MUSICIAN

MEN AT WORK

JOE JACKSON

Chameleon Cool

ENGLISH BEAT
A JOYFUL NOISE

JOHN COUGAR
ROCK'S COMPLICATED BRAT

JAN GARBAREK
NORWEIGAN SAX SOLITUDE

IRON CURTAIN ROCK
SUPPRESSION OF THE PLASTIC PEOPLE

EMMYLOU HARRIS
THE ALABAMA ANGEL

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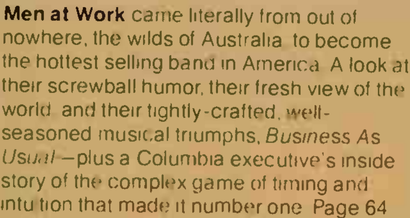
A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION

NO. 52, FEB., 1983

Joe Jackson, once a new wave icon billed as an "angry young man," has unobtrusively escaped from guitar-infested punk and into swing, and from there into salsa and his own blend of keyboard creation. David Gans interviews the man who keeps "Steppin' Out" from under everyone's expectations, the man who's walked into his well-deserved first commercial success. Page 52



Men at Work came literally from out of nowhere, the wilds of Australia, to become the hottest selling band in America. A look at their screwball humor, their fresh view of the world, and their tightly-crafted, well-seasoned musical triumphs, *Business As Usual*—plus a Columbia executive's inside story of the complex game of timing and intuition that made it number one. Page 64

The Plastic People of the Universe were not unlike your typical post-psychedelic, pre-punk outrage outfit, except for the fact that they had the misfortune to come from the mailed-fist police state of Czechoslovakia. A former band member tells the hilarious, frightening tale of the group that became an enemy of socialism simply because it was too gifted and too weird to stop making music. Page 70

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Cover Photo by Deborah Feingold

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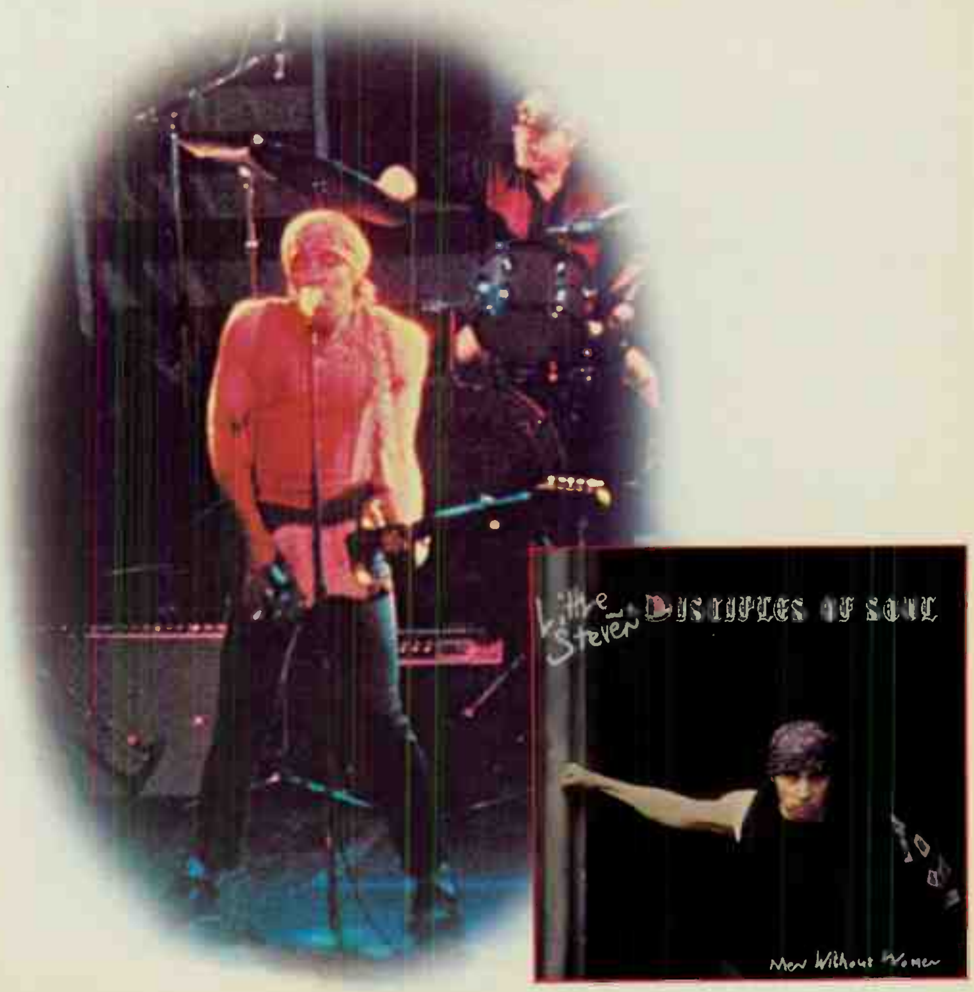
"...MEN WITHOUT WOMEN succeeds...because of a devotion, a determination to give that sweet soul music a contemporary, almost punky urgency...the result is an album that cooks from start to finish..." David Fricke—Musician, Player and Listener

"...a bold group of original songs that speak with much intensity and desire about remaining true to your dreams."
Bob Hilburn—Los Angeles Times

"What can't be denied is Little Steven's fervent intensity as a songwriter and singer. When he sings...he's talking about a life lived for music." Fred Schruers—Rolling Stone

"...an album of uncompromising, passionate rock and roll."
Lisa Robinson—N.Y. Times Syndicate



LITTLE STEVEN and the DISCIPLES of SOUL

Featuring the single, Forever. From the album and motion picture, Men Without Women.

Produced by Miami Steve

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& THE
SILVER BULLET BAND
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Vic Garbarini
Promotion Director
Paul Sacksman
Staff Photographer
Deborah Feingold
Associate Editors
Jock Baird   Rafi Zabor
David Fricke
Contributing Editors
David Breskin   Robert Fripp
J.C. Costa   Brian Cullman
Dave Marsh   Dan Forte
Timothy White   Francis Davis (Jazz)
Sales/Promotion
Scott Southard   Richard Ellis
Geoffrey Davis (617) 281-3110
Advertising Sales
Ross Garnick
Production Manager
Jane Winsor
Production
Hartley Ferguson
Terese Lind   Roz Kramer
Typography
Don Russell
Sinikka Nogelo
Administration
Hyacinth Amero   Michelle Nicastro
Mary Ellen Cataneo   Thom Darcy
Main Office/Production/Retail Sales
31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701
Gloucester, MA 01930 (617) 281-3110
New York Advertising/Editorial
MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl.
N.Y., N.Y. 10036 (212) 764-7400
Circulation Manager
Donna DeWitt (212) 764-7562

Contributors
Crispin Cioe, J. D. Considine, Chris Doering, Bill Flanagan, David Fricke, Peter Giron, Geoffrey Himes, Kristine McKenna, Jon Pareles, Ebet Roberts.

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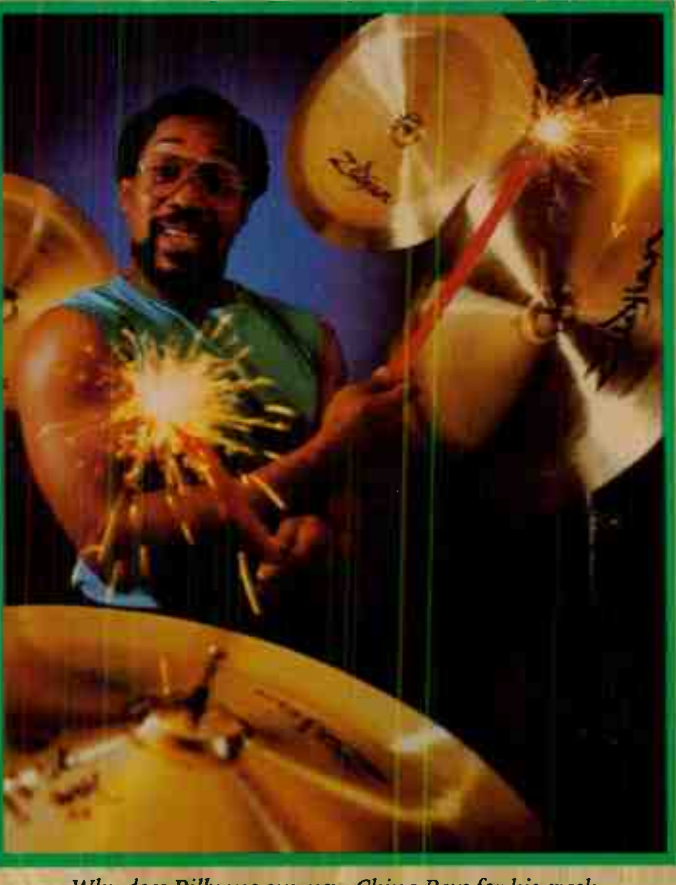
World Radio History

WHEN BILLY COBHAM PLAYS HIS ZILDJIANS, HE'S PLAYING WITH DYNAMITE.

Someone once said of Billy Cobham: "He does certain things because he just doesn't know they can't be done." In the course of doing things that "can't be done" with his own Glass Menagerie group, with the likes of Bobby and The Midnights, George Duke, Stanley Clarke, and Freddie Hubbard on some 300 albums, he's been named Down Beat Drummer of the Year time and time again.

Here are some of Billy's observations:

On His Schooling. "I graduated from Grossingers resort up in the Catskill Mountains. No, I'm just kidding. Actually, I went to the School of Music and Art in New York City, but at graduation time I got a gig at Grossingers and they had to send my diploma up there."



Why does Billy use our new China Boys for his crash and ride Cymbals: Explosive POWER!

On Playing Cymbals Upside Down. "I first got the idea of inverting my cymbals a few years back when I was in Finland. I was at an outdoor concert and a band from Prague was playing about 500 meters away. The drummer had an old Chinese cymbal and he was playing it upside down, way up above the drum set. You could barely hear the rest of the band at that distance. You just heard this great explosive cymbal sound. Now I play one 22" China Boy High upside down and one 18" China Boy High in the regular position. The reason I play one upside down is the way it projects. It can be the loudest sound on stage. What happens with the cymbal is that when it is projected up at the room, it makes the whole room the cymbal. The whole room vibrates from the cymbal sound."

On China Boy Cymbals. "I started using China Boys for my crash and ride cymbals because of the explosive effect they have. When you hit them you get this 'POW'! There's an amazing amount of projection. I can get a lot of different effects from my China Boys. If I play them upside down, hitting the outer lip will give me a nice slapping solid stick sound. They also sound great with mallets, almost like small gongs. You can ride on them and get a very different kind of ride sound. And because they cut out fast, you can get very nice short crashes."

If you're a serious drummer, chances are overwhelming that you, like Billy, are already playing Zildjians. Zildjian – a line of cymbals played by drummers on six continents – a line of cymbalmakers that spans three centuries.

For your copy of the full color Zildjian Cymbals and Accessories Catalog and Cymbal Set-Up Book of famous drummers see your Zildjian dealer or send $4.00 to Zildjian, Dept. 12.
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YOUR EFFECTS HAVE MORE POWER THAN YOU KNOW

When you're used to pushing your playing to the limit you should be able to expect the same thing from your equipment. But unless you've got seven feet, you're only scratching the surface of what your effects can really do. The SCC-700 Sound Control Center from BOSS turns the effects you already own into a totally programmable set-up that lets you do things with your effects you never dreamed you could do.

The BOSS SCC-700 is simply the most remarkable single achievement since the creation of the effects pedal—a computer-controlled effects programmer designed to program up to seven different effects in as many as thirty-two patch combinations. At the push of a single switch, the SCC-700 can take you from smoothly flowing melodies to bone-crunching chords to whining, soaring cries, pushing your effects to their ultimate performance potential.

The SCC-700 can control any kind of effects, from any manufacturer: rack-mount effects, pedal effects, rocker effects can all be programmed to turn on and off in any combination you can think of. The SCC-700 electronically disconnects and reconnects your effects for each patch, allowing effects combinations and changes that would be physically impossible to produce.

Each of the thirty-two possible patches can be programmed with information to turn the effects on and off, change the order of the effects in the signal chain, set an individual output level for each patch, and send a separate branch output from any point in the effect chain for routing to a separate amp or PA. All of this at the same time!

There are three parts to the SCC-700 system, which can be purchased separately, or together, depending on your own needs. The first part is the SCC-700C Controller itself, which contains all that is needed to program the effects, and also supplies DC power for seven effects. The SCC-700F is a remote Foot Controller which connects to the main unit by a multi-core connecting cord. The third part is the SCC-700B which is a case designed to house up to seven compact effects and connect them to the SCC-700C.

The SCC-700C is the central programmer unit, and can be used by itself without any other components to program your effects. The inputs and outputs for each effect plug directly into the rear of the SCC-700C, and the effect is run in the "effect on" condition at all times. The programmer of the SCC-700C actually decides whether or not the effect is placed in the signal path.

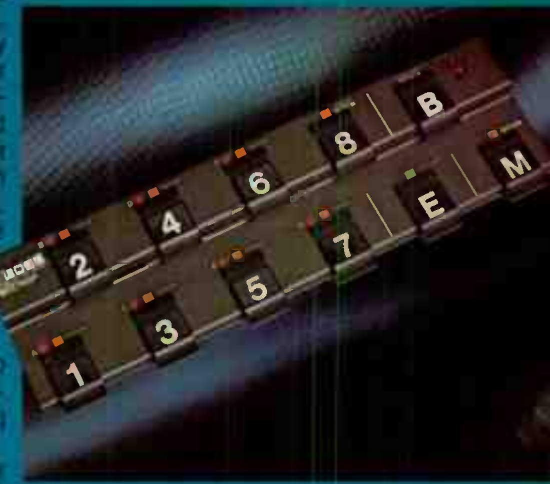
Programming effects are accomplished simply by touching the switches on the SCC-700C in the order you want the effects to play. Each switch (A-G) corresponds to an effect. This operation can also be executed live on stage from the remote footswitch controller SCC-700F. In performance, touching only one button calls up the patch, exactly as you had programmed it.

There are four modes of operation for the SCC-700C: Write—where patch programs are written into computer memory, Play—where patch programs are played by choosing the bank number (A,B,C,D) and the patch number (1-8), Monitor—where you can reference a patch combination to see what it is before you switch it in, and Modify—where you can add new effects to modify an existing patch.

Using the BOSS Sound Control Center allows all your effects to be kept together in a clean, organized fashion through the addition of either the SCC-700B Case, or the BOSS BCB-6 Carrying Box. Your effects can now be kept at table-top height, where their controls can be easily changed and where they are less subject to abuse.

The SCC-700F is a remote footswitch-type controller for the SCC-700 System. With the SCC-700F it is possible to perform all the selection and writing functions of the SCC-700 simply by pushing footswitches. The addition of this option to the SCC-700 is a powerful asset to the guitarist or bassist, who does not have his hands free to select programs on the main unit. LED readouts on the SCC-700F allow the guitarist to monitor his patch settings from right on stage.

BOSS revolutionized effects three years ago with the introduction of FET switching, low-noise circuitry, and high reliability. Now we've revolutionized effects again



by allowing you to get the most out of the effects you already own. And we did it at a price that's right. The SCC-700C Sound Control Center retails for $695.00 and the SCC-700F Footswitch is $350.00.

Find out how much power your present effects have got with the SCC-700 from BOSS. Available from: RolandCorp US, 2401 Saybrook Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90040.

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LETTERS

BILLY'S BACK IN TOWN

I found your interview with Billy Joel both refreshing and humorous. It seems that Joel has come to grips with himself both as an artist and a man. I'm glad Billy's back and in top form.
Douglas Pryor
Riverside, CA

MAYBE HE'LL STAY...

It's about time!

I don't know what the press had against Billy Joel. But, it's about time all the magazines got their acts together and printed a good word about him instead of all the garbage they naturally print about him.

I thought the interview you did on him was great. But it should have been done *a lot* sooner. It's taken the press ten years to realize how great he is!
Dawn Roy
Middlebury, CT

OOPS! BILLY'S GOTTA GO

Well, I finished my latest issue of *Musician*. After I was done with the Billy Joel article, I left the magazine right there by the toilet—where it belongs!

How *dare* you!?! Don't try to tell me how profound this jerk is. My ears work fine.
Jeffrey Corey
Waterbury, CT

...BACK TO THAT OTHER MAG

Well, I tolerated the Foreigner interview on the basis that *Musician* was, once again, forcing me to be open minded and see the other side of the coin. For this, I admire you, but I still don't care for the group. But this latest issue.... No way I'm going to agree with the Billy Joel story. Joel is a trite, corny, contemporary tin pan alley style tunesmith who spends most of his time doing glib imitations rather than writing real songs. Yup, he's clever, talented and has something to say. But not to me. If I wanted this type of garbage thrown at me, I'd buy *Rolling Stone*.
C. W. Vrtacek
New Milford, CT

YOU AIN'T THE ONLY...

Rather than write the long, hostile letter that has been seething inside of me since reading your article/review on the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, let me just make a comment using two of the writer's favorite words. Brian Cullman is a "hack" (he admits to being paid by the word) and is too "dumb" to have a good time in New Orleans.

The variety of fine music, excellent food, sunshine, and friendly ambience of New Orleans, and the Jazz and Heritage Festival in particular make "Big Easy" the place to be every spring for this musician.
Michael A. Herman
Berkeley, CA

A TIP OF THE GAS MASK

It was only by a happy chance that I have had the pleasure of leafing through the pages of *Musician* #42—thanks to some sailor who must have taken it for just another glossy poppish fashion magazine.

Well, what I wanted to woof this time is that I enjoyed the Zappa piece *to the very hilt*. I take my gas-mask off to you, Dan Forte, for the best Zappa interview I've ever read. Thanks a lot for putting Maestro some very apt questions and delivering us plenty of highly indispensable info. Though there is some bad news as well, this mail order thing of his in particular. It's the worst piece of news for us Zappa appreciators here in Russia, for even in his Warner/Discreet days records by him were virtually impossible to find in this country. I think it's a howling shame they have finally rounded up such a prominent and reputable musician to a mail order distribution. Just for how long the pajama people functionaries of showbiz are to crawl about in the way of this colossus of contemporary music?

And with this rhetorical question please let me finish a short imaginary visit to your mag which, on the whole, turned out to be by far more interesting than *Peasant Woman* I'm suscribed to at present.
Mikhail Nikitin
Latvia, USSR

STAMP OUT ABRAMS

The article on "The Failure of Corporate Rock" in issue #50, by Flanagan & Baird was a very accurate description of what's going on in radio today. Don't Lee Abrams and his cohorts remember what rock 'n' roll is all about? In their quest to rid radio of offensive sounding music, they are, in effect, removing rock 'n' roll from the airwaves. After all, offensiveness is what rock 'n' roll is all about. Lest we forget the most offensive band of the 60s—the Beatles. Where would we be now if consultants were around then? Rock 'n' roll is a non-violent form of expression and rebellion that we used to see older people trying to stamp out. Abrams is younger than I am. What's going on?
Richie Ranno
Hackensack, NJ

ELVIS, BING AND FRANK

Ah, yes! Dave Marsh, the aging angry young man, conceives one more redefinition of the Rock Icon (genus: Innovator, species: Misunderstood, sub-species: Self-abusive), struggling wildly to find one more personification of Class Struggle Itself. I have often wondered why it is that some rock critics insist on viewing rock from the perspective of Marxist dialectic, as if rock's entire purpose was to reflect, not unlike contemporary Chinese opera and ballet (you know, good comrade rescues fair maiden from clutches of evil imperialist monster bearing Confucian ethical principles, after proper self-criticism), the struggle of the masses.

I think Mr. Marsh's usually precise judgment has been clouded over by his all-too-obvious adoration of Elvis and his over-zealous (paranoid, perhaps?) dislike of conservative politicians.

To quote Charles Keil (in *Urban Blues*): "Racial equality is an established fact. The struggle is for cultural pluralism." The fact is, Mr. Marsh, Elvis did nothing for cultural pluralism. Neither did the New Deal nor the Great Society, for that matter. The proof lies not in Elvis' artistry, which I cannot deny him, but in the fact that his audience was and continues to be white and middle-class. For all his gifts and his usage of black-American musical forms and styles, Elvis went on to become merely his generation's Bing Crosby. To compare Elvis to Jackie Robinson ludicrously ignores the obvious: Robinson was a black man, and baseball is now a white-and-black American sport. Elvis' music is still white American music. Elvis is to rock what Crosby and Sinatra were to jazz: borrowers all.
Richard DeLaney
Rochester, NY

RICH RELATIONS, MAYBE

I read *Musician* magazine regularly and always enjoy it. I have to complain about your article on Elvis in the December issue, however. It seems to me that there were more than a few artists worthy of note who managed to get by before the New Deal. Were they all independently wealthy? If I wanted to read liberally slanted articles on Reaganism, I'd buy a political magazine.
Tony Molledo
Lake Worth, FL

A FRICKE AND A FLOYD

I had to write and compliment David Fricke on his rare and informative interview with David Gilmour of Pink Floyd. He not only asked an excellent batch of questions but, along with Gilmour, carried it off with uncomplicated interest and class.
Name Withheld
Indianapolis, IN

WHENEVER WE FIND THEM

Great Pink Floyd story! I love a magazine that interview innovators.
Craig Ezell
Fresno, CA

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LEAD GUITARS AND AMPS.

It was the electricity that did it. Turned the guitar and its amplification into the leading instrument combination of the last quarter century.

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But progress came quickly. And with it, increasing sophistication.

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What you don't see here is the wide range of Yamaha's line. You'll have to go to your dealer for that. We think you'll find the trip worthwhile.

There are new guitars with innovative electronics and sensational body styles, colors and finishes. New basses and new amplification systems. Even preamps and stackables. A total of 21 guitar and bass models and 18 different amps.

We're proud of our electric guitar and amp lines. And proud to be part of an industry with such a competitive environment. It keeps everyone on his toes. Especially us.

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World Radio History

By Jock Baird

Price Resistance Wins One
Faced with irrefutable evidence of consumer price resistance, WEA took the bold step of lopping two dollars off the list price of its non-current, or "catalog" albums, now $8.98, and on January 3, 1983 to become $6.98. As many as 1,100 album titles are affected; in addition, WEA will up the cost of 200 of its midline LPs listing for $5.98 by a dollar. The WEA move may well precipitate catalog price reductions by other majors before long.

Retailers were not ecstatic about the move. Like King Karol Records' **Ben Karol**, many felt "WEA has given itself every possible advantage" in the returns policy, since after January 3 all $8.98 returns bought by the dealer for the higher price will be credited at the lower one, while returns of the $5.98 LPs will also be credited at the lower price. Moreover, a lot of retailers felt that while the move would stimulate sales, they would need a 25% increase in sales volume to make the same profit. Despite being peeved about absorbing the short-run transition costs, though, most felt the long-run effect of the move would be beneficial.

Interestingly, WEA chief **Henry Droz** said that all markdowns had to be approved by "the artist and/or his manager" and that all had acquiesced except Rod Stewart and the Rolling Stones (guess they needed the money). In addition, all the ECM catalog will hold at a whopping $9.98.

Good News Department: No major label has appointed an executive from the creative (A&R) sector since the early 60s—that is, until this month, when Warner Bros. Records named **Lenny Waronker** as president. Waronker feels strongly that, "We have the chance now to nurture some acts, sit down with them to help them grow and not to drop them after one or two records. The idea of smallness interests me now." Waronker, who is the son of Liberty Records founder Si Waronker, is also one of the few top execs to speak out against "the quality problem" in new disc and tape releases.

A festering sore in black music broke open this month as a boycott of **Luther Vandross**' national tour was threatened and then averted. At issue was the minimal involvement of blacks not only at the promoter's level, but at the support level (stagehands, caterers, limo services, etc.) **Dick Griffey**, head of L.A.'s Solar Records and also outspoken head of the Black Music Association, helped negotiate a settlement, but the tendency of black acts to leave the less influential black promoters once they've hit big is a continuing source of resentment. Rabble rouser Reverend Jesse Jackson is joining the fracas, so more will certainly be heard on the subject.

The epic trial of Sam Goody executive **Samuel Stolon** finally came to an end this month, as Stolon pleaded no contest to counterfeiting the *Grease* soundtrack. Judge Thomas C. Platt threw the book at Stolon, giving him a year in jail as muted gasps of amazement broke the courtroom silence. Stolon appeared shaken after the sentence and was said by his lawyer to have taken it "horribly." The British Phonograph Industry's prosecution of a small-time London record dealer for selling counterfeit cassettes was less successful. The judge threw out the case against Edward Grimwood, describing the BPI's investigation as "unimpressive' and "slapdash."

With the Christmas salvo mostly fired off, a new round of new-year releases is ready to go. Picks of the litter: the delayed new Bob Seger studio LP, *The Distance*; the Cars' Ric Ocasek's long-awaited solo album, *Beatitude*; Neil Young's computer-based *Trans*; a new Earth, Wind & Fire offering, *Powerlight*; and new ones by Talking Heads, the Human League, Soft Cell and Joan Armatrading.

In the wake of **Lionel Richie's** solo success, rumors of his departure from **the Commodores** abound. As it happens, the lead vocals on the new Commodores single, "Painted Picture" were sung by **Harold Hudson**, a member of the Commodores' support band.... **Warren Zevon** is getting impatient. After repeatedly revealing his desire to be contacted by Philip Habib (model for *The Envoy*), the excitable boy has yet to hear from him and is starting to get ticked off. After all, what's so important about this Lebanon scuffle?.... Return to Forever, **Chick Corea**'s fusion fiesta with **Al Dimeola, Stanley Clarke** and **Lenny White**, is doing a reunion tour.... Speaking of reunions, the prodigal sons of **Genesis, Peter Gabriel** and **Steve Hackett**, rejoined the mother ship for a concert to help Gabriel recoup some of his losses for the rain-drenched WOMAD festival.... **The Jam** is calling it quits....**Joe Nanini**, percussionist for Wall of Voodoo, foiled an armed robbery by chasing the culprit through the streets of Minneapolis.

Chart Action
Santa Claus had had a tough fall preparing for the big Christmas run and his temper was wearing thin. "Look at these letters," he groused to his chief elf. "They all want a Fleetwood Mac, Rush, John Cougar, Foreigner's *Greatest Hits*.... Sheesh, we gotta get the kids into some better stuff." So saying, he sprinkled the LP-charts with magic dust and psychedelically intoned, "May you never hear surf music again." The effect was instantaneous. The Mac, Rush, Cougie and the Who all plopped out of the top ten (Cougar characteristically grabbed Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* and pulled it down with him). Left standing with the first crack at the Christmas overheat were Men at Work (five weeks at #1), the Stray Cats (#2?!), Joe Jackson (say what #4) and Billy Joel (#7).

Up from chart obscurity came Marvin Gaye, Hall & Oates, Tom Petty, Phil Collins and Pat Benetar, even as the Clash and Donald Fagen hung tough. All in all, thought Santa, not a bad dusting. Sure, Lionel Richie (#2) and Neil Diamond (#9) had gotten in there, and Santa wished he hadn't put Supertramp quite so high (#5), but 1982 was definitely the best chart Christmas he'd had in a long time.

World Radio History

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EMMYLOU HARRIS

The angel from Alabama retains her modesty and down-to-earth honesty in a sea of country crossovers.

BY DAN FORTE

"The question about eclecticism," folk guitarist John Fahey once commented, "is, 'does it work?" And, he might have added, is all this apples-and-oranges diversity really necessary? Are there no more pure country singers left, no more died-in-the-wool rock 'n' rollers, no straight-ahead jazz blowers left? Is it possible to describe someone's music without having to use hyphens or slashes?

These days reviews and press bios touting the multi-faceted talents of "jazz-rock-R&B singer/songwriter/guitarist Joe Blow, whose influences range from Ravi Shankar to Albert King, from Ornette Coleman to Conway Twitty" are the rule rather than the exception. It's no surprise to find that most of these Joes could do us all a favor by woodshedding one style for a few years instead of putting their record collections in a Cuisinart and pushing "puree." More often than should be allowed by law, what passes for eclecticism is as gratuitous as the violence in *Friday the 13th, Part 3,* in 3D, and about as artistic.

Emmylou Harris is the rare case of a pure country singer who is also a true eclectic. No hyphens needed here. True, her influences are many, but they are used as flavoring, not as separate courses. Her Hot Band may be a country-rock outfit, but Emmylou's singing is nothin' but country. She is a true stylist, who can put tunes by Springsteen, Creedence, the Beatles, the Drifters, Chuck Berry and Simon & Garfunkel alongside songs from George Jones, Dolly Parton, Merle Haggard, the Carter family, Don Gibson, and the Louvin Brothers and make them all sound uniquely suited to Emmylou Harris—not unlike, say, Jerry Lee Lewis, who can make virtually any song sound as though he wrote it.

"Crossover" is a term that record industry types bandy about as inappropriately as critics use the word eclectic. It refers to an artist's ability to handle more than one style, or, more accurately, their ability to sell to more than one audience. Judging by the country music that's occupied the airwaves and chart positions in the past ten years, an outsider might understandably assume that everyone in the world was either trying to jump on the country bandwagon or get the hell off it. Everyone from Tom Jones to Elvis Costello to B.B. King has made the trek to Nashville to record a country LP. Meanwhile, some of C&W's most successful chart-toppers have set their sights on the pop market frontier. Though it's hard to imagine the same person who wrote "My Tennessee Mountain Home" penning "9 To 5," Dolly Parton is responsible for both. Kenny Rogers has managed to conquer the pop masses the same way he captured the country crowd—by appealing to the lowest common denominator. Crystal Gayle's soulless singing never did sound very country, and I don't even want to talk about the Oak Ridge Boys.

Emmylou eschews the role of bandleader in her Hot Band, preferring musical democracy.

In the light of the above it seems almost sacrilegious to refer to Emmylou Harris as a crossover artist, but there is no denying that she is. Rockers, shitkickers and pop music fans all like Emmylou for a variety of reasons: her clear, reedy voice; her impeccable choice of material; the stellar Hot Band. But mostly people just love Emmylou, her personality, her no-nonsense presentation. While everyone else is self-consciously conniving to get a piece of the consumer's dollar, Harris' music remains as down-to-earth and uncontrived as the woman is honest and unpretentious.

From her 1975 Warner Bros. debut, *Pieces Of The Sky,* Emmylou has consistently landed at the top of the country charts. *Pieces* hit number one, as did her first single, "If I Could Only Win Your Love." Her followup, 1976's *Elite Hotel,* spun off three more number one hits, "Together Again," "Sweet Dreams" and "One Of These Days." Her fifth set, *Blue Kentucky Girl,* released in '79, won Emmy her first Grammy, for Best Country Performance,

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Female. The following year her all-acoustic bluegrass outing, *Roses In The Snow*, earned her the Country Music Association award as Best Female Vocalist. *Cimarron* (1981) included hit renderings of Paul Kennerly's "Born To Run" and Townes Van Zandt's "If I Needed You" (a duet with Don Williams). Just released is *Last Date*, composed of all-new material recorded live with the Hot Band.

Harris will give credit for the achievements listed above to almost everyone but herself. There's not a trace of false modesty when she talks about how indispensable her producer/arranger husband Brian Ahern is, what an enormous influence her former bandleader Gram Parsons was (and remains), how much she relies on her talented Hot Band. She seems a little embarrassed discussing her career and cringes visibly whenever her guitar playing is mentioned—even though she is a strong, distinctive acoustic rhythm player and one of the few country singers (male or female) who plays on nearly all of the tracks on her records. "I don't even think of myself as a bandleader," she says. "I still think of myself, in a way, as a member of the Hot Band. It's always been a very democratic group."

Emmylou was born in Alabama thirty-five years ago, and took up guitar in her teens. "My cousin got a guitar for Christmas one year," she recounts, "and I spent the entire day playing it. I guess that was when the folk boom was happening, '63 or '64. Then my grandfather bought me a little Kay. The strings must have been an inch off the fretboard. I literally bled. But I just couldn't put it down. I got books, I listened to records, I learned everything I could. Nothing very intricate; I basically just learned to accompany myself."

Her early influences were folk singers like Judy Collins, Joan Baez and Ian & Sylvia. "A lot of the 'heavier' folk stuff," she laughs. "I listened to a lot of folk blues—Robert Johnson and things like that—although I never really played or sang it. I liked Tom Rush a lot, because he had a wonderful sense of picking songs. When I moved to New York, I met people like Jerry Jeff Walker and David Bromberg. I was influenced by everything, I guess. I did a lot of Bob Dylan songs in my show."

In 1971 Emmy met her chief mentor, Gram Parsons. She toured with Parsons and appeared on his albums *GP* and *Grievous Angel* before the country-rock pioneer's untimely death in 1973. "Gram was my main musical influence," she stresses; "no one comes close to that. He really gave me the direction. He turned me on to the Louvin Brothers, Charlie Pride, George Jones, Merle Haggard. It was like an education that I was hungry for. My ears shifted into a gear that I didn't even know I had. I could hear things in George Jones' voice that I hadn't heard before."

When Emmylou embarked on her solo career, with *Pieces Of The Sky*, she enlisted the aid of several of the musicians from the Parsons sessions, including Bernie Leadon, Emory Gordon and several members of Elvis Presley's band (guitarist James Burton, drummer Ronnie Tutt and pianist Glen D. Hardin). On *Elite Hotel* she recorded three Parsons compositions, with more cropping up on subsequent albums (*Last Date* includes "Grievous Angel"). The Angel Band evolved into the Hot Band, which has over the years included such luminaries as Burton, Hardin, singer/songwriter Rodney Crowell, lead guitarist Albert Lee, steel guitarist Hank DeVito and multi-instrumentalist Ricky Scaggs. On record Emmy has been joined by a cast of legends that includes Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt, Tanya Tucker, Don Williams and Neil Young.

The current Hot Band personnel is: Steve Fishell (pedal steel/dobro), Frank Reckard (guitar/mandolin/vocals), Mike Bowden (bass), Don Johnson (piano/vocals), Barry Tashian (accordion/banjo/rhythm/vocals) and Wayne Goodwin (mandolin/fiddle/saxophone/rhythm/electric piano). John Ware, the group's long-time drummer, recently left the band. "When someone leaves," Harris explains, "you aren't really losing a band member; the circle is just expanded. When I lost Albert Lee, Emory Gordon and Glen D. Hardin all at once, now that was traumatic. I seriously considered suicide (laughs). We had auditions, and finding a piano player who can play a country shuffle, who doesn't play cocktail, who doesn't think every bar has to be piano fills, is impossible. That's when I almost went home and wanted to drink the lye. Then David Briggs told us about Tony Brown, and all I had to hear him play was the left hand—the guy was great. With Ricky Skaggs, so much of the band had become more bluegrass oriented, and I was ready to go back to more of a Rodney Crowell, looser, honky-tonk type of feel. I don't think I really knew that until I walked into this bar, and there was my old friend Barry Tashian. It was like the skies opened up and light came out. You want to know what to do next? Here it is. To me, the Hot Band is epitomized by 'Born To Run.' Barry's vocals really blend with mine and they're free, not quite as concise as Ricky's. I think of it as my ultimate Hot Band."

The "other member of the Hot Band," according to Emmy, is producer Brian Ahern, who often plays bass or rhythm guitar on the records. "He's the one that really orchestrates it all," his wife boasts, "and extracts the most out of all the instruments. I'd have to say that the bluegrass album (*Roses In The Snow*) is more Brian's than mine almost. I wanted to water it down. I wanted to put 'Millworker' on it, and 'How High The Moon,' 'Spanish Johnny.' Brian said, 'Trust me, "Millworker" belongs on another album. This album has got to have really strict param-

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eters in order for it to make its point.' I was really nervous about it, because I thought my eclecticism was what made people buy my albums. I wanted to put it out, but I was prepared for it to fail commercially. I did it as an artistic statement, but it did better than any of the other records, it went gold faster." With the Hot Band augmented by bluegrass greats like dobro phenom Jerry Douglas, the Whites (Cheryl Warren and Sharon Hicks), and flatpicker extraordinaire Tony Rice, *Roses* was also largely responsible for the rejuvenated interest in traditional country music.

"I think categories are ridiculous anyway," states Harris. "I talk about country music from a *soul* standpoint. I hear something and I know it's country. To me, Rosanne Cash is incredibly country, yet how do you compare her to Kitty Wells? A song like 'Seven Year Ache' is a country song, to me—more country than the pseudo, let's-sound-like-a-country-band-back-in-the-40s records. With her writing she has managed to cross boundaries. It's to the heart, but it has a poetry that's coming from her generation. It's like what Gram did. It's the lyric content and the attitude and the soulfulness. I don't think country records have to sound like they were recorded in 1952. You can get great sounds on the pedal steel guitar that are not traditional but are still pedal steel. And why does a country song have to have a pedal steel on it? Have you ever gone down the dial and tried to find a country station? Who knows what it is? The only album I did that I felt was not country was *Evangeline*, because after the bluegrass LP we wanted something as far removed from that as possible, something eccentric. And a lot of reviewers said, 'Well, she's returned to her grassroots country now,' (laughs) so I don't know.

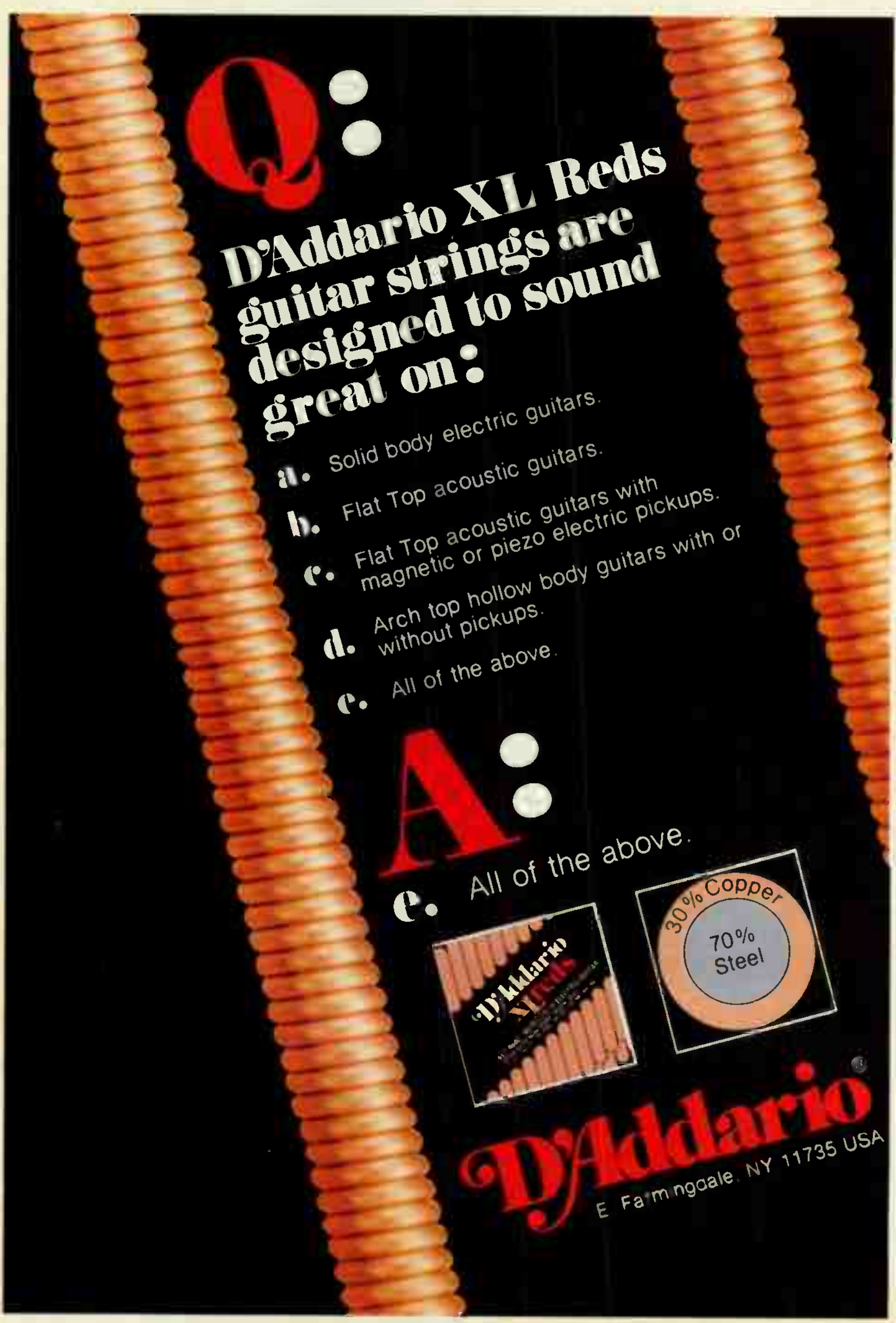
"When I put out 'Win Your Love,' I think a lot of the country music community was hungry for that. Instead of crossover they got something from a new artist from God-knows-where, who wasn't signed in Nashville. My record was made in California. But here was a hardcore country record that smacked of tradition, and the country music community just welcomed me with open arms, and they've been with me ever since. And music barriers are coming down. Everything is bleeding into everything else."

As for possible followups to *Last Date*, Emmylou has several projects in mind. "One of them, I call the 'Celtic album.' Not a bluegrass album, more mountain music and Cajun and some Scottish-Irish music. Steve Fishell is learning bagpipes. Then the other album is kind of hard to explain—kind of psychic skid row. I also would like to see Brian produce a guitar album by Duane Eddy. There are no instrumental albums really, but when you think about your favorite rock 'n' roll records when you were growing up, Duane Eddy instrumentals are the things that make my heart pound faster than anything else, except maybe the Everly Brothers. And I definitely want to use Duane on some of my things."

In January Emmy will be producing another artist for the first time, a female bluegrass singer named Delia Bell, whom she first discovered while looking for material for *Roses In The Snow*. "The first words out of her mouth, I had to sit down," Harris exclaims. "She's got the most authentic, soulful voice. The whole concept of this is a real female album. Her voice inspired this. I guess I'll get nervous about doing it at some point, and I'm sure I'll make mistakes. But it's going to be a very simple country record."

The thing that Emmylou seems most excited about lately is the acquisition of a vintage pink paisley Fender Telecaster. "It's just like James Burton's," she enthuses, "and I play 'Buckaroo' onstage. When I got it, it was tuned up a whole step, so I left it that way, because it feels so good. I mean, I'm actually able to play 'Buckaroo' fairly well. I worked it out specifically for the live album."

Actually, Emmylou's lead guitar debut on the Don Rich/Buck Owens instrumental is pretty damned impressive, and was cut live. "No way I was going to overdub it," she laughs. "I told them if I couldn't get it live to forget it." M



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John Cougar

The Complicated Rock Brat

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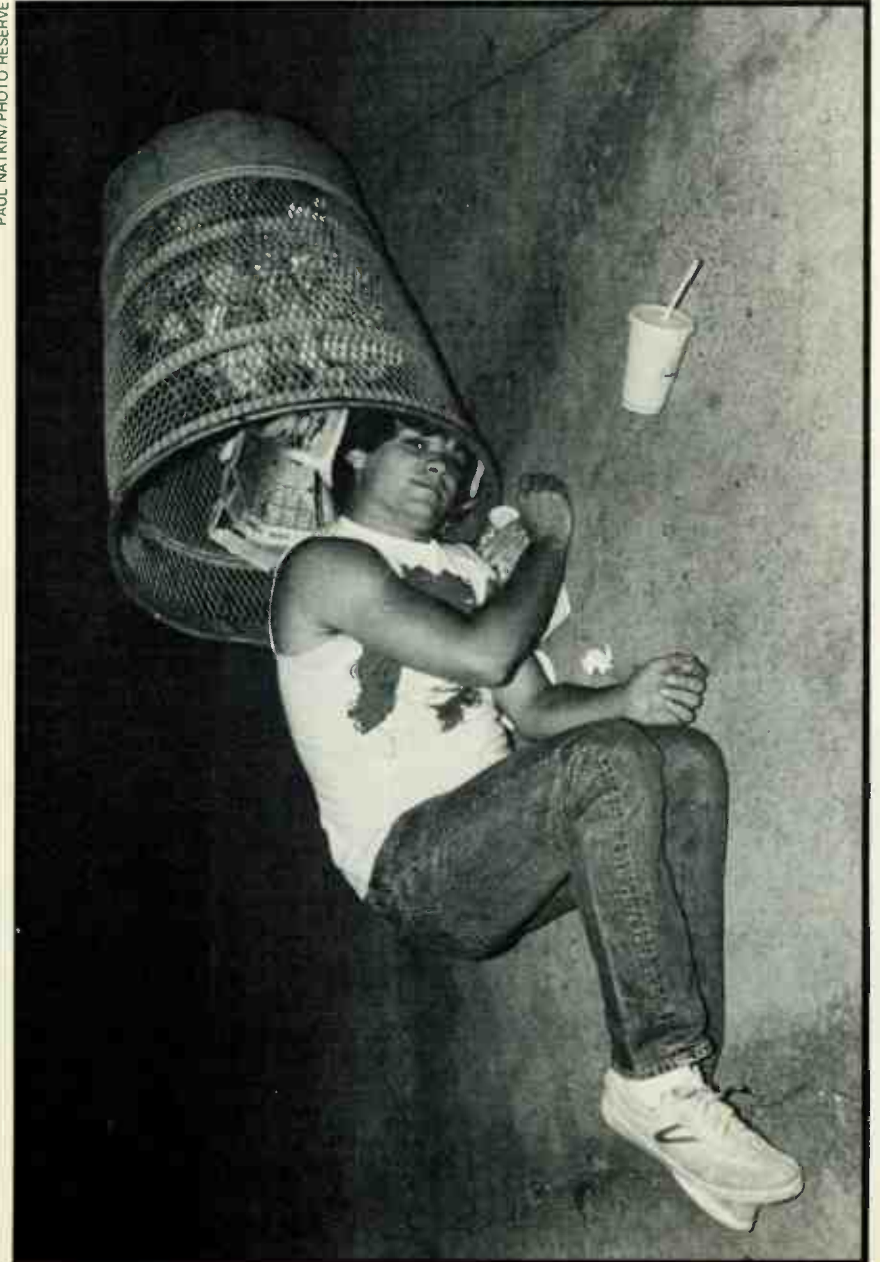

Seymour, Indiana: murder capital, chemical dump site and home of the bad and the fast.

BY MARK ROWLAND

Thanksgiving came early for John Cougar in 1982. Or at least earlier than usual. It was three in the morning when he finally arrived back in his hometown of Seymour, Indiana, completing a tour that ranged over five months and a hundred performances across the country, beginning as inauspiciously as only a concert in Boise, Idaho can begin, and gloriously climaxing before stadium-sized crowds warming up for the Who's farewell spectacle. In between came the phenomenal success of his chart-topping LP *American Fool*, and two top ten summer anthems, "Hurts So Good" and "Jack And Diane." Even music critics, ever the *bete noire* of John Cougar's struggle for good times, fame and respectability (in pretty much that order) have lately, grudgingly, commenced to alter their collective consciousness. So, all in all, a very good year. One well worth giving thanks for. And one, John Cougar swears, he'll never go through again.

"Do you know there are warrants out for my arrest in three states?" he asked, with more than a hint of wide-eyed incredulity. "This is 1982, and these mother____ers are trying to arrest me for *profanity*. There's one little town in Michigan that even filed papers to have me extradited. You think I want to go back there? I mean, on the whole I look at this past year as a positive thing, a very positive thing musically—but I can't take it seriously either. I feel good about the airplay, and selling so many records, and even the critics—but I'll tell you, for the next record we're going to play twelve shows in twelve cities and that's *it*. I'm not kidding! This tour was too long, and everybody got tired. We're not looking for trouble. We're not going to make the same mistake twice."

Nonetheless, trouble has a way of sidling up to John Cougar and, now that he is a star, turning into nationally tele-

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"These reviews, they get to me. I try to be honest with people, even to the point where it hurts me. At least you can be sure that I haven't just sat there and jacked you off."

vised news. Particularly if the trouble happens to occur on a nationally televised news program. Like, say *CBS News Nightwatch*, on which John, angered by the increasingly inquisitorial tone of host Felicia Jeter, unclipped his microphone and stalked off the show in mid-segment, muttering oaths that could get him arrested in at least three states.

"I should have learned by now," he declared ruefully, "that whenever I end up doing something that I really don't want to do, it screws up. My publicist talked me into this one, that it was a good thing and it would open a lot of doors. I was tired that day, and I'd already done about fifteen New York interviews, and I'm waiting to go on when I read my introduction on the teleprompter: 'John Cougar, the *cat* of rock 'n' roll.' I'm thinking, 'Oh, no, who *writes* this copy?' So I said to Felicia, 'Please make this light, okay?' And everything went along fine until they decided it was going along so well that they wanted to do an extra segment. And *then* they unloaded on me about the ('Hurts So Good') video"—a video, it should be noted, which features adoring women fans in, among other things, chains.

"You know, it's all stuff the Rolling Stones have been doing for years," Cougar declared in his defense. "Sex, violence, rebellion—it's all a part of rock 'n' roll. I could have explained that, but what did these people know about me or rock 'n' roll? Nothing. So I walked away. I know that's not like me at all; usually I'll put my mug in anybody's face, but I figured, 'Well, this way they'll never show any of it.' But of course it was news, so I figured wrong."

What made the CBS episode so intriguing to Coug watchers, however, was that it followed on the heels of another spot of trouble in London, Ontario, a Beach Boys concert at which it was reported that opening act Cougar stormed offstage after a thirty-five minute set, for good measure tossing a drum kit into the audience and injuring two people and hurling obscene insults at the concert promoter. As it turned out, however, this version was relayed to the pop press *by* the concert promoter, and only the last allegation remains beyond dispute.

As John recalled, he was again talked into doing the show, this time by his booking agency. Ticket sales soared from 3,000 to 10,000 after Cougar's name was added to the bill, yet he was only allotted a mere forty-five minute set, which was cut back further after the concert began to run behind schedule. "And when I got onstage," he remembered, "I discovered that the sound system was a joke—the P.A. wasn't strong enough. People in the audience could drown out the sound just by talking. And the mike was one of those cheap TV jobs; I spent half the set with it wrapped around my neck. I asked the audience how many came to see my band, and way over half the place exploded. And I'm supposed to leave after half an hour? It was all a rip-off, and I said so. But there weren't any injuries, because in fact I handed the drum kit into the audience—otherwise, believe me, I'd have been sued by now," he added with irrefutable logic.

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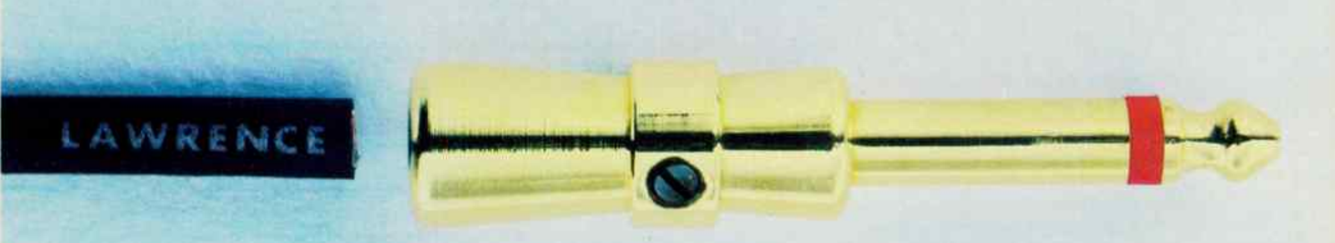

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"And when I came offstage there were all these Beach Boys standing around with the promoter, and I was pissed; I said, 'Why don't one of you mothers just say something to me about it?' And one of my guys said, 'Nice show, Jerry Lee.' I thought that was pretty funny. So I ended up paying for the drums and the P.A., and I never got paid for the concert either. And I'm going back there in April to play a free concert, which I'm sure will cost me plenty, but that's what I promised to do. And yeah, I'm sure it would have been better to just stay cool about the whole thing and not make any waves. But it's like Warren Zevon says, when you have to sit on your hands and smile at stupid things, well, that's a hard thing to do."

On this point at least, Cougar's friends and foes can all agree: he's never learned how to do it. "I have an image problem," he admitted with typical candor. "But the thing I'm most proud of, in spite of anything, is that I'm still popular in spite of all the fashions, all the trends and all the critical bullshit. I'm still popular, and that's what's great. It's almost like high school—the idea of 'I'm not playing by your rules, and if you don't like it, kiss my ass. Okay?'" He laughed. "And if you play it that way and can still be successful, well, that makes it all worthwhile."

Cougar is fond of presenting himself as this relatively simple guy, a tough-spoken but honest straight-shooter out

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Cougar, the cat of rock 'n' roll: "...and I'm thinking, 'Who *writes* this copy?'"

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to prove nothing beyond how to have a good time with rock 'n' roll. Meanwhile, critics, seizing on some of the more importunate songs and events from the Cougar saga, frequently posit an alternate theory—that he's really just a dimly talented asshole. Now, I am not a big fan of coffee table psychology, but, having spent some time on the road in the company of our subject, I do surmise that the real John Cougar is nothing like the prevailing critical stereotype, and considerably more complicated than his own. Just as his songs deserve more—or at least more respectful—scrutiny, Cougar himself must be recognized for harboring the passion and unpredictability that give so much of his music its force and dimension.

Indeed, his career often seems to thrive on paradox. Consider: an alienated and aimless product of small town Indiana—who spent seven arduous years proving himself as a songwriter and musician. A sincere, down-to-earth Midwest populist—who got into the music biz by letting David Bowie's manager completely make over his image, even changing his name. A relaxed, happy-go-lucky personality—who enjoys playing the brat with almost fiendish glee. Cougar flatly claims that his songs are about nothing and mean nothing—yet his lyrics contain some of the most personal, ambitious and evocative (though not always at once) imagery in pop music. And, like any self-respecting pop star, he pooh-poohs the whole notion of critical appraisal; yet at unguarded moments reveals festering wounds. Before a concert in Denver, for instance, I saw Cougar strike a song from his repertoire—a beloved rendition of the Stones' "Street Fighting Man"—simply because several days earlier a newspaper article in Tucson, Arizona had compared John unfavorably to Mick Jagger.

"Those reviews, they get to me," he later confessed. "They piss me off because I try to be honest with people, even to the point where it hurts me. You ask something seriously, and I'll agree or disagree, but at least you can be sure that I haven't just sat there and jacked you off."

He recalled, over the years, being called insincere, imitative and obnoxious... just about every nasty epithet in the lexicon this side of "critic's darling." And, he admitted, they haven't hurt so good at all.

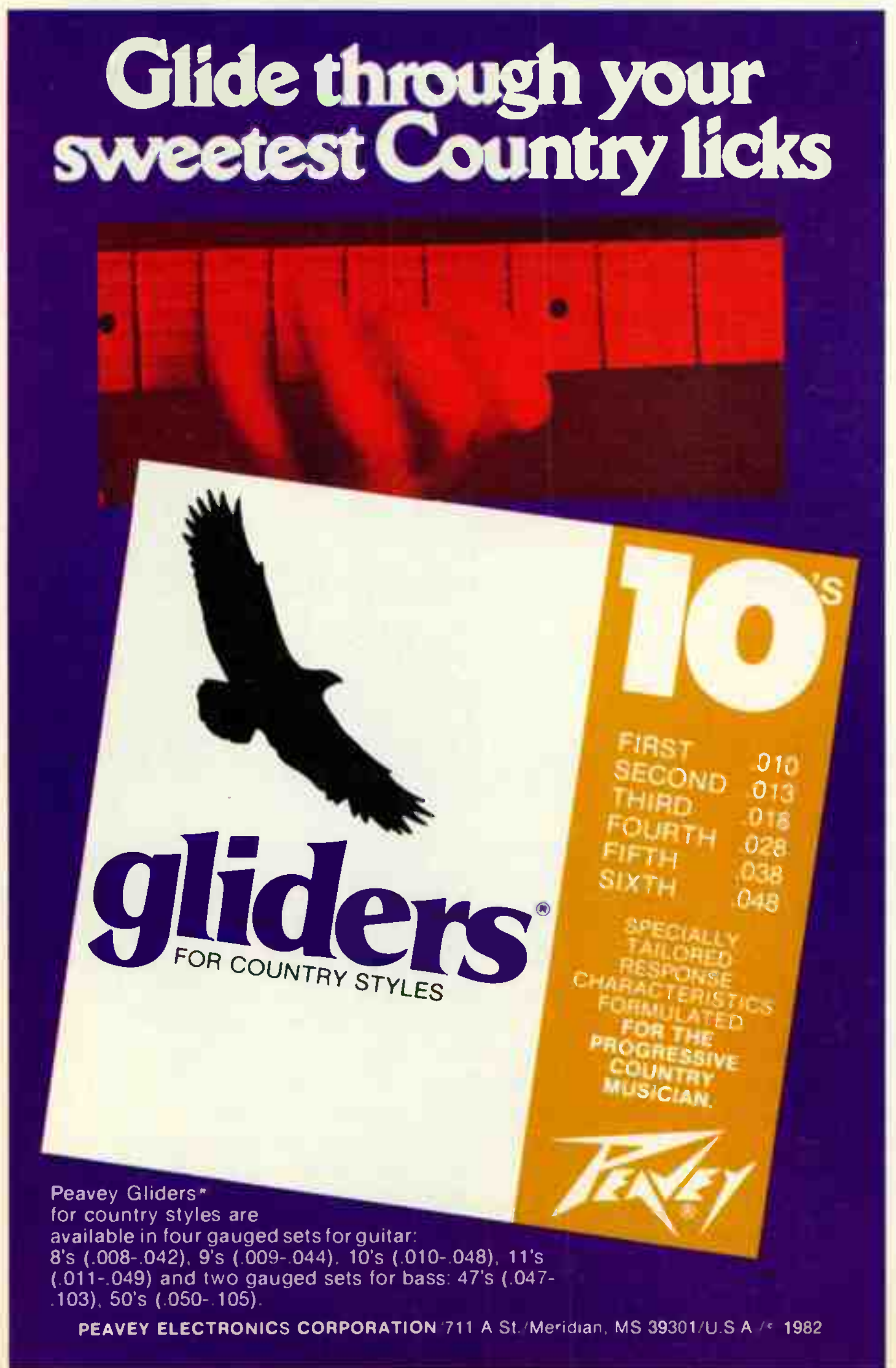
"Well, I've been taking cheap shots for years," he added. "I guess I'm used to it by now."

But he's not.

There is a song on the *John Cougar* LP titled "The Great Midwest," in which its author outlines the stolid comforts of the land, and the rock-ribbed values of home and hearth, along with grimmer traces of alienation, longing and dreams forever deferred. "They're all five years ahead of their time or twenty-five behind," he sings at one point. "I just don't know." Which could well stand for John Cougar, nee Mellancamp, and his own coming of age in Seymour, Indiana, a town where traditional rites of passage remain so firmly entrenched that John recalls hanging out on the same street corner where his father claims *he* hung out a generation earlier. John describes Seymour life as "basically, really boring. There's nothing to do except play golf. That's why I ride a Harley," he notes drily; "I'm not ready for the country club set."

He formed his first band with a friend at the age of fourteen. "We used to play fraternities for thirty dollars a weekend. I'd do my Wayne Cochrane routine and my friend, who was black, would be James Brown. He had the dances down, the cape, everything. Can you imagine, singing "This Is A Man's World" at fourteen? We used to get the Chicago and Detroit radio stations, which meant a lot of funk and R&B. For a time I didn't even know that white guys *made* records. And I was never a big Elvis fan—he was always too pretty. I'd go for the guys who looked kind of ugly, like Eric Burdon or the Stones. Now Keith Richards was for *real*.

"But music wasn't really much of an influence then," he goes on. "Most of



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these bands were just from outer space as far as my life was concerned." Instead, Cougar patterned himself after a small group of rebels on the fringe of the Seymour community. "I wasn't exactly a candidate for Demolay. I was into fighting—sometimes I'd fight five times a week. We used to go down to the Elks Club while our parents were inside and roll their cars into each other for fun. Put 'em in neutral and push'em down the hill—bam! I remember seeing this one older guy—his hair was really greasy, he'd hit a teacher a few times, you'd see him drinking on the corner at noon—and thinking, 'That's what I want to be.' That was my role model."

The town's Norman Rockwell veneer had its own slimy underside. During the 50s its mayor helped turn Seymour into a massive chemical dump site in exchange for dollar-a-barrel kickbacks. Inevitably the stuff leaked into the town's water supply. During the early 60s the town also posted the highest murder rate in the nation. Love Canal had nothing on Seymour, Indiana.

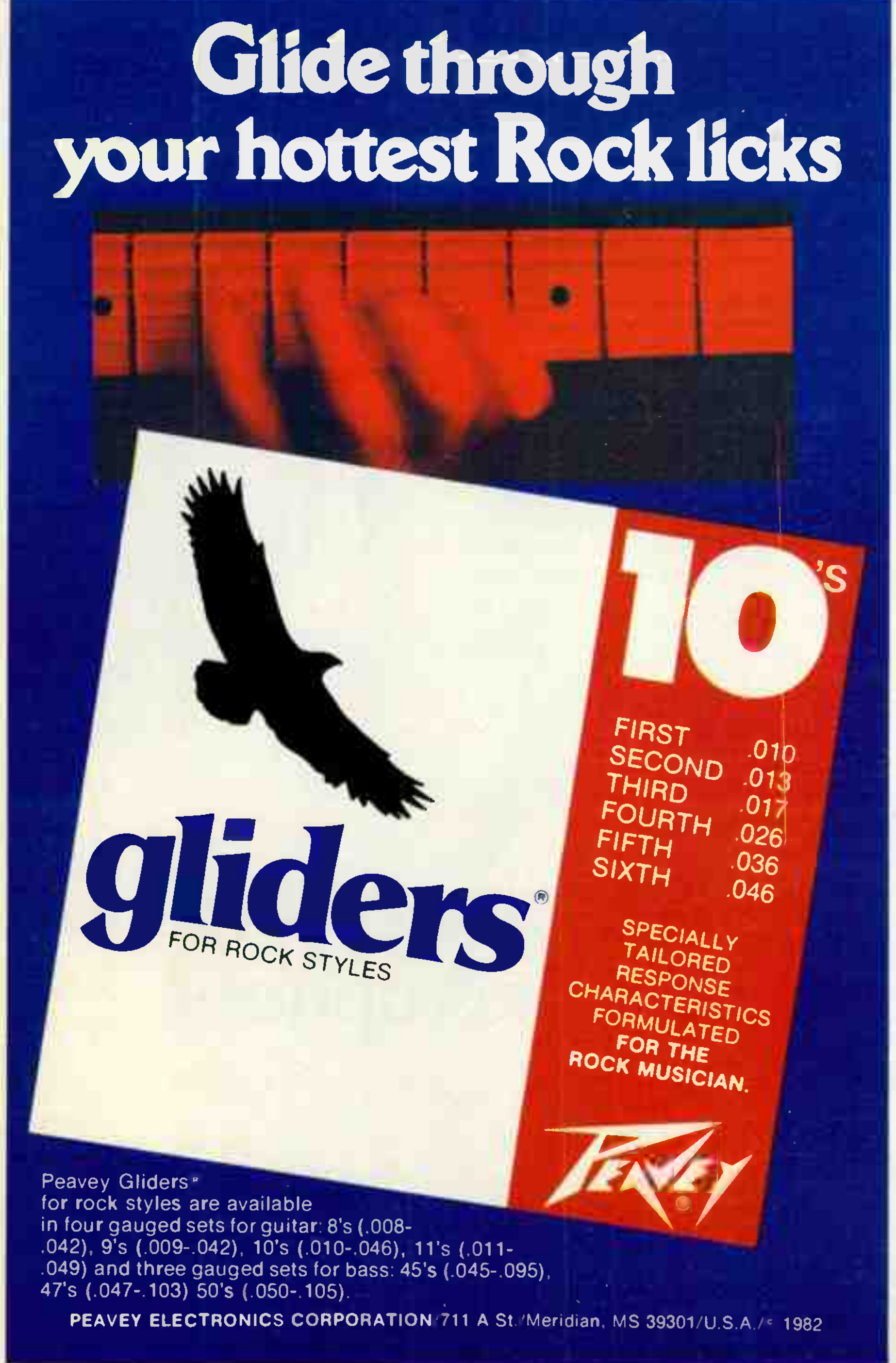
"The most interesting people I've met in this world are still the guys I grew up with in Seymour," he asserts. "And I'll tell you why—because in a place like that, you *have* to strive so hard to make a mark for yourself, a personality. And with us your merit was based on how bad you were, or how fast a talker or how hard a drinker, or how you scored with girls—or else something that carried some sort of stigma. I used to frost my hair, cut one side longer than the other and wear an earring—you know, kind of Human League, only this was, you know, 1967 in Indiana. Whatever we did, it had to be excessive.

"I had this one friend, he was no bigger than you or me, who was just a p-i-g hog. We went over to another guy's house one day—to doctor our report cards—and there on the table was a fifteen-pound Thanksgiving ham. And this guy went in and ate that ham to the *bone*—just for effect. Another time at my house he ate sixteen quarts of strawberries. Later on he ran a used car lot, and when business got bad he burned it to the ground. His parents had to send him out of town. They were probably glad—I once saw him beat up his father with a shoe because he wouldn't share a joint."

Cougar goes on to recount more cheerful reminiscences—of the local sadist who caught passing pigeons with his bare hands; of the high school Valentino who burned out on acid before rebounding as a born-again Christian; of a friend tossed in jail for passing $22,000 worth of bad checks...then he stops short. "The thing is, with all these guys, their lives just kind of ended at sixteen. 'Cause after that, people just gave up; in a town like Seymour, that's easy to do. And in a sense that's what life is *really* about. All the stuff about going to school and getting a degree and everything turning out hunky-dory—it's bullshit. Reality isn't like that. It's more like what Paul Newman said in *Cool Hand Luke*—'Life is a bunch of nothin'.' And I think *that's* why 'Hurt So Good' and 'Jack And Diane' were so successful on the radio. Because they were about...nothing.

"Of course, people can analyze songs to death," he continues, "but here's the bottom line—just what did 'Be-bop-a-lula' mean? Huh? What's the hidden connotation of that song? The problem with dissecting rock 'n' roll songs is this: rock 'n' roll guys are stupid. We are! I mean, just tell me how smart Gene Vincent was, okay? Or Eddie Cochrane or Buddy Holly. Sorry, I have my doubts about their intellectual capabilities.

"The reason I'm doing this—number one—is that I don't want to work. I'm just like you, I can't make it in the straight world. And the second reason is that maybe some kid down the line will relate the summer of '82, or some portion of their life, to 'Jack And Diane.' Okay, that's valuable. But that's all pop music's about. Because I'll tell you, the rest of the world is all business. There's a handful of guys who run this world, and they've got nothing to do with you or me, or the Clash for that matter. I mean, 'Know Your Rights?!' Gimme a break! As far as they're concerned, we're just crap on a piece of paper. Ideals are for teen-



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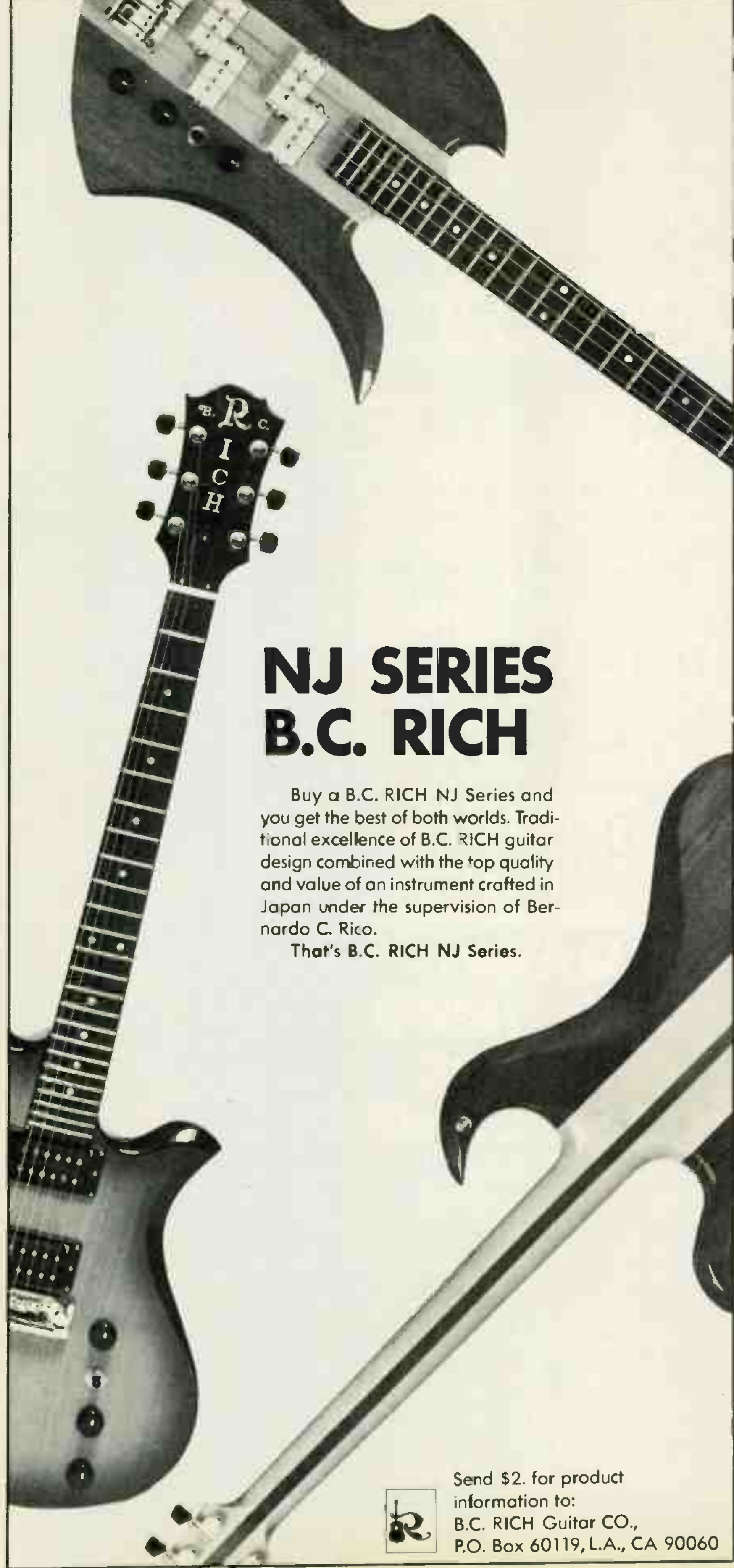

agers—in the real world there's no means available to live them out."

He says all this with a casual, cynical humor, the nothing-matters-and-what-if-it-did air of a latter-day James Dean. And it is precisely this typically bratty, chip-on-the-shoulder pose which keeps Cougar's foes so nourished and eager for battle. "Ideals are for teenagers" indeed! Just who does this guy think makes up his audience?

Such armchair cynicism could be offensive were it not so contrived. In fact, Cougar's fondness for shock value is another defensive tack: having once been burned by critics for his intellectual pretension, he seeks to undercut the critical process by denying the impact of *any* considered pop intelligence, including, perhaps especially, his own ("We're stupid"). It's patently absurd for an inveterate rock 'n' roller to attack the Clash's music, so instead he mocks their vision—or more accurately the privileged cachet created for that vision by the pop intelligentsia. Which is doubly ironic, since Cougar's own fealty to the spirit of rock transcendence is, at least in live performance, equally demonstrable. And while the Clash are clearly more ambitous, in both cases, the empathy and passion that underlie both Cougar and Clash are honestly felt and firmly rooted in the populist traditon.

"But I guess what I'm really trying to say," he later admits, "if I'm trying to say anything it's that...it's cool to fail. 'Life goes on/ After the thrill of living is gone'—you know, that's supposed to be a happy line. It means you've gotten past the bullshit. And besides, what good is success *without* failure? It'd be just an exercise. But to fail a couple of times, in love or a career—when success comes along it's very positive. So all these songs about failure and doom and greed—they're all ultimately positive."

Cougar's public relations problems probably began in 1975, when John Mellancamp was "discovered" by Tony Defries, the savvy entrepreneur who once turned David Jones into David Bowie. It was Defries who changed John's surname to Cougar without ever consulting his client, finagled a million-dollar deal with MCA for John's services and helped rush into print a hastily recorded mishmash of cover songs that everyone, Cougar included, regarded as trash. In the wake of this fiasco, the A&R contact lost his job at MCA, and Cougar limped back to Indiana with a reputation that would sober Joan Jett.

His music has developed considerably since then, but the rap lingers on. After hooking up with Billy Gaff—Rod Stewart's manager at the time—he was signed by Riva Records, and in 1979 released the energetic but uneven *John*

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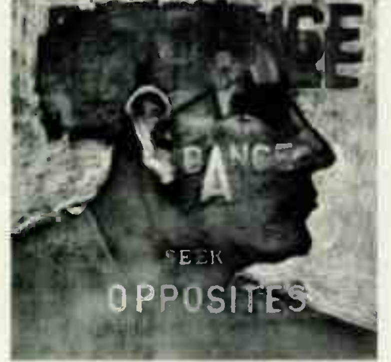

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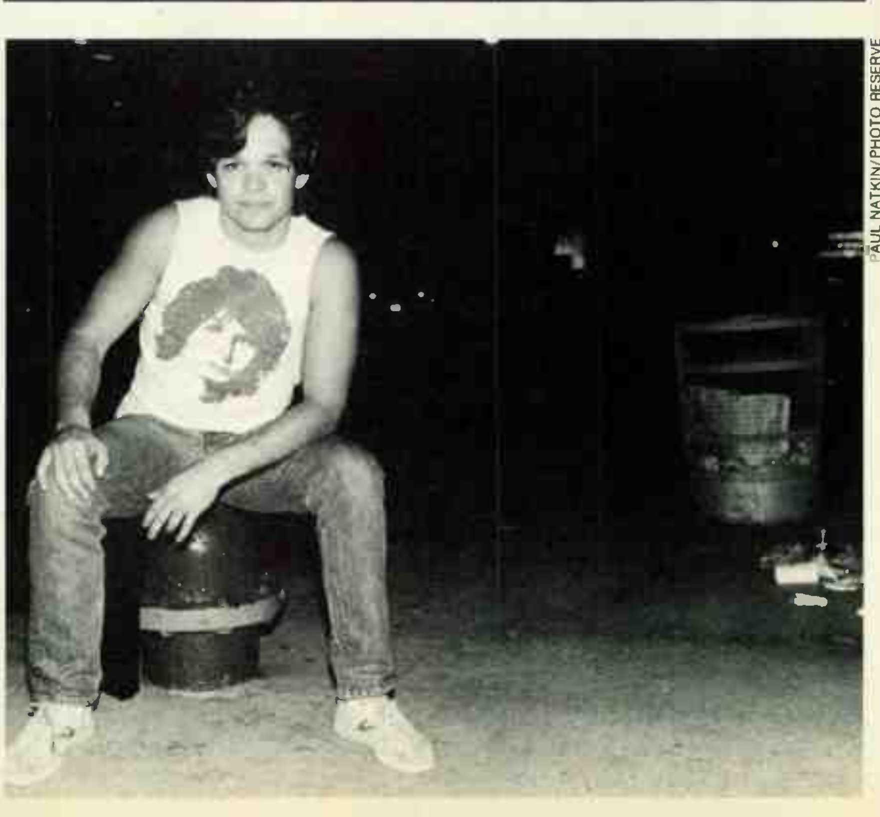
Cougar LP. The album did launch one modest single, however, "I Need A Lover"; it later received a booster shot from Pat Benatar, and Cougar was back in business. The next year Steve Cropper produced *Nothing Matters And What If It Did*, which sold nearly half a million copies but whose obvious debt to Seger and Springsteen rekindled old charges that Cougar was merely a simulation of more vital and viable pop icons.

Cougar spent the last two years retrenching, and the result is an album in which nearly every component is pared to the bone. Out went band members who Cougar felt "were too busy being rock stars"; out went the tremulous piano which congealed the rich sonic textures of *Nothing Matters* in favor of a basic two-guitar, bass and percussion attack. Formerly grandiose imagery was whittled down into concise lyrical fragments, which aimed to evoke the emotional roller coaster of Cougar's own adolescent experiences.

"We're just a little band," he observes wryly. "We didn't need a big-time producer to come in and tell us what to do and screw up our records. Heck, we already *did* that. This time the idea was to scale everything down. I'm so sick of guitars tracked a thousand times anyway. And synthesizers *make me puke*!

"We wanted to cut the songs like they used to do at Chess or Motown and still sound modern. We tracked 'Hurt So Good,' for instance, sixty or seventy times just to get the feel. Usually you do it three or four times, and once the bass is steady you start into overdubs. But this time we didn't do any overdubs. We just went for the feel—because if the tempo is off even a little bit, you lose the power. We spent five or six hours every day on the drums, changing the heads around, playing with the microphones. And then the band would cut each song over and over until it was right. Finally we ran out of money and we had to throw on 'Close Enough (For Rock 'n' Roll)' after only three takes. That's the one song that stinks on the record, and it's not much better live. We never did learn to play it right. But I'll tell you," John Cougar

"I'm sure it would've been better to just stay cool and not make any waves, but like Warren Zevon says, it's hard to sit on your hands and smile at stupid things."



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PROPHET-5

The Model 1000 (Rev 3.3) PROPHET-5 from Sequential Circuits is a completely programmable, five-voice polyphonic synthesizer. Each voice has two voltage controlled oscillators, a noise source, a voltage controlled low-pass filter, and two 4-stage envelope generators. The voices can be controlled by either the front panel knobs and switches or by one of the programs in memory.

The PROPHET-5 comes with 120 patches preprogrammed; included are orchestral timbres (brass, strings, woodwinds, etc.), keyboard sounds (organs, clav, harpsicords, electric pianos, etc.), percussive sounds (snare, toms, tympani, marimbas, etc.), special effects (animal sounds, explosions, helicopters, thunder, whistles, bells, etc.), and synthesizer "specialties" (like none of the above!). All of these programs can easily be modified or replaced by your own sounds.

The PROPHET-5 has many outstanding features to further enhance its versatility:

- Easy to use — plug it into an amplifier or stereo system, turn on the power switch, and you're ready to play!
- A full five-octave keyboard (C to C).
- The internal computer automatically tunes and scales all ten oscillators, virtually eliminating the need for periodic internal oscillator adjustments.
- A built-in battery with a 10-year life ensures all program storage, even when the machine is turned off.
- All 120 programs can be stored on tape in groups of eight or forty at a time.
- Any program in memory can be temporarily modified ("edited") by altering any knob or switch setting, which instantly shifts control of that parameter from computer memory to the front panel — the modified program can then be permanently saved or the original program can be recalled; no special "edit" switches are needed.
- The Pitch Bend and Modulation wheels will control entire chords as well as solo lines.
- A voice defeat system allows you to easily disable a defective voice in an emergency situation, even while playing.
- This instrument will interface with the Sequential Circuits POLY-SEQUENCER, REMOTE PROPHET Keyboard, the ANALOG INTERFACE BOX, and most home computers.

Another totally unique feature of the PROPHET-5 i[s] the variable "scale mode" which enables each note of the octave to be tuned individually. The tuning range for each note is approximately +1 to −½ semitone (about +94 to −50 cents) from its normal equal tempered value. For the first time, on a standard commercially available instrument, you can use alternative scales, such as Pythagorean, mean tone, just intonation, and ethnic modes. These can be stored and recalled as easily as patch programs, which enables instantaneous switching from one scale or key to another and permanent storage on tape.

The PROPHET-5 is the most versatile, reliable and easy to use polyphonic synthesizer available. Extensive use in films, television, records, and live performances have firmly established it as the Industry Standard.

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RIGHT STUFF!

PROPHET-10

'he PROPHET-10 (Model 1016) is a completely programmable polyphonic synthesizer with ten voi- ces and two 5-octave keyboards. Each 5-voice keyboard has its own programmer which will store 32 sounds (64 total). This arrangement allows two different programs to be played simultaneously. The programs can be assigned to the two manuals according to any one of four keyboard modes:

Normal — five voices and the upper programmer assigned to the top keyboard, and the lower programmer and five voices assigned to the bottom keyboard

Single — ten voices playable anywhere on either keyboard

Double — upper and lower programs are combined into five voices playable on either keyboard

Alternate — sound alternates between the upper and lower programs as notes are played on either keyboard

Each synthesizer voice consists of two voltage-controlled oscillators, a white noise source, a resonant 24 db/octave (4-pole) low-pass filter plus a 4-stage envelope generator, a voltage controlled amplifier with its own 4-stage envelope generator and a 3-band equalizer. In addition, Oscillator B and the filter envelope generator may be used to modulate the Frequency or Pulse Width of Oscillator A, or the Filter Frequency (via the Poly-Mod section). Each 5-voice synthesizer bank has a single low-frequency oscillator which can be applied to all of its voices for various effects.

Additional features of the PROPHET-10 include: Pitch and Modulation wheels, octave transposition switches, voice assignment LED indicators, automatic tuning, programmable volume control, upper and lower manual balance control, an A-440 reference tone, two assignable and programmable control voltage pedals which can act on each manual independently, program increment footswitch, and stereo/mono balanced and unbalanced outputs. The PROPHET-10 also comes with a built-in polyphonic sequencer which has over 10,000-note storage, up to six separate sequences, sequence grouping, instant transposition, real-time or single-step recording, variable playback speed, overdubbing, an external clock input for synchronized playback with other instruments, and a built-in digital cassette deck for sequence and program storage. This sequencer has been adapted for use with the PROPHET-5. (For more information, see the last page of this brochure.)

PRO-ONE

The PRO-ONE (Model 100) from Sequential Circuits offers more features at a lower price than any other professional monophonic, single-voice synthesizer. Musicians no longer have to compromise versatility or quality when purchasing a low-cost instrument. This compact synthesizer has a three-octave keyboard (C to C), Pitch and Modulation wheels, and a panel arrangement similar to the PROPHET-5. The PRO-ONE's sound is identical to any single voice on the PROPHET-5 and includes the same features:

- two voltage controlled oscillators with sawtooth, square, and variable pulse width wave shapes
- 24 db/octave (4-pole) low-pass filter with its own 4-stage envelope generator
- a 4-stage envelope generator for the voltage controlled amplifier

In addition to this basic voice, the PRO-ONE has extensive modulation capabilities. Three modulation sources are available: the filter envelope generator, Oscillator B, and a separate low-frequency oscillator. Each can be mixed and routed for direct and/or wheel-controlled modulation of five destinations: Oscillator A Frequency, Oscillator A Pulse Width, Oscillator B Frequency, Oscillator B Pulse Width, and Filter Frequency.

The PRO-ONE's built-in microcomputer makes possible innovations unheard of on a low-cost synthesizer: a 40-note sequencer, an arpeggiator, single and multiple triggering modes, repeat and drone switches, and a unique "automatic" glide feature. In addition, an internal digital interface allows connection to most home computers.

The back panel of the PRO-ONE offers a variety of functions. The audio output can drive a monophonic or stereo amplifier, or stereo headphones. The audio input, with pre-amp and automatic gate generator, allows synthesizer processing of microphones, instrument pickups, or any low-level signal. The PRO-ONE is designed with a standard one volt octave control voltage in/out and gate in/out (which can be used with an external clock for triggering the sequencer and arpeggiator).

If this is your first synthesizer, use these "buzz words" as a comparison guide and don't be discouraged; the PRO-ONE is remarkably easy to understand and grow with. Sequential Circuits has been designing state-of-the-art synthesizers for years: starting with the first fully programmable polyphonic synthesizer — the PROPHET-5. It's no wonder the industry and musicians alike have dubbed the PRO-ONE clearly superior. Look into it and see for yourself!

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muses dreamily, "when I first laid that tune down on acoustic guitar I thought I'd written 'Honky Tonk Women.'" He says it in a way that lets you know there could be no nobler ambition.

Cougar tells me with some distaste how his record label was originally unhappy with *American Fool*, and actually suggested recutting tracks with the Muscle Shoals rhythm section and the Memphis Horns. He visibly bristles at the thought. "We had a meeting in New York, and told them; if they didn't want to support the record, they could let us out," he says. "Because I knew, I *knew* that 'Hurt So Good' was a hit." He pauses for a moment, then leans over and chuckles. "Anyway," he cackles mischievously, "horns belong in a marching band."

The ecstatic audience I witnessed at Denver's Rainbow Theater would doubtless have agreed. From the moment Cougar bounded onstage, wearing his beloved Harley T-shirt, a lock of his impossibly thick hair looping into his eyes, the crowd jumped on their chairs and danced en masse until, seventy-five minutes and two encores later, the band drove to its clangorous denouement. Unlike Cougar's albums, all of which are specked with a ballad or two, the live show is unfettered shake-your-booty fare, mixing the more anthemic selections from Cougar's repertoire with telling cover versions of the Stones ("Can't Always Get What You Want"), Lynyrd Skynyrd ("Goin' South") and Iggy Pop ("Search And Destroy"). Taken respectively, those three titles provide a fair indication of Cougar's philosophical, musical and spiritual compass.

His show was hardly the last word in slick showmanship, yet Cougar remains such an ingratiating presence that all the raw edges worked in his favor. A lascivious jitterbug with backup singer Pat Peterson on "Thundering Hearts," an impromptu sing-along on "Hurt So Good," even the band's artless stage presence—all helped eradicate the barrier between fans and performers, as if we'd somehow become privy to a giant, boisterous rent party. And in the true spirit of adolescent excess, Cougar not only tried to leap into the audience, but for the final reprise of "Hurt So Good" went one better by hoisting the front row teenies onto the stage. There, he and thirty of Denver's cutest cavorted arm in arm like some flashback to a beer blast, while the rest of the band nonchalantly kicked out the jams and the security goons looked on in glazed bewilderment. This may not have qualified as a moment of pure pop transcendance, but it sure as hell looked like a good time. And it served notice that despite all his battles with critics and cognoscenti, John Cougar still holds the final trump card: the little girls understand. M

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Jan Garbarek

Sax Solitude and Northern Light

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

The quintessential ECM artist, Jan was making ECM music before the label existed.

BY HOWARD MANDEL

Jan Garbarek was feeling out of his element, perhaps, and he needed to hold something of himself in reserve. His voice and smile were cordial enough, but here he was in Manhattan for the fourth time in his life, in the dozen years since his first international record release as a jazz saxophonist, in the midst of a quick North American tour, facing a succession of insistent, ingratiating interviewers and photographers in the ECM offices above Madison Avenue's traffic din. There was still an afternoon sound-check with his quartet to live through and an informal reception in his honor, hosted by Norwegian diplomats, before the serious business of opening a two-night stand at the Bottom Line (where he'd never played before) in support of his latest album, *Paths, Prints*. A few tired lines webbed the handsome planes of Garbarek's face.

If jazz improvisation is inspiration under stress, know that there's enough stress in this world to go around. Jan is far removed from the city pace and the subway rhythms that seem to inform American jazz; in fact, his keening sax—as on *Paths, Prints*, bedded by ringing guitar and resonant bass, stirred by the merest tick of trap drum—can remove a room (and its occupants) from an urban ambience and the demands of time. Yet he *worries* notes, insistently repeating tone rows within a subtly shifting context, rather than running melodic variations over harmonic changes, as saxophonists from Coleman Hawkins to John Coltrane have done. By his seriousness, one gathers Jan Garbarek worries about the grander themes of life too.

"I like quiet to create," he answered a question about his relative isolation in Norway. "Preferably, complete quiet. Silence." Credited on more than twenty albums issued by a label that has boasted it's "the next best sound to silence," Jan might be considered the

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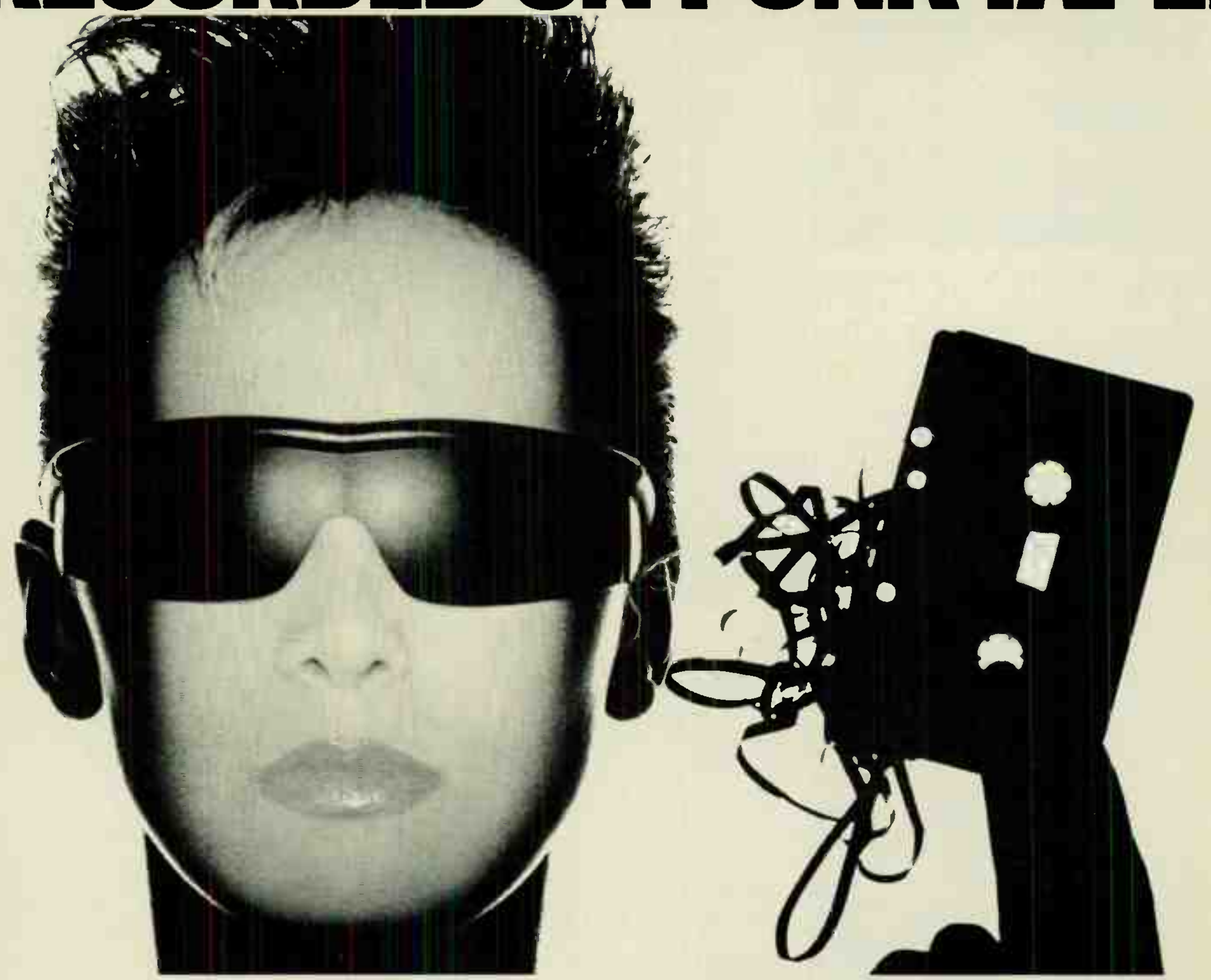

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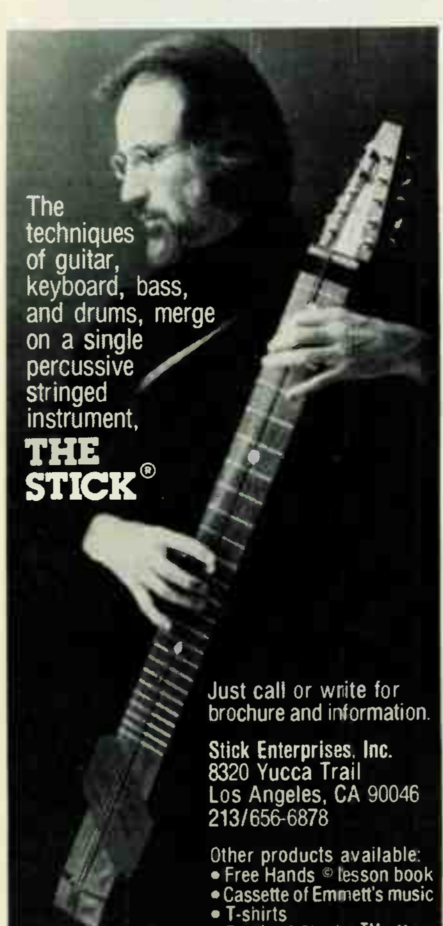

quintessential ECM artist—instrumentalist, composer with an interest in ethnic musics and capable sideman. He was one of the first musicians to record for Manfred Eicher, and indeed may have been making ECM music before there was any ECM at all.

"I don't know what it would be like to create here in the city, with activity always boiling all around," he continued; nothing in his inflection indicated he cared to find out. "Quite different, I would imagine."

Different enough to affect his music, one would think. Garbarek is a dark Scandinavian. His father was Polish, which encouraged him to study that language in Oslo's university before frequent calls to gig at clubs and dances lured him from academia. His compositions could be thought to represent the northern light and landscape; considered with his tenor and soprano playing, this music reflects the inner Garbarek, too. Which makes him seem a dark and moody presence, introspective, remote, sometimes wintry and even austere, though ECM's characteristically reverberent studio mix takes off some of the chill.

Not that Jan lacks heart. "I have a family," he admitted, a bit protective of his private life—unlike Americans, who may just blab their secret histories within minutes of a first chance meeting. "I live with my daughter, who's twelve years old now, and my wife in an apartment, in a complex that's sort of in the suburbs, just outside of town, just on the border to a forest. I can see trees from our windows. And in the summer I have a log house on the sea. It's really a quiet life.

"I don't play at home. I work in a studio; it takes me about twenty minutes to drive there, and then I'm just by myself. I try to go every day—I want to, but I don't. Also, I do some writing for films, theater and plays. I have to do that during the day, as well as play the saxophone."

So at age thirty-five, Garbarek is a man of regular habits, relatively disciplined and settled. It's not unusual, he said, for a year to pass without him playing a jazz club in Norway or Europe at all. It's a different existence, probably, than his peers in the U.S. enjoy. Except for the most prominent leaders—like Keith Jarrett, in whose quartet Jan has, in the past, been featured—a player in New York would be hustling himself onto bandstands, talking up deals with struggling companies, butting heads with friendly competition, part of a scene. Consider the man who first inspired Jan Garbarek.

"I was really not interested in music at all, but then I heard this record by Coltrane on the radio, and I just started to beg for a saxophone. I wanted to do the same thing; I was fourteen at the time. I wasn't even aware that it was jazz at the beginning.

"The song I'd heard was 'Count Down' from *Giant Steps*. I wasn't interested in playing the song. I mean, 'Count Down' is one of the most complicated tunes, you know—ever. The harmonizations, the tempo—it's unbelievable, the way he plays. So there was hardly any idea for me of trying to do that. It's like with Coltrane I felt an extramusical thing, his spiritual power. There were a lot of things that came out because of how he played. Not necessarily because he played 'Count Down.' It was the same later, in his last years, when he was playing very different things. It had nothing to do with the language he spoke, actually, but with what he was expressing in that language."

The language of John Coltrane—the language he spoke inseparable from the messages he expressed—developed in relation to a particular heritage and undeniable social circumstances, though as language, it's proved to be universally comprehensible and appealing. Perhaps the young Norwegian identified with the resolute inner search that seemed to concern Trane; in any event, Jan himself was resolute.

"Before I even got my first saxophone, I bought my first instruction book with a fingering table. When I got my saxophone I was ready, I knew a little bit about it, I was so eager. I never had any musical education, formally, though I'm trying to correct that now, studying counterpoint, theory, all the usual things with a Norwegian composer. Learning my instrument I did mostly by myself. I was really motivated."

Within a year he was gigging professionally with older musicians. There were several jazz clubs in Oslo—"They're sort of the same, I suppose, as here. Clubs are small and dark, that is a known fact, and they're crowded, depending on who is playing"—as well as concerts where visiting jazz stars performed. Eberhard Weber, the German bassist who recorded *Paths, Prints* with Garbarek and toured in his band with guitarist Bill Frisell and drummer Mike DiPasqua, recalls it was easier for rhythm players than saxists or trumpeters to gain experience with the honored American jazzmen, who were typically saxists or trumpeters themselves. For mid-60s Norwegian dancers, Garbarek blew Junior Walker and James Brown-style R&B.

"When I was younger, we played standards and the 12-bar blues," Garbarek said. "It got pretty abstract over the years, but that was the basis."

Little of the basic blues emerges from his music today, other than what's central: the yearning feeling. What about the three-chord form?

"I felt that even within that form it was hard to express what I was looking for. I figured that I had to make up some songs or some directions that would

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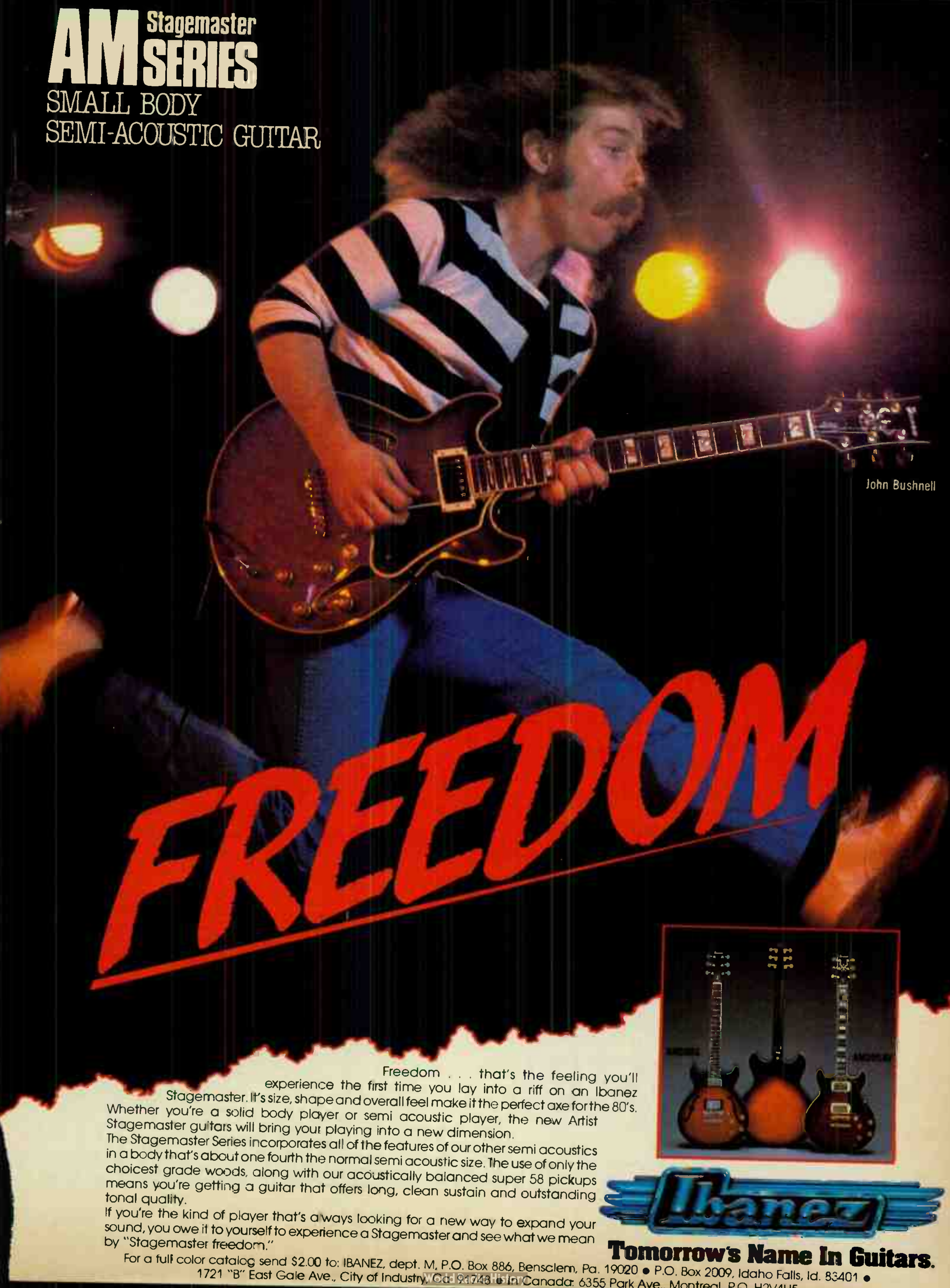
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trigger something else."

The very reason Trane, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and many others were exploding the hardbop, jazz-blues strictures in the 60s. Luckily, Garbarek came into contact with an innovative American jazz composer who was also thoroughly versed in the tradition under revision. George Russell, who'd stayed in Scandinavia after a 1964 sextet tour, took Garbarek into his band, and featured him in the first recording of "Electronic Sonata For Souls Loved By Nature." The album-long work (which appeared on the now-defunct Flying Dutchman label of Coltrane's producer Bob Thiele) was, according to its composer, "a tape composed of fragments of many different styles of music... treated electronically. And... a pallet upon which non-electronic musical statements of a pan-stylistic nature could be projected."

With Garbarek, trumpeter Manfred Schoof, guitarist Terje Rypdal and drummer Jon Christensen, all now contributors to the ECM catalog, projected the pan-stylistic statements. Under Russell's auspices, Flying Dutchman also released *The Esoteric Circle*, on which Jan, Jon, Terje and bassist Arild Anderson played their own atmospheric, esoteric jazz-rock. In the U.S. this disc anticipated ECM by some months.

"We were gigging with George Russell in Italy," Garbarek said of his Norwegian quartet, "and I thought to ask other European musicians if there was any small, strange label that would put out an album of our tapes." A German drummer pointed out Manfred Eicher, sitting in a corner, as one who was about to start a record company. He wasn't interested in the tapes Jan was offering, but indicated interest in making some new ones.

"I thought this was a nice way to say, 'No, don't call us, we'll call you,'" Jan suspected. "But a few months later I got a letter from him asking me to set up studio time in Oslo, he'd be there on such-and-such a day. He came, and we made our first album. That was his first time in Oslo, too, and he met an engineer friend of ours, Jan Erik Kongshaug, who has worked for ECM ever since.

"I am close to Manfred; we're friends and we work well together. I would say he already knew what he wanted, right from the start. He could hear something in musicians that he liked, then he would try to develop and enhance that quality. What that quality is, I can't really say—but I seem to have a feeling similar to his."

Critics, *and* musicians, have struggled with the ECM sound, of which Garbarek is certainly a foremost adherent. Whether with bassist Charlie Haden and Brazilian multi-instrumentalist Egberto Gismonti in the trio Magico, or with one

continued on page 116

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Musical Youth

LIBERATION ORCHESTRA

Rolled into London at six a.m. on the Nightrider from Scotland to find a twelve-year-old phantom playing the Venue that night at eight, waved what's left of my press card and there I was at another meeting of the community of inspiration. Carla Bley and Charlie Haden represent to my mind some unconditioned collusion between the larger than life and the deeper than life, between the broadest kind of farce and an often painfully unmodulated sincerity. In practice they bring out qualities in each other that enlarge them both. Their old collaboration on some settings of Spanish Civil War songs and internationally notorious revolutionary anthems, not excluding a strangling of the American, produced a classic and anomalous and naturally out-of-print album on Impulse more than a decade back. Their dream of a collective *risorgimento*, long deferred, has been realized for the space of a European tour and a record date for ECM, and though the resulting Liberation Music Orchestra might not shake the incomprehensible knees and moronic spines of the governments of the world, it did manage to wave an unforgettable banner for those who cared.

The evening began with an inevitably mock-solemn brass canon by Bley, which in turn gave way to a series of war and peace songs unknown to me (one of them was Chilean, I was told by a Chilean woman singing along behind me) but of a largely Spanish or Latin American cast. The rhythm section of Haden, Bley, Paul Motian and guitarist Mick Goodrick (replacing the deceased Sam Brown) was superb throughout, Bley supplying an almost Monkian structural angularity, Motian able to lead the music integrally from strict rhythm to free-jazz splatter and Haden, abetted by an omni-audient Goodrick, was as usual obsessed with two kinds of depth: he provided an unshakable bottom for the music and sounded the fundamental human note of which he is the contemporary master.

And I loved the band. Originally intended as a literal revival of the original orchestra, Brown necessarily excepted, it was in practice the Carla Bley Band altered front and back, and it was a pleasure to hear Bley writing again for voices as distinctive as Don Cherry's and Dewey Redman's. Along with trombonist Gary Valente, who was simply brilliant—the best I've ever heard him; I didn't even once miss Roswell Rudd—they were the chief soloists of the evening, though there were also fine contributions from Mike Mantler, Steve Slagle, Sharon Freeman, Jim Pepper and the rhythm section. It was also a pleasure to hear Bley working on the grand scale again—all the melodic material was woven into long, brilliantly coherent suites, and all of it sounded as if it had been composed by Bley rather than received and altered, Bley being incapable of anonymity or an unoriginal note. I think her music also gained in vitality from the reinfusion of the screely avant-gardism she has partly repressed in her working band, in fact the music as a whole, with its free expressionism and disjunct sections, was a rousing affirmation of the anarcho-syndicalist free-jazz aesthetic, and the juxtaposition of, say, both march and splatter gave the concert all the human amplitude it could have wished for.

The second set continued the festivities. Midway through, a trio of Haden, Bley and Motian lost their way in the thicket of a Bley or Haden ballad (**Bley:** Uh, suppose I try, uh, *this* modulation. **Haden:** Then I'll play this note but, like, what next?) and I enjoyed it all the way even if they didn't. The Liberation Music Orchestra concluded with its Greatest Hit, the Spanish medley, following the Bley prologue with "The Fifth Regiment" (Haden/Bley being the only composers not to take a composer's credit for the tune; both Coltrane and Corea did), and it was of course turrific, the best music heard on the planet that night. — *Rafi Zabor*

Liberation Orchestra

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

MUSICAL YOUTH

England's chart-topping Musical Youth already appear to be a genuine musical phenomenon here in America, but any band so successful (their number one U.K. hit "Pass The Dutchie" is one of the best selling singles in recent British history) *and* so young is bound to raise a lot of questions, such as: Can they truly play? Are they young pawns in somebody's marketing plan or the real thing? Will they have a long-term musical appeal, or fade like some reggaeified Partridge Family?

After a first-hand encounter with Musical Youth on their home turf of Birmingham, any suspicions and preconceptions about "kid groups" must be set aside. While *youth* is the key component to the incredible appeal, it goes far beyond the fact that these winning and handsome young teens handily play reggae.

The five members of Musical Youth range in age from eleven (the youngest being Kelvin Grant, who seems dwarfed by the guitar he plays with righteously skanking authority). The band seems to embody Jimmy Cliff's philosophy in song, "You Can Get It If You Really Want," replacing the often-threatening political and doped reggae perspective with a vibrant, positive humanism, yet without losing the music tics or even the rub-a-dub sexiness that makes for great reggae.

"We write songs about what's happening," says bassist Patrick Waite, who explains that their choice of "Dutchie," an adaptation of the old reggae hit "Pass The Koochie" (container of *ganja*) was because the song "was happy, but it's also about things today; the words are true, and it had a lot of rhythm as well." Musical Youth transform it from a song about smoking pot to a song about a cooking pot ("dutchie"). From being hungry and being young there comes a new universality

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and in the hands of Musical Youth, the frequently off-putting patois becomes more of a clever word game.

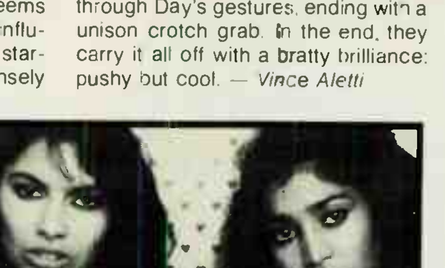
As far as the live performance acid test, seeing the Youth play a hometown kids' matinee as a benefit for their secondary school was insightful and impressive if still not a "great performance." Despite the tension of playing before friends and family after hitting number one, as well as an obtrusive BBC film crew who jostled, bumped and generally overran the band's stage ("My boys would have bottled 'em," complained another group's manager in the audience), Musical Youth were stoic and unwavering in their delivery of rocksteady solid reggae in a variety of tempos and themes. Nevertheless, their charismatic magic barely crept through the surrounding hall. Kelvin's natty toasting and singer Dennis Seaton's joyous delivery and dancing occasionally brightened the dim, dusty venue, and their three previous years of hard practice and gigs pulled them admirably through a gig a rep from MCA Records, their label, confessed was "diabolical" (meaning abysmal). Reports from hip Londoners outside the music business I'd met who'd seen the band all confirmed that they can be magical live, and on a lip-synch taping for the kids' music show *Razzamatazz* I saw a few days later, all of their sprightly stage moves and appeal shined. When properly combined with their hearty craftsmanship, ability and tight-woven band sound, no doubt they can be, as they say in patois, "mur-r-r-rder!" The icing on the cake is their singular viewpoint, a social vision whose appeal is bred by youth and could even take hold in America, where the novelty aspect of their age and accent could slip them into the charts, but their talents would keep them there.

And perhaps Musical Youth just might be the harbinger of a new phenomenon—kids rock 'n' roll with musical and lyrical credibility. Says Dennis Seaton, "The group is really there to show other kids they can do the same thing. Some of them think we're there to show off, but we're not. We're there to show them they can do the same." And we may find what they say in a song coming true—"the youth of today has got lots to say." — *Rob Patterson*

TIME/VANITY6

Both Vanity 6 and the Time are faithful students of the Prince School of Post-Adolescent, Post-Disco Raunch 'n' Roll, majoring in sexuality, conceit, style, makeup, put-on, put-down, coolness and fun, fun, fun. Main campus: Minneapolis, hometown for Prince and his protégés in the six-man Time band, assembly point for the three girls in Vanity 6, two of whom Prince discovered in less enlightened parts of the country (New York, Boston). Though the school encourages individual expression (particularly when it comes to clothes and hairstyle), master and students share a brittle, quirky, tightened-up sound, a sharp-edged rock/funk synthesis that draws on Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix and George Clinton but strikes its own instinctive balance of styles. Though neither the Time nor Vanity 6 can match Prince for impact or depth (possibly because they seem calculated while he seems possessed), under his heady influence they've turned out some startlingly fresh, witty and immensely successful music.

Vanity 6



Time

Onstage, both Vanity 6 and the Time can be distractingly visual—more pose than performance—but, the first time around at least, that's a large part of the attraction. Vanity 6 strut the stage as pinups in camisoles, stockings and garter belts: leggy, intentionally tawdry, very young girls who are more convincing as sex objects than singers. But as their band knocks out tense, jerky, synthesizer-driven tunes and the girls prance around with cheerful vulgarity, it's obvious that they're not aiming for nuance or clarity here. Instead, Vanity 6 updates the brash, self-absorbed pop of the Ronettes and the Shangri-las, only these nasty girls take the pose much further and they're not afraid to—in their words—bite the beat. Their set was short, nearly seamless and stunningly sexy.

The Time, a reliably tight, showy band, has more to offer onstage, but in pushing their songs to the limit they sometimes stretch them awfully thin. Strung between nervous guitar and jagged sheets of synthesizer jazz, the Time's music strives for a rock anthemic style and sometimes achieves it ("Cool," "Get It Up," "Wild And Loose") but rarely lets it go before all the juice has been wrung out. Following Prince's dictum that "sexuality is all you really need," the songs are mostly about guys and girls on the make, so the music is suitably pumped-up and aggressive, if lacking in surprise or invention. They make up for this, or at least mask it, by being fun onstage. Lead singer Morris Day is a perversely charming fop (cf. Kid Creole) and a strong, confident, appealing singer, even if the trademark gestures that are amusing at the beginning of the set—squeezing his mouth into a prissy pucker, slicking back his hair with both hands, tidying up his clothes—are nearly infuriating by the end. Still, it's funny when a band member holds up a gilt-framed mirror for Day to preen in, and the whole routine is spoofed in a finale chorus line when the entire group runs through Day's gestures, ending with a unison crotch grab. In the end, they carry it all off with a bratty brilliance: pushy but cool. — *Vince Aletti*

NITECAPS

John Xavier Bonfiglio, the leader of the Nitecaps, reminds one of an earnest club fighter, a "comer" building his career waiting for world reknown. The memorable pop-rock melodies he wrote for the Caps' debut album, *Go To The Line* (Sire), suggest the confluence of Pete Townshend, Curtis Mayfield, John Fogerty and the Young Rascals, but his sense of theatricality and showmanship recalls Hector "Macho" Comacho, the popular junior lightweight fighter from Spanish Harlem. Both are tough, emotional city kids with boundless energy. At CBGB there is neither blood nor the Bowery's smell of liniment, just the aura of hungry rock 'n' rollers as Bonfiglio bangs to the body with an authoritative introduction to "The New Me," a bouyant pop-rock anthem that opens the Nitecaps' set.

The rhythmic lift is immediate. Drummer Sammy Brown, bassist Peter Jordan and guitarist/vocalist Al Maddy have been playing together since 1980, and at their best they're ferocious. Bonfiglio (nicknamed "X") dispels his altarboy looks with a gritty singing voice and a collection of momentous, whirling leaps and kicks. He and Maddy also muster exhilarating harmonies and twin guitar leads on the rollicking "Wild Night" and a souped-up reggae version of "Ain't No Sunshine." The rounds are even, a tribute to the tempo of the fight, when the Uptown Horns slink across the crowded stage to the beat of the sinewy instrumental classic, "Twine Time." X certainly walked under the right star when he found saxophonists Crispin Cioe, Arno Hecht and trumpeter Paul Littoral, who complement the quartet's manic energy with an aggressive assortment of musical jabs and hooks. They breathe fire into an extended version of Solomon Burke's "Everybody Needs Somebody Too Long," with its clever quotations from "Cloud Nine" and "Dirty Water." And they add verve to "Little Too Long," "Black Tears" and "Same Situation," three songs from the album that offer a diverse range of pop-rock perspectives. A medley of "Is This The Dream" by the Zombies and "Good Times" by the Easy Beats demonstrates the band's classical taste for mid-60s British rock, and when the dancers want more, the Caps affirm their traditionalism and primeval sense of courage with a stunning interpretation of Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On."

"People want to forget their everyday bullshit and have a good time," a sweat-soaked Bonfiglio says later. "Remember when Elvis wiggled his hips? Rock was supposed to be fun." Disenfranchised souls, take heart. The Caps are "comers." — *Leo Sacks*

Nitecaps

WARING ABBOTT

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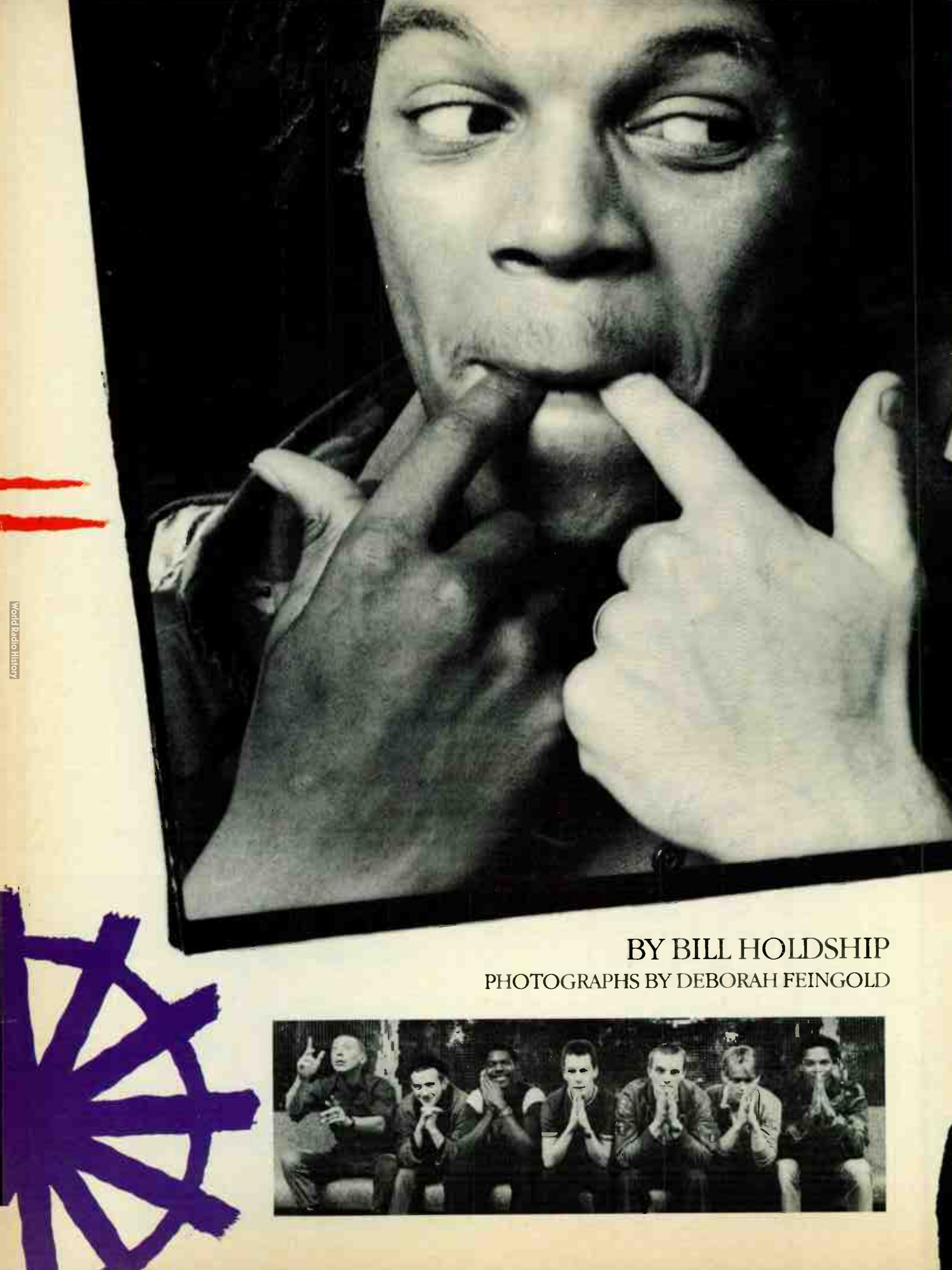

BY BILL HOLDSHIP

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEBORAH FEINGOLD

World Radio History

The English Beat

2-tone Survivors Make a Joyful Noise

"The circumstances that brought the Beat together make us tenuous, in a way," observes singer/guitarist Dave Wakeling. "With any one set of musicians, sooner or later you're going to run out of things to say. We certainly don't intend to keep doing the same things year after year." With that musical credo, it seems hard to believe that the Beat should now be the elder statesmen, indeed the only surviving major group, of the British 2-tone movement—

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that multiracial fashion/dance/entertainment celebration. With the Specials, Selecter and Madness in salt 'n' pepper pieces and in the wake of the skinhead white supremacy counterassault, the word "tenuous" seems less appropriate than "endangered." Still, the Beat (known in America as the English Beat, for legal reasons) have survived and prospered, precisely because of their readiness to adapt and because of their willingness to move beyond 2-tone and yet retain its joyous innocence.

"We originally called ourselves the Beat because we wanted to experiment with a wide assortment of rhythms. The whole concept was to create a hybrid of different influences that each member of the group held dear, so the idea of using one particular rhythm would be an antithesis of what we wanted to achieve. Ska is a specific beat, and we've only had two or three songs out of something like forty that used the ska beat."

"It's great that melody is one of this band's strengths, since reggae is struggling a bit at the moment to find new melodies." — Dave Wakeling

Dave Wakeling, the English Beat's lead vocalist and co-guitarist, is explaining why he believes his band has managed to weather the changes of a trend-conscious British music scene, where "fashions tend to change every six months."

"I thought the 2-tone movement was very useful at first," explains Wakeling, "but obviously it became a huge fashion thing. Probably the biggest thing it achieved was that it allowed clothing manufacturers to sell enormous amounts of black and white checkered suits. Beyond that, though, it did say something very strong about racial unity. It spoke out against a lot of racist myths and managed to get it all mentioned in the daily newspapers and such. Although I sometimes get annoyed when people complain that the third Beat LP isn't a ska record, I still think it was an honor to have been involved with 2-tone.

"I think we mainly got labeled ska because people saw blacks and whites together. Actually, it was no big deal for a racially mixed band to come out of Birmingham, or Coventry where the Specials began. It's happened for years because the industrial British Midlands are a very racially integrated area. This isn't true of all parts of Britain. It's more socially segregated in the south. The only 2-tone band to come out of the south was Madness, and they don't have any black people in the group."

David Steele agrees that the Beat are "more a pop band" than anything else, but he's not so sure that the band has weathered the changes in the musical climate as well as some people might think. "We don't sell that well in England anymore. When we first came out, the single was number one and the album went to number two. Now we have a sort of devout cult following that might get us in the top twenty, but we don't go to number one. During the 2-tone craze, you could release anything and it would immediately go to number one."

Steele lays part of the blame on England's economic recession, which he believes has had a crushing effect on the British rock scene in general. "It was a completely different scene in 1979. There was a recession at the time, but it wasn't half as bad as it is now. When we first started, there were at least three or four clubs in Birmingham. Now there's nothing, not even one club. It's really bad in England, and it's really hard for a band just starting out. You no longer can break through by playing clubs because no one goes to see groups anymore. The Police recently did their one British gig for the whole year in Sting's hometown, and it was only half full. The one exception is Musical Youth, a group of thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds who just broke out of Birmingham and went to number one. It's probably England's biggest seller in ages. But other than that, there's absolutely nothing happening in Birmingham."

It seems especially ironic that a joyful band like the English Beat should arise from Birmingham, one of the nation's most depressed cities. While many British groups today are doing their best to reflect a musical vision of decay, the Beat choose instead to create a warm atmosphere of goodwill and cheer, transforming the energies that could result in rage and a broken nose into a totally positive expression. This isn't an affected or artificial celebration, mind you. It's the real thing.

The Beat create an athletic spectacle onstage with as much bouncing, jumping, lurching and strutting as one might find in a sports event. Lead singer Dave Wakeling, one of the group's main focal points with his blond good looks, sways in place to the pulsing backbeat of David Steele's sensuous bass and Everett Morton's intense percussion. Skinheaded Dave Blockhead bops up and down, adding his keyboard fills to the dual guitar rhythms of Wakeling and Andy Cox, which give the music its rich melodic flair and resonance. Only newcomer Wesley Magoogan is relatively sedate for most of the set, accomplishing his unenviable task of recreating the familiar horn lines of the recently retired Saxa, and adding his own special magic to the group by turning new songs like "Sugar" and "Stress" into something that sounds very reminiscent of a Sam & Dave Stax era classic.

The band interact more with the audience than they do with each other. They seem caught up in the simple thrill of just *being there*, playing their music, and this exuberant feeling is successfully transmitted to the crowd. While the various members create a hypnotic, continuous sea of motion, it is Ranking Roger who goads the audience on, chanting and dancing like a man possessed, and ending up both hatless and shirtless by the band's final encore. It's the same type of performance the Beat have repeated numerous times over the years, ranging from their initial gigs in small Birmingham pubs to huge British festivals promoting nuclear disarmament, and it's a performance that gives you faith that good things are still possible in this world.

Despite the hard times in England, the Beat's third LP, *Special Beat Service* (a bastardization of Special Boat Service, the British naval commandos in the Falklands War), is selling better in America than the band's previous releases did, perhaps due to its being the Beat's most pop-oriented record yet. One would be hard pressed to find any evidence of ska on the entire LP, while the reggae influences are exclusively reserved for Ranking Roger's two toast celebrations. What you will find are African and Latin rhythms, as well as

Beat Gear

Andy Cox (guitar): Fender Telecaster guitar and Gibson L6/S guitar through a Fender Super Twin amplifier.

Dave Wakeling (guitar): Vox Teardrop guitar, Jaydee Custom Six guitar, Fender Telecaster guitar and Gretsch Tennessean guitar through a Roland JC120 amplifier.

David Steele (bass): Fender Precision bass through an Ampeg SVT bass rig.

Everett Morton (drums): A Ludwig drum set with Avedis Zildjian cymbals and a Melanie timbale.

Dave Blockhead (keyboards): Vox Continental organ through a Roland JC120 amplifier; Yamaha CP70B piano through a Yamaha 411SH speaker.

Wesley Magoogan (saxophone): Yamaha alto saxophone with an Otto Link alto mouthpiece; Yamaha tenor saxophone with an Otto Link tenor mouthpiece.

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plenty of American soul references, from the Motownish sound of "Sole Salvation" to the Philadelphia funk of "Sorry." There are also a pair of melodic pop ballads, which some critics have compared to Elvis Costello. "I could have made it sound a lot more like Elvis than I did," laughs pop enthusiast Wakeling, adding that the band even recorded "a great version" of Cole Porter's "Night And Day" that got pulled at the last minute. But perhaps the most radical departure is the rhythm guitar oriented "Save It For Later," which Wakeling admits was "definitely influenced by the Velvet Underground. I'm a big fan, and I've always been pushing to get more of the Velvet's influence in the band."

Both Wakeling and Steele agree that the Beat really don't have a definable musical vision. Says Steele: "It has changed in that we all had similar musical interests when we first started, mainly punk and reggae, but now everyone's into totally different stuff. That's why you get different music from track to track on the new LP, and you'll probably get an even wider variety of differences on the next one. I still don't think we have the proper mix. We've always been searching for the right sound, and I don't think we've found it yet. Maybe if we combine bits from all three LPs on the fourth one, we'll get something that's really good."

Wakeling is a bit more positive. "The whole thing that keeps it exciting is you don't know what's going to happen next, so we don't make any plans and it's a thrill when it happens. I think that melody is one of our primary strengths because there are five people in this band capable of writing catchy tunes. That's great because I feel that reggae is struggling a bit at the moment for new melodies. The rhythm's always there, but the melodies don't surprise me enough. I really prefer three-minute pop songs that are instantly recognizable.

"Some people have compared parts of the new LP to Haircut 100, which is understandable because we share the same producer, Bob Sargeant. I do hear similarities, especially on 'Sorry,' which I think sounds a bit too light. I think it would be a big mistake for us and Haircut 100 to start sounding too much alike, so whether we'll use Bob on the next LP is questionable. I'd rather do impressions of Elvis Costello if I had to make a choice."

One obstacle the Beat encountered this past year was the retirement of original member Saxa, the fifty-three-year-old saxophonist who joined the band after years of session playing in Jamaica with Desmond Dekker and Laurel Aitken, among others. Although he'll continue to perform with the band at special British gigs or on an occasional album track (the gorgeous solo on "End Of The Party" is his), ill health forced him to leave the road. Steele misses Saxa for reasons more personal than musical. "He was a great old character, and not having him around makes the tour a lot less fun. He could always cheer me up onstage."

Wakeling, on the other hand, prefers playing live with Wesley Magoogan, Saxa's replacement, "because he's a more disciplined musician. You know where he's going to come in, what he's going to play, and where he's going to stop, so I always know where I have to sing. Although Saxa is probably my biggest hero in the world, you never knew what he was going to do onstage. Whenever he felt like it was the end of a solo, he'd stop playing and I was supposed to start singing, even if it wasn't the right chord or verse.

"It was magical having Saxa in the group," Wakeling continues. "He was one of the cornerstones, and the idea of losing someone that important had us worried that the whole thing might fall apart. But it was amazing when Saxa and Wesley met because they just clicked. They were mates from the start. We were lucky the way it happened because it seemed very fraught at the time. It gives you a sort of faith in things."

As far as technical expertise is concerned, the Beat still adhere to at least one aspect of the punk ethic. "When it comes to music and musical instruments, we're all fairly ignorant," admits Steele. "I have this one Fender Precison that I like and keep coming back to because it's good for that heavy bassy sound. But I think we all probably bought our guitars for the way they look as opposed to the way they sound."

Adds Wakeling: "Whether this ignorance is conscious or not, I don't know because we've had plenty of time to learn. I'm becoming slightly more interested in equipment, but I still have the same basic gear as when I started. The only thing I've added is a Gretsch guitar for the semi-acoustic sound on 'Save It For Later.' I think we're all frightened of getting too much of a professional musician's attitude. There was a basic lesson to be learned from punk and having your guitar as badly out of tune as possible, because people were sick to death of the same guitar solo being played through an array of absolutely redundant effects."

Onstage, the Beat's melodic exuberance is reminiscent of anything but punk. Happiness, optimism and positive energy are still the best words to describe an English Beat performance. No pseudo-violent slam dancing here, even though the band's variety of dance rhythms keeps the audience in a state of perpetual motion. It's a far cry from the depressing strains of the gloom brigade that comprises much of today's British "rock" scene, and it's hard to find a face—offstage or on—that isn't lit up with a radiant smile. As David Steele puts it, "On a good night, we help people rise above what's depressing in the world."

"I really don't think any differently from the post-Joy Division bands," reveals Wakeling, "because I do believe the bomb is going to be dropped somewhere soon." It's a strange quote coming from this humanist who appears to be one of the happiest and most amiable rock performers around, a person who takes great delight in showing photos of his seven-month-old daughter to journalists on the band's bus, as well as

EBET ROBERTS

Beat live: David Steele, Ranking Roger & Dave Wakeling.

"sneaking" fans who couldn't afford tickets through the stage door with him. "But that depressing idea does make you value a beautiful morning all the more, so I think that's where the optimism comes from. If there are any alternatives to a nuclear explosion, it's going to be because enough people feel enthusiastic about those beautiful moments and the positive side of things. I think it helps to get a blend or balance between the positive and negative. It all seems quite negative at the moment, so the Beat are trying to create songs that attack from both sides of the happy/sad coin."

But perhaps the final statement belongs to Ranking Roger, the band's cheerful toastmaster whose, "It's strickley love and unity we a deal in today" line is one of the Beat's most familiar trademarks. "We used to preach love and unity. We still do, but not as much. I don't think we have to preach anymore because people can see it by just looking at us. You don't have to say it when it's there. Just look on the stage." M

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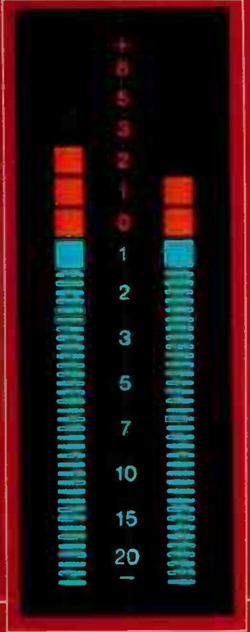

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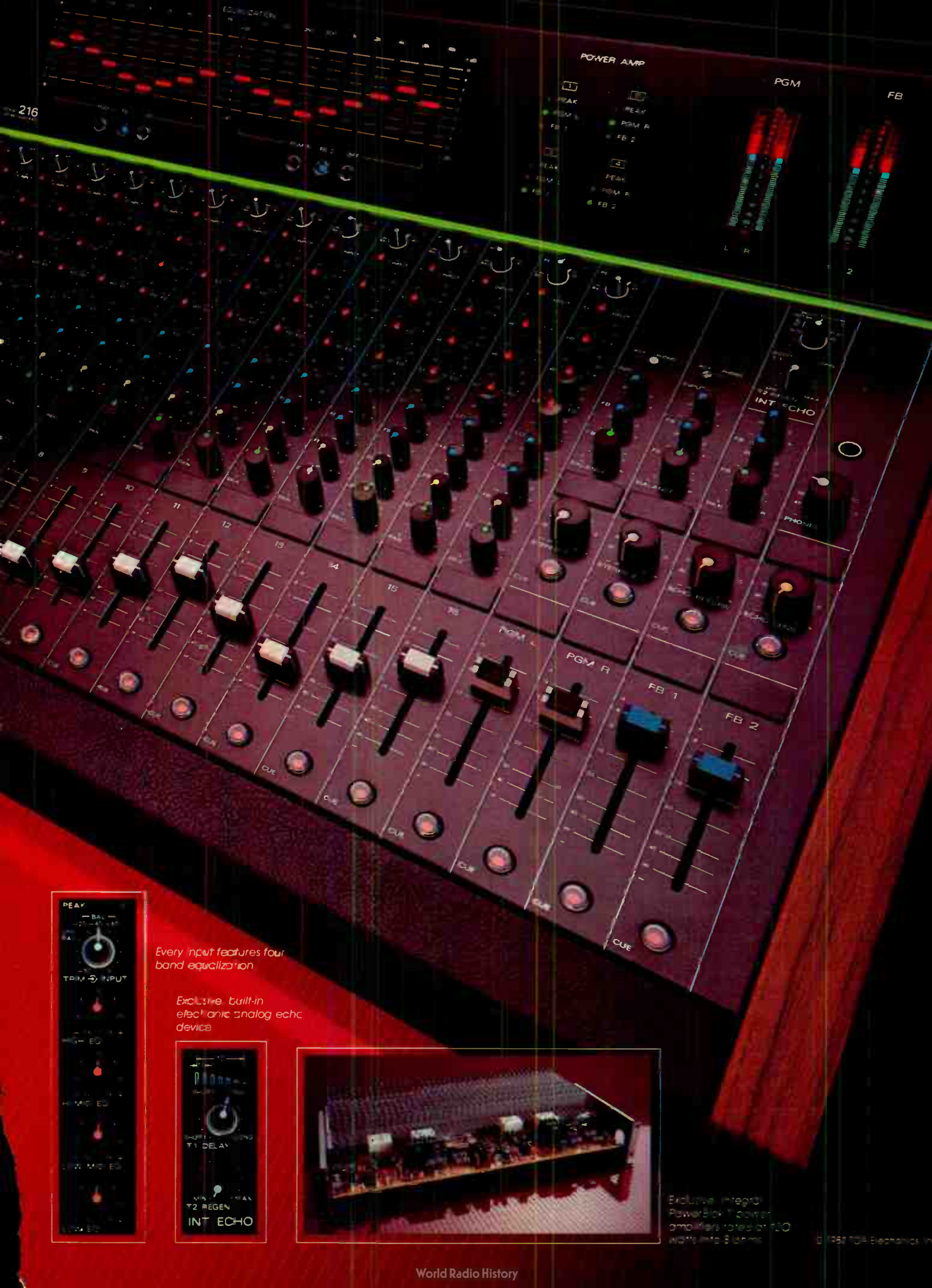

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JOE JACKSON

WHO NEEDS ROCK 'N' ROLL?

Joe Jackson *works*, from the very start of his two and a half hour show. He sings with every inch and every ounce of his skinny, six-foot frame and every calorie of energy he's got. Bathed in colored light or silhouetted against a plain backdrop awash in some rich hue, Jackson doesn't need any fancy stage gimmickry, lasers or computers to compel an audience's attention—his effort alone is enough to draw all eyes and ears to what's going on. Once the crowd is his, they're treated to a tremendous variety of rhythmic traditions, lyric images, gorgeous melodies and powerful singing.

There are no slack nights, no breath-catching throwaway numbers, no wasted moves. Every Joe Jackson performance is an impassioned report to the muse. a matter of life and death that exposes the vortex of his busy heart, mind and soul while pretending to be nothing more than an evening's entertainment. But Jackson isn't in a trance, and he's not doing it all according to preset plans, not simply overacting for the groundlings. No choreography, no rote renditions of the hits just the way you get 'em on the radio. In between songs, Joe Jackson is right there with us, responding spontaneously to a shout from the balcony or raising his beer in tribute to a well-played solo from the band. Jackson has *presence*, sheer force of character—enough to keep a crowd enthralled even if he were singing nursery rhymes.

Which of course he doesn't do. This is no bush-league fence-buster with a noodle arm—Joe Jackson is a sixty-minute man. His songs are the *raison d'etre* for all the rest, but he neglects no phase of his performance. He's got players whose wits count more than their ability to do it rote-but-right night after night; the staging de-emphasizes rock 'n' roll expectations; sound and lights work as punctuation for the music rather than as distraction from weaknesses; and Jackson himself turns in excellent performances on piano, saxophone, vibes and percussion, sparing us the false flash of the dilettante.

Why then, does he come off like such a sorehead so much of the time? His appearance has something to do with it: his sallow, bloodless complexion, receding hairline, pouting lips, heaving shoulders and bag-of-bones appearance in a roomy and unfashionable suit give him the look of an accountant on trial for embezzlement and cowardly murder in a Perry Mason episode—the one who *didn't* do it, of course, the one with the guilty look, sweaty brow and no alibi who's exonerated at the end.

Jackson also doesn't seem to be enjoying himself very much. His face is often contorted into a rather sour look when he's singing—singing *hard* nearly all the time—and often at the end of a song he holds the mike stand as if for support as he struggles to catch his breath and still his heart.

Watching him from the wings, though, one sees a different face, one dancing with pleasure and excitement. His eye contact with the band is as specifically joyous as his downstage face is anxious and defensive. It's clear that live performances find Joe Jackson at his most alive, but not in the urgent, exhibitionist I-am-what-I-say-I-am way some rockers look alive. This is the real thing, to be sure. but it's got to be real for all parties involved.

Jackson's between-songs behavior shows the conflict between his deeply rooted artistic certainty and a lifetime of social insecurity, complicated by an English sense of humor inevitably mistaken for hostility by the more

BY DAVID GANS

World Radio History

G GREEN/C de LANCIE

World Radio History

"Style is bullshit, very overrated. Content is more important than style. I've never had a style, and I still don't."

slapstick-oriented American rock public. He doesn't rely on preset patter; he incorporates passing sirens, today's news headlines and other immediate stimuli into the act; he responds spontaneously to a shout from the balcony ("I thought we left the screamers in L.A.") or a muffed note from the band; finding himself with a beer in his hand as he's announcing that *Night And Day* hit the top ten that day, he raises the bottle, smiles and says slyly, "America, this Bud's for you," by way of toasting his public. Then he averts his eyes, turns and shoots an adrenalin-spiked glance at the drummer, shouts a count and the next number is under way.

The depth of Jackson's shyness was driven home to me a few weeks after this interview was conducted in Tucson, Arizona. The talk went well enough (when it went at all) and Jackson was even willing to pose with his saxophone while I shot nearly fifty frames of film—a fact that surprised his band-mates and astonished the people at A&M Records in both Los Angeles and New York. Then, at the Jamaica World Music Festival Thanksgiving weekend, Jackson approached me backstage and said hello. We chatted idly for a few minutes, Jackson talking only to me and not regarding the strangers standing with us. When another friend approached with a camera slung over his shoulder, Jackson instantly turned self-conscious, muttered a salutation and vanished.

Raised in Portsmouth, on the south coast of England, Jackson was severely asthmatic as a child and so it was music, not sports, that occupied his hours. He began with the violin at age eleven but soon moved to the piano, which he found infinitely easier to comprehend (he says he's "never been able to figure out the guitar. I've had more progress on my alto sax in a year and a half than I've had in ten years with the guitar").

The Beatles, the Stones and the Kinks—along with "all those dreadful bands like the Swinging Blue Jeans"—drew him to pop music, and then Jackson's interest shifted to classical. "I idolized Beethoven in the same way that other people around me were idolizing bands like Cream," he recalls.

Through classical music, Jackson started to get interested in jazz, "and via jazz I came back again to rock music." He studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music for three years and earned his stripes in a succession of unglamorous gigs in cover bands, cocktail lounges (he even did time as "musical director"—read "pianist"—at the Portsmouth Playboy Club), a cabaret act called Coffee & Cream and other assignments, eventually landing in a pub-rock band called Arms & Legs. When that split up, Jackson recruited bassist Graham Maby, guitarist Gary Sanford and drummer Dave Houghton to play on a demo of his own compositions. Determined as always to make his point with or without support, the songwriter said he'd press it himself if he couldn't interest a record company.

As it happened, he met A&M staff producer David Kershenbaum, who signed Jackson and produced *Look Sharp* in a matter of weeks. The single, "Is She Really Going Out With Him," established Joe Jackson's persona as a sensitive anti-macho misunderstood in matters romantic; it also made him a hit from the git-go, entering both the American and British top twenties and earning Jackson a gold record his first time out.

The emotional violence of his early songs contributed to Jackson's sourpuss image, bringing comparisons with the new wave's most acerbic sociopath, Elvis Costello. However short that vein may have been in his creative lode, it was the source of Jackson's first gold strike, and it brought him an audience that embraced the anger and missed much of the irony and humor. And when Jackson expressed irritation at an audience's punk-ritual behavior, his remonstrations were taken for punk posturing and so the crowd snarled anew.

Jackson's musical ambition has been evident from the start, but the guitar-bass-drums-piano-vocal setting of *Look Sharp* and *I'm The Man* provided limited expressive range. He tinkered with the formula on his third album, *Beat Crazy*, but he didn't put enough distance between it and the first two albums

GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

World Radio History

GARY GREEN/RETNA

"I didn't do it, Mr. Mason, but when you look like me, people just assume you're guilty."

to make any clear statement of artistic independence.

When drummer Dave Houghton left the band, Jackson took a break from touring rather than replace him. When illness kept him down for three months, Jackson found himself listening to Louis Jordan records and decided that it would be fun to play that jumpin' swing music for a while. Keeping only bassist Graham Maby from the original band, he put together a seven-piece group that included his old friend Larry Tolfree on drums. "Jumpin' Jive was originally meant just to get a few blokes together and play in the pubs," says Tolfree. "We hadn't even intended to make an album." But record they did and to everyone's surprise, the record and a subsequent tour were quite successful. Joe Jackson's next move was anybody's guess, and his reputation as a fearless musical explorer was made.

The streets of New York lent direction to Jackson's next album. Though the stylish cover drawing suggests Cole Porter. it's the Latin pulse coupled with rich melodies and a grand keyboard-based sound that propelled *Night And Day* into the top ten and brought enthusiastic audiences to his concerts to find out what he had going this time

The players in the 1982/83 edition of the Joe Jackson Band come from many other realms than rock 'n' roll. Bassist Maby has been along for every step of Jackson's odyssey; Larry Tolfree brings a love of the great jazz drummers to his work on traps; percussionist Sue Hadjopoulos, New York-born and raised, has been playing in Latin bands for more than a dozen years and praises Jackson's respect for the truth of her music; Joy Askew suspended her own bandleading career to join the tour, and works up R&B tunes on a Portastudio between gigs; Ed Roynesdal has a "heavy classical background" and a degree in violin and piano as well as a busy session calendar in New York programming synthesizers and overdubbing strings.

Each of the band members expresses pleasure at the freedom Jackson accords his players. "Sometimes he defines what he wants, but usually it's pretty loose," says Askew. "If you do something he'll either say yes or no. I found Joe totally shocking when I first met him. When I worked in Eye to Eye with (producer) Gary Katz, he was very specific. He'd say, 'I want a little bit more cutoff on that, and raise the frequency a bit.' Joe would sort of pull a face—'Mmm, don't like that.' It's difficult to know what he wants." But she finds his attitude refreshingly nonsexist. "It's just musician to musician here, and that's great."

"I think the industry is very sexist," adds Hadjopoulos. "If there were more men like Joe out there, we'd have no problems."

Maby says that Jackson wants all the musicians to be involved in creating the music they play. "He doesn't want it to be 'Me and the rest'—*most* of the time," he says "There are times when he likes to be boss. That's fair enough—he's worked for it."

"You certainly don't get bored," adds Tolfree. "Who knows where Joe's going? At least it won't be the same as what he's doing now—you know that."

Face to face, Joe Jackson is articulate, opinionated and just a little combative. He is wary of the press, because he is the kind of artist who defies categorization and who takes the inevitable misinterpretations with something less than forgiving good humor. But given an opportunity to express himself at length, he does so enthusiastically and generously. After all, nobody really *wants* to be thought of as a sorehead, do they?

MUSICIAN: Night And Day *seems very much like a walk through New York: there's salsa on the streets, Sinatra upstairs—a whole world's worth of music.*

JACKSON: That seems like a fair description, but that's not all there is to it. There's current music which isn't rock 'n' roll—all the great jazz, Latin music and funk that's going on in

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Everyone was trying to tag me as this angry young man; it never made sense to me. People miss the humor in my songs."

ANN SUMMA

New York. Who needs rock 'n' roll? But I also relate to music from before I was born, because that interests me more. It's like people: they get more interesting as they get older. But it's all part of the same thing. I just keep my eyes and ears open all the time, because that's the kind of person I am

I think we've lost the melodic and harmonic richness of the standard songs by Gershwin, Cole Porter and so on. A lot of songs these days have a very simple hook, which will be the chorus, and then they'll have a verse which is just about three notes for about eight bars—melodically very boring.

The standards have melodies that soar! Look at "My Funny Valentine," a melody that goes on and on forever in a really logical way. Even a really corny song like "Dancing Cheek To Cheek" (sings a few bars) goes in this big arch—beautiful! And what have we got now? (singing) "Abracadabra, I wanna reach out and grab ya...." That's the chorus. When you get to the verse, it's completely boring. I'm just making a point about melodic writing. I'm not saying "Abracadabra" is a totally bad record, although I don't particularly care for it. I guess what I like most in music is a rhythm you can dance to and a melody that resounds in your head—a *real* melody, not just three notes.

MUSICIAN: *Do you write at the piano?*

JACKSON: I do most of my writing in my head and in notebooks. I tend to refer to the piano when a song is getting near completion, just to work it out finally—what key to sing in....

I don't have one method of writing—I have lots. It's all very chaotic. Often I'll have unfinished songs in my head and when a deadline comes up, I'll sit down at the piano and bash away until I'm finished and it turns out fine. Sometimes I need that pressure to make me finish things.

I'm not a very prolific songwriter at all. I don't churn out three songs a week and throw half of them away. I always have ideas, and I'm constantly rejecting ideas. If a song gets as far as actually being finished, then it will probably be pretty good and it will probably get recorded. I only write maybe a dozen songs a year that I'm really happy with, and most of them get used.

At the moment I'm writing a lot more than I usually do because I've got this movie happening—*Mike's Murder*, directed by Jim Bridges. It's a thriller—I shouldn't really say any more than that. I get four, maybe five songs; a couple of them will probably be used without the lyrics, but the full versions will be on the soundtrack album. There's also a couple of instrumental pieces. I'm doing basically the whole soundtrack, apart from a few bits and pieces which are things coming out of a jukebox in a bar.

MUSICIAN: *Will you be recording it with your band?*

JACKSON: Yeah, minus the keyboard players. I'll play the keyboards myself, because it's so much quicker.

MUSICIAN: *When you put this band together, were you determined not to have a quintet?*

JACKSON: Not so much determined as not *needing* a guitarist. There was always a struggle getting Gary [Sanford] to play the things I wanted, so in many ways it's easier with two keyboard players. There wasn't much doubt in my mind that we could rearrange at least a pretty decent amount of the old stuff without guitars.

Now and again, on things like "I'm The Man" or "Got The Time," a crashing power chord might make it more exciting, but I don't miss it at all. And the audiences don't shout, "Where are the guitars?" very often, because we make it sound good enough that it doesn't occur to them.

MUSICIAN: *Do you suppose that not having a guitarist's* mentality *in there makes a difference in the band?*

JACKSON: Yeah, I think it does. It takes it away from rock 'n' roll, y'know? I'm so bored with rock 'n' roll—it's just as stagnant and clichéd as everything else. We all know what rock stars do: they wear tight leather pants with a sock stuffed down the front and they throw televisions out the window of the Holiday Inn. It's just dreadfully boring.

I saw an interview with that guy from Van Halen [David Lee Roth], and he said that when he was a kid he used to bang on the table and scream and shout, and now he's able to make a lot of money doing just that all over again. He's really pleased with himself, really proud of that. Fair enough, but that's just not what I'm doing. Maybe I'll never fit into any particular scene, and that's fine. I'm kind of trapped in rock 'n' roll to a certain extent, whether I like it or not.

I'm not a rock star. I'm a songwriter and a musician, and to some extent an entertainer as well. I'm not up there with some kind of image people should worship; to me, a star has to have something special, which I don't think I have. A star is someone who means a lot to a hell of a lot of people just by being himself—not even so much for what he's done, but what he *is*—like James Dean, someone who has a charismatic effect on a whole lot of people.

I like to think people go out impressed with the music and the quality of our performance, the production and everything else that goes into it. I like to think that they go out having been entertained and stimulated and inspired, and hopefully respecting me for having done that—but not worshipping me as some kind of hero figure. I really don't see how people could feel that way about me (laughs)—I'm not even good-looking.

MUSICIAN: *Keyboardist Ed Roynesdal told me that you recruited Americans for this band to offset your English roots. Was the choice of two female musicians also made for a specific reason?*

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JACKSON: Right from the beginning I wanted to make the show as interesting and as varied as possible. We auditioned quite a lot of people for the percussionist gig, and Sue Hadjopoulos happened to be the perfect person, regardless of the fact that she's a woman. I hadn't considered that there might be female musicians out there who would be right for the band; on the other hand, I hadn't *not* considered it. It got me thinking that there must be a lot of great female musicians, and seeing as we needed two keyboard players there must be at least one good female keyboard player who would be right for the band. So we made a special effort to look for a woman.

I think in a way it is a kind of political statement. That sounds very heavy-handed, but all along I've written songs about men and women as *people*. I don't write songs that say, "Hey, pretty baby, put your red dress on." "It's Different For Girls" is a song where the typical roles are reversed. It's about a guy saying, "I don't want to just go to bed with you—I want to talk and get to know you," and the girl's saying, "Oh, come on with that love stuff. Give me a break—let's just get it on." A lot of my songs have things like that in them, and I've noticed that we have a lot more female attendance at our gigs than most rock 'n' roll bands do. That has something to do with not insulting their intelligence.

So it just seems right to have two women in the band. Why should a band consist of six men? But I wasn't going to hire a crappy keyboard player just because she's a woman. Joy came along at the last minute and saved the day. What appealed to me was not only her playing, but her singing, too. She's got such a great voice, and I think that adds a neat dimension to the band that I'd like to explore more as we go along.

MUSICIAN: *You use a lot of unison vocals rather than harmonies....*

JACKSON: I'm not crazy about vocal harmony. It's nice when people do it well, but I just don't use harmony vocals very much. I wouldn't want to do it unless I had a couple of people in the band who could be dead on tune every time, which I don't think we have. We all have very different voices, and I think we sound our best when we're all shouting something in unison. I like the sound of five voices in unison.

Vocal harmonies don't really occur to me. I'm trying to create a strong melodic vocal line rather than stacking up harmonies. There's a lot of counterpoint going on, but it's between me and the band rather than between voices. I think we'll find that if Joy is around for the next album there will be a lot more interplay between me and her vocally.

MUSICIAN: *I think that as a songwriter you have more in common with Billy Joel than Elvis Costello.*

JACKSON: (Sarcastically) Oh, thanks. I think I'd rather stick with the Elvis Costello comparison.

MUSICIAN: *But as a student of style....*

JACKSON: I'm not a student of style. I think style is bullshit, very overrated. Content is more important than style. I've never had a style, and I still don't. It's as simple as that. I'm just concerned with writing the best possible songs I can write and making the best possible records I can make, and just keeping it interesting.

MUSICIAN: *I can see why people make the connection between you and Elvis Costello: there are common traits in your songs, a sort of seething hostility—which is undoubtedly what the punks latched onto at first. "On Your Radio," for example, has such a vengeful lyric....*

JACKSON: You're missing the point completely. "On Your Radio" is not a revenge song—it's a triumph song. It's supposed to be inspiring, saying, "Hey! You there in the back of the class with the big ears! You can do whatever you want if you just try hard enough." It's not vindictive; it's much more a song about hope.

There's a lot of humor in my songs, and tongue-in-cheek lyrics. I don't know whether it's the public at large or just the critics, but it's certainly apparent from a lot of reviews that people have missed the humor on *Night And Day*. Hardly

SIMON FOWLER/RETNA

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anyone has interpreted "Cancer" as being an ironic, satirical kind of song; and "TV Age," which I think is sort of funny, has been interpreted as me being puritanical, slagging off TV and saying that it's bad for you.

I think it's partly the general humorlessness of rock 'n' roll and partly that the British sense of humor is a bit different. I've been thinking about it for the last several years, but I can't quite define the difference. British humor has a lot more sense of irony about it, and I think it's more subtle.

Everyone was trying to tag me this bleedin' "angry young man" on the first album, and it never made sense to me. I'm not an angry young man! I get angry sometimes, like anyone else. How can I be angry all the time?

I don't mind being compared to Elvis Costello. I admire him in many ways and I feel we have certain things in common,

"Now rock 'n' roll has gotten as stagnant and clichéd as everything else. It's just dreadfully boring."

whereas in other ways we're very, very different. What I resent is that simply because my first album came out a couple of years after his, people assume that I've ripped him off rather than just having certain things in common with him. People really must have more respect for my intelligence than to think that I would deliberately rip people off.

Everyone says, "Joe Jackson's first album was new wave; then he did a reggae album; then he did a swing album; and now he's done a salsa album." That's all bullshit, because the first album, *Look Sharp*, has so many different styles in it. "Do The Instant Mash" is funky; "Happy Loving Couples" is sort of 60s pop; there's some R&B, some reggae... it's not punk rock, y'know? I can't understand why people get so amazed just because you try to incorporate different influences.

MUSICIAN: *It's a rather subtle variation if what you're hearing is guitars, bass, drums and piano throughout. To the casual listener, the less educated ear, the influences aren't as easy to spot.*

JACKSON: I see what you mean. People often listen to music in a rather superficial way. If they hear guitar, bass and drums, they think, "Oh, this is rock 'n' roll," even if there are obviously jazz-oriented harmonies.

I like a lot of different music on different levels. I love the Cramps, because they really entertain me and make me smile. But I also like Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. You can't appreciate them in the same way.

I can be inspired by anything if it reaches me on a gut level. If it excites me, then I don't care if the people can't play their instruments or whether they're black or white or have short hair or long hair. I respond to music in a very basic gut-level sort of way. I can think about it and explain it because I'm a musician and I know the right words to use, but basically what it comes down to is that my appreciation of music is no different from anyone else's. I think I have a fairly open mind, that's all.

I think it's a shame that a lot of people can't appreciate music on different levels. They just feel that music has one particular function in their lives: if they like dance music then they don't like anything they can't dance to; if they like a good tune they can sing along with, they can't relate to anything that isn't immediately singable. They're trying to make music fit into one area of their lives, and music is too big to do that. It's as big as the whole world; it expresses anything and everything. That's what I like about music—the enormity of it, the diversity of it. Music doesn't have one little place in my life—it's not like crossword puzzles. For some musicians, music is just one side of life, whereas for me it's inseparable from everything I am and everything I do. It's there all the time, and everything I experience comes out through my music. That's been true since the beginning, and it's even more true as I mature and get less afraid to write about my true feelings.

Beat Crazy was the first time I really left behind any idea that I was doing rock music. What I tried to do was make some kind of music which just sounded *right*. Everything was built on the bass and drums instead of the guitar, but that didn't mean we were doing reggae rhythms—but people said, "Joe Jackson's done a reggae album."

Right about that time, I was kind of confused about where I was going stylistically, who my audience was and what I should and shouldn't be doing. Then, having done the album and gotten it off my chest—and then done *Jumpin' Jive*—I realized that those things aren't really worth worrying about, and if I worry about them they're only going to hold me back. If you start reacting to what you think the audience expects from you, you're trapped.

Suppose I wanted to make a commercial album, and I felt that if I did certain things, my album would be a success, whereas if I did what I really wanted it wouldn't. If I made an album that I didn't really want to make and it bombed, all I'd be left with would be a crappy album that I'd be ashamed of for the rest of my life. You've got to satisfy yourself first, because you can't be sure that you're going to have a hit—you can't be sure of anything.

MUSICIAN: *So you do what makes sense to you and hope it finds an audience so you can afford to keep making music.*

JACKSON: Exactly, yeah. But I also believe in working very hard to get it across to an audience. I don't see myself creating in my attic and expecting the world to beat a path to my door. I don't compromise artistically, but I'm prepared to work very hard to get across what I want. A four-month American tour is hard work, let me tell you, but that's all right because it's my job. I can't expect anyone to just love me if they don't even see me, and I can't expect them to love me if I come on and just play for half an hour and then walk off in disgust because the acoustics aren't very good or something.

Everything I do is geared to live performance rather than recording. It seems as if we're at a point where most people regard recording as the important thing and touring as a necessary evil. I'm really the other way around: I see contact with the audience as the most important thing and recording as the necessary evil. You have to try to get the same feeling in a room with just five of you and no audience, just staring at the walls. I find that very uninspiring. The way to do it is to have everything rehearsed, bang it down as quickly as possible and get out. That's the way I record.

For this album we didn't get a chance to do gigs before we recorded, but that's the best way. We did that with *I'm The Man* and *Beat Crazy*. Those two are very much *band* albums, more so than *Look Sharp*, and they benefited from that. If we could have been on the road for a year before we recorded *Look Sharp*, it would have been an immensely better album. But the songs are still there.

We rehearsed for *Night And Day* and learned it all pretty quickly, then we went in and did it. I never had any doubt that it would translate to live performance. I was pretty sure we could do everything on the album using two keyboard players.

MUSICIAN: *Another unusual aspect of your show is that the staging and lighting take the emphasis off the drums visually and therefore give the other instruments equal weight?*

JACKSON: I wanted the band to not only sound different, but also to *look* different. The obvious thing would have been to put the drums and percussion at the back on a big platform

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MARTIN BENJAMIN

Are They Really Going Out With Him?

Most of the Joe Jackson Band's keyboard work onstage is handled by Joy Askew and Ed Roynesdal (who replaced Al Weisman early in the current tour). Their setup consists of a Yamaha CP-70 electric grand piano, two Prophet-5 synthesizers, a Clavinet, a Fender Rhodes and a Korg BX-3 electronic organ. "We used a Hammond B-3 in the studio," notes Askew, "but even though it had superb sound it just didn't travel as well as the Korg."

Roynesdal plans to program the string parts of "Real Men" on a Sequential Circuits digital polyphonic sequencer so that Jackson can be free to sing the song standing up. "I play violin and Joy plays the Prophet now, so Joe has to play the piano," says Roynesdal "When I get the sequencer in, Joy can play the piano part."

Drummer Larry Tolfree's kit consists of white Yamaha studio model drums—a 24-inch kick, 13-inch rack tom, 16-inch floor tom on the right and an 18-inch floor tom on the left next to the high-hat stand. He uses a 6½-inch metal-shell snare drum, and all the stands, pedals, etc. are Yahama.

"Cymbals are very special to me," Tolfree notes. "I've recently acquired them from a Canadian company called Sabian. I like the brightness of the Paiste, but they don't have much body; Zildjians are normally too bottomy for me, personally. These cymbals give me the best of both worlds, a sort of in-between sound." He uses a 20-inch ride, 12-inch splash, and 16-inch, 18-inch and 20-inch crashes, plus 14-inch high-hats. "I really whack them, and there's no loss of tone or breakage. They're great." Tolfree also uses sticks (size C) obtained from Sabian's British distributor. "I don't know what make they are," he says. "Chris, the man that looks after me, just gets them for me. He got my name put on them, which is a bit naughty because I don't like that sort of thing. It's a little embarrassing."

Onstage, percussionist Sue Hadjopoulos uses Deagan Electro-Vibes (which she says are much easier to mike in live situations than the standard vibes); custom-made bongos by Junrio Terrado; and Gon-Bop congas. "To be specific, I don't really use a conga and a tomba, the 11½-inch and 12½-inch drums," she says. "For rock music, I use a quinto (10¼-inch) and a conga (11¼-inch). It's a higher pitch for each drum, and I think it cuts through better."

The Gon-Bops are the wooden variety. "The sound of them is so much nicer than fiberglass, which gives you a more ringing sound. The fiberglass ones resound better, so you don't have to hit them as hard—that's why some people use them," she says.

Though she owns a set of Leedy brass-rimmed timbales ("One of the best timbales ever made"), Hadjopoulos won't take them on the road; she uses Latin Percussion timbales instead. Some of her bells are custom-made, and some are standard. The LP timbale bell is good for rock music, she notes, and it's also perfectly adequate for the Latin numbers. The cha-cha bell is by LP, too. "I can go into the shop and try bells for hours," she says enthusiastically. "They all sound different."

Though they're not tuned to specific pitches, Hadjopoulos strikes individual bells in "Breaking Us In Two." "I just approximate the intervals on the bell tree. I want the texture of the bell itself rather than the note choice," she explains. "I could use the Musser orchestra bells and have the exact notes, but I want a more ethereal sound. If you approximate the intervals, the band sort of takes on the note." The rest of her setup includes Musser orchestra bells, wind chimes, an LP Multi-Guiro, shakers and a Yamaha 22-inch concert bass drum with a Yamaha pedal.

Graham Maby uses a Fender Precision bass with EMG pickups plugged into an Ampeg SVT amplifier. "It's stock; I'm quite satisfied with it," he says. The amp stands behind drummer Tolfree's riser onstage, with signal fed directly into the P.A. and the monitors. "I hear most through the monitor, but I have to have the amp there," he says. "But Larry gets the most benefit out of the sound from the speaker. He uses a Boss Chorus in a couple of songs. "I'm afraid I'm not really a student of the instrument," he says apologetically. "I'm more 'get-up-and-play.' Being a bass player isn't all to me—I like singing as well, and I like playing guitar sometimes."

and the keyboards all around the sides, but we did it the other way around. The two keyboard players have to be together because they're swapping around all the time.

But the staging and lighting were gone over for months. The lighting we use is really theater lighting; it's not the equipment that most rock bands use. I think it looks a bit classier. We hope that it doesn't look like your typical rock 'n' roll show.

I think that the lighting should reflect what's going on in the music. My philosophy with arranging is to leave out rather than put in, so we did the same thing with the lights. It's not a big lighting rig compared to what a lot of people use, but we've worked it out in such a way that it's very versatile and capable of a lot of subtlety.

My intention is to entertain the audience rather than just glorify my own ego. I think it's more interesting and more entertaining to focus on different people at different points in the set—that's why I walk offstage quite a lot. That's to say, "You don't watch me in this bit, you watch someone else."

MUSICIAN: *How did you happen to come up with the idea to do "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" doo-wop style?*

JACKSON: We all sing after a fashion, and I just had the idea that it would be interesting to do something *a cappella*. It's the same way that we have Ed play violin on one number, I play piano on "Cancer," the keyboard players play percussion, and Sue plays synthesizer on one number and walks off in a couple of others—it just helps to keep things interesting. So I went through all my songs, and "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" really seemed to work—partly because it's well known to the audience and they recognize it immediately.

MUSICIAN: *Do you know—or care to say—whether you'll be making another album with this band?*

JACKSON: All I can say is that I would very much like to. I don't like to talk about the future plans too much. I think this band is great, and I would like to see it continue for a while yet, but I can't say how long or whether it's going to happen.

The only long-range plan I have has to be fairly loose, because you have to take opportunities as they come. Like this movie, for instance—I really am too busy right now to handle it, but I'm going to do it one way or another, because it's too good an opportunity to miss. You have to leave yourself open. I guess I do have some long-range plans, but I also give myself enough room to maneuver if circumstances change.

MUSICIAN: *Any idea what's going to happen next?*

JACKSON: It's not too soon to know, but it's too soon to tell. M

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MEN AT WORK

The Invaders from Oz

BY CRISPIN CIOE & JONATHAN BAIRD

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LAURA LEVINE

In some Bizarro World version of English, Colin Hay and Greg Ham are describing Men at Work's earliest days in Australian pub purgatory, and there's something familiar and invigorating, almost Beatlesque, about the way they bounce their banter off each other, the interviewer, the walls....

Here's this talented, wry duo, wringing wet with great musical ideas, each finishing the other's thoughts, Hay with his balding, wire-brush-haircut intensity and Ham with his Sting-like cherubic good looks. They recall a seedy Melbourne pub called the Cricketer's Arms:

"Yeah, both his arms were on the wall. He lost them after going out for a duck in 1911 in a match against England."

"The Cricketer's Arms was fantastic!"

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"I would never even hazard a guess about where Colin's lyrics come from. While it's definitely tongue-in-cheek, there's always that unknown edge in Colin's work."

"We are a bit nostalgic, apart from all that vomitting on the drums, which never happened really...."

"Well, pretty close...."

"Yeah, he missed the drums. There was just this one drunk there who was fantastic, but when he strayed close to the band, he always...well, he had this habit of falling into it. *Of course, there were no stages. Basically, the first person was six inches away from you, smoking cigarettes and offering you a drink in the middle of a chorus."*

"It was a very cozy, cozy little place."

Steady old boy. Famous Rock Writers Correspondence School's first rule is to avoid casual comparisons to the Fab Four (a sin a whole group of Squeeze chroniclers have been recently castigated for). Yet Men at Work's new-world freshness and their screwy-but-cool sense of humor, coupled with their apparent lack of that new wave staple, anger, has this annoying habit of making you ignore that scribblers' Beatle-ban, especially since, like those other guys, Men at Work have sprung with such modesty and speed upon an unsuspecting world weary of pop phenomena and formula. Hey, no big deal; we're just up here doing our jobs, just a good meat-and-potatoes band with some musical weight and an album full of hits. No big deal? Hell, only upwards of two hundred thousand copies of *Business As Usual* have been pouring over American record store counters every *week*. By now, following the complete subjugation of America to these invaders from Oz (as Australians occasionally refer to their land), it seems almost ludicrous to ask them about their first contact with someone from Columbia Records, but the details are still clear in Colin Hay and Greg Ham's memories:

"He was just a representative, actually. Now I don't mean just *a representative....*

"He was a special *representative to us...."*

"A fan of the band. He saw us every Wednesday at the Pier Hotel, a very glum place on a Wednesday night, terrific on Saturday. One of those places which seats about a thousand people, and when we used to play it, only about a hundred used to come, so it looked like a little pocket in the middle...

"It used to be a twenty-four-lane ten-pin bowling alley, to give you an idea of the size and artistic decor of the place. The decor was particularly nice. A thousand square feet of ruby glass at the other end that reflected the snare back at you louder than you heard it onstage. Very interesting acoustically...."

"Anyway, he used to come every week. Michael Ware was his name, and he loved the band. He used to block up the Columbia executives' car park with Men at Work signs and storm his way into boardrooms with hammers and ladders and bang the table and say, 'You've got to come and see Men at Work!!!' Eventually they did, and I don't think they liked us...."

"They came on a terrible night...."

"They came to see us at Macy's and the only thing we knew was that seven or eight people had their names at the door, so they came along and said, 'Wellll, we're not really keen,' and we said, 'well, we're not really keen either.' And then Peter Karpin came along, and being a public school boy...."

"...and being of that age, he was the perfect Men at Work fan, and he signed us."

It's a chilly Saturday night in New York's East Village and outside the Ritz, a crowd of the admiring and the curious is congregating to see this band of unknowns who have just topped *Billboard*'s album charts. One major label A & R genius is overheard to speculate, "You know, maybe it's a wish fulfillment thing: everybody's unemployed these days, and along comes this band called Men at Work...." In a short time, however, such arcane theories are thoroughly laid to rest, as Colin Hay prances onstage with his guitar and a huge 20-gallon Stetson, looking like a gangly Yosemite Sam. The group plunges into a tight, well-oiled set of new wave eight-note pop 'n' roll, reggae and Aussified Anglodance. Men at Work immediately bring to mind the Police (via Hay's keening tenor and some sparse, post-reggae touches), the early Cars (by way of urgent, stripped-down rhythms and strong melodies) and Traffic (suggested by Ham's lean, moody sax lines and dry flute solos). Drummer Jerry Speiser is a hard-hitter who never misplaces the Men's signature groove and who has enough flair and personality to make simple, modern beats compelling. On "Down Under," a reggae-ish stomp that evokes the fantasy of Australia with terse, fablelike vignettes, Speiser and bassist John Rees (lurking behind his shades and art-school beard) lope into their unique variation of South Pacific ska that is becoming familiar as their second single. When Greg Ham plunged into the by-now classic sax intro to their superb Kafka-esque hit, "Who Can It Be Now?," the audience and band reached a sort of mild holy communion, as if the unknown terror knocking on Colin Hay's imagination was a regular intruder for all the men and women at work at the Ritz that night.

Colin and Greg are asked whether "Who Can It Be Now?" is a song about a paranoid.

"Ah, I think it's just one of those phobia songs. People have phobias, I think."

"People can relate to it now. Every time someone knocks on your door, you go, 'Who can it bloody be now?"

"That's right. People do it all the time. Some guy was walking along the trains beating the door and saying, 'Who can it be now?' I used to hate *people knocking on my door, I used to hate it, because it was always someone who wanted something from you, like money or to take you away or to ask you questions. But I'm over that now. I've had it surgically removed."*

Across the nation, industry pundits—in West Coast corporate headquarters, at fashionably dingy N.Y.C. nightclubs and bent over mirrors at Boston high-tech soirees—marveled at Men at Work's chart ascent and vainly attempted to explain it demographically, psychologically, sociobiologically.... But they neglected to do what so many others were doing: buy the album and play it. *Business As Usual* pretty much sold itself once people heard it; getting them to hear it is another story altogether, a labor of love by a label that knew it had something real (see accompanying box).

By 1982 standards, *Business As Usual* really is two albums, with side one a bouncy and relatively straightforward exposition of their punk 'n' pop variant and side two a more mature, musically ambitious development of the style, resembling a second album. Initially, one is charmed by the bait, those two

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live-wire singles anchoring the A-side, but B-side songs like the public school anthem, "Be Good Johnny," the bittersweet but proud portrait of bums, "Touching The Untouchable" and the wonderful syncopated skank of "Catch A Star" are the real gold here, to say nothing of the LP's evocative closer, the wintry, mournful "Down By The Sea." Clearly Columbia could mine this debut for hits all year, but the Men have already completed their second album (I mean the *real* one), tentatively entitled *Cargo* and scheduled for release in March—unless, of course, a few more singles come flying off, much as *Christopher Cross* became the LP That Would Not Die.

Although several group members write, arrangements are worked out in rehearsal by committee. "But lyrics," says guitarist Ron Strykert, "are pretty much left to the writer. I would never even hazard a guess about where Colin's lyrics come from. He brought in 'Who Can It Be' complete, and while it's definitely tongue-in-cheek, there's always that unknown edge in Colin's work." Greg Ham's inspiration for one of the album's more overtly new wave, techno-pop cuts, "Helpless Automaton," was "a period of time when I was obsessed with video games. That's also when I bought my first synthesizer, and I started learning about computer chips; I began to fantasize you could eat a chip and then do totally new things in your life."

"What will you do with your big royalty check?" Colin Hay is asked.

"Perhaps you should ask us again after the big royalty check comes in."

One of the reasons album-oriented radio took the Men into its heart was Ron Strykert's use of the guitar, splashing ambiguous chordal voicings into the spaces between drummer Jerry Speiser's muscular puckishness. Though perhaps not as spectacularly as Andy Summers, Adrien Belew, or Robert Fripp, Strykert has helped give pop-rock guitar a fresh start. His feel for color and punctuation gives an air of restrained reflection to the arrangements, offering Colin Hay's carefully-written lyrics a cosmopolitan setting. When asked about his main guitar influences, Strykert responds, "Alcohol.... and a lot of British players, I suppose. Jeff Beck, perhaps, but no ultimates." [*This guy is a guitar magazine's worst nightmare.-Ed.*]

"You see," pipes up saxman Greg Ham, "it's really hard for us to pinpoint influences, which has to do with why Australia's a little different than elsewhere. You get an incredible variety of music there on a daily basis: from America, the U.K., Europe, some reggae. The basic reggae groove—offbeat on guitar and on-the-beat drums—is very appealing to Australian ears. Also, it's interesting that there are a lot of bands and musicians considered Australian that aren't. Olivia Newton-John and the Bee Gees are immigrants, and there's a whole tradition of Scottish-born lead singers in heavy metal bands down under, like AC/DC, Cold Chisel, and Heaven, not to mention Colin, whose family moved to Australia from Glasgow when he was young."

Ham admits that he "listens to all kinds of records for new keyboard sounds that people are using, although I don't really listen to sax players that much. I did like Junior Walker's solo on Foreigner's 'Urgent'—that's the best thing I've heard in ages. I guess I listen to English music the most. I greatly admire Joe Jackson; he's got that typically British thing that runs from the Beatles through Elvis Costello, but Jackson also projects an American feel, that little extra past in his music that's a rhythmic feeling. And he's prepared to change and do what he wants to, not just go with the prevailing commercial trends.

"There's really very little native Australian music to hear; aboriginal music you only hear in school lessons and documentaries. It doesn't have a beat that could be easily expanded, like African or Latin, and it's really quite dry and

You call this work? Real men Greg Ham and Colin Hay onstage at the Ritz.

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UNUSUAL BUSINESS

Breaking Men at Work

Behind Men at Work's chart breakout was a delicate dance of timing and intuition by their label, Columbia Records, but throughout the story runs a consistent thread: smart, creative people who were attracted to the Men from Oz and outdid themselves in lending a hand, all the way from Michael Ware's Australian antics to Columbia chief Al Teller's unqualified support and Bob Sherwood's marketing moxie. The task of reading *Business As Usual*'s lifesigns and directing its promotional offensive fell upon Paul Rappaport, director of album promotion, who offered this play-by-play:

"Men at Work is a band that is 'cutting their own groove,' and any record like that is not easily heard. We could've spent $100,000 on them at the beginning and gotten nowhere. Instead you have to go out and get it on the radio and see what happens. There's a girl in Portland, Oregon, Gloria Johnson from station KGON—it's a Superstars station, but a bit of a free-thinking one. Gloria has good ears and likes to break bands. We also had two stations in Houston, KLOL and KSRR, who were on it immediately—we got about forty stations in the first three or four weeks, but then after that, it was a real chore.

"Records will show themselves to you after a little airplay. We can decide what records we want to push, but that doesn't turn out to be what the public wants to hear, what they want to own. The response of people calling in and asking, 'What was *that*? Oh, I liked *that*,' corroborates your belief that a record is—and everybody makes fun of this term—a *real* record, and once you know you have one, you never let it go. So then our promo people have something to work from. They could say, 'Hey, Gloria's having real good luck with it in Portland.' Today you have the age of the consultants and everything has to be proved. Some consultants will just take the record because they like it; Lee Abrams took the record under his wing, but John Sebastian did call-out research and verified it was making people crazy. My partner on the West Coast, Jim McKeon, did a particularly good job getting the word out.

"It's very important at this point to demonstrate to stations that the label is committed to the record, to know that Columbia's not going to walk away from it if they take a chance with us, that we'll be there in the marketplace with albums, MTV, tour support. We did some really creative ads in the tip sheets. My assistant Linda Kirisjian secured a bunch of photos from old TV shows for a teaser campaign. One of the best ones is framed in my office—it's Dennis the Menace with his little friend Joey building something on a workbench with the question, 'Whatever happened to the great American work ethic?' We did a whole series of these, with the Beaver and Wally going 'Hey, Beav' and 'Gosh, Wally....' We had people going crazy. They loved the ads.

"Then we came to the first crisis point in the life of the record. It was sometime in early July, I think, and although we had some airplay, there were half a dozen other new bands being pushed by Atlantic, Arista, Capitol, and right at that point, ten heavy-duty albums hit the streets that we knew AOR simply couldn't avoid playing: Fleetwood Mac, REO, Crosby, Stills & Nash.... Stations were warming up to 'Who Can It Be Now?' and were saying, 'Yeah, we'll add it, just give us a couple of weeks.' I got all our guys on a conference call and I told them, 'If we wait two or three weeks, you're going to be in there with all these other companies, fighting for the same space. We just can't wait—*this* is the week. We've got to have the airplay *now*. Deliver all your major stations.' I really believe that the record could've gone either way at this point. Records are like fruit, they're perishable—they really are, because they come at radio people at such a velocity. If there's anything *I* did for the record, it was foreseeing those crucial two weeks.

"The second crisis in the life of the record was deciding when to come out with a single. The timing was also crucial. Once we had gotten over the hump and had about 120 stations playing it, we knew it was time to go top forty. They were feeling the buzz and wanted to play it. Now think for a minute if we had come with a single first and top forty had rejected it. It's much worse than an AOR failure—it's gone, it disappears. Plus the AOR people would've considered it a pop record, or worse, a dead record.

"I walked into Ray Anderson's office, the vice president of national promotion, and I said, 'Ray, I've gotten this far in AOR, but it's not going to go all the way. I need a single in the next three weeks.' He turned right around and said, '*I know. it's coming out this week*.' He had already done it! Now I don't want to sound like we're all geniuses here, but it blew my mind—sometimes I think this guy has a crystal ball. We looked at each other like we were little kids, smiling and jumping up and down. We both knew what it would take to complete it. It was a great moment in the life of the record.

"I'll tell you, I've worked with this label a long time, I've seen it good, seen it terrible, I've seen it sideways, I've seen it average. Right now it's never been better. It's working the way a record company's supposed to work. This Men at Work album is going to sell double platinum. Do you know what it means for a band to come out of nowhere and do in excess of 200,000 copies a week? In this slump, that's outrageous! Those are Journey figures. So we're all dancing on our desk tops up here." — *Jock Baird*

barren, with no melodies per se. They use drone sounds on the stringed *didjeridoo* and on another instrument that's a wood block on the end of a twine string, which is then whirled around one's head. To me, it's music that sounds like the horizon on the desert outback: a lot of endless, droning space. Maybe there's a bit of that feeling in our music, like on 'Down Under.'"

A glossary of slang from Oz used in "Down Under":

"A Fried-out combie? Oh, it's a beat-up VW van."

"Vegemite? It's a kind of meat spread, something you eat if you're very brave."

"That's right. Some people use it for other things, like greasing their car or discovering the cracks in their lips. You can also put it on your cat's boils."

"A Yonnie? That's a stone, a reference to skipping stones."

"Docket? Well, that's a surprising one. A docket's like a receipt."

"That's from Greg's song, 'Helpless Automaton.'"

"Don't they have dockets in America? Yeah, well we don't have dockets either. It rhymes with pocket."

The first Men to go to work were Colin Hay and Strykert, who quit a bank job in the provinces to come to Melbourne and play. The two formed an acoustic duo that worked in small pubs. At one such joint, the Grace Darling, they joined forces with Speiser—an old college chum of both Hay and Ham—and bassist John Rees, a conservatory-trained musician who also plays piano and violin. Ham, who started playing reeds at age twenty and also attended the Melbourne Conservatorium, threw in his lot with what was basically a bunch of old acquaintances who'd been sharing musical opinions for years, and the band was born. Greg Ham recalls, "We got started playing in pubs, and even though we've got a hit record now, when we get back home, we'll still be playing the larger pubs. There are two major cities in Australia, both about the size of Boston, and all the places to play shows are concentrated on the east coast. Basically, Australian audiences want to have a good time and a few drinks, dance; the guys want to score with a girl, take her out to a panel van in the parking lot and do nefarious deeds. But our crowd there is also a mixture of people. We get mums and dads who like the sax/flute element in the music, while their kids love the videos. Being a heavy metal band and playing like a bunch of blokes who stand in front grimacing and pretending to play the guitar was never really appealing to us. Maybe we attract a fairly wimpy crowd, I don't know; but then again, we don't try to stir the audience up to a frenzy of violence, either."

"I don't really like music myself, but this sounds all right to me."

Those immortal words were spoken by manager (he's actually listed as a bandmember playing "telephone and calculator") Russell Deppeler's father, a real live Victorian sheep farmer, upon hearing Men at Work's first single. The Men enjoyed that endorsement so much, they used it as an advertising slogan for the group in the Melbourne newspapers. When Deppeler's father came down to Melbourne and saw the ad, he demanded to know which stupid father of the band had made the statement. Upon being reminded that he was its author, he then demanded to be paid for it.

Befitting their modesty about actually becoming the Next

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Big Thing, Men at Work think they had a powerful ally in American radio's low state of health. Greg Ham opines, "I've been listening to FM stations here a lot, where song after song falls somewhere between heavy ballads and heavy metal—call it mid-tempo heavy. I suppose those bands and players are doing what they want, and I certainly don't begrudge them their success, but it's the sort of music I get nothing from. I think the climate of pop music in America over the past two years has become fairly claggy in the top ten. Those corporate kinds of rock bands that churn out 'programmable' hits—that is just too formulated now; I think that the mainstream pop-rock audience is bored with it, and is looking for things with a bit of a new sound. I mean, the Clash never got much of anything away here until 'Rock The Casbah,' which is a great song, to be sure. It's like they said, 'Right, it's time to screw the politics, let's write a pop tune,' and lo and behold, radio plays it in America. But two years ago, the song probably wouldn't have been played here. The difference is that people *do* want to hear new ideas today, and although radio programmers are paranoid and tight, they realize they have to put something new out there to survive. The KROQ 'new music' format is a product of that realization. How can some band of basically studio musicians—guys with longish hair, beards, and slightly overweight—how can they possibly continue to attract the young record-buying public?

"I certainly can't give the reasons for our success in any order of priority, because it's a bunch of things. The single, of course, was a big factor, and it was initially strongest in areas of America that have MTV. In Australia, music video shows have been big for at least five years, so we're obviously well into the whole idea ourselves. There are bands with hits back home who've never toured there, but whose videos broke them nationally. It's also quite lucky that we chose that particular single to release here, because lyrically it asks the perfect question on a debut single: 'Who is this?' I've heard it played on American black R&B stations, with the DJ rapping over the intro, 'It's the midnight hour, baby, and you hear that knock on the door....' Also, all our songs tend to put the melody first, hopefully in a catchy way, before the rhythm or the sex appeal or whatever.

"Timing has been a factor in our success, too. Right now, there's a real interest in things Australian for America—films, music, and so forth, so radio programmers here are willing to check out a new Australian band. And our label, CBS, was very much behind our record; they promoted it tirelessly, even in the beginning stages here, when it was stalling on airplay and in stores. It's also quite possible that what we're doing on records and especially onstage—where our humorous side is most evident—is different enough, without being too unfamiliar, for people to enjoy here. I mean, who wants to know about slashing your wrists in 1982, when somebody's going to do it for you anyway? In that sense, the Go-Go's are perfect for these times. Like them, our music has a lot of similarities to 60s good-time pop tunes—the sing-along choruses and strong melodies. The main difference between our approach and those oldies is probably our lyrics, which have a slightly darker feeling that is, shall we say, more contemporary."

Now for the part you've waited for, Men At Work's own account of how they chose their name, the economic and intellectual underpinnings of these sweaty rock 'n' roll laborers, determined to give honest work for their fans' honest pay....

"It was just one of those names," recalls Colin Hay. "We had to start working at the Cricketer's Arms and we didn't have a name. Men at Work was only one of the names being put forward and we just walked in one day and said, 'Well ah well, let's call it Men at Work.' It was a very, very simple, almost boring way to choose a name."

Ah, yes...no big deal. M

[*Evan Hosie graciously contributed excerpts from her March 1982 interview with Colin Hay and Greg Ham.*]

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What's it making roll in a state?

The same as anywhere else, only harder. Much harder.

BY PAUL WILSON

On a snowy day in March 1976, the phone rang in our flat in Prague.

"Ahoy," said a familiar voice, a friend I'd known since I first arrived in Prague back in 1967. Like everyone else in the past couple of years, he didn't announce his name. It was a simple precaution in a time of growing paranoia.

"Ahoy," I replied. "What's happening?"

"They've arrested the Plastic People and the whole Underground," he whispered.

"When?"

"Last night, this morning. It's still going on."

"Are you at home?"

"I will be soon. I'm calling from a phone booth."

"I'll be right over."

I grabbed my coat and rushed down the wide staircase of the turn-of-the-century tenement house and into the street. As a former Plastic People band member and still an occasional participant, I had reason to fear I might also be rounded up. Thick, heavy snowflakes were drifting down, covering the ancient paving stones and the orange tiled roofs of Prague's Old Town. On the corner, a troop of boys were slapping a tennis ball against the wall of a

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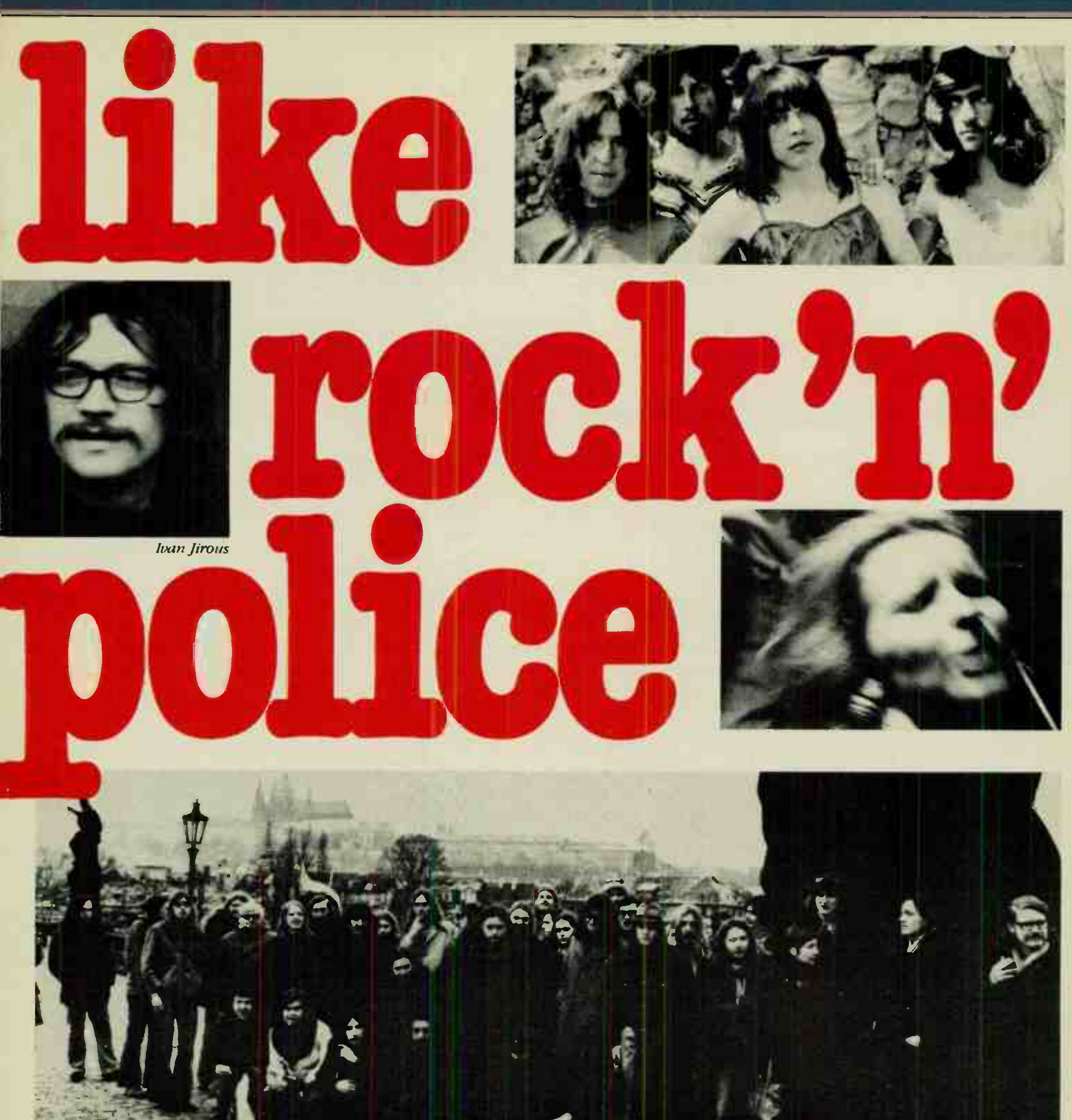
like rock'n' police



Ivan Jirous

Baroque church with hockey sticks. Here and there, forlorn graffiti stared out at me from the crumbling, rough-cast plaster that covers most buildings in the city: JETHRO TULL, BLACK SABBATH, a hammer and sickle joined to a swastika with an equal sign. I walked across the Charles Bridge, a medieval make-work project built six hundred years ago to span the Vltava River winding northward through the heart of Prague.

Less than two months ago, right here on this bridge, the Plastic People and about thirty other musicians had all posed for a picture to be used on the invitation to the Second Festival of the Second Culture, an underground event featuring twelve bands held in a secluded village tucked away in the South Bohemian

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hills. Against all our expectations, the festival had not been raided by the police, and the triumph was still warming us, encouraging our hopes. Now the hunt was on again. The hopeful calm of the past two months had been nothing more than the eye of a hurricane.

When I arrived in Czechoslovakia late in the summer of 1967—to teach English and discover what socialism was like in practice—the entire country was poised on the threshold of a tremendous political, social and cultural upheaval that has gone down in history as the Prague Spring.

One of the many signs of change in the air was rock 'n' roll, or Big Beat, as the Czechs called it at the time. In 1967 and 1968, there were beat groups, beat clubs and beat festivals everywhere. In Prague alone there were hundreds of groups, ranging from neighborhood garage bands to professional groups with names like the Matadors, the Rebels, Juventus, Olympik, Flamengo, Vulkan or Stop the Gods.

By the standards I was used to, the concerts were not especially exciting, that is if you were looking for blazing, high-decibel, mind-searing performances. The bands tended to sound pedestrian and slack, and dancing, when it was allowed at all, was Arthur Murray jive, but the young audiences were warm, and there was a keen enthusiasm and eagerness in the air.

The Czech state called the Plastics long-haired, vulgar, anti-social... it was the best advertising they could've had.

Contrary to what most people imagine, the Soviet invasion in August 1968, did not put a stop to things overnight. The momentum that was built up during the Prague Spring carried over well into 1969, and what ultimately killed it was not Russian tanks, but Czech bureaucrats.

It was in this immediate, post-invasion period in late 1968 that the Plastic People of the Universe—"The Psychedelic Band of Prague"—was formed. The moving spirit and founder of the group, bass player Milan Hlavsa, had come up through several bands with names like the Undertakers, the New Electric Potatoes and Hlavsa's Fiery Factory, before forming the Plastics with two of his schoolmates, Jiri Stevich and Michal Jernek. Pavel Zeman, also from the neighborhood, filled out the lineup on drums.

Eyewitness accounts of early Plastic People gigs all agree on one point: they made up in energy and showmanship for what they lacked in musical ability. In addition to Velvet Underground covers like "Venus In Furs," and Doors tunes like "Light My Fire," they were already playing their own material, wild compositions with suggestive titles like "Men Without Ears" and "Crematorium Smoke," and incomprehensible lyrics. They wore strange costumes and garish makeup. The stage was banked high with huge speakers, only two or three of which worked. Their main prop was a large model flying saucer, and a big sign was fixed to the front of the podium, declaring in bold English: JIM MORRISON IS OUR FATHER!

This understandable defiance of biological paternity becomes even more meaningful when you realize that the Plastics, like most of their fans, had fathers who were in one way or another identified with the system. Stevich's father was a secret policeman; Hlavsa's worked for the State Bank. Once Hlavsa had shot his brother in the stomach with an air rifle and then barricaded himself in his room with a hatchet when his brother and father had tried to force him to cut his hair. It took a psychiatrist to restore an uneasy truce to the family. Hlavsa's forearms were cross-hatched with scars. Flirtation with suicide, among some young Czechs, was an almost obligatory rite of passage.

In 1969, the Plastic People met Ivan Jirous. Jirous was a bright, energetic and very determined young man whose first loves were literature and art. Then he heard the Beatles. And, as the Lou Reed song goes, his life was changed by rock 'n' roll. He came to Prague, studied art history, hung around the nascent rock scene, grew his curly chestnut hair long, and wrote inflammatory articles.

At the time, Jirous was working with the Primitives Group—who were *the* psychedelic band in Prague in those days—helping them to stage wild, extravagant shows that were more like happenings than rock concerts. But by the spring of 1969, he had begun to feel that the Primitives were stagnating, and when he saw the Plastic People play at the Beatsalon in 1969, he felt the old excitement all over again. They had, he said later, "that inner tension that has made rock into a spiritual instrument to set a whole generation in motion."

In a matter of weeks, Jirous had become the Plastics' artistic director, taking charge of everything except the business end of things—which at this stage was looked after by a professional manager—and the music, which he left in the band's hands.

In the fall of 1969, a friend introduced me to Ivan Jirous on the street and he invited us to come to his place for a potato dumpling feast, as he called it. At the time, he was living with his wife Vera in a small side street apartment in Prague's east end. Two of the Plastic People were already there when we arrived: Hlavsa, with long, sleek black hair, a spontaneous laugh and the features of a North American Indian, of which he was very proud; and Josef Janicek, a hard-working, soft-spoken fellow whose nose was slightly out of kilter. Janicek had recently joined the band after the Primitives (for whom he played guitar) split up.

During the long preparations for supper, in which everyone took part, Jirous kept up a running monologue on Czech history and on how, even in the blackest of times (and the times were steadily getting blacker now) the Czechs had always managed to keep the flame of culture alive. We drank vast quantities of lovely golden beer brought from the taproom across the street in large ceramic jugs. In between monologues, Jirous would put his favorite records on a battered turntable jacked into a World War II radio. Sated with heavy dumplings, sauerkraut and beer, I lay back and listened to the Velvet Underground, Captain Beefheart, the Doors and the Fugs, and as I listened, I began to feel a depth in the music that I had never felt before, as though I were hearing it for the first time with Czech ears. I remember in particular the Fugs' haunting, stripped-down version of "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold. I'd studied the poem in school, but now the familiar lines, "And we are here as on a darkling plain... where ignorant armies clash by night" seemed to express directly the agony I knew so many Czechs were feeling, the agony of being caught in the middle of a pitched battle of faiths, ideologies and political systems, with no visible way out.

A few weeks later, in early December, I saw the Plastic People perform. It was at the steadiest gig they ever had, before or since, a weekly dance in a village called Horomerice, just north of Prague. Every Sunday afternoon, three buses would collect all the long-haired kids from the beer halls of central Prague and drive them out to the village. The pub was a typical rural hostelry, with a taproom at one end and a large hall with a stage at the other. It was packed with kids, jostling one another around, smoking like furnaces and drinking beer as though they were afraid the pub-keeper would soon run out.

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The stage was decorated with gigantic inflated polyethelene cigars.

Just as it was getting dark outside, the Plastics came on wearing white satin sheen gowns that looked as though they had slept in them, and dark, sinister makeup. When they broke into a spirited version of "White Light, White Heat," half the audience rushed forward to the edge of the stage, while the other half broke into a loping, free-form dance that had nothing at all to do with Arthur Murray. At the climax of the song, a short-haired fellow with no eyelashes or eyebrows ignited two bengal fires which filled the room with a choking, acrid smoke. Then he squirted an ampoule of lighter fluid into his mouth and did a fire-breathing act right on the dance floor. The Plastics sang all the lyrics, even to their own songs, in English, though it wasn't an English I could understand. Their playing was rough and ragged at times, but I felt it only needed time to cure it. When Jirous loped over, rolling his eyes and shaking his hair, to ask what I thought, I told him they were wonderful, but that they needed to play together a lot more. He peered at me for a moment, and then said, "Have you any idea, man, just how difficult it is to get gigs right now?" I didn't, but I was soon to find out.

In the fall of 1970, I was invited to join the band as vocalist and rhythm guitarist, along with Jiri Kabes, a viola player who had once played for a 60s rock 'n' roll group called the Teenagers. By this time, as part of the general cultural purges going on across the country, the Plastics had lost their professional status and with it, their basic equipment, most of which had been loaned to them by the state-run booking agency. And it is not unusual to find three generations living on top of one another in a single two-room flat. Extending hospitality to a five-piece rock band, therefore, is not something lightly undertaken. Moreover, although we could learn the vocal and instrumental parts this way, we had no way of knowing how we would sound onstage, amplified. It was like trying to paint a huge, full-color mural by candlelight. A lot of our rehearsal time was spent polishing the cover tunes we were doing, and this meant spending hours listening over and over again to the same records. The problem was that no one had a stereo set, and it was often painfully difficult to decipher words and individual instrumental lines in mono.

In addition to cover tunes, of course, the Plastics had their own growing repertoire, a lot of it based on a strange cosmo-mythological blend of everyday detail and mystical speculation. A lot of the texts or ideas were fed to them by Jirous or his wife, and when a poem or an idea caught Hlavsa's fancy, he would brood on it and then come to rehearsal with the bass line and the structure worked out in detail, with parts for the other instruments merely roughed out. He knew from the start what he wanted the final result to sound like, but there was always room in the original scheme for the rest of us to invent. Understandably, the Plastics' music was—and still is today—very weighted toward the lower registers, somewhat ponderous and unmelodic, moving forward in deliberate sections, each with its own structure and mood. The influence of Zappa, the Velvet Underground and the Fugs, of course, can be traced in all this, sometimes quite specifically. But the powerful atmosphere the music generated—and still generates—

The Plastic People live in 1969, with satin sheen gowns, cigar-shaped balloons and menacing makeup.

two of the original members, Stevich and Jernek, had quit.

The plan was to regroup, become as self-sufficient as possible (Janicek, who was a good electrician, was making a P.A. system, a simple mixing board and an amplifier) and to play as amateurs while trying to regain the all-important professional status. The biggest problem, apart from equipment and instruments, was the Catch-22 that faces all amateur rock bands in Eastern Europe—where to practice. Without official status, it is impossible to get rehearsal space, and without rehearsal space, it is difficult to get good enough to satisfy the juries who sit in judgment over every musical act in the country.

We solved the matter temporarily by practicing acoustically in the flats of accommodating relatives. Even this was difficult. There is a chronic shortage of housing in Czechoslovakia and comes straight from the band's own collective genius.

Our first concert was in fact our first full-fledged rehearsal as well. Sucha is about thirty kilometers north of Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad) and the local beat club was a low-ceilinged, jerry-built "cultural center" with a stage at one end and garish, hand-painted portraits of dead rock stars on the walls. Our name was scarcely legible on the posters, but across the sign, in huge print, was the legend: 20 METERS FROM THE WOODS! I discovered later that this too had to do with the housing shortage in Czechoslovakia. Young lovers had almost no chance to be alone, and rock concerts held near an accommodating forest were an ideal solution.

With Jimi Hendrix leering at us from the back wall, we set up and did a sound-check that we managed to drag out for almost

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Invitation to a private concert, the only gigs left (l. to r.) author Paul Wilson, Vratislav Brabenec, Josef Janicek, founder Milan Hlavsa, Jiri Sula and Jiri Kabes.

an hour while we surreptitiously ran through as much of our repertoire as we could squeeze in. The manager, a thin, jittery fellow with a goatee, paced nervously up and down. He had a large crowd of teenagers milling around outside, drinking cheap vermouth and getting surlier by the minute. As soon as we finished, they surged into the hall.

We couldn't have asked for a better opening act. Aktual was a group put together by Czech artist Milan Knizak using very unconventional instruments (like power tools and Jawa motorcycles) played by a bunch of rootless kids plucked off the streets of Marianbad. They were far more audacious artistically and musically than we were, and the audience had come expecting something more conventional. Although we were still awkward and out of focus, we at least sounded more like what they were used to. Still, the concert was a shock to me. We had no monitors, neither then nor later, so I couldn't hear myself sing or play, and what I could hear sounded awful. There was a lot of coming and going in the audience, yet they seemed glad to have us there. Any rock 'n' roll band was better than none.

During the two years I was with the Plastic People, we played about fifteen times, by my rough count, in front of a live audience. And that was the band's heydey. The type of concert varied. Sometimes it would be a simple high school or youth club dance. Sometimes it would be a special event, like the *Homage to Andy Warhol* gig in February 1972 at the Music F Club in Prague, where Jirous gave a slide show and lecture on American pop art and we "illustrated" it with songs by the Velvet Underground. We played in small towns and large cities, and wherever we went, we were followed by a band of faithful fans who were always there when we played, regardless of weather or distance. We often left mixed reactions behind us—usually the split was along age lines—but people never forgot us.

One indication of the slow spread of the band's reputation—or notoriety—was the fact that the police were beginning to take an interest in what we were doing. Sometime in 1971, they began an investigation into whether we were making money illegally. ("Indulging in illegal enterprise" is now the criminal code phrases it.) One by one (myself excepted, for some reason) the Plastics were interrogated, but no charges were made.

In the fall of 1971, we finally found a place to rehearse that was not in someone's lap. It was an old brick vaulted cellar in a condemned tenement house in Holesovice, just a whiff away from the Prague abatoirs. The dirt floor was littered with butts, broken glass and wires. There was no heat and when winter set in, we practiced in our coats and kept warm with bottled beer and rum. The only concession to beauty in the place was a Mothers of Invention poster stolen from a hoarding in Berlin. But it was a magic place, because for the first time since I'd joined the band, we could actually spend time playing together, and not just learning mechanical riffs to be glued together later onstage. It was at this point, I think, that what the Plastics had absorbed from the Velvet Underground and other groups started to loosen up their own more structured approach to songwriting; they began coming up with material that, of all their music, was the most clearly poised between America and Europe.

We premiered the new material above gound in June 1972 in a factory works club on the other side of Prague. It was the largest concert we had ever played in the city, and also the last. Egon Bondy, an underground poet who was also very popular with the younger generation, was in the audience, and was ecstatic at what he heard. He remarked that the Plastics must try to put his poetry to music. And so the seed was planted, for out of that collaboration grew the music that eventually appeared on their first LP, *Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned.*

That same evening, a drunken auxiliary police officer provoked a shoving incident in the lobby of the building. Two uniformed cops arrived and while Jirous was trying to explain the situation to them, they shot mace into his eyes from point-blank range and dragged him off to a local police station. He was released later that night after the whole thing had been explained by friends and witnesses who went with him to the police station. But there were no more concerts in Prague and soon after that, the Plastics were forced to move out of the cellar. The tenement house in Holesovice was pulled down to make way for a vacant lot full of weeds.

When I left the band in late 1972, it was not a split but a gradual drifting away that had to do with the new direction they were moving in. As long as their music had primarily been based on Western rock music and sung in English, there was something I could bring to the band out of my own experience and background. But now the band was being pulled more powerfully back toward its own roots by a desire to address its audience in its own language and regardless of how far I had managed to assimilate, this was something I couldn't contribute to, though I supported the move entirely.

The basic shift in direction coincided with the arrival of saxophonist Vratislav Brabenec. A lanky redhead with a nose even further out of joint than Janicek's, Brabenec had a background in jazz rather than rock, and he could play soaring, exhilarating free-form solos that were apparently at odds with the more formalistic approach the Plastics had. Brabenec resolutely refused to have any truck with cover tunes, and the die was cast.

In later 1972, with Brabenec aboard, the Plastics tried once again to gain professional status. This time, quite unexpectedly, a jury of official pop stars, music critics and other musicians was impressed enough to grant them a license. Two weeks later, however, a letter arrived from the Prague Cultural Center (PKS)—the booking agency—overturning the jury's decision on the grounds that the Plastics' music was "morbid" and would have a "negative social impact." Ivan Jirous immediately phoned PKS and asked them if there were any other agency that could authorize the Plastics to perform in public. He was told that PKS was the only one. Thus began the strategy of creating private occasions to perform, like wedding celebrations or birthday parties. There could be no question of giving up or turning back.

As it became more and more difficult to do things "officially," the underground music scene in Prague began to grow, and there can be no doubt that the example set by Jirous and the

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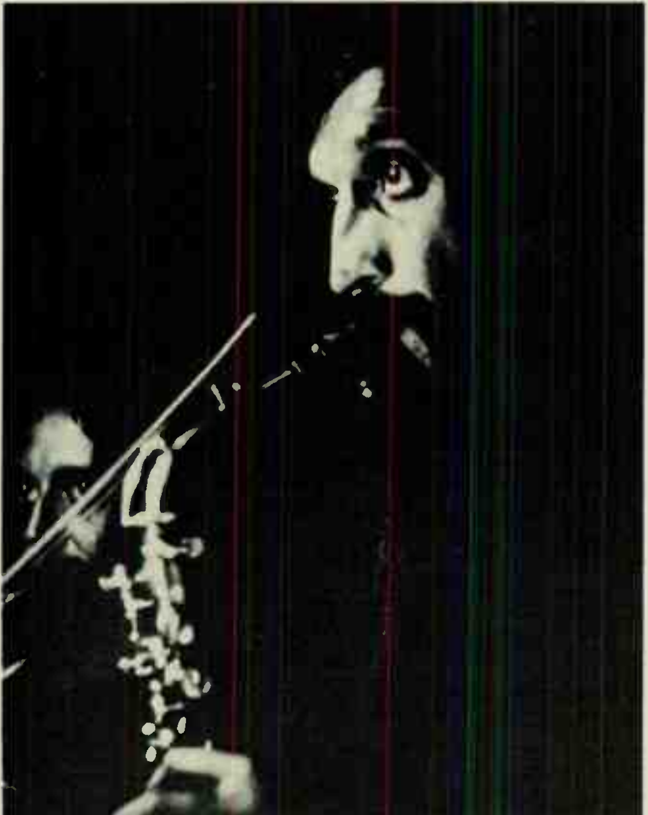
Plastics was a major inspiration. A young poet, Pavel Zajicek, joined with Hlavsa to form a group called DG 307, essentially a voice band that used unconventional instrumentation to create dramatic nerve-lascerating settings for Zajicek's visionary verse. Another band formed in this period was a proto-punk outfit called Umela Hmota (Artificial Material), which quickly divided like a living cell into two units. The UH bands were raw, energetic and direct, learning as they performed, and their music owed as much to the Plastics as it did to American bands like MC-5. Already the underground was developing its own style and traditions.

At the same time, the sense of being encircled by hostile forces grew. In the summer of 1973, Ivan Jirous was arrested along with three friends after they insulted a pensioner in a Prague beer hall. Normally, they would have spent the night in the drunk tank and been released, but the pensioner was a retired secret policeman and the insult had included the phrase "bald-headed Bolshevik." All four were sent to prison, Jirous pulling ten months.

While he and the others were still in jail, the Plastics were asked to play at a concert near the city of Ceske Budejovice in South Bohemia, an event that would come to be known as the Budejovice massacre. By now rock concerts were so rare that the news spread like a prairie fire and hundreds of kids from all over the country converged on Budejovice for a serious good time. But before the Plastics had a chance to play, several busloads of police arrived, canceled the event and then ordered everyone out of town. Masses of young people were herded into the Budejovice train station by cops and soldiers with dogs and riot gear, and were then driven through a tunnel leading under the tracks to the platforms. The tunnel was lined with truncheon-weilding goons, and a lot of blood was spilled and limbs broken. All those destined for Prague were crammed, Nazi style, into one end of a single passenger car and then, as the train rocked and rolled back to Prague, they were taken one by one into a compartment, photographed, interrogated briefly, and then sent to the other end of the car. At every station along the way, there were hoards of policemen making sure that no one escaped. In the end, six people were sent to prison and dozens were expelled from school. The Budejovice massacre was a well-coordinated paramilitary operation, the opening skirmish in a holy war against unconventional rock music that has been going on ever since.



Saxman Vratislav Bravenec, here performing the Passion, took the Plastics toward free-form jazz.

The response of the underground was typical: business (or pleasure) as usual. A few months later, in September 1974, the first large festival of underground music was held. Smaller concerts were organized from time to time in towns near Prague. Despite the extreme discretion with which these events were planned the police almost always showed up. Sometimes they merely took the names of everyone there; at other times, they made arrests. But from the Budejovice massacre on, the police were a constant factor in anything the underground did. That was why it was so astonishing when none showed up at the second festival of underground music in January, 1976. Now, as I found myself walking across the Charles Bridge two months later, watching the snow float down onto the venerable rooftops of Prague, it seemed clear to me that the police had used those two quiet months to prepare for their next big move.

Over a bottle of *Myslivecka*, a caustic, rye-based drink, my friend and I surveyed the devastation: twenty-seven people, most of them members of the Plastic People, DG 307, Umela Hmota and Hever & Vazelina, arrested; the Plastics' amps, speakers and some instruments, most of it painstakingly constructed by hand over the past five years and shared out among the underground bands on a communal basis, seized; dozens of flats raided, ransacked and countless photos, tapes, *samizdat* texts and books confiscated; over a hundred people interrogated. It was the largest police action in the country since the early 70s. And in an unexpected way, it changed the face of rock 'n' roll in Czechoslovakia.

The very next day, the Western press agencies in Prague picked up the story and sent it out. The news caused ripples of consternation and incomprehension in the West: "The Czechs lock people up just for their music? Incredible!" Within twenty-four hours, the news was beaming back into Czechoslovakia via the BBC, the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, which has an estimated listenership of three million. Suddenly, the whole country knew about the Plastic People of the Universe. The government retaliated—too late—with its own gutter press version of the arrests: these so-called musicians and artists, said *Rude Pravo*, the Party daily, were just long-haired neurotic drug addicts and mental cases who took delight in the grossest of perversions and deliberately sang vulgar, antisocial songs. For the thousands of disaffected and alienated young people in the country, it was the best advertisement the Plastics could have wished for.

Another unexpected consequence of the arrests was that the banned intellectual elite of Czechoslovakia—people who had been ousted from public life after the Soviet invasion—rallied to the defense of the underground bands. A group of intellectuals, including the playwright Vaclav Havel and the philosopher Jan Patocka, wrote an open letter to West German novelist Heinrich Boll appealing for support. A former member of Dubcek's politburo wrote an open letter to the leaders of Czechoslovakia, and so did a group of ex-lawyers and ex-judges, themselves all victims of political repression.

By the time the underground was brought to trial, all but seven had been released from prison. The rest were charged with an "organized disturbance of the peace." In one trial, three members of the Hever & Vazelina were sentenced to up to fifteen months in prison. In the major trial, which took place in Prague in September 1976, Ivan Jirous, Vratislav

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Brabenec, Pavel Zajicek and Svata Karasek were sentenced to terms ranging from eight months to one and a half years. Jirous was given the longest.

Inspired by the example of the musical underground, and by the energy and solidarity the trials had generated, Vaclav Havel (now in prison himself) and others went on to give shape to the human rights movement launched in January 1977. The result was *Charter '77*, a manifesto calling for the Czechoslovak regime to honor the commitments to human rights that it made by signing the Helsinki Agreements and the UN covenants.

While it lifted people's spirits tremendously, *Charter '77* also brought the roof down. The police made widespread arrests and harrassed the signatories endlessly, and this time I was picked up too, in a classic, early morning arrest. During the eight-hour interrogation that followed, I refused to talk about anyone but myself, but what I said was apparently enough. I was given until July 15, 1977 to leave the country.

A few days before my departure, the Plastics and I got together, polished off all the songs we used to do together, and held a small party for about fifty people in an old house in the hills near Decin in Northern Bohemia. For a couple of hours we played the old repertoire, reliving the days that now seemed as distant as an idyllic dream of youth, the days when it was still possible to pretend, for a while at least, that we were living in a normal country.

At midnight, there was a knock on the door Suddenly, the house was crawling with police and within half an hour, about ten of us were on our way down the winding road in the back of squad cars. In Decin the police station was bustling with red-eyed plainclothesmen carrying truncheons I was separated off from the rest and when I refused to be interrogated, they put me in a car and drove me back toward Prague. As we got close to the city where I had spent almost ten years of my life, the cop beside me in the back seat—who I learned later may have been Koudelka, the mastermind of the whole police campaign against the underground—said to me: "Look, you'll be leaving the country in a few days. When you get to the West, we don't want you doing anything—you know—to help the Plastics. Know what I mean?"

"When I get to the West, I'll be outside your jurisdiction."

"Is your wife going with you?"

"She hasn't got her papers yet"

"But I take it you want to see her again."

I looked at him, but I couldn't see his face in the dark.

"Call it blackmail if you want," he said, "but you'd better believe me."

The driver pulled the car over to the side of the road and stopped. We were still in the middle of empty, black countryside. "Our orders were to take you to Prague," Koudelka said. "Here you are."

He pointed up ahead A small, dirty sign leaned crazily over the ditch. PRAHA. The driver got out and opened my door, which had no handle on the inside. "Goodbye, Mr. Wilson. And if I were you, I'd advise your friends to lay off the music-making for a while.

"If you can't stop them, how can I?"

The door slammed, the car spun around and I was left standing there in the night with the lights of Prague flickering faintly in the distance like a constellation of fallen stars.

A few days later, I arrived in London, England to wait for my wife to come out. It was the summer of 1977 and punk rock was in full swing, joyful exuberance in grimy clubs, mindless weekend punch-ups on Sloane Square. instant analysis in the *New Society*. The same bands that the Plastic People had been inspired by ten years ago—The Velvets, Captain Beefheart—were now being rediscovered. I went to an early Slits/Sham 69 gig where the new Sex Pistol documentary was shown, full of arrests, protest, rage and *lese majesté*. Afterward I approached someone in the Pistols' entourage with a suggestion: why not smuggle a copy of the film into Czechoslovakia, give the Plastic People a lift. "The Plastic People?" he responded in a dead-eyed, cocky public school whine. "They're anti-socialist. I don't support fascist rock bands. I'd rather send the film to South Africa." Ah yes, images of Sid Vicious smelling his socks to raise consciousness in Soweto. I was sorry I'd asked.

Back in Czechoslovakia, Ivan Jirous was released from prison in the fall of 1977 and almost immediately rearrested after making some inappropriate remarks at the opening of an art exhibition. He got another eighteen months. Then last November he was arrested a fourth time—this time for his connection with an underground magazine called *Window*. In September of this year, his sentence of three and a half years in a maximum security prison was upheld by an appeals court. In such prisons, you are allowed a single one-hour visit per year. Most of your fellow inmates are lifers There are serious fears that Jirous will not survive. It is a heavy price to pay for keeping the faith, ignited long ago by a few Anglo-American rock bands

The Plastic People continued to write music, but they were, and still are, constantly harrassed by the police. Younger bands tend to avoid them, says Vratislav Brabenec, who has been living in Vienna since last April, because they carry the police around with them like lice. Still, since 1977, they have managed to write, record and perform four major works. Outstanding among them is the *Passion Play*, a magnificent rock rendition of the Crucifixion of Christ. It was performed and recorded in a barn belonging to Vaclav Havel while the barn was surrounded by platoons of police, staked out in the fields and woods around the farm. The Plastics have also performed in country houses, but in every case, the police have subsequently either blown the place up or burned it down. Their most recent work, a cycle of songs based on the work of a radical Czech philosopher Ladislav Klima, and a concert based on lyrics by Vratislav Brabenec, can scarcely be described in musical terms any more. They are the distillation of a struggle. On the surface, it's a struggle with a regime that cannot tolerate any music or art except that made in its own image. But essentially, it is a struggle between the principles of life and death.

A new generation is coming up in the Czech underground, however, and there are signs that, despite the repression, the scene is spunky and alive. A year ago, over thirty groups were banned in Prague alone, a fact that is more hopeful than it first appears. The new bands have names like Energie G, Garage, Frogs' Phlegm and Dog Soldiers.

A decade ago, the Plastic People stood almost alone. Now their progeny carry on. Even officially sanctioned music magazines reflect the fact that rock 'n' roll is on the boil in Czechoslovakia. Yet the band that kept the flame alive through the 70s is never mentioned in print. Officially, the Plastic People do not exist.

Recently Milan Hlavsa was waiting for a light to change and overheard a conversation between two Prague teenagers.

"Have you heard? The Plastics are all in America"

"Bullshit, man," said the other. "They're all in jail."

And Hlavsa, his ghostly non-persona smiling, brushed intangible shoulders with them and walked on by. M

[Selected albums by the Plastic People are available from Recommended Records, 583 Wandsworth Road, London, S.W.8, England; from Eurock Distributors, Box 4181, Torrance, CA 90510; and from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012. Anyone wishing to protest the treatment of the Plastic People can write to: President Gustav Husak, Praha-Hrad, 11908, Czechoslovakia.]

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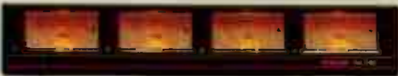

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Magic Dick

The J. Geils Band's Harp Hero Goes Beyond the Blues

JONATHAN BECKER

BY DEAN JOHNSON

The J. Geils Band burst into rock music in 1970 with a razor-sharp rough-and-tumble album they recorded, literally, in a couple of days. One of the facets of their sound that helped immediately to separate the band from scores of other blues-rock outfits was the impeccably clean and powerful harmonica of Magic Dick.

His playing showed an obvious Chicago blues background, but he also wasn't afraid to use his instrument's ability to sustain notes in a manner that allowed it to replace horn lines and brass sections in the J. Geils sound. He showed a grasp of the harmonica that extended far beyond the blues idiom, and the hard, neat, ringing tones he coaxed out of his harps became his signature sound.

Now with the release of the group's twelfth LP, the live *Showtime!*, Magic Dick is still determined to find ways of broadening the capabilities of the harmonica in a rock and pop music context. "I put different standards to the harmonica than most other harp players do," he says. "I apply the same criteria to the harp that I apply to music by a trumpet, sax, guitar or piano."

Raised in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, he originally was known as Pittsfield Slim until Geils bassist Danny Klein came up with his current moniker. It's the only name he wishes to be known by. "I'm from a long line of Magic Dicks," he jokes. "My parents were Mr. and Mrs. Magic Dick."

He started playing trumpet in grade school and also learned some sax. While in high school he was turned on to the music of Charlie Parker and Ornette Coleman, and his fascination with jazz has never abated. It was only while he was a student at Worcester Polytech in Worcester, Massachusetts that he

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began to play the harmonica seriously, taking inspiration from Sonny Terry and both Sonny Boy Williamsons. But his biggest musical influences remain jazz giants like Roy Eldridge and Louis Armstrong. Magic Dick is certain that his extensive jazz background is responsible for his unique sound.

"I'm constantly critical of the technical aspect of playing the harp. I don't like saying, 'Well, it's a harmonica. Let it do those idiomatic things.' There's a standard repertoire of harmonica clichés that most guys play.

"What it all comes down to is mental concentration. I think of a wind instrument as a sculptor of air. You take raw material, air, and shove it through a harmonica, trumpet, or whatever, and through the concentration of the mind and a few small adjustments that you make with your body you can make up something that's beautiful and moving or ugly and gross. All harp players blow and suck air. It's merely mental conditioning and where you're coming from. That's why I sound different, because I'm coming from a different place than most harp players."

"I watched him like a hawk," he says, recalling the many nights he spent watching Roy Eldridge perform. "I learned about breathing and balance from watching him, and how that affects the sound you get from your instrument. Even the posture of the person is reflected in the tone quality. He influenced me a great deal in terms of how I move, breathe, the whole mental set that I bring to what I do."

Professional and amateur harmonica players will be distressed to learn there is nothing particularly exotic in Magic Dick's equipment or instrument list that accounts for his harp sound. "There's nothing I'm doing that other people wouldn't use or haven't already used or fooled around with," he insists.

Onstage and in the studio his primary instrument is the standard Hohner Marine Band diatonic ten-hole harp (model #1896). Cost: around $10. He once used Hohner's Golden Melody harmonicas (model #542) regularly and has tried the entire Hohner catalog at one time or another. But he sticks to Marine Bands now, occasionally augmented by a standard chromatic harp. Though he has taught himself to sight read, his work with the Geils Band is "strictly an oral communication." He won't cut more than three or four takes for his solos. "I like the unexpected element," he explains. "You get too predictable and it doesn't happen." Onstage he will use the same Marine Bands in eight different keys, always making sure he has at least two, and sometimes three, harmonicas in keys he uses a great deal, like A.

"By and large, a player should concentrate on tone and sound rather than blow hard," he feels. "You should concentrate on the resonance of the tone. The air has to be controlled and steady. That control is what makes the tone ring."

In concert, he admits the challenge is to get the harp "overwhelmingly impressive, a large sound with power." He feels the most important element to that end is the microphone. In concert Dick uses an Astatic JT-30 dispatcher's mike. "It's just a high impedance crystal mike," he explains, "with a large diaphragm element. The face of the mike is so big you can put your hands around it and form a large cavity of air, and that's important."

The mike is plugged into a Nady VHF 800 wireless transmitter, the same model used by many guitarists. After the signal is picked up by the Nady wireless receiver, it's fed into an old Fisher mono tube preamp. "Any old monophonic tube hi-fi preamp will do," he explains. The preamp boosts the voltage from the mike and helps to give a mean edge to the tone quality. Next, he might use an MXR ten-band graphic equalizer and feed the signal into a unity gain signal splitter that was custom-made for him by E.U. Wurlitzer's in Boston.

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Magic Dick and Geils vocalist Peter Wolf.

The signal splitter maintains two identical signals that are fed into a pair of old Fender Twin Reverb amps "eight, maybe ten years old." Some harp players lust after old Fender Bassman amps. Magic Dick isn't a stickler for them, though he admits, "Some of them are really perfect for old harp things. But I need more sharpness and brilliance for this band."

He plugs a direct box into the auxiliary speaker output on the back of the Twin Reverbs. By doing that he avoids placing a mike in front of the amp and creating a secondary feedback loop. The direct box takes the signal from the amp and cuts it to a level that can be fed into the P.A. and stage monitors. During his solos, a member of the crew will channel his harp signal into the main vocal monitors so Dick can hear what he's playing anywhere onstage.

He isn't very picky in the studio and uses an old Champ mike and the same harps. Although he has toyed with phasing, flanging, and other time-delay effects, he feels, "They're not a basic component of my sound."

Magic Dick recalls that many people felt Louis Armstrong used a special trumpet or mouthpiece to achieve his sound. "It was the concept," he explains. "It's not even the physical aspect as much as the mental one. That's what allows the tone and sound to emerge. Without the mind in the right place, it emerges by accident, and it's a rare accident, indeed."

Magic Dick credits the rest of the J. Geils Band for helping him to expand the horizons of the harp, especially keyboard player Seth Justman. "They're all harp freaks, but Seth has continuously helped me to go beyond even what I would settle for." "Whammer Jammer," his solo showcase, came about "as a combination of fooling around and as a stimulus from Seth." But Magic Dick is particularly proud of "Rage In The Cage" from the *Freeze Frame* album. The song's main hook is based on a sassy staccato harp riff.

"To my knowledge, no one has ever done that," he says. "The harp became a foundation instrument like a bass or rhythm guitar. Seth writes that way a lot and makes use of the best aspects of the harp." The song "Mean Love" from the *Hotline* LP also has special significance. "I don't think anyone ever played harp solo like that before or will again. The influence of Jimi Hendrix came through very strongly on that. That solo came from a very intense period of struggle to go beyond the clichés and what I had done before."

Yet he also enjoys the sweet, acoustic chromatic break on *Monkey Island*'s "You're The Only One," which he feels is suggestive of Stevie Wonder. And on "Givin' It All Up" from *Nightmare*, he overdubbed as many as fifteen harmonicas for a full-blown sound.

Often what works is not what he originally meant to play, and he admits he has trouble duplicating some things he has played in the past. The new live album *Showtime!* contains "Stoop Down #39," another Magic Dick solo tune. "It was a distinct challenge to pull it off live. It forced me to sit down with my records and learn what I've done all over again."

When Magic Dick plays the harmonica, his ultimate goal is "to enter into harpland, and it is a truly unique, fun kind of place where there are no roles for the instrument and nothing is preconceived.... I'm after something that transcends it all, that even transcends what other instruments have done, because the harp can do things that no other instrument can do." ▣

World Radio History

D E V E L O P M E N T S

GIBSON'S ELECTRIC REBOUND

Something Old, Something New...

BY CHRIS DOERING

The epic Flying V, back by popular demand.

The Gibson guitar factory in Nashville is a place of constant noise and motion. As the varying notes of routers, belt sanders and high-speed buffing wheels blend into a constant drone, an endless procession of Les Pauls, ES semi-hollow bodies and Chet Atkins electric classical guitars circles on an overhead conveyor; a guitarist's vision of heaven.

But all that noisy machinery doesn't seem to intrude on the concentration of the 150 men and women who transform a few hunks of wood into Gibson guitars. It takes a Les Paul four weeks to move from the back room where the neck and body blanks are cut from raw slabs of maple and mahogany to the final playing inspection just before shipping. In between, there is the shaping of the neck and top with a belt sander and hand pressure pad, the spraying and buffing of six coats of nitro-cellulose lacquer and the installation of pickups and hardware. Many of the workers are players themselves, like Wayne Green, one of the final inspectors, who checks for nearly invisible flaws like a tiny pinhole in the control cavity that can turn a guitar into a factory second.

This is not the cheapest or most efficient way to turn out musical instruments. But this manufacturing process, halfway between the art of the individual luthier and the mechanization of the industrial age, is the bedrock of the Gibson mystique. In recent years, Gibson has been holding its own against imported Japanese copies. However, the days when a player could go from being a beginner to a professional with Gibson guitars are gone forever. While labor is cheaper in Nashville than in Gibson's original Kalamazoo, Michigan factory, Japanese and Taiwanese labor is even cheaper, making Gibsons an expensive proposition in a depressed marketplace and likely to remain that way for the forseeable future. With their Japanese-made Epiphone line and the Epiphone-USA models, Gibson is actively competing for student and semi-pro dollars. But most Gibsons are strictly high-end instruments, the kind of guitar you get when you're good enough to need and appreciate that elusive thing called personality that makes a guitar more than just a piece of wood with strings and a pickup.

Presumably that quality justifies the thousands of dollars spent by collectors on vintage Les Pauls and 335s. Unfortunately, that quality was not always there, especially during the guitar boom of the late 60s and early 70s, when corporate types from Gibson's parent conglomerate Norlin were calling the shots on the production line and Les Pauls were selling faster than the factory could crank them out. The people at Gibson also do not like to admit that some of the new guitar companies in the marketplace, particularly the Japanese manufacturers who have been exporting guitars for over a decade, have achieved a high quality of their own. And without the tradition of the arch-top jazz guitar and the Les Paul behind them, the Japanese are free to use modern manufacturing techniques and materials like epoxy finishes, which dry faster and harder but stiffen the wood and can't age and mature like Gibson's lacquer finishes.

But the bottom line with any guitar that lists for over $1,000 with case, as the most popular Gibson models do, is the sound. The difference in materials between a poplar-body Epiphone-USA and a Les Paul Custom is not enough to justify a $500 difference in price. What you're really paying for is the sound, the sound that the best vintage Les Paul and some 335s players are referring to when they complain that Gibson "doesn't make them like they used to."

For the past few years, Gibson has looked for ways to put that personality, that special sound, back into their production line instruments. It started with the careful study and reproduction of the Patent-Applied-For (PAF) humbucking pickup and continued with the introduction of the 335 Dot Heritage, which features a mahogany neck along with its PAFs. Last year, the reissue program went public in a big way with the widely advertised Korina wood body/gold plated hardware Flying V and the thirtieth anniversary reissue of the '52 gold top Les Paul, complete with Kluson-style tuners, a one-piece mahogany neck (as a $100 option), and a deep-dish carved maple top.

The Victory MV-10, a Strat-Paul hybrid, has Super Stack humbuckers and a superb neck.

More important to the great majority of Les Paul players, if less widely known, is that Les Pauls are now being made with the deep-dish top (which starts off as a ½-inch slab of maple rather than the ¼-inch in use since the Paul was reintro-

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The "Chet," a new electric classical guitar.

duced in 1968) and the 17-degree peghead pitch that was part of the original design. The three-piece neck with the grain running in opposite directions is a more stable structure than the one-piece necks of the past. In combination with the deep-dish top, which increases the maple/mahogany ratio of the body, the maple neck produces a more defined tone and makes the guitar as responsive at livingroom and studio volumes as at concert hall crunch levels. The 17-degree peghead pitch helps these guitars sustain exceptionally well, and also increases the string tension a little bit. The slightly softer feel of a 24¾-inch scale with a 14-degree pitch peghead has become a de facto industry standard for guitars with set-in necks, and most players will find that the new Pauls feel a little stiff at first. They should also find, after a short period of acclimation, that the added string tension increases the accuracy of single note lines and rhythm chops, without making string bending too difficult.

The new Pauls I've played have a lot more personality than their immediate predecessors. It's a sound you can really *hear*. Whether or not it's the equal of an original '52 gold top or '59 sunburst is entirely subjective. Certainly no one but a hard-core vintage fanatic would abandon hardware changes like Grover-style tuners, the Crank tuners on the Custom or the brass studs that support the bridge posts.

No, they don't make 'em like they used to. But as the resounding flop of Gibson's last Explorer reissue (an exact duplicate of the original, complete with Kluson tuners and a neck like a baseball bat) made clear, there's usually a good reason for the changes. A case in point is the Chet Atkins Classic electric, Gib-

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P L A Y E R S

GLENN PHILLIPS' PSYCHO-GUITAR

The Triumphs & Trials of Being Yourself

BY DAVID FRICKE

BARRY DONAHUE

Phillips does violent, schizoid, nasty things to his guitar while bassist Bill Rea eggs him on.

When Glenn Phillips takes a stage, he looks less like a rock 'n' roll guitarist than the Devil King of Racquetball. He sports sweatbands on each wrist and around his balding monkish crown. His ratty sleeveless T-shirt is already dark with perspiration from humping his own gear. On pants that could probably stroll over to the bar by themselves he wears knee pads for protection as he executes furious leaps in the air—bringing his guitar down hard on his knees for violent resonance—and lightning karate kicks that nearly take nearby bassist Bill Rea's head off. With the sweat beading rapidly on his smooth porcelain skin, he sets the end of his Gibson L6S guitar neck in the crook of his left hand, stands as if ready to fire a bow and arrow, and shoots the guitar neck through his hand like some nuclear pool cue, still holding finger to string to produce a wicked feedback glissando that peels paint off the dank club wall.

By the end of your average Phillips set, the stage is severely bruised (Phillips' idea of percussion is pounding a hammer into the floor) and the audience struck mute by his psychotic gymnastics and the sound that goes with them. Imagine "Anarchy In The U.K." as the fuel for the Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Inner Mounting Flame*, the angular jolt of Beefheart's Magic Band disrupting the academic purity of the Dregs. Driven by the brute yet agile thump of drummer Doug Landsberg (a man so fearless he works the bass and high-hat pedals in his bare feet), fired up by Bill Rea's articulate bass aggression and the curdling keyboards of Paul Provost, thirty-two-year-old Glenn Phillips is punching his way out of a whole new instrumental fusion bag. To racing beats like "I Want To Talk To My Girl" and "Cod Piece" from his new LP *Razor Pocket*, he spikes simple beguiling melodies with bursts of eloquent feedback, deep freeze echo and jittery flamencolike vibrato, tempering his randy guitar humor with warm harmonic gestures on the tone poem "Little Red Soldiers Under My Skin" and the bright saucy strutter "Where's The Happy Ending." And there are three more albums—*Lost At Sea, Swim In The Wind* and last year's *Dark Lights*—where that came from.

That you probably don't know Glenn Phillips from Glenn Ford is not all your fault. Nine years after his first band, Atlanta hippie rock anarchists the Hampton Grease Band, broke up, Phillips still refuses to knuckle under to music industry dictum. Excepting a brief '77 fling with England's Virgin Records, he issues albums on his own Snow Star label. He has recorded them in such unlikely studios as his living room (*Lost At Sea*) and Atlanta's Protestant Church Radio and Television Center, also

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known as Channel One (*Razor Pocket*). He spends long hours on the phone booking club and college dates up and down the East Coast and is not above driving from Atlanta to New York non-stop for a club audition gig. At one such show, the group received no money and Phillips had to *pay* the club soundman ten bucks to mix their sound. He has also scuttled major label offers by refusing to add a singer to the lineup.

"The thing I guess I'm trying to express is that there is room for the individual," Phillips declares in a springy Georgia drawl, relaxing between sets in the band's van outside New York's Lone Star Cafe. "Whether it comes out saleable or not, who cares? There is still room for the individual in the music business to take a stand. And the way you take a stand is by doing only what you want, by being only what you are."

And all Glenn Phillips ever wanted to be was a guitarist. That he couldn't play the guitar to save his life when he joined the Hampton Grease Band at age sixteen was only a minor irritation. "When the band played," he laughs now, "I still demanded fifty percent of all solos. And I didn't know beans about guitar. I originally thought the way you tuned a guitar was to line up all the tuning pegs."

Phillips has learned a lot since then—the hard way. His unorthodox playing style combines the fearsome crunch of a heavy boogie Les Paul with the nimble sting of a Stratocaster with only a handful of effects to do startling impersonations of a roaring motorcycle on "Flyback" and an exploding bomb in "She Don't Know" (both on *Dark Lights*), and that style demands an unorthodox guitar. In his customized Gibson L6S, he certainly has one. (Actually, he has two, a steady with an ebony fretboard and stock tailpiece for live work and a spare with rosewood fretboard and strings going through the body for the studio. He puts them through a 65-watt Music Man head and two Lansing speakers in separate cabinets on the road, using an old Fender Bassman head for recording, plugging in both channels, cranking them up to ten, and playing through two cheap Music Man speakers.)

"The thing that attracted me to the L6S was the size of the guitar, the twenty-four frets, and the weight of it. But I didn't like the pickups." So he just ripped them out, installing an old late-50s Gibson Patent-Applied-For humbucker in front and a Fender Telecaster pickup in the back. In addition to the L6S's main toggle switch, he installed five more along the bottom to manipulate the combined sound of the two pickups. One adjusts the phase of the two coils *inside* the humbucker and another

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P L A Y E R S

MATERIAL WELL-BEING

Free Substitution & Avant-Funk

BY DAN FORTE

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Material witnesses: keyboardist Michael Beinhorn and bassist Bill Laswell like changes.

To principal members Bill Laswell and Michael Beinhorn, Material is a company, not a band. They have an administrator, not a manager. And this company also includes their engineer and investor/executive producer. Instead of the usual lead guitarist and singer/frontman, they recruit anyone that suits the sound and their fancy for sessions and gigs. With almost lackadaisical casualness, Laswell and Beinhorn have virtually redefined the notions of artistic freedom and creative control while releasing two of 1982's most remarkable records, *Memory Serves* and the new *One Down* on Elektra.

Material thrives on the element of surprise. Last year, after backing vocalist Nona Hendryx on the dance club hit "Busting Out," the group made one of their low-key live appearances in New York, playing entirely improvised music with a guitar trio consisting of Derek Bailey, Fred Frith and Sonny Sharrock. Not long after that, they played a similarly improvised gig with three percussionists. Laswell plays with a host of ad hoc bands including the trio Massacre (with Frith), Curlew and the no wave supergroup the Golden Palominos. Now, after proving that improvised avant-funk needn't be esoteric and inaccessible with *Memory Serves*, they turn the tables and breathe life and conviction into that tired old horse, disco, with *One Down*, an infectious dance record and probably the most intelligent disco album ever made.

Bassist Laswell and synthesist/vocalist Beinhorn produce, compose and anchor the music. Their cast of regulars already includes Hendryx, the aforementioned guitarists, Air saxophonist Henry Threadgill, Peach vocalist R. Bernard Fowler, Chic guitarist Nile Rodgers, Jump Up sax player Oliver Lake, violinist Billy Bang and cornet player Olu Dara. Tenor sax legend Archie Shepp even makes a cameo appearance on *One Down*, playing a beautiful sax solo on the ballad "Memories." "We were thinking about who to use on that track," laughs Laswell, "and Archie walked by the restaurant we were in, so Roger Trilling, our administrator, went out and caught him and explained the situation. He did the session two days later."

Largely because of where they've played and who they've occasionally played with, Material has been associated with the New York no wave hybrid of R&B, new wave and avant-garde loft jazz, which encompasses everyone from James Chance & the Contortions to guitarist James "Blood" Ulmer. "I don't feel too attached to that music,"

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Why the Beyer M 300 could be a better choice than the vocal mic you were going to buy.

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Microphones like the Shure SM58 have been described as industry "traditions"* based on a variety of reasons including durability and a practical ball-end design. But now there are new vocal mics offering many of these standard features in addition to updated design approaches with certain advantages implicit in the newer technology.

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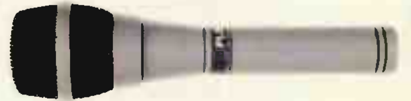

With today's constantly evolving technology, we don't doubt that newer entries into the vocal mic market such as the Electro-Voice PL80 represent updated thinking in design and manufacturing. But when someone claims to have designed a microphone based on the "complex frequency components of the human voice's waveforms,"* we must ask: Whose human voice? And when someone tells you their mic has the "today" sound, we must also ask: What is the "today" sound?

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admits Laswell, "because I think they only really do one thing. James Chance is only capable of playing one song, really. Blood Ulmer is obviously a lot further on than James Chance, but still, to me, it sounds like he's doing one thing. We've been associated with those people, but hopefully we'll be associated with a lot of others too."

Though their influences are not atypical of musicians of their generation, Laswell and Beinhorn approach their respective instruments quite unconventionally. Laswell, twenty-eight, got his training playing in soul bands around Detroit and Chicago. "I listened to James Jamerson, Chuck Rainey and Jack Bruce," he details. "I like everybody that's playing with the drummer. I'm influenced by Captain Beefheart quite a bit, just in terms of structure and the way he places the guitar, bass and drums together. And I think Ornette Coleman's rhythm section is doing something new and different."

Laswell's main instruments are his Fender Precision and Music Man Sting Ray basses. "The Music Man is slightly more punchy," he says, " and stays in tune a lot better. It's on every song on *One Down* except the ballads, and then I used the Precision. For records I go directly into the board; when we play live I just use whatever amp is available. For *One Down* we used a Mutron or a Lexicon digital delay on the bass—very simple processing."

On *Memory Serves*, Bill also used an Ibanez 8-string bass (four sets of double strings tuned essentially in the manner of a 12-string guitar) and a Fender 6-string bass for playing slide. "I use a lot of different tunings on it," he points out, "and sometimes I don't bother tuning it. It depends on the gig. I don't even have the tunings written down; I just fool around with it until I like it."

Beinhorn, twenty-three, listened mostly to what he now calls "rubbish" in his formative years (groups like Genesis and Emerson, Lake & Palmer), before graduating to Brian Eno and Roxy Music. But unlike most pianists-turned-synthesists, Michael—who now cites Stockhausen, Jimi Hendrix and Albert Ayler as influences—took up synthesizer having never played keyboards. "I don't know if that's an advantage," he poses, "but I like my approach better than if I had started as a keyboard player. I feel I have a more direct contact to different sounds, because I'm hearing everything else, instead of a lot of 'keyboard' playing. I have a disadvantage in terms of technique, but I can concentrate more on the texture of the sound. Sometimes I don't even care to approach it as a tonal instrument; a lot of

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G I G G I N G

FROM FLOORPLAY TO PENETRATION

How to Make a Dance Club Hit

BY CRISPIN CIOE

ANDY FREEBERG

Alternative to AM: DJ Richard Sweret inducing body motion at NewYork's Danceteria.

In today's post-new wave, pre-apocalypse, under-capitalized economy, dance music is one of the few areas that affords bands, producers and would-be music industry nabobs a chance to appeal directly to an existing audience, without necessarily having to convince a mid-level A&R staffer at a big label that your demo tape is worth sending upstairs to the fat cats. Recent independent label dance-oriented rock (DOR) 12-inch hits like "Temptation" by New Order (on Factory Records) and Yazoo's "Situation" (originally on an English indie, now on big-time indie Sire in America) have sold quite respectably based on floorplay, and "Situation" ultimately crossed over to urban contemporary radio and is now on the pop charts. Earlier this year, the hefty sales of "Never Say Never" by Romeo Void helped propel San Francisco's indie label czar Howie Klein and his 415 Records into a handsome label distribution arrangement with Columbia. What's more, in the current dance scene, both DOR and R&B hits cross over back and forth between dance clubs and black discos with some regularity (although black clubs and audiences tend to be a bit more open-eared in this regard). Last spring a tiny New York City indie, Tommy Boy Records, which specializes in rap and funk 12-inch dance singles, released an ultra-catchy synth-dance ditty called "Planet Rock." The tune mates Kraftwerk-style hooks with spatial electronic funk, and the group Afrika Bambaataa & Soul Sonic Force are Bronx born and bred rapper/musicians who helped start the whole New York rap scene in the mid-70s. This 12-inch single has since sold well over half a million copies and made top ten on the *Billboard* R&B charts.

The dance-rock scene as it's known today started in 1977 at a now-defunct Manhattan club called Hurrah when Jim Fourrat, a former actor and assistant to Clive Davis at CBS Records in the early 70s, took over its management. Fourrat has been a seminal tastemaker in New York for years, and after managing he went on to pilot such vanguard dance clubs as Pravda, the Blitz and, most recently, Danceteria. "We called Hurrah the 'Rock Disco' at first," recalls Fourrat, "and it really was the first place where people went specifically to dance to new rock. I also like to think that we helped expose a lot of good new music to audiences. For example, I booked James 'Blood' Ulmer in Hurrah, and he did very well in front of an audience that previously seemed inaccessible to such an 'avant-garde' musician. But people danced *and* listened to Ulmer, which was the ideal situation.

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"Basically, the major labels still market records in traditional ways, and that's their problem. DOR and black disco DJs have created their own network of clubs, stores and radio stations, which have become real alternatives to traditional commercial radio, and which are now influencing FM radio. Don't forget, Devo and the B-52's first broke nationally in black dance clubs, then crossed over to other clubs and, finally, to radio stations."

The West Coast DOR movement began in the late 70s, soon after Hurrah was off and running, when former KSAN DJ Howie Klein and two other platter-spinners started working at a Bay Area club called X's. According to Klein, "Every night literally hundreds of kids would want to know the names of the independent or import label records we were playing. I started 415 Records soon after that, with a partner, Chris Knab, and we began as a punk label, because that's what was happening at the time. In March 1981, we released Romeo Void's first LP, which did pretty well for us.

"Then we decided to release our first 12-inch single mainly as a promotional item—so we thought; it was a tune the band had just written, "Never Say Never," that had a real good dance beat. I sent it to Rockpool in New York, which is the only real DOR tipsheet/record-servicing organization for the club DJs nationally. They felt the record had big dance potential, so they serviced the clubs with it extensively. From there it just took off, went number one on the Rockpool chart, made the *Billboard* disco/dance chart, and so forth."

The Romeo Void success story is somewhat atypical; for more nuts and bolts information about what to expect from the independent recording/marketing experience, I tracked down the story of the Nails, a New York-based quintet with a partially self-produced EP, and Jimboco Records' Jim Reynolds, the indie entrepreneur who put out the record earlier this year. The band formed in Colorado in 1976, migrated to New York soon after, played upbeat ska-rock for a couple of years, and more recently evolved into a more synth-based, hard-edged trance-pop style of music. About two years ago the Nails, who had by then invested in their own 4-track recording setup, recorded a song called "88 Lines About 44 Women," a slightly macabre recitation by lead singer/songwriter Mark Campbell about some women he's known, that shows ironic traces of Lou Reed, Jim Carroll, and (gulp) Chad & Jeremy's '65 weeper, "Summer Song."

Reynolds had a speculative deal with Mediasound Recording in New York

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L E G A L

MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS

Legal Essentials for a Fair Deal

BY STAN SOOCHER

Richard Sarbin was busy running a recording/rehearsal facility in New York's Greenwich Village when he first met roots-conscious rocker Marshall Crenshaw. Six short months later Sarbin had become a personal manager, and Crenshaw was his first client.

"Marshall had been taking the 4-track tapes he made in his living room door-to-door to managers, song publishers and record companies. He'd even gotten Robert Gordon to cover three of his songs by leaving the tape with the doorman at producer Richard Gottehrer's apartment house," Sarbin recalls. "Marshall's brother Robert, who is his drummer, had been working with me as a studio assistant and, at his urging, I let Marshall rehearse and develop his sound in the studio without charging him, without judging him and without making any initial commitments. I'd seen so many guys racking their brains trying to get somewhere and Marshall is a very honest, trusting person. I didn't want to see him get abused or turned off by people who would be interested in him as a product more than anything else."

So, although "neither Marshall nor I knew much about contracts," Sarbin and Crenshaw eventually sat down, each with his own attorney, and worked out a written management agreement that is a model of fairness in a business noted for its shady deals.

"A management contract is the most important piece of paper an artist will sign," Sarbin explains. "After all, the manager is right in the thick of it, dealing with every aspect of a career, from bookings to radio stations, record companies, accountants and so on. I had two major obligations to Marshall under our agreement. First, I had one year to get him a recording contract. [Crenshaw has signed with Warner Brothers Records.] Second, I had two years in which to gross him a certain amount of money with an increase for each of the following three years. If I didn't meet either of these conditions, Marshall had the option to get out of the contract. If I did, the contract would be renewed at my option."

But not every group signs a written management agreement. "We had a gentleman's agreement with our first manager that lasted one year and ended in an amiable parting," reveals drummer Hugo Burnham of English politico-punks Gang of Four. "We'd gone to school with him, gave him an equal percentage of our profits the same as the other members of the band and he saw us through our recording and publishing deals. He now manages the Human League. After that, his assistant managed us on a salaried basis. Then I handled management chores for a few months and then our agent did." (Gang of Four have since signed a written agreement with noted English manger Chris O'Donnell.)

A musician should be careful about signing with the first manager to offer a deal. "I meet artists all the time who are ready to sign themselves away for two years to a manager who will only care about them for a month," Sarbin declares. "Then you can't go to anybody else or do anything without the manager's approval. Some managers even use you as a tax loss. But there are plenty of managers out there and if you believe in yourself and what you are doing, you will be heard and found by the right manager."

Most managers ask for 15 to 20 percent of the artist's gross earnings, although percentages can range from as low as 10 percent to as high as the 50 percent Colonel Tom Parker received under his agreement with Elvis Presley. Gross earnings typically include songwriting and record sales royalties, performing, merchandising and other such sources of income. But the alert musician shouldn't allow a manager to collect a percentage out of the recording budget or tour support fronted to the act by the record company at the initial stages of a career.

"It's not illegal," admits Peter Shukat, an artists' and managers' attorney who represented Richard Sarbin in his negotiations with Marshall Crenshaw, "but that would be taking a commission out of money that isn't going into the artist's pocket and is crucial to getting a career off the ground. None of the managers I represent do that."

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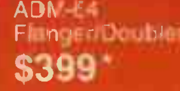

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Across-the-board deals are another potential contractual trap that should be avoided at all cost. In this situation, an act is signed to a management contract, song publishing agreement and production deal by the same organization so that the manager can collect half of the artist's songwriting royalties plus production points on top of the management percentage. Conflicts of interest may arise as a result. Bruce Springsteen signed a similar deal early in his career and only got out of it after several years of litigation that left his career in limbo.

But the real kicker from the manager's standpoint is the annuity clause where the artist is compelled to give the manager a percentage out of all deals made by the manager during his agreement with the artist but which extend beyond the length of that agreement. Here the artist ends up paying percentages to both his new and old managers.

"It may seem unfair at first glance," attorney Shukat says. "But a manager invests a great deal of time, money and effort in turning an unknown into a star. He should be able to reap benefits from his investment which might accrue at a later time, but not so much as to rape the act." Richard Sarbin suggests an equitable solution where a manager could receive a decreasing percentage over a period of time after his agreement with the artist ends, for all deals he negotiated during the contract term.

An artist approval clause can help minimize the annuity problem by limiting the kinds of decision a manager can make without first consulting the musician. But most managers are unwilling to allow new acts to have input into each decision that must be made. Still, according to Richard Sarbin, "There are a lot of managers who are very good businessmen but not very good musicians. I consult with Marshall on every offer, giving him the pros and cons. Marshall can also solicit projects on his own, although he spends most of his time performing and writing."

So be sure to choose your manager carefully, read the contracts closely and, above all, don't sign away your essential long-term legal rights in exchange for the lure of the short-term promise. M

Material, *from pg. 84*

stuff we've done lately, I was approaching it more as a percussive instrument."

Beinhorn's main synthesizer is the Prophet 5. "I find it the most versatile overall," he states. "I prefer modular synthesizers, instead of keyboard oriented ones. I think in the future I'd like to experiment with the digital synthesizers. On *One Down* we also used a sequencer on about four tracks, and the rest was the Roland TR-808 drum machine."

Most of *One Down* and all of *Memory Serves* was recorded at Material's own OAO Studio, housed in a renovated Brooklyn loft that resembles a condemned building from the street. Material's engineer Martin Bisi has outfitted the studio with a 16-track Soundcraft Series 2 board and an Autotech 16-track tape machine with a Technics 2-track recorder for mixdowns. Outboard gear includes a Lexicon Prime Time digital delay, an Eventide harmonizer, various compressors and Kepex noise gates, along with a pair of JBL 4315s and Sennheiser, Shure (SM81 condensers), and Electro-Voice (RE20 for voice and horns) microphones.

"We do so many different kinds of recording," says Bisi of the Material process. "On *One Down*, it was all step-by-step, from a drummer playing with a rhythm machine on up." Sometimes, rhythm tracks are done live and there are group improvisation sessions that are all live.

Bisi and Material favor the step-by-step approach, however. "We spend a lot of time on a piece often because we don't know what the end result will be. Bill and Michael will often write parts of a song during recording. As we go along, the feel becomes clearer. And it gives us more freedom to develop a song."

Material is also starting their own OAO record label, beginning with early '82 releases by Massacre, Cuban conga player Daniel Ponce, a seventeen-piece chamber group led by Billy Bang, and the Golden Palominos. Laswell and Beinhorn recently produced sessions for Nona Hendryx and Lenny White and will soon be producing, composing and arranging two cuts for an upcoming Herbie Hancock album. Laswell also has a solo LP *Bass Lines* ready to go. As for the next Material album, it's anyone's guess what direction it will take—the group's principal duo isn't even sure.

"We've thought a lot about that," says Laswell, "and I'd say you can definitely expect a drastic change. It should be more along the lines of pop music, directed more in the rock vein. The change is gradual, for us. You have a different vision every day, hopefully, if you're growing."

Asked whether a mass audience could be expected to adjust to and accept the band's shifting tides, Laswell admits, "We never really thought about the audience. The main thing is to develop the music so that it's good on each record and is something fresh every time and feels right. If there is a potential audience that can appreciate it, that's great. But that's never really been part of the idea." M

G I G G I N G

NEW WAVE WHO'S WHO

Business Alternatives for the Unbeautiful

BY DAVID FRICKE

A 736-page book listing 16,000 albums, singles and cassettes, and the 10,500 bands that made them may not seem an essential purchase for the starving troubadour. But *Volume II*, the second edition of 1980's highly acclaimed *Volume, the International Discography of the New Wave*, indeed speaks volumes to players—particularly those of the punk-descended persuasions—committed to peddling their wares in the underground marketplace.

That editors B. George and Martha DeFoe found that many records and groups (from England's ABC to San Francisco's Zru Vogue) to fatten up this $12.95 tome, distributed by G.P. Putnam, shows that CBS and WEA are no longer the last word in music distribution. And to ensure that this discography continues to grow, a good third of *Volume II* is devoted to listings of publications, clubs, radio stations, record labels and independent distributors, an invaluable Who's Who for the dissemination of new music in America, England, the world.

"The Blasters did their very first tour through the first edition of this book," boasts B. George, a New Yorker who also runs One Ten Records, the label that first brought you Laurie Anderson's "O Superman." "For a lot of people, there was no other way."

But more than lists, *Volume II* also gives you the nuts and bolts of management and publishing. Grace Jones' attorney Wayne Halper contributes an essay on negotiating a contract and Iain McNay of prominent U.K. indie Cherry Red Records offers tips on what to look for in British publishing and record licensing deals, a viable out for adventurous American bands stonewalled by the domestic industry. With tight budgets in mind, George has even included a list of the twenty-two best people in Britain to send your record to for maximum exposure.

"It's turning into big business," admits George of the new music revolt. "But anytime someone comes up with something a bit odd, where else do they have to turn?" Try "U.S. and Canadian labels," page 544.

(*Volume II* will be on Putnam's spring book list, available in stores in early 1983. It is also available now by mail from One Ten Records, 110 Chambers Street, New York City, NY 10007 at $12.95 plus $2.00 first class postage, $3.00 to the West Coast.) M

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Floorplay, *from pg. 88*

(one of the city's top 24-track studios) which allowed him to record bands there and then pay back for the studio time with the first money coming in from sales and licensing rights, plus a percentage of the record's future. Mastering was done at Executive Recording in Manhattan. "Mastering," Reynolds says, "is an absolutely crucial step with a dance record; for instance, I was able to boost the bass considerably in the mastering process and to roll off some midrange, both of which helped it on the dance floor.

"But I had to do this project on a shoestring," he continues. "The cost breakdown for the Nails EP includes 60 cents each for the records themselves—I think our first run was for 1,000—35 cents for the jacket sleeves, about $350 for mastering—although it costs about $100 an hour more if you plan to be there with the engineer when he masters—and a one-time charge for the negatives and color separations for the cover.

"One of the biggest problems you face with a small label and limited capital is that you lay out money up front for a first pressing, and then local distributors, even the best ones, don't pay you for at least ninety days. If you've got a hit and you sell out your first run, you've got to lay out more money for another pressing, especially if you expect the distributors to pay you on time for the first run. So, unless you have a great credit rating with a pressing plant, it's a position of having to lay out more and more dollars before seeing a return, and of course, sales are never guaranteed. With the Nails thing we've had the good fortune to be getting an increasing amount of radio and club exposure in America over the past few months.

"The whole thing is tough, but it *can* be done—if the commitment is there."

Tom Silverman is the indie-owner behind "Planet Rock" and publishes the R&B-oriented tipsheet *Dance Music Report*, operating out of a tiny East Side Manhattan office. He also agrees that it can be done, providing "you're willing to learn from your mistakes." His first 12-inch releases two years ago were rap and funk records that came to his Tommy Boy label as finished masters, so he didn't have to spend on production costs. But, he remembers, "I spent way too much money on hiring independent record promoters to take the records around to the clubs. This was during the height of the disco era, when big record labels were acting like the only way to break a dance record was to spend a lot of money on cocaine and limos. I just never bought that idea.

"So when I started *Dance Music Report*, I set out to learn about the club and DJ scene first-hand. I'd hang out at the stores in Manhattan and the Bronx where the rap records were first happening. I met Afrika Bambaataa, who is and was a DJ first and foremost, on that scene. Basically I'm looking for new forms in dance music, forms that emerge from the street. I don't think you have to spend a pile of money in the studio to get that feeling either. On the other hand, I'm definitely trying to develop the acts I record. Soul Sonic Force played the Ritz last summer in New York after their record hit big, and I spent $5,000 on costumes and staging for the group in preparation for that gig and others."

Most of these entrepreneurs and musicians were present at the New Music Seminar in New York last July, along with a very visible major label presence for the first time in this event's three-year run. Throughout most of the panels—featuring producers, booking agents, clubs, DJs, publicists—the only interesting conflicts that emerged were between the haves, the about-to-haves, and the never-wills, while AOR format heavies like John Sebastian and Bill Hard explained their reasons for programming wall-to-wall Led Zep-steen.

And the emerging dance-rock scene is exactly what's launched most of the new music acts on to the radio and the charts. As Rockpool's co-founder/director Mark Josephson points out, "The major labels are watching and waiting. Remember, the R.I.A.A. estimates that it takes 75,000 albums sold for a major label, using branch distribution, to break even on an average album; but when Howie Klein sold 50,000 copies of "Never Say Never" earlier this year, it was considered a huge success story. The trend nationally is for discos to convert to DOR clubs; there is a very large scene in L.A., for example, with 40 or so clubs operating. At Rockpool we now have 125 clubs and DJs reporting, 50 radio stations (mostly college) and 300 retail stores (mostly influential smaller ones)—and all these entities interrelate constantly. The DOR scene is not intrinsically profitable yet, but it is expanding fast."

Right now, commercially viable dance-rock music includes everything from the Blasters and the Fleshtones to Kid Creole and Grandmaster Flash to the Clash and Joe Jackson—which is one hell of a point spread. If there's anything in there you can relate to, just follow Archie Bell & the Drells' immortal advice from another dance era, and do the tighten up. Ⓜ

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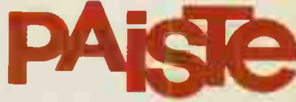

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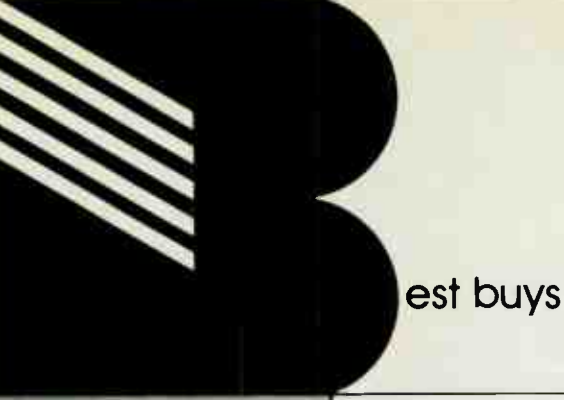

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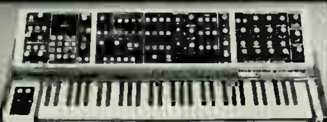

Moog Music is pleased to announce the introduction of the Memorymoog, a programmable polyphonic six-voice synthesizer, each voice similar to the Minimoog, with three oscillators generating sawtooth, triangle and rectangular pulse waveforms, the patented Moog filter and two four-part contour generators. The Memorymoog holds 100 programs in its digital memory. A cassette interface allows storage of additional programs. For easy program access during live performance, up to twenty program locations can be "linked" together to form one chain and cycled through with a single button or footswitch. Moog, 2500 Walden Ave., Buffalo, NY 14225. (716) 681-7200.

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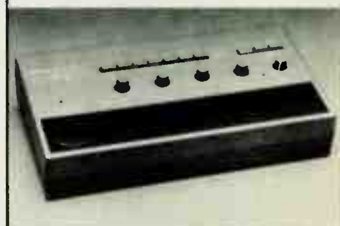
The **Yamaha** Producer Series MR10 drum machine, unlike conventional rhythm machines that only take over for the drummer, allows the drummer to join in by using the manual finger pads. The MR10 offers twelve basic preset voices that can be mixed in any arrangement for a wide range of possible rhythms. Or you can completely ignore the presets and create your own patterns by using the finger pads which are bass drum, snare, high tom, low tom and cymbal. You can even use the preset for rhythm backup, adding fills and variations using the finger pads. An optional bass drum pedal is also available. Yamaha, Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622. (714) 522-9011.



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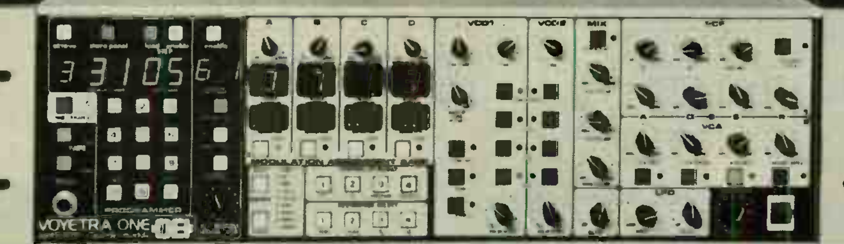

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Kate Bush

The Dreaming (EMI-American)

This is what progressive rock might have become had it actually progressed, rather than congealing into the massed, lumbering clichés that came to distinguish its latter-day forms. Oblivious to all fashions, Britain's Kate Bush has advanced into a musical area that's unquestionably her very own—a kind of mystic and semi-inscrutable artsong that slowly draws you in and keeps you marveling at her unending invention and oblique, multilayered meanings.

Although well appreciated in her homeland, Bush has been a source of continuing puzzlement for her American record company: how to promote a female performer who's neither a chirrupy sex doll nor a punked-out doom-shrieker? Her problems with popular acceptance—aside from the fact that she's a gifted musician, songwriter and producer who happens to be a beautiful woman to boot—are once again apparent on *The Dreaming*, as is her extraordinary artistry. "Sat In Your Lap," the lead song here, is a furiously percussive track that considers—of all things—the difficulty of obtaining true wisdom without work ("Some say that knowledge is something sat in your lap," she trills). Likewise, when was the last time you heard a surreal, faintly political song about bank robbery ("There Goes A Tenner") or a Vietnam War retrospective written from the point of view of a stalking guerrilla ("He's big and pink and not like me/ He sees no light/ He sees no reason for the fighting")?

"Night Of The Swallow" considers another clandestine operation, this one airborne and apparently ill-fated ("Wings fill the window/ And they beat and bleed"); "All The Love" considers life's eternally underpondered transience ("All the love we could have given/ ... 'I needed you to love me too. I wait for your move'"). And on "The Dreaming," the album's most startling and unsettling track, Bush brings in Rolf ("Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport") Harris on *didjeridoo* for a frightening rumination on the rape of native culture in Australia: "'Bang' goes another Kanga/ On the bonnet of the van/ ... Erase the race that claim the place and say we dig for ore."

Throughout all of this, Bush layers dense musical textures and elliptical catch-phrases into an elsewhere-unexampled work of disturbing art. The production is thick and rich, her high-pitched vocals often astonishing in their wayward inspiration, and her arrangements—based largely on her own keyboard playing—offer surprise at every turn.

You're not likely to see *The Dreaming* much advertised or otherwise promoted in these days of parlous record-company finances—even though this is her first LP to be released in this country in four years. My advice to seekers after artful rock: get her while you can. — *Kurt Loder*

The English Beat

Special Beat Service (I.R.S.)

Unlike *Wh'appen, Special Beat Service* successfully manages the transition from 2-tone to full color, giving the English Beat a sound that is at once more soulful and harder rocking. Of course, that's basically what they were after in the first place, but where this new album succeeds is in managing that winning combination without succumbing to the limitations of a single style, the way ska did.

The secret lies in not overplaying any one of the band's numerous influences, so that most of the musical attention focuses on the hooks, not (pardon the pun) the beat. Thus, as much as "I Confess" and "Sole Salvation" recall the rhythmic vitality of classic Motown, they do so while also retaining the subtle lilt of rock-steady. Similarly, "Pato And Roger A Go Talk" cuts dub reggae with Afro-beat for a delightfully fluid pulse, while "Save It For Later" settles into a groove somewhere between a Paul McCartney ballad and a Curtis Mayfield lament.

Figuring out exactly where credit is due is no easy task; on the one hand, the band has grown significantly as a unit and plays better than ever, but on the other, it's hard to imagine anybody missing with songs as solid as these. So let's stick with an all-purpose commendation and just say that if you expect your pop music to be tuneful, danceable and as much fun as Prince Andrew's love life, you deserve *Special Beat Service*. — *J.D. Considine*

Culture Club

Kissing To Be Clever (Epic/Virgin)

Just when you thought the last thing you needed was another washed - out attempt at dance music, along comes Culture Club to smash all your preconceptions about Brit-funk. Sure, their songs run on the expected formula of equal parts funk, reggae and post-disco dance rock, but what sets Culture Club apart from the other dance-floor detritus is that all of the band's rhythmic energies are exerted on behalf of an unstinting melodic sensibility. Not only that, but the band even boasts a singer who can do these songs justice, filling out each phrase with just the right touch of vibrato and shading, instead of the flat, nasal honk we have come to expect from Brit-funkers.

Lead singer Boy George is no Marvin Gaye, but he does manage a suppleness that verges on the soulful. His voice can be alternately sweet and cutting, and he uses its shifting timbres to navigate the rest of the band through material that sits somewhere between the bouyant punk-salsa of the Thompson Twins and the earnest neo-Motown of ABC. Following his lead, the band shifts easily from the poppish "I'll Tumble 4 Ya" to the reggae rhythms of "Love Twist" or to the doo-wop croon of "Do You Rally Want To Hurt Me," all without losing a bit of their melodic charm.

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That's not to say that Culture Club doesn't have its problems. Aside from Boy George's disconcerting appearance—the cover shot of Boy George makes him look uncomfortably like Patty Hearst's little sister—songs like "White Boys Can't Control It" and "White Boy" seem to smack of inverted racism, something which puts a sour edge on their melodic insistence. Giving Boy George's lyrical ambiguities the benefit of the doubt, it's safe to say that at its worst, *Kissing To Be Clever* is not mean but merely stupid. Nonetheless, with songs as sharp as these, it's easy to end up hoping that next time around Culture Club will put a little more emphasis on the clever. — *J.D. Considine*

Yoko Ono
It's Alright (Polydor/PolyGram)

There are still many Beatles fans who accuse Yoko Ono of cannibalizing John Lennon's soul. Undoubtedly, Yoko's new solo effort will add fuel to their fire, with its intimations of direct contact with her late husband's spirit. "My man is the best in the world," blithely croons the mourning but merry widow, as the use of present tense throughout the record indicates a refusal to come to grips with her mate's absence.

If the singsong single, "My Man," with its childlike "Babalu, I love you" chorus, represents the psychic recuperation begun by last year's *Season Of Glass*, the shimmering, nightmarish thunderclaps of "Never Say Goodbye" tear those scars open again. Yoko even employs a chilling, "beyond the grave" primal scream from John to punctuate this searing successor to the intensity of "Walking On Thin Ice," the frightening Ono track which turned out to be the last thing Lennon worked on in the studio the night he was killed. The rest of the LP is similarly divided into "happy songs" (the dreamy "Across The Universe"-like strains of "Spec Of Dust" and the Zen gospel rave-up of "Tomorrow May Never Come") or "sad songs" (the shattering shotgun blasts and spaghetti western whistling-in-the-dark of the eerie "Let The Tears Dry").

It's Alright is Yoko's unabashed grasp for pop stardom in her own right, and who's to say she doesn't deserve it? Lennon created some of his most inspired solo work—from *Plastic Ono Band* to *Double Fantasy*—in collaboration with Yoko, so why shouldn't she be able to tap his energy in death? The generosity and natural forgiveness of "Wake Up," with its clicking crickets, croaking frogs and hissing rattlesnakes, or the rolling surf and squawking seagulls of the wide-screen "Dream Love" are aural landscapes that require the same kind of communal participation to be completed that Yoko's conceptual art always has. Yoko Ono's new music may just be the 80s bearer of the Beatles' radical utopian legacy, and wouldn't that be ironic? The dream's not over yet. — *Roy Trakin*

Marvin Gaye
Midnight Love (CBS)

Upon relocating to England in 1981, Marvin Gaye complained to London's *New Musical Express* that his last Tamla release, *In Our Lifetime*, was flawed because Motown denied him the time and budget to polish it. Artistic control must have been the least of Gaye's parting conflicts with his ex-brother-in-law's company; but the Motown split and its terse if elegant product seeemed predestined, as Gaye habitually signaled radical career changes with every decade. In 1961 he left the Moonglows to record for Motown, '71 launched his eloquent venture into political proselytizing, (*What's Going On?*) and 1981 had him severing the last emotional and economic ties to the House that Gordy built.

Now on CBS, *Midnight Love* firmly reestablishes Marvin Gaye as the king of raunch 'n' roll. In spite of lyrics that repeatedly insist "I love your mind—and your body too," I wouldn't exactly classify these eight tunes as *love* songs. Ever since his first attempt at self-production in '73 (*Let's Get It On*), Gaye began to carve out the kind of thematic territory that presaged the randy precocity of Prince rather than maintaining the 60s' decorum of double entendres.

Midnight Love is both retrospective and pastiche, cannibalizing riffs and melodies from *Let's Get It On* and *I Want You* modified by more recent innovations and graceful, stylistic nods to England's reggae, tribal, Northern Soul and synthesizer fashions. The end chorus of "Third World Girl" owes its apparent Marleyisms more to Sting than to the original, and Gaye's command of the synthesizer's tonal language places him in the practical front ranks of the current crop of one-man bands.

However he arrived at his complete synthesis, it works. Doing most of his own backing vocals (with notable assistance from co-producer and ex-Moonglow Harvey Fuqua), Gaye continues to refine the trademark vocal layering I've come to tag "soul-madrigals," where ghostly libidinal choruses fade in and out of the astral plane invoked by subliminal polyrhythms and made goose-pimpling flesh by squealing saxophones.

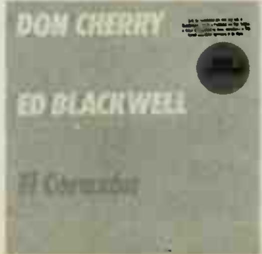
"Midnight Lady" is a brazen cross between Quincy's "Stuff Like That" and Rick James' "Super Freak," with a Latin *clave* playing counter-syncopation to the bass, creating a superior dance track. "Rockin' After Midnight" is another uptempo number which features admirable sax solos by Joel Peskin as well as some of the most vocally athletic harmonies. "Till Tomorrow" steps back into the 50s in tempo and perspective, providing a base from which we can appreciate the long formative assocation between Fuqua and Gaye—this ballad being gifted with all the former's production experience.

"Turn On Some Music" opens side two with a neat lyrical twist: sex becomes the metaphor for music rather than vice-versa. The macho posturing implied by singing, "Put on three albums, and let's fly baby" would be intentionally hilarious in another setting, but Gaye is serious about this marathon and sweats to sustain those notes and make the most suggestive use of his spectral cheering section. "Third World Girl" is a more honest attempt at a reggae sound than Kool & the Gang's recent "Let's Go Dancing," replete with a mournful mini-obit for Marley in the first stanza—the only political reference on this LP.

The remaining cuts have less to commend them in the way of novelty. They're not sloppy, but in trying to please everyone, Gaye achieved several lowest common denominator derivations. "Joy" hearkens back to golden-era Barry White, while "My Love Is Waiting" suffers from being the sort of pleasant top forty pap Lionel Ritchie might have written for Earth, Wind & Fire or MFSB. The sum total of *Midnight Love* is a creditable if not spectacular return of a legend, and I hope that Gaye makes good on his promise to follow with an album of reggae funk. Sure, it'd be bandwagoning... but far better the compelling merger of Caribbean and gospel rock represented by "Sexual Healing" than the comparatively bland boogie of "Joy" or even the P-funk pretensions of "Midnight Lady." — *Carol Cooper*

Don Cherry & Ed Blackwell
El Corazon (ECM)

Don Cherry & Latef Khan
Music/Sangam (Europa)



Confession: I felt a surge of hope seeing Don Cherry wearing shirt and tie on the back cover of his duet with long-time associate Ed Blackwell, and a sense of forboding seeing him depicted in Indian garb on his LP

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with tabla player Latef Khan. Let me put it this way: however genuine and likeable his humility, Cherry does himself and his paying customers a disservice, it seems, when he abdicates the instrument and the discipline he spent years mastering to dabble with instruments and doctrines which put mastery out of the question for Westerners like himself. On both records, Cherry the harmonically sophisticated, comically lyric jazz trumpeter willingly shares time with Cherry the naive multi-instrumentalist/one-worlder. But *El Corazon* suggests even to a skeptic like me that the trumpeter's world-music investments are starting to pay dividends. Blessed with an immaculate sense of form to begin with, Cherry's soloing seems to have gained even greater compression as a result of his studies of musics in which the rules of improvisation are far more constraining than those governing self-expression in jazz. There's very little spill here and absolutely no sprawl, and if this results in interplay less abandoned than on *Mu*—Cherry and Blackwell's previous one-on-one confrontation and one of the most joyously unfettered albums of the 70s—it also results in music of considerable charm and perhaps even greater intricacy. Cherry's bugle-like pocket trumpet shines especially brightly on the fifteen-minute suite that opens the album and consists of three of his own playful themes as well as Monk's "Bemsha Swing"; elsewhere he creates earthy, infectious moods with handclaps, melodica, *doussn' gouni*, organ and piano. Like all great drummers, Blackwell's greatness is as much a matter of tone as time, and the boom of his bass drum and the song of his cymbals have seldom been captured with such depth and clarity. On the appropriately titled "Street Dance," Blackwell sounds like a one-man New Orleans second line. The album's only weak moment, surprisingly, is the plangent trumpet solo which brings it to a close; the cathedral-like echo, so typical of ECM, too manipulatively encloses the "plangent" in quotes.

Cherry's *Sangam* (meeting) with Khan, recorded in Paris in 1978 but just now released in the U.S., is far less satisfying on the whole, though there are numerous swirling, finely textured and appealing passages that find Cherry multitracking trumpet, piano, panlike flutes and vocals all the while the tablas are imposing meter upon meter. But despite Cherry's good intentions and the immediately evident talents of Khan, too much of their music strikes resolutely Western ears like mine as exotica—Eastern ears too, I have a hunch. —*Francis Davis*

Chick Corea/Miroslav Vitous/Roy Haynes
Trio Music (ECM)

Chick Corea tries to go home again on *Trio Music*, a double LP reuniting him with the rhythm section he used on 1968's *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*—his first date as a leader. The crisp, pearly touch that distinguishes Corea's best playing is fully evident here; he sounds better than he has in ten years, in fact. Unfortunately, the trio's invention isn't always up to Corea's own level. Bassist Miroslav Vitous sounds out of his depth on the free improvisations on the first disc, employing strategies that seem primitive and rather obvious by 80s standards. Chick will play a phrase, and a second later Vitous will repeat it, tagging along like a younger brother instead of thinking for himself. Corea and Vitous play *around* each other rather than *with* each other. What's missing is a sense of risk—it's as though the musicians are afraid of making mistakes.

The second disc is given over to Monk tunes, and Vitous and drummer Roy Haynes sound more secure working within Monk's fixed structures. Vitous abandons his annoyingly whiny arco to thump on his rubber tub. Corea combines Thelonious' chord-hammering and half-step dissonances with a more contemporary Paul Bley-like way of

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fragmenting a theme. On "Hackensack," "Little Rootie Tootie" and "Rhythm-a-ning," the trio achieves a breathing, satisfying balance. But improvisers who play Monk are expected to capture his winsome spirit, which is as much a part of his music as the notes are. Doubtless Corea's intention on "Reflections" and "Eronel" was to demonstrate what pretty melodies Monk could write, but Corea's cloying, cocktail-hour interpretations of these pieces just don't measure up.

Listening to this set in its entirety, I couldn't help wishing that Corea had decided to re-form his classic trio of the 70s with Dave Holland and Barry Altschul instead. They'd have breezed through the free pieces at least—assuming that *you can* go home again. — *Kevin Whitehead*

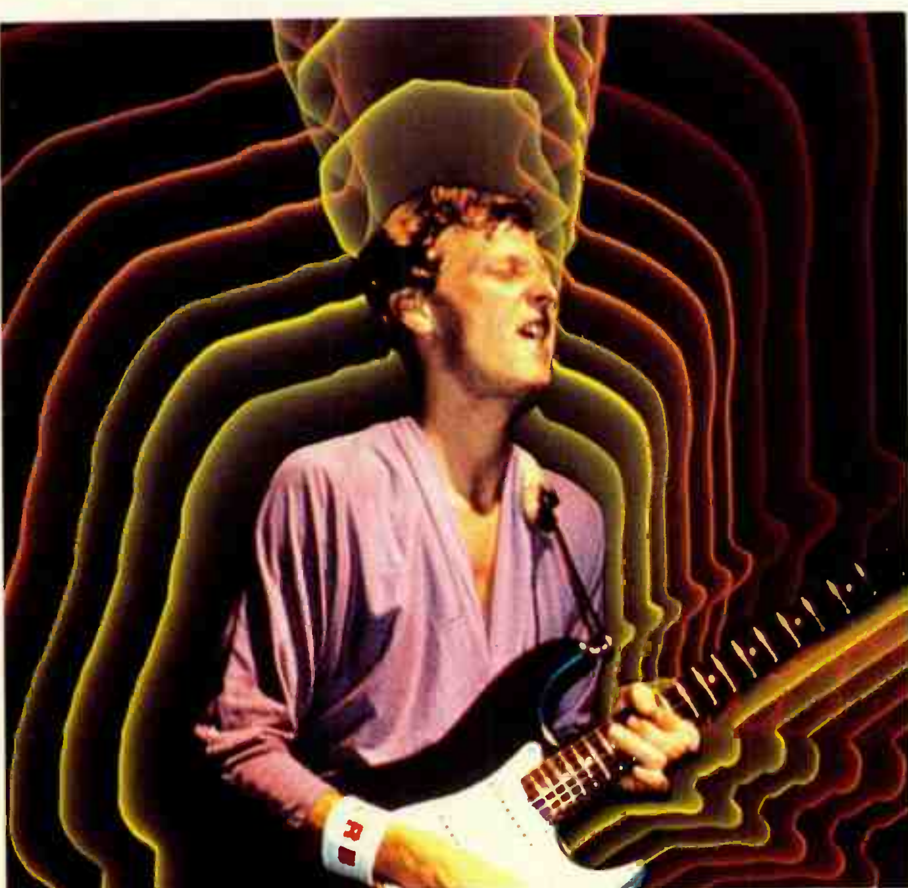
Michael Jackson
Thriller (Epic)

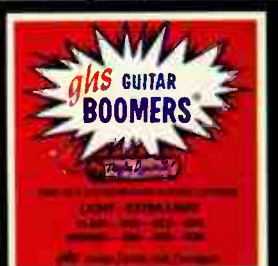
It seems only a matter of time now before Michael Jackson becomes a candy bar or a video game. His music, after all, that remarkably silky blend of infectious melody, whipcrack dance rhythm and high gloss production, seasoned and congealed by Jackson's own peppery tenor, is at least as much cultural artifact as pure art. So it's certainly no accident that *Thriller* features guest spots by Eddie Van Halen, Paul McCartney and Vincent Price, such disparate sensibilities yet all exemplars of pop mythologies sacred and profane, and each self-deprecating enough to never take any of that too seriously. So much the better to complement Michael Jackson's own sunny charisma and ingenuous ambition.

None of this would matter much to the Space Invaders crowd were not *Thriller* a superb effort, an album that fortifies Jackson's enviable niche in the pop pantheon as surely as *Off The Wall*, tuxedo and all, heralded his arrival. Neither startling departure nor cheap imitation, *Thriller* features compositions (notably Jackson's own) every bit as sturdy and energetic, subtly textured arrangements (mostly by Jackson or Rod Temperton) that are, if anything, even more assured. And let's face it, any album that even hints at the commercial portent of an LP that put four singles into the top ten cannot be said to lack a sense of style.

It is a style that, while still bearing remnants of the old Jackson Five stage show, is really more in line with post-disco consciousness: rhythms more likely sculpted by Johnson Brother Louis' fluid bass than by any mere bass drum; ebullient, punchy instrumentation that belies rather than propounds studio sophistication, despite the plethora of Jacuzzi-tune sessioneers and the presence of up to three (3) synthesizers per song; and lyrical sentiments that occasionally veer into such sobering areas as unwanted parenthood ("Billy Jean") and ill-fated machismo ("Beat It").

It is on these songs, too, that Jackson clearly expands his range as a singer, evoking in markedly different settings street characters who shuffle to and fro between punky bravado and queasy guilt. Of course, there is the McCartney duet, titled "The Girl Is Mine," and a couple of Rod Temperton smoothies to help remind the fickle that Michael is still an adorable honey bunch. But heck, we've known that since the 60s. With *Thriller*, he's also serving notice that, like Stevie Wonder, he intends to grow up further and faster than anyone else might reasonably have imagined. — *Mark Rowland*





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Devo
Oh, No! It's Devo (Warner Bros.)

Those scientific spudboys are back again, hence the self-mocking album title, but this time, Devo seem to be in a slightly more optimistic frame. The very first track, "Time Out For Fun," belies the band's eggheaded doomsaying with a surprisingly hearty assurance that "everything's going to be all right." In fact, the self-proclaimed

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"suburban robots" are even beginning to slowly emerge from their elaborately cynical philosophy.

Devo's music has always taken a back seat to their dada humor, but *Oh, No!* makes clear what's been apparent from the first synthstrains of "Mongoloid" and "Jocko Homo": these mutants have a way with a hook. In other words, Devo has established their own clipped yet swinging groove, characterized by such traditional devices as call-and-response, hesitation and syncopation. "Peek-A-Boo," the LP's first single, uses the children's game to make a serious point about social responsibility, though its main feature is a chortling "yo-ho-ho" chorus that takes some time, but eventually sucks you in like a magnet. So does "That's Good," which turns a paean to orgasm into a delirious chant that's passed back and forth between the members, with revved-up synthesizer parts trailing like a comet's tail.

Still, a Devo album is only a minor part of the group's overall message, which includes a "videosynchronous" live show and brand-new fashion accessories such as "spud collars." Producer Roy Thomas Baker hasn't tampered with the group's whip-cracking rhythm machines or bargain basement minimalism; he's merely provided a clean canvas. Devo remains the art-rock band for people who disdain bombast, but don't mind pretension. This time out, Devo has dropped its mean-spirited anti-humanism in favor of a good-natured poke in the ribs. "We must repeat!" they once warned us, and that's precisely what they've been doing since. You can't argue with an imperative like that, so let's just dance. — *Roy Trakin*

David Murray Octet
Home (Black Saint/PolyGram Special Imports)

There are times when I'm convinced David Murray really was sent to earth to chart the path to Elysium. Then there are other times when his mum-mumb-mumble tenor conception becomes so obsessive I'm tempted to slap his young hands and scold, "Stop scratching it before it festers!" But after hearing Murray's second octet record, I'm back in the genuflectional line with the rest of his admirers.

My editor likes *Ming*—last year's headturner—better, and I see his point. The levels of ensemble spontaneity and overall G-forces were somewhat higher there, but there are shadings of humor and celebration on *Home* that make it the more complete human experience

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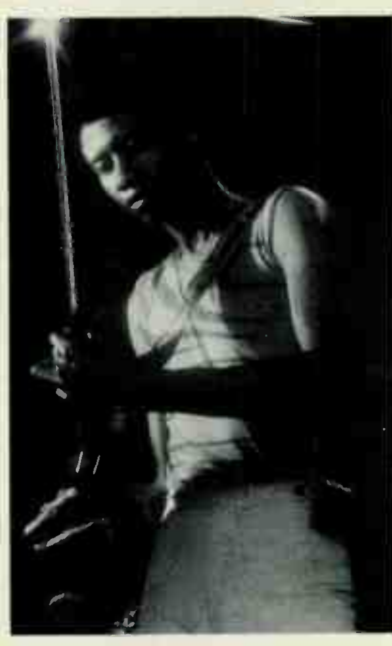

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for me. My only argument is with the opening track—the title piece. Cast in a dark slithering mood, its murky voicings just weight it down instead of creating a powerfully palpable orchestral feel. But the remainder of the album is a very satisfying dance-infected yet abstractly bluesy affair.

"Santa Barbara And Crenshaw Follies" is an uptempo ensemble chase in the great contrapuntal tradition of Ellington and Mingus (and a few lines even remind me of Braxton's big band writing). Just as we get caught up in "Santa Barbara"'s frantic excitement, Butch Morris steps in to subdue the beast with his lyrically impressionistic cornet. Pivoting on the fulcrum of a simple R&B riff reminiscent of something Sun Ra would send his troops marching down the aisles to, "Blues Choktaw" is both elemental and modern—one of Murray's strong points is his ability to tap into the tradition without pandering to it. "3D Family" is a darting, swinging, polyphonic waltz featuring George Lewis' always witty trombone, Anthony Davis' spirited piano and the Armstrong-like moves of Olu Dara's clarion trumpet. "The Last Of The Hip Men," so hip it hurts, is a brilliant composition, airy yet opulently substantial. Murray's interlocking arrangements of subtle textures are fascinating here. And while Murray's own solos are strong as ever, altoist/flut-

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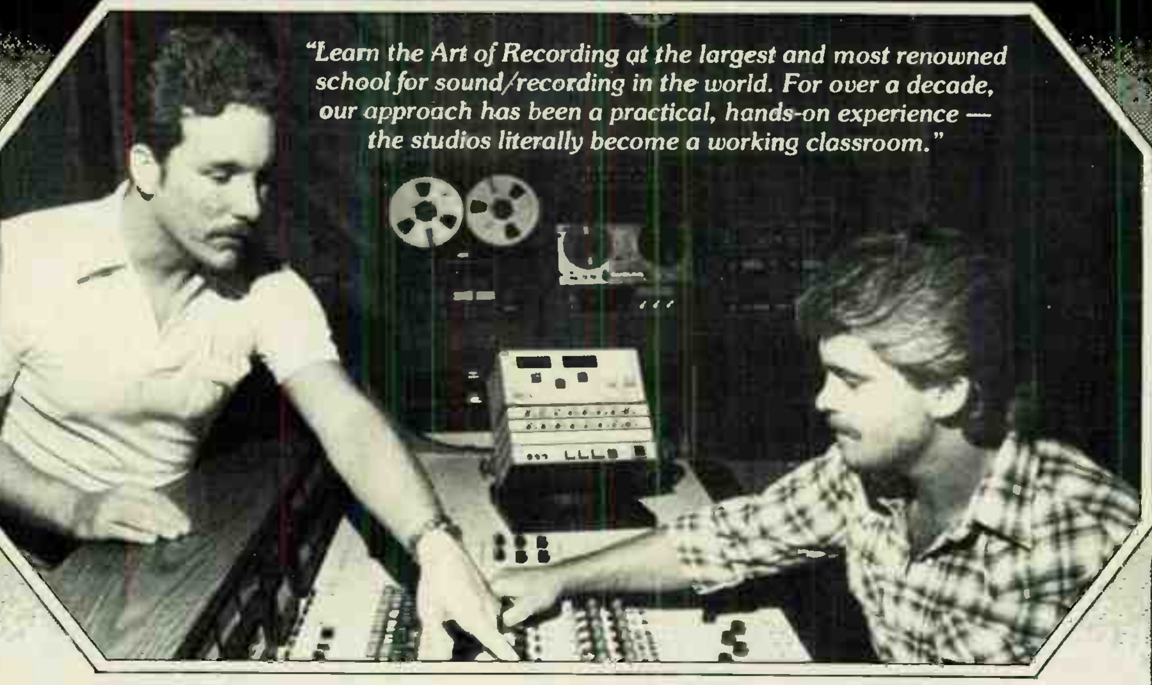

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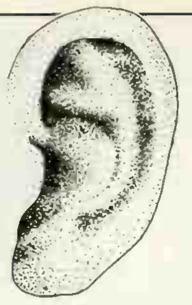

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ist Henry Threadgill almost steals the show with his intellectual earthiness. In the final analysis, however, it's Murray's compositions and the octet's array of ensemble colors that make *Home* a gorgeous and accessible record. — *Cliff Tinder*

J. Geils Band
Showtime! (EMI-America)
Rod Stewart
Absolutely Live (Warner Bros.)

You can blame Peter Frampton, as if he doesn't have enough to worry about these days. The eleven godzillion copies of *Frampton Comes Alive* that flew over the counter in 1977 exalted the live album to a status far beyond that of its real artistic or commercial worth, and five years later they're still breeding like rabbits. Throughout rock history, the best live albums have always been either a determined show of physical strength after a string of heady studio successes or after a long bout with personal problems (the Who's post-*Tommy* punchup, *Live At Leeds*, Warren Zevon's exhilarating comeback from alcoholism, *Stand In The Fire*) or a manifestation of that side of an artist's personality no studio could contain (Lou Reed's marvelously bitchy *Take No Prisoners*). Everything else is usually filler between studio opuses or a Christmas stocking stuffer (any live LP issued in late October or November is guilty until proven otherwise).

With *Showtime!*, the J. Geils Band are asking for trouble. This is their third concert recording—only the Rolling Stones have them beat with four and the Grateful Dead with *six*—and it comes suspiciously soon after the number one sweep of *Freeze Frame* and "Centerfold" last year. But the Geils guys still rank as one of America's best arena party bands, singer Peter Wolf howling like a wiley R&B coyote, leapfrogging about the stage to the jackhammer slam of the Danny Klein-Stephen Jo Bladd bass 'n' drums backfield while Magic Dick blows hearty, jazzy harp, Seth Justman fires off piercing organ trills and J. Geils sideswipes the songs with hot rod chords and steely solos. Ideally, then, *Showtime!* should be a chance to enjoy recent highly-produced studio ravers like "Just Can't Wait," "Sanctuary," and the brute, thumping "Love Stinks."

Instead, obtrusive audience noise (maybe a *little* jacked-up?) and a thick, almost monophonic band mix takes some of the cut out of Geils' strut. Even with the brassy kick of the Uptown Horns, the Marvelows' "I Do" misses the

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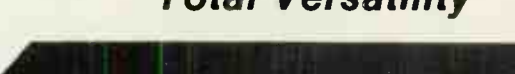

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clean bite of Geils' earlier studio cover on *Monkey Island*. I also question the programming of Wolf's five-minute speeding beatnik monologue "Love Rap" at the end of side one (it segues into "Love Stinks," which inconveniently opens side two), a spirited stage gimmick that starts spinning its wheels on vinyl after a few spins.

"Historic live album!" blares the *Showtime!* cover with good humor. "Entertaining—Informative—Fun." Entertaining? In spots, like the 60s-style crybaby soul ballad "I'm Falling" and the rousing "Land Of A Thousand Dances" finale. Informative? You've heard most of it before. Fun? You had to be there.

Absolutely Live appears to be something of an apology for Rod Stewart's recent Hollywood gadflying and disco prancing. To prove he's mended his errant ways, Stewart goes to great pains to assure us of the album's concert authenticity with several reminders of saxman Jimmy Zavala's cockup on his "Tear It Up" solo and an impassioned screed on the inner sleeve noting untampered audience noise and the sound of two topless dolls storming the stage during "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy." Then he turns right around and slips this double album into some Fiorucci vision of a bootleg cover complete with sleeve photos of some sweet dish in leopard skin panties.

If nothing else, though, *Absolutely Live* has the element of surprise. For all of his excesses—the constant rock 'n' roll cheerleading, the smug sexual come-ons—Stewart still has one of pop's most invigorating voices, a crazy cracked crow that can fire up ballads as well as boogie. And this time around, he comes packing a strong if faceless band free of studio whitewash. They whip even the dire disco wheeze "Passion" into muscular shape, breathe some new life into tired old "Maggie May," and set visions of Stewart's Jeff Beck days dancing in your head with a wicked "Rock My Plimsoul" (although guitarists Jim Cregan, Wally Stocker and Robin LeMesurier are no match for the real thing).

Absolutely Live projects none of the anarchic joy that made the Faces such lovable clowns, but Stewart works hard to salvage his credibility here and the results come as a pleasant shock. On the other hand, *Showtime!* is a rush job with a cash register ring to it by a good-time band with the brains to know better. Live albums—will they never learn? — *David Fricke*

Led Zeppelin
Coda (Swan Song)

Led Zeppelin still does *big* better than anyone. *Coda,* a nostalgia-framed collection of unreleased early/late Zep material put together by lead guitarist Jimmy Page, rams this point home with characteristic balls-up gusto while confirming the crucial role John Bonham and his awe-inspiring drum vistas played in Zeppelin's larger-than-thou sound.

Even though it is rumored that the clever Mr. Page lifted the original Jeff Beck Group's musical approach as the conceptual basis for Led Zeppelin, he deserves full credit for taking that supercharged blues-rock mode and shaping it into a massive and supernatural montage of hyper-dramatic blues givens and evil guitar riffing pumped up as huge as the existing technology would allow. On side one ('69-'72), a true *sturm und drang* version of Willie Dixon's "I Can't Quit You Baby," recorded live at Albert Hall during a sound-check, shows off the best and worst of the band who literally codified the genre known as heavy metal: Bonham fills out every corner of the hall with titanic bass drum and cannon snare, Plant glides from whispered endearments to gargantuan, climactic screams and Pagey treats us to a few moments of sublime, low-key blues phrasing on the turnarounds before ripping into another surfeit of white-heat lead guitar salvos consisting of repetitive four- and five-note patterns played in lyrical "hammer-off" style but brilliantly paced and sequenced around the neck for maximum showbiz impact.

The rest of this *early* side has limited historical appeal and "Walter's Walk" offers another nasty, subcutaneous guitar riff for Zeppelin clones throughout the land, but "Poor Tom" lacks the mys-

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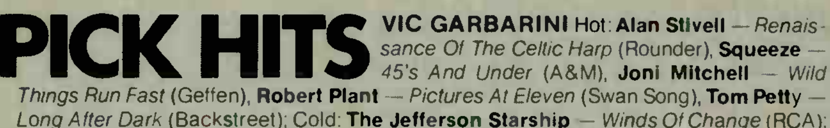
tery of more popular heavy-acoustic tunes like "Misty Mountain Hop," and their early rendition of Ben E. King's "We're Gonna Groove" lacks stylistic focus, finally settling on heavy funk mutation packed with overkill vocals. The second side features three originals recorded at Stockholm's Polar Studios in 1978 where the band, led by Page in his restless search for the definitive cross-weave of sub-octave riffs and grainy electronic textures, pushes at the already well-defined limits of their style. "Darlene" starts on the primal axis of Bonham/Page's interlocking bass drum/power guitar with another jarring, stop-time riff, then makes a bumpy transition into heavy boogie-woogie; all of which recall Zeppelin's problem reconciling their outsized instrumental voices with a more conventional stylistic framework. Bonham's bare-knuckled



PICK HITS

VIC GARBARINI Hot: **Alan Stivell** — *Renaissance Of The Celtic Harp* (Rounder), **Squeeze** — *45's And Under* (A&M), **Joni Mitchell** — *Wild Things Run Fast* (Geffen), **Robert Plant** — *Pictures At Eleven* (Swan Song), **Tom Petty** — *Long After Dark* (Backstreet); Cold: **The Jefferson Starship** — *Winds Of Change* (RCA); Live: **The Go-Go's**, the Lyceum, London.

DAVID FRICKE Hot: **John Cale** — *Music For A New Society* (Ze), **The Jam** — "Beat Surrender" (Polydor U.K. import), **Clifton Chenier & his Red Hot Louisiana Band** — *I'm Here* (Alligator), **Glenn Phillips Band** — *Razor Pocket* (Snow Star), **The Dream Syndicate** — *The Days Of Wine And Roses* (Ruby); Cold: **The Associates** — *Sulk* (Sire); Live: **Peter Gabriel**, the Palladium, New York City.

FRANCIS DAVIS Hot: **Cecil Taylor** — *Garden* (HatArt), **Sarah Vaughan** — *Crazy And Mixed Up* (Pablo), **George Russell** — *New York Big Band* (Soul Note), **Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell** — *El Corazon* (ECM), **Ella Fitzgerald** — *Duke Ellington's Songbook Vol. 2* (Verve); Cold: none; Live: **Joe Turner**, Tramps, New York City.

MARK ROWLAND Hot: **Marvin Gaye** — *Midnight Love* (Columbia), **Michael Jackson** — *Thriller* (Epic), **King Sunny Ade & His African Beats** — *Juju Music* (Mango), **Donald Fagen** — *The Nightfly* (Warner Bros.), **Thelonious Monk** — *The Riverside Trios* (Milestone); Live: **Iggy Pop**, Rismillers, Los Angeles.

ROY TRAKIN Hot: **Marvin Gaye** — *Midnight Love* (Columbia), **Culture Club** — *Kissing To Be Clever* (Epic), **Malcolm McLaren** — "Buffalo Gals" — 12-inch (Enjoy), **Chic** — *Le Plus Grande Succes De Chic* (Atlantic); Cold: **Toni Basil** — *Word Of Mouth* (Chrysalis); Live: **PiL**, Roseland, New York City.

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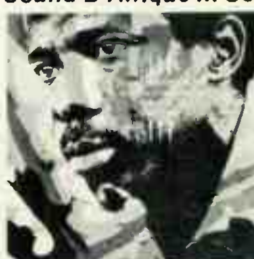
drums hang out all over the place, impeding the supple rhythmic momentum of this more traditional rock 'n' roll vehicle.

"Bonzo's Montreux" frees Bonham to waddle around a standard time signature with the kind of commanding presence that elevated blunderbuss unsubtlety to new levels, while redefining the bass drum sound for a new generation of hammer-and-tongs rock metallurgists. And for all of those who loved them for their reckless overstatement, *Coda* is a glowing reaffirmation in an era of downscale thinking. For those who bore a grudging respect for their theatrical musicianship but loathe Zeppelin for establishing dangerous precedents of entropic tastelessness, even the forward-looking "Wearing And Tearing" with its racing punk (!?) buzz guitars, won't change their basic view of this LP as an ancillary shudder of damnable noise. Either way, should they be scorned in perpetuity for the ongoing sonic crimes of their imitators? — *Jean-Charles Costa*

Various Artists
Music And Rhythm (PVC)
King Sunny Ade & His African Beats
Juju Music (Mango)
Various Artists
Sound D'Afrique II: Soukous (Mango)



It has become very hip of late to incorporate Africanisms in your rock 'n' roll, whether copped directly *a la* Burundi bandits like Bow Wow Wow or Adam & the Ants, or introduced philosophically as with David Byrne and Brian Eno's recent projects. Just how much this has enriched the music in general is open to debate, but if nothing else, this recent spurt of interest has prompted the release of African music on domestic labels, thus alleviating the inherent anxiety of shopping for overpriced and scarce import albums.

Still, the novice is left with the question of where to start, and *Music And Rhythm* provides an easy answer. This exquisite double album, assembled by the Music Arts and Dance Expo to benefit their festival in Somerset, England this past July, combines indigenous music from the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean with American and European music adapted from these sources. It's a stroke of genius—not only does the album boast an array of names like Peter Townshend, Peter Gabriel, XTC and David Byrne, it features them in such a way that the relationships

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between their music and its sources are clearly illuminated.

For instance, Vic Coppersmith-Heaven's *gamelan*-influenced "Pengosekan" is annexed to a recording of the Balinese Ramayana Monkey Chant; similarly, Peter Gabriel's percussion-based "Across The River" is prefaced by a selection of Burundi drumming. Thus, a taste for both may be developed, and in a way that is far less disorienting than plunging blindly into the Nonesuch Explorer series.

As with any anthology, there are some questionable inclusions. It's easy to appreciate the draw of Pete Townshend, but considering how jumbled and embarrassingly ambitious his "Ascension Two" turns out, I almost wish they'd passed. Furthermore, there's a noticeable techno-centrism to the collection; while the Western performers conjure their rhythms out of state-of-the-art technology, the non-Western music is generally presented as totally primitive.

No better case could be offered to show how wrong that supposed dichotomy is than King Sunny Ade's *Juju Music*. Considered the biggest name in *juju* (the throbbing dance music indigenous to Nigeria), King Sunny Ade leads a thoroughly modern band, one that includes synthesizers and employs elements of dub technology. To appreciate how sophisticated the band is, one need merely note how idiomatically these devices are applied, for the synthesizer contributes soft colorisms behind the percolating rhythm while the use of echo and other dub effects deftly enhances the overall textures. Indeed, Sunny Ade's African Beats are so up to date and adventurous, they frequently make Sun Ra sound primitive by comparison.

Sound D'Afrique II, on the other hand, offers a more traditional view of African pop. This collection of Soukous music from Zaire, Mali, Cameroun, Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African Republic sounds expectedly tropical, full of bright horn lines and merrily chattering guitars. But unlike the James Brown-ish pulse Sunny Ade employs, the Soukous guitarists toss off elaborately jazzy leads and counter-melodies, suggesting an African derivation of Django Reinhardt's style. A delightful album. — *J.D. Considine*

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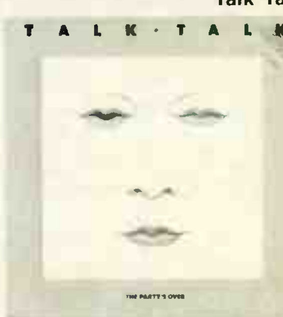

The Jam — *The Bitterest Pill* (Polydor). An appropriate farewell, this four-song EP all too aptly conveys both the best and the worst of the Jam. The title track is Paul Weller at his Beatle-ish best, all well-turned melodic phrases and ringing chord changes; "Pity Poor Alfie" is a brooding romance dragged down by a hopelessly cheesy interpolation of "Fever"; "The Great Depression" is brash, hookish social commentary in the style of *The Gift*; and "War" is a stiff, unfunky retread of the Edwin Starr hit.

Riuichi Sakamoto — *Left Handed Dream* (Epic). No synth-pop this. Despite Sakamoto's tenure with the incredibly hokey Yellow Magic Orchestra, the bulk of this album is given over to warm, almost organic blends of synths, guitars, percussion and an occasional wind instrument. In other words, a Japanese version of Japan. Except, that is, for an occasional cameo by Robin Scott, who at one point enjoins us to lay down our tools and party-hearty as the synths burble jauntily. Lotsa fun.

The Fabulous Thunderbirds — *T-Bird Rhythm* (Chrysalis). The pop album you always hoped they'd make. The songs are all killers, especially the Memphis-styled groover "How Do You Spell Love?," and the performances are sharp enough to shave with. But the masterstroke is the way producer Nick Lowe keeps the edges so raw and the mix so tinny that all this pop stuff sounds just like the T-Birds instead of trying to fake it so it would work out the other way around.

Rank and File (Slash). Punk country? That's right, pardner. Rank and File have somehow transformed the rigid pulse of L.A. post-punk into a sort of mutant twang that captures both the old-style two-step and the Huntington Beach Strut. As cultural (con)fusion, it's pretty solid stuff, especially since the band has both the chops and the voices to pull it off. But since their country drift has them playing into conventions instead of playing off them, I wonder how long they can keep this strain mutating.

Heaven 17 (Arista/Virgin). Heaven 17 may be the only group in the British synth-funk camp to actually come off as soulful, something which makes songs like "Penthouse And Pavement," "Play To Win" and the notorious "(We Don't Need No) Fascist Groove Thang" as listenable as they are danceable. Too bad it took almost two years for these songs to see American release.

Diana Ross — *Silk Electric* (RCA). "Muscles," with its from-a-whisper-to-a-crash production and hysterical beefcake sentiments, is the best thing I've heard on the radio in months. Amazingly enough, it doesn't outclass the rest of *Silk Electric* either. With Ross doing everything from ersatz 50s rock to extra-crunchy semi-metal, this is eclectic in the extreme but completely successful. Not to mention sexy as hell.

Jefferson Starship — *Winds Of Change* (Grunt). Third-rate imitation Journey.

Chic — *Tongue In Chic* (Atlantic). More funny than funky, but I take it that was supposed to be the idea. But also more funny than catchy, and I doubt that was in the plans. Aside from "Hangin'" and "Chic (Everybody Say)," these are just mannerisms posing as songs, so don't expect to find Nile and 'Nard laughing their way back to the bank anytime soon.

Dusty Springfield — *White Heat* (Casablanca). Like *Dusty In Memphis*, a pleasant surprise. Like everybody else trying to sound with-it, Springfield has a few more synthesizers behind her than she needs, but her gritty drawl and tart inflection keep things sounding quite hot indeed. Best of all is her version of "Losing You," in which she accomplishes every vocal trick Elvis Costello ever attempted. Not to be missed.

Talk Talk — *The Party's Over* (EMI/America). Okay, "Talk Talk" is a great song, and "Have You Heard The News" isn't a bad one. But isn't one Duran Duran enough?

Magazine — *After The Fact* (I.R.S.). It's great to have flat-out rockers like "Shot By Both Sides," "TV Baby" and "I Love You, You Big Dummy" in one convenient package. But as the singles compilation progresses from early Magazine to the later issues, I begin to wonder if playing just my fave singles wasn't such a bad idea, after all. Or maybe just playing side one of this.

Tav Falco's Panther Burns — *Blow Your Top* (Animal). As rockabilly weirdos go, Falco is pretty convincing, sounding exactly like the kind of guy who's dodged beer bottles all night while ripping it up in some backwoods roadhouse. But since authentic isn't the same thing as real good, and since I don't like throwing beer bottles at my stereo, I think I'll stick with Bobby Lee Riley.

Plasmatics — *Coup D'Etat* (Capitol). Ever wonder what Black Sabbath would have sounded like with a chainsaw as lead singer?

Swingers — *Counting The Beat* (Backstreet). The title cut makes a terrific single, expertly toeing the line between quirky art-pop and hook-mongering top forty. The rest of the album favors art

continued on pg. 114

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JAZZ

By Francis Davis

SHORT TAKES

George Russell — *New York Big Band* (Soul Note/PolyGram Special Imports). Nothing else in jazz is so thrilling in quite so many ways as a good big band, and there have been few bands in the last decade as awesome or as variegated as the organization Russell led in 1978. Believed until now to have gone unrecorded, here it is in all its glory. As with all of Russell's best writing, the charts subsume theory into roaring swing, embracing tried values even as they advance a true personal vision, and the shrewd combination of escalating jazz harmonies and smoldering rock rhythms elicits convincing solos from an assortment of young players, including Ricky Ford, Roger Rosenberg and Stanton Davis. The soul singer who preens on two tracks is a bit much, I admit, but in a big band this mindful of big band iconography, you tolerate him the way you do the young lovers in Marx Brothers comedies—at least I do. And if the stiff reading of "Cubano Be, Cubano Bop" by a Swedish network orchestra seems out of place here, it at least serves its purpose as a reminder of Russell's pivotal if not always appreciated role in the evolution of modern jazz.

Cecil McBee — *Flying Out* (India Navigation). The yeoman bassist's most ambitious endeavor yet is a holiday for strings, with string writing that's brambly, pensive and thickly, beautifully textured; and string solos—by violinist John Blake, cellist David Eyges and McBee himself—that are sweeping and stirring, even if they don't always do the writing full justice. Olu Dara's cornet brightens two tracks, and Billy Hart provides a steady pulse throughout.

Odean Pope — *Almost Like Me* (Moers Music, available from NMDS, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012). If Coltrane had been the one to propose a system of harmolodics, the results might have sounded almost like this—a tenor with a pealing cry tersely blowing quick dancing lines, then quickly blowing them harmonically inside out, a sharp electric bassist racing him to the finish line. Pope makes a vivid impression here, as do his bassist Gerald Veasley and his drummer Cornell Rochester. Now will someone record Pope's Saxophone Choir?

Pharoah Sanders — *Live* (Theresa). Making sense of the 60s. I'm old enough to remember when Pharoah's shrieks were supposed to dissolve my ego and topple fascist regimes. Now they're just supposed to convince me he has the blues, and I'm convinced. He's become a lustrous ballad player too, but I think I liked him better in the old days, though I never really believed any of that stuff. Did you?

Archie Shepp & Jaspar Van't Hoff — *Mama Rose* (SteepleChase). A little of Van't Hoff's synth backings and embossments go a long way for me (is that minimalism?), but Shepp sounds admirably lean and menacing, perversely declining the invitation merely to go ba-ba-ba on his accompanist's autobahn.

Dennis Moorman — *Circles Of Destiny* (India Navigation). In his initial outing as a solo pianist, Moorman reveals a depth of character and a range of abilities and interests he kept under wraps as a Chico Freeman/Cecil McBee sideman. His playing is expansive yet marked with equanimity, and the inquisitiveness and quiet forthrightness of his writing echo both the church and the concert hall. Recommended.

Sarah Vaughan — *Crazy And Mixed Up* (Pablo). She still hits some high ones just because they're there, but the divine one is fast approaching divinity for real, and this date with Roland Hanna and Joe Pass, aside from being one of the most intimate and informal she has made in some time, is also quite simply one of the very best she has made, ever.

Thelonious Monk — *At The Jazz Workshop* (Columbia). **Monk & Gerry Mulligan** — *'Round Midnight* (Milestone). The 1964 club date is a bit of a shambles, with Monk sounding pissed or tired or both, and even the usually reliable Charlie Rouse coming up empty. But it's a reminder that even jazz as finely measured as Monk's usually was, is music created in the moment when all's said and done. Paradoxically, the whole side of Monk settling into one of the more celebrated solo versions of his most popular piece, an invaluable bonus on a reissue of the 1957 *Monk Meets Mulligan* misalliance, gives us some idea of the rigorous process of trial and error a jazz musician of Monk's pride and unyielding artistry goes through when he's decided he's playing for posterity.

Walter Norris — *Stepping On Cracks* (Progressive). Even if this pianist's approach to standards is sometimes needlessly eccentric, the eleven-plus minutes of restless and clever rhythmic tinkering on his own title composition make his trio record well worth hearing. (P.O. Box 500, Tifton, GA 31794.)

Pierre Dørge — *New Jungle Orchestra* (SteepleChase). The zippiest, zaniest record of the month, from Denmark of all places. Dørge brings into play bush and highlife rhythms, free bop sax solos (by John Tchicai, among others), Ellingtonian trombones and clarinets and his own Ulmerish guitar, and summons up impressive arranger's skills and an incredible *joie de vivre* to make it all work somehow.

Stan Getz — *The Master* (Columbia). **Al Cohn** — *Overtones* (Concord Jazz). **Allen Eager** — *Renaissance* (Uptown). **Hod O'Brien** — *Bits And Pieces* (Uptown). Lestorian poets in their youth, Getz and Cohn are wearing the mantle of age gracefully. The Getz LP is a '75 quartet date illuminated by Albert Dailey's sparkling piano, and it's a mystery this master stayed in the vaults this long. Cohn's melodic sense has gotten lighter and more refined even as his tone has darkened and toughened, and here he leads a tight quartet featuring guitarist son Joe and the unimpeachable Hank Jones. Eager is a contemporary of Getz and Cohn's and something of a mystery man. His first visit to the studio in over twenty years finds him shaky but still able to evoke the young Lester's light floating sound and, better yet, some of the older Lester's dark, emotive power. Pianist O'Brien's work is striking on the Eager LP; his own trio date is less consistently impressive, though he should be sainted for resurrecting two heavenly (and previously unrecorded?) Tadd Dameron ballads and joining them in blissful medley. In addition to Eager, Uptown has located and recorded such missing persons as J.R. Monterose, John Bubbles and Davey Schildkraut, and if they were to tell me they had a Buddy Bolden coming out, I'd ask them when. (276 Pearl St., Kingston, NY 12401)

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Hilton Ruiz — *Steppin' Into Beauty* (SteepleChase). Rather lackluster trios and quintets (with Frank Foster and Richard Williams) from a gifted young inside-and-moving-out pianist who is better represented on two LPs his label has not released in this country—*Excitation* and *New York Hilton*.

Ted Curson — *& Co.* (India Navigation). The first U.S. release of one of the fiery but erratic trumpeter's smoothest and most exciting dates of the 70s—*Blue Piccolo* from Japanese Trio, with Jim McNeely, piano; Cecil McBee, bass, and Steve McCall, drums (McRhythm?).

Leonard Lonergan & Hannibal Peterson — *The Universe Is Not For Sale* (Smackdab/via NMDS). Half-assed self-production, murky engineering and namedropping liner notes can't conceal the fact that Lonergan has some provocative scoring ideas. And this is some of the most evocative Hannibal I've almost ever heard.

Bill Evans — *The Interplay Sessions* (Milestone). The reissue of a fancifully swinging 1963 quintet date with Jim Hall and a very young Freddie Hubbard, plus seven previously unreleased tracks from later the same year, with Hall and Zoot Sims gingerly but effectively addressing some of the leader's most wistfully occupied writing. Producer Orin Keepnews' frank program notes add to this twofer's appeal.

Glenn Branca & John Giorno — *Who You Staring At?* (Giorno Poetry Systems/via NMDS). On side one, Branca's mantralike stun-and-kill guitars are out to convince you there is no afterlife, to borrow a phrase from Scott Spencer. On side two, New York poet Giorno rants words to live by in the here and now (*e.g.* "When I meet someone for the first time, I have two questions: What's your sexual preference and how much money do you have?"), while Pat Irwin's hellfire guitars and keyboards curl and leap. It's not jazz, but it is all good clean downtown fun. M

Rock Shorts, *from pg. 110*

over hooks, though, proving rather conclusively which of the two sold me on the title cut. And it ain't the art.

Jerry Garcia — *Run For The Roses* (Arista). "I Saw Her Standing There" reworked as a clavinet-fueled swamp rocker? "Knockin' On Heaven's Door" reduced to the sort of syrup they play at pet cemeteries? So much for the theory that drug use doesn't lead to brain damage.... M

Phillips, *from pg. 84*

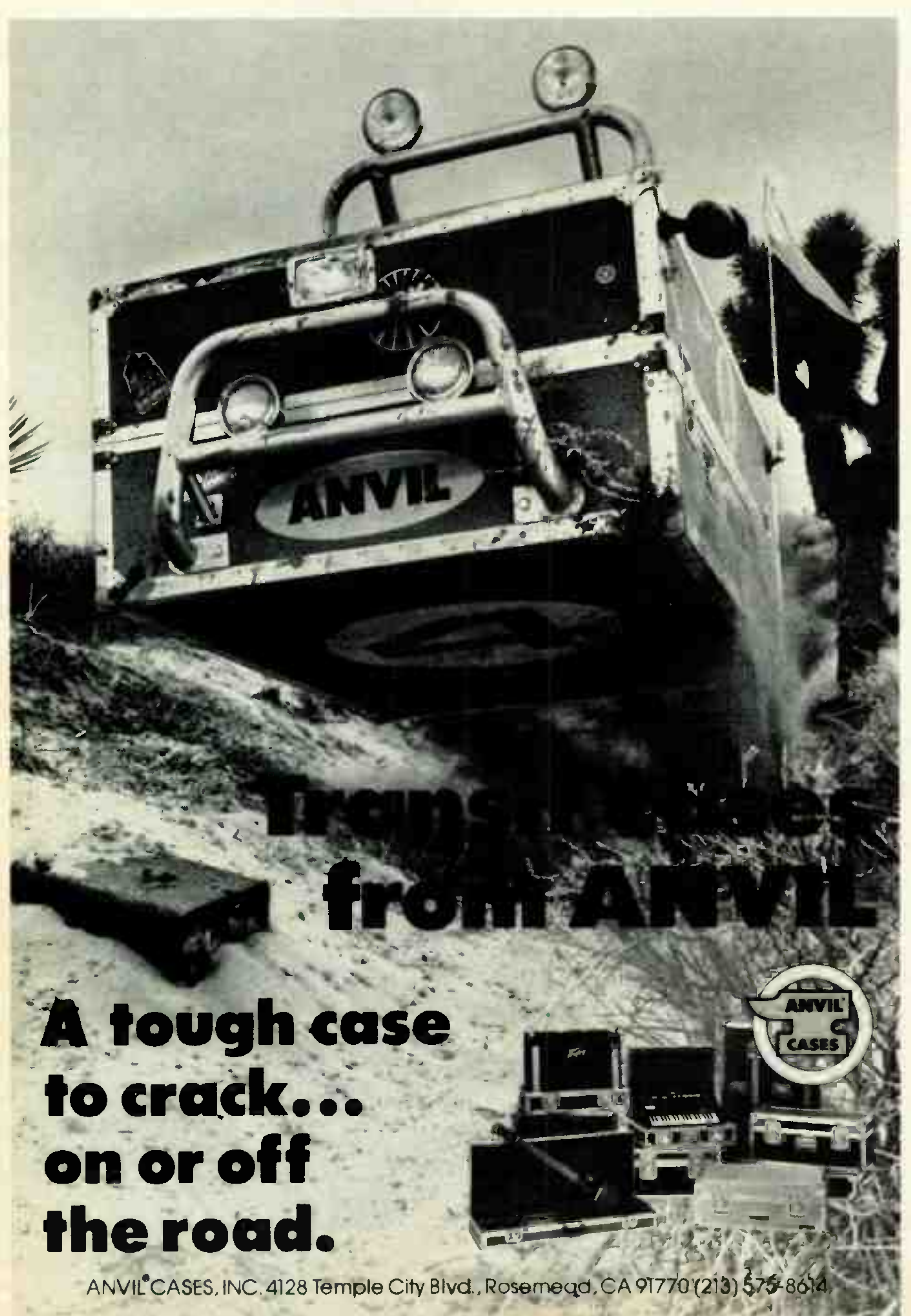
is responsible for combinations between the individual humbucker coils and the back Telecaster pickup.

"The last guitar I had before the Gibson had a humbucker, a Strat pickup and a Telecaster pickup. I used to have tons of pickups on my guitars, even behind the bridge. But I found with the toggle switches, I could have just the two pickups and still have every sound."

And what he doesn't get with the pickups, he is sure to get with his manhandling of an Echoplex delay and MXR pitch transposer rack units via Boss Overdrive and Touch-Wah pedals. Where the regeneration effect on the Echoplex allows him to manipulate feedback, the MXR creates octave harmony that he will viciously jack up and down, referring to the MXR's digital readouts to find the right squeals and sonic booms. "For that bomb sound on 'She Don't Know,'" he explains, "I set the regeneration at an octave above and then went down to a pitch a little out of tune, so it reaches down and explodes. On the new LP, there is a sound where it seems as if I've got a tremolo bar shaking octaves out of tune. What I did was set the transposer all the way over so all you hear is the transposer, then press the pedal so it shoots right to the knob. Then I twist the knob silly."

Sparing tremolo bars destruction at his hands, Phillips does his string bending with his thumb behind the bridge. He has also been known to peel back the fingernail on his middle finger ("My bird shooting finger," he moans) pulling strings; he has since resorted to lighter gauge strings as a result.

But the miracle of Phillips' guitar concept is that the physical intensity of his attack heightens instead of cheapens his melodic ideas. Without discounting the fusion influence of John McLaugh-



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I've always tended to go for simple equipment like the Tour Series snare drum with eight lugs, because it's easier for me to get the sound. Same thing goes for my hardware, which is why I like the 7 Series hardware. I don't require really heavy leg bracing so the lightweight stands are just fine; very quiet, too.

With some drums, there isn't too much you can do to alter the sound. Some will give you a real deep thud, and others are real bright. With Yamaha, I can get both sounds, they're just very versatile. Mostly I like a deep round sound with tight definition, since my concept is that a drum is a melodic instrument like anything else. I can hear drum pitches, and Yamaha lets me achieve that without a lot of constant re-tuning.

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I'd been playing the same set of drums for ten years when I met up with the Yamaha people during a tour of Japan with Rainbow. I told them that if they could come up with a kit that was stronger, louder and more playable than what I had, I'd play it. So they came up with this incredible heavy rock kit with eight ply birch shells, heavy-duty machined hoops and a pair of 26" bass drums that are like bloody cannons. And since I'm a very heavy player who needs a lot of volume, Yamahas are perfect for me. And the sound just takes off—the projection is fantastic so I can get a lot of volume without straining.

There isn't an electric guitarist in the world who can intimidate me, and I've played with the *loudest*. Yamaha drums just cut through better, like a good stiletto. They have the fattest, warmest, most powerful sound of any kit I've played and they can really take it. For my style, Yamaha is the perfect all-around rock kit.

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And Yamaha hardware is really ingenious, every bit as good as the drums. I like the 7 Series hardware because it's light and strong, especially the bass drum pedal, which has a fast, natural feel. What can I say? Everything in the Yamaha drums system is so well designed, you want for nothing. Once you hook up with them, you'll stay with them.

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World Radio History

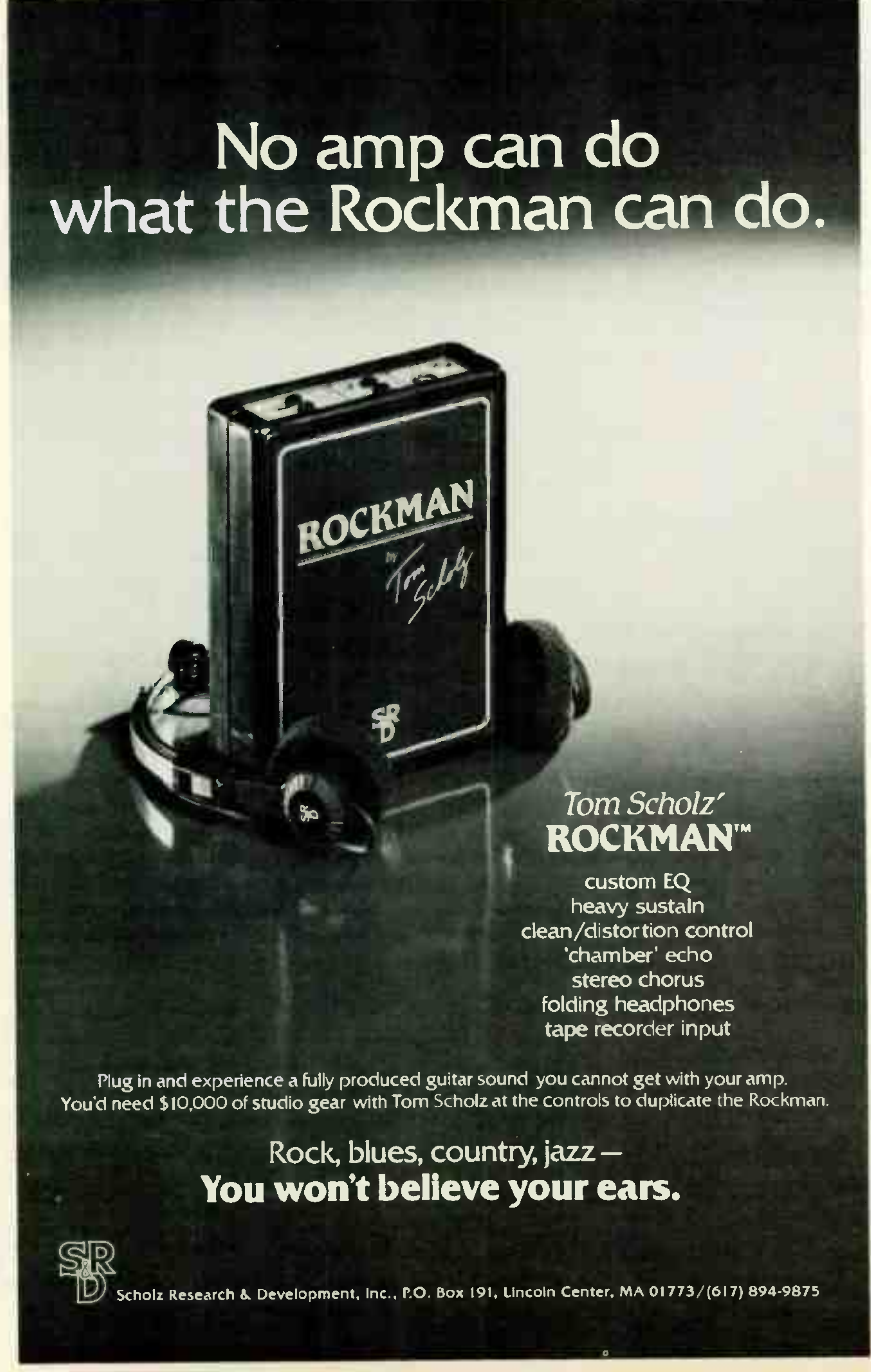
lin's original Mahavishnu Orchestra, he insists, "I listened to the Sex Pistols album much more than I ever listened to Mahavishnu." He mentions Beefheart and the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* in the same breath, professes great love for Charles Mingus and remembers being spellbound by Pharaoh Sanders in New York in the 60s.

He also credits long-suffering bassist Bill Rea—an incredible seven years at Phillips' side—with "a smoothness and liquid thing that I could never approach. To me, he adds this special dimension to the sound," doing it with a pre-CBS Fender Jazz Bass fitted with a fretless ebony neck and sent through a pedal chain including a Boss Chorus, Flanger, Overdrive and an old Mosrite fuzz box. "You almost tend not to notice what he's doing, but it completely affects you."

And it's not easy upstaging Glenn Phillips. The way he looks at it, the psycho-guitar act is the only fringe benefit in a job that pays peanuts and requires determination beyond that of mere mortals. "The stuff with pulling the hammer out and pounding the floor, playing the guitar with it—look, I'm thirty-two years old, we drive around in this van, we don't make much money and we haul our own gear. It's not much fun driving eight hours to a gig, getting up at home every morning and calling up booking agents, not much fun having to finance your own records and sell 'em after the gig. So if I'm going to do all that, I have to have something to do it for.

"Besides," he smiles, "I think the knee pads look cool."

(All four Glenn Phillips Band albums are available from Snow Star Records, 1467 Canoochee Drive, Atlanta, GA 30319.) M



Garbarek, *from pg. 40*

of his well-attuned quartets, or on special projects, Garbarek skillfully controls an emotive quaver that soars over or pierces through subtle colors and textures to measured, rather than especially propulsive, rhythms.

Productions by any given record label are apt to share some surface similarities, and the ECM sound has benefited from its earmark quality by gaining loyalists who love its reflective mood. In fact, surveying Jan Garbarek's reed playing on ECM, one finds a range: from rave-up (title cut of the Jarrett quartet's live-at-the-Village-Vanguard twofer *Nude Ants*) to painstaking examinations (any of Garbarek's own albums) to lighthearted air (Gismonti's "Cego Aderaldo," on which Jan plays the Norwegian *selje* flute, from the album *Folk Songs*). At one end, you hear the beat of a busy city's smokiest, most crowded dive; at the other is a clearing by the banks of the Amazon. At the center is Garbarek delving his own being.

Yes, Jan Garbarek can transport one, but usually he returns you to his home. The nights are long in Norway, the winters cold, the terrain is ruggedly beautiful, dramatic and still. Sure, there are people aplenty, and cars, but the density is less, allowing more solitary meditation, even creative isolation. Does that mean Jan is the saxophone's poet of lonely somberness?

"American jazz has been my interest, but whether that's what I create—I don't think about it anymore," Garbarek said. What about happy music, gregarious playing; where can his be found?

"What does that mean?—that's my question," Garbarek responded. "Happy, does that mean disco music, for instance? Vaudeville tunes? Which song by Coltrane is happy, which one by Miles? It's hard for me to define that. Is it the tempo that makes it happy, the major chords, the scale? I think there are so many levels of happiness," he shrugged, almost to himself. "It's such a complex thing." M

Gibson, *from pg. 83*

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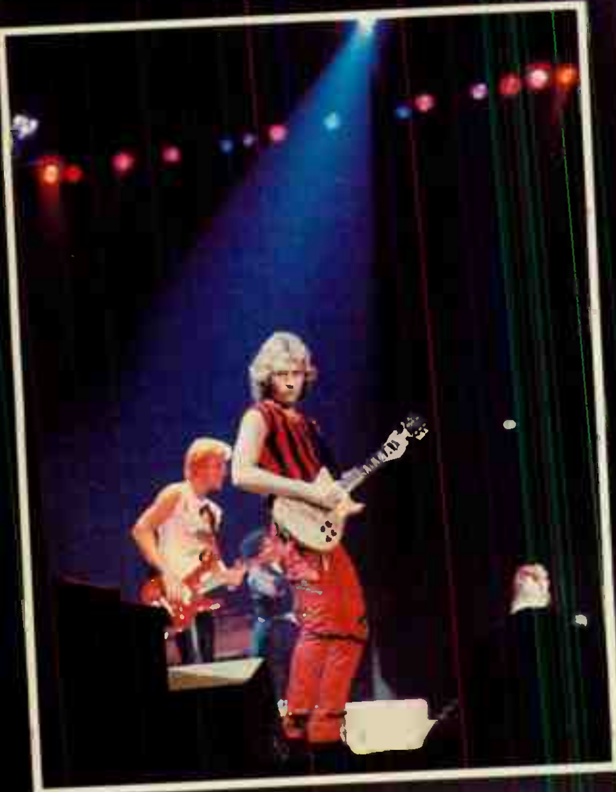
The CARVIN DC150



"I own three Carvins and they're all incredibly good guitars."
— Howard Leese, Heart

The DC150 is available direct from Carvin for $495 including custom hardshell case. Also available with red, white or koa wood finishes and in lefthand models. Try one on the job for 10 days and if not convinced of its superior craftsmanship, sound and playability we'll refund your money.

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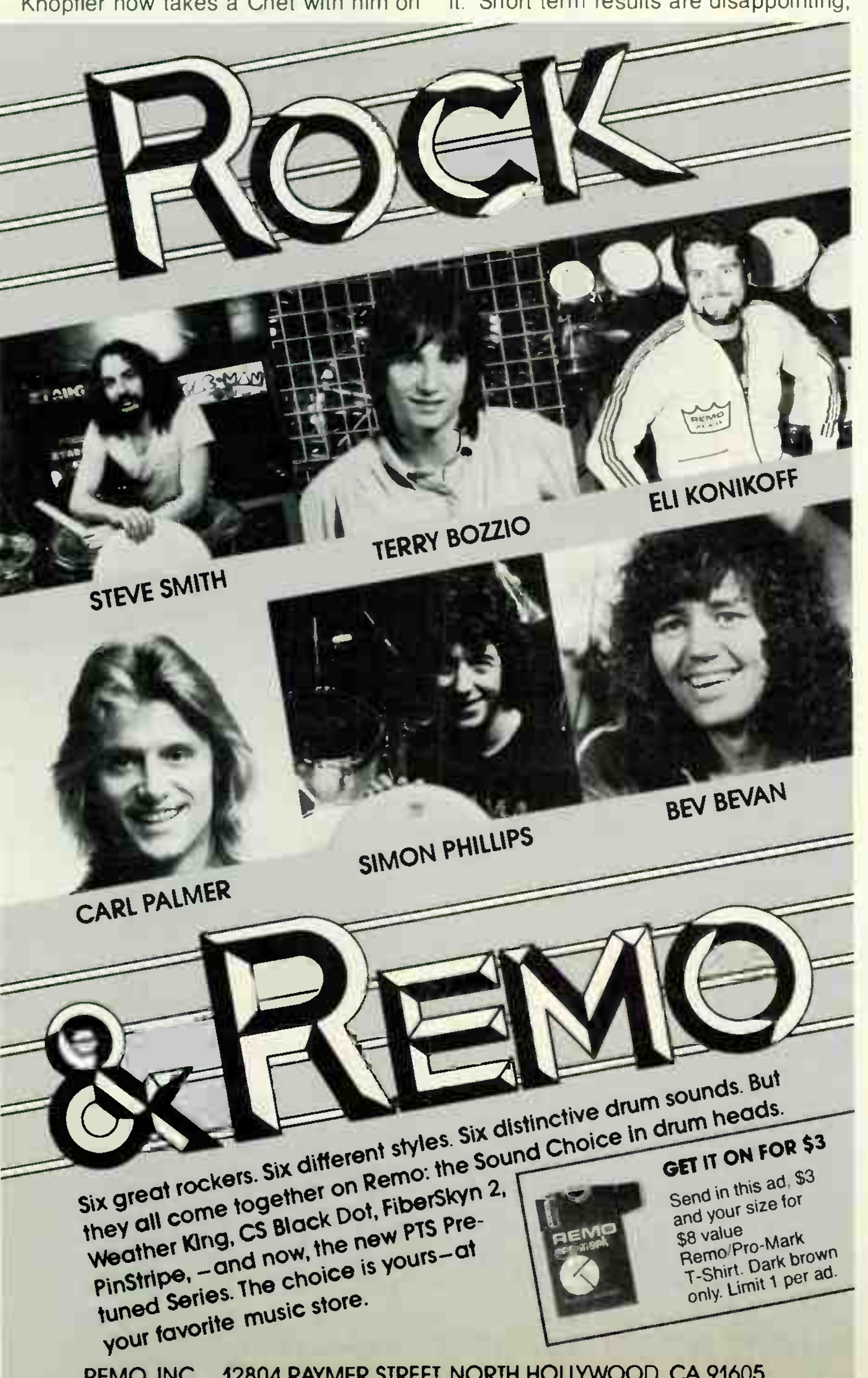
to Atkins' home, he noticed a solid-body electric classical built for Chet by Haskell Haile. After a couple of years of prototype Gibson designs, the two tone chambers in the mahogany body were relocated and reshaped to eliminate the midrange nasal sound common to such designs and to place the bass strings directly over them. The tone of the preamp was shaped to conform to Chet's idea of acoustic classical sound and the six pickups were given individual volume controls, so different types of nylon or light gauge steel strings could be used. The result is a guitar with a unique, distinctive voice that appeals to players as diverse as Earl Klugh and Pete Townshend. Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler now takes a Chet with him on the road to reproduce the delicate Ovation parts from *Love Over Gold*'s title cut and "Private Investigations" without the feedback nightmares usually associated with reinforcing a classical guitar.

The success of the Chet Atkins guitar was a very pleasant surprise for Gibson. Other recent introductions have not done so well, but the company prefers to view models like the Howard Roberts Fusion (flexible enough for both Joe Pass and Ted Nugent) and the Artist series with active electronics designed by Robert Moog as insurance for the future. "We have the unique luxury," says Gibson director of marketing services Dave Harding, "of being able to offer something new and say, 'Take it or leave it.' Short term results are disappointing, but the marketplace eventually catches on." An example: discontinued for eight years in the 60s, the Les Paul is now the company's top-selling model.

Gibson is also making an effort to change its sales force from flashy order-takers to a source of feedback from dealers and guitar salesmen, and the first tangible fruit of the monthly sales files is the new Victory series. At first glance, the Victory headstock and body look suspiciously like a Fender Strat, but the feel of the instrument is totally Gibson. The set-in, angled neck, the pitch of the modified Firebird headstock, the shape of the neck and the scale length clearly distinguish these guitars from their California counterparts. The Victory Artist bass, with active tone controls and a bridge that adjusts string spacing as well as height and intonation, is probably the most successful design in the series. The Victory MV-10 has one of the best necks I've seen on any Gibson guitar, and it introduced the Super Stack humbucking pickup. However, while the MV-10 will remind you of both a Strat and a Les Paul, it doesn't deliver the real thing in either case and has no unique voice of its own. Still, Gibson has two new whammy bars in prototype, one of which returns exactly to pitch; the Victory should appeal to players who like the sound of a Strat but can't deal with the longer scale length and more rounded fingerboard of a Fender neck.

Dave Harding confesses that Gibson is so busy working on new designs that they often fail to adequately articulate their motives to the players through dealers and the media. That, however, is changing. Gibson has moved out from under Norlin's corporate wing as a separately managed profit center with guitar players and luthiers in most of the key positions. Some people may still see the company as trading on past glories, but with the changes of recent years, Gibson now hopes their brightest triumphs are still ahead of them. ■



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BORN TO BRUNCH

and Other Songs of the Quiche Generation

BY MITCHELL COHEN

To: Radio Programmers
From: Jerome Borowitz, President, I.R.A. Records

We at I.R.A. recognize the dramatic demographic shift that has been developing in the music business. It has become obvious that our prime target audience is growing older; the 25-34 age group has more discretionary income than the teenagers who bought most of our product for the past quarter-century. Adult contemporary is the format of the future, music that speaks to the concerns and sensibilities of the age group we are aiming for.

I.R.A. is proud to release, in cooperation with other major labels, an album which we're certain you will find exciting: *The Quiche Generation*. Eleven songs by today's superstars. Eleven songs written especially for today's young adult. Eleven songs about things upwardly mobile young urban adults care about. Lifestyle rock.

It begins with a track by Bruce Springsteen that sums up the attitude behind the entire project:

In the mornin' we stay tucked in bed
With a copy of the Sunday Times
Then at noon we hit the Met
Museum
Stop and watch the mimes...
'Cause we're such a trendy bunch
And folks like us
Baby, we were born to brunch!

From there, the hits don't stop. Money, health, property, fashion, cuisine, culture; all the bases are covered. The groups include some of the YA's favorites from the 60s who have updated their most well loved material to fit this concept. Jefferson Airplane's "White Rabbit" becomes a salute to the estimated mpg (highway) of the 1982 model VW, and even the Grateful Dead are keeping apace with the new decade, singing about the joys of inheriting real estate on "Uncle John's Land." Neil Young & Crazy Horse transform "Cinnamon Girl" and give it new meaning:

I wanna go to the Cinema One
Waitin' on line to see what's
showin'
At Cinema One...
Is it a Kubrick
Or is it a Malle?
What does it matter as long as
we're all
At Cinema One.

Quiche Generation also taps the best of new wave with the Police's latest smash, "Every little thing she wears is status/ Calvin Klein or Jordache or Bill Blass/ You can see a name stitched on her bosom/ You can see another on her ass." And millions will relate to the selection by Jim Carroll:

Billy tripped on the laces of his
brand new Adidas
Alice got lost on the road to
Malpedas
Jerry just collapsed, so go the
rumors
And asked to be buried in his
Pumas
These are people who jogged,
jogged!
All my friends, they jogged!!

Once a spokesman for the rebels of the Vietnam Years, Paul Simon still has a strong social conscience, and a feeling for the frustrations of his fans. Listen to "Fifty Ways To Save Your Income": "Just set up a fund, hon'/ Some charity scam, Sam/ Buy a C.D., Lee/ Make sure it's tax free." On side two, Simon does a stirring version of "El Condo Pasa" (literally, "I passed on the offer to sell my condominium"). No list of blockbuster artists would be complete without the Rolling Stones, represented by "(I Can't Get No) Depletion Allowance."

Young Adults dine out frequently and will love Billy Joel's "Only The Goo Di Yung," which is about the one dish he orders at his favorite Hunan restaurant in San Francisco (the same place that inspired another of Joel's hits when he misheard an argument betweeen two Orientals at an adjacent table: "Go ahead with your own rice, leave me alone"). YAs are also into health and exercise, a subject tackled humorously on our LP by Kim Carnes, who sings:

She don't play racquetball
Won't try aerobicise
She won't pump iron at all
She's got Jackie Gleason thighs.

The rock generation has grown up, and our creative and marketing approaches must grow up along with it. *The Quiche Generation* is a step forward in that direction, and we hope you will join us by exposing this mature music to your listeners. If this effort is a success—and we are confident it will be—a second volume will be released on I.R.A. next summer, *Six Deep At Maxwell's Plum*.

Rock on! (In moderation, of course.)

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