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NO. 129 JULY 1988

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AGAIN**
BY CHARLES
M. YOUNG



World Radio History

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**Keyboard Magazine, Dec

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The name is the same, but will fans' requests for the old sturm und drang fall on deaf ears? Three elder Brit rock statesmen take to the highways and byways of America, for varying reasons. Interview by Charles M. Young.

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MUSICIAN

JULY 1987 NO. 129

A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION

ABOVE PHOTO: TOM REUSHE/RETNA • FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION BY C.F. PAYNE

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World Radio History



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We could easily have rested on our laurels. But that's not the way Fender works. We believe you're only innovative as long as you continue to improve. So instead of admiring our trophy, we looked for new ways to improve our perfect



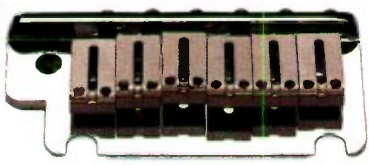
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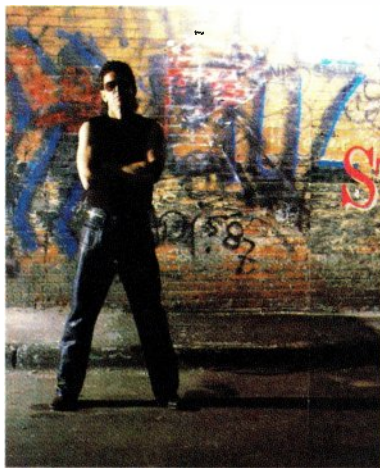
LETTERS

RATIONAL VELVET

BILL FLANAGAN'S INTERVIEW with Lou Reed (Apr. '89) was great! It was educational, very funny, and left me disgusted with politics in this country. Come to think of it, Lou's new album does those same three things. I guess Bill captured just how Lou was feeling.

Drew Lindsey
Lebanon, OR

LOU REED'S COMMENTS CONCERNING sentencing of persons convicted of violent



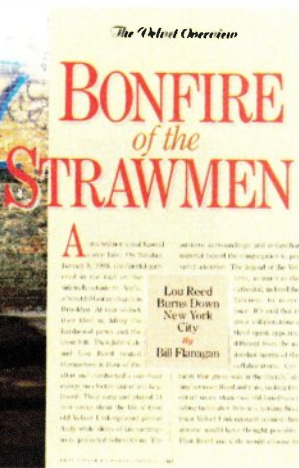
WHEN LOU REED TALKS ABOUT "Christmas in February," *Musician* says, "That takes determination. You have to look at pictures of the rice patties every day to stay that focused."

C'mon, gang, where are your dictionary skills? I don't know about rice *paddies*, but I do like hamburger patties!

Walter Desmond
Charlottesville, VA

HIS SATANIC MAJESTY

A BIG THANKS TO TED DROZDOWSKI! Even though the title



crimes have very little basis in the reality of criminal law. If he believes so strongly in the enforcement of draconian law, he should consider the time he would now be serving if he had been convicted of possession of illegal substances, or homosexual acts (illegal in some states).

I once had a career as a bass player with an obscure UA recording group named Damnation. I can tell Mr. Reed that he would be completely unable to deal with the harsh reality of prison life. So I do hope he is keeping his own lifestyle in order. God forbid that he should ever face judgment with the lack of understanding he so blatantly displayed in his highly opinionated comments.

Raymond Benick
Gander Hill Prison
Wilmington, DE

left a little to be desired—"The Devil [?] and Joe Satriani" (Apr. '89)—you finally discovered a new, sensitive, no-frills, sensible and hot artist. A small crowd of his early followers are glad to see him now getting the attention he deserves.

Teesha Pence
Custer, SD

WOMAN'S GLIB

HIGH-PROFILE WOMEN LIKE Lucinda Williams do nothing to enhance the cause of feminism. She sure did bash it in her interview (Apr. '89).

This society needs strong heterosexual women as positive role models. And as I saw in her local performance, she has talent. What a disappointment.

Betsy Carr
Bryn Mawr, PA

CHUCK DOES DEBBIE

J.D. CONSIDINE DISPATCHED Tiffany with 15 words, but it takes Charles M. Young a whole page to let us know how he feels about Debbie Gibson's *Electric Youth* ("Records," Apr. '89). I didn't even have to read the review to know that Young would hate the album, and that he would find some way to fit in an anecdote about his childhood.

Young is still trying to channel Lester Bangs, and it still isn't working. But was it necessary to waste one of a measly 98 (\$2.95) pages on something so obvious? What straw man can we expect next month? Miami Sound Machine? Tone-Lôc? Dan Quayle?

Lyle Gadwa
Warren, MI

SETTING CHARLES M. YOUNG loose on Debbie Gibson is like trying to remove grease stains from your tie with TNT. It's a waste of good dynamite and the outcome shouldn't surprise anyone.

I can usually depend on receiving good information from *Musician's* reviews, but this just showed me that Young can shoot fish in a barrel.

Please give the man some real music to listen to.

Jay Blackburn
Seattle, WA

I SEE A PATTERN DEVELOPING here. First, Kristine McKenna launches into a vicious personal attack on U2 when she was supposed to be reviewing their record. Then Charles M. Young comes along a few issues later with what I guess was supposed to be a review of *Electric Youth*. Since when does knocking musicians' personalities and beliefs constitute intelligent, enlightening and informative reviews of their music? Or do I have the wrong idea of what a record review is supposed to be? Your magazine is starting to bore me.

J. Ahmad
Lancaster, CA

I KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT from brain-dead mall dwellers such as Ms. Gibson. I would rather have read a review of some album that I am not familiar with; there are hundreds your magazine does not review.

Richard Petrie
Penfield, NY

I AM A 20-YEAR-OLD UP-AND-coming songwriter. One-and-a-half years ago I wrote Debbie Gibson for "advice"; she sent me a three-page, handwritten outline of what I'd need to do. She also told me what it took *her* to get a contract. We kept in touch until she broke big six months later. She deserves better than a review that attacks not only her music but *her* as a person!

Steven Ponath
St. Louis, MO

MIKING MILES

In our Miles Davis interview (May '89) we wrongly stated that Miles uses Nady Wireless microphones. *Untrue*. He's been happily using a Samson Concert series wireless set-up for a couple of years now.

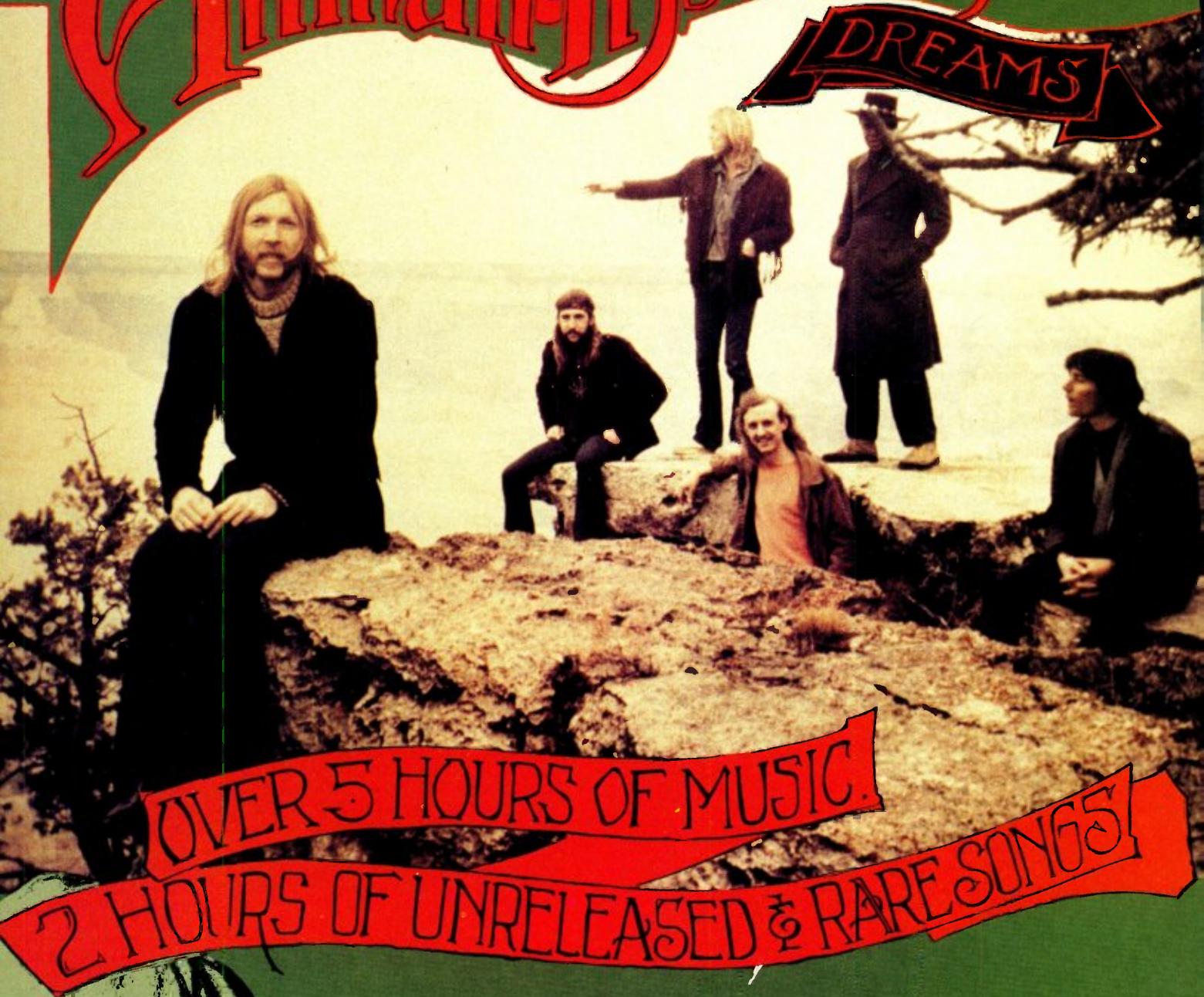
SHORT-LISTED

Our "Live Deals" article (May '89) referred to a list the American Federation of Musicians supposedly maintained of venues that failed to pay artists. This information was obtained from a staff member of the AF of M's legal department. The AF of M now says that list has been discontinued for some time in favor of civil litigation assistance offered members.

Like other unions, the AF of M currently maintains an International Unfair List on which an employer may be placed after notification and a determination that a "primary labor dispute" does in fact exist. AF of M locals also maintain Unfair Lists based on similar determinations. AF of M members are then restricted from rendering musical services for employers on such lists.

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FACES

TEENAGE NEW AGE

TANITA TIKARAM

"THEY DON'T LAST FOREVER, you know. They're supposed to, but I've had three Jennifer Warnes discs go funny on me."

With phrases like "old soul" de rigueur among the raves her *Ancient Heart* has been garnering, somehow it seems perfectly plausible for 19-year-old Tanita Tikaram to have outlived three ostensibly immortal compact discs. However, from the down-to-earth confines of a Houston hotel room, she gently dismisses the thought that a show of wisdom will soon be compulsory. "I'd go mad if I

believed everything that was written about me."

But certainly her ascent has been as effortless as if it had been preordained. Signed a scant three months after her first professional gig at London's Mean Fiddler club in December 1987, Tikaram went into the studio with producers Rod Argent and Peter Van Hooke and emerged with *Ancient Heart*, which inhabited Britain's Top 10 for three months at the beginning of the year. The first single, "Good Tradition," had the

bounce of a friendly football match between the Pretenders and Dexy's Midnight Runners; the lion's share of *Ancient Heart*, though, basks in the shimmering textures one associates with Van Morrison's Celtic explorations, a not-unlikely ambience given Van Hooke's tenure drumming with the Belfast Cowboy. How did Argent and Van Hooke function as producers?

"Their job was to be funny," Tikaram chuckles;

she clearly enjoyed the collaboration. But seriously, "they were particularly good at finding the right voicing for a song." Good indeed; from the snake-charming chug of "Twist in My Sobriety" to the inspired use of Mark Isham's trumpet and flugelhorn floating "For All These Years," Argent and Van Hooke's intuition bonded Tikaram's worldly material with a sophistication that propels her well beyond the female-

folkie ghetto of the late '80s. As we sign off, how is the young ancient preparing for this evening's performance? A chat with the spirit guides? A soak in the tub with a Rudolf Steiner paperback?

"I'm watching 'The Bionic Man,' actually. For some perverse reason they're showing the Christmas episode, so he's in a Santa Claus suit."

Well... you could call that "channeling," couldn't you?
— John Walker

Chuck Roast

Rock n roll veteran Chuck Berry recently lost seven years work when an early morning fire burned his private recording studio to the ground

On March 25 for reasons which remain officially unexplained Berry's Wentzville, Missouri studio—part of his 160 acre Berry Park ignited and was completely destroyed. The fire also consumed a master tape of 13 songs Berry had recorded over the last seven years

Death would then stop me just as gently father of rock n roll from his local Southern Air restaurant At the time Berry was with contractors, discussing rebuilding

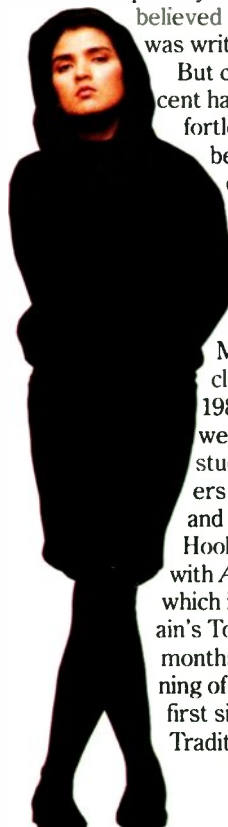
Although he lamented the loss of the tape, Berry wasn't too perturbed He told a friend at MCA Records, 'It's all upstairs.' I'll take care of it upstairs man in his mind

The studio in dealing with it a wealth of treasures year of memorabilia audio video of a jukebox and untold more



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TED DARGAN

NOT ARROGANT—CONFIDENT

MICA PARIS

AFTER HER CHAT WITH THE guy from *Musician* has wound to its end, Britain's Mica (pronounce it Mee-sha) Paris becomes concerned that maybe she's come across as too much the cocky cockney.

"Don't get the wrong impression about me," she cautions. "When I'm talking in interviews, I'm very serious and very domineering. But I'm not that way at all. I just believe in what I'm doing. I'm really stupid and crazy when you meet me in person."

Disclaimer duly noted. But whether she likes it or not, the most lasting impression Mica Paris leaves is of a woman not at a loss for confi-

dence. Folks with inferiority complexes don't say no thanks when Mick Jagger and Prince make recording offers. She did. And folks whose egos are operating at deficit levels don't blithely dismiss their colleagues three minutes into an interview. But that's about how long it takes Paris to get knee-deep into the problem with Britain's black music.

"I feel I'm the first black person to come out of London who's singing *real* songs at last. Most of the time there's usually only styles. People look great but never really sound that great.

"I think too many of them sold out. You can be commercial and have real songs and class and style and emotion



and be uplifting. But the more commercial they get, the more they lose *emotion*."

Amazingly enough, it's all said matter-of-factly, without obvious arrogance. Paris' platform for those sweeping dismissals is her debut album *So Good* and the hit single, "My One Temptation." It's a cool, jazz-inflected album that provides an effective showcase for her cool, jazz-inflected voice.

Paris says she's out to prove, in words of one syllable, that black Brits got soul too. "London is a very impressionable city," she explains. "People tend to be more into trends and stuff. I'm different. I'm like that [trendy] with clothes. But I'm not like that when it comes to my music. To me, music is never a trend. It should be everlasting."

— Leonard Pitts, Jr.

NO MORE POSES

FELICITY BUIRSKI

THE MELODIES ARE SIMPLE, beguiling. The arrangements (mostly drummerless) are relaxing, intriguing. The vocals, solo and overdubbed, are charming, reassuring. The lyrics rip your emotions to shreds with razor-sharp dissections of shattered egos and stillborn relationships.

That's Felicity Buirski's debut album, *Repairs & Alterations*—and if she didn't invent the above strategy, she's made it her own. Her painfully honest songs work both as art and confession.

"It's not for the faint-hearted," the 34-year-old Buirski admits. "It was almost like an exorcism: The experience of making that album was kind of freeing me from each situation. I wanted my album to be relentless; my life was relentless."

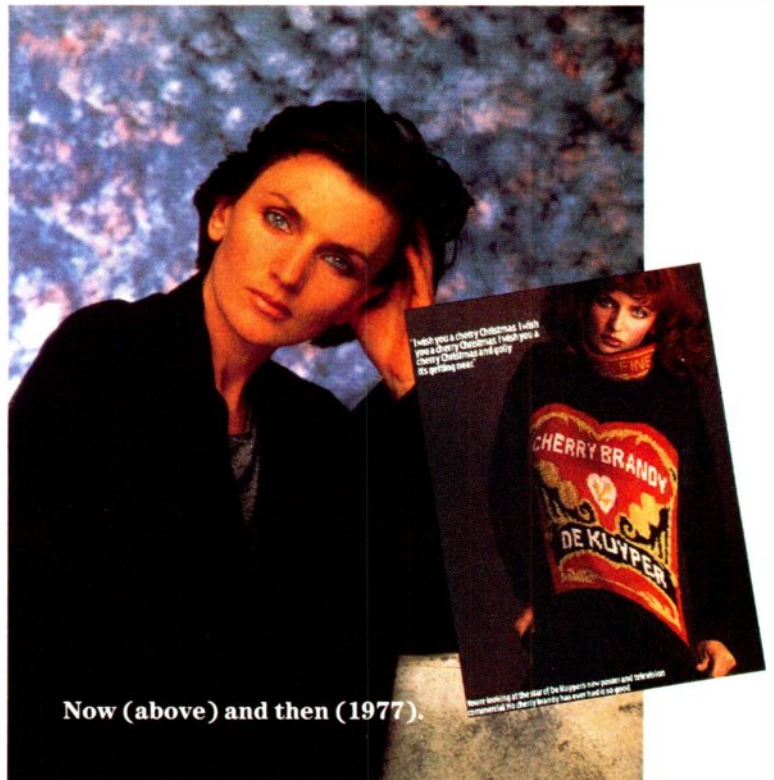
The British singer/songwriter has a varied background. When she was just out of her teens she turned

from journalism to modelling, a career she now dismisses: "That definitely was another life."

Music was always an interest, though. A teenage obsession with Leonard Cohen—what Buirski calls transference from her own father, a musician who'd died a few years earlier—led her to pick up acoustic guitar. Cohen's influence is obvious in Buirski's finger-picking as well as her songs' emotional rawness. But the singer, who's now quite friendly with Cohen, states, "I'm not sure that if Leonard had never existed [my music] wouldn't have come out anyway."

In late 1985 Buirski recorded some demos of her songs. Fred Underhill, a British-based American who was starting up Run River Records, heard them and offered to put out an album. "Being the kind of person I was," Buirski says, "I took what was offered." She adds, however, "I liked the word 'integrity,' something that has escaped my own life for most of it."

Repairs & Alterations was released in England at the



end of 1987. Run River is now setting up U.S. distribution, which should get the album the wider audience it deserves. Meanwhile, Buirski has done the occasional odd tour—more likely in Italy than England—and is now

rehearsing for a second album. She doesn't mind watching her musical career unfold one step at a time. "If it takes a little bit longer that way, that's okay by me. I was always in a rush before."

— Scott Isler

ADRIAN BOOT/RETNA

NON-SHTICK ANTI-GLITZ SIDEWINDERS

FIRST, GET SOME GUITARS. Second, invest in some leopard-skin spandex and big hair. Third, wake up screaming, realize the second part was only a nightmare, then wrap the guitars in some rusty barbed wire and drag 'em into the Arizona desert, just north of the Mexican border.

Now write some songs. Stuff that'll make even people who don't drive feel they're

at the wheel of a dusty, shot-to-shit '68 Impala. Got it? Swell. Welcome to the world of the Sidewinders. The world of the slightly misunderstood.

"Our record company was sending out salsa and chips to promote us," lead singer Dave Slutes says drily, midway through the band's current drive-'til-you-drop tour. "Then there's the cowboy promotion: Tower Records' Sidewinders contest. The prize was a pair of boots. I mean, we're *hardly* cowboys." He chuckles. "Guess

you need some sort of shtick, even at our level of non-shtickness."

Although they've been in the vanguard of the Tucson Sound for four years now, the Sidewinders are still paying dues. This, after a zillion miles of backroads touring. This, after signing with RCA, who's released the band's big-label debut, *Witchdoctor*.

The sore point? Probably lack of glitz. Although lead guitarist Rich Hopkins admits that "some people hear a little country," the band's thing is no-frills rock. A hint of Neil

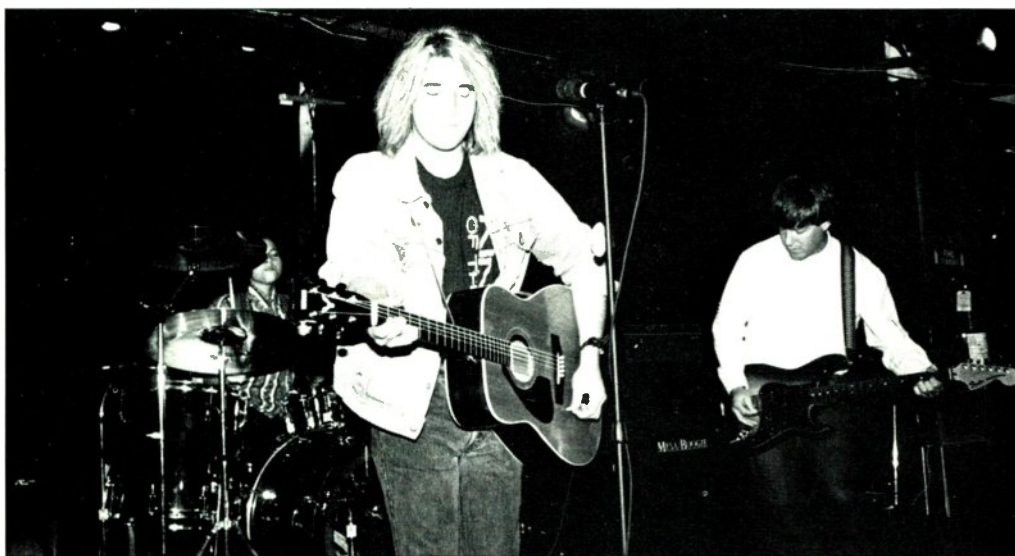
Young and sand-dusted Velvet Underground. A host of flavors culled from cross-pollination with Naked Prey, Giant Sand and a dozen other Arizona groups.

Which should pose no problem, right? Not when every three-chord bar combo is landing a beer commercial. Apart from drummer Diane Padilla, however, the Sidewinders probably aren't exotic-looking enough to become overnight sensations. Unperturbed, they're stockpiling extra fan belts, since, as Hopkins concedes, "We know it's not gonna happen this year. It's gonna take constant touring. It's gonna take work."

Mind you, Slutes recently learned that RCA is getting behind all-natural bands this year. As a result, he says, "We're trying extra hard to be ourselves. And if it's successful?" He laughs. "Who knows?"

"We might start thinking about becoming even *more* like ourselves."

— Dan Hedges



RUDE BOYS BUCK PETS

"WE STARTED OFF BEING NICE guys, then played with a bunch of assholes and got a reputation for being rude," laughs Chris Savage, lead guitarist for Dallas' hard-rockin' Buck Pets. "But we're nice guys. Really!"

He seems pleasant enough, although Savage doesn't mince words recalling his encounters with the rich and famous. Take the Ramones, those beloved sires of punk: "We were on the road with them for a week and they were burned-out, boring old men," he sneers. "Every night it was the same songs in the same order with

the same choreography. They were supposed to be groundbreakers, but they're a parody of themselves now."

Then there's good old Mick Jagger, surely a name to inspire awe in any aspiring star. "We met him in the Bahamas at the studio where we were recording our album and he was a total dick!" Savage groans. "He wore a Spuds MacKenzie T-shirt when he was out on the lawn doing sit-ups."

So much for idols. In any case, these four wild boys are making their own bid for fame via a self-titled debut album that kicks out all the jams. Howling originals like "Iron Cock" and "Inamorata" combine the pop songcraft of the Buzzcocks (the Pets' first love) with the big crunch of a Zeppelin or Sabbath.

Just don't use the M-word

to describe their music. "We're not metal! Metal is shit!" Savage exclaims. "We're a rock 'n' roll band—that's all we're trying to be," he says, while admitting they "made sure the guitars were kept high and loud" on their maiden effort. Calling it "only the bare bones of what we're capable of," Savage adds, "We won't go soft, but we'll grow and keep changing on our next record, which is what you're supposed to do. We won't make the same album five times, the way Metallica did."

By now you're probably wondering: Who does this guy like? Well, Savage hails the Replacements as "probably the only good American band to come along in the last 10 years. We finally got to meet Paul Westerberg recently. We were hoping he



wouldn't be a jerk, and he turned out to be really cool. He bought us a case of beer."

Still, says Savage, "I don't want to meet any more famous people, 'cause they usually turn out to be assholes."

He pauses. "Except Keith Richards. Yeah, I'd like to meet Keith." — Jon Young



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THE TOLL

Going to
Great Lengths
to Make a Point

BY DUNCAN STRAUSS

BRAD CIRONE, LEAD singer of the Toll, fully expects to have the P-word hurled at the Ohio band when people hear its debut album, *The Price of Progression*, and get a load of the live thang, during which Circone spins long, improvised yarns—sometimes punctuated with more (melo)dramatic moves than you can shake a shtick at.

“I think there *is* that pretentious flair, in that it’s just so unabashed,” Circone says, sipping tea at a coffee shop after performing a potent 90-minute set for a *way* over-capacity crowd in East Lansing, Michigan. It’s this kind of self-awareness and honesty that may keep the group from being undone, or done in, by its ambitions of grandeur.

Similarly, in the video press kit assembled by the Toll’s label, Geffen Records, bassist Greg Bartram allows: “I think people’s reactions to this record are going to be pretty mixed. I think we’re going to piss a lot of people off.”

No shit. When a band makes a record that includes three songs over 10 minutes long, releases one of those epics as the first single and laces another with phrases like “her pelvis nothing more than a trunk for him to keep his tools in at night”—well, *yeah*, you’d better be prepared to take a little flak.

Back at the coffee shop, Circone proves he’s able not only to take the anti-Toll flak, but to dish it out. Having already made it clear that his songwriting approach revolves around creating and assuming characters (“My whole thing is characters—I *love* to play with characters”), Circone willingly assumes the role of devil’s advocate in assessing the Toll. Indeed, he embraces the task with gusto. “Well,” he says, “the first thing I would do is question their motivation. Why are they doing this? Obviously, they



Long players: Bartram, Circone, Silk and Mayo.

have potential to write music that doesn’t *have* to be 10 minutes long—obviously they have the potential to write rock ‘n’ roll songs.

“The next thing would probably be to doubt the man onstage is sober. Then I would begin to doubt if it’s real... [like] ‘I don’t buy it, don’t even want to be around it.’ But after two or three songs, or maybe five or six, when it doesn’t stop, there would be the second question, which is: They can write three-minute songs, so if it’s so contrived, why go out on a limb? Right? Are they totally doing this self-indulgently?”

“No, because the band isn’t reciting things. If he really thought he had all the answers of the ages, he would just recite things and would not be open-minded enough to even be questioned. So then I

would have to ask what motivates that kind of songwriting? And then I would think, by the eighth or ninth song, that this is a band that I love, because it’s a band that forces me to first doubt it, just like any human being that’s going to come on that intense.”

He interrupts this verbal jag just long enough for another swig of tea, and to break character. He leans forward and continues: “I can understand why we come off that way. But I think that’s why I inflict so much pain into myself, because a lot of people will not ask that third question: What motivates the Toll? They will just say, ‘Something about this turns me off.’ The bottom line is that we don’t *need* to do 10-minute songs. It’s just that we enjoy it. It *doesn’t* get boring for us; that’s exactly why we do it. It’s



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what sets us a little bit apart.”

Fair enough. But two months later, as the band continued to wend its way West and farther away from its Midwest stronghold (where collegiate types flock to Toll shows and speak of the group in absolutely reverential terms), it's pretty safe to say that those who live by the 10-minute song die by the 10-minute song. Or at least struggle: Neither the album nor the single has made any dent on the charts. They've generated little national press. Most people haven't heard of the Toll, much less heard their music. And, not coincidentally, the band is drawing tiny crowds—including a walloping 50

folks (*maybe*) at their L.A. debut.

But Circone seems undaunted by all this, perhaps genuinely so. “We’re not disappointed or embittered—that was our gameplan,” he says of the Single Nobody Played and its attendant down-sides. “We never thought ‘Jonathan Toledo’ had a shot as a single. Geffen knew that. Radio stations, consciously or subconsciously, knew that. And we knew that. But it was a way of making an artistic statement.

“We developed these long songs from playing to nobody,” Circone continues. “We used to play to 12 people and the only way to make it interesting to those

12 people was to let them know that we were going to improvise differently every time they saw us.”

He’s speaking of the band’s earliest days, about five years ago—after he and fret-slinger Rick Silk (Circone’s cousin, whom he’d taught to play guitar at 21) had run through a succession of drummers and bassists before settling on the current rhythm team of Bartram and drummer Brett Mayo.

The improvising-narrative m.o. was born one night in a club in the group’s hometown of Columbus, Ohio where the crowd was not only small but inattentive. Circone wiggled out at their indifference, launching into a lengthy diatribe aimed at both the audience and himself. Though caught off guard, the band tried to support him musically.

Nowadays, touring behind a major-label release, the Toll does much the same thing, though the musicians are much more deft at maneuvering the guitar-driven anthemic passages behind Circone’s every physical and vocal move. And Circone is less shrill, though—lyrically, musically, vocally and visually—these guys are often *way* over the top. That ain’t likely to change, even as the band has followed up “Toledo” with a single of far more manageable length, the 3:27 “Soldier’s Room.” Still, the key to the Toll is and will likely remain the long song.

“It is the long songs—even though it’s the tough route to take—it’s the route

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

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TOLL CALL

TO achieve that big, arena-rock sound in the clubs, guitarist **Rick Silk** plays custom ESP Telecasters and a '74 Fender Esquire. **Brad Circone** goes for a Gibson Les Paul Custom, Gibson SG and Fender Thinline. Both musicians plug into ADA MP-1 preamps, SCS amplifiers and a couple of Marshall 1960 4x12 lead cabinets. Their effects include a Digitech DSP-128, an ADA 2-FX (Circone's favorite), Scholz Rockman EQs and a Rocktron Hush 2C power conditioner. Both guitarists use Dean Markley strings and picks.

Greg Bartram plays Music Man basses, trading off between a black five-string and a couple of four-strings. He uses a Gallien-Krueger 800RB with two Hartke 410-XL cabinets. Bartram's strings are Rotosound, his picks Markley.

Brett Mayo pounds a Tama Superstar kit, with either a Ludwig or Noble & Cooley snare, and his cymbals are mostly Zildjian. His pick of sticks is Markley.

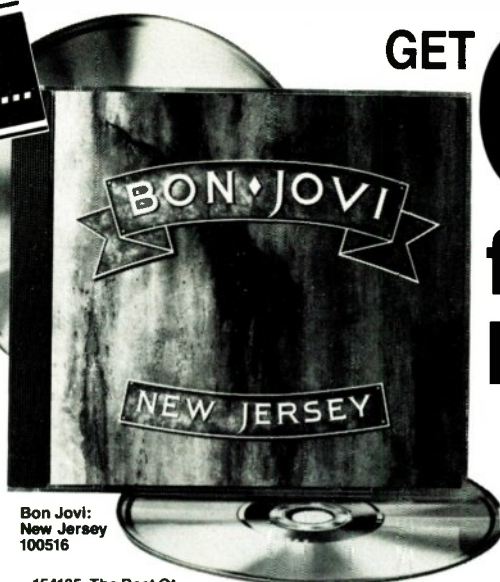
Circone sings into Shure SM-58 mikes and for "Soldier's Room" he does a two-finger tickle of the ivories on a Korg SG-1B.

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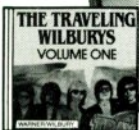
100586

100715. **R.E.M.:** Green Orange Crush, Pop Song 89, etc. (Warner Bros.)



200596

100602. **Elton John:** Reg Strikes Back • Elton's 22nd gold album! (MCA)



100711

200478. **Metallica:** And Justice For All • #1 Speed metal band! (Elektra)

223559. **The Beach Boys:** Endless Summer • 21 timeless hits! (Capitol)



100603

105392. **Pops In Space** John Williams & The Boston Pops. Music from Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back, more. (Philips DIGITAL)



115436

100604. **Heifetz:** The Decca Masters, Vol. 1 Golliwog's Cakewalk, Clair de lune, many more. (MCA)



100707

100035. **Robert Palmer:** Heavy Nova • Simply Irresistible, More Than Ever, etc. (EMI)

123385. **The Best Of Eric Clapton:** Time Pieces (Polydor)

100579. **K. T. Oslin:** This Woman • Hold Me, Money, title song, more. (RCA)

100470. **Vangelis:** Direct New Age Meditations, The Motion Of Stars, The Will Of The Wind, etc. (Arista)

153983. **Charlie Parker:** Compact Jazz • Now's The Time, Night And Day. (Verve)

Bon Jovi:
New Jersey
100516

154135. **The Best Of Steely Dan:** Decade 14 hits. (MCA)

104871. **Supertramp:** Classics (14 Greatest Hits) • The Logical Song, Give A Little Bit, more. (A&M)

144578. **The Judds:** Greatest Hits • (RCA)

115356. **Pinnock:** Vivaldi, The 4 Seasons • Simon Standage, violin; etc. (Archiv DIGITAL)

114780. **Cinderella:** Long Cold Winter • Gypsy Road, Don't Know What You Got, more. (Mercury)



182522

270106. **An Evening With Louis Armstrong** • (GNP Crescendo)

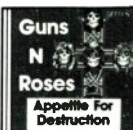
262889. **Virgil Fox:** The Digital Fox • Organ music by Bach, others. (Bainbridge DIGITAL)



115311

209468. **Pertman:** Brahms, Violin Sonatas (Angel DIGITAL)

120768. **20 Great Love Songs Of The 50s & 60s**, Vol. 1 • (Laurie)



170348

153606. **INXS:** Kick • Need You Tonight, Devil Inside, etc. (Atlantic)

100517. **Phil Collins:** Buster/Soundtrack • Groovy Kind of Love, Two Hearts, etc. (Atlantic)



100927



115457



100713

153740. **Genesis:** Invisible Touch • (Atlantic)

163579. **Andrés Segovia** Plays Rodrigo, Ponce & Torroba • Fantasia para un Gentilhombre, Concierto del Sur, Castles Of Spain. (MCA)

100679. **Steve Earle:** Copperhead Road • (UNI)

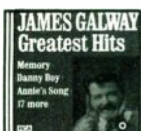
134267. **Marriner:** Mozart, Overtures • Academy of St. Martin. (Angel DIGITAL)

125360. **By Request...The Best Of John Williams & The Boston Pops** • Olympic Fanfare, Liberty Fanfare, more. (Philips DIGITAL)

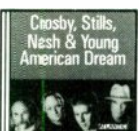
134627. **Classic Old & Gold**, Vol. 1 • 20 hits! (Laurie)

104857. **Benny Goodman:** Sing, Sing, Sing • (RCA)

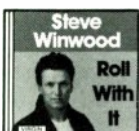
115306. **Pinnock:** Handel, Water Music • The English Concert. "A winner." — Ovation (Archiv DIGITAL)



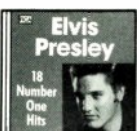
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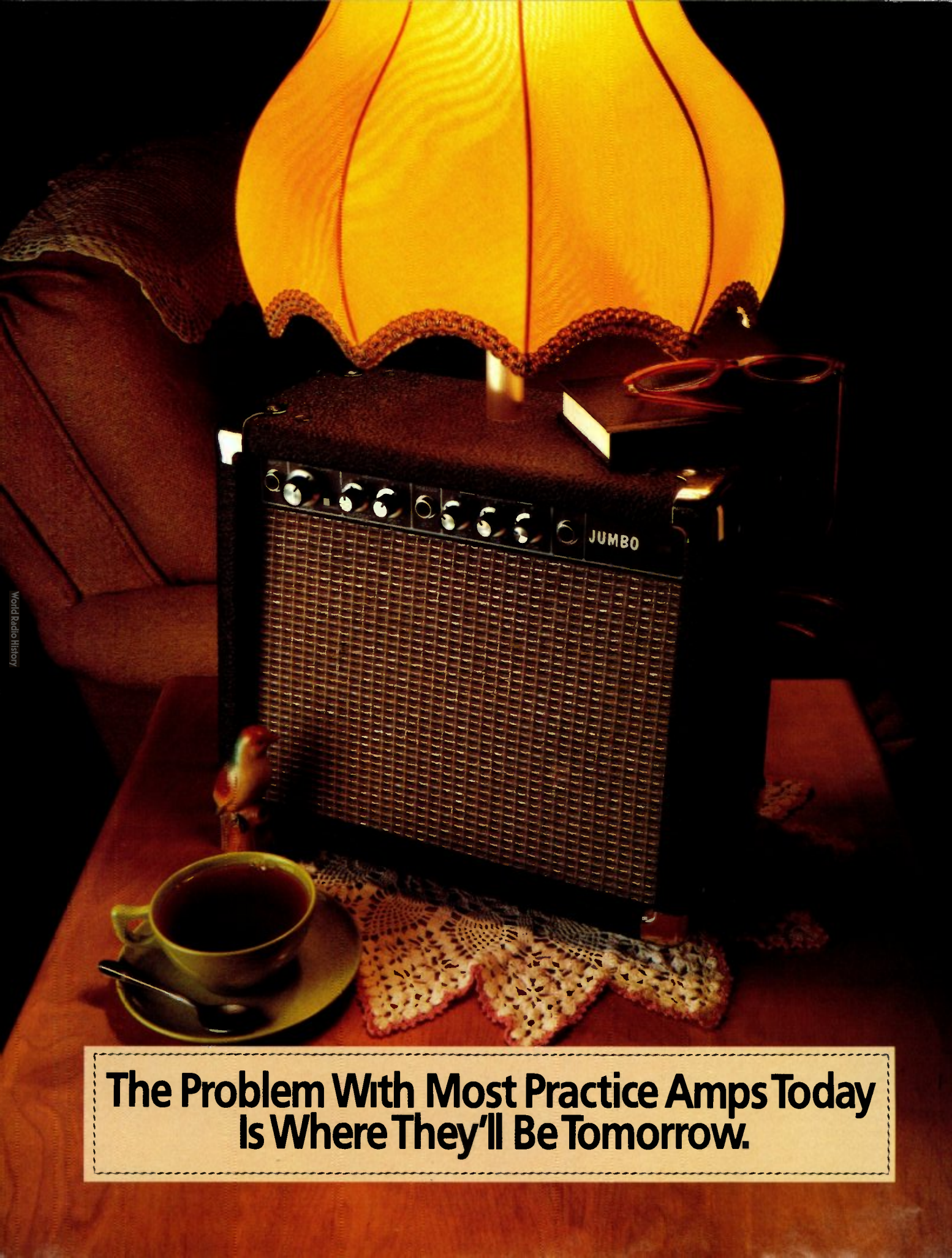
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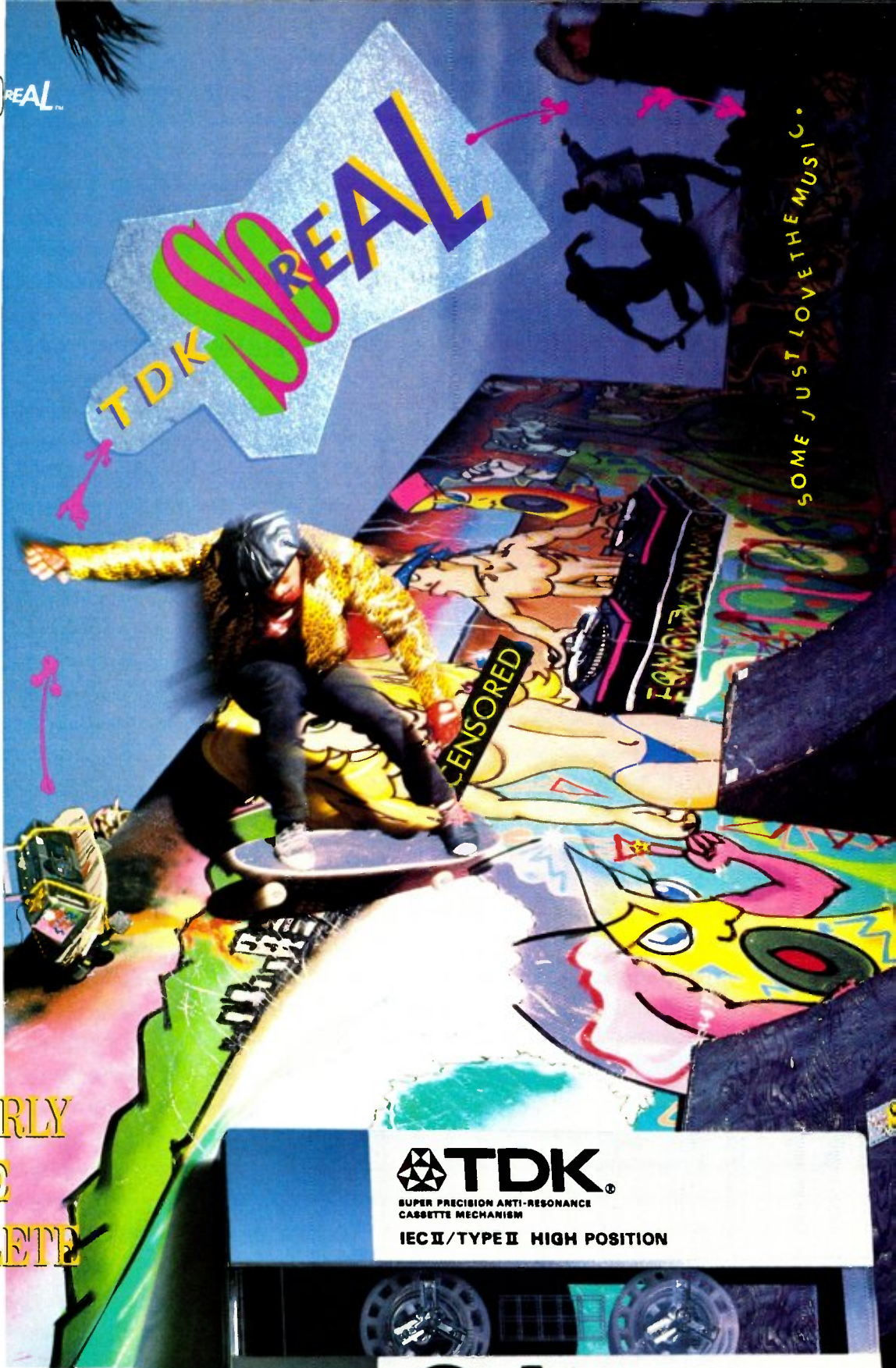
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JESSE WINCHESTER

Quiet Comeback
of the
Invisible Man

BY HOWARD DRUCKMAN

JESSE WINCHESTER'S CAREER has always been haunted by an astonishing debut. Produced by Robbie Robertson in 1969, between the Band's second and third albums, *Jesse Winchester* is steeped in their common style of Southern-gothic rock. Melancholy songs like "The Brand New Tennessee Waltz" and "Yankee Lady" told Winchester's own story, of an exiled drifter haunted by loss, longing and wanderlust. The songs established him as an important voice and earned a cult of followers. An acknowledged masterpiece, the LP's recently been reissued by Rhino Records.

But Winchester pretty much hates it.

"It just sounds awful to me," he says in a soft Southern drawl, over a glass of red wine in Montreal. "I don't like my voice, and I don't like the production. It always disturbed me to be considered a folk musician because I grew up loving the Drifters, doo-wop and popular music. I *love* commercial music, and I *want* to make commercial music. The people who like my first album like left-wing, singer/songwriter, 'artistic' kind of music, which I don't. To me, my first album was just a failed attempt to sound like what the new one sounds like."

You won't find two more different LPs. *Humor Me*, Winchester's first record in eight years, is a smooth, upbeat, occasionally maudlin product of Nashville sessionland. Winchester produced himself as light country pop: sweeping violins, echoing electric pianos, mellow sax solos—Adult Contemporary, Music City-style. But the better songs prove that he's sustained a gift for concise, affecting songwriting. "Let's Make a Baby King" offers his funky, typically wry sort of gospel; "They Just Can't Help Themselves" proves his mastery of effective



"Part of me wants success and part says it's shameful to make a display of yourself."

wordplay; "If I Were Free" demonstrates that his old drifting spirit is fully intact; "I Want to Mean Something to You" is as soulful a ballad as he's written.

Winchester spent the last eight years writing songs. He lives in Montreal and mails the tunes to his Nashville-based publishers, the Bug Music Group (which he joined in 1986 on John Hiatt's recommendation). Bug has placed his songs with Anne Murray, Michael Martin Murphy, and is entertaining interest from Smokey Robinson.

But Jesse's been invisible, living on his back catalogue and royalties. He gave up recording, which he dislikes, for performing solo, which he loves—playing relaxed, confident shows to longtime followers across North America and Europe. He's 44, with a 14-year-old daughter, Alice, and a 16-year-old son, James (who plays in a rock 'n' roll band). Winchester and his wife Leslie recently divorced after 20-odd years together. He didn't need the headache of recording (and being misinterpreted) again.

Sugarhill Records president Barry Poss had to coax him into it. "I couldn't

believe that he wasn't recording," says Poss, a long-term fan. "It was a slow process getting him to record—letting him know how much people still wanted to hear him. I was surprised how strong his sense of himself as a pop singer is. Our label is more rough and rootsy, but I wasn't about to push him."

"I have a very ambivalent character," Winchester says, when asked why he dislikes recording. "Part of me wants worldly success and part says it's shameful to make a display of yourself, to try to convince people how good you are."

The contradictions started early. Winchester's father was Protestant, his mother Roman Catholic. Jesse spent 12 years in Catholic school, and though it remains a big part of his life (and his work), he is a skeptic. The Memphis Winchesters were distinguished in politics, law and the military, but Jesse, a pacifist, was smitten by the rampant R&B of his hometown. He studied piano for 10 years, and spent several playing the organ in church. He became a rock 'n' roller at 14, the day he bought his first guitar and played it onstage that night

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YAMAHA GUITARS

with his first band. Winchester worked in several bar bands while nominally studying philosophy in Amherst, Massachusetts. He dropped out of a year's study in Munich to join the Night Sounds, who played rock 'n' roll covers across the Bavarian Alps.

When he returned to Memphis, the city's racial tension "drove me nuts." He worked as a cocktail-lounge pianist for six months, and when his draft notice came in 1967 Winchester hightailed it to Montreal. Almost on arrival, he joined Les Astronautes, with whom he played across Quebec. "I was havin' fun, but I had no money, no ambitions, no nothin', and I'd been cut off from the South. Nobody in the band spoke any English, and I didn't speak much French, so that drove me to start writing."

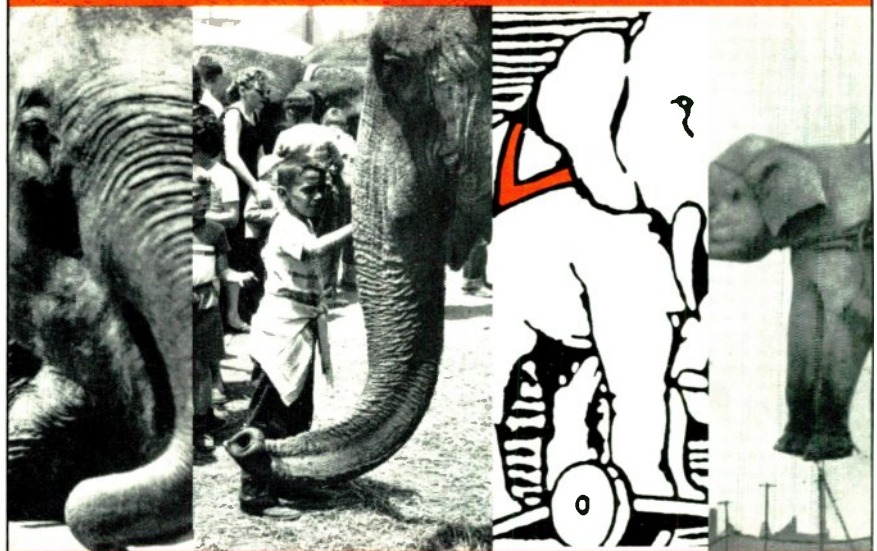
Winchester quit when they decided to wear astronaut suits onstage. He drifted between pickup bands, and started playing small coffeehouses across central Canada. While he was working on a demo tape in Ottawa, a friend brought Robbie Robertson down for a listen. Impressed, Robertson produced the first album in Toronto, played on it along with Levon Helm, and had Winchester open for the Canadian leg of the Band's 1969-70 tour. He also connected him with the Band's redoubtable manager, the late Albert Grossman.

Winchester tells it politely, but it's clear that Grossman dominated his career. Jesse's records were on Grossman's Bearsville label, his songs were published by Grossman, and Grossman managed him, too. For the second album, Grossman dispatched managers Todd Rundgren and the Full Tilt Boogie Band to Toronto. But Jesse was unhappy with the resulting record, so he scrapped it and cut an acoustic one.

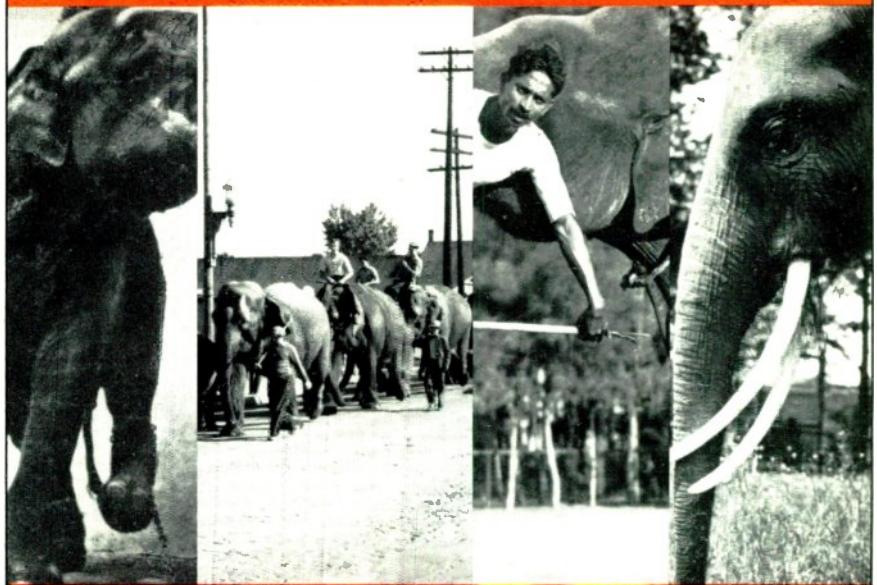
Third Down, 110 to Go was a spare work that veered from funky blues to wry, bitter folk. Its tough romance, restlessness and fragile hope would soon become Winchester trademarks. *Learn to Love It* and *Let the Rough Side Drag* found Jesse more immigrant than exile, settling down with a wife in his adopted homeland, still longing for his birthplace and confirming his gospel roots.

In his songs and his life, Winchester's longing for belief has been plagued by doubt. He secularizes the sacred to make it more real (and once wrote a doo-wop song called "Jesus Was a Teenager, Too"). More recently, Jesse's attacked TV preachers with a refrain of "swing low, big old Continental."

"I don't like intolerance," he says, "and I think Christianity has grown way past whatever Jesus might have in-



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tended. The message was to love one another, and that's pretty much it. On the days that I do believe in God, He's a forgiving father, who ultimately understands and loves us... if He exists."

If Winchester's early records comprise a body of work unsurpassed by any singer/songwriter in the '70s, the next three almost belie the achievement. In a radical shift, 1977's *Nothing but a Breeze* was slickly produced by Brian Ahearn. "Twigs and Seeds" was a jokey pot ditty, "Rhumba Man" a cute trifle; Winchester the exile/immigrant had apparently lightened up and become a matter-of-fact pop entertainer. When Jimmy Carter declared amnesty for draft resisters that year, it was Jesse's first opportunity to tour America. A full-length jaunt was mounted, full-page ads were bought, feature stories were written and the album was released. But old fans were alienated, few new ones materialized and sales remained marginal. Winchester continued to go for the slick studio sound with *A Touch on the Rainy Side* and *Talk Memphis*, recorded in his hometown with producer Willie Mitchell.

"On those albums," Winchester explains, "Albert imposed the producers and musicians. He was generous, maybe overly so. He thought you could make a great record if you hired the greatest people, but I just didn't enjoy it. Sometimes it's better to work with somebody you're comfortable with. He wanted a hit, and so did I, so I didn't fight it. I don't remember ever consciously trying to project an image, but I've stooped to every depth it's possible to stoop to as far as abandoning principles."

As Grossman lost interest in the music business, Winchester simply vanished. Fed up with producers, he built a home studio, toured and collected royalties. His records went out of print,

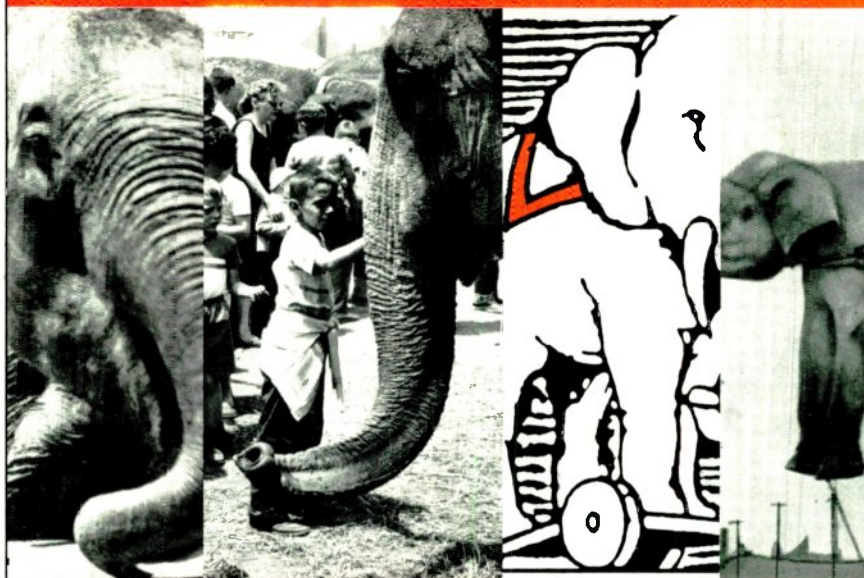
CONTINUED ON PAGE 118

GOD'S OWN JUKEBOX

If all that was involved was playing a song for a tape recorder, it'd be great to record," says Winchester. "But there's so much peripheral stuff that I'd just as soon someone else record it, and then go lip-sync it on Dick Clark." But Jesse was unusually pleased with the process of recording *Humor Me*. He used a Gibson ES-335 guitar straight into the board, and Yamaha DX7 and KX88 keyboards.

Onstage Winchester plays a classical nylon-string Takamine Hirade. For amplification, he uses a Sony ECM 50 lavalier mike—the kind used for radio and TV interviews—taped into the guitar's soundhole. "I just tried it one time and liked it," he explains. At home, Jesse records on a Fostex.

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GARY BARTZ

The Pelican
Flies in
All Directions

BY KAREN BENNETT

ELIZABETH BARTZ IS celebrating a birthday, and the gods are smiling upon her: Dizzy Gillespie is on the bill at Baltimore's new Blues Alley, and her son Gary is in town to escort her to the event. Naturally Gary brings his saxophone along and plays "Night in Tunisia" with Diz, who strolls over while Bartz is blowing and says, "You're sharp." This perplexes Bartz—he doesn't think he's off-key, and he glances at Dizzy, who is already laughing at his little pun. "Yeah man," he says, "you're really *sharp*."

The scenario conjures some recollections for Bartz, who, during his years with Miles Davis, became adept at distinguishing the prank from the serious pronouncement. It also brings back memories for his mother, who recalls an evening over 25 years ago when she and her husband went to hear John Coltrane at the Bohemian Caverns in D.C. Coltrane, who had heard the young Bartz play, walked over to his parents' table. "We were surprised and thrilled," Mrs. Bartz recalls. "He said, 'Your son is going to be great.'"

GARY BARTZ IS WATCHING a rare video of a 1971 Miles Davis concert in Paris. Bartz and Miles are playing so tightly it is impossible to distinguish the alto from the trumpet. For a second, Miles splits abruptly from the melody, then in the same breath returns. "He was foolin' with me there," Bartz notes. "I was following him so close he was trying to lose me."

During the Bartz solo which follows, the camera closes in on Miles, whose face is a street map of concentration. He glares, he nods, then the unthinkable happens: The angles of his face replane in a grin, so craggy it's unquestionable, so brief it warrants a replay. "Shit, I was



"When you've been a bandleader and a sideman, they don't know where to put you."

knockin' him out, I didn't even know it!" Bartz exclaims, then demurs, half-serious, "You'll have to excuse me, this is only the third time I've seen this."

The Bartz who appears on the screen with Miles sports a full beard, an Afro reminiscent of Julius Erving during his ABA career, a dashiki and a dangling earring. In a later segment of the video with McCoy Tyner's band, however, Bartz steps up to the mike clean-shaven, in a sportcoat, white shirt and tie. Meanwhile, the Gary Bartz who is watching all this is wearing a white painter's cap bearing Rodin's insignia, with an emerald-green fringed scarf around his neck. His graying hair is close-cropped and curly; he has a tiny diamond stud in his left ear. He's recently shaven his beard and moustache, so when he removes his tinted glasses his grin is like a kid's, shy and mischievous.

The many faces of Gary Bartz are reflective of his unorthodox career, which includes apprenticeships with Max Roach, Art Blakey, Miles Davis and

McCoy Tyner, an avatar of the post-Coltrane avant-garde; an ill-fated if sincere excursion into R&B "crossover" music; side trips into acting, singing and scoring for theater and film; a retreat from the music industry during which Bartz did not record as a leader for 10 years; and his renaissance via *Monsoon*, an album he released last year on Steeplechase Records, as a seasoned master of mainstream jazz, particularly ballads. Bartz calls himself eclectic. Less charitable critics consider some of his career choices questionable. But while Bartz—nicknamed "the Pelican" by his friends—regards those sea changes as his natural course, that doesn't mean navigation has been easy.

Consider: By 1974 Bartz had recorded 10 albums as a leader, mostly for Prestige and Milestone; the material, ranging from free blowing to politically-tinged commentary, was fresh and invigorating. In 1972 he'd topped *Melody Maker's* jazz critics' poll for best alto saxophonist. He'd become an important

voice of his generation, well-versed in previous jazz traditions but not constricted by them. Trumpeter Wallace Roney, one of several younger musicians who look up to Bartz, notes that "after Jackie [McLean] and Cannonball, Gary was the only one who could approach Bird, and the only one who could transcribe 'Trane to the alto. No alto did that before; everybody else got it directly or indirectly from Gary."

So his standing as a respected member of the jazz fraternity seemed firmly anchored when, in 1976, Bartz toured the U.S. and Japan with Norman Connors. Connors' version of "Betcha by

Golly Wow," featuring Bartz on sax and singer Phyllis Hyman, had recently gone gold. Then Bartz ventured further into the commercial arena, recording pop "crossover" albums for Capitol and Arista, and the reaction among his peers ranged from skepticism to downright disapproval. Woody Shaw, for instance (Bartz's horn mate on McCoy Tyner's *Expansions* LP), didn't speak to him for three years. "He felt I was forsaking the music," Bartz explains. "I ran into him once outside a club in New York and he said, 'Gary Bartz, the rock 'n' roll musician.' Then later when we got together, because we were like brothers, he said,

'Hey man, I'm sorry. I understand now.'"

Bartz is less understanding or forgiving of the corporate machinations which seemed to boobytrap this segment of his career from the outset. He emphatically maintains he has no regrets or apologies to tender: "I didn't do the commercial records for the money, although, not being a stupid person, I was hoping the money would come. I did them because I enjoyed playing that music. It's hard for people to understand that a jazz musician can enjoy watching people dance. But there was a time when Charlie Parker and Dizzy played for dancers. Jazz music was made for dancing, and my opinion is that when they stopped dancing to it, we lost a big audience. Dancing is an important part of the black culture."

Bartz's commercial albums sold respectably but weren't successful enough to compensate for the aggravation he encountered. "It was really the record companies that made me bitter," Bartz says. "I'll tell you one thing that happened. We came out with 'Ooh, Baby, Baby,' on *Music Is My Sanctuary* [Capitol]. It was doing very well, but with any 'jazz' artist they never print up enough copies. I sat down with my managers and three of the top jockeys in each area of the United States—E. Rodney Jones, Al Perkins in Detroit, really big guys. They said, 'You have got to cut "Ooh, Baby, Baby" as a single; this is the best thing, we are getting more calls'... they wanted it. And that would have been my breakthrough. But Capitol wanted 'Love Ballad' as the single. I hadn't even wanted to cut 'Love Ballad' for the album. But they went with 'Love Ballad.' It didn't happen. I mean it did all right, but it was nothing like the 'Ooh, Baby, Baby' thing. Proof of that is that Linda Ronstadt came out later with our exact arrangement—you can listen to it. And George Benson came out with our exact arrangement for that *and* 'Love Ballad.' The companies pushed them; they were more known than I was.

"By the time they were ready for the next single, the momentum for the song had died and they couldn't regenerate it; they would have had to put more money into it, and they didn't want to do that. That really hurt. So the next album I said, 'Well Goddammit, I want to be the producer on this one.' I produced *Love Affair*, and I spent all the money on promotion myself. But it wasn't enough.

"There was an article in the *L.A. Times* on the *Love Affair* album," Bartz recalls. "Leonard Feather reviewed it. He hated it. *Hated* it. He wrote about 12 paragraphs about how much he didn't like it. They ran my picture in conjunc-

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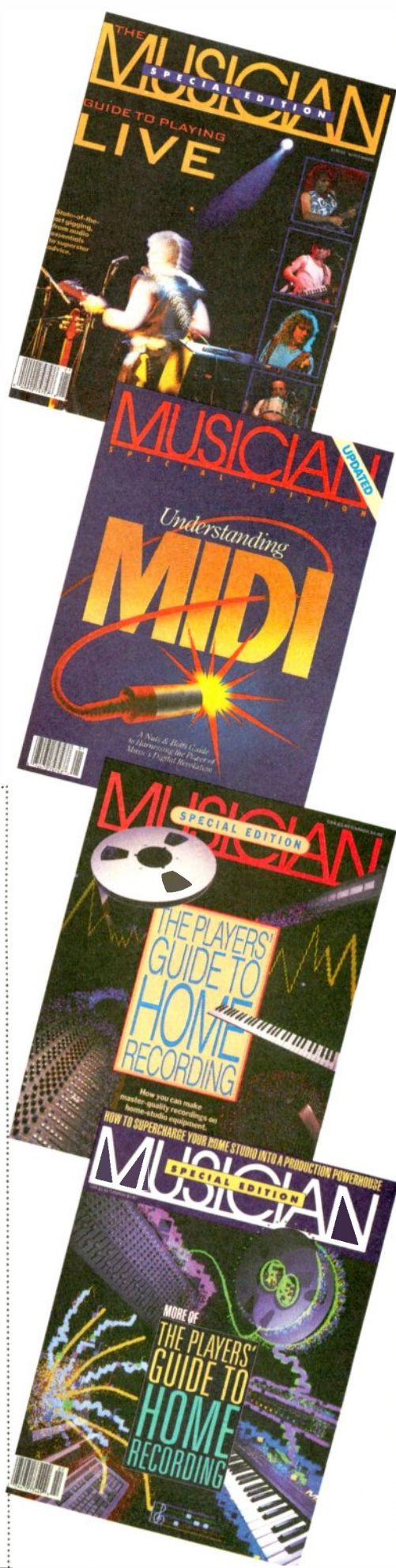
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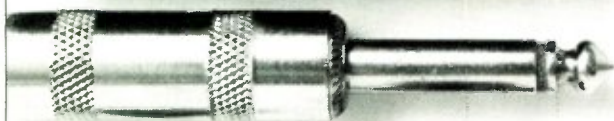
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tion with this. Now, in the following days, friends of mine and other people said, 'Yeah, I saw the article in the *Times*.' They hadn't even read it; they thought it was positive!" Bartz appreciates the irony. "I used to hear the older musicians say, 'As long as they spell my name right...'"

By that point, however, Bartz had taken about all the abuse he wished to handle. He holed up in Baltimore and booked his band regularly at a local club. He occasionally toured, with Charles Tolliver, Joanne Brackeen and Tyner, among others. What sustained him was love for music and, for all his apparent eccentricities, Bartz's resilient character. "It's not my style to quit.

"Actually, it really hurt," he admits. "I had kept writing through these years. I wanted to get it out. But I said, 'Fuck it, they don't deserve it. I won't even record. I can stay home and enjoy myself, playing for the people where I work. I'll be happy.' And basically that's what happened. Before I knew it, 10 years had gone by."

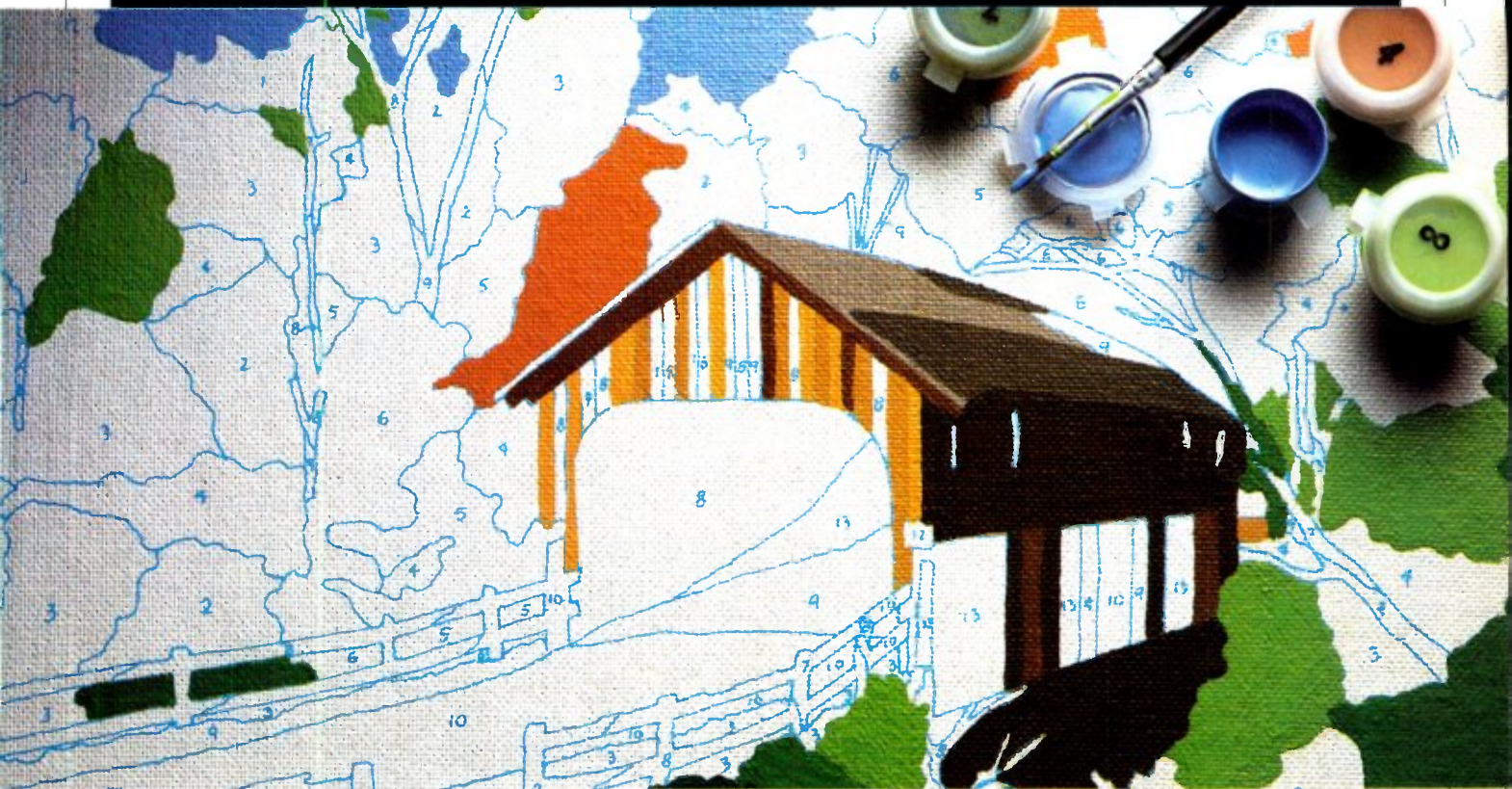
Bartz grew up in Baltimore, where music was a household staple. "They had all the Nat King Cole records, the Louis Jordan records. My uncle had all the jazz records." Uncle Leon (nicknamed "Sharp Bartz" for his sartorial flair) was friendly with many musicians, so Gary got to hear some of the greats early on, including Jordan, who became one of Bartz's main Early Influences. Bartz's dad later operated a club in Baltimore called the North End Lounge, where Gary often played. He studied at New York's Juilliard School of Music for two years before returning to Baltimore to study at the Peabody Conservatory.

Bartz, like so many fine horn players, got his real start with Max Roach and, later, Art Blakey. Lee Morgan was a part of Blakey's band, and the master of musical discretion remains one of Bartz's all-time favorites. "Lee used to stand behind me while I was playing a ballad and he would say, 'Play the *pretty* notes, motherfucker!' And I'd turn around and say, 'Lee, I thought I was!'"

He became more discriminating during his stint with Miles, whose pauses are the stuff of legend. "As you get older," Bartz says, "you start to edit yourself. The younger musicians don't realize that rests are a part of music; most younger musicians play a million notes just because they can."

Bartz, whose dry sense of humor is much appreciated by his compadres, took a few cues in that department from Miles as well. During their sets, Bartz recalls, Miles would stroll over to pianist

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Keith Jarrett and whisper, "What's wrong with Gary?" Next he'd approach Bartz: "Hey, what's wrong with Keith?" Then Miles would go off and enjoy the joke as Bartz and Jarrett scrutinized each other's performance.

"One other thing I learned, from Lester Young and Charlie Parker, is that when you play a ballad, especially, you should know the lyrics," Bartz says. "I learn the lyrics to all the songs, so I'm really singing when I'm playing."

Listeners can indeed hear Bartz singing through the changes on *Monsoon*. Bartz's insistence on a sure melodic statement only serves to amplify his

improvisational prowess, and is reminiscent of Degas' instruction to his students: "Paint me an apple that looks like an apple first." With so many jazz artists documenting their identity crises on vinyl in an understandable attempt not to be pigeonholed, *Monsoon* is like the proverbial breath of fresh wind.

Bartz's approach is informed not only by lyric but by color. He says that when he was playing 'Never Never Land,' for instance, a selection from *Peter Pan* which appears on *Monsoon*, he saw pink and blue. "It's funny," he remarks, "but different songs have different colors to me and I don't understand quite why.

Ballads might be any color; they could be bright, they could be rose-colored. Sometimes a blues to me is either blue or green, sometimes even yellow."

It seems appropriate that Bartz plays in color—he surrounds himself with it. First, there is his car: bright red, generic make and model, identifiable by the cracked windshield and the four dancing raisin figures on the dashboard. Then there are those clothes: At a gig in Philadelphia last spring, Bartz showed up in what can only be described as a neon yellow shirt. "You should see the green one," he said, tucking a turquoise silk handkerchief in his coat pocket. On another occasion in New York, he appeared in a blue suit woven with pastel color flecks, but the pièce de résistance of this outfit were his boots—cornflower blue suede. (He had just seen a film on Chuck Berry.) "I love these boots," he said repeatedly, gazing proudly at his feet. "They cost me 20 bucks."

Tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan remembers when he first met Bartz in the '60s. "Sometimes," Jordan says, "you can just look at a guy and say whether he can play—he'll either look hip or not hip. Gary had a look that was somewhere in between." Bartz roars at this assessment: "When I first came to New York, they didn't know *where* I came from. They just knew I was from 'the South.'"

The Pelican's career has been lighting up of late: He is awaiting release of a second Steeplechase LP, *Reflections of Monk: the Final Frontier*, which boasts an eerie voice intro à la "The Twilight Zone," and a varied selection of Monk tunes rendered with dizzying facility by Bartz, Billy Hart, Geoff Harper, Bob Butta and Eddie Henderson. Bartz has three tours booked overseas, one as a leader. He will hit the West Coast with his group late in the summer. He works regularly in New York.

If Bartz's retreat cost him anything, it may be the esteem of those who were essentially fair-weather fans. One music critic mouthed this armchair appraisal: "A musician, but unfortunately destined, I think, to be one of life's sidemen."

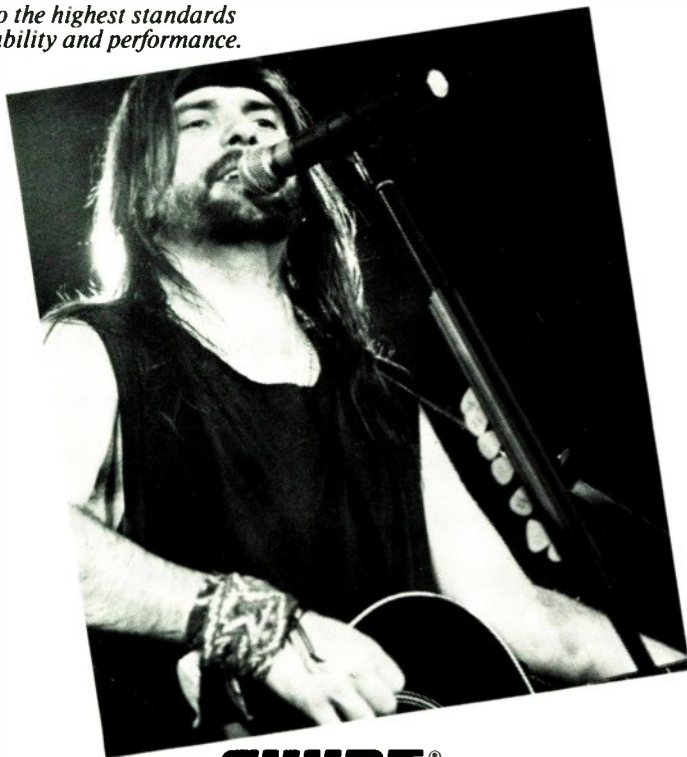
"Sidemen," Bartz sniffs. "It's like you're not even a whole man, you're half a man. When you've been both a band-leader and a sideman, they don't know where to put you." He claims he's reached the point where he's less upset than bemused by this kind of labored categorization. In any event, his fellow musicians are well aware that Bartz's lifetime of dedication has made him one of the best alto saxophonists alive. John Coltrane was prophetic after all. ▮

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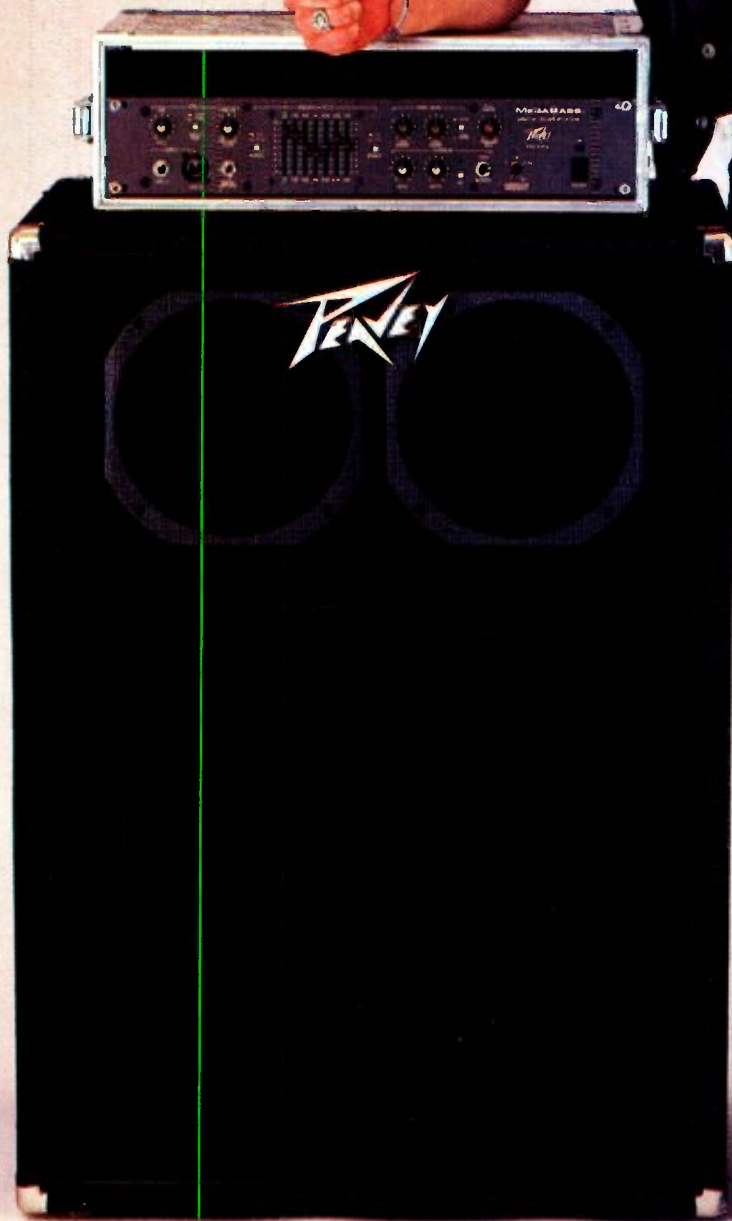


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WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Robert Smith's Conception of the Cure

By J.D. Considine

ON THE WHOLE, THE AVERAGE pop fan's image of the Cure is pretty close to the way the band appears in the video to "Fascination Street," the first American single from *Disintegration*. Shot in the haze of what seems to be a mist-enshrouded alley somewhere in the depths of London, it shows the five band members all dressed in elaborate layers of black, performing with forlorn intensity as the dry-ice fog whips around them.

Robert Smith, the Cure's singer and de facto leader, looks especially otherworldly. His black hair is spiked up in long, drooping tendrils; his dark clothes hang limply from his shoulders as if they'd been draped there and forgotten while he sings, voice almost breaking, about trying to drown the fear of intimacy in the noisy, beery bustle of bar life.

But what's most striking about him as he stands there is



brooding aesthete, a man charged with anxiety and filled with alienation.

In short, it's hard to imagine him being anything like he

his face: the sad eyes, the deathly pallor and his almost tauntingly androgynous clown's smirk of a mouth, painted a red brighter than any other color in the video. Seeing him onscreen or listening to him on record, it's hard to imagine him as anything but an awkward intellectual, a

really is.

But here he is, his smile a ghostly lipstick smear, his hair a spiky mushroom, crouched by a window in his Copenhagen hotel room, showing off his survival kit. "The only thing that saves me from cracking up on tour is being able to listen to something on a moment's notice," he says, indicating a black Sanyo boombox and two briefcases crammed with cassettes.

"I carry this monstrosity of around 200 cassettes, and a



couple of T-shirts. That's my priority. I just feel that music... it's not merely important, it's *essential* to me. To enjoy things, anyway. But yet I know people who don't listen to music for weeks at a time," he adds wonderingly. "They don't actually sit down and listen to music, they've got it on while ironing. So it's just..." His voice trails off.

Smith, 30, listens to music much the way he reads: attentively, voraciously, incessantly. When I was ushered into his room, almost two hours earlier, he was playing Enya's *Watermark*, but "that was just 'cause it was sort of an Enya kind of day." As he reels off cassette titles at random, his taste exhibits an astonishing eclecticism: "Cocteau Twins. Paula Abdul's new album. Suzanne Vega. Nico. Gregorian chant. Joy Division. Bulgarian Voices. Clannad. *Romantic Fortepiano*. Erik Satie. Various classical musics. Shirley Bassey. That Petrol Emotion. Brandenburg Concertos. Sinéad O'Connor. Elvis Costello. Neil Young."

Looking over his shoulder, I notice one cassette labeled "Cure Disco" and ask about it.

"Ah," he says, laughing in vague embarrassment. "This is something that we did when we were doing the demos for the *Kiss Me* album." He shows me the cassette itself, which features a skull and crossbones along with the warning, "Aaaaagh! Dangerous!"

"Want to hear it?" he asks. How could I resist?

According to Smith, the tape was made on something of a lark. "We'd heard [a record] the night before in this disco," he says. "We were thinking what it would be like to do an album of our worst-ever songs, rather than our favorite-ever songs. And as we were getting drunker and drunker, it seemed like a really good idea to get an album of these songs. And this was as far as it got."

He turns on the tape. After a momentary synth squall a disco beat kicks in, complete with octave-stepping bass and chirping syndrums. Smith looks over anxiously when the hook makes its appearance and, noting my uncomprehending frown,

smiles. "Good," he says relievedly. "You've never heard of it." The Eurodisco number in question, Kelly Marie's 1981 single "Feels Like I'm in Love," was a big hit in Britain but proved something of a bust Stateside, never denting the Top 40.

That hardly dampened the Cure's enthusiasm. As Smith yowls the melody—"I realized I didn't know the words once I started," he says sheepishly—in a ragged falsetto, sounding less like Marie than some Leo Sayer from hell, his bandmates energetically (and quite credibly) chime in with the chorus. It may be a joke, but it's delivered with a passion and precision which, were he in a darker mood, would probably appall Smith far more than the original record.

As it is, though, we have our laugh and Smith ejects the tape. "One of those things that did seem like a funny idea at a disco at three in the morning, with everyone bevvved up," he shrugs. "And the next day, when we tried to put it into practice, it turned out to be a very poor idea indeed."

Well, yes. But Smith's reservations about that tape aren't the same as yours or mine. Although he argues the joke "isn't that funny if it's taken out of context," the truth is more subtle. For those of us outside the band, hearing the incredibly serious Cure reprise some hoary Eurodisco hit is still a laugh, but it's a hoot of a different color: The Cure may poke fun at the giddy banality of the original, but what tickles our fancy is the spectacle of the Cure wanking around with some two-bit disco song. Two separate laughs entirely.

Why? Because from the outside the Cure seems anything but frivolous. The band's albums are dark and intense, very serious indeed. The first Cure single, 1978's "Killing an Arab," started things off by condensing the existential crises of Camus' murderous Meursault into a two-and-a-half-minute ditty. Subsequent efforts have spelled out a dread of sex, death and intimacy in frightfully personal terms. Some of the earlier Cure albums, particularly *Faith* and *Pornography*—recordings to which Smith repeatedly compares *Disintegration*—have almost a funereal air to them, a clangorous darkness that prompted one English critic to smirk that "Ian Curtis, by comparison, was a bundle of laughs."

In real life the Cure is nowhere near so serious. On the bus headed for soundcheck at the Roskilde Festival, they seem like any other rock band—talking about what and how much they drank the night before, joking about the terrible floor show in the hotel bar, laughing among themselves. Smith turns out to be quite the sports fan, poring over the football (that is, soccer) pages of the London Sunday papers, animatedly discussing the standings of his favorites. Inasmuch as there's nothing quite so impenetrable as sports chat from another country, most of this goes by in a blur; even so, it's hard not to notice the wit with which Smith addresses his topic.

Granted, hearing Robert Smith laughing over football scores isn't the same as watching Paul Shaffer clown around with David Letterman. But it doesn't exactly reinforce the Cure's image as angst-ridden eggheads.

That, however, is not an image on which the band itself is especially keen. For instance, they've billed this current round of concerts in support of the new *Disintegration* as "The Prayer Tour"—despite bassist Simon Gallup's worries that fans might confuse the Cure with Madonna as a result.

"But 'The Disintegration Tour' just sounds wrong," Smith says. "It sounds like everyone would be falling apart, and everything would be going wrong. It's tempting fate to call a tour something like that. I think the tour is an exciting aspect of

what we do, so I thought 'Prayer' would be a little more optimistic. It gives it a bit more hopefulness than 'The Disintegration Tour.'"

He pauses. "As it was, we started by missing the ferry."

Overall, Smith insists he's looking on the brighter side of things these days. "For me personally, things have got better. Because I don't worry about what I'm going to do anymore. That was a big worry in school, because I didn't know if I'd be able to do what I wanted. So that's been sort of a triumph.

"I actually do feel more self-confident than I used to," he adds. "I was never really nervous before, 'cos I could walk into a room of people, but I could never look at anyone." He reflects for a moment, then laughs. "It's not really self-confidence, I suppose. I just don't like people."

But people, or pop fans anyway, like the Cure. Thanks to the band's lighter side—flippant, bouncy numbers like "The Lovecats," "The Caterpillar" and "Why Can't I Be You"—the Cure has earned a surprisingly large, increasingly pop-oriented audience. That's particularly the case in America, where this splash of pop joviality made the Cure's dour, black-clad image seem cuddly enough even for MTV. The band's last album, the double-disc *Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me*, finally pushed the Cure into the U.S. mainstream, selling a half-million copies and spending a full year on the *Billboard* album charts.

And thus, on the verge of a major breakthrough, the Cure release... *Disintegration*? The very title will leave some fans wondering if the group is about to break up. Not a very commercially savvy move.

"I suppose, in a perverse way, that's part of the reason,"

"If our aim was to displace people we despised when we started, we failed."

Smith says. "That's not actually the reason for calling it *Disintegration*, but it's a very good reason *not* to call it *Disintegration*. I was aware it might put some people off who might think, 'Oh, this is the last record.'

"But then, I always think it's the last record, so I don't see why everyone else shouldn't get that feeling."

Hold on—he literally figures, "This is it"?

"Yeah, every time we come out of the studio I think that's it.

After *Kiss Me* I didn't think we'd make another record or play any more concerts for at least eight months. I was convinced of that. Then when I'm out with the others, it just sort of falls back into place again, and we start doing things."

This isn't a recent development. "It's been going on ever since *Seventeen Seconds*. It's just that if you have any kind

of feelings that the group's going to carry on regardless, it introduces complacency into people. That comes across in the studio: 'Maybe we just do the record even if we haven't got good songs.' Or 'If this one isn't too good, we'll make the next one better.'

"The way we work now, I try to make everyone feel like it's the last time we do something. And like this tour, I've told them already—we haven't even started, but this is it. This and the American tour is it.

"Each time I say it," he adds, "I feel stronger that it's probably true. But then I said it last time, so they've started to disbelieve me. I blew my trump card too early, I think."

Even so, ending the Cure wouldn't be a simple task. For starters, the Cure as it exists today is very much a different band from the one that cut "Killing an Arab"—or "Let's Go to

Smoking more now and enjoying it less? Smith (facing page) and pals take the Cure onstage.



Bed,” or “The Lovecats.” With the departure of Laurence “Lol” Tolhurst (of which more later), the only common thread to these Cure records is the name... and Robert Smith.

“What has happened in the past is that the group actually just changes, and that satisfies me a bit,” Smith says. “I think it’s just that I’m worried about being tied to that, I suppose, too tightly and it would be too difficult to stop.”

In a sense, the Cure was almost defined by its changeability. That left Smith with a somewhat unusual sense of who, or what, the Cure really is. “In those days, when the group used to change almost with every record—someone left, and sometimes someone else joined, sometimes two people joined, sometimes no one joined—it was always really natural,” he says. “We never worried, and still don’t, about the idea of the group, of a face disappearing from the group.”

“The Cure’s always been, and it sounds really pretentious, but it’s been more like an *idea*. The others argue with me about this, because they say if I wasn’t here it wouldn’t carry on. And it’s got to the point where they’re right. It wouldn’t.

“But there was a time when I could probably have left—two points, really, one after *Seventeen Seconds*, and one after *Pornography*. The Cure wouldn’t have been anything like it is but it could have carried on. And I would have started something else.”

In late 1982 Smith almost did start something else, going “a bit mental” after *Pornography* and joining up with Siouxsie and the Banshees for a couple of albums (the live *Nocturne* and the studio *Hyaena*). But that seemed more an act of desperation than anything else. Deep down, Smith not only knew that the Cure was his primary vehicle, but that it had many miles left.

“When I started,” he explains, “all the people that I despised, all the groups I do despise—they never knew when

keenly, as deeply. It’s that sense of everything falling apart.

“It’s really strange, as well, talking about *Disintegration* as a record when most of the words were finished before the end of last summer. I finished singing it before Christmas. Always after a record like this—the same after *Faith and Pornography*—I feel better.” He chuckles ruefully. “The next thing that happens is usually pop. So I expect if we do go make another record, it would be the most hideous pop music in the world.”

The Most Hideous Pop Music in the World. That’s a title.

Smith laughs. “*Wild Mood Swings* is the title of the next thing we do,” he says. “If we do something.”

Should all this seem a bit sour for a band on the verge of stardom, it’s perfectly in character for Smith. “There’s two types of getting famous,” he muses at one point. “There’s one where you struggle to, and there’s one where you struggle not to. We’ve fallen into the second category. We’ve become sort of well-known and popular despite ourselves, almost. We haven’t really tried to stop it, but we haven’t encouraged it that much, I don’t think.”

Nor has the band had much truck with the pop-star trappings that come with that sort of fame. Truth be told, Smith seems fairly nauseated by most pop group behavior.

“The awful thing about doing this,” he says of the music business, “is that you tend to meet particular groups who feel that they are somehow better than everyone else. And I think that the idea that you treat people how you’d like to be treated”—a philosophy Smith says he inherited from his father—“is the one thing that’s saved me from being like that. Because I don’t think I’m better than anyone else.

“Not for the reason of being in a group, anyhow. When I was in school I thought I was better than the teachers. But I despise the view that if you’re doing something [creative] somehow you’re worth more. It’s not true. Some people want to do something or feel they have to. Other people don’t.

“I mean, Mary [Poole], who has been my girlfriend and is now my wife—I find it weird to think of her as my wife—she doesn’t ‘do’ anything. She helps mentally handicapped people but she doesn’t create anything. She likes to help other people. And thus I always find it really objectionable when these people in groups think they’re worth more. Quite often, they’re worth *less*. It’s so self-indulgent, a lot of it.”

This isn’t just talk. The next day, when the Cure’s bus rolls into the backstage area at Roskilde, I see Smith’s modesty in action. Because the Roskilde festival grounds aren’t designed for rock shows—it’s more like a county fairground, with sheep pens, cattle sheds and a huge green tent serving as the theater—only a seven-foot fence separates backstage from the audience. Consequently, eager Danish fans angle for a

glance at their heroes all afternoon: A Kilroy-like assortment of noses, foreheads and hands periodically yelp “Robert! Robert!” whenever anyone looking like a Cure member passes within view.

Management eventually reparks the band bus, alleviating the situation somewhat. But when Smith heads over to retrieve something from the vehicle, the yelling starts in earnest. Now some stars would absolutely bask in this sort of attention; others would assume a Sean Penn-style belligerence. Smith seems almost embarrassed, waving shyly and smiling slightly like a kid being cheered by his classmates.

Nor does he sequester himself in the gypsy trailer the band



it’s right to stop. They’re scared of stopping. I think when we stop, it will be because we don’t enjoy it, or I don’t enjoy it. We’ve been really lucky in that we haven’t been forced to stop, with plummeting record sales and no one coming to the concerts. But as it is, I haven’t wanted to stop.”

So wherefore is it *Disintegration*? What prompted the title?

“It wasn’t really to do with the group,” he says. “Because none of the words to it are to do with the group. It’s more like an interior disintegration, and it’s something which I felt really keenly, and which I’ll feel ever more keenly as I’m getting older, as I’m sure everyone does. It’s like when you lose the ability to absorb things and to learn. You can’t feel things as



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has been allotted as a dressing room. For most of the four hours preceding the Cure's set, Smith is sociable as hell, joking with his bandmates and chatting up the support bands. Lowest on the bill (but receiving equal attention from Smith) is Dinosaur Jr., which has just released a revved-up remake of the Cure's "Just Like Heaven." Why? "We liked it," Dinosaur Jr. guitarist J Mascis explains laconically. "It's not often we find songs we like that we can do. We recorded it for a compilation album, but when we finished it we liked it so much we didn't want to give it to them."

Dinosaur Jr. did give a copy to Smith, though: "I met them last week; they had their photo taken with me. They sent me their album last year, and a demo of 'Just Like Heaven.' I think it's great; Porl [Thompson, the Cure's guitarist] now wants to do it like that." Smith chuckles. "I told him to get onstage with them and ask if he can join in." (He didn't.)

Smith's words more than match his deeds. "It's good when something comes out of [being in a group], but it's useless when you're *just* in a group," he says. "That's nonsense. That's what happened to Laurence [Tolhurst], really. That attitude sort of crept in, that you expect to be treated differently. I don't think you should."

There seems to have been more to Tolhurst's departure than bad attitude, though; if anything, that was but the straw that broke the camel's back. Tolhurst's tenure with the Cure stretched all the way back to Malice, Smith's earliest schoolyard attempt at a band. Tolhurst came up with the name Easy Cure, which Smith shortened. Tolhurst was originally the group's drummer but shifted to keyboards in 1982, apparently feeling he'd risen to his level of incompetence as a percussionist.

Talk to the others, though, and it seems as if on keyboards Tolhurst had only just begun to realize his potential for uselessness. "When I joined the band [for the *Kiss Me* tour]," says current keyboard player Roger O'Donnell, "I couldn't see why he was in the band.... He could have afforded to hire a tutor and have daily lessons, but he wasn't interested in practicing. He just liked being in the group."

"He really wasn't much use," agrees Gallup, who first signed on with the Cure a decade ago. "He was good for videos, and for photos and interviews. But he didn't contribute much otherwise." (Tolhurst, contacted through the Cure's British record company, refused to comment.)

How much Tolhurst contributed to *Disintegration* is hard to say. He's ambiguously listed as playing "other instrument" on the album's inner sleeve, and is cited along with the others in the group's joint composition credits. But he apparently got his letter of dismissal before the band shot its new videos, for he's in none of them.

Tolhurst doesn't seem much missed, either. He was the butt of numerous jokes on the band bus, and even a few in the tour program: O'Donnell's "fave raves" page includes the line, "Favourite wooden object: Lol," though O'Donnell protests, "The others made me put it in!"

It's hard to imagine the parting being an easy one, as a part of the Cure has always had as much to do with Smith's background as with his musical aspirations. He and Tolhurst, after all, were classmates at both Notre Dame Middle School and St. Wilfred's Comprehensive back in Crawley, Sussex.

But Thompson, too, dates back to those days. "He had a real reputation when we were back in Crawley growing up," Smith recalls. "He was *the* guitarist in Crawley. In fact, he was in the very first incarnation of the Cure—because he was the attrac-

tion. We used to go play in pubs when we were 16. People would come see us purely because Porl was playing guitar. They didn't even know the name of the group, it was just Porl playing guitar. So it was quite funny.

"He played on the original demos of 'Killing an Arab,' '10.15' and 'Boys Don't Cry.' But he didn't actually like what we were doing. We didn't really like what he was doing either. We were becoming more and more stripped down, and leaving him just short gaps so people would keep coming to see us and we'd keep getting bookings in the same pub.

"Eventually it just became absurd. We'd be playing something like '10.15' and there'd be like a 16-bar section where he could play lead guitar. People used to really moan at us, 'Oh, Porl isn't playing guitar anymore, man. Oh no.' So we came to an agreement, and he left.

"A few years later he started doing our artwork and I asked him if he wanted to rejoin. But," he laughs, "I said he couldn't play anything like he used to play. It was weird, because in the interim he started going out with my sister—and in fact he married her last year. So it's a very closed world, the Cure."

As might be expected of kids who came up in late-'70s England, the Cure started out as a punk band. "I still think we're a punk band," Smith says. "That, to most people, sounds ridiculous when you listen to the new record, but real punk was always an attitude. What took over in London was a fashion version of punk."

Smith has his own theory about what sparked British punk. "There was an experiment in the schooling system around the very early '70s, called the middle school," he says. "It was introduced to bridge the gap between junior school and senior school. It was supposed to be a very liberal sort of two years, when you're 11 and 12. You had open class; if you had a class you didn't like, you could move to another class; you'd address the teachers by their Christian names—that sort of setup.

"That ended up after two years as the most fascist school I'd ever been to. You couldn't do anything. They re-introduced school uniforms, the whole thing; an entire process of completely clamping down. They realized that children don't accept responsibility. They thrive on anarchy.

"And that bred a lot of resentment amongst people of my age. We felt like we were used as guinea pigs. All my friends, we used to think, 'We've spent two years of hell just to prove something which we all knew anyway.'"

As social theory, this seems a reasonable explanation of punk's rebelliousness and contemptuous dismissal of authority. But it also provides an illuminating insight into punk's central aesthetic.

Think about all the unsupervised time and unfettered expression this "open classroom" approach tried to foster; then consider how close that is to what Smith describes as punk's attitude "that anyone could do it." This particular fruit didn't fall far from the tree.

Perhaps the most obvious proof that "anyone can do it" in the case of the Cure is Smith's singing voice. Tremulous, fruity, sometimes maddeningly indistinct, it's so utterly unlike any other in rock today that it's easy to imagine hearing it for the first time and thinking, "Who told *him* he could sing?"

As it turns out, no one did. "When we started, and were playing in pubs, I wasn't the singer," he admits. "I was the drunk rhythm guitarist who wrote all these weird songs. We went through about five different singers—they were fucking useless, basically. I always ended up thinking, 'I could do better than this.'"

"So gradually I started singing a song, and then it was two

"I could walk into a room but I couldn't look at anyone. I just don't like people."

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songs, until I reached the point where I"—he searches for the right words. "I mean, I hated my voice, but I didn't hate it more than I hated everyone else's voice. So we went through a period where we just did instrumentals for about three months, while I was trying to work up the courage to say, 'I'll be the singer.'

"I remember the first concert we did where I was the singer. I was paralyzed with fear before we went out. I drank about six pints of beer, which in those days was enough to knock me over. I was singing the wrong song; of the first three songs, I started on the second song. They carried on playing. No one even noticed. So I thought, 'If I can get away with that, I can be the singer.' I've worked on that basis ever since."

Perversely enough, he's also managed to become quite a capable singer in the process. Granted, no one would ever mistake Smith for Daryl Hall, and his singing is technically quite lacking: He has wobbly intonation, he doesn't project, he swallows his words...

"Sing from the throat," he suggests.

... He sings from the throat. And yet the melody pops right out from Smith's performances, whether in the quiet cadences of "Lullaby" or the scattershot scat of "Why Can't I Be You." Somehow it works.

"Yeah, that's the thing," he agrees. "It's like with the guitar tunings. I tune the high E string on the guitar slightly flat, even though the others are perfectly in tune. So when I'm playing a minor chord the last note I hit on a downstroke isn't quite right, and I like that. That's like how I sing. I'm aware sometimes of toeing up into that flatness. But I like it.

"I think the weirdest thing about the way I sing is that most of the time it's like how I talk. Sort of stuttery. I'm a much

better singer now than I used to be. I couldn't have dreamed of singing in front of an audience of more than 10 people 10 years ago. I used to hate the idea of it. And now I feel like the best thing about [Roskilde] will be being able to sing some of the new songs, just because they're so good to sing."

He's even gotten to the point that this former rhythm guitarist sheds his instrument for a good piece of the live show. "I've found that it's very undemonstrable to be tied to a guitar," Smith says. "Because I don't flail, it looks like I'm utterly static,

and it gets a bit boring for people to watch. When I haven't got a guitar I still stand there, but at least I twitch occasionally."

Curiously, though the lyrics for *Disintegration* had been written months before the album was recorded, Smith didn't come up with vocal lines until after all the instrumental tracks were done.

This stems partly from the band's collectivist approach: Each member brings in demo tapes which are cannibalized for song ideas. Eventually a shape and arrangement are worked out—determined, in this case, by the "idea" of the album—and after it's on tape Smith begins to think about his vocal. "I've never sung the songs till I stand in front of the mike in the studio," he says. "I've never worked out the melody."

That's not to say he simply gets up and improvises, though. With the new album's "Plainsong," for example, "I had the words to that written quite close to what they're like, but I didn't worry about the meter or the rhyme. The phrases were all there. When we work out the music I think, 'This piece of music will go with these words.' And when I'm piecing together, I sit in my room and I've got the tape playing over and over again, thinking how it should go, until I don't have to read it. Then I go stand in front of the mike, turn all the lights off,

"The weirdest thing about the way I sing is that most of the time it's how I talk."

IN BETWEEN GEAR

ROBERT Smith's main guitar is a nation-shaped National. "I don't know what it's called," he shrugs. "It's a bakelite thing." He also plays "a customized Fender Jazzmaster that's been sort of sculpted into a weird fish shape." Why a fish? "I just gave it to the girl, and that's what she came back with." He says it's a '62 Jazzmaster, just a year older than his Fender VI bass. His only other guitar is an Ovation 12-string acoustic.

Apart from the Ovation, which runs directly into the board, Smith amplifies his guitars with a Peavey Stereo Chorus 100, driving a 2x12 cabinet; the Fender VI goes through a Music Man head with a 4x12 cabinet. His effects are all Boss pedals: noise gate, graphic EQ, flanger, distortion, "a clever delay that samples" and a mother box for the guitar.

As for strings, Robert uses a .010-gauge set, "usually regular Rotosound," except on the Fender VI, which uses Jet Bass strings, "named after Jet Harris, the bass player in the Shadows," says **Simon Gallup**. And what does Gallup play? "I've got three basses," he says. "One Washburn, a semi-acoustic which I try to use as the main one; and a backup Music Man bass; and another Music Man that's D-tuned." Pedals are by Boss, and include a graphic EQ, a delay, a flanger, an overdrive, a noise gate and a mother box, and are fed into a Tascam Portastudio before reaching a pair of Peavey Megabass heads and Black Widow speakers, two 15s and two 12s. His strings are also Rotosounds.

Although guitarist **Porl Thompson** has quite a few Fenders at home, on the road he's the Cure's Gibson guy, using a stereo ES-345 and a '55 ES-175 for the bulk of his onstage playing. They're fed into two Marshall 50-watt heads, split between the pickups so each pickup has got a different head. Why? "I use stereo echo," he explains, "so it pans across the two cabinets." His strings are Gibson 748s, played with a Gibson Gripper pick. In addition to the Marshalls, Thompson also uses a Vox 8013, sometimes

by itself, sometimes in conjunction with the Marshalls. He controls the mix with a Scholz Rockman pedal system and two t.c. electronics chorus pedals.

When it's **Roger O'Donnell's** turn to give the tech talk, Smith teasingly points to the cassette recorder and says, "He's got a C-120."

"It's not that bad," counters O'Donnell. And it really isn't much of a laundry list: A Yamaha KX88 mother keyboard and a Roland JX-8P, the latter just in MIDI line. There's an Elker MIDI footpedal module—"bass pedals, but I don't really play basslines," says O'Donnell. "It looks like that, but I'm actually playing chords with the foot pedals. It's for the sake of accuracy; my boots are a bit too big [for basslines]"—and a MIDI rack which consists of a Prophet 2000 sampler, a Roland MKS-80 MIDI digital piano, an Ensoniq Mirage and three Oberheim DPX-1 sample players which handle a combination of Emulator II, Mirage and Prophet 2000 disks. Outboard effects are managed by two Roland DEP multi-effects, and everything gets sorted out through a Simmons eight-channel programmable mixer with a 99-memory circuit and a Roland MIDI-Merge MIDI patchbay. Don't forget the Boss volume pedal. He hears it all through a Meyer monitor.

Finally, **Boris Williams** keeps time on a Yamaha drum kit, with four rack toms—10", 12", 13" and 15"—and a 22" bass drum. His snare is a 6½" wooden Noble & Cooley, although he keeps a metal Ludwig Black Beauty as a backup. The heads are all Remos, with Emperors on the top and Ambassadors on the bottom. His sticks are made by the Rock Shed in London, and are model SS. His cymbals are Zildjians—two splashes and a China being the most used—and he has high-hats on either side of the kit. That's not for symmetry, either; "On some beats it gives me more freedom to have my right hand over to the right," he says. "It's just easier." The high-hats are controlled by side-by-side pedals, the remote linkage for the right high-hats courtesy of Pearl. Williams' other hardware is mostly Yamaha.



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have a couple of drinks, and whatever comes out is it.

"On this record, I think I did five of the songs on first takes, the five really slow ones. 'Disintegration' took me about 10 takes over 10 different days. I could only do it once a day; it was *torture*. But I wanted all the songs to be done in one go. There's no logical reason why. I just wanted it to be a performance. So a lot of time was spent in the studio waiting for me to get in the mood to sing the songs."

Strange as the Cure's methods sometimes are, the group's music truly seems to have found an audience. Even though *Disintegration* had barely arrived in record shops when the Cure arrived in Copenhagen, it was already shaping up as the band's most successful effort yet.

"We've had our first Top 5 single ever this week, in England," Smith says, not sounding especially ebullient. "It seems very surreal to me because we haven't done anything and it's just rocketing up the charts. It's only been held back by people like Kylie Minogue. So we are a pop group as well."

Which makes him feel... how?

"I mean, I... I like it," he equivocates. "I suppose it would be foolish to pretend I didn't. I would love the idea of the Cure having a number one single in England after all this time. I think it would be brilliant. But I wouldn't do anything to help it," he laughs. "If it doesn't happen, it's tough."

So why does he seemingly take this triumph to be such a hollow victory? Because frankly, he says, the Cure hasn't really won; it has just sold a few more records than it once did. "Musically it's as stagnant now as it was when we started," he mopes. "That's the problem. If our aims had been to displace the people that we despised when we started, we've failed. 'Cause they're still there, and they're still selling more records than they ever did. Our albums just present another choice.

"But I don't know. I suppose I still think of what we do in very naive terms. I still do it because I want to. I just want to do something. And I have no concept of it being a career. I think it's quite ludicrous that I'm sitting in this hotel today.

"I still feel very strange walking out onstage," he adds. "Tomorrow night might be the thousandth concert, or probably more. I still won't be able to grasp, for a while, why everyone's staring. And it's not me being funny. There are huge areas of what we do that I still find very alien, and just very strange. And it's because I'm not a natural, I think, to be in a group."

Yet Robert Smith manages not merely to survive but to flourish, and for the most old-fashioned, un-punk reason imaginable: the love of a good woman. "I've known Mary since I was at school," he says of his wife. "She's the only person I know intimately that's known me since before the group, apart from my family. She's a calming influence. If I get too precious about things, she drags me back and makes me look at it.

"And I think if I didn't have that, I would have got lost somewhere on the way." ☞

THE TOLL from page 18

that we're still getting the most payback from," Circone says. "What we're hoping is that with this new single, we can get the radio support for the three-minute rock songs, and save the other things for live. But that certainly doesn't mean that the second album isn't going to have some long tracks on it too."

Yeah, we know, Brad. We know. ☞

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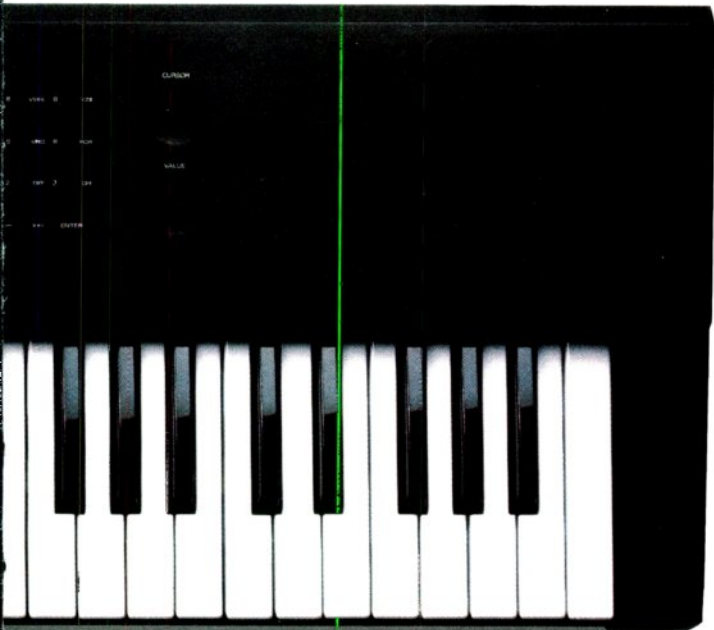
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Because the W-30 uses the same disks as the S-50 and S-550, you won't need to build a sound library. It already exists.

n the market, the first.



byte, user-accessible memory (ROM).

And because it comes with the most frequently-used sounds, you won't need to load in a sound disk to begin working.

The sampler section's 512k (RAM) memory is no less impressive. It's actually equal to that of a Roland S-330, and can be used for creating new sounds, or for playback, or for manipulating any of the S-Series disks. As a result, you'll not only be in a position to work with the sounds that are currently hot, you'll be in just as good a position to capture the sounds that will become hot.

Nor does its versatility end here, because the Roland W-30 not only puts



If you squint you can probably make out the fact that the new Roland W-30 has eight polyphonic individual outputs which allow any sound to be routed individually to a mixer.

a 3.5" floppy disk drive at your disposal, it also gives you the ability to access additional data by using either a CD-ROM or a hard disk connected to an optional SCSI interface.

Of course, a work station should be able to express itself too. Which is why we've made our 61-note keyboard sensitive to both velocity and after-touch.

And it should be easy to use. Hence, the W-30 uses a large, state-of-the-art 240x60 dot LCD display that's capable of providing more useful information at one time than ever before.

But before we go, let us take this moment to pose a hypothetical ques-

tion. Let's just say that all of the other so-called work stations found a way to include these very same fea-

tures. They'd be better, of course, but still not comparable to the re-

markable new W-30. Because they'd still be missing the most persuasive and motivating feature of all.

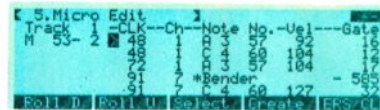
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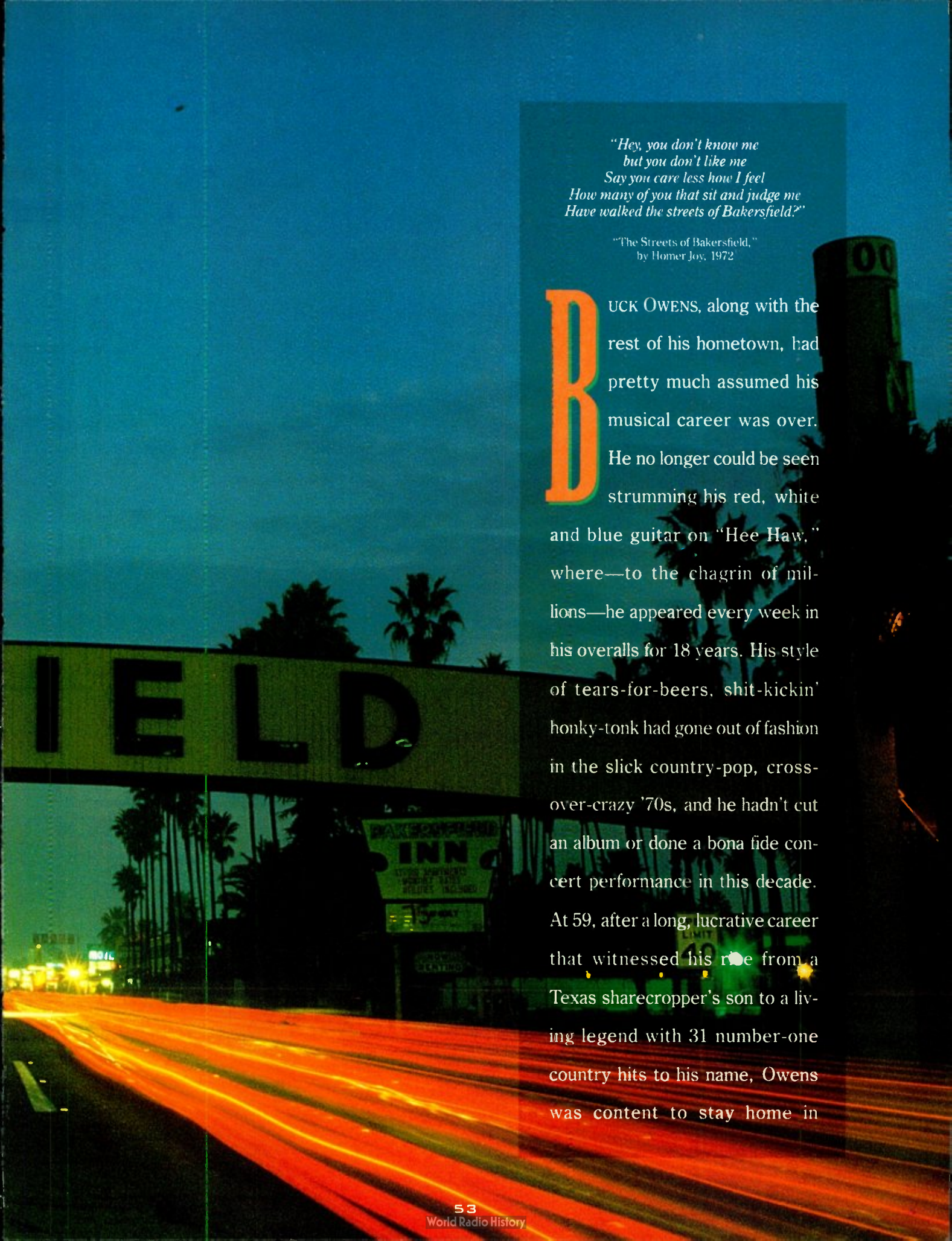
While sequencing you can change the length or dynamic value of any note simply by using microscope editing.

The Bakersfield Sound

ROOTS & REVIVAL

By Rick Mitchell





*"Hey, you don't know me
but you don't like me
Say you care less how I feel
How many of you that sit and judge me
Have walked the streets of Bakersfield?"*

"The Streets of Bakersfield,"
by Homer Joy, 1972

BUCK OWENS, along with the rest of his hometown, had pretty much assumed his musical career was over. He no longer could be seen strumming his red, white and blue guitar on "Hee Haw," where—to the chagrin of millions—he appeared every week in his overalls for 18 years. His style of tears-for-beers, shit-kickin' honky-tonk had gone out of fashion in the slick country-pop, cross-over-crazy '70s, and he hadn't cut an album or done a bona fide concert performance in this decade. At 59, after a long, lucrative career that witnessed his rise from a Texas sharecropper's son to a living legend with 31 number-one country hits to his name, Owens was content to stay home in

Bakersfield. He expected to live out his golden years looking after his successful country radio stations and playing golf.

"Hell, I was happy," says Owens, sitting and squinting into the sun on the second-story patio of his plush new offices in Bakersfield's Buck Owens Building. "I never really expected to do no more recording. Sometimes you're not aware you're missing something..."

In September 1987, a young L.A. cowboy singer named Dwight Yoakam strode uninvited into Owens' office and introduced himself. Owens, of course, had heard Yoakam's music on the radio. He'd also heard Yoakam credit the "Bakersfield Sound" popularized by Merle Haggard and others



Buck and his "little friend," Dwight Yoakam.

in the late '50s and '60s as a major influence. (Yoakam later dedicated his *Hillbilly Deluxe* LP to "Buck Owens for all the records that still serve as an inspiration for the California honky-tonk sound.") And in Dwight's outspoken criticisms of the Nashville record industry and staid country radio programmers, Buck recognized something of the young rebel he'd been when he was just starting out in the business.

Yoakam asked Owens to sit in with his band on a medley of Buckaroo classics that night at the Kern County Fair. Owens had turned down many similar offers over the past nine years, but this time he allowed himself to be persuaded. The two hit it off so well that when the Country Music Association asked Owens to appear on its thirtieth anniversary television special in February 1988, he suggested the invitation also be extended to Yoakam. Looking for duet material, they settled on an overlooked track from one of Owens' early-'70s albums: "The Streets of Bakersfield."

The song is an Okie's proud, sad lament for a Dust Bowl dream of a better life in California that never came to pass—an updated *Grapes of Wrath* tale of what hard times can mean to a common man if, as Woody Guthrie put it, you ain't got the do-re-mi, boy. As sung by Owens and Yoakam, the refrain is also the defiant response to Nashville's country music hegemony by two generations of West Coast outsiders.

Back in the '60s, Owens had bypassed the Nashville establishment by cutting his hits in Capitol Records' Los Angeles studios and at his own studio in Bakersfield. In response to Nashville's criticism that his music was starting to sound too much like that godawful rock 'n' roll, Owens took out national ads promising to record nothing but straight country

from then on.

His next single was a wobbly-kneed, hoot-and-holler version of Chuck Berry's "Memphis."

"They about hung me for it," Owens recalls with a laugh.

When Dwight Yoakam arrived on the national country scene in the mid-'80s, after first pulling off the hillbilly highway and passing through L.A.'s rock underground, he was most outspoken as to how he felt about the formulaic, middle-of-the-road country pap coming off the Nashville assembly line. The *real* country music tradition, he declared, could be found in the Bakersfield Sound of Buck Owens and Merle Haggard, not in the boring crap out of Nashville. The country music establishment did not take kindly to Yoakam's remarks, and his records initially met with resistance at country radio stations, eventually overcome by genuine popular demand.

Now here they were together on nationwide TV, the old renegade and the young rebel, smirking at each other and singing through their noses while flipping Nashville the invisible bird from the streets of Bakersfield.

A decade or two ago such insubordination would have been met with icy reserve and business recriminations. But these are changing times for country music, and the CMA accountants can read the bottom line on a ledger sheet with the best of them. New traditionalists such as Randy Travis and the Judds have successfully expanded country's appeal to hip young rock listeners who disdain the tackiness of most country-pop but who can easily relate to honest country roots. Why, even glossy queen Barbara Mandrell, who was country before country was cool and then did her dangdest to make it uncool again, hopped aboard the new traditionalist bandwagon with her latest album.

Buck and Dwight subsequently recorded "The Streets of Bakersfield" for Yoakam's album *Buenas Noches from a Lonely Room*. It became the first number-one country single of Yoakam's career, and Owens' first hit of any kind in 10 years. Flaco Jimenez's accordion added a norteño spice to the song, helping to convey the flavor of life in the hot, dusty flatlands of the southern San Joaquin Valley, home to thousands of Mexican migrant workers who have replaced the Oklahoma Dust Bowl refugees in the cotton fields and grape vineyards. The song was nominated for Best Duo Performance of 1988 by the CMA, and was up for a Grammy. The message is clear: The Bakersfield Sound is back, and country music is better for it.

LIKE RODNEY DANGERFIELD, Bakersfield can't get no respect in some quarters. Located 100 miles north of Los Angeles, but

*I'm a honky-town singer is
what I am. Every time I
compromised and did what the
record people told me to, it
went in the tank.*

seemingly in a different world, the city is the frequent butt of jokes by Johnny Carson and David Letterman. In a recent issue of *High Times*, the metropolitan area of 250,000 was dismissed as "a real shit hole—don't even stop for gas there."

Despite its oil and agricultural wealth, Bakersfield's reputation as the coccyx of central California's redneck spine is not entirely undeserved. My own first impression of the town was as a longhaired college student in the early '70s. I awoke in

a Denny's parking lot, where I had pulled over to get a couple hours' sleep before finishing the last leg of a marathon drive from Seattle to L.A., to find three drunken cowboys pressing their greasy faces against my windshield and attempting to tip my car over. I beat cleats out of there, and never returned until the music drew me back.

The oil boom of the '70s brought in a suburban yuppie population more at ease in penny loafers than cowboy boots, but the town still lacks the cultural sophistication of its huge neighbor to the south. It is, for better and worse, a little cow town that's become a big cow town.

But when Dwight brought Buck out as a special guest at a dozen stops on his *Buenas Noches from a Lonely Room* tour last year, audiences cheered any mention of Bakersfield in the same manner that references to Asbury Park draw hosannas from worshipful Bruce Springsteen fans. The old boy proceeded to steal the show from his "little friend," as Owens refers to Yoakam, drawing prolonged standing ovations at every stop.

"It's gratifying, but mystifying," says Owens of the hero's welcome he encountered. "People have fallen in love with Bakersfield. I think they always knew about Bakersfield, but that was such a big-play record. The time was right."

To knowledgeable listeners, Bakersfield has long been viewed as a mecca of "western and country" music. In the early '50s, a number of nationally-known singers and songwriters—including Wynn Stewart (to whom the young Merle Haggard often was unfavorably compared), Tommy Collins (whose western swing dissertation "If You Ain't Lovin', You Ain't Livin'" was a hit for Faron Young in 1954 and again for George Strait in 1988), Ferlin Husky, Jean Sheperd and Billy Mize—lived in and around Bakersfield or used it as a working base. These artists helped develop the distinctive, swinging honky-tonk sound later popularized by Owens and Haggard—heavy on the twangy guitars, dance beats and hillbilly pathos, never mind the pre-sweetened "countryopolitan" production techniques favored at the time by Nashville producers.

Bakersfield did not become the recording industry center—"Nashville West," they called it in the '60s—that many hoped it would. Most of the best artists either moved away, like Haggard, or retired, like Owens. Except for a few diehards such as Red Simpson—fondly remembered for white-line-fever visions such as "Hello, I'm a Truck"—and Bobby Durham—who had an album out last year on Hightone, the same label that launched the career of Robert Cray—the glory days are just a memory on the real streets of Bakersfield.

Yet the Bakersfield Sound didn't so much die as move to L.A., which is where most of the original Buckaroos records were done anyway, and lie low for 15 years. Pete Anderson, who plays guitar with Yoakam and has produced albums for Rosie Flores, George Highfill, Michelle Shocked and Jim Lauderdale as well as Yoakam's three releases, has put together two compilation LPs of up-and-coming West Coast country artists titled *A Town South of Bakersfield, Vols. I and II* (available on Enigma). While Yoakam and Anderson are unquestionably most responsible for the current revival, other major '80s country artists who've freely acknowledged their debt to Bakersfield include Travis, Strait, Ricky Van Shelton, Rodney Crowell, the Desert Rose Band and Highway 101.

When Yoakam appeared a few years ago wearing his skin-tight jeans and ever-present cowboy hat pulled over his eyes, many critics (including this one) considered his music too contrived and his pose too calculated to be taken seriously. Although Yoakam's family roots are in the mining hills of Appalachia, he grew up in the suburbs of southern Ohio. His Southern accent tends to disappear when he's not singing. But



Bakersfield notes: Owens and the original Buckaroos (top), Tex Marshall & the Rodeo Ranch Hands, Maddox Bros. and Rose, the Blackboard Lounge, Saturday night at the Blackboard.

these complaints have diminished in light of Yoakam's acceptance by the mainstream country audience and his growth as a singer and songwriter. *Buenas Noches from a Lonely Room* is easily his best album, a dark and brooding work far more personal and introspective than anything Owens—though not Haggard—ever put out.

Haggard, of course, has been touring and recording continuously for 25 years, establishing a reputation for musical integrity and consistency arguably unmatched in the annals of country music. Throughout the '70s, while the Nashville assembly line was turning out bland, country-pop models by the likes of Kenny Rogers and Crystal Gayle, Haggard stuck to his guns with such unvarnished classics as "Back to the Barrooms" and "Serving 190 Proof." He also paid tribute to his heroes on albums dedicated to the songs of Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Wills (who came through Bakersfield regularly in the early '50s while his band was quartered in California) and Lefty Frizzell. These records exposed a generation of listeners to the authentic roots and tradition of country and western music, and offered a soulful alternative to Nashville's MOR mindset. It's not surprising that Travis and Strait both cite Haggard as a primary inspiration.

Hag lives in Lake Shasta now, where he has a studio, and his music has evolved into a sound too timelessly idiosyncratic to be put into anybody's regional pigeonhole. Still, he's never lost touch with his hometown roots in Oildale, a rough, redneck community just north of Bakersfield, and several members of his band are no Strangers in these parts.

He's modest about his influence on today's generation of new traditionalists. "Nobody ever done those old songs like Jimmie Rodgers," Hag says, "and I doubt there'll be anybody in the year 2000 who does Randy Travis' songs like Randy does 'em now. To me, he's making 1990s music. If it sounds like something that's gone before, that just lets you know where he's coming from. These boys are good. I'm proud to still be competing with them."

Haggard turned 52 in April. The lines on his face are those of a man who's lived hard, works hard and plays hard. By now, the story of his early life is well-known: how his father died when he was nine, how he took to hopping freight trains as a teenager and was in and out of reform schools, how a series of

Player/producer Pete Anderson at home in the studio.



petty crimes and jailbreaks ended with a stay in San Quentin, how he made a decision to turn his life around while in solitary confinement and how he returned to Bakersfield to launch his music career upon his release. Haggard has the distinction of being the only man ever sent to prison by the city of Bakersfield and later awarded the keys to the city by the mayor.

Nineteen-eighty-eight was a rough year for him. His album, *Chill Factor*, was among the finest of his long career. He wrote or co-wrote nine of the 11 songs on the album, making it his most personal statement of the decade. But except for the number-one single "Twinkle, Twinkle Lucky Star," the album was only a moderate hit. (Audiences may take his consistency for granted.) He's also suffered through a variety of physical ailments including bronchial, digestive and dental problems. "His health was really bothering him," admits longtime Strangers steel guitarist and music director Norm Hamlet. "A tour can take a lot out of you even when you're feeling good. He was at a point of deciding to quit. Since he's rested up, he's changed his mind."

Haggard's place in country music history is as assured as that of his heroes Rodgers and Wills. "I wouldn't mind being a has-been," he allows, "but I'm still learning every day. All we've got to do is keep our health in shape and we've got an edge. I don't have to worry about creating a new style. We got a style. All we gotta do is sing a good song. We got enough true Merle Haggard fans who will buy a record if it's good. If it's bad, I wouldn't want 'em to buy it." Fortunately Merle's latest album, *Broken Friend*, is good.

THE SUCCESS OF HIS DUET with Yoakam prompted Buck Owens to release his first new album of this decade, *Hot Dog*, late last year. While a bit tentative and abbreviated—the two sides combined clock in at 26:28—*Hot Dog* is better than the bulk of the Buckaroos' output in the '70s, when the band admittedly was on "cruise control."

The title track is a harmless, Carl Perkins-inspired rockabilly goof Buck originally cut in 1957 under the pseudonym Corky Jones in an ultimately futile attempt to dodge the wrath of rock-hating country fans. The album also includes a new version of "Memphis" ("I don't think they'll say too much about it this time," Owens remarks) and a geriatric take on Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues." The heart of the album can be found on side two, where Buck redefines the Bakersfield Sound on faithful updates of jukebox classics such as "Sweethearts in Heaven," "Second Fiddle," "A-11" and "The Key's in the Mailbox," plus another duet with Yoakam on "Under Your Spell Again," one of the Buckaroos' biggest hits.

Owens is in surprisingly strong voice considering how long he's been away from the studio. He takes all the leads and, as he did in the old days, doubles and triples on the harmony parts. In some ways he sounds better than before; his voice has broadened with age, his familiar adenoidal twang is not quite so pronounced.

"Some of his songs were really up in his range," says Jim Shaw, longtime Buckaroos keyboardist and co-producer. "I was amazed that he could hit them. I think he sounds phenomenal. If you like the old Buck, it's on there. We really tried to get that old feel."

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS AREA that it has produced two country music giants, plus a disproportionate number of nationally respected musicians such as guitarist Roy Nichols, who recently retired after 40 years on the road with the Maddox Brothers and Merle Haggard, and young Mark Yeary, pianist with the Strangers?

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"This is the friendliest damn town anywhere," says drummer Henry Sharpe, who moved to Bakersfield from Oklahoma in 1956 and for years played in the house band at the Blackboard Lounge, the legendary nightclub where both Owens and Haggard launched their performing careers. Sharpe is now the president of the Bakersfield Country Music Museum, which is collecting artifacts documenting the history of country music in the region. The museum is scheduled to open in December 1989, and hopes eventually to rival its counterpart in Nashville. "If a guy shakes your hand and says you got a deal, you got a deal," Sharpe recalls. "There wasn't no kind of meanness. We all starved to death together."

The willingness of older musicians to lend a newcomer a helping hand no doubt contributed to the emergence of the Bakersfield Sound. Among those recorded as pioneers of country music in Bakersfield are Bill Woods—who no longer plays in public but can be heard daily spinning vintage country and western swing records on KCHJ-AM, "The Big Voice of the Valley" in Delano—and Lewis Talley, who owned the label that released Wynn Stewart's late-'50s hits and Haggard's first recordings.

But the cultural factors that made Bakersfield a nexus for country music go deeper than a friendly handshake. It goes back to the Dust Bowl experience. Many of Bakersfield's future country musicians came west during the Depression hoping for a new start in California. Owens' family started in Sherman, Texas and stopped in the Arizona cotton fields; Buck arrived in 1951 at the age of 21 and landed a job as a DJ on "Cousin Herb's Trading Post" radio show. (Owens now owns the city's dominant country station, KUZZ-AM/FM.) Haggard's parents moved from Checotah, Oklahoma to the Bakersfield area in 1935, two years before Merle's birth, after losing their family farm in a fire. Then as now, the lifestyle of the central California migrant farmworkers involved a continuous struggle for survival. Music was the only form of recreation they could afford, sitting around the campfires at night singing the old hillbilly songs they had brought with them.

Country music is sometimes referred to as "the white man's blues." Given the sentimental, bourgeois tendencies country music has exhibited ever since they took poor old Hank Sr.'s greatest hits and posthumously smothered them in sappy strings, this is frequently an insult to the blues. But in the case of the desperately poor Southern and Southwestern whites who settled around Bakersfield in the '30s, it is an accurate enough description.

The modern roots of the Bakersfield Sound can be traced to the day in 1946 when the Maddox Brothers and Rose, who had

Bakersfield is the friendliest damn town anywhere. If a guy shakes your hand and says you got a deal, you got a deal.

been touring the West Coast since the late '30s, plugged in their guitars and accidentally helped invent the blues-inflected rockabilly sound that would knock the pop music off its axis 10 years later with the recordings of Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash for Sun Records in Memphis.

"Before that it was strictly hillbilly," says Fred Maddox, the only surviving member of the Maddox Brothers and a resident

of Delano, a farming community 25 miles north of Bakersfield. (Fred's sister Rose Maddox, who whooped and yodeled her way into the Country Music Hall of Fame, nearly died of a heart attack last year after performing at the dedication ceremonies for the Bakersfield Country Music Museum.)

"We got together this beat we have now and started playing electric instruments," Fred recalls. "When you do that, it takes the stuff out of real hillbilly and makes it rockabilly. At least that's what they called it. To me, it's just good old country music." The Maddox Brothers gave Roy Nichols his start in




Hag: "These boys are good. I'm proud to be competing with them."

the late '40s. "I hired Roy when he was 15," says Fred. "I needed a guitar player and he came up to Modesto and tried out. I hired him after the second tune—I guess that says it all."

With Haggard, Nichols eventually perfected the art of saying everything that needed to be said on guitar in a given tune with just a few choice notes or a jazz-inflected chord change. But in the early days, as can be heard on his records with the Maddox Brothers and Rose (reissued by the Arhoolie label), he was a wildman, taking the electric guitar to places no traditional country musician had gone before.

The late Don Rich, who played both the fiddle and guitar parts on Buck Owens and the Buckaroos' essential '60s sessions, was the other great architect of the Bakersfield guitar sound. Rich's thick-stringed, trebly attack had more in common with the oily rumble of Lonnie Mack or the hang-10 reverb of Dick Dale than with the clean, toned-down Tennessee twang of Chet Atkins. His death in a motorcycle accident in the early '70s signaled the end of the Bakersfield Sound's first golden era. The current heirs to the Nichols/Rich tradition are Pete Anderson with Yoakam and Clint Strong with the Strangers, two of the finest guitarists currently working in any musical idiom.

More than anything else, it is this emphasis on the gee-tar that set the Bakersfield Sound apart from country music in Nashville. You take a bar with a crowded dance floor, a little band with a solid 4/4 rhythm section, add a maniac on guitar, maybe a pedal steel and fiddle and get a hopped-up hillbilly singing his (or her, as in the case of Rose Maddox) butt off, and you got it—Okie boogie. Simple, but nonetheless amazing on



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Fred Maddox believes his band was never accepted by the country music establishment at the Grand Ol' Opry in Nashville. "They told me you can't be real hillbillies if you're from California," he says. "I didn't know what they meant. We was from Alabama, but we done it on the West Coast." Two, three and four decades later, Buck Owens, Merle Haggard and Dwight Yoakam would echo his complaint.

One of Maddox's most far-reaching accomplishments occurred a few years later when the Maddox Brothers were performing regularly on the "Louisiana Hayride" radio program. One night, Fred gave up his nightly slot to a good-looking teenager who had been begging for a chance to be heard. The kid's name was Elvis Presley. In the radio audience that night was a producer named Sam Phillips, who owned Sun Records in Memphis. You know the rest.

IT MUST BE the rowdy guitars and steady backbeat, as well as the extremes of emotion ranging from cornball humor and drunken revelry to almost unbearably lonely pathos, that explains the appeal of the Bakersfield Sound to young artists who grew up listening to rock 'n' roll as well as country.

"Those Telecaster guitar styles were the key to those records," says Pete Anderson, remembering the first time he encountered the music of Owens and Haggard.

Anderson grew up in Detroit playing mostly rock and blues, but switched to country almost exclusively after moving to the West Coast in the late '70s. He denies that he is consciously striving to recreate the Bakersfield Sound of the '60s in his records with Yoakam, Rosie Flores and George Highfill (whose sadly overlooked LP *Waitin' Up* was one of 1987's most

promising debuts—Anderson called it "the *most* country record put out by a major company in the last 17 years"). But he adds that "a lot of my formative playing has been in the clubs out here. I just absorbed it," he says of the influence of Rich and Nichols. "I formulated what I felt country music should sound like. When I hooked up with Dwight, our band was patterned after Owens'. We approached it aggressively. Buck, he played aggressively, too."

Anderson notes another similarity between Owens and Yoakam: "For years, people told Dwight he needed to go to Nashville and get a songwriting partner, or take singing lessons, when all the time he knew who he was. He *knew* his songs were great. We had no help from the record company when we put out that first album. People just *liked* it. Nobody can tell Dwight they won't play his records because they sound too different. He won't put up with it. Neither did Buck."

Those who know Owens primarily from his dumb-ass "Hee Haw" persona might be surprised to learn that he is both a versatile musician—his first instrument was trumpet—and a notoriously shrewd businessman.

In the late '70s, with his record sales on the wane, Owens jumped to Warner Bros. in a last-gasp effort to revive his career. His contract with Capitol included an unusual clause giving him control of the master tapes, which is why his classic Capitol '60s sides have been so long out of print. With Buck back on the label now, Capitol is hopeful that Owens will agree to let them reissue the best of his old work. In November the Country Music Foundation in Nashville released the complete, unedited tape of Buck Owens and the Buckaroos' 1966 Carnegie Hall concert. In a move that would have seemed out of character earlier in his career, Owens has promised to

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donate the royalties from the first two years' sales to the CMF to "promote country music." (Under the guidance of Emmylou Harris, the foundation also has reissued rare tapes of Bob Wills, Hank Williams and the Bristol Sessions, which contain the earliest recordings of Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family and other first-generation country greats.)

So Owens has finally made his peace with the Nashville establishment, and he's encouraged his "little friend" to do likewise. But he will make no more apologies for playing rock 'n' roll. "I might have done *all* rockabilly," he says of *Hot Dog*. "I didn't want to do anything to diminish what the Bakersfield Sound means to people. Every time I compromised and did what the record people told me to, it went in the tank."

"I'm a honky-tonk singer is what I am. My love for music is straight-out and head-on. My first influence is Bob Wills, [but] I love oldtime rock 'n' roll, country music and I love bluegrass too. At the Blackboard [the Bakersfield lounge where Owens worked in the house band from 1951-1958], we used to play Little Richard, Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, Elvis... People used to take me to task for playing those songs. They'd sit there and enjoy it and then turn around and say, 'You bad boys! The guitars are too twangy, the drums are too loud.' We also used to play tangos and mambos for the strippers. But in those days they left on more than what you see 'em take off on TV nowadays."

Owens is humble regarding his technical contributions to the Bakersfield Sound. "I wish I could take all the credit for the sound of my records, but it was just something that happened along," he admits. "We had a good nucleus of musicians, and don't forget the influence of [Capitol Records producer] Ken Nelson. One thing I did, I always tried to play right on top of

the beat. I thought that made it sound livelier. And I liked the sound a little brighter. To me, lots of records get lost in the mid-range. People used to say, 'That sound is so bright.' I'd say, 'Yeah, turn it up.'"

According to steel guitarist Tom Brumley, a member of the Buckaroos from 1963-69 who has since recorded with Yoakam, the band came up with the idea to tune down a half-step to E flat when recording because he kept breaking the top string on his instrument. Of course, this led to some confusion when aspiring musicians would try to play along with the records. "They'd go, 'What are they doing in those weird keys?'" chuckles Brumley. "A buncha hillbillies playing C sharp and A flat! When actually we were just playing the way we always did in a different tuning."

Given his closet-rocker tendencies (during our interview, there is a copy of Eric Clapton's *Crossroads* boxed set lying open on his desk), it's not surprising to learn that Buck feels more at home with the new generation of country artists, who combine a purist's respect for country roots with a rock 'n' roll attitude, than he does with middle-of-the-road country artists his age. He speaks fondly of hanging out backstage at the CMA awards show with Jamie O'Hara of the O'Kanes, Lyle Lovett and Emmylou Harris.

"I think they feel more at home around me, too," he declares. "A lot of these guys are half-rock 'n' roll and half-country. That's my kinda folks. We *understand* each other. But we ain't gotta go kiss each other's feet every time we see each other."

As if to prove his point, Owens has re-recorded a duet version of "Act Naturally" with—naturally—Ringo Starr. He's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 118



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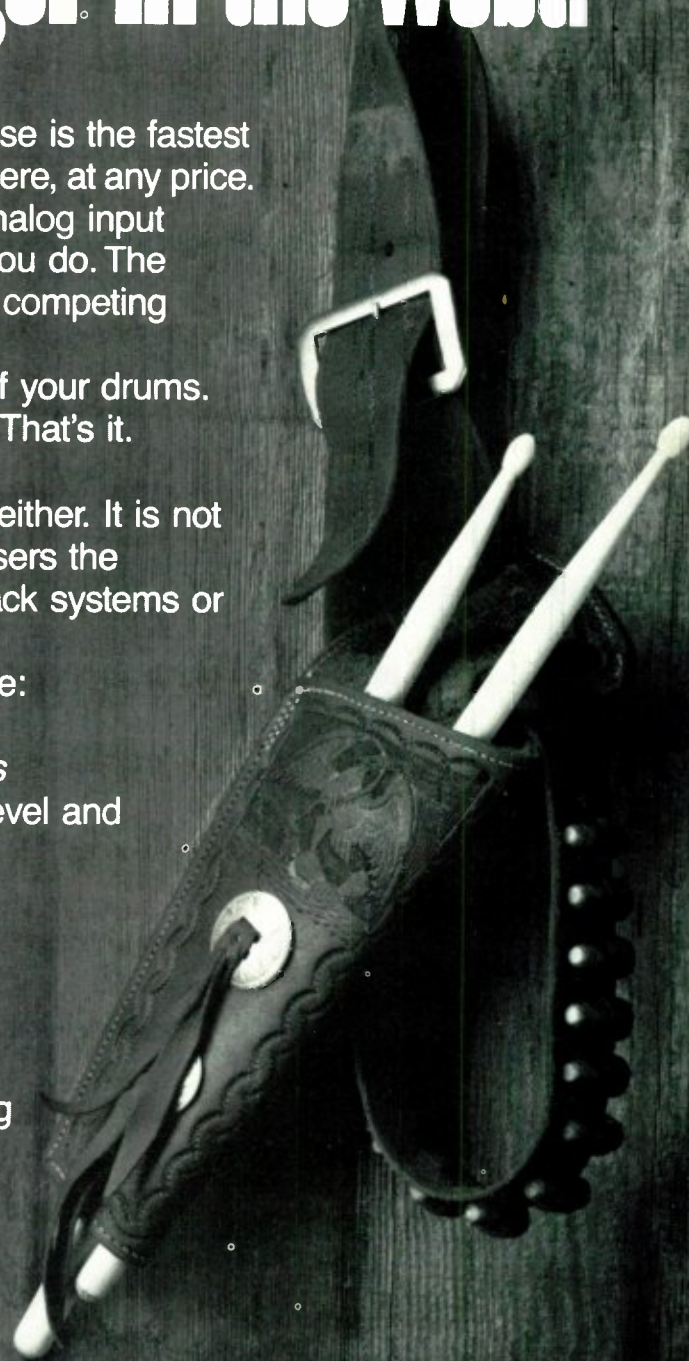
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WHO'S BACK

After seven years off the road,
can last generation's heroes
start making cents in a material world?

By Charles M. Young

MY TAKE on Pete Townshend is that he's extremely sensitive and chronically overwhelmed by his own emotions, so overwhelmed that anyone who is not overwhelmed by the same emotion at the same time makes no sense to him. And when a new emotion passes over him, his last emotion makes no sense to him either. Since he doesn't suffer fools lightly, and since no one in the world makes sense, most of all himself, the world is probably pretty lonely as well as overwhelming. No wonder he spent all that time practicing guitar drunk with the headphones on. He was going to shove those emotions right back down his ear canal, and made himself nearly deaf in the process.

Townshend has a new album out called *The Iron Man*, based on a fairy tale of the same name by England's poet laureate, Ted Hughes. It is the story of a little boy named Hogarth who encounters the Iron Man, a giant who wanders the countryside eating anything made of metal. Despite his instinct for proper ecology, the Iron Man is hated and

feared until he defeats a destructive dragon the size of Australia. It's a delightful read, makes more sense than *Tommy* and has given Townshend a focus for his creativity. It has also cost him a lot of time and money. The songs are very strong work by a very talented guy. He wants *The Iron Man* to be successful, and he's doing a big tour to support it.

The band he's touring with is called the Who. Two of them, Roger Daltrey and John Entwistle, actually played in the original Who, whose twenty-fifth anniversary (counting from when Keith Moon joined the band) is this year. Announced at a press conference in New York's Radio City Music Hall, the Who tour promises to be highly lucrative: 30-40 football stadiums selling out with 60-80,000 people paying \$23 and up to hear them. Figure in T-shirt and memorabilia sales, and it is difficult to see how the Who would gross less than a hundred million dollars. A few days after the last of these interviews, Budweiser was announced as sponsor of the band's New York shows, and several more stadium dates were added as tickets moved fast.



MUSICIAN: You said at your press conference the other day that you were still looking for a corporate sponsor for your tour?

TOWNSHEND: I can't speak for everyone in the group. But I feel and my manager feels that sponsorship is at a watershed. Great things are happening because of sponsorship. You might not agree. But the topping off of money allows you to look very differently at the profitability of tours. It might be the thing that allows people in rock to get away from playing stadiums, although it's the number of people corporations can hit in stadiums that makes sponsorship a viable prospect.

MUSICIAN: If you got enough money from a sponsor, you would take this tour to smaller venues?

TOWNSHEND: I think if you had enough money from a sponsor, you could afford to do some kind of show and reach the same number of people but not in stadiums. In other words, do high-quality, subsidized-price videos of a show or a series of paid previews. If people want a stadium show, it can be arranged. But anyone who wants to go to a stadium seems to me to have a problem. Sponsors can make it possible to avoid compromise by the fact that arenas are designed for sport, not acoustics. Music just helps these places stay in the black. The other possibility is using sponsorship as per the Madonna video to make a personal statement in a very artistic way about something that you passionately believe. I don't know if that video is a masterpiece or an aberration. I don't know. But I do

know it was a very, very dangerous thing. Was it Pepsi or Coke that sponsored it?

MUSICIAN: It was Pepsi, and they withdrew their sponsorship.

TOWNSHEND: Good. Doesn't matter as long as she made the video in her way.

MUSICIAN: Madonna has enough money to make that video on her own.

TOWNSHEND: You don't know anything about Madonna's money! You haven't got a clue! I haven't, and I'm sure I know her better than you do. In any case, the American film and record industry is based on the premise that you don't ever spend your own money. Well, there are people who have.

MUSICIAN: Would you sell a song out of the Who catalogue for a commercial?

TOWNSHEND: I've done it. Hundreds of times.

MUSICIAN: If someone came to you and wanted "My Generation" for a shoe commercial?

TOWNSHEND: Shoes? Depends on the subject. It's my legal property, my right to do what I like with it. You might not like it. You might feel it's your property...

MUSICIAN: Not my legal property...

TOWNSHEND: It's not your moral property either. It's just not your property. What's your property is your response. And the truth is, the advertisers have already made fortunes out of your response. They've used that response on a daily basis by advertising on radio and dictating what the playlist is going to





be. If you respond in a positive way to a song like "My Generation" or "Baba O'Riley" or "Won't Get Fooled Again" because you listen to AOR and then go out like a turkey and buy fucking Odorono, then they've got you. But most of all, they've got me, because it's my career that's suffering. Because the other 400 songs I've written don't ever get heard. I can't deal with it. I go to a sponsor and say, "Give me the money to do what I want to do." The public are already in the vise-like grip of advertising agencies' reductive demographic practices, reducing my career down to eight songs as AOR radio reproduces it. If somebody offers me the right price and I think it's worth doing, I'll sell the song. I've done it many times.

MUSICIAN: *Aren't you contributing to the vise-like grip Madison Avenue has?*

TOWNSHEND: It's already been done! What's the difference? There's further damage to be done? Why shouldn't I benefit the same way that you do? It's my fucking work!

MUSICIAN: *How do I benefit from it?*

TOWNSHEND: You benefit from it because it's part of your society. If you want to change society, change it. It's not my job. I'm a songwriter. It's what I do for a living. Your article isn't worth shit without the advertisers who advertise in *Musician*. It wouldn't be here except for advertisers.

MUSICIAN: *I don't make much money. You're in a privileged position in society. You're expected to tell the truth.*

TOWNSHEND: Bullshit! Bullshit! I'm not expected to do anything. Nobody is going to tell me what to do. Nobody is even going to ask me what to do. If anybody doesn't like it, that's their problem. It's my work. If someone doesn't like it, I can't help it.

MUSICIAN: *I'm not saying I don't like it. Your songs meant an enormous amount to me when I was growing up. Still do. Take it from another angle: When I listen to "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," surely one of the great rock songs, I don't want to think about the dancing raisins. I feel that's Madison Avenue stepping on a part of my memory that I don't want them having access to. The many associations I have with that song are violated and overpowered by a commercial image. I resent it.*

TOWNSHEND: You obviously watch too much fucking television.

MUSICIAN: *Actually, I don't watch that much. But when I do, the dancing raisins are there.*

TOWNSHEND: Your memory is violated by dancing raisins? Are you crazy? Is your perception of "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" so shallow that it's violated by dancing raisins? I feel strongly about this, because I've had to consider every single song I've had a bid on. For a long time there were certain things I wouldn't let go. Someone wanted "Magic Bus," and I thought, "Okay, that's a fun song. People won't mind." Then somebody comes along and wants "My Generation" to sell laxative pills. You know, "Dah dah dah, my constipation." They seriously think you're going to give them the song. And you think, "Well, let's play with the motherfuckers." And you say, "Okay, you can have the song for 16 million dollars, 'cause that's what the hatred of every Who fan in the world is worth to me."

You have to realize there's a price to what I've done in my life. The price has been established by what people have already given me by buying my work. The ethics are absolutely clear in my mind. It's my decision. It's my right. I've been outraged by certain ads that were absolutely despicable. And you are outraged by the dancing raisins. Maybe what we should do, the pair of us, is get a couple of machine guns and machine gun the lot of them. Is it really that serious?

MUSICIAN: *I'm not willing to machine gun people.*

TOWNSHEND: What are you willing to do? I'll do it with you. I do think advertising has an enormous responsibility. And they've fucked a lot of things. I just think it's better to have advertising at the front end of a project. So if there is any question about a song being associated with a product, it's there from the beginning so the public can relate to it directly. The interesting thing about tour sponsorship is you have to deal with the promoters who have already sold the venue to a beer company. Often the deal is already done, and the promoter wants his sponsor, not yours. If you want to go to heaven saying, "It's all right, because I didn't get a dollar from it," I say take it a step further. Would the event have happened at all without sponsorship? Would you be paying by a reduction in your performance fee? Better to know what you're doing. Better to take the money. Better to let the artist deal with the moral issues. Better to let the artist influence the advertisers and agencies involved.

MUSICIAN: *What are your feelings about tour sponsorship?*

ENTWISTLE: I've got no objection to someone sponsoring us unless the product is something I don't believe in. It definitely helps the tour, makes the show better. I don't see why anyone should have a go at us for being sponsored when you've got football heroes sponsoring sportswear. Why shouldn't we have a sponsor like Coke or beer or cigarettes? Especially if the company is willing to give money to

charity on top of what we get, it'll make someone else happy besides us. I haven't got much of a conscience, I suppose. I can think up really good reasons for doing things wrong. I live much easier that way.

MUSICIAN: *The Who meant so much to me growing up that I hate to see a product put in front of it. The meaning changes. The songs had such integrity.*

ENTWISTLE: Our sponsoring goes way back. We were really hunting for money in the '60s to finance our guitar smashing. We did ads for Great Shakes and Coke. "Coke after Coke after..." We did a lot of little commercials on *Who Sell Out*. We insisted that in the Schlitz commercial from the 1982 tour, at no point did it say we drank Schlitz beer. I've never drunk a glass of beer in my life. I had a sip once as a kid, and it was shit. But if someone wants me to sponsor Remy Martin, I'll jump on it. I feel I still have my integrity. When I tour, it costs me money, and I don't give a fuck if it comes from Schlitz. It enables me to play.

MUSICIAN: *You're looking for a new tour sponsor?*

DALTREY: No, we're not looking for one. We're not doing this tour for the money.

MUSICIAN: *John and Pete seemed pretty clear that they were doing it for the money.*

DALTREY: I'm not. Which isn't to say the money won't be useful. I'm doing this for me, to put a lot of things to rest, because I thought the way the Who ended felt like unfinished business. It was a rotten way to end, that 1982 tour.

MUSICIAN: *Why was it rotten?*

DALTREY: The tour wasn't rotten. The way the band ended was rotten. Just petered out, for want of a better word. [laughs] I want the experience of singing those old Who songs again. It's my passion. I love those songs. I love the band—not socially, but the chemistry when we work. It's the inside of the personality coming out, not all these electronic condiments. I just want to sing songs that I love with people that I love.



MUSICIAN: *Not socially?*

DALTREY: Our social lives are very separate. We only get together to work, so the chemistry isn't wasted on anything else. That's what made it great. It's still unbelievable how great it is. The show will be very demanding, but it's going to give me opportunity to sing because of the lowered stage volume. Before, all I could do was shout above the din. I'm singing better than ever now. No doubt about it. And I just sing. I'm not good at vocal tricks. You don't need that with the Who. I heard the W.A.S.P. version of "Can You See the Real Me" and it was just like the Who except for the metal vibrato vocal. I can't do that. If I'd been able to do that, the Who would not have had the same urgency, the same power.

MUSICIAN: *How did you feel about the Schlitz sponsorship in '82?*

DALTREY: It was great. I enjoy a drink. Nothing wrong with a beer. It paid for our plane. We did very well out of it. When we start this tour and people are printing the gate money, they look at the top line and they forget the expenses. When you get down to what's left after you cart around a stage and a 14-piece band, expenses are horrendous. Sponsorship is important. But I'm not doing this tour for the money, so I don't care if we have one or not. I live my life very simply now. I don't need all that money. I got another job to pay the rent. When the Who finished, it taught me a lesson. You can spend your whole life chasing that money, but it's not important. It's the freedom to do what you want to do. Aside from poor people who are fighting just to put food in their mouths, almost all of us have that freedom to do what we want.

I did go through a period where I regretted all that money we lost. 'Cause we lost millions, and we lost the bloody lot of it because we were crazy. But who cares? I'm still alive. I worked in Hungary last year, and it really taught me a lesson. The people are very poor there, but they still have a wonderful quality of community that we've lost here because of our stupid materialism. So I've changed. I'm different now.

MUSICIAN: *Could you describe that process of transformation?*

DALTREY: I'm not through it yet. I went through a period of a few years where I questioned my whole being. It was getting my life into balance. The end of the Who was terrifying. Now there was going to be nothing! But it wasn't true. A whole new life and career opened up for me. I've done so much living in the past seven years that I wasn't allowed in the Who. I'm a working actor now. I don't need this. *The Threepenny Opera* and *The Beggar's Opera*—that's the stuff I've been doing, and I love it. But if the Who want to do anything, I'm available because I'm a Who fan. I have my new life now, and I have this thing that I loved more than anything, and I can do it again. I'd do this tour for nothing! Better not tell John that. He'll want my share. But John hasn't got another career. He's got the Who, and he's got his own band that he takes on the road. His life is completely music.

MUSICIAN: *At the press conference, Roger had to repeat most of the questions for you. It was quite frightening. Aren't you afraid of losing more of your hearing? Did the others have to persuade you to do this tour?*

TOWNSHEND: No, it wasn't about persuasion. No one has nagged me about doing this tour. John and Roger and my man-

ager have all said, "What we're most concerned with is your health, your well-being, your happiness." To be 100 percent honest, the first thing that made me think about touring was the money. The commercial force behind such a venture is fantastic. I started to think what it would mean to have so much money that I would never have to have to make records at all. But around Christmas I decided I couldn't face doing it in spite of the fabulous sums of money involved. I said, "No, I want out." I thought what I'd be doing this year was put out my solo album, do a week of interviews, make the videos and go sailing.

Then I came to New York for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame ceremony. I saw the Soul Stirrers onstage, and this 86-year-old guy was onstage talking about music, and I realized that this undeniable American art form of rock 'n' roll had given me a reason for being, a focus, a destiny, a past, a present and a future. And I thought, "If these guys want to honor the Who next year, if the audience wants to come to our twenty-fifth anniversary party, who am I to stand in the way? Just so they know in advance that the music isn't going to be quite what they think it's going to be, then I'll go." Despite the fact that the news flashes all said Pete Townshend was going to play guitar like John Denver [Townshend's own line at the press conference] and he couldn't hear a word being said, the show in Boston sold out in two hours. I know the problem I face will compromise the show a little, but it's a problem that's technically easy to deal with, and it's important to show people that we're dealing with it. So many people have come up to me and said, "You know, I have the same problem that you do. I'm a DJ."

I say the problem is earphones. That's where my problem started. It was not loud guitar onstage rock 'n' roll style. It's very important to make this point. It was EARPHONES! EARPHONES! EARPHONES! It was going home after gigs, to my own studio, and playing guitar through the earphones. My sound was an electric sound. You couldn't reproduce it on an acoustic guitar. It had to be with earphones. Obviously I couldn't have a Marshall stack in my living room and practice with the babies upstairs. I used earphones for 20 years. That's what caused the damage. It's not helped now with loud music in performances, but I don't see any difficulty doing stadium shows when the sound is kept deliberately quiet onstage. It's also a different situation when your head is clear and you're not drunk. Wearing earphones when you're drunk can increase damage by a factor of 10, I think. Some of the muscles that operate the eardrum are disabled by alcohol.



"The thing that made me think about touring was money. I'd never have to make records."

MUSICIAN: *I'm a little mystified by what Pete will actually be doing onstage.*

ENTWISTLE: I think everyone is mystified by what Pete will be doing, including Pete. We won't know until we start rehearsing. There will be a loud side of the stage and a quiet side of the stage. The quiet side will be the vocalists, some percussion and Pete. The loud side will be keyboards, the other guitarist, the horns and me. As long as Pete is protected from that, it should be workable. The acoustic guitars will go straight through the monitors, but Pete will do some electric guitar toward the end. There are amplifiers now where you can get the sound of a stack and it's almost inaudible. Gallien-Krueger

do one. The Yamaha SPX, you can turn the distortion up and the volume down and it sounds like a Marshall stack on the other side of New York. Through the P.A. it would sound exactly like a Marshall stack. We're going to keep all our options open.

MUSICIAN: *His hearing loss is terrifying.*

ENTWISTLE: Most of our hearing damage didn't come from guitar. It came from P.A.s feeding back and headphones in the studio. I've got a slight whistle in this ear that goes off depending on how high I am in the world. I come down from where I live at 700 feet above sea level to Thames level for a business meeting, it starts whistling. For the first two hours I can't hear a damn word they're saying.

MUSICIAN: *Did it take much convincing to get Pete to agree to tour?*

ENTWISTLE: I believed in my heart he'd come around to thinking about touring again. He's inclined to change his mind quite a few times. Often in the same sentence. It was on and off, on and off. Maybe. Yes. No. Personally, I'm a much different person since the Who broke up. I'm more confident about my playing, my music, myself. I didn't want to get involved in the old Who power struggles again. The balance of power was always shifting backwards and forwards with me in the middle. When Keith died, I lost a lot of power because he and I always got together and agreed on things in advance. So that was 50 percent of the band wanting to do what we wanted to do. When Kenny Jones joined he didn't voice opinions, so I'd have to sit there while Pete and Roger mulled and changed their minds a few hundred times. Eventually they always came around to what I wanted to do anyway. The power structure has been distorted by the media from day one. No way I could be as powerful as Pete. He was the one with the gift of gab. It was a bit depressing when people would come up and say, "You're the best bass player in the world," and I was at the bottom of the pecking order in the band.

MUSICIAN: *Pete said at the press conference he wouldn't be playing much guitar. What is he going to do?*

DALTREY: He's just playing games. He'll be playing guitar. We're just trying to tell people it won't be the same. There will be elements that will be the same, but they will be getting more, not less, with this set. We'll still have the fire in "Won't Get Fooled Again," but on the other songs the color will be much greater. I intend to play acoustic guitar on some numbers with Pete playing the piano. We don't intend to generate that wall of sound from the stage anymore, mainly because of Pete's ears, but also because it's so self-defeating in the end. The music can't grow once you hit those noise levels. We'd be playing by rote instead of playing with what's left of our ears. We've all lost the top end of our hearing. It's part of the hazards of the job. But it's a nightmare for Pete. He's got tinnitus—not only is your hearing damaged, it's replaced by another noise. That's the worst part.

MUSICIAN: *Hogarth's fascination and fear and admiration of the Iron Man reminded me of my own relationship to the Who when I was a boy. There you were, this anarchic force for liberation*

lumbering through the countryside, living proof it was possible to escape middle-class repression.

TOWNSHEND: I like that, but it didn't occur to me. I identify very much with Hogarth myself. I think it's quite simply a fairy story about the fear and deprivation of children. On a more polite note, it's about the moment when a child balances those symbols of fear and smashes them against one another and grows up. I have to remind myself sometimes that I'm a big, strong man. We're all big people with nothing to be afraid of. We're the masters of this planet and nothing should frighten us except our own actions and their consequences, our carelessness, the possibility that we are our own undoing.

MUSICIAN: *Child abuse runs through the media in waves of hysteria here. Yet 75 percent of the American people believe it's fine to spank children in school. This country has a long history of assaulting smaller people to make them do our bidding.*

TOWNSHEND: They're trying to pass an act of Parliament to stop spanking their children at home in Britain. Canada has been a leader in stopping domestic violence as well. But the thing about brutality is that it's valuable when we're united against a common enemy. We can drain ourselves of all emotion and kill. We should be mobilizing all this brutality we have to clean up all this shit we've created. As the sergeant said in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, "We are living in shit." People of conscience on this planet

have got to be prepared to be brutal. It does no good being nice about it: "Please don't do that crack. Please don't beat your kids. Please don't shoot one another." We're dealing with dogs—*rabid, fighting dogs*. I'm not suggesting brutal policing. The people who care have got to be prepared to die for the cause. We've had wars and expected young people to go off and die in some far-off country. I'm surprised people aren't prepared to expect some of their young men and young women to die for the cause right here and now. Pollution, addiction, poverty—all these things are political issues and have to be dealt with in a political way. If you vote, vote with a big cross. Make a nick in your hand and vote with your blood. I feel that passionate about the way the world is going at this moment. It's urgent, and there is too much waffle. That factory where they're planning to build 500 million fluorocarbon refrigerators for the Chinese population—let's nuke it. Or buy them 500 million refrigerators. LET'S DO SOMETHING! Let's do something about those guys cutting down the rain forest. THEY'RE KILLING US!

MUSICIAN: *Are you working on a solo project these days?*

ENTWISTLE: I have a band that's changed members three times. And the album has been recorded three times because we weren't satisfied with a lot of the songs. We tried to get a deal for the band, but the day we were scheduled to sign the contract, the people at the company were arrested by the FBI for fraud. So no deal. Start from scratch. Again. The four songs that I wrote for the group album I'm going to remix and put on my solo album. But I won't be working on it for another year, because I'm not going back to England right away after this tour. I'm going to write a book about all the funny things that happened to the Who. After reading all these books by different people who thought they knew the Who, I've come to



"I'd do this tour for nothing! Better not tell John that. He'll want my share."

the conclusion that I never existed.

MUSICIAN: *You feel the various band biographers missed the humor along with your contribution?*

ENTWISTLE: Yeah. No humor in any of them. At all. All my fond memories of the Who are the silly things that happened. I haven't got any fond memories of working on albums or photo sessions. My memories are the fun we had on the road. As far as I'm concerned, the thing that made the Who a legend is the road work we did. It certainly wasn't the albums. They didn't sell particularly well. We didn't have hit singles. It was the way we performed those songs onstage. People grew to love them because of the show. None of the books talk about any performances, or why it ticked onstage. Why would 100,000 people come to our show and not buy the record?

MUSICIAN: *Care to share a fond memory of a concert before your book comes out?*

ENTWISTLE: I very rarely lose my temper. I let things bottle up and then something small or silly will be the last straw and I'll blow my top and everyone will run away and hide. Roger had been yelling at me all tour in 1974 to turn down. So I'd turn down and I'd be quite happy playing like that. And then Pete would scream from the other side of the stage, "I can't hear you! Turn up!" So I'd turn up, thinking, "What the fuck is this." For three weeks Roger would yell at me to turn down, and four seconds later Pete would yell at me to turn up. Finally we were in Houston, Texas, and Roger screamed in the microphone, "TURN DOWN!"

I thought, "I don't mind you screaming at me to turn down, but I don't need you to scream at me in front of the bloody audience." So I smashed the head off the bass, threw it in front of him and said, "You play the fuckin' thing!" He just stood there, with the song halfway through. I walked to the back of the amplifiers and they'd taken the fuckin' stairs away. I was in a bad enough temper that I jumped off the back of the stage. And it was 12 feet high. It felt like my spine came out the top of my head. But it was Chinese water torture out there: "TURN DOWN!" "TURN UP!"

MUSICIAN: *Do you approve of John's literary project?*

TOWNSHEND: I'll believe the book when I see it. I don't think any of these people know how hard it is. Very easy to start a book, very hard to finish. But it would be great if he does it, a research job like that. I coached Dave Marsh through his book on the Who and I published it in the U.K. And I coached Richard Barnes through his book on the Who. The reason I was happy with even the bad stuff about me was I was involved. Roger and John were just not available at that level to those authors. If they want to tell the story their way, they'll have to sit down and tell it. Very hard thing to do. I've contemplated a book on rock 'n' roll through my eyes. I can't imagine it being less than 150,000 words. The great thing about John is his sense of humor. If he writes down all the interesting anecdotes, whether they're true or not, it will be a wonderful story. What's fun about history is often the distortions. John is good at that. He remembers the stories and lets them evolve.

MUSICIAN: *Did John smash his bass in Houston?*

DALTREY: Yes, that's right. That's what I mean about the

problem with volume. There was Pete, all the way up, only hearing himself. And there was John playing four times as loud as he needs to be to hear himself. It was a *Catch-22* situation. With the singer in the middle. A complete nightmare. You can't sing, you just shout. I'm a good shouter, but it gets very boring.

MUSICIAN: *I was quite moved by your chapter in The Courage to Change by Dennis Wholey, the harrowing description of your withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs.*

TOWNSHEND: He's an old friend of mine and we did an interview. I was quite happy with the way it turned out. I'd been in psychotherapy and he got me the only week that I decided I was going to quit. I was very disillusioned that

week—it was year three, or something. And then I went back and finished off. I never did AA or NA.

MUSICIAN: *You're still sober?*

TOWNSHEND: Oh sure. I just wish the consequences hadn't been so fucking hard for the third parties involved.

MUSICIAN: *But you kept your family together.*

TOWNSHEND: With... with... with... with help from them and a certain amount of loss. There are advantages and disadvantages to the life I've led. The kids have financial security but there was a time when they suffered a certain amount of fear and deprivation as a direct result of my behavior. We try to talk about it regularly. Awful, awful

thing to contemplate. You don't want to hurt anyone in your life but when you do... At least my old lady knew I was in a rock 'n' roll band when we got married. She knew I was an asshole. It's not like that with kids. They're born and they're subjected to all this shit. I've never beaten them up, but I've sure as hell scared the shit out of them when I was arguing with my wife, or even with myself. I think when I was a kid and my parents would argue, it really scarred me. Interestingly, it gave me a deeper love for them when they were together and it gave me a fantastic creative force. It brought forth a type of writing which everyone around the world loves and identifies with if they're interested in rock 'n' roll. I suppose that every family has some element of fear and threat written into its constitution for the children. I'm not saying it has to stop. Maybe it should be that children have to be aware of discipline and power, because in life, however big and tough you are, there is some wall you can't kick your way through. It's good to know that. No harm in that wall being your parents or something they represent. But there should never be fear, not abstract fear.

MUSICIAN: *Back on the subject of The Iron Man, if you're putting out a solo album, why not do a solo tour?*

TOWNSHEND: Because the odds are different. As a solo artist I get fantastic fulfillment from my work in the studio and the writing. Maybe 25 years from 1979, which is when I consider I made my first solo album, I'll decide to have a party and then I'll be faced with all these issues again. The chemistry, the presence of John and Roger as performers and friends, has inspired me to take a chance.

The thing I'm most anxious about is having a solo album out. John and Roger appear on it, but it's my album. I'll be performing songs from it, I'll be talking about it. We left no stone unturned in our discussions beforehand. They both said it doesn't bother them. Whether it still won't bother them after a few three-and-a-half-hour shows, I don't know. Depends on



"I haven't got much of a conscience, I suppose. I live much easier that way."

Moonstruck: Remembering Keith

"We can't change this particular relationship," Pete Townshend announced at the reunited Who's New York press conference on April 24. "This is the one which always begs the presence of Keith Moon."

Other bands have suffered deaths in the family and soldiered on. Moon was no mere drummer, however; his triple-forte, steamroller approach on that instrument was the perfect complement to Townshend's on guitar. The style went with the man. In public, Moon lived his life as one long, grandstanding drum solo: a series of hilarious/outrageous events, seemingly without end.

There was an end. In September 1978 Moon, 31, succumbed to an overdose of pills he was taking to help him cut down on his drinking. Whatever his sins, moderation was not one of them.

A few years before his death, Moon was in Los Angeles hanging out with singer Harry Nilsson and two other drummers of no little repute, Jim Keltner and Ringo Starr. Danny Kortchmar was one of several guitarists employed on Moon's solo album, *Two Sides of the Moon*; producer Glyn Johns didn't handle that one, but he'd done *Who's Next* and *The Who by Numbers*—and would also produce *Who Are You*, Moon's last studio album.

"Every time we get together," Townshend continued in New York, "particularly if we tell stories, or remember things about him, he's very much present." For all the above Moon associates, Keith is still here. Here are their words. —Scott Isler

Danny Kortchmar—When we started playing with him, somebody counted a tune off and I'd never heard anything like it in my life when he came in. Because he doesn't play like most drummers: quarter-notes on drums and basic snare with a couple of fills. He plays full-out as soon as he starts: eighth-notes on bass drums and fills all over the place. It was intense. He was a really sweet guy.

Harry Nilsson—It's hard to give impressions of Keith Moon because there were so many Keith Moons. I miss him dearly, terribly. He was extremely bright, funny, charismatic... just a great friend.

Instead of being a drummer, he was more a guy who hit targets. He didn't have the sophistication of Jim Keltner or Ringo but he certainly could hit 'em. He was a dancer on the drums.

About a year before he died we were rooming together in London. We tried to sober up for a day; this is when I used to drink. We went to a movie. Then we went to another movie. After the second movie some madman in a car almost ran us down, so we decided to go to a pub. We only had a couple of pounds but somebody recognized Keith—I think it was the fur coat—and the drinks were on the house.

After the pub closed we went to a hotel. It happened to be the first night of their disco attempt; the music was horrible. Of course, they were buying drinks for us. Halfway through the second bottle Keith snapped. He picked up a bottle and threw it at the disc jockey. It hit the wall behind him, bounced back and wiped out the turntables. The room came to a sudden stop. The next thing I know, the table is upside-down, there are security people and I was on the floor. I looked up and saw Keith being carried out over the heads of six waiters, his arms and legs flailing, screaming, "Charge this to Neil Sedaka!" He was at the hotel at the time.

Jim Keltner—He had flash, he had charisma—more charisma than any drummer aside from Gene Krupa. You couldn't take your eyes off

of him. Everything he did that was clownlike was so musical. He just knew how to make the energy translate into good music.

The very last time I saw him was at a playback party for his album. He was dressed in an immaculate white jumpsuit. After a couple of hours my wife said to me, "Okay, it's time to go," and we went out. As I walked around the back of my van, I saw Keith lying on the ground in his white outfit, right by my door. I'm laughing, "You crazy fool!" and he's just lying there, taking this all the way. So I bend down and slap him on the face gently; he stays there. I panicked: "My god, he's out!"

My wife got out of the car, we're both pounding on him, and finally I started hitting his chest. I said, "Go get somebody quick." By the time everybody had come out, he bolted up, stood straight in front of me and said, "Jimmy, c'mon, let's have a drink."

To this day I still don't know what that was. I saw a movie about severe alcoholics: They'll black out and fall, wherever they are, and when they come to, not know what happened.

As a drummer, obviously he was phenomenal in his early days. He should serve as a good example to younger players who emulate him that a great talent on such a physical instrument as drums could only sustain itself with really good health. He abused himself to the point where he lost it. I remember thinking, "What kinda guy is this? He's such an animal one moment, and the next moment he can be one of the greatest gentlemen you'd ever want to meet." The image was far away from the man, it seemed to me.

Glyn Johns—He was a very odd guy and I was very fond of him. He wasn't the greatest drummer in the world, but at the time he was the only drummer for the Who.

No one really knew him that well. He had this front that he deliberately presented to everybody in order to keep everybody at bay.

Ringo Starr—He was brilliant as a drummer. It was hard for me to think of any other drummer for the Who; he was such an integral part of the madness and musicianship of the Who. They needed a four-armed madman to play with the band in those days 'cause their energy level was so high. And his personal energy level was higher than most people I've ever known.

In the end I had to stop Keith buying me presents because I'd always get the bill! "I don't want anything else from you, Keith, because I'm tired of paying it!" But he'd go, "Now, I've got you this, dear boy, hah, you need this!" "Great, thanks a lot." And the next week I'd get the bloody bill!

One time, after the Who had been on the road, this huge Rolls pulls up in the middle of Berkeley Street in London, Keith comes out dressed as an American policeman, and he's carrying this huge stuffed panda bear up to my office. He'd gotten a full Chicago policeman's uniform from some policeman; he was very good at that sort of stuff.

We found it hard to play drums with each other [on *Two Sides of the Moon*] because his timing was a little erratic. In the end I put my drums on tape, then he put his drums on.

I was in America when he died. We were all doing the same thing to our health; that seemed to be the course we were all on in those years. Some of us stopped and some of us didn't. I think it was pure accident with Keith 'cause he had the constitution of a horse.

He was a wonderful human being. The image of Keith is purely as a madman but he had a real big soul, and he was really kind to people. He wasn't always crazy. A lovely guy. ■



how much attention it gets, I suppose. I don't think I could tour solo. This Who tour is great for me. I worked so long on *Iron Man* and I don't want it to just slide into ignominy because the single isn't a hit or the video doesn't work on MTV. If the Who out there on the road lets people know I'm alive, it may be just the last little fillip to give me the hit I need.

MUSICIAN: How did Arthur Brown's "Fire" get on the record?

TOWNSHEND: When I first put the collection together, there seemed to be a hole in the fire scene. I said to my manager that the trouble with fire songs is that it's all been said. As recently as Bruce Springsteen, "You can't find a flame without a spark." You go back in history and the fire clichés make you want to vomit. I said the best song is just "Fire, fire, fire, fire/You're going to burn." And Bill [Curbishley] said what a great idea. I said, "No, I didn't mean the actual song." But I sat down and thought that it wouldn't hurt. I used "Eyesight to the Blind" by Sonny Boy Williamson on *Tommy*. Then I got a letter from Arthur in Texas. He's running a small commune there and leading a very simple life and I thought let's go for it. He wrote to me asking if I could help get him some money through publishing. I wrote back and said I've got a better idea. We'll put "Fire" on the album and pray for a hit.

MUSICIAN: You want to do a theatrical production of *The Iron Man*?

TOWNSHEND: That's right. I'm keen to do it. I've written a whole musical—20 songs and a score. I want to see it tested in the theater, get it into workshop as soon as possible. And if it develops, get it funded and out there.

MUSICIAN: Twenty songs? Why a single album and not a double album? You can't follow the plot by what's on the album.

TOWNSHEND: For financial reasons. I got a nice deal from Atlantic in the States and Virgin worldwide, but I had to contract all the different singers on the record and I spent two years in the studio. It cost me a lot of money. I couldn't afford a double album because neither company was willing to pay me a double album rate. They would have put it out, but I wasn't willing to risk my own money. It would have taken another six months and another \$200,000. John Lee Hooker would have sung five or six songs as opposed to two, and there would have been an enormous amount of detail work. I was working with six singers at once, all of whom were getting £600 a day. The money was just disappearing.

My aim is to change the music we hear in musical theater, not to take musicals to stadiums. I'd like to produce music for people who don't want to go to stadiums anymore. I enjoyed *Les Misérables*, and I enjoyed *The Phantom of the Opera*. Everything was great about them except the music was very old-fashioned. More than old-fashioned. Half of it was crap. The problem with Broadway is that no one in rock has paid any attention to it.

MUSICIAN: At the press conference the other day, you described Keith Moon as sad. Why?

TOWNSHEND: He was sad in that way of people who are looking for love and don't take the direct approach until it's too late. He started by trying to make people laugh, and he ended by making them cry. He had the sadness of the comic.

MUSICIAN: He seemed to have the Sid Vicious disease of trying to live up to his legend.

TOWNSHEND: He died fucking around with drugs and alcohol. Not in a nihilistic sense. He died fucking around. He'd lost

perspective. He was not drinking at the time he died, he took an overdose of a drug to prevent seizures during alcoholic withdrawal. He took eight of the pills. He was thinking, "I'm a good boy, I've quit drinking, if one of these is good for me, eight will be better." It was like a sick joke it should happen.

He once took eight elephant tranquilizers in San Francisco and survived. Couldn't move, couldn't play. He was in a wheelchair for two days. I have a Super-8 film of when we brought him off the plane in a wheelchair. The doctor from the Free Clinic says, "His heart is only beating once every 30 seconds! He's clinically dead!" And Keith says [*mumbles*], "Fuck off." That is not apocryphal. I have it on film.

It was sad, because he had alienated so many people around him by his obstinate clinging to his image. That was a good analogy to Sid Vicious. About halfway through the recording of *Who Are You*, he was showing up late and not playing very well and I got into this mood: "I'm not taking any more of his shit." So I rang him up and told him to get the fuck down here. He came running down, babbling excuses. I got him behind the drums and he could not keep the song together. He couldn't play. He'd obviously been out the night before to some club. He'd put his work second. Again. But before I could say anything, he went [*imitates chaotic drum solo*]. "See?" he said. "I'm still the best Keith Moon-type drummer in the world."

There was nobody to top him doing that. But unless you wanted that, you were fucked. It happened that on that song, we didn't want that. Keith wrestling himself. He was funny, but he was capable of so much more. He was such a wonderful drummer, not just an ape-shit drummer. But he had reduced himself to that in the eyes of the world and in his own eyes. A couple of days after that, he started to call me up just to say good night and I love you. He did that about 10 times, and you could tell he was crying a little bit. He'd say, "You

do believe me, don't you?" I'd say, "Yes, but you're still an asshole."

I helped him get a flat in London because he was broke after his stay in California. Nobody would buy his house in California, so I helped him get back on his feet by getting this flat. And a couple of days later he died in it. He couldn't live with the new character he was.

MUSICIAN: Moving to a different part of the world and taking your problem with you is a classic alcoholic behavior pattern.

TOWNSHEND: For a long time he wasn't treated as an alcoholic. A friend from AA came in to talk to Keith once, worked with him for two or three weeks. He said Keith was a heavy drinker with a strange emotional makeup. Then he said I was an alcoholic.

I wondered how he'd worked that out, because I hadn't had a drink in three or four weeks. I went back in the studio and I said to Glyn Johns, "Do you believe it? Keith's been coming in here every morning for weeks vomiting on the mixing desk, taking pills for this and that, and I'm supporting Keith by not drinking, and I could use a drink, but I haven't had a drink, and this guy thinks I'm alcoholic." Glyn kind of looked at me. Keith's driver was there, and I took him outside, and I asked, "I haven't had anything to drink, have I?" He said, "No, no." I said, "Listen, you don't have to defend my position. Have I had anything to drink?" "Not apart from when you go home." "What do you mean?" "Well, every night after work you go off



"I never thought Kenny was the right drummer for the Who. From day one."



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to the bar and drink a bottle of vodka. Everyone thought you were just not drinking while you were working. At the end of the session, you drink a bottle of vodka like water." And I suddenly remembered what I'd been doing. I was drinking alcoholically, but I didn't deal with it until several years later.

MUSICIAN: *How would the history of the Who be different if after Who's Next you'd all just quit drinking?*

TOWNSHEND: If I'd quit drinking, I would have quit the band.

MUSICIAN: *The only way you could tolerate being in the Who was by drinking too much?*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah... Ultimately... Might be unfair to the band... When I was in psychotherapy, the thing I talked about mostly was the two years or 18 months that I spent away from my parents when I was about five to seven years old. I lived with my grandmother. My parents were probably splitting up. I don't know. I'm afraid to bring up the subject with my mother, for fear I'll strangle her.

MUSICIAN: *Was there a similar incident in Keith's background?*

TOWNSHEND: Probably, but we'll never know. His father was an extremely nice man. My father was a wonderful man. The marriage looked normal. But who knows? My young parents were probably having difficulty staying married. My father was a touring musician, my mother had to stop being a singer to bring me up.

They wanted to protect me from their arguments, so they sent me to live with my grandmother, who adored me. That's quite a normal situation. Doesn't amount to child abuse. My reaction was very repressive, I suppose. My grandmother was very strict and old-fashioned. It might be that Keith had a similar thing. The most interesting aspect about Keith was the excellence of his mind, the rapidity of his memory. You often find this with drummers, that they have the most extraordinary memories. It's an extension of their work. Maybe their memories are centered in a different part of the brain, because they have to remember long musical phrases as pure data. It's almost binary. They must know exactly where they are in a song at any given time. The best drummers have the best memories.

MUSICIAN: *Would you mind telling the story about the waterbed?*

TOWNSHEND: Keith heard this Danish hotel had one suite with a waterbed, and he kept ringing them to make sure he got that particular suite: "I want to try some sexual experiments. Naughty Copenhagen, here I come. It will hold the weight of five or six female bodies, won't it?" So we were having coffee in his room, and I said how great it would be if we could get the mattress—it was 4000 gallons—in the lift and send it down to flood the lobby. Of course it wouldn't move, but Keith tried to lever it out of the frame, and it burst. The water was a foot high, flooding out into the hallway and down several floors. At first it was "Ha! Ha! Ha!" Then, "Ha...ha...ha...ooooh, this is going to cost hundreds of thousands of pounds! What are we going to do?" The destruction was unbelievable.

"Don't worry, Pete. I'll handle this," Keith says, and he rings the desk. "Hello, I want to talk to the manager. I have a suitcase here full of the most expensive stage clothes, designed by Hardy Amis, tailor to the Queen. Yes, yes, and they have just been engulfed by 4000 gallons of water from this leaking waterbed. Not only do I demand immediate replacement of my clothing, but also a room on the top floor, straight away!" And the manager came running upstairs, "Oh my God!

I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" Keith claimed it had burst when we all sat on the bed, and he *had* called several times beforehand to make sure it would hold a large number of bodies. The guy bought it, and we never had to pay.

MUSICIAN: *You agree with Pete's assessment that Keith was basically sad?*

ENTWISTLE: Yeah, I did a drawing of Keith from a photograph once. I was just trying to transfer the photograph but somehow in the process I changed his eyes, so now I've got this portrait of Keith and when you look in his eyes, they're almost in tears. Really weird. I've only just hung it up in my house, because I couldn't face looking at it.

I had the closest relationship with Keith. I hid a lot of my emotions when he died. It just didn't sink in, or I stopped myself from thinking about it, so it was like it never happened. I feel really bad about it because I haven't even spoken to his mother for a long time. Now it's so late in the day I'm ashamed to even talk to her about it. My protection for myself was to forget about it. It worked for a while but... it's weird, weird. I would have been a lot more devastated had he not spent those

three years in California. I got used to him not being around. Had he died before he went to California, I don't know what I would have done.

He never seemed to be able to get offstage. He always had to be Keith Moon. He was playing the part of Keith Moon, because he couldn't remember what it was like to be normal. The only time he was normal was before two in the afternoon. After two, he became the alter ego.

MUSICIAN: *That's when he started to drink?*

ENTWISTLE: At some point he must have realized he was an alcoholic. He only needed one beer and he was gone.

The alcohol seemed to stay in his body and all he needed was to top it off. But he didn't get falling-down drunk. He got obnoxious drunk. I wrote that song "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" about him. He was Dr. Jekyll until two in the afternoon and then Mr. Hyde for the rest of the day. He'd say something to really hurt you, and then he wouldn't remember having said it the next day. That was the sad part about Keith.

Other drummers would try to work out what he did, but the problem with Keith was, he didn't know. All he knew was that he played differently from everyone else. All his tom-toms were tuned to the same note, probably because if he missed one, he ended up hitting one that sounded the same. And they all sounded like rattling biscuit tins. Instead of starting a drum break with his left hand, he'd always start it with his right, and he always played fast, so no one would notice he was slightly out of beat. It always sounded like a kit falling downstairs.

MUSICIAN: *Was it fun for you as a bass player?*

ENTWISTLE: It was fun if I was on top of it. If I was having problems with my sound, it'd be a nightmare. That was one problem too many, because I *always* had a problem with Keith. A lot of the time I'd just carry on playing with my left hand and sort of pull the cymbal to one side to see what his bass drum foot was doing, so I could get back to the beat. He would often come out of his drum break on a different beat than I had. But it helped me in my playing style a lot. And I helped him, 'cause he knew no matter how crazy his drums got, my bass would still be there. I could always hold the band together while



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playing some flashy licks myself. If I went off on a tangent, he'd suddenly get the message and take off with me. When we came out of it together, we sounded like a couple of geniuses, but if we came out separately—oooooh!

I think the thing that really screwed him up was when his chauffeur died. He was attacked outside this club by a bunch of guys and the chauffeur got out to have a go at them. They knocked him down and they were kicking him and he crawled under the car to escape. All Keith saw was that they were hammering at the car, so he drove off. They got down the road and the chauffeur was still under the car, dead. It had a much deeper effect on him than he ever let on.

DALTREY: Keith had the comedian's disease of trying to make people laugh all the time. But inside he was incredibly unhappy. It was inevitable that we lost Keith along the way, if you'd known the way he lived. He had nine lives in the short time he was here.

MUSICIAN: Was his unhappiness a result of his alcoholism?

DALTREY: No, the alcoholism was a result of the unhappiness. I never met anyone like Keith Moon. He had so much energy, so much drive. And if he wasn't channeling it through his drums he had no place to put it. And he had this desperation to be loved, really loved by the people he cared about. If he didn't get it all the time, if he wasn't shown it all the time, he would do more and more things to get it. A lot of the serious self-destruction happened after his marriage split up in '73 or '74. There was a definite change for the worse at that point.

MUSICIAN: Do you have a favorite Keith Moon prank?

DALTREY: It was a joke Keith and I played on John in Seattle.

We turned Keith into John Entwistle—gave him a Fu Manchu moustache, dyed his hair, got the clothes just right. And Keith spent the whole evening walking one pace behind John. He mimicked him perfectly.

MUSICIAN: You seem to be aging pretty well. Got any secrets?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 121

WHO M I?

JOHN Entwistle on the bass: "Since the last time I played with the Who, I've changed absolutely everything, except the basic idea of sound splitting. All I have to do is press a footswitch and the whole thing changes. I couldn't find one amplifier manufacturer who made all I wanted, so it starts with a t.c. electronics digital delay that controls all the outboard stuff. The Yamaha SPX1000 gives me a lot more effects and splits into a stereo chorus. I've got a Gallien-Krueger 2000 CPL preamp, which I use to get a beefy overdrive. I've got the top sound, the distorted trebly guitar sound, coming out of four 12s and 16 fives in stereo. That goes into two Trace Elliot 500W power amps. I've got a Trace Elliot computer preamp for the bottom end, or I can use a t.c. graphic EQ, whichever I favor at the time, going through four 15s. All the speakers are Fanes in A.S.S. English cabinets.

"I've designed a new bass guitar for Warwick called a Buzzard, a big, weird-shaped bass, similar in dimension to the Explorer basses I was using. But now it's shaped like a flying buzzard. It reminds me of the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* playing croquet with a flamingo." **Pete Townshend** was not definite, but expected to play Takamine semi-acoustics and Fender's Eric Clapton model Stratocaster "because they're good all-'round guitars." No Marshall stacks this time—to save his hearing, Townshend will play direct through the P.A.

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HIS OWN MAN

Ziggy Marley, with a little help from his friends, is moving out of his father's shadow.

By Alan di Perna

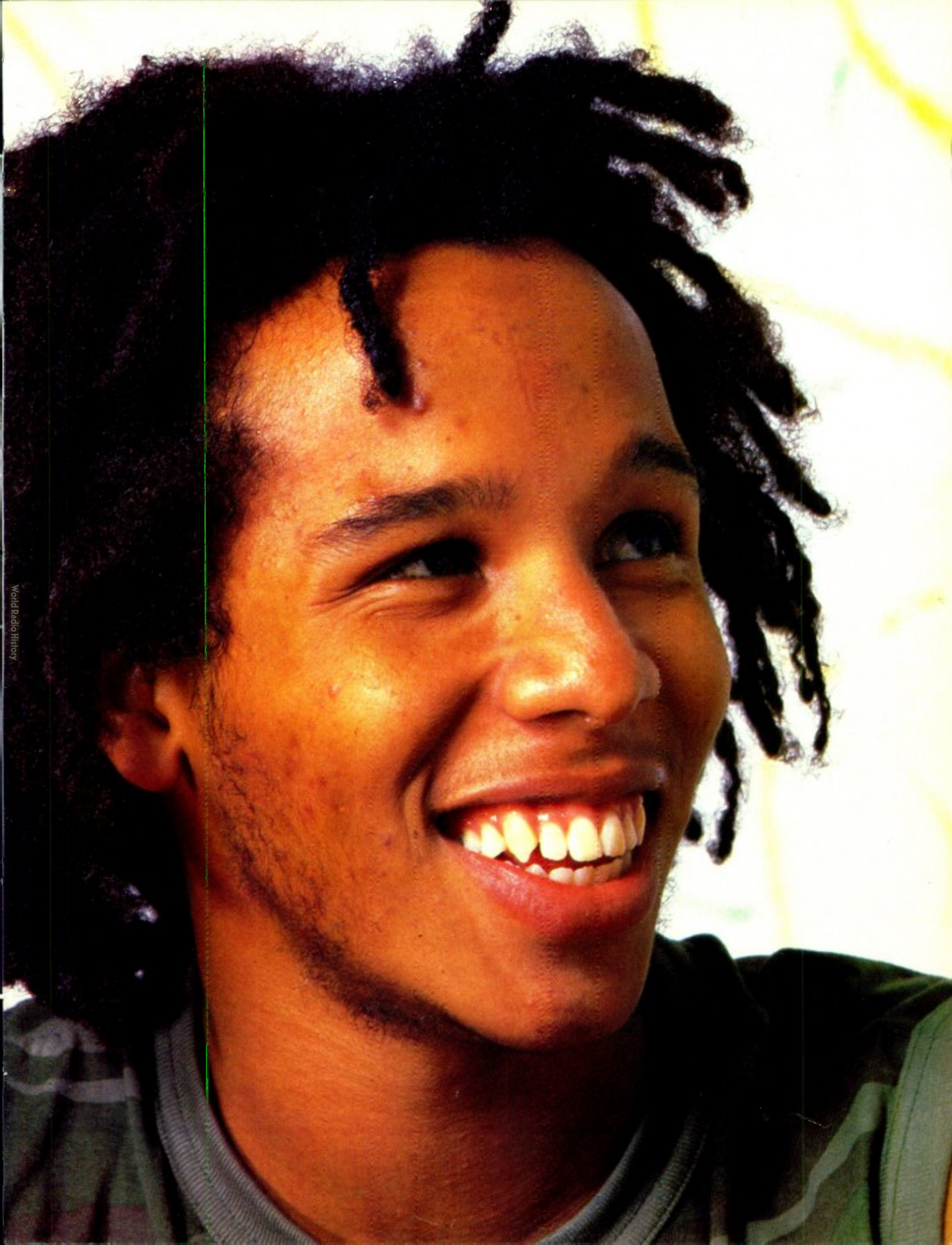
REGGAE MUSIC nah need one 'hope' to make it be. No one man or one group. Reggae music is greater than me. Y'unnerstan?"

Ziggy Marley is used to having great expectations thrust on him. As Bob Marley's son and the author of the Grammy-winning album *Conscious Party*, Ziggy is regarded as the new champion of "conscious" reggae—the spiritually and politically minded antithesis to the frankly sexual and bacchanalian "slackness" of reggae's contemporary dance-hall style. Ziggy stands firm by his message, but there's room in his outlook for dance-hall too. "It's all one music—reggae music, my music, our music, the people music."

In the years since his death, Bob Marley has been turned into a sort of plasterboard saint for many reggae fans—a figure bearing little resemblance to the earthy ghetto rebel who brought Jamaica's hard riddim to the world. There are those who would do the same to Ziggy: cast him as a sort of dreadlocked choir boy—a Rasta Puritan. Fortunately, he's having none of it.

"Me never say everyone have to be a great preacher and a great







Ziggy and the Melody Makers stay conscious: "We still rude bwai, y'unnerstan'?"

teacher. Some of us just there to make a little joy, or mek likkle fun. Not saying we can't make fun with the message. But you know, you have to have variety still. You 'av fe 'av the rude. Becau' we is rude boy, y'know? We is not no goody goody two show bwai. We still rude bwai, y'unnerstan'?"

David "Ziggy" Marley leans across the console at Compass Point Studios in the Bahamas. A red, gold and green Melody Makers T-shirt hangs from his muscular torso, along with a leather pendant bearing the image of Haile Selassie. A gray tam crowns his dreadlocks. He concentrates intently on the music, squinting one eye critically—eerily like his father. The studio monitors pound out rough tracks from Ziggy's new album with the Melody Makers, the vocal group consisting of his brother Steven, sisters Cedella and Sharon and, in recent years, cousin Errica Newell.

The Compass Point sessions have reunited the Melody Makers with the international posse that created *Conscious Party*. American rock musicians Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth are at the helm once again. But this time out, they're co-producing with Glenn Rosenstein, who engineered *Conscious Party* and who has assisted Chris and Tina on projects with both of their bands: the Talking Heads and the Tom Tom Club.

Ziggy's one-eyed squint turns into a positive scowl. Indicating a channel strip on the console, he issues a terse command to Rosenstein, seated behind the board. The co-producer punches a mute button, and a meandering niyabinghi drum track disappears. The groove gets tighter. Though Rosenstein has cut several rock and pop hits, he's a relative newcomer to Caribbean music, sheepishly admitting to "one

Budweiser commercial with Jimmy Cliff" as his sole prior reggae experience. He's aided and abetted, though, by veteran reggae engineer Errol Brown. The nephew of legendary Jamaican producer Duke Reid, Brown has worked for the Marleys since 1979. From *Survival* onward, he engineered discs for Bob and his family, managed Tuff Gong Studios and mixed the Melody Makers' live shows. This quietly-spoken black man lends a crucial roots vibe to the proceedings, as do Dallol—the Chicago-based, Ethiopian-born reggae band that backed the Melody Makers on *Conscious Party*. Meshing with Dallol are several essential Jamaican players, including guitarist Earl "Chinna" Smith (another veter-

eran of several Bob Marley albums), keyboardist Franklyn "Bubbler" Waul and drummer Squiddley Cole. 'Nuff talent ina studio, to be sure.

The music that floods the control room easily fulfills the promise of *Conscious Party*. If anything, it's harder—more to the point. Alongside sunny, danceable cuts like "Urban Music" and "Look Who's Dancin'" are darker meditations such as

"Problems," "Pains of Life" and "Justice"—songs whose brooding minor-key grooves bring vintage Black Uhuru to mind. Even the beatifically-titled "Love Is the Only Law" strikes a militant stance.

"It's a rebellion song to me," Ziggy's angry patois intensifies as he speaks. "Nah matter how many law dem a talk, more law dem write, love is the only law we care about or we listen to. No business dem a write say we cyan do this or we cyan do that. The law of racism, the unwritten law of why black and white people can't get together... fuck that. Love is our only

"Me? Never sell out. Me have roots on me and nobody can take that from me. Me can't take it from meself."

CLUBBING IT WITH THE TOM TOM CLUB

Chris and Tina are now in "a real band."

And it's *not* Talking Heads.

WE'VE been trying to make the Tom Tom Club a real band for a long while," says Tina Weymouth. "In the past we never had time to develop it that way. But now that the Talking Heads aren't touring, we can do it."

With the recent addition of guitarist Mark Roule and keyboardist Gary Pozner, the Tom Tom Club is now a full-fledged quartet. Does the move signal trouble in the Talking Heads camp? Chris Frantz says no. The Heads are just on hold for a while.

"We had a big powwow with the other two Heads a couple of months ago. And for one reason or another, probably because his wife is expecting, David Byrne has just decided to take a sabbatical. So you won't be hearing anything from us this year. Maybe next year."

Operating the Tom Tom Club as a full-on touring, recording unit, Chris maintains, presents no conflict of interest with the Heads. "I think there's room for us to do more than one thing," Frantz adds. "I don't think either David or Jerry would see it as a conflict either. They both have plenty of pursuits outside the Talking Heads as well."

For Tina Weymouth, the new Club incarnation grew from a sense that the couple had pretty much exhausted the one-track-at-a-time, studio-overdubbing approach to making records. "With a band, you can just try things out immediately and see if they work or not. If everybody's playing chunky rhythms, you're going to find the lyric, legato line to play. Whereas, laying tracks one at a time, we'd put down drums, guitar and keyboards and then find out we'd recorded the track at much too slow a tempo. Things like that would constantly slow a project down and rob it of any spontaneity. I'd often be so tired that my improvisations would become totally stupid and silly. There just wasn't enough of that feedback that you get with a band."

Weymouth is equally frank in admitting that the Club was starting to degenerate into a predictable formula. "There was this preconception of 'Oh, this is what the Tom Tom Club is, it's dance music.' And we had a feeling that our second album [*Close to the Bone*] was less successful than the [self-titled] first record primarily because it was self-consciously trying to repeat itself."

So for their new album, *Boom Boom Chi Boom Boom*, the couple veered off in a new direction. The material depends more on melody and song structures than dance grooves. Many songs, such as "Little Eva" and "Don't Say No," have an early-'80s, naive tech-pop feel. "Those songs just happened with ease," says Weymouth, "particularly 'Don't Say No.' I felt, 'Oh boy, this is so super low-tech!'"

Boom Boom Chi Boom Boom was initially released on the English Fontana label. Shortly after it came out, Chris and

Tina solidified their working relationship with Mark Roule and Gary Pozner. Both musicians had worked with the couple on *Conscious Party*—Mark as an assistant engineer and Gary as a keyboardist. Now, as a quartet, they embarked on a European tour in support of the Tom Tom Club's Fontana release.

"After getting out on the road and playing the songs, we realized we were actually pretty good at this dance thing," Frantz notes. "At least onstage, we were able to 'rock the house.' And so we decided, 'Let's get back to rocking the house some more.'" Accordingly, Chris, Tina, Mark and Gary entered the studio with producer Arthur Baker and cut four songs: "Call of the Wild," "Kiss Me When I Get Back," "Wa Wa Dance" and "I Confess." The songs, says Frantz, were "cut live, like a Talking Heads record." They lead off the American release of *Boom Boom Chi Boom Boom*, on Sire Records, replacing material that's on the import.

Now that the Tom Tom Club lineup has fallen into place, the band will be doing a club tour which will take them through the summer months. In many cities, they'll be doing extended "residencies," appearing at one club for two or three weeks. "We'd like to try and stay in the clubs as long as possible," says Weymouth. "Chris and I have always been in the role of supportive sidemen. So this is totally new for us. I've never fronted a band. In a club, you can take risks and develop. Whereas in front of 20,000 people every night, I think there'd be pressure to play it safe and flawlessly."

On the road, Tina's main axe will be a five-string Steinberger bass with a low B string. She'll be doubling on her Fender Competition guitar, a relatively rare Fender, with a small neck developed for lap steel playing. As for her bass amp, she says, "I still use the same heads and bottoms that I've played with since 1978: a Gallien-Krueger 400B, which they don't make anymore, and JBL K145 15-inch speakers."

Tina prefers "the deadest strings I can get" on her Steinberger. "I play them till they break." She has only used one pick in her entire career; and she recently lost it. "I always said I'd retire when I lost my pick. It was a large green triangular Herco. It was Sid Vicious who first told me to use a pick, because my fingers were so bloody."

Chris Frantz plays a Rogers kit that he bought with the advance money for the Talking Heads' first album. "It's a horrible color called Mojave Red. It has a 22" bass drum, 14" and 16" rack toms, and I alternate between using a floor tom and two timbales." Chris' main snare is a Joe Montineri piccolo, which Raphael W'Mariam also played on *Conscious Party*. Hardware is by Tama, including a Tama/Camco chain-drive bass drum pedal. Sticks are Regal Tip 5Bs, "and sometimes the Regal Tip jazz size in the studio." — *AdP*



law. The only law that can make things work.”

The new tracks relay another message too: Ziggy, now 20, is becoming his own man. As a songwriter and musician, he's exhibiting a new maturity these days. He has graduated, if you like, from the musical schooling that began when his father bought him his first musical instrument—a Mickey Mouse drum set—while the Marleys were residing in Delaware.

“Bout '79 now, me start taking a likkle guitar lessons. Me no really great 'pon guitar still, but me write the song lyrics still 'pon it. Sometimes on piano too, but mostly guitar.”

The instatement of Dallol as Ziggy's band has helped crystallize his songcraft. On the Melody Makers' first album, *Play the Game Right* (released in the U.S. in 1985, but containing tracks that go back to 1979), they were backed by Bob's old band, the Wailers. The riddims for the next record, 1986's *Hey World*, were provided by a team of Jamaican session aces anchored by Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare. As Bob's son, Ziggy clearly could harvest his accompaniment from the cream of reggae's instrumental crop. In the end, though, he chose a younger, up-and-coming band, reasoning that it's better “to have your own band—get your own sound.”

Rita Marley—Ziggy's mother and manager—had signed Dallol to the Marley-controlled Tuff Gong label during the early '80s. They originally came to Jamaica to cut a record of their own, titled *Genesis*. “And from 'dem time we start to jam,” Ziggy recounts. “Me just start to try some new lyrics with them. We became friends, y'know? A year pass and the Melody Makers tour with some other band, but me never like the vibes. So me just say, mek we try work with dem youth I know from that time. And so it work. Also, when we start me say, this thing is significant because it a bring Africa and Jamaica together, as we should be.”

Also significant—from a business perspective—is the fact that Ziggy switched labels, from EMI to Virgin, before releasing *Conscious Party*. “EMI treat you good,” he concedes, “but the backing behind the music was not there. They didn't spend money 'pon it. I don't know why. Maybe because, at that time, everybody was looking at reggae as if it gone or it dead or something. At that time, many magazine talk about 'reggae dead.' And so the whole world was kinda down. But the thing with Virgin is they have faith in the music. They put money behind it, many promotions, and we do a lot of touring.”

It was Virgin A&R director Nancy Jeffries who suggested Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth as producers for *Conscious Party* after an automobile accident took the life of Alex Sadkin, the gifted producer who had worked with Bob and who was originally slated to do the album. Proposing Chris and Tina—Sadkin's friends and protégés—was a novel and chancy idea.

“We had never produced a record outside of the Talking Heads/Tom Tom Club axis,” Tina Weymouth admits. “So it



the couple were not only capable of working outside the Talking Heads, but that the Club could give the Heads a good pounding on the charts. All of which made them uniquely qualified to help Ziggy emerge from beneath his father's shadow and assert himself on his own terms.

“When we first met Ziggy in New York, I grilled him a little bit,” Tina confesses. “I wanted to know whether he was the spoiled brat of a famous musician or whether he had something to say for himself.”

Ziggy passed the test with flying colors. Chris and Tina, who declare themselves disillusioned with much of today's conscienceless, mass-marketed rock, found a refreshing level of commitment and maturity in Ziggy. His unfeigned “angry young man” stance reminded Weymouth of the early punk scene from which the Talking Heads emerged—“only he didn't pursue it in cynical nihilism, and he wasn't being manipulated by adults like many of the punk bands we saw in those days.”

A vital point. However much they resemble his father's, the convictions that come across in Ziggy's music are very much his own. He didn't begin to grow his locks until his late teens and speaks of “sighting up Rastafari” at around that time. In so doing, Weymouth suggests, Ziggy set his foot on the most difficult path toward proving himself his own man.

“Someone like Julian Lennon—who I know is a very talented person—avoided many of the issues his father chose to make a lifestyle out of. It was very disappointing. Ziggy just refused to do that. He didn't care if people saw him as being the shadow of his father. He plowed through and stuck to his guns.”

Ziggy, apparently, feels little need to rebel against his patrimony. “I know somebody whose outside of me look on it differently. But me personally no look 'pon it as 'have to get out of my father's shadow.' Entertainment business look at it like that. Which I guess is necessary. But as a person, me no see it that way, y'know.”

Frantz and Weymouth decided to cut *Conscious Party* at Sigma Sound in New York. They had done a lot of work at Sigma, both with Talking Heads and the Tom Tom Club. And they thought it would be a good idea to take Ziggy outside of the Jamaican environment, “where he'd been brought up to be a young prince on a small island,” says Weymouth. “We wanted to get him away from the yes men and the jealous, envious people who would be whispering at him all the time.”

As producers, the couple's task was to build a contemporary

“When we met Ziggy,
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whether he was a
spoiled brat.”

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reggae sound that would maximize the unique qualities of Ziggy's voice, rather than morbidly dwelling on its similarity to Bob's. "We didn't want to soften things up or water them down," says Frantz. "We weren't brought in to whitewash Ziggy. Yet there was a feeling from him that he wanted to reach an international audience, much as his father had. And I think he realized Bob Marley wouldn't have had that without outside help from Alex Sadkin and Chris Blackwell."

The producers' game plan, both on *Conscious Party* and the new album, was to take an essentially documentary

approach, allowing the project's multinational ingredients to ferment naturally.

"Basically, we cut the band live, with lots of leakage," Tina explains. "Chris pointed out that most reggae albums are recorded in these really deadened Jamaican studio rooms. That's so they can do the dub thing, which is great. But we had gone down to Sunsplash to see Ziggy and the band play. And they were so exciting live, we said, 'Why don't we use the ambient rock 'n' roll recording technique, which Glenn [Rosenstein] is so superb at?'"

But Weymouth is adamant about one

thing: It was Ziggy who called the shots. "We just helped him get what he wanted. We didn't really 'do' anything to him. It was his record. He was the artist and we were the employees. We let him know that he wasn't 'the native' working for the drunken white masters."

As for directing Dallol and the other players, says Chris, "We told the band that we really expected them to put out in thinking about their parts. Not to just always play the predictable thing. That it's okay—it's still going to be reggae—if you change your sound from a grand piano to something weirder. Or if you maybe use your modulation wheel a bit more. We worked with the drummer a little, so that he was playing different parts, instead of just the one-drop reggae style on every single song. Again, it'll still sound like reggae if you put in a few funk or rock licks."

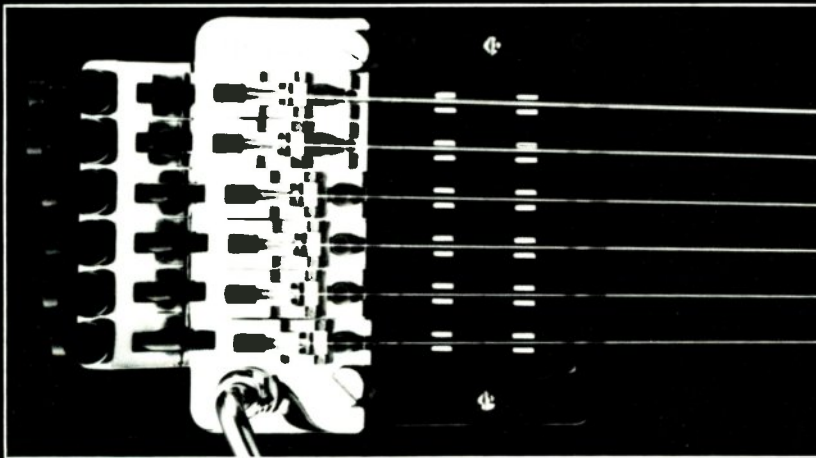
Thanks to touches like these, *Conscious Party* achieved much the same thing that Bob Marley and the Wailers did with *Rastaman Vibration* 12 years earlier. It got a whole new generation of white middle-class youth skanking and shouting "Irie," pondering their first hit of Rasta reasoning. The Melody Makers toured the rock-concert circuit with INXS, bringing reggae to an audience that had probably never even heard of Bob Marley. Meanwhile, the single "Tumblin' Down" disarmed the black music chart's traditional aversion to reggae. Once again Chris and Tina had produced an unpredicted hit. But in bringing reggae to a youthful rock audience, does Ziggy feel he has betrayed the music's hardcore roots following?

"Me? *Never* sell out. Me have me roots on me, and nobody can take that from me. Me can't take it from meself. Nah, mon... we are the t'ings that make 'ardcore fans proud. Cau' we win Grammy and win this and that. Cau' they know we is part of dem, or we are from where they are from. So dem feel good fe know we reach somewhere."

Conscious Party prepared the way for the new Melody Makers record. Ziggy was eager to begin, but had some ideas of his own. "For this record, he said, 'I wanna work somewhere where it's warm!'" Frantz laughs. "And having an almost-platinum album under his belt, he's entitled to make it where he wants."

The proposition posed no problem for Frantz and Weymouth, who do a lot of their work at Compass Point and maintain an apartment on the studio complex there. The studio, moreover, is redolent of reggae history—belonging to Island Records chief Chris Blackwell, who made reggae an international force in the

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'60s and '70s, largely on the strength of Bob Marley and the Wailers. The original plan was for Chris and Tina to produce five tracks for the new album and for Rosenstein to produce another five. But again, Ziggy proved a law unto himself.

"For this album, no demo. We just come in and do it."

"We kept recording and recording," Frantz marvels. "Because there were no demos, we couldn't listen to the songs in advance. Ziggy just had this proliferation of material. I guess it more or less came out of his head. And onto the tape. So we ended up with 16 songs. At which point we decided, 'Well, it's too late to just work on five each.' So Glenn, Tina and I started producing together."

Despite the exhilaration of plunging right in, the producers soon found that the lack of pre-production was taking its toll. "The first couple of tracks were sounding a bit standard," Weymouth explains; "what my uncle would have once called 'Oh, that ball-scratching music... chank-a-chank-a-chank.' The band wasn't in a studio head yet. They had just come off the road and were still used to being told what to do, when to meet in the hotel lobby every day. That creative studio thinking wasn't yet happening. They were exhausted and they'd

been given no preparation, apart from a couple of things they'd rehearsed at soundchecks. So we just had to sit down with the band and say, 'All right, what are your goals here?' Ziggy outlined the limits and said anybody's allowed to make a contribution and therefore everyone should stretch their capabilities. At that point, the band realized they had to be galvanized into action."

It's a great phrase for an interview, but one can only wonder whether the outspoken Weymouth actually looked Ziggy in the eye and referred to his tracks as "that ball-scratching music."

She acknowledges, however, that, for a group accustomed to Jamaica's traditionally patriarchal culture, "a woman producer who is as aggressive and abrasive as I am really must have been a shock. But I think they understood that, deep down underneath, I was really and completely in love with the band and was just pushing them as a teacher might. I think they finally came to see me in the teacher role... school marm."

While the public singles out Ziggy, he's nearly always surrounded by family. Sharon and Errica lounge in the Compass

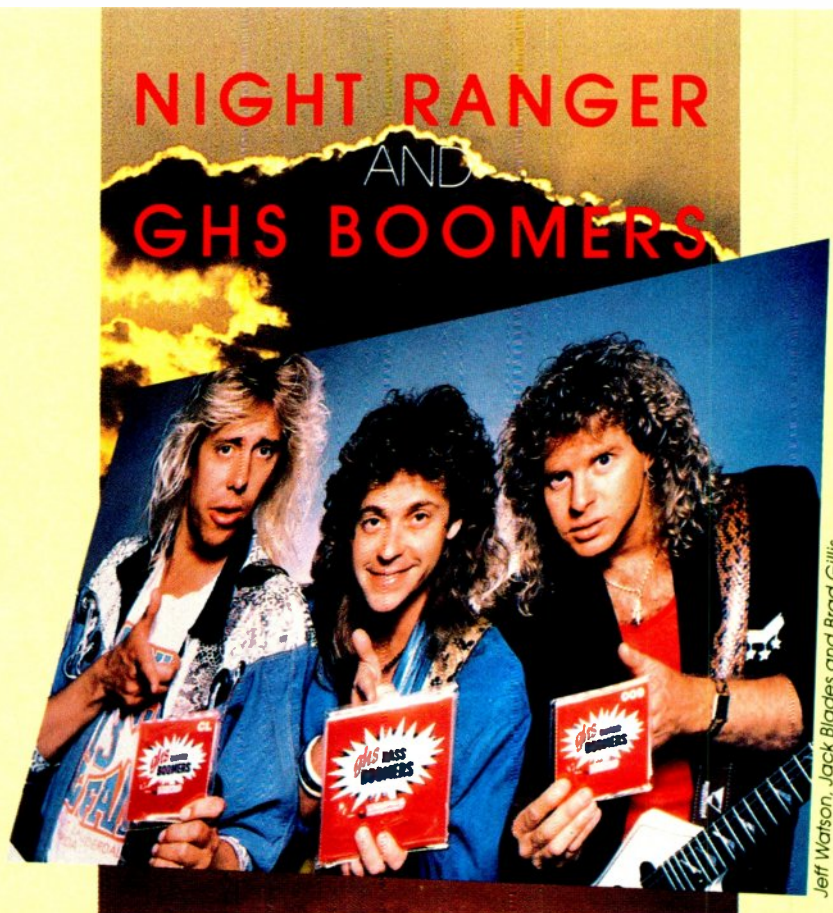
CONTINUED ON PAGE 118

SMALL AXES

ZIGGY Marley's principal guitar is a Steinberger electric. He also uses a Gibson SG Custom with three humbuckers. "I buy it inna Englan' y'know. Because me always want a regular guitar other than the Steinberger. You know—a roots guitar. My father used to play a Gibson; so me check out a Gibson still." And among the instruments Bob bequeathed his son is the Ovation acoustic the elder Marley played on the classic "Redemption Song."

As for the rest of his setup, Ziggy prefers to keep things basic. "I like the original Fender Twin Reverb the most. I don't use anything else. Maybe a wah-wah pedal sometimes. But it's mainly just me amps and guitar I love."

On both *Conscious Party* and the new *Melody Makers* album, Ziggy sang into a Neumann U87. The new record was cut on a Neve V Series Console and Mitsubishi X-850 digital 32-track machine. Effects used during the tracking sessions include Lexicon's PCM-70, PCM-42 and 200, Drawmer noise gates and, for rough mixes, a BBE 802. Several of the *Melody Makers* and *Dallol's* backing vocal parts were sampled on a Roland S-550 and "flown in" to the multitrack master. A Kahler Human Clock was used to sync the S-550 to tape. The samples were triggered via the S-550's sequencing software. And atop the console at Compass Point sits Lee "Scratch" Perry's crystal ball. Its powers have yet to be analyzed.



Jeff Watson, Jack Blades and Brad Gillis

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Demo Deals

Risk & Reward: How to finance high-tech production without giving away the store.

By Stan Soocher

THE HOME-RECORDING revolution that has flourished in the 1980s was supposed to be the Great Equalizer: Any musician or songwriter in search of a deal would be able to invest a modest sum in multi-track equipment to make acceptable demos to submit to record labels and music publishers. But in an ironic twist, many label and publishing executives have become so

Which means early reports of the death of demo deals have been greatly exaggerated. Under these deals, musicians' demo-recording costs are covered by outside investors, recording studios, record labels or production companies (firms that may provide a variety of recording-related services as compared with the individual producer supervising the sessions). Alternatively musicians may find producers, production companies or studios willing to provide free "spec" services in exchange for a flat fee or percentage payments if a record deal is eventually signed. Certainly more musicians enter into demo deals than are ever able to snare full-blown record company contracts.

"For a record company the demo deal is a fairly inexpensive way to hear new artists on tape and get a good insight into what they can do," says Harold Shedd, creative vice-president of PolyGram/Nashville and producer of K.T. Oslin and Alabama. "The demo deal also allows an artist who might not otherwise be able to afford to experiment in the studio."

According to Shedd, the typical PolyGram demo deal entails a budget of \$2,000 to \$3,000 to record two to six songs. "A demo deal with a record company can make a nice blueprint for an album. And it gives an artist a chance to learn something about how a particular label operates," adds Michael Hill, manager, east A&R for Warner Bros. Records. "But an artist already attracting the attention of a number of labels shouldn't sign a demo deal with any one record company."

WRITTEN DEMO DEALS usually run only one to three pages. By comparison, a record-label agreement can involve dozens of pages of legal technicalities. So what are the points you should be aware of if you enter into a demo deal? "There are no absolute rules, but there are certain guidelines to look for," says Cheryl Hodg-

jaded from receiving an abundance of do-it-yourself tapes that they may pay more attention to highly sophisticated demo productions made with the latest technology. This is especially true with dance music.

"Ballads may be the only types of songs you can still submit with minimal productions," contends Marc Swersky, a staff songwriter for SBK Entertainment World who has placed his work with Joe Cocker. "A&R personnel, music publishers and even managers have become so spoiled by the available technology that you have to practically slap these executives in the face with the production on a demo tape."



J.B. HOPKINS

son, an attorney who works on the administrative staff of Bill Graham Management.

These guidelines include the size of the recording budget, how long the tape may be shopped before the agreement ends, who will own the copyrights in the demo recordings and how the party financing the demos will be paid if a record-label deal is signed based on submission of the tapes.

"But you should never begin recording until the demo contract is signed," Hodgson cautions. "That can be a fatal mistake because your bargaining position goes out the window. Then it's more like pillow talk after you've already gone

to bed together."

Best for the artist is a situation in which an investor puts up money in exchange for percentage points if a record deal is obtained, Hodgson claims. "It can be subject to negotiation as to whether the band would have to pay back the initial investment," she continues. "If you work your demo deal through a production company, on the other hand, a record company most likely will pay royalties to the production company every six months. Then the production company will pay you only every six months, which means you have to wait longer for your money."

A typical demo-recording budget for five songs may range from \$2,000 to \$5,000. A band that wants to record a complete album for regional distribution in the hopes of attracting a record company may expect to spend around \$20,000, though the amount will vary from situation to situation, and may run much higher.

In the outside investor deal, someone unassociated with the music business will have enough faith in an artist to gamble a high-risk investment against a potentially high return. Or the investor may have tax strategies in mind (read, looking for a tax loss).

Input into creative and financial decision-making by an outside investor in a demo deal can range from no control or input to prior consultation, to voting on certain decisions, to prior approval of all creative and financial concerns. The major creative decisions include choice of songs and the way the finished recordings should sound. The financial decisions involve primarily how the money is to be spent on recording, mixing, packaging and promoting the songs.

One common way in which outside investors exert some control over a recording project is to make recording-fund payments in installments. Notes Manhattan music lawyer Joel Brooks, "A certain amount of money could be advanced to record four songs. If the investor is satisfied, more money would be advanced to record four more songs. If the investor is satisfied but no label deal is obtained, more money may be advanced by the investor to press and distribute a self-released record. The investor's return on the investment would be increased in relation to any additional capital required."

Some investors want 100 percent of any of the first profits earned up to full recoupment of the costs they have spent on a demo project. Then the artist would begin receiving royalties. However, if large amounts of money have been spent on the project, the recoupment time could be lengthy. So you should then ask for royalty payments starting with any first-profit dollars that may be earned.

"There are investors who will want to share in the artist's earnings forever," Brooks continues. "An artist would want to limit an investor's participation only to monies earned from the recordings made during the demo sessions or from any deal based on those tapes. But even in the latter instance an artist could try to place a cap on the number of years or dollars from which the investor's profit participation would continue."



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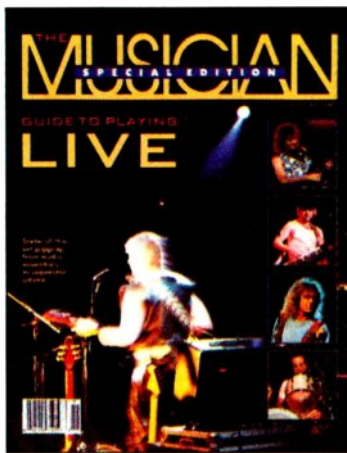
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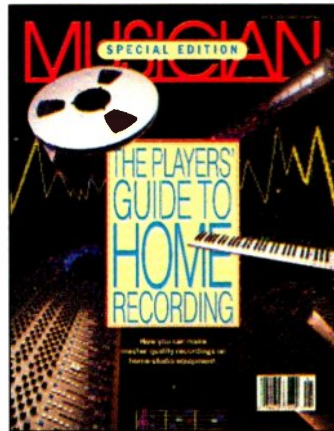
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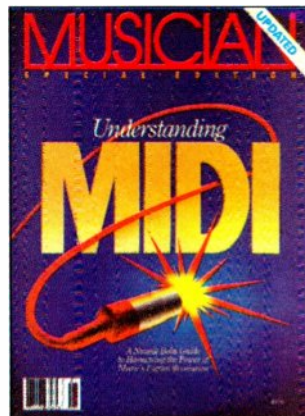
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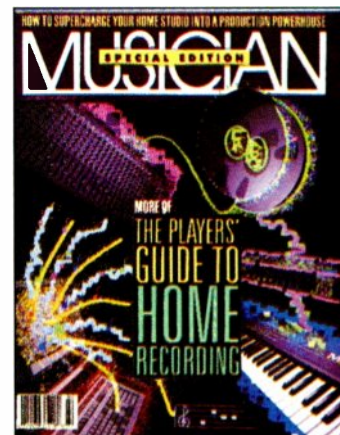
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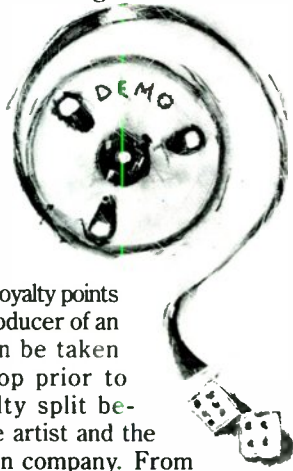
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ONE ADVANTAGE recording studios and production companies with in-house recording facilities may have over outside investors is that the studios and production firms can help keep demo costs down by offering discount recording time. "We supply the tape and studio time at our cost, and the artist pays only if the demo recordings are placed," says Gary Dallaire, an executive producer and co-owner of Neon City Productions in Cortland, New York.

"We generally ask for nine to 18 months from the time the sessions start to find a deal based on the demo tapes," Dallaire explains. "If we are negotiating a record deal on the day our demo agreement with the artist expires, the term is extended to the end of the negotiating period."

A production company will pay an artist an advance and royalty rate lower than the one paid by a record company, with the difference between the two representing the production company's profit. As a safeguard, the record company will require the artist to "sign off" on the deal, meaning the artist is presented with a copy of the contract between the production company and the label to ensure the artist is aware of the terms of the label agreement.



Fees or royalty points for the producer of an album can be taken off the top prior to the royalty split between the artist and the production company. From the artist's perspective, the producer's fees should be paid only by the production company.

"In our demo contracts, an artist will only have to accept a label deal that's reasonable," Dallaire points out. "If we are unable to get a record deal within the contract term, the artist can use the demo tapes to try to get a deal on his or her own, but not until then."

In other situations outside investors, production companies or recording studios may split up demo-shopping responsibilities with the artist. An artist will want the relationship between the production company's right to share in royalties and any deals the demo tapes

may trigger to be as narrow as possible. For instance, should the production company have a right to royalties from movie-soundtrack or commercial-jingle agreements the demo recordings may help obtain?

Parties that finance demo sessions—and even those who work on spec—may ask for the right to share in any third-party agreements the artist may enter into based on the demo tapes for up to five years. A fair compromise for the artist is to give the production company, etc., a right to receive diminishing percentage payments as, for example, the end of a five-year term approaches.

But artists should be wary of production companies that want to serve as managers and publishers, too, since conflicts of interest may arise. In particular, while it would be best to keep the publishing rights to any songs recorded in the demo sessions, if you do feel you must give up some of these rights to move the deal along, make sure the rights automatically revert to you if the demo tapes fail to result in a label deal.

Of course, a good working relationship with a music publishing company could also help you find a label deal. This is how blues artist Willie Dixon found a home for his latest release, *Hidden Charms*.

"Both T-Bone Burnett [the album's producer] and I are associated with Bug Music, the administrator of my song catalogue," Dixon says. "We started working together, and Bug Music liked what they heard and got us a label deal with Capitol Records."

"I ONCE THOUGHT demo deals were more trouble than they were worth," confesses Lou Gonzalez McLean, the owner of Manhattan's Quad Recording Studios. "In one case I found out after the fact that a song recorded on spec at a studio I owned had made money. But the artists had dissolved their corporation so I had no way to make any profit out of it."

"Then a friend came to me and said he wanted to do a deal on spec, but I didn't want to get involved with the paperwork so we based it on a handshake. A few months later he sold the recording to a record label and I was paid \$10,000 for the studio time."

As a result, McLean has changed his mind, though he claims he is highly selective about the demo deals he enters into. Now he believes it is fair to be reimbursed only studio time if, before the demo sessions begin, the artist already has a record executive waiting to hear the demo recordings completed at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 121

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Bill Frisell

A shy guitar eclectic stages a quiet revolution.

By Tom Moon

BILL FRISELL, THE GUITARIST who has appeared on at least nine albums this past year, is driving his Honda Civic around lower Manhattan in search of a parking space. Though he's been identified as one of the much-ballyhooed "lower Manhattan improvisors" whose collective works amount to a revitalization of once-staid jazz and rock forms, New York is not accorded any special

everybody separated..." His voice trails off as luck leads him into a spot. He parks, enjoys this small urban victory, regains his thought.

"Some writer just figured out that a bunch of us don't live in the city, so he came up with Brooklyn-lower Manhattan-Hoboken triangle. How much farther can it go?"

Frisell, part of the Hoboken contingent, has spent a career bashing such arbitrary divisions. Jazz people might not recognize the Frisell of Power Tools and *Smash and Scatteration*.

The rockers might not appreciate the melodic density of Frisell's work with the drummer Paul Motian. And the dread fusion of the two poles? "I do try to use different things, to be open to them. So it is a fusion, but the dominating thing can't be that. It has to be you. You've gotta hear that voice of the individual."

That voice spent the afternoon playing trio with Motian and saxophonist Joe Lovano, in preparation for a trip to France. Yesterday it was Frisell's group—bassist Kermit Driscoll, cellist Hank Roberts, drummer Joey Baron. Last week it was concerts with John Zorn's Naked City, perhaps the most eclectic small group on the planet. To each, Frisell brings the same set of tools: open ears, the formidable resources of his fingertips and a commitment to the ensemble. He is covert. He trades in broad harmonic washes and overall shapes that define the sonic canvas. And he does this without upstaging whoever's employed him: Like his intervallically challenging solo lines, Frisell's comping constructions quickly become enmeshed within the music, part of its core rather than an improvised sidelight.

While he can certainly play a seething, high-density, note-filled solo, Frisell is less interested in linear spewing and more interested in sensurround. Sometimes that means strummed, faraway chords that gently stir the pot the way a drummer does when using



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treatment today.

Nor does Frisell expect any. "I hate these categories... I don't even *live* in Manhattan," he halfway hisses. A truck blocks Frisell's passage to the right lane. "It has absolutely nothing to do with music. It's a way to keep

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brushes. Sometimes it means ear-stretching dissonances confident enough to smash the prevailing mood into pieces. Sometimes it means knotted, rhythmic declarations that distantly thank Thelonious Monk.

Not everyone appreciates it, though: One critic has called Frisell's work "musical wallpaper." Others squawk about the over-reliance on reverb of his early recordings. Increasingly, the body of work—his own albums, including the new *Before We Were Born* (Elektra/Musician), and the work he's done with John Zorn, Paul Motian, Paul Bley, Bass Desires and Power Tools—overshad-

ows such complaints. Frisell has not simply been turning up on records as the sideman of choice; he's using those opportunities to rewrite some rules and suggest new directions for interactive music. Though representative of wildly varying styles, these records share the Frisell thumbprint, and point to (at least) one common conclusion: Frisell is one of the most durable, highly personal improvisors this decade has seen.

Talk like that in front of Bill Frisell gets you nowhere. Sitting in a lower Manhattan Mexican eatery, he is clearly uncomfortable with such accolades. He is soft-spoken, as timid as a kitten on a greeting

card, the flip side of his fits of guitarissimo. He started making music on the clarinet, and it shows. When he talks, he sounds genuinely awed by the world. Sentences end with little half-questions, like he's not really sure what he's just said.

"I...don't know, really. It's all so...so, so *small*. It's like you're taking all these little tiny sounds that are on this string, and magnifying them. If you take the electric guitar without an amplifier, you hit the string a certain way to get one sound. You can scrape the string and listen to all the little overtones. Then with the amplifier, some little overtone you might hear on a certain note, you could make it into a big orchestra."

The subtitle for Frisell's works should be the Sounds of Shyness, but Frisell seems adjusted to it. It is his weapon. "It's something about my personality," he says. "I blend in, I don't make waves. I don't like to argue with people. I have that same tendency when I play, but at the same time, I can do a lot of things that I wouldn't do in my real life. I can get a lot more aggressive. A lot of frustrations can come out. I can be a lot more decisive...it's hard for me to say yes or no. I can't dance, I don't fight and I don't sing. But when I'm playing it's another world. I can move things more easily."

Frisell, 38, says he draws much of his inspiration from the musicians around him. He considers his work as a sideman a matter of "magnifying what's already there," and says he's interested only in music-making environments that lean heavily on exchange, interaction, conversation. He mentions his decade-old association with drummer Paul Motian. "Before I played with him, I didn't feel I could really go out on a limb. A lot of people, if you go a certain way, you're left in space, you know? He listens to every single note. I can't bullshit with him at all."

The quiet revolution of instinct over intellect Frisell has been mounting piecemeal on other people's records has yet to be fully articulated on his own. He admits *Lookout for Hope*, the 1988 record with his band, was close, but says he didn't realize how far from a complete representation it was until he started thinking about leaving ECM.

Frisell prefaces his account of the dissolution of his ties with ECM by praising Manfred Eicher, the president of the label: "When you're playing, you're putting your life on the line, and when he's producing, he's got the same kind of intensity. When you're both after the same thing, it's really great. I just needed to try something different."

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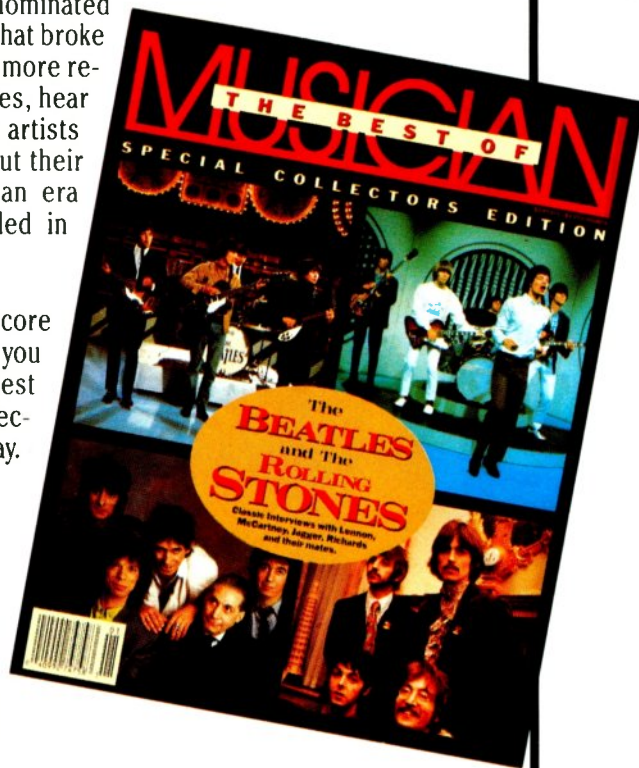
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