Circle were intent on making a largely acoustic album -- acoustic guitar, B3 organ, natural

drum sounds.

"In fact," Wardman recalls, "when we first started mixing we got complaints from the record company that we weren't using enough toys: 'We've got \$50,000 worth of digital effects here and you're not using them! Put some more stuff on it!'"

"But the approach makes it stand out, especially nowadays, from all the Synclavier and Fairlight stuff you hear on the radio."

Derrick Murphy's drums, big as they sound on the album, were recorded with ambient microphones and no effects. "The idea was to use the whole room," says Wardman. "To get a big snare sound by using a big snare. We had mikes all over the room, gated to open up only when triggered by specific drums, and only for a set time span."

Wardman also went for that crisp, well-defined bass sound that recalls the Stranglers' early work. "Part of that is just Brad Hopkins' amp," Wardman admits. "But if the bass is playing the right part, you can turn it up to carry the melody while the guitar and keyboards add flavours." For an example, listen to "Hands," where the descending bass lick anchors the other floating parts.

That separation of elements is even more pronounced in "Empty Park," where a quarter-time guitar intro leads into a half-time drum figure, and then into slow bass and keyboard textures. "We were trying to have one thing happen at a time," Wardman explains. "If the song is good it should hold up on its own. You shouldn't have to have lots of things going on."

Wardman employed other favourite studio techniques: distant, nearly inaudible backing vocals instead of keyboard parts ("This Mourning"); letting the tape roll at the end of a song to see where the band will take it, and to highlight key elements ("Park Island," "N.I.M.B.Y."); using digital multitrack facilities sparingly -- for ambient drum miking or to cut a guitar in stereo.

He also credits engineer Ron Searles for translating his ideas into sharp practice. "I'm more gonzo and he's really meticulous," says Wardman. "He's pretty much responsible for finessing it. I woke up, literally, in the middle of the night with this drum theory. He spent a lot of time getting it just right in the studio."

Wardman may be gonzo, but Chalk Circle remain sensible one-step-at-a-timers. Despite extensive CHR airplay for "This Mourning"; heavy rotation of the video on MuchMusic; all sorts of broad exposure for *The Mending Wall* on AOR radio; the solid backing of CFNY-FM in Toronto; and heavy pockets of fans in southern Ontario and Quebec, the band is playing it safe and smart by touring as Corey Hart's opening act instead of headlining.

"It's hard to say or imagine if people will like the album," says Chris Tait on the day of its release. "You can think you'll be a big hit, book a concert-sized venue, and just die."

"To paraphrase Paul Masson," Adrian Heaps chuckles, "we will play no venue before its time. As an opening act, Chalk Circle can work on their stage show. Anyone can play, but you have to learn how to perform, how to master an audience."

Beyond that, Duke Street is seeking a distribution deal for its entire catalogue, with a bigger, international label. One says Heaps, with personnel permanent enough to support his artists worldwide, as opposed to those subject to the winds of executive-level change which have left so many Canadian bands stranded in the American marketplace. So Chalk Circle might even go international within the year.

"When you're starting out as an independent," says Tait, "you think 'All I've got to do is get a record deal and I'm set.' But that's only the beginning."

It looks like Duke Street might have lot of favourite Chalk Circle stories to tell in the years ahead. □

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BY JONATHAN GROSS

# DOES IT REALLY MATTER

# ANYMORE?

It is no coincidence that 1987 marks the 20th anniversary of both the release of The Beatles *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and the first edition of *Rolling Stone* magazine. The latter and its inaugural cover featuring John Lennon was a seed sewn in the same socio-political soil as the former. Pregnant with the self-importance of the Pepsi generation, they validated each other's existence.

And planted close enough to cross-pollinate they conceived a bastard son - the career rock critic. Yes, the scruffy, unlettered, quasi-bookish former Sam Goody clerk who by dint of a brilliant record collection and a clutch of good pharmaceutical recipes nudged his way past a few freelance gigs into the warming hearth of weekly stipend. There he or she (in a few cases) would expurgate until retirement on a quotidian of triple live bills, double live sets, singularly embarrassing concept albums and too many zero talents.

The record will show that *Sgt. Pepper's* was indeed the first album to be taken seriously by journals of record such as *The New York Times* and in *Rolling Stone*, many a pimply faced youth saw inspiration in the musings of Ralph Gleason, Ben Fong Torres, Jon Landau, Dave Marsh, Greil Marcus, Charles M. Young, Lester Bangs etc. Hunter S. Thompson was in there too for his hell bent gonzo reportage.

Through their fiery prose they would follow Thompson's credo-be part and parcel of the story, become more than a thank-you on the liner notes (remember them?), and get laid or stoned because of it, even though David Lee Roth once said that rock critics liked Elvis Costello because "they look like him."

Rock criticism was a ticket out of nerdville. But the intervening years haven't been good to the profession, the fault (if any) of the information revolution and its rampant illiteracy, the maturing of the music industry which itself was the "rock star of the '70s" according to "The Stone" and a creative community increasingly driven by mercenary/careerist motives.

The environment that emerged in the years after Woodstock was hostile to its own creators. In the case of The Beatles, they were too independent and rich to play the game. As for *Rolling Stone's* critics, power had corrupted and was pre-empted with

snowstorms of slick hype and disposable hits. Actually, the issue is far more complex than that. Each point mentioned here merits its own volume.

But the thesis that the critic in 1987 is a "toothless hag" to quote the lyrics of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" is better than arguable. The relationship between the critic and artist today is a far cry from what Landau had with Springsteen prior to becoming his manager. The bite is gone, the essays that used to thunder across the record stores and radio stations of the land are today just farts into the wind.

To this day Triumph's Gil Moore says his first review was the most important: "In the summer of 1976 we played the Ontario Place Forum, our first big concert date after being just another bar band. Noah James of the *Toronto Star* gave us a huge review the following day and we suddenly became the hottest band in the province. I don't think a review for an album or show since has mattered as much."

And with the bar scene pretty much dead in 1987, few careers can be launched from a live review.

"I don't think the critic is as important as he or she once was because the music for the most part just doesn't merit any serious comment," says Greg Quill who recently made the difficult transition at the *Toronto Star* from rock to general entertainment reporting but maintains a Friday album review section. "You literally have to go through hundreds of albums to get to something decent. Most are beneath criticism let alone outright contempt. Straight marketing/merchandising ploys like Sigue Sigue Sputnik are better critiqued on the business pages."

For sure, Madonna's music has become kind of secondary to the whole pitch. It is now acceptable to wrestle critically with the girl's breasts, marriage and diet. Some have said Madonna owes everything to her hairdresser, a theory which is not entirely incorrect and supports Quill's argument.

The current pop genetic appears to have skipped forward like a stone from the naivete of the early '60s over the weightier material from the late '60s and early seventies to touch down on mid-'70s disco synthetics and take flight again over the flotsam and jetsam of the intervening years - "Yes, down on your left folks you can see the remains of what was

once Pat Benatar."

The charts, for the most part, are so lite 'n' lively that, as Quill postulates, pop is beneath criticism. And its audience is too.

"Most of the kids who go see a Bon Jovi concert are 12 to 16 year olds and really aren't too concerned about what a critic with an older perspective has to say about an album," says Polygram's national publicity coordinator Llyn Adalist. "An act like Bon Jovi is just too big to be affected by criticism and its audience just doesn't see critics in a decisive light."

Criticism is just bellybutton lint in the brainwash and dry cycles of today's music. Quill suspects that Bon Jovi wouldn't have done nearly as well had kids not gone under the thunder of the clip for "Living' On A Prayer." Not to mention the endless stadium tours, fanzines, posters, instore standups and generic *Entertainment Tonight* style TV fluff, little of which was around when *Rolling Stone* was introducing us to a little Bay Area band called Santana.

For we are the most visually fluent society ever, our brains processing and storing hundreds of thousands of images all at the expense of verbal or written data which are really pictures in raw form. Read the book? Naw, I seen the movie, eh.

Years of remote control television and *People* magazine vocabularies have yielded a generation of illiterate future art directors. For them rock critics, and to a lesser extent film critics, are dinosaurs, as obsolete as eight-track tapes.

Perhaps we are being too general or too North American. *Rolling Stone* has long de-emphasized its critical package. Indeed Marsh was fired a few years back for being too ornery. Behind it *Spin* and *Musician* barely cause a ripple. Adalist says "There isn't a magazine in Canada that matters." The surviving dean of critics, Robert Christgau of *the Village Voice* has less impact on the consumer than on the aging co-ed fraternity of newspaper critics across the states, indolent lunchpails waiting for Christgau's weekly medicare.

Says Moore: "We've played everywhere and outside the major markets in the U.S. most rock critics hold down the gardening column as a day job."

Moore is inferring that critics, for the most part, aren't exactly trained professionals, a

# Rock Criticism

long-standing argument among musicians who say their work isn't appreciated in the proper light.

Jane Siberry's manager Bob Blumer, careful not to upset what has been a very strong relationship with the press, says, "One thing I do notice is that many critics are so challenged by Jane's lyrical vocabulary that they often imitate it in their reviews, like they have to speak in her language."

Still, while Siberry has been in heavy rotation in the media, Blumer says reviews really haven't made that much of a difference.

In Canada, where the scene has always maintained an eye on the comparably more intense U.K. mags, the situation is slightly different. There is a duty to the Canadian culture to be considered and the edge-softening realization that the band you panned Thursday might be in line behind you at the Brewer's Retail Friday. Things are a little cozy.

"I can honestly say that bad reviews really hurt The Box's second album *All The Time*, *All The Time*, *All The Time*," says Alert Records publicist Lisa Zbitniew. "We got off on a bad foot with the critics. They felt the record was too light, radio was influenced and we never recovered until 'Closer Together.'"

But in the same breath Zbitniew will say that any mention of her band in print in virtually any context helps in the long run. And Alert's most prominent artist Kim Mitchell is virtually unassailable by critics.

"Kim has been around for so long (over

twelve years since Max Webster was the hippest bar band in Canada) and has such a relaxed attitude that he is perceived as 'one of the boys,'" adds Zbitniew. "Most critics know him well."

Similarly Rush, for years a critic's punching bag, have benefited from a revisionist line the past decade and have been treated with pious reverence. You can't criticize Rush because they've made money as Canadians in the international market. Putting them down would be like putting down the hopes and dreams of an entire industry.

Bryan Adams has recently reached that rarified plateau although shameless commercialists like Loverboy and Platinum Blonde are due for a serious backlash in the press.

According to CBS Records publicist Valerie Lapp, a recent study commissioned by CBS on buying habits revealed that only 16 percent of record buyers were influenced by a review while almost five times that many bought records because of radio airplay.

"There might very well be a Platinum Blonde backlash for the new record but the Blondes' audience is too young to worry about reviews," says Lapp.

Adds Blondes manager Bruce Barrow: "the only place we've really been hurt bad is in Australia when we came out with a lot of image in a time when image wasn't hip. In Canada, sometimes I'm not sure concert reviewers have been to the same show as me. There seems to be several different perspectives among critics as to what their responsibilities ultimately are."

And reprisals are few and far between.

This reporter remembers being chased down the street by Iggy Pop's drummer after a particularly tough slugging of a show, another time being berated over the phone by one Carole Pope after chronicling a dismal showing by Rough Trade. Quill recalls being yelled at by Parachute Club's Lorraine Segato after punishing them in print for a Toronto concert. Zbitniew is the only publicist surveyed who has cut off an unnamed publication for what she feels is continually cruel treatment.

However everyone agrees that although MuchMusic and the other video outlets now overshadow print publicity, any kind of press helps, especially interviews (with photo) and advances on concerts.

"Reviews are very important when shopping in the international market," says Cathy Hahn of RCA, an 18-year veteran in the industry who was pushing reggae at Island Records long before anybody knew who Bob Marley was.

"If a band is going to MIDEM or the New Music Seminar looking for a deal, good reviews from Canadian critics can help. Yes, critics are not as important to the consumer now that AOR rock has been usurped by a singles mentality. But they still matter in the trade."

It would seem that within the growing dichotomy between teenybopper pop so cynical it actually "precludes criticism by anticipating it," to borrow from culture critic Chris Lasch, and the new found grey-at-the-temples lyricism, there will be a role for criticism, which is threatened with becoming an oldies act itself, a profession that could stop and start with one generation. □

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F O C U S O N

# GUITAR

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*In putting together this year's Focus On Guitar, we were looking for a street level perspective. A perspective that embraced the colourful history of the guitar, yet looked forward confidently at evolving tastes and technology. And who better to talk to but three of Canada's top guitar retailers: Richard Shier of Richard's Music Connection in Vancouver; Bob Webster of Long and McQuade in Toronto and*

*Sheldon Sazant of Steve's Music Store in Montreal. Their insights are featured in the following pages. We also spoke to two guitar collectors; Brent Doerner of Helix and Ed McDonald of Yamaha Music Canada. Also included in Focus on Guitar 1987 is an article on guitar repair and maintenance written by the well-known technician Paul Iverson, also of Richard's Music Connection.*

## WHAT DO GUITAR PLAYERS WANT?

By Richard Shier

**M**any music store owners and employees have tried to answer this question a million times: What do guitar players want? What kind of guitar? What amplifiers? What effects, etc? The truth is that most guitar players don't know what they want. They are always looking for that sound. If I could ever find that sound, put it in a can and sell it for \$49.95, I could buy a house in every major city in Canada and my choice of cars for each (two per house, of course!). Guitar players change their minds on what type of gear sound good more than any other member of a band. Drummers buy one kit of drums and keep it for years. They might add a few electronic pads but that's about it. Keyboard players buy a particular kind of synthesizer and add on to it with varying synth modules, but they do not as often as a guitar player change all their gear drastically. Bass players have their set ups which stay pretty much the same year after year. Maybe he will buy the odd new bass, not usually too many effects, and he will maybe take a shot at

a new preamp. Bass players though are fairly consistent in their choice and use of gear.

Then we get to that person in the band that is too loud, ahead of the drummer, and out of tune with a broken string. The guitar player is always on the lookout for a better guitar, an amplifier that sounds like God himself is speaking and effects units to sound like six people playing at the same time. He will travel from music store to music store looking for any product to make him sound better than the next guy. If there is a new product out that a highly visible guitar player uses and that player is well respected, that product becomes a hot product. Guitar players will trade anything from their collection of old gear to get the new bigger and better toy.

Kramer guitars are a perfect example of a guitar player (Eddie Van Halen) influencing a product's sales dramatically. Kramer went from an unknown guitar line to leading the field in ten years. Kramer's rise in popularity increased on a parallel course with Edward Van Halen's career.

The market for new products under the guitar players category is constantly expanding. With the introduction of MIDI to the guitarist, a whole new dimension in playing is opening up. Products like the MIDIVerbII, Microverb and SPX-90 II, have introduced an inexpensive way for the guitar player to expand his sound library. Combined with products like the various guitar synthesizers available (ie Roland, IVL, Charvel, Photon) the guitar player has a wealth of technology at his disposal. MIDI is becoming a new area for guitar players just like the electric guitar was when Les Paul thought it up. To what degree MIDI will play a part will be determined by how well manufacturers can develop their products.

So the question that we started out to ask is what do guitar players want? The answer is, any product that gives them an edge over the next guy. No two players will be quite the same. Different amp, pick ups, guitars, tremolo systems, strings, effects and even a certain brand of pick to get that sound.

Everyone hears a musical tone slightly differently. Therefore every guitarist is going to have a slightly different opinion of what works and sounds good. This is great news for manufacturers of new products, because as long as there are guitar players changing their minds of what is good and what is not, manufacturers will be trying to satisfy the demand.

# THE ELECTRIC GUITAR MEANS ROCK 'N' ROLL

By Bob Webster

So what exactly is hot today in products for the guitar player. Guitars that grab the attention of the players seem to be Kramer, Fender, Charvel, B.C. Rich, Jackson, Gibson (yes Gibson), Hamer and special mention for Paul Reed Smith guitars. Kramer and Fender seem to be the leaders in the quantity of sales, although other lines may carry more interest to individual players simply because they are in smaller supply. It is always a fact for any store that there are always a group of musicians that ask for that hard to get guitar, due almost exclusively from seeing advertising in trade or music magazines. This is how a lot of the smaller manufacturers have developed a large following for the higher priced guitars.

The tube sound is very popular with guitarists and thus, manufacturers are rising to the task. Groove tube electronics is a company that has produced two products based on the sound obtained from tubes. The bass and guitar preamps have proven very popular with old school guitar players. The sounds achieved can be fine tuned to the ear of the individual players. The guitar preamp especially is amazing in the variety of sounds it can produce. The new Fender twin and Champ are two other amplifiers that are heading for increasing popularity. Fender, being one of the original tube amplifier lines, has done it again with these new products. Check them out. Other amplifiers are of course the Seymour Duncan convertible and the industry standard Marshall amplifier. Mesa Boogie is always a sought after tube amplifier as well as the only solid state amp that is high in the ranking, Gallien-Krueger.

Effect units for guitars have a very wide range. Rack mount, pedal or stand alone units have guitar players searching for that right combination. D.O.D. is truly an innovator in this area with a great selection of products available in pedal form as well as rack mount effects, in their Digitech line. Their programmable distortion unit (Model PDS-1550) is extremely popular. Their three main lines in effects are D.O.D. FX series, Digitech pedals and the Digitech rack systems. All three series are well worth trying.

Alesis is another line that is very strong with products like the MIDIVerb II and MicroVerb. This company is very aggressive and the customer receives great value for their dollars. Three new products just introduced are the Micro Enhancer, Micro Limiter and Micro Gate. Watch this company bring you many new products not only for guitar players, but all musicians.

There is of course many other effects available, but these two companies seem to be leading the way for guitarists to expand possibilities for their sound. Another interesting fact is that you look over the names of companies I have mentioned in this article and the vast majority of product lines are American made. American companies are producing a great selection of products at competitive prices. With the Japanese Yen going up over the past year, American companies can now compete on price and quality.

Technology has certainly changed the way we play and produce music today, but as I've discovered as manager of Long & McQuade's guitar department, guitars are pretty much the same today as when the first electric solid body started things rolling in the early fifties. And while guitar makers have diversified body stylings and expanded selection, guitar players still ask the same questions when in the market for their first or fiftieth guitar. In my store in Toronto I see them all - from the ever increasing fresh crop of new players to the professionals.

For the novice or hobbist entering the music store to purchase his first instrument, price is usually a primary concern. For the younger musician, who feels drawn to the instrument but is unsure of his aptitude, a popular choice is either of the Korean-made Goya acoustic or Vantek electric models whose bottomline guitars fall under \$300. But more important than price is whether the guitar is right.

Buying a guitar is a very personal choice, and not one always made wisely during one Saturday afternoon in a music shop surrounded by crowds of other guitar players. Take ample time to play the guitars you are considering to test their feel, as not every guitar will suit you, and ask any questions you have about the instrument. You should have in mind, before entering the store, a basic idea of what you want, what you need and what you can spend. Ideally, the guitar you choose should sound good, be playable, and feel comfortable.

I always stress to my customers, and Long & McQuade stresses as policy, the importance of a solid in-house service and exchange policy. The guitar you choose at Long & McQuade can always be traded in or exchanged. This reputation speaks for itself, though, through our long list of loyal repeat customers.

Which brings us to the next category of guitar players I regularly deal with, those with a bit more experience under their belts. Since the guitar's capabilities have been tremendously expanded over the past few years through a plethora of effects and signal processing units, not to mention the advent of recently introduced MIDI capabilities, many of these players are interested in the latest developments in outboard technology.

Although minor modifications have updated electric solid bodies, and artist input has encouraged guitar makers to incorporate certain features all major innovations have occurred in the technology of outboard gear.

The hotly contested issue of MIDI and the guitar tops the query list, with recommendations on pickups in general and new effects modules running a close second. Basic judgement calls and questions are best answered by handing the customer a guitar and letting him see for himself. No amount of talk can replace actual experimentation, which begins with the individual guitars themselves.

Concerning the instrument, it's easy to tell what's in demand and most popular by what I'm moving in the department. Electric solid bodies still outsell acoustics two to one, and among the electrics, my best sellers are all models which resemble the Stratocaster, with Fender's authentic Strat the top seller. As has been proven in recent years, the Japanese have improved guitar making considerably, and Japan is where most Fenders are made today. Their new American Standard Stratocaster, however, which has just come on the market, is a well crafted North American made model which is destined to give the other Strats a run for their money.

Other popular models are Gibson Les Pauls and SGs, which never seem to diminish in reputation or appeal, and the Larrivee RS4 which resembles a Strat but is Canadian made. I must say I've been quite impressed with the Larrivee electric solid bodies of the last few years. The company customizes the RS4s with your choice of hardware, pickups, neck (bolt or through neck), and tremolo systems, an important bonus for many guitarists. My best mover in acoustic guitars is by far the Quebec made Simon and Patrick Merisier, a solid top which sells for under \$200. No doubt about it though, when it comes to electric models, the standards are still hot choices as are their reissues. Fender has just reissued the Paisley Telecaster which will catch eyes.

Now for the issue which has many guitar players feeling left out in the cold technologically: MIDI. As far as the art of MIDI for guitar is concerned, it's not yet perfected. Because the guitar is such an expressive instrument, reliant upon each player's articulation, triggering the pickup properly to effect a clear tone for MIDI is a hit and miss situation at best. What usually happens is an unclear signal to MIDI, because left and right hand techniques vary greatly between players, which causes a tracking delay. The manufacturers are quickly trying to clean things up, but until they do, MIDI application is really only used in the studio, where a guitarist has the time to switch back to guitar after MIDing to synth. As it stands now, it's not chosen for live performance because, except



# Guitars really haven't changed that much.

to rely on left and right hand technique and a particular model of guitar for a sound, amps and signal processors stretch that base to define their particular sound today. And technical limits are always willing to be pushed further.

Some new items guitar players will find interesting were recently on display at the annual NAMM show. One of the products which I took note of was the prototype of a digital amp which offers all tone, chorus, etc. effects at the push of a button, plus MIDI out. They are expected to retail for \$3,000 US (read over \$4,000 CAN) when initially marketed. Another intriguing trend in evidence was what I call the "autograph paint jobs" for guitars offered by Gibson, Lado and ESP, in the tradition of the poster guitars of Jackson.

Over at Fender I noticed product endorsement still predominates marketing. Their new Yngwie Malmsteen model, a Strat with scalloped fretboard, is a noteworthy new entry. The new Ibanez line features hot coloured guitars with "handles" in them (basically a solid body with a hole in the side).

I mention these particular new models because they reflect another feature guitar players key in on when shopping. Alongside popular brand names and custom features, the look of an instrument creates much attention. As seasoned veterans know, B.C. Rich introduced weird body shapes in their Warlords, Mockingbirds and Bitches. The '80s answer for guitarists on the look for eye-catching style are the bold new shapes and colours of Ibanez.

for one brand, MIDI pickups do not allow you to return to your guitar.

The Canadian made IVL Pitch Rider 7000 is the most popular MIDI pickup because it has a live feature which allows this switchback. Gibson distributes the Photon MIDI unit which is probably the best on the market when used with six plain strings whose clarity triggers a cleaner signal than other strings. Since MIDI technology has only just approached the guitar, cost it still an issue too. IVL's goes for under \$1,000.

There are however, an arsenal of other more reliable effects which I find guitar players ask about in droves. The Tom Scholz Rock modules are by far a popular choice. At

half rack size, you can put two together for between \$375 and \$475 each. These signal processors give you overdrive, tone enhancers, chorus, and delay options to produce today's sounds. The new Ibanez digital delay pedals are also "must have" items, judging by their demand.

What all of this effect emphasis tells us, of course, is that guitars really haven't changed all that much, but what can you do with them has. Technology has certainly provided innovative advancements in the keyboard and computer areas while guitar players have stretched themselves through technique and outboard gear to keep pace and advance their craft. Where guitar players have always had

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Looking and sounding good are the aesthetic concerns of the guitarist and achieving these within a budget takes serious consideration. Inflation has hit all product lines, but in reality, guitar makers have fought hard to find ways to make good instruments cheaper. In the late '50s fewer guitars were made because the age of the electric solid body had not yet taken hold. It can be argued more time was spent on detail and quality during those early years. When companies began to shift their manufacturing to Japan to accommodate demand and cut production costs, costs were kept down, but quality was suspect. Today Japan is making good quality guitars and the yen is up - meaning some guitar players are looking to Canadian or North American made instruments to avoid duty-inflated prices. At Long & McQuade we've always sung the praises of Canadian made guitars, and customer approval of Larrivee and Simon & Patrick guitars lends credibility to this belief.

Collectors will argue that vintage models sound best, because the wood has matured or the original Humbuckers acquire personality, but in truth, recent models are of high quality and within reach price-wise. You can pick up a Fender Squire for \$350 or new American Standard for just under \$1500. A Gibson Les Paul ranges from \$700 to \$2500, and their SGs go for \$650 to \$1400. Considering inflation, these are comparable to the late sixties' prices.

Many times a young player will come in and ask for the effect unit that can duplicate a

sound he's heard on an album. Keeping up with the new developments in equipment and the music scene in general is an increasing challenge, but one which I think Long & McQuade handles very well.

For the inquisitive young guitarist, we spend time to test various pedals and processors out with him. In a case recently where a young player didn't know the difference in tuning for a locking tremolo system, I explained the system to him on the guitar he was playing. When a seasoned player asks my opinion on the difference between a maple and rosewood fretboard, beyond relating the basic qualities of those woods, I hand him guitars which will allow him to experience the differences himself. When in doubt, I say,

check it out, ask questions, and make sure the store backs everything up with an exchange policy.

To keep abreast of the latest modifications and advances in equipment, Long & McQuade regularly schedules in store product sessions with manufacturers. IVL recently came in to demonstrate and detail their MIDI Pitch Rider 7000. In this way, we are able to best inform guitar players and provide them with the models and gear they need. Today, even though acoustic sales are healthy, the largest segment of my customers are rock 'n' rollers. As symbols of the genre, guitars still mean rock'n'roll.

*(Bob Webster is the Guitar Department Manager for Long & McQuade in Toronto.)*

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## Guitar Business Is Like Fashion

By Ted Davis

As part of his job description as co-manager of Steve's Music Store in Montreal, Sheldon Sazant might include fortune telling.

It is those kinds of talents that can best serve Sazant in his quest to buy the best all-around guitars for Montreal's biggest guitar store.

Sazant says the guitar industry is like the fashion business - always introducing new styles, some valid and some not. Said Sazant, "Its up to us to anticipate which of the new products we see at trade shows will be a fad and which will have long term appeal."

Sazant has been in the business of guitars for 10 years now, working his way through the stock and sales departments to his current position. "The competition is very in-

tense in the guitar industry," said Sazant. "Sometimes we have to take chances to stay on top of things."

One gamble that paid off was a decision to stock the moulded one-piece carbon graphite basses made by Steinberger. That was approximately seven years ago and the New York made Steinberger was the first "headless" bass imported to Canada. Five years later, all manner of "headless" basses are selling briskly to bassists across the country. "That was a very good gamble," said Sazant.

While not in a trailblazing role, Steve's is also responding to a growing demand for guitar effects devices. Specifically, MIDI and MIDI modules for the generating of a wide variety of MIDI-accessed have been selling well, especially considering the high cost and complexity of the technology.

At the other end of the technology scale, Sazant has noted an increase in the popularity of the locking tremolo for eliciting note-bending wails from an electric guitar without putting it out of tune. He says the pick-ups used in conjunction with the locking tremolo are of the configuration of two single coils and one humbucking. "People like Eddie Van Halen have led a return to playing the electric rock guitar with more expression. Tremolo had gone out of style after Jimi Hendrix but now rock guitarists are looking for that same level of emotion in their playing."

Other guitar "peripherals" that perform well at Steve's cash register are the Peavey products. Sazant said Peavey is now a standard setter. He said that the quality and price of products made by the American company have been consistent through currency fluctuations that, at the time of the inflated U.S. dollar, would have given Japanese products a cost advantage. Said Sazant, "Peavey is a company that definitely does it right in all areas of marketing their products."

With 180 acoustic guitars and 365 electric guitars and basses ranging in cost from \$75.00 to \$5,000.00 on display, shopping for a guitar at Steve's could be a potentially bewildering experience. Forty staff, including sales personnel, technicians, and keyboard, p.a. and drums specialists, help ease the process. Sazant says many of the staff are former customers of Steve's who have built up a long relationship with the store in the wake of their first purchase there.

In helping a burgeoning guitarist find his or her first instrument, Steve's sales staff try to establish a musical profile of the customer, eliciting favorite musics, influences, interests, etc. They then try to accomodate what is often not a very large budget.

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## GUITAR COLLECTORS

# BRENT DOERNER- INVESTING IN SOUND

By Dara Rowland

Helix guitarist Brent Doerner's first guitar wasn't exactly a collector's item, but it fit the bill nicely for a 14 year old from Waterloo, Ontario. The Sears solid body electric soon made way for his second axe, a Guild semi-acoustic and several others over the next 14 years of his playing career. Not all would be considered hot collector's items, even if left in their original state, which isn't likely considering his penchant for customizing.

For Doerner, who is best known for his guitar work with Helix, collecting guitars is simply an occupational habit and personal passion. When he tires of his stock, he goes shopping for a guitar which "brings back the fire." What attracts him is the look and feel of a guitar and how the instrument suits his studio or stage requirements. The details which snare investment minded collectors - the instrument's date of issue, its original condition (no resurfacing, no customizing in any way) - do not follow him as he works his way down the music shop wall. But no matter how much "fire" the new axe may promise in the shop, chances are it will need a few minor adjustments.

Because it wouldn't stay in tune (no locking system), he traded his '64 Fender Stratocaster for an antique cream Gibson SG, which he still owns. Unhappy with the original volume control system, he changed the four controls to one master control, two volume controls and one tone control. The toggle switch was moved from its original bottom position and the vibrato was left on, but sawed down. The vintage pickup with non-adjustable pole pieces remains.

His Gibson Flying V, an early '80s reissue of the original V with solid mahogany body underwent little visual change. Because he has small hands, (many guitar necks are uncomfortably large, he says) he had the neck shaved down slightly, and because he finds lacquer finishes "sticky when playing," he opted for sealed wood. For his personal purposes, he finds Gibsons have narrower necks and nicer looks overall, and provide the fat sound he goes for in the studio.

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The balance of his collection includes a BC Rich Mockingbird (white), which features a Guitar Tech locking system, an EMG pickup in the back position, and original Humbuckers up front; one of the first imported Fender Squires; a Les Paul 25th Anniversary Issue; an Ibanez acoustic with double diamond fret markers which he used on a couple of albums; a red and stainless steel Kramer with reversed neck; and a Tokai Telecaster (the legendary guitar maker who couldn't fight U.S. customs was finally bought out by Fender, whose wares they copied).

From a kit, he assembled a combination Strat/Tele hybrid Charcoal Sunburst with two Humbuckers and a Floyd Rose Vibrato system. Over the years, he's owned a Gibson Explorer limited edition, Gibson Firebird, BC Rich Warlord, two Telecasters and the '64 Strat. He's currently in the process of selling his "screaming yellow" kit guitar which features a Star body, Jackson neck, sharkfin inlays, and one pickup-one volume control.

The prides of his collection, though, are the result of his endorsement agreement with Kramer. He personally selected the white Kramer Baretta with single Jackson pickup (which he exchanged for the Kramer's usual Schaller pickup) from the shelf at Kramer's plant in New Jersey. It remains his favourite guitar and sees a lot of action - mostly on stage. Because he likes to avoid heavy output from his pickups ("I'd rather control that from my amp"), Doerner complements the Jackson pickups which allow him to get a full bodied mid-range output.

The custom painted Kramer, which matches the band's sixth album cover, is another favourite in the collection. Seen in the "Wild In The Streets" Helix video, it has a Gibson pickup which runs without a capacitor in the tone control and is equipped with a Floyd Rose locking vibrato system.

During his years of swapping and collecting, Doerner has also amassed "an army of parts, pickups, and necks" which he trades and deals. When Kahler bought out Guitar Tech, he made sure to purchase several of the vibrato systems.

As an active professional, Doerner must surround himself with guitars which specifically accommodate the studio and stage performances. In the studio he prefers the Gibson Les Paul for its fat sound. Although "most people like heavy output from their pickups," he notes, in recording he lets the amps do the work for cleaner distortion. In live situations, it's one of his two favourite Kramers, which he has endorsed since 1985. One of the major considerations for Doerner, who is small in stature, is the narrowness of a guitar's neck and its comfortable fit for performance.

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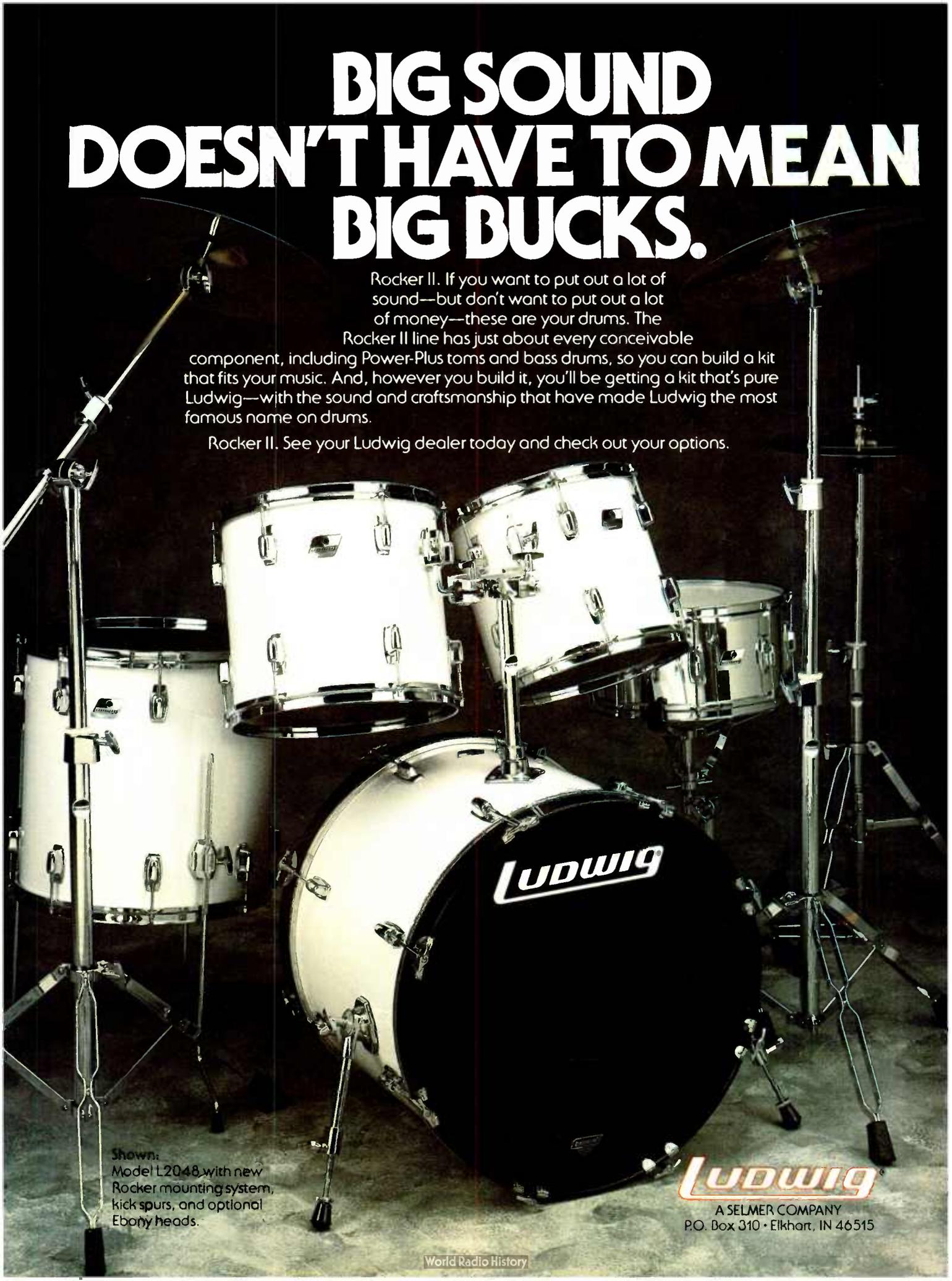
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## GUITAR COLLECTORS

### GRABBING A PIECE OF HISTORY

It was almost twenty years ago when Ed McDonald walked into a music shop with \$200 and bought his first guitar. The '57 Fender Stratocaster, its original finish hidden beneath white epoxy paint, would someday centre his ever expanding and changing guitar collection. That day, however, it was just another used guitar on the wall, and a pretty ugly one at that. McDonald wasn't aware the pre-CBS instrument was worth very much until he took it in for a neck adjustment and the shop owner offered a new guitar in trade for the Strat. With such unusual interest, he decided to forego the swap and do a little investigating. That was 1968. Today, restored to its original gold finish, it's his favourite guitar and worth he estimates a cool \$2,000.

What began as a fortunate purchase for McDonald in the late sixties has grown into a passion. Focussing on Fender and Gibson solid body electric models, he figures he's owned almost every one made including a '52 Les Paul Goldtop (the first year that model was made), an Original Dot Neck 335 Gibson, and a '58 Les Paul Tiger Stripe Gibson. About the only model he's yet to own is the original Gibson Explorer. Although his collection has changed considerably and often over the years, and he's recently sold several, he now has nine Fenders and Gibsons: the '57 Stratocaster, a '57 white Strat, '61 left-handed Sunburst Strat, a '63 left-handed Sunburst Strat, a '64 Cherry Strat, a '64 Sunburst Strat, a '67 Black Strat with maple neck, and a Fender blond 12 string electric. His only Gibson in the pile today is a '58 Flying V, one of only 98 world-wide, and one of only 38 with a black pick guard.

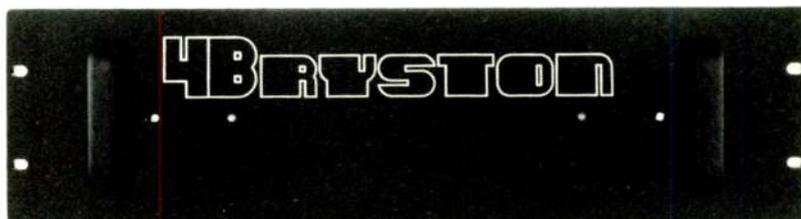
Although much attention is drawn to the values of guitars made by Fender prior to the company's takeover by CBS in '66, and late '50s and early '60s Gibson models, true value of any particular model is difficult to nail down. In a market where rarity and appreciation rule, selling price and actual worth is more or less a game between what the owner feels is fair, and what the purchaser is prepared to live with. One thing is certain however, the values of vintage models only increase.

McDonald, who watches the world market as well as action on the home turf with inter-

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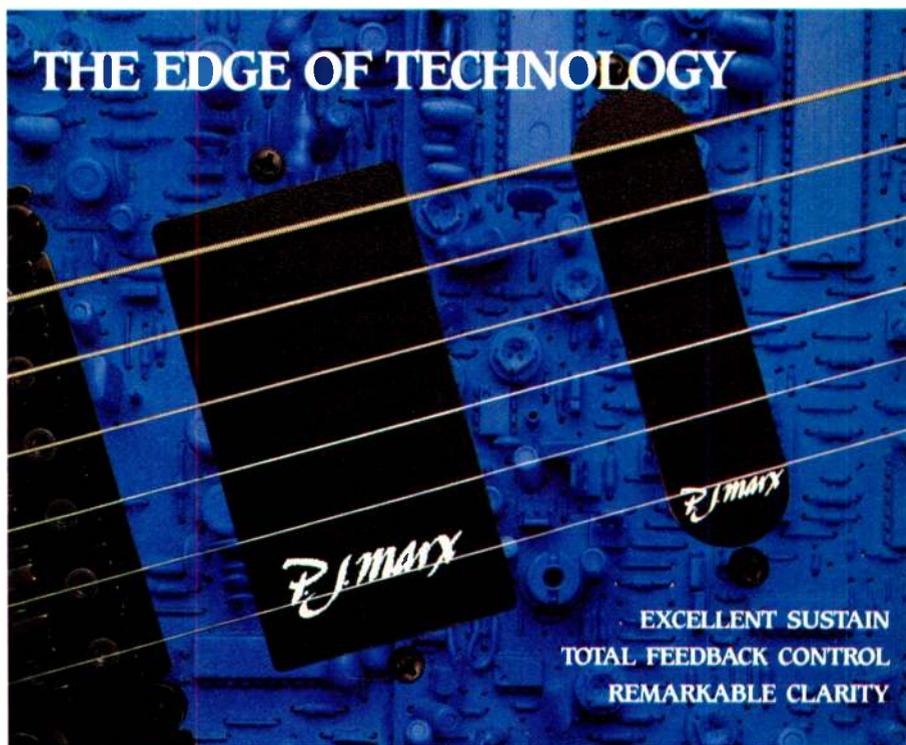
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est, notes the current trend for collectibles - from antiques to '50s paraphernalia - has generated interest in musical instrument collections. Guitar players aren't the only ones on the lookout for custom colour Stratocasters (which are nearly impossible to find now), and they must be prepared to bid against a growing number of people who view guitars as simple investments, inflationary hedges. McDonald admits some of his best customers have been dentists.

In citing one incident, McDonald recalls seeing a used '59 Gibson in 1968 selling for \$650. Today he estimates the guitar could be worth anywhere from \$4,000 to \$14,000 depending upon condition. Certain models will appreciate faster and more dramatically than others too, based on limited editions and availability. A maple neck, mint condition Stratocaster can fetch \$3,000 on a good day.

Although newer guitars often don't have the warmth and feel to veteran axemen, young players have grown up familiar with Asian made brands. What does this do for the new generation of guitar collectors and the North American vintage models of Fender and Gibson? McDonald insists that while his

## Non musicians buying guitars as investments

Yamaha R6X 12/12 is such a close Gibson/Fender combination, a combination of the old standards, few newer generation guitar makes compare to the standards set by early days at the Fender and Gibson plants. Today, many musicians, he notes, play the vintage models in the studio and Kramers on stage. As for the kids, once they notice what their heroes are playing on albums or on stage, they become literate in the history of guitars.

Oddly, no association or established network exists to keep empassioned guitar collectors in touch with the action and markets around the world. Basically divided into two camps - those who play and those to invest - it's a loosely knit group who establish connections, and new acquisitions, by word of mouth and investigation. So far the only organized gatherings are small trade shows in the United States. And although many people still feel the deals are hotter south of the border, warns McDonald, the present economy suggests it's not worth the ride.

The bottom line for McDonald, guitar collector and player, is "I wouldn't buy a guitar I wouldn't play." And he's always wanted to play a '59 Gibson Sunburst solid body with PAFs in case you're wondering.

Dara Rowland



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## DIARY OF A GUITAR REPAIRMAN (CIRCA 1987)



By Paul Iverson

As contemporary music continues down its evolutionary path, so does the task of keeping up with the changes, as well as going back and fine-tuning one's grasp of styles from past eras. What this means for the modern stringed-instrument technician is being competent at, for example, guitar synthesizer components and their installation, and also say, repairing the back of a multi-laminated mandolin or the neck of a pre-war Martin acoustic. I have had a love of electric guitars since my childhood, and with my growth as a guitar craftsman, I have more or less back-tracked to learn about instruments that were popular way before I was born.

I'm reminded of an elderly former repairman that I have called several times for help with things like re-skinning a traditional banjo (nowadays you just buy a mould hoop with a pre-attached plastic head and put it on), and it reminds me that, for all my professed knowledge, I am indeed not as worldly as I would like to be. But here we have the old syndrome of "time waits for no man," and so you just fill in as many blanks as you can, while forging ahead.

In my position as head of a guitar (etc.) repairshop at Richard's Music Connection (formerly Richard's Rare Guitars) in Vancouver, the job at hand is to be competent in all ways, give the people the service they want at a fair price, and try to extend the feeling that each individual's needs are given careful consideration.

Let's take a typical day at the repair shop. I arrive late morning to survey the instruments to be worked on that day. Often, one request or another will remind me that I've been neglecting to stock some item or part, so that goes on the purchase order sheet. The music business has become so specialized and diverse that one must anticipate all types of supplies needed to accommodate the day to day work orders. You need a good supply of pickups, there are hundreds on the market. Tuning pegs for electrical, acoustic, classical

guitars, banjo and mandolin tuners must be there at a moment's notice. A good supply of bridges and nuts must be around, as well as a selection of "Whammy Bars" or vibrato units. There are even lots of different parts and methods to hold a strap on!

After some attention to the parts, the repairs begin. A few people have brought guitars in for simple restringing and tuning. If I see something wrong, such as a bridge on an acoustic guitar that is lifting away from the body, or faulty tuning pegs, I will call it to their attention and explain their options, without being too much of a pushy salesman type. Much like driving a car with faulty brakes or bald tires, most people will realize that certain maintenance is inevitable and that if they want to enjoy their instrument, they must maintain it properly.

Another person has brought in a guitar for a fret dressing and setup. Most people develop their own style of playing, and often will lean towards playing mainly in certain areas, and these spots will wear down more. A fret dressing (or levelling) will eliminate these low spots which cause notes to frap out and buzz - the instrument can sound true again, like a new guitar. With a good setup, it will be at its optimum of comfort, and can be tailored to the individual's stylistic needs.

Next I must install a Floyd Rose vibrato, one of the new high-tech units on the market. These units cost about the same as a cheap guitar, but with the competitive level of the music business these days, most players will spring for one rather than be left behind in the dust!

Someone else wants a pickup mounted on a bass guitar in a position where there is at present no pickup. It has to be drafted out for alignment and tonal enhancement, then all the parts in the surrounding area are removed, a new cavity is routed, and the pickup is installed and sired up.

Meanwhile, calls have been coming in and people drop by for more work. Someone wants a new pickguard made for their Fender Stratocaster, another wants a custom designed neck made to go on an existing guitar. Prominent recording acts drop in and need their guitars ready for a session that night, and a guy who plays for his own enjoyment would also like his, if possible. You do the best you can. People drop by for a replacement piece on a tuning peg - a service I try to do as a free professional favour, on the spot, whenever possible. People bring in broken necks, water or fire-damaged instruments, ones which had unfortunate meetings with a drum kit or stage light, struts loosened by humidity and age, parts worn and broken, it goes on and on.

In the repair business, you have to be ready for anything, and have an aptitude and creativity that can cover you whenever something isn't a text book case. You deal with all ages and types of musically inclined people, and try to make them all feel equally important.

Thank God I'm also a musician, or I might think they were crazy for caring so much about a few pieces of wood and metal! □

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## Breathing Techniques For The Guitar Player

By Sonny Greenwich

I've had many playing experiences in Canada and the United States since I first picked up the guitar in my teens. I've performed with such jazz musicians as saxophonist Dougie Richardson and pianist Connie Maynard (my first band) in Canada, sax player Charles Lloyd at the Village Gate in New York City, John Handy's band in the States, and my own band of Teddy Saunders, Jimmy Garrison and Jack DeJohnette at the Village Vanguard in New York. In 1969 Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea, David Holland, Tony Williams and I played the Colonial Tavern in Toronto, and shortly after, I played downhill to Davis at Massey Hall.

Since 1983, my quartet has consisted of Fred Henke (piano), Ron Sequin (bass) and Andre White (drums), who are all well known Montreal jazz musicians.

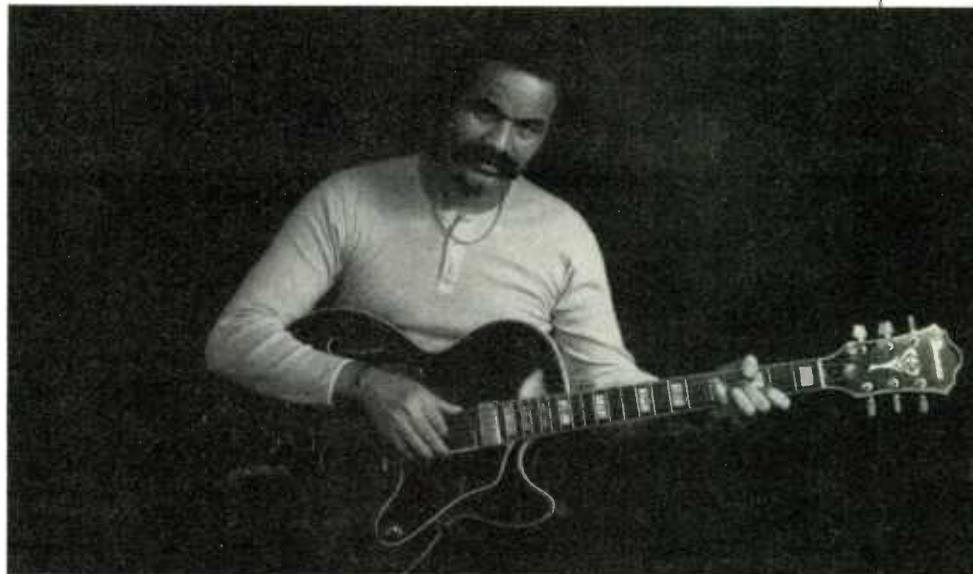
Although I'm recognized as a jazz artist, I don't think my music can be totally categorized as jazz -- I think of it as modern creative expression. I explore a wide range of music from ballads to fiery, very free pieces. I think of it like an ocean -- you have to have the storm and the calm that follows -- one thing helps the other express itself.

One of my concepts for playing the guitar is the use of breathing techniques to add lift to performance in jazz improvisation. I talked with Miles Davis about this very subject when I played with his band, and he and I use the same technique.

This involves breathing from the diaphragm or forcing air from the diaphragm and translating this lift or energy to the energy of your mind and fingers, releasing you more from the instrument itself and giving a greater freedom of expression. This is in opposition to the standard technique of a more intellectualized expression, where the intellectual energy goes directly to the guitar. We all start out the latter way and of course, many become masters of the style. I call this technique "playing the box", or being directly in contact with the guitar. My way of playing is more closely related to wind instruments where the expression is based in breathing. I find my technique frees me from the standard concept of the guitar, and allows me to play the instrument as an extension of myself.

This concept also relates to the chord structure in music itself. By flying away from the basic structure of the tune being played, a wider viewpoint is achieved, revealing alternative avenues to explore in interpreting the song.

This technique requires the use of heavier



gauge, round-wound strings (which I find give a brighter sound), and strong hard picks. Because my style of playing uses a high energy level, I used to break strings every night in the beginning of my jazz career. Now I find I can exert more control over this energy, giving it out in bursts rather than non-stop attack.

My first influence was the saxophone. With inspiration from Charlie Parker, Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane and others, my concepts of improvising are built around what I feel is the greater freedom of energy-expression and fluidity of the saxophone. In writing, my chordal approach reflects the extended chord voicings of the piano style of Bill Evans, Red Garland, and other such musicians. I seldom play chords in performance because of the presence of the piano.

When Don Thompson, Terry Clarke and I were members of the John Handy band in 1967 in New York playing opposite Bill Evans at the Vanguard, a musician came to our table one night and announced that Bill wanted to talk to me. Evans was interested in my ideas about composition.

Just prior to joining Handy, I had formed the concept with my band in Toronto of playing from a diagram related to cubism and the work of artist Paul Klee. This involved using the fretboard of the guitar as a block diagram on which I could play patterns in different formations across the board, something akin to computer-generated patterns today. Other than that, I had to admit I was devoid of ideas about composition. Since receiving my first guitar from my father who taught me the few chords he knew, I never studied formally and still do not read music. During my playing

days with Handy, I concentrated on comping behind John, but would inject some of my patterns during my solos. Larry Coryell, who would often be in the audience, released a record with Elvin Jones (drums) in which he played a tune based on these patterns. I often wondered what caused Bill Evans to ask me that question, but our talk stands as one of the highlights of my career.

When I came back to Canada after playing with Handy in New York, I reformed my own band and began to compose again, using these patterns and seeing the guitar's potential in visual terms. I have since written several compositions and am currently working on my fifth album which reflects many of my earlier pieces.

I've never been one to follow fads when it comes to guitars or amplifiers. I used to play an old Guild electric semi-acoustic, but have since switched to an Ibanez semi-acoustic. I find the Ibanez gives me a really big sound and reminds me in many ways of a piano. For years I have used a very basic Stage 400 amp. Once Ed Bickert called me to ask what kind of amp I used and, although the Stage is perfect for my non-chordal playing approach, I had to explain the amp probably would not suit his style, which differs greatly from mine.

One of the beautiful things about being a musician is to learn from the styles of many different musicians and their expressions, regardless of their instrument or musical genre. There is something to learn from them all.

*(Sonny Greenwich is an internationally known Montreal based jazz guitarist.)*

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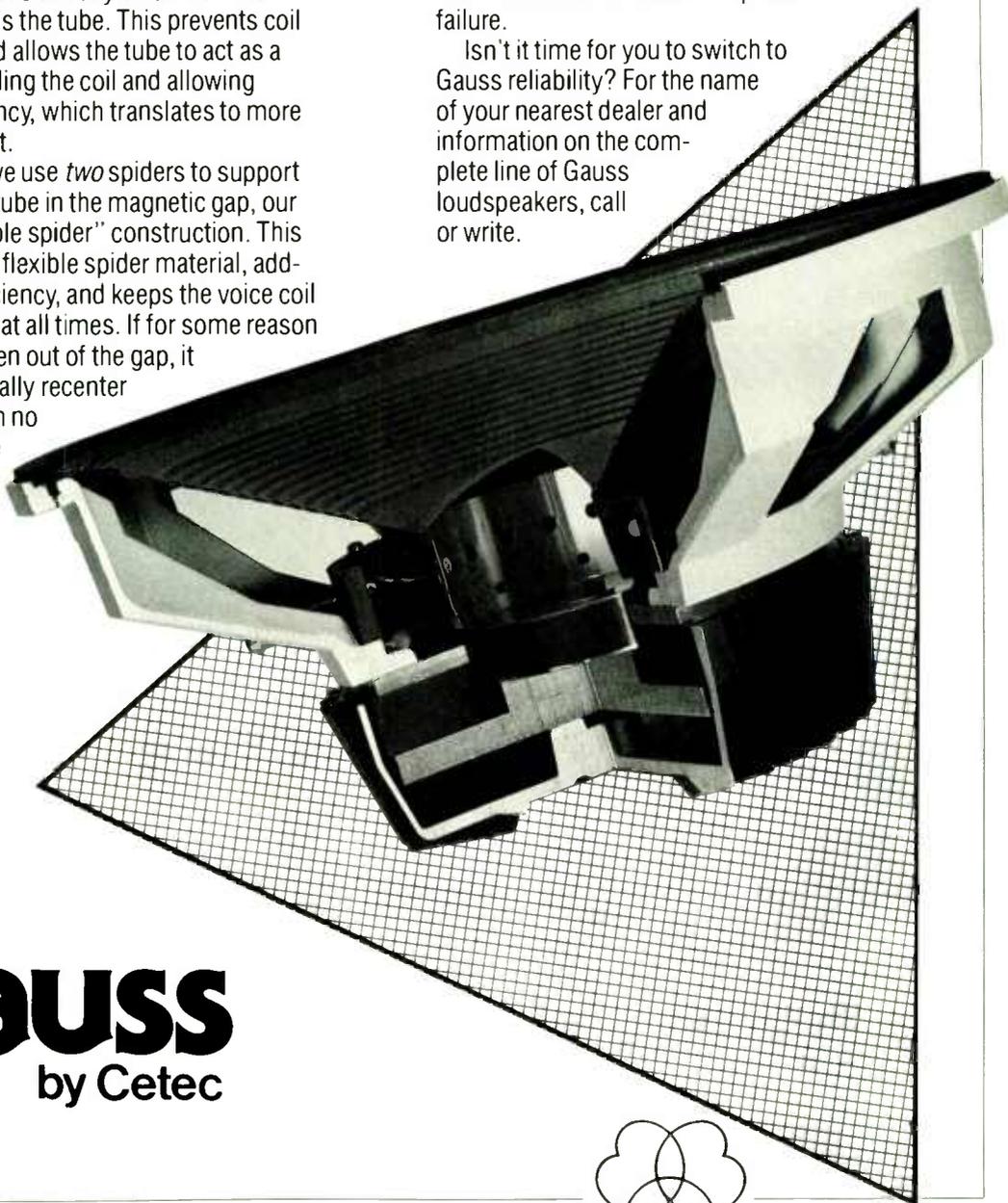
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# KEYBOARDS

## Not Being Limited By Limits

By Bobby Wiseman of Blue Rodeo

I play an Acetone organ which is about twenty-seven years old. It's from 1959 or 1960 I believe. It was a hundred dollars at Long and McQuade in Winnipeg in 1976. It's all I could afford when I wanted an electric piano. I also play a Clavinet (remember "Superstition" by Stevie Wonder?), the Clavinet belonged to my brother Ronnie. Ronnie now uses a Roland JX8P, a TX7 and he regularly rents things like the Ensoniq. Does he care about his Clavinet? Hell no. So I got the clavinet for free.

Now the guitar players in Blue Rodeo, Greg Keelor and Jim Cuddy, weren't particularly interested in the sound of the Clavinet strings because they felt it clashed with the sound of the guitars and it's true that all three (the two guitars and the Clavinet), are in the mid ranges of sound. As a result of that, I somehow developed a very different approach to playing the Clavinet because I felt really stupid taking this extra keyboard from gig to gig and never using it. So I started using it percussively. Using drumsticks I do glissandos and generally hit the whole thing. The wood is splintered all over but it sounds great. I run it through a digital delay.

Sometimes I even use the sticks on the keyboard surface like the way mallets would be used on marimba or xylophone: Playing intervals of two notes. Other times I'll play the sticks horizontally against the keyboard interface, that's to say one stick pushed against the black notes and the other stick against the white notes. I do that on the Acetone too. I also play the piano that way without sticks but using my arms. A lot of my piano interests historically have been in freely improvised music. Those kinds of things, using your arms or whatever, are certainly part of that technique. My amplifier is an R.V.S., \$200 and bottom of the line.

Primarily I'm an improviser. Sometimes I focus on playing with the drums sometimes the bass, sometimes the rhythm guitar, sometimes just the melody that's being sung. Sometimes I'll be a little anarchist and play not necessarily with anyone but intentionally against the band because something worthwhile may only form that way.

I try to chase understanding the essence of a song and I find few musicians truly lend their heart to capturing the essence of a song. In other words as my friend the famous drummer and leader of Toronto's Human Machine Parts - Graeme Kirkland - would put it, 'it doesn't matter how terrific your ar-

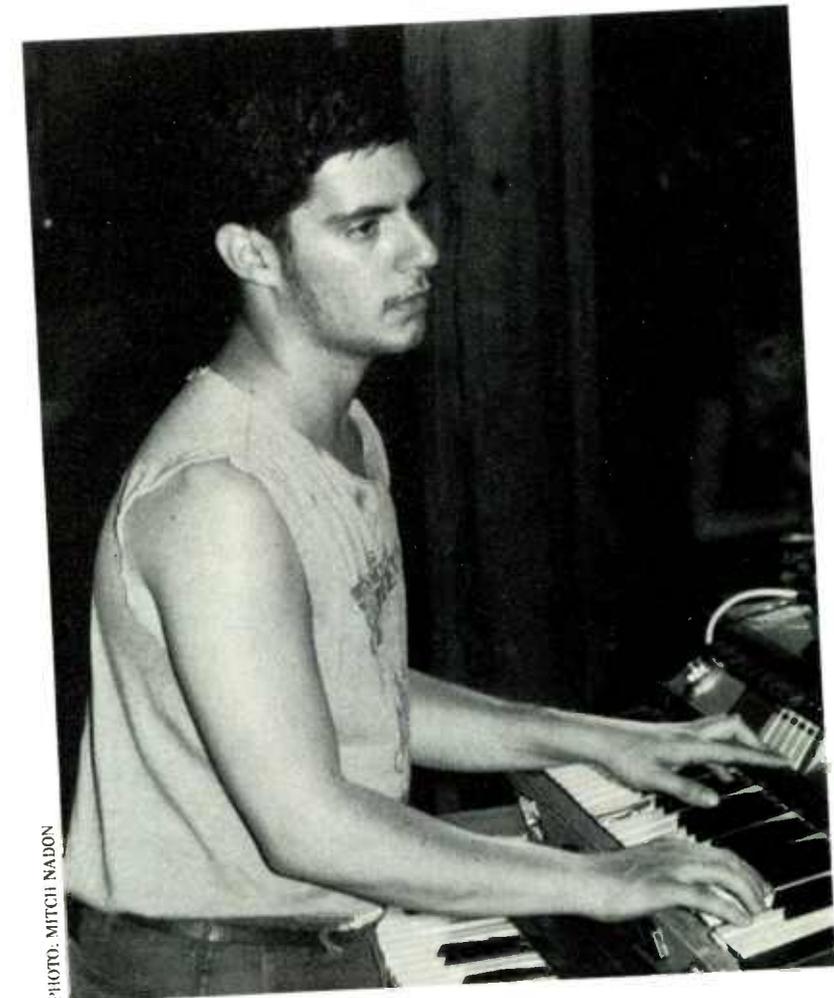


PHOTO: MITCH NADON

peggios if the spine remains undiscovered then you can't take the song to its highest possibilities'. Part of my deepest satisfaction in ensemble work like Blue Rodeo is finding the spine and then responding to the music through that understanding. Another way to understand what I'm talking about is to look at say Bill Evans in the world of jazz, whose reputation is for his voicings or rather his ability to understand deeply the whole essence of a song and articulate that emotionally. Sometimes (rarely), a musician understands the spine immediately but generally it's my observation that over repeated experiences with the same material one comes to understand it inside and out and backwards and sideways. At that point the best choices to make should be obvious.

Blue Rodeo is the only band I've been in. Otherwise I've performed only in solo contexts, and I've learned through the two and a half years that Blue Rodeo has been together

that I serve two functions: One is to solo the other to play texturally. I've had three music instructors in Toronto, Casey Sokal (who still teaches in the music department at York University), Darwyn Aitken and Fred Stone. Sadly both Darwyn and Fred died last year. Fred Stone once told me 'Don't play anything unless you hear it' or did he say 'Try to play only what you hear.' Well that's the attitude I aspire to particularly when it comes to soloing.

I run my Acetone through a foot chorus that I keep on top of the organ so that I'm able to change the degree of effect on it in the spur of the moment when soloing or playing texturally. The Acetone has five buttons, three of which sound exactly the same as each other. I believe they are Oboe, Flute, Cello, Piccolo, Strings and Organ plus a vibrato switch. One of the very amusing observations I've made in my life is how useful it is not to have too much. For example I have a bunch of clothes but I probably wear less

than a quarter of them. And so in time I came to understand how fortunate I am to have an Acetone, that's to say an instrument with finite sources of sound. Of course it's great to have things that are more unlimited. I'm not saying that anything is wrong, but I certainly noticed that having to work within limits has pushed me to come up with all the possibilities from inside myself instead of from outside. It's always pushed my ears to think that much more about other possibilities or other choices and it's put the onus on me (whenever I have found myself repeating something and getting bored with it), to find new possibilities from within myself. So I think it's really cool to have the limits that I work with.

On my way to the first Blue Rodeo rehearsal I was very scared that my playing wouldn't be inside enough primarily before joining the band I had been working mostly with John Oswald playing freely improvised music at Toronto's Cameron House every Saturday afternoon, and I still do that but the point I'm making is that I was involved in playing free music almost exclusively and even though I grew up learning rock'n'roll before anything else, I wasn't confident that my approach would be understood. But as it turned out, I was overreacting I suppose because it wasn't a big deal.

The guys were actually excited about the way I played.

These days I study piano daily. I am currently working through some of the John Mehegan books and *Microkosmos* by Bela

Bartok and I'm very interested in the work I'm doing. I'm very excited about it but my initial background on the piano was devoid of theory. When I was about ten years old my parents sent me to a classical teacher who scared the shit out of me. I used to come in not really having known my lesson well. She would act very formal and very strict and I was very scared. I pleaded with my parents to let me quit and after six months they let me. Fortunately in not much time later I started playing boogie woogies and blues thanks to my older brother Ron, who needed someone to cover the bass register so he could solo. Then I began to learn piano from predominantly listening to Otis Span records. Later when I was fifteen I was exposed to Keith Jarrett recordings thanks to a musician named Linda Bromberg. That was probably the most liberating experience I had in my life. Hearing Jarrett was like the realization of all sorts of possibilities that I didn't know how to get to but could understand. My training really was from listening to recordings and lifting them wherever possible with my growing ears. It's only now that I find myself interested in theory because now it's stimulating and new.

There are a lot of keyboard players who don't know the blues. And I think that's a big part of what's behind rock thinking and rock playing. I know someone quite popular in the world of rock music who sought me out not long ago for lessons because they wanted to know how I do what I do. And she's a good example because she was classically trained

but frustrated with the fact that there's something missing from her training, missing from her head when she's playing and she knows it and she wants that *thing*, but doesn't know how to get it. To a large extent it's just the blues, knowing the blues.

It's too bad I can't cite examples of the Clavinet things I do with the drumsticks etc. on our album *Outskirts* but none of the songs with Clavinet parts made it to the album. And also the Acetone on the album isn't true to the sound when the band is heard live because the fellow who produced the record, Terry Brown, treated the sound a bit and it comes out different than the way it is. In terms of volume I think the Acetone is heard in a louder way when we play live than on the recording.

Funny how it seems to be perceived as unusual, often, that I use these older keyboards. I find nothing unusual about it myself and there are other people who share that sentiment. An example of what I mean is the first time Terry Brown came over to work with us, he brought a synthesizer along with him. I think he assumed that I would be excited to want to use something else than what I was using. But I've never been unhappy with what I'm using and I don't think I would be unhappy if I was using a DX7 or an Emulator but I work within my means. It's all I've had and I don't feel like I've exhausted it.

*(Bob Wiseman is keyboardist with Blue Rodeo and performs solo improvisational work regularly.)*

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# PERCUSSION

## Honeymoon Suite Records With Ted Templeman



**I**t's been my experience, that when asked to recount the happenings of a certain event, may it be tales of life on the road or in this case, the recording of an album, I usually end my stories with a "I guess you had to be there."

The following is a very brief synopsis of six weeks in *La La Land* (Los Angeles for those who haven't been there) working with one of the most successful rock n' roll producers in history.

When we first met Ted Templeman (Little Feat, Van Morrison, Doobie Bros., Van Halen, etc.) it was under the assumption that we would be recording a quickie single for the up and coming movie *Lethal Weapon*. Warner Bros. films and Warner Bros. records had commissioned Honeymoon Suite to record the title track for the film. The song was already written (Michael Kamen penned it) and it was thought to be just an "in and out" sort of deal. It actually was, too. Recorded and mixed in a few days, everyone was excited about having a song in a movie that was not only good, but looked to be a box office hit too.

Ted seemed to be excited about something else as well. He seemed excited at the pros-

By Dave Betts

pect of doing an album with us. Not just a single that was written, arranged, produced and mixed so that a film director would be happy. He wanted to do something we would all be happy about: the third Honeymoon Suite album. Hopefully it would be beneficial for all. Ted had a chance to work with a band that had not quite "broke" all the way in the U.S. yet, and we had an opportunity to work with someone whom we had all admired.

The recording commenced in early June '87 at One on One recording studios in North Hollywood Calif. The head engineer and co-producer was Jeff Hendrickson who worked with Ted on David Lee Roth's EP and LP as well as the last Aerosmith album. As far as things related to the rhythm section, this was a relatively painless recording except for a couple of days of bass guitar overdubs that ended up getting scrapped for the original track anyway. But as things related to me, everyone seemed pleased with my parts. Just your basic "not too busy" which was a first for me.

One on One studios has a great main room.

With the proper miking techniques it's easy to make the drums sound like Power Station drums if so desired. If not the room ambience can be adjusted to whatever your liking. And it helped having a good studio set of drums as well. In our case the drums were supplied by a local drum tech named Jamo whose collection ranged from early '30s Ludwigs and Slingerland snares to a late '70s wood shell Gretsch and Pearl kit. It is always advantageous to use a kit that everyone involved is familiar with too. This kit was just used on the latest Heart and Kiss albums at the same studio, so the familiarity saved time in getting good sounds. They weren't afraid to move the drums either. One day here, one day over there. It helps to have different sounds throughout the record as well.

All in all it was a good session. The actual takes ranged from just run throughs for reference purposes, to meticulously crafted tunes done to satisfy all. In fact this is the first album where we recorded two or three different versions or arrangements of many of the songs.

*(Dave Betts is the drummer in Honeymoon Suite).*

# Modern Drummer Is More Than Percussionist

By Michael T. Oberle

Today's drummer has evolved into more than just a percussionist. In order to stay in tune with the music of today, a drummer has to deal with computers, computer programming and electronics. This pertains not only to the recording studio but also to his live on-stage performance. Because of the sophistication that has developed with electronic percussion, today's contemporary music has been the beneficiary of many superbly enhanced rhythm tracks. In the studio, programming of these rhythm tracks can be tried, changed and changed again, as well as being multi-tracked with the use of SMPTE time code. So how can a drummer hope to duplicate these intricately enhanced tracks on stage?

First of all, the average drummer usually cannot afford all the electronic sophistication that a studio affords. And secondly, even if he could, he cannot afford all the time on stage that it takes to co-ordinate all of this. Therefore, he must come up with some kind of simple solution that works on stage both technically and visually for his audience and himself. There are, of course, many solutions and numerous products on the market which facilitate this problem. I simply want to relate how I am approaching the situation.

At Lulu's Roadhouse, where I play in the house band, I am blessed with a very large system. I, myself, have two JBL speaker cabinets; my own monitor send, mixed to my own specifications and needs. My electronic percussion consists of Simmons SDS-5s; SDS-9s; a Roland 909 Rhythm Composer; a Roland 727 percussion unit, along with a Roland Octapad that triggers all of the aforementioned units. The actual playing kit consists of two bass drums; a digital snare and three analog toms from the SDS-9; an analog snare; analog bass and four analog toms from the SDS-5; a real Ludwig snare; two extra Simmons pads for special effects and Sabian cymbals. Much of the material that we play requires more percussion, of course, than I alone can provide, thus the use of the 909 Rhythm Composer. This is the center of the system actually. The 909 is very unique and although it has just one MIDI-in, it has two MIDI-thru outs, so with the Octapad MIDI-ed into the 909, two MIDI outs trigger both the Simmons SDS-9 and the 727 percussion unit.

This allows me a number of different functions. For example:

- 1) The 909 triggers the SDS-9 with a programmed rhythm while I play along on either the SDS-5s or the Octapad, which is triggering the 727 or the SDS-9 as well.
- 2) The 909 triggers the SDS-9 with a programmed rhythm while running in conjunction with the 727s program and I play along on the Octapad or on the kit itself or anything else for that matter. In this situation, I could actually go out for a break. The other function allows me to play the 727 or 909 manually, on the Simmons pads by MIDI-ing out from the SDS-9 into them or by plugging some of the Simmons pads into the Octapad's external input.

What I program and what I play manually is simply at my own discretion. I try to consider what will look best visually, taking into consideration what will also look realistic.

There are many die-hard drummers out there who refuse to use electronics in their live performance. That's fine, more power to them. But they're missing a lot of fun in a totally different electronic percussive world. You don't have to lose your technical abilities to play electronics. In fact, you can play so many more things. But that's another story. For the drummer who has found the world of electronics, to them I say enjoy the challenge and have a ball.

*(Mike Oberle has recorded with Ian Thomas and Tranquility Base and is currently with Lulu's Roadhouse band.)*

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# BRASS

## Canadian Brass Records *Couch Trip* Soundtrack



By Charles Daellenbach

Little did I know when we commissioned composer Michele Columbier to write a performance piece for our upcoming Canadian Brass tour last year that it would lead to our first soundtrack commission. Over our seventeen years together, the Brass had commissioned several composers to write specifically for brass quintet, among them Michael Colgrass and Lukas Foss. But in Columbier we had been particularly impressed with his *Wings* LP material which accentuated a wonderfully full orchestral sound. Then of course, there were the pieces he'd written for brass over the years. He had also scored the film *White Night* and was a hot Hollywood composer.

During one of our performances in Los Angeles with the L.A. Chamber Orchestra last fall film director Michael Ritchie came to see us. He liked our sound and kept us in mind while preparing for his next film. Shortly afterward, he got in touch with Columbier to score his next co-production with Orion Films. *Couch Trip*, the property he was to direct actors Dan Aykroyd, Charles Grodin,

Donna Dixon and Walter Matthau through, would be, he thought, the perfect film to include the Brass. Ritchie had actually studied our albums and already hit upon a few songs which he wanted to integrate into the score.

Since the Brass tours an average 130 dates annually, broken into eight and ten day segments, scheduling was a tad gruesome, but we managed to agree on the few days between the end of our Japanese tour and the beginning of July, when the studios had to prepare for a possible director's strike. All in all, considering our jet lag, everyone in the studio as well as Columbier and Ritchie made the recording experience comfortable and enjoyable.

As it turned out, we weren't the only ones on a tight schedule. Columbier saw the first edits of the film in mid May and wrote the entire score, except for the three songs Ritchie wanted from our repertoire, "The Marriage of Figaro," "Grampa's Spells," and "The Canon" by Pachelbel, by the time we entered the Group Four Studio in late June.

I found the process of working on a film score much the same as any recording project, but must admit my interest in the differences equal my fascination with film scores which have impressed me over the years. A few of the composers which I think express the artistry possible when an interesting film is accentuated by a wonderful score are Alex Nevsky's '30s film *War On Ice* where he uses the work of Russian composer Prokofiev, Nicholas Rosza's '50s films which are fully orchestrated, Canadian sax player Paul Brodie's work in Warren Beatty's *Heaven Can Wait*, and the Ragtime music use in the *Sting*. As well as providing interesting music, when you think about it, they each in their own way signified their different eras.

But whether considering past scores or current ones like *Couch Trip*, film soundtracks require specific results. And everything, from precise timing of pieces fit to a scene to matching the tempo of the music to a visual of a person walking, is painstakingly effected. To be successful when integrated into the film, a score must en-

hance the visual experience of the work. This is easily understood, but slightly confusing when actually trying to visualize the entire film in completed form during the recording process.

First of all, we saw cuts of the film out of order, in the same way it is shot. If you like, it could be like shuffling pages of music and then playing the pieces in the new order. In the hands of the professionals such as we worked with though, very few problems were encountered. Columbier had scored each piece out, as any recording session, the timing had been carefully worked out, and a click track kept us all on track and organized. A music co-ordinator, whose responsibility it was to ensure the music was right for the film, Ritchie and Columbier oversaw the entire process. At times Ritchie would call for a retake or ask for a different feel musically for certain scenes, but the music as written basically suggested itself.

Very session oriented, our recording blocks were much tighter than we normally experience. Again, to achieve the specific results necessary, soundtrack recording needs such regimentation. Since we had always approached recording sessions with specific music written down and are all classically trained musicians, some of this process was second nature. For the pop musician whose recording routine includes creating in the studio, this would present a major change.

Throughout the entire three day event, we played to dozens of cues, completing between 40 and 70 minutes of music. It was our first

experience of recording in Los Angeles and one which I personally went into a little dubious, but emerged extremely impressed. In the past the Brass had always chosen to record in RCA's huge 1930s studio in New York or Toronto's St. Mary Magdalene church for the live, natural acoustic sound large spaces offer. Ideally of course, I would love to record in a large concert hall such as Carnegie Hall,

## We completed between 40 and 70 minutes of music in three days.

but the expense is prohibitive. Studios I had found, usually reduce the sound and rely on artificial reverb.

Hats off to Frank Wolf at Group Four, the engineer who surpassed my expectations of any studio engineer. Wolf got a sound as good as any acoustic hall and changed my natural trepidation about studio recording. The musical results were a very live and expansive

feel. He placed individual mics on each instrument, a stereo pair in front and mics high in the air to the rear at the corners to make full use of acoustic majors. I admit it, I can't wait to see the film just to hear the final product of those sessions.

Now that I recall the entire experience, I can honestly say there was no hesitation in our accepting the soundtrack scoring for *Couch Trip*. We had complete confidence in Michele Columbier through his previous work. In Ritchie we knew we had a contemporary director who didn't follow the current trend of inserting pop tunes into films, but focussing on the entire project through a score. The career rewards possible from soundtrack work, particularly the association with a major studio as Orion and the film personnel, are apparent.

For seventeen years we've seemed to carve out a special niche where no space existed for brass quintets. While we will always be known for our strange brand of presentation in live performance (we have found lightning up classical pieces with humour loosens audiences and establishes a rich rapport), we now feel we've "come of age", ever expanding our recording experience.

Expanding our audience is a nice benefit of this soundtrack project too. Along with heightened media profile, our music can now reach many people who were previously unaware of our particular brand of music.

*(Charles Daellenbach is a member of the Canadian Brass.)*

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## Making War With The Harmonica

by Harvey Wolfe

He phones the office regularly for messages when he's out. He reads the financial section in the paper to see how the dollar is doing on the international market and flies to Japan several times a year on business. Your basic executive on the move. And by the way, he also plays the harmonica. In fact, he's recorded several million selling albums and toured the world with his group War. Only now he also brings along a brief case. Lee Oskar, one of the most talented exponents of the harmonica also doubles on the horn, to keep in touch with his business back in California. That business is the manufacturing of the Lee Oskar harmonica, an instrument that has made inroads in a very competitive marketplace. And don't for a moment think that this is a typical endorsement situation i.e. basketball great Larry Bird grinning with a pair of sneakers in his hands. Lee is the actual manufacturer of his product. The design is his own and the company is his along with music biz veteran Harvey Lippert.

"I find that business can be very creative," he explained. "I use the factory the way a musician uses the recording studio. A place that you can book to create and complete a finished piece of work."

Lee Oskar first started creating on the harmonica as a six year old in Copenhagen, his birthplace, and in Canada where he spent his formative years. The big turning point in his career came when he travelled to California in the late sixties, honing his skills in the futuristic L.A. club scene. "One night I happened to meet Eric Burden and we did some gigs around town," he recalled.

"We were gigging with Blues Image and when they went off on their own we fell in with a local group that became the nucleus of War." The band's earthy, rhythmic urgency was a breath of fresh air during the redundant disco craze and they were immediately well received. Although Burden soon departed, Oskar enjoyed a long and successful tenure with War as a featured soloist and an integral part of the sound.

Among the places he's toured over the years, Japan has been very special to him. In performance with War and in collaboration with Japanese percussionist Furusawa, Oskar is highly regarded in the Orient. It is also where he manufactures his harmonicas at the



*Lee Oskar*

Tombo factories in Tokyo and Nagoya. Tombo, an established harmonica maker in Japan, had not put much effort into the ten hole harmonica because of its lack of popularity at home, but it is the standard instrument used in both blues and rock. Everyone from the

late Muddy Waters to Mick Jagger used this type of harmonica.

Hohner has enjoyed a virtual monopoly in this area with its Marine Band but Oskar and company are working hard at giving them a run for their money. "We've developed a tighter comb, use the finest brass for the reed plates and steel for the covers," he stated. The harmonica is also available in the natural minor which allows playing in modes never before possible. Believing that people would pay more for a quality instrument, the harmonica was first marketed in 1984 for fifteen dollars (U.S.) at a time when the Marine Band was selling for under ten dollars. It commanded sales of nine thousand units that first year and is expected to sell over thirty thousand in 1987. It's now available in countries all around the world including those behind the Iron Curtain; but there have been times when the sound of a harmonica was scarce.

At about the time Stevie Wonder more or less traded in his harmonica for a Moog Synthesizer in the early seventies, a long period began where the harmonica was heard less and less in popular music. With the resurgence of blues through artists such as George Thorogood and Stevie Ray Vaughan it is regaining some of the ground it held during the sixties. Performances as spectacular as Jimmy Z's on The Eurhythmics "Missionary Man" also contribute in keeping the harmonica's newly found popularity in motion.

With the development of the technology in music changing the rules of the game, the harmonica has been completely passed over. That is soon to change according to Oskar. "We have a patent on a synthesizer harmonica that is fully MIDI compatible and will be introduced in the next year," he informed CM. "It will be able to do everything a Kurzweil can, and feels like a real harmonica." The unit, including the harmonica will retail for between five and six hundred dollars (U.S.). If it lives up to its manufacturer's expectations, it will redefine the role that the harmonica has played in the past. Between now and then the manufacturer will be very busy on the road with War who are again riding the charts with a re-release of their classic "Lo Rider."

When he himself is not on the airwaves his instrument is, and can be heard on recordings by Huey Lewis, Junior Wells, Jimmy Z and others who choose to use his harmonicas.

## Helix Vocalist Started In School Choir



by Brian Vollmer

**T**he voice is the hardest "instrument" to learn to play because you can't see it. Most vocalists I know have very little formal training. If you can find someone who will give you proper vocal instruction, go for it because it will increase your range and allow you to sing night after night without fear of losing your voice.

My tastes in music have always been eclectic. My parents and especially my grandfather, were huge country and western fans, and so the first songs I ever sang along with were by artists such as Johnny Cash, Hank Williams and Patsy Cline. My love for music continued through high school where I was in the choir and also enrolled in a music course. The school I attended in Listowel has one of the best high school choirs in Canada. Upon completion of grade 13, I did a brief stint with the Ontario Youth Choir. Along with Salome Bey, Al Nickleson, Nell Carter, the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra and Aretha Franklin's rhythm section we performed a modern mass written by Galt MacDermott (who also played piano) at the opening of Hamilton Place.

The first rock and roll record I ever bought was "American Woman" by The Guess Who. I drove my mother crazy singing along with it. Since then I've always liked the blues influ-

enced vocalists like Steve Marriot, Bonn Scott, Mick Jagger and John Kay.

It wasn't until two years out of grade 13 that I finally got a band together, and for the first year and a half we mostly rehearsed and played the odd roller rink or high school. When we started with William Seip Management things finally started to happen for us and we became full-time musicians. We played anywhere, at any time, just to stay alive, and after about two years on the circuit I burnt my voice out. Diagnosed as having throat nodules (nodes), I was told to pack in my career.

It was at this time I seriously began looking for vocal instruction and was sent by my manager to see a former opera singer by the name of Ed Johnson. In one year of working hard I completely rid myself of the nodes and to this day I still work on the technique Ed taught me.

The premise of singing is actually quite simple. Imagine squeezing a balloon full of air with one hand on the bottom and your thumb and index finger controlling the amount of air escaping through the neck. When you vocalize, it's exactly the same premise, but learning how to do it is a little harder. The first thing Ed taught me was to "flatten" my diaphragm, the organ situated below your lungs. This creates a low pressure area which fills your lungs completely full of air. The

next step is to pass air through your vocal chords which in turn vibrate and tap each other creating sound. The trick to singing is amplification, or where to throw the sound once you've created it. A singer who is vocalizing correctly, sings with forward resonance, in which the voice is directed to and amplified by the hard palate, which is bone.

The mistake most beginning singers make is forgetting to keep their throats up and their shoulders down. What happens when you do this is your voice becomes directed to the back of your throat and subsequently strikes soft tissue, which absorbs the sound instead of amplifying it. The natural inclination at this point is to pass more air through the vocal chords, or in effect, try to yell the notes. When you do this, your vocal chords strike each other so violently they become swollen, or in extreme cases, develop nodes. The vocal chords can no longer vibrate correctly and you lose your voice.

Here's some tips if you're just beginning to sing or even if you've been at it awhile, but remember the best thing you can do to improve your voice is to get professional instruction.

1. Never eat before you sing. (Allow one to two hours.)
2. Stay away from alcoholic beverages or pop. The best drink for your throat is still water at room temperature.
3. Warm up! Your vocal chords are muscles and should be treated with care before you use them. Start with your low register first.
4. Keep the back of your throat up and direct your voice off your hard palate. Practice smiling when you sing as this naturally raises the back of your throat. You don't have to have your mouth wide open either. It should be open only so much as is comfortable. Your highest notes should feel like they are right between your eyes, and your lowest notes should feel like they are in the middle of your upper lip.
5. Relax! The first thing beginning singers do when they have problems is to lift their shoulders, strain their neck and contort their faces but in actuality they are only putting themselves at an even greater disadvantage by doing this. Remember - stay relaxed, shoulders down and throat up.
6. Get plenty of sleep and eat a balanced diet. Think of singing as a physical act, which it is.
7. If you ever happen to develop nodes DON'T have your vocal chords scraped. This leaves scar tissue and forever limits your voice.

## Redefining Bass On New Siberry LP



PHOTO: TREVOR HUGHES

By John Switzer

**T**he electric bass in modern music serves three inter-related but not always simultaneous functions. Sonically, it's role is to cover the low end of the sound spectrum. The bass also serves a rhythmic function, most obviously seen in the almost universal tendency of bass patterns to be the same as, or related to, the kick drum pattern. And, finally, the bass serves an harmonic function, generally supplying the root note of whatever chord is being played by more obviously harmonic instruments such as guitars and keyboards. In most great bass parts, I would say, all of these things are going on at the same time. But they don't have to be: the bass player can take on a high melody line, for instance, and leave the bottom end to a keyboard. Or sometimes, when using a slap and pop technique, the bass player becomes mainly a percussionist of sorts, providing a lot of rhythmic information, but very little bottom end or harmonic information.

I play bass with the Jane Siberry band. Now, the interesting thing about that, in relation to all this, is that Jane doesn't necessarily see the bass, or any instrument for that matter, strictly in terms of its traditional role. Her priority for every instrument in the band is that it be expressive. Everything we play should ideally say something; and even more ideally, say something different. It isn't necessary to abandon the traditional roles and techniques of one's instrument in order to say something different, but that is what we're often asked to do. This creates an interesting tension, when you've become used to your instrument serving a fairly strict function with an ensemble. But this tension can result in some quite exciting creative brainstorming. We're working on a new album with Jane right now, so I can give you some examples of the kinds of things I've been up to.

The various technical aspects of playing bass are closely related to the role the instrument is playing in the particular piece of mu-

sic. The slap technique, as I mentioned, gives more punch, but generally provides less bottom end. Playing with the fingers, in the traditional right hand technique gives a warmer sound, and affords a more bubbly rhythmic approach. I'll often use my thumb in a reggae tune, where more bottom end and a warmer, more indistinct sound are deemed appropriate. Playing with a pick gives a brighter, harder edge, and allows me to play faster, more precise parts. Because of the wide range of feels and styles in Jane's music, I get to use all these techniques, and more. One tune on the new album, "The White Tent The Raft," is a rather lengthy epic that traverses a wide landscape of moods. For the verses and choruses I play with my fingers, and get a warm bottomy sound that plays a traditional rhythmic and bottom-end harmonic role. But there are sections in the tune that we call "clearings", each of which has a specific mood quite different from the others. We call the first clearing "the sad clearing"; at this point I abandon my low-end rhythmic function and get to perform a kind of solo. The point of this solo is not to feature the bass as a lead instrument, but to help create the mood of a frustrated and bitter sadness. I approached the solo somewhat recklessly: I strummed chords with a fanning right hand technique similar to a flamenco guitar technique; I played notes with my fingers, but then employed furious stretching and vibrato with my left hand; I pulled and released the strings, instead of merely plucking them. All of the techniques helped create a feeling that was perhaps a little more desperate than a well-played and lyrical solo approach might have been. In another section, the "angry clearing," we had an aggressive groove happening that I initially played with my thumb in the slap technique. But I never seemed to be able to get the edge that I wanted in the sound. Eventually I picked up a screwdriver and started using it instead of my thumb; The sound of metal on metal, and the bouncing action of the screwdriver gave me just the wild sound I wanted. I've never worried about mixing up techniques this way in the studio. You can always stop the tape, pick up your screwdriver, and punch in the appropriate section. Live, I'll have to compromise, and maybe use my thumb instead of the screwdriver, but I feel on the album it's more important to get the right sound for each section, even at the expense of being able to play the tune start to finish. This album was performed in a more live-off-the-floor manner

than any other Jane Siberry album, but if the technique required for the part requires a difficult change-up, there's nothing wrong with punching in. (And the screwdriver trick left a few serious scars on my bass, but it was worth it).

Jane's sense of orchestration is at times almost classical, in that, unlike most pop arrangements, she does not always want a full-spectrum sound and continuous groove from start to finish. There are two songs on the new album where she wanted a specific sonic shift as part of the arrangement. In the song "Red High Heels" she wanted all the instruments to play in a higher range for the first part of the verse, and then descend to a lower range for the second. A similar type of thing happened in "Lena Is A White Table", although the gradations of sonic levels were more subtle, and the variations of ups and downs more complex. So here's an example of the kind of tension I was describing: when the thing required is no obvious time feel and a higher range, and you're a bass player, your first reaction is to just lay out. It's just not much fun to play a high whole note if you're a bass player. But when I got into the idea, I decided to make something of it: high whole notes with feel, lots of vibrato and string noise, and a nice slide off to the lower note. A simple part that doesn't even seem to fit the job description of your instrument can still have an impact if it sounds like somebody played it for a reason and gave something to it. In "Lena" I ended up doing a high tapping (or right-hand hammer-on) part that had a

## "Jane's sense of orchestration is almost classical."

rhythmic purpose, yet stayed within the range Jane wanted. Then I tuned my low E string down to a C# so that when the lower part came I was really low and flappy; a great contrast. At the end of the tune, everyone was supposed to keep descending as low as they could: I just kept tuning my low string down as I played until nothing was left but a sub-sonic rumble. It was great. What began as a rather petulant resistance on my part, because I was asked to do things I didn't think were part of the role of the bass, became an opportunity to creatively expand the range and function of my instrument.

I'll tell you about one other song, though, that was probably the most satisfying. A tune

called "The Walking (And Constantly)", which is probably our first single, was sketched out in preproduction on sampled piano and drum machine. With a rolling piano part and a slightly unconventional drum groove, it had a feel that we really liked. When we recorded it for real, we used the same piano part, which Jane had recorded on her Macintosh Performer sequencer, using the Fairlight as our source for the piano sounds, and the drum sounds, only triggered from pads played by Al Cross, our drummer. Even though it *sounded* a thousand times better than our murky home demo, it just didn't feel right; it just felt awkward. So after all this stuff was recorded, I tried a bass part. I had some ideas, but hadn't really worked out a part; I just played along, trying to push the tune where I felt it needed it. I felt good about the performance, but we weren't sure if it was exactly what we wanted. So, we went to a new track, tried to perfect the part, punched in and out a few hundred times, and finally got the take. But just out of curiosity, I wanted to hear my first attempt. Well, of course, it was better. Without thinking about it, just by playing the bass as I felt it, I had provided the element in the otherwise high-tech production of the song that had given it back the feel we knew it should have. I let the bass fulfill its natural function sonically, rhythmically and harmonically, and it made the day. Now that feels good.

*(John Switzer is bass player and co-producer with the Jane Siberry Band).*

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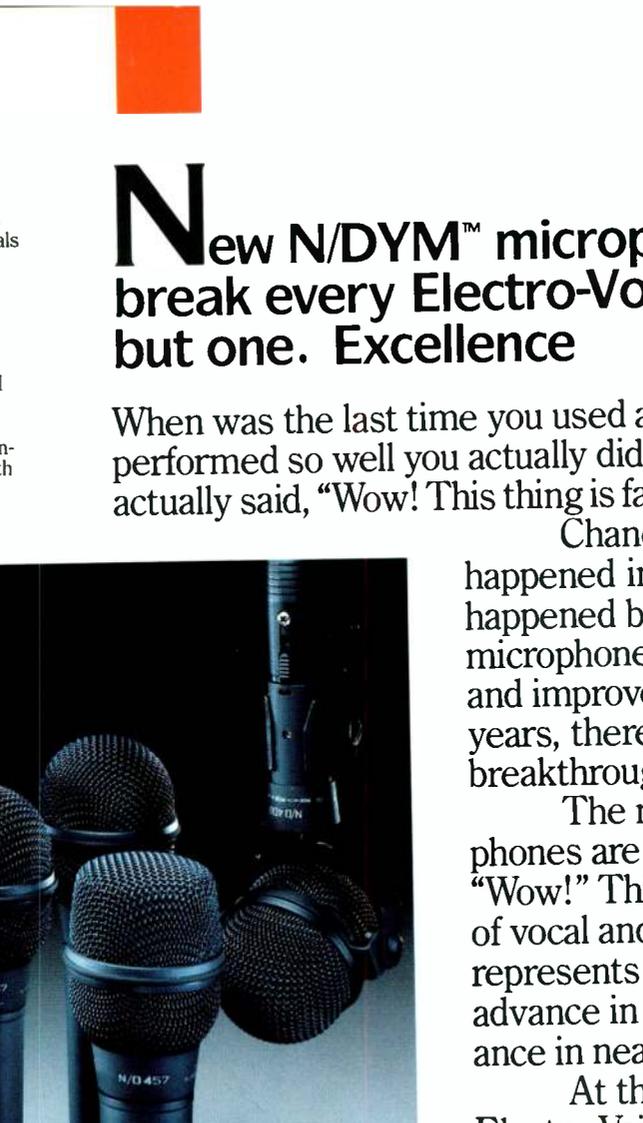
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