MUSICIAN

PLAYER & LISTENER

THE INTERVIEW

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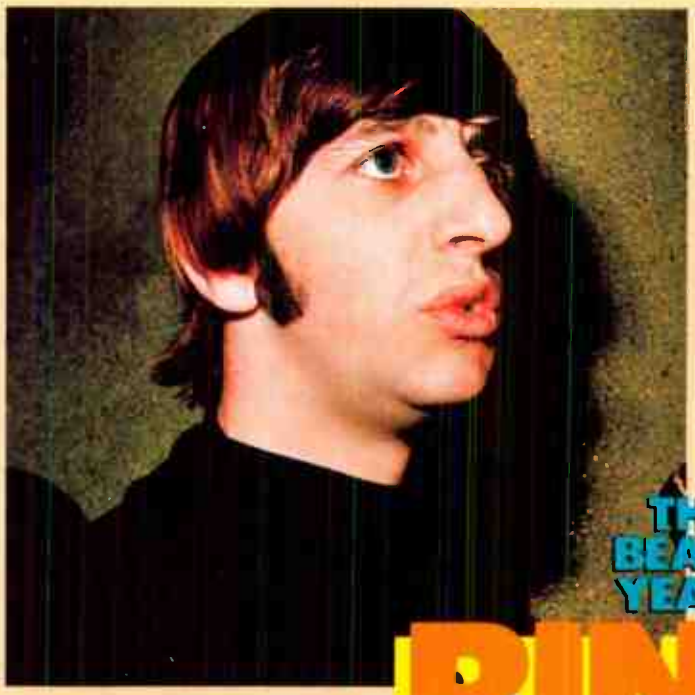
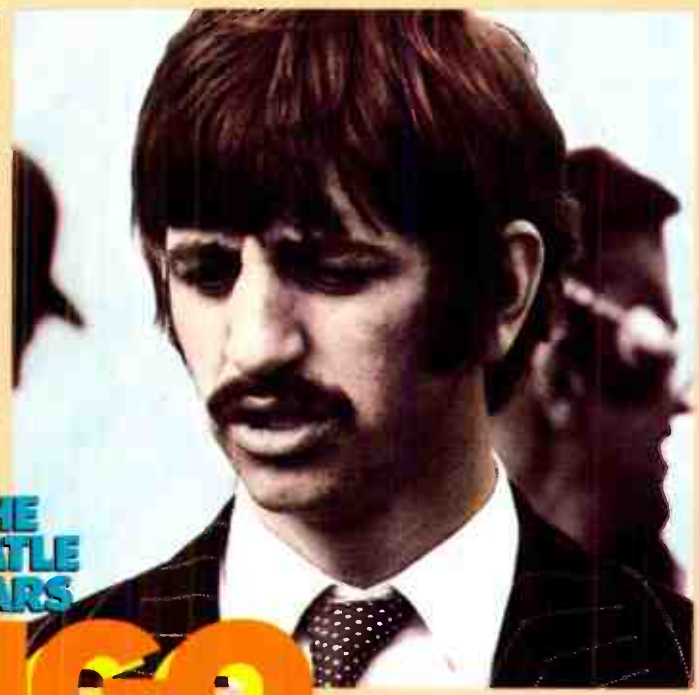
DEVO, ROSSINGTON-COLLINS, JOHN HALL, DRUM SPECIAL, ABDULLAH IBRAHIM, CREATIVE MUSIC STUDIO,

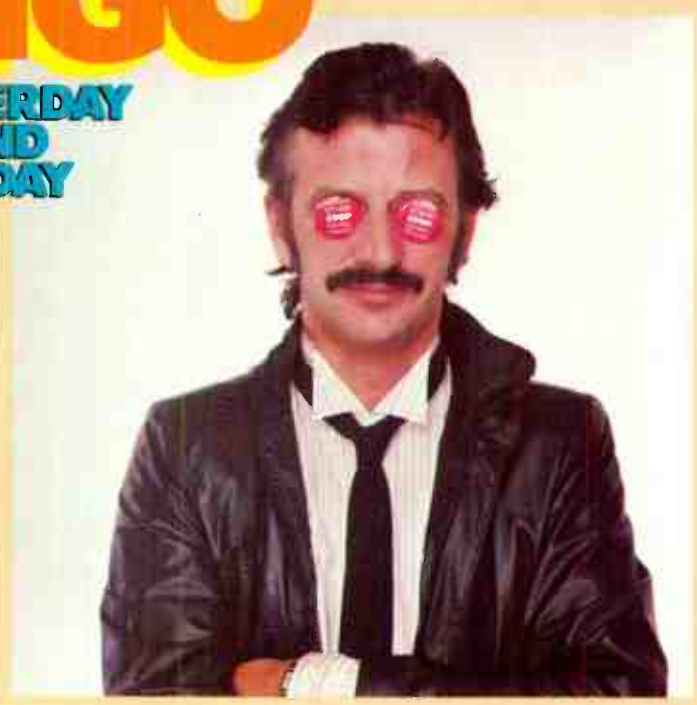




THE BEATLE YEARS

RINGO

YESTERDAY AND TODAY



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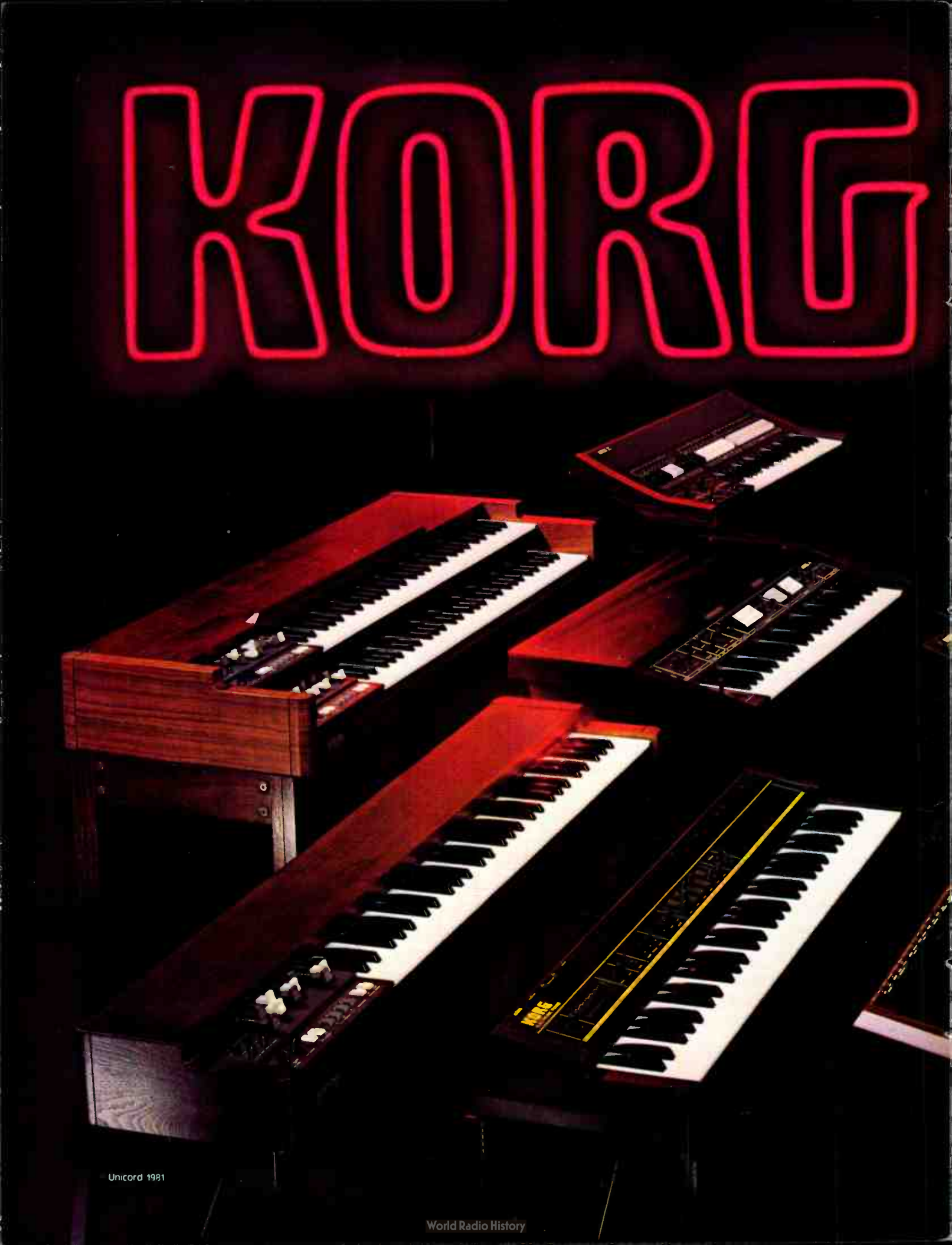

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BOSS

Understanding Technology Series

Subject: Understanding Time Delay Effects

BF-2, CE-2, DM-2

There are a number of devices that produce effects by a time delay circuit. The most common effects are Flanging, Chorus, and Echo Delay. Each of these effects mixes the original instrument signal in with the time delayed signal to produce the effect.

The time delay is the amount of time between the original note played and the note produced by the delay circuitry. These are very short, and are measured in milliseconds (mS – thousandths of a second).

The time delay produced by a flanger is the shortest, usually less than 13 milliseconds. The time delays needed to produce echoes are quite a bit longer, with a maximum at around 300 milliseconds. The time delays of a chorus fall in between the two, the longest being about 25 milliseconds.

BOSS makes three effect pedals that employ time delay circuitry. Each of these are designed to perform their effects with controls and features suited to the particular time delay application.

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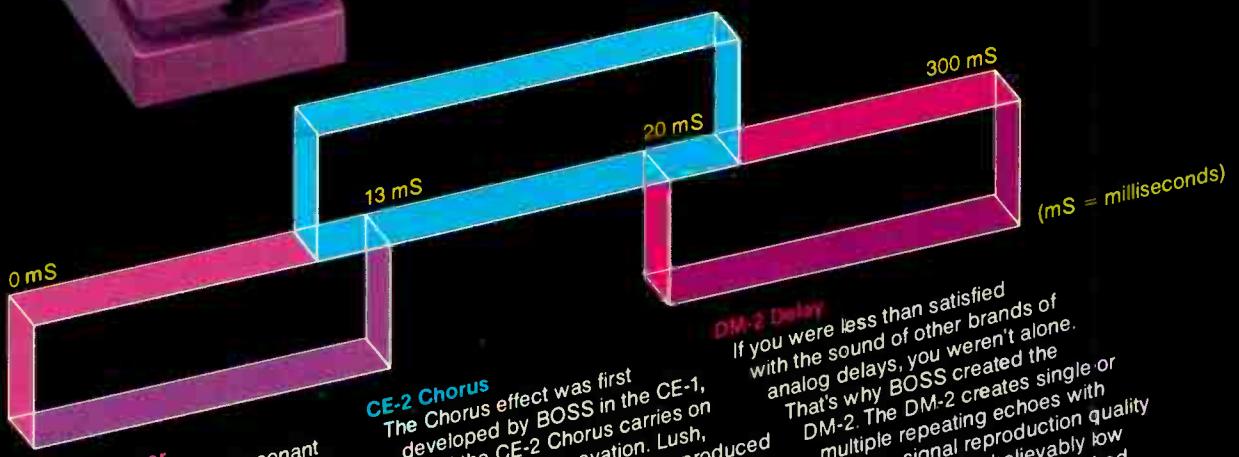

BF-2 Flanger

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CE-2 Chorus

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DM-2 Delay

If you were less than satisfied with the sound of other brands of analog delays, you weren't alone. That's why BOSS created the DM-2. The DM-2 creates single or multiple repeating echoes with strong signal reproduction quality and literally unbelievably low noise. This is accomplished through the use of a custom delay chip used exclusively by BOSS. Just trying the DM-2 will make a believer of you.

BOSS

We Want You To Understand The Future

MUSICIAN PLAYER & LISTENER

NO. 40, FEBRUARY, 1982

Devo has welded a challenging ideology to a confounding musical and theatrical presentation and whipped up a great top 40 hit to boot. Kristine McKenna remains suspicious, however, and asks for some de-evolutionary clarification.

Ringo revealed! Musical magic! International intrigue! The juiciest secrets! Film at eleven! Richard Starkey, short of stature but long on reminiscence, offers his own epic story of terror, romance, craziness and drums.

The Drum Special, a hearty compendium of technical insights and artistic confessions from some of the top drummers in rock, pop and jazz, what they play, what they hate, who they like and what makes them pound the skins.

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Hear the light.

Peter Erskine
Weather Report

You've got this polyrhythmic thing happening, using all four of your limbs constantly in a real melodic way. And as you're playing the flow, with one hand on your drum and the other on your Ride, you suddenly hear all these nice fat thick tones turn to wave after wave of pulsing light.

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LETTERS

POLICE PULL A STING

Thank you for your wonderful article on the Police. I have nearly every printed or recorded word ever put out about the Police, but the *Musician* article was a welcome and refreshing surprise; I learned more about them in one article than in the hundreds of other articles combined. The Police are a serious and intelligent group of musicians/businessmen/showmen and I thank you for giving them the recognition they deserve. *Musician* is the best music magazine around.

If he's Sting, then I'm stung.

Joyce Jaworowski
Jersey City, NJ

CAT'S OUT OF THE BAG

Damn you, Dan Forte!!!!! May you be transported to hell by means of a leaky tugboat! As if it wasn't bad enough when David Lindley opened his big mouth and spilled the beans about some of the umpteen bizarro axes he uses. But, no, you've got to write a whole damn article extolling the virtues of some of these horrendously harbascious, ill-conceived bastard children of deranged guitar designers' drug-induced nightmares! I've been digging up many of these monstrosities for quite some time and never paying more than 25 bucks for any of 'em. Whatever possessed you to let the cat out of the bag is totally beyond my twisted comprehension — don't you see, now everybody knows, and you and I (and the illustrious Mr. Lindley) will be forced to compete in the marketplace to procure these little jewels. I'm quite certain this is a blatant case of irresponsible journalism — you should be ashamed of yourself. Wish I'd written it.

Bruce Cutean
Sycamore, IL

REGGAE RAVE

"I and I" write to give thanks and proclaim my deep gratitude for "The New Reggae" by the always-prolific Cioe and Zabor. Specifically Deborah Feingold's photos and the overall cover design reminds me that my heartbeats are not only a barometer of my most cherished moments, but that heartbeat is a condition that bonds the most avid reggae devotionists. As one of those, I still burn with passions left over from repeated readings of the skillfully organized collection of words that accompanied those brilliant photographs. It was endearing and educational to be granted a woman's perspective, i.e. Puma Jones, on the reggae/rasta concept. This inspires Rita Marley's recent lyrics: "It takes a woman *and* a man to show the beauty of God's plan."

Enid Farber
Atlanta, GA

THUGS NOT COOL

After reading in your pages Robert Fripp's belief in music as a political force to bring about microcosmic change, it was most surprising to attend King Crimson's performance recently at the Roxy. I found it hard to appreciate why, having paid $12.50, the audience was made to stand all evening on a "dance floor" that Fripp had cleared while all the VIPs sat in choice seats for free. No one danced. Those not exhausted from interminable pre-concert standing were compressed in the predictable rush towards the stage when it started.

I was most offended, however, by the thugs who rudely searched us upon entry for tape recorders and cameras, and by the extraordinary sight of a burly guard breaking the nose of an amateur photographer who had exposed his Instamatic during the show. This individual, when attempting to contact the band afterwards (to see if they were aware of these atrocities committed in their name), was given a runaround typical of the most jaded rock star. While Crimson's music was all I expected, Fripp's hypocritical socio-political hokum is best forgotten.

Rudi James
Los Angeles, CA

SYMPATHETIC INDIGESTION

Robert Fripp's, "The Diary of the Return of King Crimson," was the apex of musical and personal insight into this talented quartet. Mr. Fripp's whimsically real analytical annals made me feel like I was really there. I even developed a state of inorganic indigestion after reading about the last PIZZALAND he ate at. The Shere pub incident reality was timeless. I wish more musicians had Fripp's insight; perhaps we could communicate better. I am listening to *Discipline* and remembering Fripp's story; is it a soap opera, musical or movie script? I am really looking forward to the next episode of ("Gentleman to King") the never ending saga of the Fripp animal.

Bernard Keough
Greensburg, PA

FUTURE STIMULATION

I can't believe that grown professionals are acting like primitive reactionaries. I know change is frightening to some people but Jim McCullaugh's "Studio Future Shock" with its mention of M.A.D. (Musicians Against Digital) is chock full of digital paranoia.

I see digital-video records as a new and exciting change in the business. Engineers should rally and rejoice because they can devote more time to the finished product than what it takes to put it together. Musicians need not worry — the only thing videodiscs will do is to require them to be more creative.

Arlene Nichols
Newport News, VA

RICKIE LEE REVISED

My compliments on John Pareles' interview with Rickie Lee Jones. She simply has no peer as songwriter — especially within the realm of female singer/songwriters.

However, I found Geoffrey Himes' review of *Pirates* particularly disturbing. Rickie Lee may, indeed, have a quasi-beat(nik) persona, but to imply that it is contrived ("taken on" is the actual quote) is unfair.

Lastly, and probably most outrageous is your treatment of the review in tandem with *Bella Donna*. How can he compare and contrast these LPs? There is *no* comparison! (Nonetheless, I think you people have the best music magazine around.)

Eric Snider
St. Petersburg, FL

LOOK MA, NO BELCHES

Some of the ladies and germs who throw mud on your magazine are occasionally on target, and everyone has a right to belch when something doesn't agree with them, but I've always taken journalistic endeavors, including yours, with a grain of salt and don't believe everything I read (a survival necessity in this age of fine, finer and finest print). But despite the fact that virtually no one escaped unscathed in the December "Letters" section, I felt compelled to point out that *Musican* makes you *think*, not easy in a time of orgiastic reflex! Your articles take a chance, ready and willing NOT to please a lobby that would make a liberal congressman shudder. It takes me a good, healthy chunk of time to go through each issue, a tasty change from 20 variations of "I got a plastic Harmony for Christmas one year and the rest is history..." Thanks guys and gals for a nice publication; your mother and I are proud of you.

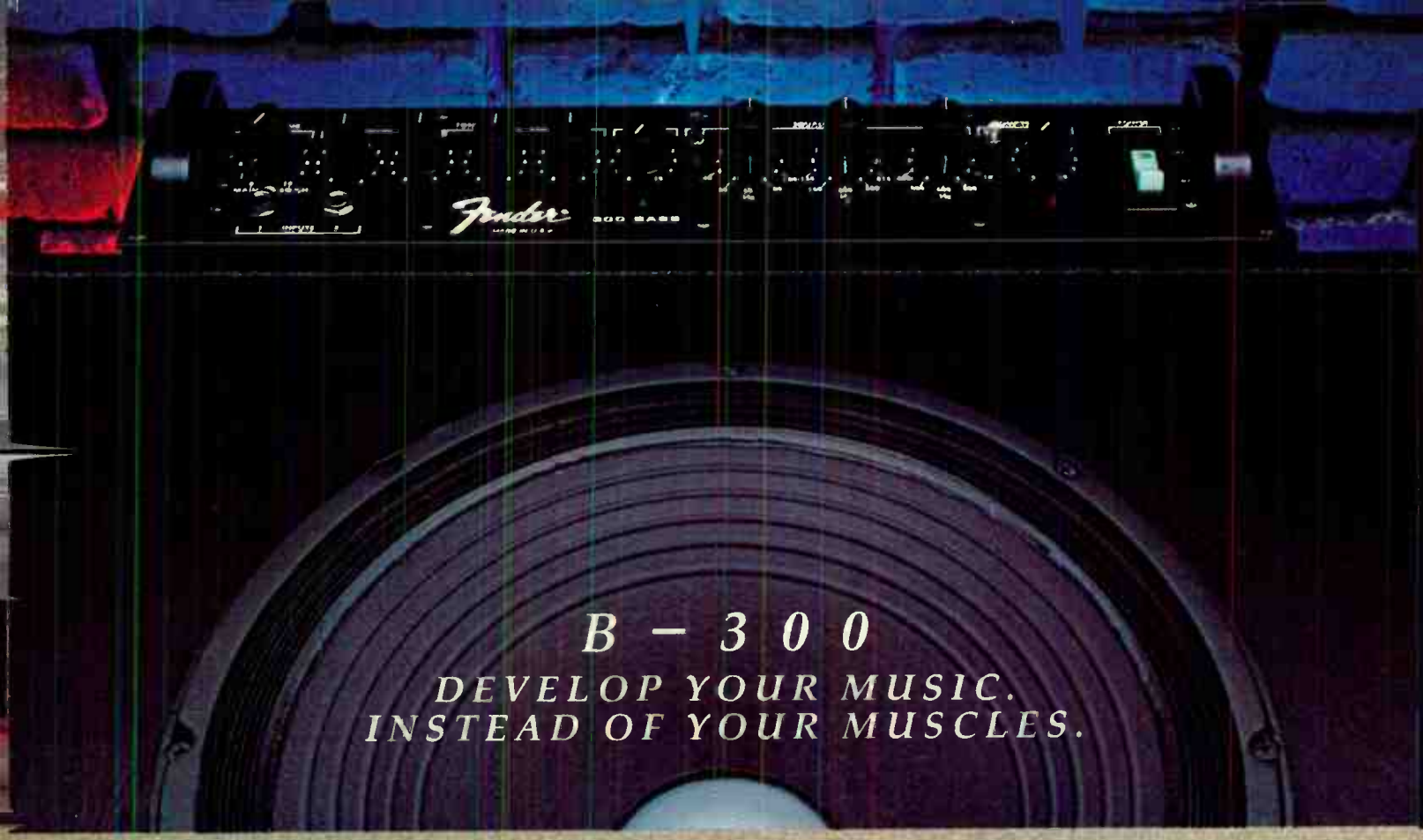
Paul Conner
Parkville, MD

STRICTLY BUBBLE GUM

I enjoy your magazine for its variety — except for the appalling variety of typos and misspellings that show up in every issue! I mean, we're not talking about one or two per issue (which would still be pretty inexcusable), we're talking about two or three per page! Your magazine is obviously not a low-budget affair, so how about paying a little extra for a typesetter who can type and a proofreader who can catch the errors — (and don't tell me about deadlines — I work in publishing...).

Nina G. Fiore
Studio City, CA

"Some people can read War and Peace *and think it's an action novel, while others can read the ingredients to a pack of chewing gum and unlock the secrets of the universe."* — Lex Luthor



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THE SOUND THAT CREATES LEGENDS

music industry news

Tired of the bar scene? Meeting no one at clubs? Discos getting you down? Then try New York's newest rock 'n' roll rage, *Midnight bowling*. Tuesday and Wednesday nights are the best, at a downtown Manhattan alley.

It's more fun than just going to another club," says **Billy Idol** (ex-Generation), a regular at the place. "The **Talking Heads** hang out there. **Siouxsie & the Banshees** were there. And it's real relaxed. Everybody talks to each other. Can you imagine **Iggy Pop** and **Johnny Rotten** bowling? Sometimes it gets wild.

Harry Nilsson has put his career on hold to chair the End Handgun Violence movement, a fund- and consciousness-raising group which grew out of the End Handgun Violence Week he organized in October. Nilsson's activism dates from drinking buddy **John Lennon**'s murder last year and includes not only speeches, interviews and rallies, but a self-financed public service announcement sent to 1,500 stations.

One of his more spectacular events was a "Hooters Against Shooters" show in Philadelphia, featuring a local band and special guests **Martin Mull**, **Stephen Bishop**, **Adrian Belew** and **Robert Fripp**. Nilsson also hooked the P.A. system into the phone and took calls from **Ringo Starr**, **Joni Mitchell**, **Lee Oskar**, **Tommy Smothers**, **Jack Nicholson**, **Warren Beatty** and **Graham Chapman**. More events are planned, including a massive Washington rally in May. Nilsson said he had asked **George Harrison** to participate and Harrison squirmed, "Harry, why do you want to make me a target?" Nilsson told him he could play behind bullet-proof glass.

With the first $2 single recently introduced by RCA, can the $10 LP be far behind? No, say retail sources who tell us the record companies are sending out feelers about a price increase on superstar product to $9.98 list for a single pocket LP in the new year.

Also the $5.98 midline series on new artist and catalog product appears threatened. Though MCA has just announced a massive television promotion of its midline LPs, the feeling reported among the other record companies is that the $5.98 has served its purpose, and now it is time for business as usual. This is: if a product sells, raise the price to make more money on it; if it doesn't sell, raise the price anyway, to recoup the losses through whatever sales you can get.

In the rush of Christmas releases, we may have neglected to mention a religious alternative. The world's "only senior citizen Jewish rock band," **Gefilte Joe and the Fish** have released *Chanukah Rocks*, an LP shaped like a star of David. This classic disc includes their past hits, "Take A Walk On The Kosher Side" and "Matzoh Man," and some great new standards: "Napper's Delight" and the seasonal cyclone, "Chanukah Rocks." Even **Albert King**'s "Santa Claus Wants Some Lovin'" can't compare with this holiday blockbuster.

Steve Miller is not real big on new wave; in fact, he's preparing a punk parody presentation of a new song, "Culture Shock," when he goes to London soon. Hope they let him leave... **The Police** will visit ultra-right-wing Chile and do a government-sponsored TV show. One world, not three, indeed... **Foreigner**, unlike their name, are not at all interested in European or other non-U.K./U.S. markets. Seems they take so much flack from those continental critics, it just ain't worth it to 'em.

The ultimate in **Stones** tour trivia: everything you ever wanted to know about balloons, according to the bombardiers, Balloon Lady of San Francisco. In New York the glimmer twins dropped 10,000 14-inch balloons from 20 plastic bags, each one 20 feet high and 12 feet wide containing 500 balloons costing 12¢ apiece.

In New Orleans, they dropped 45,000 balloons! This miracle required 250 people working three days. We've been told that four 8-pound compressors will inflate 10,000 balloons in six hours. Want to impress your friends? Figure about $10,000 for a good drop.

Chart Action

It's Christmas time here at the chart wars, and I am dug in here along the front lines with two companies of under assistant West Coast promotion men. The action has been slow and costly — a few scant yards of advance has taken weeks of fighting, often hand-to-hand. It's just another one of those ugly realities we try to spare the public, but for this month of this year, chart war is hell!

Earth, Wind & Fire crawled through the mud up five places before the Stones, Journey, the Police and the top grunts, Foreigner, beat them to a halt. Stevie Nicks clawed her way back through ground she had paid for already and Olivia Newton-John stunned Oates and Hall with a dolphin assault. Dan Fogelberg was felled by a Genesis salvo. A greatest hits package by Rush ripped through the second level opposition, charging 29 places before bogging down at #10. Rush's problem revealed the silliness of the chart optimists, clinging to straws that hip teen-dwellers like Kool & Gang, Rod Stewart, the Cars and Diana Ross are going to punch their way into such a furious no-man's land.

Another ugly reality we wish we could shield you from is the rampant outbreak of Greatest Hits. More and more vibrant young artists are being ravaged behind the lines by this dreaded infection, resulting in repetitive mental states, drooling and Christmas gift releases of *The Best Of* albums. Family and friends were shocked as the toll mounted: George Benson, Rush, Blondie, Queen, Diana Ross, the Doobies, the Jacksons, Bob Seger, Willie Nelson...

Another savage result of this agonizing stalemate is the appearance and success of psychotic horror mutants: Ozzy Osborne of Black Sabbath put his *Diary* into #19 in three weeks! A new Black Sabbath LP is gaining ground and Molly Hatchet just appeared. One relief: that nasty weirdo spud collection, Devo, peaked at #23. Thank God! Our charts are still safe for democracy.

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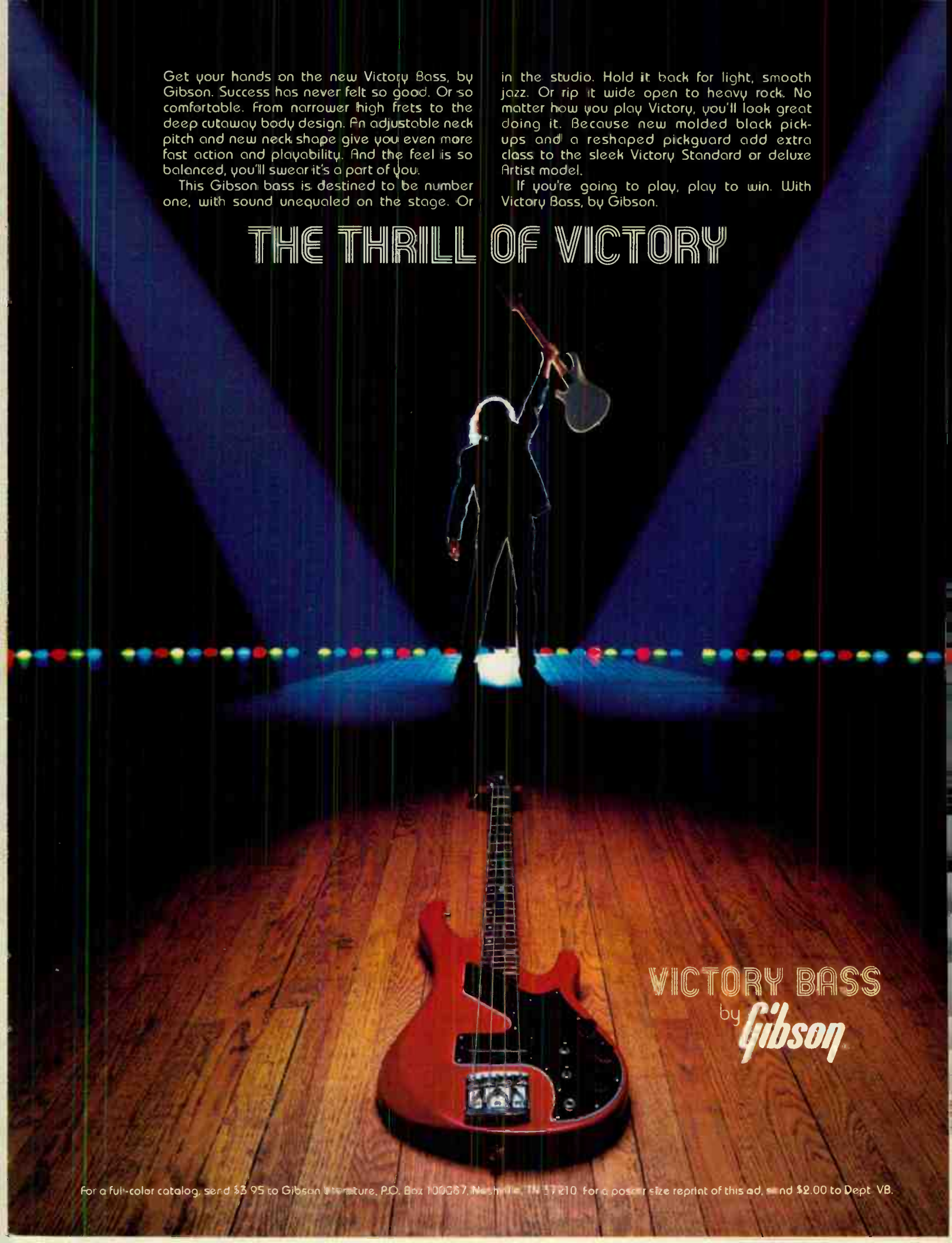
THE THRILL OF VICTORY



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comes from a working class family. He was extremely poetic. I thought he had a lot of talent and a terrific ability to express the values, ideals and sensitive issues that the Sex Pistols were about."

One begins to recognize much of McLaren's influence in John Lydon's sarcastic tongue-in-cheek humor. With Malcolm pulling many of the media strings, the Pistols' blatant disregard for convention posed a pointed threat to the suddenly creaking rock establishment. By singing about anarchy and no future, the Sex Pistols transformed throwing up in airports, getting dropped from record labels and cursing on national TV into apocalyptic statements. Much of that intellectual impetus came from McLaren.

"My job was purely to be a catalyst. It went beyond the Sex Pistols," he explains. "I tried to understand the English media. We became the 'Golden Boys of Fleet Street.' We sold more papers with the Sex Pistols on the front cover than if the President had been assassinated. That was the power we had. It was something that went beyond the realm of record company rock 'n' roll music formats. We put the word 'anarchy' into every kid's dictionary."

In between managing the Sex Pistols and the Bow Wow Wow, Malcolm McLaren attempted to resurrect the pop career of a mercilessly ridiculed, unfashionable hardcore Brit-punk-rocker by the name of Adam Ant. A minor artist with a cult following largely based on his role in the film, *Jubilee*, Adam turned to McLaren to help him.

"Malcolm beat the self-indulgence out of me by asking what I wanted to be," recalls Adam during his last trip stateside. "And I told him, 'A household name.' Which was the truth. And he said I was going about it the wrong way, that I was making it hard on myself. I was very naive. But a lot of things Malcolm said were theory and there's a big difference between theorizing about hit records and making them."

Indeed, for all the reams of publicity garnered by both the Sex Pistols and Bow Wow Wow, neither of them ever really achieved commercial success, especially not in the U.S. Adam turned out to have the last laugh, though he refuses to gloat.

"I was very influenced by what Malcolm was saying until I started to think about it," states Adam now. "He had my head in a sling. But Malcolm seems to think technology is boss. Well, it isn't. And when Malcolm talks about America, he's talking through a top hat."

On the other hand, McLaren admits he never expected to sell records, at least not with the Sex Pistols, who were rock 'n' roll's answer to "Springtime For Hitler" from Mel Brooks' *The Producers* — they were supposed to flop. That was their charm.

"If punk music did anything, if the Pistols achieved anything," insists Malcolm, "it was the non-sale of records and the demystification of the pop idol. They demolished it. They created a disloyalty to the star. But we never did sell records in comparison to the media exposure we got. People didn't buy the Sex Pistols. They were excited by the attitude of what the Sex Pistols stood for. You were selling the attitude, not the records. The albums were just souvenirs."

Adam says that's all a load of bollocks.

"Malcolm would analyze for hours what he was doing with the Sex Pistols. Half the time, anybody close to Malcolm knew he wasn't in control. When the band cursed on the Bill Grundy show (on BBC), he was nervous. He makes it all out like it was planned, but he didn't know what was going on. It's very easy to philosophize after the event.

"Malcolm likes to make out that he's in touch with the street, but the guy's middle class. He's the best-dressed guy I've ever seen. He's no Joe Orton, that's for sure. It's easy to be an anarchist when you're loaded. Most working people are very conservative. I don't like this kind of working-class-hero rubbish."

The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle is the film version of the Sex Pistols saga as seen through the eyes of its writer/star, Malcolm McLaren. The movie is a pointed satire on the music business, with McLaren offering his own version of the Ten Commandments — the steps it

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takes to foist a pop phenomenon onto an unwitting public. It is a hilarious montage of animation, video clips and filmed footage and, in the words of the venerable show biz rag, *Variety*, "the best rock movie since *Hard Day's Night*...the *Citizen Kane* of rock musicals." Due to thorny legal entanglements, the film has yet to be released in the States.

"That's really the way Malcolm sees the story," says Adam, "but that isn't the way it happened. Malcolm loved to tell people the Pistols couldn't play, but they really could! Malcolm was just an entrepreneur, a mentor. I just wish he could be richer than he is because I think he needs money to do the things he wants.

"He's great for telling people they're making it difficult for themselves, then he's in a position where he could do it and he makes it difficult for *himself!* He's crazy, and that's what's nice about him. He did bring the other groups, along with the industry, to their knees. He embarrassed them and they'll never forgive him for that. He brought life back into the clubs and fashion back onto the street. Same way Elvis Presley did."

On his arrival in America to promote Bow Wow Wow's debut LP, *See Jungle! See Jungle!*, Malcolm McLaren found himself in the midst of yet another controversy, this one surrounding 15-year-old Annabella, who apparently posed in the altogether for a photograph based on Monet's famous *Dejeuner Sur L'herbe* painting of a naked woman sitting in between two fully clothed (and seemingly oblivious) businessmen. Add McLaren's porno-parodic lyrics on songs like "Louis Quatorze," "King Kong" and "Sexy Eiffel Towers," along with an overbearing, protective stage mother and you get the expected charges of sexploitation. Upon meeting Annabella on her own visit stateside though, you find an exceedingly normal youngster with enough resiliency to deflect the most pointed query, though she admits the British press are a "real pain."

"They just get on my nerves," she complains. "Some of them try to make me out to be some sort of nymphet. I don't know what the hell they do that for, because I'm not! It's mainly because of the image thing, but I don't even see where I'm putting that image across. What is a bloody nymphet? What does that mean, anyway? If the press wants someone like that, they can find someone else. I don't happen to be that way. If girls want to be like that, it's up to them. Or boys, for that matter. I don't care. But it worries me because you can't believe everything you read or you can't believe what you're labeled as."

McLaren had to face similar charges of exploitation when the late Sex Pistols' bassist Sid Vicious was accused of murdering his girlfriend, then overdosed on heroin while out on bail, all accompanied by a fierce media blitz. Predictably, he sees a more complex issue at stake with Bow Wow Wow than mere pedophilia. Malcolm's theories include the anachronism of the teen rebel as a potent symbol in rock 'n' roll. He insists the new generation will create its own entertainment, for young *and* old.

"People don't care about records the way they used to," Malcolm mounts his soap box one last time. "In 1955, when Johnny used to listen to Alan Freed and play his radio, his old man would bash the roof in because it was too loud. In 1981, his room will house all the equipment he needs — audio, visual, the works. The only true rebel is the kid in that room making uncensored videos and music on his own for himself. He's going to be outside the industry, even as it tries to confine him. And it won't matter if it's someone the age of fifty or some girl the age of eight. They'll each be as sophisticated as the other."

The history of rock 'n' roll is filled with countless would-be P.T. Barnums trying to sell snake oil by promising miracles. Whether Malcolm McLaren is a McLuhanesque prophet or merely a snazzy swindler, the bands he's been associated with have always offered at least as much hope as hoopla. You can't ask much more from pop music than that.

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WILL SUCCESS SPOIL JOHN HALL?

One of the most gifted guitarists and songwriters in rock, John Hall has muted his radical ideology and made life easier for himself with a new commercial album. But at what price does safety and solvency come?

By David Fricke

Imagine you are guitarist John Hall. You have a five-star reputation as a sideman whose expert rhythm comping, decorative fills, and short but sweet Strat solos have made Taj Mahal, Bonnie Raitt, and Jackson Browne look good on stage and record. With your wife Johanna, you've penned a number of choice charthoppers combining the organic grace of backwoods R&B and the youthful exuberance of classic 60s Britpop, not only for your old mid-70s band Orleans ("Dance With Me," "Let There Be Music") but for bad mama Bonnie ("Good Enough"), Linda Ronstadt ("Give One Heart"), and the late mama Janis ("Half Moon"). You're also one of rock's Radical 500, soapboxing on behalf of everything from McGovern and world hunger to safe energy and Save the Med Fly (you're only kidding), and you played a pivotal role in organizing the 1979 No Nukes MUSE concerts in New York.

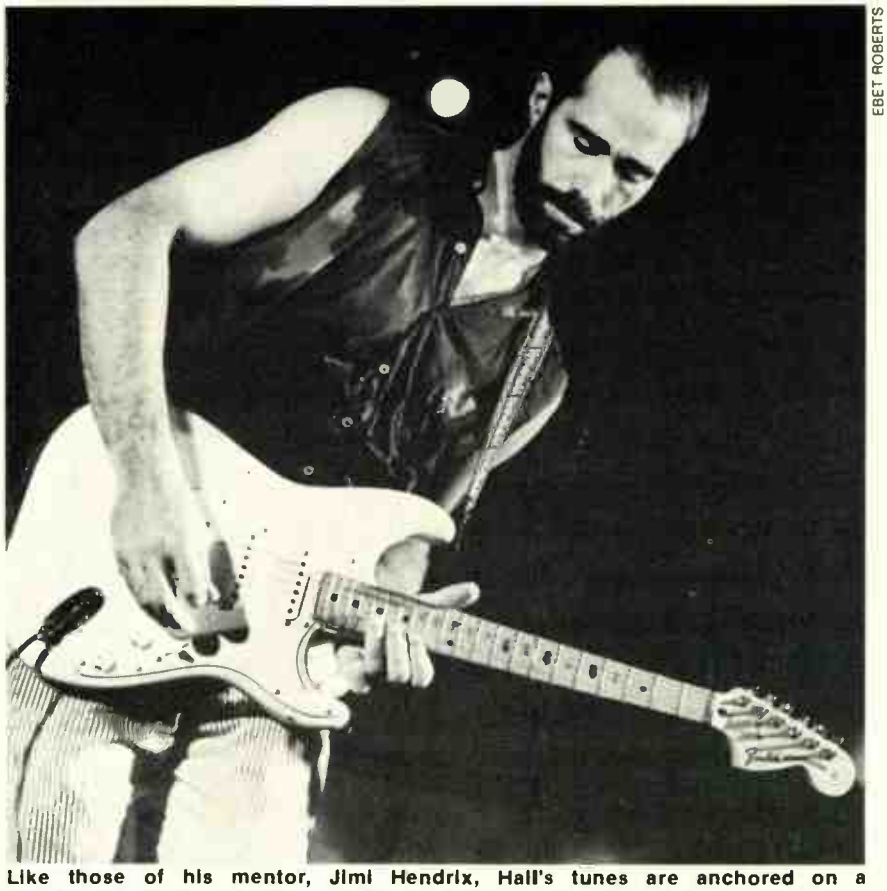
Also, if you're John Hall, you are just coming off a few lean years. A couple of solo albums stiffed, the business boys are harping on you to cool the benefits and do some real touring for real money, and record companies screen your calls with "John who? Isn't he the anti-nuke kook?" So you swear revenge, form the John Hall Band with a few Woodstock buddies, and cut an album called *All Of The Above* so self-consciously tuneful and greased with AOR gloss that, in your mercenary enthusiasm, you have made what one writer you meet feels is the most *ordinary* record of your career.

So imagine you are John Hall, realizing for the first time the difference between meaning what you say and doing what you mean.

"You know what made people act in the 60s?"

John Hall's deep foghorn of a voice booms across a desk and bounces back off the drab walls of a lifeless office cubicle in EMI-America's Manhattan headquarters.

"When they were being directly threatened," he answers immediately. "If they or their family or friends were being shot in Vietnam, they were much more prone to be anti-war. People act if they are directly threatened. Now, there's a distant threat except, say, for those people who now live in Diablo Canyon. It's real ostrich time in America. People are sticking their heads in the sand, saying, 'I'm taking care of myself first.' And I guess I can be accused of the same thing. I'm putting out a commercial record and trying to have a hit so I can keep putting out records."



EBET ROBERTS

Like those of his mentor, Jimi Hendrix, Hall's tunes are anchored on a prominent melodic guitar figure, augmented by zesty, concise solos.

Look at Hall and you do not see a man suffering a mid-career crisis. With his imposing six-foot-plus frame settled comfortably in a swivel chair, his characteristic sleeveless T-shirt exposing a set of cast-iron arms developed by (among other things) a passion for racquetball, a bristly five o'clock shadow no match for the sunny expression on his face, he is the atypical picture of rock 'n' roll health and disposition. Not unlike his music.

His indisputable technical dexterity aside (required listening: his extended breaks on Taj Mahal's 1971 live twofer *The Real Thing*), John Hall's greatest asset as a guitarist is the physical immediacy of his playing, the stunning enunciation in his phrasing heightened by his intuitive ability to speak volumes in a single chorus. The core riffs of his songs hit you with the same rhythmic passion of Hendrix (an acknowledged influence) while his wiry tensile leads can float like a butterfly one measure and sting like a bee the next. There's no idle teasing in the songs either, whether it's the ebullient bop and boys choir harmonies of Orleans' "Still the One" or the warm ballad glow of his solar energy anthem "Power."

All Of The Above is not totally lacking in those qualities. "You Sure Fooled Me," "Crazy (Keep on Falling)" — both good-natured Orleans-style workouts — and the soft-core Doobies doo-wopper "Earth Out Tonight" sport immaculately sculpted songhooks. Band members Bob Leinbach (the chrome-dome on keyboards), bassist John Troy, and ex-Ian Hunter drummer Eric Parker make up in enthusiasm what they lack in adventure. And guitar freaks get their minimum album requirement of Hall solos. But the unnatural, homogenous FM sheen of the final product suggests

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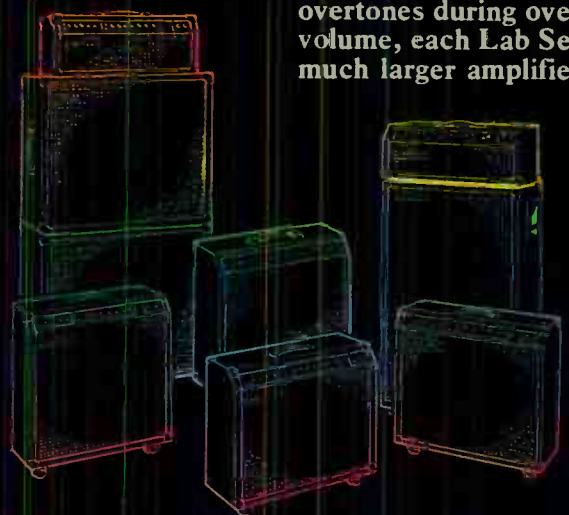

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that Hall tried so hard to make an album of sureshots according to radio's unwritten laws that he broke the cardinal rule of real pop art — be yourself.

His high political profile and widely publicized anti-nuclear activities, Hall admits, indirectly forced his hand. "It's a difficult balance and the problem is that if I can't sell any tickets, then my benefits don't do anybody any good. And it's a conservative business. When your manager and booking agent are screaming at you to stop doing so many benefits because they're not getting their ten percent and record companies are saying, 'Oh, he's that anti-nuke guy,' you've got to take other things into consideration.

"And I will not deny there were commercial considerations in making this album. But that's where rock 'n' roll started, isn't it? When I heard 'I Want To Hold Your Hand' on the radio for the first time, I thought, 'Hey, that's great rock 'n' roll.' I didn't say, 'Oh, a three-minute single.'"

Now in his thirties, Hall (a native of Baltimore and one of Woodstock's leading citizens) first made his mark backing up collegiate blues enthusiasts like Bonnie Raitt (he produced her excellent '73 LP *Takin' My Time*), but when he got his first electric guitar at age twelve, he was already smitten by the pure pop corn of the Beach Boys and the Ventures — "the epitome of that trebly, plunky Fender sound." The Beatles impressed on him that brevity was the wit as well as the spice of rock. Yet it was only after a brief romance with blues a la Britain that he discovered in Jimi Hendrix the secret of songwriting.

"I found I vastly preferred him over Beck and Clapton because of the R&B influence and his rhythm guitar playing. Every song had a motif with the guitar. 'Purple Haze,' 'Love And Confusion' — those riffs were the skeleton that the rest of the song would hang on. That's become a real influence on me. Everything from 'Dance With Me' and 'Half Moon' to 'The Touch' on this record has a guitar motif. And when Johanna and I write a song, it almost always starts out with a guitar lick that's the basis for the whole song." (It is worth noting here that one of the covers in Hall's current live set is Hendrix's "Wait Until Tomorrow" and don't complain that there's no solo. There's none in the original either.)

By the time Hall enlisted with Taj Mahal at the turn of the 70s, Taj was already deep into his Caribbean gumbo phase which, combined with the fact that Taj was more interested in Hall as a rhythm player than a lead guitarist, inspired Hall to take a crash course in the Wailers, Toots & the Maytals, and seminal Dixie soul man Don Covay. To this day, Hall insists that long solos are just an ego massage and often rob a song or performance of its rhythmic impact, citing Roy Buchanan as an unfortunate example.

"Back when I was playing in Georgetown in Washington, D.C., and he was playing another club in Georgetown, I'd go and hear Roy all the time. Back then, he would do a song — didn't matter what, it was usually shitty material — and you'd be sitting there and he would come in for the solo, play one chorus that was the hottest thing you ever heard, and then go turn down and play rhythm again. There was something about that supply and demand that made it all the more exciting.

"Now when he gets up and plays 'Hey Joe' for the eighteen-millionth time and takes twenty choruses, who gives a shit? I like jamming and I like playing with people, but the days of giving another ten choruses are over as far as I'm concerned. I don't enjoy overstatement anymore."

Ironically, *All Of The Above* is overstatement of a kind, Hall's over-compensation for the commercial quarantine laid on him following the non-success of his *Power* album, the anti-nuke curse and the Great Record Company Depression of '79 and '80. It's hard to fault him for good intentions. Besides, it's not a bad album, merely undistinguished. And as he points out, you can't support a family just by playing solos on other people's records.

But the problem with *All Of The Above* is that, considering the crucial state of his commercial stock, it is hardly the album that will change people's minds about John Hall, much less the issues he stands for. In fact, Hall is not so sure rock has the capacity to make people go to the barricades as it once did.

"Changing people's minds and making people act," he notes somewhat ruefully, "are two different things. But one of the reasons the MUSE concerts were such a success is that a lot of kids who couldn't tell nuclear power from a hole in the ground went out not only hearing good music but thinking, 'There must be something here worth checking out or all these people wouldn't have bothered.'

"You see, there are two ways you can go. You can be on one hand the sort of protest vehicle that Bob Dylan used in what I think was his heyday, or Bob Marley, even Freda Payne's 'Bring the Boys Home.' Then there's the celebration of life and that is just as political. 'Love that's real will not fade away' — that's a political statement because isn't that what we're all fighting for?"

John Hall's Equipment

John Hall is definitely a vintage Fender man, using a '56 Stratocaster as main axe and backup and a '55 Telecaster for fun. He's been known to bring a Veilette-Citroen electric 12-string into the studio along with two acoustics, a Guild and a Gurian. His stage amp is a Mesa Boogie with a 12-inch JBL, though he occasionally uses a Fender 410 Super Reverb. He uses Ernie Ball strings, MXR and Maestro boxes and pedals and is about to go wireless with a Nady set-up. Ⓜ

A PLAGUE OF SIXTIES COVER SONGS

Noticed more and more recycled sixties classics turning up on the radio? What started as a trend has turned into an avalanche of retread riches. A look at the pros and cons of 1981's great failure of imagination.

By Rob Patterson

As I sat at my typewriter, pounding the keys intently, the telephone installer working in my apartment abruptly reacted to a song that had just come on the radio. "What is going *on* in music these days?" he said with genuine puzzlement. "*Everybody's* doing remakes of old songs. Any station I listen to, WABC, WYNY, all I hear is people doing old songs. Where is the *imagination*!?"

An informal inventory of recent airplay confirmed his observation. Constantly heard are old mainstays like "Angel Of The Morning," "Why Do Fools Fall In Love," "Workin' My Way Back To You," "Boy From New York City," "Tell It Like It Is," "More Love," "Hurts So Bad" and "Crying," performed not by the original artists, Merilee Rush, Frankie Lymon, the Four Seasons, the Ad Libs, Aaron Neville, Smokey Robinson, Little Anthony and Roy Orbison, but in adaptations by Juice Newton, Diana Ross, the Spinners, Manhattan Transfer, Heart, Kim Carnes, Linda Ronstadt and Don McLean. If you scorn AM and lean toward "new music," you may still have noted remakes of "Mony Mony" by Billy Idol, "Little Red Riding Hood" by 999, "Workin' In A Coal Mine" by Devo and that old standby, "96 Tears" by Garland Jeffries. And doubtless no one has missed pop music's most pernicious trend, inspired by a medley of carbon-copied slices of Beatles songs dubbed "Stars On 45." With such discs as the "Beach Boys Medley" and the Creedence Clearwater Revival "Medley U.S.A.," the entire impact of an important act's history is distilled into three minutes of hooks, less the lines, sinkers, instrumental solos and *content*, thank you. In England, where K-Tel collections top the charts there's even a hit Hollies medley as well as "Hooked On Classics," a medley of popular you-guessed-its by the London Symphony Orchestra.

Determined to shed some light on this trend, I sought the advice of some experts in the music industry on the cover phenomenon: Richard Landis, producer of "Angel Of The Morning;" Jaap Eggermont, producer of the "Stars On 45" Beatles medley; Marcy Drexler, Arista A&R person; Karla DeVito, cover artist; Linda Wortman, of Cotillion Publishing, Atlantic's copyright arm; and a man who has made an art of analyzing the *Billboard* Chartbeat, Paul Grein.

What emerged was a vigorous debate on the validity and demography of this vast recycling of rock's riches.

For better or worse, the fundamental cause, as Paul Grein puts it, is "tight radio." Radio has always been criminally cold to innovative music and the Great Record Biz Swoon of recent years has only made matters worse. "With only 20 or even 17 songs on a contemporary playlist, a new act has a big edge if it comes in with an oldie," observes Grein. "The main concern for radio programmers is avoiding 'tune-out' and you do that by sticking with familiar acts or

Linda Wortman of Cotillion agrees wholeheartedly: "You're noticing more covers because things are tightening up so much in the industry and people are so worried about getting a hit, about what is going to be a hit. It is much easier to take something that was a hit and redo it, because the probability of success is high." Record companies have become accomplices in this squeeze play against originality on the airwaves: "There is an enormous amount of pressure on new artists to come up with the goods or they are dropped." Wortman points out that artists are being signed to shorter contracts with less options at a time when, ironically, "it usually takes more than one record to hit.

A perfect example of a new artist who rode to prominence on the crest of a cover was Juice Newton. True to the model, "Angel Of The Morning" was suggested to Newton's producer, Richard Landis, by Capitol national promotion director Steve Meyer, who had had the song in mind for a few years as a potential hit for the right female singer. Keen commercial mind plots ideal vehicle for new songbird's catapult to stardom. But Landis ignores the obvious business advantages of doing covers and dwells on the most frequent defense of remakes: the timeless emotional content of a great old song or, as I frequently heard, "a good song is a good song is a good song."

"The minute you try to formulize it, that's bad," Landis feels. To him, it's the emotional content of a song, an intensity that has its original innocence augmented by the greater maturity and freedom of the 80s. "There are songs that just got to me emotionally, and I want to cut them. It's art, not prostitution. 'Angel Of The Morning' had, for its time, a very liberated lyric and made an important statement to people emotionally."

"An old song has double meaning," asserts Karla DeVito, whose debut album includes the Grass Roots' "Midnight Confessions." "You hear it again and you remember where you were in sixth grade, or your first romance, whatever. I heard that song in a play recently and it just set me to thinking about it. It just had that power."

A related defense of hit-cloning involves the enhanced technology of the 80s as a new element in revitalizing sixties music. Richard Landis feels this can give a cover "total validity. It's fun to take a song that you loved as a kid and then with a heavy budget, studio and band, as well as a great singer, do what Vanilla Fudge did with "You Keep Me Hangin' On." Landis takes great pains to point out the changes from Merilee Rush's 1967 hit that were made in his version, such as a subtle military cadence in the original that was expanded and "beefed up with 15 snares and four guitars, honoring a part of the old arrangement while otherwise the sonic treatment, tempo and performance went to the other end of the spectrum from the original version," a change those of us not so enamored of the song, originally or otherwise, hardly noticed.

A less positive explanation for the rash of covers is the general decline of songwriting. Paul Grein says, "Com-

continued on page 88

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ABDULLAH IBRAHIM

The South African pianist once known as Dollar Brand doesn't separate his musical reality from the life and struggle of his people. His new work, polished, joyous and eclectic, is a diary of a revolution in progress.

By Don Palmer

In the 20 years since pianist and composer Abdullah Ibrahim (until recently known as Dollar Brand) left his native South Africa, he has established himself as one of the most adventurous and successful of African artists. He has developed a local voice informed by but distinct from its indigenous, pop and American sources, whereas in a lot of African music the concepts of traditional and contemporary are mutually exclusive. Musicians such as Nigeria's Fela Anikulapo Kuti have forged a brand of contemporary Afro-rock that is popular here and in Africa. It possesses a powerful, repetitive dance beat and carries a political message but, with its heavy Western influence, it is basically a mirror of black American music and other American ethno-rock musics. There are also a few younger South African musicians, such as Dudu Pukwana and Johnny Dyani, who have incorporated the traditional world into their contemporary music but, being more influenced by the avant-garde, they don't create an irresistible dance groove. Ibrahim, on the other hand, has developed a music that is danceable (if you consider the Ellington and Basie orchestras dance bands), eclectic and polished. By drawing on the township rhythms of South Africa, Ibrahim, like Gillespie, Kirk, Rollins, Blythe, and sometimes Miles, has taken jazz back to the people as populist jazz is wont to do.

Ibrahim first started playing piano at the urging of his grandmother, who was a pianist in the local African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. As a youngster growing up in the port city of Cape Town, he was exposed to traditional African, Cape Malay, carnival, popular and jazz music. He began playing professionally while still in high school working with various local dance bands. In 1961 Ibrahim, Hugh Masakela (who, along with Miriam Makeba, is the best known of South African musicians), Jonas Gwangwa and Kippy Moeketsi (the father of modern South African music) formed the Jazz Epistles, which quickly became one of the most popular jazz groups in South Africa. With these influences and experiences behind him, the 28-year-old Ibrahim left South Africa for a three-year engagement at the Cafe Africana in Zurich, Switzerland. It was here that he met Duke Ellington, which led to a recording date and, three years later, a trip to America, where he performed at the 1965 Newport Jazz Festival. Since that time Ibrahim has recorded over 40 albums ranging from solo piano to big band dates.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

"The instrument is only instrumental;" Ibrahim doesn't dwell on his use of the piano, hearing a deeper oral tradition.

In recent years the influences that Ibrahim brings to his music have congealed into a unified whole. On many earlier recordings Ibrahim would successfully interpret the orchestral colorings used by Ellington and the succinct yet scattershot phrasing of Monk, but the picture would be neither cogent nor coherent. Piano solos would meander until the flow ceased to be even a trickle, as Ibrahim grappled with the difficult task of maintaining direction, energy and rhythm in an extended improvisation. At times the alternating chords, rippling treble runs and walking bass lines created incisive vignettes of the black South African and black American experience. At other times, the fractured runs left a pall of despair without any glimmer of hope.

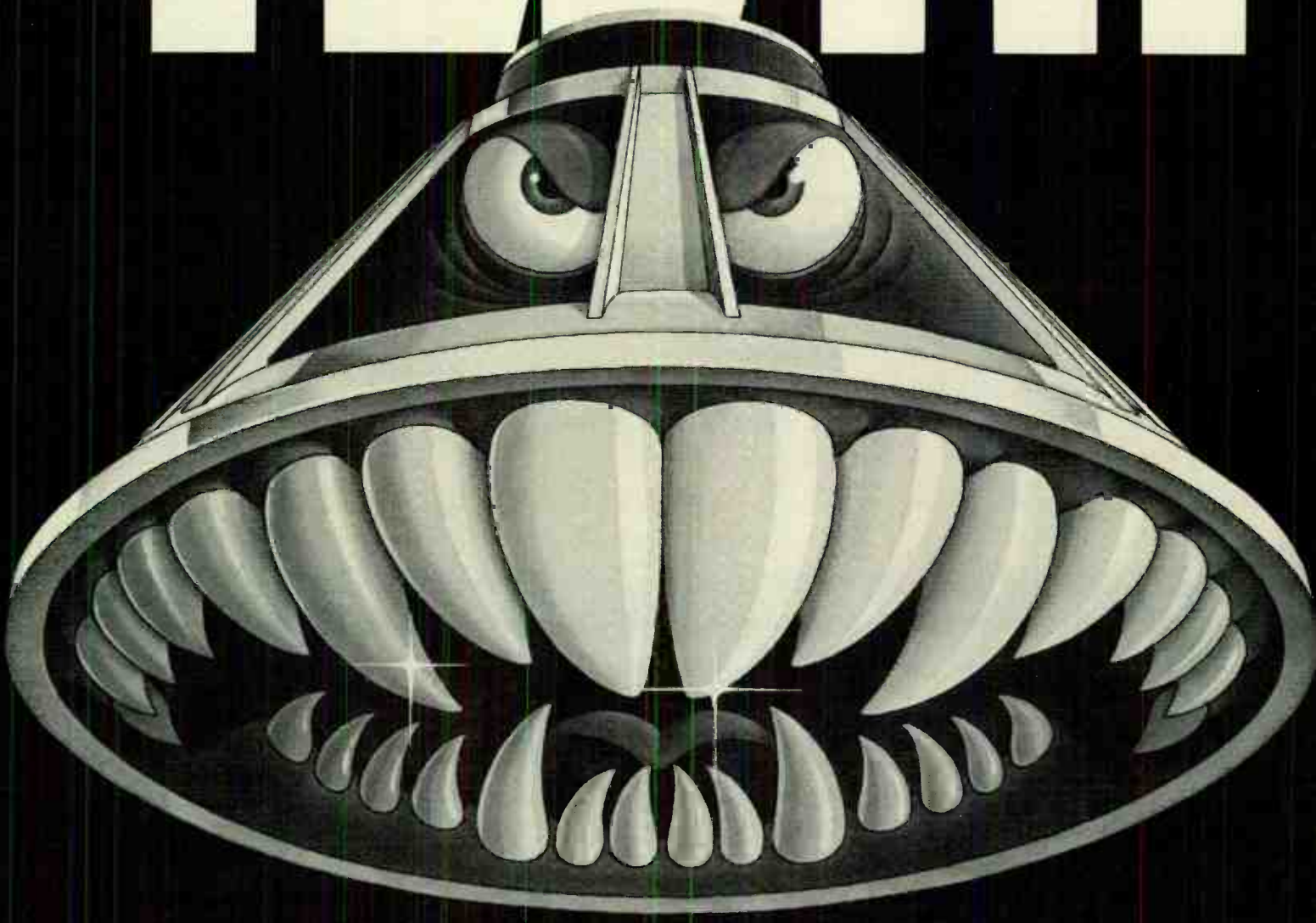
But now, with more reliance upon and a more complete synthesis of gospel, blues and African folk music — both rural and urban — Ibrahim's music possesses a heady lilt translating into a deceptively simple swing. In keeping with the basis of the African and blues traditions, the music affirms life even in the most funereal melodies. Thus the jaunty rhythms of township beer hall music — kwela — can stand alongside a restrained pensive ballad. Ibrahim has also developed the skill to integrate his pianistic orchestral concepts with those of an actual orchestra, which means his playing enhances and pushes the band without dominating it.

The best example of his large band work, *African Marketplace* (Elektra), was released last year. The ostinato riffs are cut with Carlos Ward's alto — sounding alternately like a calypso clarinet and a North African double reed — and Craig Harris' muscular, bluesy New Orleans-style trombone. The compositions develop in the same manner as the mourning ceremony described by South African writer, Richard Rive, in *Resurrection*: "...one by one the voices joined in and the volume rose. Tremulously at first, thin and tenuous and then swelling" until the listener is entranced. A trance is what Ibrahim wants — whether it be from one of his remembrances of Allah or from his recent nonet performance at New York's Public Theater. As he proudly commented after that concert, "People said they saw pictures. That is enough endorsement of the music."

The following interview took place at Abdullah Ibrahim's New York apartment. It starts with a question concerning the short political presentation on the African National Congress and the situation in South Africa that preceded Ibrahim's Public Theater concert.

MUSICIAN: Was the short presentation

TEETH



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at the beginning of your concert a new attempt to incorporate a political message into the music?

IBRAHIM: I don't express the revolution. I am the revolution. I am South African. We don't write revolutionary songs. Our whole being, our whole existence is part of the revolution.

MUSICIAN: Were you aware of attempting to make a political statement as your music developed?

IBRAHIM: The experience of just being South African, you are a political statement. Your birth is a political statement. It is impossible to divorce the two. It haunts you before your birth and it haunts you into your grave — the system of apartheid.

A few months ago in Johannesburg in a so-called white area the whites complained that they did not have enough burial space. And there was a cemetery there where black people had been buried. They took this case to court and the judge ruled that these bodies should be dug up and buried in the so-called black part of Johannesburg. Also he suggested that a steam shovel be used because it would be more hygenic.

MUSICIAN: So you are not a musician who believes that music and politics are mutually exclusive?

IBRAHIM: I am not a musician. You see, you must understand this, this Musician. Professional, whatever it is. What is the word? Specialist. This is something that grew up with industrial society and because there are consumer goods. The age of specialization came about and the fragmentation of society where nothing is an integral part anymore. Naturally, everything is interwoven. There's nothing that is separate from each other. I cannot call myself a musician. My function in society is on another level than just being an entertainer. In traditional society if you were musically endowed, you were immediately drafted into the field of medicine.

MUSICIAN: You seem to be hinting at a distinction between African and Western culture. We set up a dichotomy between the musician and audience that is explained by the critic or the market.

IBRAHIM: Exactly. When something is functional in the society, of what use is criticism? It may be possible to improve on it but criticism for the sake of criticism; there is absolutely no meaning.

MUSICIAN: How are your ideas expressed in your music?

IBRAHIM: There too, you see, it's not my music. I don't possess anything. I came in here with nothing. All knowledge is from Allah.

MUSICIAN: Well, during the 60s in America, there was a connection between music and the civil rights movement. Much of that music was tumultuous if not angry, but your music is melodic, tranquil, joyous and danceable, despite the painful situation in South Africa. Why is that?

IBRAHIM: You know the Japanese swordsman Miomoto Musashi said, "Under the sword lifted high there is hell to make you tremble, but go ahead anyway and you'll find bliss." See, the truth is revolutionary. The truth doesn't allow you to be complacent. The truth nudges and moves you. It is like drinking water, it is something that has to be done. The calmer you are the better you can affect. It's nothing to be screaming about or to be sentimental about.

MUSICIAN: So you're just a medium?

IBRAHIM: We have to clearly understand what the function of a particular person is in society. It is understood that the function of a musician is to entertain. See, we're not concerned with entertaining. We have a specific function in the society which has to do with economics, the social condition and the spiritual condition of the people. I only bring the truth. How you react to it or what you see, what you feel is your choice. Allah says, "There are those who bring the truth and those who confirm it."

Now Allah gives you free will, but he also says to you there is the law of cause and effect. I think this is a problem that's been troubling people in the West — this problem of predestination and free will. They can't seem to resolve it. You have free will to choose but every action has got a reaction equal and opposite.

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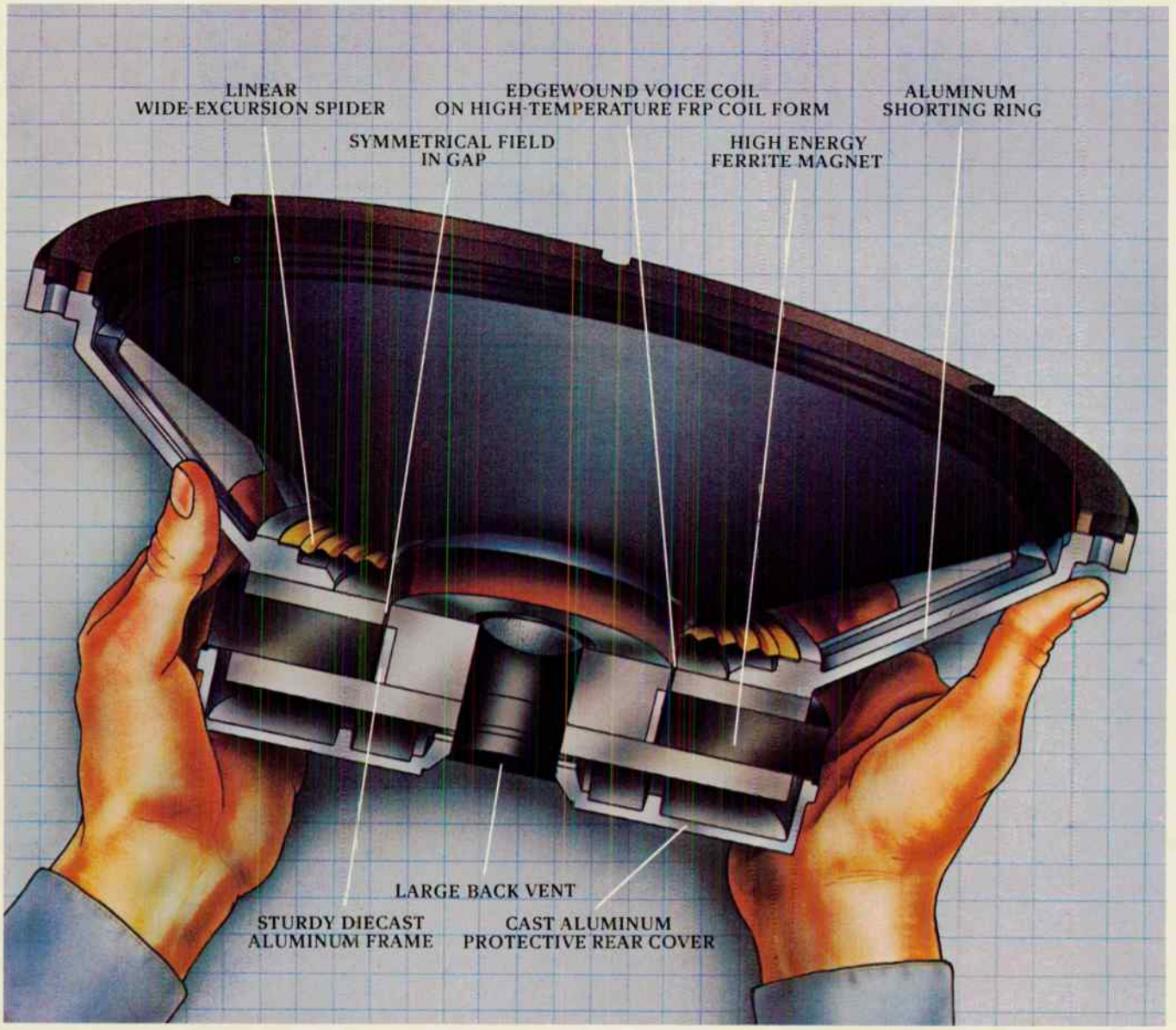

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YAMAHA

So when we say revolution people think of people running around and terrorists, but it's got nothing to do with that. Revolution is not people taking guns and shooting each other. It is the question of time. When the time comes for something, there is nothing that can stop it. So the time for the Boers has arrived.

MUSICIAN: You're very humble about your talents. When you were younger...

IBRAHIM: No, no, no, no! This thinking, this approach to the truth has got nothing to do with talent, or what you or I possess. Allah says, "I do not burden a soul with more than it can bear." So everybody is on the same level, whether a king or the queen, or a scientist or man who sweeps the streets.

MUSICIAN: When you were younger and living in South Africa, what sort of working conditions did you have?

IBRAHIM: The Europeans came there. Now this is something that struck me for some time back before I left South Africa. They built a school, you see, right in the rural area. Then they say they tabulate all the things that are wrong with the people. But nobody says that before the school was there that that was what the society was about anyway. So when you ask me, "Where did we play?" you see, the system that has been imposed on us only functions as a secondary culture. We grew up with the music, playing the music in the carnival, playing the music at weddings, in the church, or when there is plowing or sowing or reaping. So I will just answer you like you would just ask anybody from around New York. Well, I played the Vanguard.

MUSICIAN: I don't mean...

IBRAHIM: No, no, I'm not refuting your question. I'm just saying when I answer your question, it's just going to be saying the European sub-culture of clubs and concert halls.

MUSICIAN: I would prefer to hear about weddings and street songs. But a piano is hard to play on the street. I know you play soprano and flute, but did you play other instruments at that time?

IBRAHIM: You see, the instrument is the voice. We start singing. The instrument is secondary. The instrument comes later. We had big bands when I started in the 50s. Big bands abounded. Many, many big bands. I knew one guy who was an arranger. He would go out on the street and just meet guys, "Hey, hey you. Come to band and practice tomorrow. Hey you, okay, okay, come." These were people who had never touched an instrument and then six months later they would play for dance. The instrument is not important, it is only instrumental. The culture is an oral tradition, so he only has to extend his oral tradition through instrument. The harmonies that people sing, the songs they sing are just translated to the instrument. I've never considered myself a pianist.

I had an interview one time with a piano magazine and this man who interviewed me was a little skeptical because I was not prepared to talk about pianos. He wanted to know what kind of piano I used. To me it's not important. Whether I stand on my head, or stamp on my feet or use spoons to play with, the more important thing is my contribution to society; how I am utilizing this energy that Allah has given me so that I can help my fellow being.

MUSICIAN: I'll throw that question back to you.

IBRAHIM: There's only one message in everything. "In the name of Allah the compassionate and the merciful." Everything else is chasing after the good things in life, but when we start getting attached to the goodies we forget "There is no god but Allah," and we create our own heaven and our own hell. That's when we start blaming, but the blame is with us.

MUSICIAN: I suppose that's what we're doing now, creating our own problems with our wealth and power.

IBRAHIM: There's nothing wrong with material things. You must have.

MUSICIAN: But they've become paramount.

IBRAHIM: Exactly.

MUSICIAN: How did you first meet Duke Ellington?

IBRAHIM: We were playing with a trio in Zurich. My wife, Sathima, convinced Ellington to come listen to us. The next day he went to Paris and he took us to record. Since then it's been an ongoing relationship with him and, when he passed, with the family. We never thought of Ellington as an American. He was just the wise old man in the village. People used to call him the Grand Old Gentleman. He's the father figure when you talk about music in the twentieth century. He's one of the beacons when we talk about contemporary urban music.

MUSICIAN: In East Africa the word for old man is *mzee*. It is a title that implies wisdom — the type of wisdom that you'll carry through life. Did Ellington provide that for you?

IBRAHIM: Wherever I do something, I get advice from people with experience. I met James Baldwin in Paris and asked him how to handle New York. Baldwin said, "When you get to New York just pretend you're on a strange planet. You don't understand the language." I met Ornette and I asked about how to handle business. Ornette said, "I just tell them to add another zero to the end. It's not hard for them to do." I asked Duke about New York and how to handle New York. Duke said, "Survive." That's the wealth of experience, knowledge and guidance one can get from friends, peers and teachers.

MUSICIAN: You've done several recordings paying homage to Thelonious Monk. Had you heard of him in South Africa?

continued on page 90

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THE GRANDMOTHERS

GLENN BRANCA

Recent months have found avant-garde composer Glenn Branca the subject of much deservedly glowing press, and when the 31-year-old guitarist appeared at New York's Mudd Club last month it was clear that small cabarets could no longer accommodate his rapidly expanding audience. Many in the curious mob that jammed the Mudd arrived in a prove-it mood, but straggling out of the smokey club at three in the morning, those would-be doubters appeared convinced that they had indeed been witness to something quite special.

Branca describes his music as "an event" and it certainly is that. What he does technically is compose and perform orchestral guitar works to be played at an ear-shattering decibel by an army of elaborately tuned guitars. The effect of the screaming slabs of sound produced by this technique is intensely physical and inexplicably religious.

Branca's guitar army ranges from six to sixteen in number, and eleven players crowded on the tiny stage at the Mudd. The composition they played, "Indeterminate Activity of Resultant Masses," was premiered last September when it was performed at sundown on a beach in lower Manhattan. Within the closed walls of Mudd, however, its intensity was doubled and it sounded like an altogether different piece. "Masses" starts off slow and smooth, gathers momentum, hits a steady gallop, then whooosh!! — it's an airborne, stampeding roar of sound that stops on a dime and is followed by an explosion of silence. Thrilling, beautiful, scarey — this is music to be experienced first hand.

Needless to say, this is extremely taxing stuff to perform and Branca and his fellow players are quite a visual spectacle. Wide-eyed, utterly immersed in the task before them, they appear almost frightened — as though the music were playing them. Whether or not the drama and adrenalin of this music would transfer to wax has been a subject of debate amongst fans of Branca's live shows, particularly since volume and acoustics are crucial to the harmonic effects. In light of those obstacles, his new album, *The Ascension*, captures the Branca rush more successfully than many thought possible and is a vast improvement over his debut LP of last year, *Lesson No. 1*. Branca himself was not thrilled with that record but has nonetheless authorized a second pressing. But if you can afford only one, go for *The Ascension*. Branca is currently in the studio recording *Symphony No. 1*, the brilliant piece that made both critics and public snap to attention when it was performed in New York last summer.

Branca is a major talent on the brink of something big, and it's a joy to watch him test his wings with such reckless courage and passion. (*The Ascension* and *Lesson No. 1* are available from 99 Records, 99 MacDougal Street, New York City, NY 10012) — *Kristine McKenna*

GLENN BRANCA

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

GRANDMOTHERS

On October 31, Halloween night, Frank Zappa played New York City, as he has for several years now. Zappa has become as much an October fixture in New York as Reggie Jackson. But 3000 miles away, in a clothing-store-turned-rock-saloon in Hayward, California (a suburb of Oakland), some Zappa faithfuls tuned in to the Zappa of ten or more years ago — in-person renditions of Mothers of Invention standards like "King Kong," "Uncle Meat," "Peaches En Regalia," and "Mother People." For even though FZ was not in attendance, his compositions and former band members were. Calling themselves the Grandmothers, Don Preston, Bunk Gardner, Jimmy Carl Black, Denny Walley, and Walt and Tom Fowler may constitute the only rock reunion band working without their former leader, even though that leader is still alive and musically active.

About a year ago, southern California's Rhino Records released the *Grandmothers* LP, which is *not* a group effort by the above personnel. It consists instead of post-Mothers bits and pieces by some of the above Zappa alumni (as well as Elliot Ingber, Motorhead Sherwood and Buzz Gardner, who are not part of the touring group). The anthology is a bit rough and lopsided, but is no doubt a welcome addition to more than a few bulging collections.

These guys may be the bona fide article, but there's something vaguely less than legit about a band playing almost exclusively compositions by their founder-in-absentia while displaying very little evidence that they'd have a sound or repertoire at all if it weren't for him. Synthesist Don Preston seems to be the group's master of ceremonies but, make no mistake about it, the band's leader is still Zappa, whether he makes any of their gigs or not.

The one band member who exudes the most personality on stage, who is the most likeable, is drummer Jimmy Carl Black ("the Indian of the group"). At least once per set, Black leaves his drum kit and takes center stage to sing a country parody ("Lonesome Cowboy Bert" or "Harder Than Your Husband") or something a little greasier, like "Big Leg Emma" or his own "Trail of Tears" — one of the only songs from the compilation LP that the band performs live.

Zappa is probably one of the few 60s rockers whose output and personality would merit a revival, but the Grandmothers' show is hardly a tribute. The few references to the Mother Superior (Don Preston giving birth to a goateed Zappa doll; Jimmy Carl Black's introduction to "Harder Than Your Husband": "I hate to give him a plug, but here's a song I sing on Frank Zappa's new album") smacked of sour grapes. If these guys are grandmothers, then its obvious who the *great*-grandmother is. — *Dan Forte*

JOE HENDERSON

Something has obviously gone wrong behind the scenes and now the tension in the air is palpable. Drummer Roy Haynes is the only member of the sextet on stage with even a semblance of a smile, but then his career goes back to his days with Bird, and whatever problem is affecting the band at this point is trivial compared to those of the wild days of bop.

Yet, it doesn't take very sensitive ears to hear how stiffly the ensemble runs through Henderson's otherwise interesting hard bop compositions, or the almost total lack of inspiration in each solo, or the suffocating self-consciousness that Pete Yellin's alto projects — as if the anxiety of the whole band is being channelled through his horn. And where's the Joe Henderson who usually plays brilliantly when he makes his rare trips in from the West Coast? Where's the man who, in the sixties, proved that you didn't have to be Sonny Rollins or Albert Ayler to withstand being swept away by the awesome undertow of the Coltrane tenor sound; the hard-bopper who could embrace the aesthetic of the New Thing without becoming a slave to its syntax? What's on stage at this

moment seems but a shadow of the Henderson I've heard many times, blowing chorus after chorus of distinctly original improvisations, angular lines propelled by sheer emotional excitement, a full piercing sound and endless streams of wit (for proof, listen to *Tetragon* or *Joe Henderson In Japan*).

After a long intermission of grumbled disappointment, the audience reclaimed their seats. Ready to take control and salvage the concert, Henderson tears into "First Trip" (probably bassist Ron Carter's best composition) along with his rhythm section of Haynes, Carter and pianist Fred Hersch, leaving Yellin and trombonist Curtis Fuller in the wings. Beginning to regain lost ground, his extended improvisation conjures the saxophonist of so many important Blue Note dates. Finally the rhythm section has jelled and Carter delivers a nice solo, playing with the tempo the way he often does, while Hersch, although the youngest band member, remains the most consistent

JOE HENDERSON

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

soloist of the night. Even Yellin and Fuller step in for short solos that are the loosest they've played. Sliding into a swaggering ballad, Henderson again seems transformed, sounding simultaneously lush and adroit. Closing with a bop standard, he asserts his uncanny ability to take the music OUT while leading you to believe you never left traditional territory. As for the disappointing first set, well, artists are very sensitive people (right?). And for an art form that relies on the spontaneous conveyance of emotion, it's hard to hide personal tensions and conflicts, but once the music is underway, it has the power to heal. — *Cliff Tinder*

VAN MORRISON

If this was the *National Enquirer*, the headline on this piece, printed in tacky 48-point bold type, would read: VAN MORRISON FINDS GOD! POP STAR GOES RELIGIOUS!! For us, it's enough to say that Morrison, like God knows how many others, has become a religious man. He isn't wearing his latest revelation like a new set of clothes; instead, Morrison, who has remained a private man for his 18-plus-year career, is merely letting his songs tell the story. The impression left by Morrison's mellow yet riveting two-hour-plus performance at San Francisco's 1,000-seat Palace of Fine Arts in late October was of a profoundly spiritual man who has made his own uneasy peace with God.

Though the audience seemed primed for a dramatic entrance, Morrison undercut the theatrics of rock 'n' roll by strolling casually on stage wearing black cotton suede slacks and a white dress shirt, strapping on a fat hollow-body electric guitar as his band took their places, and rushing headlong into "Bright Side Of The Road." He was nervous, like a kid at the front of his class trying to remember a speech. But by the second song, "Haunts Of Ancient Peace," Van seemed a new man, remarkably assured and self-confident as he went to work on the song with the intensity of, well...a Baptist preacher.

The band, which included Pee Wee Ellis on sax; David Hayes on bass and Chris Mikki on guitar, fell into a dreamy, mid-tempo groove (*a la* "And The Healing Has Begun") for most of the set. The jazz and R&B influences that run through much of Morrison's music were happily present, as well as a strong gospel element contributed by the powerful harmonies of three female vocalists, and the rich organ work of John Allair.

Concentrating mostly on songs from his last two albums, *Into The Music* and *Common One*, as well as material form his upcoming album (to be released in February), Morrison failed to sing *any* of his hits as a solo artist. Instead, he debuted six new songs. The first was an overtly religious instrumental, featuring Morrison at the piano and Mark Isham on synthesizer; one could easily imagine the thick resounding chords in a gothic cathedral. Morrison was oblivious to everything but the music as he sat in semi-darkness on the stage, his head down, his body bent over the piano.

"Van Los Stairway," "Kelty Grey" and "Across The Bridge" were the clearest statement of Morrison's new world view: in "Van Los Stairway," Morrison sang, "Gurus from the West/ Gurus from the East/ Led you away from the bridge, away from the river/ So many people going down to the river to get healed/ Form of illusion/ Form of confusion is hanging all over the world." But far and away the most striking new song of the night was "Beholden on the Threshold." As the band hit into an uptempo, soulful groove reminiscent of "Domino," Morrison passionately intoned, "I'm standing at the door/ And I'm waiting in the darkness/ And I don't want to wait no more/I want to get out from the darkness/ And go into the light."

The encore was a surprise. "Here's a number by Johnny Kid," said Morrison, before launching into a rocking version of "Shakin' All Over," complete with thick, reverb-heavy guitar. Then he dove headlong into a version of "Gloria" that shook the entire

CHESTER SIMPSON

VAN MORRISON

theater up and dancing. It seemed Van's way of making peace with the past. That funky, three-chord rock classic took on a cathartic quality. Patti Smith may have prefaced her version, "Jesus died for your sins, not mine," but Van Morrison asked for no exemptions. If anything, he's more involved than ever. — *Michael Goldberg*

NEW ORDER

On May 18, 1980 Ian Curtis, lead singer for a relatively obscure English rock band called Joy Division, hanged himself. This immediately made Joy Division, a band that (loosely) sounded like the Velvet Underground fronted by Jim Morrison, the stuff of legend in the U.K. A month after his death, a single, "Love Will Tear Us Apart," and a second album, *Closer* (both completed while Curtis was alive) were released; both promptly popped onto the English charts. The three remaining members of Joy Division — guitarist Bernard Albrecht, bassist Peter Hook and drummer Steve Morris — decided to remain together, but changed the name of the band to New Order and added a new member, a woman named Gillian Gilbert, to play synthesizer and guitar.

But without Curtis, there was an unavoidable problem to be dealt with. Ian Curtis was the focal point of Joy Division, a powerful onstage figure who danced like a maniac and sang like he was the Napoleon of rock 'n' roll; New Order now had neither a strong vocalist nor a dynamic onstage personality. Their unique solution was to turn their problem into an asset. They shifted the emphasis from vocals to music, from short concise songs to longer open-ended jamlike pieces. Instead of relating to their audience, they ignore it.

It was after 2 a.m. when New Order, three stoic men, one stoic woman, faces frozen in hollow-cheeked seriousness, strode onto the stage at the Cinema (a porno theater turned new wave concert hall) in San Francisco before a crowd of one thousand. A drum machine, augmented by Steve Morris (playing a kit that included syndrums) began pounding out the slow, dirge-like beat to "In A Lonely Place," a hypnotic song off the band's first single. Guitarist Albrecht, who is the band's token leader, stepped up to the microphone and began playing the melancholy melody on a melodica. The music sounded like the soundtrack to a funeral march: all minor chords and existential anguish. The hour-long set (eight songs including U.K. hits "Ceremony" and "Everything's Gone Green") was as sobering as an hour spent on one's knees in mourning within a church. One felt party to a religious ceremony; the audience completely silent throughout the set, seemingly in awe of this cold, emotionless band.

New Order, like Joy Division, are an introverted band focused on private obsessions (the horror of life, for instance). Both were/are searching for answers. Joy Division found none. New Order hasn't found its way yet either. But for now, unlike Curtis, they refuse to accept the darkness. During what was the most poignant moment of the night, Albrecht suddenly woke from the semi-stupor that had characterized the rest of his singing and shouted, "SOMEBODY SAVE MY SOUL!"

(*Movement* is available from Rough Trade Records, 1412 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94133 for $5.75 per copy plus $2 postage.) — *Michael Goldberg*

NEW ORDER

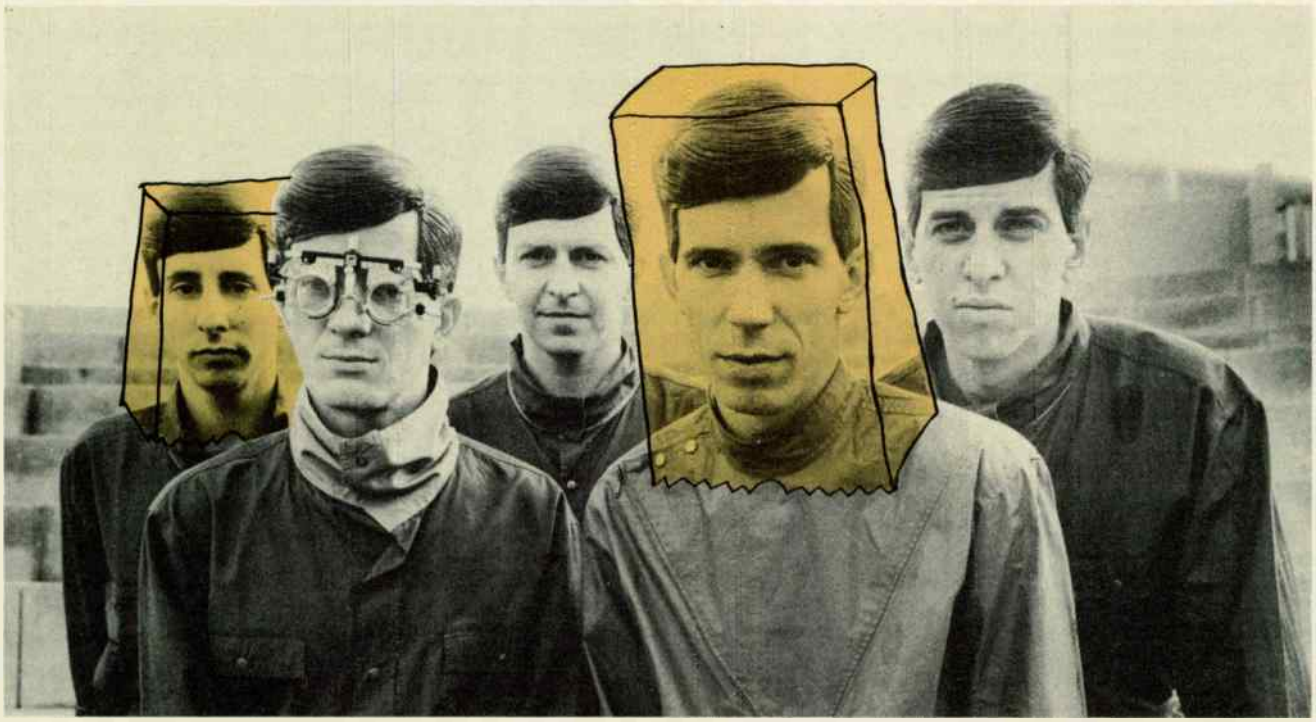
LAURA LEVINE

DEVO

De-evolutionists and boffo social critics, Devo have grown to musical maturity on the road not taken, furiously mass marketing

Devo-dos, Devo-dolls and Devo-domes; is this really any different than moving cornflakes and laundry soap?

By Kristine McKenna



ANNE FISHBEIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Sometime in 1975 Alan Meyers, brothers Mark and Bob Mothersbaugh and Jerry and Bob Casale teamed up to form Devo. A multi-media band with a plan, Devo analyzed the state of the culture thus: the human race is evolving backwards, subhumans are running the world and technology may be our salvation or undoing depending on who's manning the controls. The Devo boys, self-described "suburban robots who monitor reality," were here to rectify the situation.

Natives of Akron, Ohio, the group members were art students at Kent State during the shooting years and had first-hand experience of the American-Dream-gone-haywire. Products of the U.S.' stifling middle class, they emerged mutant geeks, dadaist guerillas with vengeance in their hearts and scores to settle. Too smart for small-town Ohio, they relocated to Los Angeles and launched their world offensive to "eliminate the ninnies and the twits."

Many contradictory elements combine to form concept Devo. It juxtaposes a fetishistic fascination with gooey biology and eroticized technology against a bitter contempt for sex and romance. The group mocks conformity while urging their fans to don the Devo uniform. Bad-seed scientists out to save a world they portray as not worth saving, they lampoon mindless consumerism while promoting their own line of Devo merchandise. As if punched-out by General Motors, each Devo album introduces a corresponding set of new Devo garb, slogans and Devoabilia. Among numerous items available from their mail-order boutique, Club Devo: "energy domes," head gear resembling upside down flower pots; "the Devo-Do," a strap-on rubber hairpiece fashioned after J.F.K.'s coif; and "Devo Muzak," a cassette of muzak renditions of their greatest hits. The group is often dismissed as a bunch of money-grubbing fascists hiding behind nebulous sloganeering and for all their dazzling showmanship, they rub a lot of people the wrong way.

Devo's Brian Eno-produced 1978 debut album, *Are We Not Men? We Are Devo!*, was an innovative essay in electronic pop and won them a rabid cult following. Their second LP, *Duty Now For The Future*, stiffed. This year Devo's commercial power was enhanced considerably when their third album, *Freedom Of Choice*, yielded a smash hit single, "Whip It." The verdict isn't in yet on their fourth album, *New Traditionalists*, but its promotional tour, a grandiose junket involving major halls in 40 cities, is quite phenomenal. Scrambling about an exotically lit set that the group describes as "a cross between the Parthenon and a fast food restaurant," Devo makes a regimental march through two hours of elaborately choreographed, frantically paced apocalyptic prophecy. A prominent weapon in the Devo arsenal is the rock video. Theirs were among the first, are consistently the best and are a featured

high point of their live show.

Vocalist/keyboardist Mark Mothersbaugh and vocalist/bassist Jerry Casale write most of Devo's material, so it was them I met with in a New York sushi bar to hash over the Devo party line. Mothersbaugh, 30, has the frisky energy of an overgrown kid, and is outspoken and quite witty. While he's certainly a staunch believer in Devology, you get the feeling that it's all a bit of a lark for him. Casale, 32, is the flip side of the coin — he's dead serious about the whole thing. Speaking slowly in a modulated tone, using five words where one would do, Casale spewed out the Devo spiel. It's a spiel not without merit — Devo's ideas are imaginative and provocative, the music is catchy and Mothersbaugh is a genuinely compelling frontman. If only the Devo creed weren't laced with such venom. I get the feeling they'd rather see the world go to hell than be proven wrong, and that's the aspect of Devo that sticks in the throat.

Deciding the best defense was a good offense, I began by confronting Casale and Mothersbaugh with some apparent contradictions in Devology.

MUSICIAN: In reading over some recent interviews you've done I was left with questions about a number of comments you made and was wondering if you could elaborate. You said, "'Whip It' was a hit because we wrote a patently disgusting lyric and sure enough it worked. As long as there's a sexual innuendo in a song it will be a hit." That comment implies that you're pandering to the masses' basest instincts in pursuit of a hit record.

CASALE: That's totally out of context. We wrote a lyric that had to do with the self-help, can-do, you're-number-one philosophy of America. It was a parody of the slogans, cliches and limericks that are part of America's folklore tradition. There was no sexual content in that lyric, but a lot of people *chose* to interpret the phrase "whip it" sexually.

MUSICIAN: Your comment: "Devo uses the same technique as McDonald's and the Levi jeans people." In other words, Devo is using the most ruthless tools of mass communication to move product.

CASALE: Those are the most sophisticated tools of mass communications and they aren't intrinsically bad. It's what is being sold with them that's foul.

MUSICIAN: You profess to be using those methods in a satirical way, but if people aren't picking up on the satire, as you point out they didn't with "Whip It," then you're simply feeding them more of the same gross product.

CASALE: What we are presenting them with has nothing to do with that.

MUSICIAN: Your comment: "Only three percent of our audience really gets our ideas." Why is that? Are you failing to communicate them adequately?

CASALE: No. Probably only three percent of any audience fully understands the ideas they're being presented with. I taught art in college and only three percent of my class had any interest or talent in visual art, yet they were all there.

MUSICIAN: Your comment: "Ninety-five percent of the population seem to be assholes." If you have such contempt for the mass audience, why are you bothering to try and engage them in a dialogue?

MOTHERSBAUGH: We play to less than one half of one percent of the population, so they wouldn't be included in that. How many people do you think live in this country? How many records do you think we sold with our last album?

MUSICIAN: You're kind of skirting the question with irrelevant statistics. I'm sure infinitely more people than bought your last album are *aware* of you.

CASALE: Possibly yes, the way you're aware of a product named Shinola.

MUSICIAN: But without having bought that product I can have a good idea of what it is about, just as the general public, or at least those tuned into the media, are probably aware of what your product is about.

MOTHERSBAUGH: Not always true. I'll give you an example of a situation where people think they know about something but in reality do not. Last year the Carl's Junior restaurant chain in Los Angeles put up billboards that said "freedom of choice" and showed pictures of four different burgers. The only difference in the burgers was the condiments on the meat. Beyond that, the man behind Carl's chain is absolutely *not* for freedom of choice. He supports a heavy right-wing John Birch movement and spends his money in Washington on anti-abortion lobbies.

MUSICIAN: Your comment: "We hate any kind of mass stupidity." On the occasions that I've attended Devo concerts I never got the feeling I was surrounded by an unusually intellectual crowd. In fact, your fans behave in quite an infantile manner, which is something you seem to encourage.

CASALE: You would characterize the ways our fans behave as stupid?

MUSICIAN: Yes I would. I think it's frightening to see masses of people aping your schtick like a bunch of trained sheep,

particularly since, as you said, most of them don't even understand your ideas.

MOTHERSBAUGH: Well, a funny thing there is that most of those sheep as you call them are wearing blue jeans, and none of us are wearing blue jeans or ever have onstage. So most of them are not wearing a Devo uniform.

CASALE: You're piling on levels of confusion here. Compared statistically to the number of people who go to see Van Halen, Devo's audience is relatively small. Our last album sold 900,000. Van Halen sold five million in the U.S. alone. Van Halen is ten times as commercially popular as Devo.

MUSICIAN: Van Halen statistics are not really the best way to measure your success. You still have the responsibility that goes with having access to a large audience. Devo is a potent commercial force.

CASALE: I would like to feel we are a potent commercial force. But I feel that if Devo elicits a response from a mass audience, it's to a different end than a Van Halen audience. You can think me naive or stupid, but I really believe that or I wouldn't do what I do.

MOTHERSBAUGH: Let us ask *you* a question: what do you think are the politics of rock 'n' roll music today?

MUSICIAN: Generally, selling the public a bad bill of goods, but I wonder if your bill of goods is substantially different.

CASALE: Okay, well, we think it *is*.

MUSICIAN: Swell. Your comment: "I'd rather see fans imitating us than Bob Seger or Van Halen. We represent a better thing to imitate." To me, for the public to model itself after *any* entertainer is the problem. Futhermore, what makes you a better role model?

CASALE: We're a better thing to imitate because we've dispensed with the implicit philosophies of those groups regarding mass consumption, guilt-ridden sexuality and chauvinism. I don't think Devo encourages that kind of mentality.

MUSICIAN: True, you are satirizing a particular mentality, but if your fans are only picking up on the grosser surface, if they're missing the satire, then what are you accomplishing?

CASALE: Something is being accomplished. Let's look at pre-Jesus Bob Dylan for example. I'd say only three percent really got his ideas, the literary and religious references in his music, the poetic imagery and the philosophy he hinted at. But there are other ways of receiving information. The majority of Dylan's fans who didn't understand every facet of his work still perceived a general ambience that he gave off and he was no less valuable to those people. Let's say a kid comes to a Devo concert and he is, for our purposes here, average or maybe a little sub-average. If he gets nothing out of our bill of goods except the way we dress and move and the tone of our voices, he has gotten a mood that I feel is in direct competition with the bill of goods being sold by Van Halen.

MUSICIAN: Your comment: "Watch us evolve. Watch us become what we're laughing at and see how gracefully we survive." How is it that you see yourselves being able to use that system without being *of* it?

CASALE: It's impossible not to be of it when you're in it. But what are your choices?

MUSICIAN: You chant "we're all Devo," yet there's an unmistakable air of superiority in the way you present yourselves. Are you as Devo as the people who buy your product?

CASALE: Devo is based on that possibility. We've always hinted at that contradiction and feel that basically Devo is based on self-depreciating humor.

MUSICIAN: Your comment: "People know that what they pretend to believe in is wrong and bad for them, yet no one can seem to stop it." Does that apply to people who believe in Devo?

CASALE: It might and it might not. Those are generally two separate things. That was Jerry Casale talking about how he sees the world.

MUSICIAN: Your comment: "What people assume to be real and true just isn't. It all disgusts us." So what *is* real and true?

MOTHERSBAUGH: Humans are not the center of the universe.

CASALE: People are taught to believe that the human is the finest creation in the universe and that we're each and every one special.

MUSICIAN: What could possibly reinforce the creed of specialness more than rock stardom?

CASALE: There's nothing special about a rock star.

MUSICIAN: In the eyes of the public there certainly is and you're doing nothing to debunk that myth of specialness.

CASALE: We act like rock stars? We're totally unglamorous, asexual geeks. We've never destroyed a TV or screwed a 13-year-old girl.

MOTHERSBAUGH: Our hotel rooms are cleaner when we leave them than when we show up!

CASALE: A Devo fan tends to question the mainstream line.

MUSICIAN: Is your personal life Devo, or do you leave that role when you leave the stage?

CASALE: Sorry to disappoint people, but I lead a 24-hour Devo existence.

MOTHERSBAUGH: I think for us it gets more Devo when we leave the stage.

EBET ROBERTS

MUSICIAN: Your comment: "Touring is the most archaic idea in the music business at this point in time." So why do it?

MOTHERSBAUGH: These are primitive times.

CASALE: You found the kink in the plan, but unfortunately, there's no choice. I know we present an image of control and self-discipline because that's what we wish to project, but anyone with any knowledge of corporate America knows that in reality we are not in control. If we could do something to get around touring then we would. But in all fairness, this issue goes beyond Devo because lots of groups feel the same way. In the last two years you can see a decline in attendance at concerts and I don't think that's because there's suddenly nothing worth seeing. I think it's because the experience of going to a concert is so uneven and fraught with so many obstacles that it's become arduous and disappointing.

MUSICIAN: Do you think audiences are becoming more sophisticated and adventurous?

MOTHERSBAUGH: They've become jaded in a sense. They've seen those flash pots for the last 20 years and they

Devo's Equipment

Keyboards/Effects/Amps: Roland Jupiter 8, Prophet 5 Synthesizer, Modified Mini-Moog, Moog Source , MXR Analog Delay, Lexicon Reverb, Eventide Harmonizer, MXR Distortion Unit, Roland Cube Amp, Music Man RD 101 Amp.

Guitars: Roland Guitar Synthesizer GR-300, Modified Ibanez, custom made, Gibson L65, Steinberger Bass, Modified Gibson EB3, Modified G&L. All use D'Addario Strings.

Drums: Yamaha Kits, Sonar Drums, Chrome Ludwig Snare.

want something else.

CASALE: One of Devo's intentions is to communicate with an audience in a more cost-efficient manner. We'd like to make a feature-length film and I think we're capable of making a quality one, with a soundtrack album and all the attendant paraphernalia. The film would be a marriage of all our theatrical, political and musical concerns, and would cost the public five dollars rather than ten.

MUSICIAN: Who do you think is currently making revolutionary music?

CASALE: That's hard to say. I know that muzak has been the most effective counter-revolutionary music. In other words, the other side is winning hands down. They're much better at what they do. As much as I like someone like Phil Glass, I think that basically his is an ivory tower endeavor. It doesn't come to the attention of anyone other than those already in the know.

MOTHERSBAUGH: Disco is probably one of the most revolutionary things that's happened in music for the past ten years, if only from a purely sound standpoint.

CASALE: Disco also redefined the function of music in the culture. You didn't have to think anymore — all you had to do was shake your booty. In the sixties people were sufficiently unsophisticated in that they listened to music in a serious frame of mind. They were students of it, and that can never happen again, just like a Beatles phenomenon can never happen again. It wouldn't be allowed to germinate. If a modern Beatles started playing in a club, the local news team would be down there along with the record executives and eat 'em up before they had a chance to figure out what they were doing.

MUSICIAN: How do you see your music evolving?

MOTHERSBAUGH: The first record stated the big case and the following ones have elaborated on it and dealt with specifics.

CASALE: We're not static, just as the people in our audience are not static, but I don't think that our basic impulse has changed. You can take the boys off the farm but you can't take the farm out of the boys. We have restructured the shape and switched the emphasis but we're still the spuds from the Midwest, pissed off, with a plan. So, anybody who sees us as retreading the same ground wouldn't be without a case.

MUSICIAN: What's the song you're most proud of?

CASALE: I think the version of "Jocko Homo" we used on the first Devo video was pretty classic.

MUSICIAN: Were you pleased with Eno's production job on the first album?

CASALE: At the time I definitely wasn't and as the years have gone by, I've come to understand why. But it is what it is due to all the forces that were going on at that time, and it would be ridiculous to blame Brian Eno for the flaws in the record.

We act like rock stars? We're totally unglamorous, asexual geeks. We've never destroyed a TV; our hotel rooms are cleaner when we leave them than when we show up!

MUSICIAN: How do you compose? Do you have structured work habits?

MOTHERSBAUGH: Semi-structured. It happens all different ways. You read a horrible story in the newspaper and that can set things off. You'll find an electronic sound you've never heard before and then devise a way to use it.

CASALE: Somebody might make up a fragment of music then play it for the rest of the group. Somebody will add another fragment. The tempo might change over the course of a few days. All these bits and pieces are like flash cards and you put them all up and begin to see a matrix and certain thematic similarities that suggest your direction.

MUSICIAN: Who has influenced you musically?

MOTHERSBAUGH: None of us lived in the Village or grew up in arty families that had famous composers dropping by. We listened to the radio and watched TV.

MUSICIAN: Did you have any formal musical training?

MOTHERSBAUGH: I had piano lessons. My parents thought they were doing me a favor — actually they were: they made me hate "Autumn Leaves" and religious songs.

MUSICIAN: I know the critics in L.A. and New York have been fairly unkind to Devo, but how about the rest of the world? Do you get good reviews?

CASALE: Of course not. Critics respond favorably when there's a reference point that allows them to elaborate on their preconceived notions. Devo comes along and upsets that. There's no pre-existing foundation for them to build their trip on so it's like, Jesus, now we really have to deal with this stuff. That pisses them off so they save every unkind thing they have to say for Devo because it's easy to level criticism at somebody that's not in a foxhole.

MUSICIAN: How do you respond to failure?

CASALE: Go back for more.

MUSICIAN: What's your idea of an important achievment?

CASALE: A totally healthy, successful bowel movement.

MUSICIAN: What do you hope to be doing in ten years?

ALLEN TANNENBAUM

MOTHERSBAUGH: I'd like to run a recombinant DNA spa somewhere in Colorado where people could come and change their life form. I like to think that's a real possibility.

MUSICIAN: What's the biggest obstacle you've had to overcome?

CASALE: Our upbringing, I suppose, but that's also what's fueled us. That contradiction is what we've dealt with from the beginning.

MUSICIAN: Has Devo accomplished the original goals it set for itself?

CASALE: Certainly not. Our original goal was to provide an alternative non-competitive form of entertainment that wouldn't be considered by the masses to be part of the wad of rock 'n' roll vinyl. We hate competing, being written up and considered with radio acts on vinyl that adhere to the system.

MUSICIAN: Then why have you allowed that to happen?

CASALE: I don't think we have allowed it to happen. We're still in the process of dealing with it, and the fight's not over. M

The ROSSINGTON-COLLINS Band

Southern Rock Survival Among the Alligators

By Geoffrey Himes

The streets in Jacksonville, Florida are an endless string of franchises: Winn Dixie supermarkets, Kentucky Fried Chickens, K-Marts. Barry Harwood slouched out the car window and explained that this was the west side of town where the members of Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Rossington-Collins Band had all gone to school together. Kids from this working class district of navy enlistees and auto workers were derided as "dumb rednecks" by their better-off peers on the south side. I had just finished my interview with Harwood and Leon Wilkeson of the Rossington-Collins Band, and I was giving the guitarist a ride home. We reached a short break in the franchise neon, and Harwood impulsively told me to make a right. We pulled into a dark grove of trees. When we had parked, the headlights shone on a white tomb that read: "Van Zant. Ronnie. 1948-1977." Chiseled below the words was a bird flying freely among clouds.

An almost-full moon shone through the north Florida mix of Georgia pines and Miami palms. Immediately to the right of Ronnie Van Zant's tomb was Steve Gaines' gravestone, topped by a granite urn. Back in the tree shadows was the gravestone for his sister, Cassie Gaines. Lead singer Ronnie Van Zant, guitarist Steve Gaines and backing singer Cassie Gaines were the three members of Lynyrd Skynyrd who died in the October 20, 1977 McComb, Mississippi plane crash that ended the band.

Gary Rossington and Allen Collins, masters of the two-bar hook.

EBET ROBERTS

Harwood, who took Gaines' place in the Rossington-Collins Band lineup of Skynyrd survivors, had been drinking Coke-and-whiskeys all afternoon and was now talking quite freely. He ambled over, slapped the marble slab and addressed Van Zant's tomb: "You're in there and I'm out here. That ain't right, but that's the way it is. All I can do is keep going the best I can." Harwood turned to me and blurted: "I stop here a lot on my way home. I sit on the marble bench here and feel their presence." "Doesn't it depress you?" I asked. He appeared shocked by the suggestion. "Oh no! I sit here and think how talented these guys were and it gives me a lot of strength. I feel like I have no choice but play my music and live my life as good as I can. Sometimes I sit here and talk to them."

The RCB is the one bright spot in the otherwise dismal state of Southern rock. In the early 70s, Southern bands injected raw bluesy energy and a distinctive regional style into American rock 'n' roll. By the start of the 80s, that energy had dissipated and the style was largely indistinguishable from mediocre AOR bands of any region. Talented bands like the Allman Brothers and Marshall Tucker were slowed by death and stagnation into reruns of their better years. Less talented bands like Molly Hatchet, Blackfoot, the Charlie Daniels Band and the Outlaws reduced the Lynyrd Skynyrd sound to a shapeless mass of blaring guitars. True geniuses are a genre's best defense against commercial compromise, and Southern rock was left unguarded by Duane Allman's death in 1971, a nasty Gregg Allman drug trial in 1976, Ronnie Van Zant's death in 1977 and the slow recuperation of the Skynyrd survivors. It is the resurrection of those survivors as the RCB that brings back rock 'n' roll that's defiantly, excitingly Southern.

Pianist Billy Powell, bassist Leon Wilkeson and drummer Derek Hess play a severely syncopated boogie instead of the popular, plodding march beat. The three guitarists — Gary Rossington, Allen Collins and Barry Harwood, who each straddle the boundary between lead and rhythm — are more interested in distinct voices than in unison lines. Dale Krantz's siren-pitched blues voice and the songs themselves drill through the "Good Ol' Boy" myth and find the pain and mortality on the other side.

Except for Indiana's Dale Krantz, every person connected with Lynyrd Skynyrd or the RCB, including roadies and office staff, has grown up in Jacksonville. During the interview, Leon Wilkeson pulled me over to his closet and pulled out a black and white photo of him and Billy Powell in the same third grade class, just a row apart: grinning, crew-cut Beaver Cleavers. Ronnie Van Zant, Gary Rossington and Allen Collins always went to the same schools together and played in the same bands. Everyone was born in either 1951 or '52.

"In Jacksonville if you had long hair," Krantz related, "you had to hide out because it was such a red-neck town. The only thing to do when you hide out is play music." They did a lot of that, especially British invasion songs from the Beatles, Who, Rolling Stones, Animals, Cream. In the late 60s, a Sarasota

KIRK WEST: PHOTO RESERVE

Singer Dale Krantz surprised everyone, including herself, when she went "crazy" on stage at RCB's first gig.

guitarist named Dickey Betts began regularly visiting Jacksonville (a.k.a. Jax), first with a band called Jaspers, then the Second Coming and finally with a band called the Allman Brothers Band. "The Allmans made it easier for us to follow," Wilkeson conceded. "They made Southern people recognized, talent-wise. They proved that we were more than a lot of red-necks who shoot Dennis Hoppers on motorcycles and hate niggers. We had some valuable music to play." The Allmans set the record companies scrambling through the previously neglected South in search of talent. Lynyrd Skynyrd, a Jax bar band, was signed to MCA's Sounds of the South label.

The band's bruising, brawling music was quite different from the Allmans' sophisticated jazz licks. The group was named after Leonard Skinner, Van Zant's much-hated high school gym teacher. Their 1973 debut album was produced by Dylan sideman Al Kooper and featured the FM radio classic, "Free Bird." They then got a big break when they opened all the shows on the Who's *Quadrophrenia* tour. Then came the follow-up album, *Second Helping* and a hit single. "Sweet Home Alabama," a proud Southern anthem and stern rebuttal to Neil Young's "Southern Man." The year 1976 brought a new producer, Tom Dowd, a new guitarist, Steve Gaines (replacing Ed King who got religion), the fourth studio album, *Gimme Back My Bullets*, a double live album, *One More From The Road* and recognition as *the* most popular band in the South and one of the biggest rock bands anywhere. Then came the crash.

On October 17, 1977, Lynyrd Skynyrd's sixth album, *Street Survivors*, was released with a picture of the group engulfed in flames. After an October 19 concert in Greensville, South Carolina, the band boarded their chartered plane for an October 21 date in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Late that night the plane's engine began to sputter. The pilot made for an airport in McComb, Mississippi. Then the engine went dead. The pilot made for a field but landed in a heavily wooded swamp. "The trees kept getting closer; they kept getting bigger," Billy Powell told *Rolling Stone* soon afterward. "Then there was a sound like someone hitting the outside of the plane with hundreds of baseball bats. I crashed into a table; people were hit by flying objects all over the plane. Ronnie was killed with a single head injury. The top of the plane was ripped open. Artimus crawled out the top and said there was a swamp, maybe alligators. I kicked my way out and felt for my hands — they were still there. I felt for my nose and it wasn't; it was on the side of my face. There was just silence."

It was a year before anyone was physically well enough to even consider playing music. After the bodies had healed and the sorrow had eased, they considered what shape a new venture should take. "We decided, with due respect to the people who died in that plane crash," said Leon Wilkeson, "that that band could never be again. That was clear from the outset. We weren't out to bleed or rip off anything. This band was a new thing. Lynyrd Skynyrd is not forgotten, but we are going on in the best way. As far as why it's called the Rossington-Collins Band? As far as I was concerned we could have been called Jack & the Diamonds, Banana & the Bunch, Sammy Hamburger & the Buns, I didn't care. Just to be playing was such a blessing in itself that words couldn't describe it. Being given a second chance was such an inspiration. It was Gary and Allen's whole ballgame. They're the ones that chose Dale. Billy, Artimus and I were taken for granted as definite choices. Not being able to play music is my idea of hell."

Artimus Pyle, who replaced Bob Burns as Lynyrd Skynyrd's drummer in 1975 and survived the plane crash, was supposed to be the RCB's drummer. During the early rehearsals, though, he feuded with Rossington and Collins over the choice of Krantz as lead vocalist. Then one night he came barrelling down a steep South Carolina hill atop his Harley-Davidson when a drunk driver pulled out in front of him. He swerved to avoid the car and rolled into a ravine where he broke his leg in 12 places. Derek Hess, Harwood's former partner in Runnin' Easy — a legendary unsigned Jax band, was invited to fill the RCB drum chair. "It took me a while to get used to their way of doing things," admitted Hess. "Nothing is ever planned; everybody's always frantic, but everything works out." In his own

unobtrusive way, Hess gives the two RCB albums their swing. "I don't see how some of these drummers can play the same thing over and over," he said, shaking his head. "It gets so monotonous. On the other hand, I don't like these fusion drummers who jump around here, there and everywhere and never settle into anything. You have to keep it steady and interesting at the same time." Significantly, his hero is Levon Helm, formerly of The Band.

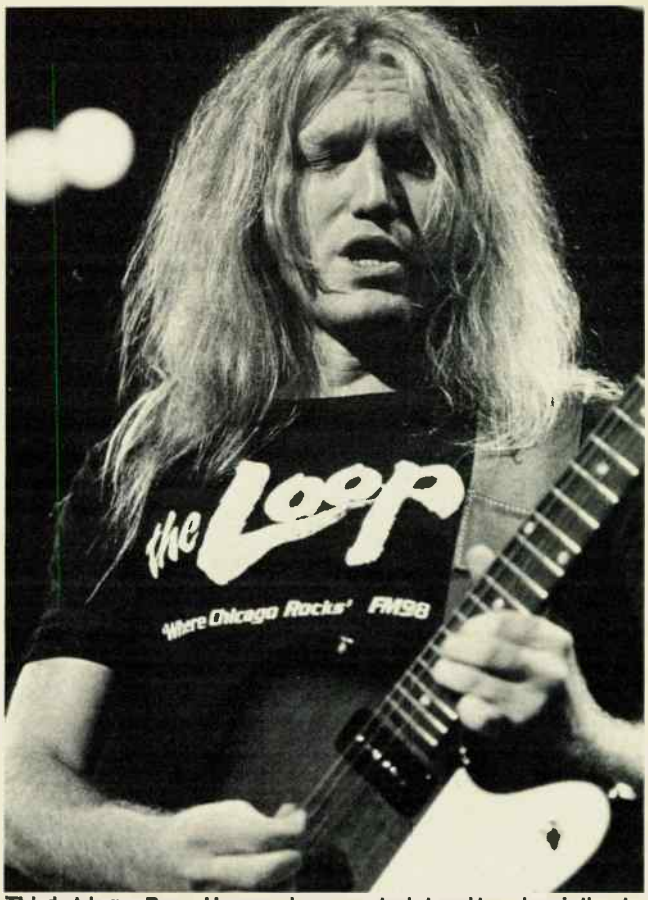
"About five months before the plane crash," Harwood said, "I had a car accident that left me with no lateral movement in my left arm. Every guitar player in this band has been clipped in the left wing. We've all had to go through therapy. When you know what you can play and you can't do it, it's the supreme slap in the face. You think, 'Maybe I wasn't on top of it as much as I thought I was; maybe I was getting a little too slick, a little too big-headed.' I remember the day I got the cast cut off. I said, 'Cut this bastard off right now, I'm going home and writing fifteen songs.' The circular saw cut this way, cut that way. I moved my wrist just that much, and the pain just about knocked me out. It was definite therapy from there on.

"I had already been offered the third guitarist gig twice before, so when they needed a third guitarist again, my name just came up. They called me up and I said, 'Book me a flight.' I got down here August 23, 1979. It's been a real quick two years."

Harwood quickly adapted to the triple guitar line-up. "It gives you your own guitar orchestra as long as you don't abuse it, as long as you don't kill people with nothing but guitar. It's discipline. How does Terry Bradshaw know when to throw those long passes to Lynn Swann and when not to throw them? It's just experience. We don't sit down and work anything out: You play this and I'll play that.' We don't do that. As we're working up a song maybe Allen will start playing the lead and then it'll become his. Allen is real aggressive when he plays, just like his personality; he's real wiry, real hot to go. Gary is real laid back. I weave in and out between the two of them. One trick I always use is to try to sound different. If Gary's got a siren, chirping-style feedback going, I'll try for a completely different sound."

Of course the trickiest addition to the new band was the lead vocalist. How could they find a singer who wouldn't suffer from inevitable comparisons to Ronnie Van Zant? "Gary and Allen were very definite about that," Krantz recounts. "From the beginning they wanted to start a new band and play music again, but they wanted a completely new direction. They didn't want any comparisons with Ronnie and Lynyrd Skynyrd."

The Rossington-Collins Band's Equipment:
Barry Harwood: "Mostly I use a 1964 Gibson Firebird, an SG standard. I started playing a Guild electric and I like it. It's a thin solid body on the same order as a Stratocaster with a five-position switch. But on stage I use my Firebird. It just sounds so damn good. It's one of those old ones from back when they made them with hand-wound pick-ups, three black single coil pick-ups. It just has a volume control and a tone control; it's real simple, but it bites. It bites through anything. Allen [Collins] plays a lot of Strat — a '54 or '57 — with a Telecaster neck. Gary [Rossington] plays a '59 Les Paul that he's had forever. You'll never get him away from that."
Derek Hess: "Pretty standard: Slingerland drums and Zildjian cymbals. But I still have my first set of Gretsch drums at home from when I loved the Beatles."
Leon Wilkeson: "I use a Gibson Thunderbird bass that's been sort of customized. Due to my arm injury from the airplane incident, I've got limited supernation, which is the movement of turning your arm palm upward. Barry has the same problem from his car accident. Basses tend to be top heavy, so I have a bar that extends down the left side so the instrument sits upright and so the neck's top-heaviness won't make it all that hard to reach. That's why Barry and I play our guitar and bass in the standing position, Bill Wyman style. We all use Peavey amps. Billy Powell plays a Steinway Helpenstill acoustic piano. He also uses a Hohner clavinet, a Wurlitzer electric and a Hammond B-3 with two Leslies."
Dale Krantz: "We've been thinking about using a cordless mic, but I haven't found one I like. So I just use a Shure. And good old Ronnie Van Zant's microphone stand. That sure is a good feeling when they tape that into place."



KIRK WEST/PHOTO RESERVE

Third stringer Barry Harwood uses restraint and tonal variation to avoid the usual Southern rock guitar overkill.

Dale Krantz was stranded in Tulsa when her first Indiana band dissolved there. She finally landed a back-up singing job with Leon and Mary Russell. After touring with them awhile, she found herself in Los Angeles, where she landed another backing vocalist gig with .38 Special, another Jax band led by Ronnie's younger brother Donnie Van Zant. "I worked on two albums and several tours with them," she recalled. ".38 Special had the same management as Lynyrd Skynyrd, so when the plane went down it stopped everything. While the management stuff was being worked out, I spent a year in Jax not doing much music. Gary and Allen took a big chance with me. They'd seen me around clubs in Jacksonville and I'd sung one lead duet with Donnie on the third .38 Special album, but that was it. They asked me if I could write lyrics, and I just flat out lied. I'd never written much, but I said, 'Oh, sure.' Luckily it worked out pretty well."

Finally in February, 1980 the new lineup was firm; the band walked on stage at the Great Southern Music Hall in Orlando, Florida, to face a live audience for the first time in more than two years. "I had gone a year and a half without playing anything," Wilkeson pointed out. "It was physical therapy five times a week with the same orthopedic doctor who repairs the Miami Dolphins. I always wanted to get back into music, but I've got to be honest; I had worries about the strain of building the callouses back up, about how good was I going to be. I'll never forget our first show, the excitement of it finally happening again. I felt like I was floating above the stage."

"Everybody was unsure how I was going to be," Dale Krantz admitted, "because I'm real quiet off stage. I was awfully shy right up 'til the first night. I think we were all a little surprised, because I just went crazy on stage. That was the first time we

all knew it was going to work out." The RCB refused to play any Skynyrd songs in their regular set and only played an instrumental version of "Free Bird" as the encore. They opened every show (and still do) with "Prime Time," a bold assertion that "we're alive and well and we're ready! Are you ready for the real McCoy?"

"Prime Time" also led off *Anytime — Anyplace — Anywhere*, the RCB's first album. That set the "nothing-can-keep-us-down" tone of the whole album. Dale Krantz's voice had the same stubborn toughness that Van Zant's had had, but it was much higher and cleaner. Instead of growling for emphasis, she would rise in pitch and quiver. Gone were Van Zant's lyrical details about Southern woods, honky tonk bars and the working class grind. In their place were more universal fables about tragedy and reaction to it, from the reflexive retreat ("I got to get away from the madness inside") to resilient perseverance ("I'll take my chances on livin' my life today").

The second album took a long time to make. Once again there were personal problems (Collins' wife Kay died; Rossington and Harwood's old injuries acted up). They didn't like the engineering and had to rerecord many tracks. "We set the tour back four different times," Harwood said. "But that was all right, because what goes down in that vinyl is history and you can never get it back." The finished album, *This Is The Way*, was much more vulnerable than the first effort. It was as if they had proven their point that they were back as strong and healthy as ever, so they could now unveil some of the wounds. It also revealed a lot more versatility with the artsy balladry of "Tashauna," the a cappella gospel of "Pine Box" and the acoustic blues of "I'm Free Today."

The best song is "The Next Phone Call." The lyrics describe those phone calls that come at three in the morning to roust you from sleep and tell you that your father's dead; your friend's totaled his car; your lover's packed and gone. The song gives the always-lurking possibility of death a very concrete image. The lyrics are the least of it, though; the music itself embodies the sense of danger. The song begins with an ominous sustained organ-and-guitar chord. The bass drum kicks aside this moment of paralysis and Rossington's two-bar guitar figure jumps in with threatening syncopation. Collins' impatient rhythm guitar figure comes from another direction; Harwood's slower lead guitar line creates the restraining tension against that impatience. Each piece of the mix becomes more insistent as Krantz recounts each bad new phone call; finally it all spills over into a moaning organ solo. When Krantz shouts, "What's it gonna be? Ah, the next phone call," one guitar jumps up into a distorted, painful solo. Rarely has the squealing, grating quality of hard rock guitar been so appropriate to a song's theme.

PAUL CANTY/RETNA

RCB wanted to avoid comparisons with Lynyrd Skynyrd and its charismatic lead singer, Ronnie Van Zant (above).

If "The Next Phone Call" was an angry response to death's regular visits, "Tashauna" is a slower, quieter eulogy. "The word Tashauna is the name of a young woman I knew here in Jacksonville," Dale Krantz reveals. "She died in a car crash, and her boyfriend asked me to write a song about her. She had a beautiful name, and it just fit what I had already written. I mostly wrote it for Allen because I admired how strong he'd been after Katy died. Originally I'd just written the first two verses, but the boys said you got to give them more. Leon is always the one who says you got to give them hope."

The album's first single, "Gotta Get It Straight," best typifies that attitude that tragedy should make you live harder, not more safely. "One thing I do know," Krantz sings for the band, "you gotta get it straight before it gets too late. I been down before, but I'm back on my feets again. How 'bout you?" Built atop Powell's boogie-woogie piano riff, the song shudders and careens in flagrant disregard for safety. "This album isn't expressing the pain so much," Leon Wilkeson maintained, "but rather the wisdom from the pain. Our engineer in Miami — Steve Klein — who was a godsend in helping us clean up those tracks — calls it an advice album. It ain't telling people what to do, but it's telling them what we've been through in such a way that maybe they can learn from it.

Like every other band, the RCB make the *pro forma* denials that they belong to any one genre. "We're not a Southern rock band," Wilkeson argued, "we're a rock band from the South. We don't want to be stuck in a box." Nonetheless, one of the RCB's biggest assets is their regional flavor. After going camping with Harwood and Hess, I learned just how Southern these musicians were. They were blunter, cornier, less frantic yet less cautious, less sophisticated and more direct than your usual East Coast urbanites. Their sense of family is so strong that it easily withstands the many shocks it has received (Wilkeson was shocked that a mere fist fight between Collins and Powell merited recent mention in *Rolling Stone*'s Random Notes.) We spent one Saturday night drinking whiskey in a motorboat on the St. John's River as we shone a spotlight into the riverside cypress, occasionally freezing an alligator's gaze.

This bluntly honest Southern character is reflected in the songs. "Southern people have a way of putting things," claims Harwood. "The lyrics especially just bring it right home. We may not use a lot of fancy words, but once we get it in gear, we can say it in two or three words."

For all its violent history, the RCB isn't interesting just because it went through so much violent tragedy, but because it was able to make some sense of it and emerge with unbroken spirit in the songs. "We're not bullshitting anybody," Harwood said. "We're telling how it happened to us and how I'm sure it happened to other people too. Hell, I'm not the only person who ever had a car wreck. There's plenty of people out there who can relate to what we went through. I've been pronounced dead three times since '77, and I just don't care anymore. I just go through my daily routine, and if it kills me, okay. We all like the good times, and we know the good times are just around the corner. That's what keeps us going."

Leon Wilkeson puts down his empty glass for emphasis. "I hope we're an inspiration to all the people who live the same way we do, because it could've happened to them." Harwood began to sing: "It could have been you..." Wilkeson completed the melody: "...just as easily."

RINGO

Our hero Richard Starkey graciously avoids plugging his new album and ruminates on the musical magic, the fortunate accidents and sublime disasters of life in the world's biggest fishbowl, the Beatles.

By Vic Garbarini

He's remembered as much for his personality as for his percussion. His droll humor, cheerful easy-going nature, and unflappable, down-to-earth disposition helped ground the Beatles psychologically as surely as his rock-steady, understated backbeat anchored them musically. But his very willingness to accommodate sometimes obscured Ringo Starr's own creative talents — the slow tom fills he introduced on *Sgt. Pepper* were a major, and often unacknowledged, innovation in rock drumming. All well and good, you say. But what's he done lately? *Ringo* and *Goodnight Vienna* weren't half-bad as Beatle solo albums go, but that was seven or eight years ago. Subsequent albums evidenced a steady decline in both quality and sales, possibly reaching a nadir with 1979's *Bad Boy*. Lately he's shown more interest (and garnered more critical and commercial kudos) with film ventures like *Caveman*, than with rock 'n' roll. That kind of Hollywood flash lands you on the cover of *People*, not *Musician*. But the publicity team was on the phone again, insisting that Ringo had just finished, with a little help from some famous friends, a new album that was a straightforward reaffirmation of his love for, and commitment to, rock 'n' roll. What's more, he was willing and anxious to sit down and talk about his music, including his time with the you-know-Whootles.

Two weeks later I'm standing in the fashionable lobby of the fashionable Beverly Wilshire Hotel (whose design, I am convinced, was the result of some unholy collaboration between Bernini and Zsa Zsa Gabor) trying to reason with a stone-faced desk officer:

"I'm sorry, but there is no Mr. Starr — or Mr. Starkey — registered here."

"Oh, yeah, I know, but I'm here to interview him...he's expecting me."

"We have no record of any such person here. *I'm sorry*, sir!"

"Right. Well, I'll just knock on each door till I find him. Where's room #1?"

"Why don't you just leave your card and we'll see if..."

The first thing you notice are the eyes: they're a startlingly bright, vibrant shade of Cote 'Azur blue — a tint no photograph can do justice to. (Sounds like *People* already, doesn't it?) I'm pleased, but not really surprised to find him alert, friendly, humorous — and quite intelligent. (As Paul McCartney put it last year, "Ringo's got a good head on his shoulders — he's by no means thick!") He was a man seemingly at ease with himself and his circumstances — still sensitive to criticism of himself or his "three brothers" — but secure in his role as husband, actor and musician. This confident demeanor takes on added significance when you consider that by all accounts the last few years haven't been the easiest of his life. *Bad Boys* had been a discouraging experience that convinced him to take a break from recording for a few years. By his own admission, some of that time had been squandered "getting drunk every night" with friends, but last year things began to turn around. His movie, *Caveman*, scored both with the critics and at the box office, and it was while making that film that Ringo met the person who has probably had a greater influence on him than anyone since the three scruffy Liverpool rockers spirited him away from Rory Storme & the Hurricanes, his new bride. Don't let the *Playboy* image fool you; Barbara Bach is an intelligent, perceptive woman and they're both obviously very much in love. As Ringo acknowledges, it was Barbara who roused him out of bed and inspired him to go back into the studio. If all this — the decision to stop making albums, the bouts of drinking, and the sensitive, supportive mate who helped revitalize flagging spirits — sounds curiously close to the story of another ex-Beatle, well...

Next to John Lennon, Ringo was always the most rock 'n' roll oriented member of the Fab Four — a fact that's repeatedly confirmed in the following interview. As the beat behind the Beatles, Ringo was the solid, no-frills pulse that helped maintain the connection with their rock 'n' roll roots. For Ringo, the *band* was everything. It was that singular chemistry that

AARON RAPPAPORT

DEZO HOFFMANN/REX

"I hate drum solos! I really do." Ringo strives for solidity, keeps exact time and fills carefully.

resulted when the four of them played together that made the magic possible, and kept the creative channels open. It's also that same simple, uncomplicated approach that makes *Smell The Roses* a successful comeback. Wisely, co-producers McCartney, Harrison, Stills et al, eschew *Ringo*'s Spectorish waif-singing-in-a-cathedral production style, opting instead for a direct, stripped-down, band-oriented sound that highlights Ringo's upbeat vocals and reborn enthusiasm for his craft, as well as Paul and George's spirited melodies. The lyrics, particularly McCartney's, are another matter. The title tune and "Drumming Is My Madness" (which the *New York Times* called "moronic") seem at first like quirky throwaways, but on closer examination appear more like self-therapy. Each solo Beatle evolved his own form of musical exorcism: Paul crooned silly love songs, and George got cosmic. True to his own nature, Ringo has a good-natured look-out. Whatever gets you through the night. In any case, the Mad Drummer is back, having stopped to take the time to cut this album, and talk thoughtfully and perceptively about the music he helped create all those years ago. It's heartening to have him back.

RINGO: I'd rather not turn this into "Unveiling The Beatles Part 2." Instead, I'd like to talk about our new album (leans into microphone) CALLED *STOP AND TAKE THE TIME TO SMELL THE ROSES*, FEATURING THE HIT SINGLE...(aside to MUSICIAN) When will this be on the newsstands?
MUSICIAN: Late December and January.
RINGO: Right. The *former* hit single, "Wrack My Brain."
MUSICIAN: I'm sure you're sick of people asking gossipy questions about the Beatles; trying to dig up dirt...
RINGO: I'm bored with it, and so is everyone else.
MUSICIAN: I agree, but that's not what we're after at all. What we're interested in is the music — how you actually put together the medley on *Abbey Road*, for instance; how you developed those trademark tom fills around the time of *Sgt. Pepper*; how you guys coordinated playing live with all that screaming going on...from a *musician's* point of view.
RINGO: That's different. I'd be *glad* to talk about the music for a change. Some of these interviews we've had...I told this one reporter that I'd done a few tracks on Paul's new album, and he says, "Gee, that's fantastic, Ring!" Then there's a long pause and he says, "By the way, *what's a track*?!"
BARBARA: And there are some who'll act very friendly for the first ten minutes or so, and then just when Ritchie's comfortable they'll try and dredge up something.
MUSICIAN: I understand. Well, we'll try and keep the center of gravity on music, and if we get into anything you're uncomfortable with, just let me know.
RINGO: That's fine. I have no problems with getting into the music.
MUSICIAN: You've had a great deal of success working in films over the last few years. Could you ever see yourself putting aside music completely at some point?
RINGO: Never. If I had to be put on a desert island with only one thing to do, it would be drumming. Like the song says, it's still my madness. There's just nothing that can compare with that magic moment when a whole band just comes together as one — the guitar, the drums, the piano — and it all fits in and clicks. Unless you're a musician, I don't think you'll ever understand that feeling.
MUSICIAN: What would you say is your greatest strength as a musician?
RINGO: I'm solid. Also great timing and good fills. With some players it's like holding a race horse, because they try and gallop off. Being a good time keeper, I try and hold it all together rather than getting excited and dashing off with the pianist or someone, and the track ending up twice as fast as when you started.
MUSICIAN: Some drummers intentionally play a little ahead or a little behind the beat...
RINGO: No, I try and play exactly on time. I seem to have this thing where my body clock keeps accurate time. I just stay dead on it...okay, I've been known to race a few fills — or even get lost in a few fills now and then — but I always seem to come back out of it at the right spot. But while I'm in the middle of it all, it's a total blackout.

MUSICIAN: Going back to the beginning, how did you get started with drums?

RINGO: Drums have always been my instrument. My grandparents played the banjo and mandolin, which they gave me ...had no interest. Then my grandfather bought me a harmonica...had no interest. Finally, they got a piano...and *that* got my interest.

MUSICIAN: Did you learn to play it?

RINGO: No, I used to walk on it — up and down the keyboard! Then at thirteen I went to hospital, and once a week they'd have the ward band, which I wouldn't play in unless I got the drums. And there were yellow dots for the triangle, and green dots for the cymbals, and I guess that's what started it all. Then I started playing on the bedside table with bits of wood or anything. When I got out I bought a cheap five-dollar bass drum and a skin that I'd use as a snare drum.

MUSICIAN: What about technique? Were you taking lessons?

RINGO: No, I'd just lay them down on the floor, take two pieces of firewood, and bang the shit out of 'em. Then my stepfather bought me this great old $30 mish-mash drum kit. I didn't have a car; I had to go to my first gigs by bus. So I ended up only carrying the snare and cymbals with me. I used to beg some other drummer on the bill with a full kit to lend me his for my set. Sometimes they would, and sometimes they wouldn't. But it didn't matter all that much when I started, because it was skiffle, and a snare and cymbals were really all you needed.

MUSICIAN: They were also the only parts of your kit that were audible on those early Beatles albums.

RINGO: Yeah, they never knew how to mic the bass drum in those days. Maybe the bass drum caused too much roll-off — made the needle jump — when they went to press it. Most records in those days were like that; the highs would come through, and little else. Then Motown came along with great highs *and* a great bass sound, because the technology became available to capture those deeper lows.

MUSICIAN: That was around the time of *Sgt. Pepper*, when you and Paul suddenly came forward in the mix. Paul told us that the fact that the bass and drums could now be recorded realistically inspired him to perfect his style. Was that leap in technology also what moved you to develop those slow tom fills? I've always felt that you effectively changed the direction of popular drumming at that point.

It was time for the Beatles to end. You can only mine a gold mine until the seam runs out; you'll search a little bit more, and that's what we were determined to do, because after eight years it's hard to stop, but it still took us a year to say "stop."

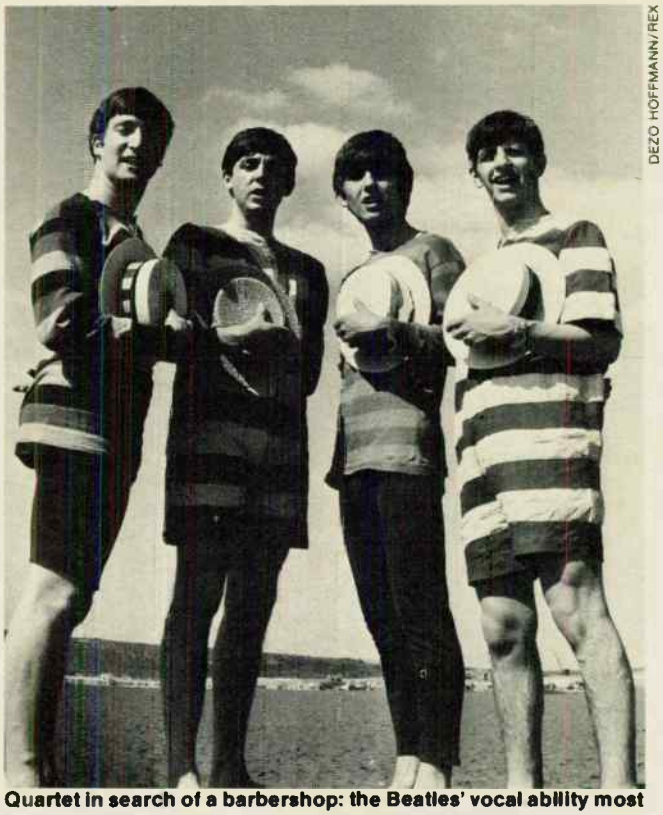
RINGO: You may not know it, but that style was put down all over the world! Like, "Oh, that's just Ringo and his funny fills." All that came about because I was getting back into calf skins and out of plastic ones when we were in the studio, and the toms just sounded so *deep*. Plus, there were more of them now that I was back to using a full kit instead of the mini-kit I'd used on tours.

MUSICIAN: The smaller kit was more convenient on the road?

RINGO: Nah, we used it so I'd look a bit taller...little English joke there, folks! But back to the funny fills: They were funny because I can't just sweep around the kit, dubba-dubba-dub, like a lot of drummers. I found I had to come off with my left hand, even though I'm right-handed, and so I wound up working my way up the kit backwards, and that's how the "funny fills" thing started.

MUSICIAN: You keep referring to them as "funny little fills", which I think is being a bit overly modest. That was an innovation that really influenced almost everyone...

RINGO: Yeah, but I didn't know that until I came to America



DEZO HOFFMANN/REX

Quartet in search of a barbershop: the Beatles' vocal ability most impressed Ringo when he first saw them in Hamburg.

and started meeting drummers like Snakey Keltner and Jim Gordon. They said, "Hey, we're sick and tired of being asked to play like Ringo every time we do a session!" So I only call them "funny little fills" because that's how the critics referred to them at the time. They were never "funny little fills" to me: they were always VERY SERIOUS LITTLE FILLS! Maybe they were funny, but everybody wanted to do them.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of fills, is it true George Martin didn't want to use you on the "Love Me Do" sessions because he felt you couldn't do a roll?

RINGO: I *still* can't do a roll. I think I freaked George out because of the way I played the demo on "Please Please Me" There I was playing the full kit with bass drum, snare, toms, high hats, and at the same time I had a tambourine in one hand and a maraca in the other. I could see George in the control booth shaking his head and thinking, "NOOOOOOOOOO, I DON'T THINK THAT'S VERY PROFESSIONAL," or whatever he thought. Then he brought in a professional drummer, Andy White, who plays on the single of "Love Me Do", and I play on the album version.

MUSICIAN: Were there any other Beatle tracks that you didn't play on?

RINGO: Only two: Paul played drums on "The Ballad of John and Yoko" and on "Back In The U.S.S.R." I did all the rest. But as George Martin said later, and I quote, although he didn't want me in the beginning, now he'd like me to play on any session he has. So he's changed.

MUSICIAN: You were with Rory Storme & the Hurricanes in Hamburg at the same time as the Beatles. How important was that experience to your musical evolution and that of the rest of the Beatles?

RINGO: Hamburg is really where we got our stuff together. If we hadn't gone there, I don't know how — or even *if* — I would have continued playing. Up 'til then we'd been gigging just a couple of nights a week in clubs around Liverpool. But in Hamburg our two groups played twelve hours a day between us. You can't play "Johnny B. Goode" for six hours a night, so we had to stretch and play anything we could think of — experiment and try new things; throw in waltzes and all kinds of madness. The Beatles and Rory both wanted to be the top band, and we'd battle to win the audience. We'd do any crazi-

ness to get them going: if it was a rock number, we'd *really* rock and if it was a slow tune, we'd really slow it down. The competition and all those hours really forced us to learn our craft. It was like a cram course.

MUSICIAN: Did the Beatles impress you as musicians at the time?

RINGO: They impressed me more as vocalists. Paul wasn't actually playing an instrument, he was strumming a two-string guitar just so he could hold something. They could rock as a band, but I mostly remember Paul up there just singing his balls off with this two-string guitar.

MUSICIAN: Just before you all came to America, you were reported as saying that "I'm not really a Beatle yet, I'm still on salary." Were you initially a hired hand?

RINGO: No, I was never on salary: I was always an equal partner. It's just that the tracks I sang on the albums were never singles. I was in the back as the drummer.

MUSICIAN: Were you anxious to sing, or did the others nudge you into it?

RINGO: No, I used to do a twenty-minute set with Rory where I'd do all the vocals. It was a natural thing for me to have a track.

MUSICIAN: You usually seemed to wind up doing cover tunes, like "Boys" or "Act Naturally"...

RINGO: We did those cover tunes in the early days simply because we didn't have enough material. We were trying to build up to where it was just our original songs, but when you do your first album, you do exactly what you do on the road. There was very little new stuff on that first album, which is how we managed to make it in twelve hours from start to finish, ending with "Twist and Shout".

MUSICIAN: It must have been a little frustrating working behind two or three of the greatest songwriters in history.

RINGO: Yeah, I had problems with that as a writer, because when I'd present my songs they'd all fall about on the floor laughing. Not good for the ego, you know.

MUSICIAN: Were they *that* bad?

RINGO: No, it was because I'd unconsciously steal old songs and re-write them and not realize it. So they'd fall about laughing and tell me "Oh, you've just rewritten *that* again".

MUSICIAN: When we talked to Paul last year, he said that the others always gave you directions on every single number...

RINGO: That's right. They wrote the songs and knew the direction they wanted to go in. Basically, I was dealing with three frustrated drummers, so they'd all have their say. I remember John and I having these great discussions about it. He'd put on some record and say "That's what I want — play it like that !" And I'd say, "But John, there's two guys playing drums on that record!" — 'cause in those days they started using two drummers at some sessions. And John would argue, "NAAAH, there's only one!" "No," I'd say, "there are *two* of them! THERE'S TWO BLOODY SNARES AND FOUR CYMBALS AND EIGHT TOMS...LISTEN TO IT!" I remember going through that conversation more than once! But as I say, every track they wrote, they had an idea how they wanted it. If it was Paul, he'd come to me and say, "I want the drums something like this," and we'd all give what we could to help. Naturally, within that general framework you would express your own personality. Sometimes I would come up with something completely different than what was asked for.

MUSICIAN: Did that cause problems?

RINGO: Never. That was the great thing about the Beatles: it didn't matter who came up with it, if you had a better idea it was used. No one stood on their ego. Hell, even our roadies like Mal contributed some lyrics or came up with titles for our albums. We weren't going to stand there like four big babies and say, "Well, we didn't think of it so we won't use it." We were always open to any good suggestion that was better than ours. Our egos didn't get in the way of the music.

MUSICIAN: Maybe it didn't affect the music directly, but there were obviously personality problems in the band by the time of *The White Album*. Paul claimed that that was the tensest...

RINGO: ...it was so tense I left the group.

MUSICIAN: What went wrong?

RINGO: We were going through madness. Everyone thought everybody else was okay — that the other three were friends — and it turned out that none of us were getting along with each other. We were all paranoid and crazy at the time. So I left for a few weeks and went on holiday because I just couldn't take it anymore. When I came back George met me with a horseshoe of flowers, and it was all beautiful again.

MUSICIAN: Is it possible that the friction may have somehow helped to get your collective creative juices flowing again? Musically, it had to be one of your best efforts.

RINGO: As a band member, I've always felt *The White Album* was better that *Sgt. Pepper*, because by the end it was more like a real group again. There weren't so many overdubs like on *Pepper*. With all those orchestras and whatnot we were virtually reduced to being a session group on our own album. So *The White Album* I really enjoyed, because we were playing like a real band again.

MUSICIAN: Paul seems to get blamed more than the others for the craziness that went down at the time. Some people say he tried to take over the band after Brian died. Did the Beatles need a musical director or leader at that point?

RINGO: Paul wasn't a musical director. Paul just likes to work — he's a workaholic. We'd all be wandering around the garden on a summer's day and there'd come this phone call, and it would be Paul saying *"I think it's time we went back to work, lads!"* So he would call us in, but not as musical director, because if, for instance, George wrote a particular track, then he'd be director on that, and so on.

MUSICIAN: As a drummer, was it difficult working with a bass player as busy and innovative as McCartney?

RINGO: It was always interesting, because Paul is one of the finest and most melodic bass players in the world. We'd always work out the bass and bass drum parts together to complement each other, and so we wouldn't get in each other's way. Going back to your earlier question, I think that's when we started to be brought forward in the mix. We were playing a very strong rhythmic mix of bass, snare, toms, and bass drum, and it was becoming an important element in our overall sound. So we'd work on that, and I still to this day always work closely with the bass player.

MUSICIAN: Were you thoroughly disgusted with touring by the time you stopped?

RINGO: The main thing about the road was that no matter how good or bad we played, we got the same reaction. When we came off stage we were the only ones who knew how well or poorly we'd actually played. It didn't matter if we'd just done the worst show in the world, they'd scream and applaud anyway. That doesn't help you.

MUSICIAN: Steve Winwood told us that he left Blind Faith for just that reason; he felt they were losing touch with reality because there was no reliable feedback. People cheered anything...

RINGO: That's exactly right, and it was screwing our brains over! After a while we figured we could probably go out there and just fart and we'd still get the same manic response. It wasn't appreciation for the act anymore, it was just a reaction to the phenomenon.

MUSICIAN: So you felt they weren't really listening...

RINGO: Well, they couldn't even hear it at that point. They didn't come to our shows to listen to music — they came to watch four guys *mime*. It must have looked like miming, because nobody could hear anything — including us!

MUSICIAN: I've always wondered how you managed to coordinate your playing in the middle of all that pandemonium?

RINGO: I couldn't do any fills, for one thing. If I did, we'd all lose track of the whole song. I used to lean over and try to read Paul's lips to keep track of where we were at, because I simply couldn't hear anything. I was actually lip-reading the songs to see where we were! So if I ever went off into a fill you could feel everybody get a little nervous and start to wonder, "Where the hell are we?"

Billy Shears and band: Ringo felt like a session player on *Sgt. Pepper* and far preferred the simplicity of *The White Album* and *Let It Be*.

As a band member, I've always felt the "White Album" was better than "Sgt. Pepper" because, by the end, it was more like a real group again. With all those orchestras and overdubs on "Pepper" we were virtually reduced to being a session group on our own album.

MUSICIAN: Is it true that you were just playing on the off-beat most of the time?

RINGO: Sure. The bass and guitars were off on the other end of the stage where I could hardly hear them, so I'd wind up just doing off-beats. And then we'd have days where we'd entertain ourselves, and I'd wind up playing "Love Me Do" as a rhumba, or do a waltz-time while the rest of the band was playing in 4/4. That was one of our favorite little variations...we used to think we were sooooooooo clever! No one knew; we'd just do it for ourselves — to have a little laugh.

MUSICIAN: In the early days, one of the most striking things about you guys was the incredible good humor and cheerfulness you communicated. In these cynical times some people might wonder if you were really enjoying yourselves up there.

RINGO: Sure, it was satisfying. I mean, look at the footage from the Shea Stadium Concert. John's just going over the edge with the organ, laughing hysterically. You don't fake that. We used to love to make each other laugh; we enjoyed it. Not all the time, of course. If we had a bad day we might only do a half-hour show. And if we *really* didn't like the place we'd race through the set and get off in twenty-five minutes.

MUSICIAN: What was the worst experience you had touring with the Beatles?

RINGO: The worst experience was Montreal, where they threatened to shoot me. They said they were going to get the "little English Jew."

MUSICIAN: You mean someone wanted to kill you because you were an English Jew?

RINGO: Yeah, in Quebec they were against the Queen and all, so that explains the English part. But the weird thing is, I'm not even Jewish!

MUSICIAN: Did you take any precautions that night?

RINGO: They had a plainclothes detective on stage with me ready to catch the bullets...and at the end of every number I'd come down hard on the cymbals and then grab them at the bottom and tilt them up like two shields to protect me. But we always managed to get to the limo or the van after the shows and get away. We never got hurt once by the crowds.

MUSICIAN: Didn't you get roughed up a bit in Manila?

RINGO: Oh, Manila I *hated*! When we arrived at Manila airport there was this impressive motorcade with a thousand policemen on motorbikes. Then we did the concert at the stadium, which was fine. When we got back to the hotel we switched on the TV to see how the concert was being reported. But instead of concert footage, the camera showed all these glum-faced little kids at the Presidential Palace looking real down. And there was the President's wife, Mrs. Marcos, looking real angry, and talking about how we were supposed to have come to this special luncheon for all these children, and how we just didn't show up. Then there's the camera again panning across these sad little faces, and they showed the food that had been prepared and their little party hats...We were completely confused by all this, we couldn't figure out what had happened. So we got up and got dressed and wandered out and our road manager says,"HURRUMMPH, WELL, THERE'S BEEN A BIT OF TROUBLE, LADS." What happened was we'd been invited to this luncheon, but our people told them we couldn't come because we'd been travelling and playing for days and needed a break. Meanwhile, Mrs. Marcos is on the TV saying we'd promised to come, and then didn't show up, even though we'd really said no. So the next morning John and I ordered some newspapers to see what was happening. They never came. We asked for some breakfast — that never came either. So we had to leave for the airport, and downstairs there was this big crowd waiting for us — only this time they didn't want autographs, they wanted to kill us! We'd come in with a thousand police escorts — we left with one car. When we got to the airport, it got really tense — people were shouting and spitting and cursing at us. Boo! Hiss! Then they tried to kick us as we headed for customs — there seemed like millions of them trying to get at us.

MUSICIAN: So what did you do?

RINGO: John and I spotted a group of nuns, so we went and hid behind them, thinking we'd be safe. We figured they wouldn't hit us in front of *nuns*...We finally got on the plane and thought well, *that's* over. The next thing we knew they were calling us off the plane by name, one by one! We thought if we got off, we'd never be seen again, so we sat there. Luckily, it was a British Airways plane. So we took off for India and tried to straighten out our brains. That was probably the most frightening experience — a whole country hating you for something you didn't even do.

MUSICIAN: What about the other side of the coin...what were the best experiences?

RINGO: Oh, no...that's just too hard...there isn't any one or two "bests," there were so many of them, all around the world.

MUSICIAN: Okay, how about in terms of your recorded work. Which tracks or albums were you most satisfied with?

RINGO: I've always thought that "Rain" is the finest drumming I've ever done; "Strawberry Fields" is another favorite. I enjoyed the little weird ones more than the nice ones...

MUSICIAN: ...Mostly John's?

RINGO: Mostly John's, yeah. "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" is a really beautiful piece, but for my own work, I've always liked "Rain." That, and the second side of *Abbey Road* where we had all those bits strung together with tom-toms and madness and Polyethylene Pams coming through bathroom windows and all the rest. I really enjoyed doing that.

MUSICIAN: How were they all stitched together?

RINGO: They were all done separately. When we finished one segment, we'd play along with the end of the completed tape of that bit to synchronize our timing and then we'd come into the next section. Some of them were just complete edits, though.

MUSICIAN: What tracks or albums would you say the group as a whole seemed most satisfied with?

RINGO: Funnily enough, we felt that a lot of the cuts on the *Let It Be* album worked well, even though it was the last one...well, the next to last one; it only came out later than *Abbey Road* because of the movie. What was that track of John's? (taps on table) bump-bump didila-didila ah, "Come Together," that felt quite good. I'd found that little drum riff and it seemed to fit that track well.

MUSICIAN: How did the group feel about *Sgt. Pepper*?

RINGO: With *Pepper* the backing tracks were fine, but there was so much to be put on top of them that you couldn't tell how good they were until we finished six months later. Something like "The One After 909" on *Let It Be* was done in just one or two takes, a simple skiffle tune. But everybody felt good about it because we were back to being a band again.

MUSICIAN: What about the earlier albums — any standouts for you?

RINGO: *Please, Please Me* felt good to everybody — because we finally had a piece of *plastic* in our hands! Then *Rubber Soul* was a turning point for us; it was the first record that was totally under our direction.

MUSICIAN: I think both Paul and John later said that Dylan was a major influence at the time.

RINGO: Well, maybe so. But it's very hard for a drummer to be influenced by Dylan!

MUSICIAN: Also, those were the first songs that were obviously drawn from real-life experience.

RINGO: And all written by some artists named John, Paul and George.

MUSICIAN: I want to ask you about Brian Epstein. I think it was John who was quoted as saying that by the time you had arrived in the states, Brian had sanitized your act to the point where a lot of the magic was wrung out of it. Was that true?

RINGO: We weren't playing like in Hamburg. It's the old story that Brian was the one who made us put on ties...

MUSICIAN: But did that really affect the music?

RINGO: Well, no, it affected our attitude.

MUSICIAN: What had your attitude been like up till then?

RINGO: We were drunken slobs! Just drunken slobs smoking and drinking onstage and having fun. And then it turned into a business. From saying things like "AH, PISS OFF!" to the audience, we became a professional group. It became a little...nice.

MUSICIAN: Just an off-the-wall question: did you guys ever feel you had any serious rivals?

RINGO: Well, as Paul said, the Beach Boys did that record (*Pet Sounds*) ...but no, I never thought we had any.

MUSICIAN: What about the Stones?

RINGO: We were always friends with the Stones. Whenever we did anything special they'd always come along, and vice versa. The only battles we had were in the press, it was never anything else. Anyway, we were appealing to totally different audiences. They were full on teenagers, while we were trying to cover everyone from children to old ladies.

MUSICIAN: I'm sure it's significant that the two best rock 'n' roll bands in history both had drummers that were solid, straight-forward, and in the pocket.

RINGO: I've always said that Charlie's an amazing musician, and very underrated. He's the only one who holds out on doing fills longer than I do.

MUSICIAN: What was it about England in the early sixties that made it such an incredible breeding ground for great bands?

RINGO: I always thought it was because National Service (the draft) ended, and so at 18 you weren't regimented. Everyone was wondering what to do, and people were picking up instruments instead of guns. There were so many kids, so many bands, so many places to play — it just mushroomed. Then we landed a contract and the next thing you know this record company comes to Liverpool and signs 80 groups — *80 groups!* Maybe two of them wound up doing something. Then the German scene opened up, and all the Liverpool groups were being shipped across the channel to Hamburg.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of crossing oceans, were you surprised when you went over so well in America? What were you thinking as you stepped off the plane?

RINGO: We were really worried about America. The whole thing came off by chance, you know.

MUSICIAN: Your coming over?

RINGO: Yeah. The story is that Ed Sullivan happened to be getting off a plane in London just as we were arriving back on a flight from Sweden. We were known all over Europe at the time, but nobody knew us in America. And so there's 10,000 kids screaming and greeting us at the airport, and Ed Sullivan saying, "What the hell is this?" and he booked us on the spot.

MUSICIAN: Hadn't one of you come over for a brief visit the year before?

RINGO: Right. George had a sister who lived in the Midwest who he came to visit six or eight months before. He'd been going into record shops there and asking, "Have you, uh got anything by the, uh, Beatles?" And they'd say, "Are you kidding?! We never even *heard* of them!" So George came back saying (knits brows, shakes head), "AWWWWWWWW, I don't know what this is going to be like, I just don't know; they've never heard of us!" And we all said, "WHOOOOOAAHH MY GOD, I HOPE IT WORKS!!!" Because for any group, America's the place to make it. You can be as big as you like in Australia or England, but you have to make it here to actually make it.

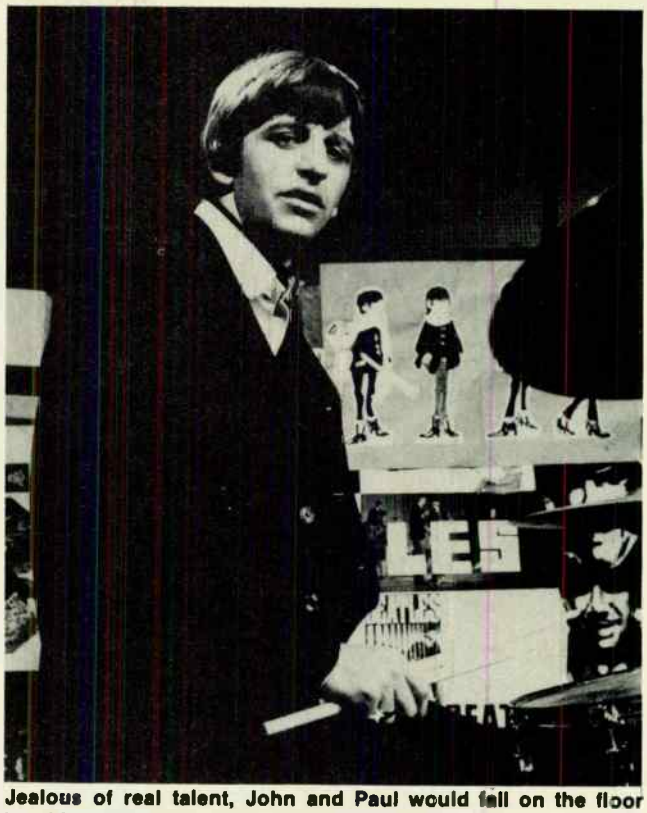
MUSICIAN: I can still remember the every detail of what I was doing the first time I heard "I Want To Hold Your Hand" in December of '63. Cynics at the time said it was a mass hallucination but it wasn't. It was the exact opposite — it was like everybody woke up for the first time. It was a real taste of our potential as individuals and as a community — that there were deeper joys and a fuller understanding available to us than what we'd been taught. Could you feel any of that at the time? Did it make any sense to you?

RINGO: Sure, it made complete sense to us. It was like everyone was getting together, and we were the catalysts for it. And it seemed a whole generation was suddenly singing the same song.

MUSICIAN: Did you ever ask yourself, "Why us?"

RINGO: No, no! (rolls eyes towards ceiling, smiles and

shrugs) I mean, WHHHHHHHHYYYYY US?! We just always had the attitude that we were going to the top.
MUSICIAN: And where was "the top"?
RINGO: It changed as we went along. At one time the top was the London Palladium. My mother was always a great supporter, even in the early days, and she'd always say, "One day your name will be in lights and I'll see you at the Palladium."
MUSICIAN: After you'd conquered Liverpool, how long did it take the rest of England to catch on?
RINGO: We used to get laughed at in England when we got started. The audiences used to think a bunch of *clowns* were coming on — what with these new songs and weird clothes and drinking and being silly, and they'd laugh at us. Then we'd finally start playing, and three or four songs into it they weren't laughing anymore! They'd all crowd down around the center and say, "Hey, something's happening here!", and you'd know you'd got 'em. Even as far as the Outer Islands and Scotland they'd all be coming in their Wellington boots and Mac raincoats and going nuts.
MUSICIAN: When did you begin to suspect that this was something more than just another good rock band?
RINGO: We knew it when our first record came out, because that gave us so much scope. Before that we were mainly playing in Liverpool and the outlying districts, with maybe an occasional odd gig a hundred miles away or so...
MUSICIAN: Still regional favorites...
RINGO: Right, and then after the record we started getting calls from all over Europe, even Paris.
MUSICIAN: But you reportedly didn't want to go to Paris...
RINGO: ...because I didn't like the French!
MUSICIAN: Is that really why you didn't want to go?
RINGO: No, I don't know...we were booked into this club in Paris and it was a variety show thing with Sylvie Vartan and a couple of poodles who did tricks...
MUSICIAN: It didn't work out very well, anyway, did it?
RINGO: Well, it was strange because it was a male audience there, unlike England and America where there are a lot of females at rock shows. By then we were getting used to the high-pitched screams and suddenly there were these deep voices going (in deepest *basso profundo* voice), "RAH RAH BEATLES!!!" And we'd be walking up the boulevard and you'd hear these boys saying (like a teenage Maurice Chevalier), "'ALLO ZARE BEATLES!" But the kids weren't against us in Paris, it was just the press that got weird, and that was because our press agent got into some...I don't know, some madness came down and the press just turned against us.
MUSICIAN: How do you feel about the press today? Do they treat you fairly?
RINGO: I do what I do and they do what they do. Whatever I say to you today you're going to put down whatever you want. As honest as you may be, I have no control over what you may say. Sometimes it seems to be going fine, and then you find out later that the guy really hates you. The press can make you out to be biased one way or another. Sometimes I'll make a little joke while the tape is running, but when it's written down it seldom looks funny.
MUSICIAN: Don't worry, I'll duly note that.
RINGO: I'm mostly talking about newspapers now. Sometimes it's not the writer's fault — it's the editor who gashes it up.
MUSICIAN: I know — I'm an editor, too!
RINGO: Okay, here's a funny story for you. As I said before, I went down to Montserrat to work on Paul's new album — but *not* to do a tribute album like the press was saying. So Barbara and I get back to L.A. and we're watching the evening news at a friend's house and this newswoman...what's her name, Connie...Toyota?
BARBARA: Connie Chung, on CBS.
RINGO: That's it...so Connie Chung's there on the evening news saying, "We've confirmed that Ringo Starr has just been in Montserrat with Paul McCartney doing this tribute album..." So I grabbed the phone and called the station, and finally got her just after the news finished. I said, "Look, you've got it all wrong, I've *denied* over and over that it's a tribute, and I'm sick



LFI/RETNA LTD

Jealous of real talent, John and Paul would fall on the floor laughing at Ringo's songwriting attempts.

of this bullshit. So please do me a favor and go back on the air right now and tell them you heard from me and it's not true!" And she says (in his best Monty Python-in-drag voice), "WHAAAAAT?! AND TAKE OFF *THE JEFFERSONS*?!! I CAN'T TAKE OFF THE JEFFERSONS!!!" (loudly laughs) I said, "Oh no, don't do *that*."
MUSICIAN: One thing that probably sparked that rumor was the fact that Paul had shelved Wings and was bringing in all these superstar types.
RINGO: I think after all those years with Wings, Paul just wanted a change, like I did. Stevie Wonder had come down; when I got there, Steve Gadd was around and Stanley Clarke had already been through. Denny Laine was playing guitar, though they've since split. He just wanted a different sound and emotion on his record.
MUSICIAN: How did he handle all the press hanging around down there?
RINGO: He drove his jeep into a group of them! You *do* get pissed off, you know. So I understood that, but it's also the surest way to get your picture in the papers, which is what you're trying to avoid.
MUSICIAN: If all the craziness dies down eventually, would you enjoy playing with Paul and George again in a live situation?
RINGO: I always enjoy playing with them, but none of us have the desire to get together again because of all the aggravation and bullshit that would go on around it. And it would only be classified as the Beatles, even if we called it something else. Besides...there's only three of us now, anyway. There's just no incentive. But we do get to work together in the studio.
MUSICIAN: Was it a hassle getting all of you together to work on your new album? You've got five people listed as producers, including Paul and George.
RINGO: That's exactly the way I wanted to do it; I didn't want to get stuck with any one producer. What happened was that my last album, *Bad Boys*, was, well, all right, I guess — but that's about all. I just didn't want to go in and make another album, repeat the formula and all that, so I let it go for two years. Then Barbara, who really loves music, said, "You've got to get back in the studio again." As it says on the back of the album, she kicked me out of bed and made me go to work

DEZO HOFFMANN/REX

While George Martin (behind Paul) was invaluable in arranging horns and strings, it was really John and Paul who produced.

again. When someone has that enthusiasm for what you're doing, it really helps. We decided to do it travelling around the world — to have a holiday and work at the same time. We bumped into Paul in Cannes where he and Linda were showing one of their cartoons that won the competition. So I told him I was thinking of doing this album with all different producers, and would he do two or three tracks? He said fine, and we agreed we'd do it sometime later in France. Two days later he calls back, "Well, set up the studio, the band'll be there, everything's ready, I want you there on such-and-such..." Like I said, Paul's an alcoholic and...no, I mean workaholic and...

MUSICIAN: Not so fast, I heard that! (jumps up, grabs microphone) STOP THE PRESSES!! RINGO CLAIMS PAUL IS AN ALCOHOLIC!!! FILM AT ELEVEN!!

RINGO: (leaps up, waving arms, grabs microphone, imitates radio) BEEP BEEP BEEP NEWSFLASH! NEWSFLASH! CALLING ALL STATIONS! SPECIAL BULLETIN!!

MUSICIAN: See, I told you you could trust me...

RINGO: (laughs) He's a workaholic, folks. Honest!

MUSICIAN: Special report tomorrow: DOES GEORGE REALLY HAVE WEBBED FEET? Speaking of George, he helped produce two tracks on your album while you appeared on his single, "All Those Years Ago"...

RINGO: Actually, that track was originally done for my album. We did three tracks, initially: "Wrack My Brain," the oldie "You Belong to Me" and an early version of "All Those Years Ago," but it didn't work for me; vocally it was a bit too high. I could have gotten it in the end, but I really didn't like the original words. So I told George I didn't feel comfortable with it, let's forget about it. Later he put new words on it and Paul dropped by and wound up adding background vocals. But as I say, it started off as my track and wound up with him doing it.

MUSICIAN: I've always had the feeling that George was the most frustrated member of the group. George Martin reportedly gave him a hard time, telling him what to play, and then he had to wedge his songs in there among John's and Paul's...

RINGO: In the end he was in the most difficult position, because John and Paul even wanted to write his solos. Paul was very definite about how he wanted his solos and George was very frustrated. There was some friction, but it all got cleared up. I never really had that problem; once we'd set up the general rhythms I would add fills and things where I wanted.

MUSICIAN: George Martin obviously played a very crucial role as a producer and arranger, particularly in the early days. Did any of you feel any resentment towards him at any point?

RINGO: No, George was very helpful. In the beginning he was in charge, but in all honesty — and I think George himself would admit this — he didn't actually produce the records; John and Paul did. For instance, they'd be sitting at the board and I'd be out in the box playing drums and then Paul would come out and play bass and the rest of us would be at the board trying to get the right sound — but mainly it was John and Paul. George was really needed when we'd come to put strings on or something, because none of us could write music. John would come up and say, "George, the horns should go dah-dah-doo-dah," or whatever, and George would write out the charts.

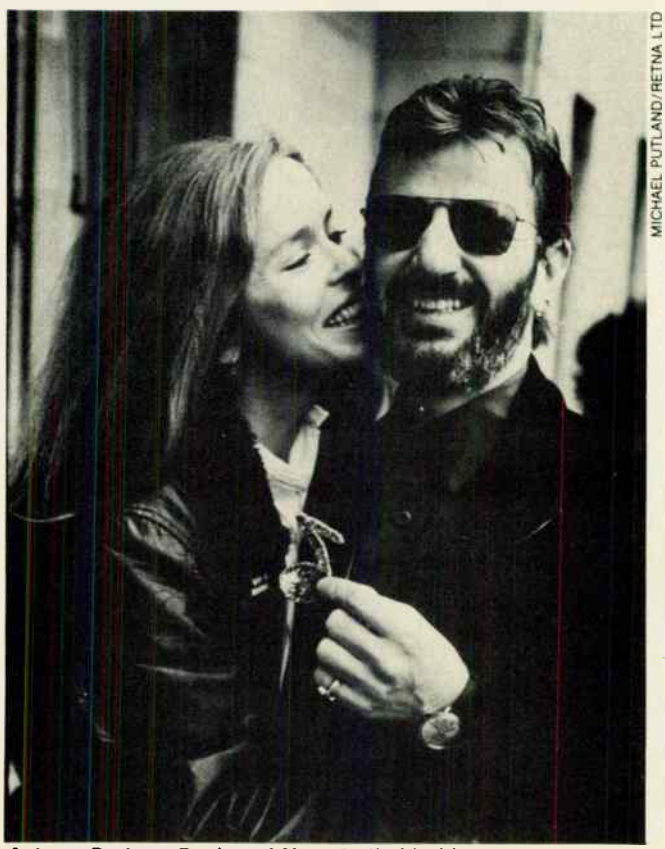
MUSICIAN: How did you actually go about working through a song around the time, say, of *The White Album*? Did you do your parts together or separately, was there a lot of overdubbing?

RINGO: No, we'd always lay down the bass, drums and guitars together. Sometimes they'd play each other's instruments at first, with Paul maybe playing piano on the track and John playing bass. But then Paul might come back later and overdub his own bass lines, because he'd find somewhere else to take it.

MUSICIAN: How did you go about working out your own parts? Did you work them out on the spot? Did you ever take a tape home to experiment with?

RINGO: No, we did it all in the studio. I never took anything home...(laughs) we never had homework in the Beatles. It went like this: If Paul had written it, he'd sit with his guitar and play the basics for us. Then we'd play along with him, after which we'd all discuss it and make suggestions about how we might play it. I'd say, "I'll do a 4/4 there — or we might do several versions with me playing a straight four on one, and maybe a shuffle or waltz on another. Sometimes we'd sit on a track for a few weeks. I know a lot of groups don't have that much time, but I feel we earned it.

MUSICIAN: What would you do when you hit a snag?
RINGO: We'd struggle with it, sometimes well into the night, and then we'd break for a cuppa' tea or something, or walk around the room or go up on the roof. Then we'd come back in and it would all just magically mesh together — just like that. You'd been struggling for six hours and then suddenly everyone came together and it fell into place.
MUSICIAN: Wasn't *Let It Be* supposed to involve "getting back to the roots" — recording live in the studio?
RINGO: Well, everything changes. I mean, *Sgt. Pepper* was supposed to have been this complete musical montage with all the songs blending into each other. That idea went out the window two tracks in, after "Sgt. Pepper" and "Little Help From My Friends." We *did* get back to being a band again on *Let It Be*. We were playing live on top of this building and that's what was being recorded. But it was getting too late then...
MUSICIAN: Why?
RINGO: We all wanted to do a lot of other things. We were all grown up, had families, and everybody was working on their solo albums. The full force wasn't coming into the group anymore.
MUSICIAN: Was the breakup inevitable?
RINGO: It was time. You can only mine a gold mine until the seam runs out. Oh, you'll search for a little bit more then, and that's what we were determined to do, because after eight years it's hard to stop. Even though inside we felt it had ended, it still took a year for us to say "stop."
MUSICIAN: Anything you wish you could go back and change?
RINGO: Looking back on it ten years after we split — even though it wasn't all good — there's nothing major I'd really change...even the bad days were good.
MUSICIAN: I was just thinking that *Abbey Road* was a pretty extraordinary swan song for a group on its last legs.
RINGO: That's because no matter what was going down we all still loved to play, and once we were sitting there as four musicians it all came together again — the magic was there.
MUSICIAN: On *Abbey Road* you finally stepped out and did a drum solo. Why hadn't you done one before?
RINGO: BECAUSE I *HATE* DRUM SOLOS!!! I really do. I think they're boring, and I haven't heard one yet that's got me. But people always applaud them because it's the drummer having his day. And, of course, a lot of drummers like to do them because it's their one big spot. So I never liked drum solos, but when we were doing that track at the end they ganged up on me and said, "C'mon, give us a solo!" And I said, "NAAAAH, I'm not gonna do it, I never do 'em." Finally I gave in. I think it lasts only 13½ bars because I just went off and did my "funny little fills" and ended it. We were all laughing with each other, so I guess they caught me in a good mood.
MUSICIAN: Do you ever get the urge to put a band together and go out on the road?
RINGO: No. The only time I play live is for special shows like Rolling Thunder, Bangladesh, the Last Waltz — things like that where it's a group that'll never be together again. The thing about putting a band together I go through every year, but I'm not really a front man — I don't want to try and sing and play drums at the same time and organize the whole thing.
MUSICIAN: A quick one for the tech people: what kind of traps are you using?
RINGO: You mean like for catching mice?
MUSICIAN: Exactly. RINGO TORTURES SMALL ANIMALS — DETAILS AT ELEVEN!!!
RINGO: No no, I'll tell. I use Ludwig drums. Always have. I think they're the finest. My kit includes a snare, bass drum, two tom-toms, and two cymbals, a ride and a crash. All Ludwigs. And a Speed King pedal. As for sticks, I can use anything. I used to use the Ringo Stick, but they went out of production.
MUSICIAN: Gee, just like Billy Beer...
RINGO: I did try the fiberglass stick but they're too heavy; they don't play right for me.
MUSICIAN: Some people may think it's strange that we've talked this long and I haven't asked you about John, directly. I can imagine all the questions you've had to answer — you must have said everything that you thought was appropriate...but let me put it simply: how would you like John to be remembered?
RINGO: The way he *will* be remembered — for his music. He was an honest human being who always laid his soul on the line for the public...he was a very open man. He stood up more times than anyone I can think of and said, "This is what I think." And what he thought was mainly the truth...he was my friend, and I miss him.
MUSICIAN: When you get together to work with the others — and John too, when he was alive — is it very different from the old days?
RINGO: We still have a natural rapport because of the last 20 years of playing. It was like mental telepathy when we'd play — you *knew* when someone else was going to do something. We'd all do things together without anyone saying anything. Things would happen like...magic. It was magical all the time.
MUSICIAN: Did that fall apart at the end, or was it still there?
RINGO: When we played, it was there.
MUSICIAN: Even on the roof?
RINGO: Even on the roof. We all had a great time.
MUSICIAN: That whole scene seemed so beautiful and sad at the same time. It was so joyous and liberating to see you all playing live again, but so ironic and sad in a way that you had to go up on a roof to do it.
RINGO: But look at it this way — we were playing for the whole of London! Then the bank next door complained so the police came up and told us we were "disturbing the peace" and we had to stop.
MUSICIAN: I remember you telling them off while you were playing.
RINGO: But I wasn't telling them off!
MUSICIAN: Then what were you saying?
RINGO: I was begging them to drag us off! "HEY, COME AND GET US, TAKE ME AWAY!" We couldn't figure out how to end the film, and I thought it was a wonderful solution to that problem — it would have made a fabulous ending for the movie, them just dragging us away... (smiles and shakes head slowly)...yeah, that would've been a wonderful way to end it.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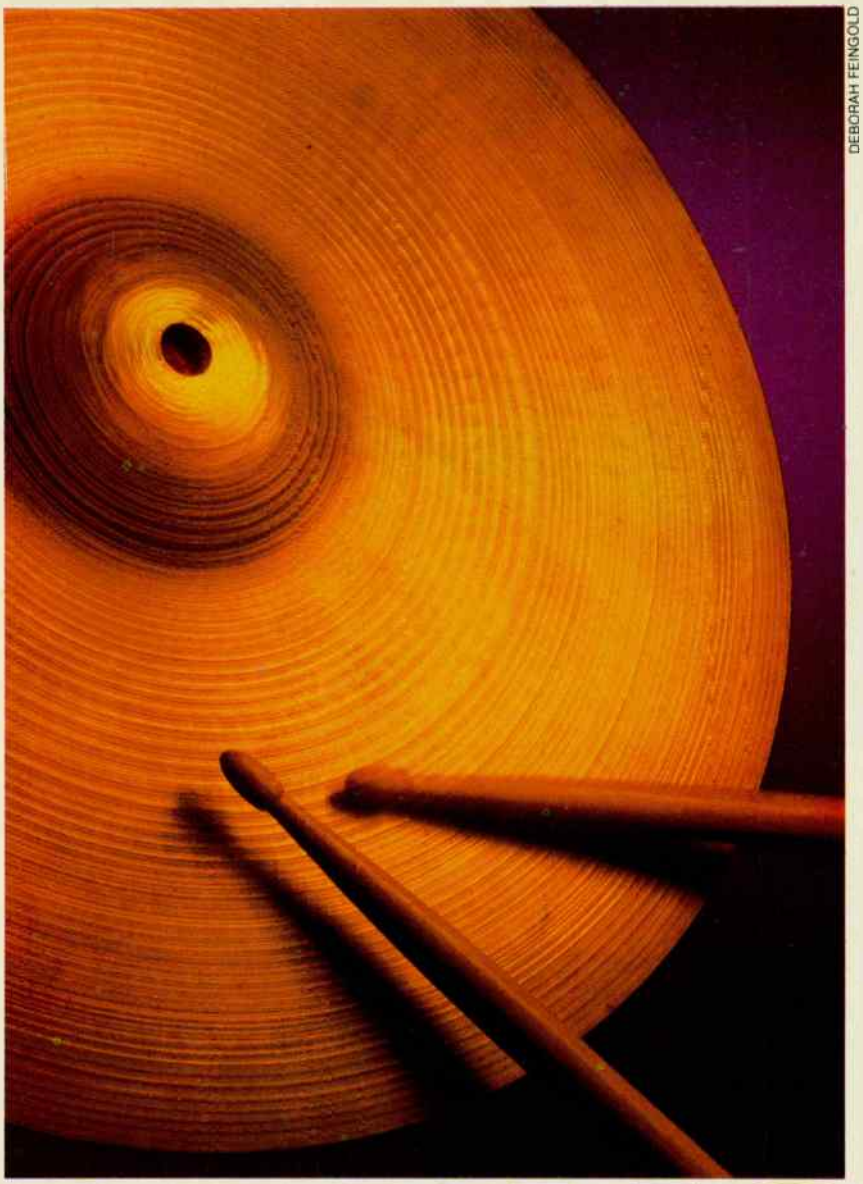


DEBORAH FEINGOLD

DRUMS

By Chip Stern

Drummers seem to be plugged into an elemental life force, without which there wouldn't even be consciousness, let alone music. There's just something about the drums that makes us feel more alive. Listen to the way those massive tympani sections in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony lift the entire orchestra; check out how a few select floor tom-tom accents by Hal Blaine charge the middle verses of Simon & Garfunkel's "America" with drama and mystery; or bask in the air-cooled power of Jo Jones and the Count Basie Orchestra of the 30s, where the drummer's shimmering hi-hat beat and wily snare drum accents galvanize the entire band until it sounds like a single voice. There's no doubt about it, rhythm is magic, and drummers translate that power—giving it form and direction.

In a very tangible sense, the drummer is to American music what the conductor is to European concert music. A good

drummer can make everyone in the band sound better by commenting on their most inspired fantasies with pauses, explosions, questions, answers, non sequiturs, subtle punctuations, abrupt contrasts, witty parodies—even mocking derision. A good drummer will inspire soloists to reach for new ideas, and feed them suggestions when they can't think of anything fresh. By carrying the pulse, cueing transitions, pacing the soloists and maintaining the tempo, drummers clean up the bands' mistakes so that everything sounds correct and the music flows. But doesn't anyone notice?

No musician is more taken for granted than the drummer, yet at the heart of every significant trend in American music for over 50 years you'll find one. In jazz, Louis Armstrong had his Baby Dodds, Duke Ellington a Sonny Greer, Lester Young a Jo Jones, Charlie Parker a Max Roach, Thelonious Monk an Art Blakey; Miles always seemed to have a great drummer when his music was in flux, like Philly Joe Jones, Tony Williamson and Jack DeJohnette, just as Ornette had Ed Blackwell, Billy Higgins and Ronald Shannon Jackson. And can you imagine John Coltrane without Elvin Jones thrashing and hissing away underneath? In "pop" music the drummers are even more vital, and as Chris Frantz points out, more obscure, because often they were uncredited on the records, but without unsung heroes like Connie Kay, Panama Francis, Cozy Cole, Osie Johnson, Earl Palmer, Hal Blaine, Jim Gordon, Clyde Stubblefield, Benny Benjamin, Al Jackson and Bernard Purdie, there'd be no rock, soul, funk or disco. I mean, can you imagine the Rolling Stones without Charlie Watts?

While the guitarist is out front showboating for the girls, the drummer has to dig in and crack those sticks to be heard. And while the guitarist is in the motel hosing down a groupie, the drummer is still packing up his gear and wondering why anyone would want to play traps.

This is what these brief glimpses at some of today's leading drummers seek to clarify. Sure, it's a hard instrument. You have to coordinate all four limbs simultaneously to play drums. The physical endurance and stamina you need is imposing. You've got to be all things to all people, because as many of these drummers point out, someone always has an idea how you should sound or play: be forceful but restrained, bold but tactful, primal yet tasty. And as Max Roach once pointed out, when you start to solo everyone leaves the stage.

Traditionally jazz drummers have played from the top down and rock/funk drummers from the bottom up. Jazzmen tend to percolate in a flowing, linear manner, rockers wrestle with the top of the beat like voodoo sumos, and funkers shadow-box with vertical syncopations of space. Some drummers play time, others play pulse. But as the conductors of the music they *all* share a common burden and a bond of joy — the inexorable necessity of time and the thrill of seeing your rhythms come alive in the faces of your fellow musicians and the pulsating bodies of the dancers. Each of these drummers represents a different stylistic approach in American music, and each brings a certain celebration and gravity to his chosen field.

Phil Collins — *Genesis' megapop art rocker*

Approach — It's a musical approach, really. I do it as second nature, and that's always a hard thing to pin down, as to how you do it or why you do it a certain way. I think I sing like a drummer, and drum like a singer, you know what I mean? It's basically sympathy, which is why I like Steve Gadd, who'll do nothing or will do a lot, depending on what is required of him.

Kit — I'm basically a purist — I like my drums to look like drums. Basically, I've got lots of drum kits. Four drum kits and fifty-odd cymbals. Lots of snare drums. I've got snare drums for all occasions: weddings, bar mitzvahs...I choose to do different sorts of projects, and therefore it requires different kits. On the two albums I've done with John Martyn, I've used two different kinds of drum kits, a double-headed drum kit on *Grace and Danger* and on the one I produced (as yet unreleased), I used a single-headed kit. You just suss out the music you're going to be playing that day, and choose a kit to suit it.

Favorite Bassists — Alphonso Johnson, Abraham Laboriel.

Favorite Drummers — Steve Gadd, Tony Williams.

Best Record — *Face Value*. I say that purely because I can't blame it on anyone else; I can't really think of another album I played better on.

ANNE FISHBEIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Phil Collins

Best Live Performance — I remember the last Madison Square Garden concert in 1980 as being very, very good. Usually, the gigs where you're supposed to be good, the New Yorks, the Los Angeleses, the Londons, are never quite as good as they should be, because people build 'em up. The last Madison Square Garden gig we did actually lived up to its expectations.

Musicians I'd Most Like To Work With — I'd like to gig with Weather Report; I'd gig with Earth, Wind & Fire; I'd love to work with Miles Davis, if he liked me. I wouldn't if he didn't, I'd wish I never thought of the idea if he didn't like me. Maybe Sting. I'm a big fan of the Police and Sting's got a lot of energy.

Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — There are no problems in being a drummer at all. I play piano like a drummer, I sing like a drummer, I approach music like a drummer. I don't see any problems in being a drummer. I wish more people were drummers. I wish they would appreciate how loud, how certain drums should sound, how important they are, and write from a drummer's point of view sometimes. I'm just talking about things that have come up in the recent past, how sometimes the drummer gets lost in the mix, because someone doesn't understand the importance of drums. I guess every musician could say the same for his own instrument, but I think with drums, there's always been this thing of four musicians — or three musicians — and a drummer.

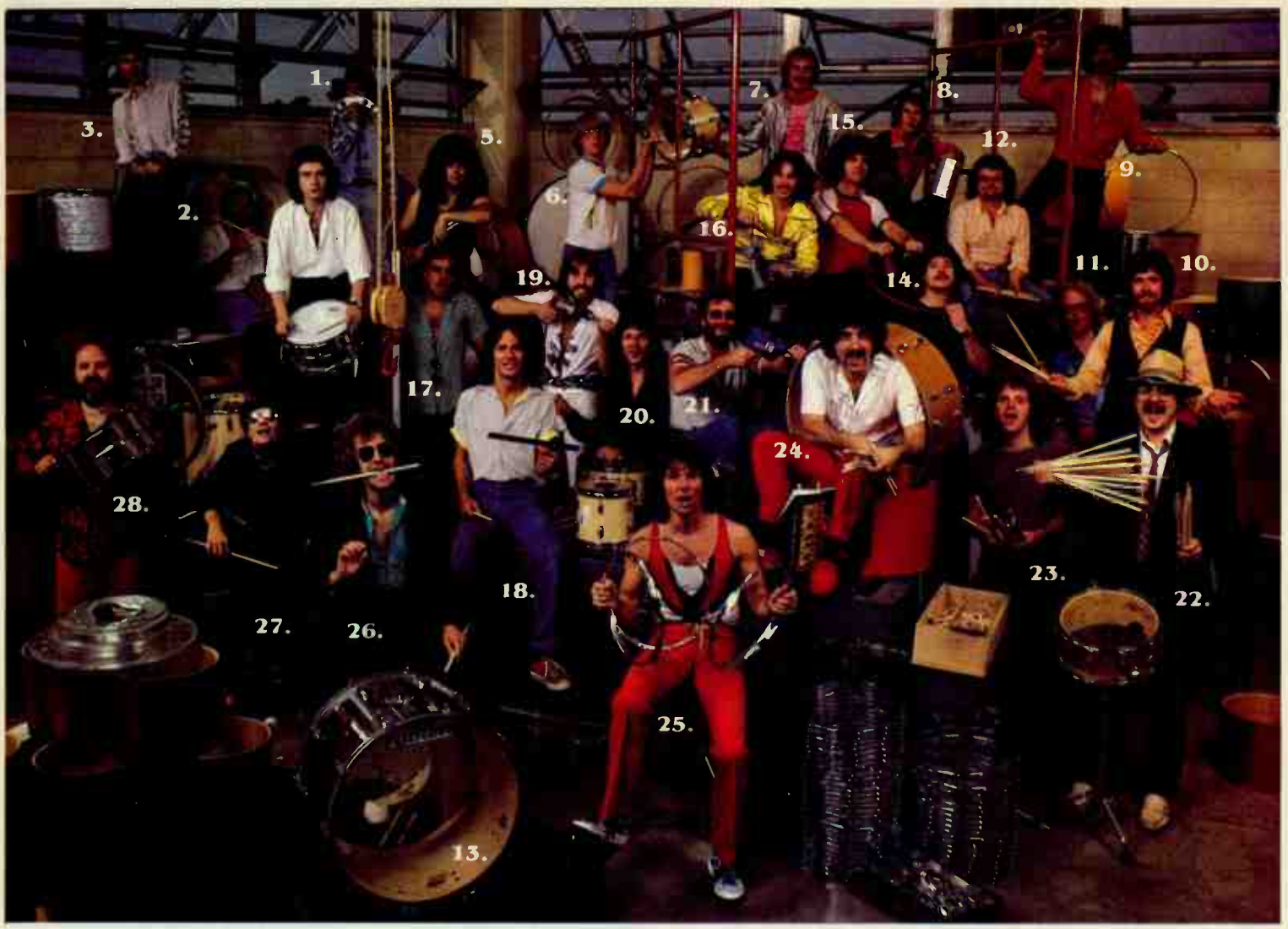
Stewart Copeland

EBET ROBERTS

Stewart Copeland — *The cop on the beat*

Approach — Ethnic downbeat. Ethnic in that although I went through playing in high school bands where we played a lot of backbeat and a lot of straight rock 'n' roll drumming, it didn't occur to me that there was an alternative until many years later: rhythms that I remember from much earlier in my life which had come from the Middle East. I suppose most drummers when they think of the rhythm inside their head that holds together what they're doing with their hands they're probably thinking backbeat. Which is what they end up playing. But if you're thinking something else, deep down inside, even though you go through a period of playing backbeat-type music, when you eventually find a band in which you can get away from that, you end up playing something else. Like when Sly Dunbar plays straight rock 'n' roll rhythms, it sounds totally different than when your average rock drummer plays it. His heartbeat is something different, so he gives it a different twist.

Kit — Lots of percussive effects. I use the hi-hat and the ride cymbal most of the time for the 16th notes at the top, but I put lots of holes in them. Most bands and drummers need the 16th notes to be happening



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to hold them together, but luckily in the Police Andy and Sting have a strong enough sense of rhythm that they can fill in the gaps themselves. So I have more things to do for my left hand than my right hand. So I have Tama Octobans over the hi-hats, along with cowbells, wood blocks and extra splash and ping cymbals. I have all these things plugged into my digital delay system, so there's a whole realm of noises I can make. For hi-hats I don't care for Paiste Sound Edge type hi-hats, because you can't get the cymbals tight enough, no matter how hard you step on it because of the rippled edge. The contact is only on a few points on the cymbal and it rattles; but on straight edge type hi-hats you clamp it down hard and there's a seal that goes all the way around and you can get a tight click with it; also there's another sound you can get when after you've pressed it down you keep pressing harder and it kind of breathes, like it's throwing up. I have a Tama drum set, all smaller than average sizes; most rock drummers go for bigger sizes imagining they'll get a bigger sound — well, the reverse is actually true. I tune them all as tight as they'll go, and I've only been able to do this on a Tama kit. I don't like spots on the drums, anything that deadens the drum, slows down the response, so I'll just use some gaffers' tape away from the central playing place.

Favorite Bassists — Matthew Ashman (with Bow Wow Wow).

Best Record — I suppose my playing on *Ghosts In The Machine* on the song "One World Not Three." But really, there's some things on our upcoming live album that are very good. I play much better live than I do in the studio.

Favorite Records — I'm an ethnic music buff, so I listen to a lot of that: *6 & 12 String Guitars*, Leo Kottke; *Nightclubbing*, Grace Jones (with Sly and Robbie).

Favorite Concert — Jimi Hendrix at the Saville Theatre in London in 1967. That was the first concert I ever saw. I came over from Beirut, Lebanon, and the first time I came West was when I was 14 or 15, and the first real professional band that I actually saw in the flesh was Jimi Hendrix — and I was one fried little peanut.

Musicians I'd Most Like To Work With — Joni Mitchell. Just between you and me, some of my favorite musicians on records get me excited and, "Oh boy, would I like to work with that guy," and then I meet them and they turn out to be complete coked-out assholes who I'd never dream of working with in a million years.

Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — In the early stage of your career the problem with being a drummer is lugging your gear into a gig. The guitarist sets up his Fender Twin and he's off to the bar, while the drummer has to spend two hours setting up his kit; and at the end of the gig you have to break it down yourself, because if you have anyone help you you end up with your drums dismantled. The other problem is later on in your career when you start getting the royalties, you look and go, "How come the drummer isn't getting any publishing royalties?" So musicians who learn drums only are stunting their musical expression by not learning how chords go or how to write music on tonal instruments — you should definitely learn piano or guitar or some chordal instrument.

Steve Smith

Steve Smith — *Journey's heavy metal goldminer*

Approach — I would say I'm very supportive of the rest of the band, very conscious of playing the *feel* really accurately, as well as paying a lot of attention to the meter and the time. I'm listening a lot to the other players in the band, I generally try to be a team player.

Kit — It's a Sonar — the German drums, and Zildjian cymbals, Remo clear Ambassador heads and on the snare drums, a white Ambassador — but all the other drums are clear Ambassadors, DW 5000 chain pedals and Vic Furth sticks. And I use Latin Percussion LP claws as mic holders.

Favorite Bassists — Randy Jackson, Ross Valory, Jeff Berlin, Tim Landers and Neil Steubenhouse.

Favorite Drummers — Steve Gadd, Terry Bozzio, Vince Colata, Tony Williams and Jack DeJohnette.

Best Record — I'd have to say the new *Escape* record is one and there's a new album I did by Tom Costa, the keyboard player, called *T.C.* It's really different from Journey, more like a jazz record. I have to say these two, 'cause the styles are so different. If you heard one, it wouldn't represent what I do on the other.

Favorite Records — Tony Williams' *Emergency*; Mahavishnu Orchestra, *Visions of the Emerald Beyond*.

Best Live Performance — I would have to say this last entire tour that we've done has been really consistent. Then there was a show that I did with Jean Luc-Ponty in Gainesville, Florida.

Favorite Concerts — I just saw King Crimson at the Roxy in L.A. and they were fantastic! I'd have to say that was one of the best shows I've ever seen; also a U.K. concert with Bozzio at the Oakland Coliseum two years ago — opening for Jethro Tull. I've seen McCoy Tyner and the Brecker Brothers a number of times and they've all been great.

Musicians I'd Most Like To Work With — John McLaughlin, McCoy Tyner.

Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — Trying to relax before a show. I don't have that many problems about it — except for finding the space and time to practice on the road.

Denardo Coleman

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Denardo Coleman — *Melodic freedom funkist*

Approach — I enjoy playing drums as a lead instrument. Unlike playing a role, harmolodic percussion allows you to equalize the time with the rhythm simultaneously. It's the search for the hidden beat that keeps it exciting with anticipation. It's compositional improvisation.

Kit — You can make any set play. You just adjust your level of sensitivity to get what's there. Right now I'm not satisfied with what I have, and I'm going to revamp to, I think, multiple roto-toms instead of mounted toms to get more into tonal playing, which makes your ideas more interesting, really. The biggest problem I've found has been hardware; I've been satisfied with Pearl hardware, and I found it to be something that won't fall apart or move; Drum Brakes are also good for keeping the drums in place. I'm also using some Pearl Syncussion. I'm looking to hook up a sequencer or drum machine where I can program the rhythms, but preferably right on the spot when I'm playing. I mean, not just using it for the sake of using it, but incorporating all that into what you're already doing — that's hip. Our engineer, Ron St. Germain, was telling me about the Linn Electronic Drum Computer, and I'm looking to get a Linn to take on the road.

Favorite Bassists — Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Albert McDowell, Charlie Haden, Aston "Family-Man" Barrett and Bootsy.

Favorite Drummers — Billy Higgins, Ed Blackwell, Charles Moffet, Ron Shannon Jackson and Grant Calvin Weston.

Favorite Records — Billie Holiday singing "God Bless The Child;" *Natty Dread*, Bob Marley & the Wailers; Ornette Coleman's Prime Time album (title to be determined), to be released by Island Records

Best Live Performance — Ornette Coleman and Prime Time at Yankee Stadium

Favorite Concert — Bob Marley at Madison Square Garden, 1980; Earth, Wind & Fire, also at the Garden in 1980; Funkadelic at the Palladium, Manhattan, 1978; and Professor Longhair in Holland, 1978 — the Professor was really smoking.

Musicians I'd Most Like To Work With — Not so much with individuals as groups: the Joujouka musicians in Morocco; Earth, Wind & Fire; Third World, and Old and New Dreams.

Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — Being limited by what's there and what I think is only there. It's like not knowing that you don't have to know, which really gets you hung up.

ANDY FREEBERG

Bernard "Pretty" Purdie

Bernard "Pretty" Purdie — *Father Time of funk*

Approach — I'm a time machine, a rhythmatician and melodic drummer; not a solo drummer but a time-keeper. I always try and put across rhythms and melodic lines. I associate my whole approach with melody-style playing. That's how I was taught, and it works, which makes it easy for me to go anywhere in the world and play with anybody. My solos are always melodic. That's what I'm about, and that's why I get along with everybody, because I'm never trying to out-drum or out-play the band. I mean, I've been a leader all my life, but I know how to be a member, a sideman — one of the fellas.

Kit — I use Sonor equipment because I think they're the best. I might use anybody's equipment around the country when I'm recording, because then it doesn't matter. In recording you always have to tune to the specific room and get the sound that the producer wants. Live I've yet to find anything that beats the Sonor drums for durability, sound and beauty; you can get any tuning you want, bright or dark, and it'll hold. I prefer the 18" bass drum, 12" and 13" mounted toms, 14" floor toms and 14" snare; but you can't always get that, so I'll use the 22" bass drum, 13" and 14" mounted, and 16" floor tom. Now it's twice as hard to satisfy yourself on the 18", because the sound isn't as big, roomy and deep; but you can *kick it* a lot harder. In terms of tuning, for me — and I recommend this to all drummers in the world — you should definitely keep your heads on the drums. They were made for two heads, and you can get any sound you want by adjusting the lugs. Don't lose your sound through cutting holes or removing the bottom heads — mistake. It only takes a little more effort to get the sound right. Tape is fine, but be careful not to lose your resonance, bounce and rebound — the overtones and ring. You don't have to use a lot of muffle — mistake. However, I don't fight with engineers about any of that. I give them the benefit of the doubt, because they should know their room. For cymbals I've been very pleased with Avedis Zildjian — they've got the best all-around sound. They give me what I want when I want it — there's always a *reserve* with their cymbals so I can get more by digging in. Because I play every style I want a cymbal that'll go with me, breathe the way I breathe; to play light or heavy.

Favorite Bassists — Chuck Rainey, Wilbur Bascomb, Stanley Clarke, Marcus Miller, Jamaaladeen Tacuma...it's hard, because there are so many unknowns who are so good. If a bass player can hold his own, he's got me. Just occasionally kick me, so I can get off.

Favorite Drummers — There are just hundreds...I'm inspired by them all for different reasons. Grady Tate, Herbie Lovell, Max Roach, Buddy Rich, Louis Bellson, Ed Shaugnessy, Dave Garibaldi, Steve Gadd, Freddie Waits, Charlie Persip. I could go on and on...Philly Joe Jones, Papa Jo Jones, Cozy Cole. And more than all the rest, Mr. Leonard Haywood, of Elkton, Maryland. He was my teacher. And Sticks Evans taught me to be a faster reader.

Best Live Performances — They've been with Aretha Franklin. I'm still fascinated by the way that woman's singing affects me, still — I just started back with her. When she opens her mouth to sing, I'm right in there — as far as I'm concerned she's singing to me. After that, with Jeff Beck...I enjoyed that tour immensely because it changed my life, and my ideas and respect for a lot of musicians — it really opened up my nose for me. [*Bernard!*]

Favorite Concert — I'll go see Earth, Wind & Fire whenever I can. Maurice White is something else.

Musicians I'd Most Like to Work With — I'd like to be the drummer for a single tour with the Rolling Stones. Only one drummer, so I can do my thing. I'm very impressed by them. And I'd like to get a chance to work more with Stanley Turrentine.

Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — The drummer's role in life is to satisfy everybody else before he can satisfy himself.

Panama Francis — *Sultan of Swing*

Approach — The average drummer cannot play time with his bass drum — I'm not just talking about accents, but time. The attitude of most drummers is to take the easy way out and just play accents; today all you got to do is learn the rudiments. When I was coming up if you couldn't play a show or play time with the bass drum, you weren't a drummer — it wasn't about no solos. Dancers and drummers are alike, they've only got a few steps and that's it, it gets monotonous. There's nothing worse than listening to a drummer soloing all night — *nothing*. Sid Catlett and them could solo, but they took pride in how they'd swing the band and them dancers. And how you gonna do that if you're not playing time on the bass drum? That's why you can listen to my music or you can dance to it.

Kit — When we were playing with the big bands, we didn't use the regular bass drum heads — we used tympani heads, because we used to tune our drums to notes on the piano, usually trying to tune the bass drum to G, because it would blend better with the note on the bass. I tune all of my drums to a pitch. I mean, I use a strip of felt on the bass drum so that it won't boom, with a round sound that doesn't overpower, but reinforces the bass sound. I've got calf heads on my bass drum that I've never taken off; that's the *true* bass drum sound, with calf — plastic heads give you a plastic sound. Trouble is, I can't hardly find calf no more, so I've got to make do with plastic heads — tuning with calf is a lost art. And I keep my kit small. If you can play you don't be needing all them cymbals and drums — that's a gimmick. You don't see Buddy Rich using all that stuff. You give me or Buddy nothing but a snare drum and we're gone — that's all we need.

Favorite Bassists — George Duvivier and Milt Hinton.

Favorite Drummers — My all-time favorite, my idol, was Chick Webb. Chick and Buddy Rich and all of the drummers who came up in the swing era were *take-charge drummers* — that's the drummer's job, to be the quarterback.

Best Records — For jazz, some of the things I did with Roy Eldridge when I was young on "High Society" and "Muskrat Ramble." I started a lot of the rock things, and cats that are trying to play it today used to put me down and call me "that rock 'n' roll drummer." I used to be ashamed to walk down the streets, but I've lived long enough that I can be proud of all the things I did. On Screamin' Jay Hawkins' "I Put A Spell On You" I was the first to play the 12/8 rock feel; on Ray Charles' "Drown In My Own Tears" I introduced the gospel rhythms on the drums; on Dinah Washington's "What A Difference A Day Makes" I played R&B triplets with a press role on brushes; and on Brook Benton's "Fools Rush In" I adapted that country-western rhythm that guitar players used to play, onto the drums. I bet I got more hit records than Bernard Purdie! And I'm very proud of *Panama Francis & The Savoy Sultans Vols. 1 & 2* (Inner City).

continued on next page

Panama Francis

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Francis *continued*

Favorite Records — The records of Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey when Sy Oliver was the arranger. And those of Chick Webb and Jimmy Lunceford.

Best Live Performance — With the Savoy Sultans in Cork, Ireland in November '81. Young men came up and shook my hand, young girls kissed me, and the tears were rolling down my face. That was my biggest thrill other than when the dancers carried me off the bandstand after my drum solo in a battle of the bands between Lucky Millender and Gene Krupa at the Savoy in the early 40s.

Favorite Concert — Duke Ellington at the Savoy Ballroom when Jimmy Blanton first joined the band around 1940. Don't ever get in a battle with those guys — they kicked everybody's ass, except the original Savoy Sultans, who could hold their own with anybody; and Ted Heath's band from England at Carnegie Hall.

Musicians I'd Most Like To Work With — They all dead. I never got to work with Johnny Hodges, and I only played with Ben Webster in jam sessions.

Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — Being able to play good time. It's not as easy as it looks. The coordination is something else. It takes years of hard work so that the tempo won't drop off or pick up — it just stay there and swings. I'd been playing drums since I was 11 and I didn't realize how little I knew about it until I was 40. It takes years.

Bill Bruford — *King Crimson's rhythm machine*

Approach — My approach depends on the group I'm in. I come in as a sort of rhythmic consultant and ask what is needed and how can I make this music go better? I'm looking for ways to highlight, shade and underline; to play with grace, balance and poise so as to create an overall flow of rhythm and sound, rather than a series of events announced by crash cymbals and fills — I think the fill is an extraordinarily antiquated device. With King Crimson the gig is to update the vernacular of modern pop drumming. The problem is that the complex must be counterbalanced by the simple — stay tuned to this station for further developments. By the way, when in doubt, roll.

Kit — A good key to my approach is the kit I use — it speaks for itself. It's almost easier to describe what's missing. I've eliminated the middle range of tom-toms, the floor toms, the majority of crash cymbals and the hi-hats — I'm trying to get away from the standard

EBET ROBERTS

Bill Bruford

punctuation of crash and bass drum, which can now be played on a Tama Gongdrum (a 24" single-headed bass drum with an extended head over where the floor toms used to be). I've got five Dragon Drums to ride on, which are single-headed acrylic versions of the Chinese boo-bams (bamboo drums of similar diameter but varying lengths); a 14" Remo Rototom and six Dave Simmons electric drums, which give me a vast range of metallic and drum sounds, pitched and unpitched — one is a foot pedal drum which is tuned more like a space snare than a bass drum. A Tama Bell brass snare and a 22" Tama bass drum rounds out the kit. My cymbals consist of a 20" Paiste 2002 Heavy Ride, a 20" 2002 Chinese and several ancient Zildjians and Paistes where I cut off all the outer metal to give me a greater ratio of cup to cymbal for different bell sounds. And, oh yes, a xylo-slit box for African log drum sounds.

Favorite Drummers — Tony Williams, Max Roach, Charlie Parsip and Hans Bennik.

Favorite Bassists — All bassists were created equal, except Eddie Gomez, who's more equal than others.

Musicians I'd Most Like To Work With — I'm working with them.

Favorite Records — *Aretha's Gold*, Aretha Franklin; *Bitches Brew*, Miles Davis.

Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — The rest of the group. No, seriously, they're self-generated — I'm my own worst enemy.

EBET ROBERTS

Chris Frantz

Mike Clark — *Versatile fusion cooker*

Approach — I believe that a drummer is supposed to be free and spontaneous within the context of the music. I try and assert myself so that I'm able to improvise by first locking up the time so that the other players feel comfortable — and get that music swinging. Then, I can open up and put all my energy into the group dialog. Too often a drummer is relegated to just keeping time, and he spends his whole life trying to figure out how to do that. This puts him in a subservient frame of mind so that no one takes him seriously; then he loses sight of the feeling that brought him to the drums in the first place. A drummer is supposed to *take action.*

Kit — I have two sets of drums. One is a large set of Gretsch with a 22" bass drum; 8" and 9" mounted toms, and 14", 16" and 18" floor toms. Gretsch gives me a wide-open, unmuffled, ringing sound with a sharp attack for electric music or recording, as opposed to that stereotyped dull thud that everyone seems to like. I use Remo CS Black Dot heads to center the sound, and my snare is an old Ludwig chrome. For acoustic jazz I've got a set of Yamaha 9000DA's with an 18" bass drum. My favorite ride cymbal is a 22" K. Zildjian, a real classic. I love that dark, airy, mystical sound, as opposed to the polyester ping of most studio cymbals. I've also got a nice 20" A. Zildjian flat top, and a pair of A. Zildjian crashes, an 18" (short decay) and a 19" (long). My hi-hats are a heavy 14" New Beat on the bottom and a K. on top.

Favorite Bassists — Jeff Berlin, Percy Jones, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Ron Carter, George Mraz, Buster Williams, Paul Jackson.

Favorite Drummers — Elvin Jones, Philly Joe Jones, Art Blakey, Tony Williams, Al Mouzon, DeJohnette, Dave Garibaldi, Bernard Purdie.

Musicians I'd Most Like To Work With — McCoy Tyner, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Ron Carter.

Favorite Concerts — Tony Williams Lifetime (with McLaughlin & Larry Young) at the Both And, San Francisco, 1969; McCoy Tyner and Al Mouzon at Mandrakes, Berkeley, 1973.

Best Records — "Actual Proof" from Herbie Hancock's *Thrust*, and "D.M.Z." from Brand X's *Do They Hurt*. These were the only times I really got creative freedom on recordings.

Favorite Records — *Emergency*, Tony Williams Lifetime; anything by Miles from 1954-1969; 60s Coltrane, especially *A Love Supreme.*

Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — Pigeonholing. A real drummer has to be able to cover every kind of music, and it inhibits your creativity when someone puts you in a bag — then you only get called for certain jobs. Pigeonholing, and lugging all that stuff around.

Sly Dunbar — *The main pulse of Jamaica*

Approach — Drumming is like a whirl like itself. It is the whole foundation of music. The drumming. The rhythm.

Kit — I set up my drums the same way every time. I tune and set them up same in studio and the same in concert.

Favorite Bassist — Robbie Shakespeare

Favorite Drummer — Steve Gadd

Best Record — "Pull Up To The Bumper" from *Nightclubbing*, Grace Jones.

Favorite Records — *The Dude*, Quincy Jones; *Off The Wall*, Michael Jackson; *I Am*, Earth, Wind & Fire; *Give Me The Night*, George Benson.

Best Live Performance — With Black Uhuru at Rock Palace in Germany, November 1981.

Favorite Concert — Peter Tosh/Rolling Stones tour in 1978.

Musicians I'd Most Like To Work With — Quincy Jones, Maurice White, Stevie Wonder, Rolling Stones.

Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — The drummer works all the time. It is very hard work because you have to play all the time. If the drummer is not steady, the music is not steady. If the drummer is steady, the music is steady. So the drummer he can never rest.

Chris Frantz — *The heartbeat of the Heads*

Approach — I go for a sort of heartbeat style of playing the drums, as opposed to these people who play "serious" polyrhythmic things, and really have their rudiments and four-way coordination down pat. My approach has always been very basic and not very difficult. I think about the drums in terms of very simple and easy to perform parts. I don't think about something very deep, just a backbone, a backbeat, a strong, steady pulse.

Kit — Likewise, I don't use a whole lot of drums. On the *Tom-Tom Club* record I bought a little Pearl drum set to bring down to the Bahamas, with an 18" bass drum, snare, hi-hat, one cymbal, one rack tom and one floor tom, and that's what we did the album with. I don't take my equipment real, real seriously. I like it to be sturdy and reliable, but I don't require a whole lot of paraphernalia; stylistically, it's not necessary. I use Canasonic snare heads and Evans Hydraulic heads on the toms, but some engineers don't like that. If I'm in a studio, *where I trust the engineer*, I generally go with whatever he thinks he can get a good sound on; I even let them tune the drums because they may hear a frequency they can translate to the tape, although I suppose I would insist on Avedis Zildjian cymbals. Live, though, I've been using a larger kit of Tama, although I'll still use timbales instead of floor toms. I like the ringing, crisp sound of the rim shots, and they also sound a whole lot better mic'd through a P.A. than single-headed floor toms, which are the worst.

Favorite Bassists — Well, I'm married to my very favorite bassist, Tina (Weymouth)...other favorites I guess would be people like Robbie Shakespeare, Bootsy, Paul McCartney.

Favorite Drummers — I've had different favorites at different points in my career. One of my early big favorites was Ringo, around the advent of the Beatles when I got my first drum set, so naturally he had an enormous impact; as a matter of fact, all of the British invasion groups; Paul Revere & the Raiders; the Young Rascals; and also the Motown and Stax-Volt drummers...the ones from my "formative" years are still, I guess, my favorites — and their names weren't even written on the albums.

Best Record — That's hard. I don't know. I started to simplify my playing to a point where I felt I was just playing the real essence of a beat on *Remain In Light*, and we carried that through on to the *Tom Tom Club*; so I guess I'm most pleased with my approach on those albums. I still like the other Talking Heads records, but on the first record I was practically a beginner. I feel like I got better as I went on.

Musicians I'd Most Like To Work With — It's not people I already know or know about; I'm always hoping to discover some exciting new person. Our upstairs neighbor Don Cherry was telling us about some kids in Washington, D.C.; they make their own instruments, sort of jungle style — they're like a cross between a gang and a band. I'd like to work with them.

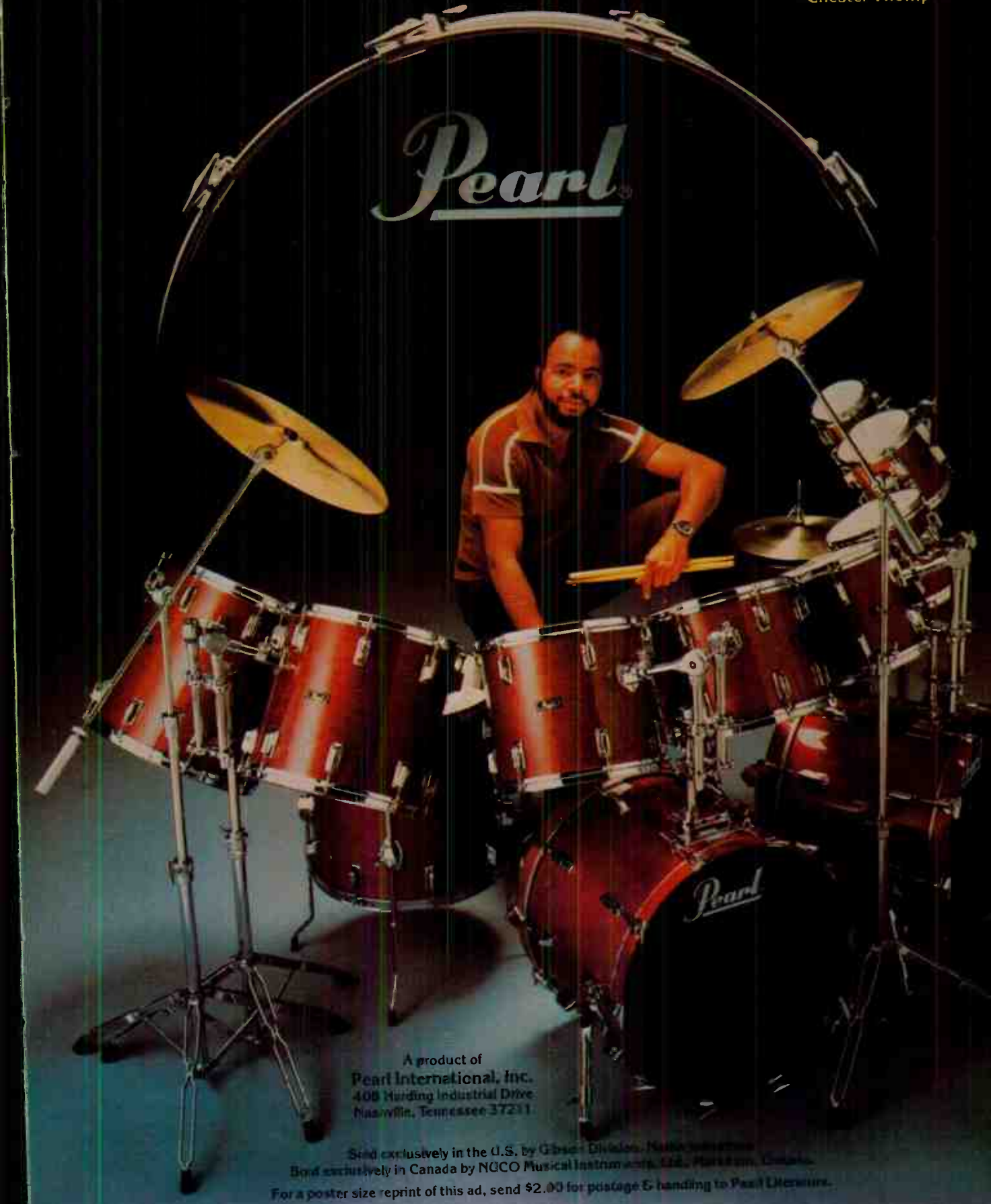
Biggest Problem In Being A Drummer — You mean other than blisters? The real problem is that you aren't taken so seriously. There's a hierarchy in the apprehension of bands. The singer/songwriter is on top; the lead guitarist is just under that; then you have competition between various other sidemen, like the bass player and keyboardist, providing they're not already singer/songwriters. And the drummer is generally at the bottom of the heap. And a sensitive person, I guess, can pick up on this over a period of time and it leaves you feeling like maybe I'll just go get drunk or maybe wishing people held you in higher esteem than they do. It's a feeling of dispensability.

Sly Dunbar

EBET ROBERTS

"When you rock with a band like Genesis, you've got to roll on drums like Pearl."

—Chester Thompson



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CREATIVE MUSIC STUDIO

What is the future of jazz education, torn between individualistic netherworlds and trade school lick factories? There is an alternate solution, Karl Berger's school in the hills of Woodstock with an all-star, all-world faculty.

By Rafi Zabor

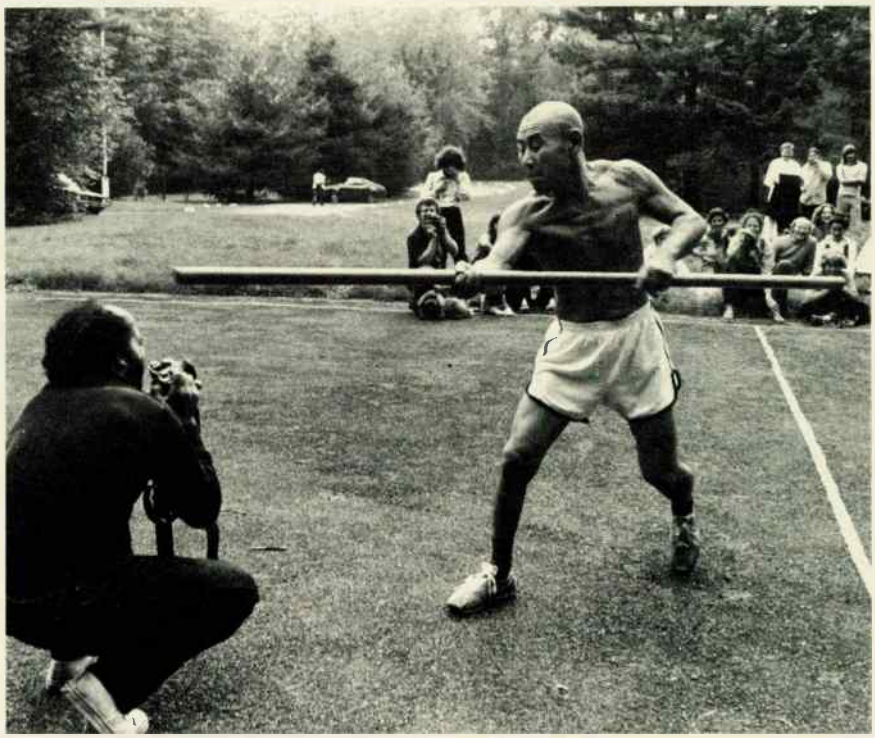
Everyone knows how you learn to play jazz. You're struck by lightning at an early age and grow accustomed to the presence of the sacred fire. You translate your struggle with the angel into sound and walk unaided into the belly of America, where elders skim cymbals at your shins and townies chuck your saxophone over a hill, then hone your craft unsuspected in a succession of roadhouses until you walk luminous and delivered onto larger stages on which you either die, lose your way, or grow so strong that your signature remains graven in the air, to be read by the angel of the world and perhaps even an audience. Maybe a paternal arm is extended you for a time. Possibly also some drugs. You are scheduled to be inspired at 10 p.m. and on the road before dawn.

The model creaks so badly by now it's no wonder everyone wants to replace it.

According to a more recent, less mythological formulation, you go to an urban outlet and study the craft of music in the daylight, learn the lick of the week, emulate the masters and gradually accumulate a store of competence. It is not necessary, in the failed search for the proper sacrifice, to make fitful attempts at self-destruction. Nor is it necessary to agonize over the burden of existence. You have instructors instead of mysteries. If you are not a God-blessed child who's got his own, you might yet be able to staff the studios of the republic, perform a function in a growing industry, go on the road with Maynard for $260 a week or rise to greater glory with the Johnny Carson band. Whatever turns you on.

Between mythic night and logical day there are a number of alternatives.

I first visited the Creative Music Studio in Woodstock, New York a few years back, when the Art Ensemble of Chicago, who had not yet broken commercially, were there for an intensive series of workshops. I was trying to learn enough about the band to write a coherent piece about them, but I was impressed by the Studio as well. The students were there to work hard — on New Year's Eve they were so intent on developing their pieces they found it odd that I expected a party — and the Studio had provided the AEC with an exemplary forum. Every member of the band taught something of value, and no two were alike. In fact, they contradicted each other, and the students were thrown into a crossfire that denied them an easy point of view they could imitate and mistake for their own.



R.J. KELLY

Japanese flautist Doso Roshi, 71, demonstrates the breath.

It was with a real curiosity about the place that I revisited the Studio this year. I attended some of the concerts of last summer's World Music Festival — next year's will be bigger and go on videotape — and in mid-autumn did an interview with Karl Berger, whom I liked immensely and whose ideas had, I thought, real substance. It might have been best for me to enroll as a student for a ten-week course, but I settled for second best and attended a week's worth of workshops and concerts and talked with everyone within range. I don't think I can analyze the place flat out, so let me tell you some stories.

Notes Are Not Music You Are

I began by attending a CMS-sponsored Don Cherry/ Ed Blackwell workshop at the State University of New York at New Paltz. Wanting to participate rather than merely observe, I brought my *dumbek* (a Middle Eastern drum), and sat in the auditorium cradling it while someone set up a trapset for Blackwell to use in the workshop and the concert that would follow it in a few hours. Cherry popped around the stage carrying a melodica, a bop minstrel in Third World colors and a 50s-hip, narrowbrim hat, then appropriated a blackboard, wrote NOTES ARE NOT MUSIC YOU ARE at the top and beneath that the lines and dots of an Ornette Coleman tune. After an arhythmic runthrough of the tune's phraseology, Cherry started getting into the rhythms, vocalizing some drum figures and asking for support. Standing in ranks with congas, saxophones, trumpets, flutes, "little instruments" and basses, the workshoppers seemed a little shy, so I rapped out a possible rhythm on the rim of my drum. "You've got to play *One*, you've got to come down on *One*," Cherry told me. I came down on One. "You're coming down on One but you're playing it as if it was the end. It's got to be a springboard, the beginning." Bedad, he was right. I lightened it up.

Cherry started running the class through the tune and I learned some more. It was tremendous to see first hand the strange brilliance with which Ornette could put a piece together, making powerful connections out of apparent failures of logic. It was a simple tune, but he gave the piece breadth and scope by linking opposites to generate rhythm through melody and the reverse — Cherry pointed this out clearly by varying the phrasing here and there and

letting you hear the result — in fact, creating a crossfield that suggested all kinds of possible transformation. He called it "harmolodics" when he felt like busying the public mind, but here it was in the flesh so that you could wrassle with it, smell its sweat, let it throw you.

Several reflections followed. You hear a lot of talk — I've done some of it — about how Ornette restored jazz to its folk roots, but this is almost always meant in a highly abstract and specialized sense, a sharp intellection about the nature of history. As the workshoppers picked up the melody and began working with it, I was struck by how much more sense it made as a literal statement. Post-Ornette jazz really is a folk music, even if the world at large hasn't recognized it yet, a language free people might speak to each other in concert halls, cornfields and at home. Post-bop jazz might eventually have perished of the intricacy of its own devices. Coleman restored the music to the calm brown earth. All you have to do is play an instrument well and be inspired. Shouldn't everyone take it up?

There was more to learn. Blackwell had set himself up smiling and inscrutable behind his shades and began playing a series of crossrhythms for the tune that sounded simple enough but which could not have been more eccentric. I had to stop playing. He showed my phrasing up as the tediously regular, habit-bound thing it too often is, and I stretched myself to cope with him. His phrasing, like Ornette's I suppose, was completely weird and completely natural. In order to play with him I had to work a different part of the beat than usual, start my phrases in different spots, land them in different places. A couple of times I came down in undiscovered territory.

A second Coleman tune followed, then a balafon piece from Mali on which Cherry pointed out the African genesis of the shuffle and the workshoppers finally started to stretch out a little. Me, I played until my fingers turned bright red and felt good enough to make enthusiastic mistakes. Cherry ended the workshop rather off-handedly, I thought, but I left feeling more full of music than I had in some time. Was I impressed? Yes, I was impressed.

Jack One

One of the Studio's greatest natural resources, and probably its best known, is the supply of local talent. Jack DeJohnette has the triple virtue of being local, global, and genuinely involved. I watched him do two afternoon improvisation classes that were part of the regular daily schedule (other teachers on the regular schedule lately have been Gary Windo, Mark Helias, J.D. Parran and Baikida Carroll).

In the first, he gradually organized the usual daunting assortment of students — four drummers, three pianists, three electric guitars, trumpet, cello, lotsa reeds — around the fluent and imaginative bebop he played on the melodica (instrument of the stars). He passed solos to the band, took them back when they lagged, waved repeatedly for the drummers to keep the volume down, ambled playing through the throng, regulating the quality of flow by playing his instructions rather than speaking them.

DeJohnette seemed a remarkable teacher. Since he doesn't especially like the press, I generally get to see his saturnine side. In class, though, his warmth, generosity, and interest in the students was palpable, and his refusal to wow everyone just be being JACK DEJOHNETTE was something to admire. It was clear too, as the class moved from playing to demonstration and discussion, that he regarded himself as still a student in a lifetime's enormous enterprise, a kid still in love with music, fascinated by all the ways in which it could be made to fit together and work. It was his love of music and lack of ego in the teaching situation that made his presence inspire music rather than the fear that could easily have been the flipside of respect.

As the class went on, I began to form an image of the perfect Creative Music Studio student, or rather, an image of the student for whom CMS is the perfect school. He or she is probably in his or her early twenties, already knows how to play fairly well and has played with other people on the young goof/young talent level. Probably does not come from New York, or any large city in which an accessible avant-garde is working, but from a smaller city, a town, the sticks, or another country, where he has found himself too thoroughly alone for his own good. The musicians he knows are likely of three kinds: too good for him, too bad, and (mostly) eager only to replicate some already existing style, whether for pay or their own satisfaction it hardly matters. And he knows that there's another reason for playing music just like himself, whoever that might be.

The company of his peers and the instruction of his idols might help. He'd get a chance to meet other people playing his instrument, buddy up, compete, get humiliated, see the black hole that awaits him or on good days the sheen of his future glory. In any case the place would test the strength of his dreams and put him in touch.

I sat on the fringes of DeJohnette's workshop in my darker, more soloistic version of America alongside Baikida Carroll, who seemed pretty aghast at the indiscipline of the student musicians. He had been hoping to hear some of his big band charts played in next week's class so he could see how he'd done. "Jack," he said later, "that was pretty, uh, *loose*."

"Yeah," Jack said, and smiled. "But you can work with it."

The Wind From the East

When I spoke with Berger (of which more anon) he was anxious for me to understand that the Creative Music Studio could no longer be strictly considered a jazz school, but a school of world music. While I shared Berger's enthusiasm for the global perspective, privately I wondered how it would work in practice. I had a chance to check the facts out when Watazumido Doso Roshi showed up. He deserves an article all to himself and will get one in a couple of issues, but a sketch will do for now.

I was able to attend his initial workshop, his final concert, and interview him over dinner in between. This 71-year-old man, who 30 years before had resigned as the head of the *fuke* order of Zen because he felt its way of life was incomplete, has taught martial arts to the Emperor, refused to be honored as one of Japan's official National Treasures ("How can I accept anything from men like you, who have no power?), and long been considered the greatest living exemplar of the *Weian* school of the Japanese flute. He's a bit wild. One of his

Jack DeJohnette runs improv classes like a kid still in love with the music.

ALAN CAREY

forms of practice is to go out into the railroad yards and scream louder than the trains. He came into the room watchful, humorous and calm, arranged his bamboo flutes in a row on a cloth at his side, knelt, settled himself, and began speaking in Japanese. A condensed paraphrase of the translation follows:

It is very good, he told us, that you are into music, but there is something better and more important than music and that is the place from which music comes. I am here to talk to you about the way of Watazumi. I come from Japan, and so the way of Watazumi is flavored with Japanese culture and appears to be Japanese, but if I had not been born in Japan and instead in some other country, I would still be sitting here before you today, teaching you about the way of Watazumi.

The way to find the place from which music comes, he told us, is by developing the breath. The ordinary, mechanical breathing we do only suffices to keep the body alive, but nothing can be created from it. It is a weak breath. Even the rough breathing that work or exercise forces from the body is weak and of little value. It is necessary to develop the "strong breath," after which it is possible to breathe softly and without weakness. Music is secondary; the way of Watazumi is the strengthening and deepening of the life force and the breath. Since I must have some way of knowing how my breath is doing, I blow into a piece of bamboo and hear how it sounds. It would be the same with a drum. For this reason I do not call these pieces of bamboo flutes but *suijo*, a contraction of the Japanese for "concentrated-breathing-tool." I will now demonstrate some concentrated breathing. (Wind whistles through a canefield by a grey lake. Cranes call to each other in open sky.) Thank you. I will now demonstrate the strong breath. (A freight train bearing the ghost of Roland Kirk appears suddenly in the room and as quickly vanishes.)

'Shakuhachi players are all cheats, don't listen to them, they cheat you. They take a piece of bamboo, hollow it out, lacquer it up and turn it into that easy despicable thing, a flute. This is just a piece of bamboo with holes in it, it's impossible to play. This, on the other hand, is a *shakuhachi*, listen to how worthless it is (he produces a fat, beautiful tone, coherent lines). This is a piece of bamboo a *shakuhachi* player couldn't even make a sound on. I can hardly play it myself and I'll never master it. I will now demonstrate another variety of concentrated breathing for you (plays a bunch of notes all strangled up, a series of incredible roars and wheezes, then pure extraordinary notes that virtually impale you). Now that's music.

You have to develop your breathing or nothing will become of you. You're young now, but if you do nothing you'll be tired and sick when you're fifty and you will certainly die. You're already tired just sitting here. And if you make music it will be the music of a sick man that will only make other people more sick than they already are. It is to teach about breathing that I have come to talk to you today. Sometimes to strengthen my breathing I play *suijo* in a Tokyo traffic jam and try to be heard above the cars. Thank you, let's take a break for a moment.

What a card, I thought. I know people who compete with the traffic in Brooklyn, but instead of being nominated for national treasurehood, they're put in the hospital for detox. On the other hand, I've been listening to people teach about the development of the breath for years, and never heard someone make such useful sense, with so complete a lack of metaphysical obfuscation.

When it was over, nevertheless, a number of people asked him semi-awe-struck questions. Which he defused. *I notice you carry your suijo in cotton and wear only cotton; why?* I hate to carry big bulky suitcases and coats. *What should I eat?* Well, I've always understood that you should eat what you like. I always eat what I can't stand, I don't know why. I'm Japanese but I haven't eaten rice in eight years. Gives me gas. So I eat bananas. *When we breathe, should we draw the breath into the lower abdomen, the "hara"?* If you try to do that it will make you crazy. There is no breath in the lower abdomen. Breath is in the lungs, so fill them. On the other hand the breath does in some way get into the heart, and from there mysteriously circulates to the rest of you. That's good.

There's really nothing like a good stand-up mystic. The last time I spoke to him he reminded me to tell my readers that he shits seven times a day, and "please breathe deeply when you write about me." Okay.

Jack Two

For his second workshop of the week, DeJohnette brought in "Silver Hollow," a 6/8 pastorale with a one-measure 5/4 sting in its tail. He ran the class through the tune interminably, the focus always on the music, showing them how to correct for their personal insufficiencies: don't play too loud, don't fall all over that measure of five this time, look, you don't have to use those same intervals every chorus because there are other parts of the chord to work from...the endless process of filling with labor the gaps in your accumulated inspiration. DeJohnette didn't scold, kept the class' eye on the Sign and made the humiliating less painful than it might have been.

With a couple of exceptions — one good drummer, a fluent pianist, one or two more — the students sounded like students, and some were lame. The class called up, in an inexhaustible train of images, the endless series of rooms in which music must be studied, the mountain of petty obstacles that must be climbed before you can even begin to stand on your own ground and sound like it.

Revealed Truth

Meanwhile, the headmaster, Mr. Karl Berger, is sitting on his porch in the rain with Nana Vasconcelos, watching me drive past him under the raindark trees in a light blue car, then turn back realizing that this must be the place.

Berger is a short, rounded salt-and-pepper German with a finely-tuned social sense, a visibly active mind and a tendency to giggle. What I liked about him first was the calm attention he paid to whatever was going on at the moment: years of Zazen, yes, but Berger's awareness came out in his own shape and that was what I liked. I let him steer me from my home ground of jazz into a consideration of world music and the Studio's dream of being a locus for it. But wasn't he aware, I asked him, that attempts at a fusion of musical styles almost always fail because they proceed from externals rather than essences? How did he deal with that?

"I see from the people who come here — Nana, or Trilok Gurtu from India, Ismet Siral from Turkey, Ayib Dieng from Senegal — that playing together is not difficult. The idea is not so much to combine styles but to look at the elements common to all the different forms of music, the idea of harmonics and rhythm that have been treated by different cultures in different ways, and learn from each other, come up with very personal ways of playing. To personalize the music more, not less, rather than identify the styles that may not be your own. You learn to see the basic human elements that carry all the different musics and build the music from *there*. This may sound very theoretical and philosophical but what we do is very practical. We've had some bands like that here and they've sounded like real units."

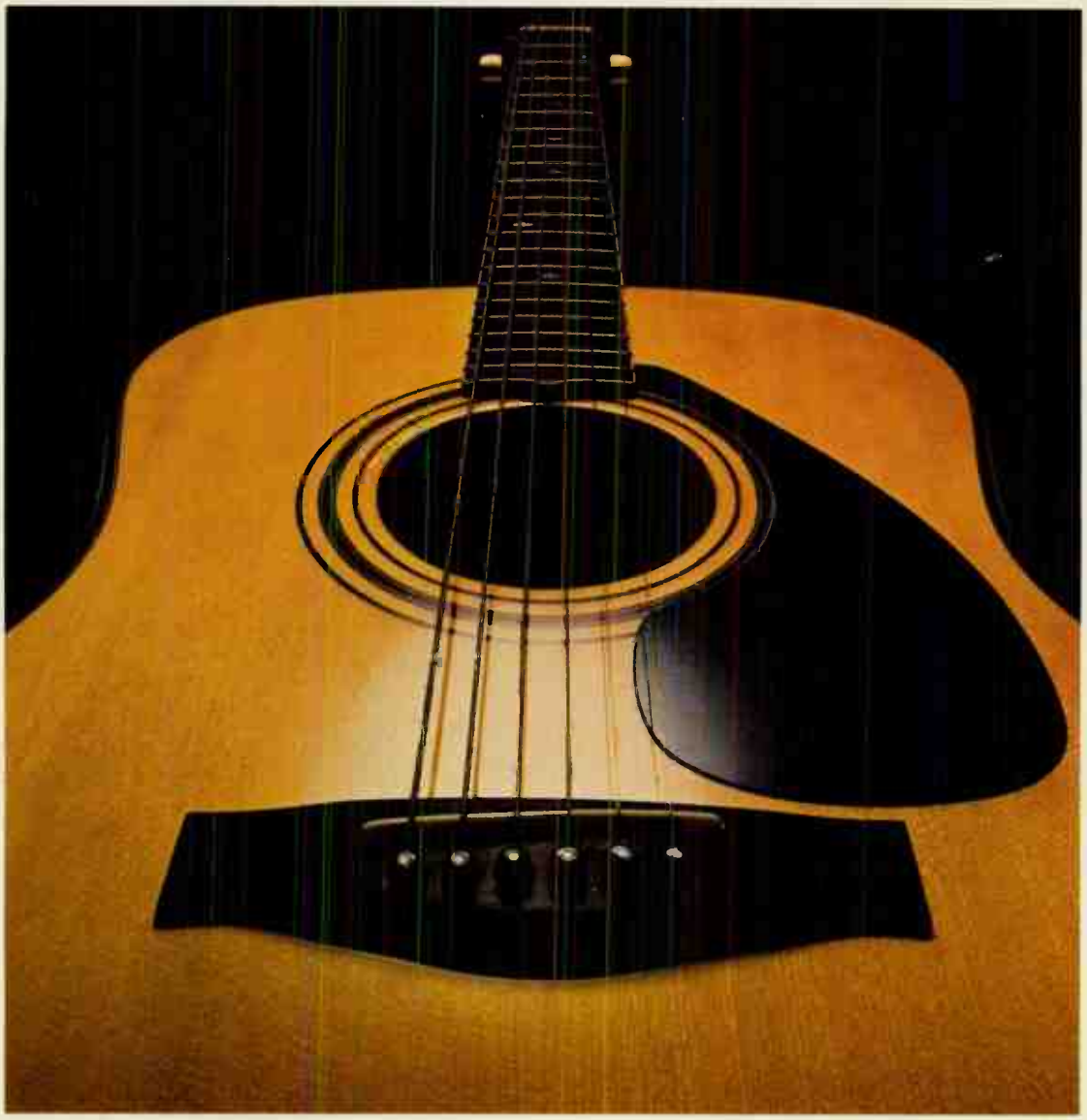
That might not have been possible even five years ago, I said.

"Exactly. We're at some very interesting ground here, something that's going to influence the shape of music to come. I've always known theoretically at least that music was some sort of universal language, and now we're beginning to see the practice of it. But I don't like to make predictions because things can go all kinds of strange ways."

So how, I asked him, did one teach in these circumstances?

"There are three basic streams of communication going on. One deals with the aspect of precision and conciseness. You go beyond stylistic precision. You don't learn to play bebop perfectly, you learn to play perfectly, period." Well, *slowly*, I thought. "Then you learn the second part, which is communication, and third, what I think a lot of people learn here is that their personality does not have to be ego. A bigger personality is more compassionate. It's

Play for keeps.



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not like 'I'm going to be a great so-and-so,' because ultimately you're going to expose yourself in the wrong way when you do that. We try to work in all these areas simultaneously, by recording, performing, listening back, doing practices on rhythms and tunings, seeing how an artist works. It's in a practical situation all the time. I think that people who come here will learn not just a craft — which is important too — but that they have to be responsible for the sound they put out into the world. This is for anyone who wants to use the medium of music, and for professionals, too. One of the traps, I feel, is actually professionalism. Once you have to make a living playing music you're very easily convinced to play certain things, and after awhile you've forgotten why you started out to play music in the first place. People don't play music because they want to be a studio musician or some kind of professional. People play music because they want to *sing*, and you want to be able to maintain that feeling throughout your life, you don't want to have to give that up. There's a lot of discouragement now among young people in music, which is one reason the punk thing has come up. Why should I learn anything when I can just punk it?"

From there we discussed the nuts and bolts of a typical student day, which begins with two kinds of food for the body, breakfast and *tai chi chuan*, and continues with a set of practices I found most interesting.

"Most of the basic practice time is spent on rhythm, mostly by systems of numbers or chant systems or patterns that may or may not come from various world music traditions: Brazilian, African, Senegalese dance. They are cyclic, but not the usual 4/4. One aspect of the practice is what we call *gamela-taki*, taking all the elements apart in odds and evens, so you can make all the rhythms and learn to integrate them into your system, so if you play a cycle of thirteen, it's a flow, alternating your hands from left to right all the time so that you never play anything twice, and you sing the syllables. After you have internalized that, you sing melodies over that by holding certain syllables, improvised right in the class."

It sounded, I told him, like more than a music practice, something designed to jar the mundane self from its narrowness and fixity.

"Exactly right. The main aspect of *gamela-taki* is to develop what I call the music-mind, which is a mind that does not function on memory or anticipation but on the time as it happens, which is a meditative state of mind but also a musical state."

Berger was obviously enthusiastic about his subject. I wondered how he'd become an educator.

"I worked with Sam Rivers, Reggie Workman and Horace Arnold for three years, going to schools and playing for sixth-graders mostly, and there was no audience hesitation whatsoever. I felt that all the hesitation that we were confronted with from audiences must come in at a later date, and I felt that it was important to create some sort of channel that was not covered by music schools. In 1969 John Cage left the New School and I thought it would be a good idea to do an improvisation class there. I enjoyed the process and thought we might do it at our own place. I didn't think of it as education, and still don't, because I learn as much as they do. I thought of it more in terms of getting my music and my mind straightened out. And I worried — *I'm a musician, I'm supposed to be out there playing and pushing my career* — but what I learned was that I was more successful in developing as a musician when I would forget about all that and just worry about the Studio. After awhile I began to feel comfortable with the situation and said, *well this is great, actually I'm very rich — everybody comes here, it's fantastic!* Also the environment makes musicians play differently, they don't play like that in New York. There's much more self-consciousness onstage in New York."

More revelatory still of Berger's nature is the spectacle of him conducting a student orchestra at a recent weekend concert. He began by standing before an instrumental section, wove a shape in the air with his hands and lo, when the section played, the shape came out both individuated and harmonious. Berger moved to other groupings, then worked in the enormous rhythm section until the whole band was caught up in it, the music palpably pulling the musicians in its wake into music-making that surpassed them while Berger, obviously a man fulfilled, danced in it, directed it, opened doors for it to blow through. He'd put in a long week and this was his pay.

A Second Opinion

At the counter of a health food shop in the city, a certain guitarist asked me what I'd been up to and I told him.

"Oh, you've been seeing Karl the gyp, huh?" he asked me.

"Karl the gyp?"

"$1,400 for ten weeks is too much."

"I agree," I told him, "but Berger says his pricing's competitive with universities."

"Then it should *be* like a university, offer accreditation and be run the way a university is run. I think it's a great *idea* for a music school, to go study with a bunch of great musicians, but that's all. It doesn't work the way it should."

A Third Opinion

Watazumi Doso Roshi, he of the rejected national treasurehood, is no respecter of persons. Does not pull his punches. Tells people what he thinks of them. He has never permitted anyone to record his work (except once, he told us, when he played some absolute rubbish

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RECORD REVIEWS

Lindsey Buckingham
Law And Order (Asylum)

By far the most progressive, most interesting element of Fleetwood Mac — their studio Svengali and onstage sparkplug — Lindsey Buckingham has somehow managed to remain the group's least visible, most enigmatic member. After jarring the sensibilities of a sizeable percentage of Mac fans with his contributions to *Tusk*, their most daring but worst-selling LP since the acquisition of Buckingham and Stevie Nicks, the guitarist was quoted in these pages as saying, "If you took all of my songs from *Tusk*, they would probably make a more cohesive album than the whole *Tusk* album." On his first solo album, Lindsey seems to back up that position.

A potpourri of styles, influences and techniques — a straightforward but gutsy reading of the standard "September Song," an obscure 1959 single by Skip & Flip called "It Was I," the C&W waltz "A Satisfied Mind" — *Law And Order* nevertheless holds together because of Buckingham's strong personality, to which everything is linked. As on *Tusk*, Buckingham continues to challenge accepted "state-of-the-art" concepts in terms of production, recording and mix — this time with more confidence and better results.

A one-man show, with Lindsey not only playing all instruments but also manning the board much of the time, *Law And Order* maintains a feeling of spontaneity even through countless overdubs because of Buckingham's sense of humor — most in evidence on "Bwana" which kicks off side one, the raucous "That's How We Do It In L.A.," and Lindsey's Frankenstein impersonation on "Johnny Stew." It would be interesting to see how Buckingham interacts with other musicians outside Fleetwood Mac, but probably not as interesting as the music that results from his interacting with himself. He has his limitations, of course, but how he overcomes those limitations is what's interesting.

The LP's two most infectious rockers are the funky new wave-ish "Johnny Stew" and the Fats Domino-ish "That's How We Do It In L.A.," featuring L.B.'s appropriately eccentric vocal. Another prime example of this aesthetically rich throwback sound is the dixieland number "Love From Here, Love From There." The drums on this one (which may be synthesized) sound like garbage cans — and couldn't be more idiomatically on the mark. Likewise the trombone, cornet and clarinet parts created by Buckingham's multi-layered guitars. This mini-masterpiece is enough to make you break out your parasol and strut down St. Peter.

The least successful track is "I'll Tell You Now," which purposely doesn't go anywhere, lyrically or musically. But it improves with repeated listenings.. "Shadow Of The West," on the other hand, is simple but not incomplete.

Since joining Fleetwood Mac in 1975, Lindsey Buckingham has outlasted all of the previous impressive lead guitarists to serve time in that band. With *Law And Order* as his first step, Buckingham may well become the first to outlast the band itself. — *Dan Forte*

The J. Geils Band
Freeze Frame (EMI America)

Year in and year out, the J. Geils Band were firmly entrenched in rock's second string. Never trend setters, never superstars (except in Boston), but reserve hitters who never let us down. Sometimes they broke out of their boogie-band style long enough to offer an innovation ("Give It To Me" was one of the first reggae hits by an American rock band), but usually they just hung in, scoring an occasional hit and earning the rent money with dynamic live shows.

But there's a trait peculiar to American rock audiences: if a band stays together, works hard, and maintains a certain level of creativity through good times and bad, they'll almost always reach a point where reservations fall away and they are embraced as troopers who've earned their place in rock Valhalla. The Kinks, REO Speedwagon and Bob Seger are recent beneficiaries of this generosity.

The J. Geils Band have earned their moment and are prepared to seize it. *Freeze Frame* is their fourth album in a row to find the 12-year-old sextet pushing at their limits without deserting their R&B base. Though the styles of the songs of *Freeze Frame* vary, the approach is so carefuly synthesized that even the most diverse influences work naturally together. Horns punch along a beat already established — and don't intrude on the melody — while the occasional strings are used like a keyboard, to add texture. Everything furthers the rhythm, including synths and guitars, as J. Geils rips, slides and tears at his strings for percussive effect.

Emerging throughout was keyboard player Seth Justman, who co-wrote the material with frontman Peter Wolf. Justman was given credit as arranger on *Sanctuary* and became producer with *Love Stinks*. With *Freeze Frame* Justman has not co-credited Peter Wolf (it was always implied that some songs were written separately) on five of the nine cuts. The Justman solo compositions are those which stretch out to encompass "Brick House" style funk ("Flamethrower"), pure pop ("Centerfold") and an almost Eagles-like country rock ("Angel In Blue") of the sort Springsteen does so well and Seger so often.

But if Justman will be credited with the album's most innovative songs, it's the tunes co-written with Wolf that will consolidate the band's traditional base. "Rage In The Cage" and the title song are bar-band howlers that the teenagers who fill arenas for Geils will understand at once, while "Piss On The Wall" is a deliberately simple-minded, derivative, rowdy, good-humored chant-along in the manner of "Love Stinks." Whether they're genuinely dedicated to breaking new stylistic ground, or simply dedicated to staying alive in a competitive game, the J. Geils Band have worked for our respect, and once again earned it. — *Bill Flanagan*

Jimmy Rowles
Plays Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn (Columbia)

Rowles is one of the slyest pianists in the music, and has paid the price by being a musician's musician: who else would appreciate in full his allusiveness and finesse, let alone notice the idiosyncratic richness and subtlety of his chording? To casual ears it can sound like cocktail, though those ears'd have to be *very* casual not to pick up on some of Rowles' invention.

He's almost always best without a rhythm section — he has a brilliant and active left hand that sedates itself when a bassist and drummer keep time — and this solo piano love-letter to the Duke and his moon is almost always Rowles at his best. For some reason, most of the best playing is on the second, Strayhorn side of the album, perhaps because, like Strayhorn, Rowles is a sideline artist and feels more comfortable at a distance from the full glare of the Ducal sun. The Ellington side of the album is good Rowles at least, but a little public and perfunctory. I won't mention cocktails again, but I almost did.

The second side of the album is an extraordinary set of performances even by Rowles' high standards. He begins by picking his way through "Take The A Train" as if it were the trickiest labyrinth devised by man, and spends the rest of his time in a ruminative tour through Strayhorn's light and shade. With Rowles you expect taste, wit, invention and savvy, but here you get more: almost Zenlike penetration and simplicity and a tightrope act with a real sense of grace and danger. And, oh yeah, "Lush Life"'s included. So's "Isfahan." I suggest you hear them. — *John Stook*

Devo
New Traditionalists (Warner Bros.)

If the members of Devo were as media-savvy as they'd like us to think, they'd have gotten out of music a long time ago and put their imagination and packaging expertise to work in the field to which it's best suited: Saturday Morning Cartoons. If the notion of Devo running amok in the world of kid vid strikes you as a bit far-fetched, consider: Over four albums, they've already proven they can add a new wrinkle to the same dumb concept every season; their work with Chuck Stadtler demonstrates that they have a good feel for the possi-

Talking Heads Alone **By Van Gosse**

It is unfair to talk about *The Red And The Black* and *Tom Tom Club* in terms of Talking Heads. David Byrne is involved with neither and he's the guiding light of the Heads, right? So there's no reason to assume that either Jerry Harrison (guitar, keyboards) or Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz (bass and drums, respectively) would cut solo albums that in any way relate to the mother-group, right? Wrong. What these records clearly reveal are the two components, the two sensibilities, which have co-existed in Talking Heads' sound for over four LPs. To put it vulgarly, these are pop (Weymouth/Frantz) and nonpop (Harrison). To put it in audience terms, it's the difference between those who've liked the Heads because they were so funky and funny and endearing (pop), and those who heard them as a Steely-Dan-in-the-rough (nonpop): how seriously did *you* take "Psycho Killer"?

Jerry Harrison's *The Red And The Black*, cut with Nona Hendryx (ex-Labelle) and Bernie Worrell (ex-P-Funk keyboardist), both members of last year's touring super-Heads, sounds disconcertingly like outtakes from *Remain In Light*. Thus the beat is a constant ethereal funk, the texture light but coolly complex and Harrison's vocals very Byrnish. Unfortunately, except for obvious smarts, *texture* is about all you get — memorable rhythms, melodies or even song structures are lacking. This, then, is the effort of a gifted sideman, but little more. Only here and there, as in the Iggy Poppish "No More Reruns," does it jell into toughness.

The *Tom Tom Club* (Weymouth, Frantz), has 13 members, including the producer, the engineers, Tina's sisters, husband Chris, several top Jamaican players and semi-Head Adrian Belew (whose tasteful guitar licks and textures are a common link between all three efforts). It bubbles over with a familial and even communal joyousness that is both ecstatic and tranquil, like a heavenly dance party. And precisely because it's so lighthearted, so unashamedly groove-happy, this disc may be shrugged off by some as ditsy fake-disco, merely B-52ish dilettante stuff: simple drums mixed loud with white-girl amateurs singing close harmony lines in no particular order. That's fine if polyrhythms-plus-angst by itself means worth and profundity to you, but what the Club has got a grip on is the singular virtue of tuneful melodies matched with an acute and loving feel for the history/comedy of modern black pop: verbal and vocal puns, paeans and parodies; Eurodisco choruses in bad French; loads of catchy synthesizer lines; spacey instrumentals that aren't gloomy. This is a record that makes people smile like Moonies, and shake themselves down in delight.

Byrne's new solo work, *The Catherine Wheel*, dance-music in the literal sense of the term, only confirms one's worst fears about the developments in this peculiar collection of heady, overdetermined pop-intelligentsia. Granted, the LP is a "soundtrack" for Twyla Tharp, the acme of chic Broadway movers whose first choreo-hit was "Little Deuce Coupe," so maybe powerful mood music, sections of tape rather than songs, is to be expected. But *Catherine Wheel* is completely what most of *Bush Of Ghosts* and some of *Remain In Light* edged towards: cold and very, very smart sound; a self-referential formality made of bits of this and that, pale funkism and pop-sophism, if you ask me.

Byrne's brilliance and the acclaim he has well earned have, perhaps, sealed him in a careful and productive alienation from the gentle and kind, often fearful, emotionality that informed the first few Heads-works. I understand that he has moved on, and maybe it is my, or our, failing, not to keep up, but pop music makes sense only, I believe, as it is *social* — an expression of implicitly shared and powerful feelings — and the smooth stuff on *Catherine Wheel* is really just another teat for neads that can only talk.

Point: with Byrne gravitating towards the least pop end of the spectrum, and the group's existence itself up in the air, these very different albums are a surprising reminder of where Talking Heads' great strength — their visceral pleasure in intelligence and vice versa — actually came from: within the band.

bilities of video; and the array of products advertised on the Club Devo order form that serves as the sleeve to *New Traditionalists* (you can get everything from flowerpot hats to a one-size-fits-all "traditionalist pomp" hairpiece) demonstrates Devo's ability to take advantage of merchandising spin-offs.

Besides, as anybody who's ever seen the group in concert knows, Devo is far more fun to watch than to listen to. Sure, our pals from Akron come up with a good lick or two, like the drum patter in "Race Of Doom" or the synthesizer fanfare in "Soft Things," but none of the music on *New Traditionalists* can come close to topping a concept like "Through Being Cool." Let alone equal the inspired remake of "Working In A Coalmine" that's been added as a bonus single (yet another strong marketing ploy).

So forget about the Smurfs! Sack the Trollkins! Put General Boy, Booji Boy and the rest of the crazy Devo gang right where they belong — next to the Flintstones. — *J.D. Considine*

The Cars
Shake It Up (Elektra)

During their scuffling bar band days, the Cars frequently played in the small New England coastal city where this magazine is assembled, and left a large group of rabid partisans in their wake. A bartender at one local club admonished the bands to "learn a song by the Cahs or I'll beat the crap outta ya'." This loyalty came to mind recently as I heard the Cars' fourth album, *Shake It Up*. For devoted followers of the group and other members of the mainstream rock audience, all is well with the Cars and you can probably stop reading right here and go buy the album.

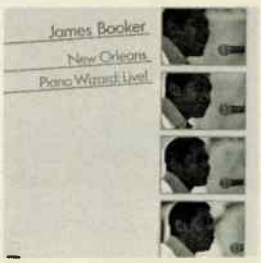
For the rest of us, the Cars have posed a more subtle question: how can the music change and mature and yet keep that spiky freshness? For much of *Shake It Up*, the answer seems murky; the Cars stand on their heads and do contortions to prove they're not rehashing the old sound, a sort of punk-deco Cal Worthington. Unfortunately many of these attempts start with familiar ideas so that they come off as rearranging the furniture without deciding what the room will be used for. Sometimes the change is subliminal, such as the uncomfortable tension of the mix on "Victim Of Love," a prototypical Ocasek gem. Other songs come right out and use wildly different vocal styles ("A Dream Away" evokes Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler) or plop an ending out of the sky ("Maybe Baby"). They even abandon hooks for a tune, "Cruisin'." But while some of these work and some don't, the most dangerous departure for the Cars has been the adoption of the four-cut side, committing the band to such experiments long after they remain interesting; all the songs on side two just plain go on too long.

One experiment that does jell and creates its own coherence and ambience is "I'm Not The One," in which Ocasek sheds his ironic mask and writes a sincere love song. Will wonders never cease? Another particularly enjoyable innovation is the polyrhythmic intro to the album's opener, "Since You're Gone," the only real guaranteed Cars Classic on this LP.

Here it must be said that some parts of the band sound better than others. As ever, the vocals are wonderful. David Robinson stretches the rhythm parts open with his imaginative use of drum boxes worked into his cavernously clean playing (notwithstanding blatant overuse of the "Let's Go" handclaps). Ocasek's lyrics, while less overly humorous, still work; my favorite is his exhortation to "set aside the screaming fish." But Elliot Easton's guitar work is decidedly less than memorable and deservedly low in the mix. Greg Hawkes' syntho-comedy does perfectly set off some of the songs but on others the Cars seem to push up against his technical limitations, particularly the so-what quality of his melodic lines. Hawkes often insists on making a lot of expensive equipment sound strictly dime-store.

Shake It Up is a sincere and serious attempt by the Cars to move to some new ground. While I risk the wrath of the bartender, it may be that a real change for the Cars may require more than some engaging new wrinkles; it might involve some new personnel. — *Jock Baird*

James Booker
New Orleans Piano Wizard: Live!
(Rounder Records)



James Booker is another of those New Orleans anomalies. He had a minor hit, "Gonzo" in 1960, a lot of work with big names — Jr. Parker, Bobby Bland, Joe Tex, Lloyd Price — and, as Crescent City legend has it, Booker was the pianist on many of Fats Domino's records. But aside from the occasional mention of things to do and see while in that cultural refuge, where even the cockroaches have sidewalks, Booker has remained a mystery to the American public. His more recent recordings have been available (more or less if you mail order imports or collect out-of-print records) on the Aves, Gold and Island labels, but he has never had an American recorded and

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Repetition Compulsion

By Rafi Zabor

The thousand year Reich, the house or heart of Glass, the reclamation of tonality, the echo of ritual and trance, the abandonment of the Western struggle of opposites for a vision of confluence — all the names and ideas relevant to a discussion of repetition music are interesting and fairly obvious, but they don't begin to explain why so many people are writing and performing it, and of course the ideas don't count if the music doesn't work. Philip Glass' new opera *Satyagraha* is probably the masterpiece of the idiom so far, and it works fine. So, now and then, do the two records reviewed here.

Anthony Davis' *Episteme* (Gramavision 8101) comprises, mostly, compositions from his "Wayang" series, based on the devices of Balinese gamelan music and scored here for a nonet or dectet of strings, trombone, reed, piano, two percussion (mostly marimba, xylophone or vibes), and drumset. Although some of the marimba figures suggest Steve Reich, the effect is un-Reichian. Employing a degree of dissonance unusual in this idiom, Davis' music seems less a contented reflection of cosmic order than a disturbed exploration of the conflicts implicit in that order. It is also, for all its odd rhythms, quite, how you say, *funky*: within the rigor of the compositions only drummer Pheeroan Ak Laff has license to cut loose, and he has a field day.

The first piece is the relatively short "Wayang No. II," which sets its systems in motion and keeps them there until a slow, low, consoling melody counters them at the end. It's like a representation of a beehive, cellular and orderly, the inhabitants busy with intricate labor, intricate dance. The long "Wayang No. IV" follows. It's the major piece on the album and a lot more successful. It builds up its structure in increments, more prodigal with feeling and melody, and effectively releases its structural tensions in a series of improvisations on side two.

I was slow to warm to this music. At first I felt, as with Davis' last release, the solo piano *Lady Of The Mirrors* on India Nav, that the pianist/composer, who must be getting awfully tired of being referred to as "brilliant, young," and "the most gifted pianist to have emerged in the last five years," was putting too much of his energy into his compositional strategies and not letting his music breathe enough. *Episteme* is full of brainy music, and I was left wishing it had a bit more heart. Well, I conceded, no one ever said that "brilliant, young" musicians had to be infallible; the most you can ask is that they be brilliant, young and keep exploring, and Davis has done that, at least. Then I kept listening. I also turned it up LOUD, and the music started to convince me that it had teeth and a subject. The rhythmic force caught me, and I started to find more in the solo interaction of Davis, George Lewis, Abdul Wadud and Shem Guibbory on side two. These are jazz musicians, and know full well how to breathe after all. The album is a solid statement, and I recommend it.

I traveled the reverse route with **Tom Ehrlich**'s *Stars* (Singularity 333), a solo piano double set. When I first heard it I thought it was a zillion times better than Davis' album or anything else I'd heard in months. Now I'm less sure, but here's what enthused me. "Some music is capable of stopping the mind's normal flow of thoughts," writes Ehrlich in his liner notes, "and only when the mind is stopped can true listening take place." Ehrlich's music has this power in extraordinary measure. You can feel it at once, to a degree that makes discussion of compositional and pianistic technique, if not superfluous, secondary. The album opens with "Gamelan," which uses repetition, natch, and its modesty is a distinct relief from the New York-ambitious stuff everyone else makes of this material. Ehrlich makes a number of musicians seem stylish, arty, posed by contrast.

"In Memoriam: Alexander Scriabin" follows, a pummelled and thunderous piece that is never rhetorical, always authentic, and "Horizon — To Georgia O'Keefe," a bare construction that makes all its notes count and keeps you alert from first to last. A long, rigorously repetitious "Whirling" concludes side two; it seems as posed and static as the work of New York geniuses, and no dervish I know would much like it. The second disc contains two pieces only: "The Elements," in four parts of course, dedicated to Coltrane and redolent of Tyner when it's loud, and "Stars," which twinkles now and then but more often rises on galactic shakes and crescendi. Are these pieces conceptually naive? I suppose they are, but I'm surprised how little I care. They're the music of a man in the universe, not a would-be genius on a stage, and are closer to the real roots of music than ambition and sophistication know how to reach.

released album, and this newest release does nothing to remedy that situation.

Piano Wizard: Live! is the domestic release of the Gold LP, *Boogie Woogie and Ragtime Piano Contest*, recorded in Zurich in 1977. I don't know what the contest is but unless Tuts Washington (another superb and unrecorded New Orleans pianist) was there, Booker must have won hands down.

His playing is a sort of soulful Third Stream music — a fusion of gospel, blues and classical. It is a more rhythmic and emotive version of Ramsey Lewis' over-celebrated classical/blues/pop fusion. Actually Booker's ebullient percussive bass crescendos, quiescent passages, staccato treble figures, whimsical endings and spine chilling conjurer's voice are eminently more human than most of Lewis' work and more unpredictable than Ray Charles' accurate but static presentations.

Booker turns standards such as "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and "Come Rain or Come Shine" into personal statements. "On the Sunny Side" resonates with an oom-pah, tuba-like bass line under a joyous marionettish treble. "Come Rain or Come Shine" becomes a gospel ballad as Booker virtually moans the vocal over a tremulous piano. "Let Them Talk," "Black Night" and "Please Send Me Somebody to Love" are gentle slow-rocking blues-gospel laments. "Tell Me How Do You Feel" — a Percy Mayfield and Ray Charles composition — and Joe Tex's "Come in My House" are rollicking romps propelled by thunderous bass lines.

Hopefully this release, Hannibal Records' forthcoming reissue of Island's *Junco Partner* and Alligator Records proposed Music of New Orleans series will garner Booker more recognition. But even that will eventually depend on Booker maintaining a consistency of performance that has eluded him in the past. — *Don Palmer*

Rockabilly Stars

Volumes 1 and 2 (Epic)

The rockabilly revival has been in full swing in England and Europe for nearly a decade. It finally appears that the U.S. is rediscovering its truest strain of rock 'n' roll. Rockabilly, a hybrid of country and western and rhythm and blues, is once again performed by scores of acts on both sides of the Atlantic. Even the Rolling Stones did Eddie Cochran's "20 Flight Rock" on their recent U.S. tour.

Hundreds of reissues have been released abroad which chronicle what followed in the wake of Elvis Presley's Sun sessions of 1954-55, which are

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generally acknowledged as the first rockabilly recordings, but *Rockabilly Stars* is the first U.S. major label entry into the field. It is ironic that that label is CBS, whose mid-fifties A&R chief was Mitch Miller, an avowed hater of rock 'n' roll. Thank God Mitch didn't exert such an iron hand over the Nashville office because there are some real gems here.

The Everly Brothers' first single is legally reissued for the first time. "The Sun Keeps Shining"/"Keep A Lovin' Me" are pure whining C&W similar to the Louvin Brothers. Other highlights include Sid King & the Five Strings with their Bill Haley-ish "Gonna Shake This Shack Tonight," the uninhibited "Bop a Lena" by Ronnie Self and Ersel Hickey's minor classic "Bluebirds Over the Mountain" — later recorded by the Beach Boys. The Carl Perkins and Link Wray sides are good but both artists have done better elsewhere. The heroes of this set are the Collins Kids. There has not yet been a reissue LP of their material and there are no overlaps with the UK compilations. We get three tracks by the duo plus cute Lorrie Collins' cover of Ed Bruce's "Rock Boppin Baby" and kid brother Larry's positively wild "Whistle Bait."

Columbia's more conservative C&W stable also turns in highly credible rockabilly performances. Marty Robbins does "That's All Right" yet again. The late Johnny Horton recorded in the rockabilly style on "Honky Tonk Hardwood Floor," as did Little Jimmie Dickens with "A Hole In My Pocket" from 1958.

I have two gripes with what is otherwise a great set. Most of the vintage material has been available on import reissues for years. What would have been one great double LP has been stretched into two less than great double LPs by the inclusion of 1970s tracks by Johnny Cash, Mickey Gilley, Charlie Rich and the like. My hat goes off to current A&R VP Gregg Geller who conceived this project and even wrote the informative liner notes. Funny how attitudes have changed at CBS in the last 25 years. — *Ed Strait*

Jackie McLean and John Jenkins
Alto Madness (Prestige)

Take a two or three horn front line, backed by the record label's "house" rhythm section. Steep one and all in the post-Bird idiom. Choose a standard tune or two at medium-bounce or galloping tempos, add an after-hours ballad, a swinging blues head, and a garrulous new line on the changes of "I Got Rhythm" or "Indiana." Throw in some chase choruses (replete with mordant allusions to show tunes), swap some fours, and above all, keep cooking. *Et voila!* — the 1950s blowing session.

Time was when Prestige issued these get-togethers by the dozen. *Alto Madness*, from 1957 (after 1956's *Tenor Madness*, the titanic meeting of Coltrane and Rollins, also on Prestige), is standard genre fare, notable primarily for its inclusion of the long-unavailable track "Bird Feathers."

McLean, who was not quite 25 when this set was recorded, had found his own voice during this period; his searing sound rose to the occasion on Art Blakey's *Hard Bop* and Charles Mingus' *Pithecanthropus Erectus* (happily, both of those momentous LPs have been reissued in the past year by Columbia and Atlantic, respectively). Lacking similarly challenging material, McLean falls back on what had become the Parker orthodoxy, although his playing is typically slashing and fiery (and the ballad feature "Easy Living" evinces his sharp-edged lyricism).

The obscure Jenkins (he put in a stint with Mingus and recorded in the late 50s with Donald Byrd, Hank Mobley, Paul Quinichette and Wilbur Ware) is McLean's near-mirror image. The Bird calls and responses fly fast and furiously, particularly in the title cut and "Bird Feathers" (Ira Gitler's notes detail the solo order and one truly can't tell the plays without this scorecard). Jenkins' work was never long on originality, but his composition "Pondering," with the

altos in unison over the late Doug Watkins' walking bass line, is a warm, attractive number.

The rhythm section of the late pianist Wade Legge, Watkins and drummer Arthur Taylor is serviceable enough, but doesn't push the altoists as hard as it might (though Taylor does rush several tempos, a hallmark of his sometimes erratic style). Still, *Alto Madness* is a spirited 50 minutes, albeit of principal interest to McLeanists. — *James Isaacs*

Teresa Stratas/Kurt Weill
The Unknown Weill (Nonesuch)

Well, *Dammen und Herren*, the album does lack the sardonic Weill orchestrations that add so much tang and dirt to *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny*, but it has a dozen Weill songs you've never heard before, the piano accompaniment is idiomatic and apt, and Teresa Stratas, one of the great singers of the day and veteran of the complete *Lulu*, has been called by Lotte Lenya herself "my dream Jenny." She sings simply and luminously. Weill's songs, of course, are full of sour magic. They lean on dark brick walls while soot gathers on the brim of their hat and a braid of water runs past their feet on the cobbles. They are as crooked and insular as signposts. Everyone has learned from them but no one has taken them home. From them the century learned, among other things, exactly how bad things were and that we were still somehow alive.

It was Weill's gift to write songs so simple they radiated ambiguity in ten directions. They are irreducible nuggets of experience, their contrarieties so bonded together that the molecule cannot be undone even by pleasure. My favorites here are the Brecht/Weill "Berlin in Light," a slughead's lovesong to his city, and "Mussells of Margate," which charts the decline of civilization from seafood to petroleum: "Shell, Shell, *Shell!*" But there are others, and it's amazing to hear what Weill and Stratas can do with, say, an arch Baudelaireian poem about all the sludge and dead prostitutes on the bottom of the Seine. Very little can be done with two dumb songs in English, "Hey There Buddy on the Nightshift" and "Schiklgruber," wartime kitsch, but you can't win 'em all. The liner contains texts and translations, photos, information and memorabilia, and a good time was had by all. A little while back, there were fears for the future of Nonesuch, and although we're sorry to see Teresa Sterne gone from the organization, it's good to see the label thriving: the Explorer Series continues to flourish, and the release that

included this album also brought a good Beethoven album from Malcolm Bilson and an exemplary Bartok set from violinist Sergiu Luca. — *Gurtmanian*

Patti Austin
Every Home Should Have One (Qwest)

Patti Austin is long overdue for recognition as an important, inspired singer in her own right, and not just as Quincy Jones' favorite vocal instrument in his many state-of-the-art, slick pop-dance-funk extravaganzas. Austin has been tagged variously as a light jazz singer, a soul seller, and a pop interpreter for two reasons: first, while Austin doesn't have the dramatic vocal grandeur of, say, Streisand, the flexibility of Aretha Franklin, or a pure jazz sensibility, Austin has an emotional versatility that gets to the heart of whatever she's singing. In fact, on her last album, *Body Language* (produced by Creed Taylor), Austin came off as a powerful rock singer; Squeeze's "Another Nail In My Heart" was deliciously nasty and pissed-off. Second, Austin has never had a steady stream of good material to work with, so successes stood out independently, not allowing for any sense of cohesion.

Her new Quincy Jones-produced album is pretty much an extension of Quincy's last album, *The Dude*, and contains the same hits and misses. Of four Rod Temperton songs, only the dance smash "Do You Love Me?" really shows off the direct, punchy joy that makes Austin great. A couple of other numbers reveal her implied sensuality. However, for the most part, Jones is too concerned with his high-tech and (au courant) spacey, aural washes. Once again, Patti Austin has to fit into her musical surroundings, when she should be at the heart of the record, with material and productions that evolve more from her exuberance and sense of style — *Jim Feldman*

U2
October (Island)

Like all good Irishmen, I enjoy nothing better than a good talker. At the same time, I share the instinctive Irish mistrust of anyone for whom the words flow too freely. It's that same reaction to glibness that keeps me from being as enthusiastic about U2's second album as I'd like.

Like its predecessor, the astoundingly precocious *Boy*, *October* is a joy to hear. Deliriously melodic, rhythmically insistent, U2 translates the relentless kinesis of the drone into an ineluctably poppish sound. Sometimes, the appeal is in the spare, hookishness of the guitar and bass, as in "I Threw A Brick Through A Window"; sometimes, it's the sheer plaintiveness of singer Bono Vox's phrasing, as in "Stranger In A Strange Land". More often than not, though, it's the cumulative effect of both elements that hits the listener, and the impact is so exhilirating that it's no wonder the songs bear titles like "Rejoice" or "Gloria".

Unfortunately, close examination of these songs makes me think that's the *only* connection. Where *Boy* waxed poetic on the boisterous mythologies of youth, *October* tends to wallow in the poetic excesses of adolescence. If any of these songs has a point, it's well hidden. Perhaps there's some artistic consideration that makes them use "Rejoice" as the sole lyric for a song, and then title it "Scarlet," but it's far from my comprehension. Maybe they just didn't want to have two songs called "Rejoice" on the album.

Whatever the case, U2 is in the rather dangerous position of having a lot of listeners and nothing to say, a position that makes predictions of the band ending up as the Yes of the 80s disturbingly convincing. What a shame if a band so musically eloquent turned out to be lyric imbeciles. — *J.D. Considine*

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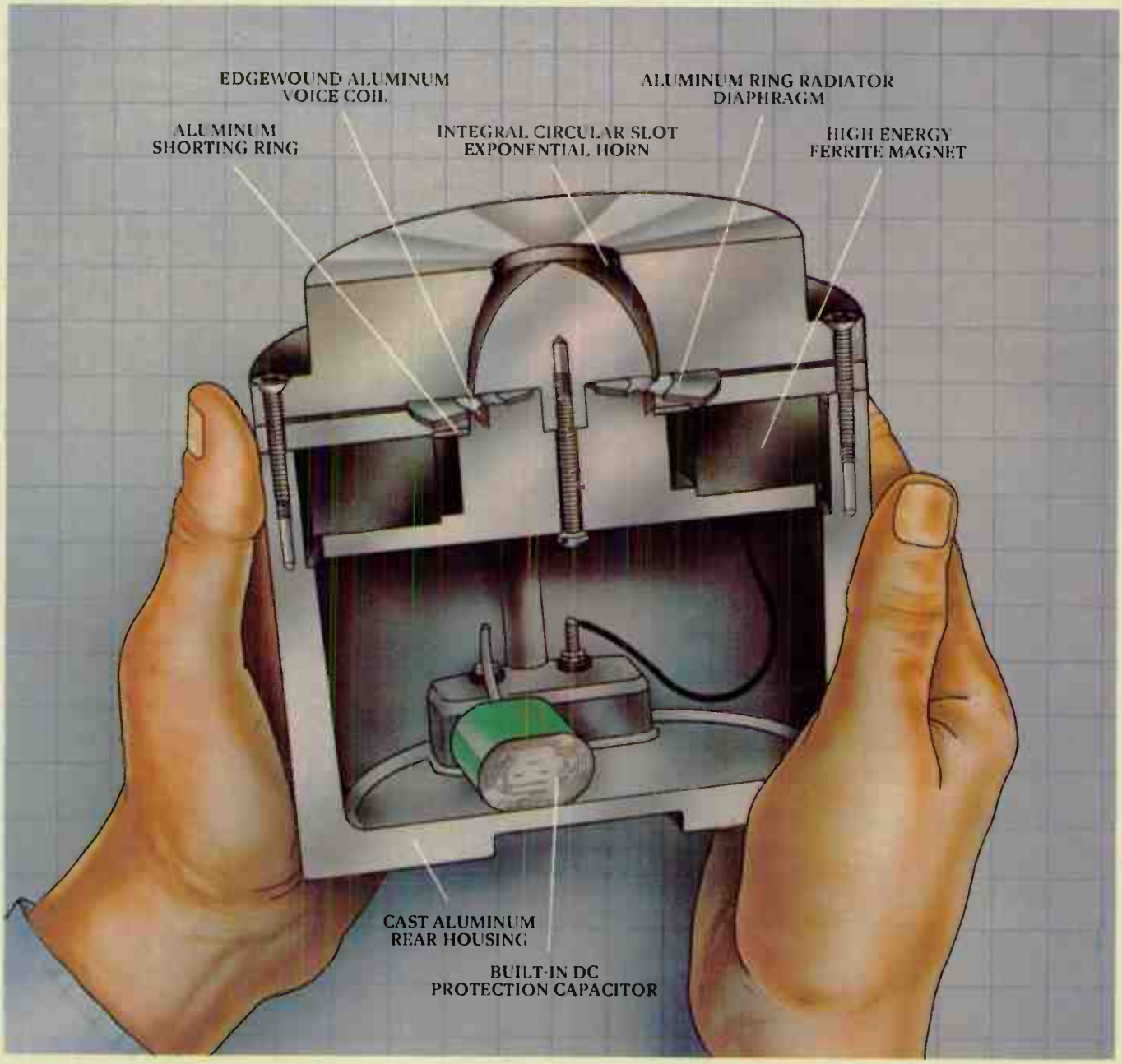

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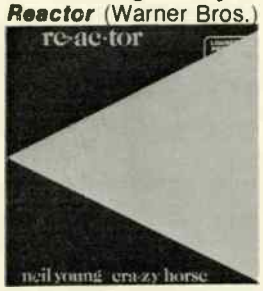
YAMAHA

Neil Young/Crazy Horse
Reactor (Warner Bros.)



We're talking dirty guitars *in excelsis* here; under the headphones, this record sounds like an automatic weapons firefight in a sawmill — or better yet, in a breeder reactor ripping its guts out during a California earthquake. Young is obviously still glorying in the Sex Pistols — his current brand of rock 'n' roll with Crazy Horse is so raw and renewing it's clear that he's decided to be nobody's old fart.

You would have to scratch very deep into the lyric sheet to find the old folkie behind *Reactor*. It bristles and glows with some message about decay, but a decay that's as urgently sensual as the breakup of an electric signal or a steaming heap of plutonium. There are themes that could be pulled out — loss of face ("Opera Star"), loss of life's work ("Southern Pacific") and loss of various American dreams like know-how ("Motor City," "Rapid Transit") and a chicken in every pot ("T-Bone"). But this record is more like a premonition than a concept, and reactive rather than interpretive. It's elliptical, even goony — a Stephen King post-meltdown horror landscape ("Surfer Joe And Moe The Sleaze") or maybe a Vonnegut-style put-on (the cover inscription is the old saw of "God grant me the serenity to accept the things..." in Latin.

Maybe it's just a guitar record. I hear some early Byrds ("Rapid Transit") and even a little Allmans-style twining ("Motor City") amidst the feral angry stabbing six strings. But the NRC took away Diablo Canyon's start-up permit the day I wrote this. — *Fred Schruers*

Jon Hassell — *Dream Theory in Malaya (Fourth World, Volume Two)* (Editions E.G.) Trumpeter and musical anthropologist Hassell stands at that unique intersection where Eastern mysticism meets Western techo-expression, using an exotic combination of traditional percussion, altered horns, and liquid overlapping sound ("Malay" is literally a water ballet) approximate the subconscious experiences of Malaysian aborigines. Sort of Miles Davis and Steve Reich go upriver in search of Colonel Kurtz. — *David Fricke*

Steve Miller Band — *Circle Of Love* (Capitol) First impression: four decent post-*Joker* boppers and one side-long riff'n'rap over-funkin'-indulgence. Second impression: "Heart Like A Wheel" and "Get On Home" show Miller's trump is still classy pop fashioned out of basic Berry and blues bop. Also note the sweet and sour Knopfler-like guitar on the title track. Third impression: in "Macho City," he makes some good points about the Me-and-my-Calvins Generation. But are they worth eighteen minutes of monotonic funk and *Children Of The Future* sound effects? — *D.F.*

PICK HITS

Pick Hits is a monthly survey of what our learned staff feels to be the cream of the current crop of album releases and concerts. Each critic is allowed up to five "Hot" votes (one of which can be an "oldie" that they've been listening to), and one "Cold" vote — plus one "Live Pick" concert vote.

J.D. CONSIDINE Hot: **The Jacksons** *Live* (Epic) — **Ian Dury** *Lord Upminster* (Polydor) — **Jerry Harrison** *The Red And The Black* (Sire) — **The Cars** *Shake It Up* (Elektra) — **Royal Ingoma Drums of Burundi/Rusty Egan** *Burundi Black* (Barclay/Cachalot EP)
Cold: **Rod Stewart** *Tonight I'm Yours* (Warner Brothers)
Live Pick: **King Crimson** — Painters Mill, Baltimore

DON PALMER: Hot: **Buck Clayton and Buddy Tate** *Kansas City Nights* (Prestige) — **James Brown** *Can Your Heart Stand It!!* (Solid Smoke) — **James Blood Ulmer** *Free Lancing* (Columbia) — **Professor Longhair** *Mardi Gras In New Orleans* 1949-1957 (Nighthawk) — **James Booker** *New Orleans Piano Wizard: Live!* (Rounder)
Live Pick: Kandolo, Falashi, Mukidi and Kumanda with the National Dance Theater of Zaire's *Nkenge*

MUSICIAN OFFICE: Hot: **Earth, Wind & Fire** *Raise!* (CBS) — **Black Uhuru** *Red* (Island) **The Beatles** *1967-70* (Capitol) — **Rosanne Cash** *Seven Year Ache* (CBS) — **Big Twist** *Big Twist And The Mellow Fellows* (Flying Fish) — **Steely Dan** *Gaucho* (MCA)
Cold: **Carly Simon** *Torch* (CBS)
Live Pick: **Miles Davis** at the Bradford Hotel, Boston

RAFI ZABOR: Hot: **Ornette Coleman** *Science Fiction/Skies Of America* (Columbia) — **Tom Ehrlich** *Stars* (Singularity) — **Various Artists** *Amarcord Nino Roto* (Hannibal) — **Karl Berger** *Woodstock Workshop Orch. Live At Donauschingen* (MPS/Rounder) — **James Booker** *New Orleans Piano Wizard Live!* (Rounder)
Live Pick: **Sonny Rollins,** Bottom Line, New York

ROY TRAKIN: Hot: **The Gun Club** *Fire Of Love* (Ruby/Slash Records) — **Lindsey Buckingham** *Law And Order* (Asylum) — **Prince** *Controversy* (Warner Bros.) — **Bob & Doug McKenzie** *The Great White North* (PolyGram) — **Connie Francis** *The Very Best Of Connie Francis* (MGM Records)
Cold: **The Jacksons** *Live* (Epic)
Live Pick: **Devo** at Radio City Music Hall, Halloween Night

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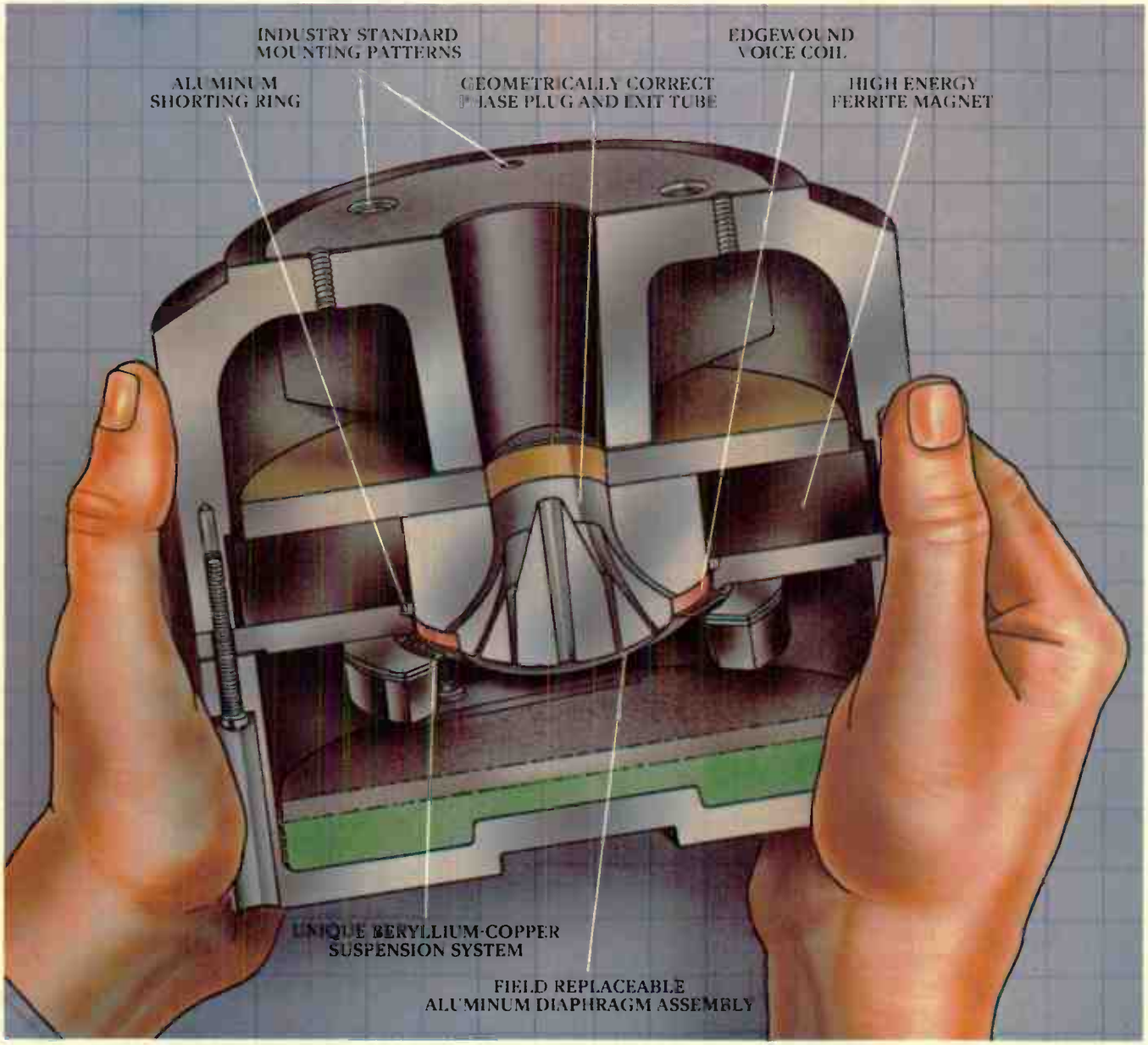

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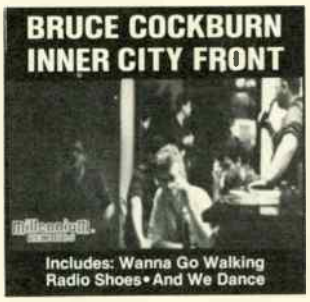
YAMAHA

ROCK

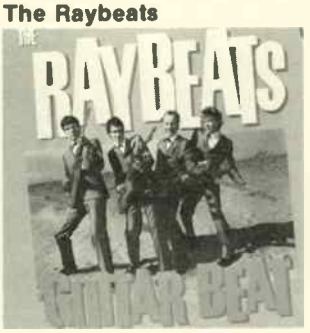
By David Fricke

SHORT TAKES

Bruce Cockburn



The Raybeats



The Late Bronze Age

Luther Vandross

Bruce Cockburn — *Inner City Front* (Millenium) From life and love's front lines come these stirring dispatches, more often bitter than sweet, reported in Cockburn's evocative folk-pop shorthand capsulizing backstreet grit, Canadian woodland grace and quiet jazzy elegance. Note the spooky Numan-like moves of "The Strong One" and the way "Loner," with its grey acoustic desperation and hyper-shriek violin, brings the album to a slow boiling but stunning climax.

Greg Lake (Chrysalis) Welcome back, my friends, to the farce that never ends. The L in ELP goes solo, proving with this Extremely Lame Product that despite their inflated art-rock pomposity and heavy metal pugnacity Emerson, Lake and Palmer's greatest strengths were in numbers and sheer bravado. On his own, the best Lake can do is anonymous AOR hard rock laced with spacey balladry and melodramatic self-importance. And isn't Bob Dylan having enough trouble spreading His word that he's got time to co-write secular swill like "Love You Too Much"?

Bobby and the Midnites (Arista) Deadman Bob Weir's latest splinter band delivers spirited AOR blues-rock spiced with a little heavy white reggae (the Heptones' "Book of Rules," the Police-like "(I Want to) Fly Away"). Gary Lyons contributes vibrant production and Billy Cobham and Alphonso Johnson wisely leave their fusion chops at home.

The Raybeats — *Guitar Beat* (PVC) The Ventures after punk-funk fallout? A couple of ex-Contortions and pals invade Muscle Beach? To paraphrase Frank "Ruben Sano" Zappa, ten years from now you'll be roasting marshmallows over a beach bonfire listening to this stuff — if there's any beach left to put your blanket on.

The Late Bronze Age — *Outside Looking Out* (Landslide) Bruce Hampton was responsible for the raw coyote howl and quixotic lyrics at the heart of the Hampton Grease Band experience. As the Late Bronze Age, together with multi-instrumentalist Ben "Pops" Thornton, he orchestrates a manic fusion that is rock in spirit and everything else in execution. "Farmers Earn Livings" is psychedelic Oregon, "The Late Bronze Age" is Burundi Beefheart, and that's not to mention the exotic ballads, customized jazz-funk, crippled cocktail swing, and dazzling wordplay dotting the rest of the album. "When In Doubt Go Completely Out...Or Do Something Familiar" — it's nice to know Hampton and Phillips are still willing to take that high road. This album is another experience altogether.

Luther Vandross *Never Too Much* (Epic) Stylish pop & B arrangements, classy tunes free of the usual bedroom bromides, and a Voice, polished by years of sessions and jingles and fired by emotional conviction — as singer, writer and producer, Vandross knows how to leave you begging for a whole lot more.

Chuck Hammer — *Guitarchitecture* (Guitarchitect) This former Lou Reed guitarist (he also did the honors on Bowie's "Ashes to Ashes") honestly believes the guitar synthesizer may be the biggest thing that's happened to the instrument since Hendrix first put a match to his Strat. Although this debut solo LP isn't conclusive proof, instrumentals like "Sleeping W/ Antiques I" and "Guitargraphy" — with Hammer's modal serpentine melodies and the guit-synth's rich cathedral harmonics — make it one heck of a demonstration record. Hammer also tries a little singing, but he speaks loudest when his instrument does the talking.

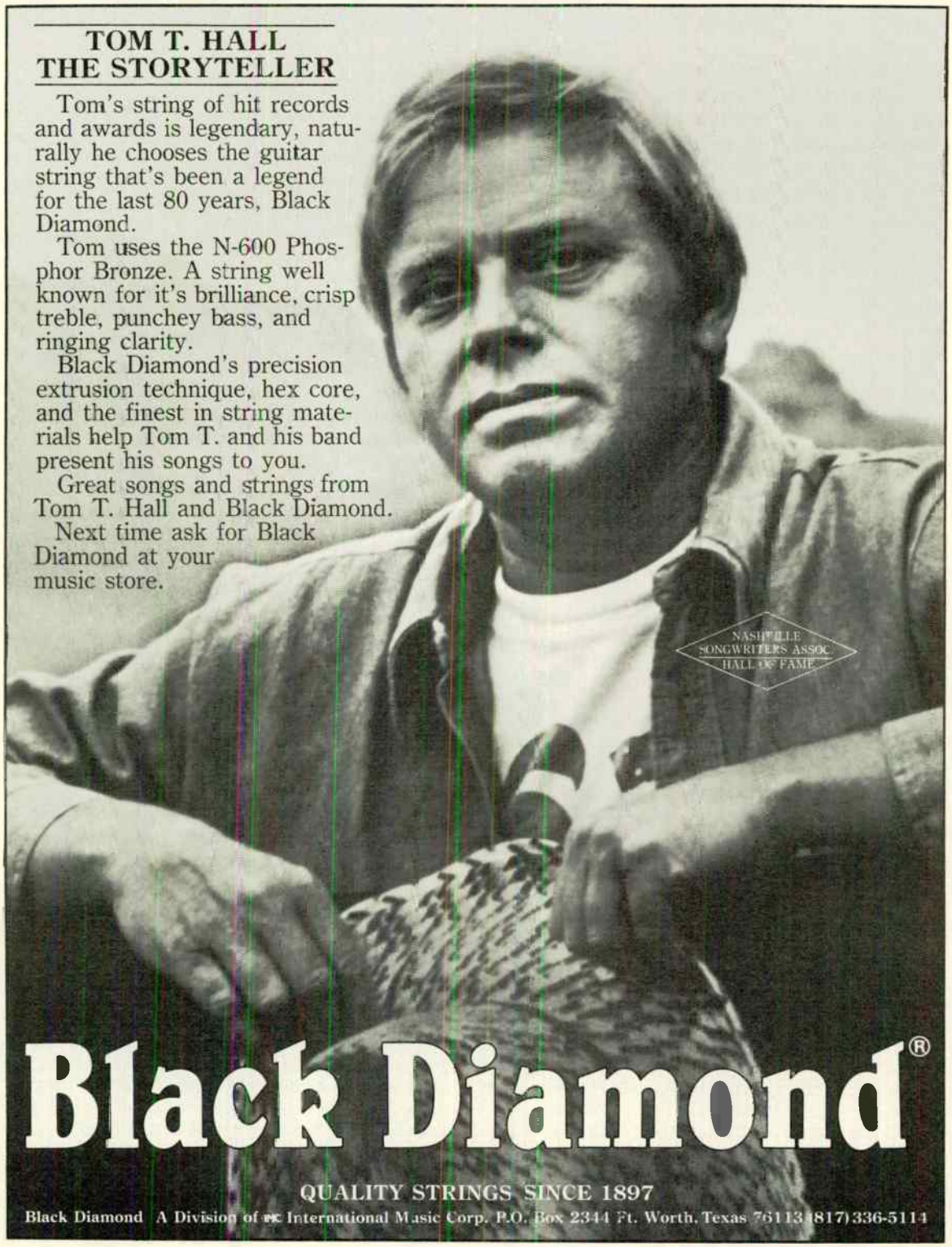
Gun Club — *Fire Of Love* (Ruby/Slash) Hailing from the Hollywood Delta, these sons of Blind Lemon Rotten set their dual slide guitars on stun, rev up the rhythm section, and take on the American blues tradition with a rapacious punk enthusiasm mingled with genuine respect. It is a mark of their true mettle that both the mad voodoo arrangement of Robert Johnson's "Preaching The Blues" and their own "She's Like Heroin To Me" sound like they have a hellhound snapping at their heels.

The Blasters (Slash) No copy rockabilly cats, L.A.'s Blasters have an ace original pensman in lead guitarist Dave Alvin and "Marie Marie" — a hit for Shakin' Stevens everywhere but here — is inarguably his finest hour. The band also rustles up some New Orleans gumbo with "Hollywood Bed" and color "Highway 61" (not Rev. Bob's) Chicago blue(s). But the best thing about this debut platter is they'll hit the road to support it, where their apparent studiophobia won't mean a hill of beans.

Glenn Phillips Band — *Dark Lights* (Snow Star) Before the B-52s, before Capricorn Records, there was the Hampton Grease Band — Georgia's own psycho heavy metal Grateful Dead with a penchant for long chaotic instrumental passages that sounded like Cream-meets-Sun Ra. In that wonderfully twisted tradition comes Hampton guitarists Glenn Phillips' third solo outing with his trio, a collection of short but soaring instrumental flashes of tortuous variations on Beck, McLaughlin, Hen-

continued on page 88

IF YOU KNOW MUSIC YOU KNOW TOM T.



JAZZ

By Howard Mandel

SHORT TAKES

In this month's releases, **Cecil Taylor** is king, having mastered a world of compositional complexity with improvisational finesse. He's perfectly capable of describing the whole of the universe with his two hands when 88 tuned bongos are in reach.

There is nothing simple about Cecil's solo *Fly! Fly! Fly! Fly! Fly!* (PA/USA), but it joins *Spring Of Two Blue Jays* and *Air Above Mountains*, Taylor's two other man-alone efforts, as the least forbidding paths into the monarch's advanced harmonic sphere. The tracks are short enough for radio airplay (but don't hold your breath), and actually rock (though rather abstractly).

Like the above mentioned lord, **Sun Ra** is royalty, exploring the cosmos with his Arkestra. *Sunrise In Different Dimensions* (hat Hut), recorded live in Willisau, Switzerland in 1980, presents Ra's brave team of ten making several jazz classics their own. Though long part of his concert repertoire, Jelly Roll Morton's "King Porter Stomp," Billy Strayhorn's "'A' Train," Monk's "'Round Midnight," "Big John Special" and other unexpected but familiar items fit well amidst Ra's originals and have not been previously documented by the Arkestra. While he may not be CT, defining the infinity within, Sun Ra controls keyboard clusters of exploding novae, while his Arkestra seems ready to plunge into any roughness short of an asteroid belt.

For comprehensive but singularly smooth domination of genre, there's only one Cid, arisen from Nuevo York and expert in the dance. I'm talkin' **Eddie Palmieri**, whose eponymous new album (Coco) revives his pure, classical Latin roots after his audacious last effort fused hot jazz and fast voodoo rhythms. Palmieri is a suggestive, rather than explicit, keyboard soloist, but damn, what an orchestra leader. He steers his excellent group through charts that shift from stately turns to wicked *guaguancos* as quickly as the Art Ensemble transmutes advanced bop into meaningful freedom. Cheo Feliciano and Ishmael Miranda sing the Spanish lyrics with heart throbs in their throats. If you've heard Palmieri, you want this LP, and if you haven't, you ought to.

Paying homage to the paladins of the piano, we must not slight such nobles as **Marian McPartland** and **George Shearing**, who are *Alone Together* (Concord Jazz), administering detailed duets with professional aplomb. Worthy of consideration for knighthood is an advanced experimentalist named **Tom Ehrlich**, who has devised his own atmospherics, impressively performed over a two-record set *Stars* (on Singularity, available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, NYC, NY 10012). Ehrlich is just 40, a resident of the Southwest, and his acoustic, neoclassical work is decidedly non-linear but nonetheless easy to slip into.

Now let's take a moment to abuse an aging pretender to leadership. **Herbie Hancock**'s *Magic Windows* (Columbia) open on several unmemorable, slick and formulaic tracks bound for the urban contemporary (read: upscale black) market. David Rubinson's direction, Ray Parker, Jr.'s ballad "Tonight's The Night," and vocals by Sylvester, Vicki Randle and Gavin Christopher stand out; Hancock, despite his use of more than a dozen instruments, does not. His collaboration with guitarist Adrian Belew and three Ghanaian percussionists, ridiculously entitled "The Twilight Clone," sounds (surprise!) just like Talking Heads. If this is the best Hancock can do, I'll trade in my well-worn *Maiden Voyage* for *Splash* (Fantasy), the latest dive taken by trumpeter **Freddie Hubbard**, and *make* myself happy.

Verily, *Splash* is Hub at his most innocuous; he's closing in on the Herb Alpert Fatuity Award. The Heavy Hoosier's chops are up to anyone's, but he doesn't do anything with them that he hasn't done much better before. One Al Hall, Jr., has arranged rhythms, horns, and synthesizers, played trombones and solina strings, grabbed the mic to sing, helped pen several songs and co-produced this depressing disc. I predict both he and *Splash* will soon be forgotten.

The seat where Freddie first made his mark, brassman for the ever-explosive **Art Blakey**, is again filled by a potent youngster steeped in the tradition yet pointing towards things to come. **Wynton Marsalas** has also been blowing with Herbie Hancock (their summer waxing is eagerly awaited), but he's become the virtual musical director of Blakey's current Messengers, comprising tenor saxist Bill Pierce, altoist Bobby Watson, bassist Charles Fambrough and pianist James Williams, besides Buhania and Marsalas. Their debut album is, indeed, *Straight Ahead* (Concord Jazz). A live date from the Keystone Korner, the set's sound, both taped and played, is a bit uneven but the soloists prove equal to Blakey's unpredictable barrage, and Marsalas establishes that his confidence, crispness, ambition and angularity are as good as rumored. You didn't hear Blakey and band in 1981? Fear not; *he* hasn't sold out, and this was taped only last June.

Contemporary has returned to availability much of its older catalogue, and bassist **Red Mitchell**'s *Quartet* (CR), with reedman James Clay (Texas preachin' a la Billy Harper on tenor, more tentative on flute), pianist Lorraine Geller (warm, light, compatible — where is she now?), and drummer Billy Higgins (as usual, bright, loose and propulsive) is still pleasing, well-recorded and concise, 23 years later. Mitchell, one of the late 50s bass virtuosi, now resides in Scandinavia; we've missed him without realizing it.

Prestige is also reactivating its out-of-prints — so much cheaper than new recordings, don't you know? — with a bargain sticker list price of $5.98 (pay no more). Lately added to the fine cheapo series is **Dexter Gordon**'s *Resurgence;* **Lee Morgan**'s *Take 12*; *Opening Blues,* a date led by **Benny Carter** with Ben Webster, Barney Bigard, Jimmy Rowles and Mel Lewis, among others.

Discoveries for the 80s are what we really need. Few record labels would agree, right now, though Carl Jefferson has taken a chance with guitarist **Emily Remler**. Her *Firefly* (Concord Jazz) is a safe step forward. Though only 24, Ms. Remler has the plectral skills of a 55-year-old and sounds natural in the company of Hank Jones, Bob Maize and Jake Hanna. Next time out, Emily, we could stand some of that New Orleans R&B you tried with Little Queenie and the Percolators. Not that there's anything *wrong* with "In A Sentimental Mood"...

Chijazz (Erect Records) comes from

the air was a veil of smoke and sweat and laughter.
the music, a blade, white hot and icey blue.
the horn, of course, a Benge.

Jazz Shorts *continued*

heartland Chicago (— er, make that 7250 Broadway, Merrilville, Indiana) and reveals vocalist Luba Raashiek, an Eddie Jefferson sound-alike who does a particulary nasty job on "Well... You Needn't" backed by a fine group: Von Freeman and Ari Brown, reeds, John Young, piano, Milton Suggs, bass; Robert Shy, drums. **Bagel O' Fun** *Live In The Underground Wonderland* (Sparrow Sound Design, 1721 N. Dayton, Chicago) seems like a fusion group, but has many more notions than just jazz-rock. A quartet led by keyboardist Dave Gordon and guitarist Jack Gallagher, Bagel adds trumpet ringer Billy Brimfield on one tune, and is worth keeping an ear out for, if that's your taste.

Continuing down his own rocky road is altoist **Art Pepper** with the third volume from a 1977 date. *Saturday Night At The Village Vanguard* (Contemporary) is an amazing climax — the side-long "Cherokee" fulfills Pepper's childhood desire to call himself a musician, and then some. Elvin Jones pounds as though Coltrane is before him; George Cables is fleet and neat; George Mraz beat-solid and self-effacing. I'm going to turn back to *Thursday* and *Friday* nights to see what I overlooked. Here Pepper squeals so high and moans so low as to be suspected of switching to soprano and tenor saxes in mid-chorus. But he hasn't — he's just healthy and free, bursting with ideas and able to exploit them. Hot, very hot. M

Rock Shorts *from pg. 84*

drix and Zoot Horn Rollo. One minute he's Mahavishnu Johnny Ramone ("29," "The Tube"), the other he's displaying quiet melodic class on the fragile "Phoebe." And just think, there were *two* guitarists like this in the HGB.

Alvin Lee — *RX5* (Atlantic) Nearly ten years after Ten Years After, Lee continues to plow the same tiresome boogie turf, sweetening this lightweight harvest with the obligatory FM gloss. Did Mick Taylor really listen to this album before he agreed to go on tour with him?

Al Stewart — *Indian Summer* (Arista) Three-quarters live reruns, one-quarter new studio sides of which "Here in Angola" and "Pandora" best represent Stewart's alluring blend of commercial pop grace and folk-poet eloquence. Five or six more new ones like that would not have been amiss.

Four Tops — *Tonight!* (Casablanca) The Return of the Magnificent Four — again. Proving once again that soul isn't a sound but a state of mind, the Tops light up this otherwise well-executed program of assembly-line uptown R&B (galloping disco, glitzy EW&F-style ladies' choices, soft-pedalled funk) with classic Motown fire. But apparently only Berry Gordy knows what it takes to make them really burn.

continued on pg. 94

Cover Songs *from pg.22*

pared to the mid-sixties, the quality of today's songwriting is less, but not if you compare today to 1975. The music was in full flower in the sixties like it's never been. It was such a fertile period — for five or ten years, everything was going on at once, from the Beatles to Motown."

"I think that there are newer people around who are good writers, but they are fewer and far between. With the cultural shift, people are going into computers or whatever, not into rock 'n' roll. But are we gonna have another Jimi Hendrix? Are we going to have people writing like the Beatles, only new stuff? Are we going to have more Joni Mitchells and Bob Dylans? I don't think anybody knows..."

Richard Landis sees the problem as less a lack of people than of more subtle requirements: "Today, everybody I know is a songwriter, but there are thousands of them who don't have the time, the art or the common sense to write a great song, so these oldies just get more valuable." Where is the imagination indeed?

Another factor in the cover explosion is the disproportionate number of Motown classics that get recycled. Paul Grein points out that this reflects the growing share of R&B in today's market, a sort of second pass-through of great songs that didn't get a really equal shot at exposure in the racially stratified sixties. Linda Wortman's Atlantic catalog has gotten a lot of use in the U.K. recently, with Elvis Costello's use of "I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down" a visible example. Wortman also works the old Buffalo Springfield and Neil Young material and "between you and me and a tree, I can't get *anyone* to cut that stuff."

One class of songs that will probably be recycled in the near future is the Creedence Clearwater Revival catalog. A mini land-rush has already occurred over John Fogerty's "Almost Saturday Night," dressed up by Dave Edmunds, Rick Nelson (twice), the Searchers and Karla DeVito (who did the song at the suggestion of *Musician*'s Brian Cullman). "I was aware that Rick Nelson had done the song," said DeVito, "but when I heard that Dave Edmunds had cut it after I did, I was ready to slit my wrists and use the tapes of the song for dental floss." Cutting oldies can be hazardous to your health. Another example of simultaneous covers was the recent appearance of two independent singles of "Double Shot Of My Baby's Love" by both the Original Symptoms and R.F. & the Radar Angels. And this is from the *new* music community, mind you.

The argument that is most often given to justify a remake is presented by Richard Landis: "There's a whole generation that never heard a song like 'Angel Of The Morning.' It's been 14 or 15 years since the original and kids have been born and bar-mitzvah'd since then." Arista's Marcy Drexler feels it is well nigh an obligation, the Pepsi generation's burden if you will, to expose sixties material: "It is very important to make the younger generation aware of all the great songs we grew up with, as well as give them a well-rounded rock 'n' roll history. There are a lot of people out there who don't know this stuff.

As one who has had much to gain by the cover explosion, Jaap Eggermont, the Dutch mastermind behind "Stars on 45," the Beatles-cum-disco medley, has this argument highly refined: "The thing was to introduce that type of music to disco. Those songs you heard on the radio and listened to and sang in the car — you can now do all that and dance to them, too. These types of songs weren't on the market and I think my records were bought by people who don't own the originals — youngsters. It gives an extra dimension to Beatles songs." Eggermont, who used to drum for Golden Earring, actually came up with the concept from a bootleg recording of a crudely-spliced Beatles medley; he did so little to alter it that he left the first song on the bootleg, Shocking Blue's "Venus," on his own version, a not-surprising failure of imagination.

This earnest defense of the Pepsi generation's burden may actually be the best face of a disturbing fundamental cause of the great coverup: the inability of the babyboomers to move beyond the music they were weaned on. Marcy Drexler elaborates: "A lot of what's wrong with radio is *us* — people who are locked into their generation's sound and are not particularly open to or interested in new music." When viewed from this perspective, it is not as surprising to realize that this has actually been going on throughout the seventies. For the entire decade we've seen a constant recycling of the music of the babyboom generation. The people who buy records, listen to the radio and are the prime *spenders*, all came of age in the sixties." For Grein, the most unusual thing about 1981's crop is "the disproportionate number of songs that were originally hits in 1965."

The time warp back to 1965 is ironic to Grein because it was a time when nostalgia for 16-year-old material was totally absent: "You didn't have the music of 15 years before hanging around then as you do now. It was absurd to consider something, be it a song or an artist, from the era of 1949 or so on the charts in 1965. They were light years apart." This sixties carryover can be quickly confirmed by a quick look at the charts, replete with new work by the Stones, Diana Ross, Burt Bacharach, the Moody Blues, the Four Tops, the Isleys, Eric Clapton, Cliff Richards, George Martin, Streisand, Neil Diamond,

continued

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Cover Songs *from pg. 88*

the Who, Pink Floyd, Van Morrison, Steve Miller and Steve Winwood (not to mention the three Beatle survivors and Mr. Dylan). As Richard Landis says about "Angel," "the public *wanted* this record — no socio-political-metaphysical routine. You did something right and you got a million people to buy it." "Angel," in fact, went to #1, outpacing Merilee Rush's version which hit #7.

The plain truth is that in the last decade, music and the related industry has become, like we the audience, dependent on what is safe, familiar and nostalgic, looking back to a time when music meant *none* of those things and drawing material and inspiration from there. All the new waves we've seen recently haven't done much to change all that. M

CMS *from pg. 71*

for Pete Seeger to take around the world as an example of great Japanese flute playing), but when he came to CMS he permitted the Studio not only to record but videotape his concert. He also did his physical workout, a system of exercises with a long oak pole, for the cameras, demonstrating a few farts and screams in the bargain while the rest of us huddled in our coats and a couple of jazz musicians (Carroll and DeJohnette) observed the goings-on from the perimeter of the field in their cars, heaters running. Doso Roshi also asked to be made an honorary full professor of the Creative Music Studio (a diploma had to be invented), and said that on his visit to America next year he wouldn't bother with the rest of the country, only come to CMS, and if anyone wanted to see him they could visit him there.

As for myself, I think the place has an extraordinary potential. All things worth doing have this much in common: they are unprecedented. CMS stumbles here and there; because what it is doing is necessary, it works. Obviously I was impressed by the workshops, etc., but some of the things that impressed me most were quite small: the fact, for instance, that the students had to clean and maintain the buildings between classes and took that job as seriously as any other. Have I forgotten to describe the place? Oh dear. Nestled in the small hills of West Hurley, New York, large and small buildings of the former Oehler's Mountain Lodge. Enter, stage left, a squirrel, a rabbit, a doe, a Volvo, an Israeli, a jeep. Creative Music Studio, P.O. Box 671, Woodstock, NY 12498. M

Ibrahim *from pg. 30*

IBRAHIM: When I started playing I had gone my own way just like now. I was not involved with jazz. I just played what I heard and felt. People told me I sounded like Monk or Debussy. I'd never heard of Monk or Debussy. Then when I heard Monk I said, "Ahhh, this is a direction to go." When I got to Europe I met Monk. I'd heard many people say that he was difficult and wouldn't speak to you. I went and introduced myself and said, "I am a piano player from South Africa. Thank you for all the wonderful inspiration." He looked very surprised. He said to me, "That is the first time that a piano player says that to me." That surprised me. I know there's always been this talk of Monk not having any technique, but we are not concerned with the outside. And, when you look at from the inside, you find there is an incredible structure. It is monumental.

MUSICIAN: What about the blues influence in your music or the boogie woogie influence in some South African music?

IBRAHIM: Well, as Duke says, "Blues is the complement to a man and a woman going steady. And if neither of them was to sing the blues, the blues just vamps 'til ready." It's the same experience. There's a close affinity between the music in South Africa and here. Also politically, socially, economically, very, very close. My grandmother, in fact, was one of the founding members of the A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal) Church in Cape Town. We had visits from black American bishops once a year. It was a big occasion. The hymns that we sang were from the Alexander hymnal, which was the same hymnal that was used here. The spirituals we knew. Blues was from records. Boogie-woogie, Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis, Pete Johnson, we heard all those things. For us it was like seeing an image of ourselves, because we could relate it to the traditional music. The traditional music was at least what you would call 16-bar or 8-bar blues. Four- or five-part

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MUSICIAN: Throughout the 60s your recordings were primarily with small groups. Were you working with a big band?

IBRAHIM: You see, when I play solo piano or trio or quartet, it's just because of economics. But the experience is really the whole society or the whole *jamaa* or the whole group or the whole tribe or the whole nation. We never think of me as an individual. It's not solo piano. The old adage is, "The piano is an orchestra." The thinking is not in terms of one person. The structure of the music is always in terms of the group.

MUSICIAN: When did you start working with a large group?

IBRAHIM: In South Africa. It was always big band, but not in the sense of the big band factory with five reeds, four trombones, four trumpets and the rhythm section. In carnival we have voices. For example, in the rural areas like Swaziland, there are festivals with 300 or 400 drummers, about 1,000 maidens, 5,000 warriors. The concept here when you say big band is 15 guys, but that we did in South Africa anyway. In the 60s I wrote for the Danish Radio Orchestra and string quartets. It is always something that has to be done because the ideal situation is in the group.

MUSICIAN: How about recently?

IBRAHIM: It is a question of finding musicians who are sympathetic and have the concept. The younger musicians you find are much more universal in their approach instead of just playing in one direction. Because of modern communications, the whole milieu of existence has been integrated. The music needed that kind of international interpretation instead of just being regional. That's why me and Carlos Ward have been together for 20 years. We had an immediate ambience even at the time when he was with Coltrane and we knew John and afterwards when I played with Elvin Jones. Then the music went through another period. We are inundated by waves. Another wave is upon us now.

MUSICIAN: How do you pick musicians?

IBRAHIM: Oh, I don't pick musicians. They come to me. Whenever we have a project, we ask Allah to send us those.

MUSICIAN: Do you compose for an ensemble and then allow players solo space?

IBRAHIM: The structures come as projects. It's not music in the sense that it's thought out to be music. If we say, "The Wedding," it has a specific structure. It is an excerpt from the *Liberation Opera* which we plan to launch next year. It is the story of two young people in South Africa. The young man's parents are killed by the police during an upris-

continued on page 102

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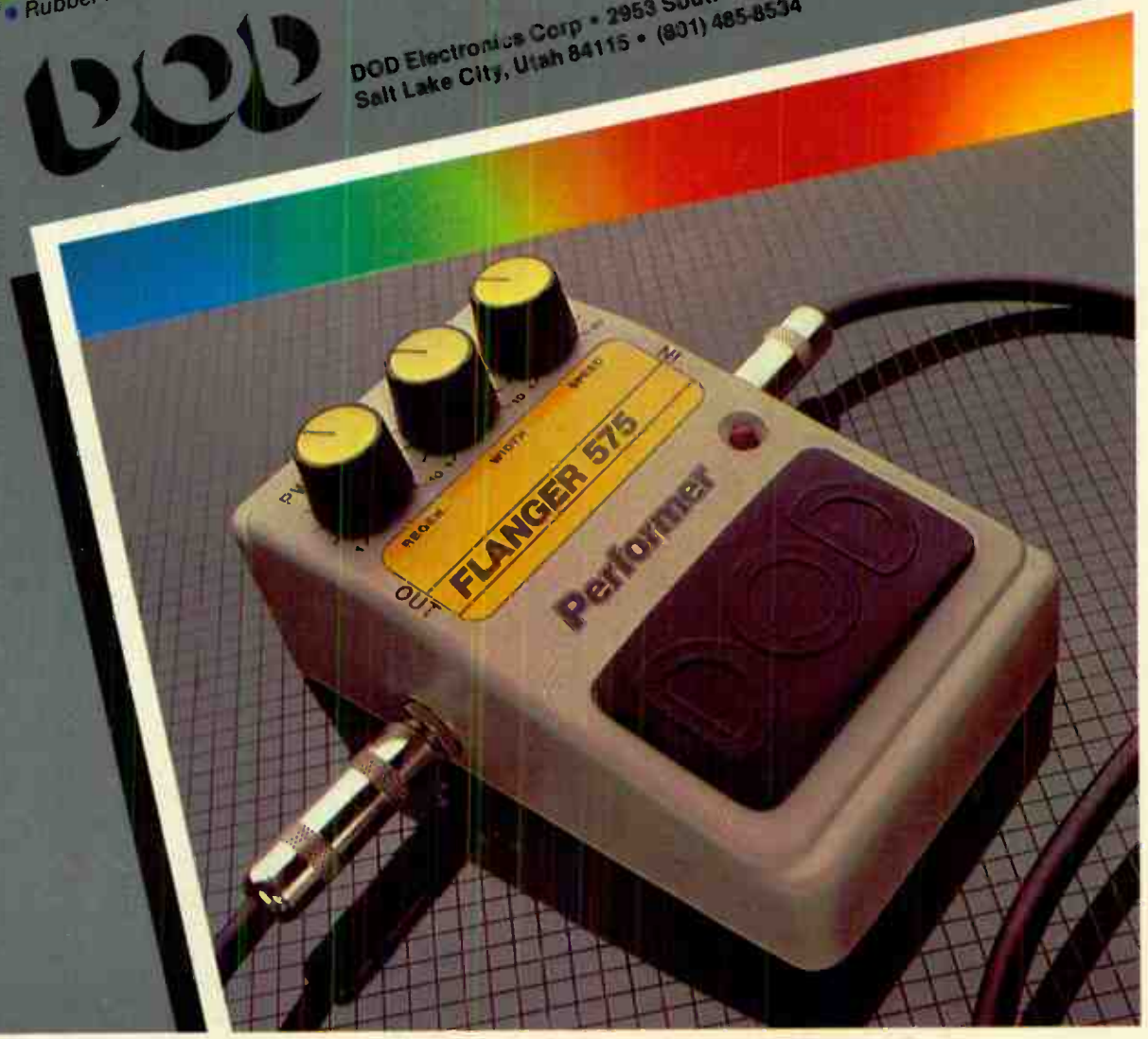

The Time (Warner Bros.) Greasy, punchy jam-ups from Minneapolis pals of His Erotic Majesty Prince. Unfortunately, they tend to blow their wad on aimless funk riffing (three of the LP's six tunes account for 28 minutes) which indicates that, at least as songwriters, their time has not yet come.

Mike Batt — *Six Days in Berlin* (Epic) Or "Wagner was a Womble." British pop producer puts on his thinking cap, mates the Berlin Opera Orchestra with a rock rhythm section, and calls it art. With a capital F.

Bee Gees — *Living Eyes* (RSO) If "Stayin' Alive" and "You Should Be Dancing" was music for a Saturday night fever, this is music for the early morning after, mostly rich dreamy ballads that go down easy. So easy in fact, you may miss them altogether.

Joe "King" Carrasco and the Crowns — *Party Safari* (Hannibal) The Tex-Mex tornado marks time 'til his next LP with this four-toone twelve-inch. "Bad Rap" sounds more Athens (Geo.) than Austin and the overall sound is a little too studio-cool. Still, "That's the Love" and "Gin Baby Gin" are a couple of real hot tamales, the latter copping its loping Farfisa fill from the Swingin' Medallions' "Double Shot of My Baby's Love." Who probably got it from Augie Meyer. M

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FEEDBACK:

Sissy Guitars; Vintage Personality, Repeatability and Built-In Variation; Solid Body Woods and What-not...

By J.C. Costa

Usual editorial practice would find this column devoted to some newer, more sophisticated developments in laser drum pedals or digital saxophones, complete with sweeping generalizations and half-digested lumps of information. Thankfully, my editor's largesse has permitted me a temporary respite from the numbing predictability of yet another "product overview" theme piece [not that there's anything wrong with a few good sweeping generalizations from time to time — Ed].

Instead, in a more random sequence of blinding insights and careful reconsiderations, I will share a few thoughts and discoveries relating to the hardware that affects the course of modern music. Herein are some admittedly subjective but, I hope, useful views.

More and more thinking is being focused on the inherent resonant properties of wood on solid-body guitars. Pickups still play a crucial role, of course, but the special presence of a Les Paul or Stratocaster has a lot to do with the kind of wood used to build the body. For the Paul, a felicitous pairing of a mahogany body with a maple top makes all the difference in depth and projection of the sound. Similarly, Leo Fender's use of alder is a major part of that unique Fender sound in the Strat, Telecaster or Jazzmaster guitars. During a recent transatlantic conversation, Alan Holdsworth, pyrotechnic fusion guitarist of U.K. and Tony Williams fame talked of his increasing preoccupation with body woods as a primary factor in the final sound of an instrument. He also alluded to a current debate among luthiers over whether or not exotic hardwoods like rosewood, koa or zebrawood offer any *sonic* advantages over less decorative woods.

50s and 60s was on the more relaxed, "personalized" environment in guitar production lines. If one worker, more skilled than the next, built an instrument with a particularly nice selection of wood, then the resulting instrument really would have an appreciably better sound, feel and look than any of the others that came off the line that day. Thus, certain guitars come off the line as winners and others can be lemons in every sense of the word.

This means that both parties are right; not every vintage guitar is a good instrument and the emphasis on date and serial number as a sole means of valuation is ridiculous. But DiMarzio did not, in fact, claim that *all* vintage guitars were great; just certain ones that he stumbled across in his collecting career. Modern production techniques did ensure more repeatability and predictability, but eliminated that accident of fate that can reward years of guitar hunting.

This idea of repeatability and freedom from the irrationality of wood guitars propelled Charles Kaman into producing the Ovation guitar line. Kaman used his technical expertise and his aviation company's advanced capabilities to produce a reasonably priced instrument that can be successfully amplified; in fact, only when they are amplified do Ovations sound particlarly special. They efficiently convert acoustic sound to electronic energy, eliminating the wooden guitar feedback problem and producing a clear, silvery tone. But the repeatability factor has run amok: one would be hard-pressed indeed to tell the difference between one Ovation guitar and the next.

When Kaman realized that musicians really want and need that signature, that uniqueness of one guitar in a million, he completed the circle. Having removed all those annoying eccentricities, having tamed the wooden beast, he put back into each top-of-the-line Ovation, the Adamas, some little quirk of individuality. Thus, ironically, the most evolved *repeatable* production facilities put in the same variation that the "personal" techniques had earlier insured.

Beginner's or "lower-end" instruments have improved tremendously in the last decade. Novices no longer have to grapple with warped necks, thick rusting strings or the unfortunate combo of high action and exaggerated string tension which could lead to bleeding fingers and aborted guitar careers. But how easy must the manufacturer make it for the musician before we all reach the point of diminishing returns? Arguably, the great blues pioneers created a personal sound based on triumphing over totally inadequate guitars. A requisite amount of struggle might well be necessary to forge the kind of character and commitment that produces exceptional guitarists. Not that you should suffer in the literal sense, but certain over-refinements like ultra light gauge "sissy strings" (.008 E string sets for example) and super-low, fast action have led to problems in tuning consistency, a too-light sound that has to be compensated for by boosting pickup response or amplifier output, and a generation of lead guitar "wankers" who can't see beyond the next cliched run of sixteenth notes. In the long run, I have my doubts about whether this type of make-it-easy-on-yourself thinking is beneficial, either to the individual player or music in general.

Another debate is the vintage vs. new guitar sound, with Larry DiMarzio providing a case for vintage in his "All-Star Guitars" (Oct. '81) and a recent letter by an anonymous guitar salesman (whose girlfriend drives a Harley) claiming that there was no perceptible difference. A look at the manufacturing techniques of the two different periods may shed some light on the subject. The emphasis in the

Finally, I received a letter from a Neil Merryweather criticizing me for omitting B.C. Rich basses from my "Bass Technology" piece (Dec. '81). He concludes, "In looking through a few issues of *Musician*, I noticed there were no ads for B.C. Rich guitars. If this is the reason Rich basses were not mentioned in your article, and I suspect it is, I can understand the politics involved and thus the real cause of the omission." Rest assured, Mr. Merryweather, that if advertising exerts any pressure on this writer, it is for *inclusion*, not exclusion. I agree that smaller companies like Rich and Hamer make some fine instruments, but I felt the piece could not mention everyone and decided to focus on the elemental movers and shakers in the field of bass technology. Many of the companies highly praised are not advertisers in this magazine. While stories abound of music mags using their studio pages to settle advertising scores, none applies to *Musician*. With such upstanding uncorruptability my job's probably not worth a plugged nickel now. Well, 'til next time...

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24-TRACKS TO GO

Two former road sausages develop a concept of remote recording that is truly mobile, reasonably priced and versatile enough to join Mick Fleetwood's African odyssey.

By Mark Slag

What has 44 wheels, 24 tracks, and, in a manner of speaking, flies? The answer is L.A.'s loss and New York's gain with the arrival of Effanel Music's portable 24-track recording *system* to the Big Apple's growing family of budget-minded recording facilities. Effanel is the brainchild of two former "road-dogs," Gary Geller and Randy Ezratty, who after less than a year in the business have already carved out a formidable niche for themselves in the remote recording marketplace. With an initial investment of about $150,000, Effanel (a phonetic homage to the "Fear and Loathing" syndrome) quickly attained notoriety as the owners and coordinators of the equipment contracted by Mick Fleetwood when he traveled to Ghana last year for the recording of his RCA release, *The Visitor*. The album was recorded entirely on location (though mixed elsewhere) under what any jaded pro would describe as trying circumstances. Hard after the cross-country trip bringing them to their new headquarters in New York's loft-laden TRIBECA area, the two entrepreneurs recounted their rapid rise in the remote recording industry.

The concept developed as the two partners spent their early years on the road with veterans like Seals & Crofts and Al Jarreau. Like most road-bound techies and administrators (Ezratty was a P.A. engineer with sales and demo credentials from the Allison Research Company; Geller a well-respected production manager), they spent their off-hours in hotel rooms discussing what was lacking in the business and how they could parlay their experience into an alternate means of earning a living doing what they liked — handling the technical side of music, providing players with a valuable service at a fair price while contributing to the overall creative process. They soon formalized a concept of remote recording and, through a series of beneficial contacts with manufacturers and professional musicians, quickly realized their goal to be owners and operators of a portable, low-cost and space-efficient recording system capable of producing professional quality recordings.

Sound Workshop provided Effanel with a customized 28-channel console that breaks down to three main frames cabled together with heavy-duty multi-pin connectors. Ezratty goes out of his way to praise the engineers at Sound Workshop, a company whose low-priced consoles consistently win rave reviews. Effanel, in an effort to keep the signal flow clean between mic and tape, chose the Series 30-E partly because of the transformerless channel modules provided by the Long Island-based console manufacturer. Ezratty maintains that the combination of the Sound Workshop board and the Stephens 24-track recorder were ideal choices for a "straight-forward, road-minded recording system," with no pretensions of challenging highly regarded remote operations like the Record Plant or Wally Heider's mobile units on the West Coast.

Effanel's compact cockpit needs little set-up space, travels on the same truck with the band's gear and costs half the usual remote rates.

The relatively low overhead of the Effanel system allows the young company to offer location 24-track recording at about half the rates charged by major remote recorders according to Gary Geller, who handles the business and logistical side of the Effanel operation. "One thing that adds to the cost of bringing in a truck is that you usually pay close to a dollar-a-mile before you even begin to pay for the recording." So much for the trucks that drink gasoline and suck up two-inch tape. The Effanel alternative allows the entire recording system to be packed on the same truck carrying band gear. Geller estimates that a band filling a 40-foot semi with sound, lights and stage gear need only allow three feet to carry the 24-track recording facility, an attractive incentive for those who wish to capture those magic moments in Des Moines. The Effanel system can go places the big trucks can't, requiring only a small dressing room backstage or a roped-off area next to the beer cooler in a club.

Their mutual road experience has helped Geller sell the Effanel concept to reinforcement companies and house soundmen around the country. "Ideally we're just two more guys on the crew and we make a point of working alongside stage crews, road crews and house technical staffs. The crew is the bottom line in getting a show up, on and down, and when you make a good impression on these people they'll remember you the next time a remote unit is required. A lot of live recording people have attitudes that aren't conducive to the pressure of putting a production together. We ride the crew bus, stay in the same Holiday Inns as the crew and move our own gear whenever possible." Such loyalty to their roots is admirable and prudent. No white gloves for these guys; Ezratty's hands look like a rigger's — calloused, rough and knowledgeable.

Such attributes are indicative of Effanel's "no frills" recording philosophy. Aside from the well-researched purchase of the console and recorder, outboard equipment is rudimentary studio gear, including Lexicon Prime Time Delay and 224 Reverb units, the ever popular dbx 160 limiters, two Ivonics peak and average limiters and custom mic preamp submixers. A customer's request for specific outboard gear is merely a matter of renting the item from a studio supply house.

Ezratty points out that Effanel's approach to clean recording technique guided the two partners to invest heavily

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in quality microphones. "A prime concern when we put the system together was quality equipment in a minimum of packing space. A good mic takes up the same amount of room as a mic of lesser quality, so why load up on outboard gear or console features that add weight to the whole package, all for the sake of making a bad mic sound good? So we went for the best." The equipment list sports an impressive array of transducers by Neumann, Sony, Crown, Beyer and AKG, just to name a few. Ezratty, a lover of equipment that has survived the test of time, also proudly displayed four AKG C-12 Tube mics that date back to 1950.

The system had only recently been completed when Effanel got their big shot with the Mick Fleetwood project. Not only did the small company need the approval of Fleetwood and co-producer Richard Dashutt, but they also had to meet the weight restrictions imposed by air freight carriers to Africa. The amount of paperwork for all the arrangements for the project must have been staggering, a fact supported by the encyclopedic credits on the album jacket — it seems as though the entire diplomatic corps of Ghana and their U.S. counterparts were involved in the production of Fleetwood's African odyssey.

As fate would have it, the advance design considerations employed by Geller and Ezratty paid off. Air freight to Africa is astronomical and the accountants at RCA were watching the expense reports carefully. Though Fleetwood's in-house production staff actually worked out the major details, Effanel's system was made to order for the excursion and considering the possible calamities that can befall a production crew in Gainesville, let alone Ghana, the project was completed without a hitch, though Ezratty, who made the trip while Geller manned the fort stateside, told stories of disguising requests for spare parts by using a Christian missionary's ham radio. A two-month wait for a telephone circuit to the U.S. makes for some severe downtime if a ground problem starts popping IC's in your console. Surmounting this obstacle sorely tested Ezratty's ability to keep cool in the face of imminent disaster.

Equipment maintenance is always a preoccupation of any recording facility, whether permanent or remote. Remote units have the added horrors of transporting the fragile workings of a multitrack recording system. How does one ship a highly sensitive 24-track recorder to Africa and expect it to survive the trip? Geller and Ezratty have high praise for the Stephens deck's integrity while traveling, citing their cross-country trek to New York in a rented truck without air ride suspension. As Geller recounts it, "Every time we hit a bump I cringed, and there're a lot of bumps betwen here and L.A. As soon as we set up the system, Randy put on the calibration tape and I was stunned when every track hit the mark perfectly."

With the African trip firmly behind them and their credibility established with the release of the LP, Ezratty and Geller discussed the future of Effanel Music. "A lot of bands can't foot the bill for a 24-track studio, let alone a mobile truck. We offer an alternative. We're cheaper than either of the standard 24-track formats and can stay receptive to the needs of young bands who might be intimidated by the environment and the financial pressure of going into a studio," explains Geller. "We can go to their rehearsal space or be there to record a set at the local showcase."

Ezratty concurs: "We can easily assimilate our set-up to any environment and cut the costs in half. We'll slide our rates according to the client's means. This allows us to do projects on spec when schedules and finances permit. We plan on spending a lot of time in Europe, one rationale in the move to the East Coast. Europeans are very environment-conscious, so we fit right in. Sixteen cases is nothing compared to what the average band carries on tour and the entire system can be set up and operated by one person."

While a large portion of the industry concerns itself with the acquisition of huge and expensive recorders, it's refreshing to see an Effanel emerge on the scene. Such a force will surely be noticed in an industry searching for a cost-effective means of recording quality product in an unrelenting economy, and just as surely improve the access of less mainstream and more risky music to the listening public. M

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ing. He decides that he must go and leave the country and join the Spear of the Nation — the military wing of the African National Congress. He and the young girl spend the last evening together before he has to go. They make the vow that, Allah willing, they will get married afterwards. This theme is the wedding song. It pervades the opera. So it's not the sense of a song we're writing in order to make money. It has a specific purpose in the society and it tells about the situation. That is just transmitted to the instruments and we deal with whatever is available. We don't have to say, "Now I have to go look for a trumpet player and write music for a trumpet player." We just say, "Can we do this?" This is why we had two trombones, two tenors, and an alto at the Public Theater. That was what was available.

MUSICIAN: That sounds like African Jewelry being made from beads, buttons and scrap metal.

IBRAHIM: That's improvisation. Improvisation is not standing up there playing 20 choruses. Improvisation is using what's at hand.

MUSICIAN: Can you tell me more about the opera?

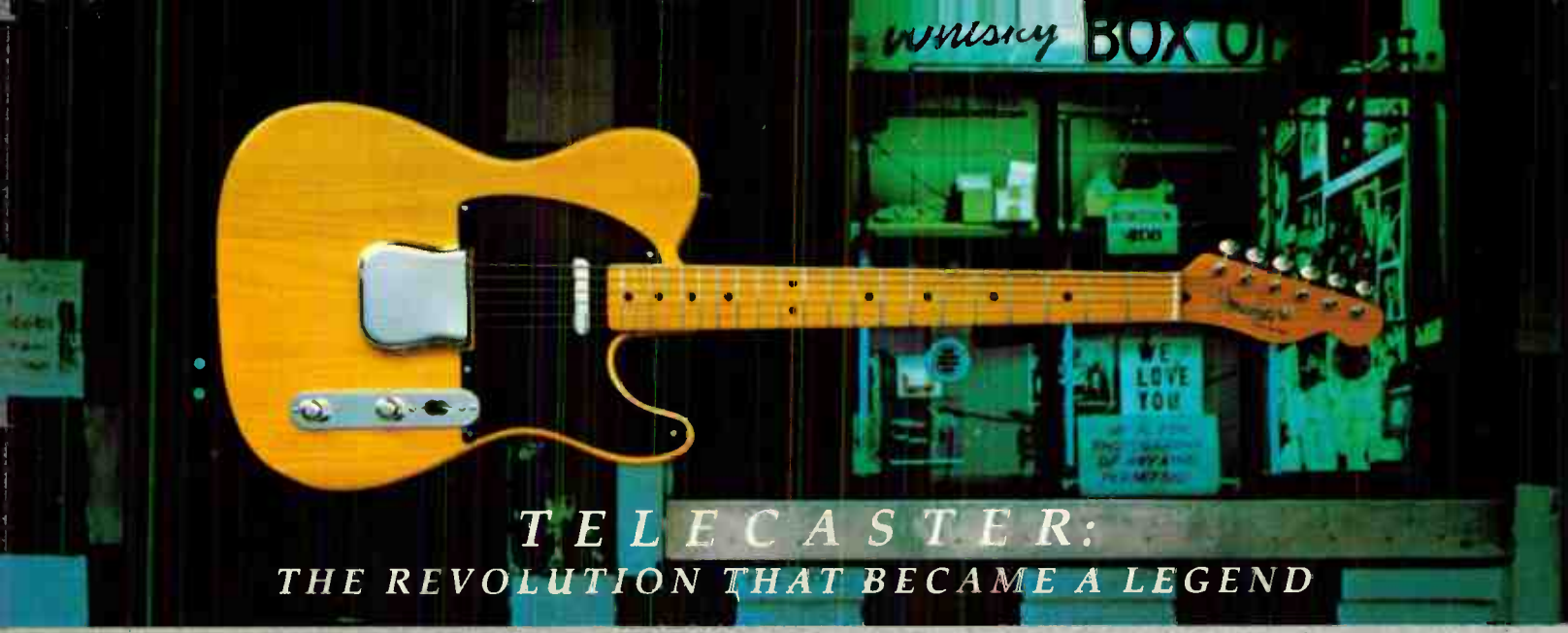
IBRAHIM: Yes, for the lack of a better word, opera or folk drama. It's about the struggle of black people in South Africa. It's in their own words through the mother, the father, the children, the baker, the taxi driver, the street sweep, the priest, the gangster. With song, dance, poetry and music they express their experiences in this horrendous system of apartheid and how they individually feel it can be resolved.

MUSICIAN: The question of resolution seems to occur quite often in South African literature. Actually I once compared your solo piano style to the literature and the tenuous position of blacks in South Africa. It seemed that your solos and the short stories I had read never reached a conclusion.

IBRAHIM: That's African. The traditional world. You would play a concert tonight and the music would continue tomorrow even though you're not playing. People would be at work and the music would continue. And the day afterwards and the day afterwards. The music would continue. See the end (laughing), that's impossible. If it was the end, everybody would be dead. Traditionally the music would just go on and it would dissolve into the community.

MUSICIAN: Has your approach to music and your music changed over the years? Do you have a sense of development or evolution?

IBRAHIM: It's an experience. The music is not important, the music is secondary. I always tell musicians, "Don't worry about the notes." You know, people came to us after the concert and said they saw pictures. They see pictures. That is enough endorsement of the music. M



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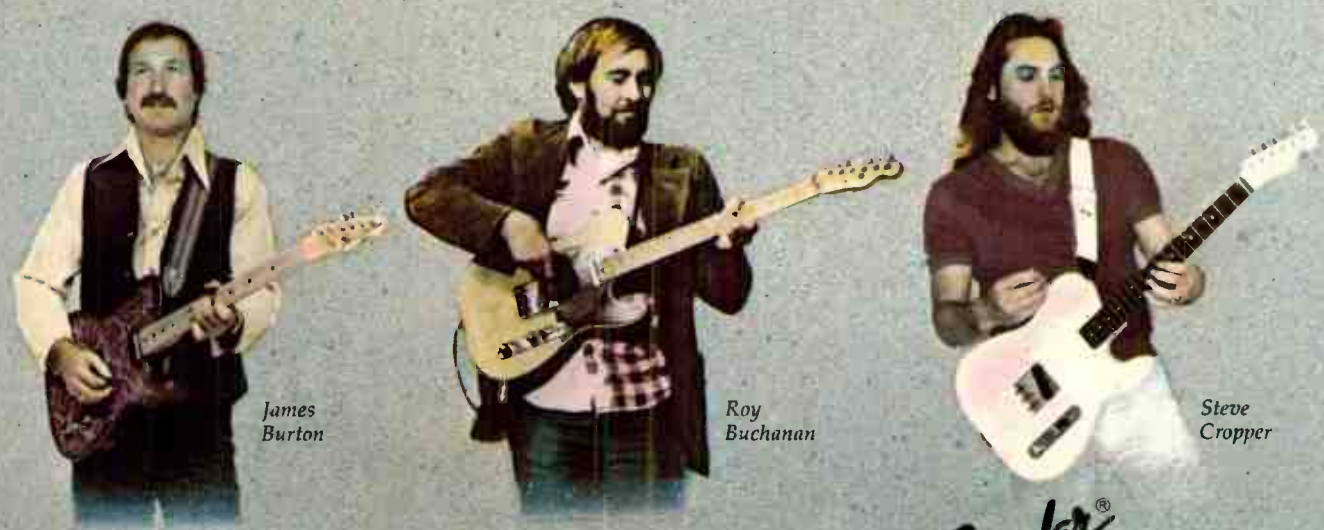

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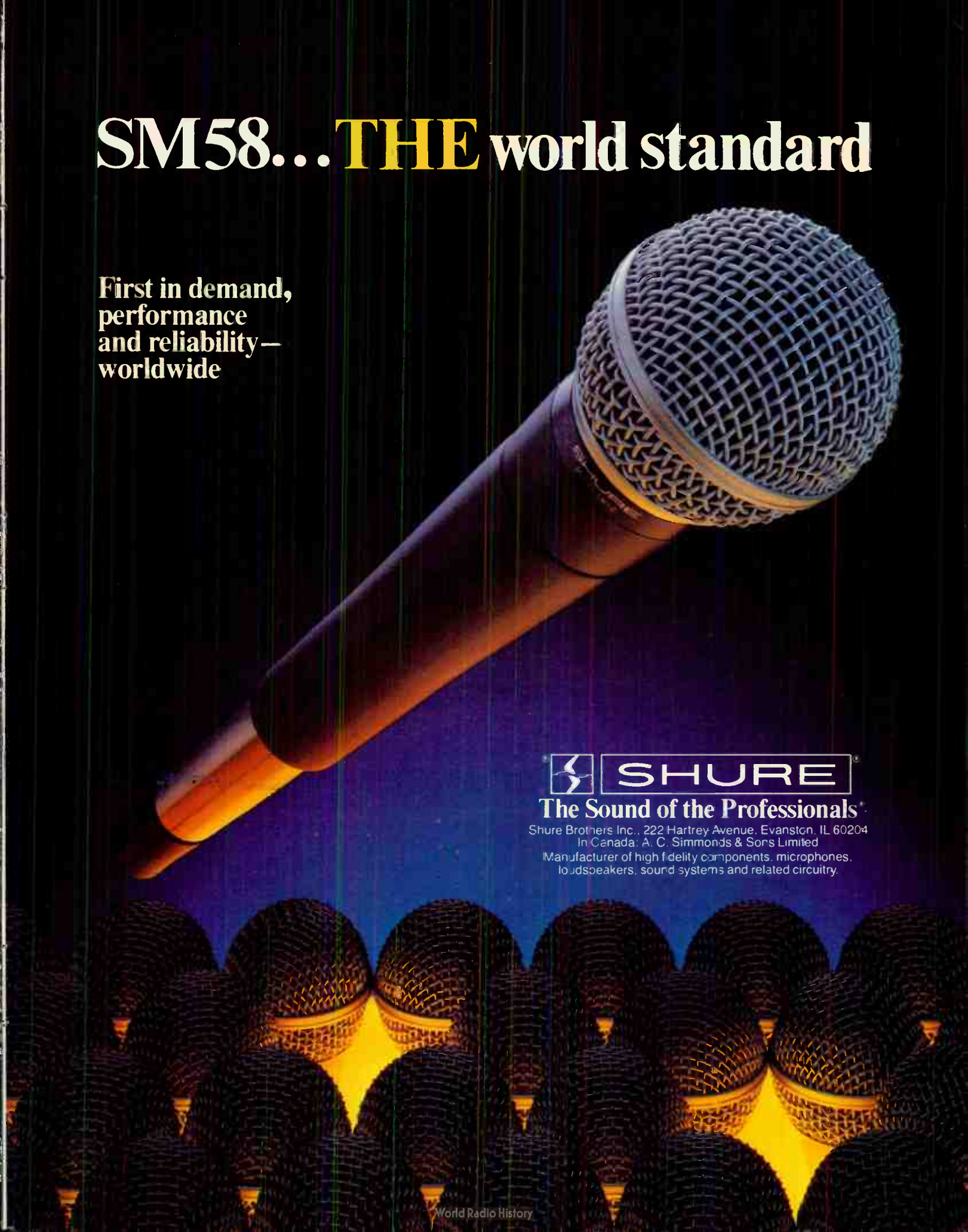

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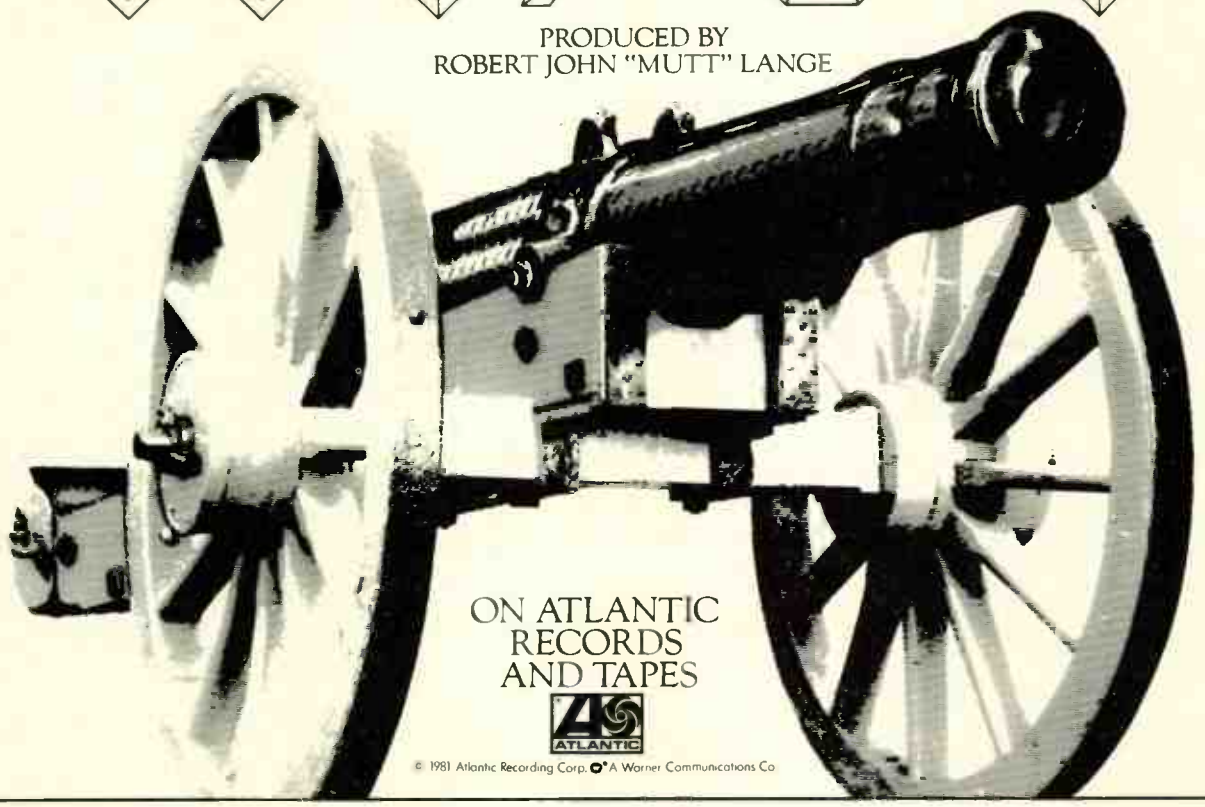

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