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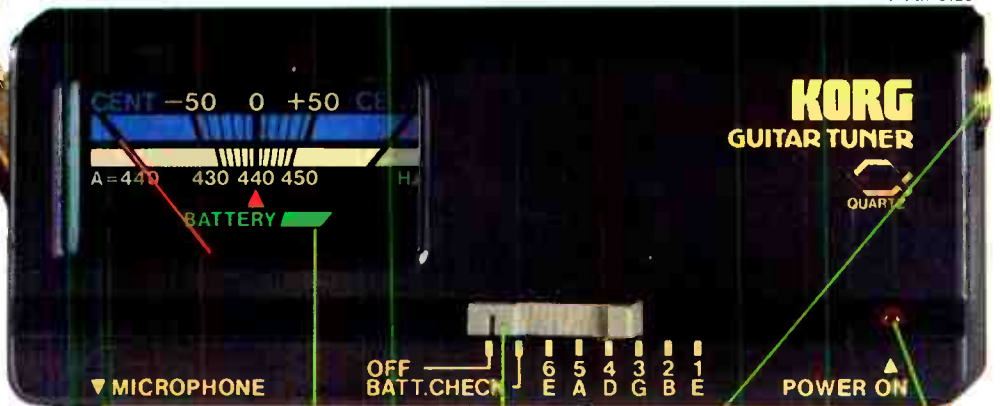
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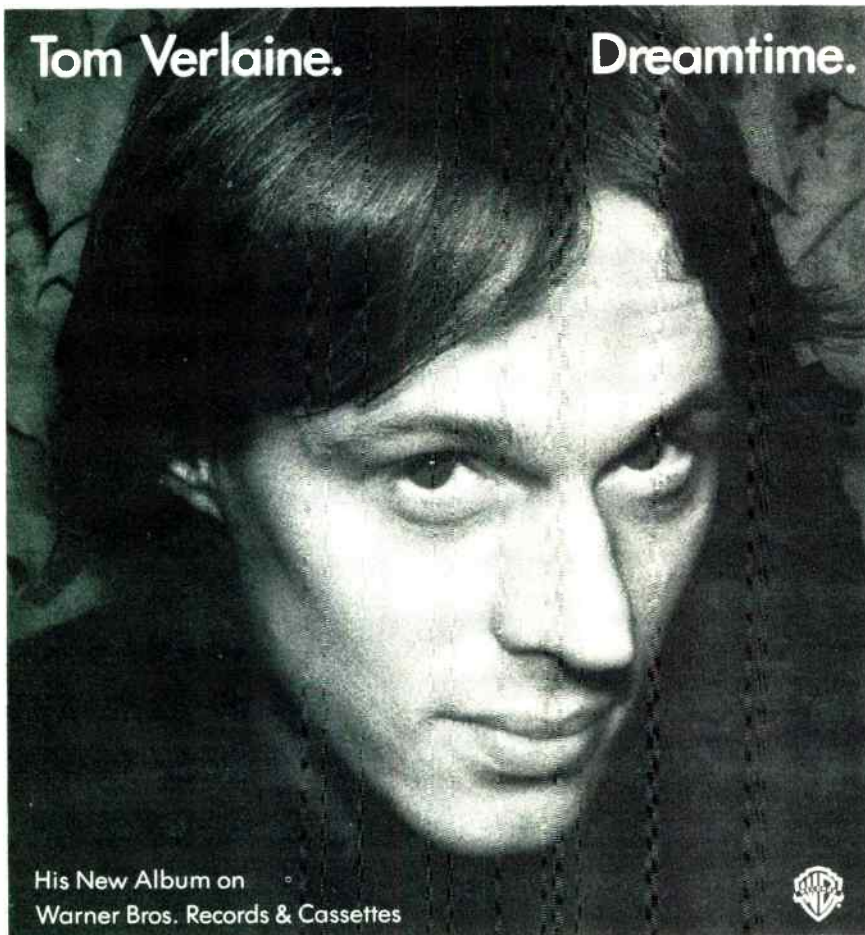


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Co-Publisher/Ad Director

Gordon Baird

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Gary Krasner

Art Director

Sam Holdsworth

Managing Editor/N.Y.

Vic Garbarini

Promotion Director

Paul Sacksman

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Hyacinth Amero

Michelle Nicaastro

Mary Ellen Cataneo

Main Office/Production

31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701

Gloucester, MA 01930

New York Advertising/Editorial

MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl

N.Y., N.Y. 10036 (212) 764-7400

Contributors

Lester Bangs, Bob Blumenthal, Crispin

Cioe, J. D. Considine, Tom Copi, Chris

Doering, David Fricke, Peter Giron,

Geoffrey Himes, Jon Pareles, Ebet

Roberts, Allan Tannenbaum, Roy

Trakin.

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Lorch **Corporate Manager:** Charles Rueger,

General Manager of Publishers Graphics

Musician Player & Listener (USPS 431-910) is

published monthly by Amordian Press, Inc., P.O.

Box 701, 31 Commercial St., Gloucester, MA

01930 (617) 281-3110 Amordian Press Inc. is a

wholly owned subsidiary of Billboard Publica-

tions, Inc., One Astor Place, 1515 Broadway,

New York, N.Y. 10036 Musician Player & Lis-

tenor is a trademark of Amordian Press, Inc.

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reserved Second class postage paid at Glou-

cester, MA 01930 and at additional mailing offi-

ces Subscriptions \$18 per year, \$34 for two

years, \$48 for three years Canadian, add \$1 per

year elsewhere, add \$6 per year U.S. funds

only Subscription address Musician, Box 989,

Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737 Postmaster send form

3579 to above address

Manuscripts and artwork are welcome, how-

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LETTERS LETTERS

YOU HIPPIE, LESTER

To Lester Bangs, on your article about Jim Morrison: I don't rightly care for you or your damn opinions. You put the man down through the whole article and at the end tried to say you liked him. Can't you make up your mind?

At least Morrison had his own style about everything he did. Maybe you're just jealous 'cause you couldn't make it past being a plain old hippie. It takes a lot of balls to be different and not a plastic person who does only what other people want him to do. If anyone's a bozo, you are.

I read your opinion of Morrison so you can read my opinion of you!

Patricia Surley
Evanston, IL

A LITTLE PERSPECTIVE, PLEASE

Let me shake the hand of Lester Bangs, whose expose of Jim Morrison was at once timely and overdue. Morrison was a poet like thousands of others; his lyrics alternate between simplistically symbolic renderings of mundane subjects (sex, sex and sex) and dream-like landscapes that only came into focus in the deepest folds of Jim Morrison's brain. It is true that Morrison's voice was vividly haunting and his personal mannerisms engrossing, but if we boil down all the man's talents, all we can say is that he could rock with style, an accomplishment worthy of respect, but not worship.

It was also interesting to see Bangs' article juxtaposed with interviews with Ray Manzarek and Paul Rothchild, two people who have been crucial in sustaining the amazing intensity of Morrison hype. They churned out for your magazine the same stories that they always have, with musician and journalist mutually convincing each other that such repetitions are necessary because Jim Morrison was, in fact, JIM MORRISON. If Jesus' story gets to be told twelve times in one book, then we're gonna give Jim thirteen! Anyone who convinces himself, however, that the love which Morrison spoke of was anything but bluntly sexual does not even deserve one hearing.

Let us not kid ourselves that today's Doors fans are any more perceptive than yesterday's: they listen to Morrison the way they watch Brian DePalma's films. If they're flipping through pages of the Doors' lyrics, it's only to find the really juicy parts.

David Stanton
Essex Fells, NJ

WE STAND WARNED

Re Jim Morrison: You say, "...if he

was still around today, no way would he still be singing about chaos and revolution." Isn't there a group called the Clash? And England is burning today. It ain't over, man. Only the seventies are dead (RIP). One good observation: "Like a 20-watt light bulb that's fed 80 watts of current, he wasn't prepared to handle what he encountered." What if it's a mind-blowing million watts of perception? It doesn't matter whether the bulb is 20 or 200 watts. Would you call Hendrix 20 watts?

What about Plato when you go back into the cave, because you always have to go back into this cave, and that's why music is your only friend, until the end. I really like your magazine, it has taste, but remember that the waters naturally cut their own channel.

Juan Matus
Mercer, PA

NO HEAT

No doubt about it: Robert Fripp is a smart man with a lot of common sense and an ability to put it into words, but why are his records so COLD? Music comes from the heart, the brain is only there to coordinate it.

Arthur Neihaus
Jersey City, NJ

SACRED CREAM

So sorry to see so many pages wasted on the hipper-than-thou rantings of Lester Bangs. Just to pick one passage that verifies his cramped frame of reference, how about his astonishment that anyone would "still" listen to the Cream and revere them beyond the Beatles or any other of his sacred cows? This lack of understanding in a big-time professional writer would astonish me if I had not come to expect it from Mr. Bangs, having read his work before.

Yes, Cream. Their music is timeless in every bit the same way as that of the Doors, Hendrix, and the Wailers; and yes, Lester, even of the Beatles and Iggy Pop. You needn't die to relate. After many years of being ignored by rock publications, the Cream deserve some recognition.

Steven Dekody
Gainesville, FLA

WE HATE EVERYONE, TOO

I found your article "Music and Violence Under the Palms" fairly informative and pretty much factually correct. However you chose to omit one of the greatest "punk" bands in America: Mr. Epp and the Calculations. Based in Seattle, *not* Los Angeles, the Calculations attack the audience, the poor, rich, punk and heavy metal people all in one fell swoop.

The Calculations are truly America's answer to the Sex Pistols and Crass from England. But where Crass hate only the rich, Joe Smitty of the Calculations said, "I hate the rich because they are rich, the poor because they are poor and the middle class because they are middle class." Mark, Smitty, Todd and Randy are the *only* group with a valid message for America: Change or be destroyed!!!

John Sitkin
Bellevue, WA

THE SOBER MIDDLE CLASS

Geoffrey Himes' "The Heart of Blue Collar Rock" was full of good intentions, but ultimately fell short of its potential. Firstly, use of the term "blue collar" is both too restrictive and highly misleading. Bruce Springsteen, the Clash and Graham Parker are not merely spokespersons for the blue collar point of view, they speak for all people who appreciate sober and compassionate appraisals of the world/human situation.

Secondly, the audiences which appreciate these groups are only minutely "blue collar." Most working class kids are not at all noble in their praise of Van Halen, Rush, and that ilk. I've probably come across like a pompous bastard, and if so, I'm sorry. It's just that Himes' article preaches that college students like myself have no business listening to Bruce and Joe Strummer because we have it so cushy. Well I'm proud to be middle class and proud to love "blue collar" rock.

Peter Thomson
Chelmsford, MA

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The KGB's Greatest Hits

Lest we forget what some of our best music is, we should consider the views of our enemies. Somewhere, deep in the Soviet Union, the aunt of an acquaintance was preparing to visit the United States for the first time and was called in for a routine clearance by the KGB, the infamous secret police. Two stern agents reminded her that things in the Soviet Union were not all that bad, that she should consider her country's reputation... Then one of the agents lowered his voice conspiratorially, "Now, comrade, there is something we want you to do." As the woman blanched at what espionage-terrorist act was being contemplated, she was handed a list. She was to purchase at least half a dozen pairs of denim jeans and eight record albums.

My acquaintance showed me the list. The first album was "Chose Feresiano," which we decided had to be Jose Feliciano's *Greatest Hits*. Then Santana's *Caravanserai*. Two Pink Floyd albums followed, *Dark Side of the Moon* and *Obscured By Clouds*. *Honey* by the Ohio PLayers! Elvis *Live*. Then we puzzled over the last entry: Comrade Mitlov. The album title listed with it was translated into "A flying mouse in damnation." Who could it be? Then, *Bat Out of Hell* popped into our minds, by Comrade Meatloaf. The albums and jeans went back to the U.S.S.R. and war was avoided.

Chart Action

After a staid early summer, the chart turnover has been ferocious. After putting their first number one album ever to the top, Foreigner's 4 was hipchecked out by Stevie Nicks' studio extravaganza, *Bella Donna*, surpassing in four weeks the highest

spots of the last two Fleetwood Mac releases. Then Journey's *Escape* pushed both of them out of the way while Pat Benatar hovered threateningly with *Precious Time* and Rickie Lee Jones muscled up *Pirates*, elsewhere noted in this issue. Then the Rolling Stones plopped into the rumble at #8 with *Tattoo You*, ready to challenge all five. By the time you read this...

Roughed up by all this action were Tom Petty (*Hard Promises*), Kenny Rogers (*Share Your Love*), Phil Collins (*Face Value*) and Air Supply (*The One That You Love*), former toughies who dropped into the twenties. The Pretenders have appeared from left field to #10 in no time while Al Jarreau's new album is at fourteen in only four weeks, an omen that everyone's favorite vocalist may finally break out into dollarland. Oblivious to all this heavy chart action, The Moody Blues (*Long Distance Voyager*) ommed along serenely at #11, Rick James (*Street Songs*) funkateered at #9, Rick Springfield (*Working Class Dog*) soaped it at #7 and Billy Squier (*Don't Say No*) sickly squeezed to #5. New releases by Debbie Harry, Joe Jackson, ZZ Top and Aretha Franklin are expected to make more trouble down the line.

On the AM side of the universe, things were far more placid. Lionel Ritchie and Diana Ross, two aging, easy listening heavies did an anthem to desperate teenage passion, an irony that has escaped the top forty audience for over a month now. The Pointer Sisters' "Slow Hand," catchy gospel-pop, sits secure in the vice-hype's chair. "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," Stevie Nicks' feisty (for her) duet with Tom Petty is also comfortably ensconced, as is Foreigner's "Urgent," which one disappointed Foreigner fan described

heat." Ronnie Milsap's warm James Taylor wit underpins a delightfully written "There Ain't No Gettin' Over Me," while Juice Newton's "Queen of Hearts" (recorded better by Dave Edmunds) can get into your ear and take weeks to drive out. Christopher Cross has his "Theme From Arthur" and Journey sports "Who's Crying Now," Pablo Cruise, Gary Wright, the Commodores, Eddie Rabbit and Pat Benatar are trying the waters of the top twenty. I mean, how many of these people can we mention?...

Over across the tracks, the soul charts are also into "Endless Love" but cut it with "She's a Bad Mama Jama" by Teena Marie. Rick James is mopping up all the album competition while Teena Marie's *It Must Be Magic* and Maze's *Live* puff after him. Miles' album, *The Man With a Horn*, is number 17! New albums by the Temps, Gladys and Brick check in.

The Center for Contemporary Studies in London has released a report finding evidence that British fascist parties, including the National Front and the British Movement, have been recruiting and propagandizing in skinhead clubs and are directly responsible for much of the overt racism breaking out in West London. Leafletting by trained cadres at performances of Bad Manners and Madness, disruptions of concerts by the salt-and-pepper Specials, and the appearance of "puppet groups," incompetent but indoctrinated, have all been documented...

An interesting new concept in Music Trade Shows, **Music Expo '81**, will be held in Boston, Oct. 10-12 at Commonwealth Pier, in association with *Musician Magazine*. Encompassing all facets of the music industry and highlighting the Boston music scene, the show will provide an opportunity for consumers and professionals to interact with equipment displays, clinics, workshops, video and concerts. At presstime, bands signed include Black Uhuru, Jr. Walker, Don McLean, Vassar Clements, Jesse Winchester and Buddy Miles. It's an idea we hope will spread around the country.

Joe Cocker seems unwilling to go peacefully to jaded rock star heaven. After doing an album with reggae kingmakers **Robbie Shakespeare** and **Sly Dunbar**, he sang two exciting vocals on the **Crusaders'** new release... **Jonli Mitchell** has expressed interest in having Andy Summers and the **Police** back her up on an upcoming tour. Meanwhile, her former associates, the **Pat Metheny Group**, were approached by **Rickie Lee Jones**, who hoped they'd work with her. Scheduling conflicts precluded any link-up for the present, but...



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And the WR-8716 features plastic conductive faders for greater reliability and smooth, low-noise operation; external power supply for light weight, and switchable 48V DC phantom power for condenser mics.



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singles. Today, they merely resurrect remembrances of discoveries we have long since lost.

"We used to play to people who were trying to hang on to their pleasant memories of the 60s," explains Dee Dee Ramone, earnest bassist/songwriter for the Ramones, those four lovable geeks from Forest Hills who formed the prototype leather-jacketed punk band that helped launch the new wave scene from

their previously monolithic group identity. Both lead singer Joey and Dee Dee take individual credit for their own songs, as they have never done in the past.

"When you have one name to hide behind, one guy doesn't have to take the fall," explains Dee Dee. "This way, the competition brings out the best in everyone."

"Songwriting is an extension of your



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

The Ramones play for the kids: "When you're young and in love, you hear things differently."

a makeshift stage in a Bowery bar and biker hangout known as CBGB over five years ago.

"To an extent, we were trying to do that, too," continues Dee Dee. "We wanted to recreate the first band you ever saw that knocked your socks off. But when you've got to stand up on that stage every night and talk to kids, it's different. You don't think about the past."

Perhaps only the drug-addled mind of a rock critic could conclude that the Ramones were songwriting geniuses on the basis of lyrics like "Beat on the brat/Beat on the brat/Beat on the brat with a baseball bat/Oh Yeah, oh yeah, uh-oh."

The fact was, within their own stringently simplistic system, the Ramones were practically the perfect popsters — their one-chord guitar drone and minimal half-part harmonies fronted by Joey's Liverpool-by-way-of-Queens Boulevard vocal plaints were suggestively overflowing with irresistible pop hooks. Phil Spector didn't see stars in the Ramones by coincidence, folks. The distance between "Rockaway Beach" and "Surfin' U.S.A." was much closer than 3,000 miles in spirit.

With *Pleasant Dreams*, the Ramones have started to come out from behind

personality," continues Joey. "When four people take credit for a song somebody writes, it kind of loses something. Whether it's anger, frustration or love, it's a personal thing. I look at myself as an artist and a songwriter and I take a lot of pleasure in what I do. I get very frustrated, you know what I mean?"

"Definitely, songwriting is the greatest satisfaction in the world, the ultimate high. Nothing beats writing a song and thinking it's the best one in the world. Y'know, calling up the rest of the guys and telling them I just wrote the greatest song in the world and they have to learn it right away. Know what I mean?"

The level of songwriting on *Pleasant Dreams* is consistently high, even while the guise of group democracy has been lifted. No one can tell me the Dee Dee who created that stirring ode to the New York streets, "All's Quiet on the Eastern Front," is dumb.

"The song is a reflection of my personality," says Dee Dee. "One of the things that inspires me is exploration, like walking around the city. That's my city, New York, and when I walk around it, I feel good in it. That's the kind of things I pick up on. I'm kind of a loner.

continued on next page

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continued from previous page

That song is just me walking around at five in the morning, coming home from a club. I'm in that garbage as much as anyone else, but it's really a joyful song. It's happy. There's nothing depressing about it.

"Usually, my songs are some kind of expression of torment that I may have within me. But, now that I'm becoming happier, somehow, I know more what I want to say. Things strike me in a more serious vein now. It could be because I'm older and more grown up. I don't want to be silly. Since *Rocket to Russia* and *Road to Ruin*, my songs try to say something. Before that, I was just amazed I could even do it, so whatever came out came out. We didn't take our-

selves seriously. Maybe now we're taking ourselves too seriously."

Similarly, Joey's songs — the anthemic "We Want the Airwaves," the sly social commentary of "It's Not My Place (In the 9 to 5 World)" and "This Business Is Killing Me," the self-parodic, tongue-in-cheek teen celebration of "7-11" and "She's a Sensation" — attempt to reflect the communal joy of the 60s. Didn't the choice of 10cc's Graham Gouldman as producer indicate the Ramones' acknowledgment of their debt to vintage limey pop? After all, Gouldman was responsible for penning some of the most characteristic examples of the genre for groups like the Hollies, the Yardbirds, the Mindbenders and Herman's Hermits.

"We only became aware of that stuff later on," insists Dee Dee. "It was really our manager's idea. I certainly admire the things that have been done in the 60s, but I don't wanna be stuck in the 60s. I'm not stuck on the mono sound. I admire a guy who's a master technician in the studio, like Graham."

Dee Dee goes on to describe what he felt made that mid-60s music so effective. "It spoke for situations that could happen to young people. You knew what they were talking about. It wasn't some jaded, coked-out rock star singing about his tax troubles. Those songs were not written as hustles."

But it's 1981, not 1965, and the Ramones find themselves fighting a distinctly uphill fight. They are far from ignorant of the irony of their situation.


In "7-11," Joey croons, "Summer fun with the Beach Boys on/But we all know what went wrong." The Ramones live in the present.

"It's almost like saying, 'We was young and in love,'" says Joey. "And that's a scapegoat because when you're young and in love you hear things different, know what I mean? It's like pulling the shade over someone's face. The problem is much deeper than the quality of songs on the radio today.

"We try to make people aware of the problem by penetrating their minds and forcing them to think for themselves. The radio stands for brainwashing, dictating and telling people what they should be listening to and buying. That's why we're in the state we're in, why rock 'n' roll is in such pathetic state. Hopefully, things are gonna get better, y'know? I mean, we don't live in the past. We live for the betterment of rock 'n' roll."

As the rock audience continues to fragment into specialized tastes, the consensus represented by 60s groups becomes harder and harder to envision. It's not that Squeeze and the Ramones aren't as good as the Beatles and the Beach Boys, but in today's conservative, seen-it-all atmosphere, they can't hope to have the same impact as their forebears. To each group's credit, though, they do not dwell in the past, but update the legacy for a brand-new generation that wasn't even born when the Beatles appeared on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, reminding us of a time when rock 'n' roll still had the ability to change our lives.

"I think it's great to bang your head against the wall, to try to penetrate it, to knock the crap out of it and to come through the other side," says Joey Ramone. "Now's the real test. When the odds are totally against you to still come out a hero."

Thanks to bands like Squeeze and the Ramones, the pleasant dreams of timeless pop are kept alive in their two birthplaces on either side of the Atlantic. To me, that's pretty heroic. 



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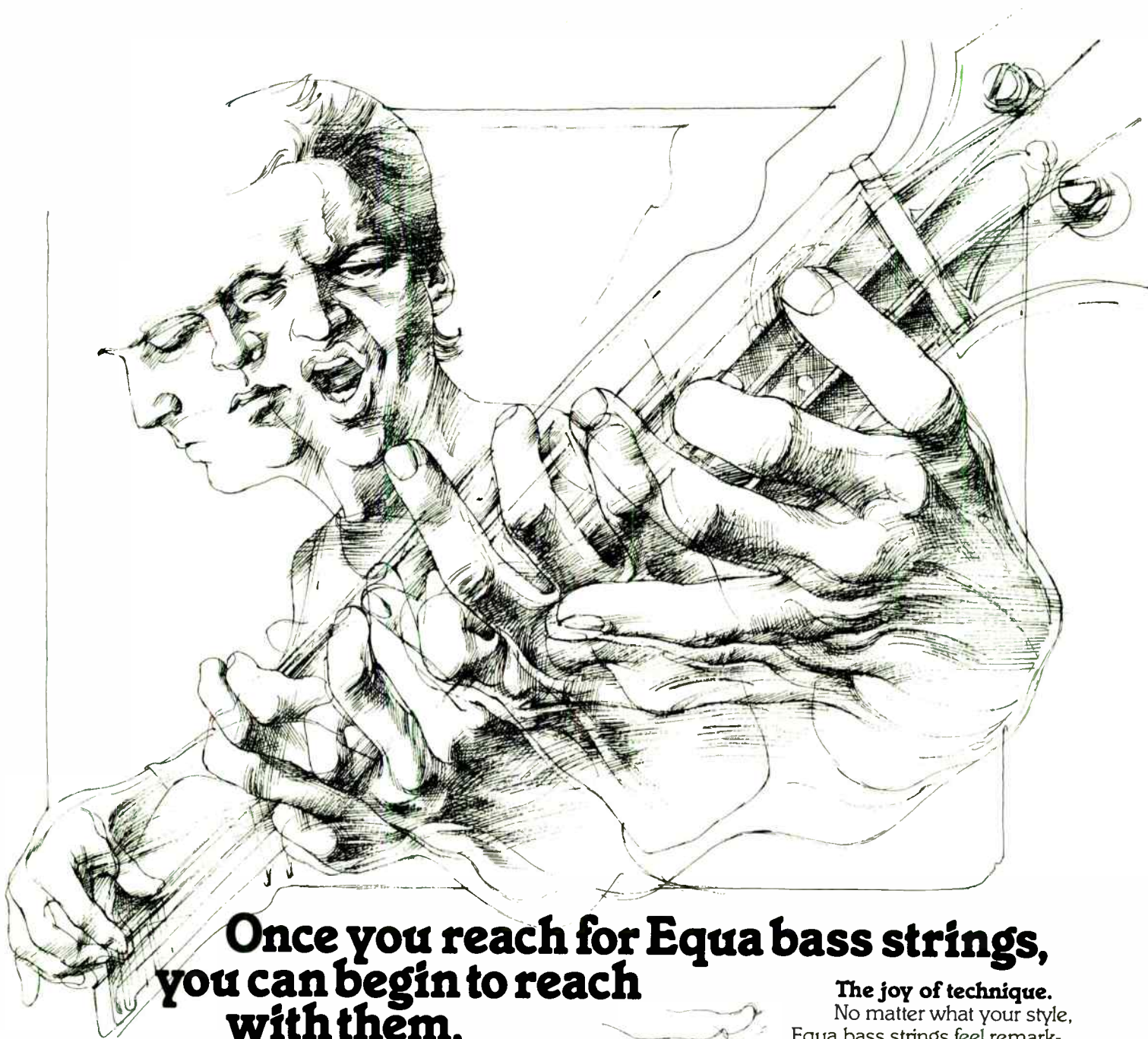
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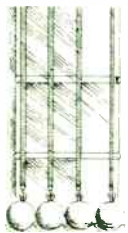
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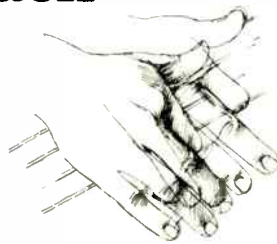


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JOHNNY COPELAND SENDS THE BLUES

The blues is more than alive and kicking, with a seasoned master giving up breathtaking performances and a spikey new album.

By Brian Cullman

Johnny can sing the blues as good as anyone in the world.

—Lightnin' Hopkins

Johnny Copeland could walk through the land of a thousand dances and never miss a step. Dressed in a red-flecked houndstooth jacket and dark slacks, slick as can be, he is ambling through the back room of the Top Club, up at 125th Street and St. Nicholas in Harlem, stopping to gladhand someone or kiss one of the ladies at every other table. There is a recurring thought: this man simply looks too happy, too well-adjusted to play blues; damned if he doesn't look like he's already been saved twice over and can now do anything he wants and get away with it for the rest of his life.

A woman the size of a small nightclub stands up, knocking over half a dozen paying customers, and pounds on the table top.

"Play that send music, Johnny! I want to get sent!" It's the voice of a woman who takes her food and her whiskey and her music seriously, and Johnny waves appreciatively, hesitates a moment, and then darts over to kiss her on the cheek before he steps up to the stage.

The stage isn't quite big enough to hold Copeland and his six-piece band, so he shrugs philosophically, takes down one of the microphones, picks up his guitar, and begins to set up in the tiny passageway between the stage and the bar; this passage also connects the back music room with the front bar, so that waiters with trays of drinks and ladies on their way to the rest room will have to edge past Johnny while he's playing, the waiters squeezing around him with an all-in-a-day's-work tilt of the head, many of the ladies stopping to whisper in his ear or touch his cheek as they go by.

I haven't seen anyone this doggedly good-natured since Ed McMahon and am expecting some perfunctory playing, perhaps the blues equivalent of a hootenanny (Everybody!! "Look over yonder's wall..."), and so the transformation that takes place when Johnny Copeland starts to play seems just short of miraculous. He is suddenly a fanatic, an obsessive, straining at his guitar, playing with the fierceness of someone whose world hangs on the outcome of each and



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Accept no cheap substitutes: Johnny Copeland's ferocity and maturity make him the genuine article, the quintessential bluesman.

every note he is about to hit, his body lurching unconsciously into a phrase or a pull, his head thrown back, listening. And all the while, the waiters are edging past him, their trays balanced above the neck of his guitar.

Copeland was born in Louisiana, the son of a blues guitarist, and was raised in Arkansas and Texas, and it's the Texas blues that jumps out at you when you first hear him play, the rhythm and the style of T-Bone Walker and Johnny "Guitar" Watson, along with Otis Rush and Albert King. But after hearing three or four sets on three or four different nights, I realized that I kept thinking of and hearing someone else in the music: the great Sagittarian, Jimi Hendrix.

Back in the late sixties, I used to sneak in the back door of the Cafe Au Go Go after school and watch Jimi Hendrix rehearse. Backed by Billy Cox on bass and a young black drummer, Hendrix would run through a couple of 12-bar blues numbers and then walk over to a portable record player he kept at the edge of the stage and stand listening to a record of Albert Collins playing "Frosty." And then he'd shake his head and run through the song with the band. It sounded perfect to me, just right, with the exact snap and sting, but he never seemed quite satisfied with it. In retrospect, he didn't have the economy of Collins, he couldn't keep from pushing

things a little too far.

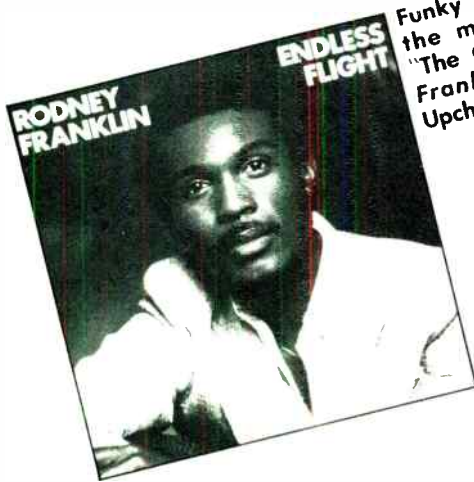
That's the Hendrix that Johnny Copeland reminds me of, the Hendrix of "Red House," the Hendrix who could play the blues on the moon, who could make the most abstract chordings sound logical, who could cluster notes until they became one enormous chord. He has that same spirit, that talent for pushing everything further than you expect him to go, and when he lets loose, the room he's playing in seems to grow larger.

Copeland's blessed with a powerful, heart-rending voice that couples the sweetness of Bobby "Blue" Bland with the grit of Solomon Burke and is doubly blessed with a truly crack band. With the exception of a misguided trumpeter, the band (bass, drums, rhythm guitar, keyboards, sax and trumpet) sounds as strong as the house band on the old Stax/Volt records, with all the punch and swing. And when the piano is replaced with a Hammond organ, the band sounds uncannily like the Paul Butterfield Band back in the glory days when Mark Naftalin was on organ and Philip Wilson was on drums.

Sometimes it takes the ordinary to show the extraordinary in its true light. Right in the middle of Copeland's set at the Top Club, he was joined by B.B. King, Jr. Stuck with the most unfortunate of names (would anyone shop at L.L. Bean, Jr.'s?), King has followed the only

ESCAPE

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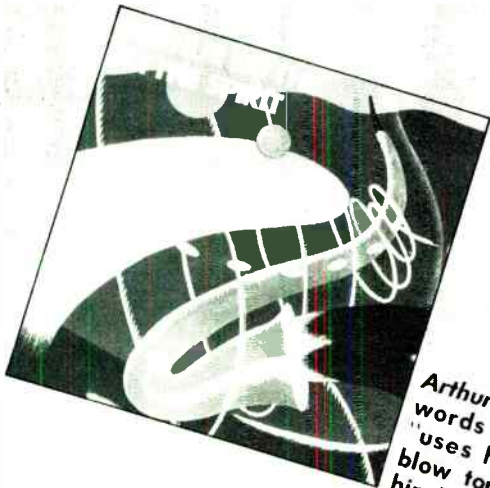


Funky surprises from the man who made "The Groove," Rodney Franklin. With Phil Upchurch on guitar.

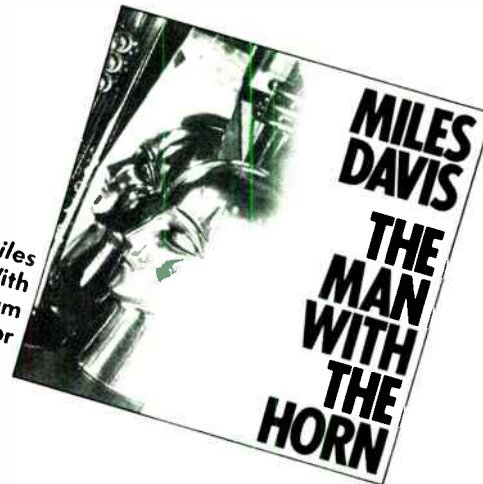


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course available to him; he has grown even fatter than his alleged father; has taken to wearing blue suits that are even shinier and bluer than Mr. King, Sr.'s; and he has found a way of incorporating each and every note played on *Live At The Regal* into each song he performs. His guest appearance was a model of virtuosity and technique, but after each phrasing I expected to see a footnote and a source reference ("Dwee dat dat / Doo dee" — *fig. 1, col. 2, see "Everyday I Have the Blues," verse 2, line 3). Copeland, on the other hand, seems to be



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

re-inventing blues, making sounds up out of thin air. Night after night he makes the same songs (songs of his, songs of T-Bone Walker's and Nappy Brown's) sound important, riveting.

Why it's taken him so long to record an album is something of a mystery. Since the Late 50s, he's recorded about 30 singles for national and local labels and has accompanied Clifton Chenier, Albert Collins, Sonny Boy Williamson, Lee Dorsey, and Aretha Franklin, among others. Before moving to New York in the mid-sixties, he maintained a nine-piece band in Houston, touring the Southwest with some success.

Now in his early forties, Copeland has just released his first album, *Copeland Special* on Rounder Records. Recorded over the last three years and featuring guest artists like Arthur Blythe on saxophone, it's one of the strongest blues albums released in years, certainly the strongest debut, despite the fact that the recorded rhythm section isn't nearly as powerful as his live band. Still, there is a fire and an exuberance that comes crackling through the record, and at least two of the songs ("Claim Jumper," and "It's My Own Tears") are gems. On the record he sounds very good; live he is breathtaking.

At a recent performance at Tramp's, a blues club on New York's lower East Side, customers found they weren't able to get any dinner while the show was on. The cooks refused to stay in the kitchen and stood, wide-eyed, at the far end of the room, watching Johnny Copeland and his band swing the blues. **M**

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THE ORANGE-BLOSSOM SPECIAL MEETS THE A-TRAIN

Two young heretics have forsaken that ol' time music and stretched it into a new sound. Bluegrass may never be the same.

By Jason Shulman

The modern bluegrass banjo looks like a cross between a guitar and a machine shop. It has virtually no sustaining capabilities, making legato, single-note melodic passages all but impossible. Its timbre, while perfect for the highly rhythmic, chordal music that is called bluegrass, is not noticeably suited for anything else. It's an instrument that's all dressed up and has nowhere to go. While innovators like Earl Scruggs, Don Reno, Alan Munde and Bill Keith have revitalized the sound of the banjo within the framework of bluegrass music, Tony Trischka has revitalized the *banjo*, an instrument whose limitations are even more staggering once you get out of the confines of its traditional role. Probably some of the most original music-without-a-genre is to be heard on Trischka's three albums for Rounder Records.

Bluegrass is an art form that allows for very little deviation from the tried and true. Bluegrass players are expected to walk the straight and narrow, like a saint strolling through a red light district. In actuality, the form has been changing steadily, though slowly, since the early days of Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys. But the unstated motto is: Not too much, not too soon. While many of the early, classic bluegrass cuts like Monroe's "Blue Moon of Kentucky" and Ralph Stanley's "Man of Constant Sorrow" have a crystalline and pristine beauty, for my ears at least, much of the

While purists may consider him "off the wall," Andy Statman aspires to the roof and beyond.



DEBORAH FEINGOLD



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Tony Trischka's music, loony and fresh, still respects tradition.

genre is repetitious, and lacks depth.

Trischka's heresies go back — on record at least — to his early work with Pete Wernick, Andy Statman, Russ Barenberg, Kenny Kosek and company, on the first *Country Cooking* album. Although it seems rather mild today, it caused quite a stir when it was released. Some people loved it and others, who liked their bluegrass straight — no chaser — hated it. Today the album is seen as a landmark in one of blue-

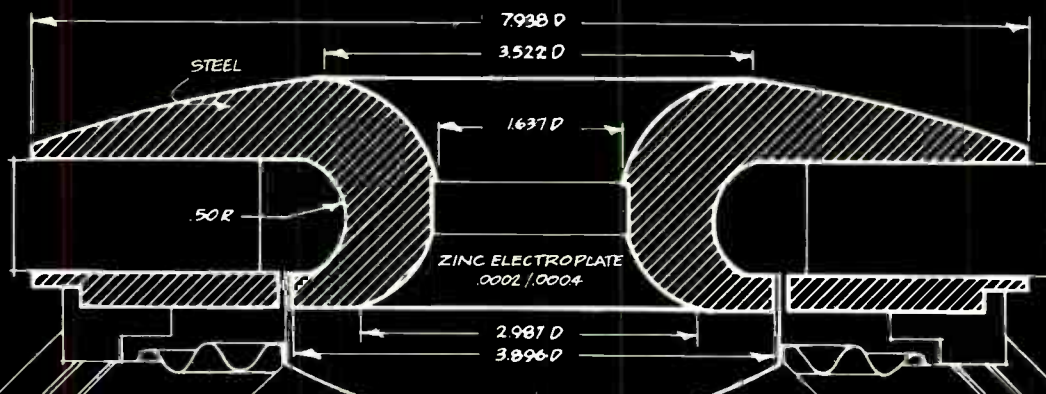
grass's new directions.

"I always had an interest in classical music," Trischka says. "I got interested in jazz in 1969 and '70. I lent my car to somebody and he dented the fender, and gave me a Miles Davis record as a present. It was *Bitches Brew*, and that really started me getting into it. I wasn't going into jazz because I was sick of bluegrass. I just got turned on to it. But toward the end of the sixties and early seventies, I just started getting tired of bluegrass. I realized that there were limitations, and I needed something more. I think all the way through I was just hearing things a little differently, because of something inside of me."

But those first couple of albums with *Country Cooking* were merely the preliminaries. *Bluegrass Lights*, Trischka's first solo album, allowed Trischka to expand his musical sensibilities. Surrounded by many of the same players from *Country Cooking*, Trischka began to create the mad, gentle music that became his hallmark. Maintaining a healthy respect for straight bluegrass, he didn't quite so much break with tradition as stretch it, and melt it down. Even when the chord changes are fairly regular and the runs and riffs are within the lower partials of the chords, the music often sounds like an alien's impression of bluegrass, something picked up on a first visit to Earth, with a little of the folk music of the home planet thrown in for good measure. Yet, while this slightly loony storm gathers around him, you can feel Trischka's guiding intelligence in the center, keeping the conception clear and precise. No meandering jam session, this. Tunes like "My Birdcage Needs New Paper (Because My Parakeet's Read the One That's in There)," and "Blue Light," and "The Only Way" (with Andy Statman on saxophone) became trademarks of his new style.

Trischka's second album, *Heartlands*, marked a pronounced if subtle change. He began to dig deeper into the bluegrass tradition and brought out a sense of dignity and stability that strengthened his command of his own idiom. By now, his whirlwind music sounds, if not almost totally traditional, then almost like an old friend's conversation. The mood is easy and the players seem to communicate telepathically. Trischka continues to experiment chordally and rhythmically, and though the music is definitely still in

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the acoustic tradition, bluegrass listeners begin to line up *for* and *against* his music. On *Barrel of Fun*, (Country Cooking's second album), Trischka told me, "We started stretching out a little bit. People were getting a little nervous about what was going on there, and I don't blame them either. For a traditional listener, who was used to hearing 'Foggy Mountain Breakdown,' to hear 'Kentucky Bullfight' (one of Trischka's tunes) with a piano and saxophone introduction, must have been sort of a shock. Some of the ideas we were coming up with were pretty *outré*. The negative reactions have never bothered me because I feel good about what I'm doing. It's an honest part of my musical personality."

Banjoland, his latest album, splits the difference: one side is traditional bluegrass (approximately) and the other is what has come to be called "jazz-grass," an appellation that carries a certain amount of sarcasm to "straight" bluegrass lovers.

"The traditional tunes on *Banjoland* are really a by-product of the fact that I went down to Nashville and did a recording session on short notice with some of the players who were working on David Grisman's album. David was there, Bill Keith, Tony Rice and Vassar Clements. There was no time to rehearse, so the easiest thing to do was some traditional tunes. I thought it would be sort of fun to do that anyway. To a certain extent, it was a reaction to the criticism, though in retrospect, we didn't play them *all* that straight anyway."

What makes these three albums of lasting value is not so much the innovation alone. Rather, it is Tony Trischka's sophistication as a musician, a sophistication that allows him to experiment without deriding the form that gave his music birth. He is not out to impress you with his technique or imagination (though he could, with either) but to use his skills in the service of love — love of sound, invention, and music. Though I personally prefer the "jazz" to the "straight" bluegrass, the real pleasure I get listening to Trischka and his co-workers is from their honesty, their sense of fun, and their straightforward musicianship.

Trischka's new band is called Skyline, and relies more heavily on vocals than any of his previous bands. "We're coming from bluegrass," he said, "and we're trying to put together a little bit of rock 'n' roll, a little country and a little jazz. It's the first band where I can really express my music." Their debut album will be out on Flying Fish in the fall. "One of the things I would like for the future," continues Trischka, "is to have my music reflect my involvement with spirituality. I'd like to start doing spontaneous improvisations after a period of prayer. I'm starting to do that on stage with the band. Sometimes I go out — when I feel it — and

improvise freely, with no definite format. That way, there's more coming out than just my conscious self."

Trischka's music seems almost spiritually co-created by the playing of Andy Statman on mandolin and saxophone. If Trischka's music is slightly loony, Statman's is slightly fierce, more biting and acidic. Statman's debut solo album, *Flatbush Waltz*, is a strange mixture of bluegrass instrumentation plus saxophone, drums, electric guitar, string sections; a little Chinese and Jewish music, some Arabic and Turkish sounds, and a touch of Wolfgang Amadeus himself. The most amazing thing is that this smorgasbord works. We should all get along so well.

"I was living in Brooklyn, and when I was around 11 or 12, I got interested in short-wave radio," Statman told me.

"There was this thing called 'd-xing:' when you pick up an out-of-town radio station, you would send them certain information, and they would send you back a picture of their antenna and their call letters. Well, I picked up WWVA from Wheeling, West Virginia. They had a lot of live bluegrass. I decided I wanted to learn how to play the banjo or guitar, so I sent away for WWVA's Doc Williams' Guitar Course, and my brother, who was a folk musician, helped me to learn. I was very excited by bluegrass, and the sound of the mandolin. But a lot of it was just that this music was from a different culture. When I started playing, I wanted to get a cowboy hat and I had dreams of becoming a farmer. I used to play hookey from school and spend hours every day learning mandolin solos. I learned

continued on next page

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HARRY PARTCH: FREEDOM BEYOND 12 TONES

A composer who needed more notes than he was given, Partch created new tonalities, timbres and themes, and the instruments to play them.

By Marty Wisckol

When Harry Partch tossed 15 years of equal-tempered 12-note compositions into a New Orleans stove in 1930, it was a fire that had been ignited in Partch nearly a decade before — its kindling collected for centuries by the Western musical tradition.

Partch wouldn't let the indomitable librarian of tradition chase him down a one-way street, regardless of how much further the road could be paved. He had little respect for a musical system which altered the pure tones of nature for the sake of equal distance between notes. By the time the potbellied stove was fed with his frustrated attempts at Western music, Partch had refined a system he would work with for the next 44 years — a 43-note octave in Just Intonation which respected the precise overtones of nature, allowed for modular harmonic resolution and produced melodic shadings unobtainable in 12-tone equal temperament. Damn the Western theoreticians who said just intonation was impractical and too awkward for modulation.

"To promote a youthful vitality in music," Partch wrote, "we must have students who will question every idea and related physical object they encounter...for example — the very fact of a piano; they must question, constantly and eternally, what might be called the philosophies behind the device, the philosophies that are really responsible for these things."

Certainly Partch's investigations didn't stop at intonation: he was a composer with a drive to create and he needed instruments. His "seduction" into instrument-construction would eventually give him 28 exotic pieces of equipment which give a first impression of something between a medieval torture chamber, a real life Rube Goldberg chain reaction device and a collection of conceptual sculpture. They would stand on the stage not only as instruments but

props, the musicians dancing on them, the dancers acting around them, the actors singing for them. From tranquil exordiums to orgasmic polyrhythmic explosions, the physical fusion would collect visual and audio into a powerful display of the moment, of substance, of corporeality. Damn undisturbed tradi-



Partch at the Quadrangularis Reversum: a new instrument that coincided with a new piece. The "two ideas always grew together."

tion, its accepted forms and its abstractions.

Born to parents who had been missionaries in China, Partch as a kid was sung Chinese lullabies by his mother, spied on the Yaqui Indian musical rituals near his Arizona home, and was hearing Edison cylinder recordings of Hebrew chants, Chinese theater and Congo puberty rituals. Musical instruments came mail order with clothes and canned foods. "My older sister learned to play the violin very well and my older brother the mandolin. But I do not think that any of my family devoured as avidly as I did the *idea* of music." Partch learned the viola and the piano — by 14 he was composing music and, among odd jobs, playing piano in the Benson, Arizona movie house.

It was the viola which Partch studied most ardently and intuition led him to explore notes in between those in the method books. After discovering Helmholtz-Ellis' book *On the Sensations of Tone* and investigating ancient Greek

theories and systems — at the time of the 1930 "auto-da-fe" — he had his first instrument for his music to come: the Adapted Viola, its fingerboard elongated and marked for the new octave by Partch and attached by a New Orleans violin maker. (By this time Partch detested the piano, though he would eventually retune three reed-organs to his scale and rename the foot-pumped pawnshop keyboards "Chromelodians.")

Partch used lyrics and the human voice throughout his life ("Of all the tonal ingredients a creative man can put into his music, his voice is at once the most dramatically potent and the most intimate") but more so in his earlier works than when he had an arsenal of instruments to utilize. And he refused to fit words into contrived melodies which had little relation to one another. Aided by his octave and his sophisticated rhythmic sense, he created melodies which comple-

mented their words with extraordinary sympathy and depth. This is probably most obvious in the stark setting of "Adapted Viola and Intoning Voice," for which he scored 17 lyrics by Li Po (available on New World Recordings' *Harry Partch/John Cage*). These early works (1930-33) use the Chinese poet's poignant words as direct inspiration for their melodies, not by using Chinese-sounding music but with poetic inflection. Like most of Partch's music, these short pieces at first sound haunting and primitive but after the veil of inexperience is lifted, they pull one into a world of simple yet intricate emotion and nature.

In 1938, Partch built his first large "musical sculpture," the Kithara I, which resembles the harp-like kitharas depicted on ancient Greek vases. The Kitharas (like many of the instruments, they would be rebuilt, refined and modified several times) are an extension of his Adapted Guitars (built from 1934-45) and feature sliding Pyrex rods on four of

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the 12 sets of strings, and sound not unlike a slide guitar.

By the time Partch built his first percussion instrument in 1946, he had extensively examined the possibilities of his existing instruments in compositions and resultant performances around the country. These works drew from the Bible, Shakespeare, James Joyce and a broadcast transcription of a World War II glider pilot, among other sources, for lyrics and themes.

But the pieces which most richly capture Partch's sense of intuition, corporeality and the multi-media theater he would soon become involved with were a result of his hobnobbing adventures in the late 30s: "Barstow — Eight Hitchhiker Inscriptions from a Highway Railing at Barstow, California" (*The Music of Harry Partch*, CBS Masterworks); "U.S. Highball — A Musical Account of a Transcontinental Hobo Trip;" "San Francisco — A Setting of the Cries of Two Newsboys on a Foggy Night in the Twenties;" and "The Letter — A Depression Message from a Hobo Friend." In these works, he taps the heartbeat of Americana as deeply as any artist of the time. The rhythmic elements involved cry out for stronger pulses than the stringed instruments could provide and Partch eventually rewrote them including percussion instruments.

The first in Partch's percussion array was the Diamond Marimba, with 36 terraced bars in a diamond configuration. This was followed by the 11-barred Bass Marimba in 1949 ("The player must stand on a high riser and...is visually very conspicuous...In fast music, the combination of hands, feet, and attitude results in a functional dance"). The four gargantuan pieces of the Marimba Eroica (1951) vibrate so low they are more felt than heard ("The Eroica player must be a hero of the Trojan War. In exciting and furious passages he must convey the vision of Ben Hur in his chariot, charging around the last curve of the final lap"). The Cloud-Chamber Bowls (1950) are suspended tops and bottoms of large Pyrex glass bottles. "Spoils of War" (1950) features Cloud-Chamber Bowls, artillery shell casings, flexitones, two-tongued bamboo pieces, a marimba bar and a gourd guiro. Also to come were the Bamboo Marimba, Mazda Marimba, Zymo-Xyl, Gourd Tree, Eucal Blossom, Quadrangularis Reversum and Mbira Bass Dyad plus several more stringed instruments.


Each new instrument Partch built from the 50s on, aside from those he rebuilt, usually coincided with a piece of music he was working on. A record on which he presents all his instruments (included with *Delusion of the Fury*, CBS Masterworks) records Partch: "The idea of a new instrument and a new concept were always one. They always grew together."

Partch's first major (75-80 minutes)

work was premiered in 1952 at Mills College, Oakland. But *Oedipus* was in the mind of Partch for many years: when he visited Ireland in 1934 on a Guggenheim Fellowship, he showed a musical outline for the W.B. Yeats' version of the ancient drama to the poet, who responded quite enthusiastically. (While the first performance used Yeats' text, an alternative version was subsequently used due to copyright complications.) In this fairly straightforward dramatic/operatic presentation, Partch nonetheless broke with tradition by bringing the instruments onto the stage with the musicians/singers/actors/dancers (ideally, each player was all four of these) intermixed, and using a concluding overture as a dance section.

During the early 50s, Partch began 19 years of recording, packaging and mailing his work through Gate 5, his own mail order record company. In addition to the money earned from these LPs, he was supported by patron friends and occasional royalty checks from his musical autobiography, *Genesis of a Music*. (First published in 1949, Partch rewrote the rather cryptic, ratio-filled book in 1972, including thorough blueprints for the construction of all his instruments, in addition to a full examination of intonation, the theory behind his octave, and his views on music and art in general. The 500-page book is available through Da Capo Press.)

But his record company didn't tie him
continued on page 114



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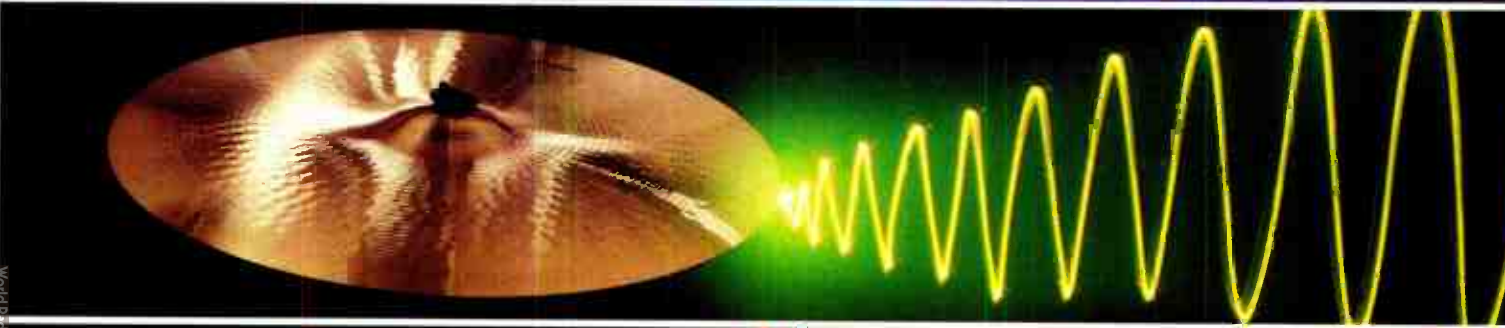
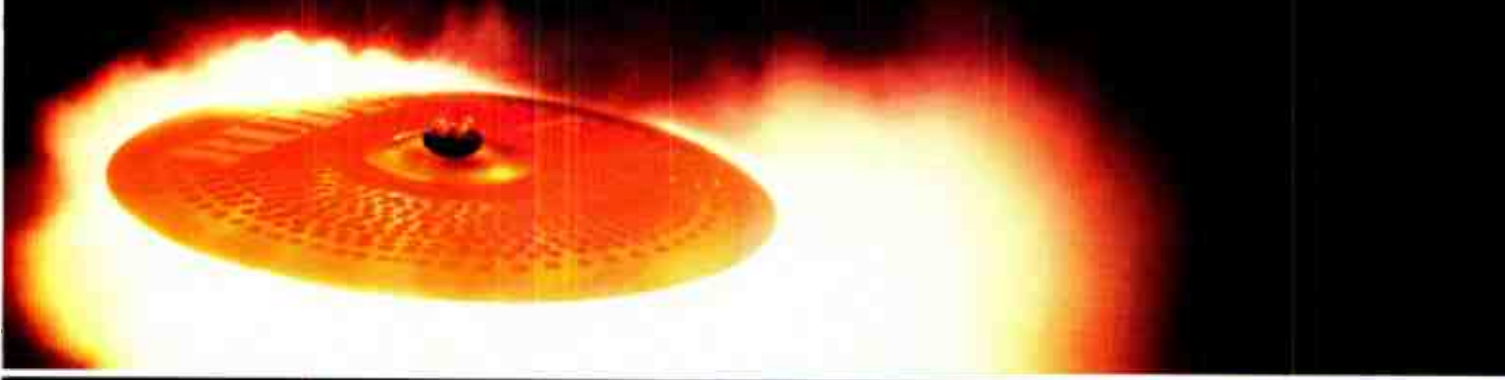
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FACES



STEPHANIE CHERNIKOWSKI

OLU DARA

NEVILLE BROS.

The Civic Theatre is a hybrid — once a disco, now part expensive-night club, part pack-'em-in rock palace. Since this is New Orleans, though, the tables get pushed together, and most of the crowd dances in the side aisles. The Neville Brothers — Art, Aaron, Charles and Cyril — are hybrids too. Local boys raised on a mixture of gospel, doo-wop, and the Afro-Caribbean second line rhythms of the Mardi Gras Indians, they've had brief glimpses of outside success (Aaron when "Tell It Like It Is" hit big in 1966, Art and Cyril when the Meters got the chance to tour with the Rolling Stones) while scratching for a living locally.

Now they're staking their hopes on a new major-label LP — *Fiyo on the Bayou* on A&M — and their show's as much an attempt to show the company they're ready for the big time as it is the "Thank You New Orleans" that promo posters advertised. The tunes may be the same ones the brothers have been playing for the last few years at local joints like Tipitina's, but new charts (by ace bandleader Wardell Quezergue), a host of back-up musicians (including Meters guitarist Leon Nocentelli and Allen Toussaint's superb rhythm section) and a dose of pure show-biz give the performance the flashy feel of a soul revue: the Neville Brothers Live at the Apollo.

But the theatrics (including the dub-

ious use of ersatz Mardi Gras Indians as glorified fan dancers rather than musicians) don't break the concert's driving momentum, or lessen the pent-up air of excitement; this is the Neville Brothers pushing their dream of success to the limit. When Quezergue conducts an invisible (taped) choir of strings to accompany Aaron's heart-stopping rendition of the Nat King Cole hit "Mona Lisa," it doesn't seem foolish, or even excessive — it just adds to the perfect dream-like quality of Aaron's Nureyev-leaping falsetto.

On *Fiyo on the Bayou*, Aaron's star turns are part of a seamless array of styles that take the brothers from the loving doo-wop of "Ten Commandments of Love" to Cyril's up-to-date funk. However, in concert they're more like breath-held hiatuses in the urgent, earthy business of celebration. The real stuff of this concert — what has the hometown crowd dancing — is the Neville Brothers' version of the New Orleans street chants, with Cyril on congas beating out the rhythms he learned from his uncle George Landry — a.k.a. Big Chief Jolly of the Wild Tchoupitoulas. Through the smoke and dancing that fill the stage during "Brother John," you can see a little kid up on stage clad in blue jeans and stage pass — Aaron's younger son, Jason, beating a mean tambourine. Elsewhere it might seem hokey — but this is New Orleans. It just proves there's a third generation ready to pick up the beat. — *Debra Rae Cohen*

NEVILLE BROS.

OLU DARA

Mixing-bowl mute in hand, Olu Dara implored the Jazzmania audience, "Stop sitting there looking at us. We're not artists. I just live down the street. Get up and dance." He and the Okra Orchestra set out to show the reverential that jazz can be as silly as beating an egg to conga accompaniment or as serious as preparing a scrambled egg pie (you know, a quiche). The difference being in the beat, or, if you want to dance, the rhythm.

The Okra Orchestra — Olu Dara, trumpet; Henry Threadgill, reeds; Craig Harris, trombone; Andrei Strobert, drums; Jean Paul Bourelly, guitar; Massamba Coster, percussion; Alonzo Gardner, bass — accomplished the goals of African visual art, discovering a perfect balance between the horizontal and the vertical, creating a fluid motion of disparate movements. They swung even while producing music between dissonance and consonance.

Coster, Strobert, Gardner and Bourelly maintained rhythmically tough three, four and five note vamps. A half-step. A step. A stutter. A shake. Take a breath and start over again. The spaces between Strobert's bass drum back-beat and insistent cymbal were filled by Gardner's sometimes rumbling, sometimes incisive bass tone. Bourelly's percussive woodchopping guitar (he learned while working in his father's Chicago-based Haitian band) elevated the proceedings to an irresistible sparse groove. The structure allowed the rhythm section room to flex and the horns ample space. Beats were implied by one instrument and played by another, unison horns would begin a phrase that the bass or guitar would complete.

The horns usually cut against the rhythmic groove as their unison and melodic passages were composed of notes held so long that they accumulated moss. With trombonist Harris breathing entire folk melodies through one note, Threadgill's "Naw-I-ain't-givin'-nothin'-up-yet" tenor and Olu Dara's bugle calls, the horns recalled a Trinidadian brass band. Olu Dara blared like Armstrong, made me wonder "What the hell Buddy Bolden did say," and sang the blues like the

Growing Tiger, although he did bother to shout, "You got pigs on ya fire escape, 'cuz ya lak that kinda meat." When Threadgill wasn't being parsimonious with his notes he swung madly, playing the role of the saxophonic deacon.

After playing the most complete fusion tune in dance hall history (for lack of a better title I named it, "Uncle Levi's Curried Goat") that made the connection between the Mississippi Sheiks, calypso, kwela and contemporary funk, Olu Dara demanded an encore from the audience. "We won't stop playing until you get up and dance." Unfortunately, the request was too easily fulfilled. — *Don Palmer*

SMOKEY ROBINSON

It's hard to imagine that a Smokey Robinson concert could hold much in the way of surprises. Celebrating his 25th year in the business, Robinson possesses one of the most easily-recognizable voices in pop music. Nor should we forget why that voice is so familiar: Robinson's considerable gifts as a songwriter, which have produced such memorable songs as "What's So Good About Goodbye," "Tracks of My Tears," "Ooo Baby Baby," "Tears of a Clown" and "Cruising." Not to mention "Beign With You," Robinson's latest and arguably best single in ten years.

With a backlog of such impressive material, you'd expect the show to be parcelled into sections of "new material" and "old material." Which is exactly what Robinson did when he came to Baltimore's Painters Mill Star Theater. After letting his backup singers do two numbers — a nice gesture that would have made more sense had the songs been something other than covers of "Make That Move" and "What Cha Gonna Do For Me" — Robinson got things rolling with a quick run-through of his new album, *Beign With You*, along with other post-Miracles material like "Cruising" and "A Quiet Storm."

The only detour was into "More Love," which Robinson called, "a new old song." He credited the revitalization of the Miracles hit to Kim Carnes, whose version he had heard on the radio one day. In fact, Robinson said, he was so impressed by Carnes' ren-



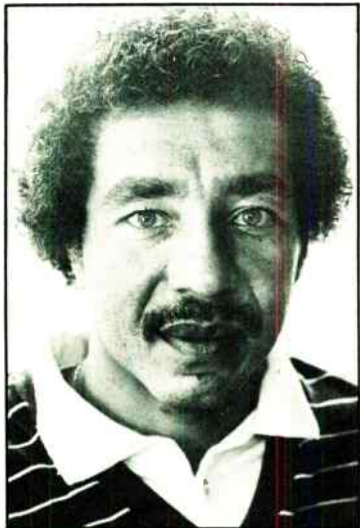
MICHAEL WEINSTEIN/PHOTO RESERVE

dition that he decided to write some new songs for her. "See, I'm always thinking," he told the audience. "I figure if somebody likes one of my songs, they might want to record some more." So Robinson took a couple of songs over to George Tobin, who had produced Carnes' version of "More Love." One of those happened to be, in Tobin's opinion, better suited to Robinson's voice than Carnes'. It was called "Being With You."

That was the first surprise.

The second surprise came during the oldies section of the show. Robinson did this segment on a request basis, a tactic greatly facilitated by Painters Mill's theater-in-the-round format. While the musical surprises were few, what was amazing was the unaffected sense of giving on Robinson's part. Not only did he rejoice at some of the more obscure requests, like a version of "Bad Girl" that had him covering all four parts in the doo wop arrangement, but he graciously played the part of "the star" as an

SMOKEY ROBINSON



JAMES HAMILTON

assortment of women from the audience rushed the stage to kiss or touch him. At one point, Robinson was nearly knocked off his feet by the fans, and yet, in a situation that would have panicked most other performers into issuing arrogant demands to "clear the stage," Robinson never lost his smile. In fact, he made a point of holding each hand offered him; it's what his music has always been about. — J.D. *Consider*

NRBQ

Al Anderson, NRBQ's rotund bear of a lead guitarist, gave his meanest squint and chewed up the title line to his rollicking, vintage-sounding rockabilly tune: "I can't quit it! I can't quit it, because it comes to me naturally." Terry Adams wrapped up the song with a hysterical brothel-style solo on the tinny upright piano.

Adams jumped up from the piano, spun around in his black-and-gold smoking jacket and tiny blonde braid, flapped his arms, rolled his eyes at the audience and landed in front of his Hohner clavinet. NRBQ plays without

a set list, so Anderson and bassist Joey Spampinato leaned intently towards Adams as the pianist scattershot some jazzy chords. Finally they caught his drift and the band launched into "Me and the Boys," one of the sleekest bits of new wave to come out of America.

For a dozen years, NRBQ has been many a critic's favorite electric bar band. It's finally dawning on a lot of people that this rock acronym (New Rhythm & Blues Quartet) is much more than that. Even more eclectic than Rockpile, their debut album opened with Eddie Cochran's "C'mon Everybody" followed by Sun Ra's "Rocket Number 9." Terry Adams, who played in the Carla Bley Band and compiled the Thelonius Monk anthology, *Always Know* — will lead freejazz versions of TV themes. The band once joined Carl Perkins for an album, and Joey Spampinato has a flair for Beatlesque melodies.

Upstairs at Girard's in Baltimore, Spampinato explained how they choose a song to cover: "It has to be adaptable, so it could sound as if we had written it." Unlike many eclectic bands, NRBQ has a unified sound. Whether it's Johnny Cash's "Get Rhythm" or the swing classic, "Music Goes Round and Round," each song sounds like an original. Conversely, the band's many originals sound like obscure songs discovered on dusty 78s from a Missouri junk shop.

Spampinato refuses to discuss anything before 1976, when drummer Tom Ardolino joined to form the present lineup. Adams and Joey Spampinato (a.k.a. Jody St. Nicholas) are the only members left from the original New Rhythm & Blues Quartet. Now it's a quartet plus two: the Whole Wheat Horns of trombonist Don Adams (Terry's brother) and tenor saxophonist Keith Spring.

Girard's is a glitzy disco seeking reincarnation as a rock club. Halfway through the set, the Q's crew figured out the disco lights. Baltimore's always dancing rock audience mobbed the hardwood floors under pulsing green fluorescent bulbs and the band slapped out the primitive rockabilly of Adams' "That's Nice, That's Neat." Al Anderson pulled out a milk crate painted with question marks and invited the crowd to test the band with "requests from any source, any era." Ten minutes later, Tom Ardolino pulled out the winner: "New York, New York." Anderson only knew the lyrics to the chorus, but Keith Spring and the Adams brothers (Terry on trumpet) embarked on an impromptu horn arrangement. It got so out of hand that Anderson had to stop them with David Seville shouts: "Okay, guys. Guys! Al-I-I-Ivin!"

They went back to the box and threw out requests for their own songs. "It's no fun faking something you wrote," explained Terry Adams. Finally they drew a request for "Girl Watcher." Without hesitation, they bounced into it with the infectious joy of a band that thrives on surprise. — *Geoffrey Himes*.



NRBQ

JOOLS HOLLAND

To leave a nearly successful band in order to put together another that's part English vaudeville revue, part Southern revival meeting and part bar mitzvah orchestra a person would have to be crazy or Jools Holland.

Indeed, this flamboyant, cigar-chomping keyboard ace with attractively nasal voice to match decided to do just that after figuring he'd written too many songs that didn't have a place in the repertoire of Squeeze. After spending the better part of four years in the group from his hometown of Deptford, Holland just decided that Squeeze was taking too narrow a path for his taste.

After recruiting Mick Paice, who was playing sax and harmonica in an R&B band; Pino Palladino, who'd handled bass for a funk outfit and Martin T. Deegan, a drummer with a background in electronic synthesizer music. Holland guaranteed he'd soon make millionaires out of them. True to his word, he immediately christened the group Jools Holland and his Millionaires. Completing the entourage with two female backing vocalists, dubbed the Wealthy Tarts, Holland decided to take to the road in order to test the water and tighten up any loose ends prior to recording an album.

If the band's recent New York appearances are any indication, Holland has made the right move in leaving Squeeze. Better able to push his effervescent and sometimes hilarious

JOOLS HOLLAND

personality and patter to the fore, Holland neatly combines his irreverent English Borscht-Belt-style humor with an equally engaging musical presentation drawn from a potpourri of styles, from Huey "Piano" Smith-like New Orleans rock 'n' roll to gospel to boogie woogie to the Anglopop material he wrote with Squeeze, such as "Hop, Skip and a Jump."

At a Bottom Line show, Holland invited a female sinner from the audience up on stage and played the part of a TV preacher to the hilt, even pausing for a moment to plug the Ginsu knife, before musically exorcising the woman's demons with a spirited, hands-in-the-air gospel number. Later, he left the piano to introduce and tout his band members, telling the audience whom he'd turned down in order to get them ("Barbra Streisand called me and said she wanted to sing backing vocals. I said, 'Barbra, buzz off...'").

Fortunately, Holland — who now limits his keyboard activity to piano — and his Millionaires possess the chops to render his braggadocio funny rather than embarrassing. By striking an all too rare balance between musicality and entertainment, Holland has put together a live show that, like the Ginsu knife, really, really works. Whether the wide range of his material and vocal quirkiness will translate effectively into an enjoyable album is a question that will be answered in the near future. — *Dave Schulps*



EBET ROBERTS

THE DIARY OF THE RETURN OF

King Crimson

By Robert Fripp

Pizzaland, Kings Road, London; March 11th, 1981. The League of Gentlemen played at Brady's in Liverpool one Sunday last year, the 23rd of November. That morning Johnny Too-Bad had been sent home for continued misbehaviour; or, simply put, he didn't want to be in a band very much and didn't care for the restraints on his personal liberties which that involved. No one wanting a comfortable way of life would join a touring band; in fact, as soon as one has discovered what is really involved, only an idiot would do it.

The LoG had initially formed for three month's work and following the end of the U.S. tour on July 22nd never managed to recover the same degree of cohesion, which was always pretty fluid anyway. The short rehearsals grew shorter and less productive, the recording depressing. The first two shots at recording with Johnny broke down: after three days he was ill, after two days Sara was ill. Both attempts at recording had several gigs as runners, so players' fingers could move without thought. Only two tracks, "Heptaparaparshinokh" and "Dislocated," came out of the (supposed) seven days' recording.

The LoG, a "second wave dance band with the emphasis on spirit rather than competence," was envisaged as somewhere between anarchism and democracy. As a live unit it began slipping towards a benevolent despotism without ever quite getting there. With the record I took over, the alternative was an EP. The group never broke up, and interest was expressed by all parties to do some more work. I hope we shall. But at the moment my concern is with another band. That morning as we drove to Liverpool from Manchester, disappointed and



PHOTOS BY TONY LEVIN

Good-bye 'second wave'

depressed with the state of the LoG, I made the decision to return to the first division. Frippertronics was a third division venture in terms of budget and appeal, the LoG second division. Third division is research and development, interesting ideas and civilised life style, but you won't earn a living. Second division will earn you a living if you graft and you can get to be professionally respectable, but you won't change the world. First division is an entirely different bag of bananas: at worst it's merely "prime market penetration" and success as mass culture; at best it means the top players, cream of new ideas and the apex of popular culture. It also involves the commitment to what EG call the "24-hour-a-day man:" total commitment of belief, energy, life-style and time. You put yourself on the line every time you play: you expose yourself to the ignominy of being considered defec by those who love you, being sliced apart by those who don't: you risk losing yourself in your own press hand-outs and favourable reviews, and abandoning yourself with the bad reviews, without becoming cynical either. You're on a tightrope: either way you have to jump and if you fall you lose your health, sanity and occasionally your soul. But, you just might fly away. So, there's your choice. And on the morning of Sunday, 23rd November, 1980 while driving from Manchester to Liverpool I made my choice.

Pizzaland, Kings Road, London; March 18th. The LoG album has got a mixed response, mainly of moderate encouragement. The English cut is not as good as I'd hoped for. America is the place for me to master; in the Atlantic cutting room with George Piro. After 11 years there I can tell 1/2dB shifts in stereo balance and high frequencies: theoretically impossible. So the English cut is never as fine tuned. The test pressing for England was approved while I was away and the stereo balance isn't what I want. My passionate disappointment was conveyed to Cynthia Rose at the NME who did me a favour and gave it space in the paper. My mistake: I should have kept quiet and cooled down. Those who view me as a moderate creature would be surprised to learn of the strength of my passions, and better understand the firm but flexible

PHOTOS BY TONY LEVIN



A Paris photo session

control of the various creatures that inhabit the Fripp animal. We all form an uneasy alliance so as not to query the pitch for each other: with Cynthia I blew it. Simply, I was unseated by passion. Fripp, you are a turkey.

Another source of difficulty is pinning down the terrifying logistics of Discipline [Fripp's original name for what is now King Crimson]. Within that operation I have a separate issue of a fundamental nature with EG: whether we have the same intentions. Any action by the artist on a public platform has a significance whether intentional or otherwise. And since any social action is inevitably political, it follows that any action by the artist is a political statement. Everyone in public life learns this one sooner or later. Any musician working on jingles and commercials is agreeing to underwrite all that we understand by a "commercial culture;" i.e. essentially an exploitive way of working. So, how can I work to change the structure and values of a culture which is alien to most of what I wish for? For the industry, unless I am ambitious, I am unsafe. An ambitious artist is completely trustworthy. And in an industry committed to maximum profitability I must be highly profitable for the people I work with. In the traditional mould I become a "star," aloof and with mystique. EG are afraid that Frippertronics would blow my mystique: punters would see how ordinary I am and say "the emperor has no clothes." My reply to that suggestion was: "But I stand up and say 'the emperor has no clothes'." Where I'm not the emperor I can be a human being with other human beings: at that point the performance can become a glimpse of an entirely different world; but because that world isn't exciting we can easily miss the glimpses we have of it.

In addition to all of this, the front wall of my house has fallen down and an inner wall with it. Oh boy, oh boy.

Idea: one acquires technique in order to abandon it. The more we have to abandon, the greater the authority we have. Art for me is the capacity to re-experience one's innocence: one can be innocent or one can act with innocence. The first is artless, the second the act of the master.

March 19th, 12:30. EG Office, Kings Road, London. Currently waiting for Vic Garbarini to arrive at 15:00 and possibly a pizza with the Pad. Hopefully I can meet with Sam and Mark, the EG directors, to decide how we can best work together. Quick discussion with Sam: he says that following the most technically difficult deal in EG history the LoG has recouped its recording costs and touring losses with the record advance, so we can earn publishing from record one. Whether or not we go ahead with Discipline depends on the meeting with EG. After the decision in Liverpool to have a go at forming a first division band I called Adrian Belew and Bill Bruford. Both were eager, Bill with some suspicions because of my connection with him at the beginning of the abortive UK venture. Bill I visited at his home and talked frankly about what I have in mind, musically and industrially, for the group. And then we went to N.Y. together in February to find a bass player.

March 21st, Delabole, Cornwall. Here at the Goldsmith's farm on a work weekend with Mrs. Elizabeth Bennett and nine other people, mainly from my year at Sherborne. This is a good time to chew over what it is that I'm trying to do. There's something going on in the world at the moment, some process which is intangible but available none the less. Those who are regularly involved in music, either as professionals or as punters, have probably been touched by this something working through the medium of music. The medieval view of music, both in Indian classical and English church, was of an action which could quieten the mind to render it more susceptible to divine influences. One can go further, and say that music may not only open us to a quality of influences, but can contain them. In this high view, music is a language between God and people which speaks from the musician. The interesting point being that the language is reciprocal.

World HQ, Wimborne; March 22nd. Further history of the

formation of Discipline: Bill, having got a disappointing reaction industrially and publicly to Bruford, is prepared to accept direction, but not control, from someone he can trust. Adrian, who says that Bill and myself have been favourite musicians of his for several years, is very keen and happy to leave the choice of bass player to us. Bill was very keen to try Jeff Berlin, who he's worked with a lot, so Jeff flew to England to check it out. The team of BB and JB works best as a duo: they are both busy players constantly shifting and moving. Hearing their duets, unaware of me sitting outside, I was very impressed. But stylistically it's directly away from what I have in mind for Discipline.

So BB and I went to N.Y. to join AB in search of a bassman. AB was passing through town on his way to Japan with the Talking Heads. I was in town to master the LoG album. Auditions are fairly depressing in the traditional manner; one is tested to see if capacities and qualifications are acceptable. With these auditions, we rather assumed that abilities were given but were checking out compatibility and common aims. In fact, not everyone did have the qualifications.

Generally, anything we say or do, the way we appear, how we tune our instrument, sit, eat, or scratch ourselves, is a statement of how we feel, what we are and how we view ourselves: whether this is deliberate or otherwise. So the auditioner can tell at a glance if the auditionee will be right for the band. The first four bars confirms one's instinctive judgement. Bill began by playing a 17/8 figure from a cassette for



Bill Bruford and Friend

the bass player to learn. Although this seems difficult, it's only difficult if approached cerebrally rather than through the ears and the body. The mind can hold the pattern in front of the fingers and let the body do the work. Well, it certainly sorted them out. The ideas for two guitars which I was very keen to try out worked well between AB and myself: the simpler, the better.

Tony Levin came down on the third day. Through Polydor I'd been given the word that he was open to work. Because TL is so busy it never occurred to me that he would be interested in a band, otherwise Tony would have been my first call. The idea is to work as a unit for six months a year, three on, three off, with a sufficiently flexible structure to let everyone do a number of things, while extending the commitment to Discipline.

World HQ; March 24th. The afternoon with Tony was one of the best musical experiences of my life. Bill was showing TL a rather difficult 9/8, grouped 5 and 4. Tony had it before Bill completed the sentence. Adrian was trying to remember some queer accents BB had shown him as rhythm shots on top of the 9/8, which we had worked on the day before. TL played them as well as his own part, to make them clearer for Adrian!

And TL, who had never heard "Larks' Tongues in Aspic, Part Two" in his life, played it in spirit perfectly, and certainly the best performance of that in the past three days. For five minutes of the afternoon the music coming out was as good as any I've ever heard by anyone, anywhere, anytime.

So, we sat down to talk.

Idea music is a form of expressing relationships: personal, social and cosmological. It can present history and prepare the future; it can generate specific energies and present complex propositions. Music can present a picture of the ideal society and bring it a step nearer.



Photographer/bassist Tony Levin

March 25th, Kings Head Hotel, Wimborne; 11:00.

Anyone interested in change, rather than just ideas of change, has to work as if the aim has already been realised. In "art," the art is realised in the process of creating the art object, rather than the art object being an end in itself. Where you're going is how you travel. Or, if one views music as a blueprint for an ideal society, how the society of players organise themselves has to be in step with the imaginary society presented in the music they play. Charles Ives had two jobs: selling insurance and writing music; when he gave up selling insurance the quality of his writing fell. For now most of my energy goes into organising the industrial rather than the musical base; I need more time for music but it's more important to get the process/object in better balance. On a practical level, AB and TL are used to the sideman role of working within a given structure, and BB is open to direction. So if they're presented with a traditional way of working they'll take it. But if I can design another, they'd probably take that too.

Waylands Corner Hotel, Surrey; April 1st; 24:15.

Adrian Belew arrived today minus his passport. He was halfway to St. Louis from Springfield, Illinois when he realised. So he signed a form indemnifying the airline should he hit trouble and hustled English immigration, a remarkable achievement given the current civil service strike. He is feebly recovering Chez Blatford. The three of us discussed band philosophy, and my problem of having a firm idea of what the band should sound like but not wanting to be a band leader. In practice the problem is removed a lot by sharing all the money from records, publishing and performance. Other issues: how can one work from the "inner man," and trust a part of you to take the right decision in a situation without precedent (i.e. be intelligent)? Like when the band is flying in an improvisation: where to go next? With lyric writing: say what concerns you without too much concern for iambic pentameter or cerebral wit. This real concern carries an authority of its own. One can organise music on the externals of rhythm, melody, harmony and volume, or on the internals — the process. The two affect each other and are actually interlocked. I want both to work

together for this band.

The test of a good band is if everyone can put up with it: a band has a life of its own which may not satisfy any of the individuals. So many ideas are thrown away it can get painful. So we should all have other concerns as safety valves and means of growth. AB and BB (and TL but he hasn't arrived yet) are both players: I get the impression they'd be happy to play anything rather than not play. I'm not. If the music doesn't make me want to play I'd rather read a book. The aim for this band is to have music which compels us to play.

Pizzaland, Kings Road, London; April 2nd. Just finished an interview for *Music Life* of Japan and an Italian music mag. The interest from foreign press is remarkable, while the English press contributes permanent cynicism. The LoG album is 29 in the *NME* chart with a snide comment; an impressive feat with the album in *Music Week* at 91 or thereabouts. Similarly the *NME* manages a snide remark under a generally positive review of the Barbertronics show by Cynthia Rose. (Barbertronics is Frippertronics for haircutting, undertaken by Mary Lou Green and myself with guest heads at the Virgin Street Megastore. A lot of silly fun, only slightly marred by my equipment failing to function.) And the *MM* provides a Fripp interview presented with flaccid cynicism. So none of the comics deliver an acid wit slicing through one's pretensions and conceits; rather they throw garbage into one's living room because they don't like the furniture arrangement. The English style of deflating star musicians appeals to me, particularly the post-punk press, but now the criticism is destructive rather than positive. Having tried for two years to work with English music press at this point I'll pass.

Newlands Corner Hotel; 23:40. Well, back here and all set for the film company to come in and shoot the horror movie. I'm the only guest in this large old hotel, alone with the young manager and his (probably) wife. The mist has settled around the hill the hotel is on and the only sound is the whine of my calor gas heater, failing in its feeble attempt to remove the damp from my bed and chill from the room.

The official beginning of rehearsals was at 17:00 and finished at 21:00. And it sounded good. Adrian is nervous about playing with "intellectuals." He feels he's not "good" enough. The cross-picking ideas probably are difficult but the sound between the two guitars is fabulous. Bill's small wooden slit-drum is a great texture. We began to sound like a rock game-lan. A lull in the middle when nothing worked: momentary despair. Is this all the new music we can write? But then Adrian delivered a lilting rhythm chop, we pulled out our double marimbas (on guitar) and the evening wound up with us well ahead. Bill is so enthusiastic I'm constantly amazed.

We discussed publishing royalties: the problems of payment.

Blanes Court Hotel, Guildford; April 3rd. Adrian is still uneasy about his role, and this is part of his "artistic dilemma." AB has written lots of "simple, commercial songs" which seem out of place with the "serious, influential" people he works with, but he needs to record them and get them out of his system. Some of these songs he played in Gaga, his own group from Springfield which supported the LoG (at our request) on five dates last year. This dilemma was disturbing Adrian so much that on our final day's rehearsal in New York he came in and said that he couldn't continue in the band; he needed to work out his own ideas. Tony Levin was also uncertain as to whether he could make a commitment to an ongoing band: he was used to pick-up tours and sessions. So when I returned to England from N.Y. on March 1st it was with every intention of returning to America two weeks later. But within the first week of being in Wimborne, Tony phoned from Paris, where he was recording an album, to say that he couldn't make the commitment. At that point Adrian was still shaky. So my return to the U.S. was cancelled so that I could stay and put energy into pulling the band together here.



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The music continues to improve. Today we extended our first piece, assumed to be called "Discipline," and tried the heavy rock end of our new ideas: flying chunks of heavy metal. With a couple of backing tracks it's over to AB to follow through on that: he's confident about his singing, just needs a way in. We touched briefly on "Breathless" but I'm going to have to learn it: the last time I played it was three years ago in the studio.

Idea: if the relationship between the notes is arbitrary, then the relationship between the players will be as well.



Nothing is simple.

Pizzaland, Guildford; April 4th, 20:35. Yet another Pizzaland is playing host to this journal. The anchovy special is a savage little tickler, just right to pump down with a coffee. The past 27 hours have been intense for me; a lot of thinking, ideas falling into place. I've got a better understanding of the pattern surrounding this project. There are a number of possibilities; what they are is becoming clearer. This was triggered to a degree by driving up to London to record with Bryan Ferry. On the way up I was upset by seeing Bill's visible, but gallantly controlled, disappointment at getting a feeble response to one of his musical suggestions. He has been writing a lot from his Prophet, mainly for the Bruford band, and has developed into a reasonably proficient player, writer and arranger. But the parts are best kept on the keyboard and remain good ideas not up for development. My plan is to record all Bill's dozens of ideas on the Prophet at World HQ and release it as primers and themes for TV shows. Turning down so many of Bill's ideas, how he gets so many, how he works with them, has made me try and figure out the man he is. How he hears music is different from me. Bill listens to the relationships between the notes in a melody, between the melody and the harmony, the shift of harmony, the interplay of rhythm. All this in terms of an idiosyncratic background with all the definitions of traits, character and tastes involved. As a player Bill is busy, in keeping with the streams of ideas rushing through his healthy brain. Saying no to those ideas is a strain for him, although once in Amsterdam, at the Concertgebouw with King Crimson, he refrained from joining in a gentle improvisation between David Cross, John Wetton and myself; for this he was awarded equal writing credits for "admirable restraint:" he contributed silence. This was released as "Trio" on *Starless and Bible Black*.

My interest, as with non-cerebral types, is in the sound. One note with the right sound has its own relationships, on the inside. Once that one note feels good it can be played in society with other groupings, whether the organisation centres around pitch, loudness, timbre or duration. So, for now, I take time over letting an idea unfold while Bill tends to move onto another. Twentieth century "classical" music has lost its listening public because it doesn't sound good. It is not a

popular "art." Rock is, because it sounds better. The generally arbitrary societies pinned down in, e.g. serial composition, played by musicians working from their heads, are not places I'd want to live in. There was a Stravinsky piece for orchestra on Radio 3 recently. He'd tried to write a swing into it. Appallingly simplistic. If Igor had learnt to tap his foot that turkey would have moved differently. Even if he had succeeded in producing a swing, this orchestra would have killed off anything left. A pedestrian, limpid, flaccid, toneless, boring lump of art.

Meanwhile, the Pizzaland muzak churns out copies of recent chart raves. Police's "Walking on the Moon," "Blondie's "Atomic" have attracted my interested attention. They are so weedy. Anyway, European music since 1600 has essentially been concerned with relationships rather than sound. And hearing the relationship is part of a trained hearing. Unless one has learnt to follow the movement of harmony it can seem unnecessary, like following moves in a game of whist. It's better if you're playing than watching. The attempt to break free of tonal harmony began about 1902 in Schoenberg's *Second String Quartet*. But the development of atonality was carried on within the tradition of the "classical" musician: the composer as one man directing musicians via the Chief of Police, the conductor. This was the sticking point. Afro-American music, jazz and later rock, carried on outside the middle class "art" background, struck a common, popular note.

These things were whirring through my own three-pound, grey, 25-watt, glucose-driven computer on the way to London. The recording session was preceded by a photo session for Japan. Rhett Davies was engineering and co-producing with Bryan. First a ballad, and then I persuaded them to let me have a go at a rocker. My taste is rather more savage and off-the-wall to Bryan's, so I was hairy within limits, although Rhett kept one ripping little brute of enthusiasm. Very happy with my work. Bryan thought the new band should be called King Crimson and he "told your managers" (we have the same).

Shere, a pub; April 8th, 12:00. Buzzing with ideas. 'Phoned Sam of EG this morning and told him this band may well be heavier than we imagined. Whatever the band is called, it sounds like King Crimson. I recognise its features well.

Finished reading "Policing the Police" before breakfast and in my new reading came across a quote from Luther which expressed my approach to work in the marketplace exactly: "A man should not say 'I will sell my wares as dear as I can or please' but 'I will sell my wares as is right and proper.' For thy selling should not be a work that is within thy own power or will, without all law and limit, as though thou were a God, bound to no one. But because thy selling is a work that thou performest to thy neighbor, it should be restrained within such law or conscience that thou mayest practise it without harm or injury to him."

A conversation on my right is discussing discipline. A retired gentleman in check jacket is explaining the merit of hitting children: "It's a good training." A middle-aged man agrees: "Put them in the forces."

1st man: "Well, they're lax too." Stories of the army. "In those days," "Strict," "Oh, I think they should be."

2nd man: "The earlier you learn the better."

1st man: "It didn't do us any harm. You didn't dare put your foot in it. Officers and men sit together now. Lax, isn't it? Too lax."

2nd man: "Yes. Still. Talk about it doesn't do anything does it?"

1st man: "I believe in modernising if it's good, but it has to be worthwhile."

This is terrifying. These people are loonies. They have no idea what they're saying, only stereotypes saying nothing themselves. Here in beautiful Shere, the best kept village in England, I have a vision of force holding it together by glue rather than by heart. If I disagreed here with anyone then I would automatically be an enemy and carted away. Perhaps I should consume my ration of Stilton quickly.

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Pizzaland, Guildford; 21:20. A very good rehearsal. Told BB and AB of the lunatic conversation in the Shere pub and how it might be used for lyrics. AB particularly liked "officers and men sit together now." BB preferred "it didn't do us any harm." Explained to AB how the lyrics of "NY3" came about: recording an argument next door one hot N.Y. night. I enthused to AB my feelings for this group: he can't handle that. It seems to overwhelm him. We spent the afternoon pulling him out. Per-



Life on the road.

haps being alone in a strange house with two overpowering characters he's held in awe for years, and being given all my guitar parts to handle, maybe it's heavy going? Anyway, we managed to pull him in. "Indiscipline" got Bill going. As BB is playing so well and we're getting so much sound from the two guitars, maybe keyboards aren't needed. Overall, a stage further on.

Mentioned to AB that the band I was hearing play was King Crimson. For Adrian it was his favourite band after the Beatles. Ahead of its time. He thought it was a band to be successful in 1980. "In 1981? Would you like to be a member of King Crimson?" I asked. "Sure."

That this group is King Crimson is creeping up on me, something I hadn't expected. And I'm just calming down from an intense two or three days. For the first time in six years I'm having heavy "work" dreams about the people I'm with. Every night for six years in King Crimson my dreams were full of daytime characters. Even after two years there'd be nightmares: playing "Schizoid Man" in the open as a three-piece, badly, and the crowd leaving throughout it. Oh boy, could I live without those.

There is a potential behind this band that I've sensed. This could be the sound of 1983, and one of the top five bands of that year. But why? There is a lot of energy in King Crimson: it has a continuing life of its own quite apart from mine, or the people involved in it, even after all this time. My aim in the music marketplace is to find a way that, for a period anyway, it's possible to be a human being and a musician simultaneously. If I can get that for me, it can work for others. King Crimson is a powerful tool for that. But, as I told Sam this morning, if I'm going to uncover my backside it has to be on my terms. It's not good using this tool to consolidate existing values. The first King Crimson was part of a new movement with new people in records, Island, agency, Chrysalis, and management, EG. And it all went wrong. But if all this band does is one album, it'll be worth it.

Blanes Court Hotel; April 6th, 8:55. Perhaps haddock for breakfast? Here I sit, my census form waiting to be unseated by bureaucracy. The peace of the room is being unseated by Capital Radio. An advert is blasting its message: adults will lie to make money. They will do this with enthusiasm. The truth is in the sale, not the selling. An elderly American couple are in

the room with me. Where is my haddock?

Very pleased that Bill wants to do a drum solo: in "Indiscipline." It turned out well. After returning from Pizzaland I did some more work on it and came up with some hummers.

While washing this morning something a celebrity said to me recently came back: "Give the public what they want." This is sheer nonsense. What is meant by anyone who says this is: 1) Give the public what the industry wants; 2) Give the public what it has been given before; i.e. I am lazy, I am conservative; 3) I wish to clean up.

Pub in Shere; 12:10. I wish, therefore I become. The pub is quieter this lunchtime; *moins de bigot*. Oh no! They've just begun the muzak. Awful, simpering, twittering guitar with muffled sound and tremolo warbling. "Fascination" indeed. "The Way We Were" is driving me out. I am away.

Pizzaland, Guildford; 19:45. A difficult but rewarding day. AB was up until 3:00 A.M. trying out the synthesizer part of his guitar. We begin with an hour or two away from the amps, just the two of us. Then, we join Bill in the music room of the house, soundproofed. AB said this was his first weak day, but came up with a Jungle Rhythm. BB responded immediately with a real hummer of a rhythm using five tuned boo-bams instead of cymbals. Not using cymbals, with all the associations and opening up that frequency range, is such a release.

But BB suggests tunes for us to play. This gives me problems: 1) AB should be encouraged to deliver his own tunes and parts, and come out towards us; 2) BB has technical difficulties presenting us with non-guitar parts: they don't "sound"; 3) His tunes are relationships, not sounds anyway; 4) We have enough tunes of our own; 5) I don't like them. But Bill is beginning to sound like two drummers with his new parts.

Quote from the pub AB and BB went to last night: "I knew the job was dangerous when I took it." It seemed to strike a sympathetic note with Adrian.

Blanes Court Hotel; 22:35. Last night on TV David Rothberg guest starred in "Kate Loves a Mystery;" he's an American actor I worked with in a N.Y. therapy group. He looked well. And Johnny Ray was on this weird programme, "Star Parade," which features James Last. Johnny mimed to "Yes Tonight Josephine," a hit for him in 1957, which my sister, Patricia, and I bought, and he kept forgetting the words. Whole lines during which he had to keep his lips moving until he knew where he was. Most bizarre. The show consists of lots of international artists filmed quickly without an audience, cut into James Last in front of an audience in an aircraft hangar, with dancing girls being very Germanic. The idea is, this is a very cheap programme which can be sold to any country because the top artist from that country is included. The juxtapositions can be staggering.

BB thinks his drumming improved when he took up gardening and children. Jamie Muir influenced him there; Bill feels Jamie would have preferred just gardening. The Western approach of fighting to conquer the instrument is so out to lunch. The instrument is a friend to work with in a total social setting, in which children and gardening and music are all of value and reinforce each other. The idea of leaving that setting and going off to play at people from raised daises is so queer.

The man next door is snoring. The wall is very thin.

Gomshall Mill; 15:30, April 7th. We are coming to the end of the first phase. I'm tired. The overall approach is based on a different way of playing: no one is a permanent leader. It's a role, rather than a fixed position, and it shifts among the players. There's often good anarchism, where we all have our own parts, each worth listening to and autonomous, but played together. The listener can switch attention from one instrument to another. This way of listening isn't one we're used to.

BB took "Fripp's idea of playing rhythm" — repeated, accented single-note phrases — and extended his tuned

continued on page 114

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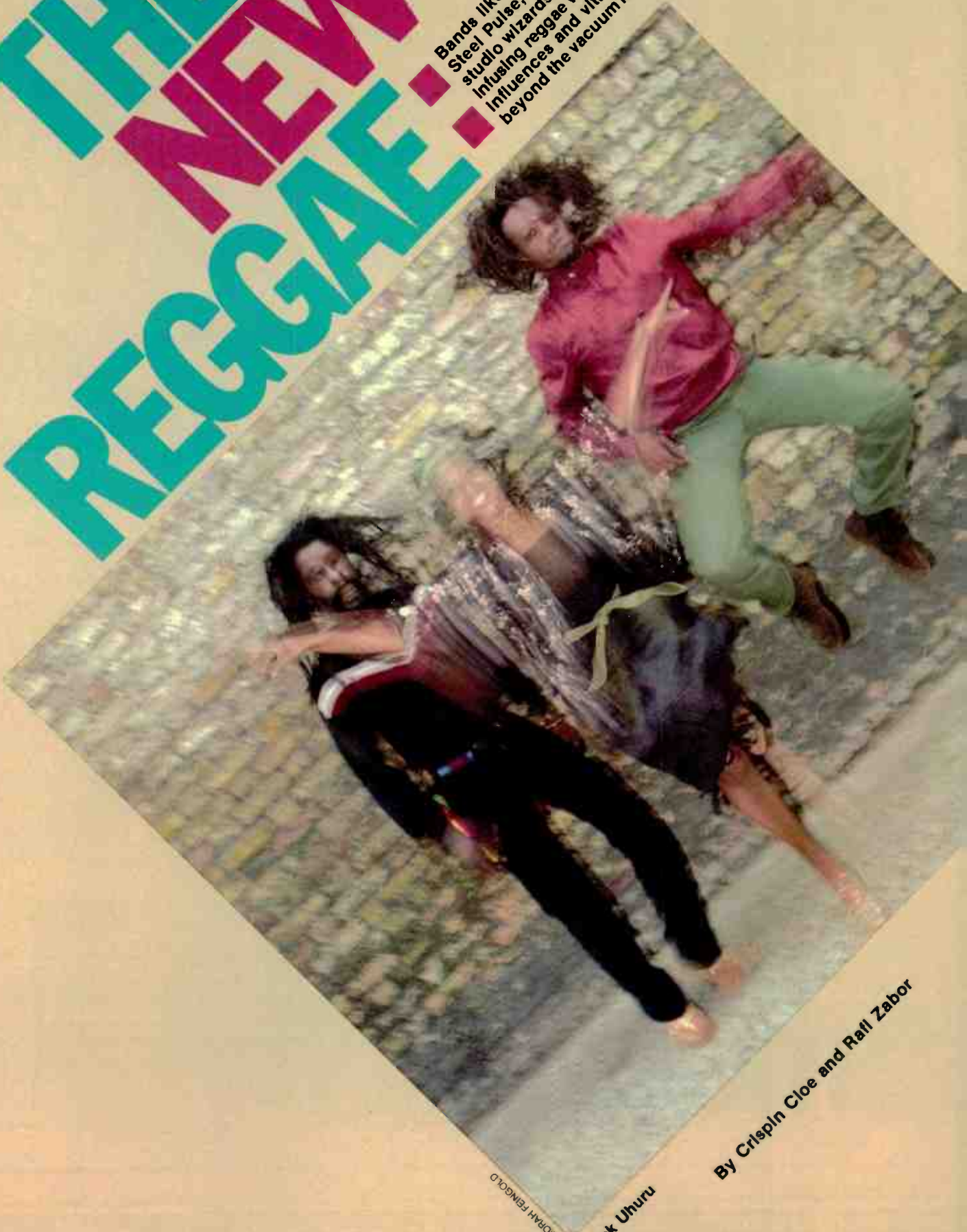
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DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Black Uhuru

By Crispin Cloe and Raff Zabor

When Black Uhuru's lead singer and composer Michael Rose went into a New York record store last summer to do an in-store promo and meet some customers, the salesman popped on a copy of "Sponji Reggae," the single from the band's second album, *Red*. It was a hit in England and had begun to attract attention in the States, but a black woman customer snorted her obvious displeasure. Rose asked her, in his heavy Jamaican patois, if she'd heard the record already. "Yes," she told him. "They play it on WBLS all the time and I don't like it. I think all you people should go back to your own country." The salesman put on a copy of the R&B hit "I'll Do Anything for You," by Denroy Morgan. Now, that's good music," the woman told Rose. "That's what I like to hear on the radio."

"What if I told you," Rose asked her, "that Denroy Morgan is a West Indian living in Brooklyn, with dreadlocks down to here?"

"No," said the woman. "That couldn't be true."

Rose, who lives in Queens these days and spends much of his time in Brooklyn's East New York, happened to be carrying a magazine with a point-proving photo of Denroy Morgan. He smiled at the woman and spoke softly; "Yes, I can always go home to Jamaica. But what about you? What will you do when the white man kicks you out of America? Where do *you* go?"

Score one point for Jamaica.

More than ever, reggae's position in the world is fraught with this kind of irony. Five years ago, fans and music industry touts were ready to declare reggae the Next Big Thing, and five years later it still isn't. America is as xenophobic as the rest of the nations on the planet, and great numbers are not likely to listen to the music of a dissimilar tribe no matter how satisfying the groove, particularly when said tribe predicts the immanent downfall of sievelization and takes His Majesty Haile Selassie to be the incarnation of the living God. But there have been inroads. Reggae came loping into Babylon underground, insinuating itself into the walled city, a music to ignore jails by. While rock thrashes in its chains, reggae is the music of men already free. Among whites sufficiently disaffected to have tasted their own depth of exile, reggae performs the same function jazz has for generations, a bridge to hipness, a self-contained way out of the culture. The mainstream rock audience, knee-deep in an Anglophilia rivaling the mid-60s British Invasion in intensity, has been reggaed via the Clash, Police, Pretenders, Elvis Costello, the Specials and other two-tone acts; Jah music is as integral to current British rock as American blues was to Cream, the Animals and the Rolling Stones way back when. Popular American bands have begun to cover reggae tunes as a matter of course; Blondie's number one version of the Paragons' fifteen-year-old rock-steady Jamaican hit "The Tide Is High" is an obvious recent example.

Despite the protesting woman in the record shop, black stations have lately become more receptive to reggae. Although black listeners seemed to ignore Jamaican music for years — perhaps because it never sounded like upwardly mobile soundtrack music — more of it is finding its way onto black radio playlists and turntables than ever before. Paradoxically, one reason for this swell in BOS radio airplay has been Bob Marley's death last May. One industry vet put it this way: "Marley's passing itself was an event of international importance, and he was given virtually a state funeral in Jamaica. This may have made a few black program directors feel that reggae isn't just relevant to Jamaica and the Third World." Black Uhuru's Michael Rose put it more succinctly: "People realize what they have lost and it's too late." Marley raised a music of black unity to a universal level of utterance, and, as Thulani Davis put it, demonstrated to a world largely incapable of faith what a God-absorbed life might be like. The music he introduced to us may never hit the Babylonian big-time, but

neither is it likely to go away. Unlike most contemporary music, whose subject is largely the ambition and ingenuity of its performers, reggae is actually *about* something. It is an aware, if occasionally bizarre, expression of the history of a people, from Africa to exile to the rediscovery of the way home. It is also a groove.

In Brooklyn's East New York and Crown Heights sections, on Utica and Nostrand Avenues, Jamaican and West Indian record stores run three or four to the block, some of them with their own labels and artists roster, others with powerhouse sound systems that pump reggae and dub — from General Echo to Clint Eastwood, Scientist, the ultimate genius of dub Augustus Pablo and the new light on the dub scene, the Long Ranger — onto the street all day long. Another popular sub-genre is "lover's rock," in which solid reggae singers like Dennis Brown and Gregory Isaacs croon love songs to a skanking beat. One artist who *doesn't* show up on these stores' reggae charts very often is former Wailer Peter Tosh who, in good faith and quite openly, has opted to fuse reggae with other elements, mostly R&B, and some pop. His current album, *Wanted Dread or Alive*, has picked up more black radio airplay than any previous reggae album, including Marley's LPs, and he recently sold out a 55-city tour of the U.S. (venues averaged 3,000 seats in capacity), and filled them with a racially mixed audience. Tosh is undoubtedly the most visible reggae artist working today.

In conversation he is amiable and quick-witted, as well as quick to play down any talk of his "inheriting" Marley's mantle: "Me no want no dead man's crown. Reggae, the word, means 'King's music,' and I play the King's music. The King put many princes on earth, and the music is given to those who praise Him. You have to be spiritually inclined to deal with this kind of talent, and when you are so influenced, you can paint many pictures from one picture. And the music has reached the stage now where it has been trying to break down the barriers of commerciality to get across in places where people can hear it like they hear funky, disco, get-down, shake-your-booty every day. Reggae has been exploited by the shitstem over the years, but I know its potential, and it's a very heavy spiritual potential. But the shitstem often creates barriers to defamate the true characteristics of reggae, to make it look like it's not something people can really dance to, saying in effect it's only for mad, ganja-smoking Rastas. But things are changing, I see it clearly. For example, Frankie Crocker [at New York's WBLS, the most influential black station in America], and subsequently a goodly number of stations around the country, are playing my record now, and two years ago they wouldn't."

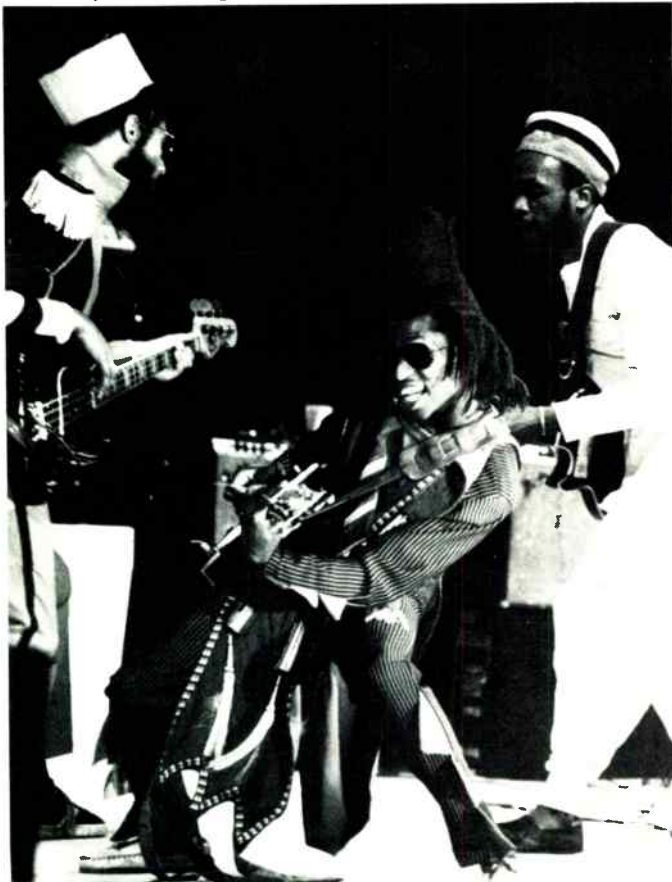
Tosh's past encapsulates that of the music, and he recalls his beginnings with a fondness that is more than personal, and tells his story with a nearly childlike reverence for the past. "I was born a musician, and to prove it I made my first instrument, a homemade guitar, when I was about six years old. I got a board, chopped it up, got a sardine can, drilled holes for pegs in the wood, put in wires, tuned it up and sang along with it. When I was about eleven in my hometown of Westmoreland, there was a man who would come around to play the guitar and sing beautiful church melodies. I sat and watched him play every day for months, watched his fingers move on the guitar. Then one day I asked him if I could play it, and I did. He said, 'Who taught you to play the guitar?' — and I said, 'It was you!' After that I played in talent shows and what they called penny concerts, sometimes playing the kazoo so that it sounded like a trombone. When I came to Kingston at about sixteen years of age, I soon realized that nine out of ten singers found themselves in poverty in Trenchtown, the ghetto. It was me, Bob Marley, Bunny Livingstone, Joe Higgs, the Maytals — we'd all sit around every night and just sing. At that time me and Joe Higgs were the only ones who could play the guitar. Finally Joe Higgs helped to get us into the studio with Sir Coxson Dodd producing and that was the start of recording for me and Bob and Bunny." The rest is, how you say, history.

If "me and Bob and Bunny" were the band that ultimately spoke to the world at large, Winston Rodney (a.k.a. Burning

Spear), who has shown small interest in touring and prefers to stay home tending his farm for all his music's extraordinary power, is in many ways the most purely African of reggae artists, and articulates the most fundamental values behind reggae clearly, and stands at the beginning of Rastafarian tradition, which emerged from Marcus Garvey's back-to-Africa movement when His Majesty Haile Selassie, lion of Judah, attained to the Ethiopian throne.

In a 1980 interview with *Musician's* Don Palmer, Spear said that he had not yet been to Africa "on this level, but spiritually, minutely, in Africa." Of reggae's variety and multiplicity he said: "Some of I an' I do the works in different forms. Is like the man who sings punk or blues or soul or rock is just another part of 'is Imperial Majesty's world musically. It's still oneness. It's just a matter that I keep more closer to the African 'istory t'rough the Marcus Garvey prophecy dealing with culture on a spiritual level at a wideness and togetherness so strong as to spread itself and involve people. All these t'ings come t'rough reggae music. When I individually deal with my music and referring to black people or white people I-man not referring on a level of speak English. See. Or no prejudice feelings. I-man a deal a eternal which is internal feelings for each and everyone to be equal or ival an' get a equal share. An' everyman entitled to dem share an' should get dem share. Most people feel when I say Marcus Garvey I prejudice somet'ing. Or I may feel the white man or the white female shouldn't exist. An' everyone should exist. An' everyone did pass t'rough 'asslin' an' strugglin' an' sufferation. An' each man should give accordin' to the t'ings that reach 'im an' the t'ings 'im pass t'rough. I don't really take part in the political system. There is no convenience in political for I an' I works. This work is to bring the whole world together, an' to get y'self together. See. That is naturality. Non-violence, less pollution, more togetherness, more industry, less institution like prison, more schools, more 'ospitals. These t'ings come t'rough the music. An' the music is those t'ings an' those t'ings is the music."

Steel Pulse's David Hynes displays his kongo dreads, a medieval court jester casting spells upon an electrified audience.



LISA DUBOIS

Black Uhuru

There is a cutting edge in reggae today, an advance guard that speaks to its audience from a global viewpoint, and is able to register its experience in its music. Steel Pulse, Culture, the Third World Band, the Wailing Souls and most especially Black Uhuru, represent this side of reggae. They may ultimately push the music toward the kind of multi-layered relevance and socio-musical sock that rock once had and punk sporadically revived. All of these bands generate strong music, can lively up themselves and an audience in concert halls and clubs, and write lyrics that embody the spiritual and cultural thrust of Rastafari, but Michael Rose, Duckie Simpson and Puma — the vocal trio that write and sing as Black Uhuru — with the aid of the rhythm section (and production team) of Robbie Shakespeare on bass and Sly Dunbar on drums, project a total style that fuses the music and the message into something living and direct.

Nothing could be more direct than the opening of Black Uhuru's stunning second album, *Red*:

See blood

The youths of Eglinton

Won't put down their Remington

The youth of Brixton

They leave their 45 Smith & Wesson pistol pistol

The youth of Utica Avenue

They just can't keep cool

So much gunshot some cripple some turn fool...

It's the same kind of world-stripped-naked literalism we've had from the Clash, among others, but it doesn't begin to suggest the ways in which this album goes to work on you or the depth of effect it has when it finally strikes home. People tend to overlook *Red* on first hearing, but then the album begins to pull at you like an undertow — it was Robbie Shakespeare's work, surely some of the finest electric bass playing on record, that got to me first — and gradually the subliminal effects began to add up: the way Sly Dunbar's drumming is soaked into Shakespeare's, the incessant and clackety guitar figures of Mikey Chung, Rose's hoarse vocalizations set against the ethereal marginalia of Puma and Duckie Simpson, the oddball piano slams and glockenspiel — the cumulative effect is overwhelming in a low-profile kind of way.

The other night, a friend of mine and I spent a long night listening to a bunch of good records — the World Saxophone Quartet, the Grateful Dead, what have you — and just before shutting down the machine we popped on a recording of two crazed tribal villagers whanging away on a broken-down bass drum and a whining, primitive double-reed contraption. It rendered all the fancy stuff we'd been hearing insubstantial and unreal; but I have the feeling it wouldn't have blown away the Black Uhuru album. *Red* has a kind of grit and staying power that won't let itself be forgotten. The lyrics delineate the material world with the kind of precision we expect from poetry ("Civilian warring among each other/ Only to achieve their coffin"), celebrate the groove ("You bum right here and you bounce over there sponji reggae"), promote the faith ("What a joy to hear the utterance of a Rasta") and hit you with some ultimately untranslatable Jamaiciana ("If you have a sistren and she come from woodland home/ Irie spirit she has when she greets you/ It shows grandfather say/ Oh mammy say forward gal a mountain side dub her up a ital fall/ Dub her up a ital fall"). Through it all the rhythm section rolls on like a wave, and the music leaves upon you the unmistakable imprint of something real.

Live, the band conjures some of the atmosphere of a revival meeting. If Bob Marley was clearly situated in another world, and had the ability to raise the audience up to that world, Black Uhuru generates a more earthly communal fire. At New York's Palladium this year, Michael Rose bounded around the stage as if each corner of it represented a different part of the world. Puma Jones, who was born in South Carolina and picked up a Masters degree from Columbia before moving to



PETER SIMON

Peter Tosh has opted for a more pop-flavored reggae, appealing to a broader slice of the American audience.

Although black listeners seemed to ignore Jamaican music for years, more is finding its way onto U.S. black radio, including the turntable of influential programmer Frankie Crocker at WBLS in New York.

Jamaica, danced with floating grace behind him while lank Duckie Simpson stood surly beside her, singing. The entire first-floor crowd at the Palladium was out of its seats and dancing to the band's blend of hard reggae, pared-down African funk and enhanced backbeat rock for the whole of the hour-and-a-half set. They were not dancing to a diatribe.

Black Uhuru first formed in the early 70s with Rose, Simpson and another singer named Don Carlos, who split the group in mid-decade. The singers worked the club scene on the island's North Coast and talent shows in Kingston. The irony of reggae's "official" position in Jamaica might be difficult for Americans to understand. Concerts with major reggae acts are infrequent because there just aren't adequate facilities — P.A. systems, halls, security. "In Jamaica," as Puma Jones put it, "the radio stations apparently still believe that foreign music is the standard. Reggae is considered yard music, ghetto music. Reggae is just not given the respect and regard it should be given in Jamaica."

Last summer, Duckie Simpson recalled the way it was: "Michael and I had some singles out early on, but never saw our career really growing, which is why Don Carlos quit and how we came to find Puma. But one of those singles, produced by Prince Jammy, called "Love Crisis" made some noise. We'd been knowing Sly and Robbie for a while by then, and this record made them more confident about recording us. They got some studio time for us and we started to work together,

releasing singles on some different labels, songs like 'General Penitentiary,' 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner' and 'Leaving for Zion.'"

Michael Rose added, "You know, we never saw any financial return from those early singles, though they did very well in Jamaica and elsewhere, but once we got on Sly and Robbie's own Taxi label, things began to change. Singles like 'Shine Eye Girl' and 'Sinsemilla' brought us to the attention of Island, with the help of Lister Hewan-Lowe and Denise Mills at that label. We always wanted to do albums, not just cut singles and then disappear."

The American Puma Jones picked up the history from there "I had been singing with Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus on the *Movements* LP, when I met and joined Michael and Duckie. Black Uhuru's initial success came completely from sound-system dance sessions. Our music was never played on Jamaican radio in the beginning. But wherever there was a sound system set up, at every dance session in Jamaica, it got to the point where Black Uhuru's records had to be a part of it. And when you came to New York, you'd find we were being played in the clubs the same way — we were spreading in a completely underground fashion. Even if you went to California in the late 70s, and there was a Jamaican at the session, they *must* be playing 'General Penitentiary' or any of our singles. Now the Jamaican stations play us because we're doing all right."

The story of an American woman's journey from the ghettos of Babylon through the groves of Academe to the world of the Rastas is of more than passing interest. "I went to Africa the year before I started Columbia," she said, "and it helped me bring my goals into focus. I wanted very much to work in the black community and aid the whole process of development from within, but it's very difficult to do that because the system is set up to control most aspects of the community. I had to decide whether I was going to join that structure and work in one of its institutions, but I didn't think that would work for me



REUTIE BUTLER SHOBER

REGGAE SUNSPASH 1981

This year's Sunsplash festival, held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, provides one of the clearest windows on the growing impact and maturity of reggae. Over 500,000 people were said to have attended over the four days, many having come thousands of miles, along with the brethren come down from the hills. Dedicated to the memory of the late Robert Nesta Marley, O.M., the very best of the current crop let their dreadlocks down: on the first night, Steel Pulse's lead singer David Hynes threw off his head scarf to reveal kongo dreads growing eight inches straight into the air while Rastas cheered in amazement. Steel Pulse then delivered an intense, perfectly honest performance that combined traditional "riddims" and political activism with their new-found British influence. At the conclusion of their set, percussionist Phonso Martin donned a white sheet and hood and chased the band members back to their instruments for a rendition of their "Ku Klux Klan," now the number one tune on the British charts.

Robbie "Basspeare" and Sly Dunbar joined the Tamilins for a set, then brought on Black Uhuru, who gave one of the most exciting performances of the festival. Michael Rose shouted, "Who's got a stalk of sensimilla, raise your hand!" and the band kicked into their hit of the same title while the crowd roared and 100,000-plus hands jutted into the sky.

On the second night, Judy Mowatt, formerly of the I-Threes set the stage aglow with her funky-disco band, One Vibe, and Jimmy Cliff followed with a two-part set, the first being very traditional African "Night of Oneness" which was very well received, the second being his more familiar hits from *The Harder They Come*. Surprisingly, many felt let down that Cliff was not keeping pace with the younger bands and had been standing still musically.

On the third night, Leroy Sibbles, once a member of the pre-reggae Heptones, was the highlight of the supporting acts. Then the Third World Band came on at 5:00 A.M. and the crowd went wild. Bunny Riggs led the group through a steamy mix of pop, jazz, R&B, and reggae, rocked by Richard "Bassheart" Daley's virtuoso bass work. Occasionally guitarist Cat Coore overpowered the groove and fell into Ted Nugent posturing, revealing the band's unfinished search for a true synthesis of Jamaican and pop. Then, after two-and-a-half hours, Stevie Wonder appeared to pandemonium, singing his "Master Blaster" and "Happy Birthday to You" while the Third World Band cooked behind him. Stevie then sat at the piano and improvised haunting melodies to greet the dawn, concluding with his new "Hello Morning, Hello Sunshine." Marley's widow, Rita, was led to the stage and sang an emotional "Stevie, we love you" that greatly touched the sunrise audience.

On the fourth night, Dennis Brown incited the crowd with his pop hits, "Foul Play" and "Money in My Pocket." The Wailers came on and brought up Marley's four children to unlock some sacred musical memories. David Marley astounded many as he unconsciously evoked his father's young, confident days. With center stage empty, the Wailers ended the festival with some of the classics, joined by the I-Threes.

Any account of Sunsplash would be incomplete without mentioning the many DJs who also performed, local heroes such as the Lone Ranger, Tommy Cowan, and, of course, Erroll Scorcher, who donned a full "I-theopian" uniform resembling Haile Selassie's and delivered a ironic toast for the occasion that reminded all of the island's poverty: "Me no have da cash a go a Sunsplash." — *Maggy Howe*

because my goals were too different." The search led her to Jamaica, where she was able to discover not only her place in history but a way of living out her destiny in the present. "Rasta is a *forward* movement. In America, blacks have some awareness of Africa, but they have to go back in the past for that contact — it's a backwards-oriented thing. We could go back in history and look at the aspects we could identify with and try to relate them to our current lifestyle, but it didn't provide a contemporary framework that could help guide us. Rastafarianism is a forward-looking movement. It's based on knowledge. We seek knowledge of our past, but to help build our future. And His Majesty provides the light so we can discover things that were left untold before. We're trying to relate to the same aspects of life that the traditional African had to relate to in his time: his instruments, his way of passing on his traditions. So reggae music is part of the current tradition of African man."

Her story raises a number of interesting points. Even avid reggae listeners in this country may wonder what the apotheosis of Haile Selassie could possibly have to do with them, but Puma Jones' discovery of Rastafarianism as a living tradition with a real power to redeem the horrendous losses of the black people in the historical world points to a plausible answer. The world is full of doctrinally reasonable religions that are perfectly dead. In matters of faith, words and dogma mean a good deal less than the quality of life and the apprehension of truth that go into them. The world that would deny divinity to an Ethiopian but allow it in a Nazarene may have a lot less living spirit going for it than the inexplicable island of Jamaica, whose music, like black American gospel, makes use of the Old Testament psalms of exile and redemption not just to make sense of the ravages of history but to keep a nation's soul alive. When a power like this is in a piece of music, it can communicate itself to anyone, at whatever level anyone is able to receive it. Puma sees the mission of Rastafarianism as "really to be the light of the world. 'I and I' means I am, one people, under one God, one aim, one justice." And Michael Rose, has Haile Selassie led you out of Babylon? Didn't Haile Selassie die? "He's alive. You know dey say Jesus Christ is risen — he was never dead."

Rose feels that American blacks were slow to pick up on reggae because "they're living in the lap of luxury over there. It's like a paradise thing. It's hard for them to understand what we're about because they've been brainwashed for so long. Like we say in 'Journey' on the album, 'Scientific advancement corrupt the mind.' They forget where they came from. They don't care. All they want to know is about eating and living good."

Musically, Rose has found America a shade less useless, though his tastes run to voices gentler than his own. "As a youngster I was always into Dennis Brown, who became a big Jamaican pop star when he was quite young, and is still big today, all over the world. As far as American musicians I liked Ronnie Dyson, the Spinners, Johnny Mathis, Jerry Butler, Billy Paul. Before that Sam Cooke, Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson..."

Puma Jones interjects, "...and the Supremes, of course. For me, being a black American, or rather an African born in America, I love the music. I don't like it, though, when things get too plastic, like all the sexual stuff in a lot of disco and funk, 'cause it's just on such a low level. We have to raise up ourselves with music, and I don't think people even realize how detrimental it is to the human structure to be in that sort of meditation. A lot of the American R&B of a few years ago was just more sensitive."

Michael Rose: "Well, you find a lot of music today with a nice melody and good feel, but the lyrics are all 'private affair' type of thing; social and economic problems just aren't dealt with here."

Puma Jones: "Bob Marley's death affected people everywhere, because they began to realize what it is to dedicate yourself to good, clean work in the interest of the people. Everyone holds Bob very strong in themselves, but now peo-



Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare honed their bass and drums into the cutting edge of reggae's simplicity and impact.

"You find a lot of music today with a nice melody and a good feel, but the lyrics are all 'private affair' type of things; social and economic problems just aren't dealt with in America."

ple want to see the work continue. That's why people are looking at Black Uhuru, because our vibration is strong and it relates to today. Bob established a foundation everywhere in the world, and if people know about reggae internationally, they know about it through Bob. I think we all have to get a sense of what it is to really put in a good fight; if you're going to defend something you have to go ahead and do it. We have a firm foundation in Europe and England, where our new album is in the top ten, so we have no doubt of the love they have for the music. In America, it will take more time. The crucial element now will be to get support from the people and from the music business. I mean, we know how to survive — as Rastas — with little or nothing really. But to continue with this work we do need people like Frankie Crocker, who's promoting our Palladium show and playing our album on his station. On the other hand it's good for him too; here's a man who's personally benefitted for years from the black experience. So he must really put in as much as he can to keep the business vital in America. And it's good for us to deal with these situations, because we must demand what is necessary to get the message out. Before, we never had the kind of confidence in ourselves to give each other the kind of support to take us from strength to strength."

Michael Rose: "We're ready now, to get reggae music strong on the four corners of the earth."

Sly & Robbie & Out

Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare are the architects of

Black Uhuru's innovative sound and the most influential instrumentalists in Jamaica today. With the small circle of studio musicians they use regularly, like guitarists Mikey Chung and Ranchy McLean, they are also the dominant producers in the music. In recent months they have expanded their sphere of influence, co-producing Grace Jones and recording with Joan Armatrading, Joe Cocker and Ian Dury, among others. Onstage with Black Uhuru they played with precision and fire, obviously happy with the band's energy and ability to communicate with an audience. On record, their playing helps make *Red* the probable classic that it is.

In New York before the Palladium show, Shakespeare spoke with us about how he and his partner evolved their style over the past decade. "When I was young, I listened to country & western and blues a lot; at first all you could get was one radio station in Jamaica, but then transistor radios got better and we began to pick up some American stations, rock stations. We always liked the sad songs, and the singers with feeling: everybody from Marty Robbins and Frankie Laine to Bobby Blue Bland. When I started to play bass, my hero was Aston 'Family Man' Barrett [of Marley's Wailers]. He was the first to play really strong, simple, melodic lines with deep feeling on records, after the ska era. I really followed in his footsteps: after he left a band called the Hippie Boys, I took his place; when he quit the Aggravators, I joined that group. I even played on some Wailers' cuts, like 'Stir It Up,' and it got so Family Man and I couldn't really tell the difference between our sounds on record. But then I started searching to find my own style, and what I came up with was to make my playing even simpler, to play as simple and direct as I can, so that the people, the real audience, can all relate to my sound. In American R&B, the bass player I think who has that quality the most, at least for me, is Louis Johnson of the Brothers Johnson. Also I like Stanley Clarke a lot, and Jaco Pastorius, and Larry Graham, who really invented the whole slap-style of bass playing."

"I met Sly after we'd both been playing awhile. One night he
continued on page 120



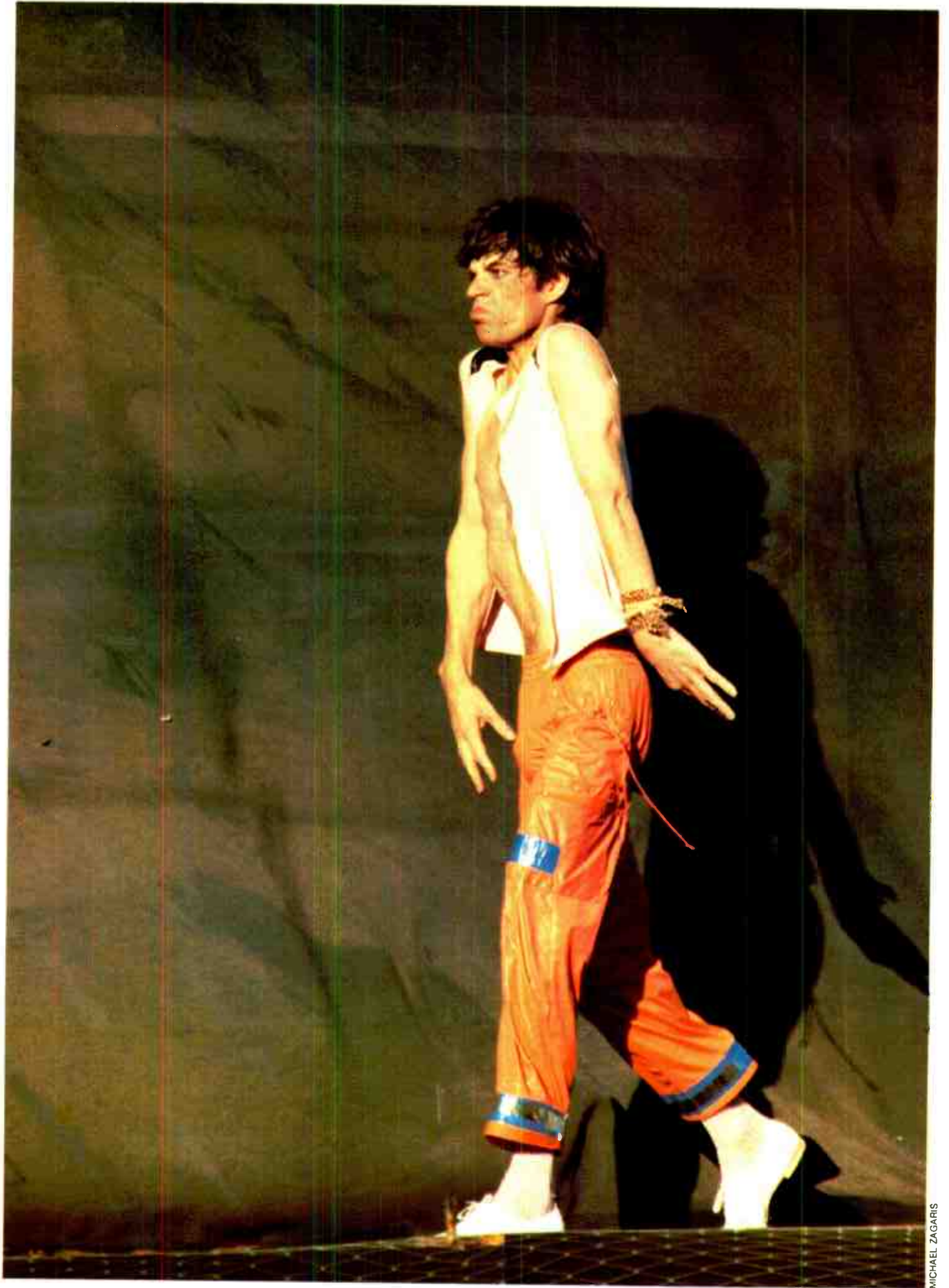
**BILL WYMAN
ON
THE LIFE AND
TIMES OF
THE**

ROLLING STONES

By Pete Fornatale and Vic Garbarini

I guess the last thing most of us expected at this point was a great Stones album, but it looks like that's what's come along. By now it's apparent that *Tattoo You* is easily their best effort since *Exile on Main Street* — though in terms of style and direction it can more readily be seen as a stripped-down, modernized successor to *Sticky Fingers*. In either case, that leaves almost a decade during which the World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band spent an inordinate amount of time wandering in the deserts of disco and decadence. But why quibble? The Stones are back with an album that reaffirms the rock 'n'

roll verities of directness, intensity and simplicity that earned them the title in the first place. But amidst the hosannas a few sour notes can be heard: Mick and Keith were reportedly feuding in the studio again, while persistent reports in the English press had bassist Bill Wyman exiting the band in the near future. Jagger himself was seen by more than one member of the press speaking with Busta Cherry Jones about handling the bass chores on the current tour. By his own admission, Wyman has always been somewhat of an outsider as far as the rest of the band is concerned. Long known as the



"quiet Stone," Bill has been branching out recently with a number of projects, including: a solo album on A&M which yielded a hit single, production chores on two blues and jazz records and a book of photographs about his neighbor, Marc Chagall. In the following interview Wyman delivers on his promise to us to "set the record straight on a few things." It's a remarkably candid conversation that offers a revealing glimpse into the seclusive, often reclusive, world of the Rolling Stones.

As you will learn in this interview, Bill considers himself the historian of the band. As such, his reminiscences have a detachment and objectivity that are surprising as well as revealing. At the end of our conversation, I couldn't imagine how Bill ever earned his reputation as the "quiet Stone."

MUSICIAN: *Tattoo You* is being hailed as your best work since *Exile on Main Street*. Being on the inside, can you feel it as a clear step forward?

WYMAN: I think of it as the culmination of a process that began with *Some Girls*, and continued on through *Emotional Rescue* to this album; we're pretty well grounded now.

MUSICIAN: What was it that initiated this process?

WYMAN: Well, *Some Girls* was a kind of revitalization, what with Woody joining and giving all that bubble and bounce that he's got. *Emotional Rescue* wasn't really a step forward or backward...it was moving along in the same line, but there were a few things on there, as well as on *Some Girls*, that I wasn't keen on. But as I say, the new album is basically a consolidation of the gains made on the previous two.

MUSICIAN: For me, *Tattoo You* works because it's such an effective re-affirmation of rock 'n roll basics and values that you guys have always stood for. How have you managed to stay in touch with that over the years?

WYMAN: It's probably because we listened to and played so much early blues material. Musically it was very simple, so you *had* to put a lot of feeling into it to make it work. Whenever we rehearse and learn new numbers, every other thing we play is a jam on an old Elmore James or Muddy Waters or Chuck Berry thing. I know a lot of people say, "What are you playing that old stuff for?" But we're not doing it for sentimental reasons — we're doing it to retain the *feeling* of those blues and R&B things.

MUSICIAN: So putting that kind of quality into the basics is the key?

WYMAN: Yeah, you can't have everybody flying off everywhere and showing off your chops. Besides, our chops aren't always that good! I think the great thing about the Stones is the simplicity of it — that slightly ragged rhythm that always sounds like it might fall apart by the next bar, but never does. We always have scrappy endings; we play with a kind of pulse that fluctuates between being slightly behind and slightly in front of the beat, but it swings like that. And it works for us. I hate bands that play on eighths or sixteenths; there's no feel there, nothing seems to be coming from inside them.

MUSICIAN: That's why jazz fusion rarely works for me: it misses the essential power of rock on one hand, and the transcendence of great jazz on the other.

WYMAN: Like the bands Chick Corea puts together: they're wonderful musicians — great solos and all that — but when it's all over you don't give it a second thought. That's always been apparent in a lot of those technically brilliant bands — like Emerson, Lake and Palmer — that I never really dug...there's nothing to grab on to.

MUSICIAN: Meanwhile, your own single "Je Suis Un Rock Star" is topping the charts in Britain and Europe, and is due for release here shortly. How does it feel to have a hit single as a solo artist after all these years as a Stone?

WYMAN: It's really exciting — it's like the first time we as a group had a hit; everything feels new again. We all have our insecurities and doubts about whether we as individuals are as good alone as our position in a famous band implies we should be. We all feel this way — Mick, Keith, Charlie, Ron — so you always try to do something outside the band to build your confidence and assuage those doubts. I'd attempted that

before with two solo albums, but they were done much more just for the fun of it, and to learn a bit about producing and arranging.

MUSICIAN: Were you discouraged by the lukewarm reception they'd received?

WYMAN: Yeah, after that I said, "Let's just forget about this; I'm not meant to be doing solo stuff." I didn't want to face that same non-response again. But then this song came up and I did a demo, and everybody said, "You've got to record that." So I did...reluctantly, I might add!

MUSICIAN: Why don't you contribute material to the Stones? You can obviously write, but I can't recall anything of yours appearing on a Stones album since *Their Satanic Majesties Request*.

WYMAN: Firstly, I don't think I write songs that are appropriate for the band. And secondly, we only record once every eighteen months or so; and Mick and Keith have such a tremendous amount of material that there really isn't much room left over. Woody gets a bit in here and there, but he lives in the same country as they do, so he hangs out a bit more; I live in the south of France.

MUSICIAN: Was the new album recorded live in the studio, or did most of you lay down your parts separately?

WYMAN: No, we never do that. We always lay down the backing tracks together, meaning drums, bass, two guitars and piano; and then do the overdubbing later.

MUSICIAN: There were some reports in the press recently about Mick and Keith feuding in the studio, and even erasing each others tracks. Insiders tell me this kind of thing has happened at least once before, at the time of *Let It Bleed* when Keith allegedly erased Mick's vocal on "You Got the Silver" and replaced it with his own. He then supposedly told Jagger that the tape had been lost. I've heard the "lost/erased" version with Mick singing "You Got the Silver," but that doesn't really prove anything. So I have two questions: does this kind of craziness go on, and who has the final say as producer of a Stones album?

WYMAN: The story is that Mick and Keith are the producers. They work together on the basic tracks, but from then on they work separately and form their own opinions. So you end up with various mixes that Keith's done, as well as alternate mixes that Mick has done of the same material. At that point they haggle out which versions of each tune are best. I've never heard of them erasing each others tapes (chuckles) — it's more a question of fighting it out over which version of any given song will appear on the album

MUSICIAN: Incidentally, your bass playing on the new album is superb, especially those lines on "Hang Fire"...

WYMAN: Yeah, it's nice that they turned me and Charlie up for a change! During the last few albums they've really pulled out the rhythm section much more. It used to be that only the bass drum would stand out of that mono-ish mix they'd go for.

MUSICIAN: Isn't that because you've been bringing in someone to re-mix the tracks who used to work in disco?

WYMAN: Yeah, but I can never remember his bloody name...and we've also been using Chris Kimsey from *Some Girls* on forward. He's considered an expert on recording bass and drum sounds, and it's been such a relief to have an engineer like Chris around, because there's nothing more frustrating than coming into the studio after playing what you thought was a great track and then hearing a muddy, blurry sound that doesn't cut it. Oh — Bob Clearmountain — that's the guy I was trying to remember before. We've been using him to mix because he seemed to get that little extra something out of each track.

MUSICIAN: Can you clear up this confusion in the press about the possibility of your leaving the band? Did Mick actually ask Busta Cherry Jones to replace you?

WYMAN: When that original story came out I let everybody know it was a misquote, and that I was very upset about it. But then every few months another magazine would mention it, and then about four months ago a magazine claimed they had just done an exclusive interview with me — which was com-



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

Although he has a hit single in Britain and Europe, Wyman says press accounts of his retirement from the Stones are overinflated.

They think I'm not as interested in the band as they are because I don't want to hang out all night long jamming or listening to records. I can't live like that. I get frustrated and tense just hanging out in a room getting drunk.

pletely unfounded — and reported exactly the same thing from eighteen months previous. So I slapped a writ on them, and they apologized to me personally, but of course that raised doubts in the band once more. As for the band talking to other bass players: I was informed that when those rumors were spreading various people phoned the band to see if a replacement was needed; and that once the band was assured that I was still in the band — that I wasn't about to leave and I never was — then it was all forgotten about. Mick said he had a conversation with the guy, but that he contacted Mick first. That's the way I was told it... maybe people are telling fibs, I don't know. If it was done, it was done under cover. You have to ask Mick.

MUSICIAN: I get the impression from people I've talked to who've worked with the band over the years that this kind of thing has happened before. For instance, I was told by an eyewitness that Mick came into the Stones office one day in 1969 and announced that both Brian Jones and you were leaving the band — it wasn't clear from the way I was told whether you two were quitting or being fired — and that Mick was looking for a black Motown bass player as a replacement. Is that story true? Is your reputation as an "outsider" in the band justified?

WYMAN: I don't know about that incident you mentioned, but I think it could possibly be true. I've always had the feeling — whether it's actually true or false — that other members of the band have been unsure of me.

MUSICIAN: Unsure of you in what sense?

WYMAN: Because I live and treat things very normally, and they often misinterpret that as detachment. They think I'm not as interested in the band as they are because I don't want to hang out all night long jamming or listening to records. I can't live like that; I get frustrated and tense just hanging out in a room getting drunk. They always regarded it as a threat in a way, and weren't sure about me. It sounds silly after all these years, but we still don't really know each other... Within the band there's always been an element of uncertainty: is Mick going to go into movies? Is Charlie going to join a jazz band? So because I detach myself from them they think I'm not interested or don't want to be part of them, which is totally untrue. I just want to have the "other" part of me separate from that, but they always saw that as a threat.

MUSICIAN: Still, there have been periods where you seemed to become dissociated from the band musically as well. I'm thinking of *Exile on Main Street* in particular, where you didn't play bass on almost half the album.

WYMAN: Actually, there were only four cuts that I wasn't on. Out of twenty tracks, Mick made a mistake with the credits on two of the cuts, he listed Mick Taylor or somebody as playing bass on "Loving Cup" and one other track. It was really me.

MUSICIAN: What happened with the other four?

WYMAN: It's quite simple really: we were working in France and the studio was in Keith's house. So when Keith would suddenly get an inspiration for a song on a day we weren't recording, like he did with "Happy," he'd just record it there and there with whoever was around, or do the parts himself. Then when we were all together and we listened to it, we decided it was fine as it was, and there was no need to do it over. So there was no exclusion involved. We tend to fill in for each other, and the bass is easy to fill in for. If Charlie wasn't there it'd be difficult. If Mick isn't around he can always add his vocals the next day. If Keith isn't there — as he isn't on many tracks — he can overdub his parts later. I can never overdub, because you've got to get that rhythm track down with bass



MICHAEL ZAGARIS

Disillusioned by the excesses of stoned arena fans, the Stones included more intimate dates at small clubs on their last tour.

and drums together. So I'm at a disadvantage in that my instrument has to be present to build the foundation whether I'm there to play it or not. Yet if someone has filled in for me, I can't change it or overdub later on. Often when that happens I shift over to another instrument like keyboards or synthesizer. Brian and I used to do that all the time in the old days — and come to think of it I play synthesizer and three other instruments on "Heaven" on the new album. That's just me, Mick and Charlie on that track — only nobody realizes it because there are no credits on the album.

MUSICIAN: Why not? It seems a shame that you'd get someone of the caliber of Sonny Rollins to guest on sax, and then not bother to credit him. Whose idea was it to get him involved?

WYMAN: Yeah, I asked Mick about that and he said he just hadn't got around to doing it this time. As for Sonny, I think that was Ian Stewart's idea basically, though I think Charlie had a hand in there, too. He plays some wonderful notes on those chords. There's some talk that he may appear onstage with us a few times during the tour.

MUSICIAN: You've been described to me, on more than one occasion, as the historian of the Stones. Is that an accurate descriptor?

WYMAN: Yeah, I am, because I'm the only one who really cares about it; no one else gives a damn, really. Charlie Watts gives his gold records away to his chauffeur, or to the taxi driver who runs him to the airport; he doesn't care about those things. So I've compiled this whole mass of stuff which I store in various places and refer to occasionally, because it really pisses me off that every time a book or article comes out the dates are wrong...the facts...everything's wrong! And one of these days I'm going to put the record straight.

MUSICIAN: In that case, I'd like to ask you about the Stones, present and past. What's your perception of the difference between the public image of Mick Jagger and the real person?

WYMAN: Well...I... (phone rings)

MUSICIAN: Saved by the bell.

WYMAN: Alright, Mick. It's difficult because I know both, and

You can't have everybody flying off everywhere and showing off your chops. Besides, our chops aren't always that good! I think the great thing about the Stones is the simplicity of it.

they both merge into his character for me — the sublime and the ridiculous! (Laughs) He is totally different in public than he is in private life. Unfortunately, he seems to think — as most of us probably do — that there's a way you react in public, and a way you react at home. Sometimes he carries his public persona over into his private life, which gets to be a *real* pain in the ass, because you know he's full of shit. So you have to remind him and bring him down...*Come on, Mick!* And then he comes back to normal.

MUSICIAN: Specifically, how does it manifest?

WYMAN: His voice changes, for one thing, and he starts talking with that pseudo-Southern accent. And sometimes in private he starts using a very rough, Cockney accent, which also is not his real voice. It's actually more like the way Charlie and I talk, dropping the h's and all that. He never talked like that before, because he came from a middle class family and went to middle class schools. I've got interviews with him on radio and television from the 60s where he's talking like the Queen does — "Oh, well, it's *quite* interesting to..." He's getting a bit like Peter Sellers: I don't think he knows which one is the real Mick Jagger. (Laughs) It keeps the mystery going.

MUSICIAN: I'd think that must be fortified by the fact he's surrounded by so many images of himself that at this point...

WYMAN: Yeah, if one person walks into a crowded room he can change without even thinking about it. Keith can as well. I suppose we all do. Charlie doesn't.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of Charlie, there was an article in the paper last year which had this banner headline about Charlie Watts hating rock and roll! Do you buy that?

WYMAN: That was taken from an English article a few days before. They always misquote and sort of "overdo" what you say. He probably said something like "I don't like rock and roll," but he didn't mean like rock and roll *music*. He meant he didn't like all the things that go with rock and roll — living in a hotel, constant traveling, etc. He much prefers to play jazz, where he can just get dropped off at a club and jam with some people, and then go home. That's what he does a lot of now. But I know he does like rock and roll as music, because he listens to a lot of it, a lot of new wave stuff and everything. English papers are terrible that way. They just abbreviate what you say, and précis it down to such little pieces that it becomes totally different from what you intended.

MUSICIAN: Is that how that rumor about you retiring got started last year?

WYMAN: The thing I said about retiring? Yeah, it escalated into something amazing. What actually happened was the guy said, "How long do you think the band is gonna last?" And I said, "Well, probably a couple of years." We've been saying that since '62. So he says, "How long do you think you're gonna go on?" And I answered, "Well, if we *do* last a few more years we'll be at our twentieth anniversary in December of '82, and if the band is still functioning then — which it may not, I don't know — then I think that would be a good time to stop, while we're still up there, and then start to do something else. Because you can't play rock and roll forever." Then that escalated into how I was quitting the band on *that* day in '82, and I didn't like Mick and Keith and so on. I felt a bit rotten, you know, the way it was put; it looked like I was being bitchy... and we're not like that.

MUSICIAN: I'm entitled to one clichéd question this afternoon, and here it is: what is Keith Richard really like?

WYMAN: Shy. Introverted. He's very nice, really. He can be a real bust, though. (Laughs) If he's in his regular mood, he's great. But if he's in a bad mood you can't be in a good mood with him, because he kind of dominates the mood of the room. Maybe he had a hard couple of hours at home, or his car broke down, or he lost his favorite cassette and he doesn't really want to talk, so you just leave it for a few hours and then he's alright. As I say, he's very introverted and to overcome that he makes the appearance of being very carefree and brash, flailing his arms and rubbing his hair when he comes into the room. He's a bit insecure, I think.

MUSICIAN: Fans tend to worry about him. Is that worry misplaced or...

WYMAN: No, I tend to worry about him sometimes! So I don't think it's misplaced at all. But we're not entitled to worry about him, really, because he doesn't worry about us worrying about him, does he? He's his own man — he is what he is. Sometimes it's a little difficult to communicate with him, that's all. Because he does keep things inside and burn them up inside himself. It's a bit too personal to go digging in there, because he won't talk about personal things.

MUSICIAN: Has he always been like that?

WYMAN: Yeah, except for the first three years of the band he's always been a little bit difficult to relate to. Maybe because we're totally different people. For instance, Keith will come into a hotel room and in fifteen minutes it looks like it's been a gypsy camp for the last twenty years. He just *makes* things look like that. He throws things around. I couldn't live like that. I could stay in a hotel room twenty years and it would still look like it did the first day I got there. And Woody's exactly the same as Keith.

MUSICIAN: Was Woody destined to be a Stone? How's he doing from a group standpoint?

WYMAN: I think he's getting too much like Keith. And one Keith's enough. To have a Keith in the band is great, but to have a Keith *and* a Keith Mark II gets a little strange for me. Musically, he's fine. But it's like Keith and the shadow, in a way. Woody wasn't quite like that when he joined.

MUSICIAN: How was he different then?

WYMAN: He was just all fun and games and laughing. He united the band much more when we were kind of drifting apart, personality-wise. It's very frustrating to be in the same band that *long*, because what you liked in 1963, you don't necessarily like in 1981. So there's a lot of things that get left out, that you can't deal with in the same band. That's why Woody does solo albums, and Mick Taylor probably got very frustrated, and Brian Jones, too. So Charlie has to play with a jazz band, and I had to do some solo albums and some producing, and Mick did movies. You *do* have other things that you want to do. When we all came into this band, we probably never thought it'd last more than two or three years, and suddenly it's a third of your life. That's the whole thing about leaving after twenty years, because it's enough for me. No matter how great it is. Wonderful to do it, and be in that band, but I've got so many other things that I want to do in my life. I don't want to still be going out on a stage in a wheelchair in ten years time.

MUSICIAN: Chuck Berry still seems to be going strong...

WYMAN: His composing, yeah. But he hasn't done many really good ones lately. I haven't really bought his records in the last ten years, because they always seemed like lazy attempts to rehash, unfortunately. But he's still great on stage. And I do hear he uses good musicians these days to back him sometimes. That was always the failing with him; he was always so fantastic, and yet he wouldn't pay that extra little bit of cash to get some good musicians behind him, so that he could have a *great* show. He'd just grab anybody for ten bucks a night. It focused everybody's attention on him, because the rest of the band was no good. I've always found that top people have always wanted to produce the best show that they could, and not just knock it off like that.

MUSICIAN: I think he has a lot of anger and resentment...

WYMAN: Yeah, absolutely. He's another person who's very hard to talk to. One day he'll be very nice; the next day he won't

Brian Jones, who originally formed the Stones, found it difficult to deal with the public's growing preoccupation with Mick.





RETNA/LEI

England's Newest Hitmakers: "I'm going to make you Rolling Stones wish you'd never come over here," said James Brown.

even speak to you. We must have earned him a few dollars ...as he probably earned us a few, I'm sure! (Laughs) I mean, he's always been an idol and a god of ours, and sometimes he's not polite enough even to say hello. And when Keith wanted to play with him — when he went on stage with Ian Stewart and a few people in California somewhere to back him — Chuck Berry threw 'em all off ...because they were playing better than he was, probably. Physically, he told 'em to leave the stage. What a downer that must have been. I think he was a bit resentful of the applause that Keith was getting.

MUSICIAN: You mentioned Mick Taylor earlier. Do you think he regrets having left the band?

WYMAN: Oh yeah, he wanted to rejoin a year later. He kept ringing up and asking if we wanted another guitarist to tour.

MUSICIAN: Why did he leave?

WYMAN: I think he was resentful about not being able to contribute songs, or getting credits on things that he thought he had contributed to. He was trying to assert his strength a bit more than it really was. He was a new member and therefore obliged to accept things in a certain way, because they had been like that for ten years. And I think he was being pushed by some people to be a stronger member of the band, rather than laid back like Charlie and I are. It was like a poker game, where you only had a pair, and you bluffed. And the bluff was called, and that was the end of it, because once someone says, "I'm leaving," you don't reinstate them again when they feel like it. It was a very inconvenient time he did it, and I don't think he did it very politely.

MUSICIAN: It was just before you went into the studio...

WYMAN: It was the day before we went in to cut an album, yeah. We finished up that album using a lot of kinds of people that just dropped by; it was very inconvenient for us. We all really liked him a lot, but he did tend to get very, very moody and frustrated. It's the frustration that he didn't deal with outside the band, you see. Like I was saying before, I had many frustrations, but I dealt with them by doing other things outside the band. You have to do that. He didn't, and in the end he had to

Sometimes Mick carries his public persona over into his private life, which gets to be a real pain in the ass, because you know he's full of crap. So you have to remind him and bring him down.

leave to do some of the things that he wanted to do... which he could have done within the band, with no effort at all. And it shows, because it took him three, four years to cut an album, which was the first thing he was gonna do as soon as he left the band. And then it wasn't a success, so I'm sure he wished he hadn't left. I dunno. Maybe...

MUSICIAN: These days how do you view his overall contribution to the band?

WYMAN: It was a great period in our history because he brought something fresh and new — some brilliant playing — to the band.

MUSICIAN: How was the band different from when Brian Jones was alive?

WYMAN: Brian was an experimenter. He could pick up any instrument that was lying around the studio and figure out how to use it. He managed to get "Paint It Black" out of a sitar, and "Lacy Jane" from a dulcimer. Marimbas, dulcimer, stand-up harp — he'd find a line on them that sounded reasonably correct, and he'd just do it. He and I in particular liked to experiment with whatever we could find. I used to play organ pedals for the bass, vibes, marimbas, and more recently some synthesizer things, like "Heaven" on the new album. Just little touches. So Brian could do all that, but he lost the ability to progress on his original instrument, rhythm guitar, and sometimes lead. He compensated by playing other instruments, but suddenly we only had one guitar player. And there was no interplay between Keith and Brian, which was really funky in

the early days. When Mick Taylor came he could also play just about anything, but he didn't want to because he wanted to be a lead guitarist. Besides, we didn't need him to because by that time we were using people like Nicky Hopkins and Billy Preston on piano or Ray Cooper on percussion. We were bringing in really good people to do the things that we used to have to do. You never thought of using session musicians in the early days, just like you never thought of jamming with people on stage.

MUSICIAN: Why not?

WYMAN: It just wasn't done in our band. It was in America but not in the Rolling Stones. Just our concept of things. So, Mick Taylor came along and played fantastic guitar, but he wanted to do other things and he didn't have the facilities to do it within the band at that time.

MUSICIAN: Did you find yourself in the same predicament?

WYMAN: Yeah, I wasn't playing other instruments and messing around anymore. So I had to work out some of my own things on the side. Successful or not, it didn't matter; it was just a question of getting them out of my system.

MUSICIAN: When you think about Brian Jones now, is it likely to be a happy or a sad memory?

WYMAN: Happy, definitely. He was an innovator in England in '62-'63 when no one knew about blues... I mean *real* blues like Elmore James and John Lee Hooker. He was the first guy to play bottleneck slide guitar in England; nobody knew anything about that there before Brian. And he was quite good at it — he knew every Jimmy Reed and Howling Wolf record. He and Keith would sit around and listen to those albums and work out every last note perfectly, and that's what we used to play.

MUSICIAN: Did Brian reach his own point of frustration within the band?

WYMAN: There came a time when he wanted to write for the band, but he couldn't. He was just not able to produce a song for the Rolling Stones, which frustrated him. Remember, he was the leader of the band in the beginning: Brian Jones formed the Rolling Stones, not Mick Jagger. And Brian got

more fan mail during the first year and a half than anybody else. When the limelight went away from him and Mick started getting all the attention, Brian found it difficult to deal with.

MUSICIAN: When did the attention start to shift to Mick?

WYMAN: When we went to America. In the U.S. the public goes straight for the singer; it's the only place in the world where they say "Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones." In the rest of the world it's simply "the Rolling Stones." The band. So Mick got the attention and became the "leader," as it were. Because he was a bit... egotistical in that way. Anyway, I have good memories of Brian because I always used to hang out with him. In the early days we were always the ones who went to the clubs and were pulling girls, while the others just stayed back in the hotel and went to bed or something. Yeah, Brian was all right... he could be a real pain in the ass, as well, if he didn't have his way. But everybody's got their bad side.

MUSICIAN: I guess it goes with the territory. I mean, I imagine that you can very easily start believing your press.

WYMAN: Sure, lots of new bands do that. They have one hit and they have to walk into a rock club and find some way to announce themselves. They wear flamboyant clothes, shout about, knock a table over, so you'll look around and say, "Oh, yeah, that's So-and-So from What's-Their-Name." They think they have to do that to gain attention. It happens to everybody to some extent; it just depends on how you handle it.

MUSICIAN: So how did the Rolling Stones deal with celebrity when it arrived?

WYMAN: The first time we ever had an article in an English music paper was March or April of '63, in the *New Record Mirror*. We were in town shopping one day and we bought one and there was our picture with the headline, "New Rhythm and Blues Band in Richmond Driving People Crazy," or whatever it was. So when I went home on the train that night I neatly folded the magazine so that the picture was uppermost, and I sat there with it on my lap waiting to be recognized. That's how naive I was!... And it didn't happen. (Laughs) And then when it finally did start happening I wished to hell it hadn't because it's

Each member of the Stones has done other projects outside the band, venting possible resentments or artistic frustrations.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

so boring, with people bugging you all the time for this and that.

MUSICIAN: At least you had the sense to be cool about it.

WYMAN: Yeah, I guess some people in that situation would have run up and down the platform saying "'EY!!! THIS IS ME, EVERYBODY, THIS IS ME!!'" And some people would have just folded it up, put it in their pocket, and looked out the window at the view and not even thought about it. It's just in the way it gets to you.

MUSICIAN: July 5, 1969 must have been an emotional day. On the one hand, you were introducing a new guitarist at that Hyde Park Free Concert, and on the other hand, it was just two days after Brian's death...

WYMAN: We came very close to canceling the whole thing. Brian had left the band about a month before, and he'd come around to tell us that he was getting a band together with Alexis Koerner. He was really excited about his new project, and he was kind of hanging out with us a bit. Then we got the news while we were recording in London and, of course, we all thought we should cancel the Hyde Park thing. Then we realized that Brian would have probably wanted us to go on — it had been announced for weeks in the papers, and they were estimating there'd be half a million people there. So we went ahead, basically to keep our minds off what happened, I suppose. We had a photo of Brian on the stage and... it was exactly like he was there. There was a special atmosphere, and Mick said that poem and they released 10,000 butterflies. It was the most peaceful concert — there was no trouble, no problems. And afterwards gangs and gangs of kids went around and cleaned up, and we promised everyone who came back with a sack of litter a free album. And by the next morning, apart from a few broken branches, you wouldn't have known anything about it, it was so well done. It was just the complete opposite of Altamont, which was the other end of the scale.

MUSICIAN: Well, it's an obligatory question, so we might as well deal with it. What does hindsight bring to mind about that horrible day? Was there a lesson to be learned?

WYMAN: Don't do free concerts in America. (Laughs) Don't say thank you... just jump on the plane and wave. We'd had such a good tour, that we felt we'd make a gesture to the American people and just do a concert for all the people that couldn't make the concerts and wanted to, and could hitch-hike there, and didn't have to pay money and all that. It was a shame that that became the focal point of the entire tour, because if you ever talk about the '69 tour, all anybody ever remembers of it is not all the great shows we had for seven or eight weeks, it's the Altamont program. And even that's out of all proportion, because there were an estimated 400,000 people there — some people say more — and the trouble was all in the front. I would say 80 percent of the audience didn't even know anything about the trouble, because they couldn't see it, they weren't aware of it, except that we kept starting and stopping playing. But it was focused around forty people in a crowd of 400,000, so that was really out of proportion, too. It was just very unfortunate.

MUSICIAN: Why did it become such a media "execution?"

WYMAN: American kids can't just go and listen to music, can they? They have to get stoned. Or they have to get drunk. They can't just go and have fun. And you get the violent ones, you see a few of them all the time before you go on the stage. Then they're on a stretcher out in the back there having OD'd on something, and they never even see the concert. It's like the kids that go to rock concerts in Germany and Holland and just start fighting. They're not interested in the music, and it's a shame, because it always spoils it for everybody else — the good people.

MUSICIAN: Was it a disillusionment with arenas and stadiums that led to those club appearances in '76 at El Macombo in Toronto?

WYMAN: We wanted to do some live music, of a really different nature, in a club where we could get a really good atmosphere and a bit of audience reaction. Just basic blues stuff like we did in the early days on our live album. It was an idea that we'd had for some years, but we found it very uneconomical to

tour America and play small places. In the old days, when you traveled in a van and you lived in tiny hotels two in a room, you could afford to do small clubs. But touring America and staying in suites at the Plaza, and having the best food and good wine and restaurants, means your expenses can reach \$5,000,000 — and you lose \$100,000 or \$200,000 each. But it's the only place in the world where you can actually make some money from touring: Europe you can't. England you can't. Australia's really hard, and... we *have* to make some money, especially Charlie and me, because we don't write songs. So the only money we physically earn is from record royalties which I can't complain about, but if you only do one record every two years, that cuts it down. It sounds very mercenary, but it's the facts of life. It's essential that we make some money on some tours, and as we only tour America every three years, it's difficult to do little clubs. But what we did in '78, was we split up. We did Philadelphia, J.F.K. Stadium with 110,000 people, then we came into New York and did the Palladium with 3,000. That worked on that tour, and we had a lot of fun jumping from big to little all the time.

MUSICIAN: What is the difference between being on stage at the Capitol in New Jersey, and the Palladium in New York, or some baseball stadium somewhere?

WYMAN: First of all, you *know* that three-quarters of the kids are using binoculars in a big stadium, and you're just dots on the horizon. So you have to wear clothes not because they look good, but because they stand out — a *brilliant* red jacket — so that they can make out you're not an amplifier or something. When you're in a club it's smoky, and it's intense, and very personal. Like, in the El Macombo, the girls were grabbing our legs and crotches, while we're playing, which adds a little bit to the show from our side. (Chuckles.)

MUSICIAN: On the subject of records: in 1971, the band formed Rolling Stone Records. What was your hope for the label at the time, and do you feel that you've achieved it?

WYMAN: At first we were not thinking of building a label that we could use for the other artists, but just one that we could control our own destinies with. Since then we've signed a couple of acts, but very sparingly because we haven't got the time to get involved. Mick and Keith wanted to sign Peter Tosh, and he was looking for a label. Fine. But just a few months after that I met someone in Barbados who was looking for a label, and I listened to a couple of records of his, a single and an early album. I was very excited about him, and I got in touch with Keith and Mick, and asked them what they thought about this guy. Keith loved him, but Mick said, "No, we don't really want another... reggae act." Or, "We can't have a reggae act on the label, because we just signed Peter Tosh." Which is a valid statement, right? I was very psyched about this guy, but we didn't sign him. And now he's having lots of big, big hits, in England — Eddy Grant. "Living on the Front Line," was a song he did, and "Hello, Africa"... oh, he's had three Top Ten records in England last year. Which is a kind of a shame, because there really is room for two acts...

MUSICIAN: On May 1, 1975, you chose a rather unique way of announcing the tour for that year.

WYMAN: The truck, yeah. (Laughs)

MUSICIAN: How did that happen?

WYMAN: I don't know whose idea that was. Probably Mick's — he always comes up with these bad ideas that work. But it was quite fun to do. The sad thing was, when it came on TV they said we *obviously* weren't playing live — we were miming, to a record. Now, that was very annoying because we were playing live! It was raining and we were taking the risk of being electrocuted to *death*.

MUSICIAN: While we're on the subject of television, how did you feel about those yearly ritual appearances by the Stones on the *Ed Sullivan Show*?

WYMAN: Well, I think Ed Sullivan can be summed up really easily: do you remember when the Supremes came on his show and it came time for him to make the announcement? He said 'Ahnd Naow, ladies and gen'lemen, for your enjoyment, the...the...the...' and the curtains open and he says, "the

Girls!" He had only one line to say every ten minutes, but he couldn't handle it. Every time we were on the show he had to do four re-takes of whatever he was saying, "Heeeers the Rolling Stones with their new record...er...uh..." He must have been all right at one time. Otherwise he never would have gotten the show, right?

MUSICIAN: Was it difficult to put up with the censorship at the time? I'm thinking of the trouble they gave you about "Satisfaction" and "Let's Spend the Night Together."

WYMAN: If it was England we probably wouldn't have bothered to go through with it. But the *Sullivan Show* was quite important at the time, reached 60 million people or so, and it was our only shot since you had to agree not to do another big show one month before or after being on it. So they wanted to beep out a word in "Satisfaction," and they just wound up making everything that much worse. We were miming to the record and Mick was singing live, and when he came to the line, "Trying to make some girl" they beeped it so it came out, "Trying to BEEP some girl," which made it so much worse because everybody's vivid imaginations were trying to figure out what he really said. (Laughs) "What did he say?" "Did he say...fuck?" In the end it kind of helped our image in a way. (Laughs) I mean, it's still talked about now, right?

MUSICIAN: Whatever happened to the now legendary "Rock and Roll Circus" film?

WYMAN: We weren't really satisfied with our performances on that — Mick, in particular, wasn't happy. We thought about reshooting our sequence, but it would have involved re-doing the whole 3- or 4-day spectacle to preserve continuity, or else you would have seen the differences in lighting or whatever. And then we broke with Allen Kleir, and to have done anything about "Rock and Roll Circus" at that point would have involved enormous legal hassles and negotiations about ownership. So in the end it was just shelved. Permanently.

MUSICIAN: It occurs to me that when it's the Stones' turn to do your version of "The Kids Are Alright," you'll be the one to put it together.

WYMAN: No, because Mick doesn't like people to have that kind of freedom. He'd much rather be on top of all the Rolling Stones projects. Oh, I was involved in a project doing "The Black Box," which involved releasing some old material, but that was because Mick was too busy. So I took that over... a little thing like that.

MUSICIAN: Was the TAMI show a pivotal experience?

WYMAN: Yeah, there were an awful lot of black artists, which was great for us, but it wasn't the accepted thing at the time. We were hardly known in America at the time — we'd never had a big hit — and they put us on top of the bill in front of people like Chuck Berry, Marvin Gaye, the Supremes, James Brown, the Miracles...

MUSICIAN: Were you pleased about that?

WYMAN: No! We wanted James Brown to top it. Especially after we saw him. (Laughs) But they *insisted* that we top it, and before he went on James Brown came over to us and said, "I'm going to make you Rolling Stones wish that you'd never, ever come here to America!" Then he went on and did this *incredible* twenty-minute set and scared the shit out of us. We were literally shaking in our boots; we couldn't face it. We went out there and somehow or other it worked, everybody gave it everything they had — Keith and Mick were fantastic. They really tried. Then afterwards James Brown came over and congratulated us, and we were all mates after that. We saw quite a bit of him over the next two years. But anyway, that show captured, all in one shot, where music was at in '63-'64, and you can always go back and see those acts doing their hits and get an idea of how exciting it all was. Since then I don't think I've really seen anything comparable to that — where you've had fifteen top acts on the same show, and it's come off as well as that.

MUSICIAN: We were talking about people like Chuck Berry and Howling Wolf before, and I remembered that you did a

session with Wolf, Clapton and Winwood. How did that go?

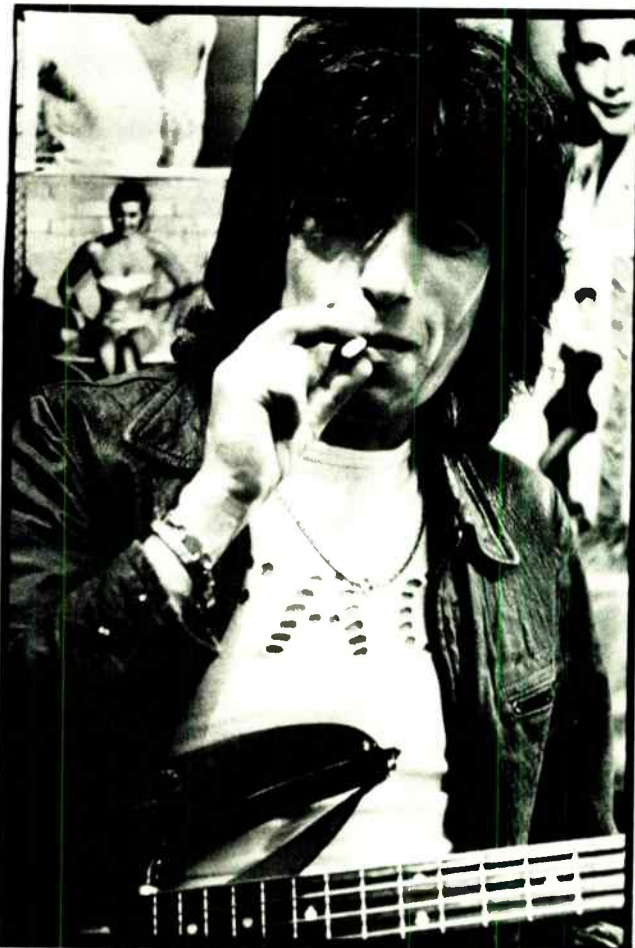
WYMAN: Very nice, actually. Except Wolf had just had a kidney operation and he wasn't feeling too well at the time. I remember on some of the tracks there was someone standing behind him whispering the lyrics into his ear because he was getting blanks which he couldn't remember. But it was a good session — he showed us how to play "Little Red Rooster." We cut the tune and then he says, "No, it shouldn't go like that." We were playing it kind of backwards — the way white kids would play it, but the way we felt it. He started to show us the right way to do it, but the Chess people wound up using the old "backwards" take anyway.

MUSICIAN: Can you get detached from your new albums after they're released? Can you view your new albums from a detached perspective, or are you too close?

WYMAN: I'm excited about them while we're working, but once they're out I'll probably just play it once or twice and that's it, because I've already heard it a hundred times or whatever. It's in the past. See, I can never buy a Stones album, put it on, and just listen and say, "Wow! That's good," or "That's bad," because before it even goes in the shops I know the whole thing by heart...it's like I've never seen a Rolling Stones concert, which might be a good kick one day... if they're still going in January '83, I might well do that!

Bill Wyman Equipment

"I used a wooden Dan Armstrong model on stage for the '75 and '78 tours — it's a light guitar that I feel comfortable with. I've been playing a Travis Bean Bass in the studio since *Some Girls*. It's a specially made short scale model, since I've got small hands and short arms. That's why I hold the instrument upright like I do — so I can reach the first fret without even having to bend an elbow; otherwise it's a real stretch. My strings are Rotosound, and I use a Mesa Boogie Bass Amp in the studio. We've all been using Ampeg amps in concert on the last few tours."



MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

Pete Fornatale is an on-air personality at WNEW FM and co-author of Radio in the Television Age and The Rock Sourcebook.

Pickie Te Te



A large, stylized graphic on the left side of the page. It features the word "Pirates" in a bold, yellow, hand-drawn font with thick blue outlines. The letters are slanted and have a dynamic, energetic feel. The background behind the text is a light blue gradient.

*Hanging out on the
corner of commerce and
art, a pirate who
might sail and the
thin thread of light...*

By Jon Pareles

Rickie Lee Jones just doesn't add up. With *Pirates*, her second album, she's established herself as the equal (at least) of any other songwriter in pop, using every technique of the big-budget mainstream for songs the mainstream never dreamed of: extended, associative songs that touch on topics like life after death, girlfriend-beating, police murders, and the real meaning of rock 'n' roll. *Pirates'* five- and six- and eight-minute tracks prove that long pop songs can be something more than stretched-out or slowed-down singles; that melodies can be interwoven and developed as well as stuck together; that pop can be dramatic without being melodramatic; that songs can be intelligent and even ironic without becoming cynical. Jones' arrangements and her direction of the best-and-brightest studio band money can buy is likely to refute every cliché about session men: she gets them to play soulfully as well as precisely on tunes that are determinedly unconventional and unmechanical — tunes that breathe. And her own singing *swings* in a way that few her age (twenty-six) and generation (rock 'n' roll) seem to be able to carry off. Although Jones didn't know it when she gave this interview the week *Pirates* came out, the intricacy of her songs hasn't made them inaccessible; *Pirates* bulletted into the top 10 almost immediately. In short, Jones is the kind of innovator pop needs. And, as the two-year genesis of *Pirates* suggests, she's a hard-working perfectionist.

Yet she hardly comes across as a pop professional. Her songs are magnificently crafted, but they've got a streak of something like mystical innocence. Jones doesn't seem to dominate her tunes; it's more as if she's swept up in them, her voice disappearing in and out of the horn section, her lyrics dissolving into images that are as inconclusive, as intuitive, as the music is clear. When she toured behind her 1979 debut, *Rickie Lee Jones*, she came across onstage as a sultry, nearly bawdy, take-charge gal; in conversation, she's quiet but forthcoming, without the preset answers of someone who's already had platinum-level success.

The story of Jones' life fails to resolve this contradiction. She's the daughter of a waitress and a waiter/longshoreman/gardener/sometime songwriter, and the granddaughter of one-legged vaudeville dancer Peg Leg Jones. Rickie Lee was born in Chicago, and lived with her family at various times in Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Olympia, Washington (where her mother still lives). In her teens, Jones often ran away from home; but 1973, she'd settled in Los Angeles, where she eventually ran into Tom Waits and some of the people whose first names showed up on her debut album (notably Chuck E.

Weiss, of "Chuck E.'s in Love" fame). For a long time she carried on a romance with Waits; her back appeared on the cover of Waits' 1978 album, *Blue Valentine*. At around the same time, a friend played one of Jones' songs, "Easy Money," for Lowell George, who decided to include it on his solo album. Through George, Jones' demo tape came into the hands of Warner Brothers A&R man/producer Lenny Waronker, who signed her and co-produced (with Russ Tittleman) her debut and, two years later, *Pirates*.

Taken as a legend, Jones is great copy: Bad Girl Makes Good; From Lowlife to the Bigtime; Overnight Success from the Dark Side of L.A. Indeed, *Rickie Lee Jones* encouraged that sort of romantic myth; it was populated with colorful down-and-outers, the equivalents of Springsteen's Jersey Shore crew on *Greetings from Asbury Park* or Laura Nyro's junkie pals on *Christmas and the Beads of Sweat*. Jones' songs were lots of fun (or, like the ballads "Company" and "After Hours," moonily dramatic), and packed with clever wordplay; "The Last Chance Texaco" did its best to sneak every brand of gasoline into a single verse. Enjoyable as that album is, however, it's clear now that its songs were genre pieces, apprenticeships. They were just the thing to pep up sagging AOR formats, since they fit in but had flair to spare. And with "Chuck E.'s in Love" fingerpopping out of AM radio, Jones was a sensation. She toured bigger and better halls, won Grammy and NARM New Artist awards. Then she disappeared.

The tour knocked her out, and the sudden fame warped her perspective: Jones ended up making major changes. She and Waits broke up once and for all, ending a flamboyantly tragic love affair. (Waits got married shortly afterwards.) A depressed Jones went to live with her mother in Olympia, and eventually began working on new songs, using a music room at a nearby Catholic college to write in because a girlfriend had a key. When she got her spirit back, Jones moved to New York, and unexpectedly began a new romance with Sal Bernardi, a friend who'd appeared in "Weasel and the White Boys Cool." She recorded *Pirates* in two stretches, one in spring of 1980 and the other from November 1980 to April of this year, back in Los Angeles, and by the time she completed the album Bernardi had earned co-credit on "Traces of the Western Slopes"; he sings the first verse.

The amazing thing about *Pirates* is that it's not *Rickie Lee Jones, Part 2*, which would probably have satisfied Warner Brothers and radio and the great unwashed. Everything about it is chancier, more daring, more original — not only the subject matter and the length of the songs, but the rhythms and harmonies as well. While two years is a long time between albums, *Pirates* sounds like Jones has been woodshedding for twice that time; she's learned to use twisted chords Steely Dan would be proud of and horn charts that might be worthy of Carla Bley. (Since Jones doesn't write music, she uses Tom Scott to transcribe her ideas, but considering his other work, she doubtless deserves full credit for the results.) Even in "Pirates," which uses a standard bluesy vamp, the horns poke in and out of the rhythm in novel ways, and on "Traces of the Western Slopes" — as nonstandard as anything in pop — the combinations of brass and saxes and harmonicas is absolutely eerie.

Pirates is most assuredly a pop album, justifiably proud of its complex structures and the studio craft that's been used to realize them. The fact that Jones decided to concentrate on her music rather than mythic self-aggrandizement (the way Bruce Springsteen did after *The Wild, the Innocent, and the E Street Shuffle*, when he let the myth take over) makes me grateful. For all its care and planning, *Pirates* also reaffirms, however paradoxically, the link between the best pop and jazz. It's not just the playful, improvisatory vocals, or the use of horns as contrapuntal voices — it's Jones' sense of rhythm, which comes directly from jazz. She obviously demands from her session players that the tracks flow, and she virtually insures that they do by continually changing up the tempo, both in her singing and her arrangements. (Sparks would

definitely fly if she collaborated with the likes of Gil Evans or Julius Hemphill.) But don't tell your local DJ — he thinks Rickie Lee Jones is just another girl singer.

I met Rickie Lee on the neutral ground of the Berkshire Hotel in midtown Manhattan. Jones was slither than she'd looked onstage, not just because she's thinner now, but because she wasn't strutting and bumping (although she did have rings on her toes). She took the room key from the desk clerk, turned around, flashed a conspiratorial glance at my tape recorder and said, "Come with me, honey..."

MUSICIAN: Do you have any kind of writing discipline? Do you sit at a certain place, at a certain time, or something like that?

JONES: No. (laughs) I rented a place to go work, but I never go there. I can't work until I'm ready. I have to be by myself, with nothing else on my mind — nothing like a tour — and I have to be in some kind of slightly adverse situation. If I'm completely relaxed, with nothing challenging me, I won't concentrate. Writing comes out of trying to get something out that I can't get out any other way. Even if it's a sad circumstance, it won't necessarily be a sad song — it just comes out of that environment. At least, that's been true for the past. I'm trying to say to myself, "You don't want to create problems in your personal life in order to write. Look — you know how to write songs, you know how to write lyrics, you have things to write about." I think I'm coming to the point; I'm growing out of adolescence, even though it took a lot longer than I thought it would. I walk around with ideas in my head a lot of times, and I'm holding off before I sit and write another record. It's difficult at this point to write because *Pirates* is just coming out, I have to let this one finish.

I'm not doing anything to promote it, per se. I'll do a tour in September, but I don't think of that as promoting it — I like to play. I'm not doing anything for the purpose of selling the record, so I'm really not sure how it's going to do. I think I have a constituency waiting, but the success of "Chuck E." and the first record was much more than I anticipated. What I've learned businesswise is that record sales really do come out of singles, and I suspect this won't do as well. In the last week, I realized — I always thought, "I don't care if the record sells or not, because I did what I had to do" — *that's not true*. And it might not have mattered if the first one hadn't sold, but now I suddenly realized that there's this real intense pressure. What if it doesn't do anything? Is this record going to *fall*? The whole company's been waiting, and it's not just for them — I have a stake in whether or not the record sells, emotionally. But I'll survive.

MUSICIAN: But I think that you do have a constituency as a personality, not just as a girl singer with a hit song. Which is a neat trick.

JONES: Not if you *are* a person. I think if you really are a character you can't help but put it across. And if you're a performer, you know how to put it across. I love to perform and I'm good at it. I'm comfortable on the stage and I put it all out as much as I can.

MUSICIAN: When you played those first New York shows at the Village Gate, I remember being astonished because you'd start out with a ballad, and after a few seconds the place was totally quiet.

JONES: We did that every night. I guess it was unexpected — people always start with the wham-bam number. But it was most important for me to shut 'em up and tell 'em who I was immediately. And then, once we'd established some kind of emotional contact, we could go on and play "Chuck E."

MUSICIAN: Is it frustrating to wait two years between tours?

JONES: No, I didn't want to play. I'd go down to the Surf Maid or something and sit and play. It's a little frustrating; I wish I had a band that was always around and I could call them up and say, "Let's go play." And a tour is really a high-pressure situation, it's nerve-wracking. We're gonna do about three or four weeks in colleges, and then pick a couple of nice places and go out, play two or three months and quit. The last tour, I



PHOTO RESERVE/KIRK WEST

Concerned that her image was becoming too facile and clichéd, Rickie Lee abandoned her beret and delayed her second album.

I had no idea how the songs on “Rickie Lee Jones” would sound with a band — I’d never heard myself with a band. It was a brand new sound and I was so excited. I was the leader but the band had a lot to say.

was out four or five months, I’d never toured, and when I came off the road I was a mess. I don’t have that desire to wake up in a hotel in a new city every night.

I was drinking a lot on that tour. I’d have little cups of whiskey stashed all around the stage, and while the guys were soloing, I’d take a little swig... I don’t think I’ll go back to that on this tour.

I’d like to have a band, though... But I object morally to paying someone a steady retainer to play with me.

MUSICIAN: You could probably find volunteers.

JONES: The problem with that is that even though they are good players and they’re real dedicated, they’re not professional. I’m struggling with that now, because for me the band that I went out with — they were a good band, the audience liked them — but there were times when I felt that what they were playing was inappropriate. The fusion would come out, and we didn’t connect.

MUSICIAN: It’s hard to hire a band to do that: maybe you have to grow up with them, like Springsteen and the E Street Band.

JONES: The thing about the E Street Band is that they’re so connected with roots. They’re like one entity, and I think that’s the most important thing to get across if you really want to reach an audience. If you’re separated from the band, it shows, and you have to struggle that much more, and they become background. If you’re gonna have a band, they have to be completely with you. I have to make that happen.

MUSICIAN: There’ll probably be players coming out of the woodwork, saying, “You could make me a star, Rickie Lee!”

JONES: I get that all the time — cab drivers (laughs)...

MUSICIAN: It seems that one problem with being a recogniz-

able star is that it can drive you off the street, into the music biz — you can lose your material.

JONES: You can if you’re attracted to that to begin with. But if you’re not interested, even if someone looks at you like that, you can still keep your feet on the ground. If all the hype impresses you, and you buy your own press, then you’ll lose yourself in it. I think that happens to so many people — and it is attractive. You can flirt with that initial superficial attraction, but it’s shallow and empty and lonely, and you can forget who you are and the things that make you a human being.

Part of holding the record off this long was to stop something like that. It was carrying me away. And I couldn’t go out, and I hated it. I dressed down a lot in the last few years and never wore my beret — and I love my beret! In the last six months I’ve started wearing it again, and once in awhile people recognize me, but I contend with it now. At first it was embarrassing; when I first got asked for my autograph I thought they were making fun of me. Now I don’t feel snotty, and I don’t feel embarrassed — it’s just part of the routine. ‘Cause I’m in entertainment, and somebody likes the record, they want an autograph. Deal with it, okay, say something nice to them, and it’s just stuff that it took me awhile to adjust to. You’ve just got to keep in touch with yourself and not be impressed, not be everything everyone says. The only danger is that I might grow out of being interested in writing, but that doesn’t worry me, as long as that happens as a part of me and where I’m going.

MUSICIAN: And not as a reaction against the attention you get when you write?

JONES: I’ve gone through some of that, too. But I feel a lot of music yet to come.

MUSICIAN: So being richer doesn’t take away the impetus to write?

JONES: Not for me. If your desire to write came out of the desire to get out of poverty, to get somewhere — which a lot of it does — or to buy a new dress (laughs) — that’s a definite motivator, but it can’t be the only one. It’ll come out, it’ll show, who you really are and, more than that, how strong you are. They’re all trials and challenges you use under pressure — you can get stronger from them. I’ve been at the point where I



Rickie Lee feels she has to grow together with her touring band so that they can get a more instinctive grasp of what she hears.

“Western Slopes” was the one song that I crafted bar for bar. Every bar was important, every half-note. On other songs, you give the musicians room to play, but with that one, it was a movie, it had to draw pictures. That was a lot of work.

almost broke: the train was going, and we ran to get on it, and it just didn't come.

MUSICIAN: Do you know what pulled you out? What kept you going?

JONES: My love of my art. I struggled too long and worked too hard on those songs. If I was going to give up, I couldn't make them as fine as I want to; I couldn't go as far as I'd seen myself going if I was straight and tuned in and right there with it.

MUSICIAN: On your first album, you had a lot more wisecracks; the songs on *Pirates* seem a lot deeper.

JONES: They are. These lyrics are like poetry. The first record, I was writing song lyrics, so they were simpler, they were more structured. Also, I was younger when I wrote all those songs — I was 22 years old — and I didn't know as much about how to write a song. And they're good, but with this music — especially with “Western Slopes” — I worked on that so hard for six months, I have stacks of drafts of that. The problem was, I knew what I wanted to say, but I was writing in my head on three different levels, and it's a very difficult thing to do, to write poetry on this many levels and say what you want to say. I tackled things...it was just growing, it was something that I was headed for. It'll grow into something else on the next album.

I have a couple of different areas that I want to go into ultimately. I have a real dedication to writing songs, and to fulfilling myself, and it's real important that I do both. I don't really think I'll make myself inaccessible, because, well, I don't want to. I want to reach people. You can write songs for yourself and feel good, but for it to mean something, you have to give it to somebody. If you just want to sit and do it for

yourself, you shouldn't make a record. Of course that premise comes after you're completely dedicated to the feeling itself — the first responsibility is to you. Otherwise, if you're doing it for *them*, you lose yourself — you have nothing to say. Take care of yourself first.

To a point, you do change your work, because you're in the business of selling records. But I never felt like I'd prostituted anything in my work. It's crafting it, and in that way you do take the audience into consideration. If I didn't have a record contract and was writing songs for playing in clubs, they might be four minutes longer.

MUSICIAN: Writers have editors: songwriters don't.

JONES: Lenny Waronker and Russ Tittleman help me, Lenny mostly. He'll say, “I like that part, I like that part,” — he'll never say, “I don't like that part,” it's all positive reinforcement — and I understand that if he doesn't get it, I know I've failed to get something across, because he's completely responsive. That's what it comes down to; you can be yourself *automatically*, you don't have to work at getting it across to yourself, you have to work at getting it across to someone else.

You're never sure that anybody else is going to get it. I don't know with this record. I don't know if this time I'll get across to the mass of people, because the record's not as simple. People like simplicity, they don't want to be bothered with having to work. These songs pretty much demand that they listen. If they do try it, it'll bring them more pleasure. But if they don't want to listen, the songs will go right by them.

MUSICIAN: You were real lucky when you did your first record; it had all those famous people on it.

JONES: I don't think that was lucky — we just paid 'em. People were real impressed with that, and I don't really know why — if you listen to the record and it's good, then you should be impressed, but to read the back of it and be impressed before you hear the music... People have said to me something to the effect that the music was especially good because those people played on it. I didn't know who any of them were. I never read the backs of records before.

You know, I had no idea how those songs would sound with a band — I'd never heard myself with a band. It was a brand

new sound, and I was so excited with whatever happened. "Company" was the only one I took real control of; I was the leader of all of them, but the band had a lot more to say.

MUSICIAN: Well, you were lucky that your budget could afford those guys.

JONES: Yeah, I was lucky because I had complete support, and complete control — well, 95 percent control.

MUSICIAN: Waronker and Titleman have the other five?

JONES: They have veto power. They'll let me go, but if there's something they don't like, they can stop it. I'll give 'em a bunch of songs, and they'll say, "Well, we think you better work on this one and put that one aside," and that's good.

MUSICIAN: Your new songs seem so carefully assembled. One thing that makes you sound so different is that you seem to have horns in mind while you're writing; in "Traces of the Western Slopes," there are parts where it's hard to tell your voice from the horns.

JONES: Horn charts are just like voices to me; arranging voices and arranging horns is pretty much the same. You sit and listen to which is more appropriate. I get to where I'm really blending voices and horns, because I have a voice that fits right in with saxophones and horns. It's an interesting effect. And I used the harmonica with the horns this time, which I really like; in "Pirates," there's a harmonica, saxes and horns. That's a real nice sound — it takes away from the brassy horn and gives it more of a play sound, a lighter sound.

I don't write music, so I have to have someone transcribe. My lead sheets are like crossword puzzles. But lead sheets are just maps, and they're not even that good because the idiosyncracies of what I play aren't even on them. I usually have to sit and play for an hour, while the musicians listen.

I worked on the "Traces" demo with my friend Sal Bernardi and wrote horn charts and did 'em all with harmonica. What an effect! It was great, and he's so good on the harp that he can play it like a horn, and it shifts back and forth — sometimes it sounds like a muted horn. I'm gonna try working with that more, because it's still used kinda like a toy or a solo instrument, and I think I've stumbled on a real interesting effect. The beginning of "Traces," that's all harmonicas. That crying instrument you hear in the first couple of bars, that comes and goes, that's a harmonica — the horns you hear for the first half of the song are all harmonicas. We put some effects in it, but it's all harmonicas.

MUSICIAN: How long did that track take to make?

JONES: That was a hard one.

MUSICIAN: Did you know what you were going to come out with when you started?

JONES: Actually, that song was written in different parts from August through October. What you hear is never exactly how it comes out, but I knew how I wanted it to feel, and it was real steadfast. We cut that song three times, and the third time we did it. That was the one song that I crafted bar for bar. Every bar was important, every single half note. Other songs, you give room to perform, you give room for the musicians to play, it's music. But with that, it was a movie, it had to draw pictures.

MUSICIAN: It's got those strange pauses in it...

JONES: The meter changes three times. That was a lot of work on the part of the players. And yet what you try to do is keep that element of jazz and improvisation. I want to know exactly what I'm saying, cinematically — that's where it's like classical music — and yet you have to have the jazz. That's the direction I'd like to go. And to do it with lyrics, in a song.

We're also going to try to put out a jazz album, of standards. Because that's my first love, to sing, and I don't do anything remotely like the standards in my own writing. I'd like to do it live, I don't know yet.

MUSICIAN: Do you listen to jazz singers, like Betty Carter?

JONES: Betty Carter — I think by far she's the greatest jazz singer. Jazz enthusiasts presume to be so hip, but most of them seem to go right by her, except the real cult. Aside from being an incredible technician, she can deliver a song so wittily, so humorous and then very sad. As far as being a performer, she is completely magnetic, and she has humor —

and that is the most important element.

MUSICIAN: She's tough, too.

JONES: Well, yeah, I guess that's the most obvious thing. But a woman who stands there with all that strength, it's because she's vulnerable. People, I think, believe I'm a tough broad. I'm a strong woman, but I'm a real person.

MUSICIAN: Do you care about reviews?

JONES: I felt like they would most assuredly tear this record apart because I did so well the other time. I thought it wouldn't matter what I did, how good it was, how much time I took. So because I knew that I just did it, took as much time and did the best I could, you know, and just prepared silently inside for them to tear me apart.

MUSICIAN: It's not really a fashionable record — you have long songs, delicate acoustic instruments...

JONES: But I don't expect it because it's too good. I expect it from a social point of view, but anyone who'd give it a bad review does not know anything about music. Musically, you know, I can sit and listen to it objectively, and it's so good. There's nothing contrived about it, it's just real pleasant, which is what I think music should be. It should give you pleasant feelings or a sad feeling or it should just evoke emotion, and I think it succeeds in doing that. I also think it succeeds on a musical level, being a higher effort. Anyone who attacks it is attacking me — it's something they don't like about me — and that doesn't belong in there. That's the problem now: it's that people don't listen to the music now. They're so busy trying to assess personalities, make stars, break stars, and it has nothing to do with the art. All of the entertainment magazines are so pseudo-hip, they jerk themselves off. Most writers are, like, "Rickie Lee Jones happened to be there, but I'm writing about myself."

Why write a review about something if you know you're not going to like it? You can say, "Because this viewpoint should be considered," but it's not necessary. It's just gonna hurt somebody.

MUSICIAN: Is it tough being in charge?

JONES: I couldn't not be in charge, I've always been. When I was a little girl I'd get everybody together on the playground, choreograph them, and make little parts for them, I've always been like that.

MUSICIAN: You were making your own musicals?

JONES: One of the first records I got when I was seven was *West Side Story*; that's why I used it at the end of "We Belong Together." Bernstein had so capitalized on those notes; it's a little tip of the hat. I love his music. It really comes out of Stravinsky; there are times he'll cop directly from Stravinsky, but then he'll do something that's so American — just one note in the chord or something — that's where Bernstein stands by himself. He came out of Stravinsky, and he came out of Gershwin, too — and that's the difference. He's so urban, so beautiful, because he's got the jazz Stravinsky didn't have. The clarinet is in there all over the place.

We called Bernstein to see if he wanted to write some charts or something, but we couldn't get past his secretary. I'd like to meet him at some point and collaborate or do something. I hope I grow, I think I'll grow into what I consider sophisticated.

MUSICIAN: That's a dangerous word, sophisticated.

JONES: I mean music that I know nothing about.

MUSICIAN: Does that mean longer songs?

JONES: Not necessarily. Just stronger... or not even stronger, just different intervals, crazier, a different kind of music.

MUSICIAN: Do you analyze everything you hear?

JONES: Always. I scrutinize everything I hear. I don't listen to much music now, it really bores me. I rarely listen, because I can't play music and talk, because I have to listen. Sal is always turning on the radio, and it drives me crazy, because I just can't hear music without giving it my complete attention. It's like some people watching a movie; when I play a record that's all I do.

MUSICIAN: Do you read for ideas?

JONES: I have trouble finishing books, but I start a lot of them. I have a real short attention span. I finished *Catch 22* — I can

name the ones I've finished — and I read a couple of Raymond, Chandlers, and my favorite book is poetry by Rimbaud. It's so rich, it's out there on the western slopes, it's beautiful. He's a kid, I'm in love with him!

Paris, you know, Paris has been such a center for art and poetry and insanity... The picture on the front of the record is Paris in the 30s, and I was thinking that I would like to get a lot of books and study the artists of Paris in the last 100 years, because they're crazy. There must be a magnetism there that draws them, I don't know if it's still there, maybe it got blown up in the war or something.

MUSICIAN: Have you been there?

JONES: I was there for a day; I arrived, did a sound check, went to the performance, went home and left in the morning. I want to go again. But they don't like Americans, and I hate the continual bullshit; I had to deal with it even at the club.

MUSICIAN: For someone with a short attention span, it's odd that you'd work two years on an album.

JONES: But that's my own work. And I know that it's really important to get it done fast, because if you don't get your point across and get in touch with what you want to say and say it, you'll spend six months trying to figure out what it was.

MUSICIAN: Is that what happened with "Traces of the Western Slopes?"

JONES: To a point. I was trying to say something at such a nebulous level. I was talking to myself about death and trying to write something to myself about it. I saw this landscape, and I saw it so clear, this little slope, and this slate-dark, purple-black background, and it was foggy, and it just was sitting here in the middle of this desert, with a post and a street like a Fellini scene. And I was just looking at it and trying to describe this place, and also trying to write this scenario. One level — "we go down..." — was about these kids and these people and where they go and what happens to them, and the other level was about me — "I'm going down to the far side of the track, and I can't get back..." Maybe I was trying too hard to say these things in the song. And I had a deadline, and I had to let it go, and that was a serious lesson to learn: let it go. I'd still be working on that — I would never be satisfied, because it's a question that will remain unanswered, till I go there. The other problem was, I didn't have a story — the story was unfinished, and I was trying to finish the story and I couldn't because I was drawing on my own life. So it's left unfinished and that's as it should be: you simply ask the questions.

People just don't listen to the music now. They're so busy trying to assess personalities, make stars, break stars and it has nothing to do with the art. All the entertainment magazines are so pseudo-hip, they just write about themselves and, oh yeah, the artist was there, too.

MUSICIAN: Do you do a lot of thinking about death?

JONES: I have been lately, more so. Sometimes I think about it and get real sad, and sometimes it's real intriguing, but it's so impressive, and it's never talked about. And it drives me crazy, because I have so many questions about it and we are so afraid of it, so people walk around and they never talk about it and they're so sad. Can you remember when you were little and you first found out you were going to die someday? I realized, "I am so sad, I have to go and I don't ever want to go," and that's something you never talk about and never confront, and consequently you never put any energy into finding out anything about it.

MUSICIAN: Do you want to be immortal through your songs?

JONES: No, I'd like to be immortal through my body. It fucks up my life sometimes; when things start to go real well, I think, "What's the point, it's gonna all be over anyway." Especially love; I think, "One of us is going to die someday, and that's going to break my heart. It's gonna hurt so much I don't even

wanna stay here and be in love." That goes way back to my brother's accident. I was eleven and everything was going great, and he got in an accident and everything fell apart. And I realized this year that every time something starts to go good, I go, "Oh no, you're not gonna do it to me again," and I'll stop it from being happy and working out. Because I would rather have control of messing it up than have the element of surprise catch me again.

I'm getting out of it but I still have in me some self-destruction.
MUSICIAN: Isn't the fact of death freeing, too? While you're alive, take some chances?

JONES: Yeah, I'll take a chance. I'm not obsessed with death, but I'm intrigued with it, and with the occult — other places, other times, other dimensions, things that have to do with magic. That goes to angels, and back to Catholicism. I was brought up shrouded in Catholicism. Mysticism is fine, but there are other things about it that are not so good.

MUSICIAN: Like guilt?

JONES: My producers are both Jewish; they told me the difference between Jews and Catholics is that the Jews are guilty and the Catholics are sorry.

MUSICIAN: Do you practice your instruments? Do you want to be a better pianist, or guitarist?

JONES: I'm gonna start working again. I haven't picked up my guitar in well over a year, I haven't played it. The problem was I wanted a piano, and when I made the record I rented a piano. I finally had one, so I learned to play the piano. I definitely want to be able to execute the things I hear, and I can't hear. I can play well enough to accompany myself, and I know enough about music so I can play some riffs and things, but it's very frustrating.

MUSICIAN: You didn't have a piano when you wrote the songs for the first record?

JONES: No, I wrote "After Hours" on the guitar, and then I transferred it to the piano. The songs that are on the piano I wrote after I started to make that record.

MUSICIAN: Now you're going to have to get your guitar calluses back.

JONES: I really wish I was interested in guitar, but I'm not. An acoustic guitar is always so clumsy; I bought an electric guitar and that feels much more comfortable. I played guitar for twelve years, and I'm still uncomfortable making chords. You're pressing your fingers against these wires, and it hurts, and it's cramping — you've got to really work at it to become comfortable with it, I was just too lazy to sit and play for three hours a day.

MUSICIAN: How do you practice singing? Do you sing in the shower?

JONES: I've been real lazy, not really practicing. But I usually just sing all the time. If I hear somebody sing something that challenges me, I'll work on it. Like some black singers, they're so natural, it's incredible. Before I did this record, I first started doing some really serious listening to Donald Fagen on *The Royal Scam*. He sang incredible on that, he's really soulful, so I would play that record and sing along. I don't think he thinks of himself as a singer, but he's great.

MUSICIAN: He always seems sort of embarrassed to be white...

JONES: He's really not all that white — he's got a lot of soul. White to me is — Hall & Oates sound pretty white... White is to me a kind of lack of emotion, and Donald Fagen doesn't lack emotion. But there's usually no particular person that I practice with. I like to sing with the people on the radio, the black church — when they yell, I yell back at them. That really gets you going.

MUSICIAN: Is that where the angels in your songs come from?

JONES: No — that's something else. I always believed that I had a guardian angel, ever since I was a little girl. I can't remember when I first thought so, but I always felt like there was some spirit protecting me. It's like there's been some little guy who follows me around wherever I go, and keeps things from getting too bad. **M**

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O r n e t t e

C o l e m a n

GOING
BEYOND
OUTSIDE

By Quincy Troupe

Ornette Coleman is one of the most influential musicians to emerge in the post-bebop period. The possibilities he opened up for improved music in the late fifties and early sixties, when he scrapped the conventions of Western harmony and pitch for a conception that was both a leap into the future and a recovery of the blues past, show no signs of being exhausted, and the implications of his more recent work, involving symphonic composition, free-funk and the "harmolodic" system, are now being worked on by a new generation of musicians, many of whom are alumni of his bands.

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, on March 9, 1930, Coleman combines all the elements of black-based music, honky tonk, rock and gutbucket, with free-form blues-form improvisational jazz. For many years he has been an enigma to many inside and outside the music world. Loved and respected by many, he has nonetheless been maligned for his musical ideas and innovations, particularly in his first decade of public life. Even more than John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor and Eric Dolphy, Coleman served as a magnet for the charges of charlatanism that raged in the free-jazz wars of the sixties, but his formidable talents as both instrumentalist and composer have made his place in the history of instrumental music secure. No player save Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker and Coltrane has had a more dramatic effect on the practice of jazz.

His conversation resembles his music in its disregard for linguistic convention and for the liberating effect it can have. A certain amount of editing has been done on the transcript, but the greatest number of conceptual knots have been left untied: Coleman understands how things harden and ultimately die of the sense people make of them (see his discussion of *method* below). His inventions have always tended to subvert the usual dead verities. His first classic band — a

quartet that included Don Cherry on trumpet, Charlie Haden on bass and either Billy Higgins or Ed Blackwell on drums — simultaneously developed and obliterated the parameters of bop; Coleman details how this happened at the start of the interview. When this quartet broke up, Coleman was fugitively audible for the remainder of the sixties with a trio, the occasional R&B band and string quartet. He had begun to simplify his playing style (see his distinction between "improvisers," whose strength is in their lines, and "players," who communicate through their sound). In the early seventies, he was even less available to the public than before, appearing occasionally with a quartet and even more occasionally with symphony orchestra, as in his long piece, *The Skies of America*. In the middle of the decade, he began working with a Coleman-styled electric R&B band called Prime Time, with which he recorded the seminal *Dancing in Your Head* and the (hopefully) soon-to-be-released *Fashion Faces*, and with which he has begun to concertize this year. Coleman has never had trouble making great music, but his liaison with the material and economic world has run from the shaky to nonexistent. Even in his absence, his influence has been extraordinary and undiminished. Currently managed by Sid Bernstein (of Beatles-at-Shea-Stadium fame), he is with us again.

It's said that the desert camel can feed on the thornbush when water keeps the thorns green and alive, but that when the plant dies the dry and darkened thorns lacerate the camel's tongue, and he dies. Through a subtlety of disposition that combines an almost childlike naivete with a percipience more acute and truthful than that of the conventional intellect, Coleman has succeeded in keeping his music alive, nourishing and unpredictable. This interview took place in the offices of Sid Bernstein in New York City, on July 22, 1981.



MUSICIAN: Let me begin by asking you; do you think that your absorption of bebop was and is one of the difficulties people have in understanding your music?

COLEMAN: I didn't make my first record until I was 28 or 29 but I'd been playing bebop since the late 40s. It got dated for me, at least the style of it. I had figured out where I wanted to go, myself, musically. The reason I was having problems was I was trying to do *that* — go someplace else musically — more than trying to prove to someone how that involved bebop language. So, many musicians didn't approve of me playing like that, and at the same time I wasn't having any jobs to prove that I was someone that people wanted to hear. Whenever I went to a jam session I would try to play the bebop line, but when I got ready to solo, I would play exactly the way I'm playing now, today, which is exactly how I played when I first picked up the horn. Musicians thought I had bebop all screwed up the way I was playing the lines, but I had figured out that most bebop songs were lines interpreting standard songs by using standard changes, but with more advanced lines, you know? I understood that it — bebop playing — was a *method*, and when I understood that method and had really absorbed it, I found that I could keep the method in my mind and still play independent of it. The *method* for playing bebop had become stronger than the *creativity* of bebop. With Charlie Parker, Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, bebop was their expression. It wasn't a method to them. It was their expression, it was what they did. And everyone else, including myself, were playing *their* method, and I had learned their method, the method of bebop, very well; I could play and sound like Charlie Parker note for note. I realized that regardless of how advanced I was going to play bebop, I was *still* only going to play it from the method. So I banned the idea that I was going to be a very successful bebop player. I accepted the fact that, okay, now that I've observed and absorbed this, now where to go? And then I remembered when I first got my horn I was playing ideas without having to relate to anything. I thought that maybe if I did this I would, perhaps, find something.

MUSICIAN: Did you, did you find something?

COLEMAN: I started with the saxophone, especially the alto. I found out that when I played an idea the way I was approaching it — which was outside of the way people were telling me to approach it — I didn't have to transpose the notes to sound right with the piano. The piano key — like a C concert piano — would put the alto in A, but if you're playing A minor, you have to use C. Therefore, A and C are the same sound when you're interchanging your method of using them. That's the first signal I got about how I was approaching the saxophone. Instead of me thinking of the alto as a transposing instrument I started thinking of it as a concert instrument.

MUSICIAN: What's the difference between a concert instrument and a transposing instrument?

COLEMAN: A concert instrument means that if you want to play any standard song you have to transpose the pitches onto the piano. For instance, if you're in the key of C in the piano concert, that makes your alto A natural, because there are 6 above to get the same pitch. Right? But yet you have the same notes without worrying about that pitch. That's what I was doing; I was playing everything in what I thought was concert. I later found out that I was only playing in the concert of alto, not the concert key of piano. I realized then that melody not only is something that a person thinks of to manipulate on the instrument, but it almost by design is a hard sound according to the instrument you're playing it on. *Melody*, right? A person playing an African thumb piano and a person playing an electric piano are going to have two different ideas about melody, only because of the instrument they're playing.

MUSICIAN: Because of the technique involved?

COLEMAN: Yeah. And the instrument. I started analyzing the difference between the alto sax being in its own concert key as opposed to transposing. Then I came up with the term "harmonic," which I call the harmony, the melody, the time and the rhythm all having equal positions. I got involved in writing music. You see, I finally realized that the *method* set up the

musical patterns in bebop, so that if you had a particular song that you liked, a standard for instance, like "Laura," you'd say A major 7 to E minor 7 to B minor. And if you played those voices without playing the melody you would resolve the voices according to how you heard your horn sound through those voices. I said, well, if that's the way the standard song is played, then what would happen *if the instrument became that itself*? In other words, if the sound of the instrument was what you were making the voices sound like more than the melody you were trying to play. I started playing ideas as if I wasn't playing the saxophone — it was just an instrument, but not an instrument that you had to transpose on, you know? I found that I was having much more trouble playing with piano players and other musicians because I would be in one unison and they would be in another. I started understanding the complex voicings of how and why musicians choose certain instruments to play, and it has a lot to do with how they've been related to concert instruments. I'd been playing sometimes with piano players where the piano would be so out of tune that I'd have to play out of tune with them in order to be in tune with their out-of-tuneness. It brought me only back to that same problem of playing non-transposed sound, you know? So I started writing music that people could play with me so they could understand how that sound was.

MUSICIAN: How did musicians and people respond to you and your ideas then?

COLEMAN: I found a lot of negativeness in the community I was playing in, black and white. They were all saying that this wasn't the way music and the saxophone were supposed to be played. And they weren't seeing it as really putting me down; they really believed from where they were at that I was wrong. I didn't try to show them that they were right or wrong. The only thing I tried to do was see if I could find a way to bring the sound of what I was playing to where they could get something out of it, and I knew, given the chance, it would work.

MUSICIAN: Do you think it might have had something to do with the fact that you wanted to be Ornette Coleman rather than Charlie Parker during the bebop era?

COLEMAN: I met Charlie Parker; I liked him and I enjoyed his songs. But I wanted to have the experience of him hearing what I had done, because by the time we met, in 1951, or '52, I was really into what I did later on my own records. But I couldn't have any attitude about what I was doing — especially with Charlie Parker — because no one had ever given me any attention to think of it as something that was valuable to them. I had always made compromises just to play bebop. But it kept working against me, because regardless of how long bebop has been around, it still didn't reach a success level commercially the way Louis Armstrong was a success. And bebop today, despite critical acclaim, has still never gotten any real big musical play in the way that fusion music has.

MUSICIAN: How did you and Charlie Parker interact?

COLEMAN: I was around 21 or 22 when I met him. I met him in Los Angeles at a club he was playing on 8th Street and Normandy. He was only playing standards; he wasn't playing any of the music he had written. But when I heard him playing standards it blew my mind because I didn't expect it and because I understood so well the method he was using to play his ideas. What I remember about him, though, was the fact that he knew very well he was the musician of that era; it was in his attitude towards himself and whatever he played; he knew exactly what he was doing; he was in total control. I got the feeling from him that he didn't have any problems with his talent, you know? I didn't know then what his personal life was — I later found out that it was pretty bad — but then he was at ease. I got the feeling from him then that I later got from myself; that he hadn't found the outlet, businesswise, that would have brought him to a wider public. I felt that he was still being limited. He and I had the same problem: the money-people don't know you; hardly any of them are aware of this music because it isn't commercially viable to them.

MUSICIAN: What has made you commercially "unviable"?

COLEMAN: I found out that I was constantly being limited by



CAROL FRIEDMAN

Ornette with bassist Charlie Haden, an original member of his groundbreaking 60s quartet along with Don Cherry and Eddie Blackwell.

At rehearsals, I'll play an idea on the saxophone and then I'll have them play the equivalent of what I played back on their instruments. The main thing is the motive of the idea, when everyone gets excited about how it affects them.

the term "jazz." This was around 1976. By this time I was writing symphonies, music for string quartets, woodwinds, etc., but the critics were always telling me how "great" a "jazzman" I was. But I was into other things. This limiting bothered me. I thought about how every time I played in public I was always writing a new musical program. I thought this was my duty to an audience — to write new material every time I played in public — because I thought they wanted to hear something they'd never heard before. Then finally, at the Public Theater in New York this summer, I went out and played something I already recorded and got a big response from it. I said, "Oh, this must be the way." I'd never had the experience of someone liking my old music in public because I had never played it. I didn't realize I could play my own music and get the response I got at the Public this summer. Most of that music was off of *Dancing in Your Head*, which I recorded in 1976. It became clear to me that I could play music I wrote 20 years ago and music I wrote yesterday and have people that knew the old stuff and people who wanted to hear the new stuff enjoying both things.

MUSICIAN: You and Coltrane and Miles Davis have had a tremendous impact on contemporary instrumental music. But in terms of the "fusion" movement, I think you and Miles have created two different but similar musical languages that are both fusionistic and futuristic at the same time.

COLEMAN: Let's start with Trane, because I always had a good experience with him. He used to come and visit me a lot and I, him. About three or four months before he passed he sent me a check and a note and said that he had finally found it, and thanks very much. I never got to see him again. Let me

say it this way. The improviser, the person that's called the improviser, has been the maverick of musical expression in the modern civilization that we call the Western world. The improviser is known as the jazzman, and he's been the one who says, "Just give me the horn and put me in front of the people and I will take this horn and do something better than what you can prepare or compose in a structured way." But for me, the improviser has become less and less interesting, because of the *method* and style of what improvising is; it is bogged down, for the most part, in some personal, social background. Now you take Albert Ayler, for example. Now, I knew Albert very well, and Albert was a musician that really was very gifted, one who did not relate to any form but his own. What happened to the kind of music — free form — that Albert was associated with is that it became connected with the racial phenomenon that took place in the 60s. Critics started saying that this was black expression, a kind of social, black expression of, perhaps, rage. Right? But when Trane started playing this music it brought the critics back to thinking of it just as music. They didn't do this with Albert Ayler. With Trane it was a musical expression, which it was. It was just more demanding to listen to, more so than bebop. The music of the 60s really stretched out: the improvised form had never gotten so individual as it was in the 60s, and the kind of music I was playing — even the writing sounded like it was being improvised. I started trying to let the themes finally become even freer than improvising. I was trying to get more free than the structure of improvising had previously allowed. *But then that too was becoming a method.*

MUSICIAN: Are you saying that people run the danger of becoming the *method* in any kind of music, or expression, even if it's supposed to be new?

COLEMAN: That's what I'm saying. I have always wanted to move forward. For instance, in 1962, I hired a rhythm and blues band, a string quartet, and my own trio, and performed an original work at Town Hall. I started playing with them not thinking of fusion or anything, but because I wanted to have more color to improvise from, to get away from thinking about

improvising. The more voices I had to inspire me, the freer I felt I could be from improvising. I went from there to writing for string quartets and symphonies because if I could create enough sounds in unison then the listener could see the difference and growth between where I started from and where I was then.

MUSICIAN: And where was that, where were you going then?

COLEMAN: I realized that the multiple expression could be translated into sound where you could hear and sense more than one thing at once. I assumed that I could write a musical idea that would interject more than one particular direction, where musicians and the audience could have more intake, and that this would be more enjoyable to do. I went and bought me a trumpet and a violin and I started playing those instruments. I started putting those things into the music I was writing. Back to your earlier question about fusion: by this time Trane had passed, and Miles came out with this rock band that sounded just natural to me. This was in the early 70s, and by this time the music was moving towards fusion.

MUSICIAN: What were some of the other changes that were taking place in the music during this time?

COLEMAN: Well, in most music, pop, etc., time is dominated by the drums. In the music I was starting to play, every instrument, every person had the right to dominate.

MUSICIAN: Every instrument?

COLEMAN: When I heard fusion it only made me realize that Miles and the people playing fusion had taken the roots of the drums and used it as a form of improvising with whatever melodies they were playing. I had always been doing that, but not in a systematic way. It was then that I realized that it had always been the improviser that had stood out as the jazzman. But understand; the improviser and the player are two different people. I've always wanted to be a player, myself.

MUSICIAN: Could you explain the difference between an "improviser" and a "player?" First, what is a "player?"

COLEMAN: Okay. For me, Johnny Hodges was a great player, rather than an improviser. Charlie Parker was a great player, you know? But I think Johnny Griffin was and is a great improviser. I think Jackie McLean is like that — a great improviser.

MUSICIAN: What would you say about Coltrane?

COLEMAN: I think that Coltrane was about half and half. Great improviser, great player.

MUSICIAN: Where would you put yourself?

COLEMAN: Like I said, I think I'm more of a player.

MUSICIAN: What would you say about Miles Davis?

COLEMAN: I think he's more of a player than an improviser, though he can be a great improviser, too.

MUSICIAN: That's interesting. What about Julius Hemphill and Arthur Blythe?

COLEMAN: I think they're really improvisers. I think that that's a group of musicians that whether they are backed by instinct, or by sweat, it comes out that way — more like improvisers, rather than like players. I think the trumpet player, Olu Daru, is a great improviser. But you understand that improvising, to me, is almost self-annihilating. I mean, you know your limitations. As a player you don't really know your limitations that way, because the construction of playing is like architecture — you are always building, you know? Where improvising is like the person who's always putting furniture in, who's always putting this and that in, and sometimes you only get a jumble of stuff that doesn't relate to anything.

MUSICIAN: Do you think "improvisers" can become "players," or are they two separate categories?

COLEMAN: Yes. I think I was an improviser once.

MUSICIAN: *Dancing in Your Head* has real funk in it, heavy funk, almost honky-tonk and gutbucket in places.

COLEMAN: You see, all the things I grew up with back in Fort Worth, Texas, affect the things that I play. There was honky-tonk, blues and funk there, so it comes out naturally in the things I play. That's why I am a "player," because when I picked up my horn, I didn't think about improvising; I thought about *playing*, I've always thought about playing. I have

always tried my best to stay clear of having a particular style. For some reason, improvising doesn't have a style, but a style has improvising.

MUSICIAN: Are you saying you don't want, ever, to have an identifiable style?

COLEMAN: Yeah. I wouldn't like to have a style.

MUSICIAN: But there are musicians — Coltrane, Blythe, yourself — that as soon as I hear them, I know who they are.

COLEMAN: I know, but that's pitch. When I hear your voice, I know that's you. I think that what you're talking about is the character of a person's breathmarks. It's in their pitch, in the pitch sound. I don't think that makes the sound better though. Look at Paul Quinichette and Lester Young. The only way you can tell Quinichette and Lester apart is that when you hear Lester you get an emotional experience from that sound, and from Quinichette, you get a remembrance; he's just making you remember where you heard that particular emotion from. But it *sounds* just like Lester. I can play like Charlie Parker all the way down to his sound because I know the things to avoid and the things to touch to create that sound. And I am sure someone that wished to repeat the things I'm playing could do it if they really wanted to. The only thing different in the way I'm playing is that I don't use any structure to play that way.

MUSICIAN: Do you think it's very difficult for some other alto saxophonist to duplicate your sound?

COLEMAN: When someone plays ideas in logic, in the same logic as I would, it's much easier to do. But when you play the same idea without that logic, it's harder. And that is what I'm trying to do; to play logical ideas without using logical terms.

MUSICIAN: How would you explain the "harmolodic" theory?

COLEMAN: What instrument do you like? What is your favorite instrument?

MUSICIAN: I like saxophone, trumpet, bass, guitar, I like most of the musical instruments.

COLEMAN: Okay. Let's say we use a string instrument, like the guitar. On the guitar you've got six strings. When you want to make a sound you pluck the strings and they vibrate, right? But *there's an order that's already there, on the instrument*; the order that is designed and made is already there. So if you play something that makes you feel good, you think it's you, but all you're doing is playing something that's already there. In "harmolodic" theory, or music, I suggest to everyone that, don't think that just because there is something you want to play, and the instrument that you want to play it on, you have to put your mind to working out something only to make mistakes until you find out what you're really doing. The thing is to acknowledge the fact that the instrument is going to respond the way you approach it, right? So, basically, the only way you can approach any instrument is to find the relationship between the sound you want to hear from it and the place you have to put your mouth and fingers to bring about that sound. Now, the only thing that keeps you from doing that is the *method* that's already there on the instrument, how that instrument was built to play in the first place. So in "harmolodics" what happens is that the particular method, the sounds that you want to play, or the ideas, say on a guitar, might be trumpet ideas in your mind. So what I tell the person is that whatever instrument you want to play, just think of the music that you want to play more than how you want the instrument to sound. Once you find the place to put your fingers and carry the sound to the next sound, you will find yourself playing in a sequence. And most all Western music is written in sequences. When you start learning music you find out these sequences are called chords, they are called keys and they are called changes; they're called lots of things. The thing to realize in "harmolodics" is that you first approach the instrument strictly with the idea that you want to manipulate it — the idea on the instrument — and then you find out the limitations of the instrument.

MUSICIAN: So the musician takes the initiative on the instrument, bends it, so to speak, to his will, to what they want to do with it?

COLEMAN: Right. If you brought me an instrument I'd never

seen, never played, I wouldn't try to figure out what the traditional role for playing that instrument has been, but I would try to figure out what I could do with it just from knowing it's already built to play whatever it is designed to play.

MUSICIAN: You were saying earlier that the drums have dominated the time in the music at one point, and that you wanted everyone in your band to have the chance to dominate. Could you talk about that a little more?

COLEMAN: The word "dominate" is not the right word. In classical music, in a symphony orchestra, you sometimes have 30 to 40 violins, 3, sometimes 4, trumpets; in other words, you have at least 30 or 40 different instruments. Now, imagine if those 30 or 40 instruments were playing their own line, you'd hear many different ideas, right? But those 30 to 40 instruments have been designed to only play basically, four different



STEVEN NEEDHAM

voices, which we call in the Western world, the bass, treble, tenor and alto voice. What I mean by "domination" is that the rhythm concept is the only free movement in sound that doesn't have to have a strict pitch to be heard. In Western music, what's called the tempered scale, there is a strict pitch. If we're in the key of C, you'd have to produce that C and I would, too. Because of that strict pitch, musicians have been limited rhythmically. Whereas in the drums, I think that Eddie Blackwell, Billy Higgins, Max Roach, Art Blakey, and in some ways, Buddy Rich, always played the rhythm as if it was as valuable as the note. A lot of drummers don't do this. They play notes over rhythm.

MUSICIAN: What about young drummers?

COLEMAN: The person, for me, that has taken the drums to a more advanced place is Denardo.

COLEMAN: Your son Denardo?

COLEMAN: Yeah. Now Denardo, for some reason, can play a set of drums the way African people play talking drums. On a talking drum, you can reproduce the actual melody, with the sound, and independent of the rhythm at the same time. Denardo uses the concept of what talking drums must have done before drums had to establish a regular sense of time.

MUSICIAN: I remember when I first met you in Los Angeles back in 1967, you were getting a lot of bad press for using Denardo, because he was so young.

COLEMAN: Yeah, I know. When I met you I was playing at Shelly's ManneHole in Hollywood, and I remember Shelly Manne saying Denardo should go and become a "garbage-man," or something like that. At that time, Denardo was not only playing freer than any drummer I had played with outside of Billy Higgins and Eddie Blackwell, but he was also inspirational to play with. The first thing I recognized when I heard him play was the way he saw the time, the way he saw keeping the time. He sounded to me like he had been listening to a lot of drummers, and although he had a teacher teaching him about reading and everything, it seemed to me that this hadn't affected the way he already wanted to play; it seemed to me that he already had his own concept of how he wanted to play, even way back then. He really enjoyed playing. I never tried to tell him what not to do, or what to do; the only thing I have ever

talked to him about was how good he could get doing what he believed he could do best. He has perfected how to play the drums as if he was singing.

MUSICIAN: Could you talk a little about your present band?

COLEMAN: The band that I have now has two guitars, two drummers and two basses. You see, I couldn't afford to have an orchestra, which is what I would prefer to have. The guitar is the most popular social instrument, especially to white people; it's what the tenor saxophone is for most black Americans. Anyway, the guitar takes up a lot of the string section. Having two of them usually means you use one for the rhythm and one for the melody. What I have done in my band is that the structure and the playing both interweave. For instance, if I give a melody to one of the bass players, I'll say I want him to play the rhythm equivalent to this line, then I'll want to play the harmony equivalent, and I'll give the guitar that number. Everyone is playing a lead that's equivalent to the same result, so we don't have to reach a climax by someone being at a certain place at a certain time. That's the difference between "harmolodic" music and arranged music; the musicians don't have to be at a certain place with some rule reaching some climax. It can happen instantly and according to the way the mood and feeling of whatever we're playing dictates.

MUSICIAN: Does Denardo play saxophone lines on the drums, and do you play drum lines on your saxophone, violin and trumpet?

COLEMAN: That's what I'm saying. I think he plays the vocal concept and the rhythm concept. That's what he does. And I do, too.

MUSICIAN: So everyone is playing all kinds of different parts and voices at the same time?

COLEMAN: Right. Everyone's also playing what they think would be best if they had their own band.

MUSICIAN: How do you approach rehearsals, and how is new music brought in and introduced to the band?

COLEMAN: What happens is that all of these guys have their own music, right? And, they would probably like to have their own band if they had the same outlet that I have. At rehearsals, I will write out a musical idea. I'll play it on the saxophone and then I'll have them play the equivalent of what I played back on their instruments. Then, I'll write it out. But the main thing that happens is the motive of the idea. Ideas are very interesting, but it's the motive behind the idea that's very stimulating. So if you get hung up in playing an idea it might be outdated and not stimulating at all. For me what makes a musical motive is when everyone gets excited about how it affects them, you know. If I brought in a new musical idea, it has no validity other than for it

For me, the Improviser has become less and less interesting; It's bogged down, for the most part, in some personal, social background. I started trying to let the themes become even freer than improvising.

to be manipulated on the instrument. But when someone else shares in it, then it becomes really musical. And that is one of the great things about having a band, playing the music, exploring new frontiers of musical consciousness.

MUSICIAN: What kind of music are you composing today and how long is it?

COLEMAN: I am writing a piece of music, a long piece, for what I call the oldest musical language, and that's what it's called: *The Oldest Language*. This music will be for about 125 musicians, and for as many non-tempered musicians as I can get into it. More than half of it is written. I think it would be at least 2 hours, maybe 3, when it's performed. But I haven't thought about where I'm going to play it, or how I'm going to make the time to play it. If I get it done I will play it somewhere.

MUSICIAN: What instruments are you writing for in this music?

COLEMAN: The talking drums. The sitar. The kind of instru-

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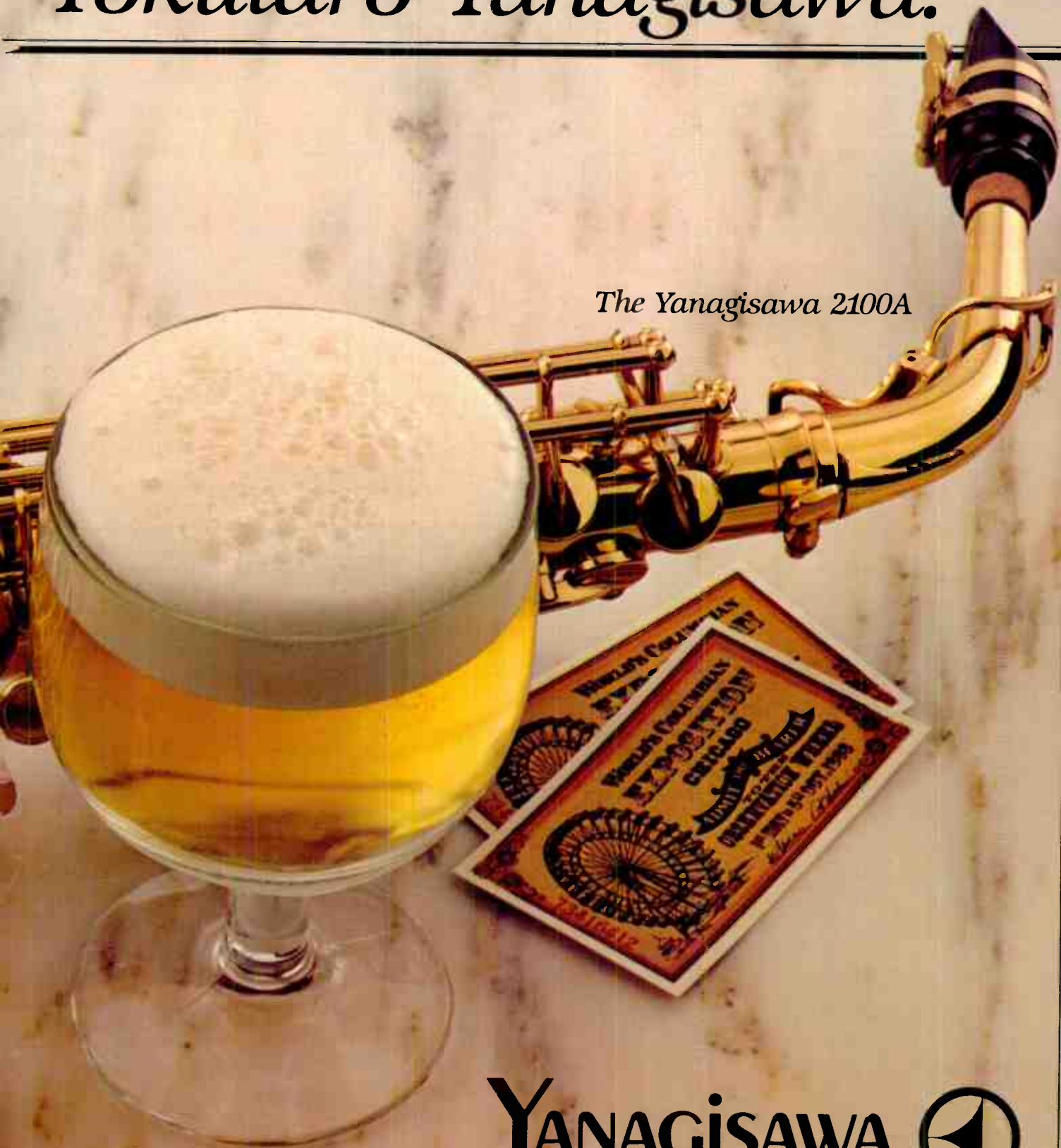
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ments African people play, instruments that Arabs play, instruments that are basically, string, wind, brass, and probably some other instruments made out of some form of metal.

MUSICIAN: I know you're going to have Denardo's drums in this, right?

COLEMAN: Oh yeah, right. Denardo's drums will be there, too. But the thing that I'm more interested in is having the experience of hearing the musicians express how these sounds are going to affect how they play as an individual. That's the result I'm looking for, that's my motive behind doing this. And what I hope to bring about is, shall we say, some form of medicine in the music.

MUSICIAN: Medicine? Could you explain?

COLEMAN: What I would hope for is that some kind of healing medicine would be incorporated in these sounds, come from these ancient instruments. I would like to try and bring about some kind of medical sounds that could actually cure depression, cure whatever it could. I think that some certain people outside of doctors do this now, already, but it's done in such a camouflaged way, you know?

MUSICIAN: So you think music can cure?

COLEMAN: Oh, yes.

MUSICIAN: Why did Shannon Jackson call you a "magician?"

COLEMAN: Well, maybe he was using that word for describing how I think. I don't think of myself as a musician, or composer, but as a human being that has the same problems everyone else has, in that I have to figure out how to do my share in this human state we call living. I think that maybe Shannon was giving his philosophy about how he thinks I think about things I believe in. You see, I believe that immortality is distance, and that things take up more than just one-dimensional aspects of our living. I think that what we call the earth and human beings and the way we live and die is distance, you know?

MUSICIAN: What do you think about the connection between

your music, Blood Ulmer's, Shannon Jackson's and "punk" music?

COLEMAN: Well, I think that everybody can logic. But I don't think the label, necessarily, has to be transcribed. When someone says "punk rock," when you use any term that is non-musical, you're really talking about a person, or a group of people. It's much easier to label a group of people than it is to label music. I saw the movie, *The Decline of Western Civilization*. It's a "punk" movie. And what I got from it was that a lot of rich white kids that have grown up with human ideas are now using music to express violence. So if that is the particular signal they enjoy being stimulated by then they will, or must eventually grow out of that, because violence usually leads to death.

MUSICIAN: You have no animosities towards critics, no hostilities?

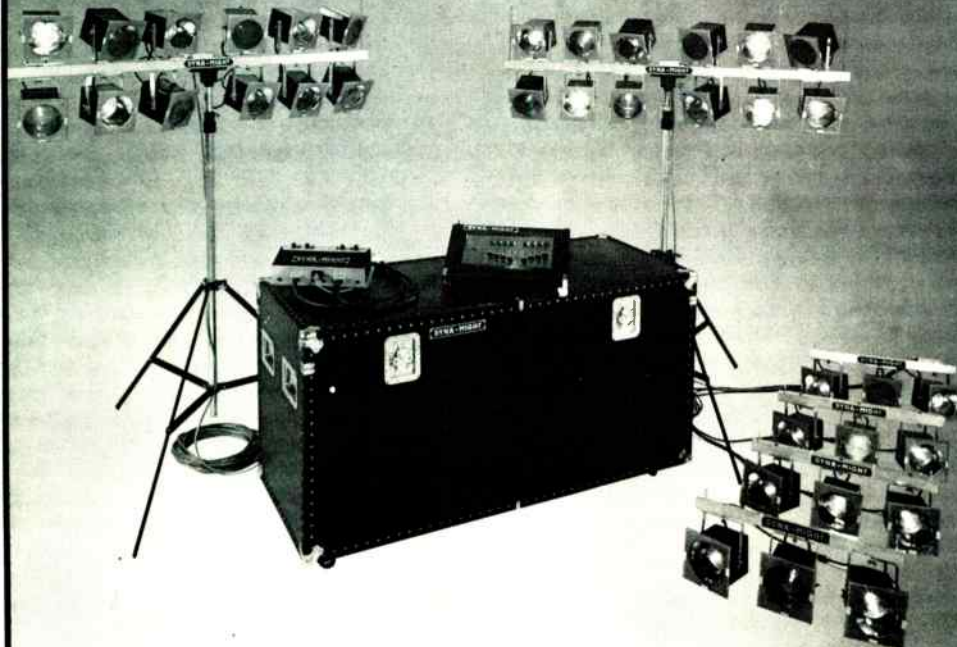
COLEMAN: No. I don't have any. I always say I don't have any enemies, period.

MUSICIAN: What about the experiences you had in Morocco and Nigeria?

COLEMAN: When I went to Morocco, there was a festival they were having, a festival that had been handed down for the last 6000 years, and their music was as old, or older than that. It was really beautiful. The same thing in Nigeria. I guess for some reason in a society like America, where the people haven't figured out a way to grow closer together, that basically it's the goodness of being a human being that transcends the structure of what someone doesn't want you to be or have. My outlook for being born in America and being an American person, I feel the same way as any person that's born; that where you are born has something very important to do with what you are born to live as, and that you don't have to imitate any race, or to force your race on another person, but to find a way to better the conditions of why you were born. These are some of the things my trip to Africa taught me, that I could be myself, because I didn't have nobody else to be. **M**

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RECORD REVIEWS

The Rolling Stones

Tattoo You (Atlantic)

ROLLING STONES: TATTOO YOU



Vicious Rumour had it, one night, that Mick went down, piss-faced drunk, to what was then a New Romanticism club in London

and was turned away for not looking right, screaming, "You don't even know who I am, do you?" Even if this incident was a piece of pure fiction, it may have helped turn the head Stone's head around and around a little to the brittle quality of style-based music. They've proved that disco, reggae, and even punk could come in all the colors of the Stones' inspirational rainbow; and now, finally, they've lost interest in proving anything to anybody.

The mix, the instrumentation and the design on *Tattoo You* are simple, almost minimal, without ever being sterile. Falsetto, effects, and horns are pulled when needed from the artists' toolbox but the sound is mostly full five-man band. *Tattoo You* glides through eleven songs that are neither old hat nor consciously experimental: they just sound right.

Most of the rhythms come straight from the James Brown/Tina Turner/Temptations tradition of soul. On side two, "Heaven" at first blatantly riffs off the Four Tops classic "Reach Out," but then stretches out into a long, magic, bossa nova caress of a song, featuring possibly the most tasteful use of echo effect to date and the simplest chord change in extended teaser phrasing. This jewel is well set between "Tops" and "No Use in Crying," a gospel blues ballad pure enough to please even the most hard-assed Brian Jones fan. On "Slave," Mick's ad lib syncopation introduces unnamed guest star Sonny Rollins. Known for playing solo sax as a rhythm instrument, Rollins fits the bill perfectly, adding just that touch of Miles/Ornette unpredictability to the solid funk.

Next up, Keith's vocal on "Little T&A" is one of the treats of the album. "She's my little Rock and Roll" is what he actu-

ally sings, and the likes of this passionate, 14-year-old-type rocker innocence have not been seen since Bowie's "Rebel Rebel," or Keith's own "Happy" from *Exile on Main Street*. Rapping up side one is "Neighbors," guaranteed to keep *Tattoo You* out of the easy listening racks.

Side one was good fun; side two is better, more consistent, more magical. The near medley builds slowly, surely, from "Worried About You," through "Heaven"'s crescendo, and on out to the fading chorus of "Waiting on a Friend." On "Heaven," the vocals and guitars are completely intertwined, an other-worldly "Time Waits for No One" infinite progression anchors in the barely flanged guitar and steady drums. Whew The whole band still pulls its own weight.

When the papers say the Stones have grown up, they probably hear "Waiting on a Friend" in their heads. Indeed, this update of "Stupid Girl" has a patient, experienced tone with the added grace of Rollins' street corner sax. The feel of the album, however, is more one of rediscovered youth, of axes to play, not grind, of the latest cope, not dope.

After *Emotional Rescue*, it seems the Stones couldn't make it anymore with the theme of life getting harder and harder. The old themes are not invalidated by the new, but rather taken for granted, like knowing how to tie one's bootlace. The Stones have shed yet another layer of self-consciousness and their shiny vinyl new skin tingles with an open, early-decade kind of excitement. — Patty Rose

Tom Verlaine

Dreamtime (Warner Bros.)



of the earliest new wave bands from New York, comes out from behind his

On *Dreamtime*, you can almost hear Tom Verlaine cackling while his guitar gently weeps, as the reclusive founder of Television, one

oft-enigmatic personality. Two years have lapsed since Verlaine's self-titled solo debut, which followed Television's break-up, and you may well wonder what Tom has been up to in all that time — he certainly hasn't played live. Thankfully, *Dreamtime* answers our curiosity and proves that, for true artists, concepts like "career suicide" have little, if any, meaning.

The first thing you'll notice about *Dreamtime* is the guitars — there are lots of 'em. In fact, *Dreamtime* must be the ultimate rock guitar album, with cascades of layered, fractured guitars forming an ever-shifting wall of undulating, gorgeous solos, intertwined in the manner of the most intricate Persian rug. Like vintage Television, *Dreamtime* takes the guitar solo out of its mundane context and uses it as a corollary to the lyrics, a sometimes screaming, sometimes ringing, sometimes lulling extension of the literal meaning into the realm of pure feelings. There Verlaine's cool subconscious — his playing — can transcend his rather banal, nerdy, everyday ego — his persona; Freud and Jung dueling into the sunset.

The joy of *Dreamtime* is that Tom Verlaine gleefully owns up to this image with playful punning and warmly humorous, self-effacing jibes. On "There's a Reason," Verlaine starts to reveal the source of his eccentricity, but the answer gets lost as a pair of guitars holds a modern version of the Platonic dialogue. "Penetration" features the great stoned line, "Well, I'm forgetting things/before I think them," while "Fragile" confronts his paranoia: "I've got to face/What's never there."

Finally, though, it's the guitar-playing that will draw you into *Dreamtime*; not since *Layla* have guitar duets been used for such emotional payoff. What's unusual about *Dreamtime* is all the guitars are played by Verlaine himself, leading you to believe this Delaware native is one schizy dude (especially with a publishing company called Double Exposure). But Tom Verlaine is an authentic modern romantic — not a trendy Blitz kid or a pop moralist, but a classic dualistic seer. "I'm beginning a fortune/A fortune in lies," he sings in "Without a Word."

For Tom Verlaine, the truth will always reside in the absolute beauty of pure sound rather than the paradoxical compromise of verbal communication. — *Roy Trakin*

Lene Lovich

New Toy (Stiff-Epic)

Rachel Sweet

... And Then He Kissed Me (Columbia)



Lene Lovich and Rachel Sweet once were traveling companions on the Stiff tour bus, but it's now apparent they were always

bound for very different destinations. Sweet's influences have led her down a well-trodden path while Lovich's latest venture illustrates an intriguing amble along the road not taken.

How ironic that, of the pair, Rachel Sweet was heralded as the "natural" singer and Lene Lovich was frequently dismissed as a yodeling weirdo. On her third album, *... And Then He Kissed Me*, it's Sweet's voice that shows the strain of pushing in a dozen directions and succeeding at maybe one, while throughout Lovich's *New Toy* EP, Lene sounds so vocally secure in her quirkiness that she's got the time to enlarge her compositional talent instrumentally.

No sooner does Sweet turn 18 than she's already complaining "My baby, he left me for a young girl's arms," ("Fool's Story"). But her attempted maturity, sounding particularly forced in her own compositions, doesn't wash as she whines through "Billy and the Gun" and alters a pair of classic Greenwich-Barry girl-tunes into cutesiness. On Eddie Schwartz's retrogressive macho grope song, "Two Hearts Full of Love," Sweet acts like she's been told to compete with Pat Benatar, or else. ("Or else" meaning they'll pair her with Rex Smith in a loathsome, saccharine version of "Everlasting Love" that's already sold a zillion copies, so what do I know.)

If preaching a duet with Sexy Remy was Rachel's own idea of a guaranteed key to the U.S. top 20, she deserves kudos for her commercial acumen. What seems far more likely is that either someone in management or her producer, Rick Chertoff (who'd do far better if he didn't try to be Phil Spector) told Rachel to mutate like Plasticman and somewhere she'd find a real direction. Hey guys, I've got an idea; why not team her with Brooke Shields next time, so Rachel can really play the older woman?

Meanwhile, back in the jungle, Lene Lovich has followed up two traditional song-format albums with a danceable EP that promises a bold instrumental

continued on next page



Fop Rock

By J.D. Considine

It looks like rock 'n' roll's most recently certified Next Big Thing is fop rock. Its adherents, known variously as the New Romantics, the Blitz Kids or The Cult With No Name, are clothes-conscious young Britons whose idea of the good life is spending several hours each evening dressing up, then going for a few more hours of dancing and being looked at. Of the two, being looked at is by far the more important aspect of the movement, something that goes a long way toward explaining why news of fop rock cropped up in *Vogue* long before it hit the music magazines. "The music is irrelevant," said Gary Kemp of Spandau Ballet, one of the bands in the forefront of fop rock. Instead, the individual club-goer, arrayed in the finery of his or her choice, vies with others on the dance floor for envious glares.

It might strike you that fop rock is just discomania under an assumed name, but it's not. Rather than emulate the swagger of John Travolta, your average teeny-fopper is more likely to go after something along the lines of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. in *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. Thus the appeal of fop rock: by pursuing an aesthetic so willfully obscure, its glory boys are guaranteed a degree of hipness unattainable in the polyester wastelands of Middle America.

Where the disco connection does come in handy is the music. Like disco, fop rock is given over to long, single riff songs that are seldom more than a verse and maybe a chorus repeated over and over while the drummer counts to four with his kick drum. As was the case with the Eurodisco style, synthesizers are preferred over guitars, and the melodies, like those of Abba, resolutely avoid contact with the blues or blues-based harmonies. And while fop rock does its best to get down, it never gets funky.

As a result, it's usually boring as mud.

The self-titled debut albums of Duran Duran and Classix Nouveaux are cases in point. Stylistically, both groups func-

tion in a mode that could be termed Basic Ultravox, only, unlike that group's chief plagiarist Gary Numan, neither Duran Duran nor Classix Nouveaux are any good at writing hooks. Classix Nouveaux comes fairly close when singer Sal Solo launches a Leo Sayer falsetto on "Run Away," but for the most part, you're likely to have forgotten both records before you've lifted the stylus from the groove.

Landscape fares far better in this respect. Although *From the Tea Rooms of Mars to the Hell-holes of Uranus* is no *Meet the Beatles*, it does demonstrate a basic understanding of how pop music functions. The album's best cut, "Einstein A Go-Go," has the same slightly warped melodic instincts that made Martha and the Muffins' "Echo Beach" so endearing. Sadly, Landscape is unable to maintain that level of listenability, and the bulk of *Tea Rooms* is given over to windy and insubstantial (albeit texturally interesting) noodling.

Perhaps the problem is one of format. Visage, a studio ensemble led by clothes-horse Steve Strange and featuring several members of Ultravox, suffers from many of the problems that plague Landscape. The textures and instrumental textures are intriguing, sometimes daring, but when applied to the vacuous fluff of the group's debut album, the effect was not unlike listening to a stereo demonstration record. *Visage-the-album* was a clunky bore, but *Visage-the-EP* is almost interesting. It salvages "Fade to Grey," the catchiest cut from the album, and matches it with two reasonably entertaining, completely danceable new tunes, "We Move" and "Frequency 7." Nothing to trade in your Taana Gardner 12" for, but a notable improvement.

Finally, there's Spandau Ballet, the fashion-concept-turned-pop-group whose debut album, *Journeys to Glory*, sounded rather like the Village People with fascist overtones. A far more palat-

continued on next page

able representation of the group's sound can be found on the 12" single, "Chant No. 1 (I don't need this pressure on)." Although built around a single two-bar riff, it's hot, frenetic and deliciously compelling. Credit here goes to the intricate, James Brown-ish rhythm arrangement spiked with tough horn interjections and percolating Latin percussion. It's the only record in the bunch that doesn't sound as if the players were afraid that working up a sweat would spoil their clothing.

continued from previous page
style to match Lene's voice. Instead of hardening the babushka'd fruitcake act into concrete, on *New Toy* Lovich has become the vocal conductor of a percussive orchestra. She can still sing straight, as on the wistful "Never Never Land," but on "Savages," she gives her voice equal stature to any of her other band members. In fact, "Cats Away," an instrumental dominated by keyboardist Dean Klevatt, proves that Lovich can be content to limit her participation to songwriter.

Emotions have always figured highly in Lene Lovich's music, but in the six songs on *New Toy* they are the framework and the trills, bleeps and sputters, are simply decorative details. Lovich and guitarist/co-writer Les Chappel, as producers, have come up with a recording that's urgent yet spare. Maybe they should have a sit-down with Rachel

Sweet the next time she prepares for the studio, and teach her a few lessons about growing up gracefully. — *Toby Goldstein*

Koko Taylor
From the Heart of a Woman (Alligator)
Johnny Copeland
Copeland Special (Rounder)



The rap on Koko Taylor is that she lacks diversity, but her new album should silence her critics.

There is nary a hint of "Wang Dang Doodle" and only an oblique reference, or two, to Muddy Waters and Willie Dixon, while Taylor maintains the Saturday Night Function immediacy of the blues. Her parting-of-the-waters growl is most effective on the gospel-blues slow burn, "I'd Rather Go Blind," that is buoyed by Criss Johnson's sustained-note guitar obligatos.

There are other R&B tunes — "Something Strange is Going On," "If You Got a Heartache" and "Sure Had a Wonderful Time Last Night" — that are more obscure but less successful. The band swings but Taylor's powerful impassioned vocals don't capture the forlorn falsettos of Bobby Bland and Willie Tee or the lithe rhythm of Louis Jordan. Pricilla

Bowman's "Keep Your Hands Off," Taylor's "Thanks But No Thanks" (as in "Thanks for the offer/ but I think I'll buy my own/I'm not one of those pick-up women/You can buy two drinks and take on home"), and Detroit Junior's "Never Trust a Man" are more suited to Taylor's grit and mother-wit cynicism. On "It Took a Long Time," she admonishes "I cried you a river, but now it's your time to pay," over a muddied-brogan stomp with a Charlie Patton, Howlin' Wolf, Latimore lineage. This advice seems appropriate from the dense rhythms and whining guitars of Koko Taylor's most solid album.

Johnny Copeland's album can't be praised by such comparisons because it is his first. He has thirty singles to his credit in the Southwest, but regional music died when the teetotalers shut the clubs in Kansas City, and the war and radio made working big bands impractical. Nonetheless, Copeland is part of the jump band tradition in grand Texas style. Copeland, a guitarist, has collected a gaggle of horns including Arthur Blythe (his cavernous vibrato can suspend time), Byard Lancaster (his "Over the Rainbow" made Sunny Murray's Untouchable Factor embraceable) and George Adams.

The horns, with the rag-tag intensity of a New Orleans brass band, riff, shout and virtually cheer behind Copeland's razor-edged guitar that contrasts busy phrases with long loping notes. On

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songs like "Done Got Over," "Everybody Wants a Piece of Me" and the swampy "Third Party," the rhythm cranks and churns, the horns provide their own call and response while Copeland strangles and batters the lyrics. The slow blues — "It's My Own Tears" and "St. Louis Blues" — are models of control as each song builds slowly. Lancaster's hesitant tenor collapses into spasms of sorrow on "Tears" and Adams weeps the melody of "St. Louis Blues" on soprano before echoing Copeland's percussive vocals.

Copeland's guitar work, like that of T-Bone Walker and Albert Collins, exhibits a mastery of time and note placement, producing a relentless swing. And, like the great Texas blues bards, Copeland is able to make the familiar fresh and the unfamiliar dear, which makes him and the album of great worth. — Don Palmer

Chick Corea

Three Quartets (Warner Bros.)



Chick's grand piano music announces his serious intentions from the start of "Quartet #1." It wears no funny hat or ethnic disguise, cushions no vocalizing companion, needs no electricity, string or horn section. The austere titled "Quartets" (parts of #2 are dedicated to Ellington and Coltrane, but otherwise, dig your favorite number) are jazz chamber sketches, to be filled in by expert play. Apparently Chick has convinced his fellows, tenor saxist Michael Brecker, bassist Eddie Gomez, and drummer Steve Gadd, that this kind of program keeps their promises, and they all, with balanced strength and sensitivity, persuade us to listen hard.

Not that the quartets are difficult music — merely more complex than the average riff-and-ostinato tune. They feature changes, and dynamic modulations. Corea, we gradually remember, first impressed jazz aficionados with a warm but not cloying technique, and skills as an accompanist and lyrical improviser. He has a distinguished touch, capable of *strumming* runs on the ivories. Gadd prods, busy but with brushes or restrained stick strokes, as syncopated with his accents but not so singleminded with his back-beat as on pop-rock-fusion assignments. Gomez provides a ringing beam of harmonic foundation, wasting no effort. Brecker's at his best, lining open-ended melodies in a well-considered, masculine but never brutish manner.

Chick, subtly swinging, simply excels. The pianist is confident enough to go with his sidemen, and they are respon-

sive to the thoughtfulness of his mood settings. What results is an album that stands proudly alongside the superb Corea trios on *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*, the outward-bound cooperative Circle's Paris Concert, and the jet-stream songs for Stan Getz on *Captain Marvel* — that is, amongst Chick's most mature recordings. No saccharin, no bombast, and, true, probably no sales bonanza or crossover potential (though we'd all feel better if the radio, any radio, played "#3, part 2," on which Chick quotes "Softly as a Morning Sunrise" oh-so-briefly). Chick: imagine your career continually rising to the creation of such bountiful, sophisticated work as you offer here! Now, please, make it happen. — Howard Mandel

Rickie Lee Jones

Pirates (Warner Brothers)

Stevie Nicks

Bella Donna (Modern)



Why have so many of our best women singer/songwriters taken on a beatnik persona? Is the male atmosphere of the industry so

inhospitable that artists like Laura Nyro, Joni Mitchell, Stevie Nicks, Rickie Lee Jones and the Roches have had to wrap themselves up in a twenty year out-of-date bohemian myth? Obviously these women find comfort in the beatnik role; it exempts them from conventional commercial behavior; it gives free reign to their inclinations towards elliptical modern poetry and open-ended scat jazz. It also offers a temptation to indulge themselves in the esoteric and ethereal.

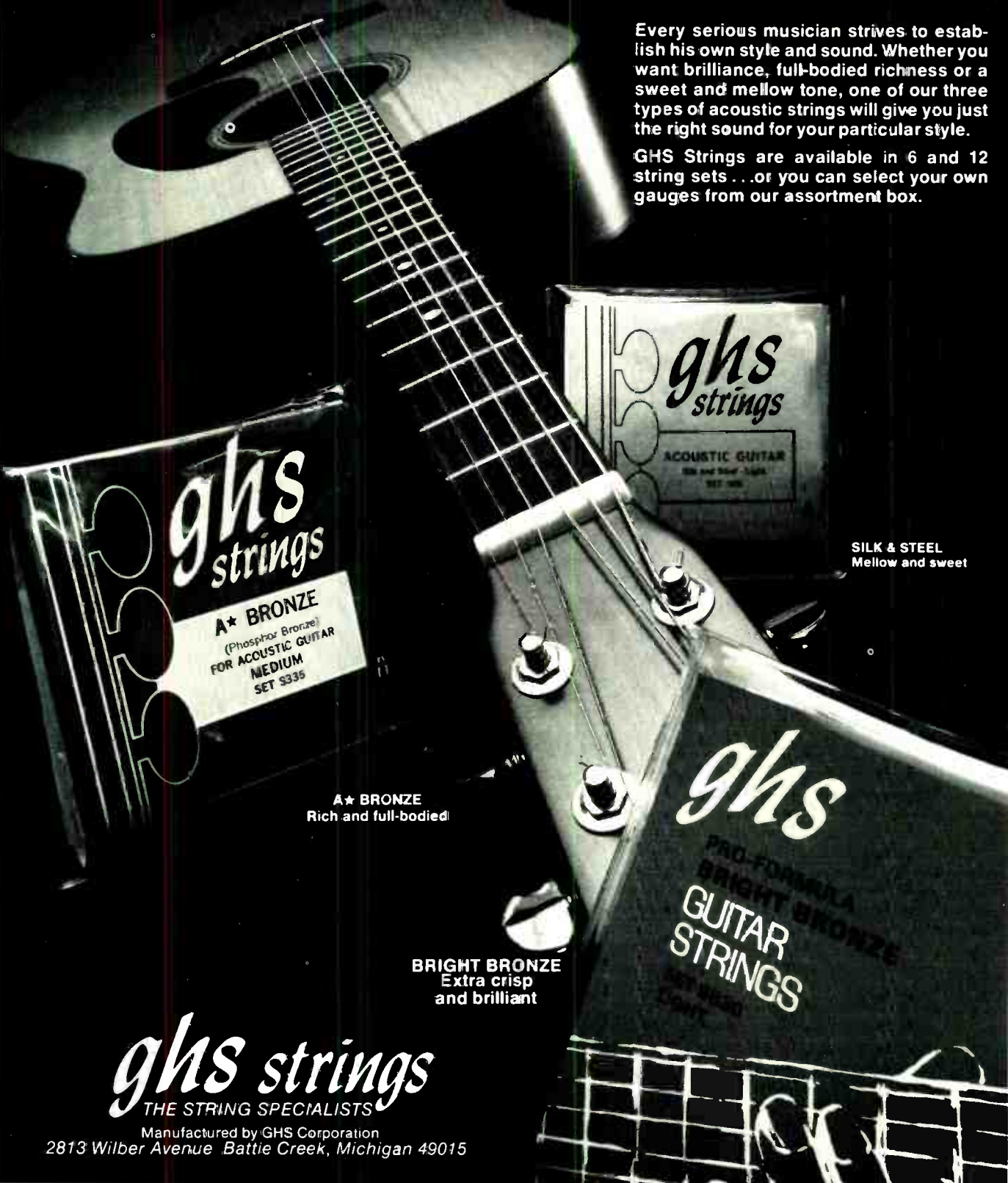
The two new albums by Rickie Lee Jones and Stevie Nicks feature arch-beatnik covers: Nicks poses with an albino parrot, white roses and a crystal ball; Jones wears a feathered, ruffled hat and lace gloves. The music inside is arch-beatnik too. The songs careen crazily between rambling, tuneless esoterica and sharply sketched and stylishly sung short stories. Though both albums have grand moments, neither is as good as *Rickie Lee Jones* or *Fleetwood Mac*. Because Jones is more talented, her successes are grander and her failures more interesting.

Jones' debut album was surprisingly mature with description so sharp and music so assertive you couldn't dodge its implications. Instead of the usual confessional ballads, she gave us short stories about other characters in the style of Randy Newman, Warren Zevon and her mentor, Tom Waits. After a strange two-year delay, her second album has arrived with images that are more ambiguous than sharp and an attitude

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that's more questioning than assertive. Accordingly, the music has less rhythm & blues snap and more dreamy drift. This shift has yielded some assets and some definite liabilities.

On the plus side, she has written two songs about love that are far more revealing emotionally than anything on the first album. "We Belong Together" tells of a romance with one Johnny the King who both thrills her and tricks her. Her whispered verses detail the doom that haunts a love lived out on a scruffy street. A ghostly synthesizer swell and echoing Latin percussion form the backdrop to a dramatic piano figure. That figure quickens into the chorus as Jones stubbornly shouts: "We belong together" again and again in sharp defiance of the odds against her love.

On "Lucky Guy," she marvels at her ex-boyfriend's ability to sleep soundly and talk about her calmly. The cabaret piano figure captures that flip attitude. When Jones resolves at the end of the song to swallow her hurt and be "a lucky guy" too, it is not without irony. "Skeletons" uses Randy Newman's technique of pitting brutal lyrics against pretty music. In this case, the story concerns a very pregnant wife whose husband is killed by trigger-happy cops, and the music is a soft lullaby.

On the minus side, Jones' lyrics often drift off into hazy esoterica. Lines like "In the terminal where dreams let so many tickets through" recall the days when we mistook drugs for the muse. Using the lazy lyricist's trick, she drops names like Brando, Dean and Poe to stand for feel-

ings she should describe herself. As her lyrics lose focus, so does her voice and music. When she speak-sings in a wispy whisper, her voice loses its compelling qualities. "The Returns" and "Traces of the Western Slopes" are completely out of focus; "Living It Up" and "Pirates" try to tell a story without a story; "Woody and Dutch" reprises "Danny's All-Star Joint" from her first record without the concrete details. Yet even in these disappointments, every song has at least one line where the writing and/or singing is so good there's no mistaking this woman's potential.

Fleetwood Mac is the first band since the Beatles to have three strong songwriters. Lindsey Buckingham fills the John Lennon role; Christine McVie the Paul McCartney role, and Stevie Nicks the George Harrison role. Like Harrison, Nicks' tendency towards dubious mysticism is curbed by the other strong figures in the group but flourishes unchecked on solo albums. Like Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*, Nicks' first solo album pulls songs from a seven-year backlog of compositions her group couldn't use. The results are some embarrassingly ponderous lyrics and dragging tempos, but a few sharp melodies, consistently good backing and some exceptional singing.

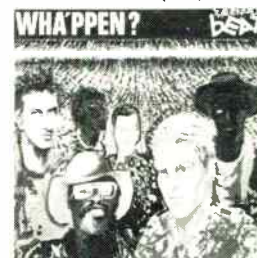
No matter how silly the lyrics are — and some are pretty silly — Nicks' reedy voice convinces you that something important is at stake. She will send a syllable sailing and then give it a slight quiver to make it sound as if she is just an instrument the music is blowing through. She is especially effective as a harmony singer, where her voice flickers like a shadow around her partners. She duets with Tom Petty on "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" and with Don Henley on "Leather and Lace." She gets expert help from members of Petty's, Springsteen's, Ronstadt's and Taylor's bands. If you don't read the lyrics on the sleeve, "Bella Donna" builds a powerful momentum. But Petty's "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" is the only song with concrete lyrics or a dance beat. Nicks could use a lot more of both. — *Geoffrey Himes*

The English Beat

Wha'ppen? (Sire)

The Specials

Ghost Town (EP)



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field Blues band, etc., etc. The collective spirit of a hot interracial band somehow captures the very essence of post World War II popular music. The Beat and Specials are just two of the groups countering the dead weight styles of postpunk Oi bands and spiritually bankrupt new romantic thrillseekers.

The Beat combines ska, blues, R&B and hi-life elements into an irresistible mix of sweating and syncopated dance music. Tracks like "The Doors of Your Heart," "A Dream Home in New Zealand," and "Over and Over" demonstrate the Beat's eagerness to put new wave vocals and steel band music, dub and toasting raps, R&B horn charts and a rhythm section that fuses New Orleans and Kingston via England all in the same pot.

"Ghost Town," the song that topped the British charts this past summer as England's cities burned, apparently staved off the band's breakup and is probably the song of the year. From its monster movie soundtrack organ to its Little Eva Eastern melodic hook, the song typifies the kind of experimentation this music stands for. The switch from the solemn, death march verse to the wailing, eerie chorus is a chilling effect. At the open air concert in New York last August, "Ghost Town"'s dramatic impact was saved for the end of the set, and when the featured solo in the tune came on the trombone the crowd stood and cheered. Now *that's* entertainment.

— John Swenson

Debbie Harry

KooKoo (Chrysalis)



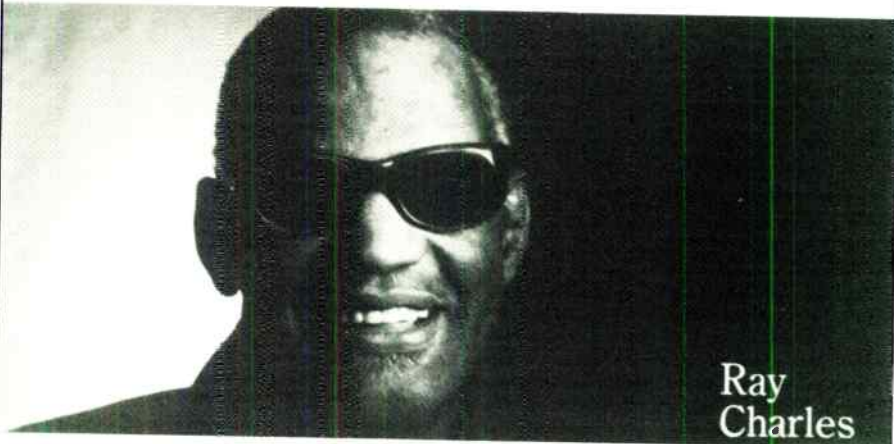
As H. R. Giger's cover painting graphically renders it, one of Debbie Harry's intentions in making KooKoo, her first solo album, was to skewer

the image that Blondie had created for her. Complicating this is that Harry's other major goal was to have a hit record, and therefore didn't want to actually alienate her audience. Perhaps that's why Harry's most daring move was visual, not aural; a weird cover can get all sorts of publicity, but it doesn't affect the way a song sounds on the radio.

Musically, KooKoo is plainly aiming for mass-market acceptance. Even though there's a lot of the arch humor and cultural subversion that Harry and cohort Chris Stein are famous for, the album's arty ambitions never dominate. You may, for example, catch the sly swipe at Pat Benatar's "Hit Me with Your Best Shot" that's buried in "Surrender." Then again, you may not, but you're sure to be infected by the lean, irresistibly rhythmic hook that holds the song together.

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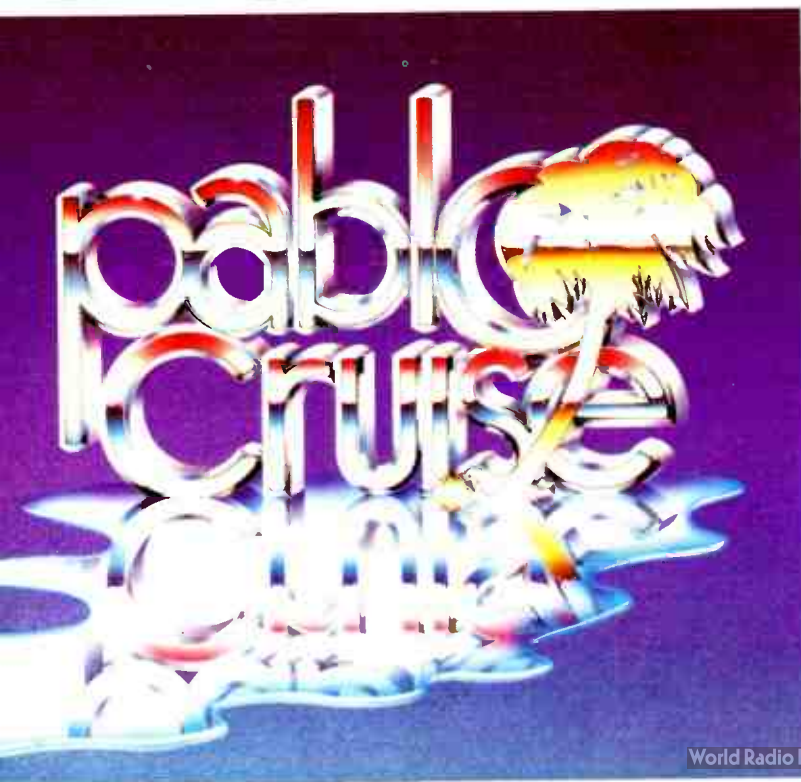


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team, producers Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards. Unlike Blondie producer Mike Chapman, who packed each album with as many ear-catching devices as he could cram into the grooves, Rodgers and Edwards go for a rhythmically astute, concisely melodic approach that rests comfortably between rock and R&B.

This suits Harry to a tee. Because she's not a soul singer, her previous attempts at getting funky were, like "Rapture," awkward embarrassments. Rodgers and Edwards, though, use the brittle, unsyn-copated rhythms of Harry's New Yawk accent to their advantage, and have assembled songs that combine the plasticity of rock phrasing with the insistent pulse of funk. The result is not only danceable but convincing, and makes *KooKoo* one of the most satisfying recordings Debbie Harry has made.—*J.D. Considine*

World Saxophone Quartet

WSQ (Black Saint Records)



When I found myself walking to work whistling tuneful riffs from WSQ, I knew either something was terribly right in my life or terribly

infectious about the album. After a second listening, I discovered it was the latter.

The four horn concept — suggested to Hamiett Blueitt, David Murray, Oliver Lake and Julius Hemphill by Ed Jordan, a New Orleans reed player and instructor — has matured, producing concise and highly articulate statements. Instead of wasting time on parody and antagonism, the Sax Quartet establishes a dialogue between the varieties of black music within a miniature orchestral context, which embodies the often debauched principles of American democracy — freedom of speech, freedom of response and freedom of innovation within a commonly agreed upon structure. By using instruments that can approximate the human voice, the Sax Quartet has extended the black *a capella* tradition, while fusing it with another of equal richness — the jump band. Thus, the music is lyrical, humorous, sonorous and, most importantly, it swings demonically.

The new album improves upon their previous Black Saint release — *Steppin'* — because of the tautness of the compositions and ensemble interplay. The songs are shorter, the solos more concise, and Hemphill's compositions glide from group improvisations to vamps and orchestral themes. WSQ also utilizes the whirling furor of the Quartet's disastrous first album — *Point of No Return* — in a celebratory manner. Their first album had all the charm of being dragged

ANOTHER RHODES SCHOLAR SPEAKS OUT.

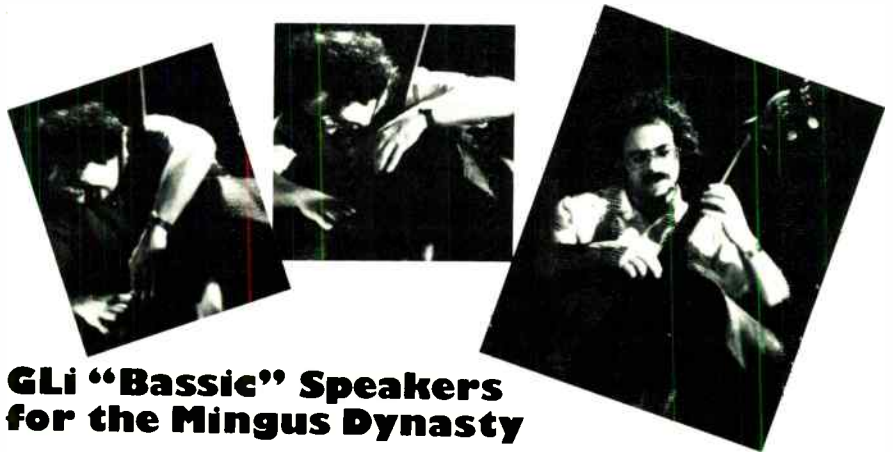


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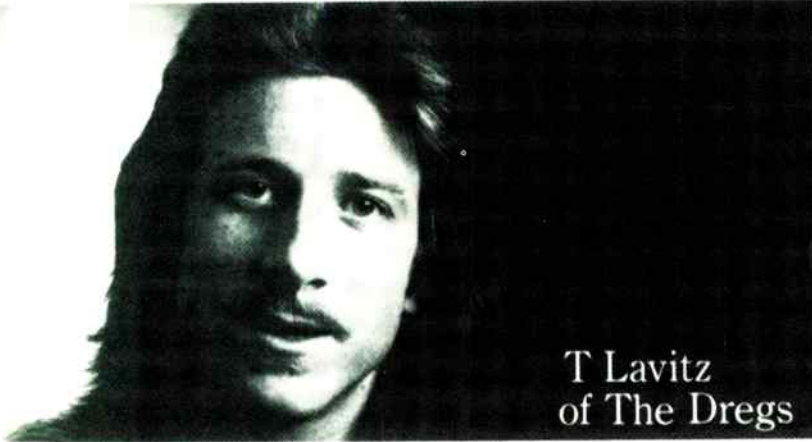


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headlong into a saw mill, while the newest has the glee of a fife and drum band that just sacrificed the drummer, in lieu of a chicken, for the higher good.

At times the band jabbbers amongst itself. They, like the contemporary gospel choirs, are preacher and congregation both, providing their own polyphonic call-and-response. Tunes like "Sundance" and Lake's "WSQ" recall the swagger and orchestra! coloration of Ellington's "Harlem Air Shaft" and Mingus' "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting"; rarified chittlin' struts and ring shouts.

Blueitt's baritone is the cornerstone of the album. His lines, often flushed out by a second horn, combine the role of the bass and drum in a traditional jump band. This is especially evident on the four-note-vamp-plus thunderous baritone/bass clarinet backbeat of "WSQ," the percussive Elmore James type shout of "Hattie Wall," and the shifting motifs of Hemphill's joyous melodic "Pillars Latino." The latter tune, along with the brooding "Connections" and Blueitt's "Suite Music," display the lushness of black orchestral music. Embedded in the accompaniment are Hemphill's Ornette-ish phrases, Lake's stilted gospel/blues wails and Murray's careening squeals that he counters with lavish Websterian phrases.

Lake, the composer of tone poems, wrote one textural gem for the album. "Sound Light" is the type of music that could support a theatrical production, but its stark beauty might be wasted if fettered with words or bodies. It speaks silently in the same manner WSQ swings without a rhythm section. — *Don Palmer*

George Lewis *Chicago Slow Dance* (Lovely Music/Vital Records)



It's strange slipping into, or out of, composer/ trombonist/ electrician George Lewis' album-long opus, which opens with insistent

castanet-like clicking and some casually intoned horn licks (from Douglas Ewart, and J.D. Parran on Indian nagaswaram) that sound for all the world like Guiseppi Logan's ESP Discs revived. That's it for the first nine and a half minutes. Lewis, a Yale graduate, AACM member, and director for the past year of the Kitchen's experimental music and performance schedule, has been quoted as indicating this introduction refers to the artistic and intellectual pace of Chicago, where virtually nothing new is ever accepted, thus resembling a slow dance. He forgets, I think, the inti-

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macy, the suspense, the passionate, death-like clutch...but never mind. He knows Chicago well.

When Lewis himself enters, it's with a single low trombone tone, and he's matched by a higher, clearer sax. They alternate while the clicking recedes (eventually to silence) and Richard Teitelbaum's Moog synthesizer colors the context. About six minutes more, and Ewart develops a tenor sax solo that veers between solemn narration and flurries that demonstrate his total control of the instrument's odd extremities. Some of Douglas' most *audible* blowing, his solo is, as always, honest if knotty as a tree's branch.

The sides break on forced air and whispering; side two continues with the synth's ring modulations and horn tones blending to roar like creatures from the deep. Peculiar percussion: pots and pans, horses' hoofs. Parran overblowing his piccolo, while temple bells ring, silvery. All the metallic splashes ornament the far-ranging piccolo line, then the Moog encompasses it all. Something blown is like dogs barking. An upper register suite unravels slowly; sounds open onto other sounds unexpectedly, like doors in a fun house falling away. What's this? Deep waves like an airship's noises, isolated. Teitelbaum is rattling the room, Parran is sinking with his baritone, Ewart prevails on musette, is that George, whimpering? Yes, I know, the metaphors are all mixed up, but — my God, I'm changing... Is that Chicago, dark, momentous, threatening, coming to dance with *me*? I've been patient, listened closely, and now I'm nervous, holding my breath, not to disturb a delicate order of nearly random elements, rather like Power Boothe's feathery cover drawing. Lovely music, indeed! Let me hear this again. From New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, N.Y.C., NY 10012. — *Howard Mandel*

Little Feat

Hoy-Hoy! (Warner Bros.)



A well-intentioned but spotty aural documentary/sampler for hard-core Little Feat-sters, any resemblance between this double set and a Lowell George tribute album is purely unavoidable. *Hoy-Hoy!* covers the band's lifespan stretching back to an energetic treatment of Liber & Stoller's "Framed," recorded in 1969 prior to the first album with the original line-up including Roy Estrada on bass, and moving forward to recent (and largely unremarkable) studio material from Payne and second generation guitarist

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Paul Barrere. As the extensive liner copy explains, George envisioned some of the more complicated tunes like "Rock and Roll Doctor" in terms of a "cracked mosaic." And his idiosyncratic brilliance as a musician, vocalist, composer and arranger allowed him to work convoluted changes, odd, stop-time signatures and precariously phrased lyrics into gritty and hummable songs which broke all the rules. With less success, *Hoy-Hoy!* subliminally apes this approach with a hot-to-tepid montage of live material, alternate takes and heretofore rejected songs carefully sequenced to evoke a comprehensive emotional take on Little Feat's overall musical impact.

Produced by Payne and Barrere (with long-time engineer George Massenburg), *Hoy-Hoy!* ideally looks beyond George's primal contribution to the "overlooked" talents and material of the other band members. And while there's no doubt that Payne, Barrere et al., are excellent players who've written or co-written their fair share of winners ("All That You Dream," "Strawberry Flats," "Skin It Back") the imposing presence of Lowell George still looms large over this album. The best of the live material (recorded in Washington, D.C.'s Lisner Auditorium and on Long Island) — "Two Trains," "Teenage Nervous Breakdown" — is sparked by his subtly evocative slide guitar playing and "vanilla grits" (credit: Van Dyke Parks) vocalizing which brought the use of melisma to a different plane.

The real undiscovered gems on this LP are mostly his: an impassioned and respectful cloning of Howlin' Wolf's "Forty-Four Blues," a soulful version of Hank Williams' "Lonesome Whistle" discovered in the back of the garage by his wife, Elizabeth, and an absolutely shattering if over-produced hymn to the seductive evil of heroin entitled "China White" not included on George's solo LP, *Thanks, I'll Eat It Here*. Among the many heartfelt tributes to Lowell that course through this record, Elizabeth George's closing line about this tune stands out in sharp relief: "I think it was probably easy for him to write, if you know what I mean."

George's finite determination to pursue his quirky and unique musical vision to the fullest during his lifetime undoubtedly created tension within Little Feat. But that tension helped push the band beyond its normal limitations into new, uncharted areas. Over the years, Payne and company came to the fore and the sound became more ponderous, unfocused and excessive. Tired of fighting the good fight for a universe of reasons, Lowell receded into the background and Little Feat culminated into a somewhat bland, state-of-the-art L.A. studio band ("Gringo," "Over the Edge"). *Hoy-Hoy!*, ostensibly designed to prove otherwise, is a painful reminder that Lowell George was Little Feat. — J.C. Costa

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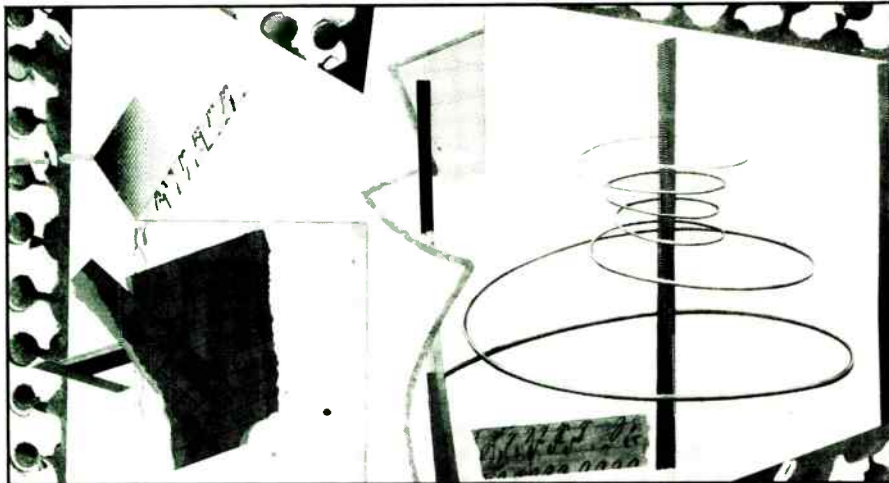
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Art Hats & Sax Huts

by Rafi Zabor

It's been entirely too long since the last **Anthony Braxton** Quartet record. Until *Performance 9/17/79* (hat Hut 2R19) came along I hadn't noticed how much I'd missed their odd-ball brilliance and the way in which their innocence and outrage go hand-in-hand with the most exacting instrumental discipline. Braxton is no longer the only Chicago avant-gardist with a recording contract — how time flies — but he's still one of the most consistent. The music is the usual brainy stuff, but his writing for quartet has continued to develop and the personnel has changed. John Lindberg proves that there is life after Dave Holland; Ray Anderson, the first post-George Lewis trombonist in jazz, is more raucous than Lewis, approximately as adept, but as with Lewis I sometimes wish he'd avoid melody less; Thrumman Barker is a smoother, less analytical drummer than Barry Altschul and gives the band a stronger bottom than it had. Fine as the band is, Braxton is the obvious star: he extracts lyricism from apparently schematic trills, generates extraordinary grunts and gargles on bass clarinet that produce a kind of beauty, and in general demonstrates a sense of play in his willingness to try out one possible gambit after another, like a brilliant kid tinkering in a lab. This is the best Braxton record in a long time, although spies in Chicago inform me that this band performed the same suite of pieces to even better effect in that city's jazz festival last year. Console yourself for the haphazardness of recordings and the concert that got away with the liner notes, which, although written in the usual semi-penetrable Braxtonese, are the most helpful piece-by-piece exegesis of his musical strategies so far.

Jimmy Lyons and **Sunny Murray's** *Jump Up/What to Do About* (hat Hut 2R21) is a different kettle of different fish but just as worth owning. Lyons, who in his more than twenty years with Cecil Taylor has established himself as one of the finest sidemen in the music, is a "bet-

ter" saxophonist than Braxton in most of the usual senses of the term, but Braxton has done the Taylorish work of bodying forth a group music — when tunes or chord changes don't provide the landmarks something must, whether it's energy or a formula. Lyons is a prototypical improviser, not a structuralist; it is his own playing he relies on. His clarity of line, his technique and fluency of ideas represent a standard of music-making we don't get to hear very often. The thematic material is bop-based, although bop harmony is dispensed with and its rhythmic language shattered. On "Riffs 1" he juggles thematic fragments a la Taylor for awhile, but structure quickly gives way to neo-Parkerish fluency and the solo is on. Which is to say that this is a blowing date and that the pieces go on as long as the soloist has ideas. John Lindberg is on bass and Sunny Murray, who has taken a lot of flack over the years for his untechnical drum style, is an excellent accompanist and listener, and his use of texture, as in a long cymbal roar behind Lindberg's first bass solo, is both effective and unique.

As good as these albums are, and as dramatically as they illustrate the dialogue between form and freedom that is one of the mainsprings of jazz tradition, they are variations on the already known. New to me this month, though not so new that a whole new subsidiary label called hat ART seems necessary for it, is the 13-piece **Vienna Art Orchestra**, *Concerto Piccolo* (hat ART 1980/81), and its gifted and eclectic composer Mathias Ruegg wears his influence (Carla Bley, Gil Evans, George Russell, Willem Breuker, Mingus) on his sleeve, proudly, and his moderately outrageous music is an ironist's encyclopedia. You can tell it's European because they still believe in Art — the album opens with the twin cries, "The avant-garde is dead," and "Tradition is dead:" try to find an American band sufficiently possessed with the subject to bother rais-

continued next column

ing it. I'm inclined to disregard the references to death because the music teams with death's famous opposite: continuous invention and surprise, monstrously different charts, lots of melody, bebop smithereens, *echt*-German alpenhorns and no slouches in the band — every time a space opens in the charts, out pops a good solo, the most distinctive of them by flugelhornist Herbert Joos, who has a Gil Evansish piece to himself, and a glossolalian vocalist named Laura Newton, who finds something to do with supervocalisms of Jay Clayton. The music is superficial and derivative in the best ways, prefers ingenuity to the depths, has a good beat and you can laugh to it. It fills three sides of two records, comes in a nifty box you should be careful not to tear when you open, was recorded on Halloween, and why haven't we heard of these guys before? (All three albums available through NMDS, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012.)

Pretenders

Pretenders II (Sire)



Disappointing, but not the unmitigated disaster some of them would have you believe. *Pretenders II* is not so much guilty of thin,

follow-up material like "The Adultress" and "Bad Boys Get Spanked," but an unhealthy compunction to lean on studio gimmickry, i.e., why so much phasing, panning and echo on Chrissie Hynde's vocals when she has the best built-in slow vibrato east of the Pecos? James Honeyman-Scott, a solid artisan on lead guitar, decides things need a little filling up and cranks the timbre to a heavy metal distortion setting. Sometimes it works — the beautiful churning chorus in "Message of Love" — but mostly it overwhelms the material and alienates purist critics who were initially hooked on the angular guitar parts pinning down the corners of their best songs.

For those captivated by Hynde's dark and tremulous phrasing or the solid gold hooks pulsing through primo tunes like "Talk of the Town," what's scary about this album transcends sagging material and histrionic instrumentation. The overproduced sound of *Pretenders II* underscores a gradual distancing from the visceral kick of Hynde/Pretenders early on, a self-parody of legitimate concerns on the first LP that threatens to add real resonance to their name. Like many others before them, they all take refuge in the electronic womb of the studio, layering each repetition with enough

continued on next page

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grace notes to keep us from noticing.

But Chrissie Hynde's undeniable gift salvages enough moments to save this from being a total write-off. Previously released gems "Message of Love" and "Talk of the Town" still sound good (let's not quibble about the earlier versions on the EP), there's a nice dream-like interpretation of Ray Davies' "I Go To Sleep," "Pack It Up" is a little overwrought but the closing vamp on contemporary do do-ism is irresistible and "Birds of Paradise," "Day After Day" and "The English Roses" threaten to get better with repeated listenings. Stunned but not yet down for a ten count, the Pretenders will continue to produce enough FM-AOR sales to support at least two more attempts to kiss and make up. — J.C. Costa

The Go-Go's *Beauty and the Beat* (IRS)



It hasn't been easy to be a fan of groups like the Raspberries during the past few years. What those minions of white-suited quartets and quintets sang was pop music, in its truest sense meaning popular. By the mid-1970s, that label became synonymous with insubstantial shlock littering the top

ten, or even worse, the dreaded "power pop" blitz, by which record companies tried to make x-dozen third-rate corporate new wave bands sound original. But if a Barry Manilow or a Paul Anka makes pop music, then what do we call those classics by the Shangri-Las, or the Ronettes, or the Shirelles, or, for that matter, the Go-Go's?

We call it *pop*, and by so doing, bring that misused term home to again represent sprightly music with crisp harmonies, well-structured melodies and enough danceability to blow the lid off the American Bandstand rate-a-record chart. *Beauty and the Beat* is the album those of you who were embarrassed by pop music can use to say that pop's okay. For those of us who've remained die-hard genre fans through several pretentious eras, the Go-Go's debut album is a vindication of our dedication. Even better, all the credit belongs to a bunch of California girls who wouldn't know a Sunkist Soda commercial if it bit 'em.

Working with producer Richard Gottschler (who paid his pop dues as a Strangelove), the Go-Go's utilize hints of familiar riffs or harmonies to evoke well-known pop classics, rather than merely repeat them. "Skidmarks on My Heart," written by guitarist Charlotte Caffey and vocalist Belinda Carlisle, recalls a zillion "girls on the beach" summer songs melodically, but its jaunty interweaving of love chat and auto lingo is strictly the

Go-Go's personal property. On "This Town," Caffey and guitarist Jane Wiedlin's ode to Los Angeles, the Go-Go's proudly harmonize about their glamour metropolis, utilizing the same brand of arrogance one sensed in the Rascals' "I Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore," yet nowhere is that tune duplicated.

Throughout *Beauty and the Beat*, twangy guitars highlight Carlisle's young-girl vocals, and Gina Schock's substantive drumming is rigorous without sacrificing precision. Gottschler must have swooned the first time he heard Schock's demanding introduction to "We Got the Beat," so much like his "Cara-lin" of the 1960s. A more pleasant surprise to me was the realization that one T. Hall, co-author with Wiedlin of the Go-Go's successful single, "Our Lips Are Sealed," was none other than the Specials' Terry Hall. By his complete understanding of the Go-Go's style, Hall acknowledges that the group, like the Specials, speak to youth, but the ladies do it with joy and optimism.

On *Beauty and the Beat*, this joy is not to be confused with frivolity or throw-away pleasure. The best pop music is that which churns at the heart and acts as a non-threatening catharsis. These may be serious and deadly times, but unless you're prepared to live in an emotional vacuum, you could use some honest release, and honesty is the Go-Go's only policy. — Toby Goldstein

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JAZZ

By Rafi Zabor

SHORT TAKES

Prestige Items

It's autumn in Shikasta and I've got a million of them, the first half-dozen of which prove that we don't call certain guys giants for nothing. From the inexhaustible maw of Prestige/Milestone comes a cataract of twofers that provide some of the best listening of the month.

Sonny Rollins *Vintage Sessions* (Prestige) is a fascinating set for those afflicted with Sonnymania: not his first appearances on record, but the first issued under his own name (1951-54), before he became officially Colossal. It opens with "I Know," a brilliant afterthought at Miles Davis' *Dig* session, passes through some journeyman stuff with flashes of things to come, and ends well with sessions with the MJQ, Blakey and Monk. I like the Blakey date best. Rollins' (uncredited) tenor solos on the new **Rolling Stones** album ain't too bad either, particularly the chord substitutions on "Neighbors." Question is, will the Stones give him more room if and when he does some dates with them live? Now that would be something to see. *April in Paris/Live* (Milestone) by

Thelonious Monk, once was known as *Two Hours with Thelonious* and features the quartet with which the great disrupter finally subsided into routine. Charlie Rouse and Frankie Dunlop are very Monkish accomplices, and prefer this 1961 live set to the Columbia albums that followed, but the best thing on it is the one-minute-and-twenty-second unaccompanied titled tune. Oh Monk. Two quite different **Max Roach** bands perform on *Conversations* (Milestone). The first from the master drummer's most audibly embittered period (1958), including the brilliant and doomed Booker Little on trumpet, is a tightly led band already leaning into the whirlwinds of the 60s. The second, a fine quartet with Clifford Jordan, Mal Waldron and Eddie Khan, plays two pieces each over twenty minutes long; as usual in a Roach band that relies on long solos, the best things on the record are the leader's furious and architectural inventions.

Gene Ammons *The Big Sound* (Prestige), is a warm, worth-it 1958 blowing session with saxophonists Ammons, Pepper Adams, Paul Quinichette, Jerome Richardson and a brilliant altoist who, when I heard this record unan-



nounced on the radio a few years back, was clearly the greatest undiscovered genius in the music. Turned out to be John Coltrane on a borrowed horn.

The most successful of all these twofers is the reissue of *Mingus at Monterey* (Prestige), a technically inadequate recording of one of **Charles Mingus**' most important concerts that boasts more bass solos than usual, fine alto work from Charles McPherson and John Handy, and Jaki Byard's large-scale orchestration of one of Mingus' most imposing works, "Meditations on Integration." For all the overloaded mics and missed notes, and despite the fact that a definite version was recorded a few months earlier with Eric Dolphy (available on Milestone's *Portrait* twofer), this performance builds up to an earned catharsis that reminds you what music is all about. **Bill Evans** *Re: Person I Knew* (Fantasy) is neither a reissue nor a twofer but unused material from the five dates that produced the excellent *Since We Met*. This album is about as good, and the gnomic, withdrawn music of 1974 reminds you with a shock how happy Evans' life and art became in the time between '74 and his death last year. And you want to know how sad it makes me feel?

Fresh Air

Among new releases there is, sad to say for the struggling customer, a ton of stuff worth owning. A flock of new Black Saints and Soul Notes are in from Italy. I think the best of them is easily the new **World Saxophone Quartet** (see main review section; two new George Russell albums will also get a full treatment next issue), but the new **Air** album, *Air Mail* (Black Saint), is good too. It has a couple of problems though, the most serious of which is not the band's fault: splendidly recorded in the past by Nessa and Arista/Novus, this band, with its startling textures and sense of detail, now suffers from the same cramped recording regularly dished out to the rest of the avant-garde. Fred Hopkins has suffered worst, Steve McCall hardly at all, and a great deal of Henry Threadgill's pungency of attack has been lost. McCall's tune, a simple thing for flute that uses the two-chord flip of "Temptation," comes off best of all. An occasionally similar trio of Sirone, Dennis Charles and Claude Lawrence digs occasionally deeper on **Sirone Live** (Serious Music), although it lacks Air's structural smarts and the solos run on some. But if Sirone wanted to make a case for himself as one of the most accomplished bassists in the

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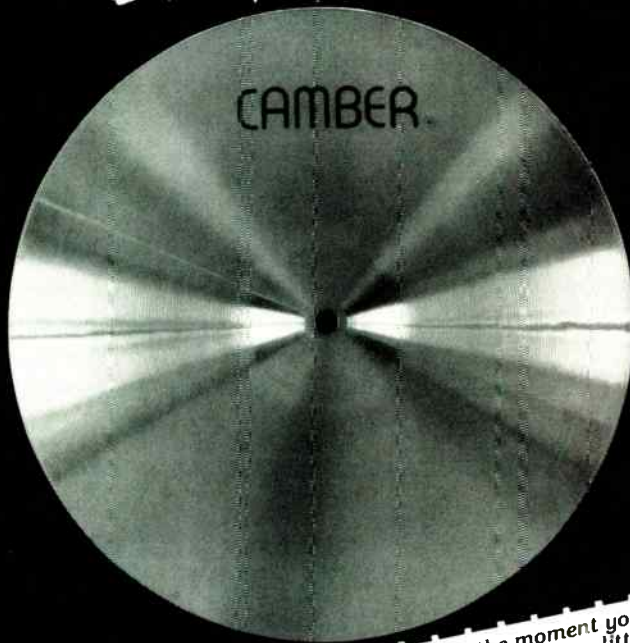
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and discontinuous the music gets the deeper it goes — there's also a genuinely unusual drummer named Toshi Tsuchitori, who is one of the few to follow up on Milford Graves. Shankar, an Indian musician who has mastered a living and highly evolved classical tradition, has the technical and emotional resources of centuries behind him and improvises at least as well as Jenkins and Bang, with far more expressive range, yet I am unable to say whether his music is in any way "better" or "richer" than theirs. Bang and Jenkins simply cut through another way. I think it's odd that such satisfying music can come out of the reduced resources of contemporary culture, and a proof, perhaps, that creativity is essentially unconditioned.

Rock Shorts, cont. from pg. 104
unknown talent who doesn't deserve to be.

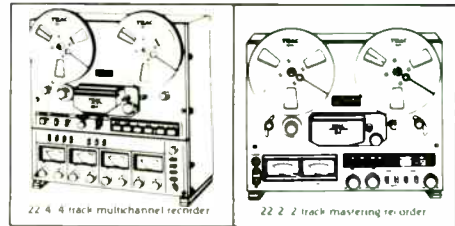
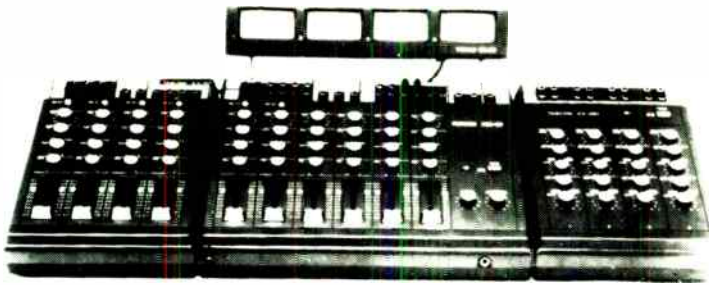
Any Trouble — *Wheels in Motion* (Stiff America) So much for the Costello comparisons. This Manchester band's chief penman Clive Gregson steps out with an ace program of new originals ("Trouble with Love," "Walking in Chains," "Open Fire" among them) that with Mike Howlett's crisp production and the new rhythmic muscle of drummer Martin Hughes crackles with Rockpile-like excitement. They also get extra points for covering guitarist Richard Thompson's exquisite "Dimming of the Day."

The Paragons (Mango) Original Jamaican rock steady pioneers the Paragons (John Holt, Garth Evans, Howard Barrett) reunite for another go at the brass ring following Blondie's success with their 1966 hit "The Tide is High." The song is rerecorded here as are several other of the Paragons' mid-60s JA hits, all given a contemporary reggae kick by the band led by the Wyman 'n' Watts of Kingston, Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare. And those voices, all sun-baked R&B croon, sound so good together again. Hopefully, this is no one-shot.

Sparks — *Whomp That Sucker* (RCA) The wacky brothers Mael try to recapture their idiosyncratic pop charm of yore only to go down for the count due to average material and unsympathetic production.

Kevin Dunn and the Regiment of Women — *The Judgement of Paris* (DB) A member of Georgia's new music mafia, Dunn used to be in a nifty Atlanta band called the Fans and recorded a mekkanik-pop dance version of Chuck Berry's "Nadine" on his own. On his first album, he applies familiar post-punk sounds (Frippepertronics-like guitar, robotic electro-percussion, a variety of curious keyboards) to a unique yet remarkably hummable collection of originals like "Tootsie 2" and "911." By the way, there is no Regiment of Women. Dunn does it all.

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Statman/Trischka, cont. from pg. 30 quotes another. Nothing could be further from the truth. Trischka's music has always had a lot of good earth in it, and anarchy only exists when you can't yet make out the new pattern. Now, it's hard to fault a company that's been so creative over the years, and given so many artists a chance when the majors couldn't be bothered. I just wish Rounder would admit that it has grown beyond its original mandate, and start a Rounder New Music (or some such) label. This would leave the bluegrassers and the jazzers happy. Sometimes admitting what's already there is the best way out of a dilemma.

Is this the way bluegrass will be going in the future? No. Nor should it. Bluegrass in its own way is as pure and stylized as a Japanese Noh play, and there is always a need for such predictable and classic drama. But this is music that clearly goes beyond the boundaries of bluegrass, to communicate something more subtle and particular. I asked Andy Statman recently, what, if anything, he was trying to express through his music. He said, "What I'm trying to do is reach the deepest emotions and express the most profound thoughts — thoughts which will affect people in a deeply emotional way. I want people to laugh when they hear the music. I want them to be able to cry, to be able to feel happy, sad, holy, or totally dirty and mundane. I want to express as many strong feelings as I can. I believe God gave me a talent and that one of my responsibilities is to develop as much as I can as a musician. This was one of the things I was given to do." 

King Crimson, cont. from pg. 46 drums with boo-bams. Now we can all play tuned rhythm: lead and accompaniment simultaneous and linked. Any of us can stop, even three at once, and it still sounds interesting.

AB has a new Jungle Rhythm and let out a series of wild sounds: grunts, screams, rips, flurries, honks and raunches.

But I had to leave for cream tea. Thankfully this first stage has passed that agonising point around the middle of any process when you're too far from the beginning to go back, and too far from the end to go forward: the "dark night" of any process. It's a necessary suffering if anything worthwhile is to be done. But at this point I could easily be irritable. The kind of person I am, very private, I can only handle a certain amount of sensory input; beyond that is work and beyond that is painful. To get a balance between filters and relationships is always difficult for me. Adler's "introvert" is a person who gets a lot of "charge" from very little external stimulus, whereas the extrovert needs a lot of information registering to get a response.

In those terms, I'm an introvert.


This evening I hope for a meeting with Sam. Because I recognise that this band is King Crimson I have no objection to it using its name. But that would give the band a weight and authority of 12 years of energy and attention, and if that were to be used to reinforce traditional ways of working I should prefer "Discipline," which would work in a gentler way.

Gomshall Tea Shop; April 8th, 12:25. Musing over Gomshall goodies: theoretically the public could advise a group on musical direction and the "use" of music. In practice the public expresses its interest by voting with its money on records and concert tickets. People aren't turkeys, but we constantly undermine ourselves. I don't have the Marxist faith in the working class as God; they are as fallible as any other group of people.

World HQ; 23:20. Exhausted after a week's rehearsal. Running through the repertoire we have six pieces after abandoning several others. This interspersed with flying young Alex Bruford's rubber-propelled balsa wood aeroplane; I'm fine for landing it on the Brufords' roof.

There's a difference of approach between BB and myself. Having spent six years in a band which twitched from one rapid, spasmodic style to another, I'm happy to repeat myself. And here's the difference with BB: he wants ideas to interest him, I don't mind if the music doesn't seem interesting (the interest is there, on the inside) but it must have a feel. And if that feel sits in a pocket, then fine. We've been grooving for a week and it hasn't been boring at all. This one has really got to me.

World HQ; April 9th. Woke up still full of it. This was what my life was like for six years: the concerns of KC never left me. Perhaps the dynamism for this band will come from Bill trying to break up the music and me working for gradual changes.

At the meeting with EG on the 7th there was no pressure at all to use the name King Crimson. Mark Fenwick actually suggested using Discipline. 

Partch, cont. from pg. 35 to a permanent home. Partch was constantly on the move around the country, instruments in tow. By the time he settled in San Diego County in the late 60s, he had glued, screwed and strung his instruments in no less than 20 different towns.

In 1955, Partch completed his second major work, *The Bewitched*, subtitled "A Dance Satire" (Composers Recordings, Inc. — while all specific recordings mentioned are both in print and superbly performed, *The Bewitched* alone suffers from poor engineering). This work is made up of ten scenes — bearing titles such as "A Soul Tormented by Contem-


porary Music Finds a Humanizing Alchemy" and "Euphoria Descends a Sausalito Stairway" — which work into the main theme of predicaments and accidents of nature. *The Bewitched* is the apex of Partch's "at-one-ness" concept, integrating music, dance and theater thoroughly. His first major work involving intense polyrhythms, the satire gives particular emphasis to the corporeal (as opposed to abstract) side of us. Through a combination of movement and sound, it uses all instruments, props and players to exude a visual as well as musical physicality.

The University of Illinois commissioned Partch to supervise a performance of *The Bewitched* in 1957. As was often the case, Partch went to the new locale without any players, trained and directed interested musicians, dancers and actors for six months or so, and put on a performance before moving on.

Partch's next major piece was completed in 1960. *Revelation in the Courthouse Park* has the parallel stories of a Greek drama and the worship of a rock star. In addition to his previous themes and concepts, Partch focused on the idea of ritual very heavily. (The Aspen Festival in Colorado, which last month [July '81] featured a week-long symposium on Partch by Mitchell and the Ensemble, wants the group to perform *Revelation* next summer.)

Partch's final major work is *Delusion of the Fury*, a piece brimming with corporeality and ritual. And while Partch drew from Japan and Africa for a pair of ritualistic folk tales, *Delusion* can be seen as a minor reconciliation to Western musical practices for its abundant lyricism, something Partch had viewed disdainfully until then.

When Partch died in San Diego in 1974, he left not only a complete alternative to the Western tradition but also a body of music — created by the same inspiration that was responsible for the 43 notes, the wood, glass and metal instruments, and the multi-media theater — which ranks with the finest from American composers in all genres. For the sake of description of Partch: it can be argued that his sophistication of concept was broader than Charles Ives'; his moods, deeper than Duke Ellington's; his intricacy, more functional than Cecil Taylor's; and his mystique leaves Sun Ra out on Saturn.

His innovations cannot be separated from his music. Of course discoveries and inventions lose their impact amid today's proliferation of music systems unreliant on the piano octave, emotion over system intonations, polyrhythms, physically active musicians, instrument builders, and multi-media presentations. But Partch's intuition cannot be ignored: all signs point to a very short bit of road being explored by current Western musical practice. Partch points beyond. 

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By Dan Forte

In the early sixties, bands like the Ventures and later the Beatles made any four kids believe that they too could get a couple of electric guitars, a bass, and a set of drums and start their own rock 'n' roll band. And with a little bit of paper route money and some sympathetic parents, they actually could afford some cheap but functional equipment and be playing "Walk — Don't Run" and "Louie Louie" in no time. Sometime in the early seventies this garage band ideal got subverted, so that four kids needed their own paper mill and parents who were millionaires before they could play ELO or ELP.

The Beatles may have inspired a generation of would-be guitar players, but they didn't all necessarily have to play hollow-body Gretsches and Hofner "violin" basses. It wasn't until the advent of The Lead Guitarist that models and makes became crucial to one's "getting that sound." As Clapton, Beck and Bloomfield changed guitars (each almost simultaneously moving from Fender Telecasters to Gibson Les Pauls to Fender Stratocasters), so did a legion of string benders.

As any Econ student or guitar dealer can tell you, supply and demand determine market value. Fashion (both in terms of sound and name recognition) made the prices of Strats, Les Pauls, and to a lesser degree Teles skyrocket several lengths ahead of inflation. Today it is virtually impossible to obtain a vintage Stratocaster for less than \$1,000. In fact, a grand would be considered a steal, since new Strats are listing near \$800. And, needless to say, the days of finding an old lady with a Strat her son abandoned in mint condition are all but gone.

But there are alternatives to the high cost of the six-string industry standards that are not only easier on your pocketbook but sound pretty darn good to boot. (You may not be able to "get that sound," but the sounds you will get are likely to open your ears.) What I'm talking about here are names like Harmony, Kay, Danelectro, Teisco, Goya, Eko, Encore, Coral, and, yes, even the Sears-Roebuck Silvertones.

About a year ago I was stranded in a music store with a lot of time to kill, and I proceeded to play literally every guitar hanging on every wall. Strats, Les Pauls, 335's, Flying V's — you name it — I wasn't really looking for a new instrument, but I tried them all. Just as I was ready to pack up and leave, I discovered the corner where the store kept all the real "junk." Whereas the rest of the store's wares were displayed like antiques, these ugly ducklings weren't displayed at all. Sitting in a pile behind a stack of Marshalls were green guitars, red guitars, guitars with racing stripes, guitars with more plastic than wood. An odd-shaped silver metal-fleck number caught my eye. I plugged it in.

"This is the best one I've played so far," I told the salesman. "I think I'd like to buy it," I said, looking at the \$89.00 price tag.

"I can let you have that one for 75 bucks," he said, driving the worst bargain I'd ever encountered. "I'll throw in a case if we can find one that fits."

What I ended up with is not only a great electric guitar, but one hell of a conversation piece as well. It's called a Diamond Ranger. I'm only guessing that Diamond is the make and Ranger is the particular model, although the word Ranger is on the headstock (over a scrawled tiger) and "Diamond" is written in chrome on the black plastic pickguard (complete with a rhinestone dotting the i). What this guitar has that the others in the store lacked is character. Sure, a Strat has a lot of character, as does a Les Paul or an ES-355; but how many Strat players have character? More often than not the guitar's sound overwhelms the players' (unless you're Mark Knopfler).

The Diamond Ranger (made in Italy, assumedly in the early sixties), features a unique body construction consisting of a fiberglass top apparently glued onto a wooden back (type unknown, thanks to a heavy coat of black enamel). The scale is 24½", although the string length (from tuning machine to tailpiece) is extremely long — 37" for the high E. It has 21 frets on its rosewood fingerboard, three single-coil pickups, one master volume and one master tone knob, and,

instead of a toggle switch, six — count 'em, six — Vegematic buttons, which yield five pickup positions (neck, middle, bridge, neck and bridge, all three). The sixth button is for — why didn't Gibson think of this? — none of the above.

The whammy or vibrato bar (what would a silver metal-fleck Diamond Ranger be without a whammy bar?) is one of the simplest designs imaginable — and with vibrato bars, simpler usually equals better. You could launch a boat with the sideways spring vibrato found on the early sixties Les Pauls (the ones with the body design that later became the SG), but the suckers never work and don't stay in tune. The Ranger's whammy consists of a piece of bent metal with a bar attached. Push it down, the pitch is lowered; pull it up, the pitch is raised. Instant Duane Eddy.

Some guitarists (like Rick Nielson) collect vintage Strats, some (like Steve St.!'s) collect old Martin flat-tops. Me, I collect Diamond Rangers. So far I own two. I found the second one about six months later. Same body shape, only this time it was red metal-fleck with a gold pickguard, only two pickups (and consequently only four selector buttons), and a white mother-of-jackknife plastic fingerboard, instead of rosewood. It was strung with heavy-gauge flatwounds when I bought it (for \$125), which caused the soft neck to warp considerably, but it sounded like "Dick Dale Meets Hound Dog Taylor," so I left them on.

Two things that become immediately apparent when collecting mutant guitars: 1) they never come with cases, and most are too odd-shaped to fit any other case; 2) they invariably have parts missing that are impossible to replace. The Diamond Rangers feature a Fender-ish bridge saddle design (without the little springs that always buzz), and because one was missing I had to have a skilled friend machine me a duplicate. Teisco guitars boast another simple but effective whammy design, but the bars have invariably been removed (because they're held in with a thumb screw).

Some cheapo electrics have one characteristic albeit strange tone quality

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and that's it. (Despite all of the pickup combinations, the Diamond Ranger's sound derives mainly from its two-piece front-back fiberglass-wood body.) Others are surprisingly versatile. Teisco of Japan circa 1960 is both. The Teisco bass, with its huge flat-gray body and long neck, was the standard for high school dance bands in the mid-sixties, because of its naturally fuzzy sound (not to mention its price tag). The Teiscoguitar, on the other hand, with the same basic shape and gray finish, provides a wide variety of tonal colors, all of them fantastic. Three pickups (some Teiscos feature four), three on-off "light" switches. Would could be simpler? Why didn't Fender think of this? Even the customizers could only come up with a five-position Strat switch, instead of the seven different combinations on-off switches allow — neck, middle, bridge, neck and middle, bridge and middle, neck and bridge, or all three. True, some of these aren't very usable on most guitars, but not so with the Teisco. The Teisco (some models say Teisco Del Ray) guitar's big brother, the six-string bass, includes all the same features — a bass with three pickups, a whammy bar, and a bass cut switch (also present on the guitar). Because of its square-pole pickup and the placement of same, it



Complete with mother-of-toilet-seat body and lipstick tube pickup, this Silvertone carries an amp in its case.

sounds best in the neck/middle pickup mode, which would sound far too muddy on most guitars.

By far the *least* versatile of the bottom-of-the-line models is the infamous Silvertone "one-nighter" — you know, the kind you buy from Sears Roebuck with the amplifier built into the case. Consisting as it does of a three quarter scale, 18-fret neck bolted onto a masonite mother-of-toilet-seat body, with one "lipstick tube" bar pickup (somewhere between what would ordinarily be the neck and middle positions), this can only get one sound, unless you want to monkey with the one volume or tone knob. This is about as nofrills as they come; the body isn't even contoured — instead a strip of white nonskid mother-of-diving-board is glued around the rim. But because of its simplicity, there's obviously less that can go wrong with a Silvertone. Even the amp/case (with the original tubes) works on mine; it's about twenty years old.

There are a few modifications that are advisable on some of the more inexpensive axes. The Silvertone tuning machines (they look like skate keys and are about as fine tuned) have got to go, but should be replaced with pegs in the same spots, since the distance from nut to machine is essential to the Silvertone's distinctive thin sound. The stamped aluminum nut should be discarded in favor of bone or ivory. Likewise, the cheap plastic "nut" on the Diamond Ranger (actually, it's merely a string spacer directly behind a "zero fret") should be replaced with bone or ivory (in case you run across a Diamond Ranger).

Happily, the punk movement and the choice of instruments by renegade players such as David Lindley and Jeff "Skunk" Baxter have seen a slight return of the lesser known electrics, and there-

fore accounted for a wider array of guitar sounds. On his most recent tour, Lindley could be found playing a masonite Danelectro "short-horn" with three slanted parallel lipstick tube pickups. The guitar offers volume and tone pots for each pickup, but has a toggle switch rather than the on-off options.

One of J.J. Cale's favorite guitars is a Vincent Bell signature model Firefly made by Coral (one of several Danelectro lines). This 335-shaped thin-body features two bar pickups which are wired in series, so that they are hum-bucking. Like most inexpensive 335 lookalikes it does not contain a sound block (the ES-335-355 series' main attraction). It's completely hollow like an ES-330, and so could cause feedback problems at higher volumes. Hondo's new Longhorn line is, of course, an updated version of the Danelectro Longhorns with a few "refinements" that give it a less distinctive tonal quality. Unlike the Hondos, which are made of solid wood, the Danelectros were masonite with a thin airspace in the middle but no f-holes. (So if you want to sound like Link Wray playing "Rumble," only a Dan-O will make it.)

Some of Fender's less fashionable models threatened to make a comeback a couple of years ago when Elvis Costello posed with a Jazzmaster (which he actually played for a while) for the cover of *My Aim Is True*. Also, Jackson Browne employed two Jazzmasters on his *Hold Out* tour. Ironically, the prices of these Fender dinosaurs (originally at the top of their solid body line) climbed upward, but they didn't seem to catch on in a big way. Which is unfortunate, because the Jazzmaster is one fine instrument, and extremely versatile. The rhythm pickup preset switch (which automatically cuts some of the neck pickup's highs) isn't very desirable for rock applications, but it should be remembered that Joe Pass actually used a Jazzmaster on some of his early monumental sessions. The Jaguar, on the other hand, boasts several "features" which are more or less a waste of time: one more fret than a Jazzmaster, a built-in string damper. You can, however, announce your songs through the Jaguar pickup's open coils.

So far I haven't seen any Schecter or Charvel Jazzmaster copies, and I keep looking for one of those nifty stickpins in the shape of a Teisco with no luck. But a couple of weeks ago I did see a punker wailing away on some metal-fleck job that even I couldn't identify. Sounds and attitudes do seem to be changing slowly but surely.

As Jeff Baxter said recently in these pages, "See, someone spent some time with the really strange ones." Best of all, the red sparkle three-pickup fiberglass guitar with a whammy bar may be the last bargain left in music. **M**

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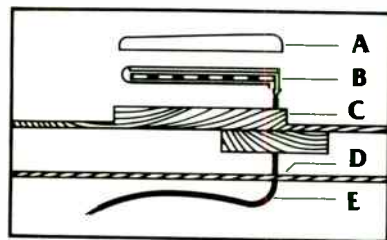
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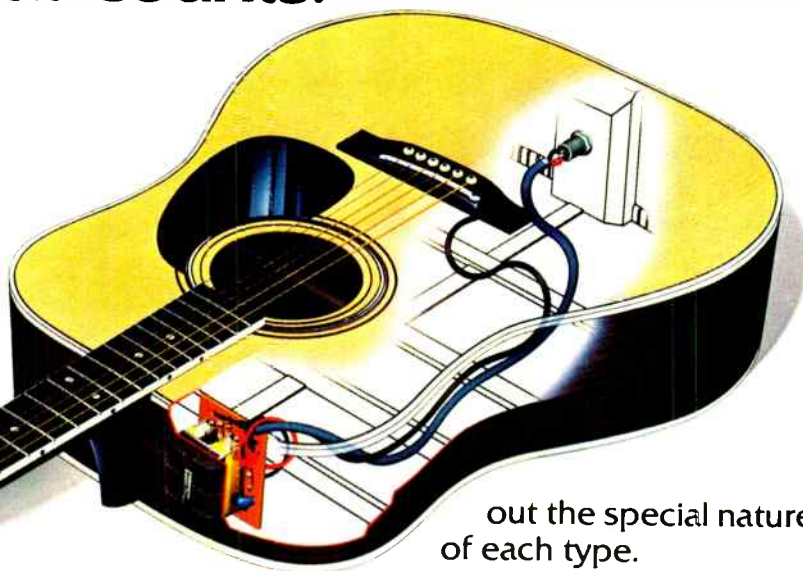
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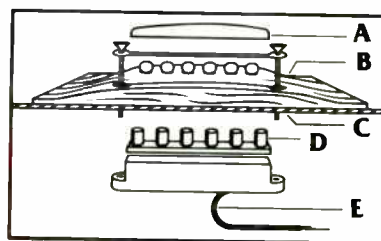
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GUITARS

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New Reggae, cont. from pg. 53
 was playing at a Kingston club called Tit For Tat and I was up the street at Evil People. We liked each other's playing, and I'd been doing a lot of studio work already; we just gradually got on the same sessions. Then we played together in a band called Revolutionary, and later with Word, Sound & Power which became Peter Tosh's backup band. We did his first album *Legalize It*, with a very roots, message kind of style; with *Bush Doctor* and *Mystic Man*, we meant to record more commercial sounds, especially with the single 'Don't Look Back.' We also played on Peter's new album, but didn't have anything to do with the production. We've parted ways, as friends, because he wants to work on his sound and we on ours.

"You see, all along when Sly and I were doing those early sessions together, we were thinking about producing. We didn't like our sounds on records, the way we were mixed. So, he began to work on tuning his drums, on his sound, and I on mine. Then when we started producing, we'd record bass and drums first, alone, getting our sounds just right, later adding the other instruments. This is the technique we used on our first Taxi recording, Gregory Isaacs' 'Soon Forward.' We just saved some money from our sessions, bought the tape and booked some four-track studio time. We asked Gregory if he would do a song with us, and he said 'yea mon, anytime.' That first single was the number one hit in Jamaica for eight weeks straight. So we really started coming up with a new way of recording reggae; but in Jamaica, people like to dance, and if a tune makes the foot move, it will be accepted, whether it's calypso, boogalu, funky, disco, moon-rock, sun-rock, anything.

"We knew Black Uhuru because Sly grew up in the same neighborhood with Michael Rose and Duckie, and we had done some things with Michael earlier. After two or three singles with the trio, we cut 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner' and it went number one on the island. They come in with their song, we hear them sing to get a feel from that, and we just work up the chords and slice up the tempo. We cut *Red* with bass, drums and lead guitar on the basic tracks, and most of the songs were cut in one take, once we'd all learned the tune. We don't rehearse before the session either; the first take usually just comes up feeling more natural before anybody's had time to think about other parts they might have played. On this album we also doubled up guitar parts more than on the last LP, and we tried to make every single instrument clean and clear. We mixed this one in Nassau at Compass Point Studio, which might have made a difference in that respect. Also, we didn't want to use the same kind of lines and parts as on earlier stuff. On this one,

A Beginner's Guide To Reggae

By Brian Cullman

Bob Marley & the Wailers — *Catch A Fire* (Island); *Exodus* (Island)

No household should be without four or five Marley records, if not for spiritual then for social reasons. Even albums like *Kaya* that sounded minor when they were released sound heartbreakingly radiant and joyful now. *Catch A Fire*, their first nationally released record, and *Exodus* are personal favorites, but you'll be hard pressed to find a bad Wailers' album.

Burning Spear — *Marcus Garvey* (Mango)

Winston Rodney, a.k.a. Burning Spear, comes on like the prophet Elias on a good day. Searing lyrics, beautiful vocals, and a solid beat.

Ijahman — *Are We A Warrior* (Mango)

Reggae's answer to *Astral Weeks*. Loping, mystical, and sung with a sleepy intensity that's totally hypnotic.

Black Uhuru — *Red* (Island)

You've read the article, now buy the album.

Jimmy Cliff — *The Harder They Come* (Island)

Listed as a Jimmy Cliff album, it's the songs by the Slickers, the Melodians, Toots & the Maytals, and Desmond Dekker that make the record really memorable. Ten years after its release, this soundtrack/ compilation still holds up.

Rockers — soundtrack album, various artists (Mango)

The movie was lame, but the soundtrack's even better than *The Harder They Come*. Beautiful songs by Junior Murvin ("Police and Thieves," which the Clash had class enough to cover), the Heptones, Jacob Miller, the Maytones, Bunny Wailer, et al.

The "King" Kong Collection — various artists (Mango)

A seminal collection of singles produced by Leslie Kong between 1968 and 1971 including Toots & the Maytals' "Monkey Man," the Melodians' "Rivers of Babylon," Delroy Wilson's "Gave You My Love," and Desmond Dekker & the Aces' "The Israelites." Also included is Desmond Dekker's followup record, "It Mek," which was a small hit before it was taken off the air when DJs discovered that "It Mek" is Jamaican slang for "I fuck."

UB40 — *Signing Off* (Graduate Records/U.K. import)

Brilliant young two-tone band out of London. Overtly political (UB40 is the listing on Britain's unemployment forms), the record is loaded with great songs, impassioned singing and reggae melodica. A slow burn.

The Heptones — *Night Food* (Mango)

An exuberant gem of an album; like a good Motown dance record. "Book of Rules" may be one of the most beautiful songs (in any genre) recorded in the last ten years.

The Melodians — *Sweet Sensation* (Mango)

Eight cuts recorded with producer Leslie Kong between 1969 and 1971. The Melodians were one of the sweetest vocal groups ever, having taken their inspirations from Smokey & the Miracles and Curtis Mayfield & the Impressions, and the singing is gorgeous.

Bunny Wailer — *Bunny Wailer Sings the Wailers* (Mango)

Bunny Livingstone a.k.a. Wailer in a loving tribute to Marley and to the early (pre-*Catch A Fire*) songs from his old group.

Linton Kwesi Johnson — *Forces of Victory* (Island)


A pivotal record: articulate, political, uncompromising, with the strength in the music as much as in the lyrics.

each individual instrument is almost like a lead, although we're still working together in grooves."

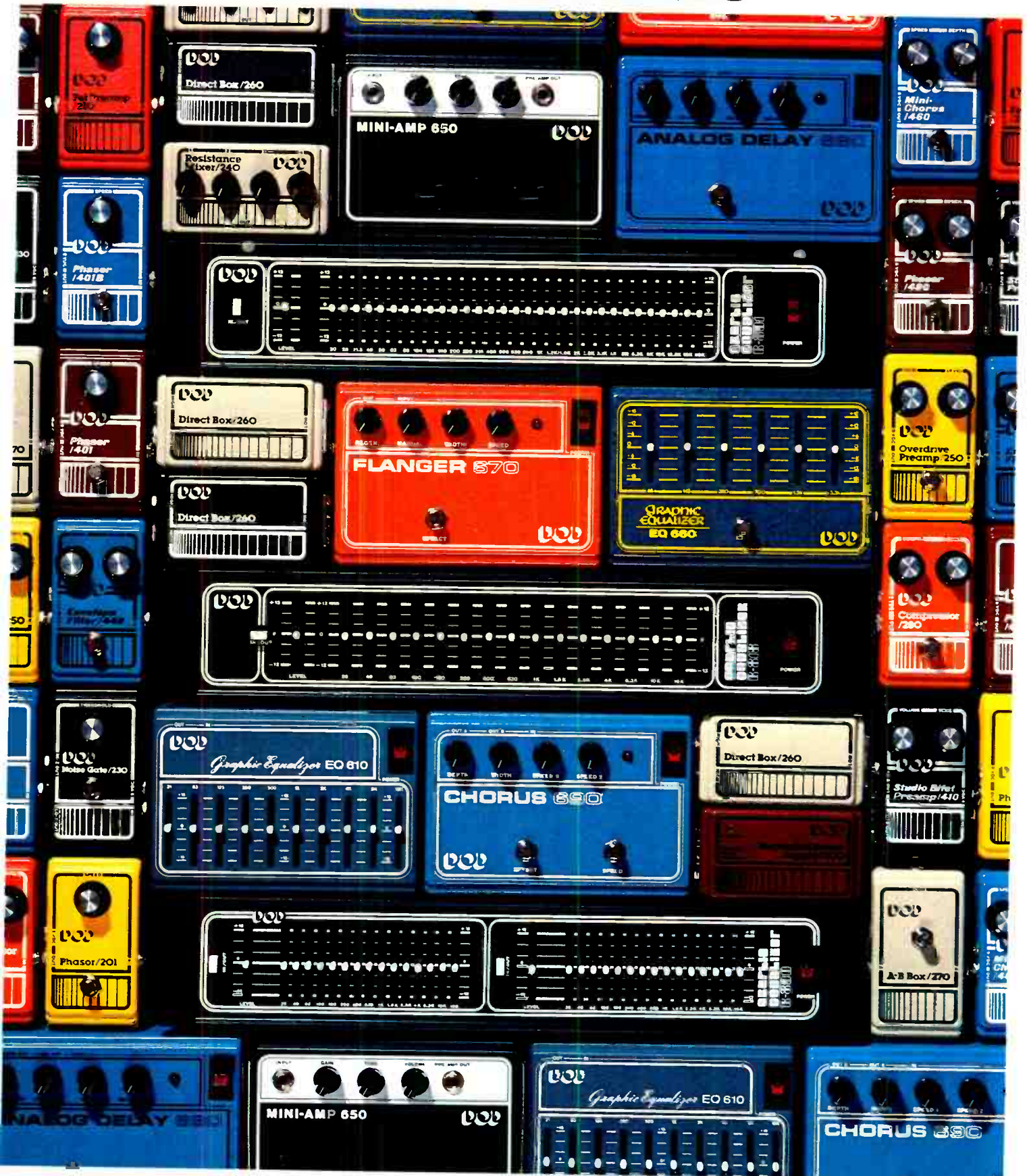
It would be pleasant to say that Black Uhuru once again brings reggae to the brink of mass hysterical acceptance, or whatever it is we're supposed to wish will happen to the music of our choice, but the future will probably be both more modest and more genuinely constructive. The last thing reggae needs is a place on the list of art-forms automatically consumed and as quickly eliminated from the social/aesthetic digestive system. Any future we wish for reggae ought to respect the sources and intentions of the music.

In Bob Marley the world gained and lost a figure who, for a time, inhabited the near-prophetic function in which some of the finest artists of the last twenty

years have found themselves; a real agent of spiritual and social change. Marley had a tradition behind him and it continues to endure. Burning Spear keeps the home fires burning and the sources of tradition running clear and pure, Peter Tosh junkets to Babylon and learns to speak its language without losing himself in it, and a number of bands and artists in a variety of idioms work the ground the past has prepared. Black Uhuru's music embodies many of the possibilities of the hour. Its toughness comes at a time when, in speaking of the world, only toughness will be believed (and you can dance to it). It's an episode in a story that bridges two continents and several centuries. The river in which Puma Jones jumped flows on.

(*Black Uhuru will tour America this fall, and a live album is likely.*) 

SOUND IMPROVEMENTS



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SMALL DEVICES THAT MAKE QUIET THINGS LOUD

By Marc Silag

Sound engineers all know the difficulty in reinforcing (amplifying) acoustic instruments like violins or classical gut-string guitars, especially when they are used in an ensemble with electric guitars and keyboards, not to mention drums. When the Barcus Berry company first introduced their line of transducer pickups, the response from the pro audio field was qualified: the pickups achieved higher levels without feedback, but the fidelity of the instrument was often lost to the vibration-sensitive pickups that were usually attached to the instrument (with a substance reminiscent of chewing gum after a few hours under the sun).

In the mid-seventies, everyone went pickup crazy and a number of devices were introduced to emphasize the heretofore "buried" acoustic instruments on the bandstand. A soundman's list of excuses for feedback and lack of level grew shorter. Charlie Helpinstill and Carl Countryman developed their respective magnetic piano pickups with six or seven magnetic elements suspended just over the strings of the piano, combined to one output through a passive mixer. But the sound engineer still had to devise methods of equalization to enhance the "dead" quality of these nonetheless useful pickups imparted on the amplified piano signal.

FRAP (Flat Response Audio Pickup) provided the guitar player with a more "natural" tonality via sophisticated pre-amp circuitry, while Barcus Berry diversified their product line by incorporating their popular bridge pickups for violin into a line of "electrified" violins. Obviously the instruments favored by Jean-Luc Ponty and other electronic violinists were not the same instrument on which Paganini intended to hear his "24 Capriccios." How many remember the five-string Vitar Michael Urbanek played when he first arrived in the States? This five-stringed, multi-pre-amplified instrument was made of molded plastic and sounded like a tree shredder. These vibration-sensitive pickups and redesigned instruments were and are a compromise in fidelity.

In the midst of this pickup mania, Don Ketteler, then chief engineer at the burgeoning Bottom Line Theatre in New York, mentioned that he'd received two microphones from Electro-Voice in Michigan and planned to experiment with them during an upcoming David



Countryman EM-101 microphone, a breakthrough that allows distortion-free recording of everything from a violin to a Titan lift-off.

Bromberg show. The last time, Bromberg and his band of acoustical marauders had arrived brandishing penny-whistles, mandolins, legions of acoustic guitars, clarinets, concertinas and howling feedback-prone *fiddles*. Ketteler hoped his experiment would alleviate the feedback problem presented when so many open mics on stage reinforce the natural phenomenon known as acoustic feedback.

The microphones Ketteler used in this particular instance were manufactured by E-V as a quality headset mic (model RE-51), the type used by TV directors and broadcasters as well as, um, air traffic controllers. Under normal applications these are crisp, clean and unobtrusive. About four inches long overall, the mic consists of a flexible black plastic tube about $\frac{1}{8}$ " in diameter attached to a small plastic cylinder which houses the diaphragm of the mic. This is attached to a small battery pack (about the size of a pack of cigarettes) which provides signal boost to the mic signal while adding some equalization to the signal output. Ketteler's plan was to attach the mics to the tailpiece of the fiddles and flex the plastic tube directly over the instruments' sound hole. This would effectively isolate the very directional pattern of the mic within the violin, eliminating bleed-through of other instruments or the monitors on stage. Ketteler is a good salesman; the fiddle players lost no time in strapping these feather-light trans-

ducers to their instruments. The degree of fidelity was astounding for such a small mic, and this skeptical observer was convinced during a soundcheck that this indeed was a mic capable of high levels and accurate fidelity. The soundcheck turned into a party (one band member claimed he'd never known what the two guys with the fiddles did — he'd never *heard* them before) and Ketteler's experiment was a success.

Since then, a number of other musicians have also benefitted from the RE-51, among them Alto Reed, Bob Seger's flamboyant and unusually mobile sax man. The mini-mic had arrived, but pickup fever was still rampant. These mics are still susceptible to feedback, so any success with such a device depends on the hands of a talented soundman. But vibration-sensitive pickups still have a place on a live stage, depending on their application. A year after Ketteler had demonstrated the little E-V mic, I took the position of sound engineer with Shakti, John McLaughlin's acoustic fusion of Eastern and Western music. L. Shankar, whose talents on the violin matched McLaughlin's abilities on the fretboard, quickly agreed to try the E-V mic and was delighted with the results. He has used the mic in concerts all over the world performing with McLaughlin, Frank Zappa and the renowned Violin Trio in his native India.

At that time, McLaughlin played a specially built, scalloped-fingerboard guitar made by the luthiers at Gibson. The guitar has seven strings mounted diagonally across the sound hole which are tuned "sympathetically" to the conventionally mounted six strings, and was equipped with two internally-mounted FRAP pickups. Since these pickups are vibration-sensitive, it was difficult to isolate the two signals emanating from the guitar, which, because of the stress placed on the top due to seven sympathetic strings, was not as resonant as a more conventional design. The pickups therefore needed a lot of help to attain anything resembling the true natural tone of the guitar. From the six-string output of the guitar, the signal was processed through a FRAP stereo pre-amplifier, an MXR Ten Band Equalizer, a dbx Compressor/Limiter and then fed to the house mixing console, where I patched a White $\frac{1}{3}$ Octave Equalizer into the six string input! Remember, this is an all acoustic band. In order to



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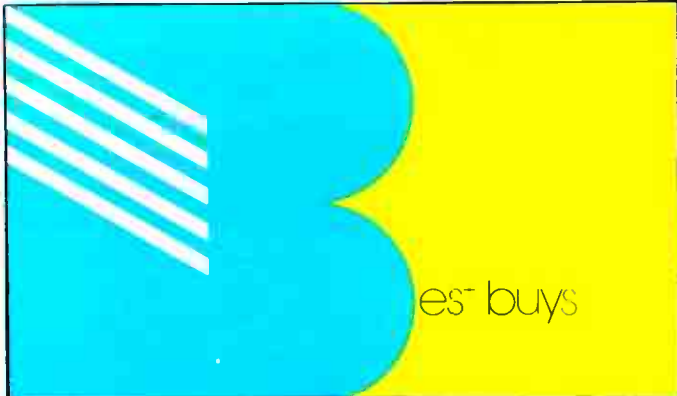


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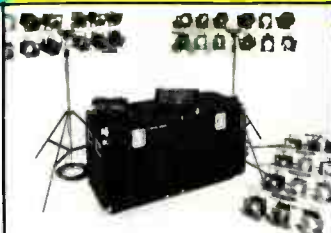
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Kaman Musical String Corp. is pleased to announce the introduction of Kaman Performers Electronic Guitar Strings, the world's first electronic guitar strings. In addition to being made from stainless steel wrap, the fifth and sixth strings on Kaman Performers Electronic Guitar Strings are made with equal sized core wire and wrap which this design produces dramatically more flexible strings. The fourth string is made from a newly developed material called "chrome steel," which has 8% more output than conventional stainless steel, and gives the fourth string the bite it needs to balance its output with the rest of the set. Kaman Strings, 1330 Blue Hills Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002.



Audio-Technica U.S. has introduced the Model AT831 (\$110) sub-miniature microphone for use by professional musicians, especially as an acoustical, stringed instrument pickup. The AT831 is an electret condenser microphone with a uni-directional polar pattern. In hands-free applications, this new unit will provide improved gain before feedback that cannot be achieved with miniature omnidirectional microphones. Perfect for acoustic guitar miking, the AT831 instrument pickup is crisp and clean, yet full sounding, and suppression of background sound is improved significantly over that of full-sized cardioid units. Audio-Technica, 1221 Commerce Dr., Stow, OH 44224.

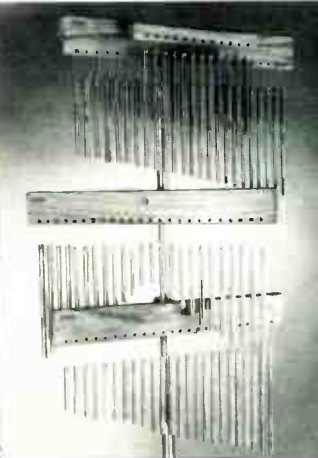


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Pearl Drum Co. has developed a new line of drums, the Extender Series. The name is appropriate since the batter head actually extends about an inch past the shell diameter. This "overlapping" design enables the drummer to achieve a truer pitch, excellent resonance and outstanding sustain. The wider pitch capabilities give the musician the dark, wet, low sound that is so popular in today's music. Until now, this sound has been difficult to achieve consistently from a standard drum... especially on a snare, but Pearl delivers a low pitch without releasing as much tension, so the head kicks back responsively. Extender drums are built by hand from eight plies of maple with no inner filler parts. Pearl, P.O. Box 100087, Nashville, TN 37210.

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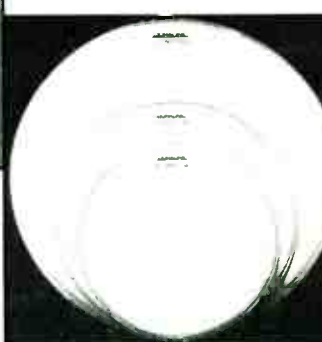


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Morley just announced the introduction of its new Stereo Chorus Vibrato. Designed for recording and stage musicians, the unit processes signals from a variety of electronic instruments. A wide range of expressive and original sounds is possible in each modality. Individual controls make possible precision adjustment of Chorus intensity, Vibrato depth and Vibrato speed. High signal-to-noise ratio and low output impedance assures signal clarity.

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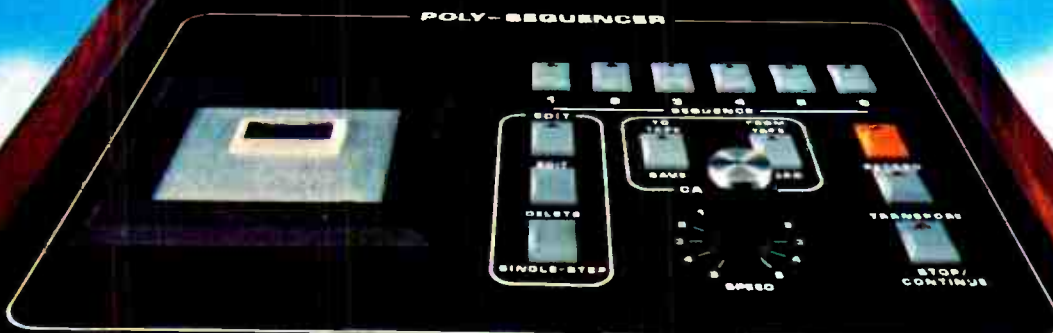


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World Radio History

Duane Allman

1946 ~ 1971

By J.C. Costa

Ten years ago this month, on a highway near Macon, Georgia, the career of one of the most powerful and gifted stylists of the guitar came to an abrupt and shocking end. Duane Allman literally invented not only Southern rock, but an electrifying slide technique that left its listeners groping with words like "honesty," "character," "strength," "intensity," and "commitment." His playing transcended specific categorization, and melded effortlessly into the recordings of soul, pop-rock, blues, jazz, and hard-rock artists with equal fluidity and grace.

Duane Allman first came to light as a member of the legendary house band at Muscle Shoals, a short but prolific sojourn which left numerous examples of Duane's undiluted energy and conviction on wax. These recordings still testify to his striking musical presence. For Aretha Franklin ("The Weight," "It Ain't Fair"), Wilson Pickett ("Hey Jude," "Born to Be Wild"), or King Curtis ("Games People Play," "The Weight"), he was tight and chunky, with tasty rhythm fills and short, powerful solos. For Clarence Carter ("The Road of Love"), his slide guitar explodes through the center of the song with dark, ominous foreboding. On acoustic guitar and dobro he reveals his sense of country blues roots for artists like Delaney and Bonnie ("Come on in My Kitchen"), Sam Samudio (John Lee Hooker's "Goin' Upstairs"), and Cowboy ("Please Be With Me"). Even Herbie Mann tapped into the Muscle Shoals energy ("Push Push" and "Muscle Shoals Nitty Gritty") and got some of Duane's best.

His brilliance as a slide player in his session work, perhaps best epitomized by the rich, stratospheric tone of his work on Eric Clapton's *Layla*, was a lasting monument. Jerry Wexler, Atco mogul and producer, explains, "On slide, he had *the* touch. A lot of slide players sound sour. To get clear intonation with the right overtones — that's the mark of genius." Unlike other successful slide artists like Lowell George or Ry Cooder, who used their unerring touch as a tool of enhancing a song's arrangement, Allman would inevitably let his playing burst from the confines of the tune to stand proud and tall above the final mix. His resonant, glassine tone remains the standard by which all later slide players will be judged.

Duane had no desire to be a mere studio functionary, however, and it was the formation of the Allman Brothers Band with brother Greg, Dickey Betts, Berry Oakley, Jai Johanny Johanson and Butch Trucks that he will be best remembered for.

Duane had worked with the band during his studio heyday, but it was not until Phil Walden, former manager of Otis Redding, started Capricorn Records in 1969 and signed the Allman Brothers as its first act that he could put most of his energies into it.

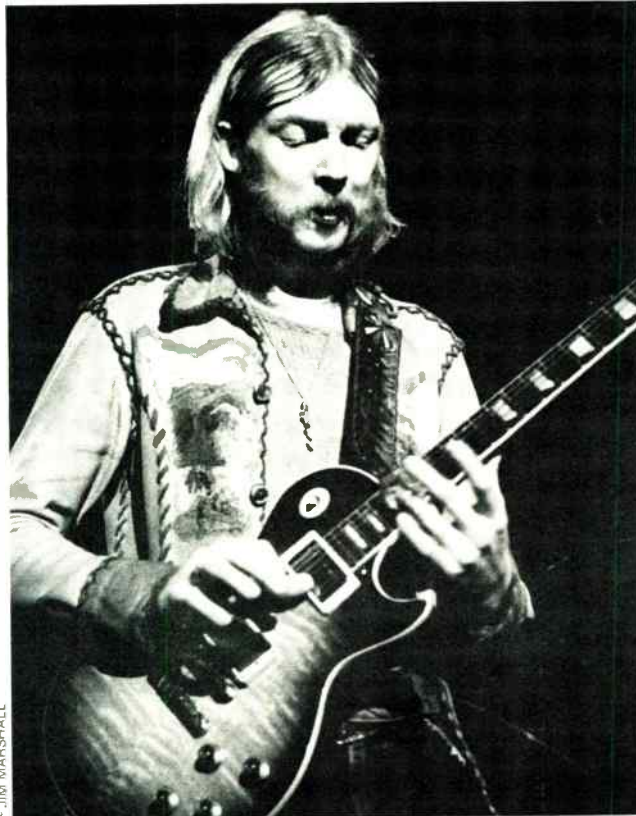
Much of the very best Allmans music comes from their first two albums, which, despite much local impact and a few glimmers of national attention, were not very successful. Then, their live two-record set *At Fillmore East* catapulted them into mass popularity. The use of guitar harmonies and careful arrangements, particularly on the FM classic, "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed," had a striking effect on rock; twin guitar parts sprouted all over. More importantly, the mix of the

huge, double-drummer freight train sound with its screamingly loud impact coupled with the Allmans' deep South nuance begat a new genre that other young musicians were quick to join. Bands such as Lynyrd Skynyrd, Marshall Tucker, and Charlie Daniels, as well as a second layer of groups like Wet Willie, the Outlaws, Molly Hatchet, and even the Atlanta Rhythm Section and the Amazing Rhythm Aces became Duane Allman's step-children.

Duane's role in the band was clear: he was the prime mover and spiritual matrix who could and would guide the others past their apparent limitations. Producer Tom Dowd recalls, "Duane could pull from them what they were trying to say, in the way they wanted to say it. He could chomp on Greg, holler at Dickey, and kiss Jai Johanny all at the same time. All three would laugh — and play better. The way he delivered his strength, you were never antagonized by his being right."

The brief personal contact I had with Duane during my tenure at Atlantic Records remains clearly in my memory to this day. Friendly, interested and always courteous, Allman still filled the room with his presence. He avoided all of the small lies and petty phoniness of modern life; you might try to slip something past him in a fatuous, off-handed way and he'd fix you with that stare. You'd start to curl up inside and look for a hole to crawl into. Then his face would break out in his irresistible grin and you were off his hook, but you never tried for that facile response or the easy way out again, at least not while he was in the room.

Ten years after that tragedy, a motorcycle accident in October of 1971 that claimed so much of the unplayed brilliance left to us, Duane Allman is still badly missed and will never be replaced.



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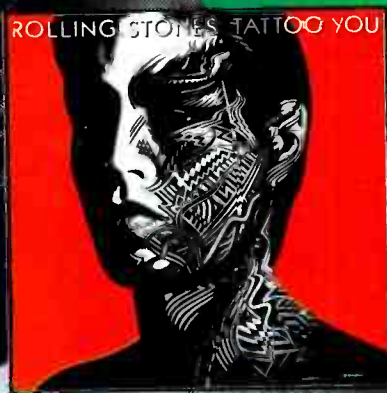
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