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NO. 117 JULY 1988

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LENNON REMEMBERED

SCOTT ISLER'S ARTICLE, "JOHN Lennon: Lost in Sound" (Apr. '88) made me realize just how much I miss John Lennon. And I never even met him.

Thomas Greco
Nutley, NY

THERE'S A BIG EMPTY SPACE where he used to be.

Terese Abbate
Bronx, NY

SONGS OF A TAYLOR

TIMOTHY WHITE CONDUCTED an intelligent, insightful interview with James Taylor, pop music's greatest talent (Apr. '88). I'm 24, and as I get older a lot of the music I embraced loses its meaning and importance. Many of Taylor's songs are as rich today as they ever were. His music will last.

Nick Salatino
Chicago, IL

OLDIES BUT GOODIES?

WHILE THUMBING THROUGH my new copy of *Musician*, I had to check the date on the cover to see which decade I was in. How about devoting those pages to new, up-to-date musicians? Do we really want John Lennon to become the over-commercialized corpse that Elvis Presley has become?

Commercial radio is ultra-conservative and narrow-minded enough, not to mention hung up on the past. Let's hope music journalists stay more hip and up-to-date than most of the nation's over-the-hill, pseudo-hip radio programmers and disk jockeys.

I have nothing at all against the great John Lennon. He was truly one of the most creative and influential artists in all of rock music. But let's not run his art into the ground. Use the pages of *Musician* to turn us, your readers, on to today's brilliant young recording artists.

Jim Fuller
Jefferson City, MO

I'VE GOT YOUR PATTERN FIGured out: Write about R.E.M. all the time, the Beatles or its members every two or three months, and if Bruce Springsteen farts, send over a reporter.

John Malone, Jr.
Indianapolis, IN

VICE SQUAD

APRIL FOOL! YOU GUYS MUST have had an incredible year to promote everyone to vice president (Apr. '88). Sounds like the company I work for: all chiefs and no Indians.

G.K. Worrell
Ocoee, FL

AS I BEGAN TO FILL OUT MY change of address form, I noticed why you've been able to maintain such a high level of critical consistency: Everyone that works for you is a vice president.

The Japanese style of management equality has hit the publishing world. Congratulations to all on the promotion.

Mark Copenhauer
Vice President
Minneapolis, MN

THE J.D. PROBLEM

I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND. Is this guy J.D. Considine doing reviews for your *Rock Shorts* column because he can't hold down any other job? Every time I open up your magazine, I read at least one asinine review on an artist that I'm interested in. Maybe this guy would be a good errand boy or something, but he definitely doesn't belong where he is now. Get him laid or something; maybe he'll have something nice to say about somebody once in a while.

Mike Crutcher
Boston, MA

J.D. Considine is employed for the express purpose of pissing off readers. We're glad to see it's working. – Ed.

DEPENDABLE REVIEWS

IN MY THREE YEARS OF READING *Musician*, I have come to one conclusion: If it gets bad reviews it's probably pretty good.

Lorina Blackwell
Memphis, TN

JACO TAPE REDUX

I READ WITH GREAT CONSTERnation and disbelief Tracy Lee's letter in the May issue. That letter inaccurately describes the tape on Jaco as a "RIP OFF." As to the tape's authenticity, it was made at my cost, and the disposition of it was given to me by Jaco. From what few orders that I have received and processed, I have provided a fair-share payment to the trust fund, as I advertised. Whether Ms. Lee chooses to avail Jaco's children of the financial help they could certainly use and is available to them does not make my enterprise more or less honorable.

Characterizing my efforts on the basis of her sentiments is certainly her subjective right, but not objective reality. It's my further interest that you and your readers know that attorneys for the trust do not share her sentiments, as is witnessed by their letter of acknowledgement and thanks. Any contribution your readers and you wish to make to the trust may be sent, as I have sent mine, to the following attorneys: Thomson, Zeder, Boher, Werth & Razook, %Terri E. Grumer, Jaco's Children's Trust, 4900 Southeast Financial Center, 200 S. Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, FL 33131-2363.

Lauran Productions

The editors received several enclosures along with this letter, which was written by Randy Malt of Plantation, FL. One was a photocopy of a check for $150 from Malt to the Jaco Pastorius Children's account, along with a letter of thanks from a Miami attorney administering Pastorius' estate. The letter also thanks Malt for "gathering information about the estate." This donation was apparently made after Tracy Lee's letter to Musician *was written but before it was published. Malt also included a copy of a studio bill for $89.25, with a typewritten addendum: "Jaco agrees to pay this bill in 72 hours or releases all rights to Randy Malt and Mike Foureens." Jaco's signature is at the bottom.*

Musician*'s editors unsuccessfully called the number in Lauran Productions' classified ad a number of times before deciding to publish Tracy Lee's letter. We regret not having the information Mr. Malt subsequently provided at that time. – Ed.*

ERRATA

IF YOU NOTICED THE SUBJECT seemed to jump around a bit in J.D. Considine's "How to Think Like a Drummer" in the June issue, it's not because drummers can't think linearly. In fact, Musician*'s production gremlins pasted some galleys down out of order, spoiling an otherwise wonderful story. Our heartfelt apologies to J.D., Max, Stewart, Tony, Dennis, their parents and fans, and drummers everywhere.*

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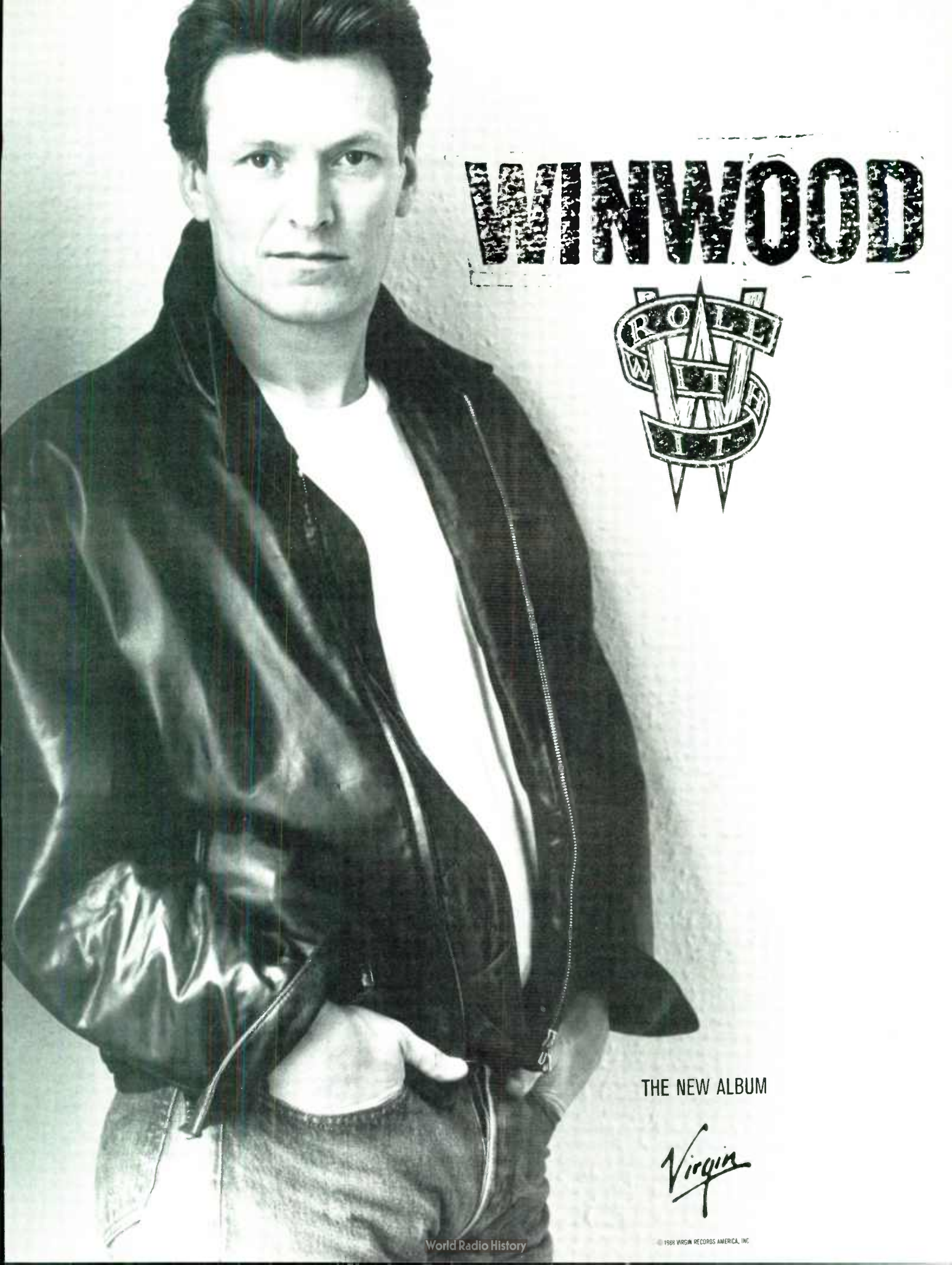
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F·A·C·E·S

Treat Her Right

Next Time, No Blondes

Treat Her Right is one blues band that doesn't care if they have their mojo working. "We're not exactly hard-drinkin', hard-lovin' kinda guys," explains singer/guitarist David Champagne (no, not his real name). "You can't think with your, pardon the expression, dick all the time."

While the Boston-based quartet may not walk that walk or talk that talk, they have got that sound—that of the early Chess recordings by legendary bluesmeisters like Muddy Waters and Little Walter. But unlike most white boys who worship old, blind or dead black musicians, they don't come off as mere blues revivalists. "We're patterned off those Chess records but it's rock 'n' roll, definitely," Champagne says. "We don't have a bass guitar 'cause we don't have a snare drum, and those two go together. We wanted that sound."

DAVID GAHR

Treat Her Right's self-produced debut album was originally released on the local Soul Selects label. The band struck a deal with RCA after the company agreed to put out the record as was and in general keep their corporate paws at a safe distance. For the most part, Treat Her Right has been left to its own designs—although the powers that be did manage to drag the requisite blonde model into the video for their song "I Think She Likes Me." Next time, Champagne vows, "No blondes."

With an album filled with smart, cool, often witty songs, Treat Her Right asks the musical question: Can you still be a blues band and not write only about girls, guns and gambling? With inspirations ranging from Bob Dylan to James Blood Ulmer, Treat Her Right is no slave to the blues tradition, although they've learned a thing or two from it. The group's name, Champagne admits, "has caused some problems, although it seemed ambiguous enough. I wanted a more aggressive name."

Why decide on "Treat Her Right"? "We took the title and album graphics to girls we knew for approval." Champagne laughs. "It seemed to appeal to women." Like some old man once said, the little girls understand.

– Amy Linden

Joe Louis Walker

Through the Blues, Darkly

"A lot of my friends are changing now," says rising blues star Joe Louis Walker. "Guys are gettin' wise. That whole hard-drinking, hard-living musicians' lifestyle is bullshit. It just ain't conducive to a long life."

This soft-spoken San Franciscan speaks from experience. Though pushing 40, Walker is just now tasting success with his second LP, *The Gift*, a crackling showcase for his hot guitar licks and expressive vocals. Much of the previous two decades were spent battling personal demons that kept him from developing his talent.

In the late '60s, teenager Walker was an up-and-coming axe whiz, poised to follow in the footsteps of Buddy Guy and B.B. King. He shared a house with Mike Bloomfield in the Bay area, and gigged with heavies like Otis Rush and Earl Hooker. But his career never took off, and Walker spent the first half of the '70s burning around the U.S. and Canada, chasing that elusive big chance. "I was trying to get somewhere, only I didn't know how," he recalls. "If I'd gotten a break then, I probably would've misused it. I wasn't ready."

By mid-decade a discouraged, bitter Walker desperately needed a change and signed on with the Spiritual Corinthians, an Oakland gospel group. He cleaned up his act, kicking alcohol and other abusable substances during his 10-year tenure with the group.

When he finally got the yen for

Mulgrew Miller His Fingers Are Going Places

Long, agile fingers, that's what Mulgrew Miller's got. And evidently that's what a lot of well-known bandleaders—like Betty Carter, Woody Shaw and Art Blakey—want. "I'm a long guy," the 32-year-old pianist admits, "but I don't know if my fingers go places that shorter fingers wouldn't."

One thing's certain: Miller's going places. He's been ubiquitous on the New York club scene for the last couple years, actively handling acoustic keyboards for leaders young and old. Currently with the Tony Williams Quintet, Miller's getting his ears opened nightly; his boss' souped-up attack reminds him of a past employer, and the problems that pianists sometimes face.

"The toughest part of playing with Tony and Blakey is their volume. It's very challenging to blend in correctly with drummers who are that dynamic." Miller holds his own, however: His solos are starting to become anchored yet adventurous studies in melodic drama, and his sturdy comping is full of effective building blocks to spur on soloists.

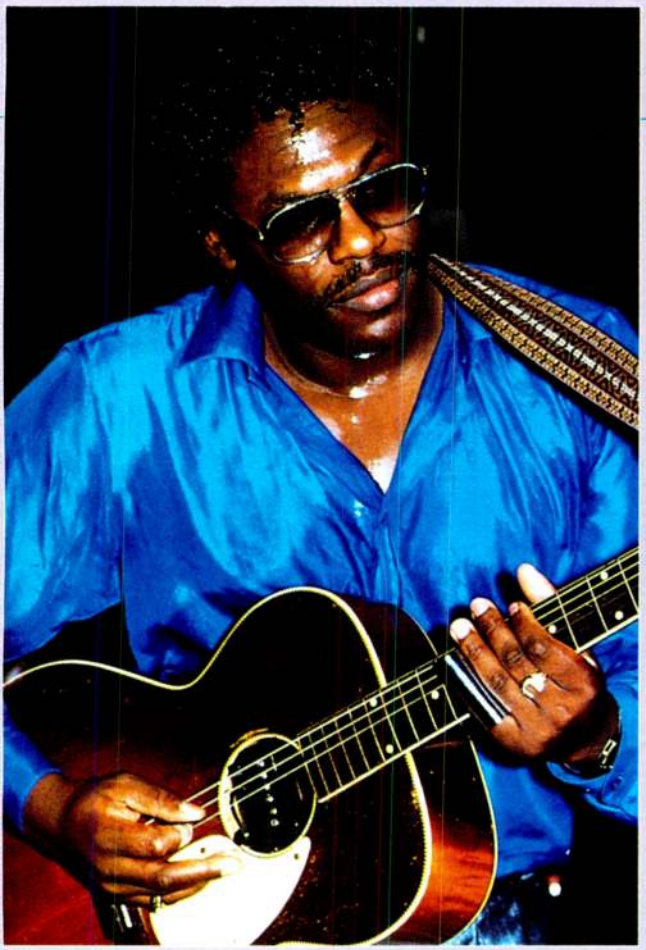
"That's what good comping is about," he explains, "making it almost like a solo itself, but not getting in the way of the real soloist. You listen for everything: rhythm, harmony, melody, and sometimes it's best just to lay out."

Mulgrew puts these notions to work for himself on his three records as a leader. *Keys to the City* and *Work* were in the piano trio context, a set-up which proved he had a grip on ballads (impressionistic without being maudlin) *and* up tunes (forceful without being too sunny).

With his latest session, *Wingspan*, he's branched out. A slightly odd front line of alto and vibes delivers a fresh mix of post-bop and semi-trad voicings, even though Miller couldn't have any more respect for the music's past.

"Today it's hard to forge a completely new statement in any context," Miller says. "Yet you can't worry about what's been done already, you just have to learn from it." *Wingspan* shows not only growth but confidence as well, something not all young leaders bring into the studio with them.

"There's only one reason for that," concludes Miller. "I feel completely at home in a rhythm section." – *Jim Macnie*



the blues again, Walker discovered it was easier to make headway. A 1985 demo led to a Hightone Records contract and the promising *Cold Is the Night* LP. *The Gift* finds his potential fulfilled, with no-nonsense performances that reaffirm the continuing vitality of the blues. The timing couldn't be better, since, as Walker notes, "Robert [Cray], Stevie Ray [Vaughan], and the Thunderbirds have proved that the blues are bankable. Blues are becoming part of mainstream pop culture."

No doubt about it: Joe Louis Walker is on track now. "I had to go through rehabilitation for five years before I started back playing blues," he notes. "If it was ever a choice between indulgence and sobriety, I'd pick sobriety. I've seen the other side." – *Jon Young*

Carlton: Gimme Some Neck

Guitarist Larry Carlton is on the road to recovery following his being shot April 6. A male teenager shot Carlton in the neck as he was entering his Los Angeles studio to work on his next album.

As of press time, the perpetrator of the shooting—possibly a gang initiation rite—was still at large; a group of Los Angeles musicians and industry people have matched the city council's $10,000 reward for information.

After being admitted in serious condition, Carlton was released from hospital April 19. His voice is back to normal (the bullet penetrated his voice box), and he is getting daily therapy to restore the grip in his left arm, affected by damaged muscles in his neck. The Grammy-award-winning guitarist suffered no severe nerve damage.

"He's in a lot of pain," Carlton's manager Charlie Lico said, "but overall doing well." – *Scott Isler*

Young Fresh Fellows

Being Funny Isn't All Laughs

JIM SANGSTER, SCOTT MCCAUGHEY, CHUCK CARROLL, TAD HUTCHISON

For a band distinguished largely by its sense of humor, the Young Fresh Fellows can get a bit touchy. Especially *about* that sense of humor. "We do get kinda mad when people write one paragraph about us and they use both 'wacky' and 'zany,'" concedes singer/songwriter/guitarist Scott McCaughey. "If they just use one or the other, we expect that. But if they use both of 'em, it's really like overkill."

And under-representation. Sure, McCaughey and company are funny fellows with funny songs liberally sprinkled among four albums and an EP. And yeah, the Seattle band's shows tend to include a gaggle of gags and manic antics that would do the Marx Brothers proud—not to mention an unpredictable assortment of covers, from "White Room" to "Margaritaville."

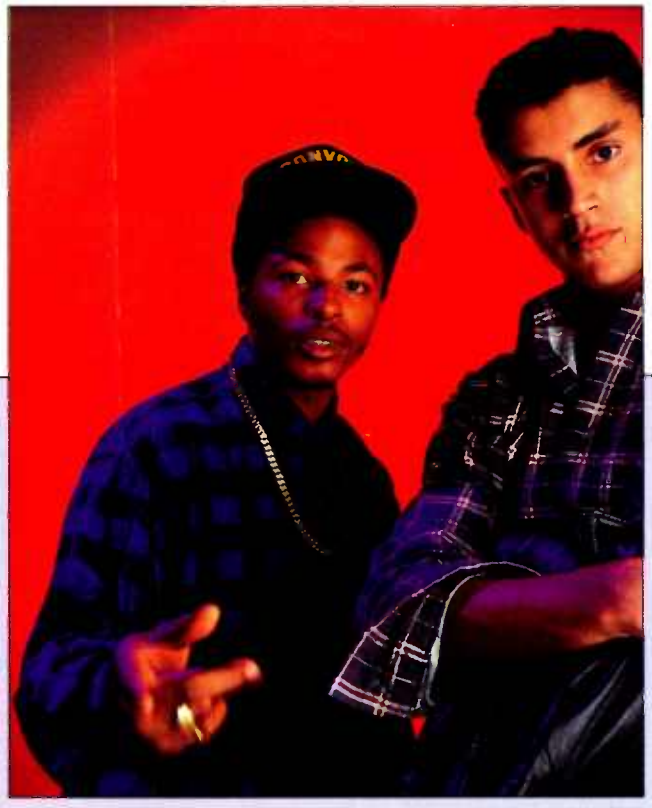
Moreover, the foursome created a college radio fave last year with "Amy Grant," a bouncy, goofy paean to the Christian rock singer that's one of the Fellows' best-known songs, if not one of their best efforts.

So people don't have any trouble getting the jokes. But fully appreciating the *band* can be another matter. "Our real fans like us," McCaughey observes, "because we do all different kinds of songs. They know it's going to be fun when they come see us, but I think when they listen to the records they know that the songs mean a lot to us, and it's not just a sarcastic, fuck-all kind of thing."

He might be thinking of the Fellows' new *Totally Lost* LP, which raises the band's seriousness quotient. "It's still fun," McCaughey says of the record. "But I think it has a little less of the downright, unabashed craziness that we get into sometimes."

McCaughey wouldn't even mind hearing the poignant "No One Really Knows," from *Totally Lost*, on the radio. "It's unlike anything we've ever done; it's so straight, it's so—it's almost embarrassing to me [because] it's so sincere. Actually, I'm really proud of it. I think if that got some exposure, people would get into it. And it's *not* a wacky song, either!" – *Duncan Strauss*

ANDY CATLIN BETTY UDESEN SEATTLE TIMES



Mantronix

The Ghost in the Machine

I think the ultimate computer will be where they actually grow a brain—I guess it would be done by gene splicing and things like that—and incorporate it into the framework of the computer, into the electronics so it's an actual human brain. A superhuman, basically."

That, in a nutshell, is the Mantronik Theory of Cybernetics. It may not make much sense as science, but it sure goes a long way toward explaining the ease with which Mantronik (Curtis Khaleel)—a 22-year-old DJ/mixer/producer—takes to drum machines and sequencers.

"Yeah," he laughs, "but I'm not the superbrain. I'm not wired into these things. I just punch buttons."

Still, it's not hard to see how theory and reality play off each other in Mantronik's world. As the man behind the machines in Mantronix (rapper MC Tee completes the line-up), Mantronik has taken the electronic groove of hip-hop into a dimension where human feel and computerized efficiency aren't mutually exclusive. And though the blend was enough to make Joyce Sims' "All and All" a left-field pop hit, its true flavor is best savored on *In Full Effect*, the latest Mantronix album.

Mantronik is a modest guy, though, and respectfully declines the title of hip-hop revolutionary. "I wouldn't say we're necessarily years ahead of everyone else," he demurs. "It's basically one band doing our own thing and hoping that other people will catch on to the new trend. It's difficult for other people to copy our stuff. It's not that easy because it's always changing."

– *J.D. Considine*

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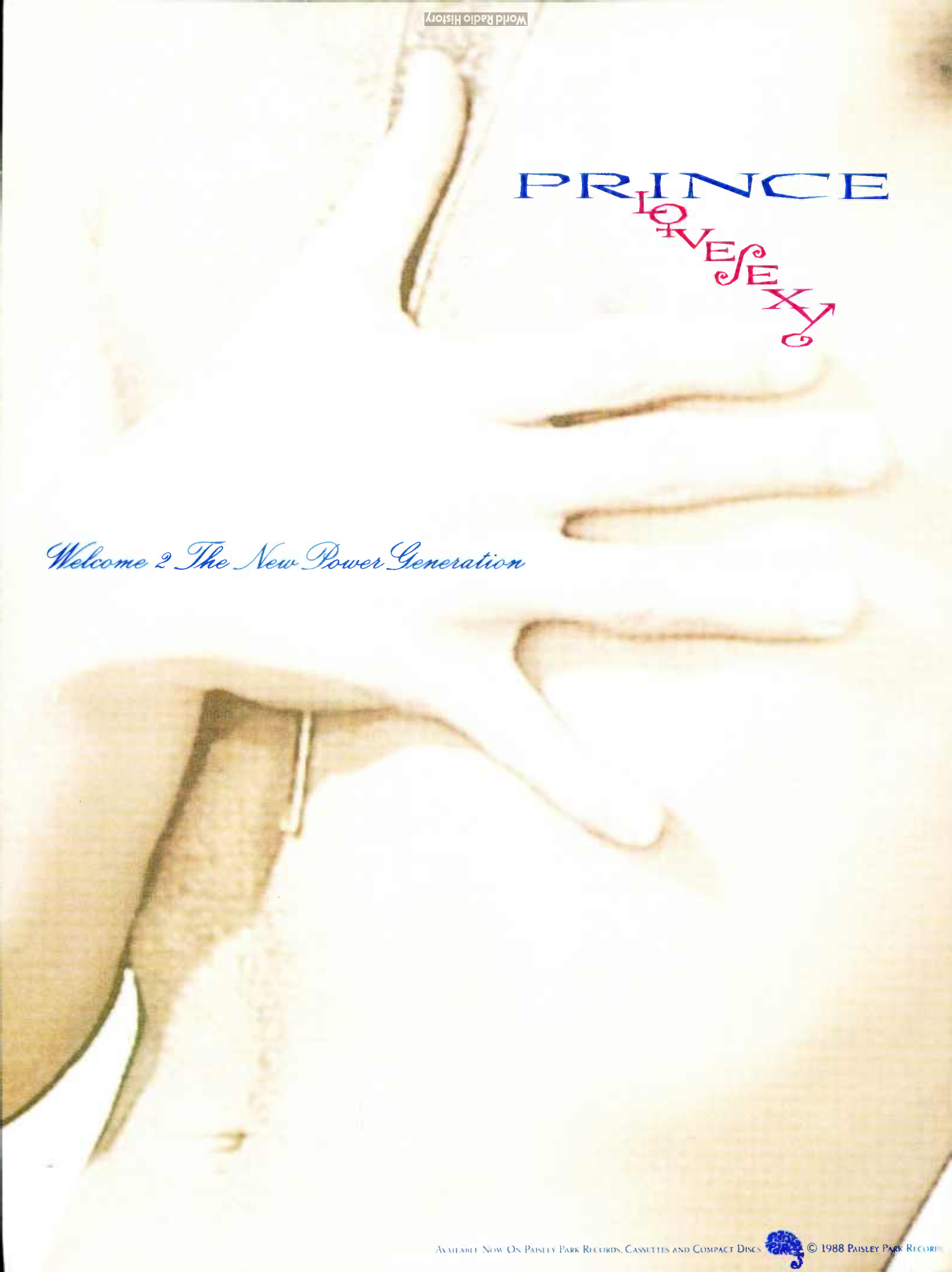

GRAHAM PARKER

by rory o'connor

The Less Music You Put On, the More Gets Heard

I was successful the day I signed a record deal and got a check for £5,000," says Graham Parker. "I was down in the suburbs with a couple of mates in a pub, and I put it on the counter and said, 'Three pints of lager and a packet of crisps,' and the guys went, 'Shit, you got that from a record company?' They couldn't believe it, and I've considered myself successful from that day on."

But these days "you can't be happy while someone else has a fistful," as Parker ironically puts it on *The Mona Lisa's Sister*, his best release in a decade. And these days Parker—whose career has been in an admitted critical and commercial decline for years—wouldn't mind being a bit *more* successful.

"You just want to be taken more seriously," Parker explains. "Let's face it, I've been in a slump as far as the critics are concerned. I haven't had the real lead review attention. If you combine that with a lack of sales, the result is 'What is Graham Parker? *Who* is he? We don't know anymore.'"

At 37, Parker still sports the scrawny, pinched-face look and spindly-legged, belligerent stance that once made him the angry young heir-apparent of roots rock. His thinning curly brown hair is still cropped short, and he still peers out at the world through omnipresent dark shades, even over mid-day sushi in a midtown Manhattan eatery. In sum, he appears much the same person as on the covers of both *Howlin' Wind*, his classic 1976 debut album, and *Squeezing Out Sparks*, the 1979 masterpiece that marked Parker as a contender for the throne of the Next Big Thing.

After a dozen years he's still into shades, but he doesn't do windows.

But a succession of so-so albums and indifferent record companies left Parker's promise unfulfilled. His last record, 1985's *Steady Nerves*, received a modicum of critical acclaim, but stiffed in the stores. More recently, he lived up to his reputation for being headstrong by leaving his fourth U.S. label, Atlantic, without even releasing a record. Parker faced an unsigned and uncertain future—particularly because he now insisted on producing his own records.

"After the Atlantic thing I said to my manager, 'I'm sorry, I just can't do this, it's gotta be *my* way,'" Parker says. "I'd rather be cleaning windows than be fucked around by a bunch of A&R guys who meet you for an hour and expect you to listen to what they say. They've all got different opinions, and none of them know what's happening. Besides, it's the public that really matters anyway."

But when his management contacted record companies to ask if any were interested in signing Parker "with no input whatsoever" in his music, there were no takers. "What's really disappointing is that even independents like Rhino and Slash said, 'We've got to hear something first,'" Parker recalls. "I could have sent around cassettes, but I didn't want to, because then you get other people's opinions. And I didn't *want* other people's opinions. I was just *me*, that's it, full stop."

But Parker's determination paid off. Just as he was "getting the window-cleaning gear out, ready to hit the road," RCA Records decided to take a chance. Pausing only long enough to collect an acoustic guitar and his trusty sidekick Brinsley Schwarz, he returned to London's Lansdowne Studios, the site of his last great album, *Squeezing Out Sparks*. Twenty-eight days later the pair emerged with what Schwarz accurately terms "the most essential Graham Parker record ever."

"Graham writes and plays in a very unique way," says Schwarz, who co-produced and played electric guitar on *Mona Lisa*. "Often his feel for the music tends to get swamped over, first by a band, and then second by a producer. So on this record, we started with Graham Parker, then added drums, and then put other things on top. If they didn't work, we didn't add them."

By eliminating the middleman, Parker and Schwarz managed to restore the immediacy that had been missing from Parker's music. "My idea was to make the record sound more like my demos," Parker explains, and in a curious and very touching way *The Mona Lisa's Sister* does sound like a demo, albeit one recorded by an exceedingly talented friend who's just dropped by your living room to play a few tunes. The sound is direct and spare, detailed and discrete, yet as insistently rhythmic as any of Parker's previous work, and derived, he says, from an attention to "sonic detail."

"All those years with the Rumour, you're talking about a crapshoot as to what the record's going to come out sounding like, with those guys sometimes all playing at once," Parker recalls. "But on this record, it's bass, drums, acoustic and electric guitar, and anything else is sonic detail...a bit like R.E.M." Parker describes Schwarz and himself as "a strange pair, the Odd Couple of rock." His thoughts are echoed by his partner, who sums matters up by noting that "the less you put on a record, the more of

FABIO NOSOTTI/LGI

what you put on it gets heard."

What Graham Parker put on *The Mona Lisa's Sister* was his usual mixture: reggae, rock and blues; lacerating lyrics with vocals to match; heart, soul and mind, all intertwined. But this time the stripped-down simplicity of the production serves to strengthen rather than diminish the music.

"After making this record I have a great feeling of success," says Parker. "Because I felt, God, I'm really doing it; I'm calling myself the goddamn producer and I've nobody else to blame. I'm stuck with this...and I think I pulled it off."

Success...there's that word again. Parker is so preoccupied with it that he even used it as the title of one of the songs on *Mona Lisa*. But it's a word, as he readily acknowledges, that means different things to different people...at different times.

"Sure I'm pissed off with selling such a small amount of records," he spits out with distaste. "I don't like my records to be looked at as not important. But people's priorities these days are that if you ain't making it, you can't be happy, 'cause you just ain't happening. And it's just an *annoying* thing. It's *so* annoying."

Nonetheless Parker steadfastly refuses to bend in the face of the prevailing winds of commerce or fashion. "Commercial success is up to the public," he maintains. "It's not something I'm consciously aiming at, because if I were, I would have done what Atlantic wanted me to do—which was co-write songs with other people in the desperate attempt to get a hit, and to get a producer in who would be a 'sureshot,' or what they would *think* would be a sureshot."

Parker and Brinsley Schwarz: Their crapshooting days are over.

Instead, Graham Parker says he'd be happy just to rise to a slightly higher level, "to try to double the amount of sales, or quadruple it," while still remain-

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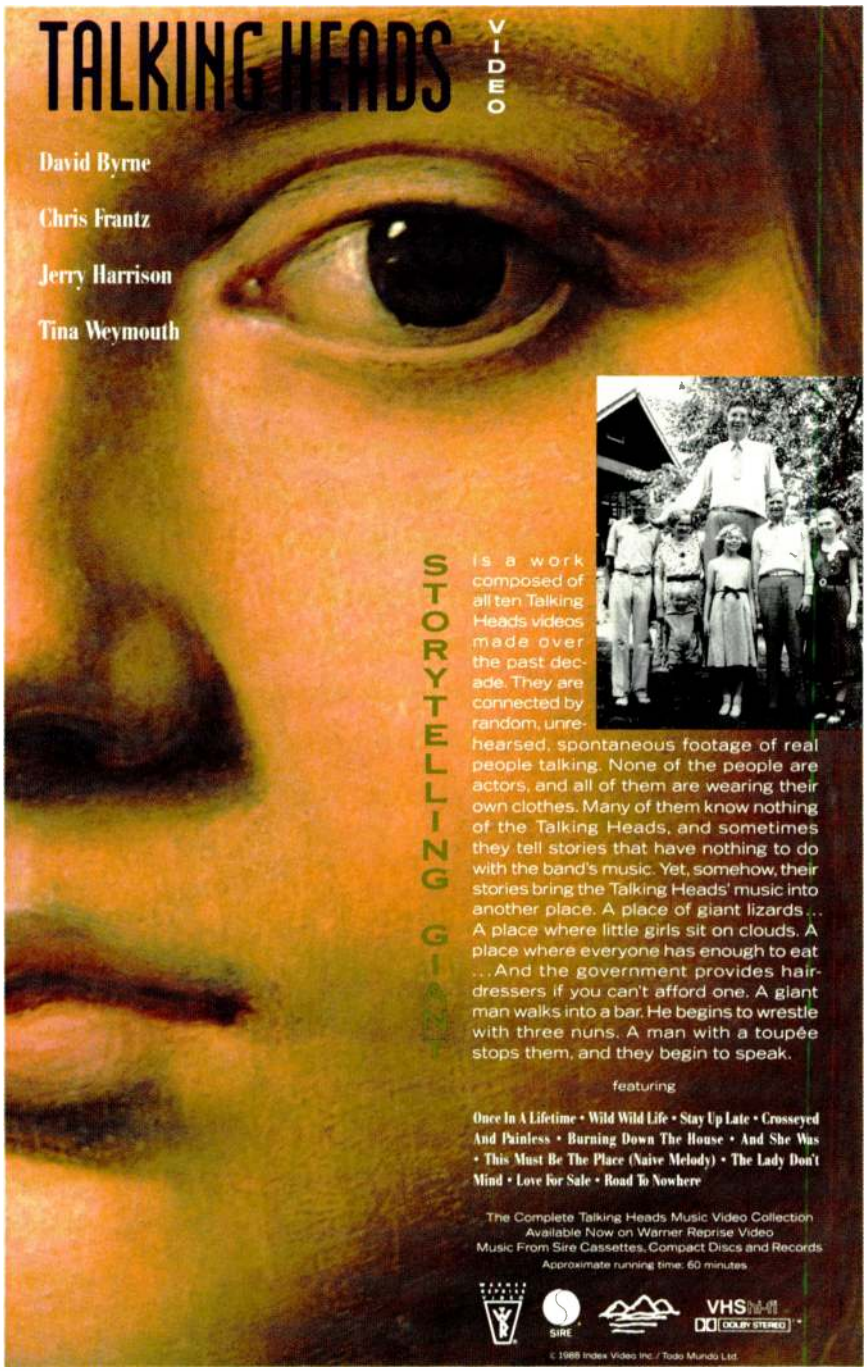

SPARK PLUGS

When it comes to songwriting and recording, simplicity is the key word for Graham Parker. Most of the songs on *Mona Lisa's Sister* were written, he says, "on an old Guild acoustic the company gave me about 10 years ago." He used both the Guild and a baby Martin in the studio. For touring, Parker employs a Fender Telecaster with Seymour Duncan pickups and an Ibanez solid-body electric/acoustic.

Co-producer and guitarist Brinsley Schwarz plays a self-built guitar he calls a "Little Guy," which is basically a modified Stratocaster with a souped-up tremolo unit and locking Sperzell tuning heads. Schwarz also used a PRS through a MESA/Boogie. Other than adding bass, drums and a "smattering of keyboard"—a Hammond organ and a Korg through a Leslie—the production of *The Mona Lisa's Sister* involved "as little instrumentation and technical stuff as possible," says Schwarz. "It's basically a '60s-style recording."

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SAFE SAX

by steve bloom

What's Sales Got to Do With It? A Lot.

Kenny G was schmoozing backstage during the Grammys when a fellow saxophone player stopped and shook his hand. "I just want to thank you," he said. Bewildered, Kenny G asked him, "What for?"

"I'm about to get a record deal," he explained, "and it's because of the success of your record that they're considering signing me."

The next day, in an Arista Records conference room, Kenny G, whose album *Duotones* has climbed rare heights for an instrumental pop record, was reflecting on the significance of that meeting. "I don't know what his music is going to sound like," he said, "but 80 percent of the sax players' albums out there are basically this mellow R&B groove; there's no real melody, there's no real sincerity to me.

"I'm not going to name names, but there are some sax players who have records out whose tone isn't very good and who don't play in time. Every record company now is putting out a sax player, but there are not that many guys [who] can really play a song. I think that's where the problem is."

Grover Washington (top) wants respect. Kenny G (below) thinks he has it: "I'm an achiever."

I wanted to say the real problem is Kenny G's being voted 1987's "Best Jazz Artist" by *Rolling Stone*'s readers, but I bit my tongue. Instead, I suggested that there is an imbalance when someone with his ability can sell millions of records while more competent players slave away in jazz clubs night after night.

Mr. G seemed ready for my attack. "Hey," he said, "Clive Davis is not going to go down to the Village Vanguard and take a sax player off the stage and say, 'You're the one—I'm gonna do this all for you.' Because I am who I am and I've done what I've done, I'm here. And because that particular sax player has done the things that he's done, he's there. That's not an imbalance.

"I pushed. I'm an achiever. I shook a lot of hands, I knocked on a lot of doors, I begged a little bit. And here I am. That's America."

Of course, Kenny G is hardly the first saxophonist to take jazz to the cleaners. Rhythm & blues has been washing over jazz for decades, diluting its holier-than-thou purity. In the late '40s, Louis Jordan laughed and hollered his way to the bank while Charlie Parker searched the gutter for spare needles. Jazz got soulful in the '50s when the West Coast white boys started to take too much control. By the late '60s rock 'n' roll had practically put jazz out of business, and fusion was born. And now, thanks in part to a "Wave" sensibility that threatens to eradicate more traditional programming from jazz radio, what sells best is the "sweet and mellow" saxophone sound.

All of which raises a few issues, such as: How do the "progressive jazz" and "new age" camps of saxophone players relate to each other? Is the popularity of the latter diminishing opportunities for the former? And if so, what accounts for the recent surge of "serious" jazz albums on major labels by young saxophonists like Branford Marsalis, Tim Berne and Jane Ira Bloom?

Grover Washington, a father figure for groove players like Kenny G, thinks he knows one answer: "The record companies," he suggests, "have just figured out how to market jazz."

With this in mind, Washington decided it was time for him to record the "jazz" album he's had inside of him for years, but which the labels he worked for—CTI, Elektra—wouldn't let him put out. "It was always, 'Yeah, sure, you can do one later—but first let's do this,'" he says. "So the jazz album never got done. Now it's in the language of the contract."

Washington had painted himself into a corner with the steady success of his groove-styled music, which culminated with the platinum *Winelight* album (featuring the number two hit, "Just the Two of Us") in 1980. Though he says, "I don't think I really have to prove anything to anybody—I just want people to be aware that I can do more than play 'Mister Magic,'" he's been haunted over the years by the criticism he has received from jazz "purists." Once, at a seminar in 1978,

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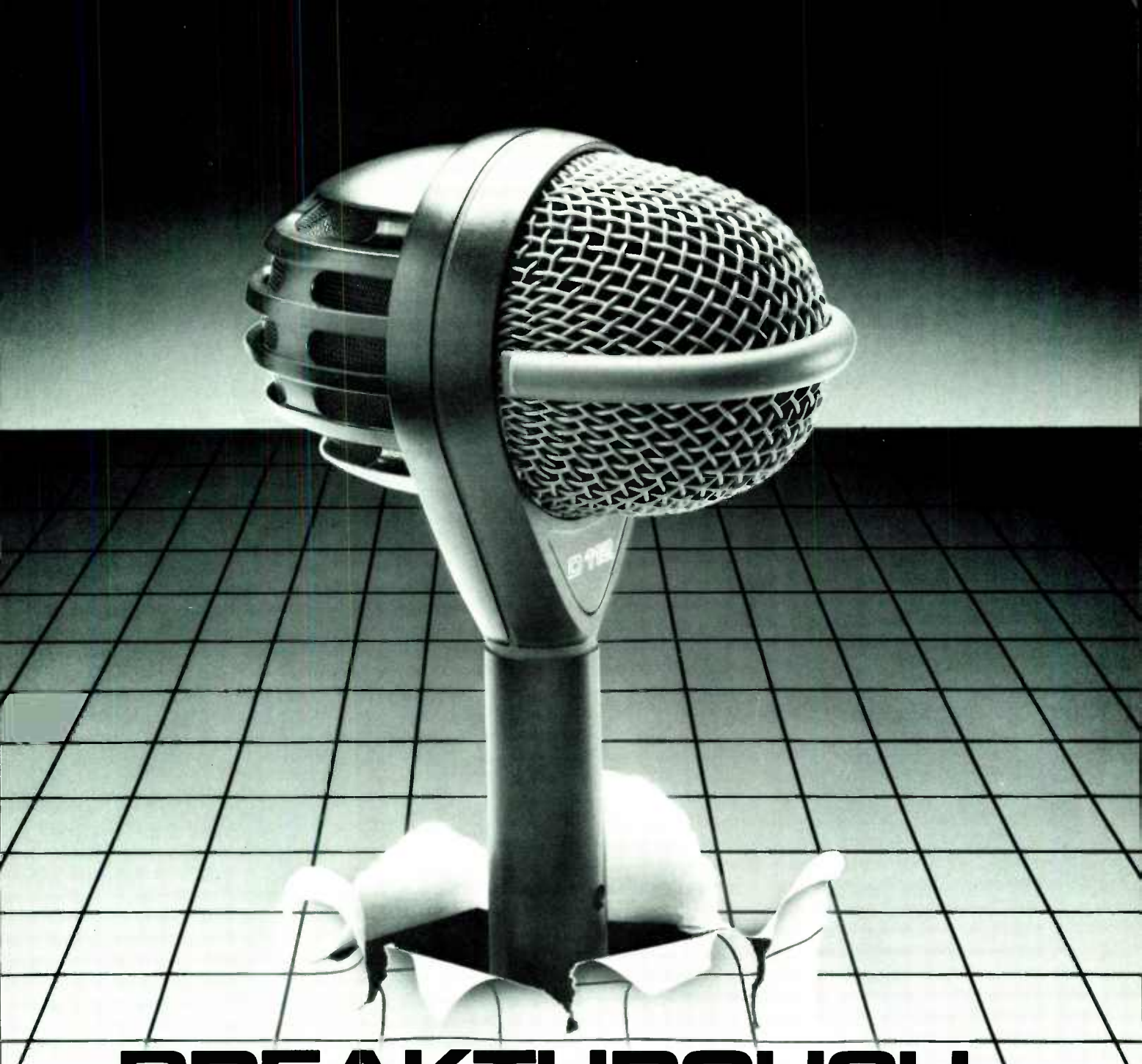

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Percy Heath complained about the younger musicians who are bastardizing the music. "Suddenly, the whole thing focused on me," Washington recalls. "I was doing this to jazz and that to jazz. I couldn't believe it. Maybe it's good that I'm not callous enough to say, 'I don't care,'" he adds, "because I do care what is said about my music."

Washington's desire to win over his detractors can be traced to an appearance he made with Sonny Rollins at Town Hall in 1982 and an album he recorded with Kenny Burrell (*Togethering*) in 1984. Recently, he did a tour of jazz clubs, playing standards like "Stella by Starlight" and "Stolen Moments" as well as his funkier tunes. "If anybody's seen me live, they know I try to tell them and show them that the music didn't start five or six years ago," he says. "This is the time to show the audience that jazz isn't always in 4/4, isn't always the easy-listening kind of Wave thing. Sometimes it can be angry, sometimes it's the blues."

Defining jazz's perimeters is no easier today than it was 17 years ago, when Washington filled in for Hank Crawford and cut his first album, *Inner City Blues* (CTI)—especially on the radio. There are only 17 radio stations—public and commercial—playing variations of jazz 24 hours a day. New York and Chicago don't even have jazz stations; Detroit does (WJZZ), but purists would probably never turn to it.

Jane Ira Bloom: "The commercial music world is not something I'm aware of."

"That's silly," counters WJZZ's program director Steve Williams. "When Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald were recording in the '40s they used jazz musicians, but they were making pop records. That's the same thing Michael Franks does [today]. 'A Tisket-a-Tasket' and 'Stompin' [at the Savoy]' are pop records! We consider ourselves a jazz station and proud of it."

But Williams freely admits that his first loyalty is to business. And he has the numbers to back him up—a "two" share in a competitive market (most jazz stations are lucky to get a "one"). "If we stopped playing David Sanborn, we'd be flooded with calls. If the purists don't like what we're playing, they should turn off the radio and play one of their [own] albums," he says, adding snidely, "they all have about 3000 jazz albums anyway."

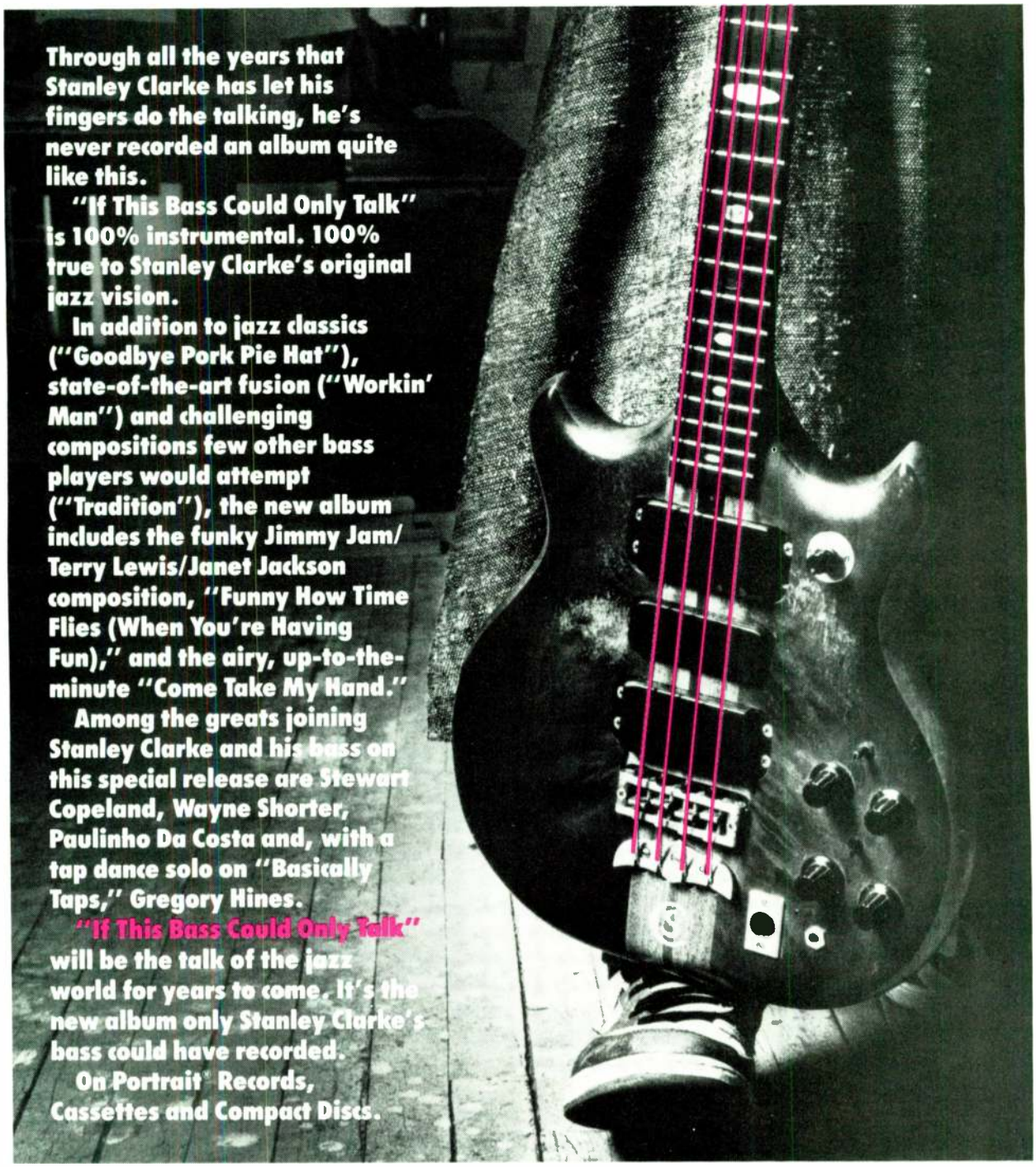
For his part, Washington is convinced that jazz artists need to diversify to keep from being pigeonholed, perhaps even to survive. He offers this advice to Kenny G: "He has to show what else he can do. I think his outlook will change once he starts doing sessions with other people. It helped me tremendously to be on a Randy Weston album (*Blue Moses*) and work with Billy Cobham—to see how expansive [jazz] is. My mind constantly changes about music and I'm sure Kenny's will."

Kenny G isn't so certain. "I can't do that stuff," he admits. "I never said I could. If you sat me down and put me with a big band and gave me a chart with millions of changes on it and said, 'Blow,' I wouldn't sound very good. Somebody else who came in would blow me right off the stage. But in my kind of style, I consider myself as good as anybody."

Saxophonist Steve Coleman, whose album *Sine Die* was released on Sting's Pangaea label in May, is hardly a purist when it

HAL MAYFORTH

STANLEY CLARKE
MAKES HIS BASS THE STAR.



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PORTRAIT

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comes to jazz. But he does have standards for judging instrumental music. Sometimes those standards can get in the way. Here's a typical breaking-the-ice conversation Coleman has had with women:

"What do you do?"

"I'm a musician."

"Oh, what kind of music do you play?"

"Jazz."

"Jazz? I love jazz!"

Coleman says, "Then they come out with the Kenny G record. Now you have a choice to make. Most of the guys I know, if you don't like their music they take it very, very personally. If the girl says Kenny G, that's it. They might [bleep] her, but they won't have an inner respect for her. I don't look at it like that. I've gone out with people who've hated my music. You can't slight somebody for what they like."

You can't? "Well," Coleman concedes, "a lot of times what somebody likes is a reflection of their lifestyle. I mean, a guy with a doo-rag around his head going 'LL! LL!' has a certain style. Let's face it: He's probably not going to walk into IBM and start fixing their hard drive."

Coleman is hard to pin down: Though his music stings with the same intensity as Ornette Coleman's Prime Time, he refutes comparisons to Coleman and his followers. "I like some of it. I like Jamaaladeen [Tacuma]. I don't like [Ronald] Shannon Jackson so much. I like some of Blood's [James Blood Ulmer] stuff. I like more of Ornette's older stuff. They're closer to what I'm doing than somebody like Kenny G," he says. "But I'm influenced by James Brown, Motown, Sly [Stone], Funkadelic. Wynton [Marsalis] listened to Funkadelic, he played in funk bands, too, but you wouldn't know it by listening to his music. I just don't deny anything," he says, in an odd echo of Kenny G's refrain. "I let what I truly feel come through."

Steve Coleman: "I won't play what I think the masses want to hear just to sell records."

Coleman, however, had been denied an opportunity to record in the United States until Sting heard his tape (a compilation of his two Five Elements—Coleman's group—albums on the Munich-based JMT label). "Evidently, he freaked," Coleman says. "I had been talking to Island and Nonesuch, but Pangaea offered me the most freedom. They told me, 'We want you to do what you do. We're interested in that and we think it can sell.'

"I'm very conscious of selling records—the difference is, I won't play what I think the masses want to hear just to sell records. I try to make the music listenable for people, but I try to get them to hear what I'm doing."

Sting liked what he heard so much that Coleman was invited to fill in for Branford Marsalis during the first leg of the Blond One's recent tour. "I had to do a little soul searching before I even accepted the thing," Coleman reports. "I'd only do it if I could play like I wanted to play from the outset. I didn't want to be playing no David Sanborn licks." But, he says, "Sting never told me how to play—not once!"

Coleman, who is 31, spent most of his 20s playing and recording in Europe and

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Virgin

Japan. Given a chance to do things over, he wouldn't have it any other way. "I wanted to develop a strong personality—musically and business-wise—before I jumped into this [signing with an American label], because I saw guys jump into it that got swallowed up. Some of them are walking around and don't know what they want to do. Some of them are just doing something because they have 10 options. I didn't want to get into that situation. By the time I talked to the people at Sting's label I had a definite idea of what I wanted to do."

One of the rewards of his new American recording contract was the opportunity to stretch out in the studio. The main difference, he says, between recording for Pangaea and JMT "is I had a lot more time because of the budget. The quality is light years ahead of what I was doing before. We were just able to get our thoughts across a lot clearer. I was really trying to get clarity in terms of the sound, because a lot of creative records sound raggedy. With a lot of Blood Ulmer's records it doesn't seem like much care was taken in the recording and the mixing."

Jane Ira Bloom, another saxophonist who recently made the leap from independent to major label, is similarly awed by the power of the big budget. She had previously recorded albums on her own label, Outline, and on the German labels Enja and JMT. Though Bloom says the concept behind the writing and playing on *Modern Drama*, her Columbia debut, is the same as on her other works, this time she had "the opportunity to orchestrate a little more fully and to actualize some ideas that I never had budgets to ever think of or even imagine being able to do. Certainly," Bloom adds with a devilish grin, "24-track digital is a magical experience."

Bloom's music, which is strictly instrumental and incorporates the use of electronic signal processing (in tandem with her soprano sax), came to the attention of Columbia vice president of jazz and progressive music George Butler in 1986. Butler was in the process of revamping the label's jazz roster. "He was definitely interested in seeing what new directions people were taking jazz in," says Bloom. "I guess my use of live electronics and unique writing and playing style interested him. He gave me the very rare and wonderful opportunity of being completely, artistically in control.

"I get asked all the time: Didn't you have any pressure to do this or do that? People don't believe me when I say no."

In the past, Columbia and Butler had been criticized for taking jazz artists to

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the commercial well. Saxophonist Arthur Blythe, for instance, recorded *Put Sunshine in It*, a pop-funk record, because, Butler says, "it was the company thinking to try that bag with him. They thought it might attract a larger audience. I bowed to that thinking. It was a mistake. He ended up sacrificing his artistry."

Butler was among the first producers to record fusion, when he was with Blue Note in the mid-'70s. "It worked," he says about albums by Noel Pointer, Ronnie Laws and Earl Klugh. "But then I got caught up in it." At Columbia he continued pushing out commercial records until Wynton Marsalis knocked at his door. "Signing Wynton was pivotal," he contends. "I knew his mastery would appeal to young and older listeners. The timing—with CDs starting—was right to start focusing on good jazz again."

Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Terence Blanchard, Donald Harrison, Harry Connick, Tim Berne and Bloom are the heart of Butler's straight-ahead jazz/progressive stable. But he's also signed Washington, Ronnie Laws and Chuck Mangione in recent years. "I don't want people to think I wouldn't sign commercial artists," he says. "But what I'm really looking for is musicianship and mastery of the instrument. I'm looking to build careers. With Jane's and with Tim's first albums, we went for exposure. Sales should follow by the next record or the one after that."

Bloom fits in well with Butler's "born-again" philosophy. She purposefully isolates herself from the more commercial jazz-pop scene because she's "more interested in being an artist, to be honest." Asked to comment on sax players like Kenny G, she shrugs, "I don't know. To me, it's such another world that I don't often feel that I can even apply the same standards of musicianship which I apply to horn players or improvisers in a tradition that I'm a little more familiar with. The commercial or popular music world," Bloom admits, "is not something I'm really aware of."

In contrast, Steve Coleman talks about the "fan side of me that enjoys things—I might buy a Prince or a LL Cool J record because I enjoy it—and then there's the music student side that might buy a Bartók string quartet record." He says he doesn't listen to current commercial sax players "because it doesn't do anything for me on any level. It's complicated elevator music." He does like Grover Washington—until I tell him about the jazz record.

"That bugs me, because it's not like

continued on page 130

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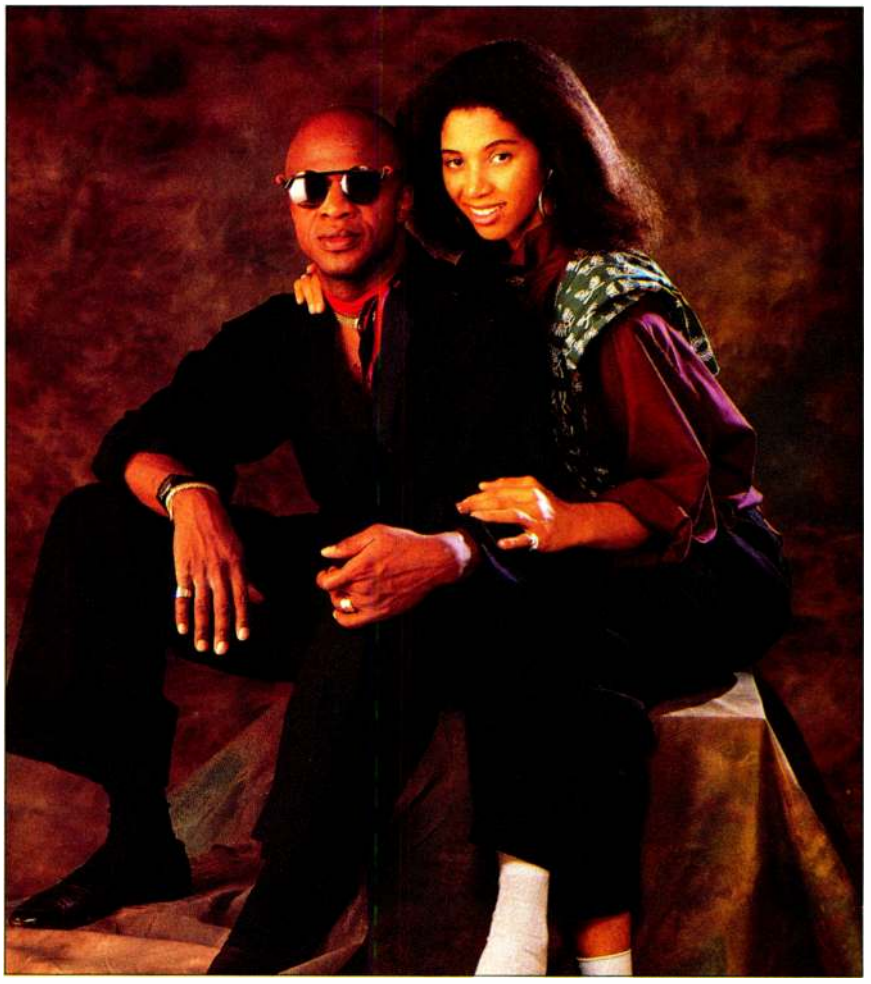
WOMACK & WOMACK

by steve perry

Finding the Hidden Music in Quiet Lives



Basketball Capital of the United States: State AA Champions. This roadside sign on the outskirts of town is one of the few immodest gestures to be found anywhere in Northfork, Virginia. Not far away, in the heart of town, a small, handpainted sign on weatherbeaten plywood marks the police station. And a few blocks from there, yet another sign points the way to the Old Fashion Full Gospel Church, an imposing old building made in the image of a thousand country churches, except that this one is built from unpainted cement blocks instead of white clapboard. "Cecil used to sing at that church," Linda Womack points out with a smile.

"Me and my brothers sung in *every* church around here," Cecil Womack amends. "Out in West Virginia, they got churches in places you wouldn't believe, places you can only get to on foot. They used to have revivals that would run for two or three weeks at different churches. We'd be out singin' at all of 'em." Navigating the family van through the narrow streets of the old Appalachian mining town, he smiles to himself and bounces their 10-month-old, Cecilia, on his knee. Linda rides beside them, and three of their other four children (Womack, two; Sameya, four; and Micah, six) play in back. The two youngest occasionally climb up in my lap to draw pictures in my notepad.

"Sometimes this business may not give you what you think you deserve."

Even before Cecil and Linda Womack decided to get out of L.A. a couple of years ago, they bought back the house in Northfork where Cecil's late father, Friendly Womack, started his family. These days they actually live on a hundred-acre farm near Wytheville, several miles down the road, but they return regularly to the sturdy, two-story woodframe, which doubles as family shrine and office/rehearsal space. The walls in the front room are filled with momentos, including framed sleeves of Womack & Womack records and gold and platinum albums by Teddy Pendergrass—souvenirs of the days before Cecil and Linda started to make records of their own, when they were part of the stable of songwriters at Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff's Philly International. But the most prominent remembrance of all is a picture of Friendly Womack, looking gruff and tired and wise, flanked by a copy of his birth certificate. "He was like a father to us all," Linda says of her father-in-law, who died in 1981 after a long bout with black lung. "He was a very spiritual man, knew his heart, knew his *purpose*. Much like Cecil."

Friendly Womack's sense of purpose was evident from the beginning. He married Naomi Reid when she was 12 years old, and they had their five children while she was between the ages of 13 and 18. I mention to Cecil that this seems strange; it was commonplace for country people in those days to get married and start families at a very young age, but it's odd that they *stopped* so young. Cecil shrugs. "My father wanted five sons to make a gospel singing group," he explains. "That's what he prayed for. And that's what he got." Before Cecil was even born, Friendly moved the family to Cleveland, the better to launch his sons (Friendly II, Curtis, Bobby, Harry and Cecil) in a career on the gospel circuit. It was on that circuit, years later, that the Womacks hooked up with Sam Cooke, who became their mentor and brought them to Los Angeles to record as a pop group, the Valentinos. And it was there, in turn, that 13-year-old Cecil first met Cooke's eight-year-old daughter Linda. After Sam Cooke died, Cecil's older brother Bobby married Sam's widow. Linda married Cecil in the '70s. But through the years the Womacks came back to Virginia each summer, to visit relatives and to sing in country churches all through that part of the Appalachians.

These days Northfork represents more than heritage to Cecil and Linda Womack; it is also where their new album, *Conscience*, was conceived. All

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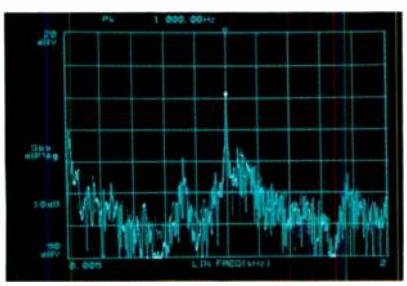
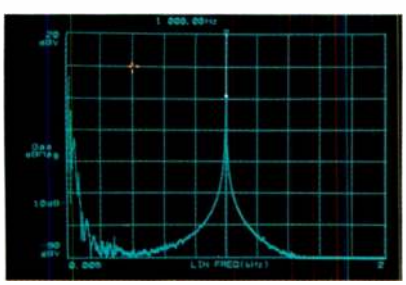


OLD XLII



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nine of its songs were written by the people of Northfork and nearby towns, nearly all of them coal miners and amateur musicians of long-standing family acquaintance. Men like Pete Hickman, Arthur "Confucius" Latimore, James "Catfish" Latimore, Buster Edwards (now dead, he was the co-author of "Slave," and the eventual victim of the sexual obsession chronicled therein), Jimmy "Snake" Burger (so nicknamed because he's one of many in the area who've been bitten repeatedly by the copperheads that slither up out of the creek running through town), and Dr. Rudolph Rue (a 64-year-old friend of Cecil's father, and his co-worker for years in the number four mine).

This scenario may call to mind all the long-standing popular images of mountain people playing fiddle jigs and 12-bar blues, but *Conscience* sounds nothing like that. Lean and expressive, the music is a logical extension of the spare sound of past Womack & Womack records. And so are the lyrics, which mourn and celebrate the stuff of common experience—love, marriage, heartbreak, recovery. It's simple in the same spirit as the best country music and blues: concrete, plainspoken, yet full of a heightened sense of the emotional contours of everyday life.

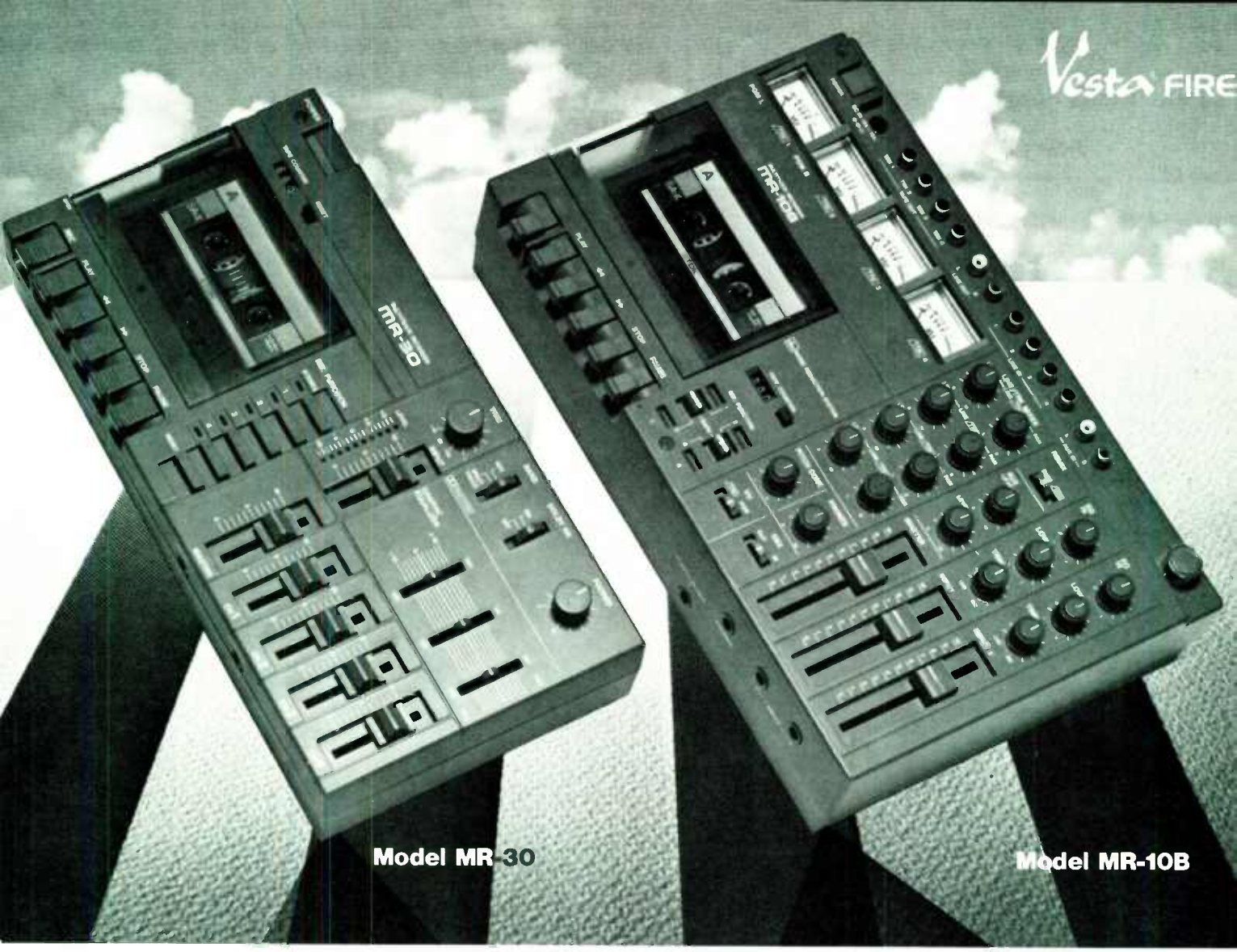
Which is precisely how music ought to be, as far as Cecil Womack is concerned. "When you sung gospel, it made you content, because you was singin' for people's hearts. That was a big thing. We prayed before we sung, and we prayed when we got through, and we hoped we touched somebody. That's the way you should always feel about your music. It's great when you hear somebody say, 'Man, that song turned my life around,' or 'You made me reconsider goin' back with my wife.' That's what you want to feel like. You want to know you're doin' something.

"I have certain artists I like today. I appreciate Bruce Springsteen when he slows down and I can tell he's doin' himself. 'My Hometown.' I love him on stuff like that. He's like a country folksinger, comin' back home to do what he's gotta do. But to a lot of artists, that probably ain't fashionable.

"We always wanted to come back here," Cecil reflects later, "but I don't know that we ever thought of doin' something creative with these people. You know what triggered that? I think it was the negative response we'd been gettin' with our own songs, when we were givin' it our whole heart and soul. And they were bein' basically trampled on." Indeed, when the Womacks talk about their dealings with record labels in the years between *Love Wars* (1983) and *Star Bright* (1986; European release only), the themes that keep recurring are frustration and misunderstanding.

Cecil: "The first album, we kept a cool attitude. I said, 'This is good to start, but we're not really doin' what we want.' They already got us figured out. We were workin' with [producer] Stewart Levine, so one day I asked him, 'Man, what does this company *want* from us?' He said, 'They say you guys are basically R&B traditional artists, and that's where you should stay, and that's where they're gonna keep you.' I said, 'What is that?' 'Whatever sounds like Stax, Motown, whatever. The old Southern thing.' I said, 'But we weren't into that, we didn't come up in that. I used to listen to Peter, Paul & Mary a lot. I really liked the Beach Boys.'"

Linda, laughing: "When we cut 'Angie' on our first record, Cecil was playing an acoustic guitar, which they said would never do for that song 'cause there was too much buzzing in the recording or something. I said, 'Listen, we do it in our living room all the time, I put it on my Sony, it sounds great. With all the bullcrap you got in there, you oughtta be able to do *that*.' Oh, they were pissed.



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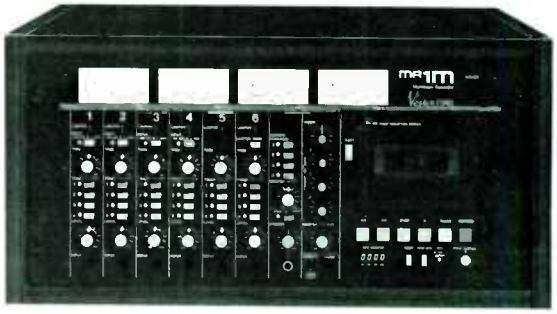

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We got it across, but you know, it's unreal the things you go through."

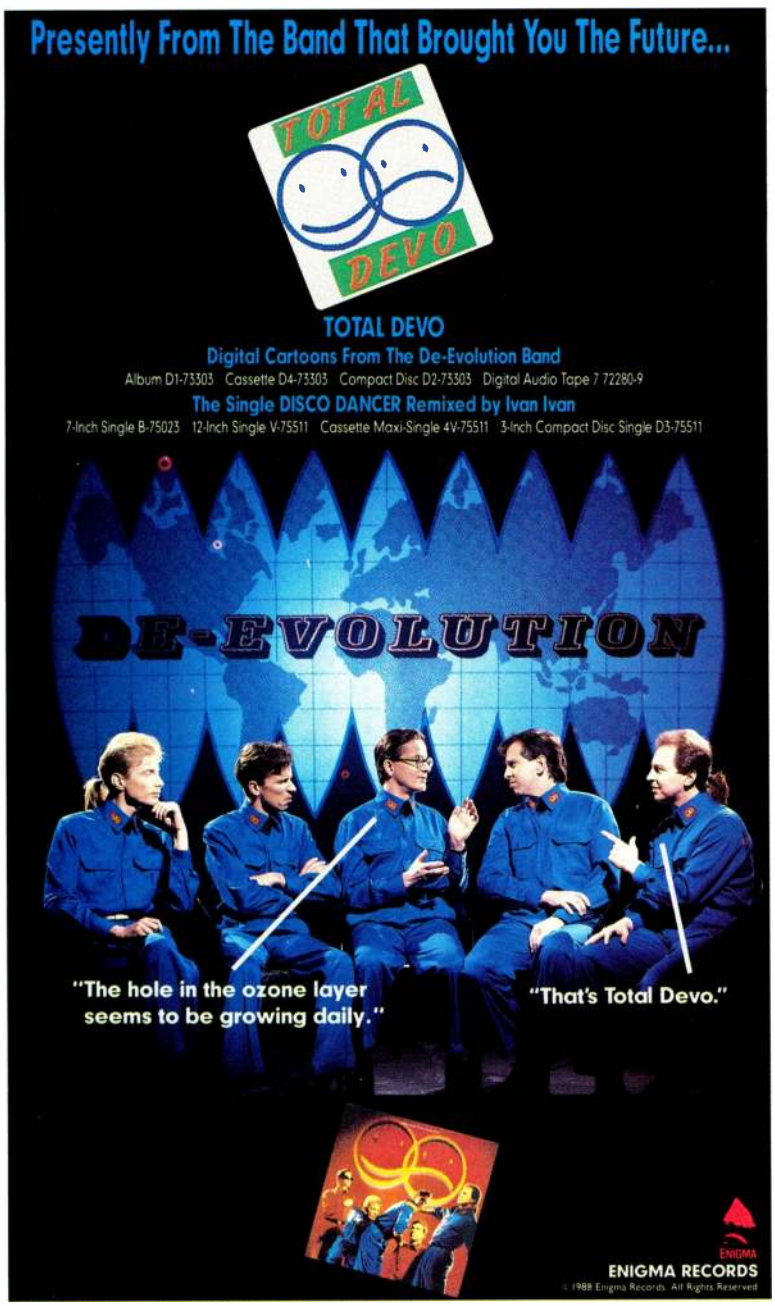
Most recording artists face creative pressures like these at one time or another, but few are as adamant about dotting all their own i's and crossing all their own t's as the Womacks. After three albums' worth of fights, chiefly with Elektra, they were spent. "So I said to Linda, 'Let's pull back.' We were writing, but it didn't really have a purpose to where we could say, 'Let's go cut it and take it to a label. We wasn't inspired to do that. We was just feelin' good, getting our stuff out of L.A., and kind of changin' our lifestyle."

Of the songwriters who contributed to the project, Cecil says, "Their ideas are very raw, like ours. Because we come from the same source. People ask if we're tryin' to prove somethin' about these people or this place. Not really. I just wanted people to know there are people out there that will live and be content with quiet lives, and probably have more talent than a lot of people in the business. A lot of guys have ripped off people like these, you know, have gone to the South and taken guys' songs and give 'em $20, and then they be out somewhere collectin' awards for it. They get theirs and somebody else's, too. It don't take all that glorification to live. It's just too complicated."

Diffidence toward The Business helped bring the Womacks together in the first place, back in the mid-'70s when their paths crossed for the first time in years. Linda had just recorded an album for Capricorn, which had ideas about promoting her Natalie Cole-style—a second-generation superstar. Everything was finished but the paperwork, but it felt *wrong*, somehow. Cecil, back in L.A. visiting his sick father, told her to drop it. Told her she'd know when the time was right. The record never came out. Two weeks or so later, they drove to Las Vegas in the middle of the night and were married. "Didn't nobody know what we were doin'," Cecil grins.

The Business. Time and again, the Womacks shake their heads at the vanity and futility of getting caught up in it. More than that, the *danger*. The Womacks aren't indifferent to success; like all artists, they want to be recognized for what they do. But they have their limits. And their reasons.

"You look around," says Cecil, "and it seems like every time you do, you see somebody go down. And they go down because a lot of times they didn't have the substance to say, 'Hey, *I have a life.*' I was born a musician; I'm a natural musician, but a musician should have things, raise a family, think about other things. He should. If you don't, you won't be balanced. Sometimes this business may not give you what you think you deserve. Like Donnie Hathaway, if he'd lived longer, might just now be getting his due. But he couldn't wait no more years. A lot of people can't, because they have their lives wrapped up in it, and if it don't work, they ain't gonna find their way home again."



COUNTRY COMFORTS

On the *Conscience* sessions, says Linda, "Cecil played his Ovation 12-string, a Roland Super-J and a DX7, and a Fender Stratocaster. A lot of times when we go to sessions, we take four or five guitars, and we got the keyboards all stacked up. But we did this very basic, very raw. It doesn't take a whole lot of music when it's like that."

Linda: "I was my father's wardrobe mistress on the road. You know, in charge of missing buttons, shirts, all that. I was too young to go to the shows in clubs, but I saw the ones on the theater circuit—the Regal, the Apollo. When he was home, he was in the studio, but

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on the road...you pass through so many scenes, you get to see things. Like the chain gangs. That was real, that's where the song came from.

"I spent time with a lot of ladies on the road when I was traveling with my father, ladies like Dionne Warwick, the Shirelles, the Crystals. I watched them. And it's not to say all of them had unhappy lives, or anything like that. I saw Dionne again a few years ago, and she's a beautiful lady. I respect her a lot. But most of those people didn't make it through as whole women I could admire. Some did, but very few; I could count 'em on one hand. So every time I saw those...*things* happening around me, I would run for cover. I would just try to forget it, and I did."

Sam Cooke casts a long shadow over Linda and Cecil; his influence helped shape them both. Cooke was the first major black recording artist to own his own publishing, the first to exact a one-million-dollar contract, the first to start his own record label. His willingness to record the occasional whitebread show tune notwithstanding, Sam Cooke understood the importance of being in a position to call his own shots, and a good deal of Cecil and Linda Womack's stony determination to do things their own way must derive from his example.

Yet if his life influenced them vastly, so did his death, which they have researched exhaustively for a book they've begun to write. The Sam Cooke they describe (that Cecil describes, really; Linda shies from this part) was perpetually torn between the streets he came from and the life in the Hollywood Hills he found himself living. So he took chances, never ran from danger, always tested himself. Cecil remembers seeing him break in on Central Avenue dice games with strangers. Before the players even got over their shock at the star in their midst, he'd take off his jacket, clean them out—and give the money back. Unlike many of his gospel contemporaries, Cooke was devoted to his family; one of the first things he did when he became successful was to move his family to L.A. to be near him. Yet still he lacked *balance.*

"You have to go your own speed," Linda says later, without specific reference to her father. "It gets back to all these people we've been talking about—people we're older than now. And we can see they were immature in certain ways. I don't mean immature, exactly, but they bent and twisted themselves enough to get over, and then they had to try to run back and get themselves back again. And it doesn't come like that." M

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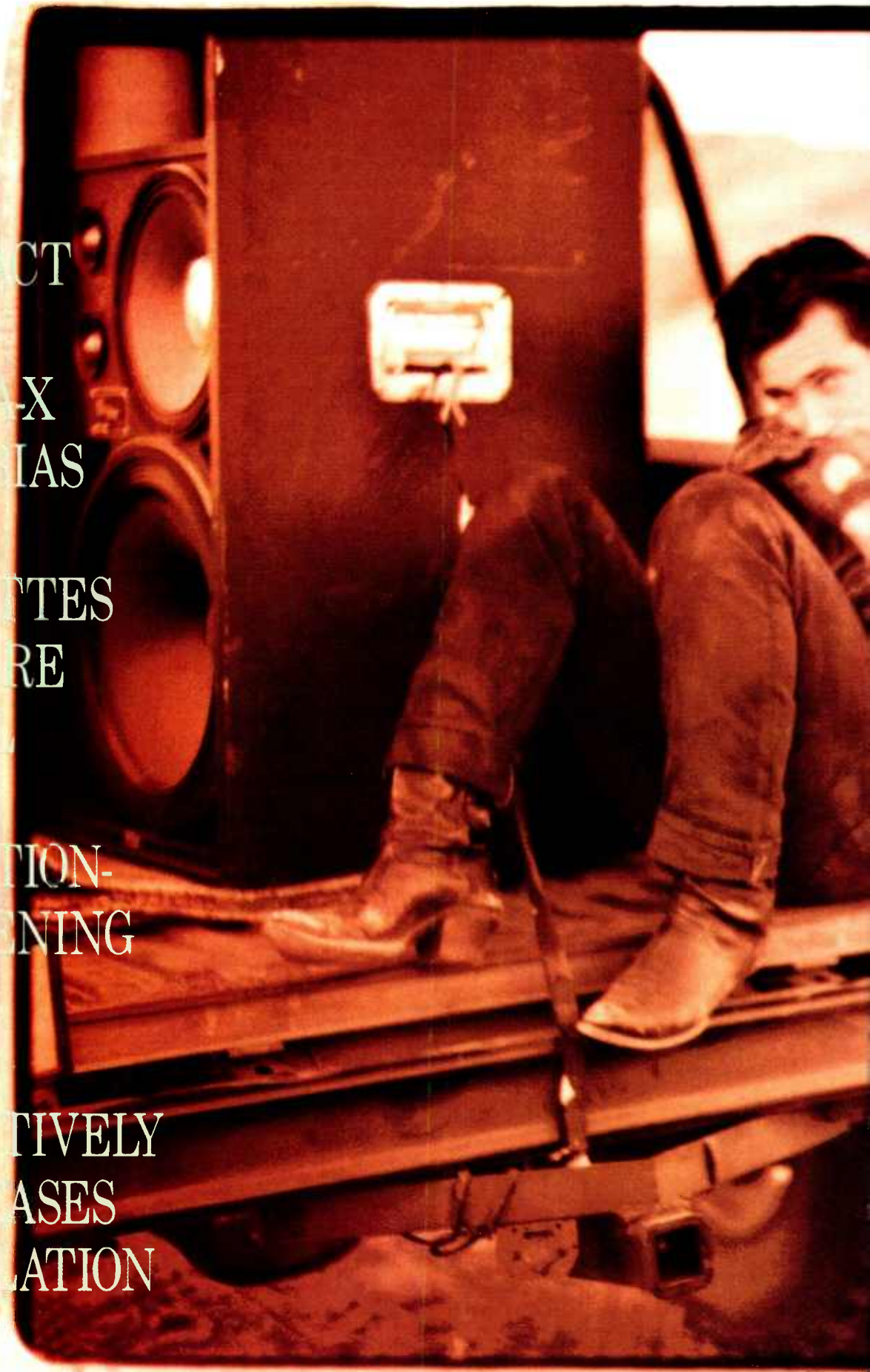

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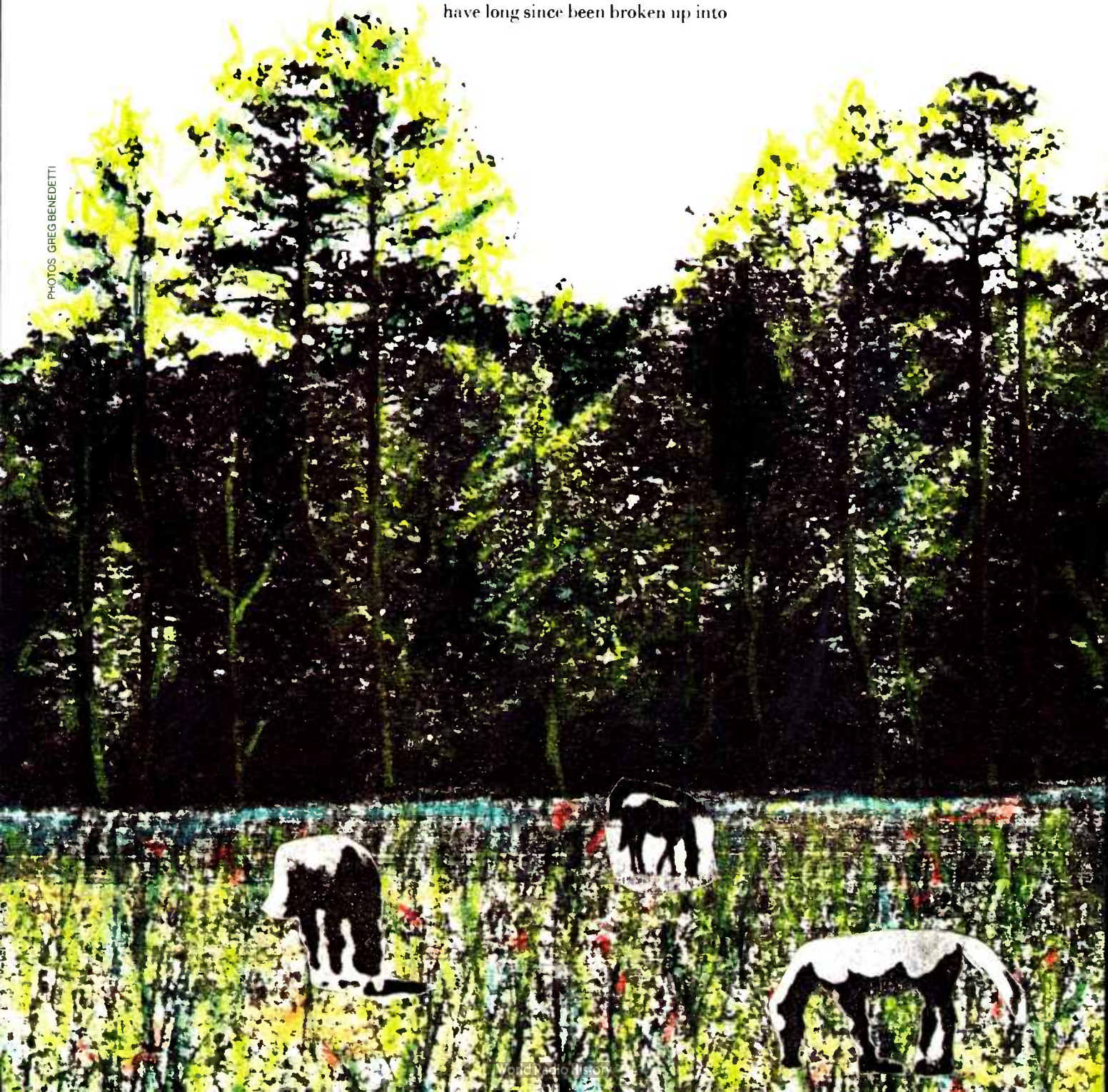
There are few lovelier places to be in the month of April than central Georgia. Explosions of flowering dogwood dot the verdant forests and fields, newly freshened with spring rains. The deep red clay soil seems to throb underfoot, perhaps with good reason. For a time, this whole area was a hotbed of American history, now only dimly recalled by an occasional marble monument. Less than seven miles from here, in an anticlimactic little battle called Jonesboro, the fate of Atlanta was sealed 124 years ago, and along these same roads Sherman's "bummers" began the fulfillment of his promise to make Georgia howl. The huge cotton plantations have long since been broken up into small farms, one of which is distinguished by a battered old truck parked on a small rise of ground near the road; the truck says "Dixie Dregs" and it too is an historical monument of sorts, to the late Twiggs Lyndon, road manager and guru to the Dregs. The truck and a small



PHOTOS GREG BENEDETTI

CLASS REUNION

Can the Dixie Dregs Go Home Again?

by Jock Baird

Lavitz, Morgenstein, Morse & engineer Sandidge.

plane out with the horses in the back 20 are the only clues that this is the farm of Steve Morse.

Although the events taking place here can't compete with the dissolution of the Confederacy, they're nonetheless making a kind of history: It's the first time since New Year's Eve 1982 that the Dixie Dregs have played together. Next to the house trailer, in a cinder block outbuilding that houses Morse's 24-track studio, he, Rod Morgenstein, T Lavitz and Andy West are recording again. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since Morse broke up the Dregs five-and-a-half years ago and spawned a checkered series of solo careers, and all four have approached this reunion with some skittishness, but by all accounts things are going better than well. For the fanatical hosts of long-suffering Dregs loyalists, this is cause for wild jubilation, and it's hard to blame them.

The Dixie Dregs, later abbreviated to the Dregs, were the American spearhead of the Second Fusion Generation, coming in the shadow of the twin pillars of Mahavishnu and Chick. While the CTI-disco-saxoid East Coast fusion and funkified-synthoid West Coast fusion camps were noodling about aimlessly, the Dixie Dregs appeared in 1977 as a burst of fresh energy. Clearly Southern-inflected, seeming like hyper-chops younger cousins of their Capricorn label-mates the Allman Brothers and fortified with full shots of Zeppelin and Yes, the Dregs reminded everyone that rock 'n' roll was an important-but-neglected part of the fusion equation. Despite their high musicianship, the six albums they recorded were tightly focused efforts in which instrumental ability served carefully crafted compositions—virtually all written by Steve Morse. True unsung heroes, the Dregs never recorded a tune with vocals until their final LP, and paid the price in record sales even after they signed with big-timer Arista. But a cult of committed followers maintained steady support, especially of live performances. Legal problems with their manager, which the band has signed an agreement not to publicly discuss, made even this modest activity unprofitable and undoubtedly played a role in the Dregs' 1983 demise.

Of the solo fragments, Morse has had the best luck. But despite a promising debut LP, artistic differences with his label, Elektra/Musician, frustrated him. In part as a reaction, he joined the reformed band Kansas two years ago as a hired gun and has increased his writing contributions to the band as well as toured with them. He is now contracted to Kansas' label, MCA, and has a third solo LP awaiting release. T Lavitz has done a number of projects as a bandleader, two with a bevy of West Coast fusion stars under the moniker Players, but these rarely add up to the sum of their parts. Rod Morgenstein, who joined Morse's power trio, has more recently been working with a heavy metal band named Sahara, which has a new album. Andy West, after a couple of unsuccessful solo projects, has turned to computers for musical excitement and now works nine-to-five as a product specialist for WaveFrame, a maker of mega-bucks digital workstations. Of the two Dregs violin players, Allen Sloane is now in medical school, and Mark O'Connor, who joined the band shortly before its demise, has become a studio superstar.

Morse on the farm: "We had a chance of *retaining* identity instead of *getting* identity."

No, life after the Dregs hasn't been bitter exile, but it's been an intensely compromised life for everyone, especially Morse. A measurable loss of power has assaulted the individual members of the Dregs in the '80s, just as it has most musicians in the record industry. In this fertile Georgia spring of 1988, the Dregs are suddenly and happily reminded of how much power they once held, and are wondering whether any of it can be permanently recovered.

Rod Morgenstein frowns over a sheet of paper and reads the typed words again, this time aloud: "'With music becoming more and more the same, it's good to find an instrument that lets you be yourself. Every Premier set seems to have its own personality. I really like that.'" He looks up encouragingly. "It's for my Premier drums ad. What do you think?"

T Lavitz isn't going to pass up this action: "You mean you're saying that with music becoming more the same you're just conforming to one style of music? I thought you're known as a versatile drummer who can play different styles...."

Morgenstein is perplexed: "Well...'With music sounding more and more the same....'"

"He doesn't mean *his* music is sounding the same," someone pipes up helpfully. Morgenstein is grateful for the aid. "No, mine is the only music that *doesn't* sound more and more the same...," he says, none too convincingly.

Lavitz dives in for the kill: "Then why do you need a kit to

GLEN LA FERMAN

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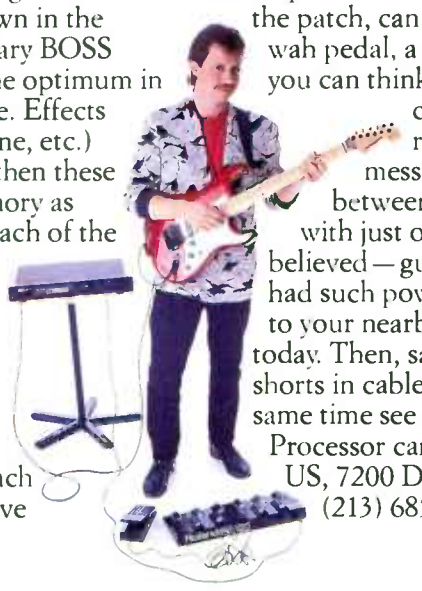

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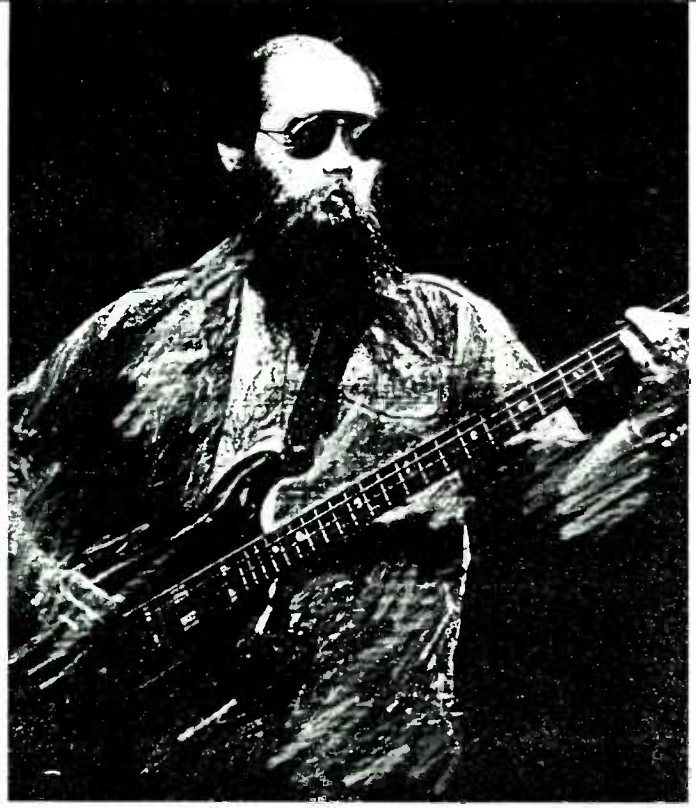

differentiate you? You should be able to sound different on anything, Rod. You're saying because I sound so different, I want to go with something that sounds the same, so all Premier kits sound the same. That'd be like me saying I need a DX7, and I'm probably the only keyboard player in the world who doesn't use one. It's all backwards."

Morgenstein is hopelessly confused now. He puts down the endorsement. It's a tough job being straight man in the Dixie Dregs, but someone's got to do it. Especially when T Lavitz is in the room. All week T's been dishing out a steady—some would say relentless—stream of one-liners, sight gags and heckling moves, and the other Dregs have been hopelessly infected. It's also a tough job being "musicians' musicians," or, as T calls it, "the darlings of NAMM." In the musical cosmos, the community of players and instrument makers alone has unquestioningly sustained the Dregs in exile. Of course, the darker side of "NAMM darlings" is "NAMM whores."

"Endorsements are so easy to turn into watered down, dismissable, sell-out crap that it's almost never worth it," says Steve Morse. "I like to dodge endorsements whenever possible. But we happen to know three people involved with Ensoniq who we like and trust and can work with. That very rarely happens."

"Wait!" All eyes turn to Morgenstein, who raises his sheet of paper in triumph: "With music becoming more and more the same, it's good to...."

Ensoniq is indeed underwriting this recorded reunion, in hopes of gaining pro acceptance of their SQ-80 synth and EPS sampler, which by agreement will be extensively used on the two-song CD. After much discussion, the band has decided to do a remake of *Night of the Living Dregs*' "Leprechaun Promenade," and *What If*'s opening rave-up "Take It Off the Top" (a tribute to booking agent commissions). The two performances differ markedly. The first tune, based on an Irish jig, has been extended far beyond its original form with literally dozens of new sections. The main melody of "Leprechaun Promenade," not among Morse's top-shelf compositions, gets a tad repetitive in spots, but the new parts are quite compelling. Still, with keyboards carrying most of the lead lines and the arrangement easily the most complex the Dregs have ever recorded, one longs to hear Morse go out for a long bomb and play some nasty loud guitar. Mercifully, he does exactly that on the second number, which despite being slowed down—considerably slowed down, bordering on the sacrilegious—is a triumph of raunch heroism. Forget all those homilies about team play, it's a Michael Jordan or a Larry Bird who fills those seats, and when the Dregs give Morse the ball, he scores every damn time.

Big Chill: Andy West wore his sunglasses at night; today he's a nine-to-fiver.

"Instrumental music right now to a lot of people is either New Age or heavy speed-freak guitarists with bass and drums," says Morse of the project, "and I wanted to keep it away from either of those two extremes. I also wanted to come into this without too many preconceived ideas, just clear my head and not try to arrange everything and tell everybody what to play. I basically wanted to have a band dynamic, see the band personality emerge. And it did, real quickly."

Andy West is not present at the time of this writer's visit, but he adds his two cents in a follow-up phone interview: "We really didn't have any concrete ideas. We just came up with some musical figures on the spot and then extrapolated. One thing led to another in terms of mood. For instance, on 'Take It Off the Top,' there was a bass solo section that sounded sort of gratuitous to me, to stick with a lot of sixteenth notes in there, and it sounded neater to have a guitar solo over some of the section and then have violin and keyboard trades at the end."

Actually, Lavitz probably came in with more than his share of trepidation; he had waited until a few days before to do his homework and discovered the batteries in his cassette player were too low, and new ones unavailable. He learned the song in the wrong key, had a moment of panic when he and Morse seemed on different planets, and then discovered his errant transposition with great relief. After that rocky beginning, and after the hectic logistical details were managed, all parties agreed something special instantly happened: "We cried," mugs Lavitz. "It really was a neat thing," Morgenstein says. "It was," adds Morse. "Instantly the music came out. And it was good."

"The neatest thing was that everyone picked up their instruments and had done their homework and remembered the tunes," says Rod. "That was a partial fear." Morse's eyes flash: "That would've pissed me off if everyone had come and said, 'Duh, what songs?'"

With barely any exceptions, all the Dregs material was written by Steve Morse and arranged under his attentive ear. Says Andy West, "Steve's always had definite *ideas* when he hears music, and his vision is always so unified, we found it a lot easier to play his songs because anything that anyone else wrote sounded really stuck in—it didn't really fit with the Dregs' sound."

"Steve's writing was the original idea for the band," echoes Lavitz. "Then we'd get together and one by one he would start throwing parts out to people, and the parts would go through their own changes by the individual musician."

So it wasn't like, "Here's the part, play it"? "To an extent it was," smiles Morgenstein, "because if you change a melody it's not the melody anymore, wouldn't you say?"

"Even in classical music, pianists or solo violinists will put their own interpretation into the exact notes," observes Lavitz. "The beauty of this was you could say, 'What if, on the chords, I put in this note or change this?' and the composer was in the room to ask, not dead for 200 years. It was pretty exacting, but I like that because I'm a rare breed of keyboard player that loves to play parts as well as improvise. Maybe that's why I ended up in the band, because I could handle sticking to the same part in the same place night after night,

PAUL ROBICHEAU

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which a lot of jazz players would go out of their minds doing. I guess we were lucky not to have big egos. The ego was kind of a band ego: God, we're good doing this music."

"One of my big things about bands is, you've got to hire the musician you want *and* the person you want," says Morse. "And if you can ever get those two people to be in one body, then you're going to have a chance. It's so easy to get swept away by someone's playing, but how fast they can play their licks at the moment they audition almost doesn't matter. What matters most is what kind of raw materials you have got: attitude, and the ability and willingness to work. That's hard to find. But to me, I don't care if I have to start at the bottom all over again—if I got those kind of people to work with, it's just a matter of time."

It all began very near here. Steve Morse's family moved to Georgia from Michigan, while Andy West arrived from Cleveland when he was 13. After a stint in Atlanta, West's family moved to Augusta, a small city about 160 miles east of Atlanta on the South Carolina border. "I had hip and cool friends in local bands who played down in Augusta," recalls West, "and when I told one of them I was moving and asked what was happening there, he said, 'It really, really sucks; there's nothing but GIs, except there's this kid down there named Steve Morse who can play just like Jimmy Page.' So I go to my new school, Richmond Military High School, and the first thing I notice is that I have the longest hair in the school and they're all looking at me like, 'You better git yore hayer cut, son.' I was in French class one day, and the teacher gives us a big homework assignment, and all of a sudden the guy behind me goes, 'Uh, that's not where it's *at!*' Like, *lingo!* Who's *this* guy? It turned out to be Steve. We just started trying to get bands together. In Augusta, the two of us were definitely aliens."

"Definite ideas": Morse tortures T Lavitz and John Senior for the perfect part.

Morse and West's band became known as Dixie Grit, and developed a formidable following in the area. "At that time, we were sowing some of the seeds of what we later did," reports West, "but it was a lot more experimental. We did a lot of things using tape recorders and weird sounds." When graduation depleted their ranks, West and Morse reportedly looked at each other and said, "Well, I guess we're the dregs," and a name was born. The two pals matriculated to several colleges, Morse winding up at the University of Miami in the mid-'70s along with some of the best and brightest musicians around: "It was ridiculous," says Lavitz. "Listen to who was there while we were: Pat Metheny, Mark Egan, Danny Gottlieb, Hiram Bullock, Will Lee, Narada Michael Walden, Jaco was the bass teacher, even Bruce Hornsby and his band. And us."

One day, Morse made a fateful acquaintance: "I was in a jazz improv class with Steve," Rod Morgenstein remembers, "and he had long, long blond hair and was the only guitarist who played a solid-body Fender. Everyone else had big fat guitars and was being encouraged to play like Wes Montgomery, you know, turn the treble down and wear the guitar higher up. Steve really stuck out from the pack to me. I was playing piano in the class and he didn't really know I was a drummer, but he had a group and the drummer was a surfer and had broken his arm—the guy's name was Bart Yarnold. Steve heard that I played drums and liked my piano playing, so he asked me to sit in, and when Bart got better we had double drums. That band also had Hiram Bullock on bass, Allen Sloane on violin and a guy named Frank Josephs on piano."

With double drums, did the early Dregs do Allman Brothers tunes? "We did," smiles Rod. Morgenstein's abilities with sticks no doubt made life uncomfortable for his co-drummer, who dropped away. "We started doing things that were not his cup of tea, mixed meters, odd times. I was pushing to do Mahavishnu tunes and would transcribe songs in 9/16 time. It wasn't Bart's forte, but Steve was very much into that."

In the final year of Morse's U-Miami undergrad stint, West came down to fill the bass chair and the band lurched toward professionalism—sort of. Their first paying job was for watermelons, but they were underpaid: "Some student carnival wanted them to play a campus festival and said, 'We can't pay you,'" recalls Lavitz, also at UM but not at that time a band member. "They said, 'Well, what if you give us each a watermelon?' And the committee said, 'No, we'll give you one and you can split it between the band.' And the band went, 'Okay!' I guess that's when they became professionals."

With the final semester for most of the band winding down, they made a collective decision to throw in their lot together and move back to Augusta, where West's parents had a number of rental properties ("They were sort of slumlords," smiles T). The pianist chair passed steadily from Josephs to David Roystein to Steve Davidowski to Mark Parrish, who had originally been a Dixie Grit member. The chief advantage of Augusta for the fledgling Dixie Dregs was its economy of life: "You know, 40 bucks a week pretty much covered our expenses," says Morgenstein. "There was a club in Augusta called the Whipping Post that let us play there once a month for a week—we'd walk out with $150, $200 per man for only six nights, four sets a night. When I run into younger musicians who have the same dream, I worry about them, because the cost of living steadily increases, but the amount of money the musician at the entry level gets paid is still the same—about a hundred bucks a night for the whole band."

With characteristic single-mindedness, their material was virtually all originals—with an occasional necessary exception: "The Whipping Post was on a circuit where regional acts would come in and do all copy material, and then we'd come in and do this unusual stuff to a mixed crowd that contained a lot of Andy/Steve fanatics from years back," smiles Rod. "And the regular crowd had *no* idea what we were doing, and just wanted to dance. I remember well into the band's career playing in Charleston at the Citadel, a military academy, and no one cared for us at *all*. Steve suddenly yells out, '"Tush,"' and breaks right into it. He sung it, too: *'I been up, I been down....'* And they all went wild."

While at U-Miami, the band had recorded a limited-run EP

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called *Great Spectacular.* It was later used, as Morgenstein ruefully recalls, to woo major labels: "Andy, Steve and myself went to New York City and took it around to all the record companies we could think of—there were about 27 or 30 back then. We were trying to set off a bidding war, but we were a bit naive. They all sent rejections. They told us, 'Sounds terrible, no commercial potential, get a vocalist, you gotta play disco....' The guy at CTI was very big on disco. And it was so depressing. But that may have helped make our fight that much stronger. We said, 'Yeah, we're gonna do it anyway, we're committed, we're gonna *get* a record deal, we're gonna do it with no vocals.' We had a grudge.

"Then we played a club in Nashville where a couple of guys from the Allman Brothers heard us, Chuck Leavell and Twiggs Lyndon, who was part of their crew and later became our mentor. They called Phil Walden, who was the president of Capricorn, and said, 'You've *got* to sign this band.' So they set up a date for us to play in Macon, we played and shook hands and that's how it happened. It was paying dues by sticking to your guns, but it really only took about a year."

Capricorn chose Stewart Levine to produce the Dixie Dregs' debut LP, *Free Fall.* Levine was best known then for his work with the Jazz Crusaders, and he dressed the Dregs in the same sonic clothes, somewhat to their disappointment. "It didn't have the sound we *thought* it would originally have," says Morgenstein. "It was our first album, it'd all been for *this.* When the record arrived from the West Coast, we put it on, waiting to hear our *first* project. And it was a letdown."

"Let's tone that down a bit," cautions Morse, who mistrusts microphones. "It's just that the producer was going for more of a live jazz sound, while we were imagining more of a massive Mahavishnu rock sound." Capricorn's suggestion for producer of the follow-up LP, *What If,* was more to their taste: Ken Scott, who produced not only Mahavishnu but Jeff Beck, Queen and Supertramp among others. "Ken was a great producer for us," says Morse, "because he didn't say, 'All right, let's start from the beginning with this song. You have an A chord, right? We'll keep the A....' He just said, 'What's the music? Give me 15 tunes.' We'd play 15 and he'd pick eight. The rest of it was just getting a good sound. He was very intuitive and kept his hands off the music as much as possible."

"Except for me," cautions Morgenstein. "Ken had a lot to say about my drumming. My concept of playing at the time was immature in that I wanted to play every note imaginable on my instrument, so that when drummers listened to it, they'd be impressed. During the first thing we played for Ken, 'Take It Off the Top,' he *stopped* us in mid-song and said, 'What are you *doing?*' And I was offended, although I didn't show it. He said, 'Trust me, you'll see what I'm talking about. The less you play, the harder you can hit your instrument, and the better we can make it sound.' Then he did a comparison. He said, 'Here's your favorite band,' and put on some unreleased Mahavishnu, and then he put on a new Supertramp record he'd just done. And I had to admit the Supertramp drums sounded better than those of Billy Cobham, my idol at the time."

Scott also produced the band's third LP, *Night of the Living Dregs,* which was the last with Mark Parrish; old Miami schoolmate Lavitz became keyboardist number five. "T practically didn't know what a synthesizer was when he joined the band," notes Morse, "but we could see the guy was a hyper workaholic with a good attitude." *Night of the Living Dregs* also marked the first of four consecutive Grammy nominations for best rock instrumental. The band hopefully attended each

continued on page 68

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UREI

Jane Siberry's Post-Pop Populism

By Josef Woodard

Days before I interviewed Jane Siberry, I acquired the strangest round stigmata on my forehead after putting a suction cup toy there to amuse my kid. A hematoma, someone told me it was. The woman at the rent-a-car place in Toronto thought it was a hockey mishap: a puckish incident. Later, in Siberry's Toronto flat, she is trying her hardest to ignore the obvious, purploid orb.

"You're probably wondering about this mark," I say.

"Oh, I just assumed that it was a birthmark," she says softly, "or that you'd been sitting like this [*takes the position of Rodin's famous sculpture, with fist on temple*]...'The Thinker,' that's it. It's good to have things that you can't always explain to people; they just have to accept it."

It's much the same with Siberry's haunting, oblique and often epic songs. In her musical world, elements of the theatrical and the ethereal vie for prominence. Her folk roots are more of a footnote, embellished with large doses of experimental elan and progressive touches. Odd time signatures and extended song forms nestle up to thick tufts of layered voices, like Abba with an attitude problem.

Is Siberry a visionary of sorts, or is she, as some would too quickly dismiss her, simply another wild-card songbird with visions of Joni Mitchell, Kate Bush, Laurie Anderson and other unorthodox female musicians dancing in her head?

Either way, Siberry has existed comfortably on the northern fringe for the last few years. And now her delightfully inexplicable music is available wherever records and tapes are sold. *The Walking* and its single, "Ingrid (and the Footman)," were recently released on Reprise, following an independent project in 1981 and two LPs, *No Borders Here* and *The Speckless Sky*, on Windham Hill's Open Air subsidiary. You'd think that Siberry would take the occasion of her debut with the mighty Brothers Warner to solidify a commercial presence. But, never one to play it straight sonically or careeristically, she has, instead, produced her most subtle and ambitious album. A slow-burner, it creeps up on the attentive listener and gains emotional scope with each spin.

CHILLING OUT WITH THE QUEEN OF THE NORTHERN FRINGE

STANLEY GREEN/PIX INTERNATIONAL

Raised in Toronto, Siberry went to the University of Guelph with the intent of studying music. Instead, she fled from musical academia and wound up a microbiology major, studying the secret life of organisms. Music beckoned, though, and she became a mainstay in the Toronto club scene, steadily expanding her pop and folk instincts into new areas.

In a recent, tightly choreographed and charismatic homecoming at Toronto's Massey Hall, Siberry and her able bandmates mounted a bold, inventive performance. The twining vocal texture of her records is recreated by her live Siberrites, Rebeccas Jenkins and Campbell. Bassist John Switzer and drummer Al Cross produce an elegant thunder alongside Ken Myhr's arpeggiated guitar lines and Anne Bourne's keyboard color schemes, all beneath a huge surreal clothesline looming overhead.

The next night, Siberry and crew scale down and make a surprise visit to the Horseshoe, one of the bars she played in her salad days. Guitarist David Torn and trumpeter Mark Isham, who have just played at the Massey that night in David Sylvian's band, have elbowed into the wall-to-wall crowd and are duly impressed. Torn announces that his goal is to play with all the world's "weird pop stars," but he has trouble coming up with more than a handful: Sylvian, Kate Bush, Peter Gabriel, the Talking Heads, and now Siberry.

MUSICIAN: *What's the songwriting process like for you?*

SIBERRY: It's a balancing act—knowing when to let things free, when to tighten up, when it's alright to use lyrics you know won't mean anything [to anyone] but you, but they're open enough that other people can fill them.

A lot of my criteria for writing songs are pleasure-oriented. If I'm getting a certain sound that I know feels good, I'll let it go longer. I'll make sure that, if something is more hookish than something else, the lyrics that go with it are open enough that they take full advantage of a hook.

It would be much easier to take an electrode and put it on people's heads, because all the information is there, in a flash in your head. But that's the beauty of art—how you take those steps. Still, everyone would have different concepts in their head, but that's what you have to work at all your life—how to get what you see in your head closer to what you end up with. Completing something is a real skill, not necessarily an art.

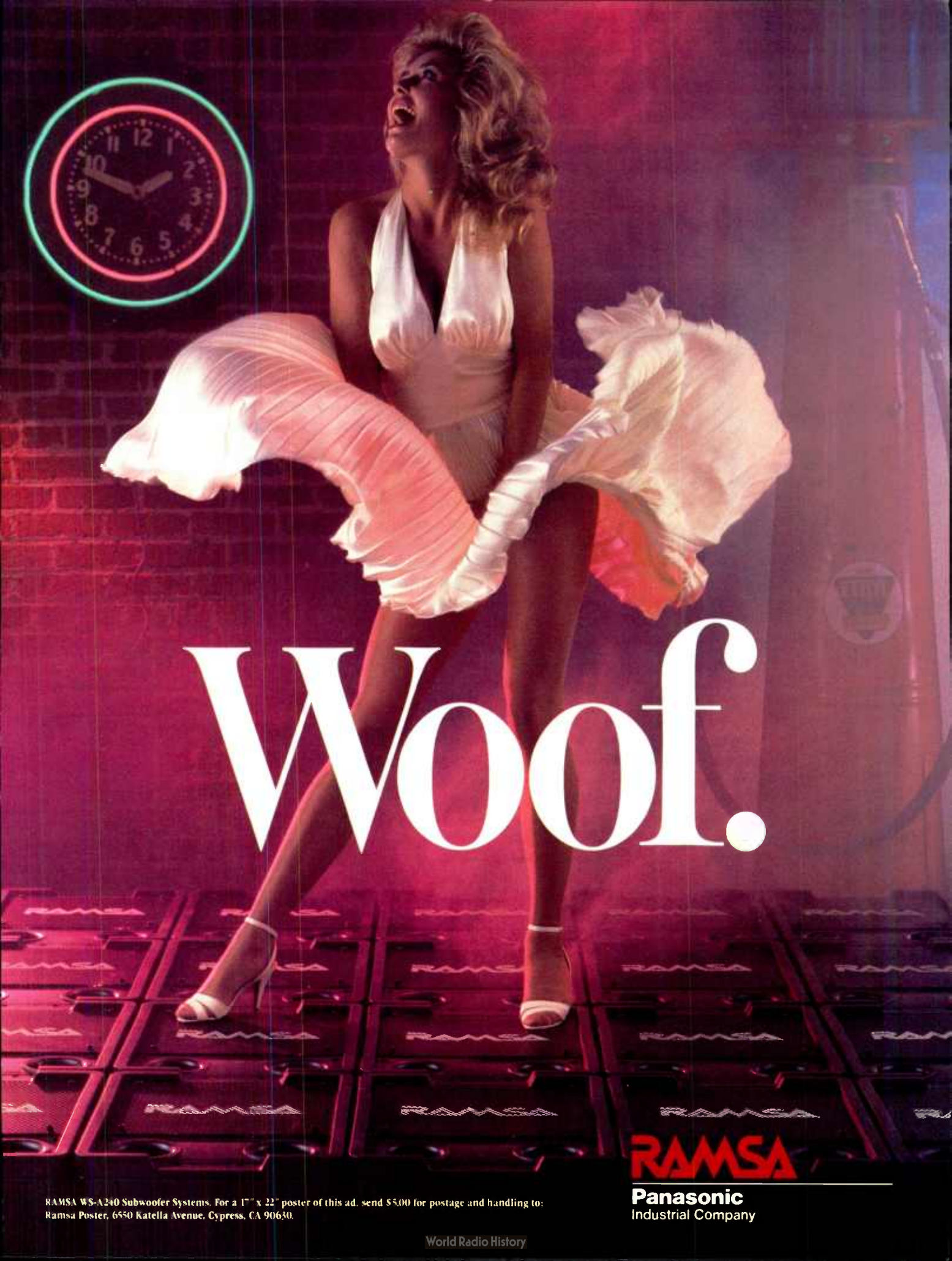
MUSICIAN: *You started out as a folk singer, yet you've become very comfortable with technology. Would it be hard for you to return to the simplicity of just the voice and guitar?*

SIBERRY: Yeah, if that's all I could do. I love it though—the simplicity of it. I find that sometimes it requires more effort to get that simplicity than to work with people. But even when I was performing solo, I would still do my own recording, multi-tracking on two tape recorders. I'm definitely more comfortable now with things. Part of the reason this record took a while was because I wanted to learn how to use a computer, a 12-track, samplers and keyboards.

MUSICIAN: *On this album, you avoid a lot of songcraft elements—backbeats and basic verse/chorus/bridge structures. Do you find yourself becoming more experimental?*

SIBERRY: I like finding new ways to do things, but I like backbeats. I like anchoring things down. In "White Tent the Raft," because it was a complex song, I worked to make sure the kick drum is right there. And it is verse/chorus; it just has five bridges. It still feels like classic form, somehow, because it winds down at the end and comes full circle.

I had a bit of an aversion to a lot of experimental music, because I can't feel it. You can stretch and make things



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interesting—a heartfelt stretch, so to speak. I see a big difference between experimental music and music that is just interesting. I think I'm always just working towards better songwriting. It doesn't matter what the elements are, as long as the essence is there.

MUSICIAN: *"Goodbye" is a very heart-wrenching song. It begins as a tender ballad, explodes on the title word, and plunges into the bridge, which is more aggressive and cathartic.*

SIBERRY: When I was writing that song on the piano, I was reminded of Randy Newman. I could really hear him singing it, because it almost has that strange classical sense that he has. I think he's one of the most brilliant songwriters, he and Tom Waits and Elvis Costello. You would never know from the finished arrangement on the record, but when I play piano, I think of Randy Newman a lot. I almost didn't put that song on the album, because I felt it was too primal or something. I just didn't feel comfortable about it.

MUSICIAN: *The new album has a pervasive sense of lost love. With love songs, it's easy to fall into the trap of sentimentality. Whereas lost love is more from a state of anarchy, don't you think?*

SIBERRY: It's easier to project sadness. I try to find the thing on the other side. If you can get people to see something in a funny way, the feeling inspires us. Then you can get people to see the world in a funny way.

That's the beauty of imagery and poetry—not poetry as in poems, but in speaking in a non-linear way. It gets to a different part of your brain. Someone put it nicely: A koan is an Eastern teacher's way of getting students to reach a state of transcendence. It's a non-logical puzzle that goes in a circle so that it makes your mind jump, because you can't get out of it. And that's the same power of poetry.

MUSICIAN: *When you started playing, was it a sort of escape from suburbia?*

SIBERRY: I think it wouldn't matter where you lived; when you're growing up, art is a friend to anybody. I would come home from school and play piano or go in my room and play guitar, which I started playing when I was 16.

MUSICIAN: *What sort of music were you listening to?*

SIBERRY: A lot of it had to do with proximity. We had records around our house: Herb Alpert, Richard Harris, Petula Clark, all the singles we would buy. "Body and Soul." Bubblegum pop.

MUSICIAN: *You have Valkyries on your*

continued on page 128

THE PLAYING

After starting out with only her guitar and voice, **Siberry** has learned to love the digital age. On *The Speckless Sky*, programmer Rob Yale helped her lay down songs on a Fairlight, after which the band recorded its parts. On *The Walking*, Siberry collaborated with keyboardist **Anne Bourne** and bassist co-producer **John Switzer** in sketching out the songs before going into the studio, using a Mac with Performer software and an Akai S900 sampler. Siberry and Bourne also use a Roland Juno 8, a Roland JX8P, a Yamaha DX7II and the Yamaha FB01, a polytimbral module.

Switzer uses a custom bass with Schecter parts and EMG pickups. He mostly goes direct, but also uses an H & H Studio 60 amp. Drummer **Al Cross** uses a kit made by the Canadian Canwood Company and plays pads triggering an Akai S900 on the album. Guitarist **Ken Myhr** uses a Fender Stratocaster through a Fender Concert amp. He recently streamlined his effects with the Roland GP-8, a programmable multi-effects unit which he sometimes uses MIDIed up to a Yamaha SPX90.

Oh yeah, and Siberry still plays a Yamaha 12-string acoustic and a Wren acoustic guitar.

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Drawing the Line

How to Organize Your Band as a Business

BY STAN SOOCHER

Musicians are notoriously informal about many things, but when it comes to how they do business, a little informality can be dangerous. Assumptions quietly held but never mutually acknowledged can lead to disaster down the road when things aren't spelled out in black and white at the outset. It may be time for you to put your band's relationship into formal terms, or modify an existing arrangement. How can you tell if it's time? Well, how much do you make?

"I believe a band should enter into a written agreement among themselves when they are making enough money to hire a lawyer to draw one up," says Los Angeles music attorney Samuel Fox. Aerosmith bassist Tom Hamilton agrees: "Use of a written agreement among the members of a band is like the invention of the wheel. You create one when you need one. But you usually won't need one until you have some money coming in and you're on your way to obtaining a record deal."

Hamilton feels that despite good initial intentions, Aerosmith probably waited too long to discuss rights and responsibilities: "We had a common purpose and passion from the start. Even though we didn't always get along so great, hunger for that big record deal is a strong motivator for functioning properly as a band. But one of the problems Aerosmith had was incomplete communication within the group. Things left unsaid begin to fester like mold as time goes on."

A negotiating session for a written band agreement can be "a consciousness-raising endeavor," according to Samuel Fox. "Issues will be raised by the drafting lawyer which in all likelihood haven't been considered by the band before." How will the profits be split? What about solo projects? What happens if members are fired or quit? Who owns what? These and other questions are raised and answered in the creation of any formal business entity.

For most conventional band relationships, the two options are a written partnership or an incorporation agreement. With partnerships, the basic issues include the handling of capital, income and drawing accounts, voting rights, group property, solo projects, new and leaving members, and dissolution. Incorporation involves profit participation for stockholders, restrictions on the transferability of stock, and provisions for directors and officers. Because members of bands come and go more often than the principals of most other business entities, partnerships may be preferable to corporations which require the sale and purchase of stock, and may bring securities laws into play. Bands who form corporations are also required to closely follow the organizational rules required by state laws. These cover the filing and administering of corporate documents, and the drafting of bylaws to establish the framework for the issuance of stock, and the roles of corporate officers and directors. In addition, employment and franchise taxes must be paid.

Despite its greater complexity, though, incorporation is preferred by many experts, especially because it's more flexible when it comes to averaging the lean and fat years that are the bane of the musician's financial life. Under the old tax laws, artists who incorporated could easily shift income from one year to the next to lower their tax liability. Under the new laws, though, income shifting has become more difficult, if not impossible in many instances. However, if an incorporated musician earns a small amount of money one year and a large amount the next, the *salary* paid the musician by the corporation may still be shifted as under the old law.

"Many tax advantages of incorporation have been diminished by new federal tax laws," admits Samuel Fox, "but this business form retains other advantages, such as reducing individual liability." (By contrast, general partners are themselves liable for actions of the partnership.)

Of course, it's not always an either/or decision. Many bands today form one corporation to limit legal liability for touring purposes, but may function as a partnership for writing and recording pursuits. And if you're not sure your band is really a band, you can try a one-person variation on the same theme: "A solo artist may work as a sole proprietor or incorporate," suggests Fox. "Then the artist can enter into written employment agreements with musicians he or she may hire to form a working musical unit."

For many bands, however, a group partnership agreement is all the formality they'll ever need (see Jeff Murphy box). For these arrangements, bands can usually write their own structural provisions to govern the organization. Individual members should definitely engage their own separate attorneys to explain to them what they're signing; if they don't, the attorney who drafts the agreement will probably insert a clause stating the band members were advised to do so, just to lessen malpractice liability. In a typical partnership, each member may be required initially to contribute at least a minimal amount of capital to fund the band. The amount each member contributes is usually proportional to that member's ownership percentage of the group. Money advanced by group members to make up for another member's shortfall would be considered loans. The funding of more ambitious projects is generally the responsibility of the band's management.

A good agreement will be very specific about splitting the take. Profits can be distributed proportionately on group vote or on a pre-negotiated schedule. Losses would also be shared proportionately. Each band member may have the right prior to the distribution of any profits to withdraw funds up to a specified limit. This is particularly essential if the band represents any member's principal means of livelihood.

The lines of power are also delineated. Voting rights may call for majority or unanimous vote, or give one or more members of the band extra voting power. Regardless of the voting rights on day-to-

Tom Hamilton, bass player for Aerosmith:

"We split everything five ways when Aerosmith began [in 1970]. Even now we try to either divide everything equally between the members of the group or buy some piece of equipment to benefit the band as a whole. In the early days, whoever brought equipment into the band owned it. [Vocalist] Steven Tyler brought in the PA system, by far the most expensive and elaborate piece of equipment, which gave him extra influence in the group.

"We didn't incorporate until our managers suggested we form some sort of legal entity. But the internal politics of the band didn't change once a written agreement was signed. Everyone was an equal owner of the new company. We argued for more than an hour over what voting procedures should be. We ended up requiring a three-out-of-five majority for most decisions. But even though it's written down that way, a major decision doesn't get made unless everyone in the band finally agrees.

"When you get managers and a record deal, all of a sudden you have outsiders in positions of strength. It can be unsettling to the band since some members will get more attention than others from managers who don't want to deal with five different minds and mouths, but one or two instead. So the ice can get a little thinner and there's a potential for jealousy.

"When we incorporated we had language about a leaving member. If someone was injured and couldn't play for an extended length of time, or was fired, money would still go to that person but eventually trail off. As for solo projects [which guitarist Joe Perry left the band to do in 1979], we hadn't considered that. We could have said that the corporation got 10 percent or that such projects were to be kept separate. We avoided considering it because we'd have had to determine whether that member would still be in the band or was leaving. It was a free-floating thing, but before Joe actually left he came back into the studio to finish the album we were working on.

"With Joe back the basic structure of the band is the same, only more carefully defined. We've had a second chance to come back, which very few bands get, so we're trying to keep well-organized. Still, after so many years, though we've always had flashpoints, everyone in the band is more comfortable speaking his own mind."

day matters, the band may want to require a near- or absolute unanimous vote for commitments vital to its existence. These could include any agreements that would bind the band for a substantial length of time, such as one year, or transfer a member's interest in the band.

"What I primarily include in a partnership agreement is who is in the band, what the members get paid and who owns the name," says New York music attorney Nicholas Gordon. "First I ask, 'Who writes the songs?' Normally the composer of a song will get the full writer's share of copyright income while more often than not publishing income is divided equally between all band members."

The importance of the band's name in any agreement must not be underestimated. The name could be owned by one or more members; if one member owns it, the partnership agreement would stipulate the name is on loan for use by the group. The ownership of the name may become further complicated by signing a record deal. A label will often retain the right to determine the use of the name of a band if the band breaks up. For instance, the company could have the group continue with a single member recording for the label as a solo act.

Some abuses of this have occurred. Samuel Fox remembers one well-known band in which the president of a record company claimed to be a partner and have an ownership right in the name. "The executive tried to sell the name through an auction. He then would have gone to the auction to buy it back himself. We got an injunction to stop the auction based on equitable principles. The band was hoodwinked to have ever entered into such an agreement with that executive."

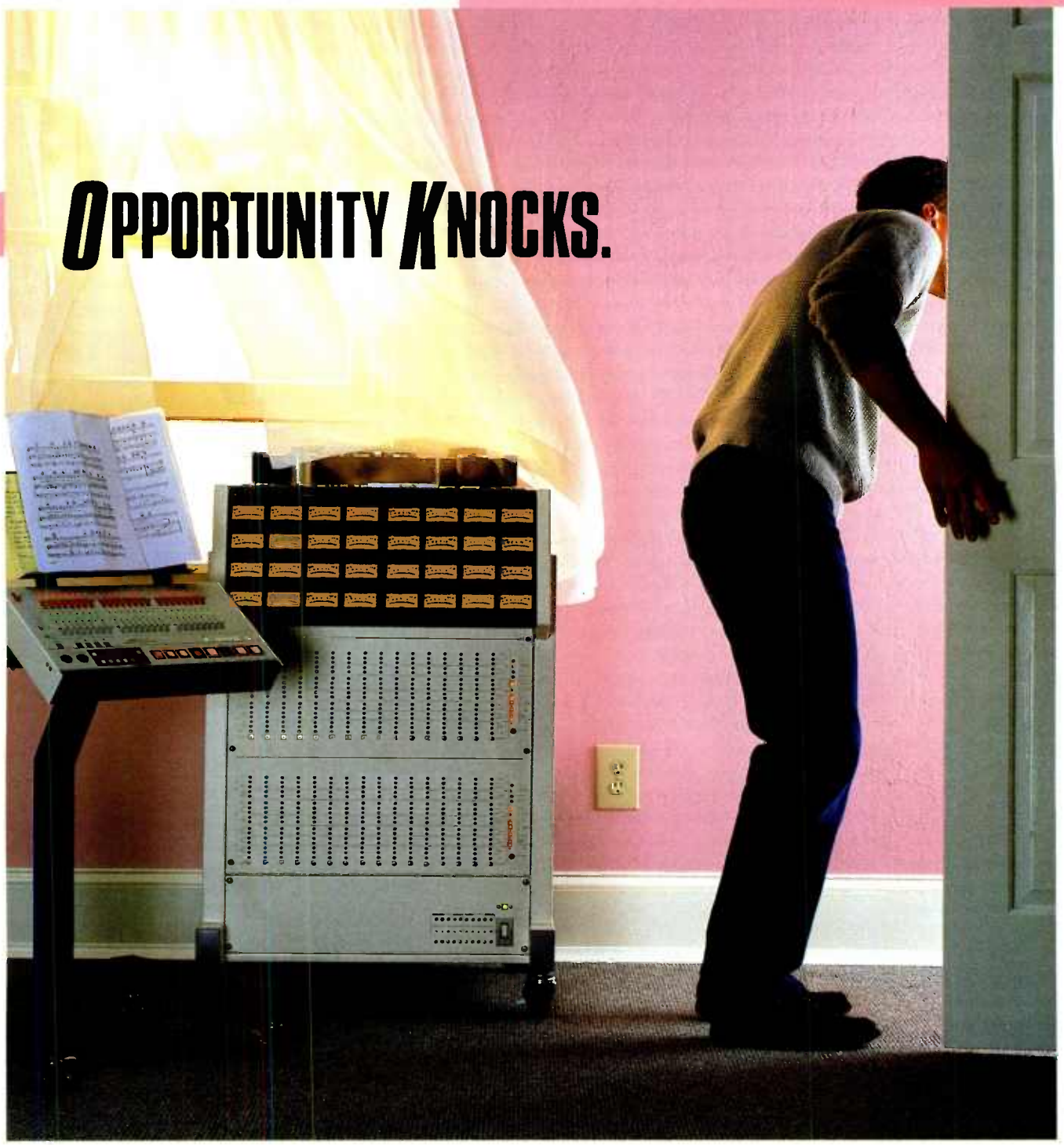
Many group partnership agreements stipulate whether and for how long band members will be allowed to work on solo projects. A group vote could be required if a solo project will last beyond a specified period of time. In some cases, band members may be limited to working as session or side players on outside projects.

It's the more unthinkable eventualities like death and dissolution that an agreement needs to anticipate. Under the partnership laws of most states, if a member of a band resigns, becomes disabled or dies, the partnership is automatically dissolved unless an agreement in writing provides otherwise. A written agreement may also contain provisions for expulsion of group members for good cause, such as substantial breach of the partnership agreement or personal behavior that seriously affects the ability of the band to conduct its business. This conduct could include the repeated failure to show up for rehearsals, concerts and recording sessions.

A departing member's capital, drawing and income accounts would be assessed from the date of his or her withdrawal. "There may be a buyout of a group member at fair market value, though this is difficult to calculate," Nicholas Gordon notes. "After all, how could you have determined the fair market value of the Beatles without John Lennon?"

The major concern for departed band members (dead or otherwise) will be how future income on past projects is paid. "Say a band signs a deal with a record company," Gordon continues. "Heavy advances are paid, the debut album is delivered and the keyboard player leaves before a second album is recorded. The debut album sells well and $50,000 in royalties are due in June. The second album is recorded before June and costs $200,000. The company will offset the $200,000 with the $50,000 and hold a $150,000 debit against the band."

Gordon recommends a band distinguish between a member who is *asked* to leave and one who *chooses* to leave the group. The member who is asked to leave would receive an amount equal to his or her royalties regardless of the recording costs



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and sales of any future albums. A member who chooses to leave would only get paid royalties earned when the band is back in the black with the record company, which may be years, or perhaps never.

Gordon elaborates: "The member who *chose* to leave has decided not to gamble along with the rest of the group who are still bound to the record company. Why should he or she walk out with cash in his pocket while the band is in debt? A member kicked out for good reason may not believe that is so. If he isn't

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Pop and R&B singer Gladys Knight:

"We didn't intentionally become 'Gladys Knight & the Pips' [today composed of Knight, her brother and two cousins]. We were known as the Pips, with other lead singers, but the recordings I sang on happened to become popular. Our first hit, 'Every Beat of My Heart,' was released on different labels. To distinguish between the versions, we used the name 'The Pips' on one label and 'Gladys Knight & the Pips' on the other.

"Our earliest business organization was an informal oral partnership. We didn't have a formal arrangement until after 'Every Beat' was released. Then we formed Pips In Performance, Inc. And Pips Entertainment Organization, Inc. (PEO), our main corporation today, serves the same function.

"We've always taken care of our own business, handling the money and dealing with promoters, so it was rather difficult for us during our years at Motown. Many of the acts didn't seem to know what money they were making and Motown wasn't used to having an act around that knew so much about business. We've also always had some kind of creative control.

"I'm a firm believer in in-house resources. My sister was running my company until she got a promotion in her government job. Today I work through several corporations. My mother, who was the original inspiration behind the Pips, is the treasurer. She handles all the money and banking, though we have accountants on board. Shakeji Inc. lends me out to PEO. Shakeji also serves as a production house. My daughter is administrative executive for the company. My mom, my son and my daughter and I also hold stock. My nephew is executive director of PEO. My son, who was road manager for the Pips for four years, runs my talent management company. Each of the Pips have their own corporations and are on loan to PEO."

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE INC

Jeff Murphy, vocalist and guitarist for Shoes:

"We started out working under an oral agreement between the members of Shoes. Sort of like living together as opposed to being married. We learned marketing and finance from recording and packaging *Black Vinyl Shoes*, our first album on our own in 1977. We got more formal when we licensed that album to Jem Records. We formed our own publishing company and hired an administrator. We also drew up a written partnership agreement. We chose a partnership over a corporation for convenience for the way we conduct business. No one has ever strongly urged us to incorporate.

"Our partnership agreement is fairly general because we prefer to do a lot of things orally. John [Murphy, the bass player] is my brother and Gary [Klebe, vocals and guitars] and I went to high school together. All three of us write, record and handle business. We've always had a kind of transient relationship with our drummers, who we now hire as session players. At one point we had Skip Meyer [drummer on several Shoes albums] involved in publishing as an incentive. When that didn't prove motivational, we bought the publishing back.

"We recorded three albums for Elektra Records and released one called *Silhouette* overseas after that on our own in 1984. We owned *Silhouette* entirely. We financed and produced it, then released it through licensing agreements. We released our latest album, *Shoes Best*, on CD only on our Black Vinyl label. We financed it through our studio, Short Order Recorder in Zion, Illinois.

"If we have to make a decision we must have three votes. We all have personal property within the group. Gary has guitars and amps he financed and owns. But the PA and monitor systems, and our studio, all belong to the group.

"We have an informal oral agreement that even if a song has one writer, we split the money equally to avoid conflict. We've eliminated the problem where someone might say, 'I want my song done because I need money to buy a car.' This allows us to concentrate on the creative side.

"If one of us were to quit, I don't think it would be possible for Shoes to carry on. If it were to happen we would split everything equally. That's written into our partnership agreement. But the legal paperwork is not to protect us from ourselves, but from the outside world."

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paid when he leaves, he can argue the band is unfairly using his money for its next move."

Partnership agreements also anticipate failure and have guidelines for cashing in the chips. Property acquired by a band, such as real estate or equipment, can be proportionately divided or sold, with the money distributed to group members. A fair distribution of the group's assets could be made in the following order: first to creditors of the group, second to repay band members for loans made to the group in addition to their proportionate capital contributions, third to repay members' capital contributions, and finally to proportionately distribute profits to members. An administrative trust can be formed to distribute any future income. Any joint ownership of the group name should be preserved to prevent the dilution of goodwill with the public in continued record sales and possible reunions.

As good as the partnership is as a form of organization, though, it often lacks the sophistication of the corporation for solving problems. For example, individual musicians often form so-called "loan-out" corporations for the purpose of contracting their services to third parties. This could include separate arrangements with an umbrella corporation representing all members of the group (see Gladys Knight box).

"One major problem you run into with incorporation is inequality when advances are recouped," cautions Steven Massarsky, a Manhattan lawyer who once served as the Allman Brothers' manager. "Assume you have co-writers in the band who equally split a $20,000 advance recoupable by a publishing company. Say one writer's songs sell and the other's don't. The writer whose songs aren't selling is paying back his advance through royalties earned by the selling songwriter. If you set up separate loan-out corporations for each of the writers, advances could be recouped only out of that writer's income. The Allman Brothers formed as a partnership, but later each member set up separate loan-out corporations in a joint venture. That way when a tour ended everyone could settle up directly with his own money and avoid a tremendous amount of bookkeeping."

When the corporate obligations get confusing, managers, record companies, publishing companies and others will usually require a musician to sign a separate "inducement letter" obligating the musician to fulfill the contractual obligations regardless of any disputes that may arise between the musician and the musician's corporation.

"A record company doesn't always know who owns or controls the musician's corporation, or who will in the future," says New York attorney Stanley Schneider, former in-house counsel at CBS Records. "If record companies demand that musicians personally guarantee performance, it really doesn't matter. The company will then be in privity with the flesh-and-blood artist since it is really the artist's services the company is contracting for."

But from the musician's standpoint, all the legal planning in the world won't matter unless the internal dynamics of a band mesh. "Even when a written agreement is drawn up, musicians don't pay much attention to it," Samuel Fox concludes. "A written agreement really won't affect day-to-day operations, but becomes important when someone enters or leaves the band. If the first four musicians to join a five-member group have all the voting power before they walk into an attorney's office, that most likely won't change when a written agreement is drafted. An attorney who tries to alter the basic working relationships of the band is only looking for trouble." M

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Developments: Summer No-Shows

By Jock Baird

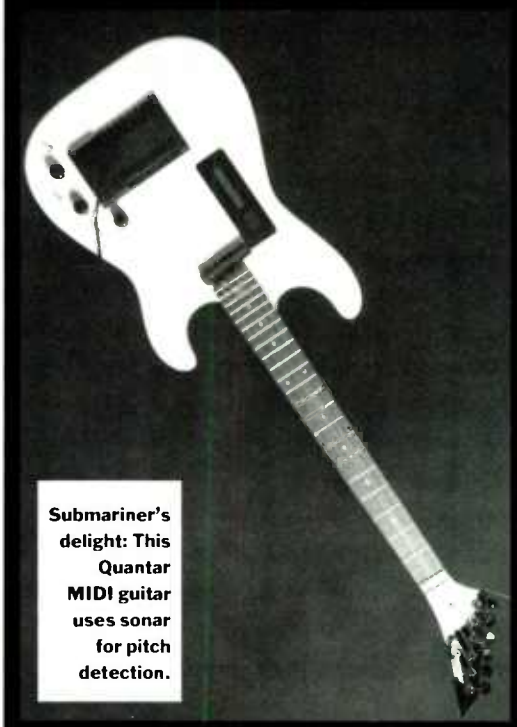
In late June, the musical instrument industry's eyes and ears turn to NAMM, and this summer's show at Atlanta has rekindled a long-simmering debate within the MI community about the demand for a summer show. Now that the Frankfurt Fair in Germany has become a world-class confab, can the manufacturers really afford three blow-outs a year? For many firms, the answer has come back a resounding no. That's right, big-name NAMM dropouts are the big news.

Prominent absences are nothing new, of course—witness **Oberheim**'s tradition of passing on the winter show while **Sequential Circuits** used to skip the summer. And last summer **Ensoniq** took a show off because they were readying a big winter blitz. But this year it's become an epidemic, with **Roland** (gasp), **Fender** (gulp) and **Kramer** (golly) leading the sick-out. Ensoniq is again a no-show, as is **Akai**, whose U.S. distributor is rumored to be in some financial rearrangement. **Yamaha** is not sending all its divisions; **DOD/Digitech** is scaling back its booth; and **Seymour Duncan** is said to be on the fence. Undoubtedly more names will emerge by showtime.

In the case of some of these firms, the problem has been so many back orders that it isn't worth taking any more. At least that's what Fender's **Bill Schultz** said in a letter to his dealers explaining his "agonizing decision." It probably *was* a tough one, since booth positions are gained by seniority and NAMM could theoretically put Fender or Roland back at the bottom of the list for Anaheim, next to the fog machine and guitar-strap vendors. Talk about back on the street again....

For its part, NAMM has maintained a steadfast commitment to two shows a year: "There is no doubt the summer show has a strong established footing," said NAMM's **John Vincent** in a bullish press release which also noted dealer preregistration is running 13 percent ahead of last summer's. But NAMM has never acknowledged that the Anaheim winter session is better attended and generally more exciting, especially because of the number of top artists coming down from L.A. And the Southern summer shows, like the one in New Orleans in 1985, have a tendency to be slow as molasses.

GUESS WHO'S *NOT* COMING TO ATLANTA NAMM—AND WHO IS



Submariner's delight: This Quantar MIDI guitar uses sonar for pitch detection.

Still, one man's burden is another's opportunity. No company that's got a product to show *now* should be waiting around till next January to unveil it (unless, of course, it's vaporware). Especially because it can get lost in the crowd in flashy old Anaheim. Virtually all of the above-named dropouts have already garnered a lot of ink in the trade press this year, and their disappearance will send newshounds like myself scurrying around looking for new stories to write. This month, here's a smattering of potential summer show-stealers.

First a new wrinkle in the MIDI guitar wars, which will excite all you submariners out there. Yup, sonar sensing of the strings to determine pitch. Keen students of this column will recognize this as the **Beetle** system, embodied in their Quan-

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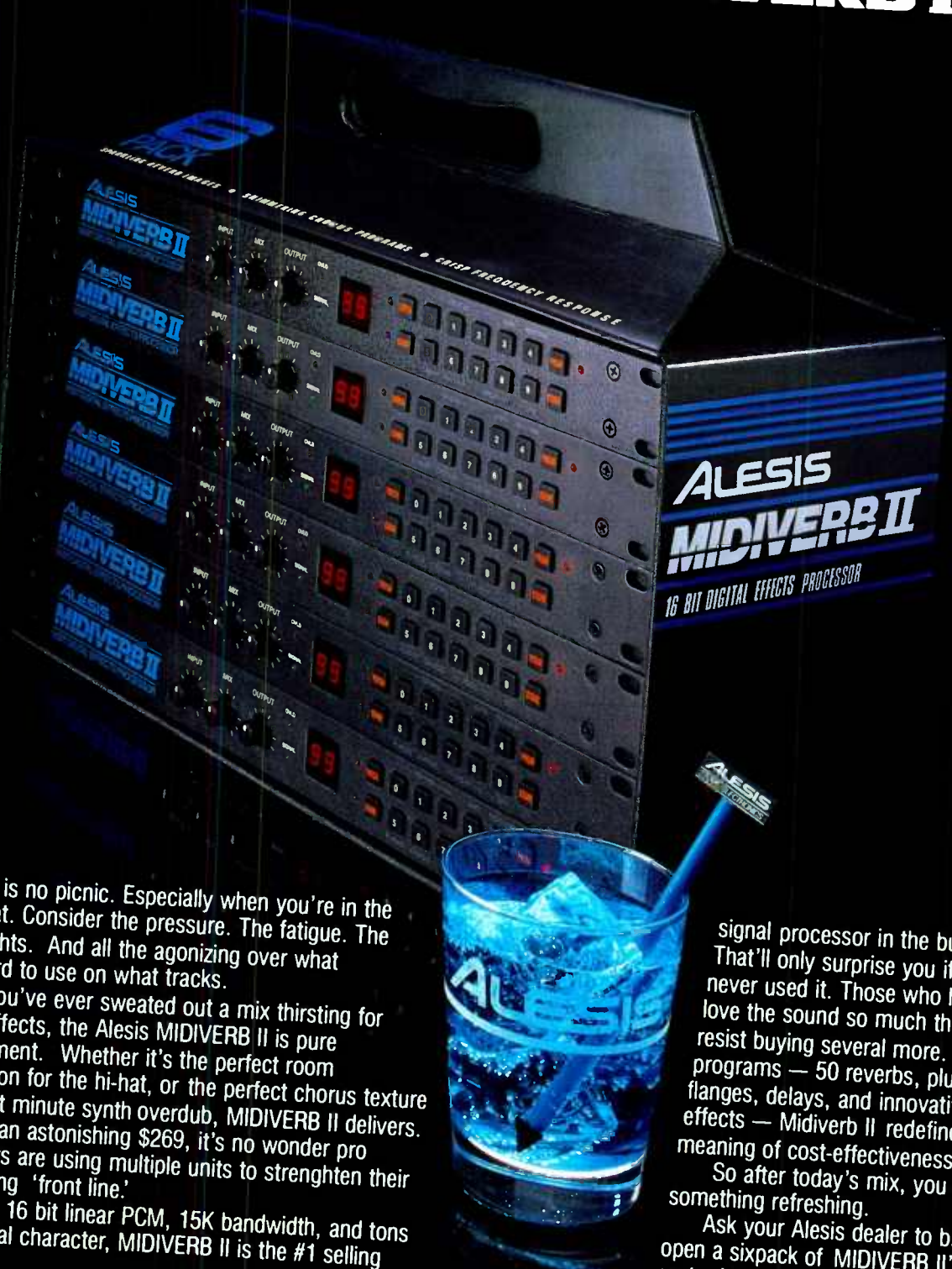

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*Based on *Music and Sound Retailer's* monthly survey of 1,200 audio dealers

tar guitar controller. Atlanta will technically mark the fourth NAMM appearance of the Quantar, but the Burbank firm now says they mean business and will start shipping. Granted they've said this before, but maybe they really will. The system is said to use sonar to measure the length of the fretted string, so there's no actual pitch-to-MIDI conversion going on. The electronics are all self-contained in the guitar body (similar to the Casio), with only a MIDI-out jack coming out. There's both a pair of LEDs and a separate display onboard. Although it's not mentioned, the Quantar appears to use six plain, unwound strings rather than real guitar strings, and has no analog out for ordinary guitar sounds.

Four continuous MIDI controllers are supported: whammy bar, a "palm pad," a foot pedal and string bends. Other MIDI guitar staples like 99 programmable setup patches, global or individual string transposition and mono mode capability are included, as is the ability to use the fretboard itself for patch selection. As for playability, Beetle claims it handles string muting and damping, hammer-ons and pull-offs, strums and other guitaristic activity just fine. For what it's worth, Craig Anderton came back from Anaheim raving about the Quantar, but *caveat emptor* is always in force in the MIDI guitar universe. Price? The Quantar will go for $1300, with a $100 foot controller option.

This would probably be worth ink by itself, but the recent revelation that **Yamaha**'s Atlanta MIDI guitar entry will also use sonar for pitch sensing adds a new dimension to the puzzle. Beetle claims the Yamaha version is a direct cop, while Yamaha denies this. In any case, the Yamaha MIDI guitar is a more expensive model, said to be in the mid-$2000 range, and company sources say they will avoid standard MIDI guitar abuses by a) having the product available immediately in significant numbers and b) having it actually work as advertised. That would be novel. As we learn more, we'll pass it along.

A company that's been in eclipse for the last couple of shows, **TOA**, will be plunging back into the fray at Atlanta. Most newsworthy is their MR-8T, an eight-track Philips cassette recorder. Unlike the Tascam 238, which made big waves last winter, the rack-mount MR-8T will have a mixer section that includes pan, effects loops and an insert point for playback mixdown—not really full-service, but certainly serviceable. The MR-8T also has a 20 percent pitch control, dbx noise reduction, and sync and remote punch-in capabilities. Not too

Fancy Filters and Other Sampling Fun

Okay, the market is glutted with digital samplers, in every conceivable price range. So what do you do if you've got a new sampler to introduce? One way is to start with a decent sampler and then add a pile of features which kick that great sampled sound into a new dimension. The Fancy Filters Factor. This, plus newer and bolder tales of hard disk prowess, are the latest wrinkles in sampling hardware.

Nowhere is the "Sampler Plus" idea better realized than in the new SE (Synthesis Enhanced) function for a machine that's been around a while now: E-mu Systems' E-max. The system is called Spectrum Synthesis. It groups individual harmonics into blocks of 24 (both preset and user-defined) which can then be combined via a time-based crossfading scheme. Some digital signal processing can be added as well. So the whole thing is a lot like being able to turn your E-max into a D-50. But here's the best part: The SE option only adds $295 to the price of an E-max. And if you already own one, you can get an SE upgrade for just 95 bucks. Now *that's* a deal. In the area of memory extension, E-mu has been dabbling in realms beyond the hard disk—witness its 800-megabyte optical media WORM drive for the E-III and a CD-ROM system for the E-max.

Perhaps the most discussed of all the new samplers is Yamaha's TX16W. On the down side, the 16W only has 12-bit linear A/D conversion resolution (delta modulation encoding). And even after hearing much rhetoric at the last NAMM show—everything from orgiastic accounts of sampling the *Graceland* CD to circular arguments about how the 16W doesn't have any input filters because it's so wonderful it doesn't need any—the reason for this relatively low resolution remains a mystery to me.

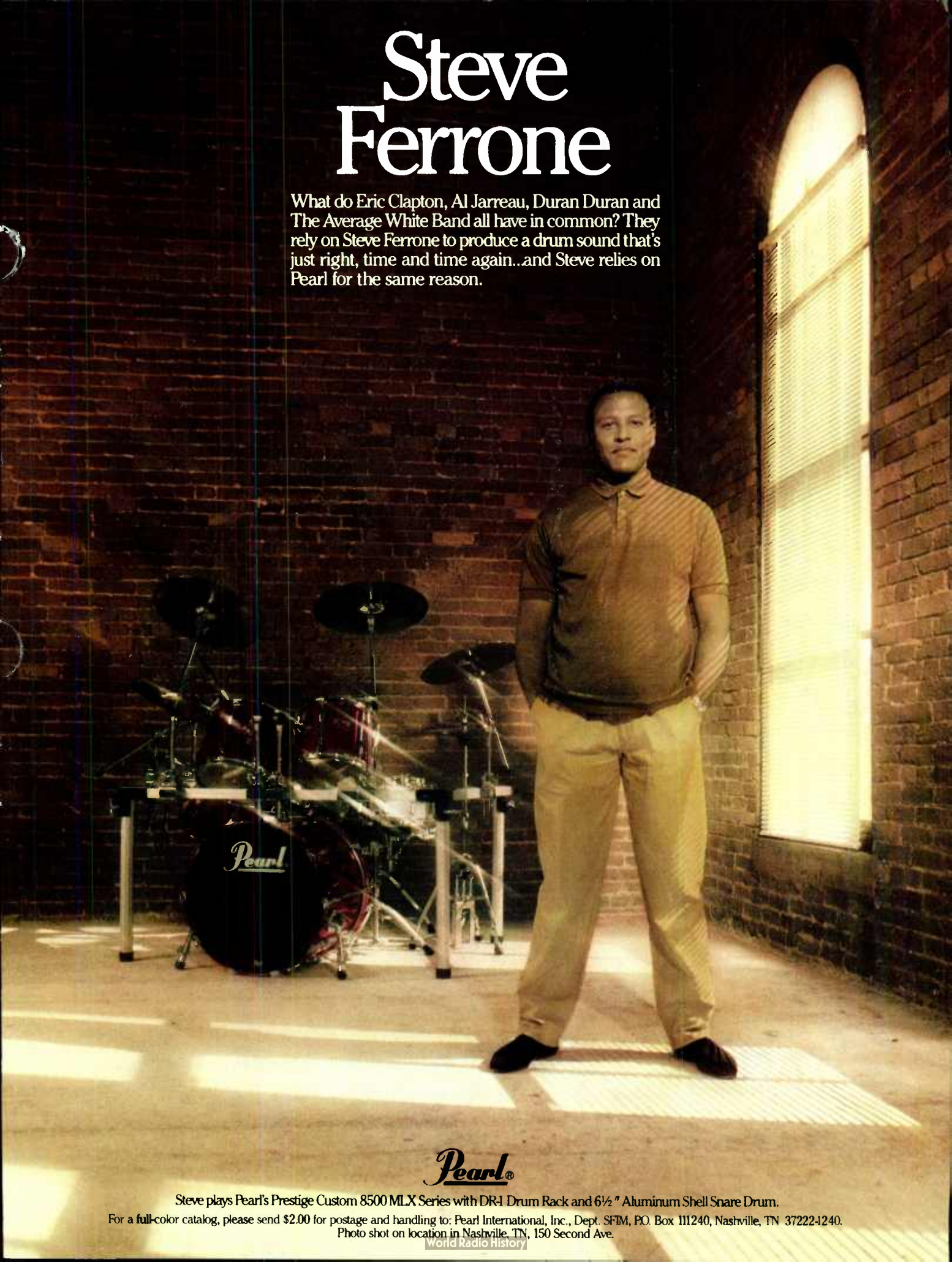
Maximum sampling frequency is 50 kHz. But if you want to sample in stereo, the maximum sample rate goes down to 33 kHz. And you have to hook up a special adaptor to the unit's single quarter-inch stereo input jack if your stereo source has dual output plugs. (Like say you want to sample the *Graceland* CD; I can hardly get through a week without doing that.)

On the positive side, the 16W *is* a Yamaha tone module, which means you can take every parameter in the thing and assign it frontwards, backwards and sideways down. Thirty-two different samples can be assigned to the controlling keyboard in a variety of crossfaded and non-crossfaded combos. Sixteen-voice polyphony, with eight individual outputs plus stereo outs, is another attractive feature. Sample edit capabilities seem thoughtful and comprehensive. And to process the samples, there's the usual posse of digital EGs, LFOs and...yes... Fancy Filters. Or what they call Digital Dynamic Filters, which respond to touch and other control parameters to reproduce the different timbral characteristics a sound has at different amplitude levels. The effectiveness of this was fairly well demonstrated at Anaheim by a dynamically-filtered, non-production piano sample that Yamaha had loaded. Unfortunately it was the only sound they had available, but Atlanta should remedy that.

By an odd quirk of fate, Roland has its own Fancy Filters—oh, sorry, new improved TVFs (Time Variant Filters) that now act as input filters for the Roland S-550 and S-330 rack-mount samplers. The S-330, if you haven't heard, is essentially the 550's affordable little brother. It's virtually identical to its senior sibling except it takes up just one rack space, has half the memory of the 550 and doesn't have the 550's SCSI ("scuzzy") interface for connection to a hard-disk system. Speaking of which, also unveiled was its older brother's hard disk: the HD-5/80 drive which pumps the S-550 up to a whomping 80 megabytes.

One of the lesser-known new units is the Dynacord ADS sampler. Here's another device that's betting the farm on high-quality specs rather than fancy come-on features. And the specs are good indeed: 16-bit linear A/D conversion, 20-bit double oversampling on the digital input filters, 48-kHz sample rate, 16 voices with 8 individual outputs and a pair of stereo outs. All the right numbers. The unit's Sound Fusion editing area allows sampled sounds to be looped, stacked, processed and then resampled to conserve memory. Not quite the same as Fancy Filters, but not bad. – **Alan di Perna**

Unsung sampling hero: Dynacord's 16-bit ADS.



shabby for $2150. TOA's also playing its strengths in the reinforcement realm, with some new feature-packed six-channel powered mixers and speaker cabinets to match.

JBL will be standing taller than usual in Atlanta. Their parent company, **Harman International**, has just purchased **Soundcraft Electronics**, the blue-chip British console firm JBL's already been distributing for a couple of years now. Everyone's been drooling over the new Soundcraft 6000 console that first appeared at winter NAMM, especially its MIDI interface and automation features, but who can afford something like that? Ah, but you should definitely be able to afford the JBL/UREI 7110 compressor/limiter. Traditionally, you'd need about $650 to get an $1176, the top-of-the-line C/L, or maybe settle for an LA-4 for $550. Now you can get super-silent pro specs and the UREI Smart-Slope compression system for a modest $450. And JBL will also be blasting its Control 5 monitors, a near-field speaker pair with a large-screen punch.

One last late-breaking rumor has **Peavey** pulling back its whole **AMR** line of home recording gear, and doing a big rethink. But hey, at least they're showing up. Ⓜ

DREGS from page 48

show, only to remain a bridesmaid: "Please welcome four-time Grammy losers, the Dixie Dregs," Rod grins.

If some parts of the industry were passing on them, the band had caught the ear of Arista president Clive Davis. "He auditioned us at the Bottom Line," smiles Lavitz. "It was a Saturday night and the place was sold out. He was in a white suit, applauding politely from the front row while the rest of the audience was screaming, standing on tables and stuff. We did three encores. I guess he saw potential." Arista signed the Dixie Dregs and in the process lopped off the "Dixie," hoping to avoid the Southern rock associations which, as T recalls, had hindered airplay: "Lots of DJs used to come up to me and say, 'You guys are incredible! I threw away your first three albums without listening to them, but I'm gonna play 'em now!'"

The biggest change in the band, though, was that Morse became the producer, a role he had coveted since the outset: "Obviously a seasoned producer has had more experience and knows how to get a sound quicker than you would. On the other hand, though, when you write a piece of music, you already hear it produced in your head. All you've got to know is 'What am I looking for? *That's* it.' You know when you've got it. So producing yourself allows you to skip one step of communication. But it's an important step."

The sound and format of the next two albums, *Dregs of the Earth* and *Unsung Heroes*, changed little, but the band MO changed considerably. "It was really, really hard work," says Morse. "To me, those albums represented a crossing over from being a guy who stood totally in awe of record companies and the whole music-making machine to a guy who said, 'Okay, we can make a record.' Basically we were just let loose."

To Morse the producer, the overdub and the pinpoint punch-in became important tools. The Dregs would record drums first with the whole band playing along for energy, then overdub every other part piece by piece, closely scrutinized by Morse. "Steve's relative pitch is so good," says Lavitz. "I can be playing a solo and without an instrument he can go, 'I think it's C#; right where you hit that, I think we should punch in and try some other ideas. Pick up the improvisation there.' He knows exactly where to punch, right on the second sixteenth note of beat two."

Steve's perfectionism is now well-known; do the musicians in a sense play

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for Steve? Morgenstein replies, "To different degrees, yeah. I mean, you could line 10 people up and play them something and each of them will have a different opinion of what they just heard. One will say it was perfect, another will say, 'Are you kidding, did you hear the run in the second bar? It was totally out of time.'" "On the other hand," says Lavitz, "I've listened to my solos that Steve has produced, and I go, 'That's me? That sounds better than me.' But it *is* me."

It is late in the evening and T Lavitz is laying down an overdub for the fade of "Leprechaun Promenade." It's just a couple of solo keyboard fills that reply to the main theme, each one lasting less than a bar. It's pretty much a piece of detail work that has to be nailed before the band goes ahead to percussion and MIDI guitar overdubs. John Senior, an Ensoniq software designer who's been here all week as de facto executive producer, tweaks an SQ-80 patch while engineer Rick Sandidge starts running back the sections. Lavitz plays a few passes and seems to nail the parts. Morse wants to take a bit of breathiness off the sound. Senior obliges. T makes a few more passes. Morse doesn't hear it yet. After a few more attempts, he comes over to the keyboard and begins to have T turn the seven notes inside-out, maybe backwards.... Finally, he plays a couple of variations himself, though not for tape.

For a time it's a fascinating view of how exacting Morse can be as a producer. Then it gets somewhat boring, stretching into an hour now, that same damn melody, most of T's fills apparently fine but not pleasing Morse. Then we enter the torture zone. Again and again he keeps digging for the fill. Lavitz plays everything dutifully, never losing patience, never taking the rejection of his parts personally. This writer, having witnessed much repetitive, dull studio activity in his career, is driven to the brink of insanity. After 90 minutes of growing horror, I withdraw, destined to hear that passage ringing through my mind for the next 10 days. In the final version, Lavitz's solo fills seem close to the early versions, but I wouldn't swear to that. In fact, the whole evening session now seems like a bad dream.

Was this night of the living Dregs an isolated incident? Perhaps in length of time, but not in intensity, say sources close to the band. In particular, Morse is said to use this technique with Lavitz and West, who clearly are not the musical peers of Morse and Morgenstein. This perceived inequality is not reflected in any observable hierarchy, but just as musicianship naturally seeking its own level. One thinks back to dinner with the band at a restaurant earlier that night, watching Morse laughing so hard at a Lavitz line he had to put his head down on the table and was unable to speak for several minutes. Can this be the same person?

Morse drives himself harder than anyone. He does a great many things well, sometimes can't seem to realize there are limits to his time, and is given to extreme solutions. By all accounts, 1987 was a year of intense frustration for him. After putting vocals on his second solo album, *Stand Up*, reportedly to please his A&R man, a partisan of dance music, Morse joined Kansas. He professes not to regret *Stand Up* and his Kansas association, but in the middle of last year he abruptly took a job as a pilot for a commuter airline operating out of Macon. This was supposed to be no part-time fling for Morse, but a full-scale attempt to get more financial control over his life. In doing so, he was forced to cut his waist-length hair, a great private trauma. It was a symbolic moment, the mythic hero losing the source

continued on page 84

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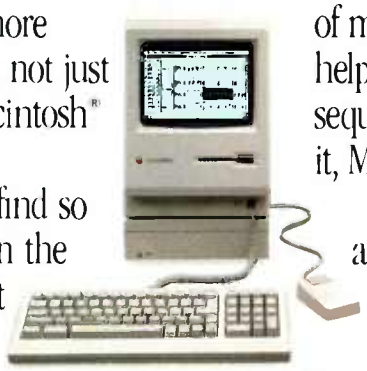

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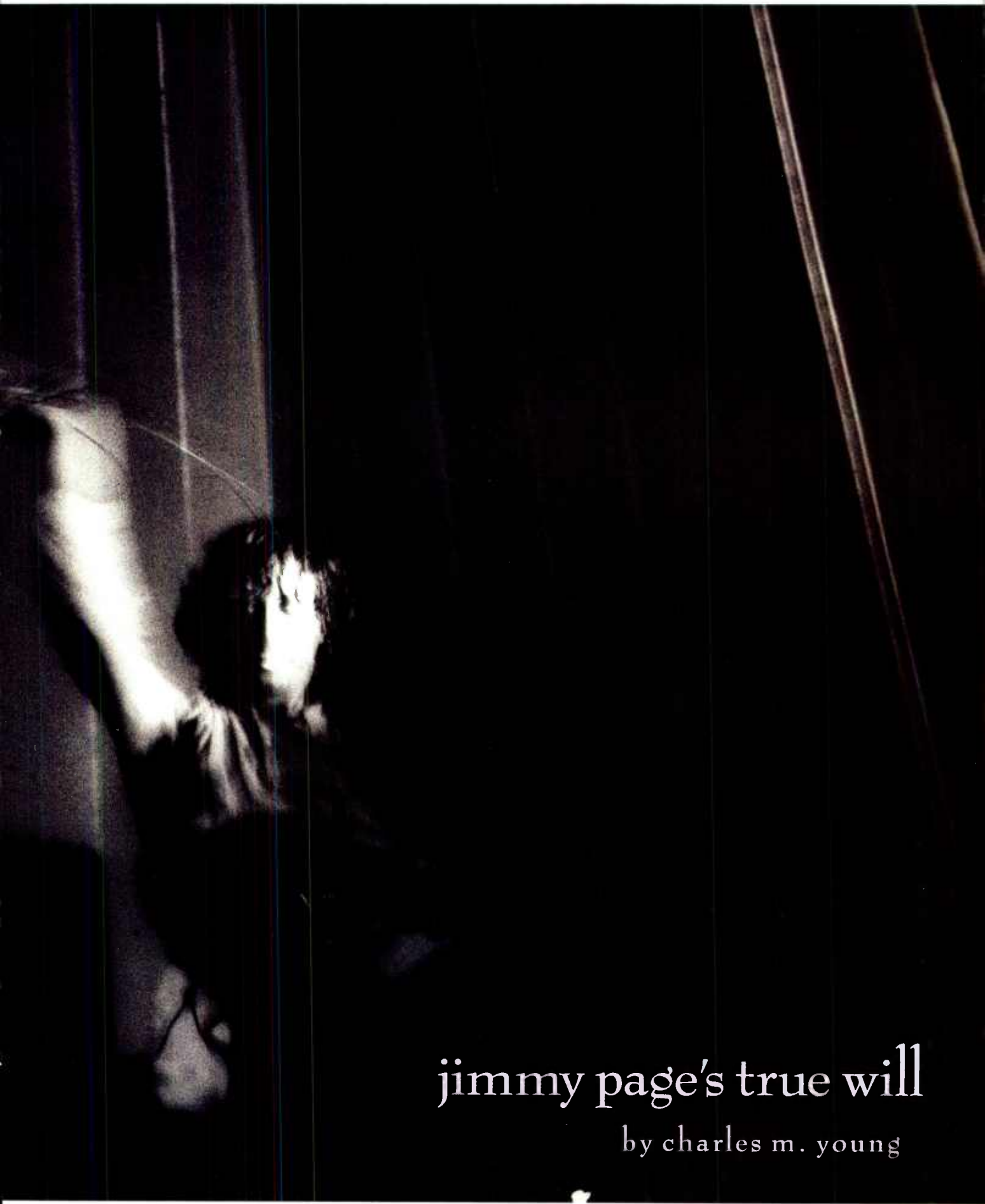
Since word arrived that I would be interviewing Jimmy Page, colossal waves of anxiety have been boiling out of my brain stem like somebody forgot to pull the plutonium rods and the containment cracked and for years to come calves will be stillborn downwind of me. Is this merely greater than normal fear that a musician I admire might turn out to be an arrogant snot and ruin some of my favorite albums with a foul memory? Or has the ghost of Aleister Crowley somehow mugged my guardian angel in the ether and is now tapdancing on my neurotransmitters? Or is it just the coffee Page has kindly served me in his living room?

Maybe the third richest musician in the world after Michael Jackson and Paul McCartney, Page lives in an 11-bedroom converted mill west of London on a tributary of the Thames. There's a lot of skylight action, so plenty of sunlight illuminates framed album covers of earliest rock 'n' roll vintage and artwork of strange mythological creatures. It is a house with the same sort of balance as Led Zeppelin: at once

NEAL PRESTON



jimmy page's true will

by charles m. young

cheerful and eerie, light balanced with shade, tight but loose. No mess, however, balances the neat. Nary a dustball nor hint of cat hair besmirches the environs, summoning the image of a maid following his Persian and Siamese with a vacuum cleaner.

Two pictures on the main wall catch the eye: one of Page at the age of 12 with two of his buddies posing as rock stars with primitive guitars, Page already miming a blistering lead halfway up the neck; the other is a painting by Aleister Crowley of Leah Hirsig, one of the many mistresses with whom he practiced his sex magic. On his most schizzed-out day, Vincent Van Gogh couldn't make paint vibrate half so much as the reds, greens and yellows in this woman's florescent physiognomy. I think it is Leah at the center of my anxiety meltdown.

I think it is me at the center of Page's anxiety meltdown. He has granted few interviews over the years because he doesn't enjoy the process. Like many guitarists, he's an introvert who is comfortable conversing only through his instrument. The energy flows inward to the point that he doesn't even like to exhale, teetering on the edge of hyperventilation when asked about topics he strongly wants to avoid, topics like his childhood and Jeff Beck and the occult. Topics he *sort of* wants to avoid generate sighs. Easier topics he will either declare "obvious" or emit a nervous laugh.

One of the topics he refuses to discuss is Aleister Crowley, the rebellious mystic who outraged Victorian England and became a posthumous influence on Page. "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law," wrote Crowley. It could have been the epigraph of rock 'n' roll, and "Do what thou wilt" was the run-off message of *Led Zeppelin III*. Crowley distinguished variously between doing what thou wilt and doing what you want, at times identifying the "true will" as any urge arriving from the unconscious, but admitting at the end of *Diary of a Drug Fiend* that one couldn't discern the true will when screwed up on heroin and cocaine. If so, Crowley had only an intermittent handle on his true will, because he was never able to beat his own addictions. To the extent he had actual magical powers, they appear to have been out of control much of the time. Personally speaking, if I had a load on, the last thing I'd want to do is summon up demons.

Amidst grandiosity and fiasco and odd sexual behavior (he once prevailed on one of his mistresses to have sex with a goat, later sacrificing the goat for lack of enthusiasm), Crowley nonetheless had his insights, mostly having to do with his courage and absolute insistence on being himself. "What I can relate to is Crowley's system of self-liberation in which repression is the greatest work of sin," Page told Chris Salewicz in 1977. "It's like being in a job when you want to be doing something else. That's the area where the true will should come forward. And when you've discovered your true will, you should just forge ahead like a steam train. If you put all your energies into it, there's no doubt you'll succeed."

That's what Page did: discovered his true will in his guitar and forged riffs that rearranged the solar system. They also offended a large number of critics and virtually everyone now over the age of 40, but once you have tasted true will, nothing else can substitute (it also didn't hurt that Led Zeppelin was the most successful band in the world during the '70s). Whatever you call it, Page was in touch with something where his only peer was Jimi Hendrix.

Opposite page: Jones, Page, Plant and Bonham in Dallas, April Fools' Day, 1977.

Another aspect of Led Zeppelin's appeal that Crowley influenced was their celebration of male sexuality. They made men feel proud of being men, a subversive and wondrous discovery for high school students who have been castrated by the educational process. Let us not forget that sex and marriage are one of the main tools of social control in this country—a bad thing in the opinion of smart guys like Led Zeppelin and Gore Vidal, a good thing in the opinion of assholes like George Gilder and Midge Decter. If Led Zeppelin occasionally crossed the line into sexism (and they did: "Crowley didn't have a very high opinion of women, and I don't think he was wrong," said Page as late as 1982), it can't be endorsed, but should be seen in the context of their vast wealth. Rich people can easily isolate themselves, don't have to deal with any idea they choose to avoid, and attract certain personality types to which it is easy to feel superior.

Page does lead a fairly isolated life, strange to the outsider yet uniquely designed so he can be Jimmy Page. He has been comfortable with solitude since early childhood and has no desire to show more of himself except onstage with his guitar, which he plans to do for three months starting in late summer. His new album is called *Outrider*. At this writing, it is still under lock and key at his new record company, Geffen, where I have listened to it twice through. One side is thrilling guitar-bash rock 'n' roll, the other side is pure crystalline blues guitar. If you want to hear Page do what he does best without much distraction (even from the three vocalists: John Miles, Chris Farlowe and Robert Plant), this is your meat. I rate it better than anything by the Firm but hesitate to compare it to Led Zeppelin where Page was operating in a never-to-be-repeated chemistry with three other equally inspired musicians.

Physically, Page is frail and pale and 44 years old, with no evidence of muscle anywhere on his quaking skeletal structure. His face has vastly changed from the rock god of the mid-'70s. (On the Keith Richards Ravage Scale, he gets an eight.) His life has also vastly changed because of a baby boy, one week old and still at the hospital with his mom at the time of the interview. The name is James Patrick, same as daddy and daddy's daddy.

MUSICIAN: *New baby, new record company, new album, new support musicians, new manager—anything new I'm missing?*
PAGE: No. No, no. That's fair enough. It's rebirth, I suppose. Phoenix time.
MUSICIAN: *Seriously?*
PAGE: No. Well, it is my first departure into a solo career. I had a film track before, but that didn't represent a career move. It wasn't as if I wanted to be doing film scores, although I did enjoy the one. To take full responsibility for something, as opposed to working in a group framework—that's quite a challenge. Yes, a challenge.

Basically in the past, if I was working with a group, I'd have the musicians in, we'd do the tracks, and once they'd gone home, it was down to me to do everything else: the orchestration, the layering over of the guitars. When I went to the studio this time, I had to be in tip-top form every day. I can assure you I wasn't. One in three days you'd come up with something that was pretty amazing to yourself. Pretty inspirational. In the past, that was all right, because if you came in and had to do an amazing solo and that wasn't the day for it, you could get someone else to get their parts on. So in other words, I was really on the spot every day. It was good for discipline.
MUSICIAN: *How long did it take?*
PAGE: That's the obvious question, isn't it? It took a long time. We'll leave it at that. Ha, ha. No, it spanned a long period of time because it was originally going to be a double album. But under the circumstances that I just described, it wasn't possible to do that. I wasn't working every day. I would sort of go in three days a week. It spans a long time. I'll have to add up the actual days I was in for the studio bill. I can tell you then how long it took.

"Kingdom Come's guitarist said he'd never heard my guitar playing... A rock 'n' roll guitarist who's never heard any Led Zeppelin music, that's quite amazing. It must be I visit him as a vampire and leave my mark psychically."

MUSICIAN: *This isn't your own studio?*
PAGE: It is, but I still have to recompense the studio, don't I?
MUSICIAN: *You bill yourself for tax purposes?*
PAGE: Not only that. There's other people working there. I wasn't on my own totally. There were engineers, an assistant engineer.
MUSICIAN: *The album sounds like you're "tight but loose" again.*
PAGE: Heh, heh. I'll always be loose but tightened up. I agree. Yes, it is. It's part of my technique, which is a non-technique. It's always a little bit loose. If it was too tight, it would be too mechanical.
MUSICIAN: *In the issue of* Guitar World *that was dedicated to you, I was struck by two quotes at opposite ends of the magazine. Your former engineer Eddie Kramer described you as an "inaccurate" guitarist—meaning the necessity of imperfection for feel and humanity—and later on you were describing Paul Rodgers as a technically perfect singer who always hit the notes. Working with Paul in the Firm must have been very different from working with Robert Plant.*
PAGE: Yes, Paul Rodgers is a technical vocalist. He'll sing with that beautiful quality to his voice, but always within the framework. He'll do it the same every time. If you did two takes, it virtually sounded like one voice. Whereas Robert will improvise. He's a vocal gymnast, really. Same with my guitar.

NEAL PRESTON JEFF HOPPA/ILLUSTRATION

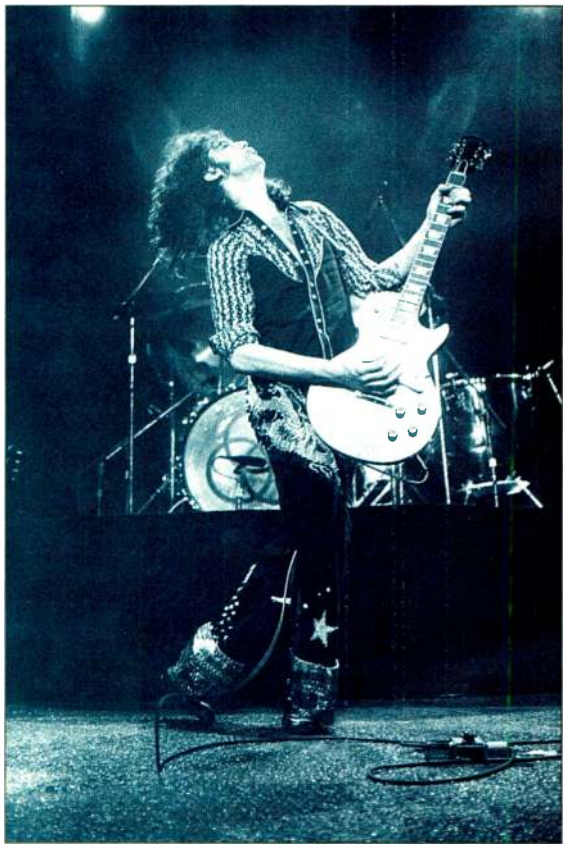
It's going to be different on every take. If I do three solos, there'll be one that's all right.

MUSICIAN: *The difference between your approach and Paul's approach seems like you were mixing oil and water in the Firm.*

PAGE: Yeah. That's fair comment. But at the time I desperately wanted to go out and play after being rejuvenated in my spirit after the ARMS tour, because I think everyone on that tour was. Quite honestly, I didn't know that many singers. Now maybe you can think of many, many, many singers in the States where you'd say, "He'd be great with Page." But I didn't.

MUSICIAN: *You're welcome to call me up and ask my advice.*

PAGE: No, I won't. [*laughs*] I do things that feel right at the time. And it felt right at the time, as we'd had some form of musical union on the ARMS tour that we could continue. I think at times it worked out all right, but it wasn't the sort of situation I wanted to get back into, and that's why we didn't do anything more than the second album.



MUSICIAN: *Bad Company was a band I liked a lot, but their virtue was that they were tight but tight. Every note in its place.*

PAGE: Yeah. Yeah, well, anyway, we were both in total agreement that we wanted to go out and play to audiences to prove that neither of us was long gone and forgotten, so to speak. I know when you think of Paul you immediately think of Bad Company format songs. I wondered if he could stretch from that at all, as I was willing to go his way to a degree. I just wondered if he could stretch into some more unusual stuff with that vocal quality. What we did is what we did.

MUSICIAN: *John Miles is the vocalist you use most on* Outrider *and he's not well known to American audiences. Why him and who is he?*

PAGE: Vocally he's extremely versatile and proficient. We seem to get on pretty well together. In the live situation it will be good because he can play keyboards as well. It will give us a lot of different textures. I first met him in Ibiza [an island off Spain], where he was playing with his band many years ago. Since then, he's had a number one record over here and done some work with the Alan Parsons Project. Lately he's been singing with Tina Turner.

Madison Square Garden, 1975: When you start actually playing, the stage fright goes away.

MUSICIAN: *You'd play him a track and he'd write lyrics to it?*

PAGE: Basically.

MUSICIAN: *You had no input on the lyrics?*

PAGE: I may have given a rough idea of the overall atmosphere I was trying to get. But no, I didn't write the words. I was layering the textures of the guitars, and there was more time put into that. It was more important to me. I do things the total opposite way of most people.

MUSICIAN: *To start at the end, I was deeply impressed by the last song, "Anthem," which was sung by Chris Farlowe. It had the same sort of effect as "Thorntree in the Garden" on* Layla, *a sweet and very beautiful love song after this tremendous rock and blues workout. I thought it could be a hit single.*

PAGE: I don't know about that. The way it came to be, I just continued playing, and he continued singing. It just popped out in the studio. We got the chorus, the first couple of verses, and then we worked it into a construction a few days later. The simplicity and honesty shone through in the singing, so we wanted to avoid overproduction. I would say it was simply but effectively orchestrated with that guitar synthesizer.

MUSICIAN: *What kind?*

PAGE: Another one that doesn't work properly. [*laughs*] It was a Roland, the MIDI one, so you could use disc drive samples and stuff. I find they just don't work—this is using an ordinary guitar as opposed to the ones that use fishline strings, like the Synthaxe. This is still trying to use the usual six strings and you find as you get down to the low E string that the tracking, the pitch-to-voltage, is not up to scratch with any of them. They all glitch, I don't care what they tell you. Maybe I didn't spend enough time working with it, to be honest with you. But for what I wanted to do, I found the same problems arising no matter what. I used it on only two tracks, "Anthem" and "Emerald Eyes."

MUSICIAN: *Which other guitars did you use?*

PAGE: The Stratocaster, Telecaster, the Les Paul B-bender and my main Les Paul, the '59.

MUSICIAN: *Is the Telecaster the same one from way back with the psychedelic paint job?*

PAGE: It's the neck from that. It's the one I used with the Firm that first appeared on *In Through the Out Door.* And acoustic and electric 12-strings, Martin and Washburn.

MUSICIAN: *Any special effects you want to mention?*

PAGE: Not that I want to mention. I tried to keep the album as simple as possible, actually. I just hope the guitars speak for themselves. The crux of the matter is: This is my first solo album, and if I hadn't done it exactly the way I wanted to do it, I'd have felt...well, I couldn't have done it any other way. But if I believe in what I've done, I'll feel better about it, even if it's against the current stream of things.

MUSICIAN: *What about amplifiers?*

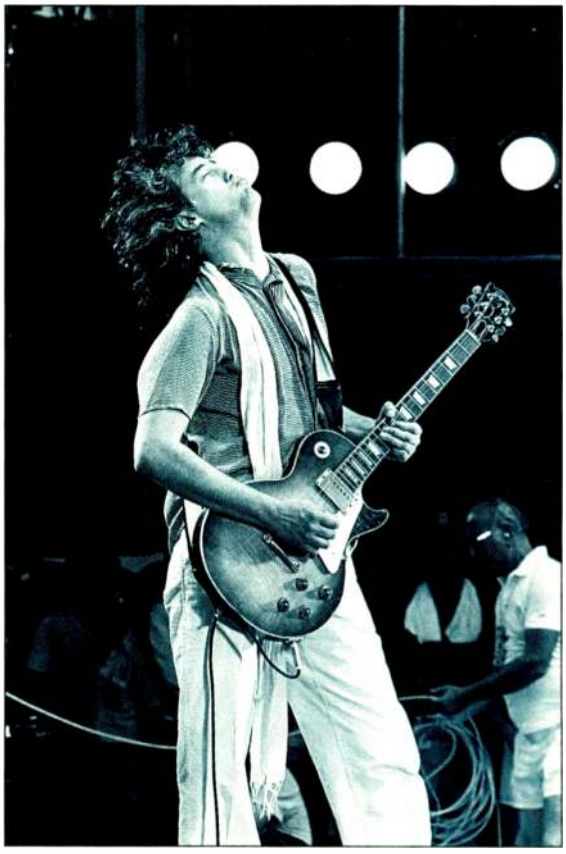
PAGE: If an album is going to be all different guitars, obviously you have to deal with all different amplifiers. If you put a Strat through a Twin, you get that true Fender sound, as opposed to putting it through the Marshall. We did have a battery of amplifiers, but what was mainly used was Fenders, Marshalls and the Vox AC-30, which still comes out as one of the tops for recording.

MUSICIAN: *Did you use your old National Supro at all?*

PAGE: No, because the poor thing has given up the ghost. Like an idiot I said in the past what I was using and you can't get the damn things anymore. I used to use it a hell of a lot. But it let me down on the solo project.

NEAL PRESTON

MUSICIAN: *Are there secret old instruments on the album that you're not mentioning so you can find them again when they die?*
PAGE: You never know. [*laughs*] You never know.
MUSICIAN: *That happened with the Danelectro, didn't it?*
PAGE: Yeah, but I was fortunate there because I had a spare one of those. They sound fabulous, those things, because they're not solid bodies. If you put those cigar-tube pickups on another guitar, it wouldn't have the same effect, but on those it's really ballsy. It's made out of fiberboard. You can break it in your hand. I really love those old instruments. I'll tell you what—I'd been doing all these tracks to do this double album, but when Chris Farlowe was there, I said let's do a blues. I got the Les Paul out and put it through the Marshall with one cabinet. You can hear the reality of the Les Paul, nothing else like it. It's such a controllable instrument. We did it in one take.

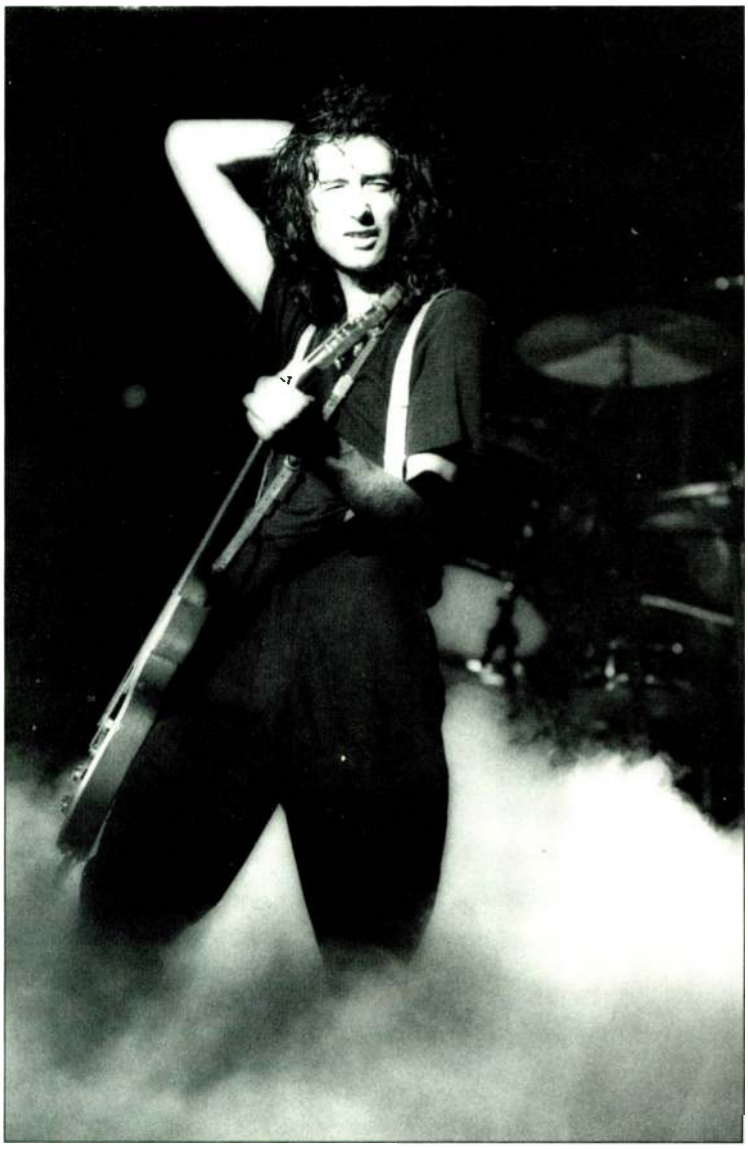


MUSICIAN: *You're talking about "Prison Blues"?*
PAGE: Yeah. I felt, "Why have I been messing about with all these other guitars when the Les Paul just sings so sweetly?" Of course, they're all different. They've all got their own characteristics.
MUSICIAN: *What was it like having Jason Bonham on drums?*
PAGE: Great. I'd played with him on several occasions, various jams, plus he supported the Firm in Virginia Wolf. I really wanted to play with him. It was a natural thing.
MUSICIAN: *How does he compare with his dad?*
PAGE: He's really young, only 21, so his style is still developing. But he tends to attack the drums like his father. He's certainly got the power his father had. I would say his approach to the artillery is similar.
MUSICIAN: *I've heard it said that Bonzo has the most sampled left foot in music.*
PAGE: Yeah, he was the ultimate rock 'n' roll drummer. That's all there is to it. You can't say anything more.
MUSICIAN: *His stature has grown enormously since his death.*
PAGE: Because when people started really listening to what he was doing, it was absolutely terrifying stuff. He was doing so much that...that...that was it. It was so right for what drums ought to be doing.

With the Firm, 1985: Where "inaccurate" inspiration met technical craft.

MUSICIAN: *Not to put down Keith Moon, but I think his reputation has leveled off or faded since his death. When I talk to other drummers, it's Bonzo who inspires awe. I think he's the more influential.*
PAGE: It came home to me when we were touring after the second album. Tom Jones' band was in the States with some English musicians backing him, one being Ronnie Verrell, who was a session drummer that I used to work with when I was doing studio work. He was one of the top session drummers back then, about 50 years old. I happened to run into him at a hotel and we were chatting away, and he said, "That bass drum pattern your drummer does on 'Good Times Bad Times'—wow!" Bonham could really impress someone like that even in the early days. If you just think about the riffs and then the bass drum patterns he did, you realize what an important contribution he was making. I suppose that's exactly what other musicians hear in him.
MUSICIAN: *I think "Bonzo's Montreux" on* Coda *is one of the under-appreciated Led Zeppelin cuts.*
PAGE: That was an idea we'd been kicking around between the two of us, this idea of doing a drum orchestra. He was in Montreux with his drums. And I'd just got the Harmonizer, one of the first ones, and I was just realizing what could be done with it. The steel drums were the Harmonizer, and we used a few things that had been done before, like the backwards echo. It was quite staggering, really.
MUSICIAN: *I understand it didn't take much provocation for Bonzo to get belligerent when he was drunk?*
PAGE: He could be, uh, if he felt insulted. Yeah, sure. He'd stand his ground. Who wouldn't? You mean as far as violence? Yeah, he'd have a fight, if it came to that. But I wouldn't say he would just fly off the handle. There may have been a couple of occasions when he did, but it wasn't the expected thing. That's not a fact at all.
MUSICIAN: *While doing* Musician*'s Robert Plant interview a few months ago, I heard that Bonzo passed out on the drums during a show.*
PAGE: Yeah. There was a night when he...yeah. But it was very early on. Yeah, he was drunk. I can't remember where it was, though. Someplace like Kansas. He used to get homesick quite a bit.
MUSICIAN: *Did you feel he was an alcoholic?*
PAGE: I don't know. I wasn't close enough to him to know that. If that means you can't go a day without a drink, I don't know. No, I don't think...well, I don't know.
MUSICIAN: *He certainly died from drinking too much.*
PAGE: Yes, he did. He did. Yeah. But that was a massive binge. He used to get quite nervous before tours and things like that. First dates of tours, et cetera.
MUSICIAN: *It's hard to imagine him nervous. He was such a purely masculine, almost bulldozer-like presence behind the drums. What was he afraid of?*
PAGE: Well, that's a question, isn't it? [*sighs*] Everyone gets stagefright. I certainly did. It's all part of the psyching-up process. I get very, very nervous. Everyone deals with it in their own way. Then when you actually start playing, it goes away.
MUSICIAN: *Did you ever speak with John about the incident in San Francisco when he and [Zep manager] Peter Grant and a couple of your roadies allegedly beat up a stagehand?*
PAGE: Well, I don't know what happened because I wasn't there. I mean, I only heard about it afterwards when we were all being whisked away from it, so I don't know.
MUSICIAN: *Do you remember what you heard about it?*

LARRY BUSACCA/RETNA



PAGE: Because it was distorted. It was journalistic sensationalism. In fact a lot of things were wilder than some of the things in the book. But they were funny at the time. They became extremely sordid in the book. I'm not saying that San Francisco was funny. It certainly wasn't. I'm referring to other stories. They were based in fact, but the fun element was missing. We had to amuse ourselves after a concert.

MUSICIAN: *What's Peter Grant doing these days?*

PAGE: He's been very ill. Last I saw him must have been in October. He was a very big-built man. He had a lot of trouble with his heart. I just heard that he's having it again. I guess it catches up to you as you get older.

MUSICIAN: *You're still friends?*

PAGE: Of course. I just haven't seen him for a while, because he lives quite a ways from here, comparatively speaking.

MUSICIAN: *How's your relationship with Jonesy?*

PAGE: I knew you were going to ask that. He also lives quite a long way away, and as I don't have a license to drive a car at the moment, I don't get a chance to see him.

MUSICIAN: *What happened to your driver's license?*

PAGE: I haven't got one at the moment, so I don't get around.

MUSICIAN: *That means you're not going to answer my question?*

PAGE: That means what it says. Consequently, I'm not mobile. I don't get a chance to see either of them unless they're in London. I haven't seen Jonesy since before he did the Mission. I have spoken with him on the phone.

MUSICIAN: *I think people needed a few years for perspective on Led Zeppelin, to come back to it with fresh ears. Sometimes it was hard to hear clearly because of the mystique. There's a big Zeppelin revival going on now...*

PAGE: Those kids have fresh ears, don't they? So it's not that hard, is it?

MUSICIAN: *I'm just saying Led Zep generated extreme reactions.*

PAGE: You mean the albums were controversial? And now they're accepted? The controversy was generated by reviews. That's a fact. It was the old saying, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, as far as the people were concerned. We were fine by them.

MUSICIAN: *Have you listened to Kingdom Come?*

PAGE: Kingdom Clone, you mean? I've heard the album, yeah. I've listened to the album. I was amused, to begin with. It wasn't as amusing as Whitesnake, let's put it that way. Kingdom Come was closer to the bone. The thing that comes to mind is that the guitarist said he'd never heard my playing.

MUSICIAN: *What!??!*

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA NEAL PRESTON/OUTLINE

PAGE: [*sighs*] I don't really want to talk about it. Because as far as I...I don't know that either of them beat up anybody, so I'm not sure what they did. All these horrific stories about what's supposed to have happened there, I don't think it was as bad as what it was built up to be, to be truthful with you.

I'm not saying that something didn't happen. But you know what it's like over there. If you sneeze on someone, they'll sue you. I'm not denying somebody got hit, because they did. It just wasn't anywhere near...it got blown out of proportion.

MUSICIAN: *Yeah, and as Robert said, Led Zeppelin was an entity that never stood up and explained itself. It appeared to be a conscious decision to go with mystique and let people think what they would.*

PAGE: Well, I know that in your interview, you said, "I'd like to remind you, Robert, that I didn't bring up *Hammer of the Gods* first, you did." [*laughs*]

MUSICIAN: *And you haven't mentioned it. Until now.*

PAGE: No, I haven't mentioned it, because I didn't read the book. I read about four pages and I threw it away.

MUSICIAN: *Because what you read was untrue, or...*

(Above) Getting down onstage, 1977; (right) Jimmy's evil doppelgänger takes a bow, 1971.

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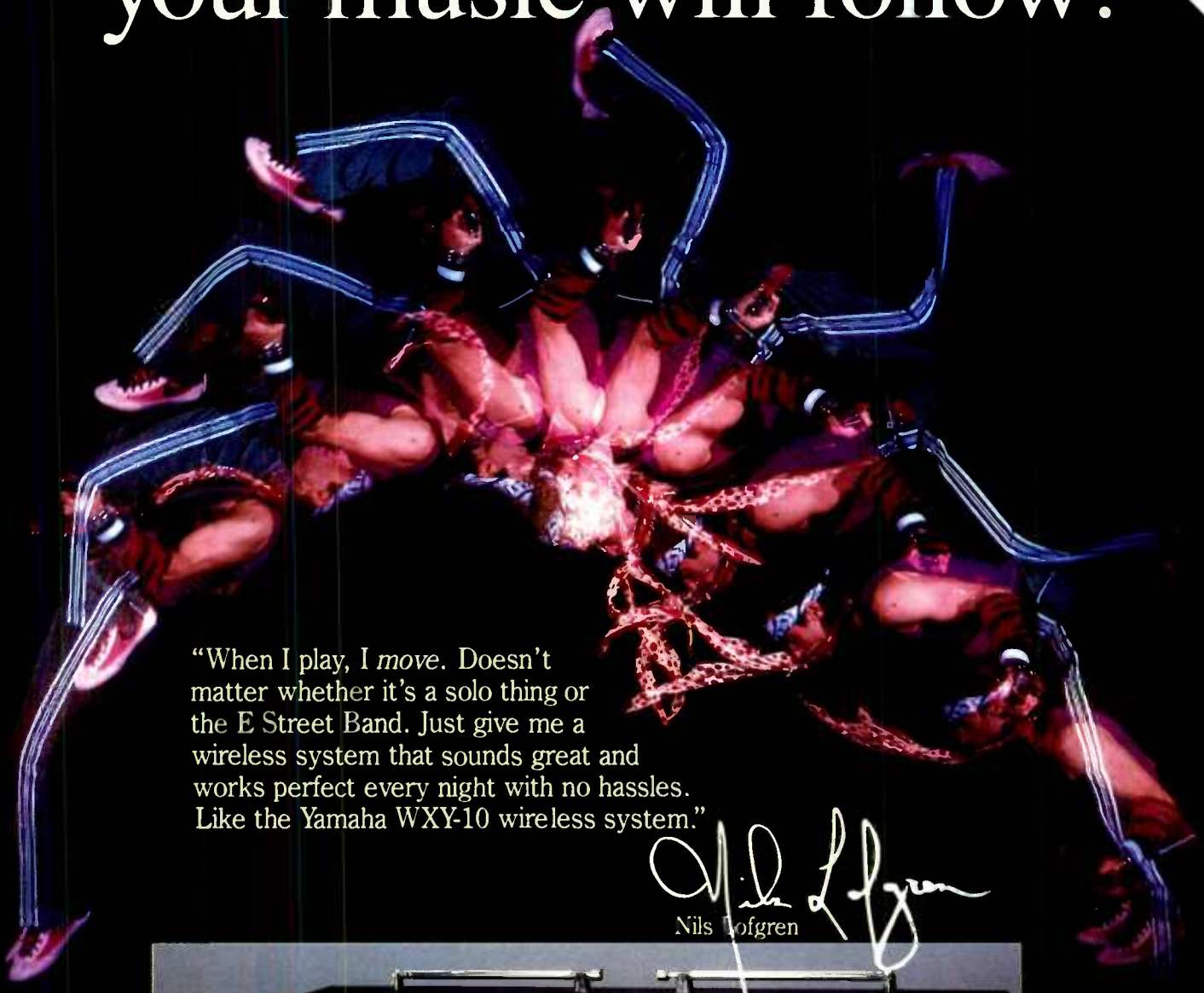

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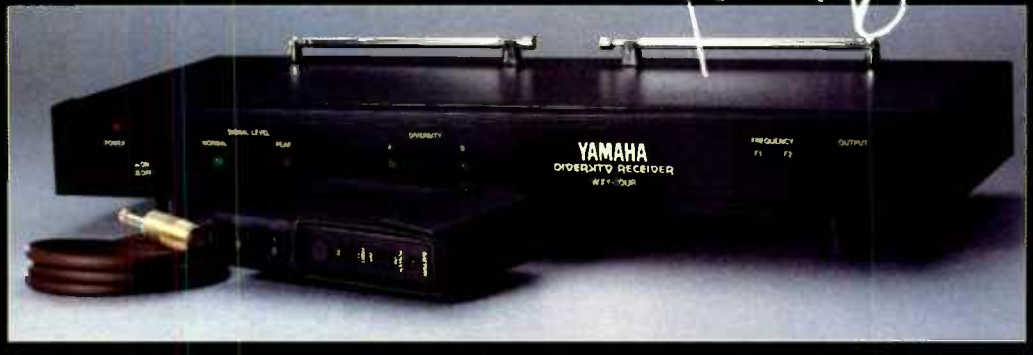

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PAGE: Which I found hard to believe, since the guitarist is from America. A rock 'n' roll guitarist who's never heard any Led Zeppelin music, that's quite amazing. It must be I visit him as a vampire and leave my mark psychically.

MUSICIAN: *You were more amused by David Coverdale?*

PAGE: I was amused when I saw the first video. When the guitarist picked up the bow, I literally fell out of my bed laughing. I couldn't believe anyone could be so cheap. That was rather amusing. I guess they're pretty popular. There are real differences between coming up with an original riff, restructuring a riff, and just stealing a riff. If you're going to do a song like "Get It On," you should at least try to change the vocal approach as well. Or the melody and riff are going to sound very familiar. And that's the Kingdom of the Clone.

MUSICIAN: *It's not cloning if you take the riff and not the melody? What's fair in borrowing?*

PAGE: I don't consider that to be very fair.

MUSICIAN: *You're not going to sue them, though?*

PAGE: I haven't yet.

MUSICIAN: *You're considering it?*

PAGE: When I get time, I'll consider it.

MUSICIAN: *You've been sued for the same thing, have you not? I'm thinking of the Willie Dixon suit, his "I Need Love" and "Whole Lotta Love."*

PAGE: Um hmmm.

MUSICIAN: *What was the disposition of that?*

PAGE: Lyrical content.

MUSICIAN: *That you had taken lyrical content?*

PAGE: We. We as a band.

MUSICIAN: *So you have to give him songwriting credit?*

PAGE: I don't know what the outcome was.

MUSICIAN: *This was just something the lawyers negotiated?*

PAGE: I haven't made any court appearances personally. I don't know. I mean, I might know. It's probably on file somewhere. I'm just not interested.

MUSICIAN: *One of my favorite songs on* Physical Graffiti *is "Boogie with Stu." There's a sixth songwriting credit to Mrs. Valens. That's Ritchie Valens' mother? Why is she credited?*

PAGE: Yeah. Let's put it this way. "Surfin' USA" by the Beach Boys had a credit for Chuck Berry, didn't it? I think that answers the question. It does in my book, anyway.

MUSICIAN: *It was from "Ooh My Head," right?*

PAGE: Yeah. Some of the lyrics from that. Yeah. It appears. In print. Mrs. Valens.

MUSICIAN: *So she got her little piece of* Physical Graffiti*?*

With Les Paul in New York, 1987. "Why mess with other guitars when the Les Paul sings so sweetly?"

PAGE: That was the idea right from the outset. We'd heard she'd been ripped off in the past. You should ask Robert these things, because I didn't write the words, did I?

MUSICIAN: *One thing I did ask Robert was if there would ever be an ultimate Led Zeppelin live album, and he said no. That comment got quite a few letters from people adamantly demanding that he change his mind. Why won't you give us a live Zeppelin album if you've got the tapes?*

PAGE: There are so many bootlegs around that people who are that interested have probably already made up their own compilation. They've got their own favorites, and it's a very personal thing. I'm not really waffling here. The point is that we have live tapes that I haven't listened to for years and years. There aren't as many as one would like, but there are some live tapes. Maybe eight or 10 different performances.

MUSICIAN: *High-quality recordings?*

PAGE: Yeah. Same quality as *The Song Remains the Same*. But they were all different shows, and we don't necessarily have live footage. Some of them do. For instance, there's 1970 Royal Albert Hall. That would include the second album as well as the first. The approach to the different songs changed quite a lot over time.

MUSICIAN: *But you're going to sit on it?*

PAGE: No, I'm not sitting on it. It's there in the tape vaults. But it would take a long time to do it. It would be a monumental task. At this point in time, Robert isn't keen on it, from the sound of things. There are other things to do now.

MUSICIAN: *Is it true your nickname was Led Wallet?*

PAGE: Yeah. Yeah. [*sighs*] Well, it didn't come from anyone in the band. It came from someone who didn't even know us.

MUSICIAN: *You didn't feel it was justified?*

PAGE: No. No.

MUSICIAN: *Well, I read you had a reputation for being cheap.*

PAGE: Not cheap. Tight. There's a difference.

MUSICIAN: *What's the difference?*

PAGE: The difference being if you've got a bunch of chaps and you buy them a round of drinks in a bar, a cheap bloke will go to toilet when he sees the tab. I'm not like that.

MUSICIAN: *You will buy a round of drinks, then?*

PAGE: Of course I'll buy a round of drinks. I've given you a Pepsi Cola, haven't I?

MUSICIAN: *Yes, I admit before the world that I'm drinking Jimmy Page's Diet Pepsi.*

PAGE: I could have given you water. That would be cheap.

MUSICIAN: *How did Robert get the nickname Percy?*

PAGE: Oh dear me. You do want to hear all the old stories, don't you?

MUSICIAN: *I like sitting around and telling stories.*

PAGE: But the difference is, you write them.

MUSICIAN: *You don't want to see that story in print either?*

PAGE: No, not really. How many more Led Zeppelin questions do you have?

MUSICIAN: *A few. What do you want to talk about?*

PAGE: I want to talk about why I'm doing this tour.

MUSICIAN: *Okay. Why are you doing this tour?*

PAGE: Because I pioneered a lot of guitar techniques and non-techniques and ideas and whatever—from basic riff concepts to more experimental stuff like the violin bow. I want to do a concert which encompasses all the different guitar styles that I've pioneered, with some damn good rock 'n' roll and blues. We're going to pull out all the stops.

MUSICIAN: *Any of those techniques you want to discuss?*

PAGE: There will be some surprises I've got in mind, let's put it that way. I can't talk about them now because they're still in the experimental stage.

MUSICIAN: *Let's try going way back. Not much is known about your childhood. What did your parents do?*

JOHN BELLISSIMO/RETNA

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PAGE: My father was a personnel manager. My mother did various things. What you really want to know is, were they musical?
MUSICIAN: *No, I wanted to know if they were Christian.*
PAGE: Oh, I see. They were baptized but didn't go to church.
MUSICIAN: *The reason I ask is that Led Zeppelin seemed to understand better than anyone that rock 'n' roll is very pagan music, that it had evolved mainly from the pagan side of black music, namely the blues. You took both the blues and rock 'n' roll a step further, and to do that you couldn't have been overly burdened with a Sunday school world view.*
PAGE: Well, I was a choir boy. I used to get paid to be a choir boy. No, I'm putting you on. I don't want to start talking about the occult.
MUSICIAN: *Okay, were your parents musical?*
PAGE: No.
MUSICIAN: *I've got to ask you one more thing about Robert. When I talked to him, he still seemed sensitive that Terry Reid had been asked to join Led Zeppelin first.*
PAGE: Well, I don't understand that. Terry recommended him. Admittedly I contracted him, but he was already under contract for his solo records. I went to see Robert and things were fine. I thought things were fine. Maybe he didn't.
MUSICIAN: *Apparently he thought he was low man on the totem pole in the band.*
PAGE: Really? How peculiar.
MUSICIAN: *I don't think he felt fully secure in his position until after* Led Zeppelin II.
PAGE: I suppose you could say the same thing about anyone in the band. What position was it? There was no position until it was established. Is that what you mean?
MUSICIAN: *After* Led Zeppelin I, *did you have any thoughts about getting another singer?*
PAGE: Absolutely not.
MUSICIAN: *I think Robert remembers it differently.*
PAGE: How peculiar. I thought he was absolutely great. He was as experimental with his voice as I was on guitar or Bonzo on drums or Jonesy in his way. The four of us were locked in musically like a tight fist. That was immediately apparent. From the first rehearsal it was like an explosion. The first album had so many ideas on it that got developed, even though we weren't consciously trying to develop them. Over the years, you could trace what came from those first statements, how the structure and intensity of the music matured. So did his contribution with lyrics. He was a damn good lyricist. We were all pushing ourselves to the limit.
MUSICIAN: *This may be another question you don't want to answer, but when I was telling people that I was going to talk to you, the first thing they asked was, "Is he healthy enough to play?"*
PAGE: Why would that be a question I don't want to answer?
MUSICIAN: *I'm euphemizing about drugs.*
PAGE: Oh, I see. I gathered that. The only questions I'm not keen on are about the old stories and things. Well, yeah, I'm in good enough shape. Yes, you do hear that.
MUSICIAN: *I'm always hearing rumors about you being so screwed up that you can't do anything. You're drug-free now?*
PAGE: Well, I just had a cigarette. My nicotine addiction is...well, why not?
MUSICIAN: *I was thinking more of heroin. It's been associated with your name.*
PAGE: Why is that?
MUSICIAN: *I don't know.*
PAGE: Yeah. Well. There you are, you see.
MUSICIAN: *One hears stories, that's all.*
PAGE: Well, do I look as if I'm a smack addict?
MUSICIAN: *No.*
PAGE: Well, I'm not. Thank you very much.
MUSICIAN: *Are you doing anything to get in shape? Those Les Pauls weigh a lot.*
PAGE: No, I'm not. That's why one of my shoulders is higher than the other. I'm only working out on the guitar. Are you serious?
MUSICIAN: *You don't exactly look like Bruce Springsteen. I know guitarists who've been to chiropractors and do yoga just so they can hold their instrument.*
PAGE: I've never done any of that. If you're talking about stamina, on the Firm tour I got on all right and I hadn't been on the road for years. It's just a state of mind, and I'm in it now.

Three weeks later: After 12 hours of opening acts at the Atlantic Records 40th-birthday concert in Madison Square Garden, Led Zeppelin opened their set at 1:05 a.m., which may be a record for lateness of the top bill (the unions get overtime after 11 p.m.). Next to me, a Canadian kid who had paid $400 for his ticket woke up from an overdose of suds just in time to be relocated somewhere in the rafters by a vigilant usher. Dressed in a loose-fitting charcoal-gray suit, Jimmy Page stroked his black-and-white Danelectro and the ominous minor-key rising riff signaled the wildly enthusiastic crowd that it was going to hear "Kashmir." Somewhere between dirge and mid-tempo crunch, the song seemed an odd opener, but maybe it was Page's way of reclaiming his territory, since the song appears in different guises on two Top 10 albums right now; it was a heavy influence on Robert Plant's "Heaven Knows," and more than an influence on Kingdom Come's "Get It On."

Page did reclaim his territory. After years of rumors regarding his health and certain shows ranging from the ARMS tour to the last Zeppelin reunion at Live Aid, where Page's appearance seemed to confirm the rumors, he again looked and sounded like the guitarist who created whole new genres of rock 'n' roll.

Although Page had arrived on the Concorde three days before, no one around him was sure he would not change his mind and go home. He ventured out of his hotel only to rehearse twice with Plant, Jones and Bonzo's son Jason—who came in knowing his parts better than any of the old guys. There must have been enough magic to convince Page to stick around, because no one could have persuaded him to flog a limp demon.

When I asked Plant a few months ago about playing with Page on his album, he said he wanted some of Page's "stagger" again. I had wondered about his choice of word. I hadn't seen Zeppelin live since 1977 and I'd forgotten just how much the man does stagger, since television doesn't do his stiff-legged teetering peregrinations justice. The sound system didn't do his fingers justice, either, but his intensity (and occasional inaccuracy) came through for 30 minutes of "Heartbreaker," "Whole Lotta Love," "Misty Mountain Hop" and "Stairway to Heaven." When Plant, who looked and sounded in pinnacle form, reached the final "And she's buy-y-y-ing...," Page had a glow on his face that said he had already ascended the stairway, that he could have played three hours more, that he could tour again and sound like Jimmy Page. Ⓜ

DREGS from page 70

of his virility and strength, Samson shorn or Christopher Reeve (whom he now resembles) giving up his super powers to marry Lois Lane.

But somewhere in there, a touch of moderation took hold. Morse realized he had something invested in Kansas and that it was foolish to walk away from it. The success of Joe Satriani

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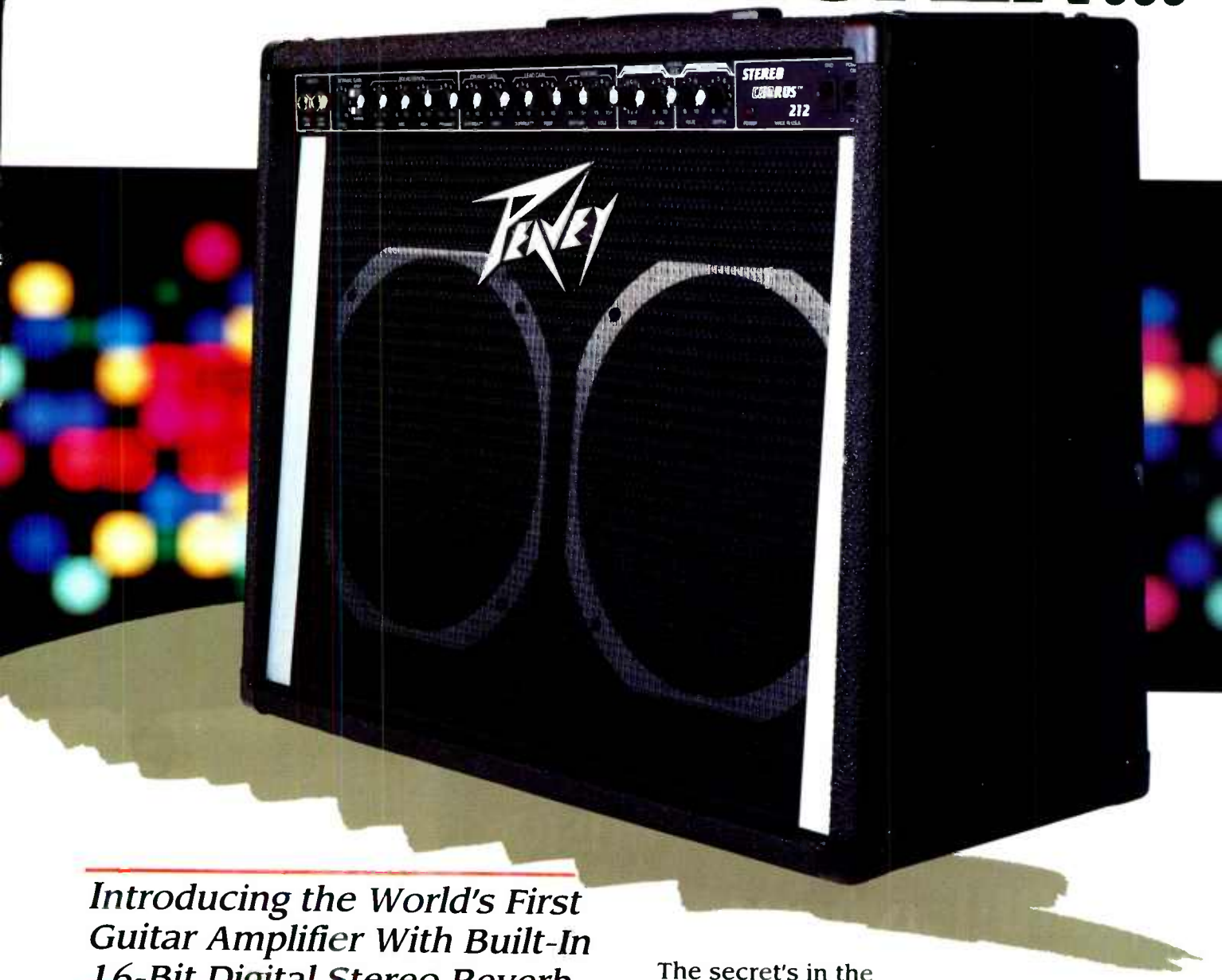

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swung the pendulum back to real guitar albums, and MCA stopped asking him to put saxes on the next Steve Morse Band record. This LP, already finished, is said to be everything *Stand Up* was not. And now this Dregs project. How could he not replay the mid-period Dregs albums, which his guitar work inexorably dominates, and not be amazed at how strong and intensely creative he was. Whatever the Dregs mean to Morse—the ability to laugh more, especially at himself; the freedom to torture his friends without guilt; the memory of how it felt not to be compromised; or simply a body of material that he should feel tremendously proud of—this spring above all marks the greening of Steve Morse, even if the Dregs never play another note together. He has decided to quit flying commuter jets and return to being a full-time musician.

"For me, nothing's changed about the business. Basically it was, 'Here's your budget, bring us a record. Don't make something horrible.' It's the same thing now," Morse explains. "They make their suggestions and you try and accommodate them. It's not so much *that* that's different. It's really the radio stations. I wish they'd go back to listening to music and choosing it themselves, but apparently that's asking too much.

"The record company was pressuring us to change our image in certain ways," recalls Morse. "Everyone wanted us to try changing the sound. We did a little, but..." Was this while *Industry Standard* was being made? "Before, after, during, always...," he sighs wearily. "Like I said, a lot of business things would be too pitiful to even go into."

"Everyone was always saying, 'You guys are great, but we can't do anything 'cause it doesn't have vocals," says West. "So we said, 'Okay, fine. Here.' And then broke up."

The two vocal tunes, sung by Doobie Pat Simmons and Santana-ite Alex Ligertwood, appeared on *Industry Standard.* The record was done at a converted theater in Atlanta run by engineer Eddie Offord, and remains one of the band's favorites. "The environment was amazing," waxes Morgenstein. "There was no isolation. You just set up onstage and there was so much ambience in the room it felt like a concert, unlike that sterilized, typical studio where you can't hear anything. And all the guys were up onstage with you. I really don't think the power of the live Dregs was ever really recorded. Maybe it's a great out, but I really feel that."

"Yeah, live we were always intense," says Lavitz. "Even if someone was sick or something, it was 'Go, give it all you got.' And I guess in the studio some of the spontaneity *was* lost by production. It's a give-and-take thing. The studio stuff is clean and it's for history. It's in tune and in time. But there was something cool about the live thing, just...." He growls. "Digging in."

But by the end of 1982, Morse felt that quality ebbing from their live shows. He partly attributes this to overwork: "We never got any breaks. The one time we took two weeks off was a major event. There was never time to readjust—there was nothing *but* that reality. And what happened to me was that I played three gigs in a row that I didn't enjoy, and I said, 'This is crazy. I could work for a living if I'm not going to enjoy it. Maybe I should.' That's the simplest way I can put it, and it's a lot more complex than that."

Sources close to the band say that Lavitz and West in particular were beginning to regard themselves as instrumental stars in their own right and chafed under Morse's direction. There is also talk that the pair got a tad over-involved with recreational drug use, which did not wear well with straight-arrows Morse and Morgenstein. Morse alludes to some of all this when he says, "People make assumptions and take things for granted and aren't as hungry. It happens to everybody to a certain extent when people are coming up to you—and they come up to everyone, good, bad or indifferent—and telling you that you're great. But sometimes people need jolts of reality—

humiliation therapy, I call it. Like when I jam with T, he has an amp I plug into that makes me sound terrible. And every once in a while you have to be stripped down to appreciate the fact that, oh, by the way, you're a *little* smarter than a dog, but you've got flesh and bones, just like a dog. If you were God, you'd be up there."

On the last day of 1982, the Dregs played their last gig and broke up, still at the height of their musical prowess.

Back on the Morse farm, it's reasonable to ask why four guys from Michigan, Cleveland, New Jersey and Long Island made their musical home in the South. How important was Dixie to the Dixie Dregs? "I think it's less a Southern thing than a rural thing," opines Morse. "I have real strong feelings about the fact that we didn't live in a big city as a chance to *retain* identity, as opposed to *getting* identity. And things are just more real here. You want something done, you do it. If you do it shitty, it'll be shitty. If you do it good, it'll be good. It's not like betting on a stock at a computer terminal and suddenly you're $50,000 richer or you've lost your house. You work and you produce results. This is reality.

"One thing about the South, though, is there's a lack of opportunity, which is not always a good thing. But it's not always a bad thing. Take a guy like Twiggs," Morse continues, invoking a personality that's seldom far from his conversation. "Here's a guy who, had he been living in the North, would've gotten just swallowed up by somebody to do some of the millions of things he was capable of doing. But instead he worked for us as a road manager. We lived in that truck! Where up north could you find someone like that who'd be able to say, 'Well, if you guys ever get any money, just give me a piece.'"

Twiggs Lyndon was more than the Dregs' road manager. He imposed a certain discipline on the band and kept them focused on the present. He lived—and died—on the edge, perishing in 1979 in a parachute jump as the band watched in horror from an upstate New York airport patio restaurant. And perhaps his absence was the real cause of the Dregs' demise. And so the truck that Twiggs built keeps its vigil on the Morse farm, even though it no longer runs. The Dregs have decided to tour this summer, and their catalog has reappeared in many stores, so there may be a groundswell out there, but for most of them, and especially Morse, there are important tasks to get on with in their separate lives. Can the Dregs go home again? Will this CD be the last Dregs recording or the first of a new era in the band? No one knows. And for Morse there is always the question of whether his rural isolation is a hindrance to his career or a source of his power.

Rod Morgenstein laughingly suggests Dregs fans boycott all solo projects and buy thousands of copies of this CD to send a message, and while managers and label execs blanch, that may ultimately be the deciding factor. One thing is certain: Andy West will not be part of the future Dregs; he's not only happy with his WaveFrame gig, but enjoys his new band Zazen, to which "we all contribute in a real spontaneous, equal sort of fashion." Definitely a change from his Dregs experience. West has also undergone the most thorough personal change, having become involved with meditation. Though he enjoyed the reunion, he remains ambiguous: "It wasn't like it *was* in a sense, 'cause it'll never be like that. Once you lose your naïveté, things change. And everyone has made their own lives for themselves, so reviving the Dregs would require a degree of commitment that's possibly not there."

But regardless of the future, a feeling has been recovered here: "It was just five guys that were deeply committed to something," says Morgenstein, "that didn't care what obstacles they met along the way. It was just something we *had* to accomplish. And nothing was going to stand in our way. I know that's how *I* felt." Ⓜ

RUSSELL YOUNG/LFI

Too Square for the U.K.? Too Hip for the U.S.? Ed Ward Visits a British Fashion Victim.

LOST IN THE ATLANTIC WITH LLOYD COLE

Lloyd Cole has a problem, the same problem a lot of bands have: He wants to be popular and sell a lot of records so that he can make a half-way decent living at what he does best. But it's a little more complicated than that, and in order to understand why, I'm going to have to ask you to hang on while I spin off some facts and opinions about the state of Britain and the music business there.

One symptom of Cole's problem is fairly odd: He's been popular right from the start. But that's just the way it goes in Britain, the way it's always gone. For all that British rock 'n' roll speaks to Americans, the system that produces it is very, very different. The average American does not appreciate just how different it is. For instance, it is probably inconceivable to an American garage musician, the aspiring pop star, that you could get a band together around Thanksgiving, release a single in April, have it go to the top of the charts, and have your album on the streets by mid-June. Over here you work and slave and play horrible gigs in clubs till two in the morning and gradually, usually over a period of no less than a year, you accumulate enough money to buy a little bit of studio time to make a record, probably a six-track EP, and get it pressed so you can face the nightmares of distribution and getting it played on the radio.

But Cole managed to go from "gee, let's form a band" to the heights in about eight months, which meant he had to undergo yet another peculiarly British phenomenon: having to deal with the press. I have no idea how many pop magazines there are in Britain, but I do know that the Brits love to read about the stuff, and the average man on the street is far more knowledgeable about his country's pop culture than he'd be over here. There are three weekly newspapers devoted to pop music—*New*

Musical Express, Melody Maker, Sounds—and an unbelievable number of monthlies, from relatively intelligent, sober publications like *Q* to by-the-numbers teenybop sheets to journals of hyperintellectualization like the late *Collusion*. Every issue of every one has to be filled up with writing.

Now, what this means is that the people who write about this stuff get tired of it a lot faster than the people who read about it and listen to it. After your sixth go-round with some phenomenon or another, you get a little annoyed. The subject has long stopped being an object of your admiration—even pop stars tend to be human—and there's a sort of displacement that occurs in which the journalist transfers onto the poor hapless rock star the irritation he feels about his job and his editor constantly urging him to bring in more copy. You've written about the early, scuffling days, the surprise at the sudden rise to glory, the impressions after the first tour of America, the writer's block over the third album, the fourth album's failure to do anything in Britain even though it's tearing up the charts in America, the battle with drugs and alcohol, and the divorce... So where's the new angle for the story? Get ugly this time. There's not a single positive virtue that can't be thought of as negative if you try.

Okay, now, bringing all of this down to the specifics, we have Lloyd Cole & the Commotions, a fine band, guitar-based and twangy, which isn't such a usual thing in a land filled with synth duos. Even though they're almost completely unknown in the U.S., Cole & the Commotions are facing the prospect of being

Causing a Commotion (l.-r.): Neil Clark, Lawrence Donegan, Cole and Stephen Irvine.

old-hat in the home country. Their first album, *Rattlesnakes*, is one of the best British records you've probably never heard. "That album, for me, is an ego-builder," Cole said in England recently. "It's made by a young group. We'd only been together six months by the time we started making that album. We were all pretty excited: As a band we were incredibly good, and the reason we were good is because of all of us being different people. We didn't all like the Byrds, we didn't all like R.E.M., we didn't all like Gang of Four. We all had different ideas, and that's what has made the Commotions the band that they are. We were on the crest of a wave. *Rattlesnakes* is where everything went right. I listen to it now, and there's not a single thing I would change.

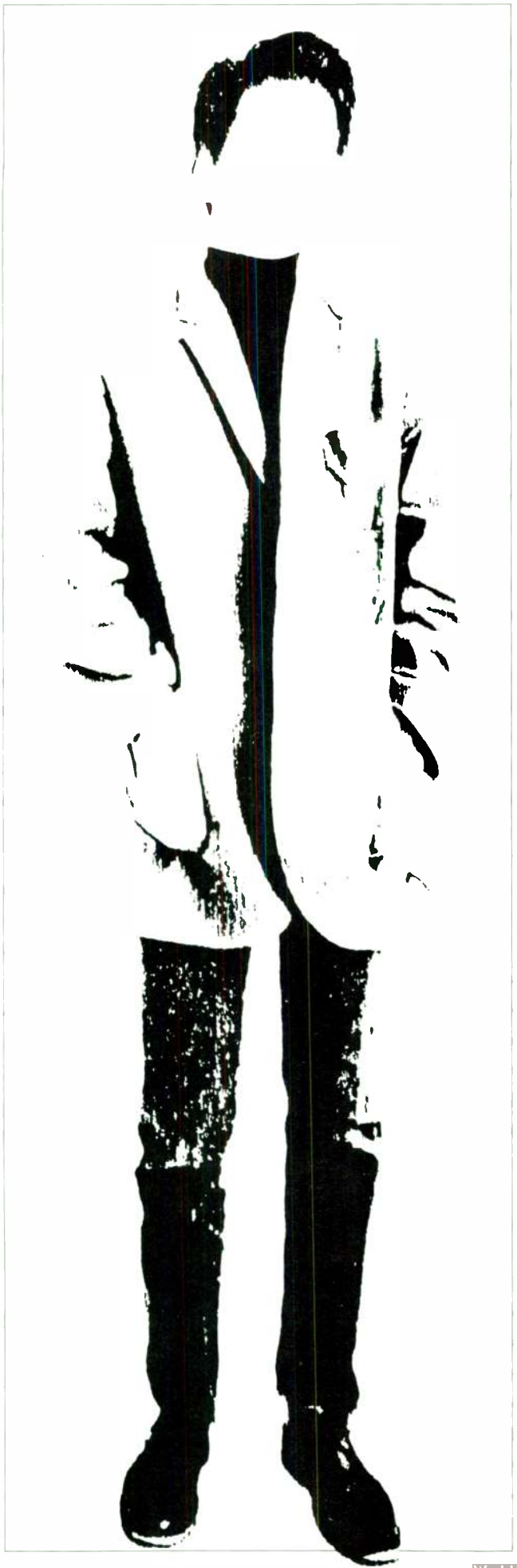
"All the individuals involved had such good ideas about the way things should go, and we were lucky that we met the perfect producer at the time as well, Paul Hardiman, because Paul is interested in soul music, not just rock. I don't know anybody whose musical ideas I respect more. It was essential to get somebody like that because ingredients from R&B are in rock 'n' roll. If you don't see that side of things, you're going to sound like Foreigner."

But they didn't sound anything like Foreigner—or much like anybody else in England. They were a bit harder-rocking than the Smiths, who I guess are the nearest touchstone, and less folkie than Aztec Camera. It was (although one doesn't bruit this about in England, thanks to the press' well-honed Americophobia) a very *American*-sounding record, except that no American could have written lyrics like Cole's. So the press they got back then was very respectful. Oh, there was a bit of fun about how much Lloyd reads, but mostly they were very happy that an intelligent, thoughtful young man could also deliver 11 such melodic, haunting, memorable songs.

On to album number two, *Five Easy Pieces*. "We were a bit full of ourselves," Cole confessed. "We thought we could write another 10 or 11 songs and they'd be good enough for an album. We didn't allow ourselves enough time to think about it. Nobody said to us, 'Ha ha! Be careful! You're not a new band anymore. This is not a debut album. You've not got the naïveté anymore. You've been on the road for six months.' We were in a different pattern, trying to work in the same way. We should have accepted the fact that we were a year older and gone on in an adult fashion. Consequently, the album for me is patchy." Although, in my opinion, the high points are higher. "That's exactly what I said, and I still say it, although my favorite songs aren't necessarily on it. Things like 'The Best Way' and 'Cut Me Down' I think are wonderful." "Lost Weekend" even wound up on MTV from time to time, and the band came to the U.S. for a decent tour. Well, almost decent: When they played my city, Austin, it was at three in the afternoon on a Sunday, in the middle of some championship Frisbee tournament, an event the band still remembers ruefully.

And by this time the British press was laying for them. No longer the perfect boy genius, Cole was on the verge of being a has-been, as they measure time over there. The big thing to shoot him down for was "angst." For my money, there's way more angst in Morrissey's songs than in Cole's, but Morrissey was still selling lots of albums and was more popular, so nobody was going after him. Suddenly, the exact same details the press had reported so reverently when the first round of interviews was happening—Cole's education, his reading, his smart lyrics, his straightforward music—became objects of derision. There's sort of a rip in his voice when he sings some notes, it's just his style, but all of a sudden it was an *unbearably affected expression of whining, selfish introversion*. A couple of stories printed around this time in the British weeklies had that classic technique first developed at *NME* whereby the journalist interviews the subject, gets a fairly neutral, informative interview, and then ends the story with a paragraph that usually starts with the words "But afterwards, I couldn't help but think..." and goes on to conclude that although the subject seemed like a nice guy at the time, he was actually a jerk because he wasn't as witty/intelligent/sophisticated as the true star of the piece, the journalist.

"We did have it in us to make a great album that time, but we just didn't do it right. Having made that mistake, we realized that we'd be a four-year-old band by the time we made our third album. We realized we needed to go about it in a thoughtful manner and make sure we didn't fuck up, so we took our time, wrote 25 songs, and picked about seven. We didn't finish 25, but we had 25 ideas, which meant an awful lot of wasted lyrics and good melodies, but we had to make sure that the album was one we'd be happy about."



RUSSELL YOUNG/LFI

"A lot of people in Britain think about America as basically a meal ticket to an early retirement... One good hit album and you make a fortune."

It's called *Mainstream*, which may or may not be ironic, and while it's a good deal slicker than the previous two, it's nothing to be ashamed of: The craftsmanship shows. With the lyrics vacillating between the opaque and the literal, supported by those beefy melodies the band's so noted for, it might be a good idea for Cole to explain just what some of it was about, so that some of what makes him tick might become visible.

"My Bag" was the first U.K. single, and Cole described it as "a kind of 1980s nightmare. There's a growing tendency, which seems to have originated in New York but spread to Britain, to believe that suddenly it's okay to say, 'I just want to make an awful lot of money and piss on the man next door.' It seems to have something to do with cocaine, as well. Cocaine seems to be, as far as I can gather, a business drug, a work drug. It doesn't seem like a drug where people enjoy themselves. I actually think there's going to be a kind of hippie revival as a backlash against what's happening. I surely hope it's not down to wearing caftans and things, but more like a revival of morality being hip, like it was between 1966 and 1974 in America. I just read that *20 Years of Rolling Stone* book, and America seemed like not a bad place to be in 1969. There were a lot of people thinking in a way that's not the way people seem to think these days. It's sort of died. I think people just got tired of being poor and ideologically sound, and decided that they wanted that big house.

"I would think that there's a median between the extremes, but then, trends are always extreme. You have all this dull, self-indulgent music around and therefore the trend is to be completely and radically different, like in punk rock. I was very excited in those days, but now I can hardly listen to those records. I mean, I certainly don't want to listen to *Never Mind the Bollocks* again.

"'From the Hip' was meant to be very simple. I got to this point in my public life where I looked back to see what I'd done over the past couple of years and I saw myself on television, where it looked like I was apologizing for being there. I was really annoyed and said, 'For God sakes, if you've got some kind of talent, you shouldn't be ashamed of it. You shouldn't be saying, "I'm sorry for having this talent."' So I'd had enough of it, no more false modesty. There's a bit in there about my modesty and how I won't take it anymore, and basically that's what this song's about: This one's from the hip. Sometimes you feel that you should write what people tell you to write, for instance. You should write just what comes into your head!

"'29' is an attempt to create an atmosphere in a song akin to something like *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It's the kind of person that reaches a certain age and becomes desperate and decides they're not going to beat around the bush anymore and yeah, I want a *lush life*. Like the old jazz song. I used that phrase in the song because I felt that it represented the kind of feel I wanted: I'm gonna live a lush life, rather than sitting

around being depressed and having nothing. I mean, you might as well sit around and be depressed, but at least have the pleasures of the flesh or something. It's about reaching a certain age where you kind of snap.

"'Mainstream' is about the way business is conducted. 'All you have to do is crawl' is the chorus. The history of business says that the only way to get on is to lick the boots of the one above you. That's basically what I'm singing about here, about this character who says, 'I'm doing it right and I'm just crawling everywhere, but I'm not getting anywhere.' It's a very simple song, but there are a lot of words in it. Sometimes I have to use a lot of words to get something very simple across.

"'Jennifer She Said' is about what people do when they fall in love. It seemed like the best way to do that would be to use the example of somebody else's name in a tattoo on their arm, so it's a song about a man embracing a woman who's not Jennifer. There used to be a third verse for the song which was in between what is now verse one and verse two: 'Jennifer she said, what a pretty name, who was she?' But the song had to be cut short.

"Did you ever see *My Beautiful Laundrette*? 'Mister Malcontent' is based on the character that Daniel Day Lewis plays. He's the blonde involved with the fascist movement. It's about a person with strong limbs and a weak mind who gets blown around from movement to movement because he feels that he's not getting what he deserves, yet he doesn't know how to get out of it and he sways with the wind and winds up doing things he will regret because he doesn't have the suss or the education to get out of the situation: 'Cut off my nose to spite my face, I will not no longer wait.' Threw a T.S. Eliot one in there, 'Or should I part my hair...' It fit the song quite well. Sometimes you write these things and you don't remember, and then, 'Oh for God sakes, I'll just leave it in.' There's a lot of angst in that song, which was difficult for me because I don't normally sing over the top. I try to understate my singing, but in that song it was necessary to let rip. Which was quite strange, because I've never really done it. It felt *really good*. I got a really sore throat. I'll have to do it more often.

"'Sean Penn Blues' is based on a true story you might have heard. Penn was set up to go to a poetry reading, not at a university, like in the song, but at some poetry circle. They wrote him a letter and said, 'Hey Sean, we've heard you've written some poems. Would you like to come to one of our meetings and give a reading?' So he went along and there were a few journalists there. When he read, people laughed openly and he was slaughtered in the press afterwards. I felt that if someone did that to me, *I'd* smash TVs and cameras. That's a really pathetic joke, a pathetic way to get a cheap story, so when I read that, I knew there was a song in it somewhere. It was going to be called 'Sympathy for Sean Penn,' but I thought that was a little much. It was also going to be called '17 Lines' at one point, because there's a line in the song, 'After 17 lines, I had to stop,' meaning the poem, but it's quite funny and gives a double meaning to the song. I sincerely hope I hear from him. And I hope he doesn't beat me up.

"There's a growing tendency to say, 'I just want to make a lot of money and piss on the man next door.' It seems to have something to do with cocaine. Cocaine seems to be a business drug, a work drug."

"The next song, 'Big Snake,' is just a blues song. I always wanted to write a song about a harbor, so the song is set there. It's about two people engaged in a physical relationship in the shadows of the big ships. I always thought a harbor was very romantic: mist, ships that come and go... It's based on Sydney harbor. I was sleepless, and went walking there at night, with the moon and all. I also got a chance to use that blues line, to say things like 'Oh daddy.' I love that, 'I wanna be your daddy.' It is quite a sexist way of putting things, I suppose, but it's just talking about physical relationships, nothing else. We got to use Jon Hassell on the track, too, and he was wonderful to work with. He's real gentle on his own, not at all a rock 'n' roll sort of character. He did a whole day with us, and then at the end said if there was a problem he'd come back the next day, which is amazing. Session men don't say that.

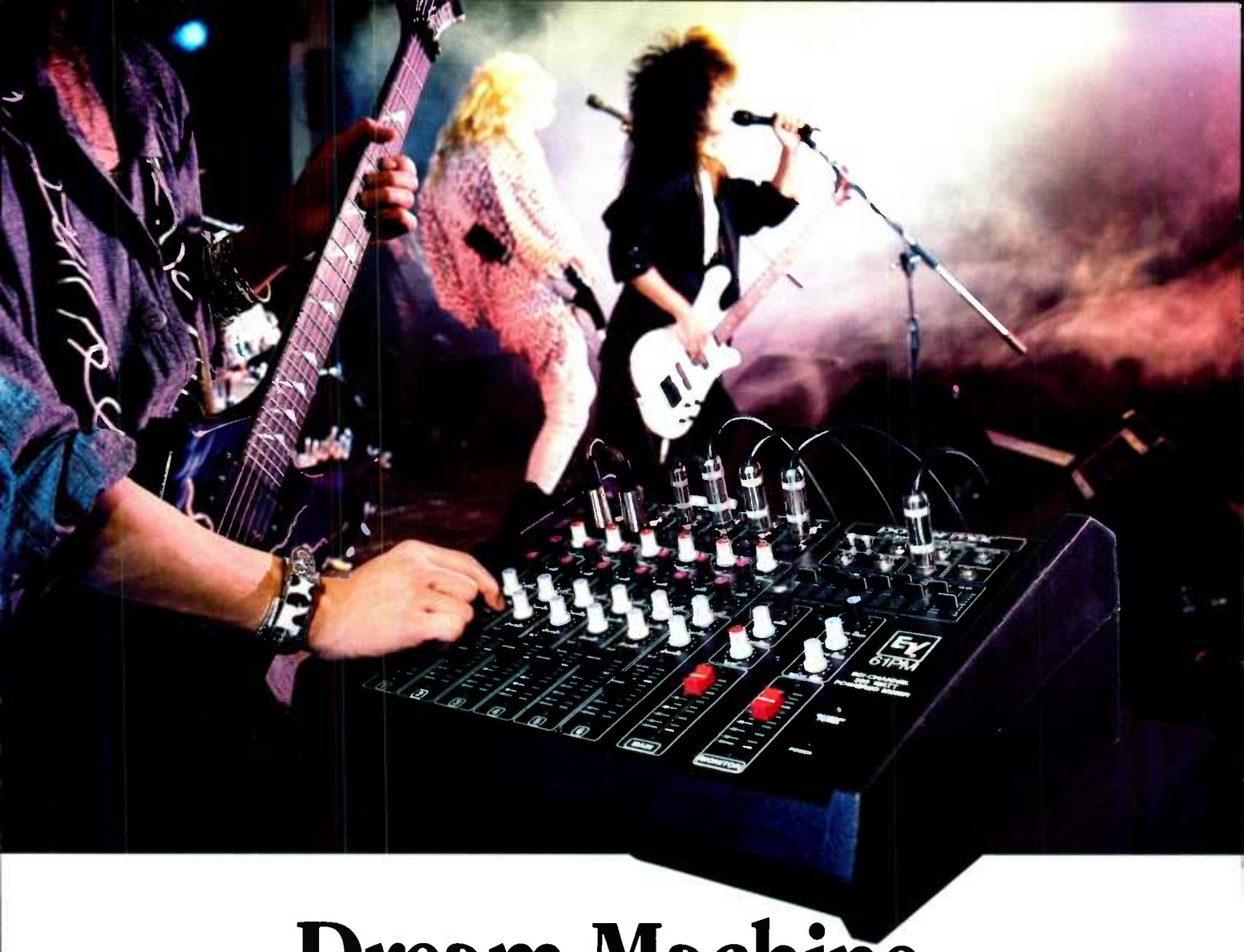
"'Hey Rusty' is a song about teenage angst and middle-aged spread. It's about a character who wants to relive his youth when he's reached a point in his life where he's had enough of living. He turned his back on bohemian life and decided to go straight, and after 15-20 years of this he wants to try to be bohemian again, which is impossible. Well, he wants to be *young* again, which *is* impossible. It's sad, you see these guys around London a lot, in the brasseries and things. These guys are 45 and trying to look 28, and it's very sad, I think. He's desperate. If you listen to the song in a literal sense and you think that the singer is the person who's talking, then you think the guy's a prick. A lot of the imagery is wide-eyed, like going down the boulevards, but that's the way wide-eyed people think; it's the way teenagers think. I'm dealing with pathos in that song, which is something I've never dealt with before. It's very tricky. Springsteen is probably the person who deals best with pathos. I thought I might as well have a go, and if it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out. I don't think it turned out badly.

"'These Days' is about AIDS. There's a policeman in this country named James Anderton, he's chief constable of Manchester, and he's incredibly stupid and outspoken about AIDS. He said—rock bottom—'Jesus has spoken to me and said...' So I had to get even with him without talking to him. It's a simple song.

"Hey, we've actually been through the whole album!"

Mainstream would have been the Commotions' first album on their new label, Sire, after two on Geffen. "It was difficult to persuade Geffen to spend any money on making us visible," Cole complained. "We did two tours, and the maximum number of people we played for was 1,000 or 1,500. It's difficult to motivate yourself to keep going around, doing these clubs,

continued on page 120



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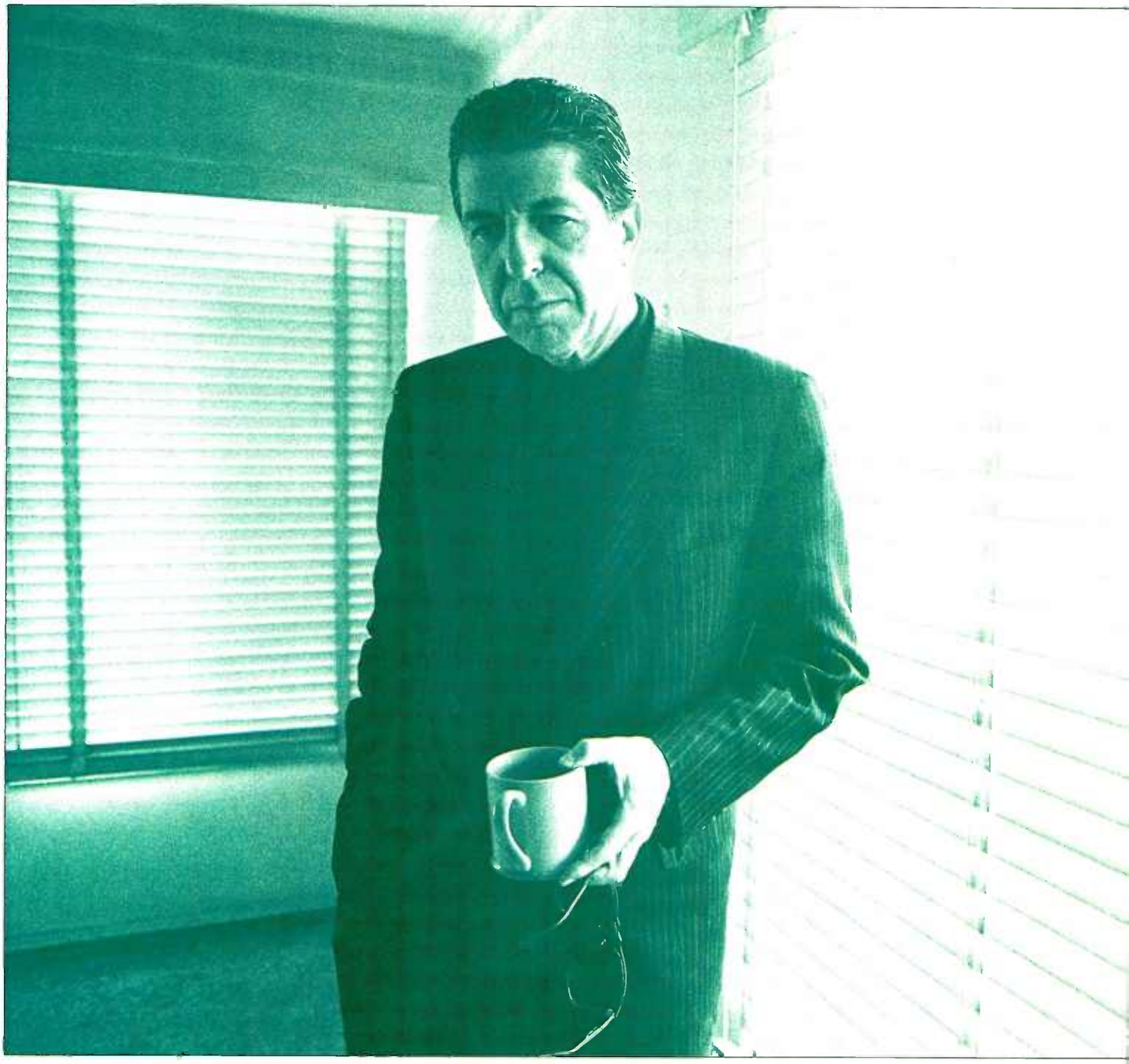

leonard cohen's nervous breakthrough

by mark rowland

"I THINK IF I HAD ONE OF THOSE GOOD VOICES, I WOULD HAVE DONE IT COMPLETELY DIFFERENTLY," LEONARD COHEN RUMINATES. "I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE SUNG THE SONGS I REALLY LIKE RATHER THAN BE A WRITER. WHEN I WAS A KID I ALWAYS HAD THIS FANTASY OF SINGING WITH A BAND. WE'D HAVE GET-TOGETHERS AND I'D SING 'RACING WITH THE MOON,' STUFF LIKE THAT. I JUST DON'T THINK ONE WOULD HAVE BOTHERED TO WRITE IF ONE COULD HAVE REALLY LIFTED ONE'S VOICE IN SONG. BUT THAT WASN'T MY VOICE. THIS IS MY VOICE."

Leonard Cohen has written two novels, eight volumes of poetry and nine albums, the latest of which, *I'm Your Man*, is as sophisticated and drolly incisive as pop songwriting gets. Ask any fan about Cohen, though, and invariably the first point of reference is the man's way with a song. The pitch is deep if not particularly resonant, dynamic shifts are seemingly verboten, his phrasing deceptively flat. On "Tower of Song," a tune from the new album, Leonard even makes a crack about it: "I was born like this, I had no choice," he explains in that distinctive warble. "I was born with the gift of a golden voice."

But he's not entirely kidding, either, or at any rate he shouldn't be. For Cohen's voice is very much the witting instrument of his songs—dark, knowing, romantic, bummed. He's the reigning auteur of folk noir, the godfather of doom 'n' gloom. Over in England, where pop ennui has become something of a cottage industry, Cohen is treated with near-regal respect. Popsters from Nick Cave to Echo & the Bunnymen's Ian McCulloch credit his inspiration; the Sisters of Mercy even took their name from one of his early songs. Cohen's last record, *Various Positions*, sold 300,000 copies in Europe. In the U.S., it was not even released.

photo by james cassimus

If you want a heart
that beats for you
If you want a fighter in the [illegible]
If you want a [illegible]
Here I stand
I'm your man

There ain't no pill, ain't no drug
you might as well
Settle down and have a baby
Cause there ain't no cure for love

Of course existential despair has never been a hot ticket in America; to an audience that admires R.E.M., Cohen's elegant lyrical turns probably don't count for much. But dismissing him as a terminal groaner (and unless you're a member of his substantial cult following, chances are good you've thought along those lines) only underscores Cohen's constancy. At 53, Leonard still dresses in black, his shoes are shined and his pinstriped jacket well-tailored. He has style, in other words. Not the sort that cops Grammy awards or Top 40 airplay, as Cohen has survived 20 years in pop music without either. But it's an honest style, singular and uncompromised—which may be why he's managed to survive at all.

He grew up in Montreal; his father was an engineer and sometime clothier who died when Leonard was nine. At McGill University he began writing poetry and played in a country and western trio, the Buckskin Boys. He also became part of a literary "underground" that, as Cohen recalls, "didn't have any subversive intentions because even that would be beneath it." With the help of a grant, Cohen began traveling through Europe, eventually settling on the Greek island of Hydra. He stayed seven years, wrote two highly-regarded novels, *The Favorite Game* (1963) and *Beautiful Losers* (1965)—the latter itself the subject of a book by the Canadian critic Dennis Lee—and lived with Marianne Jenson, later celebrated in one of Cohen's more popular songs ("So Long, Marianne"), and the mother of Norwegian novelist Axel Jensen.

"It was a very intense group of people who were passing through the island at that time," Cohen remembers. "People who were going to make their mark on the culture—Axel, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, the Swedish poet Goran Tonstrom. A very curious meeting of people, and that was very much a part of why I stayed."

It was a scene Cohen finally abandoned, however, along with his romance and his career as a novelist. He returned to the United States with the idea of becoming a country singer, eventually settling near Nashville. Before that happened, though, "Suzanne" was covered by Judy Collins, and he was signed to Columbia by that label's great talent scout, John Hammond. *Songs of Leonard Cohen* was an immediate success, several of its selections later comprising the soundtrack to Robert Altman's classic film *McCabe and Mrs. Miller.*

With his minimalist melodies, chiaroscuro croak and a poetic sensibility that suggested *fin-de-siècle* fatigue, Cohen seemed to have as much in common with the late-'60s counterculture as an undertaker at a carnival. But they clicked. Partly it was Cohen's stance, so determinedly unfashionable ("to change my name or go for an image would have felt sneaky, underhanded—that was Hollywood") as to be irresistible for a culture hooked on novelty. Part was the power of truths, however unpleasant, to insinuate and endure. With *Songs from a Room* (1969) and *Songs of Love and Hate* (1971), he became a mordant prototype for a new breed of confessional, and increasingly popular, singer/songwriters.

But as the '60s waned, so, ironically, did Cohen's appeal. Another lengthy romantic liaison (Cohen has never married) produced two children, Adam and Lorca, and for a time a measure of personal stability. But Cohen's music foundered. Always fascinated by religion, some of his themes grew mystical to the point of becoming opaque. "I thought I was one of those men that sang about his predicament, and that somehow everybody would connect with it," Cohen admits. "But I lost my way and began involving myself with speculations that I knew deep down were not really public concerns. The world was no longer attracting me. It wasn't very entertaining."

The record industry seemed to feel the same way about Cohen. Despite continued success in Europe, his albums went out of print here, and he didn't tour the U.S. for 10 years. A few months ago, Columbia Records tried to airbrush its past policy of benign neglect by presenting Cohen with its Crystal Globe award, representing over five-million sales by an artist outside their native country. Accepting the award at a sparsely-attended ceremony, Cohen remarked that he had "always been deeply touched by the modesty of [Columbia's] interest in my work." Even when surrounded by corporate hype, Cohen is a very reliable witness.

"I don't care whether they like me or not, or whether they think I'm a great poet or not. I shiver every time they use the word 'poet,'" he notes dryly. "It means I've never been shut down. [But] I consider it a friendly gesture that they remembered that I had sold these records. And if they think I've produced a record that can sell, I don't want to say anything that's going to change their minds."

The surprise success last year of Jennifer Warnes' album of

JAMES CASSIMUS

All handwritten lyrics from Leonard Cohen's notebook.

Cohen songs, *Famous Blue Raincoat*, hasn't hurt his commercial prospects, and with the release of *I'm Your Man*, Cohen's songwriting career may be finally coming full circle. Meticulously crafted, and for once not so's you'd notice, the songs mesh the direct lyricism of his earliest work along with the toughened emotional fiber of a guy who's been around the block a few times since. It's a black comedy, and an entertaining one; "Ain't No Cure for Love," "Everybody Knows" and "I Can't Forget" even have what you might call hooks. Were it not for the polished production values, occasional oud lick, or those angelic female harmonies—by now a Cohen trademark—you'd think he was finally making his country-western debut.

Cohen likes the record too, but mostly he's glad it's finished; as the following interview indicates, its three-year gestation was unusually tortured, even for him. Tortured enough at least to lead Cohen to re-examine his life, his worth as an artist and his place in the world. Now he's a happier man. "But I think that's because I just heard that the record went to number one in Norway," he admits. "Then I heard it was going toward number one in Spain, and I began to reach higher states of ecstasy and bliss."

We conversed one evening in Cohen's Los Angeles apartment, a few days before his octet departed on a 65-concert tour of Europe. It was a clean, well-lighted place, though virtually devoid of furniture. Whether rummaging through his refrigerator or his own fertile mind, Cohen graciously shared the discoveries—an ear of corn, a forgotten poem, grape leaves, funny stories. For all his reputation as a bard of despair, his manner seemed elfin, his bleakest observations peppered with self-deprecating humor. Leonard Cohen is an artist, all right, and something else at least as valuable: He's a character.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think your music is coming back in vogue?*

COHEN: People like the stuff again; I guess that means it's a good time. Other musicians are treating me like Beethoven. Younger groups are recording my songs, some of them in subterranean caves in Iceland. I'm always gratified when extremist groups are attracted by my work.

I look at it more or less like it's the Middle Ages, or the Dark Ages. There's a flame here or there. Someone lifts a torch. Sometimes it's in Warsaw, sometimes Reykjavik. It takes a certain amount of perseverence.

MUSICIAN: *Is that a problem for you?*

COHEN: I did not go into this for the short haul. I understood that about myself a long time ago. And then, you're not even aware as the years go by. It's not that one wakes up every morning and says, "I must reconsecrate myself in this great mission..." Also, I've had examples in my life of men who've grown older in the harness and kept producing remarkable work. My friend Irving Layton, who is probably the best Canadian poet alive today, is on maybe his fiftieth book. That's inspiring. There's no concession to old age.

MUSICIAN: *You're referring to writers and poets. In terms of pop singer/songwriters, though, you haven't had many role models.*

COHEN: That's true. But I've been sustained by people responding to my work though the marketplace does not celebrate it. So I never got the sense that "it's over." Maybe I should have—there was ample evidence from certain points of view.

MUSICIAN: *Most of your following is in Europe. Do you think your songs, your world view, attracts or plays to what's considered a more European sensibility?*

COHEN: I think the public world in Europe is not as powerful as the public world here, so there's still an inner space that's not so much under assault. There's still some remnant of nineteenth-century culture. In America there is no vacuum. Everything is public and the commercial institutions are now the landscaping of this public world. There's nowhere else for you to exist. There's a few libraries, a few second-hand record stores—the archives. But unless you are in the system here, you don't exist. I'm not on the side of the cultivation of inner space, though. I don't have anything vested in the position my life has given me. I'm happy to make a living. I don't consider myself scorned, and I never design my songs to be outside the mainstream.

MUSICIAN: *But you have often positioned yourself as an outsider, particularly when you arrived on the pop scene in the late '60s.*

COHEN: I always find it interesting when people designate me as a figure of the '60s, because I certainly never bought the ['60s] point of view, and I'm on record in book after book. I think there's one called *The Energy of Slaves* which came out in '73 and ends with this line: "Welcome to this book of slaves

which I wrote during your exile, you lucky son-of-a-bitch, while I had to contend with all the flabby liars of the Aquarian Age."

MUSICIAN: *But in the late '60s you were in a community of folk singers who played together, sang each other's songs—*

COHEN: And everybody went for the money. Everybody. The thing died very, very quickly; the merchants took over. Nobody resisted. My purity is based on the fact that nobody *offered* me much money. I suppose that had I moved into more popular realms, I might have surrendered some of the characteristics of my nature that are now described as virtues.

MUSICIAN: *That must have made you feel a little odd.*

COHEN: It made me feel a little poor. [*laughter*]

MUSICIAN: *Do you feel limited by your voice?*

COHEN: There's no question; there are lots of things I wouldn't try. But I don't think that has anything to do with delivering a song. A song, a message, a laundry list, a salutation—there's a way to deliver the thing so that it touches the person you're speaking to. Now there are lots of good singers who couldn't do my stuff—couldn't penetrate it, would have no interest in it. I can do my songs better than most people. Very rarely someone like Jennifer Warnes comes along, who has all the emotional equipment and can bring musical qualities to the song that I can't even approach. This superb sound that issues from her throat. Now maybe that can get in the way of a song too.

Most music criticism is in the nineteenth century. It's so far behind, say, the criticism of painting. It's still based on nineteenth-century art—cows beside a stream and trees and "I know what I like." There's no concession to the fact that Dylan might be a more sophisticated singer than Whitney Houston, that he's probably the most sophisticated singer we've had in a generation. Or that Tom Waits' whole personage is incredibly classy and chic, much more so than anybody around, mostly.

MUSICIAN: *Is that something you take to heart?*

COHEN: Well, I'm actually talking about myself. People talk about me being a primitive, they use "folk singer" as a way to put people down, things like that. I'm a folk singer, okay, but I mean, some folk singer wrote the melody to "Greensleeves." How primitive was that? Nobody is identifying our popular singers like a Matisse or Picasso. Dylan's a Picasso—that exuberance, range, an assimilation of the whole history of music.

MUSICIAN: *What's great about the best folk and country music is the clarity, the removal of anything extraneous from the point. And listening to* I'm Your Man, *I hear that in your own writing again, those succinct narrative and musical qualities.*

COHEN: That's what I've been working on for the last few years. I think "The Book of Mercy" (from *Various Positions*) was the final statement of the mystical, religious being. I don't have to talk about religion anymore—it's gone underground. I don't think popular music is a good place to explore a lot of those ideas.

The song that is going to survive in this landscape today has got to have a certain kind of power, of strength. You don't put your philosopher at the head of the army. This is a time for a very strategic position—to the marketplace, and to the whole psychic landscape. Muscle is indicated, a kind of phalanx. A lot of other things have to be put behind the front line. If your heart has really been threatened with cynicism—one's own, I'm talking about, not CBS'. [*laughter*] With the greed, the skepticism, the general devaluation of all spiritual currency that faces us today, a position has to be taken that is appropriate in the face of this real assault.

MUSICIAN: *You found yourself having a change of heart?*

COHEN: I found myself getting wiped out, over and over again. I found myself breaking down, in not very pleasant ways.

I wasn't making [songs] as strong, I wasn't paying enough attention to the foundation, the casting. I had good ideas, and sometimes I made a frail thing whose frailty was so alarming that it could endure, like the song "If It Be Your Will." It has its own disarming life and can survive in this landscape. But mostly, no, they can't.

MUSICIAN: *Are you speaking in terms of music, or the craft of writing those songs?*

COHEN: I'm speaking in terms of a position that embraces those things but also embraces the mode that we order our food in a restaurant and approach our friends and our lovers, just the style of operation today.

MUSICIAN: *This may be something of a stretch, but do you think that your attitude in the '60s, which was then something of a corrective to the excesses of the era, ultimately became corrupting and disfiguring for yourself?*

COHEN: Well, my retrospective chops are pretty rusty; I don't have that kind of mind. I remember that I was enflamed in the '60s, as so many of us were. My appetites were enflamed: to love, to create, my greed, one really wanted the whole thing. And I remember feeling at a certain point that this was not working. You'd wander around the East Village in New York, there'd be a paper called the *East Village Other* which seemed to indicate there was some kind of community. Only you'd walk the street and there'd be no evidence of any such thing. The evidence started to accumulate that nothing was happening. Someone observed that whoever marries the spirit of their generation will be a widow in the next. I never married the spirit of my generation because it wasn't that attractive to me. And I've since moved further and further from any possible matrimonial commitment. As you get older, I think you get less willing to buy the latest version of reality. Mostly, I'm on the front line of my own tiny life.

MUSICIAN: *It's remarkable that you'd written two well-received novels before becoming a professional songwriter. After that much struggle, why did you abandon a career as a novelist?*

COHEN: Many times in the last few years I've thought I should have stayed with writing. Then maybe life would have been a little easier. I would have shipwrecked less dramatically. From my point of view.

SELF-PORTRAIT LEONARD COHEN

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The current tour band prepares to storm Norway.

MUSICIAN: *You think it's a less difficult life emotionally?*
COHEN: As I remember it, for the writing of books you have to be in one place. The regime is just completely different. It usually involves a certain type of stability. You tend to gather things around you when you write a novel. You need a woman in your life. It's good to have some kids around, 'cause there's always food. It's nice to have a place that is clean and orderly, where this light comes in.
MUSICIAN: *You had gathered these things?*
COHEN: I had those things and then I decided to be a songwriter. I don't know what it was, something to do with money. Although I was being affirmed in certain circles, I couldn't pay the rent. I'd always written songs, so it was more like an emphasis changed rather than a venue. But I still don't know how I got so deeply into it. It started to engross me—and also, I had enormous success at the beginning. That's always a trap; you think, "I can repeat that." This seems like a wonderful way to live. Everywhere you go people seem delighted to have you around. It seems to be more lively.

But...it wasn't. I found myself mostly alone and that all the flaws of my nature were aggravated and written large. And I found myself mostly alone in cities that I didn't know very well, trying to find a date for dinner.

That's really what I found. What I left, which was an intimate relationship and a beautiful house on a Greek island, was obviously something I couldn't stand either. So I don't know, but it certainly didn't work out very happily over the years. It's taken me a long time to come out of the shipwreck of 10 or 15 years of broken families and hotel rooms. And some kind of shining idea that my voice was important, that I had a meaning in the cosmos. Well, after enough lonely nights you don't care whether you have a meaning in the cosmos or not.

But you don't know what to change *to*. When we're young and we're standing in front of this buffet table, you can pick and choose from the vast range of generality. The older you get the more specific your life becomes, and you can't say, "I could be a forest ranger" or "I could be a brain surgeon." When all the while you're this songwriter living in L.A. It takes a long time to know it, and to say, "Well, okay, that's what I'm gonna be." Or even, "That's who I am. Now I'm going to be a good one."

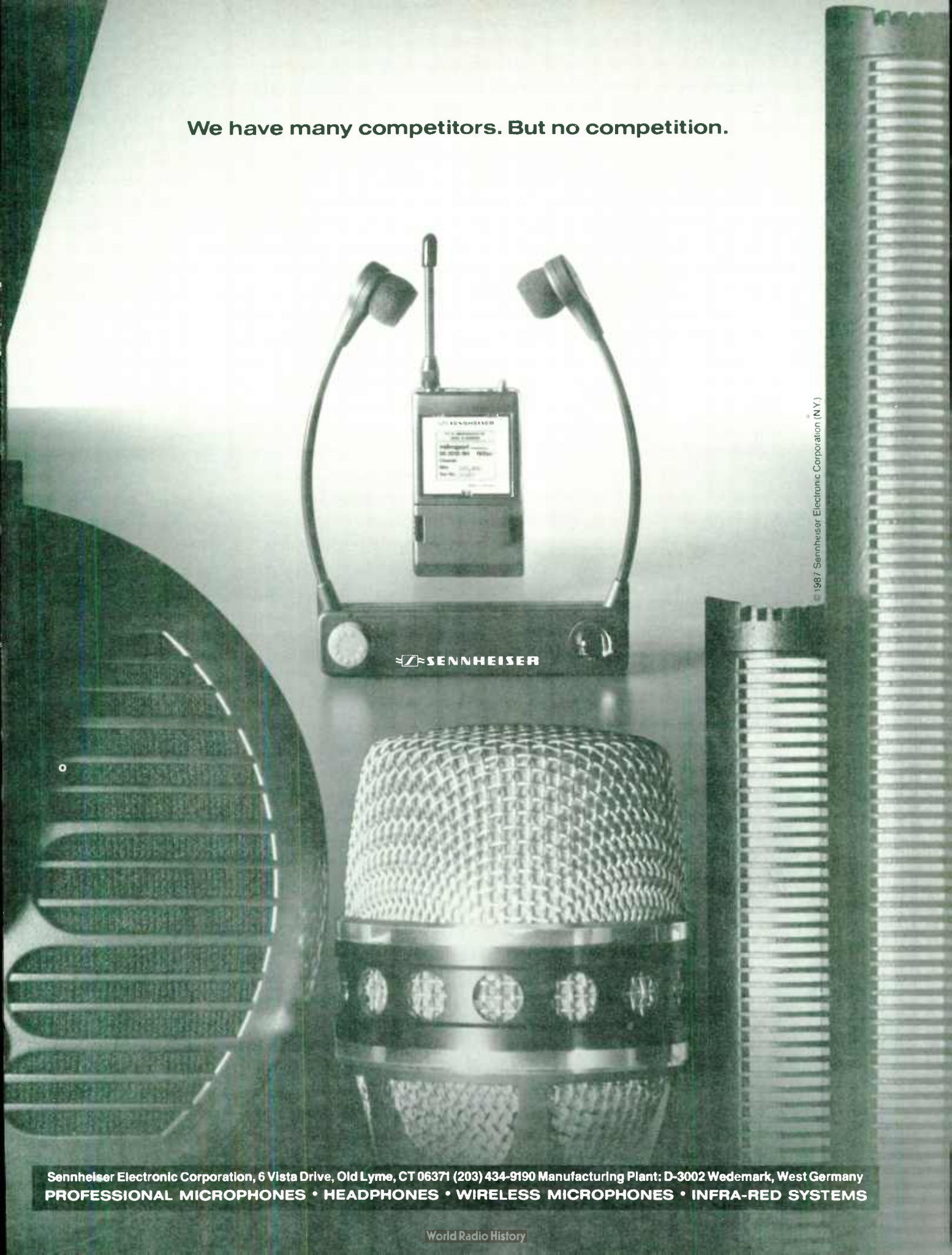
Now I know what I am. I'm not a novelist. I'm not the light of my generation. I'm not the spokesman for new sensibility. I'm a songwriter living in L.A., and this is my new record.

MUSICIAN: *It sounds like there were times you felt pretty close to going under.*
COHEN: It's just a matter of how prone you are to real mental disorder. It's true that certain suffering is educational. It's true that experience is important. That artists have an unstable psychic nature and sometimes it's valuable. All these things that you've heard about writing, about the artist, are true. But a lot of people spend most of their life in acute pain. And it breaks some people. I was no stranger to depression and many distressed kinds of states, but at a certain point it really wasn't funny. And at that point you have to start being what the Christians call "born again." You've got to recreate your personality so that you can live a life appropriate to your station and predicament. And having illusions makes it very difficult to create an appropriate self.
MUSICIAN: *I'd imagine it's also a catch-22, since so much of your best music seemed to spring from that sense of despair.*
COHEN: I can't tell you how many letters and phone calls I've gotten over the years from people in mental hospitals who say, "You know where we are, and the fact that you're on the outside and we're inside gives us great hope." It's tricky, because I have been in real dangerous places, and I don't like them.
MUSICIAN: *Where you worry that you can't trust yourself?*
COHEN: Where you worry about jumping out of the window. You worry whether you're gonna get from one moment to the other. I don't want to spend much time there. I know my voice can speak from time to time to people who have been there. Whether I've helped somebody or bound them to their predicament, I don't know. Affliction and suffering are mysterious.
MUSICIAN: *But you speak as if you've had a more recent change of heart, or will.*
COHEN: For the moment I seem to have. I think it may be because my record is number one in Norway. [*laughter*] I'm not sure; it might be that.

I listen to the radio, and I like all kinds of music, you know. But I do like to hear from people who have been there, that's just my personal taste. Now, Hank Williams has been there.
MUSICIAN: *Yeah, he died there.*
COHEN: You want to hear a guy's story, and if the guy's really seen a few things, the story is quite interesting. Or even if he comes to the point where he wants to sing about the moon in June, there's something in his voice...when you hear Fats Domino singing, "I found my thrill on Blueberry Hill," *whatever* that's about, I mean, it's deep.
MUSICIAN: *Do you always know what your songs are about?*
COHEN: There's a lot of songs that lose their meaning, you forget. I'm finding that out now, rehearsing the band. There are some songs I just can't get behind. Some are surprising me, songs I really thought I could sing, like "Bird on a Wire." I'm not sure it's necessary to say, "I swear by this song and by

They said I was a loser
Now they're worried I might win
They'd like to ~~stop me cold~~ hold me back
But they don't have the discipline

JAMES CASSIMUS



all I've done wrong that I will make it all up to thee." Either I've done that, or there's no point in making that promise again if I haven't. It's very hard to get behind certain lines. The new songs I'm not having any trouble with.

My daddy said that she was dead
She meant, she couldn't feel

MUSICIAN: *It's been three years since your last album. How did this one come about?*

COHEN: Well, I hope I don't have to write a record like this again. I've always been slow, but this was very slow and tricky and it broke down a lot. And I had to leave it many times and I spent a lot of money and my judgments were all wrong. In the middle of the recording I realized that the lyrics were all wrong, and they'd already taken a year or two to write.

For instance, "I Can't Forget" has that limpid kind of language that doesn't twist your arm at all. It's a dead, flat language that I like. But that song started off as a song about the exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt. As a metaphor for the journey of the soul from bondage into freedom. It started out, "I was born in chains but I was taken out of Egypt/ I was bound to a burden but the burden it was raised/ Lord I can no longer keep this secret/ Blessed is the name, the name be praised."

It went on like that for a long, long time, and I went into the studio and tried to sing this song about how "I was born in chains and I was taken..." But I *wasn't* born in chains and I wasn't taken out of Egypt, and not only that, but I was on the edge of what was going to become a very serious nervous breakdown. So I hadn't had the burden lifted and the whole thing was a lie! It was wishful thinking.

And this song, "Taken Out of Egypt," took months and months to write. Nobody believes me when I say these things, but I have the notebooks, and I don't fill them in an evening. And there were many of them. So it wasn't as if I had an endless supply of songs: I had to start over. And I was saying to myself, "What is my life?" and that's when I started writing that lyric: "I stumble out of bed/ I got ready for the struggle/ I smoked a cigarette/ And I tightened up my gut/ I said this can't be me/ Must be my double/ And I can't forget/ I can't forget/ I can't forget/ But I don't remember what." That was really true.

MUSICIAN: *That's quite a switch. The first version is such a big-screen technicolor production.*

COHEN: Yeah: "I was led to the edge of a mighty sea of sorrow/ Pursued by the armies of a dark and cruel regime/ But the waters parted and my soul crossed over/ Out of Egypt, out of Pharoah's dream." Pretty good—it's DeMille! [*laughs*]

MUSICIAN: *It must have been hard to let go of all that imagery.*

COHEN: This happened with almost every one of the songs. "First We Take Manhattan" began as a song called "In Old Berlin," which was an inquiry into the nature of evil. "I'm Your Man," that started off as a song about "waiting for the miracle." It had some funny lines in it like "waiting for the miracle, there's nothing left to do/ I haven't been this happy since the end of World War II." But I couldn't sing it. I *wasn't* waiting for the miracle, or maybe I was and I didn't like the victimized position. Then it became a song called "I've Cried Enough for You," where I was talking to myself, you know, "I've never seen the sky so blue the grass so green the day so new/ I can't believe it but it must be true/ I've cried enough for you." And *that* didn't work.

'Cause what I was really trying to say was, "I'll do *anything* for you." But it took two or three more writings and recordings of the song to get to "I'm Your Man," which is just a perfect little song. It was hard to get to those truths.

MUSICIAN: *It sounds like this album was like your personal psychologist, where you go in and say, "This is what I'm feeling," and the therapist says okay but keep talking, and ultimately, you discover that your real feelings are completely the opposite.*

COHEN: Right, right. The true position is not a Sunday school position. It is not the platform you thought you had developed to present yourself as the guy you want people to know about. But the thing is, it is the way a guy feels when he's trying to get a girl back. [*laughter*]

MUSICIAN: *All these songs started out as grand themes, and ended up as something very basic.*

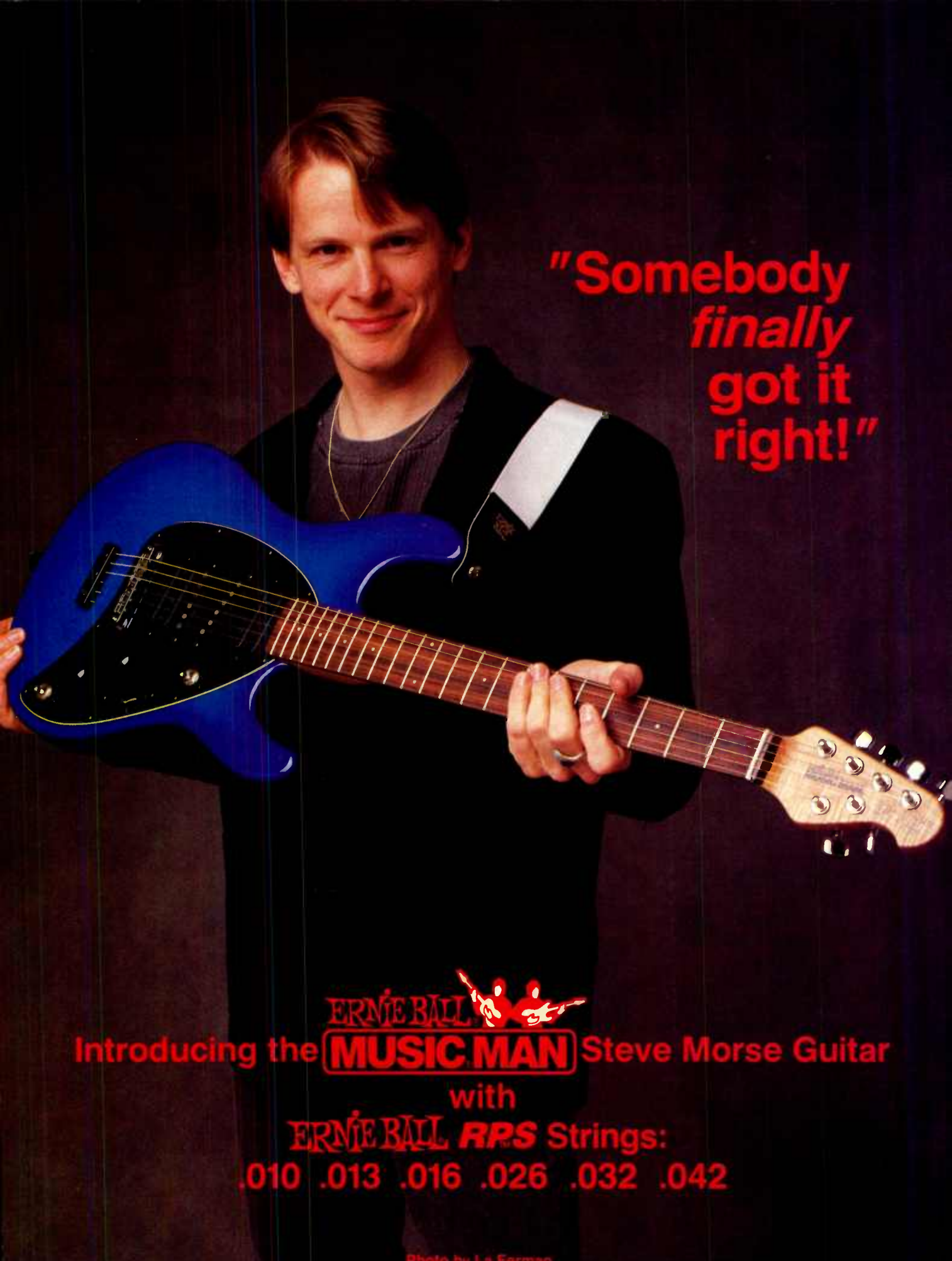
COHEN: Yes, as I myself was a grand theme when I started the record a few years ago, and that grand theme evaporated.

MUSICIAN: *Are you sad to lose that?*

JAMES CASSIMUS

COHEN: I'm happy I lost it! The whole idea of a grand theme made my life very unhappy.

This mad period started with *Various Positions*. I remember writing this song "Hallelujah"; I filled two notebooks with the song, and I remember being on the floor of the Royalton Hotel, on the carpet in my underwear, banging my head on the floor and saying, "I can't finish this song." After I wrote the one version [for *Various Positions*], I wrote another lyric which I'm doing now, which goes like this: "Maybe I've been here before/ I know this room I've walked this floor/ I used to live alone before I knew you./ I see a flag on the marble arch/ But love is not a victory march/ It's a cold and it's a broken hallelujah./ There was a time when you let me know/ What's really going on below/ But now you never show it to me do you?/ I remember when I moved in you/ And the holy dove was moving too/ And every breath we drew



was hallelujah./ Maybe there's a God above/ But all I ever learned of love/ Was how to shoot at someone who outdrew you./ It's not a cry you hear tonight/ It's not a mystic who's seen the light/ It's a cold and it's a broken hallelujah." That was the prototype of the defeat.

I won't tell you how many times I did "Ain't No Cure for Love." That started out as a song—

MUSICIAN: *About the SALT Treaty?*

COHEN: Actually, one of the things on my mind was that I was very pissed off at Band-Aid, this moment in musical history where everyone took care of "we gave at the office." It was very nice, but first of all, I hadn't been asked by anybody to sing. [*smiles*] So the song started off "from the heart of man to the heart of God the ladder's been removed/ And there ain't no band-aid big enough to cover up this wound." That idea.

I've always had this very scroogie point of view. When people demonstrate against nuclear weapons, I think, "These people think that if they eliminate nuclear weapons, they eliminate death." It promotes something like "eternal peace." But we're not going to live forever; maybe I think, basically, that nothing really changes. I'm not attached to that opinion, though. I don't even care if it's true. When you're banging your head against the dirty carpet of the Royalton Hotel trying to find the rhyme for "orange," you don't care about these things.

But I had this idea that "there ain't no cure for love" in every sense of the matter. If you do have [love] it's a kind of wound, and if you don't have it, it's worse. And this is what Christ is about: Christ *had* to die because there ain't no cure for love. You can't change this world. And Christ, especially, understood this. So I wrote the whole song on those terms.

MUSICIAN: *What terms?*

COHEN: Theological terms. And then I thought, "I'm never gonna get behind this, either." But Jenny heard part of the song and she liked it. So I started writing a lyric that would have these ideas somewhere way, way, way back and no one would have to bother about them but me. It'd just be this love song about a guy who'd lost a girl.

"Take This Waltz" was written deep into the nervous breakdown. It took me 150 hours to do the translation of the poem [by Federico García Lorca]. It was hard to adapt so you could sing it in 3/4. The official translation—well, you couldn't sing that. So I had to get permission from the [Lorca] estate to do my own translation. And I was sorry that they gave it to me because when I started the thing, I didn't realize I had taken my first step on a walk to China.

MUSICIAN: *You must read Spanish pretty well.*

COHEN: No, I don't. I met a Costa Rican girl who helped me with it, and I had other translations that people had done, but they weren't rhymed. His poem is rhymed. Then I went to Paris to record it, then I broke down and went to a monastery in New Mexico for two months. I thought, "I don't have to do a record anymore, I'll be a monk!" It's good to have these places to go. When I came out I started the record again.

MUSICIAN: *I think I'm beginning to understand the meaning of "Tower of Song."*

COHEN: I was sitting at this table when I began that song, in 1985. I've got lots of verses. I wanted to make a definitive statement about this heroic enterprise of the craft.

MUSICIAN: *And at the end you're just kind of locked in a room.* [*laughter*]

COHEN: Right. That's when it became clear to me that I was in the "Tower of Song."

MUSICIAN: *You've mentioned every song on the album except "Jazz Police," which, musically at least, is really an anomaly.*

COHEN: I met a young musician in Montreal, Jeff Fisher. He arranged "First We Take Manhattan," which had that Sergio Leone quality that I wanted—otherwise the song would have been laughed out of the world. I said to him, "Why don't you write something? Let's do a rap song." I had this song, "Jazz Police," from going around with the fusion group Passenger. There was this standing joke that if I caught them playing augmented fifths, or even sevenths, I'd call them on it, because I've always gone for a certain kind of sound. So I was the "jazz police." The lyric, I'm not sure what it was about. The idea was to take a premise and let it collapse into a joke, or an absurdity. But—I hated it. I hated the whole thing and I think I still do. I was going to let it go, but then all these other songs started breaking down, and it moved back on the menu.

It caught the mood of this whole period I'm describing, though—this kind of fragmented absurdity. I was living that, so I let it stay, and also, I didn't have much to choose from.

MUSICIAN: *The vault was empty?*

COHEN: The vault was empty. To put together another couple of songs for this record—it would have been another year! And I realized things were hospitable for me in Europe. If I waited, I'd be starting from scratch again.

This is as tough as it's ever been for me, just in terms of working. I had a pretty rough time with *Beautiful Losers*, but I didn't know it. I broke down after it was over.

MUSICIAN: *When you say "broke down," what do you mean?*

COHEN: Well, when I finished *Beautiful Losers* I was living on Hydra. I went to another island and when I wanted to come back I hired a boatman to get me to another, bigger boat that was headed that way. It was about 110 degrees, very hot sun. The fisherman said to me, "You'd better come in under the tarp." I said no. He said, "'Sea Wolf,' huh?" When I got back to Hydra I couldn't get up the stairs to my house. They got a donkey and took me up. I went to bed and I couldn't eat for 10 or 15 days. They finally called a doctor and I was hallucinating and going crazy and went down to 116 pounds and, you know, a breakdown of some kind. But that seemed right: I'd been working pretty hard and taking speed. I'd had a sunstroke, obviously. And I'd just finished this book.

The day the storks came to the island was the day I recovered. They stop over and land on their way to Africa, or maybe coming back from Africa; they nest on the highest buildings, which are usually churches. So there's a curious feeling; they come in and sit on the churches and leave the next

JAMES CASSIMUS

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it means forever
give or take a night or two

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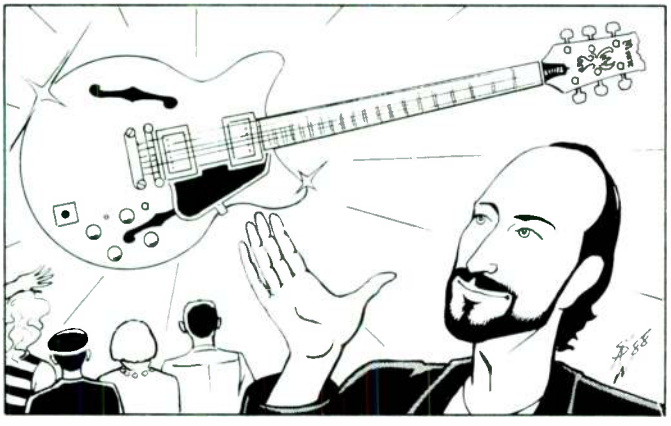

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morning. They just spend one night. And the morning they left I recovered, I stood up and I addressed the people of my family and it was a miracle. The miracle of the storks. [*laughter*]

So that wasn't like *this*: This took two years of disintegration and then putting it back together in some way. But I think I recovered because my song went to number one in Norway...

MUSICIAN: *That wasn't too long ago.*

COHEN: No, I'm newly recovered.

MUSICIAN: *For someone who's Jewish, your music often seems obsessed with Catholicism. Why?*

COHEN: I grew up in a Catholic city, and all through Quebec the church is very strong. And I had an Irish-Catholic nanny; because my father was sick and my mother was usually at the hospital taking care of him, I was brought up part Catholic in a certain way. The figure of Christ touched me very early in my life. My radical Catholic friends were very angry at me for this Christological infatuation. Because they had really been *oppressed* by the church. To me it was romance. And there were many georeligious ideas I could speculate on. For one thing, I could see Christianity as the great missionary arm of Judaism. So I felt a certain patronizing interest in this version of the thing. I didn't have to believe it.

But I was talking today to a friend of mine, and it came to me that Christ's image is just the perfect symbol for our civilization. It's a perfect event for us—you have to die to survive. Because the personality is crucified in our society. That's why so many people collapse, why the mental hospitals are full. Nobody can survive with the personality that they want, which is the hero of their own drama. That hero dies, it's massacred, and the self that is reborn remembers that crucifixion. And we're doing that every day. This Christian myth at the center of our society is very good. It's workable.

MUSICIAN: *It's interesting that you moved from Montreal to Greece, since the Greek Orthodox church is kind of the link between the Roman Catholic liturgy and Judaism.*

COHEN: There are many things about Greece; the most

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important is the climate. I came from Montreal, I had never been warm before. I remember laying on a rock after I'd been there two months and feeling some interior sliver of ice melt from inside my bones. I thought, God...the universe is benign. I was drawn mostly by the sun.

MUSICIAN: *I understand that somehow during the course of your travels you ended up in Cuba during the Bay of Pigs invasion.*

COHEN: I don't know why I did any of these things. I do remember that Fidel Castro used to be laughed at in America. He'd make these five-hour speeches—apparently he speaks beautifully—and he'd say, "They're going to invade us," and people thought that was a big joke. But I thought they *were* going to invade them.

So I went down there and immediately found myself accurately described as a "bourgeois individualist poet." I said, "That's right. Suits me to a tee." I wrote a poem in one of my early books: "The only tourist in Havana turns his thoughts homeward."

I was walking on the beach in the middle of one night and was suddenly surrounded by about 11 guys with Czechoslovakian submachine guns; I was an American who didn't speak Spanish, and they thought I was the first guy off the landing boat. I was the first guy arrested. It was a bit tricky to sort this thing out. But they happened to be very gracious. Wherever they took me, by the end of the night we were drinking toasts to each other and "the friendship of the people," and they let me go.

A little later it hit the newspapers in North America that the airport had been bombed. I'm in this little seedy hotel in Havana and somebody knocks on my door and says, "You have to go down to the Canadian consulate right away." They don't like the look of me there because I really do look like a Cuban revolutionary—I had a beard and wore khakis. Finally I'm brought in to one of the secretaries of the consulate—I'm pretending to be pretty tough. And he says to me, "Mr. Cohen. Your mother is very worried about you."

MUSICIAN: *Speaking of dangerous missions, you also collaborated on an album with Phil Spector* [Death of a Ladies Man]. *What was that like?*

COHEN: Phil didn't like to go out very much at the time [1975], but he came to the Troubadour when I played there. He liked it very much so he invited me to his house. Then he locked all the doors. He wouldn't let me leave. So I said, "Well, let's do something interesting, 'cause it's mighty boring here, Phil."

It was like one of these classic Hollywood moments: We sat down at the piano and started writing songs. And over the next month we wrote some very good ones. The execution on the album was all wrong, though. I think Bill Medley should have sung them, or somebody else produced them, or something. The recording was a nightmare. I hear Phil is very calm these days, very happy. And he's a delightful man in any case, one on one. But in the studio he was different. It was very stressful when he'd approach you at three in the morning with a bottle of Manischewitz in one hand and a .45 in the other. And he'd put his arm around my shoulder and shove the .45 under my neck and he'd say, "I love you, Leonard."

There were a few moments like that. It's a good story, isn't it? In retrospect.

MUSICIAN: *Now that they're teenagers, what do your kids think of your music?*

COHEN: I just spoke to my son—he's 15—on the telephone and he said, "Dad, I've just been listening to *Various Positions* and I want you to know I really respect your writing." It was pretty nice. I gave him a cassette of *I'm Your Man* before it came out and both my children recited all the lyrics to me.

continued on page 119

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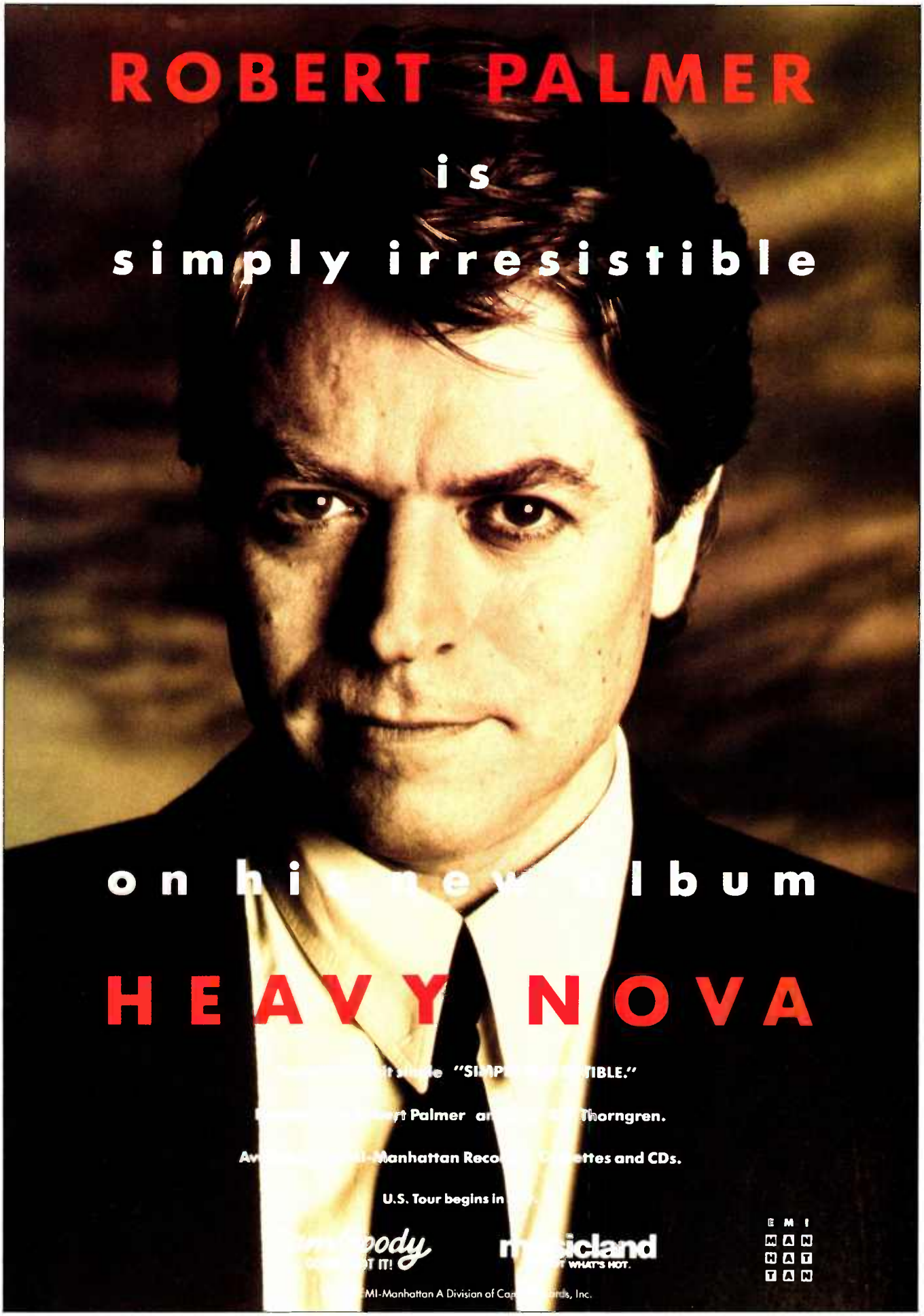


TAKING IT BACK TO THE STREETS

MERYL SKLUT

PRINCE

Lovesexy
(Warner Bros./Paisley Park)
The Black Album
(unreleased)

The story going around is that Prince wanted Warner Brothers to release the so-called Black Album last December, but the company, too busy breaking singles off *Sign o' the Times*, balked at his request. Irritated, Prince pulled the record and without much further ado came up with *Lovesexy* as its replacement. Another version is that Warners didn't even want to deal with the first LP, as uncompromisingly "black" a funk album as Prince has produced. Whichever rumor you're buying, one thing is certain: Only Prince could, in the space of a few months, put together two entirely disparate but worthy successors to *Sign o' the Times*, itself the best pop album of 1987.

The Black Album never was officially released, so it remains a hot item on the "black market," fueling the Prince myth in a fashion he probably enjoys. Nor is its title, which begs comparison with the Beatles, inappropriate. On a strictly musical level, Prince has become the '80s equivalent of the Fab Four, a figure whose innovations and ideas permeate the pop landscape, plowing new ground while lesser artists from Janet Jackson to Terence Trent D'Arby live off the ideas he's already discarded.

The problem for Prince is that, having met the musical challenge set by his '60s

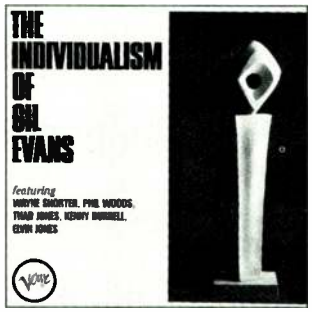
heroes, from the Beatles to Jimi Hendrix to Sly Stone, he aspires to match their spiritual reach; he wants to be a leader. It's a problem because, unlike the '60s, today's pop audience is divided and depressed, more psychically inclined to accept condolences from Bruce Springsteen than anyone's giddy version of utopia. The other problem, of course, is that many fans regard Prince, genius or not, as a flake.

The perception probably won't be defused by the cover of *Lovesexy*, which finds his purpleness supine in a bed of orchids (one with a coyly arched stamen), hand over his crucifix and otherwise beatific in his personal garden of Eden. No doubt the parody is intentional (the guy does have a sense of humor), although, as the rest of *Lovesexy* makes clear, Prince is quite serious about mating the sexy with the celestial. "Eye No," which kicks off the record, is virtually a gospel paean—all the more striking to those Princephiles who recognize its melody as a clever variation of "Head." The gorgeously arranged "Anna Stesia" turns sexual longing into a quest for spiritual fulfillment; the title track posits the idea that "heaven is just a kiss away," etc. None of this is particularly fresh; Sly implied as much, so did Marvin Gaye, and so, for the last several years, has Prince.

What's changed is that Prince is directing these messages toward a specific audience. Perhaps as a consequence, he's also more clearly defining himself. Never much of a social critic before, he now offers themes like "Positivity" as antidotes to the ravages of crack, crime and despair. "Dance On" merges urban dreams turned ugly ("Bass guitar in spider webs longin' 4 the funk/ Uzi gun takes its place in a wagon trunk") with a fragmentary soundtrack and the ironic command—"Dance On!"—that frames larger issues of social responsibility. The song even calls into question Prince's music—part of a solution, or merely an escape?

It's a good question. Like Jesse Jackson, another successful crossover artist with messianic overtones, Prince's desire to speak for a vulnerable underclass doesn't mean a whole lot unless he's also speaking *to* it. Somewhere between *Dirty Mind* and *Purple Rain* Prince became a superstar, but his music drifted away from those roots. On *Lovesexy*, and particularly the Black Album, he reclaims them with a vengeance. ("Sign o' the Times" and "Housequake" apparently provided the blueprints.) Whether crooning the graphically sensual ballad "When 2 R in Love"—the only track which appears on both "records"—or kicking out the guitar jams on "I Wish U Heaven," Prince invests his new arrangements with a weightier funk sound than he's previously conjured, and a tone more consciously within the black pop tradition. Indeed, "Alphabet Street" is virtually a primer on R&B innovation from the '60s onward, encapsulating Archie Bell guitar licks, Sly Stone idealism, George Clinton textural adventures, a minimalist rap—and all hooked to an irresistible go-go percussive beat.

Making music this uncompromised is a commercial risk, even for an artist of Prince's stature, but he seems to be having a good time risking it. Part of the credit must go to the band which appears on these albums, a tighter and considerably more soulful unit than Prince's old group, the Revolution. But what most impressed about last year's *Sign o' the Times* movie—in which the band also appears—was not Sheila E.'s incendiary drum patterns or Eric Leeds' juke-joint bop saxophone so much as the self-assured and generous spirit exhibited by Prince himself. The community Prince leads on stage and record is, in its way, the best possible paradigm for his larger communal aspirations. The '60s may be over, but *Lovesexy* and the Black Album prove that Prince has absorbed that decade's crucial lesson: Real revolutions begin at home. – **Mark Rowland**



G I L E V A N S

There Comes a Time
(RCA CD)
The Individualism of Gil Evans
(Verve/PolyGram CD)

Gradually, with the soul and originality that marked his over 40 years as an arranger, composer and conductor of jazz, Gil Evans' music had begun to galvanize the current generation of rock listeners before he died this past April. After Evans arranged songs and wrote some of the score for the British film *Absolute Beginners* in 1986, MCA remastered and rereleased his 1957 album *Out of the Cool*, and the Columbia Jazz Masterpieces series reissued *Sketches of Spain*, *Miles Ahead* and *Porgy and Bess*, his late-'50s collaborations with Miles Davis. Last year Evans—who played the piano like he was thinking instead of trying to impress anyone—made some pretty high-profile appearances in the pop world with his brass sections, contributing to Sting's ...*Nothing Like the Sun* and *Robbie Robertson*.

Gil Evans was a 75-year-old Australian, born in Canada and reared in the American northwest, who taught himself to make transcriptions of the Louis Armstrong records he grew up amazed by. During the '40s, Evans arranged for Claude Thornhill's idiosyncratic big band; at the end of that decade, he and Miles Davis hit onto a spacier form of bebop in New York City. When Evans next collaborated with Davis at CBS, the Spanish music and blues which he'd always been hearing began to catch fire with his swing rhythms and the accessible melodic sense he'd picked up from Armstrong, as well as from decades of other pop songs.

As the Davis albums and *Out of the Cool* demonstrate, Evans excelled at arranging. But at the same time, he was knocked out by where good soloists, given their head and also some keen direction, could go. Evans evolved a system for these interests, which looked opposed: rhythmic foundations, with plenty of room for ensemble interaction and solo take-offs. Because he was a genius at orchestration, Evans realized that arranging didn't have to mean math or coldness or certainly the restrictiveness which, as a jazz hound, he'd never wanted. Because he was supremely confident of his own gifted ears and logical sense of things, he let tubas and French horns, for example, go to the fence in his music just like basses or saxophones. As much as in any music you will ever hear, Evans' workouts understood the great middle ground between musical structure and spontaneity, chops and grit. If you're the sort of rock fan who's always heard Eric Clapton's "Layla," for instance, as a world-class piece of playing and arranging—as well as a tortured yell from the gut—Evans' music will make sense to you. If you like the swing and funk in Prince, all the better.

As with rock musicians who keep moving themselves and their field forward, Evans didn't stand still. During the

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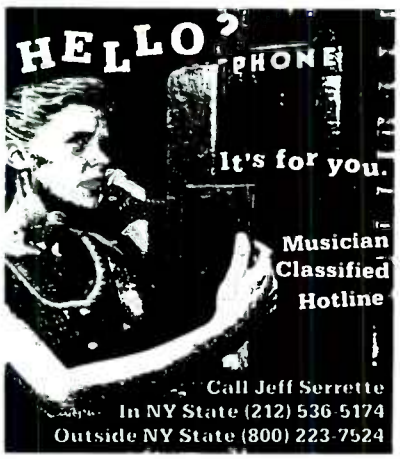

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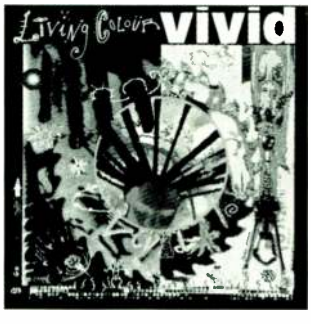
'70s, he grew intrigued with electronic instrumentation and the music of Jimi Hendrix. He was set to make an album with the guitarist just before Hendrix died; later, Evans' renderings of Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile" and "Stone Free," among others, became staples of Evans' increasingly stripped-down and free live performances. Good-to-unreal examples of those can be heard on the two 1986 and 1987 Gramavision *Live at Sweet Basil* doubles, and on Black-Hawk's 1987 *Live at the Public Theater (New York 1980)*, also in two volumes.

The Individualism of Gil Evans expands the same-titled album Evans made in the mid-'60s. The original sequence, with the diamond-edged surge-and-restraint of "Las Vegas Trio" and "Hotel Me," which later turned into a rollicking stomp renamed "Jelly Rolls," is tucked between five previously unreleased tracks. *There Comes a Time*, which also includes newly mixed and available material overseen by Evans, finds him and cohorts like trumpeter Lew Soloff, tenor saxophonist George Adams and percussionist Sue Evans staring down '70s fusion. The rhythms are stauncher and the orchestral attacks less crystalline than in the '60s work. The collection ends with the New Orleans lift-off of "Anita's Dance," which Evans stretches out into 14 minutes of staggering control and improvisation at the beginning of the 1980 Public Theater concerts.

Dig into all this music. It's the work of a giant whose stature isn't hard to hear. Sometimes even legends aren't famous enough. – **James Hunter**



SCORPIONS

Savage Amusement
(Mercury)

LIVING COLOUR

Vivid
(Epic)

Admit it—most of you would no sooner listen to metal than volunteer for root canal work. Metal is nasty, noisy, brutish, the kind of rock that tempts you to sound like your parents: "Turn that garbage *down!*"

Well, you'll get no sympathy from me. Sure, metal's crap quotient is higher than most (and no wonder, given its often reactionary audience and penchant for formula), and its stylistic tics can be profoundly annoying, but when metal is done right, it's as powerful and profound as anything in rock.

What's the right way, though? For a mainstream metal act like the Scorpions, it's a careful balance between melodic accessibility and instrumental aggression—the old "velvet tune in an iron fist" approach. To their credit, the Scorps come equipped with all the right tools, from the crisply melodic twin-guitar leads to Klaus Meine's heroic vocals, and deploy them with a minimum of overkill. It's a bit predictable—the ballads tend to go soppy around the edges, particularly the sub-Whitesnake "Believe in Love," while the rockers, whether stately and mid-tempo like "Don't Stop at the Top" or as hell-for-leather as "Love on the Run," are lean, mean and aggressive. But the best stuff here, like "Rhythm of Love" or "Media Overkill," goes one step beyond, tying rhythm, riff and vocal line into a single, unstoppable force, a true musical juggernaut.

Because the Scorps are too middlebrow to challenge their audience's expectations, the amusement here tends to be a little less than savage. Not so Living Colour; this group is not only smart enough to step over stylistic boundaries when it suits them, but visceral enough to avoid the temptations of formalism and irony.

What's their secret? Basically, Living Colour understands that the best riffs in the world won't help if the rhythm section can't kick some ass, and so, even though "Cult of Personality" and "Desperate People" boast some truly bone-crunching guitar lines, what really knocks those suckers home is the way the drums and bass propel a monolithic guitar stomp. Imagine a cross between Led Zeppelin and Chic, and you're in the neighborhood. Then there's Vernon Reid, whose inspired, note-splattering solo spots show him to be one of the few guitarists in metal capable of using the whammy bar for something other than an Eddie Van Halen impression. Add in lyrics that actually say something intelligent about the state of the world and singing that verges on the soulful, and you've got a metal album that sounds almost too good to be true. Turn that garbage up! – **J.D. Considine**

k . d . l a n g

Shadowland: The Owen Bradley Sessions
(Sire)

Listening to *Shadowland*, k.d. lang's second album, you can't help thinking you've fallen into a time warp, back to when Patsy Cline ruled the radio. Like the classic Cline sides of the late '50s, lang's often dramatic, always evocative vocals are bathed in lush, string-laden arrangements where steels weep and fiddles turn inside out.

Subtitled *The Owen Bradley Sessions*, this collection is as much a tribute to Bradley's taste as it is to lang's dusky alto. Where most Nashville producers tend to use artists as a tool for their "sound," Bradley, who also masterminded Cline's best recordings, uses his prowess to bring out what's best in lang, be it the built-in ache of her voice or the ease with which she slips from breathy to full-bore. Drawing most of its material from the '40s and '50s, this vintage collection derives its influences as much from jazz (the title track) and torch ("Black Coffee") as it does old-time country shuffles ("[Waltz Me] Once Again Around the Dance Floor") and weepers ("I'm Down to My Last Cigarette"). No matter the style or subject, lang drapes her voice convincingly around the proffered material and illuminates the darkest corners of desperation and heartache with a few exhaled syllables.

In addition to the Jordanaires, who provide background vocals, Bradley's assembled the cream of Nashville's old-guard session players, including pianist Hargus Robbins, guitarist Pete Wade, steel player Buddy Emmons and drummer Buddy Harman. The way the notes fall from their fingers confirms all that was good about the Nashville sound before it was overridden by gooey background singers and syrupy strings.

As for lang, she can favorably hold up to the Patsy Cline comparisons that are assigned to any female singing country with even a modicum of proficiency.

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Perhaps what's more important is that *Shadowland* shows lang to be a talent singular enough to warrant her own identity. Certainly in the "Honky Tonk Angels Medley," where she is joined by Bradley alums Brenda Lee, Loretta Lynn and Kitty Wells, her voice is just as distinctive as those three legends'.

This album may not be as joyously raucous as *Angel with a Lariat,* k.d. lang's frenetic debut. But for those who crave a voice that embraces heartache with more than just a wail and a sob, it's a more than welcome tonic.

– **Holly Gleason**

T I M B U K 3

Eden Alley
(I.R.S.)

They had their first hit with a misinterpreted novelty tune ("The Future's So Bright"), but Timbuk 3's barbs are aggressively unambiguous on *Eden Alley,* their second album. Following the pattern of their trenchant, no-excuses anti-war-toy single "All I Want for Christmas," Pat MacDonald and Barbara K. have filled *Eden Alley* with rages against a society gone mad (ours) and celebrations of the little joys that peek about among the ravages. It's all put across with minimal clutter: Using mostly guitar, harmonica and drums, this D.I.Y. duo gets a full, reverberating sound.

What sets Timbuk 3 apart from legions of literate roots rockers is that, although they're smart, they're not self-consciously clever to the point of obscurity (cf. T-Bone Burnett's latest). "Welcome to the Human Race" and "Too Much Sex, Not Enough Affection" make nihilism sound charming; "Dance Fever" and "A Sinful Life (With You)" are welcome caresses, revelry of the most unlikely circumstances. The only clunker is "Reckless Driver," a six-minute funk exercise that might kick up dirt onstage, but sounds too sedate in the studio.

It's hard to pinpoint standouts here, but "Easy" and "Sample the Dog" are

likely candidates. "Easy," sung by Barbara K, slides on a greased cushion of percussion, resignation expanding into global regret. "Sample the Dog" is the most ambitious, most direct cut: MacDonald takes on just about everyone from complacent suburbanites to even lazier educators and comes up with broad indictments as sure and ferocious as his upper-neck six-string asides.

The success of "The Future's So Bright," whether misread or not, has allowed Timbuk 3 to refine the attack of their debut and skewer some more well-chosen targets and rhythms. May they continue to point their barbs and guitars so wisely. – **Jimmy Guterman**

DINAH WASHINGTON

The Complete Dinah Washington on Mercury, Volume One (1946-1949)/ Volume II (1950-1952)
(Mercury)

When Dinah Washington said, "I can sing anything, anything at all," it was no brag—just fact. There's an extraordinary moment at the end of "If I Loved You" (on volume two) where she surmounts the rococo arrangement with an astounding sustained tone that is damn near as striking as Louis Armstrong's clarion call on "West End Blues." Miss Dinah holds her "I" for what seems like a count of 11; her intonation tart and true, the vibrato with which she colors the note has the brassy, measured power of a slide trombone. The sister could sing. Or as the ribald Jo Jones liked to put it, "There's three gals who'd never get assaulted in Central Park: Dinah Washington, Ethel Merman and Barbara Streisand—because them bitches could *holler!*"

Through the late '40s and '50s, Miss Dinah was the Queen of Rhythm & Blues, her every stately gesture greeted with such spontaneous devotion by inner-city record buyers that the Mercury label never bothered to expand on her appeal and cross her over into a pop market. It wasn't until *What a Diff'rence*

a Day Makes (Mercury) won a Grammy in 1959 that Washington garnered the widespread acclaim her talent warranted, a coronation cut short by her abrupt death in 1963 from a lethal mix of diet pills and liquor. She was 39.

Born Ruth Jones in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Miss Dinah's art distilled the spiritual heat of gospel music—with its stunning dynamics, rich colorations and virtuoso leaps in register—and baptized the secular spheres of blues, R&B and jazz with a sass and ardor that prefigured the likes of Ray Charles and Aretha Franklin. As a pure singer, she had it all: perfect elocution, operatic scope, a sure harmonic ear, a sultry, vivacious beat and an expressive vibrato that conveyed any emotion with audacious immediacy. The only jazz record in my Long Island home when I was growing up was Dinah's *Fats Waller Songbook* (Mercury), which exuded such impudent good humor and swing that it baffled me in later years when I couldn't track down this or any of her other records. It was a legacy in limbo, compared to her peers among America's great divas (Bessie, Billie, Ella, Sarah).

The situation has been remedied of late thanks to the archival work of the Japanese, aided and abetted by an invigorated PolyGram jazz program. The six CDs comprising these two sets, from the early years of her career, are the beginning of an ambitious career retrospective and delineate Washington's mastery of the pop song form (as on Noel Coward's "Mad About the Boy")—but honey, it's her emotional range on the blues that'll give you religion. Miss Dinah always pointed to Billie Holiday ("Ain't Nobody's Business") as an influence, and was most often compared to Bessie Smith (the multiple entendres of "Long John's Blues") in her lifetime. But on features like "I Wanna Be Loved," "My Heart Cries for You," "Wheel of Fortune" or "Trouble in Mind," her feline vulnerability never projects Billie's tragic dimension. And when the Queen breaks into that left hook of a holler on a newly discovered version of "Double Dealing Daddy," little boys can understand why nine, count 'em, nine separate husbands were willing to ignore their mammas' admonitions about taking up with a gal who packed a pistol.

– Chip Stern

JESSE JOHNSON

Every Shade of Love
(A&M)

You'd be excused for mistaking one-Time guitarist Jesse Johnson for his former Twin Cities running mate, Prince. After all, he *looks* like Prince in his multi-breasted, quasi-military jacket and poodle 'do, and on first listen to tracks like "Love Struck," the single from his third solo album, he certainly *sounds* like Prince. But *Every Shade of Love* also serves notice that Johnson wants to establish an identity apart from His Purpleness, even while staking claims to the same turf.

The combination of a gospel-funk backbeat overlaid with heavy metal guitar histrionics, of course, owes at

least as much to Johnson's seminal work with the Time as it does to *Purple Rain*. But the guy who wrote the Time classic "Jungle Love" has more than just Minneapolis on his mind. On the churning "So Misunderstood," Jesse growls "Good Gawd, *hunh!*" like the Godfather, while on the insinuatingly hooky "Color Shock," his obvious inspiration is *Fresh*-era Sly Stone, who made a cameo appearance on Johnson's 1987 single, "Crazay." Toss in some Hendrixian wah-wah solos and a shimmering ballad which leads into a gorgeous acoustic vamp ("I'm Just Wanting You"), and the result is an impressive display of pop chops.

Trouble is, there's a difference between a talent that's wide-ranging and one that's simply unfocused. Like his fellow Time alumni Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Johnson has flexed his studio abilities with Janet Jackson, as well as with Rita Mitsouko, Clarence Clemons and Vanity. Unlike Jam and Lewis, he has yet to create a signature sound. Without that, *Every Shade of Love* seems destined to be one more credit on a respectable but forgettable résumé.

– **Roy Trakin**

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2. **Darden Smith** – *Darden Smith* (Epic)
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5. **Sam Phillips** – *The Incredible Wow* (Virgin)
6. **Fairport Convention** – *What We Did on Our Holidays* (Carthage reissue)

– **Peter Cronin**

COHEN continued from page 108

MUSICIAN: *So they're fans.*

COHEN: They're very judicious. They understand I'm not Depeche Mode, but I think they take the measure of it. My son has started to write lyrics, so he knows what some of the problems are.

MUSICIAN: *Does he want to be a musician?*

COHEN: I don't think so, but he happens to be gifted in that realm, so there'll always be that temptation. He's a very good singer—I mean, a real singer. His pitch is good, he could do it.

MUSICIAN: *He could sing your songs.*

COHEN: He could, but I don't think he's interested in the business, in a career in showbiz. I never was. I never thought I *was* in showbiz until I had the revelation that I was a songwriter living in L.A.

MUSICIAN: *And now you're getting adjusted to it?*

COHEN: Yeah, I like it.

COLE from page 92

when the basic show that we've got these days doesn't really translate to a club. With the kind of lighting we've got, and the keyboards, we're not the kind of band that can just pick up guitars and use anybody's amp and play our songs."

Unfortunately, the band has become embroiled in legal difficulties, and God knows if the album will ever come out in the United States. And the fact remains that despite their success and fame in Britain, Lloyd Cole & the Commotions remain virtual unknowns in this country, and in order to do the sort of tour they need to do in order to make the kind of impression that will elevate them to the status they enjoy in Europe, they may well have to leave some of that gear in the truck. Certainly the music's there: When I showed up at their rehearsal hall, the band was running through some covers of tunes by R.E.M. and the Triffids to use as encores.

But really, did Cole think the Commotions would go over in America? "From over here, it looks like half of America is more interested in rock than rock 'n' roll—things like REO Speedwagon and Foreigner, which in my opinion have no kind of groove or soul to it. I think a lot of people in Britain think about America as basically a kind of meal ticket to an early retirement, because it's such a big place. One good hit album and you make a fortune. A lot of people are so intent on cracking the States because, one, there's so much money involved, and because it's so big, it's such a challenge. Myself, I don't really mind one way or another. I just want to make good records, and I think eventually it'll happen. I mean, the first Velvet Underground album went gold last year after being out for 22 years."

American images pervade the first couple of Commotions albums, something Cole attributes to his voracious reading. "I think when I first started writing, I was more occupied with Americana. I was reading a lot of American literature, like Joan Didion. I used to have a shrine to her in my room. These days, though, I'm reading a lot of technical stuff. We had to learn about how all these things work, so I've had to read up on it, which is quite boring, really, but it's necessary. We didn't like the situation we were getting into on this LP. We'd get into the studio, and the people who knew how this stuff worked were the engineers and the producers, and not the band. I don't think it's good to get into a situation where you're at the mercy of the people who own the studio and you don't understand it. If you're going to use the technology, you should understand it.

"Other than that, I'm reading a lot of detective stuff—Hammett and Chandler, the things I never read when I was younger. And Graham Greene—I actually like him. I read *The Long Goodbye* recently, and it's as good a book as I've read. I still can't read a badly-written book, I have to set it down."

Probably the reason ol' literary Lloyd got so much flak from the British press is that despite his wide-ranging reading, the music he makes is very down-to-earth and accessible. And he is perfectly candid and generous about ascribing at least a part of this to the band. "What we realized by the time we got to this album was that, you take a song like 'Forest Fire': I got the sole writing credit for that. I wrote the melody and chord arrangement and the pieces of the rhythm. But the high point for most people is the guitar solo at the end, which I didn't write at all. Things like that kept happening. We realized that the distinction between arranging and writing was getting difficult to tell, so on *Mainstream* all of the songs are credited to the Commotions, except 'Big Snake,' which is nearly all done by Ian Stanley, and I just put the words over it. Various people in the band write the tunes, and I write the words. Usually what happens is that when I've written my end of the song, I take it to the band and it invariably gets changed, and it invariably gets changed for the better. So even when it's on the album, it seems fair to credit it to everyone in the band."

And that may be yet another thing causing static with the trendoids: This is a band, a band that can actually set up and play the numbers it records, a band that has guitars in it and everything. No matter what you think of the Communards or Rick Astley, there's no way they can do their stuff live, and there are a lot of us who think that live playing is an essential component of music-making.

So maybe Lloyd Cole's problem is most simply expressed by saying that he dresses like a normal guy, has a normal haircut and a normal band, writes songs that are abnormally good, and who says things like "I'm not one of these people with a big message. I always wanted to be like Ray Davies, with little stories here and there. People can take them or leave them." Of course, Cole would rather they take them, even when he winds up taking important parts out, like the tattoo in "Jennifer She Said," and making you reach a little bit for the tale.

On second thought, if some people can't get to what Lloyd Cole & the Commotions are trying to do, maybe that's *their* problem. I got the distinct feeling that this is a talent with a long way to go before he reaches the limits, and I have no problem with that at all. M

COLE BURNERS

The heart of the matter seems to be hired gun **Ken Campbell**'s huge keyboard set-up, two Yamaha DX5s and a Roland D-50 controlling the MIDI deal. "We've got a lot of this stuff sequenced, keyboard parts plus sequence parts, all stored in a Sequential Studio 440. There are also some percussion sounds from the Simmons pads. Everything goes through this Sycologic M-16 matrix, British-made. We've got two E-mu Systems, E-Max hard-disk samplers and a Yamaha TX216. Four programmable Simmons SPM 8:2 MIDI mixers mix the keyboards onstage. We've got three effects units below that: an SPX90 by Yamaha, two Roland DEP-5s, and there's a Roland Digital Piano, an MKS-20. Oh, and an event processor, a Yamaha MEP4."

Drummer **Stephen Irvine** uses Tama drums, with a 14-inch brass snare. Toms are 10, 12, 14 and 16-inchers, all hanging. There are a couple of Simmons pads linked to the MIDI setup. Paiste cymbals are from their 3000 series: 20 and 18-inch crashes; a 2002 thin crash; and a 602 20-inch rude type. He also employs a Rhythm-Tech tambourine, Latin Percussion cowbell and timbales; a Studio 440 sequencer through a Realistic amp into headphones for the click-track, and a 20-inch bass drum with a Kampco pedal.

Lloyd Cole himself uses no amp, just a Pro-Rockman rack-mounted. "I just use the chorus side of the right-hand side. Then it goes through a Yamaha SPX90." He's MIDIed up to a Simmons mixer, and has a Trantec radio system instead of a cord. He plays a Vox 12-string, a Schecter six-string, and a custom-made backup guitar made for him by Moon Guitars in Glasgow, designed like an old semi-acoustic Telecaster. He uses .010 or .011-gauge strings. There's also an acoustic, that all the band uses, by Maton in Australia. Oh, and two Marine Band harmonicas.

Bassist **Lawrence Donegan** uses a 1962 Fender Jazz bass; on some songs, a Wal bass; and occasionally a Moon bass. He puts them through a MESA/Boogie Bass 400 amp with two 15-inch JBL speakers, a Drawmer compressor and Ibanez harmonic digital delay. He uses flat-wound strings, medium gauge.

Guitarist **Neil Clark** plays a 1963 Stratocaster and occasionally a 1965 Gibson 335, with a CSP 400 as a backup instrument. Amps are MESA/Boogie through a Marshall top. Gadgets include a tc 2290 processor with a pedal board which enables him to route all his effects. There are two Ibanez sustainers "so that you can play full chords and it doesn't screw up the harmonics." And an Ibanez compressor to give the effects some depth.

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SHORT TAKES

RUN-D.M.C.
Tougher Than Leather (Profile)

THIS IS AN AWESOME ALBUM BY ANY STANDARD, but it isn't Run-D.M.C.'s toughness that astonishes so much as their sheer daring. Not only is the wordplay harder, faster and more immediate than before, but the music behind those rhymes is ambitious and wide-ranging in a way rap seldom manages. From the rock-edged "Miss Elaine" to the B-Boy "How'd Ya Do It Dee," to the rambunctious funk of "Papa Crazy," Run-D.M.C.'s sound seems all over the map without their sense of identity being compromised. Which may be why you'd have to go back pretty far to find another act as convincingly eclectic.

WOMACK & WOMACK
Conscience (Island)

ASSEMBLING A CONCEPT ALBUM ABOUT THE moral responsibilities of romance isn't exactly the most commercial move an R&B act could make right now, and yet these songs are nothing short of irresistible. Some of that is the writing, *Tunnel of Love* done as Philly Soul, but the deepest magic being worked here is strictly vocal. The Womacks inhabit these songs with both the fervor of true believers and the interpretive sense of world-class soul singers; their performances are charged with such energy and intensity, it seems fair to suggest that if the likes of "Slave," "MPB" or "Good Man Monologue" don't move you, nothing will.

NARADA
Divine Emotion (Reprise)

HOW SHARP A PRODUCER IS NARADA Michael Walden? Forget Whitney Houston and ask yourself who else could have taken a voice this pedestrian and pulled a great album from it? His way with a beat is such that even his dog could've landed hits with a couple of these tunes, and there's more here than mere groovesmanship. Listen to the slow tunes; it's not studio coloring that makes them work, but Narada's ability to generate gut-level conviction where others would simply coast on studio craft. A hit-maker with heart? Believe it.

AL B. SURE!
In Effect Mode (Warner Bros.)

DESPITE THE INSINUATING APPEAL OF "Nite and Day," which whips its layers of keyboards and backing vocals into a tasty, low-cal froth, most of this is just hi-tech mood music. Just what the world needed—a hip-hop Barry White.

JENNY MORRIS
Body & Soul (Atlantic)

MORRIS' APPROACH MAY SEEM PRETTY perfunctory—these days, sure-voiced rock singers with a solidly pop sensibility are a dime a dozen—but what she does with it is something else again. Taking songs by Tim Finn, Neil Finn and Andrew Farriss, plus arrangements inclined toward sinewy INXS grooves, Morris delivers like a pro, exhibiting the cool confidence and genuine energy of a real rocker while keeping things tuneful and to-the-point. Pleasant surprise.

THOMAS DOLBY
Aliens Ate My Buick (EMI-Manhattan)

LIKE A B– PAPER FROM AN A+ STUDENT, it's hard not to feel Dolby could've done better. Though the gags are great, from the eat-me jokes of "Hot Sauce" to the anti-erotic pun behind "The Key to Her Ferrari," the melodies accompanying his punch lines miss as often as they hit. Maybe it's a lack of focus; sadly, Dolby's detailed backgrounds are often offset by a hastily sketched foreground. But not terminally so, for "Airhead," "Pulp Culture" and the CD-only "May the Cube Be With You" are winners by any standard.

CAMPER VAN BEETHOVEN
Our Beloved Revolutionary Sweetheart (Virgin)

STRANGE AS CAMPER VAN BEETHOVEN might be in some respects, the group is utterly down-to-earth where it counts. Melodies, for instance. Other bands might be tricky enough to put reggae guitar behind Gypsy violin the way the Campers do in "One of These Days," but would they be smart enough to manage a stick-in-your-mind country melody as well? Or turn a Balkan burlesque like "Tania" into a quirky-but-catchy pop tune? One suspects the most perverse thing of all about these guys is their ability to make weirdness marketable.

THE MIGHTY LEMON DROPS
World Without End (Sire/Reprise)

NOW HERE'S A *GENUINE* PSEUDO-ECHO FOR you, an album that sounds more like the classic Bunnymen than *Echo & the Bunnymen* itself. Which, given the strengths of the Drops' debut, isn't much of a commendation.

DIVINYLS
Temperamental (Chrysalis)

THOUGH THIS IS BY FAR THE DIVINYLS' most commercial album, none of its obvious studio polish blunts the band's raw edge. Thank producer Mike Chapman's understanding of the group's inner chemistry for one part of that, and the tuneful crunch of Mark McEntee's guitars for another. But save most of the credit for Christina Amphlett, whose incendiary delivery allows her to play off McEntee the way Bon Scott played off Angus Young—all without raising her voice above a sultry growl.

TRACY CHAPMAN
Tracy Chapman (Elektra)

BECAUSE HER SONGS ARE AS LITERATE AS they are tuneful, because her dark, expressive alto recalls the impassioned burr of Joan Armatrading, and because her accompaniment of choice is invariably an acoustic guitar, odds are Chapman will be considered another neo-folkie. And frankly, that's too bad. Not only does Chapman's narrative style have more in common with Robbie Robertson or Joni Mitchell than Vega and Armatrading, but her taste in melodies has pronounced pop overtones. Besides, what folkie ever sounded as soulful as Chapman does on "Fast Car" or "For My Lover"?

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

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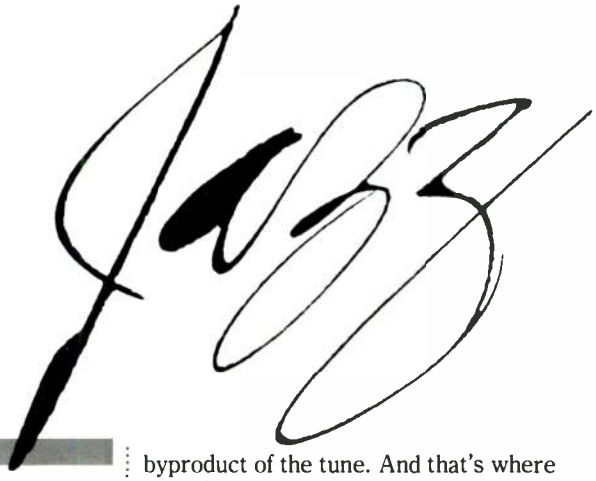

SHORT TAKES

BIG JACK JOHNSON
The Oil Man (Earwig)

BEST BLUES RECORD I'VE HEARD IN A LONG time. The rhythm section, two young brothers from Mississippi, rock like a landslide; Johnson, another Delta dweller, sings like he's seen it all and wants to tell about it, and his playing sounds like you just stuck your finger in a lamp socket. Just to dispel any notions about purity, let's say that one of Johnson's favorite musicians is Johnny Cash; "Tom Dooley" and Bob Wills' "Steel Guitar Rag" get bluesed. Nothing American is simple, even in the Delta.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Gospel Warriors (Spirit Feel/Shanachie)

EIGHT GOSPEL SOLOISTS, FROM SISTER Rosetta Tharpe to Frances Steadman, i.e. from a popularizer to an unknown, from 1931 to 1982. The art on these cuts is almost unbelievable: This is the highest level American singing has ever reached. The tunes here aren't rockhouse gospel; they're about the soloist, with an organ or a piano softly comping away at death and agonizing-every-detail-remembered-rebirth tempos. Learn where Little Richard got his whoop (Marion Williams), and check out a wordless version of "Amazing Grace."

THE LOUVIN BROTHERS
Ira and Charlie (Stetson)

THE LOUVIN BROS. MADE THEIR REPUTATION on intense religious numbers, but they bring that same fervor to romantic stuff. When they sing "Tennesse Waltz," it sounds like they're lamenting the apocalypse, their voices dripping anguish. Guitar solos by Chet Atkins and mandolin solos by Ira block off the vocals, and though the album only features one Louvin original, it's a lesson in how true anguish can find its way out in the context of love, and a reminder how blue country music can be. (Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530.)

CHRIS KENNER
I Like It Like That (Charly)

KENNER, LIKE MANY NEW ORLEANS LEGends, had a solid hit or two. He stayed drunk most of the time, and his "Land of 1,000 Dances" was covered by so many people he made an okay living off it. But the singles he did make are just about perfect. According to the liner notes, he'd come into the studio with just a few lines and no chords ("Anybody Here Seen My Baby?" has one [!] oily chord), and Allen Toussaint, who produced all of the stuff on this record, turned them into jewels. Back then, Toussaint was doing that for everyone. What makes these special is the mix of Toussaint's perfect New Orleans sound with Kenner's gospel melodies and singing.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
New Orleans Gospel Quartets (Gospel Heritage/Down Home Music)

THE QUARTET STYLE GETS ITS HEAT FROM shouting and roiling polyphony, intense lead singers and worked-out group arrangements. The quartets, for the most part, don't use instruments, and there's usually about five or six members in the groups; they make some sanctified noise. No surprises here: Gospel music in New Orleans wasn't significantly different than other Southern gospel, and it's no surprise that the stuff rocks as hard as it does. Another nice thing about the record, besides the nuclear performances, is that it has a bunch of tracks by female quartets—rare stuff.

WOODY SHAW
Imagination (Muse)

I ALWAYS GET THE IMPRESSION, LISTENING to the harmonically sophisticated players who came up in the '60s, that they're out to kill the feeling of harmonic change the way the serialists did in European music. Shaw's lines, chromatic, step up, step down, step up, step down, almost sound like 12-tone rows. They also sound brought in, like a ringer, not a natural byproduct of the tune. And that's where the grimy, fleet tension comes in, and it's why a relatively simple (by which I mean not heavily arranged, or formally inquisitive) date like this really works. This is a soloist's session, and between him and trombonist Steve Turre, they tear up the harmony of some standards—"If I Were a Bell," "Stormy Weather," "Dat Dere"—making clear exactly how radical harmonic exploration once was.

HELEN HUMES
New Million Dollar Secret (Whisky, Women, and.../Down Home)

HUMES' FIRST CAREER STARTED IN THE '20s and went, off and on, until 1961. She sang country blues, R&B (where she had some big hits), with the great Count Basie band of the late '30s, and on her own as a jazz singer; her career deflates a bunch of myths about black musical culture. These dates, except for a 1927 blues session, were recorded in Los Angeles between 1945 and 1955, and they catch that blurring of the line between jazz and what would become, after jump, R&B. Her version of "See, See Rider" (with Lester Young as a nonsoloing sideman), with bebop harmonies, is urbane and knowingly innocent. A good, educational contrast to a frying-hot live date at the Shrine auditorium featuring a double-entendre blues called "Hard Driving Mama."

KARL BERGER
Transit (Black Saint/PolyGram)

BERGER WRITES WIDE-OPEN, PRAIRIE-BIG tunes out of little riffs that act successfully as melodies; with the rhythm section of Dave Holland and Ed Blackwell, down the road they go. Berger plays both vibes and piano on the record. He's a minimalist who uses a spare vocabulary of melodies and ambiguous harmony to wrap his solos in different colors. Floating over the rhythm section, he'll swing, drift off, and generally act Ornetteish, piano-style.

BY PETER WATROUS

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SHORT TAKES

SEX PISTOLS
We Have Cum for Your Children (Skyclad)

TEN YEARS AFTER, THE SEX PISTOLS ARE still the Last Rock 'n' Roll Band. This mixed bag of studio rehearsal takes, live performances and other trivia may leave you feeling had (a Pistols trademark). But punkologists will savor an infamous British TV "interview" and esoterica like "Revolution in the Classroom." The rest of us will settle for the punch of a live "God Save the Queen" and recall the anomie that used to be. (6 Valley Brook Drive, Middlesex, NJ 08846)

– *Scott Isler*

CHUCK BROWN & THE SOUL SEARCHERS
Any Other Way to Go? (Rhythm Attack)

CHUCK BROWN, THE GODFATHER OF GO-Go, gets the vote here for jazz vocal performance of the year: Brown and his intelligent seven-piece band cover "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Moody's Mood," "Stormy Monday" and "Harlem Nocturne" and never sound out of their element, not even for a minute. Naturally the music swings like a barnyard gate—note drummer Ricky Wellman's locked-in triplets on "It Don't Mean..."—and the soloists, while not Lee Morgans, testify convincingly on the slippin' and slidin' harmony, aided by Brown's Burrell & Benson-influenced lead guitar. As a vocalist, though, gruff baritone Brown is without peer: A guy who can search "There I Go Again" to find and execute the interesting intervallic leaps, then turn around and exclaim "Well!" and "Party witcha body" like he's never heard Sinatra croon. Duke would love it madly. – *Tom Moon*

THE INCREDIBLE CASUALS
That's That (Rounder)

THE DEPARTURE OF STEVE SHOOK MAKES for less-quirky melodic hooks, once this trio's stock in trade, but the latest disc by Cape Cod's finest band remains as effervescently danceable as anything you'll hear this side of surf music. Guitarist Johnny Spampinato knows his way around a three-minute hook, and bassist Chandler Shook writes '60s rockers with the passion and panache of someone who's been there. The overall style is, of course, incredibly casual. Cool record.

– *Mark Rowland*

DEREK BAILEY AND CYRO BAPTISTA
Cyro

DEREK BAILEY AND HAN BENNINK
Han
(Incus CDs)

FREE IMPROVISATION IS LIKE WALKING A tightrope: Most players can't do it at all, some awkwardly try and come to a messy end, and a few hit levels of joyful invention that delight, inspire and reveal the beauty of raw, gut-sprung creative genius. So it is with guitarist Derek Bailey, whose mastery of dynamics, tone and plectral technique, and keen harmonic sense, keep him aloft in nearly any situation—even a pair of duets with these canny, eccentric percussionists. The energetic live set with Bennink is flakiest, snaking from gentle melodicism to near-industrial dissonance and back, with odd turns like Bennink's shrieking and sporadic blasts of noisy sax, and runs by Bailey that evolve from speedy bebop and near-bluegrass into seemingly random clusters of notes. Baptista's Latin grounding makes him a more consistent foil, and Bailey turns to the acoustic guitar to respond with some of his most fluid, dense and dramatic playing. (14 Downs Road, London E5 8DS, England)

– *Ted Drozdowski*

RANDY ERWIN
Cowboy Rhythm (Four Dots)

RANDY ERWIN IS MAKING THE SORT OF OLD-time Western music that Roy and Dale would sing around the campfire as Trigger looked on. But there's something innately joyful about this Texan's updated approach to yodeling, where the tempos can be picked up, norteño music factored in, and the drums, harmonicas and accordions play a prominent role. From the vocal versatility of "The Alpine Milkman" to the bleating "Long Gone Lonesome Blues," Erwin's in fine voice—and his version of "Bring It On Down to My House" qualifies as dance music for the shitkickin' set. For the truly adventurous and serious cowboy aficionados. (Box 233, Denton, TX 76201) – *Holly Gleason*

LOU CHRISTIE
EnLIGHTNIN'ment: The Best of Lou Christie (Rhino)

TRUE, LOU CHRISTIE DESERVES HOMAGE IF only for writing such lyrics as "On our first date/ We were making out in the rain"; true, "Lightnin' Strikes" has the most sexually-stunted guitar solo in pop history; and true, "Back to the Days of the Romans" shows the famed falsetto king had melodramatic rock opera leanings that dwarfed Pete Townshend's. Why this fab collection *really* had to be issued was to prove that at one point in the '60s, one man and one man alone saw fit to force his back-up singers to bark in unison like chihuahuas. And when you get right down to it, "Outside the Gates of Heaven" and "Cryin' in the Streets," loaded with such percussive effects, could have been written by Morrissey last week. No other artist, in song or in lifestyle, has personified *coitus interruptus* so eloquently. – *Dave DiMartino*

DAVID FULTON
Marcos & Harry (Dossier)

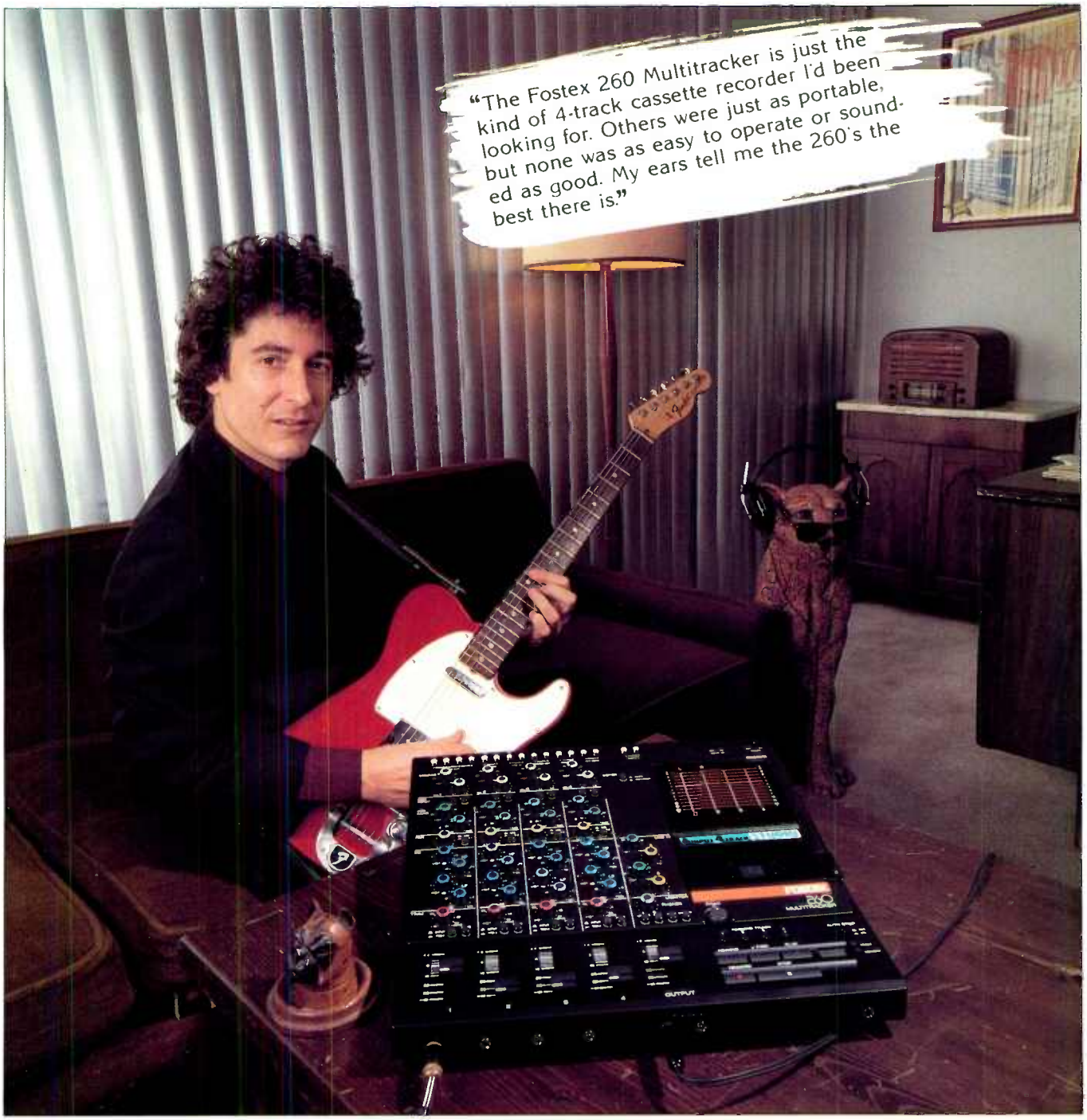
MANHATTAN GUITARIST DAVID FULTON'S brief, busy compositions and unfettered fretwork are so crammed with vividly cinematic ideas that he's more an impressionist than a card-carrying member of the downtown noise/improv crowd. He can conjure an aural paradise replete with bright esoteric guitar sounds, a rhythmic sense best described as tropical minimalism, and lush tonal colors that shift shades as they skitter across the stereo spectrum or bathe in cool pools of reverb. Then, with a cloudburst of grinding feedback or a frenetic change of tempo, it becomes a steaming hellhole of insect dissonance and jagged harmonic terrain. Schizophrenic? Who cares? Fulton is becoming the master of a heady sonic jungle somewhere between Stockhausen and Pink Floyd. (N.M.D.S., 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012)

– *Ted Drozdowski*

BY ALL HANDS

STAN RIDGWAY ON FOSTEX

The former lead singer for Wall of Voodoo iscurrently working on the follow up album to "The Big Heat," his first solo endeavor. Stan also composes for film soundtracks and performs with his new band, Chapter Eleven.



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SIBERRY from page 54

tour T-shirt. Are you an opera fan?

SIBERRY: Oh, no, that came from the "Ingrid (and the Footman)" video. It has this girl from the fjords coming to Canada. I don't know opera at all. I've always loved the sound of opera. When I hear it, it's like a telephone goes off in my head. It's hard not to imitate them, just for a joke.

MUSICIAN: *You do have a broad range. Have you worked on that, or is it just in the genes?*

SIBERRY: I've always had a very soft voice and no power up high. In the last couple of years, I've been writing more and more up there and being able to sing it. If you hear my first record, my voice is very low and narrow in range, close to my speaking voice. I was 21 and I thought I sounded too young whenever I heard myself, so I tried to sound deeper.

MUSICIAN: *Not to stereotype, but the best Canadian musicians—Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Robbie Robertson—give American pop music vital twists. Could it have something to do with being separate from the media-mad body of land to the south?*

SIBERRY: I don't think so. I would say North Americans—Canadians and Americans—all feed from the same trough, so to speak. You're associating being eccentric with being Canadian. There are lots of similar Americans. But if Laurie Anderson were Canadian, then I couldn't be the Canadian Laurie Anderson. [*laughs*] That wouldn't work at all.

MUSICIAN: *You're often lumped in with the unofficial cadre of unusual female artists. You must be weary of the comparisons by now.*

SIBERRY: No, it doesn't register, that's all. Everyone's absorbing everyone else and it's often a compliment to be considered in those ranks. I grew up with Neil Young, Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen as people I respected and who are a part of me. When someone starts out, they're not quite sure who they are or how to sing, even. But now I feel that I'm not drawing so much from the outside. That I don't feel like...

MUSICIAN: *A thief?*

SIBERRY: Yeah.

MUSICIAN: *Have you had periods where you were a conscious thief?*

SIBERRY: Oh no, I have a pretty rigid censor board. If something reminds me of something, I won't use it. But some things you don't notice because they're so deep.

MUSICIAN: *You seem to be taking influences from the world as you pass through, without using the topical approach—borrowing from headlines for ideas.*

SIBERRY: I have no drive for that. It's so fleeting and it dates the music. Plus it turns me off. Not completely. Some people are very topical and entertaining at the same time.

I've been asked if I'm a political writer and I say that I am; I feel there's a strong sense of values projected in the music. It's not in the morals—what should or shouldn't be done. It's about things I think about that are good.

Political music—if you take the Latin meaning relating to people—translates to folk music. If you're going to get into words, heavy metal is more of a folk music than traditional folk music.

Using that same definition, I'm drawing right from my times. I'd say all music is folk music unless it's jingles. Even people writing Top 40 material are doing folk music because they are responding to the society which is saying, "You have to make money and you can do it most

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The ADS is a true 16 bit, 16 voice, phase locked stereo sampler with better than C.D. quality circuitry throughout. Both the keyboard and the rack have capacity for 8 megabytes of memory for almost 100 seconds of 44.1 K sampling. The ADS comprehensive modulation matrix, sound fusion, loop smoothing, digital mixing, and SCSI port gives you extensive control and sound variation.

ADD TWO

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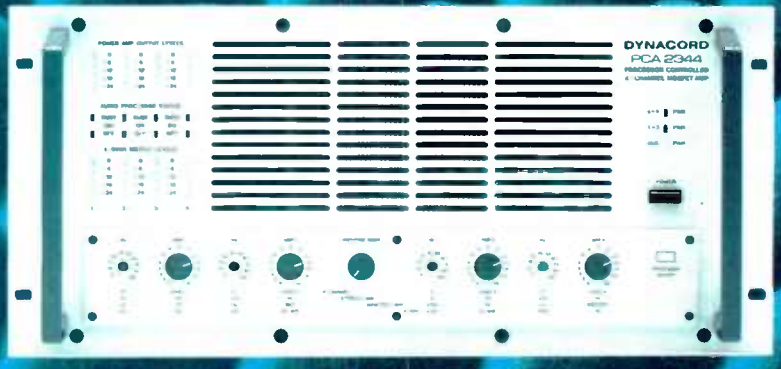
The DRP 20, digital reverb and effects processor, is the result of DYNACORD's ten years of experience in the pro audio market. It features 32 bit floating point technology, 15 reverb structures and reflection clusters, over a dozens stereo delay effects, 100 factory presets and 128 user programms. This innovative two channel/stereo effects processor sets completely new standards for audio processing.



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easily this way, and greed is acceptable."

MUSICIAN: *Is transcending the pop form a goal of yours?*

SIBERRY: I don't think about it that way. It feels like it's anchored with one foot in the pop stream, and then pushing past it. Anyway, I can't write any other way, or else I'd just sort of fade away. And I've had enough encouragement that I've kept going this far. I like the idea of non-exclusivity, of having my foot on the ground. I hate elitism and the sort.

MUSICIAN: *You're on the verge of seeping into the mass media world. Do you have apprehensions about that?*

SIBERRY: No, because I may always be on the verge.

MUSICIAN: *It's a nice place to hang out.*

SIBERRY: It is, as long as you don't go under. M

PARKER from page 16

ing true to his music and his audience.

"There's a whole different level of music out there that's not at the top of the charts, but that's still selling better than me, and I want to find that level," he says. "I mean, *forget* 50-million, you know, do me a favor...It's gonna backfire if Graham Parker tries to do that.

"What I said to Atlantic was, 'Look, I sell a really lousy amount of records as far as you guys are concerned, but how often is it that a person gets a hundred thousand people in his living room listening to him, to what he's got to say? It's important, you know?"

Yeah, Graham, we know. Some of us might even call it success. M

SAFE SAX from page 28

the guy's into it." I try to explain that he is. Coleman just keeps shaking his head. "Sure, regular people are gonna say it sounds great, but a guy who's musical like Wynton, who's doing that all the time, is gonna break down laughing.

"I'm not mad that Kenny G has gotten money—there's plenty of money out there. I just say this: Give other cats a chance to get their stuff out there too. At least a chance. And let people decide for themselves what they like, instead of jamming it down their throats.

"I'm not saying that Kenny G's stuff should not be on the radio," Coleman says. "What bothers me is a lot of other music doesn't get attention. In Germany, they could play a Prince record and then one of mine right after it. They won't do that here." M

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