

BIMBO ROCK: GETTING DOWN WITH MISSING PERSONS AND BERLIN

RECORD



PAGE 34

SEPTEMBER 1984
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PRINCE
HITS HIS STRIDE

LITTLE STEVEN
ON MAIN STREET,
USA

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN
STRINGS ATTACHED

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ELECTRONICS
BUYING GUIDE

EXCLUSIVE
PAUL McCARTNEY

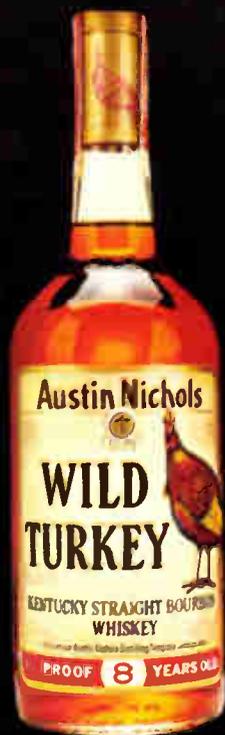
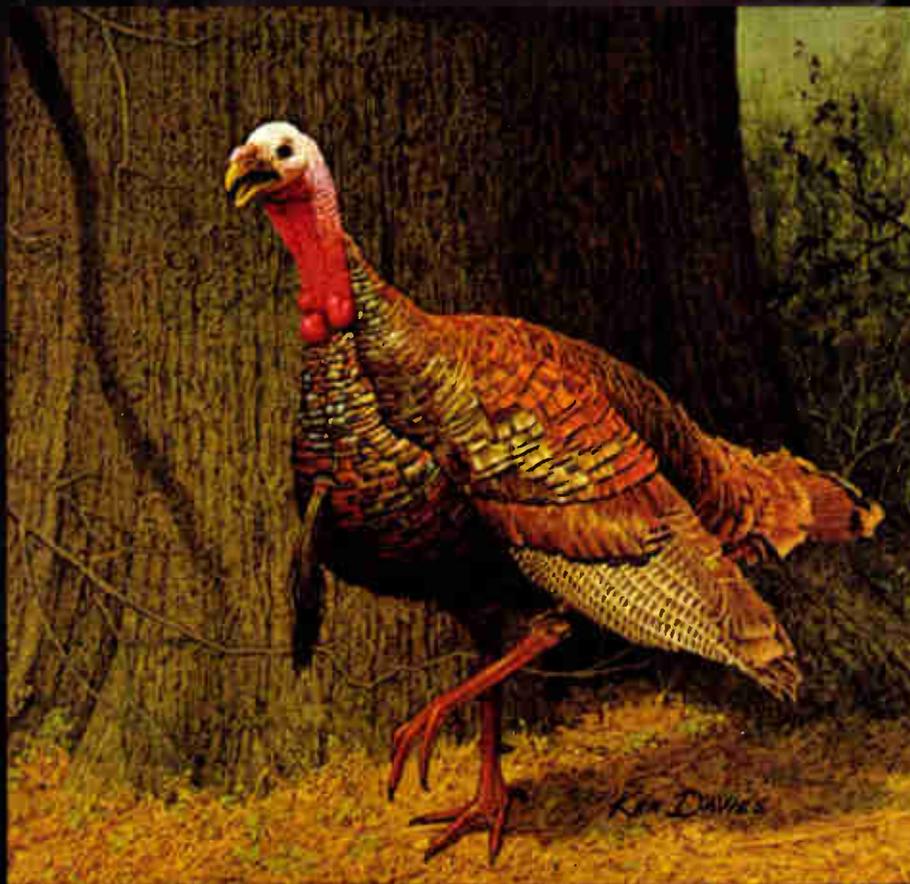
THE RECORD
INTERVIEW



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PHOTO: LINDA MCCARTNEY



PHOTO: EJ CAMP

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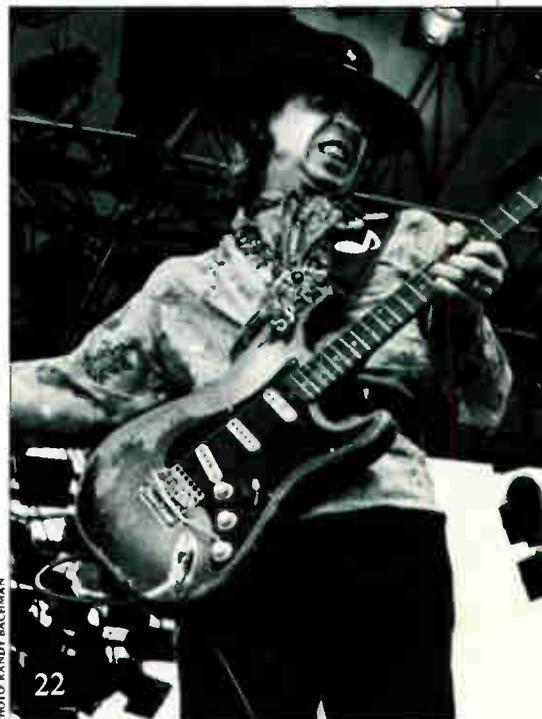


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Newport



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DEAR BRUCE...

BY ASKING \$21.50 FOR A Bruce Springsteen concert ticket, I wondered where all his concern for working class people went—perhaps to his wallet? Springsteen sings about the uncertainty and grim realities facing Americans today, yet the very people he is most concerned about will be the first pinched by the ticket price. In the June '84 edition of RECORD, Dave Marsh expressed concern over Michael Jackson's ticket price, as he felt the amount "was terribly unfair to (the) fans, most of whom simply can't dream of spending that much to see (him)." Unfortunately the same situation applies here as well. The power of a Springsteen concert is unequalled in music today, yet the ticket price will inevitably deter many of his most faithful fans from seeing him this year and produce an irreconcilable feeling of betrayal.

CHRISTINE LUPTON
Embryo, Ontario, Canada

\$21.50 is the Canadian currency price for a Springsteen ticket (plus, apparently, some two dollars for postage and handling). At current exchange rates, the tickets are, like tickets to Springsteen's U.S. shows, on average, \$15 each, a fairly standard rate for arena shows here and up north. —Ed.

AND MICHAEL

I DOUBT THAT MICHAEL Jackson will reply to Dave Marsh's naive letter in the June RECORD ("An Open Letter to Michael Jackson,"

American Grandstand). Jackson is a "superstar" only because the media (radio in particular) has made him one, and I'm suprised that an intelligent person like Marsh, author of definitive books on Springsteen and the Who, has been suckered by this scam.

Michael Jackson, like most recording artists, is in it for the money and really doesn't give a damn about anybody. This is borne out by the Pepsi commercial mentioned in the column; Jackson did it because Pepsi laid out enough cash to make it worth his while. Furthermore, I'm sure the profits from all those posters, buttons, bumperstickers and T-shirts aren't going to charity.

Marsh wrote that Michael Jackson is both "black and controversial," but I'm calling him on both counts. Jackson is black only so far as it is convenient for him to be black; like most black "superstars" idolized by the media, he bears more resemblance to a white singer. Anyone who had a nose job in order to look more acceptable to the public is not going to be too concerned about his "brothers and sisters" in Greenwood, Mississippi or Mobile, Alabama.

The part about the Jacksons' tour "becoming the theatrical expression of the rainbow coalition" was pretty funny. *What* "rainbow coalition"? The most hilarious suggestion made was the one about "refocusing" money and attention to "those who desperately need it in times of Depression and reaction." I can't deny that they need it, but even if Michael Jackson would try

to do it, does Marsh think that any of the rest of the Jacksons, or their promoters, or their lawyers, or their merchandisers, or the owners of the football stadiums and hockey rinks they will play in would let him do it?

Five years from now Michael Jackson will probably be regarded about as seriously as Peter Frampton is today, and he'll probably be just as interesting. Marsh is expecting far too much from a pop singer. If there's going to be any "theatrical expression of the rainbow coalition," it will come from Prince, George Clinton, James Blood Ulmer, Eddy Grant, Bunny Wailer or any one of dozens of groups and individuals in the forefront of black music.

If I were Marsh, I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for Michael Jackson to change the world. He just wouldn't profit from it.

MARK SAUCIER
Gulfport, MS

MOD-EST PROPOSALS

IN HIS REVIEW OF THE Style Council's *My Ever Changing Moods* (July RECORD), Wayne King made several exceptionally misguided remarks about fashion, Paul Weller, Pete Townshend and, particularly, mods. Though King may not realize it, there are still mods left (myself included), and he is in imminent danger of having the Clacton riot re-enacted on his front yard. Mods were and are cool, not "slavishly fashion-con-

scious and self-obsessed." The Style Council's brand of semi-soul is the mods' particular sound, pleasant and danceable. And if Weller deepens it by adding politics and compassion and love to the lyrics, so much the better. I see nothing wrong with music that can be enjoyed, danced to and thought about. Incidentally, the possible return of bell bottom trousers is a threat to Western civilization, or at least to its aesthetics.

CANDACE OLSON
Deer River, MN

HEY RECORD, WAKE UP! Instead of giving us the same old, tired articles about the same old tired bands and trends, how about something refreshing? How about something that's been right under your upturned nose? How about MODS! That's right, the mod movement is alive and well in America. Go anywhere in the United States and you're bound to find a small sect of neatly dressed, ultra-hip mods. Granted, the movement is a little slow, but a good article on the bands (from England, the Times, the Truth, Secret Affair, Squire, Merton Partas, Purple Hearts, etc.; and even a few good domestic group, i.e., the Untouchables from Los Angeles and Modest Proposal from D.C.) and the major points of mod-ism could burst the whole thing wide open. So take a chance, dare to be different, and give us a spread on MODS. We're out here; you've got an audience. Ready? Steady? GO!

PETER WALBY
Oakton, VA

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MILLER HIGH LIFE® PRESENTS

TOP 100 ALBUMS



- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 SOUNDTRACK
"Footloose" Columbia | 22 ABOUT FACE
David Gilmour Columbia | 45 PRIVATE DANCER
Tina Turner Capitol | 66 MISTER HEARTBREAK
Laurie Anderson Warner Bros | 85 LET THE MUSIC PLAY
Shannon Mirago/Atco |
| 2 SPORTS
Huey Lewis & The News Chrysalis | 23 THE PROS AND CONS
OF HITCH HIKING
Roger Waters Columbia | 46 LOVE LIFE
Berlin Getten Warner Bros | 67 THE SWING
INXS Atco | 86 THE FLAT EARTH
Thomas Dolby Capitol |
| 3 HEARTBEAT CITY
The Cars Elektra | 24 JERMAINE JACKSON
Jermaine Jackson Ansta | 47 SOUNDTRACK
"Beat Street" Atlantic | 68 OCEAN RAIN
Echo & The Bunnymen Warner Bros | 87 NO PARLEZ
Paul Young Columbia |
| 4 SHE'S SO UNUSUAL
Cyndi Lauper Portrait CBS | 25 MADONNA
Madonna Warner Bros | 48 HALLOWED GROUND
Violent Femmes
Slash-Warner Bros | 69 ROLL ON
Alabama RCA | 88 ROCK 'N' SOUL PT. 1
Hall & Oates RCA |
| 5 COLOUR BY NUMBERS
Culture Club Epic | 26 BREAK OUT
The Pointer Sisters Planet/RCA | 49 FUTURE SHOCK
Herbie Hancock Columbia | 70 KIHNTAGIOUS
Greg Kihn Berserkley | 89 BE MY LOVER
O'Bryan Capitol |
| 6 1984
Van Halen Warner Bros | 27 BORN IN THE U.S.A.
Bruce Springsteen Columbia | 50 HYSTERIA
Human League A&M | 71 SOUNDTRACK
"Flashdance" Casablanca | 90 THREE OF A PERFECT PAIR
King Crimson Warner Bros |
| 7 CAN'T SLOW DOWN
Lionel Richie Motown | 28 TALK SHOW
The Go-Go's I.R.S. | 51 90125
Yes | 72 RHYME & REASON
Missing Persons Capitol | 91 IN THE HEART
Kool & the Gang PolyGram |
| 8 THRILLER
Michael Jackson Epic | 29 MIDNIGHT MADNESS
Night Ranger MCA | 52 NOW
Patricia Rodriguez Elektra | 73 SHE'S STRANGE
Cameo PolyGram | 92 LABOUR OF LOVE
UB40 Virgin A&M |
| 9 AN INNOCENT MAN
Billy Joel Columbia | 30 LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BOY
Deniece Williams Columbia | | 74 NEW SENSATION
Lou Reed RCA | 93 GENESIS
Genesis Atlantic |
| 10 SEVEN AND THE RAGGED TIGER
Duran Duran Capitol | 31 CHICAGO XVII
Chicago Full Moon Warner Bros | | 75 BORN TO LOVE
Peabo Bryson/Roberta
Flack Capitol | 94 IT'S YOUR NIGHT
James Ingram Warner Bros |
| 11 BODY AND SOUL
Joe Jackson A&M | 32 MIRROR MOVES
Psychedelic Furs Columbia | | 76 HUMAN'S LIB
Howard Jones Elektra | 95 DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH
Judas Priest Columbia |
| 12 REBEL YELL
Billy Idol Chrysalis | 33 SELF CONTROL
Laura Branigan Atlantic | | 77 FAREWELL MY SUMMER LOVE
Michael Jackson Motown | 96 99 LUFTBALLONS
Nena Epic |
| 13 TOUCH
Eurythmics RCA | 34 UH-HUH
John Cougar Mellencamp Riva | | 78 CAUGHT IN THE ACT
Styx A&M | 97 YOU BROKE MY HEART
IN 17 PLACES
Tracey Ullman MCA |
| 14 STREET TALK
Steve Perry Columbia | 35 OUT OF THE CELLAR
Ratt Atlantic | | 79 LADY
One Way MCA | 98 THROUGH THE FIRE
Haga/Schon/Aaronson
Shriever Getten Warner Bros |
| 15 SOUNDTRACK
"Breakin'" Polydor | 36 AMMONIA AVENUE
The Alan Parsons Project Ansta | | 80 DANGEROUS
The Bar-Kays PolyGram | 99 DECEMBER
George Winston Windham Hill |
| 16 INTO THE GAP
Thompson Twins Ansta | 37 POINTS ON THE CURVE
Wang Chung Getten | | 81 I'M IN LOVE AGAIN
Patti La Bell Epic | 100 JULIO
Julio Iglesias PolyGram |
| 17 LEARNING TO CRAWL
The Pretenders Sire | 38 NUCLEAR FURNITURE
Jefferson Starship RCA | | 82 THE POET II
Bobby Womack Beverly Glen | |
| 18 LOVE AT FIRST STING
The Scorpions Mercury | 39 VOICE OF AMERICA
Little Steven and the
Disciples of Soul EMI | | 83 WONDERLAND
Big Country PolyGram | |
| 19 GRACE UNDER PRESSURE
Rush PolyGram | 40 SHOUT AT THE DEVIL
Mötley Crüe Elektra | | 84 IN 3-D
Weird Al Yankovic South Bros Epic | |
| 20 RECKONING
R.E.M. I.R.S. | 41 SOUNDTRACK
Hard To Hold RCA | | | |
| 21 ELIMINATOR
ZZ Top Warner Bros | 42 WHAT'S NEW
Linda Ronstadt Asylum | | | |
| | 43 SOUNDTRACK
"Against All Odds" Atlantic | | | |
| | 44 SOUNDTRACK
"The Big Chill" Motown | | | |
| | | 53 IT'S MY LIFE
Talk Talk EMI | | |
| | | 54 LOVE LANGUAGE
Jeddy Pendergrass Elektra Asylum | | |
| | | 55 WINDOWS AND WALLS
Dan Fogelberg Full Moon Epic | | |
| | | 56 ALCHEMY
Dire Straits Warner Bros | | |
| | | 57 KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF
MY POWER SUPPLY
Slade CBS Associated | | |
| | | 58 ICICLE WORKS
Icicle Works Ansta | | |
| | | 59 THE SAGA CONTINUES
Roger Warner Bros | | |
| | | 60 MORE SONGS FROM THE
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK
"The Big Chill" Motown | | |
| | | 61 DON'T LOOK ANY
FURTHER
Dennis Edwards Motown | | |
| | | 62 NO PARKING ON THE
DANCE FLOOR
Midnight Starr Elektra | | |
| | | 63 MY EVER CHANGING MOODS
Style Council Getten Warner Bros | | |
| | | 64 SYNCHRONICITY
The Police A&M | | |
| | | 65 COULDN'T STAND THE WEATHER
Stevie Ray Vaughn Epic | | |

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A QUIET CRUSADE

Icicle Works opts for integrity

NEW YORK—Britain's neo-psychedelic wave rages on, with the latest contender being a three-piece band from Liverpool that takes its name from a Frederick Pohl science fiction story and sings lyrics like "Armadillo skin and the leafy green/Our minds are where we keep her/The ideals born of the western world/Were always buried deeper."

Icicle Works' cosmic conundrums are not all in 4/4 time; the rhythmic variation under Ian McNabb's echoed guitar-picking suggests a Rush in the works as opposed to another Echo and the Bunnymen. The merging of sci-fi and nature imagery and the melding of '60s guitar sounds with '80s techno-arena-rock arrangements could be why Icicle Works' debut album is waxing, so to speak, the contempo-

trippy competition.

"We're like a melting pot of different influences," says tall, lanky bassist Chris Layhe. "Like the Byrds, late '60s American stuff. Also U2 and Big Country. But we like to create something new, maybe take something from somebody and mold it into a new shape."

Basically, the band's style is no-style: they prefer to win fans with their songs and not their looks. Layhe proudly points out that the video for the hit "Whisper To A Scream (Birds Fly)" is simple, straightforward, and "really cheap!" Ditto for their live performance on parts of the recent Pretenders and David Gilmour tours. No fancy costumes, no flashing lights.

"We're on a quiet, reserved sort of crusade," says Layhe. "We're great believers in integrity in music. There's not a lot of it around anymore." He sighs. "Bands like Dead or Alive, Marilyn . . . it's getting to be more like a circus."

—Stuart Cohn



PHOTO BY JAGI

Icicle Works (Chris Layhe, seated):
Great believers in musical integrity



PHOTO BY JAGI

China Crisis (Garry Daly, right)

SEEKING THE TIMELESS

China Crisis' Garry Daly has his mission

NEW YORK—In many respects, Garry Daly's story is unremarkable. He's 21 years old, from a small town outside Liverpool. He went to school, worked in a factory, started a band, China Crisis, with three friends. Now, after having had hits in Britain and Europe, the quartet's been signed by Warner Bros. and is touring the States.

Not so unusual, except that lead singer Daly is involved in the world and in his music in ways that might one day count for something. Life, he opines, is "a struggle, one that every poor person has; a need to understand things, because people with greater education usually understand a lot more. Poverty doesn't scare them."

The songs on the quartet's album, *Working With Fire And Steel*, are dreamy, contemplative, airy, much like Daly himself. The title track, for example, is about Daly's home town and "how it fell to pieces when all the industry closed down. It's a socialist song," he claims, but "I couldn't define socialism." China Crisis has a smooth sound illuminated by oboes, trumpets, and flutes. Lyrically, they're a bit thin, but the eclectic instrumentation creates cool textures, the aural equivalent of watching shifting shadows on a lake.

But at the moment, music-making is a little frustrating for Daly, who's trying to "make the music timeless," but finds it difficult to do so. "Technology has taken over so much," he says. "I think too many people bought the same instruments and electronic gadgets. Years from now, we'll probably look back on this age and its music and it'll all sound really naive."

—Stuart Cohn

A SURE WAY TO THE TOP

Frankie Goes To Hollywood speaks up

LONDON—"It's 1984 and someone has to say something loud," Holly Johnson, Frankie Goes To Hollywood's lead singer, announces. Something he wasn't allowed to say was "come," the offending lyric that led to the banning of "Relax," the band's debut single, by BBC Radio One. As usual, the attendant notoriety helped the record sell more than 1,250,000 copies—an unheard-of figure in Great Britain—to establish FGTH as the most talked-about band.

Formed early last year by Johnson, a Liverpool music scene veteran, Frankie Goes to Hollywood is comprised of two unabashed homosexuals (Johnson and Paul Rutherford) and three "raging heterosexuals" (Mark O'Toole, Peter Gill and Brian Nash), all Merseyside natives. They got their break last summer when they were signed to production wiz and noted Yes-man Trevor Horn's newly-formed Zang Tuum Tumb (ZTT) Records (founded by Horn and ex-

NME writer Paul Morley) after an appearance on the nationwide rock program *The Tube*. Horn's commitment to '80s Wall of Sound production and Morley's to arch and iconoclastic image-mongering are just as responsible as the BBC for the group's success.

Currently completing their first LP, FGTH's follow-up to "Relax," "Two Tribes," is described by Johnson as "the first genuine protest song of the last eight years." Johnson wrote it during the Falklands War when he "thought we were all going to be drafted." Although he insists it's not necessarily a political song, "Two Tribes" has been done in a video version, with its key scene showing Ronald Reagan and Soviet chairman Chernenko mud wrestling, which was promptly banned by the BBC for being too violent. So, true to form, "Two Tribes" went gold and entered at Number One. That's how it goes for Frankie, in or out of Hollywood. —Debbie Geller



FGTH: A little controversy helps

MANY WORLDS IN ONE

Sonny Okusun's global imperative

NEW YORK—A young man grows up poor in a remote part of the country, goes to see an Elvis Presley movie and decides to learn to play guitar so he can make friends and meet girls. He plays in bands for awhile, for fun, then sees the Stones, the Beatles, the Who in the mid-'60s and makes up his mind to take rock 'n' roll seriously.

Sound familiar? It could be the story of anyone in your record collection. But all this happened to Sonny Okusun while he was growing up in eastern Nigeria. A product of African as well as Anglo-American influences, Okusun has gone on to create his own style of contemporary African music, a combination of all the sounds of Africa with what he calls "a

Western touch."

A reggae influence is also apparent on Okusun's latest album, *Liberation*, on Shanachie. Live, he leaps and pounds the air like a Rastaman and his songs revive reggae's protest tradition, attacking apartheid in South Africa, austerity and coups in Nigeria, and calling

for unity and black rule all over the continent.

"Many people have sung protest songs," says Okusun, who sings his in English, the one language all the tribes and ethnic groups of Nigeria have in common, "Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Bob Marley. We're all marching towards one

thing—peace! I decided to use my own music for that purpose. There are many problems now all over Africa. Many people think they can't do anything about it. But if they hear reasonable words from musicians, they'll be able to think the other way around." —Stuart Cohn

Okusun: 'We're all marching towards peace'



HERE FOR A REASON

Steel Pulse as the missing link

PORTLAND—"We're playing to those who wish to learn," declares David Hinds, songwriter and spokesman for Steel Pulse, the British reggae band. "Ignorance of other people's culture and ideals makes war happen. We want to be a link between Man what he is and Man what he could be."

A polite, slightly-built, former art student who wears his hair in long dreadlocks that sway above his head like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Hinds expresses disappointment that more blacks haven't picked up on the message of black consciousness that informs Steel Pulse's music. Even in England, he explains, much of the group's following dates from the late '70s alliance of punk and reggae. "When I was growing up, I was subjected to



PHOTO TONY REID

Steel Pulse (Hinds, second right): 'We're playing to those who wish to learn'

music that had a lot of protest, that explained why people were suffering. Now there's a population of zombies in my neighborhood. The youth just sitting back. Slack talk (dee jays) don't add anything."

He warms to the subject of black American music, how-

ever; "The funk is getting tougher—Midnight Star, Cameo. I consider it an honor when funk bands try to introduce audiences to reggae, no matter how bad it might sound sometimes."

In his outspoken courage and conviction as a Rasta in Babylon, critics have begun to refer to Hinds in the same breath with the late Bob Marley. He smiles wearily at the comparison. "I have great respect for Bob Marley," he ex-

plains. "It's nice to be recognized, but I think there's a difference between me and Bob. I really believe that Bob was sent here for a reason."

And he doesn't feel the same about himself?

"I never used to. But coming to America and seeing what the music means to people... When you are doing something that's moving people in a positive way, you start to think that you were meant to do that." —Rico Mitchell



PHOTO NICK ELGAR/LGI

Yellowman: Slack raps give him the last laugh

HE WHO LAUGHS LAST...

Yellowman's life and good times

NEW YORK—After about 20 years of being dumped on, Yellowman (aka Winston Foster), a 24-year-old albino Jamaican reggae-rapper, is having the last laugh.

"I never had no friend in Jamaica, not being a man of color," says Yellowman, whose debut Columbia LP, *King Yellowman*, was released earlier this year. "I could get no producer, nobody want to have nothing to do with me. Now I want them all to know what they miss."

To this end, Yellowman's music leans heavily on Ego and Eros. He describes his ribald, Walt Whitman-like celebrations of sexual triumph as "slack raps."

"It is not serious," he says with a faint grin. "I just want to talk about myself, something I never get the chance to do. Now I tell them who I am,

and people start to respect me for the first time."

There is, however, a danger in all this. Yellowman, married two years and the father of 15-month-old Karim Christopher Foster, must take great care not to mix family with erotic extracurriculars. "My wife is much respected by me," he asserts. "She have nothing to do with Yellowman and his women. My family is a separate thing."

Yellowman, who will start recording a new LP towards the end of '84, suggests that being pushed around by people of all races has had a positive impact on his music. "It is not good for an artist to be too comfortable," he explains. "But I don't want to live in the past. I treat people nice, the same people who treat me bad. That way we do away with problems." —Mark Mehler

HOW IT'S DONE, Y'ALL

The revamped dB's do it like this

ATLANTA—"Quirky" and 'eccentric' are two words that have been strapped around us like an albatross," says Peter Holsapple, songwriter/guitarist/vocalist for the dB's. Attempting his own assessment, he cites the influence of '60s radio and the band's commitment to diversity. "We listen to everything from ABBA to Zapp." Drummer Will Rigby chimes in: "We're unpigeon-hole-able."

Moving to New York in 1978 from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Holsapple, Rigby, bassist Gene Holder, and guitarist/songwriter Chris Stamey teamed up during New Wave's early crest. "But we never felt rebellious against the history of pop music," Rigby says. "We care about what came before." By 1982, the group had released *Stands for Decibels* and *Repercussion* on Albion, an English independent label. Their witty British

Invasion- and Beach Boys-based pop made them critical darlings, but hardly chartbusters.

"The 400-page press kit doesn't have anything to do with the real world," claims Holsapple, and after a difficult tour with Dave Edmunds, the band took a sabbatical for strategy and soul-searching. Holsapple, playing solo acoustic guitar, opened shows for R.E.M. Rigby fronted a country band. Holder played with the Individuals and, with Stamey, co-produced *Chomp*, the swan song from Athens dance-rockers Pylon. And Stamey's *It's A Wonderful Life*, a compellingly odd solo album, precipitated his departure. Holder comments, "I think Chris just grew apart from us."

Now, with Holder switching to guitar and Pennsylvanian Rick Wagner on board as bassist, the dB's are pumped up about their first major label LP. The Bearsville vinyl boasts the strongest offering yet of the dB's big beat examinations of modern romance. It's title? *Like This*. "Like showing you how it's done, y'all," quips Rigby. —Paul Evans



PHOTO: LAURA LEVINE

dB's Rigby, Holsapple, Holder and Wagner: A commitment to diversity

A BURNING RING OF FIRE

The Brains' Tom Gray starts over

ATLANTA—"I couldn't look at things from an artistic point of view any more," recalls songwriter Tom Gray about the last days of his former band, the Brains. "Be-

cause we managed ourselves I had to look at things from the point of view of a manager: give 'em what they want to hear, what they'll buy. When you start thinking that way,

it's like committing suicide. You have to write things that come from inside."

As the man who penned the '70s angst-rock classic, "Money Changes Everything," Gray should be an expert on the havoc the long green can wreak in people's lives. At least he better be. Because Cyndi Lauper

covered "Money" on her best-selling *She's So Unusual* LP, Gray stands to make a fair piece of change himself.

But the Lauper cover is only one aspect of how the keyboardist's life has picked up since the Brains packed it in. Gray got married, stopped smoking, and put together a new quartet, Ring of Fire, with guitarist Donal Jones, bassist Tommy Dean and former Brains drummer Charles Wolff.

"This is a very different band," Gray reports. "Charles said the other day that this band sounds the way he always hoped the Brains would sound, and I feel the same way. There was always strife and strain somewhere in the Brains."

Anyone familiar with Gray's anthems of alienation will be stunned to learn that the Ring will hit the stage in silver lame suits. "It's a gutsy thing to do," Gray chuckles. "Once we get those suits, we'll have to live up to 'em. It's gotta be showtime all the way to the wall!"

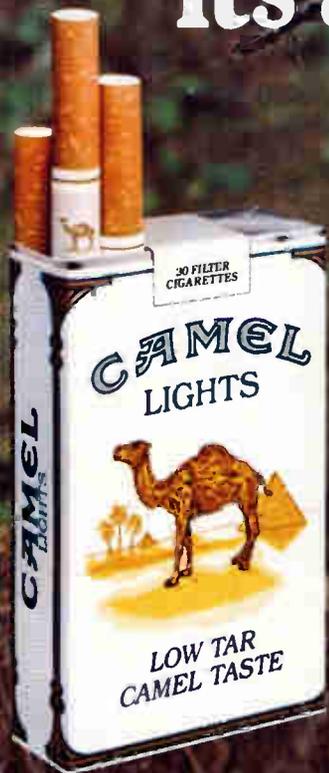
—Anthony DeCurtis

Ring of Fire (Tom Gray, left): Ready for showtime



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Video Rock

Missing Persons and Berlin are less than the sum of their parts, so to speak

"I LIKE THIS GUY—HE'S GOING TO try to nail us," says John Crawford mirthlessly to his bandmate. This gratuitous piece of gamesmanship is clearly intended to elicit a reaction from an interviewer who's more amused than outraged by what Crawford is saying—a fact that has eluded Crawford completely.

Crawford is the founder of Berlin, and the conversation leading up to his ploy has been about the consistency of subject matter on that band's first two albums. "All the songs are relationship-oriented," says Crawford, adding that the second LP, *Love Life*, reflects a more "positive, or at least objective, non-emotional viewpoint," than the first.

The first two tracks on *Love Life* contain (respectively) the lines "A line of boys, an all-night part in my porno love" and "Take me home and tear my clothes off." And strangely enough, it is more positive—well, less negative—than Berlin's first. But if John Crawford thinks he's about to be nailed, why does he like the idea? And if he's having a good time, why isn't he smiling?

BERLIN IS ONE OF THE NEW AND highly visible wave of bands coming out in this video-inspired Age of Visuals, one with a style that might be called Techno-Slut. Berlin, Missing Persons and their Bimbo Rock brethren offer dance-oriented, synth-laden tunes, but they depend more on the visual appeal of their very flashy front ladies than on musical inventiveness or heart.

Berlin and Missing Persons are currently the most visible of these video-validated bands, and the most often compared. Both acts cut demos that were turned down more times than a bachelor with a cold sore, but proceeded to release do-it-yourself EPs and build a following on their home turf. That brought a procession of major label offers—the bigs don't let first impressions get in the way of making a buck—and ere long the rejected tapes were waxed anew. And both Berlin and Missing Persons are now being hyped to the max in all the available media.

Berlin's personnel are Southern Califor-

nia suburban kids whose talents have more to do with titillation than with musical innovation, as evidenced by their most controversial—and therefore most famous—song, "Sex (I'm a . . .)." Keyboardist David Diamond says Berlin is a "dinosaur" synth band, which is to say they don't have any computerized, synchronized gear. On the other hand, Missing Persons are fusion veterans who've turned to crass brass and a flashy frontlady because there isn't much of a market for sophisticated sounds that don't include vocals. They've designed their own instruments and stage, and vocalist Dale Bozzio creates her work clothes "out of coconuts, records, cassettes—anything that's workable." And it's no coincidence that both Bozzio and Berlin's Terri Nunn came to the music business after having worked in movies and/or TV.

Nunn worked in television as a teenager, usually playing troubled types such as hookers, drug casualties or criminals. But she always wanted to be a backup singer, she admits during a brief interview prior to Berlin's show at the University of California at San Diego. "Acting is not the excitement for me that even backup singing was." Nunn uses her theatrical skills on stage with Berlin, acting out the lascivious scenarios of the songs. The naughty bits have been toned down for the current tour, but the last time out Berlin's show included an act of simulated fellatio—and Nunn is credited on the first Berlin album, *Pleasure Victim*, with "Vocals, BJs." Although a disclaimer was etched in the runout groove of Side Two ("Bad Jokes, You Fool"), part of Berlin's early image was built on the possibility that principal songwriter John Crawford was putting more than just words in Nunn's mouth.

Between its graphic lyrics and the slurs and groans over the fadeout, "Sex" seems to glorify its subject matter unhealthily. Asked to comment, the coy Nunn offers the standard Not Responsible Ploy: "I have no way of gauging what will go on in people's minds when I write a song." Then she uses the Turnaround Ploy: "Do you have any idea what will go through people's minds when they read one of your articles?" I invoke the famous Apples and Oranges Retort, noting that my job is to inform and interpret while hers is much less clearly defined. I concede that a song

should mean different things to different people, "but you must have known that 'Sex' would raise a few eyebrows."

"Do you think any sane artist would write a song like that for Top 40 radio?" she retorts. No, but a smart operator could get reams of publicity and underground airplay from a banned record. Imagine the stickers: As NOT Seen on MTV! Nunn pronounces herself weary of the subject and invites another topic. With uncanny timing, a record company operative tells Nunn it's time for her to eat and informs me that Crawford and Diamond are waiting outside in the crew bus.

Of all the people whose fantasies are being realized on Berlin's *Love Life* tour, the least unsavory visions probably belong to Diamond, the chipper 20-year-old synthesist. "Let's let Johnny tell you the story of how the band got its name," he says puckishly. "It's his favorite question. He's so philosophical, he'll think of something colorful to say."

Crawford appears to have been born without a sense of humor. He is soooo tired of answering questions and defending his *oeuvre*. In a tone heavy with ennui, he runs down the Berlin story one more time:

Crawford chose the name in 1977 as "a reaction against what was going on in L.A. at the time. It was the early days of the Knack, the Pop, the *this*, the *that*—all those twangy guitars and smiley boys and happy love songs—it was driving me nuts." How could a young suburban sourpuss practice his scowling with all that upbeat music around?

He wanted his band's name to have an international flavor to reflect his distaste for the L.A. scene. The sound of the word Berlin was "very powerful and, to a kid who'd never even been out of California, Berlin conjured up all sorts of decadent, kinky visions that may or may not have been rooted in reality but . . . were nice and dark and different from the rest of the L.A. bands."

Sex has been part of Crawford's musical consciousness since he took up the guitar while recuperating from a broken leg sustained when he was a high school sophomore in Orange County, California. Bedridden much of the time, he obviously found inspiration close at hand. Though he wasn't getting laid, the foundations for

By David Gans



PHOTO: ANN SUMMERS/RETNA

**Missing Personoids Cuccurullo, Bozzio, Bozzio:
A calculation from the git-go**

Berlin were. With the ascendance of Blondie's Europop and Prince's crotch rock, the precedents were set for Crawford's answer to happy love songs.

Crawford insists rather irritably that his songs are an attempt to ease the pressure on young people to grow up too soon. "A girl who's 14 is going to watch *Dynasty* and see the most beautiful girls acting out those roles. She's going to think, 'I don't look like that—I'm not a relevant human being.'" And there's also a lot of confusion about casual sex: "It would be nice for people to be comfortable about things they're feeling rather than believing that possessiveness is wrong and jealousy is wrong and sex is wrong." It's just a guess, mind you, but this is apparently Crawford's way of explaining lines like "Drink your fill from my fountain of love, wet your lips."

Diamond gamely adds that preaching to teenagers is ineffective and that dramatizing the options is a better way to get the idea across. "It's a very rebellious age. If you say to a 15-year-old kid, 'You can't do what you see on TV or what you hear in that song,' he's going to say, 'Maybe it's wrong for you, but maybe it's not wrong for me.'" Ah, yes—the Noble Intentions Rationale.

Despite their purported cautionary intent, Berlin's gimmick virtually romanticizes "decadence" and thereby publishes the blueprints for disaster. And the band may be too generous in assessing its young audience's perceptiveness. I wandered out to the men's room during Berlin's set, and there I discovered that Joe College, whom John Crawford sees as being so attuned to subtlety and open to moral dialogue, is still stuffing paper towels in the sinks and running the water to try and flood the place.

IF BERLIN'S SONGS DEFINE THE world in terms of sex, with Missing Persons it's the Cult of the Self. Their new album, *Rhyme and Reason*, sounds like a collection of self-motivation mantras, only

not as interesting. Their current bio begins with the pompous phrase, "The evolution of pop music" and rambles on for several paragraphs of condescending bafflelegab that might just as well have come from the pen of that famous comic strip philosopher-*manque*, Zippy the Pinhead.

The three principal Missing Personoids have their pleasant demeanors turned up to full beam when they enter the Capitol Records conference room. I know it's them; some people just *look* like show folk. And I can safely say that no one, anywhere, ever, is going to walk into a room and ask, "Which one is Dale Bozzio?"

Like my encounter with Berlin, the Missing Persons interview is like a visit to Ploys R Us. Dale has a handful of t-shirts, all for me (last year's model, alas), a copy of the new LP, and an 8x10 glossy of herself. In silver ink, she signs the photo and the album ("Your'e [sic] sweet," she writes), and passes the LP to drummer Terry Bozzio. He signs it "thanks" and passes it to guitarist Warren Cuccurullo, who adds his "thanx" and presents it to me. I suppose I am expected to be putty in their hands from now on.

Dale is the manager of Missing Persons as well as being the band's vocalist, and she manages this conversation, too, seeing to it that it never strays far from Topic A. Terry is allowed to describe the electronic drums he's designing, but when talk turns to drums in general Dale abruptly interjects, "And Warren designed his guitar, along with a few of his associates."

It's not that Dale is bored by tech talk, though. "I'm interested in everything that makes Missing Persons work," she asserts. "The bottom line is the music: the guitar licks, the drum licks, the melodies, the lyrics, what the music is about. Literally, the lyrics are realistic; they're in black and white, and the music is texturally in color. Living color."

"Techno-color," jokes Cuccurullo.

Terry Bozzio and Warren Cuccurullo are alumni of Frank Zappa's bands and other high-technique outfits, veteran fusion players now working well below their skills level and adopting trendy grooming habits for money. "We wanted to *not* use all the technique we had to speak in terms that would be above the man on the street's comprehension," says Terry pleasantly.

They retained Dale, a woman of undeniable visual appeal and dubious vocal gifts, to front the band. She designs her own stage garb and often takes a minimalist approach to costuming—but she is unamused at the suggestion that she's exploiting her physical charms. "I would never downplay any sexual attribute that is God-given," she concedes, while noting that her costumes reveal no more than a bikini would. It seems senseless to point out that few rock stars of either sex wear bikinis to work.

Suddenly cracks appear in Terry's carefully applied mask of pleasantness. "Peo-

ple play up the sexual aspect because they don't look any deeper," he says. "They don't give a shit what's going on in our minds. And I can't blame them, because I don't give a damn about them or anybody else..." He smiles, regaining his composure. "We're not selling sex."

"It doesn't hurt to be beautiful," quoth Dale. "Beauty is freedom." Four legs good, two legs bad. Love is hate.

MISSING PERSONS CAN PLAY rings around Berlin, but that's not enough. Dale's vocals sound like Betty Boop on acid at an est lecture; as coy as she plays it off stage, 97-pound meek thing Terri Nunn is a strong performer when the lights go down. She will outlast Berlin's juvenile concupiscence and make a career for herself.

Both bands are allowing themselves to be marketed in ways not conducive to creative longevity, but Berlin is already working away from the sleazy image they started with. Missing Persons has been a calculation from the git-go, a support group for people with large musical vocabularies and nothing to say. This may be their last crack at commercial success on their own terms; it's a shame that their cynical assessment of market conditions is proving accurate.

Terri Nunn says, and quite convincingly, "It's not the accumulation of money that interests me; there are so many ways to do that that you might as well do what you like." Dale Bozzio, on the other hand, sums up her commitment to her art thusly: "I wouldn't devote my life to anything unless it could pay my bills."

And 'twas ever thus. ○

Berlin: Southern California suburban kids whose talents have more to do with titillation than with musical innovation



PHOTO: ERET ROBERTS

DAVID MCGEE ●

LITTLE STEVEN ON MAIN STREET, U.S.A.

There's more
than one voice
of America

The precise moment of the change is lost in time but not in memory. It came as a revelation that would forever alter the course of one man's life. It came when he saw his native land reviled, spat upon, regarded with fear and loathing.

He stood up and called himself a patriot, and recognized his home as a proud, brave land where people desire peace and harmony, apparently against the wishes of those elected to preserve those very ideals.

From afar he offered up a great sound, fired by a vision of a world that lays down its arms and sings a song of freedom, of justice. And his was the one true voice of America.

*And I ain't no communist, and I ain't no capitalist
And I ain't no socialist,
and I sure ain't no imperialist
And I ain't no democrat
and I ain't no republican either
And I only know one party,
And its name is freedom
I am a patriot . . .
And the river opens for the righteous, someday.*

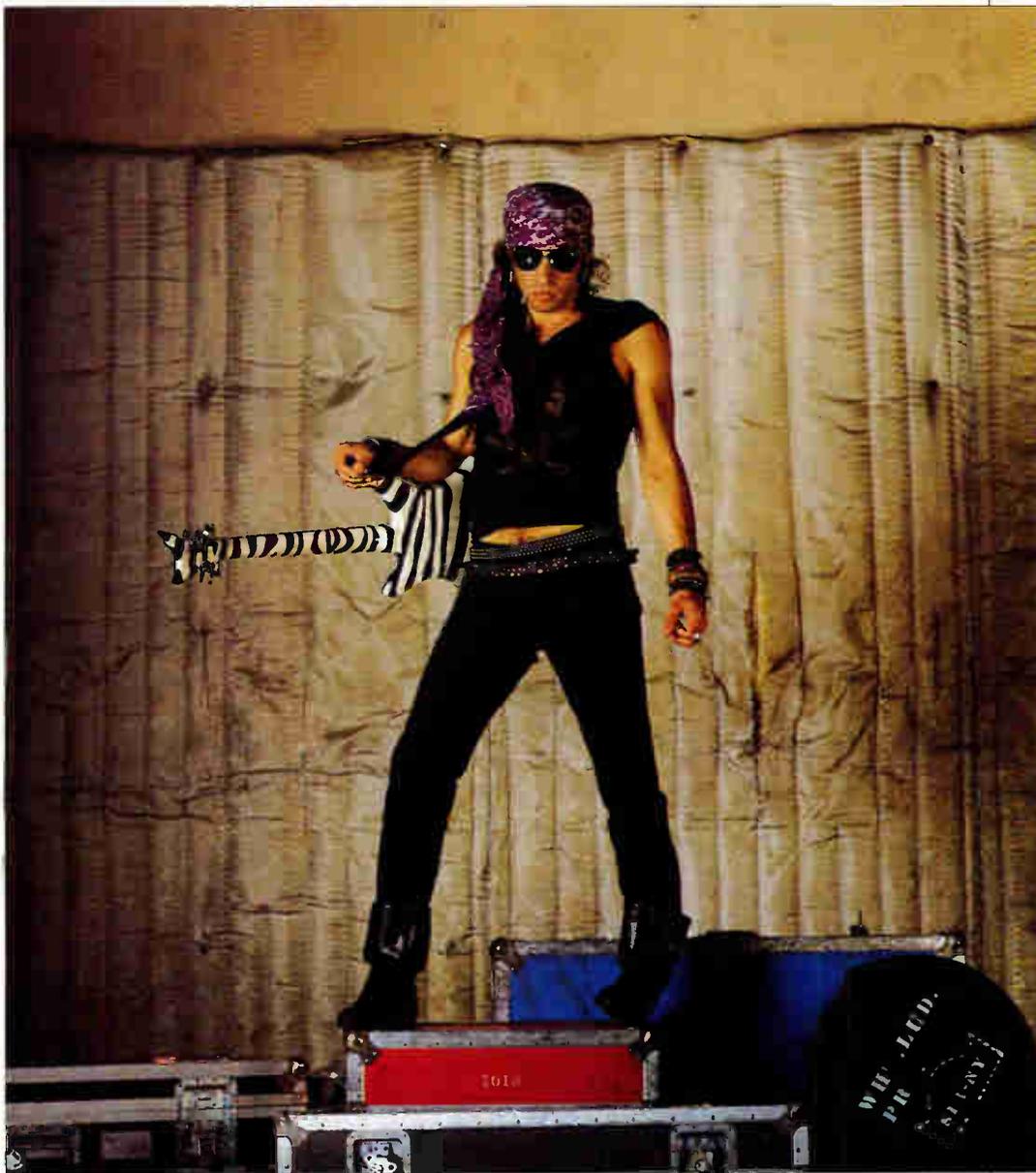
IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT things and people change and what goes around comes around, and so on and so forth, but consider the case of one Steve Van Zandt. A mainstay of the Jersey shore music scene in the early '70s, he did a stint with the Dovells on the oldies circuit, then founded the Asbury Jukes, which turned out to be the ideal vehicle for his attempts to marry traditional rock and soul song forms to a contemporary sound. In 1975, Van Zandt's long-time friend Bruce Springsteen beckoned, and he joined the E Street Band at the most critical juncture of Springsteen's career. Much has been written since about the vital role Van Zandt played in Springsteen's subsequent development both as a performing and recording artist, none of which is in dispute at the moment.

Van Zandt and the Jukes parted ways in '78 having never achieved the widespread success predicted for them. Intervening

years found him producing and writing for Gary U.S. Bonds, and putting in his fair share of work on Springsteen's *The River* and the accompanying mammoth tour of nearly a year's duration, including—most crucially—a lengthy jaunt throughout Europe. After the tour, Van Zandt went into the studio and cut a solo album, *Men Without Women*, that suggested the genesis of a startling artistic evolution. *Men Without Women* was identifiably Steve Van Zandt in its ambience—the horns were pumping, the instrumental tracks were rife with

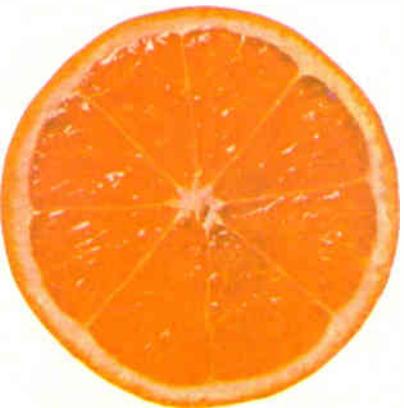
homages to Motown and Stax and the Stones and the singing reeked of soul. But its emphasis on politics, sexual and otherwise, placed Van Zandt not on the boardwalk anymore, but on Main Street, America. In fact, the man was *stalking* Main Street, America, trying to define the growing sense of patriotism he felt toward his country at the same time his country was being accused of all manner of immoral and illegal activity abroad. He stalked Main Street, and he found it. In Europe.

Springsteen's tour completed, Van



Little Steven: 'Bruce knew that this record was the beginning of my new life'

PHOTO: E.J. CAMP



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Zandt and his band, the Disciples of Soul, had gone overseas to do some dates in support of their album. A year later, dining on a club sandwich at Richoux of London near the EMI America offices in Manhattan, Van Zandt, decked out in the now-standard leather gear with head scarf, recalls feeling "an incredible communication (with European audiences) as an American. And all of a sudden, a certain clarity came to me and I really felt I knew who I was and why I'm here and what it is I should be talking about. It was partly the result of the shows, but it was equally the result of talking to people, doing interviews and talking to people on the streets. I started getting all these feelings.

"First of all, everybody hates Americans. There's an incredibly consistent anti-American sentiment everywhere. Second, I'm starting to feel more and more American by not being here. And not only am I feeling more American, I'm feeling like a *patriotic* American—which you just don't feel that strongly when you're here. Well, I found out that the anti-American sentiment is the result of our foreign policy since World War II, basically, and it comes as a result of *letting our government do our talking for us*, which all countries do. And at the same time I'm feeling all this and trying to make some sense of it, I'm realizing that there I am, onstage, on that tour with the American flag behind me—which the promoters begged me not to do—and *I'm not having any problems. I got an hour and a half of pure communication going on, in spite of all the facts.*"

Having found his mission, Van Zandt tends to speak in italics a lot these days. There are reasons for this. He shares with most Americans a sense of urgency about the times, about political games getting out of hand, about the common citizen's lack of voice in national and international affairs. But that "certain clarity" he referred to earlier is what drives him now: "There's something real simple going on here that we've been missing since . . . I don't know, since the '60s maybe, and that is that *rock 'n' roll is a phenomenal form of communication*. Not only is it an important art form, but there's this incredible good will from one country to another—or certainly street level, one country to another—that happens when I'm onstage. That's how I got into the record, that's what it's all about, basically that we really have a lot in common with everybody that our governments don't suggest."

The record in question is Van Zandt's second solo album, *Voice of America*, an album that essentially directs itself to the oppressed—the oppressed being pretty well defined as the Iron Curtain countries, countries threatened by the U.S.-Soviet crisis and Central America (as a result of U.S. policy). As an artistic statement, it may be the year's most compelling record, not only because it tackles political and human issues head on (by far its greatest vir-



PHOTO: ANN SUMMA/RETNA

Little Steven and his Disciples: A different voice of America

tue), but because of what it says about Steve Van Zandt, or Little Steven, who has left the E Street Band to rise or fall on the merits of his own work.

"Listen," he confides, "I could have stayed with Bruce, made a very good living, made more money than I could ever have imagined, and had a real good time. At the time I joined Bruce I didn't know what would happen. I might have just been there for one tour, but I ended up staying for seven years because I was able to contribute along the way to his thing. But with this record it became obvious that artistically I had something that was just too important, and Bruce felt the same way. He knew that this was the beginning of my new life, whatever, or certainly a continuation of where I was when I joined him."

Continuation is the key word there; or better yet, evolution. Van Zandt looks back on the mid-'70s as a time when he was "kind of in neutral artistically, or at least evolving very, very slowly since I started with Bruce in '75. But from the minute I began to make my first record I realized that this was going to be a different experience than writing songs for other people, even though I was very much in those songs. You know, they weren't written just for Southside or Gary without any involve-

ment of my own feelings. But when I got into my record I realized, Gee, there's a whole lot more here to discover. I hadn't really gone all that deeply into myself. So that first record was about finding myself. Even though there's politics all through it, it's mostly an introspective record. And a very important record for me."

With the Disciples of Soul Van Zandt made three trips to Europe in support of *Men Without Women*. It was on those tours that he began asking himself, "What's going on? This is who I am, now what am I here to say? What exactly is my role gonna be? What is my justification for existence? Do I have one? Or am I just gonna be a sideman who makes introspective records occasionally?"

The definitive answers to these questions are in the grooves, as they say, of *Voice of America*. The guitars and powerhouse rhythm section attack from cut one side one, to the final bars of the anthemic, exultant closer on side two, "Undeclared (Everybody Goes Home)." Horns are out, synthesizers—a taste, anyway—are in. Lyrically, too, Van Zandt's stripped down, forsaking the sort of Pomus-Shuman street poetry that's marked his previous work in favor of more straightforward (some would say less eloquent) messages akin to

JODY DENBERG

STRINGS ATTACHED

Stevie Ray Vaughan raises the stakes



Stevie Ray Vaughan:
'You try to keep your heart in the right place'

On Stevie Ray Vaughan's chest, a peacock tattoo peers out from above the weather-beaten, wood-toned Stratocaster strapped across the guitarist's shoulder. A kimono hangs loosely from his upper torso, and the wide-brimmed black hat perched on his head shades his eyes. Vaughan's arms swing in huge arcs and his feet shuffle while his fingers tear along the strings of his Strat, steely runs spiralling through the rhythms provided by his band, Double Trouble. Does this 26-year-old Texan have a flair for flash? You bet. But he's also got the chops to back it up.

"Yeah, I like to dress weird," the easy-

going Vaughan admits with a chuckle. "It looks good. To me, it's normal. As for windmilling, it's something that feels right. I'm not trying to be Pete Townshend. T-Bone Walker was probably the king of all that stuff. Him and Hendrix probably did it better than anybody. And it worked. It all made different sounds."

Different sounds are something that Vaughan likes to make. In early '83, while synthesizers and rhythm boxes dominated the airwaves, Vaughan overdubbed his serpentine licks onto the backing tracks for David Bowie's *Let's Dance* album. But the collaboration ended there: when Bowie's offer for Double Trouble to open the *Serious Moonlight Tour* dates was rescinded, Vaughan walked. "Double Trouble and I have played together for all this time because we like to play together, and I couldn't see dropping all that for fame."

Instead, Vaughan hit the road with bassist Tommy Shannon and drummer Chris "Whipper" Layton in support of their *Texas Flood* album, which featured an impressive array of original compositions and covers that used rhythm and blues as a base for vociferous guitar improvisations in the tradition of Jimi Hendrix. After 12 years of playing the Texas club circuit with acts like the Cobras and Triple Threat Review (the latter numbering among its members Lou Ann Barton, who was also in an early incarnation of Double Trouble, and former Joe Ely Band keyboardist Mike Kindred), Vaughan was an overnight success—*Texas Flood* climbed into the Top 40

without the aid of a hit single.

On his newly-released second album, *Couldn't Stand The Weather*, Vaughan's raised the stakes a bit. Besides sharper production, the LP features an excursion into jazz, a remarkable cover of Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)" and appearances by brother Jimmie Vaughan of the Fabulous Thunderbirds. All in all, it's a solid step forward for this newly-christened guitar hero.

The second son born to Big Jim and Martha Vaughan (Jimmie is three-and-a-half years older), Stevie Ray Vaughan was raised in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas, which he describes as being one of that bustling city's nicer areas. "It's a lot different than the usual 'money, money, let me take your money' hustle. In some ways it was pretty rough, in some ways it was lots of fun. It's where T-Bone Walker's from, and Leadbelly was there for a long time."

Along with the acclaim from his peers, Vaughan was voted "Best Electric Guitarist" (unseating Eric Clapton after four consecutive years) and "Best New Talent" by the readers of *Guitar Player* magazine, who also chose *Texas Flood* as the "Best Guitar Album." But the accolades, while gladly accepted, are not the primary motivation: the music is.

Vaughan, who has made his home in burgeoning Austin since the early '70s, would someday like to expand beyond recording into "helping other things get going. I'd love to see all these cats hanging around (Austin) with great ideas and great talent be able to do all their music and have a way to get it out." Before Vaughan starts his own label, though, he must first tend to his own business. Months of touring are in the offing, and Vaughan wants to use his time on the road to broaden the scope of his approach. "'Stang's Swang' on the new record is a lot different than anything I've ever done before," he notes, "and I was wondering if anyone would accept it. Then I said, 'Wait a minute. If they don't, I still said it.'"

And what of the tragedies that have befallen other guitar heroes, many of whom burned brightly then burned out?

"You just try to keep your heart in the right place, try to make sense of it all, then you don't run into as many problems," he answers. "Everybody goes through a lot of shit, and the more attention everybody pays to their heart, and the people around them, and their hearts, it works out in the long run. I run into problems stumbling off the path like everybody else, but thank God I keep comin' back." ○



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THE RECORD INTERVIEW

Paul McCartney

'ONCE
THERE
WAS
A WAY
TO GET
BACK



HOME- WARD...

LONDON. IN A CITY WHERE NEARLY every kid on the street looks like he's rushing off to audition for Duran Duran, Paul McCartney, dressed for work in a blue-and-white-checked Levis shirt, blue cotton jeans and slightly muddy rubber-soled loafers, seems almost . . . out of place. Paul McCartney. No matter what you may feel about his recent records, his wife, his bank account, his marijuana busts, his "it's a drag" response to his ex-partner's and ex-best friend's assassination, the man has contributed to more incredible moments of rock music and rock history than almost any other human being on the face of this Earth. And Paul carries that weight, even though he bounces into the coffee bar of George Martin's AIR Studios, where he's mixing the soundtrack to his first solo feature film, *Give My Regards to Broad Street* (which features Ringo Starr, Dave Edmunds, Chris Spedding and Led Zep's John Paul Jones among the musicians, and Sir Ralph Richardson, *Breaker Morant's* Bryan Brown and Tracey Ullman among the thespians). Whistling and trying to play it nonchalant, he fires off a few rounds of Asteroids, complains that some engineer or another is threatening his house record, then says hello. As you note his fading re-

PHOTO LINDA MCCARTNEY

BY DEBORAH FROST
World Radio History

You never forget your first Girl.



semblance to "the cute one" of the Fab Four—his greying hair, crinkling eyes, bit of a tummy—he's checking you out, too. Are you going to bug him about the Beatles? Or share his enthusiasm for old Chuck Berry B-sides? Are you going to see him as the kid who grew up in a Liverpool housing project, never content to just reach for the brass ring? Like the little figure in the logo for his multi-million dollar company, MPL (for which he oversees every aspect, from making albums to picking out photos for his fan club newsletter), Paul McCartney, at age 42, 20 years after the onset of Beatlemania, is still trying to juggle the sun, the moon and Saturn.

In the last two years you've had successful records on the charts (*Tug of War*, *Pipes of Peace*), but you haven't toured since 1976 and your recent public appearances seem to have been limited to a brief wave as you emerge from jail. People probably read all kinds of things into your supposed seclusion, but what they may not realize is that for the past 18 months you've been at work in England, doing a film. Maybe you should explain *Give My Regards To Broad Street* and how it came about.

I was sittin' in a traffic jam and I was bored and I'd been trying to get together a film of some kind. At first, it was going to be based on the *Tug of War* album, an anti-war film. We were working with Tom Stoppard, who's a great writer. But it wasn't happening. I think if it's someone else's idea, it's not as easy as if it's your own. I'd talked to a few directors and David Putnam, who did *Chariots of Fire*, recommended Peter Webb. So I was trying to do this *Tug of War* thing with him and Tom Stoppard, and it was all falling down. And I was stuck in this traffic jam, so I said I'll write something then.

Do you ever write songs while you're driving in the car?

Not really. I sing along with the radio. You can always sing best in a car, can't you? It's better than a recording studio.

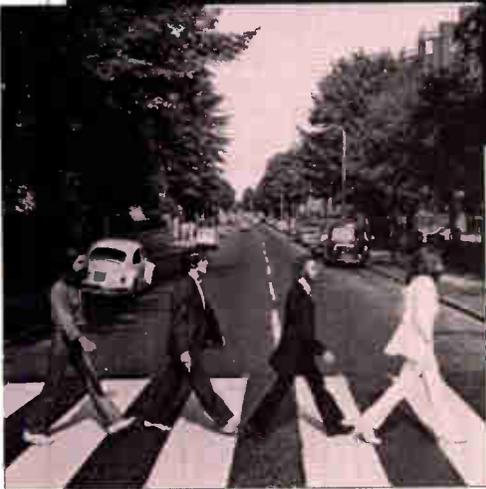
You actually wrote a film script while stuck in traffic?

I wrote it first as an account. After I got busted in Japan for marijuana and I was held in jail for nine days—you may not have heard, it rarely got in the papers—after I got out of that, I wanted to write it down. Just for the record. 'Cause I know how I am, I forget things very easily. Haven't got the world's greatest memory. Anyway, I wrote it all down. I sort of thought, God, this is like writing an essay for school. I can't do it, I'm frightened of the piece of paper. But because I knew I had to write it down to remember the incident, I forced myself to write it. In the end, I'd written 20,000 words.

Why didn't Paul McCartney, the richest man in show biz, etc., etc., pay somebody else to carry his contraband, like some oth-



PHOTO: CURT QUINTER/CAMERA 5



Feeding the frenzy: 'People were reading so much into our lives and our lyrics that we found ourselves feedin' 'em the crazy facts. Like me going across the Abbey Road crossing with no shoes on. I mean, that's all made up, all that stuff.'

sometimes went into first class carriages on a second class ticket. I sometimes got caught then, too. I'm not an angel; by the same token, I'm not a criminal, either. This is sounding rather like dialogue from our film, actually.

But *Broad Street* isn't about your bust, is it? It's a musical fantasy. You play a character with no name, who loses his master tapes—but that's not intended as a heavy metaphor or a deep-rooted existential dilemma. You see the film as fun family entertainment rather than the great statement that sums up your life's work and everything you want to say to the world.

In the same way, really, that *Hard Day's Night* was just these four guys kinda going 'round from song to song and being chased by a lot of fans—which was a kinda parody of what was really happening to us. Well, this is a sort of *Hard Day's Night* of me solo. It's a kind of parody of me now. The truth of the matter is, anything I say about it, I sort of can't pin down. When I was faced with making it, it was sort of like, well, should we go into this kinda space blockbuster, ridiculous music on the moon or whatever—that's Spielberg, that's Lucas, that's *Raiders*, that's those guys. They do it so well, there's no point tryin' to compete with them. The other thing was *National Lampoon*, *Saturday Night Live*, Monty Python, *The Young Ones* over here—but I'll look like a second class any o' them if I try and do their thing. So this was just more . . . my thing. And it comes off a bit more English, a bit lighter on the comedy. 'Cause I'm not any great, stunning comedian. Ringo's funny.

It's interesting that as movies are getting more rock, or at least more soundtrack oriented, rock people are getting more involved with film.

It's exciting. You're getting people like Spielberg—you go and see *Close Encounters*—I saw it in New York and it was like (makes noise like an explosion). They've wound up the volume. And I thought, God, this guy is nicking everything out of our thing. He's making films like rock shows. He's grabbing you at the beginning with a big special effect. He's very plugged in with the average head. Mr. Spielberg, isn't he? Y'know, television, cornflakes. The mother who lives on her own with the children. He's very plugged in to how it is.

Do you think you're plugged in?

To some degree, yeah. My family is like the families that happen in the Spielberg movies. Where the kids swear and say "Penis breath" and the mother says "Stop that, Jonathan," and the kids come home from school with new words and the boys wanna be rougher than the girls. It's all the same as it ever was, really. I don't know how it is in the States. I know how it is around me.

Your children go to a regular school, don't they?

The normal kind of school like I went to when I was a kid, yeah. Just a state school. That's mainly because if they're gonna be privileged in some way—and I s'pose money gives you privileges—I don't want 'em lookin' down on ordinary people. I see that as the main danger when you get money. Especially inherited wealth. You start to think, Well, I'm better than him anyway, I've got more than him, and you tend to

er musicians do? Did you think you were above the law?

Because everyone knows you don't bring grass into Japan, people assume I was arrogant. I wasn't. I was just bein' dumb. I'd got some good grass in America, if you wanna know the truth, and I was loath to flush it down the toilet. And I was silly enough to think I might get past. It was daft. Obviously, looking back on it, you could say why didn't you pay someone? Then they woulda got busted. I don't want anyone else to take the rap. It was just dumb, that's all. We all make mistakes. That was one of mine. The joke of the matter is they haven't changed my opinions on the marijuana thing a'tall. 'Cause they didn't make any attempt to rehabilitate me; they don't, of course, in jail. They lock you in a box and hope the experience will be so horrible you won't do it again.

Was it the first time in years you'd really been alone?

First time that kind of alone. It's a different kind of alone when you're stuck over in Tokyo. It's bad enough when you're stuck in jail when it's your home town, I would think. Although I've never been to my home town jail. It's always some weird foreign country. It was one of those things . . . y'know, when I was a schoolboy, I



PHOTO: SHIELLY KATZ/BLACKSTAR

'You can't top the Beatles. But even existing, without topping it, is really tough to do.'

look down on him. It's that easy to do. We all know about that. So my kids go to ordinary schools in order for them to learn how it is first. Then if you want to be terrific and privileged afterwards, you can handle it. You've got some humanity and compassion with it. But if you are just hit with a big bank balance and you're a bit of a slob, you'll go and slob all that money all over people. You can cause a lotta harm. So I'm trying to bring them up to have values. To have heart, more than anything. It's heart, really, I want them to have. I want them to actually care, you know, if someone gets hurt. And they do. They're very good kids, like that.

What do the kids at school think about them?

We try to play down the whole thing. They know I'm famous, but they see the kids are trying to cope with it normally, so they help 'em. Some of them pick on 'em. Like all kids at all schools. But the main body of them know what's going on there. That we're not big-headed swine trying to take over the area. We're just trying to fit in. Real normal. With a little bit of privacy here and there—just like most people

want. Normally I steer interviews off it. Just so we don't make them the subject. Good kids, though. They're good kids. I'd love nothing more than to be able to show you photographs of my house, let you publish 'em. 'Cause I love it, I'm very proud of it. But if you do that, everyone goes, "Oh God, look at 'im, showing off." So now I try and play it a little more private.

Let's get back to *Broad Street*, then. If it's supposed to be a parody of your solo career, why did you re-record Beatles songs for the film?

As it's a story about me and what happens to me, we decided to draw on my entire composing output. We were trying to do the equivalent of, like, a live show. If you're doing a live show and you're doing all new songs, people don't understand. They don't, really. All of us would like to go on a tour and have some new ideas and just do it. For the freshness. Just for ourselves. But if Jagger gets on and doesn't sing "Satisfaction," I'm gonna want my money back. I know the Beatles and the Stones—two of the biggest performin' acts in history, I 'spose—always *tried* to do new numbers. But whenever we stuck a new

number in, it went flat—as a pancake. We'd have to explain it, we'd have to set it all up. Now audiences are better. But there's always gonna be someone who will kinda say (cups hands and yells like a drunk) "Yeah, sing 'Yesterday!'" There's always gonna be *someone* in the audience who's gonna wanna hear it. So I think what you gotta do is, you compromise. It'd be lovely if everyone was madly sensitive to the artist, but they're not. People are just people. I love that fact, though. To me, I love that people are real . . . slob. Not slob, but really . . . slob. I love that. That people eat junk food and watch a lot of telly. There's something I find I identify with. I'm a bit like that.

You eat junk food?

I don't really eat junk food. But I can identify with people who do. I happen to be a vegetarian now, but that's another matter. If they had vegetarian junk food, I'd eat it. What I mean is, I agree that the customer's always right. To an extent. I hate to agree with it, actually. 'Cause we'd all love to say, No, he isn't. But there's a bottom line somewhere. F'rinstance, people have said to me, "Will you make another film after this one?" It depends if I think this one works. Critics, forget. If the public likes it, that's who I'll listen to.

You used to be extremely sensitive to criticism.

Well, I still am. Everyone is.

Your work has been described as mawkish, insipid, silly, vacuous—and worse.

The stuff they write is so much better, isn't it? Storms the charts, what they write. The thing is, they all tell you about the story of gettin' to the top and that's when everyone tries to knock you off your pedestal. They all tell you it's tough at the top and it is. But you get used to it. I've never liked criticism. Unless it was really constructive. This is what you'll hear everyone say and it's the same for me, really. It's the negative, bitchy kind I don't like. I know this film, I know the critics will have quite a bit to say, y'know? The thing is, we set out to make a film and the great thing, as David Putnam said the other day, is we've done it. These same people who kinda put me down and say, Oh, he's insipid and vacuous—f'rinstance, "Ebony and Ivory," I just saw it described as that the other day. It *is* a very simple song. If you're looking for thoughty verse, 40 stanzas, you won't get it. You'd better look to Coleridge for that kinda gig. That was the best I can do. But for me, they didn't do anything less insipid. Who else had a number one talking about the black and white color problem? Who else has done anything remotely like it? There were a few records a few years ago—you got anti-Vietnam, give peace a chance and stuff. There's not many people actually even bother to take issues like that.

Are you concerned with other issues or political causes? You did a song, "Give Ireland Back to the Irish," and not long ago you fired off a telegram to Maggie Thatcher about the nurses' strike here in England.

I figure I'm just a fella, livin'. I got four kids, I'm a rate [tax] payer. So that entitles me to an opinion. I'm livin' in the West, so we're allowed to talk over here, right? So when the English paratroopers, *my* army who I'm payin' rates for, go into Ireland and shoot down some innocent bystanders, for the first time in my life I go, Hey, wait a minute, we're the goodies, aren't we? That wasn't very goody. And I'm moved to make some kind of protest. So I did "Give Ireland Back to the Irish." Which was promptly banned in England. But it was Number One in Spain, of all places. That was rather odd—Franco was in power.

Maybe they couldn't understand the words.

I think that's what it was, actually. They just liked the tune.

It's not so much that I'm a protester, it's just that there are some times when you can't help but protest. So "Give Ireland Back to the Irish" was something I *had* to write. And "Ebony and Ivory," I just had the idea and thought, Yeah, well, that says something I wanna say. One of the reasons it says it simply is I tried forever to write the second verse and never could. And to me, this argument that commercial is drippy—I don't think it's true. That's underestimating the intelligence of the people who are buying your stuff. I mean, *Soap* is the number one comedy show 'cause it's funny. Those things don't get there 'cause someone manages 'em. It's 'cause we all laugh. Or 'cause we all like the new Michael Jackson thing. *Thriller* doesn't sell 'cause he's some kind of jerk. It's proof that you've reached people rather than this kind of rathuh vulgah commercial thing, dahling. He sells, good God. But dahling—how vulgah! That's the weight of snobbery, I think.

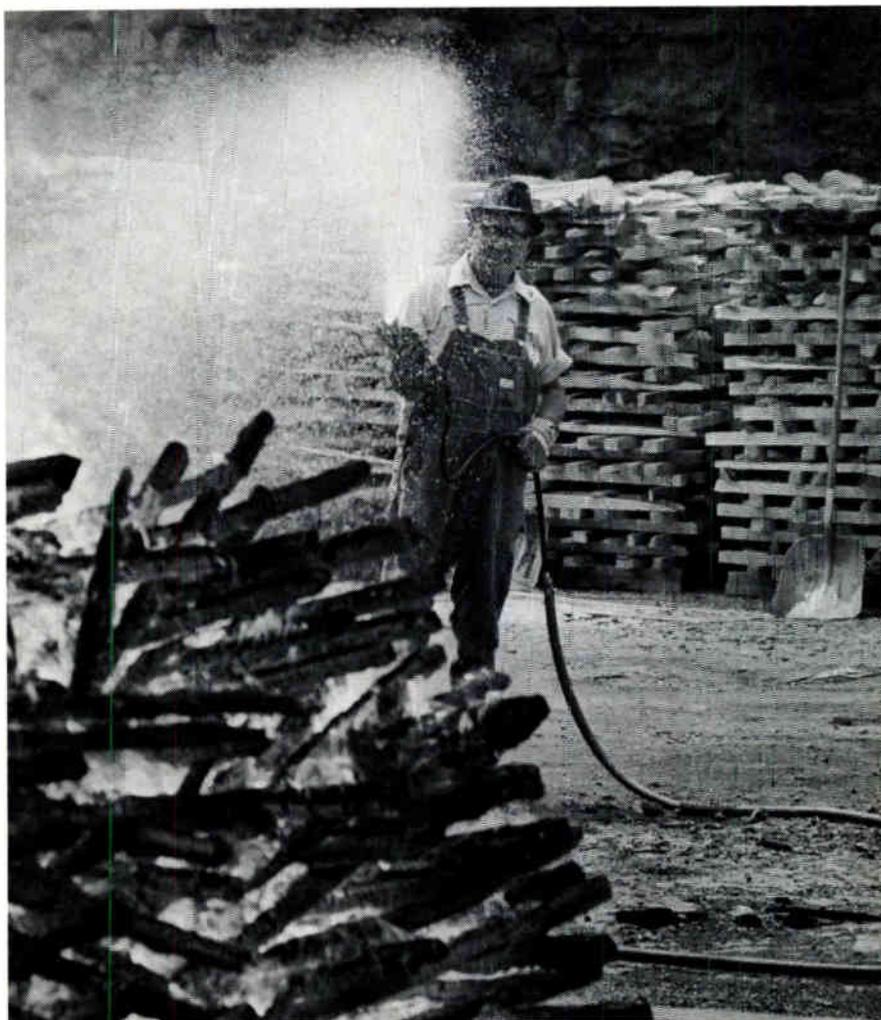
Is Michaelmania as intense over here as it is in the States? It almost seems as if the media won't be happy until it's used him up. His face is everywhere, every week. When you're sick of his face, they write about his glove.

It's known as being hot. There was Beatlemania, now there's Michaelmania.

Can it destroy you?

I didn't get destroyed by it. It's nice of everyone to worry for Michael—I don't think he needs it a'tall. He's a very straightforward kid. He's very talented: he can dance, he can sing, he knows how to make records that people'll like. He's got a great lot of faith. He's got a lot of innocence, he protects it especially. He's very careful about that.

How does he protect it?



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Discovering how it gentles Jack Daniel's is the nicest moment of all.



CHARCOAL
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BY DROP

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With Michael Jackson in 'Say Say Say': 'Don't do drugs, look at cartoons and you'll be more innocent. That's how he does it.'

Look at cartoons all day. Don't do drugs, look at cartoons and you'll be more innocent. That's sort of how he does it. One of my theories about Michael's high voice is if you were whatever age he was when he started gettin' famous—a little itty bitty kid you see in those old Motown videos—well, at 13 or 14, when most of us fellas are trying to make our voices break so girls will go out with us and we're all tryin' to look butch—someone who's earning that much off not being butch isn't gonna want his voice to break as easily. And he just doesn't want to lose his childhood. I know that feeling. I mean, sometimes people will say I'm trying to be a Beatle. I'm not trying to stay young-looking, although I prefer young-looking to old-looking, actually. I'm not working at it like mad. I don't dye my hair or anything. What I don't like is "growing up" in inverted commas. That kind of idea of putting aside foolish pleasure and getting into the serious worrying things in life. There's too much of that about anyway. I love to be able to look through child's eyes at rain or something like that.

Does having children keep you in touch with that?

That's one of the great things about having kids. I know that when I was 20-odd and we'd ridden on the crest of the wave of the Beatles and it was breaking up, I was at a point where I was writing songs like on *Abbey Road*—(sings) "Once there was a way to get back homeward"—like once there was a way to get back home, but now there isn't. Like you couldn't get back to your roots anymore once you've been in the city a long time and not been back to Liverpool. Once you've been on rock 'n' roll tours and seen people snorting this and doin' this and doin' that. You can't keep your innocence

because you've been exposed to the non-innocent thing. But suddenly that's not true, 'cause it's only you exposing yourself. It's you putting down yourself there. If you want to go into a field and lie down and smell a dandelion—sounds all very flower power and '60s—but if you want to your youth floods back. The great thing with having kids is they want to roll down hills, so you get to do that. And they want pen knives and bits of string. They do all that stuff that you remember.

There's a Delmore Schwartz quote I always try to keep in mind. Actually, I think he was paraphrasing Pater, or some ancient philosopher, but it's something to the effect that every stage of life aspires to the condition of childhood and all art constantly aspires to the condition of music.

That's the way I feel. You've heard of the painter—people like Picasso or an English painter, Peter Blake—we've heard him say how he learns all his life to be a painter, to be technically brilliant, and then he gets to a stage and says now I've got to unlearn it. Now I'm so stiff in my lines, I'm so clever—when I was kid. God, how free that line was. I don't really wanna go through all that. I just want to stay unlearned. That really is my intention. If I can have some kinda fun whilst doing my job and kinda being me, then that'll help.

Has it become more of a job?

A lot more. Not a little bit. A lottle bit. When we started off, we came down from Liverpool, we went into the studio, we sang 10 songs and we went to the pub. And that was the last we heard of that record 'til it was out in the shops. That was when we had no control, no money, nothing. Those were the lightest working hours ever. And we began to take over control, the work-

men taking control of the tools, and become members of the team. So now you stay for mixing, you talk about what's gonna be the single, and you work. You work harder than I ever thought you worked. And for someone who only got into music to avoid gettin' a job... But think about it; think about it. I've survived. After the Beatles. And I've even had another group since the Beatles and even that did well. I mean, anyone forced to carry on after the Stones, the Beatles, Led Zeppelin—you can't top it. There's no question you can top it. But even just existing, without topping it, is really tough to do. And me, I just feel really lucky that no matter who's slagged me off here, there and everywhere, somehow I ended up here. I'm just an ordinary fella, really. I've done bloody well.

How do you feel about the books that keep coming out about you and the Beatles? Does it bother you that people who were once friends or employees are trying to cash in by revealing all the trash?

It's trash, let's leave it at that. It is trash. And they know it and they've got to live with it. I think I'm pretty lucky to have got off like this, considering how bitchy and jealous people can be. I don't feel wrong about anything I've done. Obviously, like everyone, I'd prefer everything of mine to be a complete critical success and number one in every country in the world. At least. But you know, it doesn't happen like that. I remember actually looking at Sinatra's career, when I was 20, and thinking, God, you know, he took some knocks. 'Cause he had big slump periods and all that. But I was thinking but still, he's reckoned by some people to be the tops and so it obviously is possible to live life and take some knocks and take some slumps and still... get on.

Let me ask you about someone else taking some knocks. I can understand that for you, having Linda in the band was a way of having her on the road with you. And people probably would have objected to anyone you married—unless it was Princess Di, probably. But having Linda play in the band really set her up.

What happened, really, was the Beatles broke up and there we were, left with the wreckage. I just thought, that's the end of me as a singer, songwriter, composer—'cause I hadn't got anyone to do it with—unless I now work out another way to do it. I looked at someone like Johnny Cash and I thought, Well, Johnny Cash just takes a coupla guys and goes around Folsom Prison and has a sing. It doesn't particularly matter who's in his backing group. And I thought, Well, I'll just do a similar thing, I'll just get a band and it'll really just be for the playing and singing, just so I don't forget how to do it. Like an athlete keeping in some form, some kinda condition. All in

Continued on page 35



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On the BEAT

FAN NEWS

Chambers Essential English Dictionary defines *fan* as: "short for fanatic, an enthusiastic follower of some sport or hobby, or public figure." As a rule, fanzines (the kind created by fans for fans of a particular rock luminary) tend to be well-intentioned but strictly kitchen table productions—a half dozen poorly mimeographed sheets, stapled together. Lacking much real information, they feature a lot of bad drawings, lousy poetry, and (at best) a muddy Public Domain photo or two. For the last year, a Canadian fanzine called *Break-through* has been putting most others to shame. Subheaded "A Magazine Dedicated to **Kate Bush**," the publication is just that: clearly a labor of love by editor/publisher Dale Somerville and the legions of Bush followers who contribute to each issue. With the recent, though belated, U.S. release of her '79 and '80 albums, *Lionheart* and *Never Forever* (and a brand new LP reportedly waiting in the wings), Bush finally seems poised for a breakthrough in this country—one that the contributors to *Break-through* have been trying to foster for years. Tastefully laid out and printed on double-weight stock, an average issue (illustrated with dozens of clear and often rare photos) is a treasure trove of news, obscure collector's info, and a mixed bag of articles on Kate that are culled from commercial publications around the world. A recent 76-page issue included a European interview with Bush that concentrated on her unorthodox studio techniques, another interview focusing on her album, *The Dreaming*, Bush's own day-by-day account of a typical work week, and a number of reprinted reviews. Granted, there's the odd crossword puzzle, pen pal list, a sprinkling of home-grown art work, and an occasional Ode to Kate in open verse, but the usual fanzine lunatic fringe seems to be virtually non-existent. *Break-through* also has recently moved up-market to a full-color cover. It seems to grow more elaborate each time around, and Issue Five (The Kate Bush Birthday Issue) recently rolled off the press. A single copy is \$4.00, and subscriptions are also available. For information, write Break-Through, Box 160, Hartney, Manitoba, R0M 0X0, Canada. . . . While we're on the topic of fanzines, Britain's **Yes** (currently on the latest Stateside leg of its mammoth 90125 world tour) has a Vancouver-based fanzine of its own called *Relayer*. Though it's not as graphically elaborate as the Bush venture, its advantage is that editors Tanya Coad and Sue Smith have managed to secure a fair amount of direct input from past and present band members, their families, and associates over the last few years. Lengthy, mainly original interviews are a mainstay here. Subscriptions are available. A sample issue is \$2.50 from Relayer, 1384 Hope Road, North Vancouver, British Columbia, V7P 1W7, Canada. ■



With *Infidels* (Bob Dylan's 21st Columbia album) chalking up reasonable sales figures (it recently went gold), armchair culture buffs and practically everyone who's ever been herded through a County Art Museum on a school trip has been playing 'Spot the Masterpiece' with Bob's as-seen-on-MTV video of the LP's second single, "Jokerman." For those who get a kick out of proving that the money spent on that college education didn't totally go down the drain, here's a list of the Great Works, in the order that they appear in the video: Self-Portrait as The Redeemer (Durer, 1500); Sumerian Idol (2700 B.C.); The Slave Ship (Turner, 1840); Minoan Snake Goddess (1500 B.C.); Bob Dylan poster (Glaser, 1966); Moses (Michelangelo, 1514); Man in Bondage from The Book of Urizen (Blake, 1795); Dead Christ (Mantegna, 1490); The Delphi Charioteer (Greek, 5th Century B.C.); Weeping Woman (Picasso, 1937); Woman and Man (Lindner, 1971); The Musicians' Hell (Bosch, 1510); Jewish Illuminated Manuscript (German, 1300); Island Man of New Guinea (Kirk, 1970); The Battle of San Romano (Uccello, 1435-50); David (Michelangelo, 1504); Cow's Skull—Red, White, and Blue (O'Keefe, 1931); Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce (Curtis, 1903); The Third of May 1808 (Goya, 1814); The Armor of Henry VIII (1520); Muhammad Ali as St. Sebastian (Lois, 1968); Colossal Head (Palazzo Orsini, Bomarzo, Italy); Slain Heroes at Arlington (Lois, 1969); The Joker (DC Comics); The Scream (Munch, 1893); Goddess of Earth and Procreation (Aztec, 1400).

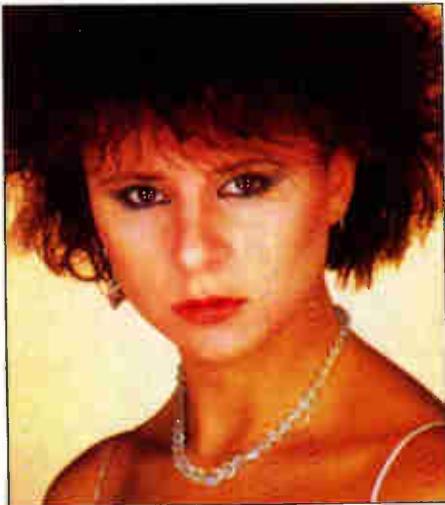
THE VINYL WORD

Eric Carmen—who, during his early 70s stint with the Raspberries could almost out-McCartney Paul McCartney—has a new solo album due from Warner Brothers on the 3rd of September. . . . Despite a workload that would

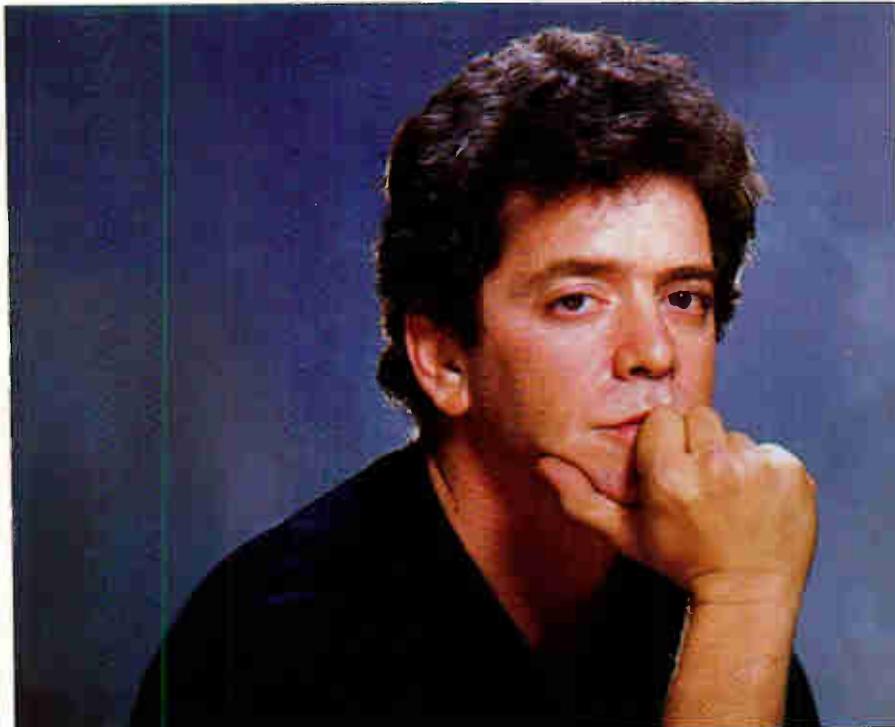
drive lesser mortals into the ground—including constant touring and recording with Genesis, as well as producing other artists—**Phil Collins** is finding time to pen songs for his third solo album. Atlantic expects him back in the studio before fall; the LP will be out very early in the New Year. . . . **Let's Active**, the two women/one man band with whom R.E.M. producer Mitch Easter has been associated for the past three years, has an album due on September 17th for IRS Records. It comes in the wake of *Afoot*, the band's warmly-received EP released last October. . . . Also on the 17th of September, A&M Records is shipping the newest LP from **Bryan Adams**, who scored last year with *Cuts Like a Knife*. . . . It's no secret that though many of rock's most legendary names barely make a dent in the office calculator when it comes to album sales, it's a situation that many labels overlook, just for the privilege of having the Name in Question associated with the firm. Accordingly, more than a few industry eyebrows were raised when Warner Brothers recently announced that they had given the ax to **Van Morrison**—even though the company tore its corporate hair out and wailed a thousand regrets as it wiped off the blade. PolyGram was only too happy to give Morrison a contract. Now the word is that Van is working hard on his first studio effort for that label and hopes are high for its prompt release. . . . Epic Records releases the latest studio album from California's REO Speedwagon on September 20th. ■

PROBLEMS

With the release of *Tapdancing Bats* further cementing a reputation for being America's most famous rock obscurity, the members of **NRBQ** recently found themselves in a slugfest with a certain upstate New York college. It seems certain members of this temple of learning's student hierarchy got a bit ticked off by the band's laff-filled rendition of Budd Abbott & Lou Costello's "Who's On First" routine—and by the fact that the band felt it necessary to do it three times during the course of a single gig. The college claimed the comedy interlude spanned a full 35 minutes of the band's set, and (what's worse) wasn't even particularly funny. At issue was the agreed-upon fee. According to NRBQ's label, Bearsville Records, the group's lawyers (armed with a tape of the performance) contended that the Abbott & Costello tribute ran more like 16 minutes, that the contract didn't state what the band had to do (just so long as they showed up), and that the collegians' sense of humor (or lack of it) was their problem, not the band's. In the end, reportedly, NRBQ managed to prove that they'd played for half an hour *over* the stipulated time, and the college coughed up the bucks. ■



Tracey Ullman aficionados (not to mention admirers of former Beatles) will have to wait a bit longer to see their faves on the silver screen. Seems that **Paul McCartney's** first foray into movie musicals, *Give My Regards to Broad Street*, was originally scheduled to be playing the nation's triplexes by now, but isn't. A sneak preview in Atlanta earlier this summer apparently indicated that the epic needed a bit of reorganizing in the editing room, so the premiere has been re-slated for late October. Dubbed a musical mystery, the feature-length flick covers a day in the life of an "internationally famous rock star" and his efforts to track down the stolen master tape of his new album. The cast includes McCartney and former bandmate **Ringo Starr**, their respective spouses (**Linda McCartney** and **Barbara Bach**), **Bryan Brown**, and the aforementioned Ms. Ullman. The soundtrack album, also delayed, is presumably on the way.



Most recorded rock outfits—both successful and not—have several tape reels of never-released material gathering dust in some manager's storage closet. Some of the stuff is good, some is just plain unlistenable. All of it is of interest to hardcore followers of the performer(s) in question. From their Andy Warhol mid-60s period through the middle 70s, New York's **Velvet Underground** laid down its fair share of obscure tunes that, for one reason or another, never made it to America's turntables. **Lou Reed**, who seems to be back on the creative track with the release of his recent solo effort, *New Sensations*, has also been chained to a reel-to-reel, going over more than a dozen previously-unreleased gems from the Velvet Vault, with an eye to releasing the best of the bunch as a retrospective.

RADIO

With the nation's radio airwaves apparently in the grip of homogenization fever, **Paul Simon** has dug into his wallet and is taking matters into his own hands. He, brother Ed, and former *Saturday Night Live* and *New Show* producer **Lorne Michaels** have gone into partnership and purchased their own 3000-watt radio station. Located on eastern Long Island, WWHB (according to the trio) will mix current mainstream hits with items from the 50s, 60s, and 70s. The idea is to attract listeners who, in this age of radio specialization, have grown bored stiff with one form of automated playlist or another. Could become a real trend. ■

SCREENINGS

Rock 'n' Roll continues to exert its influence on the very young this month with the premiere of NBC's new Saturday morning program, *Kidd Video*. Aimed at an audience of six- to 12-year-olds, the half-hour program will feature a mix of standard rock videos, animated cartoon interpretations of Top 40 hits, and live performances by an in-house band called, coincidentally, *Kidd Video*. Reportedly, 2,000 singer/actor/musicians auditioned for spots in the quartet; the final four will also be featured characters in the animated sequences. At press time, NBC claimed that a panel of two network execs and 40 kids (aged 6 to 15) was "evaluating" thousands of original tunes for possible inclusion in the televised kiddie fest. Well, you've been warned. ■



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Chrome Audio & Video Tapes

Continued from page 30

all, I ended up sayin' to Lin, So how'd you fancy it, c'mon, hit a synthesizer for us—just a little wah-wah. Just somethin' simple. We'll go and have a laugh. I needja on-stage for my confidence, that was really the major point. I, like an idiot, asked her to do it. And like a wonderful person, she agreed. It was mad, really. But in truth, in our own innocence at the time, just kinda the first years of like knowin' each other—we just thought we could do anything. And we did, for God's sake. That's the joke about it. It doesn't matter who hated her on the way. We did it. On the '76 tour there she was, by God, doin' it all. The thing is, it caused a lot of trouble between us.

What was interesting was that both you and John appeared to replace each other with your wives as your primary collaborators.

It wasn't serious collaboration. I mean, I don't even feel like writing with Michael (Jackson) was a collaboration in the same way it was with John. That was a songwriting partnership. We were very special. I could feel it was a special kind of thing 'cause it was dead easy to write. Talk about sittin' around for days trying to write songs—in a matter of hours, we'd feel we'd been at it too long. John and I were perfect, really, for each other. I could do stuff he might not be in the mood for, egg him in a certain direction he might not wanna go in. And he could do the same with me. If I'd go in a certain direction he didn't like, he'd just stop it (snaps fingers) like that. The thing is, I don't think Linda and I have ever taken her contribution seriously. So when other people judge it seriously, they're not really using the same terms of reference we're using. You gotta imagine these people—the guy's just lost the Beatles and he's out of a job. The girl is a photographer. They've just suddenly fallen in love. It's the '60s. They wanna do stuff that suits them, not what anyone else thinks. It's just some fella, some girl. Just gettin' married. And we just went in and did it (sings) "Our way . . ."

Are you ever going to tour again?

I don't know. I haven't ruled it out. I know in the back of everyone's minds when they ask this question—and they all ask it—in the back of everyone's minds is he won't tour again 'cause John got killed. And no one mentions it. To me, I haven't been able to consider a tour in the last two years because I've been making this film and no way could I have taken one second off what I've been doing. I may easily do it after this movie. If I was some 24-year-old bachelor, I sure as hell would want to be out on tour—just for the women, probably. And if I was as I was once, it would be—they man, the performance, there's no substitute—all of those things would be true. But I've got four kids and they deserve most of my time. If they're to be brought



'The cute one' at 42: 'Think about it—I've survived after the Beatles. I've done bloody well.'

up happy. They deserve for me to be around sometime.

Did you really play drums on a lot of the Beatles' things? At least one of "those books" claims that in your attempt to control the band you sort of pushed Ringo right off his own drum stool.

Some Beatles things. On "Back in the U.S.S.R." and I think I played guitar on "Taxman" and "The Night Before," a couple of those. But everything else gets exaggerated in the Beatles' case. People were reading so much into our lives and our lyrics that we found ourselves feedin' 'em the crazy facts. Like me going across the Abbey Road crossing with no shoes on. I mean, that's all made up, all that stuff. If you're trying to look for the truth of it, with the Beatles, you got four guys who

were a good little band, a tight little unit, and for most of their working lives were really good with each other.

Do you miss it?

Yeah. But I don't miss it as much as I would've if I'd been the 28-year-old bachelor. Hey, this bachelor's gettin' older by the minute. I can see there would have been a bigger thing for it then. One of the great things about my life is that I don't have too many regrets. As far as women are concerned, I don't lust after them now 'cause I sowed a lot of wild oats. Me and Linda got a lot done, y'know, in the '60s. We got a lot out of our systems. Which is good for now, because it allows you to sort of settle back and be content with just kind of ordinary life. That's how we feel. We don't feel like we missed anything. ○

ANTHONY DECURTIS

STREET SCENES

Breakin' and *Beat Street* illuminate different perspectives on a new dance craze; *Streets of Fire* is nowhere, baby

Just as disco swiveled out of gay and Latin dance clubs onto the big screen in the '70s, break dancing is hip-hopping its way into our hearts from the class-war-ravaged streets of the South Bronx in the '80s. Consumerism demands a never-ending flow of new styles, fashions and trends—and mainstream America has always used our country's various subcultures as a kind of farm system for the media big leagues.

On the positive side, this appropriation process helps "underground" acts get na-

Steady Crew in *Flashdance*, some of Michael Jackson's fresh moves and the street-gang setting of his "Beat It" video, and Grandmixer D. St.'s furious rip-rock scratching on Herbie Hancock's "Rockit."

The visual explosiveness of break-dancing and graffiti art makes the movies hip-hop's clearest route to the mass audience beyond the dance charts, storefront and basement clubs, and the odd crossover stroke. After the buzz generated last year by director Charlie Ahearn's *Wild Style*, a street-level look at the South Bronx rock-

canon; belief in it is the only loyalty oath this country really requires. These raggedy tights-to-relative riches plots still pack theaters (and sell soundtracks) for the same reason all cultural myths of any status retain their daily force: denying them would be too painful and raise too many troublesome questions.

But while show-biz as a road out of the ghetto is the most important and the most traditional fantasy reinforced by *Breakin'* and *Beat Street*, it's hardly the only one. Hip-hop may actually have lessened the gang warfare that makes anyone who lives in poverty-crippled neighborhoods a potential victim. But judging by these movies, the street scene is peopled exclusively by sensitive kids of phenomenal talent who move with grace, ease and saintly good humor amid the rubble of the lives and buildings around them. Their days are governed by an ethic of artistic discipline and practice worthy of Flaubert. Maybe drugs are a problem in the suburbs; these kids scarcely take a drink—got to stay in shape, you know. The only battling in these movies is in the dancefloor face-offs, which, needless to say, form the visual core of the two pictures and are great fun to watch.

Police harrassment? Well, *The Man* hauls the *Beat Street* Breakers (played by the New York City Breakers) in for dancing in the subway, but all ends well when one of the Breakers' moms makes it to the precinct and runs down the riot act to the kids and the cops. Family problems? The same mom who springs her son from the clink raps in perfect rhythm to him and his D.J. brother at the breakfast table. *Beat Street* graffiti painter Ramon (one of his pieces reads, "If art is a crime, God forgive me") is portrayed as coming from a troubled home because his mechanic father thinks the boy should get a job and support his illegitimate child. He doesn't understand that his son's an *artist*, you see.

Racial and sexual tension? *Breakin'*'s triumphant dance combo—a white woman, a black man, and an Hispanic man—could've been grouped by an affirmative action officer. In *Beat Street* Latino graffiti-man Ramon and black D.J. Kenny are tight like that, while *Us Girls* get up in a tough scene to prove that "us girls can boogie too." Despite the counter-evidence of Ramon's illegitimate child, sexuality among the hip-hops (as opposed to the sleazoid jazz-dance teacher in *Breakin'* who wants to bang his best female students by way of making them stars) is a matter of remarkable maturity and restraint.



PHOTO MICHAEL GINUIER/RC

Beat Street: Turning the tables on obscurity and oppression

tional exposure and hopefully sell discs, make movies and reap the rewards of their artistic pioneering. Negatively, upward mobility sometimes sucks the juice from the local scene, creating stars out of the more commercial acts, condemning more daring ones to obscurity, and transforming a popular art that spoke directly to the needs and conditions of a specific group of people into the featureless pap that the money boys often believe can appeal to "everyone."

Strangely, the hip-hop culture of break dancing, rapping/DJing, and graffiti art has already been stylized into a cultural media myth before any of its major practitioners have gained anything more than cult status. Thus far, the big breakthroughs have all been indirect: a plug for Fab Five Freddy in Blondie's 1981 "Rapture" smash, the appearance of the Rock

ers' scene (with a soundtrack featuring Grandmixer D. St., Grand Wizard Theodore, and Chief Rocker Busy Bee) made for under \$500,000, Hollywood got on the case.

Like *Wild Style*, the first two big-bucks hip-hop flicks to hit theaters, *Breakin'* and *Beat Street* (the latter produced by Harry Belafonte), take as their plot the process of cultural mainstreaming that the movies themselves are enacting. Both films depict the breakers' tense and wary attitude toward the high art/upscale entertainment world that looks down on them. At the same time that privileged world seems to represent the only goal these street artists can pursue if they want to make a living from their creative gifts.

Of course the hard-earned rise from oppressed obscurity to the high life is the most basic plot in the American cultural

So what's wrong with showing a positive image for once and acknowledging some of the results of forces like hip-hop mainstay Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation, which has encouraged South Bronx kids to give up drugs and violence to find a better way? Nothing really; neither of these movies is offensive in any serious sense. And while *Breakin'* is simply innocuous (and stiffly acted, particularly by female lead Lucinda Dickey), *Beat Street* handles its subjects and setting with a certain amount of subtlety and insight.

Breakin' takes place in Los Angeles, a locale that makes hip-hop seem like the latest sun-baked fad, just a touch more charged than skate-boarding. *Beat Street's* savaged South Bronx is not only truer to the culture's roots, but it captures the desperation conquered by hope that makes the scene exciting and significant.

Breakin''s easy contrast between high-toned jazz dancing and the breakers' vital Venice Beach milieu pits a white-dominated professional and privileged world against an aspiring street art. The rainbow coalition trio mentioned earlier crash a closed audition for a Broadway-style show called *Street Jazz* and, you guessed it, win over the stodgy, but eminently fair-minded, judges.

The cultural shadings in *Beat Street* make for more compelling oppositions than these. The tenement club breakers form a complex relationship with a more

or less avant student composer (played by Rae Dawn Chong) from Harlem's City College, so the aesthetic war being waged is largely within the social strata of the black art world. The young D.J.'s aspiration is not to make the Broadway scene, but to spin first at a hot South Bronx club and later at the Roxy downtown, both venues where hip-hop is already established and recognized. And while *Breakin'* doesn't do much with graffiti, *Beat Street's* Ramon gets fried on the third rail after "bombing" a subway car with one of his murals—making an important point about the risks involved in pursuing an art that's both illegal and highly dangerous.

Both *Breakin'* and *Beat Street* assume their audience's lack of familiarity with the world they describe. Consequently, for all their mythologizing, they play almost a documentary role in educating viewers' in the breakers' art, language and beliefs. Director Walter Hill's excruciatingly pretentious "rock & roll fable," *Streets of Fire*, begins from the entirely opposite premise. It assumes that rock culture is familiar to everyone and consists solely of an already completed, essentially meaningless series of gestures, postures, attitudes and clichés that can be manipulated in the most cynical ways and that reflect nothing more than the desire to be cool. Now you know why Bruce Springsteen refused to release his "Streets of Fire" track from *Darkness on the Edge of Town* to this debacle.

Set in (get this) "Another Time, Another Place," *Streets of Fire* actually occurs in a dreary, urban film-noir world that combines '50s fatalism with *Road Warrior*-like post-holocaust despair. Hill describes the violence-convulsed plot this way: "The Leader of the Pack steals the Queen of the Hop and Soldier Boy comes home to do something about it." As plot summaries go, this makes one appreciate "shark terrorizes Long Island beach."

With the exception of two tunes by the Blasters, everything in this movie that has anything to do with music is completely unconvincing on both an emotional and intellectual level (see plot summary above). Ry Cooder turns in the most tedious performance of his career, and king of tripe Jim Steinman (the man responsible for Bonnie Tyler's spirit-crushing abomination, "Total Eclipse of the Heart") contributes two masterpieces of bombastic nonsense: "Nowhere Fast" and "Tonight Is What It Means To Be Young."

But even beyond these flaws, *Streets of Fire's* worst failing is its nihilistic, beautiful loser philosophy. "There's nothing wrong with going nowhere, baby," one of this flick's tunes advises, "but we should be going nowhere fast." The problem is, in our time and our place, there's plenty wrong with going nowhere, baby. Apparently not enough, however, to keep Walter Hill from getting there in record time with this frighteningly empty "film." ○

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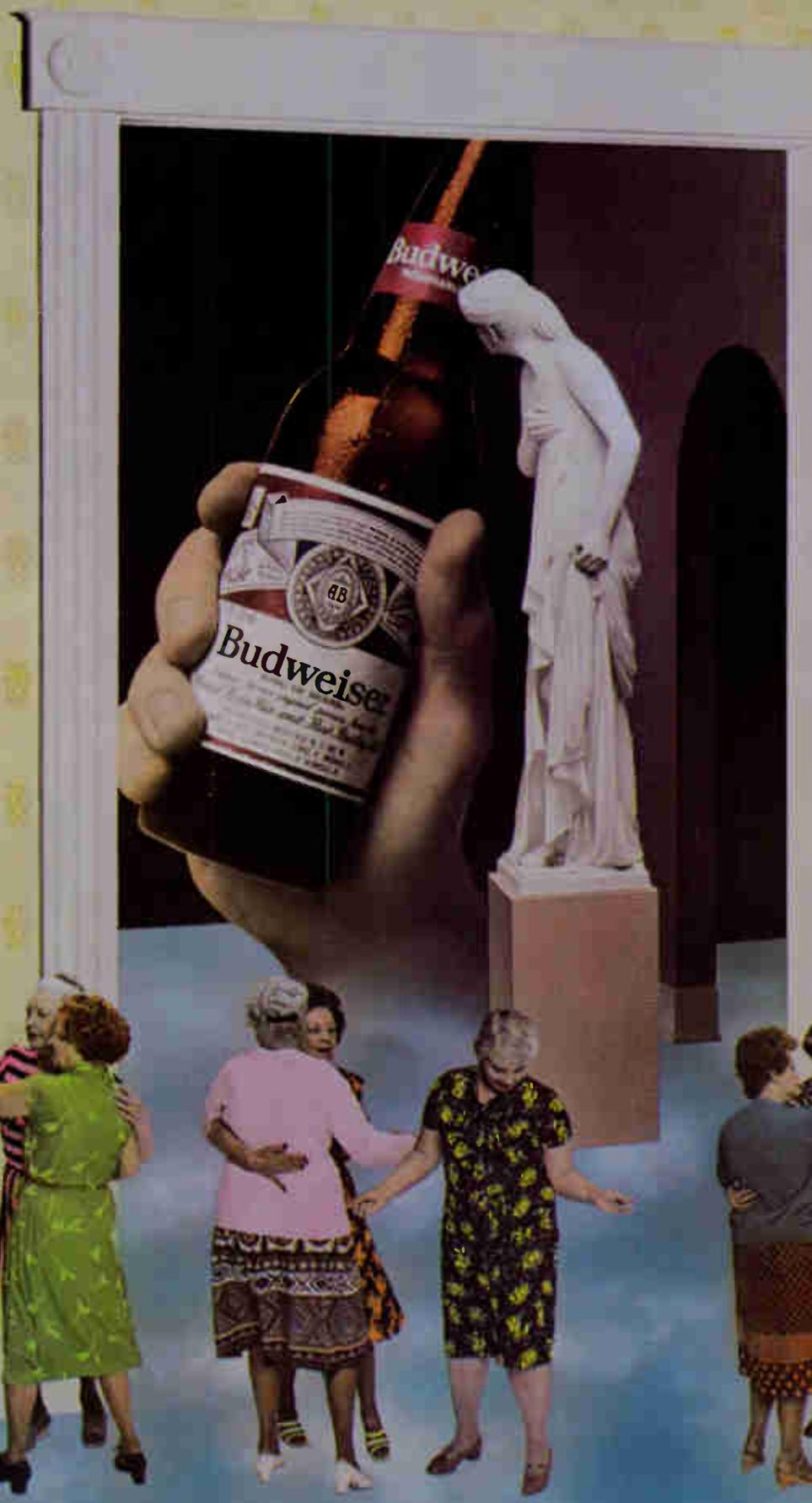
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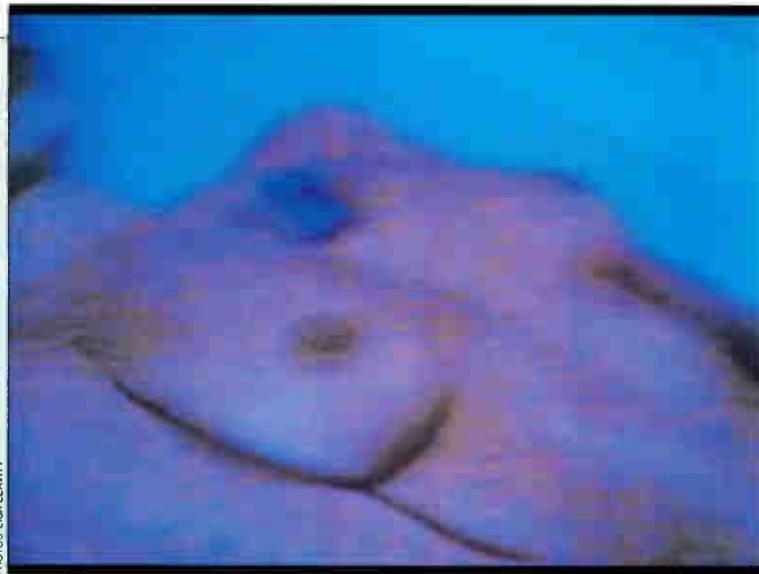
The arguments have already started: Who's sexier, Apollonia or her predecessor, Vanity? Apollonia, the female lead in Prince's autobiographical film Purple Rain is really Patty Katere, an Hispanic American who won an open audition after Vanity balked at the script and bolted for a solo deal with Motown. Katere, 24, now fronts Vanity's sidekicks as the leader of Apollonia 6. Prince's new guitarist is Wendy Melvoin, replacing Dez Dickerson, who's now shopping for a solo deal.

made its first tentative effort at acknowledging rock's illustrious history by committing to broadcast six installments of *Rock Influences*, a series developed by Television Theatre Co. and Monarch Entertainment. The first show was shot live at Passaic, New Jersey's Capitol Theatre and featured headlining band R.E.M. in concert with special guests Levon Helm, Rick Danko and Richard Manuel from the Band, plus Richie Havens, Jesse Colin Young, John Sebastian and Roger McGuinn. Other installments are said to follow the same format of homing in on one up-and-coming young band and studying the musicians and musical styles that most influenced it. This development is almost as promising as the exclusivity deal is depressing. Bear in mind, however, that by the time this item reaches print, *Rock Influences* may well have gone the way of the dinosaur—and we don't mean Yes . . . Also on the TV front, this

month marks the debut of *Puttin' On The Hits*, the *Amateur Hour* of the '80s that was prominently featured on a spring installment of *60 Minutes* centering on activity at the Na-



Puttin' On The Hits: Where's Ted Mack when we need him?



PHOTOS: LISA LEVITZ

Dangerous curves: the R-rated version of the Cars' "Hello Again" video is for home consumption only

tional Association of Television Program Executives. *Hits*, apparently, was the hit of the NATPE meet: correspondent Morley Safer termed it "the Cabbage Patch doll" of the convention. Contestants lip-synch and/or act out their favorite current hits before a panel of judges in hopes of winning a \$2000 prize. So far the show's producers, Chris Beard (*Laugh In*, *Sonny and Cher*) and Dick Clark (everything else), have seen acts ranging from 13-year-old Michael Jackson impersonator to a 300-pound Sheena Easton. The only thing the show lacks is a gong . . . serious curves ahead! Those road conditions you're seeing are excerpts from the R-rated version of the Cars' "Hello Again" to be included in a home video compilation of the clips from *Heartbeat City*. The titillation comes courtesy

of directors **Andy Warhol** and **Don Munroe**. But why? Says **Ric Ocasek**: "Well, uh, they're sort of into that stuff." And you're not, Ric? . . . **Chrissie Hynde's** sudden marriage to Simple Mind **Jim Kerr** reportedly sent **Ray Davies**, father of Hynde's daughter Natalie, into a funk and might have added to the delay in his long-awaited video/film project, *Return to Waterloo*. Written and directed by Davies, *Waterloo* chronicles the paranoia of Britain's middle-class through the eyes of one blighter played by **Ken Colley**. There's no dialogue, though—Kinks music provides the narration for the hour-long production . . . a **Joan Jett** video that won't be released in the U.S.? C'mon, the girl's as Yankee Doodle as take-out sushi! Nevertheless, that's the plan for "I Need Someone," the single and video rush-released for a European tour last spring. Directed by **Beth B.**, the New York underground filmmaker responsible for the dance club

video hit "Dominatrix Sleeps Tonight," "I Need Someone" is a harmless romp in which Jett tries, with some success, to soften her ballsy image. The punchline, however, is that Jett nearly broke her elbow in a fall on the set, thus pushing back the release of her new album, *Glorious Results of a Misspent*

Youth, and causing the cancellation of some tour dates . . . it seemed like the perfect marriage—England's curious juggernaut the **Art of Noise** and gifted Polish director **Zbigniew Rybezynski**, winner of the 1983 Academy Award for Best Short Foreign Film, who gained notoriety for being mistaken for a gate crasher and arrested only 20 minutes after receiving his Oscar. The match was made by an MTV executive who, after seeing Zbig's reel, which included the Oscar-winning *Tango* plus shorts he did for *The New Show*, recommended him to Island Records at the moment the label was looking for someone to direct Art's "Close to the Edit." But no sooner did the couple bring forth into the world a bouncing baby video than did **Trevor Horn**, head of the Art's ZTT label, step in and brand

ton McConnice, the visionary art director of *Diva*, the pop art classic that's regarded as a seminal influence on video. For his work on *Moon in the Gutter* McConnice won France's version of the Oscar, the Cesar . . . long after Island Records has given up on Will Powers, rock photographer Lynn Goldsmith is still plugging away for her alter ego and rock's answer to Dale Carnegie. For the video for "Opportunity," the fourth from Powers' album *Dancing for Mental Health*, Goldsmith mortgaged her midtown Manhattan loft. "Everybody says forget it, but I'm obsessed," says Goldsmith, who is looking for further financing for a Powers home video that she says will include a testimonial by Marlon Brando. Featured in the "Opportunity" clip are Powers acolytes **Carly Simon**, **Fred Schneider** of the

A scene from Art of Noise's "Close to the Edit": Trevor blew the horn on this one



Joan Jett: Giving her all for video?

hind those names, but RCA says only bona-fide singers and players need apply. Phantom seekers should contact RCA's VP of programming, Chuck Mitchell.

And to insure that the video clips have that authentic look, RCA will hire one director for the videos and one for the action sequences. Writer/producer Michael Uslan, who produced the cult film *Swamp Thing* and is currently producing the movie *Batman*, will be at the helm. Uslan is also the author of *The Rock 'n' Roll Trivia Quiz Book* and promises dialogue chocked with double entendres, trivia and hidden references to '60s rock. There's also a character in the script named Walter Yenta. Wonder who that could be?

The Phantom Empire will be released to cable and theatres in early '85; RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video will the videocassette on the market shortly thereafter.

—Jonathan Gross

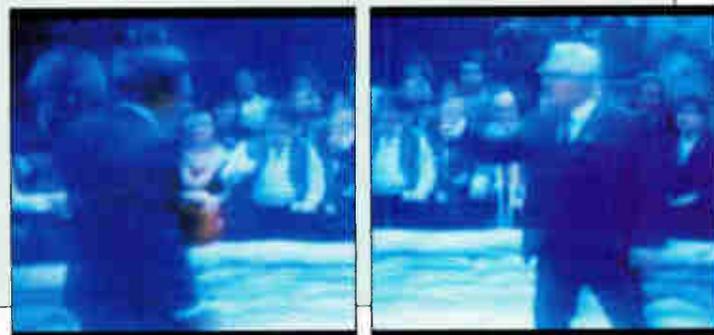
the child illegitimate and unfit for release. No reasons were given and none seem apparent, for Zbig's interpretation is pure filmmaking. A six-year-old girl, clad in punk garb and representing what Zbig calls "the synthetic future of music," is seen leading three chain-saw-wielding middle-aged men, symbolic of the past, through the systematic destruction of several classical instruments. At press time, Island Records president Chris Blackwell was appealing Horn's decision . . . at last report, CBS was mulling over the North American release of a single by French artist **Buzy** titled "Adrian." A hit in France, "Adrian" is accompanied by a steamy video directed by Hil-

B-52's and **Ellen Foley** . . . ever wish you could see **David Lee Roth** tied to a railroad track with a freight train rumbling straight for him? You may not have long to wait. RCA Video is sinking \$3.2 million into the production of *The Phantom Empire*, a *Perils of Pauline*-style rock 'n' roll cliffhanger comprised of 15 12-to-15 minute episodes.

The musical hook? Well, each episode will contain at least one video clip and the star of the series is none other than a rock band called, yes, *The Phantom Empire*. Actually the band doesn't exist yet, but their names do! Lead singer is D (stands for David) Phantom, keyboardist is Wayne New Jersey, guitarist is Pat Z. Brat and

the drummer is Valentine Jones. A nationwide talent search will put real people be-

Get banned in England and you're laughing all the way to the bank. And so it was for the consistently controversial Frankie Goes To Hollywood. The glad-to-be-gay outfit saw their 'Two Tribes' single rocket to the top of the charts after the BBC banned the video, a Godley and Creme special, starring Reagan and Chernenko lookalikes in a no-holds-barred wrestling match. Crotch-grabbing and ear-biting spreads to the stands and culminates in a doomsday message.



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D: Etienne Mirlesse

MGM/UA Home Video/118 minutes/\$59.95

You don't have to be a country music buff to appreciate the sentiments behind *The Other Side of Nashville*: that country music ain't what it used to be, as Chet Atkins says here, because it's big business. And to be big business it has to expand its scope; and in expanding its scope, it has forsaken tributary musics such as gospel and country blues and built a worldwide following by diluting its hard edge with pop. Just look around: Kenny Rogers isn't, really never was, country; Dolly Parton appears to have forgotten how to write a good country song, ditto for Willy Nelson; the Oak Ridge Boys sold out years ago; George Jones is too erratic to be influential anymore. (Merle Haggard still shines like a beacon, but he's not Nashville.) This is a sad story.

The Other Side of Nashville wants us to believe there's still hope. We hear Ricky Skaggs talking about bringing "old, traditional country sounds to an industry that's gone so pop that a lot of people don't remember the traditional sounds;" we hear Emmylou Harris referring to country music as "a machine that can take mediocre music and make it a hit, and can do the same for good music. The machine doesn't know the difference. So it's up to us, all up to the artists and writers to keep creating good music and get it to the people"; we hear Charlie Daniels offering an eloquent statement on black music's vital contribution to country, and see him engaging in an electrifying call-and-response with a gospel choir on "Will The Circle Be Unbroken."

Unfortunately, this counter-commercial for contemporary Nashville doesn't leave one feeling that better days are ahead, de-

spite the best efforts of artists like Skaggs, Harris (who's seen performing Bruce Springsteen's "Racing in the Streets") and Hank Williams Jr. The middle portion of the near-two-hour film traces country's illustrious history, and details the cross-fertilization of country, blues and rock 'n' roll that produced so much memorable music in the '50s and '60s. There's a lengthy segment on Bob Dylan's Nashville period, including footage of Dylan and Johnny Cash recording "A Thousand Miles Behind," and much praise from Cash and producer Bob Johnston for the way Dylan's presence reinvigorated country in the early '70s. Ironically, the creative insurgency that Dylan spearheaded was gobbled up by the machine; today's "outlaws" are fairly benign and more a part of the problem than the solution.

Still, the spokespeople for the cause, as it were, are ones you'd like to believe in. Bobby Bare gets little recognition but quietly cuts good record after good record, always with a sharp eye out for new songwriters; Charlie Daniels doesn't appear to have a dishonest bone in his body, and it shows in his music; Carl Perkins still has that light in his eyes; Gail Davies' undeniable integrity speaks well for her future; as a representative of the old guard, Chet Atkins has a clear-headed perspective on what's gone down on Music Row over the last three decades and what's needed to turn it around; and Johnny Cash (another artist who's actively promoted new talent in town) is still beyond reproach. The one hard question left unanswered—indeed, not even dealt with—is why young lions like Rodney Crowell and Rosanne Cash, who certainly have the vision and talent to energize country music the way Dylan did over a decade ago, aren't more active. That quibble aside, *The Other Side of Nashville* comes highly recommended, both as history and as a provocative look at a proud music at low tide.

—David McGee

Pete Townshend

(D: Chalkie Davies/Carol Starr)

Sony Video EP/min./\$19.95

There are no great revelations to be made about the making of this album," Pete Townshend informs us near the beginning of this video EP. That claim is not quite true, because this project—a mixture of video clips and "day in the life of" footage narrated by Townshend and filmed by noted British rock photogs Chalkie Davies and Carol Starr—offers a clearer picture of just what the lead Who man was trying to convey with *All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes*, his 1982 stream-of-consciousness confessional LP.

The video informs, appropriately enough, more through its visuals than by way of Townshend's narration. Seeing Townshend's leisurely lifestyle—walking along the Thames, playing golf and snookers, driving his big car—has the effect of correcting the "truth" of the myth-making compilation *The Kids Are Alright*, because Pete is more the country gentleman musician we see here than the committed rock 'n' roller whose image we're more familiar with. And the isolation of that lifestyle is seen clearly in the "Stardom In Acton" clip, because the gang of guitar-toting yob-bos shown really have nothing in common with this middle-aged man who continues to want their respect and adoration.

The distance between himself, his audience, and his roots (he states, "I had no idea how much...the simple thing I call rock 'n' roll could give, and how much it could take—try to take") were the reasons for the feelings of complete hopelessness he admits to in the narration. Neither the songs here nor those on the Who's *It's Hard* show him to have progressed beyond mere recognition of these problems, and the sight of him making breakfast by trying to chainsaw through a loaf of bread doesn't lead one to believe a revelation is immi-

Hank Williams, Jr.: Trying to tame the commercial beast Nashville has become; Pete Townshend: A leisurely lifestyle



ment. Only when we get Pete as the functioning musician, leading a band through "Slit Skirts," or closing the videocassette with a beautiful piano reprise of "Prelude," do we have any hope that the salvation that escapes the man is within his reach. But who knows; as he admits early on, his is a "self-inflicted torment—I know a lot of people reckon I couldn't live without it."
—Wayne King

Lou Reed

A NIGHT WITH LOU REED (D: Clark Santee)
RCA/Columbia Home Video/60 minutes/\$29.95

I thought that was short and delicious," lopes Lou Reed after this furious set, and who's to disagree? *A Night With Lou Reed* is as consistent and fully realized a work as Reed has delivered in his often brilliant, always erratic solo career.

For this 1983 Bottom Line date Reed jettisons all his easy excesses, fronting a streamlined three-man combo that sucks fire from him and pumps straight to the legendary heart of these 13 tunes.

No one in this outfit ever takes a load off. Punk guitar hero Robert Quine

squeals, scratches and squawks through a genius-level performance, while drummer Fred Maher beats with an open-ended precision that simultaneously heats and loosens the band. Bassist Fernando Saunders ignites subtle blazes down below and also solos with exquisite lyricism on "I Love Women" and "New Age."

As for the Rock 'n' Roll Animal himself, his singing and playing charge restraint with passion, tensing the group's muscle for powerhouse takes on "I'm Waiting for My Man," "Martial Law," "White Light/White Heat," and "Rock 'n' Roll."

Visually, *Night* is a tasteful, straightforward concert shoot, a show where the music and the main man are the message. Given the emotional freight Reed's mean and meaningful tales of perdition and redemption convey, you couldn't take or ask for much more.
—Anthony DeCurtis

Donna Summer

A HOT SUMMER NIGHT . . . WITH DONNA (D: Brian Grant)
RCA/Columbia Home Video/78 minutes

With its elaborate set and costume changes, production numbers, TV-

special camera work and stage patter, *A Hot Summer Night* is essentially a musical without a plot. Our girl looks great and belts through the show's 12 numbers with power and zip, but the viewer's tolerance for unabashed and unredeemed show-biz chops will determine how much of this hot night you want to spend with Donna.

The show kicks off on a false step with Summer's passionate take on "MacArthur Park," a '60s "classic" that represents a nearly overwhelming attack on the mind. The charming "Unconditional Love" hauls out Musical Youth for an island paradise vignette so stereotyped as to make a patronizing chestnut like "Rum and Coca Cola" seem a masterpiece of cross-cultural understanding. The born-again rap preceding "Forgive Me" (yet another sexy millionaire peddling salvation) could also have been deep-sixed with no grousing from this corner.

Summer and her skillful 10-piece band sizzle on "Love Is In Control," a video-reminiscent "She Works Hard for the Money," and an all-too-brief "Dim All The Lights"/"Sunset People"/"Bad Girls"/"Hot Stuff" medley. A full-cast singalong on "State of Independence" brings the curtain down on a bracing note.

But, all in all, *A Hot Night* is buffs-only turf. If you have to work hard for your money, you might want to think twice about making the jack for this one.

—Anthony DeCurtis

MUSICVIDEO TOP TEN

- 1 MAKING MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER**
MICHAEL JACKSON
Vestron Video
- 2 DAVID BOWIE: SERIOUS MOONLIGHT**
DAVID BOWIE
Media Music
- 3 NEIL DIAMOND: LIVE AT THE GREEK**
NEIL DIAMOND
Vestron Video
- 4 DURAN DURAN**
DURAN DURAN
Thorn-EMI Home Video
- 5 THE WALL**
PINK FLOYD
MGM/UA Home Video
- 6 BILLY JOEL: LIVE FROM LONG ISLAND**
BILLY JOEL
CBS/Fox Home Video
- 7 PHIL COLLINS**
PHIL COLLINS
Sony Video 45
- 8 THAT WAS ROCK***
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Media Home Entertainment
- 9 COOL CATS**
VARIOUS ARTISTS
MGM/UA Home Video
- 10 THE CONCERT FOR BANGLADESH**
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Picture Music Intl.

*Denotes new entry
The MusicVideo Top Ten indicates the fastest-moving sales and rentals titles in music product as reported by the country's leading video retail outlets.

VIDEO CLIP TOP TEN

- 1 WHEN DOVES CRY**
PRINCE
(WB) D: Larry Williams
- 2 BORDERLINE**
MADONNA
(WB) D: Mary Lambert
- 3 HEART OF ROCK 'N' ROLL**
HUEY LEWIS & THE NEWS
(Chrysalis) D: Ed Griles
- 4 SELF CONTROL**
LAURA BRANIGAN
(Atlantic) D: William Friedkin
- 5 THE REFLEX**
DURAN DURAN
(Capitol) D: Russell Mulcahy
- 6 GIVE ME TONIGHT**
SHANNON
(Mirage) D: Kort Falkenberg III
- 7 RELAX**
FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
(ZTT/Island) D: Bernard Rose
- 8 LEGS**
ZZ TOP
(WB) D: Tim Newman
- 9 NO PARKING ON THE DANCE FLOOR**
MIDNIGHT STAR
(Elektra) D: Peter Allen
- 10 DANCEHALL DAYS**
WANG CHUNG
(Geffen) D: Danny Kleinman

Compiled by RockAmerica (27 E. 21st Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10003), the Video Clip Top Ten indicates the most popular rock video clips being played in over 250 clubs, colleges and record stores. In addition to title, artist and label, each entry contains the name of the clip's director. These charts reflect video play for the month of July

Motels

D: Russell Mulcahy ("Only the Lonely," "Take the L"); Val Garay ("Suddenly Last Summer," "Remember the Night")
Sony Video 45/Picture Music Intl./14 minutes/\$16.95

Sexy, introspective Martha Davis is the main event of this video 45, but director Russell Mulcahy gets his shots in as well. "Only the Lonely" features the first appearance of one of rock video's great clichés—slow-motion table turning. Similarly, "Take the L" is a showcase for some fascinating special effects, such as the page-turning effect for scene changes (one of the earliest uses of this technique), and split-screen performance footage of Davis in three different personae.

Two of the clips are directed by Motels producer Val Garay. "Suddenly Last Summer" starts out well enough as a total min-movie without any lip synch. Our Martha is seen in dream sequences living out the story of scandalous seduction presumably portrayed in the romance novel she'd been reading when she fell asleep. What starts off well ends up as sloppy execution of a video that can't decide whether it's going for an R or PG rating. "Remember the Night" is a performance piece interrupted by concept footage notable only for being a take-off on the rice-throwing scene in Bowie's "China Girl."

In sum, a fairly muddled effort, even though Martha Davis clearly has what it takes to be a video star.
—Alan Hecht

A Martin Scorsese Film

Hi-Fi
STEREO

THE LAST WALTZ



CBS
FOX
VIDEO
MUSIC

*It Started as
a Concert*

Starring

The Band

Rick Danko
Levon Helm
Garth Hudson
Richard Manuel
Robbie Robertson

Featuring

Eric Clapton
Neil Diamond
Bob Dylan
Joni Mitchell
Neil Young
Emmylou Harris
Van Morrison
The Staples

Dr. John
Muddy Waters
Paul Butterfield
Ronnie Hawkins
Ringo Starr
Ron Wood

*It Became
a Celebration*

NOW ON VIDEOCASSETTE

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MIKE SHEA ●

POCKET POWER

The ESP PS-10 Pocket Studio makes pros out of novices

Beginning players obviously have a number of problems in mastering their instruments of choice, not the least being the possibility of arousing their neighbors' wrath when it comes time to practice. I'm a player myself, but many's the night when I've plotted the timely demise of the tenant downstairs from me who believed he would soon be the next great rock drummer, all the while pleading through the wall to my next door neighbor to at least attempt practicing a new scale after 45 continuous minutes of do, re, me, fa, so, la, etc. It's a nerve-wracking situation, but I sympathize with the culprits. Obviously you don't learn if you don't practice.

Boston's Tom Scholz sussed out this problem easily enough, and came up with the Rockman and Bass Rockman, Walkman-size devices that the player can plug headphones and instrument into and play as loud as he or she wants unbeknownst to the outside world. The last couple of years have seen the introduction of similar de-

vices that incorporate some of the special effects required to get a professional sound along with privacy. For the beginning player, the **ESP PS-10 Pocket Studio** beats every other product on the market because it's the only one built solely with novices in mind. Battery-powered by eight AA batteries, measuring 1/2" H X 5" W X 6" D and weighing only a couple of pounds, it may not actually fit into a pocket but it's compact nonetheless. The plastic casing is fairly rugged, and should last a good long time, barring high-speed collisions with a wall. And don't be scared off by my calling it a beginner's unit—a number of proficient players use the ESP. However, the Pocket Studio's attractiveness doesn't begin and end with the privacy factor. There's enough here to justify its \$325 list price.

The unit has five basic sounds: "normal" is straight ahead, just as your axe sounds but amplified so that you can hear it; "clean 1" and "clean 2" have two different degrees of sustain; "overdrive" adds in a bit of tubelike distortion, while "distortion" lives up to its name, and in particularly nasty fashion. These settings provide anything from a very clear country pickin' sound to heavy metal—set the volume fader and play to your heart's content, secure in knowing that only you can hear the walls of Jericho tumbling down.

All of the variations in sound do not by any means constitute recording studio effects. The Pocket Studio does, however, in-

corporate two of the most popular effects, i.e., delay and chorusing, summoned singly or together via two push buttons, both with LED indication. A sort of pseudo-reverberation, delay's internal feedback generates multiple repeats of the signal, the duration of which is determined by a small, screwdriver-set "depth" control (an unfortunate design flaw considering how simple a knob would have been). Changing the delay time while the signal is being processed will also alter the pitch of the signal, due to the signal being fed out of the device faster or slower than it was originally fed in. When the chorus button is activated, an internal oscillator controls the amount of delay time. Since oscillation is a constantly changing voltage, both delay and pitch are constantly changing. Engaging the chorusing button does not defeat the depth control, though, which now adjusts the rate of change and allows you to set this overall pitch modulation tempo to that of the tune. To visualize what's happening here picture yourself listening to someone walking down a street. Punch in the chorus and you add several other people of different sizes, weights and heights. Add in the delay and they're all marching through a large reverberant coliseum. Substitute a guitar and you're playing power chords at Madison Square Garden.

The PS-10 will also grow with you. Its auxiliary input will handle most of the rhythm machines available, and when it comes time to start jamming with other players, you can add a couple of "Y" chords so that you can both play and listen with the rhythm machine going. Want an additional effect in order to get a specific sound? No problem. There's an effects send and return patch point on the side of the PS-10. When it comes time to play out, whether live or in a studio, there's additional inputs for amps, stereo PA systems or the studio's equipment (as a professional recording engineer I would not hesitate to use the Pocket Studio in a state of the art recording facility). One last note: there's also an input for an AC adaptor, but you must use the one supplied by the manufacturer; any other will destroy the unit. But since additional buzzes and noise are inherent with the use of AC adaptors, I'd recommend getting a battery charger instead. ○

Mike Shea is a graduate instructor at the Institute of Audio Research in New York City. Readers are invited to submit questions concerning audio, video or recording to Mike Shea/Hands On, RECORD 745 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10151.

ESP's PS-10 Pocket Studio: Professional sound designed with novices in mind (\$350)





PT-80
\$99.50

MT-35
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MT-46
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MARTIN PORTER ●

AUDIO/ ELECTRONICS FALL BUYING GUIDE

For some, back to school means back to the books. For those in the know, however, it means back to the stereo that has sat silent while the Walkman was getting all the action at the beach and points in between. It means redeploying that Walkman for recording class lectures. And it even means buying an electronic typewriter or maybe a portable computer, not to mention outfitting your room with the party essentials, a new sound system being of prime importance in this scenario.

Back to school means turning back to electronics and there are plenty of products that can make school work a cinch and also offer a quick escape from home work drudgery.

THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY

BEFORE PLUGGING INTO your school work, it's a good idea to get your party life in order. What better way to make sure your dorm becomes the hot spot on campus than to pad your tuition for a powerhouse stereo system?

Yamaha Electronics has gone after the one-for-the-money stereo system

The total package: Yamaha's Concert System CS-470CD is a rack-mounted arrangement featuring amplifier, turntable, cassette and Compact Disc player, and three-way speakers. All components can be purchased separately as well. Suggested list price is under \$1900, but look for deep discounting in major cities.



fans with a series of rack-mounted component configurations that bring power and versatility at an affordable price tag. Its Concert System 470D can play any source of music (LPs, cassettes, Compact Discs and AM/FM) at a price listed under \$1900 and probably discounted well below that figure in major cities.

This rack-mounted arrangement carries an 80 watt per channel amplifier, separate tuner, belt-driven automatic turntable, a two-motor-drive cassette machine, CD player, cartridge, and three-way speakers. The system has its good and bad points



Pioneer's Progression IV system: Compact, inexpensive, high-performance

and has corrected many of the circuitry faults that made some of the first digital playback units sound funky. It



Proton's 320 clock radio: A multitude of quality features designed with sleeping humans in mind (\$100)

but as a total package it's everything you'll need for music.

High on the list of notable rack components—and available for your ears individually if you so choose—are the turntable and CD. The turntable, model P-16 (approx. \$70), is a stripped-down and simple automatic, belt-driven model that uses a straight tonearm and cartridge combo that tested well with a range of warped and needle-ridden vinyl material. While stationed on a speaker it played Herbie Hancock's "Rockit" at high volume without skipping (or scratching) a beat.

The CD player, model CD-XI (under \$500), is the first Compact Disc player I wholeheartedly recommend. Like all of the second generation CD machines it has a boldly slashed price

features an automatic front load draw, but programmability is limited: it can skip around cuts on the laser-disc material randomly but only in ascending order. Despite this drawback, the CD-XI is possibly, for what it delivers for the price, the best CD buy on the market.

The other components have their fair share of features too. The 10-band graphic equalizer lets you shape the sound to your taste and your room environment but, like most models, it is nearly impossible to set correctly by ear. The tuner itself is the usual quartz-locked, synthesizer brand with five AM/FM presets and one-button scan. The amplifier controls and faceplate design leave something to be desired, and Dolby C is sorely missing from the cassette deck.



Panasonic's RQ-383 features auto reverse and a voice-activated recording system (under \$100)

Overall you might do better picking and choosing your component features by brand. But you certainly won't put a package like this together at this price. Besides, the compromises are few and far between. It's a lot of stereo for the money.

AND SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE FLOOR space to spare for a rack and speakers this size, you might do well with a combination of downsized hi-fi components called Progression IV from Pioneer. The system lets you select from any of four amplifiers, four tuners, three cassette decks, two front-loading turntables, or two sets of speakers to fit your budget.

Here's an example of how a Progression IV system can stack up: the A-X8 amplifier (approx. \$160) delivers an average output of 47 watts per channel, carries two tape monitors, bass and treble controls as well

Panasonic's RN-109 voice-activated microcassette recorder is ideal for inconspicuous recording (approx. \$70)



as a two-speed electronic volume control and an auto function button that lets you switch automatically to other Progression IV components with a single command. The unit comes with its own 10-segment LED power meter.

Each of the **turntables**, meanwhile, can be stacked anywhere in the rack arrangement (top, middle, bottom) and the **PL-XR** (approx. \$330), for example, lets you play up to 15 selections (or eight cuts) on any record side. An optical sensor detects the shiny space between songs and automatically sets down the stylus at the preselected cut. A deck "synchro" feature, meanwhile, lets you shift the tape deck automatically to pause when the turntable tone arm lifts—a nice taping convenience. And the platter assembly slides out of its



Marantz's PMD 430 portable AC/DC audio cassette deck is a flexible entry for those eager for a recorder-to-go that works well at home, too (approx. \$500)

housing to accept new LPs and retracts when the turntable starts playing.

The companion **tuners** are synthesized and quartz-locked for drift-free reception. They carry no mechanical dials, simply one-touch scanning and eight station presets for both the FM and AM bands. The **F-X9** (approx. \$250), at the top of the line, adds some nice early morning and late night features: a sleep timer to lull you to sleep and an alarm clock to get you out of bed for class after a late night of—what else?—listening to music.

A cassette deck is mandatory gear in any stereo system and the **CT-X9** (approx. \$380) is as feature-full as you can get from a tape component these days. There's auto-reverse, Dolby C noise reduction, and an index scan feature that automatically plays the first 10 seconds of each selection, skips to the next and continues until you find a cut that suits your ears. It'll handle all forms of tape (metal and chrome) and will automatically insert blanks between album

selections so they can be easily and automatically located.

To round off this system you can select a pair of Pioneer's **Mirror Image speakers**. These speaker cabinets feature a three-way design that places the tweeter and mid-range for the left and right speakers in mir-



Bose's RM-1 RoomMate full-range speakers can pump a roomful of music out of any portable cassette recorder (approx. \$260)

ror positions. In other words, they are placed to the left side of the cabinet on the left speaker and to the right on the right speaker, a design intended to offer a bal-



Panasonic's RF-H25 personal AM/FM stereo radio delivers exceptional sound in a credit card-size package (approx. \$100). Also shown: Panasonic's recharging stand for the RF-H25's internal NiCad battery.

anced sound performance. The **S-77X** (approx. \$340/pair) are rated at 100 watts maximum per channel, and also offer tweeters that can be swiveled for optimum high frequency dispersion.



Akai's PJ-11FSB lightweight portable cassette recorder comes with a pair of mini-speakers that can be rotated on their base to three positions for better sound direction and flexibility (approx. \$150)

THE DAY AFTER

STUDENTS DON'T STAY CHAINED to their bedrooms. There's always work to be done in the library or in the lab; and, meanwhile, there's usually time to listen to tunes between classes and maybe slip in a blank cassette to catch some class notes while you're catching some Zs in the back of the room.

The optimum portable tape recorder doesn't belong either on the beach or in your back pack. And **Panasonic** offers the

stereo tracks. The unit weighs only 3.5 pounds and measures smaller than most textbooks. You'll need a rechargeable Ni-Cad battery (approx. \$50) to make it a portable recorder, though.

For any personal portable to fully make its mark on an interior space bigger than the school bathroom, you need decent speakers and additional amplification. And **Bose**, a company noted for its loud-speaker innovations, has come up with a solution with its **RM-1 RoomMate** full range speakers.

tion and a three-band graphic equalizer to fine tune the music to your taste. It comes equipped with a three-watts-per-channel amplifier and a built-in microphone. But its biggest plus is the pair of mini-speakers that can be rotated on their base to three positions for better sound direction and flexibility.

If your ears and musical needs demand something bigger, how about adding \$100 to the price tag for **JVC's** answer to lightweight audio portability—the **PC-M100** (approx. \$250), with four-band receiver (AM/FM/two shortwave) and a power output of two watts per channel. This unit's plus is a detachable stereo Dolby B cassette player/recorder that slides neatly out of the classic ghetto blaster design. The cassette deck will accommodate metal tape and carries its own headphone jacks. The speakers also slip off to spread out your listening, or you can lug the entire eight-pound package around on your shoulder and blast out the schoolyard if you so choose.

CAN YOU CORE AN APPLE?

YOU AREN'T GOING TO GET VERY far in school this year without cracking the books, and electronics can help you make a serious and effortless dent in your assignments. For one, you may have to invest in a computer, and if so the 7.5-pound **Apple IIc** is a suggested best bet. There are bigger and better machines around, but for a list price of \$1300 you aren't going to find one that can handle as much available software and is more suited to students' lifestyles.

Equipped with 128K worth of memory and a pointer called a "mouse" that helps you scan around your editing screen like a speed demon, this slim-downed keyboard offers one disc drive and outputs so it can be tagged to a dedicated monitor or the average television screen display. This month, Apple is expected to introduce a portable LCD screen for the machine that will make it into a portable computer, able to accept any of the many thousands of available educational, business and game software written over the years for its predecessor, the Apple IIe.

Priced at \$1300, the **Apple IIc** is well-suited to students' nomadic lifestyles and handles much of the available software



JVC's answer to lightweight audio portability is its model PC-M100 mini-portable component system with detachable stereo Dolby B cassette player/recorder (approx. \$250)

best of both worlds with its **RQ-383** mini-cassette recorder, featuring auto reverse and a voice-activated recording system.

The auto reverse feature not only supplies long-play audio (both sides of the cassette) but works in the record mode when the end of the tape has been reached. Irritating and airy tape gaps are eliminated since the recorder clicks off when your professor stops talking. The unit carries a built-in condenser microphone and a low/high mic sensity switch that helps you screen out background noise or pick up lecturers even from the back of an amphitheatre.

Otherwise the unit carries everything you'll need for switching from the Renaissance to rock 'n' roll, including pause control and jacks for an external microphone or speakers. At under \$100 it will carry you through the school year and not let you down next summer on the beach.

If higher end portable audio is what you're after, the **Marantz** portable AC/DC audio cassette deck, model **PMD 430** (approx. \$500), is a flexible entry for those eager for a recorder-to-go that can stay at home as well. The unit offers both Dolby B and dbx noise reductions and carries a three-head recording mechanism, a control to finely tune your tape bias and illuminated VU meters for each of the two

Packed with their own dual channel power amplifier and distortion limiting circuitry, these 6"x9"x6" speaker enclosures can help pump a roomful of music out of any portable. Combined with electronic equalization, the 4.5-inch full-range speakers give the pair a surprising response, especially in the low frequencies where most portable units fall short.

The RoomMate system is separated into a master unit that contains one of two speakers, the amplifier and equalization. A second speaker carries only the second half of the stereo signal. It's a great solution to turning your Walkman into a budget home system. Suggested retail price is \$260.

LETS GET SMALL

THINK ABOUT THE ULTIMATE IN personal stereo. **Panasonic** has taken the bulk out of the portable to-go movement with its **RF-H25** (approx. \$100), a personal AM/FM stereo radio the size of a credit card. It operates on a rechargeable internal NiCad battery and, with its mini-earphones, creates exceptional sound. Nobody will catch you listening to the Top 40 while you should be paying attention in class with this beauty.

Priced at \$150, **Akai's PJ-11FSB** is a lightweight portable with four-band recep-

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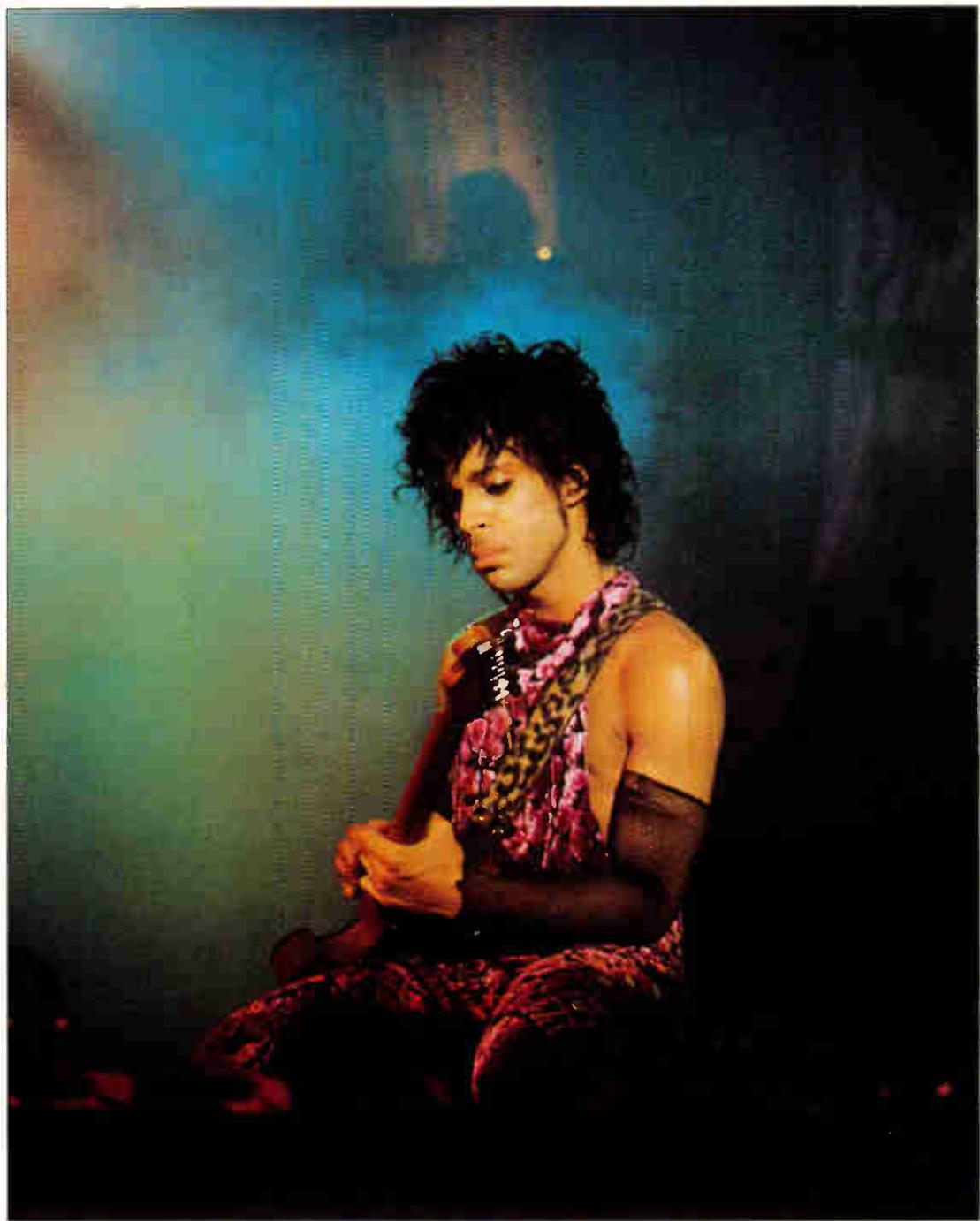


PHOTO PAUL NATKI/PHOTO RESERVE

BODY AND SOUL

PURPLE RAIN Prince

Warner Bros.

By
Crispin
Sartwell

P rince is the most influential black pop



performer today. Even Michael Jackson has not produced such a vast array of proteges and imitators. Prince's circle of outrageous Minneapolisians, which includes the Time and Vanity (now Apollonia) 6, has churned a string of solid hits. Fine new performers like Michael Lovesmith and Rockwell would be inconceivable without Prince. The playlists of funk stations sometimes seem to be footnotes to the complete works of Prince, and you can bet that songs from *Purple Rain* like "Baby I'm A Star" and "Computer Blue" will

give rise to innumerable hot rockers on the black charts. Even veteran performers such as Shalamar sound remarkably like him in recent recordings. Indeed, *Purple Rain* is Prince's most definitive and vigorous record to date, and, for that reason, it may well define and invigorate black pop for years to come.

Up until now, however, Prince himself has been a cartoon character—extraordinarily charming and entertaining, but two-dimensional. The omnisexual, omniracial creation who asked the musical questions, "Am I

black or white, am I straight or gay?" (answer: all of the above), was a gimmick. That gimmick produced some of the smartest smut and niftiest licks in the history of pop, but it was a gimmick nonetheless.

With *Purple Rain*, Prince emerges into the third dimension. The gimmickry is gone, replaced by a musician of authentic depth and maturity. *Purple Rain*, then, marks the exit of an animation and the advent of a man. And while this album may lack the pure delectability of *Dirty Mind*, *Controversy*, and *1999*—three of the most pleasurable and least challenging albums ever made—it replaces their simplistic hedonism with a calmness and sincerity that Prince has never displayed before.

Take "When Doves Fly," the first of what will certainly be many singles pulled from this album. The underlying air of desperation that was always present in Prince's songs—the shameless bid for attention that marked even slow cuts like "Little Red Corvette"—is wholly absent here. Instead, Prince frames autobiographical lyrics in a beautiful mid-tempo melody: "How can you leave me standing/Alone in a world that's so cold?/ Maybe I'm just too demanding/Maybe I'm just like my father: too bold/Maybe you're just like my mother/She's never satisfied/Why do we scream at each other?/This is what it sounds like when doves cry." It's apparent that he's tapped into something crucial to his own experience here, and injected it with perfect ease and composure into his music.

Purple Rain also includes two exquisite slow numbers, the title cut and "The Beautiful Ones," which give Prince the chance to exercise his sweet, powerful falsetto. "Purple Rain," in particular, picks up where "Little Red Corvette" left off, but it's marked by a purity, simplicity and ingenuousness none of his previous songs can touch.

In its first weeks of release, "Doves" was the fastest selling single in Warner Bros.' history, and that fact illustrates the unlimited commercial potential of this great LP. Though *1999* has remained on the charts since it was issued in October of 1982, and though it produced a clutch of hits, *Purple Rain* may well surpass it in popularity. Prince is moving closer to the mainstream, or, rather, the mainstream is moving closer to Prince.

Even more than *1999*, *Purple Rain* is tailor-made for crossover play. As he demonstrated with "Delirious," Prince is an astute rock 'n' roller, and the new album constantly emphasizes that. On several of these songs, Prince employs a studio band (the Revolution) for the first time—on previous albums he played all the instruments—and the addition of strident guitars and percussion nudges Prince completely into the rock realm.

This album is better than Prince's others because it's more carefully conceived and

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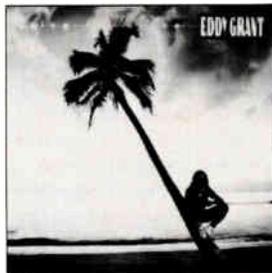


more fully focused. Where 1999 filled out two disks with inordinately extended mixes and obvious throwaways, everything here is here for a good reason. Prince has risen to the challenge that his ubiquitous influence presented. *Purple Rain* includes elements of traditional styles, elements drawn from his own previous records and elements seemingly pulled from thin air. It would have been easy for Prince to grow complacent; instead, he's grown up.

GOING FOR BROKE Eddy Grant

Ice/Portrait

By
J.D.
Considine



In many ways, Eddy Grant represents the perfect Westernization of Third World music. His sound is gritty yet refined, matching the raw power that comes from deep cultural roots with an approach so utterly eclectic that it's nearly impossible to nail down its origins. Afro-pop, reggae, rock, hip-hop—they're all part of Grant's musical gumbo, leaving his records with greater potential for a breakthrough pop synthesis than any other artist working today.

Which is why it's kind of disappointing that *Going For Broke* doesn't. After last year's "Electric Avenue," perhaps the most aurally distinctive, certainly the most politically assertive Top Five record in ages, it wasn't hard to expect Grant's follow-up to come in with guns blazing. Yet the new album is surprisingly circumspect, leaning more towards refitting the conventions of pop formulaicity to Grant's own sound than to any kind of radical rethink.

Still, as disappointments go, *Going For Broke* is appallingly likable. Oh, you might find yourself wishing that music as dynamic as that in "Romancing The Stone" was selling something a little more exciting than a new twist on the hard-hearted lover theme. But the unfettered cheer of "Heaven Only Knows" will more than make up for it, maybe even going so far as to convince you that Grant's lyrics are more transcendent than they appear in print. Certainly that's the case with "Political Bassa-Bassa," which might be a love song, might be a protest song, but surely is a *hummable* song.

Ultimately, *Going For Broke* is an album that values sound over sense, and though it isn't the musical breakthrough Grant is obviously capable of, it may well establish him as more than a one hit wonder. If so, then just sit back and wait, for the best will surely be coming.

LIGHTS OUT Peter Wolf

EMI America

By
Craig
Zeller



Hearing that Peter Wolf had been ejected from the ranks of the J. Geils Band depressed me as much as the time the Dictators threw out Handsome Dick Manitoba (after which they split up—take that as a warning, Geils). We're talking rock 'n' roll tragedy here. Geils without the Wolf—inconceivable! (I mean, what the hell are they gonna do? Teach Danny Klein to dance? They're crazy. Not to mention through.) So Wolf does the obvious thing and puts out a solo album. Let's see what he came up with.

"Lights Out": Hottest cut here and the one that sounds most like Geils in their glory days. Wolf's wired on this one, and quick to get on the good foot at every available opportunity. His diddybopping "uh-huh" speak volumes.

"I Need You Tonight": A natural born hit single. The low-key intensity of the arrangement is a perfect complement to Wolf's tender urgency. It's got one of those irresistibly yearning choruses, too. Bonus Moment: Wolf's vocal encouragement on the guitar break.

"Oo-Ee-Diddy-Bop!": The first of four lesser efforts. I regard Wolf as one of our premier jabber-jive kings but his rapping here is half-assed. Throwaway funk with some fancy scratching thrown in.

"Gloomy Sunday": An off-the-wall dud. Wolf makes a lousy interpreter of Billie Holiday classics—and boy, does this ever meander.

"Baby Please Don't Let Me Go": This is more like it; this is summertime soul music. Love to hear the man when he saunters. Wolf co-wrote with Micheal Jonzun, who also co-produced the LP, and Jonzun's brother, Maurice "Candy Girl" Starr. The three-way harmony between them is—how you say?—infectious.

"Crazy": A whoop-it-up celebration from a man who loves to go off his head kicks of side two. Wicked guitar from both G.E. Smith and Elliot Easton (who accelerates admirably—he is a Car—on several occasions during the album).

"Poor Girl's Heart": The sunniest reggae bash I've attended in months. Makes a swell double play with Geils' first top 30 hits, the reggae-ish "Give It To Me." Wolf's vocal vamping at the end hurts so good.

"Here Comes That Hurt": Another natural born hit single. Everyone's very relaxed despite the fact that Peter's in pain

(although he doesn't seem to mind; gives him a chance to have a falsetto duel with Micheal Jonzun).

"Pretty Lady": Wilson Pickett, are you listening? Guest backup vocalist Mick Jagger is completely dispensable. Just sit back and listen to Wolf percolate.

"Mars Needs Women": A novelty fiasco and the worst interplanetary tripe to be heard in ages, battling for that dubious distinction with Jermaine Jackson's lousy "Escape From The Planet of the Ant Men."

"Billy Bigtime": Wolf's stumbling in the dark on this piece of funk overkill; even the P-Funk Horns can't save him.

And that's it. It's no classic but it's a damn good beginning for a solo career I never wanted to see. The thought of never again hearing one of the Wolf's frantic outbursts summon forth Magic Dick and his lickin' stick or a stinging guitar solo from Jerome deeply saddens me. That band blew it in a big way. For them it's all downhill from here on in; for Wolf it turns out to be a new lease on life. Hey, J. Geils! You lose—he don't need you no more.

ESSAR Smokey Robinson

Tamla

By
Steve
Futterman



And I Don't Love You," the opening track on Smokey Robinson's *Essar*, is everything you could ask from a pop record in 1984. The production is post-*Thriller* perfect: creamy string synthesizers, an upfront funk bass line and even a wailing rock guitar solo a la "Beat It." The lyric sensibility, though, is pure Smokey. "The whiporwill-whipoor won't/The weeping willows laughing/Sunday is moon night/All wrong is alright/And I don't love you"—no one but Smokey could have the nerve to write those lyrics, or the talent to pull off singing them. "And I Don't Love You" is shimmering black pop with the weirdly contradictory edge that is Robinson's trademark; it's the most glorious thing he's done since "Cruisin'."

Nothing else on *Essar* reaches the heights of "And I Don't Love You," but all the material that Robinson wrote and co-produced is marked by the obsession with craftsmanship that has carried his career for three decades. Of these, "Little Girl Little Girl" is the best of all. A confession of lust from a middle-aged man for the finally-grown-up girl next door, it casts Smokey in the role of the sophisticated lech, a persona he pulls off with gleeful

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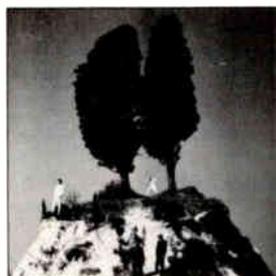
The ballads are also compelling, highlighted by exquisite vocal performances and subtle arrangements that call attention to, but never overpower, the sentiments of the songs. "I Can't Find" and "Gone Forever" are first class Robinson heart wrenchers that point out his great influence on Michael Jackson. "Gone Forever" is particularly interesting in this respect. A virtual replica of "She's Out Of My Life," it has a Robinson vocal replete with all the breathy intimacy of Jackson at his best, a jarring resemblance until you remember that Smokey has been singing like this since the early '60s. By borrowing melodic ideas from Jackson's work, Robinson is merely completing the historical circle. These cuts prove that Robinson can still give his unofficial protege a run for the money.

Oddly, considering Robinson's undiminished creativity, outside writing and production teams are brought in to round out the final cuts on both sides. The slick L.A. drivel they concoct mars the funkishly romantic atmosphere Robinson has successfully conjured up. Hopefully the favor he owed these guys has now been paid off; if Robinson maintains artistic control on his next record it could be the stylistic, if not quite the commercial, equal of *Thriller*.

GOODBYE CRUEL WORLD

Elvis Costello
Columbia

By
Wayne
King



When Elvis Costello toured America in spring, playing solo renditions of his songs, it proved that he didn't need the backing of the Attractions to make his work come alive. The decision to perform acoustic shows may have had deeper motives behind it, though, because, judging from *Goodbye Cruel World*, he may not want to record with the Attractions at all anymore. At least, that's the impression given by an album in which, when Costello and his cohorts aren't repeating themselves, the music is at odds with the songs.

It may seem perverse to focus so much attention to the music here; after all, isn't Elvis a word man primarily? The answer to that is, in my book, not quite the resounding affirmative that general consensus would have it. While the critical focus on Costello's output has correctly centered on his complex lyrics, the Attractions' role in his music shouldn't be underplayed. The difference between his first two albums,

My Aim Is True and *This Year's Model* is, after all, the contribution of Pete Thomas, Bruce Thomas and Steve Nieve, which is quite a difference. Whatever Costello has wanted from them musically—the grand pop of *Armed Forces* and *Imperial Bedroom*, the neo-soul of *Get Happy*, even the C&W treatments of *Almost Blue*—the Attractions have delivered. But last year's *Punch The Clock* relied as much on outside elements brought in by the established production team of Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley, like the TKO Horns, or the spare arrangements of numbers like "Shipbuilding" and "Pills And Soap."

Goodbye Cruel World is reminiscent of Graham Parker's *The Up Escalator*, because in both cases the power of the songwriting was undercut by the incongruity of the backing. Whether it's on the soul-based side-openers, "The Only Flame In Town" and "I Wanna Be Loved," or the plodding "Home Truth," the careful framing that Costello gives his lyrics just isn't evident with the music. And when the songs have to do without sympathetic backing, the shortcomings of Elvis' singing and the occasional obscurity of his writing is overemphasized. Parker's *Escalator* turned out to be his last record with the Rumour, a collaboration which served both of them well; he has continued doing fine work since. Maybe it's now time for Costello and the Attractions to part. Because, as he gets further away from the ambitious pop constructions of *Imperial Bedrooms*, it looks as if Elvis Costello wants to start singing his songs alone.

NICK LOWE AND HIS COWBOY OUTFIT

Nick Lowe
Columbia

By
Christopher
Hill



Well, what do you know? A record with some perspiration. And inspiration. And even conviction. Just when it looked like Nick Lowe was set to carve himself a niche as the wiseguy Paul McCartney of post-Sex Pistols Britain, *Nick Lowe and His Cowboy Outfit* sets out deliberately to prove that Lowe can deliver a solid, good-rocking album's worth without collapsing in giggles. And he comes pretty close.

The first sign of this new earnestness is the way that practically every cut wastes no time in rolling out the big guns, making you sit up and take notice from the start. "Break Away" does just what it says, with Lowe coming on breathy, stuttering, eager to jump into each new verse. "Love Like A

Glove" announces its presence with a barrage of rich acoustic chords; "(Hey Big Mouth) Stand Up And Say That" surfs in smooth and cocksure.

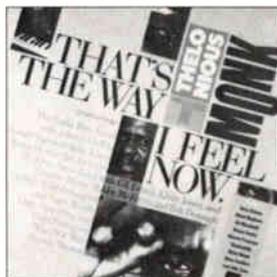
Moments like these utilize Lowe's pop skills rightly enough, but this time they're placed at the service of an overriding desire to rock out. Lowe and band grab for all the gusto they can in "Half A Boy and Half A Man," a ripping border radio workout. Drummer Bobby Irwin bashes away hard enough to threaten the song's structure, Lowe's bass just keeps pushing faster, and the exuberant singing makes it clear that Lowe is having a hell of a time. The whole thing ends up sounding like a rare night at the Chicken Ranch. Of course, not everything breezes along so easily. Every Nick Lowe album needs some throwaways; here they come in the form of "Maureen" and "God's Gift To Women," two derivative country-rock homages.

Nick Lowe and His Cowboy Outfit is summed up best in the last cut, a beguiling version of Faron Young's "Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young." As always, Lowe stands a little outside the material, allowing himself an ironic, artful distance from the song's both-ends-burning romanticism. And yet there's such an unguarded quality in his singing now that he makes the song's premise sound genial, warm, full of earthy wisdom. Of such contradictions, unreconciled yet joined together, does fine rock 'n' roll come.

THAT'S THE WAY I FEEL NOW
Various Artists

A&M

By
J.D.
Considine



The idea for a Thelonius Monk tribute album is hardly original; Sphere, a group made up largely from the pianist's former sidemen, has made a career of bringing Monk's compositions back to life. Still, *That's The Way I Feel Now* is not your run-of-the-mill homage; because producer Hal Willner had drawn as much upon musicians with no apparent connection to Monk's music as those who once played with the master himself, the album manages to capture a universality few would have otherwise detected in the music.

Stylistically, the LP careens from avant-garde jazz to straight-ahead rock, bouncing between aural abstractions and juicy chunks of melody without a moment's hesitation. Anywhere else, such diversity would make a record all-but-unlistenable,

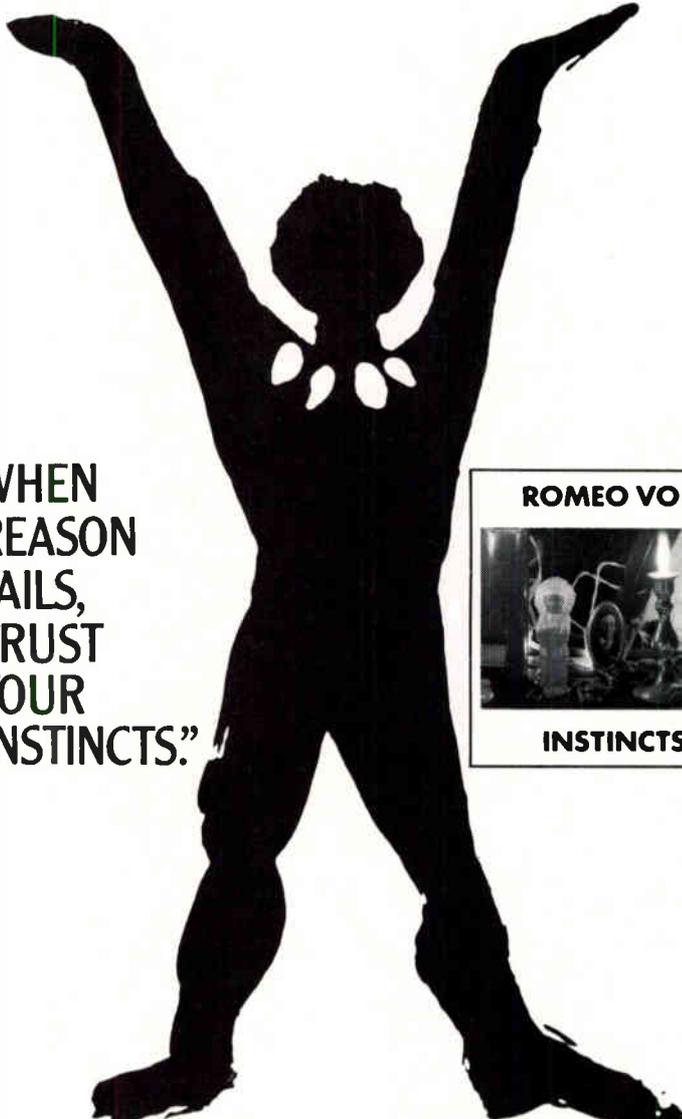
yet *That's The Way's* all-Monk programming gives it not merely a common thread, but a musical continuity that finds connections between the most unlikely performers.

For instance, Todd Rundgren, jazz pianist Barry Harris and avant-rocker John Zorn are about as musically distant from one another as three musicians are likely to get. Yet because each is attracted to the same Monk-ism—the pianist's fondness for clunky, irregular counter-melodies—there's an unexpected connection between Rundgren's synthesized sound effects on "Four In One," Zorn's kitchen symphonette version of "Shuffle Boil" and Harris' tack-piano "Pannonica."

Granted, some of the album's best moments, such as Dr. John's rollicking New Orleans-styled "Blue Monk," come as

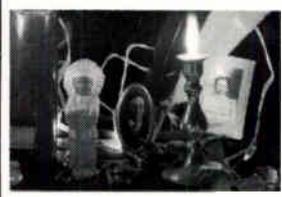
complete surprises. Part of it is novelty, after all—nobody expects a Chris Spedding/Peter Frampton collaboration on "Work" to do so, so when it does, we're delighted. But there's an equal amount of good music that comes just as you'd expect, like Carla Bley's "Misterioso," which is alternately raucous and hymn-like, and blessed with a luminous Johnny Griffin tenor solo. Even the outright disappointments, like Joe Jackson's mood music, "Round Midnight," still manage to touch a central truth or two.

As a result, although this is hardly as complete as it could be (why didn't Willner recruit Monk's children in T.S. Monk to add some funk to the proceedings?), it does a wonderful job of demonstrating just how universal great American music can be. Here's hoping that there will be more to come.



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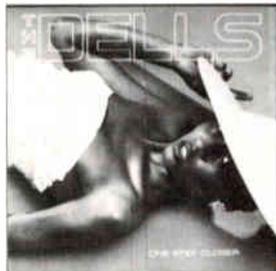
THE DELLS
One Step Closer

Private I/CBS

THE O'JAYS
Love And More

Philadelphia International/CBS

By
Rico Mitchell



The Dells and the O'Jays are two of the most durable vocal groups in pop music history. The O'Jays became known to most white listeners in 1972 with "Backstabbers," but they had already paid a decade's worth of dues before teaming up with Philly-based producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff in 1969. The Dells go back even further, to the golden age of doo wop. They were street corner heroes in Chicago by the time of their first hit, "Oh, What A Night," in 1956. The newest albums from these two groups, while deeply rooted in the essential conservatism of the black harmony group tradition, are fine examples of the genre's capacity to evolve with the times.

It is probably fitting for a group sharing such a long professional relationship that most of the songs on the Dells' *One Step Closer* are about lovers staying together, or at least wanting to. The production by Chuck Jackson and Marvin Yancy is dignified and rhythmically restrained next to today's electro-funk mixes, although they do successfully experiment with a reggae feel on "Love On." But what the best of these tunes lack in dance floor dynamics is more than compensated for in the gloriously smooth five-part harmonies. "You Just Can't Walk Away," in particular, ranks behind "Oh, What A Night" and "Stay In My Corner" among the group's finest efforts. And when Marvin Junior, whose gruff, gospel-tinged lead vocals were the model for the young Teddy Pendergrass, shouts out, "Stay in my corner, baby," in "I Am Your Man," you can feel his hard-earned pride radiating through the entire album. The Dells sound as fresh here as they must have on the street corner 30 years ago.

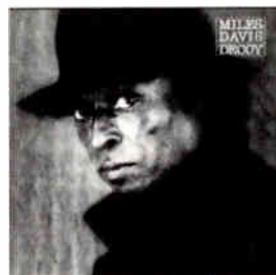
The O'Jays also maintain their reputation as a class act on *Love And More*, despite the fact that Gamble and Huff have written far more substantial material than the four songs which comprise side one. Lead singer Eddie Levert slices through the TSOP orchestral gloss with his usual panache, and the group harmonies still sound like burnished gold, but when saddled with lyrics as banal as those of "I'm The Kind Of Man (Every Mother Wants Her Daughter To Love)" and "Every-

body's Dance Krazy," there's only so much a body can do. Side two has a couple of redeeming moments in Matthew Rose's "Summer Fling" and Bunny Sigler's "Give My Love To The Ladies," but nothing here approaches the O'Jays' string of great '70s singles from "Backstabbers" through "Use Ta Be My Girl." Difficult as it might be to imagine after all these years, a change of producers could be in order if the group is to continue to evolve.

DECOY
Miles Davis

Columbia

By
Steve Futterman



Decoy is Miles Davis' peace treaty with the '80s. He is no longer struggling to incorporate the musical elements of this decade that he cherishes: black funk rhythms, the sonic textures of rock and the proliferation of synthesizers. Davis has now pulled these disparate ingredients together in a way that feels perfectly comfortable for him. Instead of unsuccessfully aping contemporary musical idioms, Davis is now molding them to fit his own vision, and *Decoy* is his new statement of purpose.

The great difference between electric Davis of the '70s and the present edition is the tightness and organization that has replaced the sprawling, exploratory delves into the unknown. Davis' new work is concise, his material clear cut and to the point. The triumph of *Decoy* is that it is accessible without being slavishly commercial; the tunes may be shorter but this only makes the playing leaner, tenser and ultimately more exciting.

The incorporation of two new members into the band has also altered Davis' sound. Guitarist John Scofield, who made a tentative but impressive appearance on last year's *Star People*, is simply the best musician Davis has used since his return. Whether cutting loose on a funky uptempo number or getting down on a slow blues, Scofield shows tremendous imagination and control as well as an intuitive understanding of Davis' motives. And the addition of Robert Irving III on synthesizers is more unexpected but equally successful.

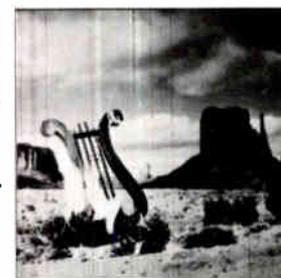
Although he doesn't play as much trumpet as any Davis fanatic would want, the leader still sounds majestic on the few solos he does take. So while *Decoy* isn't in the same category as *The Birth of the Cool*, *Kind of Blue* or *Bitches Brew* (being less a jolting, iconoclastic change of direction than a crystallization of what he has been trying to do since his comeback), it de-

serves to give Davis a wider audience—liking it would be easier than the uninitiated could imagine.

ON FYRE
The Lyres

Ace of Hearts

By
Ira Robbins

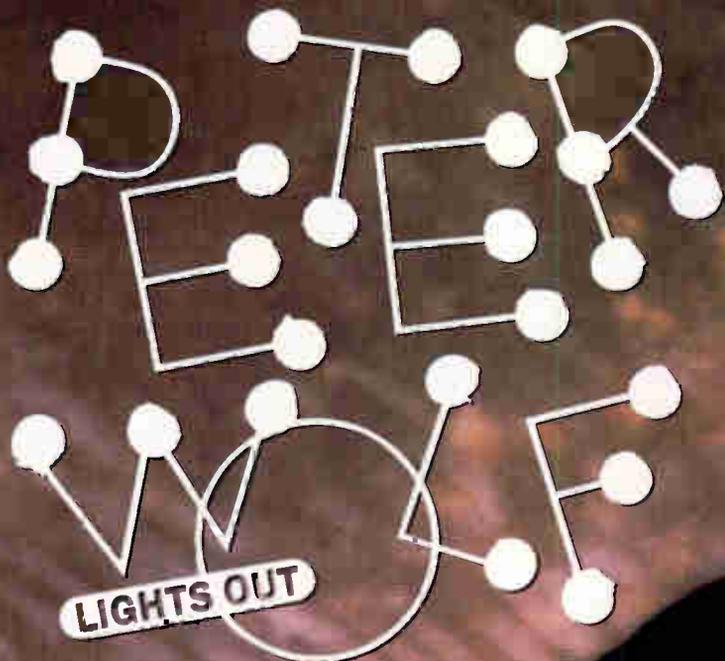


In light of today's virulent punk variant, hardcore, it may be difficult for some to appreciate the subtler charms of garage punk, the leather-coated '60s music exemplified by classics like the Seeds' "Pushin' Too Hard" and the 13th Floor Elevators' "You're Gonna Miss Me." At the time, and for good reason, the reedy sounds of Farfisa organ and fuzzed-out guitar seemed the ultimate in rock rebellion. In the far more debauched modern world, such an illusion becomes laughable. Still, there is undeniable power in tremolo and twang, and head Lyre Jeff Connolly knows it in his heart.

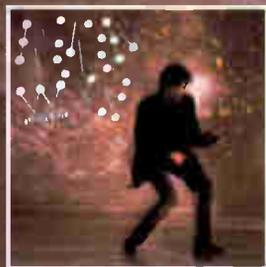
The Lyres' antecedent, Boston's own DMZ, were the pioneers of *nouveau* garage punk in 1978 with a self-titled Sire LP produced by Flo and Eddie (!). They were either years too early, or twelve years too late, and the roar of their greasy rock was roundly ignored. Righteously refusing to give up, Connolly formed the Lyres several years ago, and has continued to carry the garage flag proudly, issuing a great EP in 1981, a quintessential rock 'n' roll single ("Help You Ann"/"I Really Want You Right Now") last year, and now—finally—a debut album with ten tracks of invigorating music of the '60s for the '80s (or is it the other way around?).

On Fyre includes "Help You Ann," a Connolly original the Romantics probably wish they'd written, plus some other neat variations on '60s sounds. It also relies on '60s covers: two Kinks numbers—Ray's "Tired of Waiting" and Dave's "Love Me Till The Sun Shines"—plus a few from The Place Where Obscure Records Go (including—would you believe?—a tune first done by Pete Best). All of the numbers are played with extraordinary care and enthusiasm, but really played—none of this is delicate or half-assed. The Lyres don't fuss with details: the background vocals are haphazard, and the instrumental work is hardly precise, but the overall effect is unmistakable. This is an album with heart and guts, a modern statement of timeless values that'll make you want to jump up and down—if only all rock 'n' roll was this much fun! (Ace of Hearts, P.O. Box 579, Kenmore Station, Boston, MA 02215.)

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PRIME TIME FOR THE SEDUCTRESS



PRIVATE DANCER Tina Turner

Capitol

By James Hunter

Before her vanquishing version of Al Green's "Let's Stay Together" hit in America in the spring, Tina Turner's name was just part of a fabulous rock 'n' roll phrase: *Icanteena*. As Ike Turner's wife she'd been the woman God made to show other women how to dance in high heels, a Southern soul seductress with long, straight hair and revelatory legs, a woman whose blazingly sexual vocal style had scorched the English imaginations of rockers like Mick Jagger and Rod Stewart.

The proof of her wild past, though, was next-to-impossible to find—she was a legend without a record. Oh, there are some early '60s pent-up sides on Kent with Ike's swift rhythms and the Ikettes' background teasing and testifying; "River Deep, Mountain High," Phil Spector's 1966 masterpiece with Tina's voice swimming, climbing through it; "Proud Mary," her and Ike's nice 'n' rough 1971 tackle of the Creedence Clearwater song. Maybe you stumbled onto *The Acid Queen*, the mediocre 1975 hard rock solo album cut in the wake of her renown from Ken Russell's film of *Tommy*, but probably not 1970's *Come Together*, prime *Icanteena* where she's alternately driven by her desires and doomed by them. Divorced from Ike since 1976, Turner began giving "comeback" performances several years ago, dynamic shows that left wit-

nesses rapt and crazy, but before "Let's Stay Together" she still didn't have a "comeback" record.

The fantastic *Private Dancer* is that record and more. It's not produced by American rock or pop-soul veterans or by post-*Thriller*, post-Bambaataa black-poppers. With the excep-

ten's glistening dance-beats; on Britten's steaming technoid recasting of Ann Peebles' "I Can Stand The Rain"—British synthpop stretches out as it rarely has before. This is the glory of Heaven 17's Martin Ware and Greg Walsh's brilliant arrangement of "Let's Stay Together," the warmly beating



Turner: Startling scope, luscious sensitivity

tion of the magnificently desolate title track and "Steel Claw," both done with Dire Straits, it's the work of the current generation of English synthpoppers who took three long years to get it together. As Tina Turner comes back on this record—on "What's Love Got To Do With It," a sensuous but '80s-cynical mid-tempo ballad moving on producer Terry Brit-

ten's heart of *Private Dancer*, with the single's tender jazz-colored break, its romantic paradise of synthesizers, its sure-footed hypnotic beat. This and Turner's singing.

Although the raw power of her voice always seemed supernatural, Turner hasn't been a pageant of technique like Aretha Franklin or a crafty lyric actress like Dionne Warwick.

But on *Private Dancer* she sings with startling scope and scratchy, luscious sensitivity. Her protracted first minute of "Let's Stay Together" is headed for history; on "I Can't Stand The Rain" she leans into "rain" as if to punish the word for calling forth killing memories of lost love grandeurs. And on "Better Be Good To Me," with half of the Fixx and their producer Rupert Hine arranging a testy Stax-styled ending with real drums, she concisely demands respect.

Private Dancer coheres because the synthpoppers (who, having grown up in an England where she was consistently lauded, can no more resist Turner than could Jagger or Stewart) are as wise about her myth as they are celebratory about the '70s rock bound up with it—music for which they have previously shown mostly disdain. Hine writes and produces "I Might Have Been Queen," opening with potent bursts of rock-disco, a number that laments and then trounces the unlucky aspects of Turner's career. Jammed with references to rivers and wreckage and a soul superwoman's stamina, it finally has Turner gazing at the stars and declaring that the future can't faze her. Side two's sequencing of "Let's Stay Together," Ware and Walsh's production of David Bowie's "1984," and "Steel Claw"—the latter smarting with Jeff Beck's blistering guitar—sweeps out of the sweet R&B past into the arch present and then back to the flesh-and-blood fury of the Rolling Stones. When you're Tina Turner and you command this much ground, no one should blink when you insist you're a soul survivor.

After covering all that ground, the record ends on Mark Knopfler's insightful "Private Dancer," where Turner evokes the elegance of a courtesan and the steady-eyed resignation of a stripper to suggest the sad, perhaps inevitable plights of hundreds of singers' tawdry albums where "any old music will do." Knopfler's disturbing monologue traces exactly what this record isn't—not just any old music, not just a paid-for tired shimmy, but a righting of the past and a brightening of the future. And that future is now.

PHOTO EBET ROBERTS

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VINYLEXAMS

THE BANGLES

All Over The Place /Columbia

The Bangles, an all-girl group from L.A., debuted in 1983 with a great EP on Faulty Products; *All Over The Place* is their long playing debut. Outside of new bassist Michael Steele (this Mike is a female), the group remains the same; that is, bouncy guitar group sounds and soaring vocals predominate. While their mid-'60s fixation means that they'd be best represented by a couple of great singles, I don't hear any on this record (a lot of good ones, maybe, but no great ones). But maybe the fine singing will suffice in an age when the pleasant but lightweight Bananarama are considered (by some) to be nightingales. —Wayne King

BIG COUNTRY Wonderland /Mercury

Since *The Crossing* turned out to be camouflaging an idea shortage behind three great sounding songs, it's nice to find that this EP is a real effort to explore new moods, moods more industrial than lyrical. Those keening guitars are leashed in, creating tense excitement in "Angle Park," where "the lights are dim, the statues grin." But anybody who says he's an honest man three times in one song better know the difference between life and art, or get ready for some rigorous scrutiny. Just ask somebody about Jimmy Carter, Stu. —Christopher Hill

THE CURE The Top /Sire

The makers of some of Britain's most pleasurable and unpredictable new wave change gears here with characteristic deftness. They leave behind the synth-based dance pop of *Japanese Whispers*, as well as the slow, sombre approach of their previous albums, and go for the throat with some raucous rock 'n' roll. Like a lot of new wavers lately, they've rediscovered the lead guitar; unlike a lot of new wavers, they know precisely what to do with it. And *The Top* contains the best song they've ever made: "Bananafishbones." —Crispin Sartwell

THE EARONS Hear On Earth /Island

Great — a group that identifies its members only by numbers (to wit: lead and rhythm guitars and background vocals—22; bass guitar—69; 28, 33, 18, hike) and dresses up in spaceman gear. But wait a second: though these guys may claim they're Earotronic Energies from Earon Earth, they ain't no space cadets. What they offer those human listeners attuned to their wavelength is a slick combination of powerful group chanting, some fine lead singing (courtesy of 28), and cymbal-crazy syndrum backing, mixed to a fine trebly pitch. At least, that's the story on side one; the back side offers the reggae-based political rouser, "Land of Hunger," and the record ends with a couple of solid soul numbers done straight up. Which only goes to show that some things are truly universal. —W.K.

THE HUMAN LEAGUE Hysteria /A&M

This album is a turkey. I mean, we're talking USDA prime self-basting *Butterball*. There are no fun songs here, no good ideas, no enthusiasm—in short, no justification whatsoever for the album's existence. Perhaps the most surpris-

ing thing about *Hysteria* is that most of it is not even remotely danceable, and the League, whatever else they were, were always a great dance band. What Phil Oakey and Co. intend to accomplish with pretentious twaddle like "The Lebanon" remains shrouded in profound mystery. Certainly, they don't seem to be aiming at commercial success; it's difficult to imagine anyone who's heard this record going out and purchasing it. Except, perhaps, to serve on Thanksgiving. —C.S.

JERRY LEE LEWIS

I Am What I Am /MCA

Tha ravages are finally beginning to show up in his voice—it's always been reedy, but you'll listen in vain here for the bull roar he used to summon up to sock a ballad home as powerfully as a rocker. But Jerry Lee survives uninspired material, arrangements and production, just as he does the exigencies of his career. There's easy rocking strength in the title cut, good, dirty fun in "Get Out Your Big Roll, Daddy." He remains the best honky tonk singer alive, if only because no one else cares enough to do it right. —C.H.

VAN MORRISON

Live At The Grand Opera House Belfast /Mercury (import)

When Van makes it work, he can still conjure the supercharged dream that haunted *Astral Weeks*. This live recording (not due on Mercury, his new label here, until January) is a pretty good example of how it works, when it works. "Vanlose Stairway" and "Rave On, John Donne" are models of the way that he welds the hazy gleam of occult poetry to the heat of R&B, creating a convincingly spiritual soul music that owes next-to-nothing to traditional gospel. Yet it only works to the degree that you ignore the lyrics; and his everpresent complement of "soulful" backup singers is an ever-clumsier appendage. —C.H.

WILLIE NELSON Angel Eyes /Columbia

Since 1978's *Stardust*, Willie Nelson, one of the greatest singer-songwriters in the history of country music, has been evocatively exploring the forgotten backroads that connect all American music forms. *Angel Eyes* features a mainstream jazz quartet led by Jackie King, a facile guitarist in the mode of Herb Ellis and Barney Kessel, on a program of standard jazz vehicles, country-swing classics and King originals. Willie sounds about like he always does—laid back—although the quick tempo changes on "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" would leave the Sons of the Pioneers in the dust. His phrasing and intonation aren't going to make anyone forget Ella Fitzgerald, and King is no innovator, but you gotta give these guys a hand just for trying. —Rico Mitchell

ROGER The Saga Continues /Warner Bros.

This cat is nothing if not prolific. Since abandon the P-Funk mothership a few years back, Roger has produced three albums with Zapp, the Ohio-based band that includes his brothers Larry, Lester and Zapp Troutman, as well as three albums of his own. Zapp's can't-miss electro-funk formula is reflected here on side one, but I suspect the man's true heart lies with the bluesier grooves on side two. The Mighty Clouds of Joy add Sunday morning harmonies behind Roger's Saturday night voice box effects on Wilson Pickett's "In The Midnight Hour," and his guitar quotes from B.B. King on "Bucket of Blood," a good-humored paean to the chitlin' circuit. The killer single, though, is "In The Mix," a thank-you note to deejays that's guaranteed to have 'em poppin' in the streets this summer. —R.M.

THE SPECIALS AKA

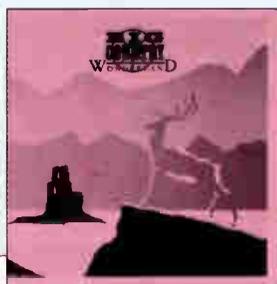
"Free Nelson Mandela" /Chrysalis

The Specials were the progenitors of the fabled 2-Tone style of rock flavored with bluebeat and ska (the dance-oriented Jamaican precursors of reggae that the Brits adored during both the original Mod period and its brief late '70s revival) which dominated the British charts at the beginning of the decade. With this single, leader Jerry Dammers and company (only one original member, drummer John Bradbury, is still here) return to the wars with a fine upbeat plea for the release of Nelson Mandela, the 65-year-old leader of South Africa's liberation group, the African National Congress, currently nearing the 22 year mark as a prisoner and as a virtual "unperson." Produced by Elvis Costello—who did the Specials' first album—the "Free" 12" (their first record here since 1981's *Ghost Town* EP) is from the *In The Studio* LP, and well worth the wait. —W.K.

YELLOWMAN

King Yellowman /Columbia

Despite the protests of (predominantly white) criticals purists, Yellowman's X-rated raps are closer to reggae's popular roots in West Indian folk culture than any Rastafarian attempt to recreate a mythological African past. Since emerging as Jamaica's hottest sound system deejay in 1981, Yellowman has released over 20 albums. This, however, is his first American product, and most non-Jamaicans will find the patois a bit thick. But don't worry—he's not saying anything important anyway, just more of the usual boasting and dumb rhymes. The two tracks produced by Material are immediately appealing party grooves, and Yellowman's vocals possess a certain roguish charm (comparable to, say, Mick Jagger), but overall, this album represents a step backward in reggae's quest for international significance. —R.M.



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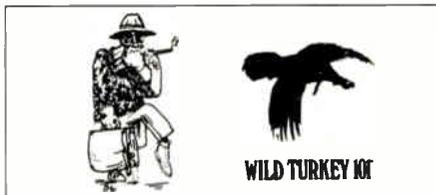
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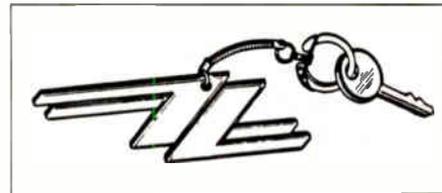
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ROCK AT FACE VALUE

Sitting through the Alarm's performance at Radio City Musical Hall in May, when they opened for the Pretenders, was a fairly painful experience for me. Not simply because the acoustic instruments that are the band's trademark were amplified to a point that went beyond loud and approached excruciating. No, what was troublesome about the Alarm was that I had touted them in a piece for this magazine last year as up-and-coming saviors of rock; not exactly the Next Big Thing, mind you, but in that vicinity. And despite the crowd's reaction that night, which was very favorable, I

the band, which would be unfair; their genuine enthusiasm for their audience and themselves is a necessary element in any music which seeks to inspire. But, like so many other writers, I had simply swallowed what an artist presented as his real nature and regurgitated it whole. Unfortunately, taking things as they appear to be is more the norm in rock journalism these days than the exception. Which makes sense, given what the state of the media is in the '80s. More and more, the fourth estate is turning into a *People's Republic of Blather*, less concerned with issues and ideas and the interaction of community

"Eyes Without A Face" video), or Spandau Ballet's Tony Hadley claiming his group of soulless MOR mannequins to be the True revolutionaries on today's scene.

Of course, the medium most culpable in this process as far as rock is concerned is music video. It is with music video that we get such wholesale distortions as Pat Benatar and her ludicrous street/feminist fantasy, "Love Is A Battlefield." Then there's Huey Lewis and the News' "The Heart of Rock 'n' Roll," in which the performance shots of the band are filmed in black and white (unlike the rest of the video) to blend in with the vintage clips shown of Elvis, Chuck Berry and others, and thus equate Lewis' music with that of rock's founders. And even that weasel, Steve Perry, gets into the act with his spoof of the whole music video biz in "Oh, Sherrrie." What Perry is saying, by his refusal to play the frog prince in the original concept that we see, is that *he* won't succumb to the absurdities of this promotional vehicle; no, his is a love song, and so he'll sing it to his girlfriend (he plays a mean broom, to boot). Too bad, then, that the "Sherrrie" shown is not his real girlfriend, but the type of post-jailbait cutie that dominates most AOR videos—thus making the whole charade just another promotional tool. And the less said about the abomination that is the "movie/video," with its further blurring of already hazy distinctions between artistic and promotional intents, the better.

But change is due, and perhaps it will start with—ironically enough—Michael Jackson, the symbol of the industry's fragile resurgence and (unwittingly) the '80s social somnolence. It is not only promoters and writers who are finding fault with the avaricious attitude exhibited by the Jacksons' moneymen; some of that resentment is being expressed directly by the fans most affected by the megatour's greed and contempt. It was a similar resentment of the aloof, aristocratic Stones after a series of disastrous shows in London in 1976 which helped spur Britain's punk scene, and now that the cycle of pop events set in motion there has wound down, it may be time again for an explosion of idealism. The enthusiasm necessary for such an upheaval is certainly present. As for me, I quickly regained my sense of purpose during the Pretenders' set at Radio City when Chrissie Hynde sang: "Now we're back in the fight ... Back on the chain gang." Only some hard digging by artists, fans and the media will get things moving, and this prisoner of rock is ready for things to start rolling again. ○



PHOTO: LISA LEAVITT

Pat Benatar's "Love Is A Battlefield": Feminist statement or ludicrous fantasy?

was squirming because the sight in front of me was not the group of dedicated and unyielding rock rebels that I had written about, but a quartet of gesturing poseurs who had no real business being in a 6000-seat arena at such an arrested stage of their musical and songwriting development.

If this sounds like yet another critic falling off the (band)wagon the second an act becomes remotely popular, you're wrong. Because what had happened was less the case of that common, adolescent critical reaction than the more important problem of taking things solely at face value. When interviewing the group the previous July, I'd been hoodwinked by the Save-The-World mouthings of their charismatic lunkhead singer, Mike Peters.

All of this will either make me look like a fool, for being so journalistically naive (read: stupid), or look like a total dump on

than with the celebrities who appear like clockwork for their Warholian duration and then vanish, fated to reappear only for *Whatever Happened To?* specials or one of those *Bloopers* shows.

Some recent examples of this attitude in the press include the treatment given the British band the Smiths, whose lead singer Morrissey is allowed the pose of a non-practicing bisexual speaking for a vaguely-defined "fourth gender." The most obvious question—How is your spiel different from anyone else's, and why should we believe you'll be around in six months?—is never asked; no, as long as the artist has something new to sell, that's all that matters. So we let such rampant revisionism go as Billy Idol claiming that he's still upholding punk ideals today (suck on that one to the rhythm of faceless women slapping their asses, like in the twerp's

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