

MUSICIAN

THE CARS

\$1.95 NO. 68 JUNE 1984

The Oddest Couple: Can It Last?

Van Halen by Charles M. Young

XTC
Electric Armboys

JOE JACKSON
Sweats the Details

BLACK FLAG
Hardcore Evolution

HUEY LEWIS
Finally Newsworthy

THE SMITHS
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Yours truly
Elliot Randall

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word radio history

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Art Director

Gary Koepke

Managing Editor

Jock Baird

Promotion Director

Paul Sacksman

Staff Photographer

Deborah Feingold

Associate Editor

Mark Rowland

Contributing Editors

David Breskin David Fricke

Brian Cullman J.D. Considine

Timothy White Charles M Young

Francis Davis Freff Rafi Zabor

Sales/Promotion

R. Bradford Lee J.R. Morse

Advertising Sales

Ross Garnick

Production Manager

Pamela Ellis Hawkes

Production

Keith Powers Jeanine M. Guerin

Elizabeth East

Typography

Don Russell

Assistant to the Publisher

Cindy Amero

Administration

Michelle Nicastro Deborah Reid

Maria Pallazola

Main Office/Production/Retail Sales

31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701
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Group Publisher

Gerald S. Hobbs

Circulation Manager

Barbara Eskin (212)764-7467

Subscriber Service

Gregory Thompson (212)764-7536

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Letters

JEKYLL & HYNDE

I guess it's no BIG DEAL to praise Mr. Young on writing an informative article on a woman whose hard-edged tactics are hard to follow. I'll also *ignore* the fact that at times I'll find myself crying out with her raw, biting music, disciplined lyrics and distinctive vocals, as if I *know* what she's going through.

Now, if I could only meet her to tell her all this, then maybe she'll sign the posters of her hanging over my bed.

R. Good
Montreal, Canada

Chrissie Hynde's guitar "sounds like shit" because she doesn't know how to play the damned thing.

She sounds like a real jerk. I suggest psychiatric help.

Jackie Ellering
Cleveland, Ohio

Hats off to Charles M. Young on his fascinating article on Chrissie and the boys. His up-to-date report on the new edition of the Pretenders is as fresh and bold as the group's new LP, *Learning To Crawl* (which is undoubtedly the best album to touch vinyl since their debut effort in 1980). I look forward to the group's triumphant return to California, as well as more fine articles from your magazine.

Eric M. Vaughnes
Licorice Pizza Records
San Bernardino, California

Thank you so much. Charles M. Young is nobody's fool—he had the guts to finally give Chrissie Hynde that punch in the face she has just been asking for, and rightly deserved all along for her rude, uncouth, embarrassing antics.

Thanks again, Charles "the Hitman" Young, for a first-round (first rate) "K.O." I *knew* she'd eventually mouth off to the wrong dude.

Rebecca Beck
East Cleveland, Ohio

For the last time, the lyrics in "Precious" are "but not me baby, I'm too precious / I had to fuck off." Chrissie Hynde isn't telling anyone to fuck off. She's saying she wasn't gonna stick around and get caught in that trap—so she had to fuck off—get out, you know—LEAVE.

You know what I mean?
Eva D.
Rochester, New York

REGGAE REVISED

Although I disagree with most of the sentiments contained in your Reggae 1984 article (February 1984), at least it was thoughtful. I would like to point out, however, that there are three different reggae markets, and that it is difficult to discuss any record without realizing who it is aimed at. For example, Yellowman and Tristan Palma's records are aimed at the roots Jamaican market; a record like Ruddy Thomas' *Key To The World*, which was a huge hit in the English market and sank like a stone here, was aimed at the Jamaicans living overseas (characterized by more sophisticated R&B-style arrangements); and the most recent albums by Tosh, Cliff and Dennis Brown are aimed at a mass (i.e., white and black non-Jamaican) audience. It is rare that a hit in any of these three markets is a hit in another. Andy Bassford

PRETTY VACANT

I must bring a point to the attention of Timothy White, re: his otherwise thoroughly accurate review of Lennon/Ono's *Milk And Honey*. I object to him comparing Lennon's "Forgive Me (My Little Flower Princess)" to Bowie's "China Girl," since "China Girl" was in its original form a mediocre throwaway tune for Bowie's objectionable protege Iggy Pop. As a Bowie fan, I sure feel uncertain as of why he'd rehash this song on the album that signals his return to the world of the living. But as a Lennon fan, I find the comparison between John's sincere, heartfelt songwriting and David's unglamorous recycling of his own droppings for the sake of chartdom to be, uh, in the words of the Sex Pistols, pretty vacant. Sadly, Bowie's antics often come across as "pin-ups," while Lennon's ups and downs always spell, even subconsciously, "R-O-C-K 'N' R-O-L-L." Unsigned

ACHES, BUDGETS & COOL

ABC seems to be as strategy-minded as its name implies. But the very image-conscious Mr. Fry is too *self*-conscious, and all three of them are as happy-go-lucky as nervous kids with stomach-aches.

While many journalists agree that the new album was a bold and innovative new direction, eclecticism alone won't sell records. And those execs discussing his new promotion budget when he

leaves the room are looking for one thing: good songs that sell.

Rock fans are wising up, too, Mac. Unsigned

CHEEZY WHEEZER

Hey, look: it's high time someone corrected one of the misconceptions that keeps circulating through the 60's Revivalist Youth Corps these days. Anyone who was a musician or avid fan of rock 'n' roll between 1963 and 1969 will tell you that that now-famous cheezy transistor organ sound that sliced through so many recordings back then was made by the Vox Combo organ and *not* by a Farfisa. The Farfisa Professional appeared in 1969, and its big feature was that it could simulate the far more desirable roar of the Hammond B-3 when used with a Leslie cabinet. Look at any photo of mid-60s bands who used organ, and you'll see the familiar Vox design—usually a red top model with nifty steel tubular legs. This was the trademark instrument of the Dave Clark 5, Paul Revere & the Raiders, Iron Butterfly, Sam the Sham & the Pharoahs, the Sir Douglas Quintet, the Seeds, the Blues Magoos...the same one John (Lennon) pummels in the Shea Stadium film.

Whining Dippy Wheezer
Boston, U.S.A.

FINE SHINES

I just finished reading Allen Barra's article on bluesman Johnny Shines, and I have to say it is one of the most thoughtful profiles I have encountered in a long time. Although I had heard of Johnny Shines, I have never listened to his music, contenting myself with dusty copies of Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters records. But it's pleasing to know an authentic Delta blues artist is still out there.

Being another white, middle-class, former college student I can empathize with Mr. Barra's observation that many so-called blues "students" forget that the blues are as vivid and painful today as in Jim Crow and slavery days. Thank you for reminding me.

Peter Kurtz
Cincinnati, Ohio

ERRATA

In our shameless pursuit of a final punch line to April's N.A.M.M. wrapup, we neglected to mention that Ernie Ball Strings generously co-sponsored our Allan Holdsworth-Blasters concert, and that EB's Sterling Ball performed a major triumph of guitarist-publisher mediation, thereby saving the show. Nice job!



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MUSIC INDUSTRY NEWS

by Mark Rowland

MTV update: record execs at major labels are mulling over MTV's offer of large sums of moola in exchange for exclusive first rights to selected pop videos. However, it now seems likely that any accord will probably be challenged in court by the intended victims of MTV's strategy, namely their competitors. Scott Sasso, producer of the WTBS show *Night Tracks*, notes that legal "areas within such an agreement could be suspect," even while noting that the Federal Trade Commission does not have direct jurisdiction over the controversy. Mike Green, vice-president and general manager of Atlanta's Video Music Channel, takes a more aggressive stance, vowing to fight any agreement which would restrict the Channel's use of clips. "It smacks of restraint of trade," he declared.

Perhaps more to the point for viewers and consumers is what effect such a deal might have on the overall direction and formatting of pop videos; at the moment MTV seems to be moving in an increasingly conservative direction, with less room for either low-profile bands or low-budget productions. Any exclusivity agreement is likely to raise the financial stakes for other outlets—a turn of events not likely to encourage more daring formats by either MTV or its peers.

Disingenuous press release of the month: kudos go out to Warner Bros. Music, which, according to their publicity firm, capped a banner year by winning ten Grammy awards. Ten you say? Well, you see, the arithmetic goes like this: Warners administers the copyrights to "Beat It," "Thriller" and the LP *Thriller*, which garnered four trophies for Michael Jackson. Add that to the two other Michael Jackson awards for "Billie Jean." Then, of course, let's not forget that WB is "associated" with Michael and Quincy Jones, co-producers of the year. Next we learn that the company has an "interest" in *Flashdance* which nabbed

best vocal performance for Irene Cara. And don't forget Culture Club, winners of the Best New Artist Grammy; thanks to their hit "Karma Chameleon" they are also "associated" with WB Music. The final award was garnered by D. Hawk Wolinsky, who penned "Ain't Nobody" for Rufus and Chaka Khan—the only entry of the ten that's actually on the Warner Bros. label. Publicity flacks will have to go a long way to match this display of chutzpah—we'll keep you posted if they do....



B.B. King will be the subject of an hour-long special June 13 on P.B.S. called "Let the Good Times Roll." It includes concert footage and a master class.

So you want to be a rock 'n' roll star: You think things are tough here, check out the Soviet Union, which, according to recent news agency reports, is conducting a crackdown on the burgeoning Russian rock scene. One ominous harbinger of the current freeze was the selection of Konstantin Chernenko as Premier; last year Chernenko made a public statement specifically attacking Western pop music as "ideologically dangerous and banal" (you gotta admit, he has a point). Several Soviet groups have since been forced to disband by authorities, and a crackdown is now underway against the thriving black market trade in Western records, which often fetch up to \$120 a disc. **Kiss** has been singled out for particular condemnation for allegedly employing "fascist symbols" on their album sleeves. One Soviet official explained the rise of enthusiasm for rock among Russian youth as endemic among fans "of a low spiritual culture. You might be looking at the faces of slaves. You can see the spiritual devastation, the obvious signs of profound poisoning...." Oh well, looks like the Ozzy Osbourne State Department tour is off this summer....

Speaking of musical survival under a totalitarian regime, Czech upstarts **the Plastic People of the Universe** have released a new LP, *Leading Horses*, described as their most accessible yet. Their saxman, **Vratislav Brabenec** is now living in exile in Toronto.

In other news, **Andy Warhol** directs and makes an appearance in the next **Cars** video, "Hello Again".... ex-

Floydman **Roger Waters** will be touring this summer with **Eric Clapton**.... **Annie Lennox** of Eurythmics recently got married, and not to partner **Dave Stewart**. Stewart, meanwhile, is planning a move to New York.... An album of **Yoko Ono** songs by various artists is awaiting summer release. Included on the disc are covers by **Elvis Costello** ("Walking On This Ice"), **Rosanne Cash** ("Nobody Sees You Like I Do"), **Roberta Flack** ("Good-bye Sadness") and **Sean Ono Lennon** ("I'm Gonna Be Alright").... **Paul Weller** recently broke his arm.... **Mark Knopfler** is playing on **Bryan Ferry's** new album, while **Brian Eno** is producing the new **U2**.... **Talking Heads** star in a feature film chronicling the climax of a recent tour, *Stop Making Sense*. Shot at a live show in Hollywood with digital audio, the film includes a multi-media spectacle centering on the multiple personas of head **David Byrne**.... The music community was saddened by the recent passing away of **Robert Share**, popular provost of Boston's Berklee College of Music.... *Musician* contributor **Timothy White** has helped pen the undoubtedly hit-bound "If You Don't Get Out Of My Life, I'm Gonna Find Somebody Who Will" by Woodie Garrett. Will Tim be interviewing himself?

Chart Action

One of these days, one of these months, one of these years, an album will sit at the top of the *Billboard* charts, and its title will not be *Thriller*. But it probably won't be 1984 either; after making a strong run at the top, Van Halen's latest epic has slipped a notch to #3, falling behind the soundtrack from *Footloose*. (The Kenny Loggins title tune also heads the singles charts this week.) Culture Club's *Colour By Numbers*, Lionel Richie's *Can't Slow Down*, and Huey Lewis & the News' *Sports* continue to rock steady in positions four through six—all three records have been on the charts for over twenty weeks. Switching spots to #7 and #8 are *Touch* by Eurythmics and *Learning To Crawl* by the Pretenders, respectively; the Police and Cyndi Lauper round out the top ten. Must be the month for soundtracks; biggest jump of the week goes to the music from *Against All Odds*, propelled to #31 from #70 a week ago. The Cars debut at #37, the Go-Go's at #86.... "Crime Of Passion" by Mike Oldfield is currently the number one single in Denmark. Tell all your friends....

The winner of the *Musician*/PolyGram "Music on the Move" contest is **Yoland C. Bator** of Boston, MA, who carried off a Bose 1401 Series II car stereo for his trouble. Well done, Yoland!

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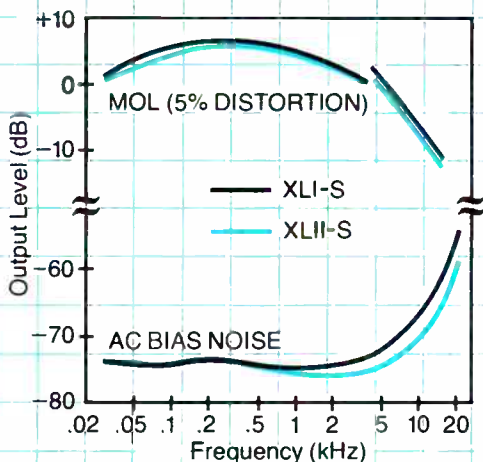
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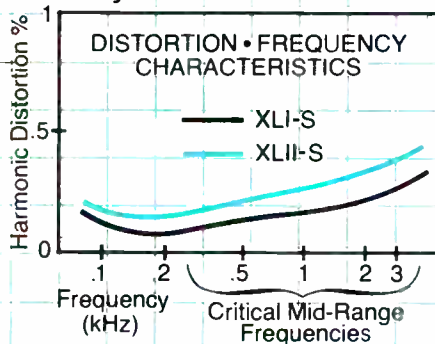


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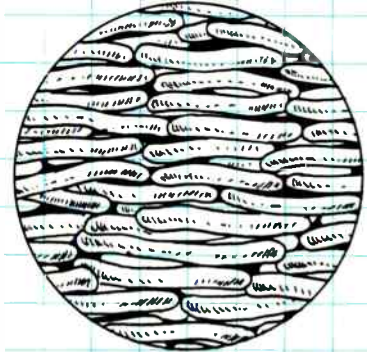
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THE SOUND THAT CREATES LEGENDS

THE SMITHS

THIS CHARMING BAND SAYS GOODBYE TECHNO-BLEAK, HELLO GLADIOLA

BY ROY TRAKIN

America may have been charmed by Boy George, but it's more difficult to imagine it embracing the Smiths and their poetic singer/writer Morrissey, the U.K.'s latest Top of the Pop rave. The Smiths hail from Manchester, the northern industrial town which spawned the likes of the Buzzcocks and Joy Division, and in their sound they've assimilated each of those bands, plus a lot of Velvet Underground, Modern Lovers and Only Ones. The Smiths' first three singles—"This Charming Man," "Hand In Glove" and "What Difference Does It Make?"—have all landed in the upper regions of the U.K. charts, while their debut LP, on the independent Rough Trade label, broke in at #2 its first week out.

All this from a chap in his twenties who writes about "love on the smooth leather of the passenger seat" and "what a mess he's made of his life," even as the English tabloids accuse him of polymorphously perverse pedophilia and Wilde assertions (e.g. "The Hand That Rocks The Cradle," "Pretty Girls Make Graves" and "Suffer Little Children"). Morrissey's nasal plaint slinks in and out of guitarist (and founding member) Johnny Marr's swirling acoustic garage sound, fitting together like, well, a "Hand In Glove." The Smiths' vision of Life without Love as an Illness unto Death recalls the unflinching bleakness of Joy Division, while their sharp observations and wry humor rival the rat-a-tat wordplay of the Buzzcocks.

"Fifteen minutes with you/ Well, I wouldn't say no," sings Morrissey in "Reel Around The Fountain," and that was about how long I had on the phone with the Smiths' frontman during the band's just-completed jaunt around England, which was, by all accounts, pretty hectic. "The tour's a complete sell-out," he says matter-of-factly. "It's really been quite wonderful. The reactions in most places have been rather hysterical. It's immensely pleasing."

Indeed, despite Morrissey's own self-



LISA HAUN

Regular guys Andy Rourke, Morrissey, Johnny Marr and Mike Joyce.

confessed ambition to create "Art," he's not at all averse to peddling a little commerce, a factor which distinguishes the Smiths from most of their fellow acts on Rough Trade, a label better known for the offbeat and the political.

"I don't really feel part of a Rough Trade group," insists the singer, who took his name from the director of Andy Warhol's *Frankenstein*, *Heat*, *Trash* and *Flesh* (a photograph of Joe Dallesandro's chest from the latter adorns the cover of the Smiths' album). "I think the Smiths would be what they are regardless of their record company. I don't feel Rough Trade's policies have been ingrained in our music or anything I write. I just so happens, on most points, we agree completely.

"I find most previous Rough Trade groups nonsensical and unimportant,"

Morrissey goes on. "I am quite pleased that we have become successful with Rough Trade, though, rather than any major record company—it seems to increase the value of snubbing the industry. By not doing videos, by not paying for album promotion, by not taking advertising space...all that's rather unique."

Certainly Rough Trade's comparatively small size hasn't harmed the Smiths' ability to sell records in England, but America's quite another story. As Morrissey admits, the band will need promotion just to get the record heard on the radio; and one wonders how long the Smiths can survive without that all-important MTV airplay.

"I'd like to be successful everywhere," answers the ever-forthright pop star. "But it always has to be on our terms. Otherwise, it would have no value



to us. That's where we get our reputation for being stubborn and problematic, but it's really quite untrue.... Where America's concerned, I don't wish to go door-to-door. I refuse to take the long route that seems to have destroyed so many others. I want it the easy way. I won't go to America unless we're really wanted there. If the record can be listened to over there, then that should be enough. It should provide a good foundation, a beginning. But endless touring is time-consuming, soul destroying and it wrecks your health. I think the U.S. market is much more flexible and open than is generally considered. I do believe it's there for the taking. Most things people tell me about breaking in America have proven to be completely wrong. It either happens or it doesn't. I think it's largely fate."

Tell that to Paul Weller or REO Speedwagon, Mr. Smith. Still, regardless of his sometimes insufferable pretensions (this is the guy known for throwing *freshly cut* gladiolus into the audience at performances), Morrissey's neo-flower power is downright refreshing compared to the glut of still-born flash-synth futurists like Duran headband. The Smiths are a British guitar band for people who crave Americana like '65 Dylan, the Byrds and Television. Any guy who sounds like a cross between Lou Reed and Jonathan Richman in their prime, of course, is gonna be all right by me.

Especially with lines like, "I dreamt about you last night/ And fell out of bed twice," or "I know the wind-swept mystical air/ It means: I'd like to seize your underwear" or "I would go out tonight/ But I haven't got a stitch to wear." You can just tell Morrissey's background was in literature rather than rock, his influences more Thomas Hardy, Oscar Wilde and Shelagh Delaney than the Velvet or the Modern Lovers.

"I'd listen to the Velvet Underground quite often, but never seriously," he says now. "I couldn't cite them as an influence, but so much of their stuff really pleases me. Books were always more important to me than music. But I always believed the two could be combined quite successfully in a way that hadn't been done before. I felt lyricists in popular music were just a bit too traditional; it was like a profession, with a collection of words that had to be used. You know, the moon-June-spoon school of songwriting. It's become important to me to write words off the accepted track."

Asked to name contemporaries who've achieved similar results, Morrissey is typically succinct: "I can't think of one person, really. I wish that I could."

The Smiths' no-frills romanticism is a welcome reaction to the Anglo-fascination with fashion which so often overshadows the music. On the other hand, Morrissey's frequent claims that he's actually doing something "new" are a bit more suspect, reminiscent of Gary Hart's "new" politics—the same old jive with a new haircut. Similarly, the Smiths' stand against rock videos, their insistence on autonomy, their old-fashioned notion about a spiritual pop community bonded together by shared ideas, their aversion to hype, and their vision of an America "there for the taking," suggest a bunch of nouveau hippies whose non-image will leave them lost in the land of *Entertainment Tonight*.

"I believe the record should sell itself," insists Morrissey. "And if one does really need a string of videos and endless promotions, I believe it only reflects one's disbelief in the work and himself. I'd just as soon stand next to my album, and if it works that way, it works."

Morrissey's fatalism might just be the preparation he needs for his shot at American stardom. "I'm just a country-mile behind the whole world," he sings with a manic, high-pitched falsetto in "Miserable Lie," but you know this rube is only lulling us into a false sense of confidence. The Smiths are an intellectual Britrock band which might just sneak in the populist back door and achieve stateside success when no one's watching. ☐

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World Radio History

BLACK FLAG

CONFLICT, CHAOS AND CHANGE AS STANDARD OPERATING PUNK PROCEDURE

CHRIS MORRIS

As the members of Black Flag sit around a dining room table in Los Angeles guzzling black coffee by the potful, they are asked if they have perhaps made life more difficult for themselves during their long and rocky reign as the city's foremost hardcore punk terrors.

"YES!" yells Bill Stevenson, the band's ebullient drummer; he is seconded by a chorus from the others.

"It's a prerequisite," responds Kira Roessler, the group's demure female bassist.

"It's satisfying," replies guitarist and founder Greg Ginn, with a grin as slow and measured as his speech.

"We just kept it lively," adds singer Henry Rollins, with an uncharacteristic broad smile.

"Lively" may be understating the case somewhat. In their stormy six years in the L.A. slam-pit, Black Flag has courted chaos and disaster as part of standard operating procedure. Their inflammatory and uncompromising antics on and off the stage have won them the antipathy of the Los Angeles Police Department, a ban from a major record label, a lawsuit from another label, and (for two band members) short jail terms for contempt of court. At one point, the band was effectively frozen out of the city's nightclubs; at another, they were legally enjoined from releasing records under their own name. Black Flag's career, if it may be called that, has been a mobile insurrection.

Apparently determined to prove that they will pursue their own course and damn the torpedoes, Black Flag is presently challenging the cozy expectations of their young audience with a startlingly different look and sound. Just the group's appearance is enough to raise eyebrows among the almost fascisti-

cally dress- and haircut-conscious Flag followers: Rollins, once one of the hardcore's pre-eminent skinheads, now sports a mane of shoulder-length hair, and Ginn and Stevenson are hardly less hirsute. The addition of Roessler, who replaced founding bassist Chuck Dukowski in mid-1983 after a stint with her brother Paul's band Twisted Roots, may inspire a yelp of protest from the hardcore troops, who like their bonding male.

And then there is the music. *My War*, the first Black Flag album in nearly three years, will likely confound diehard devotees of louder-faster-shorter hardcore. The songs on the 1981 LP *Damaged* were curt shrieks of adolescent angst, embellished with quick, dithering bursts from Ginn's guitar and pushed along with lathering energy. Many of the numbers on *My War*, on the other hand, are syrupy, throbbing drones—no less agonized than before, but closer to heavy metal (!) in texture and length. Ginn now sounds more like Black Sabbath's Tony Iommi than anybody else, and four of the record's nine numbers clock in at over five minutes—three of



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"We just kept it lively"; hyper-evolutionary Black Flag: Greg Ginn, Bill Stevenson, Henry Rollins and Kira Roessler.

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them, all six minutes-plus, are strung together back-to-back on the album's second side. As they say in the band's home community of Redondo Beach, pretty rad.

Although the members of Black Flag say that their new music is nothing more than a natural evolution from the songs on *Damaged*, the thick, lumbering pieces that they play and record today might be considered a gauntlet tossed in the faces of a complacent and unquestioning corps audience. As the lyric to Chuck Dukowski's "My War" runs, "You said that you're my friend, but you're one of them!" Even so-called allies can use some shaking up—and Black Flag have built their rep on moving things around.

Black Flag have always trotted along the edge of the rock 'n' roll chasm, cheerfully ignoring the drop. They first appeared in the L.A. clubs in 1978, bringing with them a new breed of very young, invariably rowdy beach punks, for whom the short, caustic, bitterly funny hardcore songs represented a revolt into consciousness and style. The kids were the shock troops of bored suburbia, bred in tract homes in the beach communities south of L.A. and looking for their own piece of turf on which to dismantle the split-level, valium-fueled dream of their parents. They proceeded to teach the world how to slam dance—and riot.

Conflict soon became the norm at Black Flag shows: the band, the most vocal and visible exponents of the beach-punk ethos, pursued a laissez-faire policy of "police yourself" at their shows, but the L.A. cops, whose disaffection for the movements of reckless youth dates back to the 70s tenure of Chief Ed Davis, stepped in and did the policing for the kids. Smash-ups at the Whisky and Baces Hall turned into full-scale police-punk confrontations, complete with platoons of squad cars and circling L.A.P.D. helicopters. After a number of Flag-related disturbances, the band found themselves effectively locked out of the local clubs.

"The police harassment has been blown up in a cynical way, but in a very practical way it stopped us creatively all the time," Ginn says. "We used to go through a lot—moving every six months, getting run out of places. Lately we've been real low-key. I guess we've learned how to dig ourselves underground."

For a time the band's sub-rosa profile was a result of the bitter wrangling that developed over the release of *Damaged*. First, MCA Records, which was set to distribute the record nationally, backed out of the deal, citing the album's "objectionable" content; MCA distribution chief Al Bergamo's immortal quote, "As a parent... I found it an anti-parent record," was printed on a sticker

which covered the MCA logo.

Next, more catastrophically, Unicorn Records, with which Black Flag had signed for the *Damaged* deal, sued the band for non-production of records and failure to fulfill contractual obligations. Unicorn obtained an injunction prohibiting the release of any records under the name Black Flag; when SST Records issued a two-record retrospective set, *Everything Went Black*, with all references to Black Flag blotted out on the cover, the courts ruled that the LP violated the injunction. Ginn and Dukowski were sentenced to five days in jail for contempt, and the record was pulled off the market.

"We lost money on *Damaged*—it sold pretty well, and all the money just went," Ginn says. "Now, Unicorn is bankrupt, and they kind of took us down with them. We were very positive about it, though. If we hadn't been through all of this stuff before, we wouldn't have been prepared for the lawsuits. We tried to use it to develop musically."

During their hiatus from recording, Black Flag toured extensively in both Europe and America, debuting both their long-haired look and long-form songs. The response was mixed, to say the least.

Rollins recalls, "We came through



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Europe with [former singer and guitarist] Dez [Cadena], who had hair down past his shoulders, and all these new songs—three-quarters of a set that no one had heard before—and people really *bumped*. You know, ‘faggot hip-pie,’ the full can of beer in the head, the fights, all that shit. That was due in large part to having no vinyl out.” Back in L.A., the initial reaction was just as inconclusive, Rollins notes: “A lot of people came up to me and said, ‘The new songs are my favorite ones.’ A lot of other people gave me the Led Zeppelin rap—they wanted the song to remain the same.”

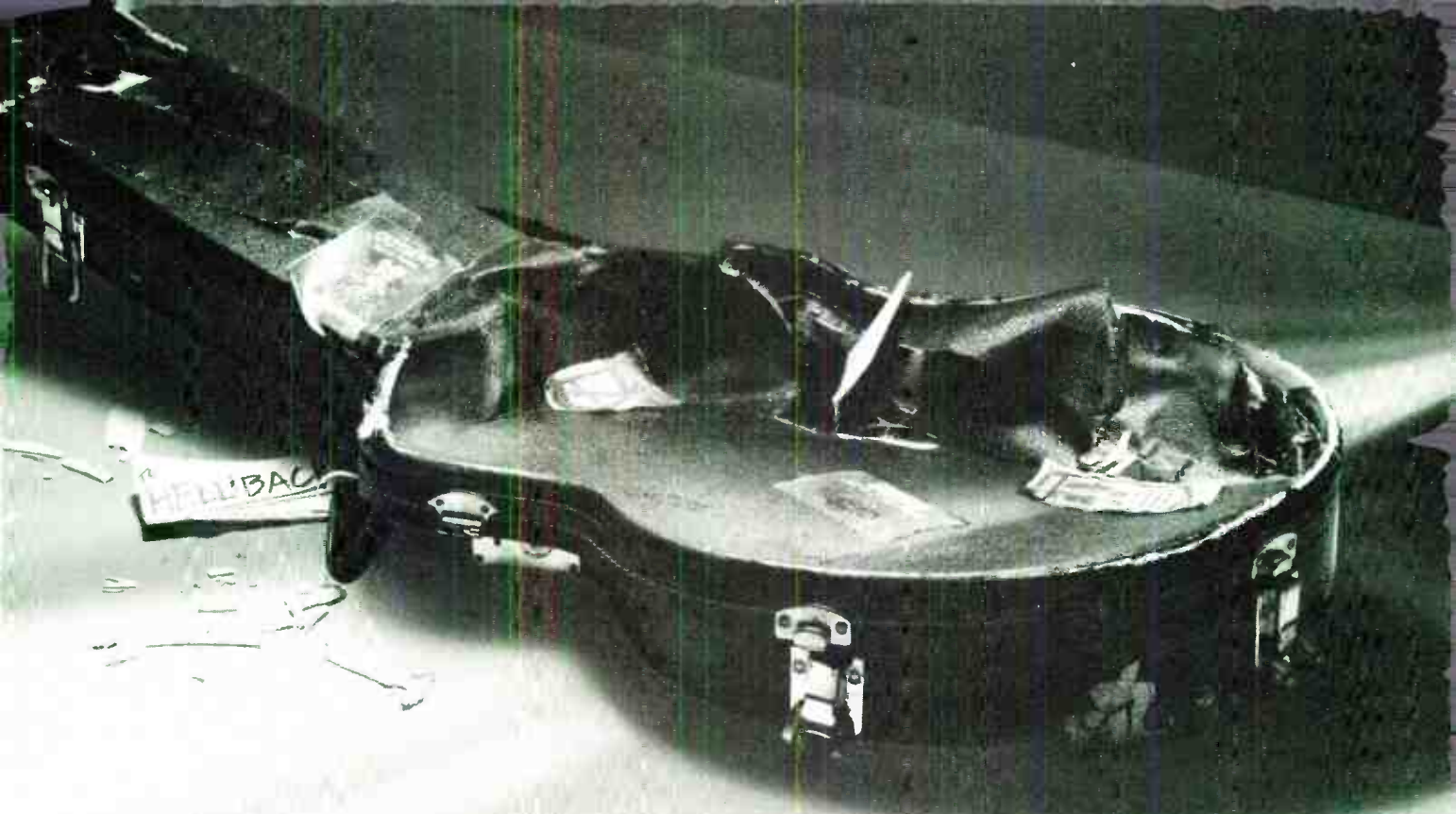
Adds Stevenson, “After more albums that are unpredictable, the fans who are lightweight, who come to heckle and throw bottles, will just stay home, because they won’t want to bother anymore.” Ginn opines, with a wry smile, that the worst of the furor over the band’s new sound is over: “They know that we’re progressive jazz heavy metal hip-pies playing punk rock now.”

Punk rock? Well not quite. Although *My War* contains the intensely alienated lyrics that one heard on *Damaged*, its sonic structure lies somewhere between the grinding, fuzz-toned mania of Chris Desjardins’ late-period *Flesh Eaters* (a group that Ginn admires) and the thunderously thick-headed dirges of the Stooges’ *Funhouse* (an LP that affected Rollins powerfully). The tempos are as viscous as motor oil (“Black Flag has effectively proved that speed does not matter,” Rollins says), and the rhythm section of Stevenson (who arrived from the Descendents a year and a half ago) and bassist Dale Mixon slogs its merry way through many of the tracks in a Romilar-like fog. Some writers, like Jim Farber in *The New Rolling Stone Record Guide*, have made the metal connection in the past, but the full-blown crunge of *My War* makes comparisons to metallurgists past somewhat inevitable.

For their part, the members of Black Flag are uncomfortable with an identification with HM. “Take the ‘metal’ out of ‘heavy metal’ and that’s what we are—it’s just heavy,” Rollins says. “Heavy metal is a defined form, Black Flag is not a defined form.” The singer adds that the record’s atmosphere of grim foreboding (no TV parties here) and suppressed violence is unlikely to appeal to the long-haired lout in search of cheap thrills: “There are *no tasties* on this album.”

In all fairness, *My War* is probably not a fair representation of the way the band sounds now: some of the material, like Dukowski’s “My War” and “I Love You,” Ginn’s “Scream,” and Ginn and Rollins’ “Nothing Left Inside,” is close to two years old. Black Flag raced into the studio to record a new album for summer release before they embarked on their forty-date spring-summer U.S. tour.

Historically, Black Flag on vinyl has



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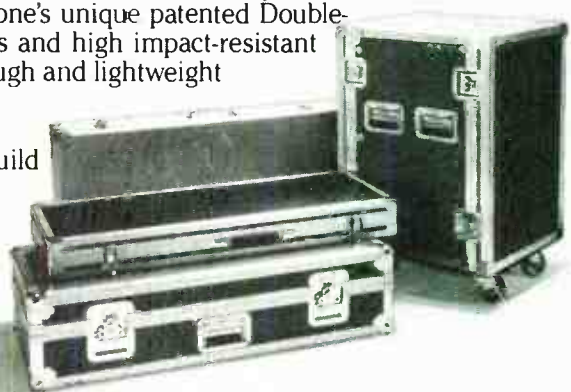
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always lagged behind Black Flag on-stage: many of the songs heard in early versions on *Everything Went Black* surfaced years later on *Damaged*. The current band is no different, Ginn says: "We're working on stuff that we'll probably be able to play in a few years. We'll always be behind in executing what we want to do the way we want to do it. A lot of it's gonna sound like shit for a couple of years."

Black Flag's current music is evolving in an almost laboratory-like environment. For almost eight months, the band made no public appearances in Los Angeles; they were content to use their time rehearsing and fine-tuning their new songs. "We're into sweaty practice rooms, playing for five hours every night, with wood chips flying off the drum sticks," Stevenson says.

Some of the band's newer lyrics, like those in "Swinging Man" and "Three Nights" on *My War*, are drawn from Rollins' journals (the singer's extracurricular activities have lately included a series of live readings, a controversial performance with no-wave queen Lydia Lunch and tracks on Harvey Kubernik's spoken-word album *English As A Second Language*). Much of the music has its genesis in jam sessions.

"There's an improvised thing happening with bands in our area right now," Ginn says. "It's getting a lot wilder.

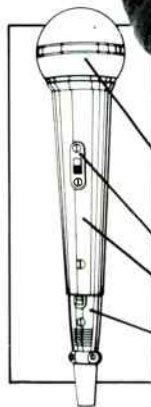
You've got bands like Dez's DC3; they're different every time they play. Wurm [Chuck Dukowski's post-Flag group] is the same way, and the Minutemen are getting more of that influence. We did a whole jam weekend, and there was a bunch of people in and out all weekend." Adds Stevenson, with his customary febrile enthusiasm, "It's cool, it's like everyone freaking out on everything all the time."

The public lay-off and long-term woodshedding are not the stuff of rock 'n' roll careerism, but Black Flag is insouciant about the game.

"A lot of people kind of gave up on us, as far as settling down and getting into it and making a career out of it," Ginn says. "People who know us real well know that that's just not gonna happen. We just go, 'Sorry, that's not us, and we can't be changed.' I've been totally satisfied, even though my career is going nowhere, except into the fucking ground."

"With other bands, if you don't get whatever your dream is, it's gonna bum your life," Rollins says, following with a kind of Black Flag credo: "We're just into our thing. We just play, and if they don't like it, next time they don't have to waste their money. As Ginn says, they can join the billions of people on the earth who don't listen to Black Flag. It's a widespread phenomenon." ☐

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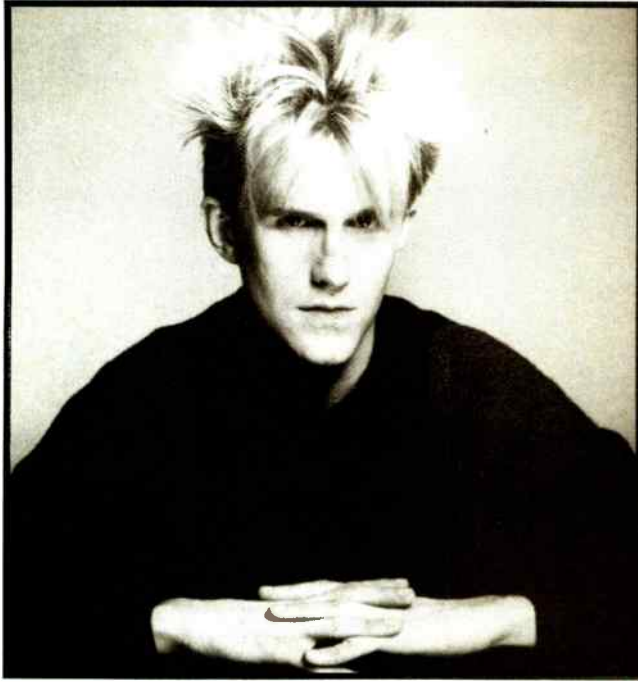
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HOWARD JONES *New Song, Quiet Evolution*

At this early stage, British synthesizer soloist Howard Jones is more fascinating for his talk than his music. He looks the way his music feels: cool-skinned and gentle, with a fierce pulse palpable in the distance. His philosophy is a pragmatic and passionately held synthesis of 60s drive to transform the world with 70s drive to transform the self. But where many viewed the latter as an end in itself, Jones sees "quiet revolutions coming from inside" as the only source of large-scale rebirth. And though he ascribes to the "hundredth monkey theory" of real change spreading via the telepathy of the collective unconscious, he is "virtually desperate to communicate—music just happens to be my medium."

Jones spent sixteen years

of his suburban London youth studying classical piano; inspired by classical music and art-rockers, he slogged through local bands and struggled with every electric keyboard within reach. A cash settlement on a family car accident a few years ago paid for more advanced electronics. Immediately Jones began attracting the disenfranchised of the London pop scene, playing shows with just his drive, his keyboards, and an occasional mime artist illustrating his own heartfelt ideas. It's all there, if nascent, on the *New Song* EP and his debut LP *Human's Lib*, both big chart successes in England. In time he might come across with some really powerful work.

Although the message is

the key, the medium still excites. The crisp, highly textural *Human's Lib* is a paean to the synthesizer's precocious infancy. "We used a new synthesizer that's touch sensitive—a Prophet T8 linked by a MIDI connection to two Yamaha DX7s. It's a major breakthrough for the instrument, it brings back all the feel and control of other keyboard instruments. It's a very recent development that everyone's been desperate for."

Even more apparent on *Human's Lib* than synth pioneering is Jones' piano training. Graceful, articulate melodic units repeat, layer and interlock; percussive effects are clean and cleverly placed compositional punctuation. The lyrics, colloquial and declarative, are a curious counterpoint to the music, with lots of ingenuous positive thinking. "It's what

I've always been about, singing about things in a positive way, but not being an airy-fairy romantic about it. To me it's the most practical thing going. So I get frustrated when lyrics hide their meaning with poetry and metaphor. I think some people get afraid of saying what they really mean; they've been intimidated by the 'cynical few.' I think my lyrics are still my weakest point. I want to become better at making it really crystal clear."

Jones seems part of a burgeoning strain of positivism in pop music, a holistic blend of sociology, personal and collective politics, and non-denominational spiritualism. Hard to get him talking about any of the isms, but once he gets to talking, it's there—the clear, progressive thought and the pulsebeat. It's there in the music too, fermenting.

— **Laura Fissinger**

WARREN ZEVON & Moonlighting R.E.M.s

"I would never say this in front of Peter," Warren Zevon confided seconds after R.E.M. guitarist Pete Buck bolted from the room to join the swirl of an Athens, Georgia party, "but it's the hardest thing in the world for me to go to another musician and say, 'Here, listen to this song I'm working on.' Peter seemed to understand that, and made me feel it was okay to be shy."

Zevon's "shyness" wasn't much in evidence a few hours earlier when the blond, bearded songwriter bounded onto the stage of the 40 Watt Club to make public one of

the more surprising collaborations in recorded memory: Warren Zevon with guitarist Pete Buck, bassist Mike Mills and drummer Bill Berry of R.E.M.

Currently living in Philadelphia and shopping for a record contract, Zevon had written some new songs and wanted to make demos. A mutual friend suggested contacting Buck about the possibility of them working together. "I was aware that R.E.M. is the best group around," Zevon reports. "I listened to *Murmur* and was... impressed would be an understatement. I had been



Zevon (left) blasts Athens with members of R.E.M. and Love Tractor.

MICHAEL EPSTEIN

thinking of going blind into a studio in Philadelphia to cut my songs McCartney style, playing all the parts myself. And suddenly, with my typical blind luck, I had the opportunity to come to Athens to do it with R.E.M."

Doing it with R.E.M., however, required certain psychic adjustments. Separated by a mere continent geographically, the high-tech L.A. recording world that generated Zevon's albums and the 8-track Gimp Studio in Athens are light years apart in attitude and ambience. With no aural fetishists or swinger/songwriter egos to appease, Warren and the boys worked with energetic new wave efficiency: four songs in two days. The new tunes are "Up On The Cross," a crunching, heavy-metal boogie Buck describes as "ZZ Top meets T-Rex"; a moody-brooding ballad called "I'm A Shadow Of Him"; a droning, morally textured homage to the killer-boxer "Boom Boom Mancini"; and "Trouble Waiting To Happen," a melodic, medium-tempo rocker Zevon composed with J.D. Souther.

Zevon's 40 Watt appearance took place during an evening of Athens merriment featuring the Wheel of Cheese (a country/disco/metal cover band consisting of Love Tractor and assorted friends) and the Hindu Love Gods (Buck, Mills, Berry and vocalist Brian Cooke playing obscure rock should-have-been-hits). After thumping through "Up On The Cross," "Boom Boom Mancini" and "Trouble Waiting To Happen," Zevon incited the packed club to howling ecstasy by seating himself behind a Farfisa and

launching into a spirited, highly improvisatory "Werewolves Of Georgia." Brian Cooke then came on and whipped the Love Gods and Zevon through a fevered version of the Easybeats' "Gonna Have A Good Time Tonight."

The night took its most surprising turn when, lo and behold, the usually stage-shy Michael Stipe showed up and R.E.M. leaned into "Little America" and "Second Guessing" from their just-released second LP, *Reckoning*. Stipe then moved over to drums (!), pounding out a decidedly tom-tom heavy bottom to Zevon and the Athens All-Stars' reading of "Rebel Rebel." To everyone's relief, Stipe abandoned the skins after that number, contenting himself with lead vocals as the gang careened to a raucous close with "Gloria" and "Wild Thing."

"I don't think you can call it over, I'd say we're done for now," Buck says of his working relationship with Zevon. "I'd like to do an album with him." "And I'd like to do an album with him," Zevon echoes, adding that Buck's focused enthusiasm in the studio was nothing short of inspirational. But during his three-day Athens stay, inspiration came to Zevon in many forms, including the purely physical one of fine Southern dining. "Unfortunately I don't know if they'd let me make a two-record set concept album about Walter's Barbecue," Zevon reflects, carefully measuring the potential relationship between one of Athens' premiere eateries and his creative future. "If they did, then all our problems would be over." —

Anthony DeCurtis



STEPHANIE CHERNIKOWSKI

No fake folkies are Squares Agnelli, Goodkind and Paskow.

Invaders, Lauren Agnelli from Nervus Rex. The Squares concept was also hatched by Goodkind—at the Peppermint Lounge—as a purposeful shove of the musical pendulum away from today's trends and scenes. "If music is a window to the soul," notes Goodkind, "then new wave slapped a coat of black paint over it. We were all so tired of the things we'd been doing that we wanted to move in an opposite direction. It just happened to be acoustic and humanitarian."

Goodkind found kindred sentiments in Paskow and Agnelli, and together they devised a refreshing notion: folk music with "the beat, the harmonies, the meaningful lyrics and the balls," in Paskow's words. And while their ardent absorption of the Weavers, Kerouac and social consciousness may seem like Coffeenhouse 101, the Squares succeed by not faking the folk; they deliver on every point of Paskow's promises. At Folk City, their tender touch on "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine" makes for a poignant revival, while at more *au courant* venues like Danceteria and Irving Plaza, their 80s sense of camp helps put the music over (the

Squares even acoustify hits like "Beat It" and "Every Breath You Take").

Spurred by Paskow and Agnelli's staunch strumming (and backed by guest bongoists like Dee Pop from the Bush Tetras and the Gun Club), the three Squares achieve a rare and natural vocal interlock; Agnelli's loamy, alluring alto, Paskow's picturesque tenor and Goodkind's authoritative bass. The combination is as lustrous and luscious as the genre demands, without sacrificing rock 'n' roll drive. Observes Paskow, "I feel just as energetic onstage, and tired afterwards, as when I played rock 'n' roll. Maybe even more so, because you really have to concentrate. You don't have all this sound to cover up."

Original songs like "New Generation" prove the Squares can effectively offer both the music and message of yore for today even though the group's biggest rebellion is against accepted fashion. "Decadence is so negative," observes Agnelli. "We want to be affirmative."

Which leads Paskow to an interesting observation: "Look at us. We're the *real* Village People." — **Rob Patterson**

WASHINGTON SQUARES

Beatnik Affirmation

As the times they are a'constantly changing, this year's musical folly can be next year's fad and fortune. That's the gamble taken by New York's Washington Squares, a neo-folk trio—Tom, Bruce & Lauren. In Ray-Bans, berets and beatnik black they may well be the first folk

group born of style rather than substance; but calculation can't taint this triad's sheer talent and commitment.

All three Squares have been around New York's new wave scene, each hailing from a rock 'n' roll band: Tom Goodkind from U.S. Ape, Bruce Paskow from the

LONE JUSTICE

Pure Country Thrash

LESLEY CAMPBELL



Lone Justice's Ryan Hedgecock and Maria McKee stop conversation in West Hollywood bars.

Something is definitely going on when Dolly Parton pulls up to a nondescript West Los Angeles bar in a pick-up truck to check out a local country-rock band that's been together less than a year.

"I was sitting in the dressing room, putting on my make-up, when somebody came in and told me Dolly was there," says Maria McKee, Lone Justice's nineteen-year-old lead singer. "I was looking into the mirror, saying, 'Ooooooh.' I got lip-stick all over my face."

The members of Lone Justice are probably used to this kind of attention by now. Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt are other stars who have caught the young group's souped-up country sound, and marveled at McKee's hair-curling singing.

The band has plenty going for it—enough to have already collected a contract with Geffen Records. The writing of McKee, guitarist Ryan Hedgecock and bassist Marvin Etzioni sparkles, as does Hedgecock's crisp, gutsy picking. But in the end it's McKee's spunky presence and swooping vocals that stop all the traffic.

Her rendition of the breathtaking ballad "Don't Toss Us Away" (penned by her half-brother, Bryan MacLean of the 60s group Love) almost invariably performs the near

impossible—it brings the noise and clatter in the West Hollywood nightclubs to an abrupt and complete halt.

Lone Justice began in July, 1982 as an unlikely collaboration of purists. McKee, already familiar to some Hollywood club-goers as a member of Bryan MacLean's band and a participant in Top Jimmy's Monday night blues jams, met Hedgecock at a drive-in restaurant, and the duo began practicing and playing acoustically.

"Our whole set was George Jones and Rose Maddox—that was it," says McKee. "We were going to do this whole hillbilly thing, totally traditional country with stand-up fiddle and Hawaiian lap steel guitar." But, adds Hedgecock, "It was impossible to find a steel player around here. They don't exist."

McKee and Hedgecock recruited a rhythm section and began collaborating on a set of originals. "We started getting rawer and rawer, and our musical tastes started changing," McKee notes. Seeing other bands, such as Austin-based Rank & File, who were headed towards the same hard-edged country sound, encouraged them.

Under the paternal guidance of creative consultant Etzioni, who joined the group after the departure of the original bassist, Lone Justice

have developed a set of bashing originals—"Drug-store Cowboy," "He's Working Late," "I See It," "The Train Song"—that are perfectly suited for McKee's sonic boom of a voice. "I used to listen to a lot of musical comedy and sing along with Ethel Merman," the young belter admits.

"We've got our roots, but we don't want the roots to stop us from really rocking," McKee continues. "There's this trend towards being real traditional, but then you miss out on being aggressive." Hedgecock agrees: "We don't want to lose that edge that makes us want to thrash." — **Chris Morris**

MARK ISHAM

Mixed Bag Mood

Mark Isham has worked with a mid-70s incarnation of the Sons of Champlin, pianist Art Lande's acoustic Rubisa Patrol ensemble, the rock-powered fusion of Group 87 and Van Morrison's recent studio and stage bands, which should offer some clue to the scope of his musical pantheism. More recently, however, he has stepped out as leader, launching no less than three separate projects—his first film score, for Carroll Ballard's film *Never*

Cry Wolf, a re-formation of Group 87, and his own solo album, *Vapor Drawings*, a hypnotic synthesizer foray into ambient electronic pop that marks Windham Hill's boldest step beyond its original foundation in acoustic guitar and piano works.

Isham, thirty-two, grew up in a classically-oriented household, thanks to parents who both maintained full careers as violinists. Early studies on violin, piano and

continued on page 110



Former Van Morrison employee Mark Isham formidably wields both trumpet and synths.

IRENE YOUNG

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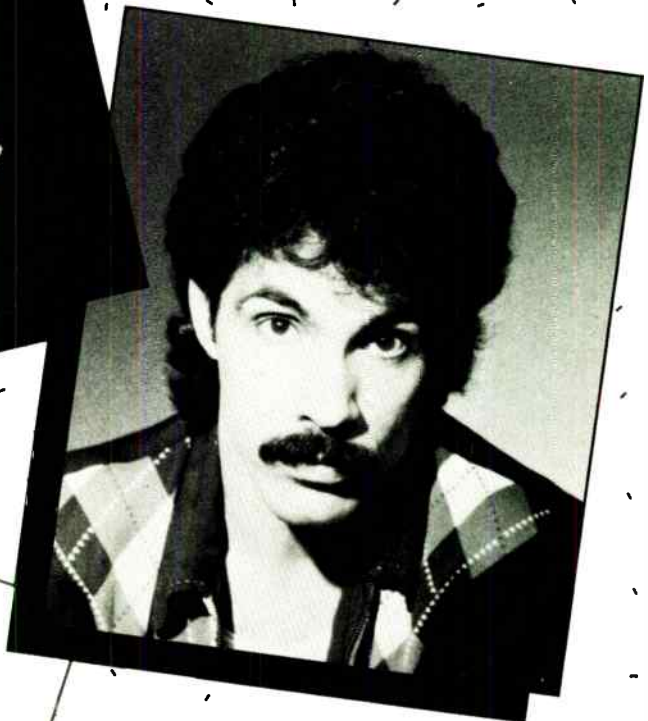
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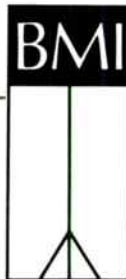
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XTC: LOVE AND DISGUISE ON A FARMBOY'S WAGES

If there were a true norm for British pop bands, it would be XTC, who reflect where they're from and what they see so accurately as to provide a sort of aural travelogue for rural England. Listening to the band's latest album, *Mummer*, provides the perfect scenario for the countryside as the train pushes on towards Swindon. Britain is an anachronism in a way that America can never be, which is one reason why "quaint" is invariably how Americans describe most aspects of the British Isles. It is an unselfconscious amalgam of old and new: ugly cement motorways nestling next to rolling green fields, upon which lay ancient stone walls that surround fat, contented grazing sheep...pubs so old they would be museum pieces in the States...mailboxes that still bear the imprint of Queen Victoria...thatched cottages, stone manses, towns with names like Biggleswade, Scunthorpe and Swindon.

Swindon, Wiltshire was once a bustling and proud railway center, home of the Great Western. Everyone worked for the railroad. Now there's a railway museum there, and saying Swindon to an Englishman is like saying New Jersey to a New Yorker. The town is not very picturesque, not very quaint, rather nondescript, and, well, *dull*. But it's home for XTC, Swindon-bred Andy Partridge, Colin Moulding and Dave Gregory.

In comes I, with a sheaf of tattered magazines around my head. I've come to try and dissect magic, for how else can one describe that delicate balance between words and music that makes an XTC song? On this chilly gray Swindon afternoon, my amiable victims are lounging around a small living room, drinking the ever-present cups of tea.

The dynamics of a group interview with XTC are instructive: Andy Partridge is a natural talker; the fact that it sometimes takes gentle force to get a word in edgewise seems to be taken for granted within the group. Dark-haired, soft-spoken Moulding was reading a magazine at the start of the interview (I learn later he doesn't usually expect to get to say much) but opens up as time goes on; while possessing, as all the band does, a sharp sense of humor, Moulding seems the most bitter about the business end of the band's pop career and how it has hindered XTC's progress. Dave Gregory is quietly witty and just as quietly articulate; I'm sure his importance to the group's sound is largely underrated by the public. Drummer-in-residence Peter Phipps (who also manned the sticks for most of *Mummer*) sat reading *Helter Skelter* and managed to get in a few words

about his drum kit when necessary.

"In comes I," explains Andy Partridge, principal songwriter/singer and outspoken wit of XTC, is a line frequently used in the mummings plays that take place around Christmas time in rural England. The ancient tradition has the players—the townsfolk—dress in suits of rags and tatters and follow a basic script having to do with cycles of death and rebirth. Just an ordinary folks' entertainment in the days before telly, which is why traditions like mummings are now rapidly dying out.

Disguise is important to the mummings, says Partridge, and recognition would "spoil the magic. If somebody said, 'Ere!'" (Partridge's Wiltshire accent, full of "errs" and an unpronounceable way of saying "ou," broadens, flattens and widens to become a perfect Monty Pythonesque yokel.) "'You're Fred the Baker!' he'd have to go home in tears 'cause he'd been recognized. It's an ordinary people's show business. They don't go on stages to do it; they do it in the street or they knock on your door and come in your house and do it."

Disguise is also important to *Mummer*, the album. This is a band in a business devoted to pushing yourself in front of other people and demanding attention, but XTC has no enthusiasm whatever for the task. They try to keep their sense of normalcy and reality by planting themselves in their surroundings to keep the sentiments true, but disguising the facts with metaphors to keep people from getting too close. "None of use are really into hey-notice-me," says Partridge. "We'd all like to be rich and obscure."

"The good thing about the way we are," Gregory says, "is that we don't feel honor-bound to follow up. We can do whatever we want. It's not like we've become a mammoth success with one particular record and then felt we didn't *dare* do anything that wasn't quite as good as that, or the same as that."

"I feel like a thirty-year-old musical vandal," Partridge says cheerfully. "I can do what the hell I want and I don't have to answer for anything."

Mummer is the latest act in this West Country version of Everyman; an album that was just about finished at the end of 1982 but was released in England about nine months later, and in the States a little over three months after that. XTC's difficulties would have broken a less secure band, one that wasn't grounded by now in reality. There were problems with *Mummer*'s original producer, Steve Nye, which led to a couple of new

BY KAREN SCHLOSBERG



Dave Gregory, Colln Moulding & Andy Partridge

recordings with a new producer (Bob Sargeant), and several remixes with yet more producers (Alex Sadkin and Phil Thornalley); a disagreement over the cover; and a new label in the States, Geffen, which, by the way, the band found out about by accident.

All of this followed a major decision by the band not to tour anymore and the loss of a drummer who'd been with them since they began (Terry Chambers, who moved to Australia).

"I'm personally not too interested in touring," says Partridge, "plus I've developed a *terrible* phobia about audiences that got worse and worse. It was making me physically ill. My nervous system was not handling it. The next step was a sand tray." He pauses. "Move over, Bri! Don't nick all the sand!" Moulding and Gregory crack up.

What we sing about is sort of double-decker buses, cups of tea, farms. It's reflecting exactly what you see around you, be it gritty or nice."

"Still..." Partridge muses, then breaks into his yokel accent, "ya got ta laugh!"

"Is anyone playing *Game For A Laugh* on us or something?" asks bassist Moulding (*Game For A Laugh* being the English equivalent of *Candid Camera* in terms of public practical joking).

"*Game For A Laugh*..." chuckles Partridge. "Maybe we're not really signed to Virgin."

But XTC doesn't particularly feel it's being persecuted. "No, actually I think we probably got over that," Partridge says, then laughs. "We had a stage of feeling persecuted 'round about 1981."

Guitarist Gregory adds, "We just got used to the idea of being always the bridesmaids, never the bride."

Mummer continues what *English Settlement* (1981) started—a textured, rich, layered and personal album that actually succeeded as a double-disc package (though it was slashed down to a single LP in the States by XTC's current record company), and contained the breathtaking songs "Senses Working Overtime" and "All Of A Sudden." *Mummer* is more personal, more accessible and more acoustic than *English Settlement*, and is best listened to as a whole, for the songs flow into one another and complement each other.

Mummer is also a most creative and unusual album, blending pop, rock and folk in a way that pretty near defies categorization. XTC don't recycle American rock 'n' roll. They play their music as if the only thing America did for rock 'n' roll was electrify the guitar, and the band has developed, since their first LP *White Music* in 1978, a definite, warm and defiantly unique style.

And they've left their least favorite adjective far behind with *White Music* and *Go 2*'s rather artsy new wave.

"Quirky!" all three of them shout at once.

"We still get it, as well," Partridge says, sighing. "Looks like Tom Dolby's going to get it now, poor sod. I think we're one of the straightest bands going, and people think we sit around with huge boffin-expanding heads saying, 'Hey, how can we out-Devo Devo?'"

"We've always claimed to be a pop group, not a rock group," Gregory says. "Our audiences tend to be rock-oriented audiences, and that's probably why they think we're a bit weird."

Partridge laughs. "Yeah, they're the sort of rock audiences



Principal songwriter/singer Partridge displays his acerbic wit...

who kind of go in on the weird angle." He whispers, "Oh—they're really a pop group, but there's something about them, something strange...."

"QUIRKY!" Gregory stage-whispers.

Sorry, but *White Music* and *Go 2* were rather quir—uh, eclectic, but since the crystalline pop visions of 1979's somewhat erratic *Drums And Wires* ("Making Plans For Nigel"), the sophistication and personality of the band's lyrics and melodies took a giant step to the near-perfection of 1980's *Black Sea*. Then came the somewhat pastoral *English Settlement* that settled into *Mummer*, which suggests what rock 'n' roll might have sounded like had it been invented in the nineteenth century.

Mummer is a celebration of simple life in the best definition of that word: pure and unadulterated; without affectation; natural. Trust plays an important part in life on *Mummer*, as does love, faith and a sort of pastoral mysticism that is evoked through the haunting arrangements of such songs as Moulding's "Deliver Us From The Elements" and the touching "In Loving Memory Of A Name," Partridge's "Beating Of Hearts" and "Love On A Farmboy's Wages" (which is one of the most wonderfully original pop songs written in a very long time).

Of course, talking about songs doesn't always get you very far. Partridge feels XTC's songs are simple. "We try not to write things that aren't necessarily untrue; we try to write things that we can either see happening to other people, or have hap-



Bassist/songscribe Collin Moulding works on a punch line.

pened to us—and I'm going to give it to you in metaphors because I'm a bit scared of giving it to you *real*." He smiles. "So really, in the last four albums, it's all been fact writing; things that have happened to us or things that we are concerned about.

"Sometimes," he continues, "when you get asked to explain a song, you have to think—now how can I say this so as not to expose too much of myself? Because what you put in a song, sometimes you're on a very thin line of really exposing a few raw nerves, and people are going to touch them and you'll think, 'Anhh, I knew I shouldn't have exposed that!'" Partridge chooses metaphors both as a way of exposing his sentiments safely, and keeping them hidden.

"Love On A Farmboy's Wages," for example, "is just about being poor and knowing that if you keep going, it will be all right. I was choosing a nice local metaphor about farms, a metaphor that most people can swallow. They're all things that we've lived through, or are living through, whatever."

"Some of the songs are just describing the surroundings," adds Moulding, "be they gritty or really nice."

The surroundings of the British countryside are special, as there's always been a very deep and mystical connection between the people and the land. The more you live in the countryside, the more in tune you are not just to nature, but specific rhythms; your perceptions are broadened and deepened as you move into sync with the terrestrial heartbeat. XTC's music has reflected more of their surroundings, and

gotten more personal, philosophical and simple as they've toured less and less.

A song like Moulding's "Deliver Us From The Elements," for example, seems infused with an almost primordial sense of being overpowered by Elemental Forces; it sounds like a stormy night, a pagan prayer in front of some druid altar. Moulding, in instinctive empathy with the countryside around him, is uneasy about over-intellectualizing what is essentially an intuitive feeling, and perhaps rightly so.

"I was just looking up at the sky one gray afternoon, you know," he says and laughs.

"You thought your house was going to be blown away in a hurricane and end up in Oz," says Partridge, to the band's general amusement.

"Yeah, on a wet and windy night. No, I just thought of a song about, uh," Moulding pauses, "about the elements, really." He laughs again. "No matter what we can do, the elements will decide what happens to us. It's beyond our control."

The Englishness of the band might, admittedly, seem more charming if you're not from England ("I don't think the English like to see themselves, necessarily," Partridge says), since XTC on *Mummer* appear to reflect every stereotype of bucolic country life that's ever been portrayed on *Masterpiece Theatre*: joy in nature, acceptance of life's beauty and sorrow, and verbal eloquence reflecting the eloquence of the physical surroundings. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* meets *Oklahoma!*

"That's probably where the Englishness thing comes in as well," Partridge says. "We don't sing about freeways and drive-in burger stands 'cause there aren't any around here. What we can sing about is sort of double-decker buses, cups of tea, farms. It's reflecting exactly what you see around you."

But it's not just the quality of the songs that makes XTC's music so compelling; the execution is equally unique, a tribute to the skills of guitarist Dave Gregory and new drummer Peter Phipps. Partridge calls Gregory the "musical glue" in XTC, the "music teacher who tells me how to get from one chord to the next. He kinds of ties up a lot of loose ends."

"That's right," Gregory says, laughing. "The loose end tidier-upper, the gleaner of chaff. I'm the last link between the songwriters and the group—as such, otherwise we'd just be making solo records."

Phipps' arrival has also affected XTC's approach: "Pete's drumming changed a lot of the original intention of tracks from *Mummer*, which were kind of written with Terry's drumming in mind," says Partridge. "Things like 'Ladybird' were much harder until he picked up a pair of brushes. He kind of broke it up into Pentangle-on-acid mixed with a bit of Dave Brubeck."

One sonic trademark of XTC is their everything-plus-the-kitchen-sink approach to effects: "We use loads of that stuff," says Partridge, "filing cabinets, some metal lampshades, an electric shaver... techniques like 'Beating Of Hearts'—what sound like really sparkly, zithery guitars are actually 12-string electric guitars that are miked up as opposed to being electrified. So all you hear is the *pling-pling* of the electric sound miked up through the air so it's thin; then we layer those on."

"Wonderland" is mostly various tracks of Prophet 5 and people wopping bird noises and stuff. You get that thick tropical sort of nothingness, you know, that thick, steamy glump. Plus accidental things, like on 'Me And The Wind' what sounds like a ship's masts rattling away at the end is just me trying to hold one of those vibra-slaps still enough while the track's fading out and it just happened to be sort of clanking."

"There's quite a few shouts on that record," says Moulding.

"Somebody asked me what you were yelling, the other week," Partridge says to Moulding. "In 'Ladybird' he goes.... (Partridge shouts) He played a really terrible bum note and yelled, as if to say, 'Oh my God!' We couldn't get rid of the shout so we had to leave it on there."

"I think we left the bum note on there as well," Moulding adds, and laughs.

Mummer's celebration includes the bittersweet, as the joy

and exhilaration of songs like "Beating Of Hearts," "Farmboy," "Great Fire" and "Ladybird" are tempered with Partridge's "Human Alchemy," a dark song about slavery; "Me And The Wind," a haunting song of lost love; and "Funk Pop A Roll," a biting but funny song about, what else, the music business ("...is a hammer to keep/ You pegs in your holes/ But please don't listen to me/ I've already been poisoned by this industry/ Funk pop a roll beats up my soul"); and Moulding's songs are touched by either sadness ("Memory"), a feeling of helplessness ("Elements"), or love's frustration ("Wonderland").

"I'm getting cynical," says Partridge, "more cynical as I get older. It's a sort of natural human thing, because, 'Ahhh, I've done all that!' I suppose it's the cruel end of wise, is cynical. It's the same hat but it's the pointed end of it. I'm sort of a romantic as well, because I like things to be nice, I like people to be pleasant—although I am aware of how gritty things are. Maybe songs are my soapbox; get up on there and say, 'Look, things are really shitty, please let's try and sort them out.'"

Since the band tends to look at their albums as going in pairs, it's about time for a change, and Partridge says that the next album will be harder, with perhaps more of an R&B feel.

"I think that people think the next album from us is going to be even *more* acoustic guitars. They think it's going to be more songs about farms and hayricks."

"More songs about farm buildings and chicken food," adds Gregory.

"Farm buildings and high-density bulk yield!" throws Partridge into the cackling momentum. "There are *no* acoustic guitars within a thousand miles of what we're doing now. We've just twanged the possibilities out for us.

"We tend to garner as many new friends as we must piss off old fans, you know," Partridge continues cheerfully. "I mean, people obviously want *Black Sea II*, and then *English Settlement* arrives. And they go away and some new people come along and say, 'Hey great! I can't wait for *English Settlement III*!', then *Mummer* comes along and must annoy some people."

XTC will never be staying in one place for long; how will it all add up? "Hell, write your epitaph now..." Partridge pauses. "I demand a second opinion!"

"I'd like to be remembered as having some really good songs," Moulding says firmly.

Partridge wanders over to a bookcase and pulls out a rock encyclopedia. "Well, let's see how we're going to get remembered.... Here we are, XTC!" He reads. "U.K. male vocal/instrumental group." He snaps the book shut. "There we are, that's it. We got one line."

I say that reminds me of the description of Earth in the book, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*: "Harmless."

Partridge laughs. "Mostly. They added, 'Mostly harmless.' Yeah, file under 'mostly harmless,' file under 'U.K., male.' Well, that's *it*, I mean, they've written our epitaph already. No, I hope it's infinitely more subtle than that."

"In Loving Memory Of A Group," says Moulding, and smiles.

"That Thick, Steamy Glump"

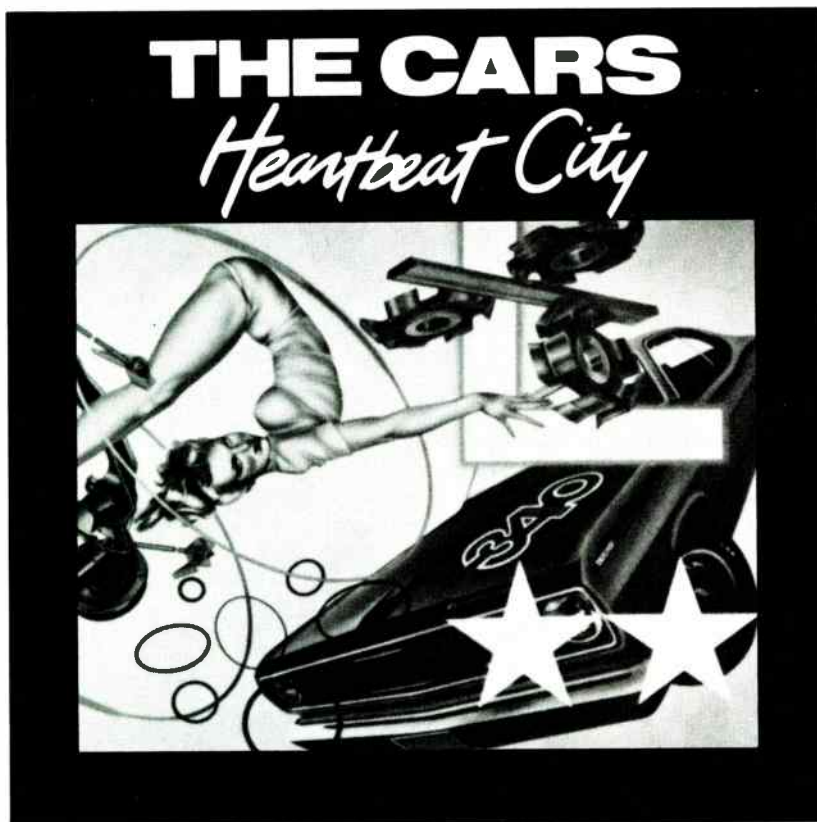
Andy Partridge: Ibanez Artist, Martin acoustic, Squier Telecaster, Marshall 100-watt amp, Trucker amp. The instruments "change on each track. Also through laziness. I go to the studio and most likely I'm going to put my part down and I think, 'Oh shit, I can't be bothered to put a new set of strings on,' so I'll walk over and grab one of Dave's guitars."

Dave Gregory: Owns sixteen guitars; uses mostly Stratocasters; Rickenbacker 12-strings; and a Schecter guitar. His amp is a Roland JC-120.

Colin Moulding: a couple of Fender Precisions; a fretless bass; an old Epiphone that sounds like a string bass, used on "Ladybird" and "Me And The Wind." Colin has an Ampeg SVT amp, but usually prefers to go direct through the board.

Peter Phipps: Sonor drum kit; four concert toms; Dave Gregory's brother's 20-inch (European) Hamer bass drum; Terry Chambers' Tama floor tom and Premier roto-tom; four Paiste cymbals—16-inch, 18-inch, 22-inch and 20-inch.

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typically more disposed to unleash his passions through a piano rather than upon one. When he does, the scope of his talent is just as likely to startle. Following the release of his first solo recordings, *The Ways Of Freedom* (Leo Records) several respectable Western critics carped that the tape had obviously been sped up—surely no human could really play with such dexterity. In fact Kuryokhin does, but by now he's rather used to being misunderstood, even—especially—in his homeland. And at age thirty, this iconoclast who was booted out of two prestigious Soviet conservatories for professing "boredom" has enough confidence and sense of purpose to remain patient. "I will sit and wait for the opportunity," he's declared, "for the time when I am recognized as a genius, and am simply allowed to travel."

Perhaps like his idol, Vladimir Chekasin. At first glance Chekasin would seem an unlikely favorite of the Soviet establishment: for one thing he plays the saxophone, and for another, he's from Siberia. True, things have lightened a bit in Russia since the 30s purges, back when the sax was a symbol for Western subversion and just the mention of the word risked a ticket to the Gulag. But in the relatively cosmopolitan centers of Leningrad and Moscow, Siberia is still, well, Siberia. Yet Chekasin, a bearded, dark-featured and quietly intense man in his mid-40s, has become a figure of near legendary proportion. Having expertly assimilated styles of Western jazz icons like Bird and Coltrane along with the folk influences of his native Urals, Chekasin meshes them together with grace, passion and sharp humor. He has the gift of at once genuflecting before and mocking jazz tradition—a telling feature in a country where the very existence of his art seems itself a contradiction.

Chekasin is best known as a member of the Ganelin Trio, the most popular and advanced exemplars of progressive Russian jazz, where his coarse, powerful solos provide a kind of polar balance with the glib, Slavic intellectual underpinnings of pianist Vyacheslav Ganelin. Add to that his wild duets with Kuryokhin and his seminal influence on the nascent Soviet

"MUSIC IS THE ONLY WAY OUT. EVERYTHING ELSE IS CENSORED, EVERYTHING BUT IMPROVISATION."

sub-genre of *Siberian* progressive music, and it becomes clear that Vladimir Chekasin is the single most important figure in the field of Russian avant-garde jazz.

Russian avant-garde jazz?

Does that moniker have an odd ring about it, like, say, Jamaican heavy metal, or Canadian samba? Perhaps, though, on second blush it fits perfectly—after all, a music of physical passion and intellectual rigor, succored on the blues, should strike a resonant chord for modern-day Russians, whose staunch intellectualism is the match for any culture, and who most certainly have the blues. Musicians in the Soviet Union have long shared a fascination with American jazz, while the government's attitude has been more pendular—swinging between "symbol of Western decadence" and "fruit of oppressed proletarian culture." But the current generation of progressive musicians have moved far beyond the imitative and derivative efforts which characterized their forebears. Abandoned by audiences which turned increasingly toward

rock during the late 60s, and hounded at the same time by Soviet authorities who viewed "free-form" music (correctly) as essentially uncensorable, modern composers and players were forced to hone their talents in a crucible forged by isolation and time. A decade later, they're emerging with a meld of old Russian classical influences, post-bop and free-form jazz, native folk idioms and improvisational theater. And the result, as Sergey Kuryokhin observes of his own work, distinctively reflects their environment: "to make a whole out of complex and contradictory elements... (so that) a paradox is produced in the music. It is very necessary, in the structure, to have a contradiction all the time."

We have listened to and in one case actually jammed with some very fine jazz musicians... these fellows felt the music, and that's what impressed me. I don't know where they got the feeling, but they felt it.

—B.B. King, during a tour of the Soviet Union

That Western listeners are at all privy to the current Russian jazz evolution is attributable, in large part, to the efforts of Leo Feigin, an expatriate now living in England. With slender build, thinning white hair, and an impeccable old world manner, Feigin certainly fits the part. He is an indefatigable booster of Kuryokhin, the Siberian Four and particularly the Ganelin Trio, and his facial expressions seem to assume an incandescent glow when discussing their merits. He has also produced ten albums' worth of Russian avant-garde jazz on his own Leo Records, all culled from smuggled tapes; these include six records by the Ganelin Trio, an album of duets by Kuryokhin with Chekasin, and another with the trumpet player Anatoly Vapirov (currently in prison for alleged black market dealings—but that's another story) and *Homo Liber*, the vinyl debut of the Siberian Four. (All are available through Leo Records, 130 Twyford Road, W. Harrow, Middlesex, England, or through New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012.) That pretty much comprises the catalog of modern Russian jazz (though the Ganelin Trio has recorded three records on the Soviet Melodiya label, and one on Enja, in West Germany) so Feigin, mindful of the curiosity and ignorance which invariably attends such discoveries, is eager to fill in the gaps.

The current movement had its genesis in the late 60s, according to Feigin, as Russian musicians were inspired by the spirit as well as conceptual freedoms from harmony, rhythms and textures offered by John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Sunny Murray and others. Their subsequent repression ironically had a bracing effect; instead of merely copping Western ideas as they came along, or "going commercial" (a rather ludicrous proposition in the Soviet Union anyway), musicians and composers were forced to develop their own concepts, which over time became increasingly elaborate. Even more ironically, says Feigin, their music was let out of the closet only because of the greater subversive threat currently posed by rock 'n' roll. "Russia is swamped, inundated with rock groups," notes Feigin with sardonic glee. "You see, rock is [seen as] the personification of Western propaganda—opium for the masses. So in this respect, the Soviet authorities see that jazz causes no harm. And secondly, they realize they are great musicians. The Ganelin Trio are popular of course, even to rock fans. But still, they could never approach such a level of popularity. So they are tolerated." Feigin shrugs.

The Ganelin Trio (Ganelin, Chekasin and drummer Vladimir Tarasov) has been working together for over a decade, and it shows: in the trio's intricate ensemble play, in their endless rush and jarring juxtaposition of musical ideas, by their apparently effortless ability to improvise amidst formal structures as delicate and as ornately contoured as a spider's web. Like Kuryokhin, their technical grasp strains credulity; together they play up to fifteen instruments (drummer Tarasov, for instance, also plays trumpet and flute, Ganelin contrapuntal



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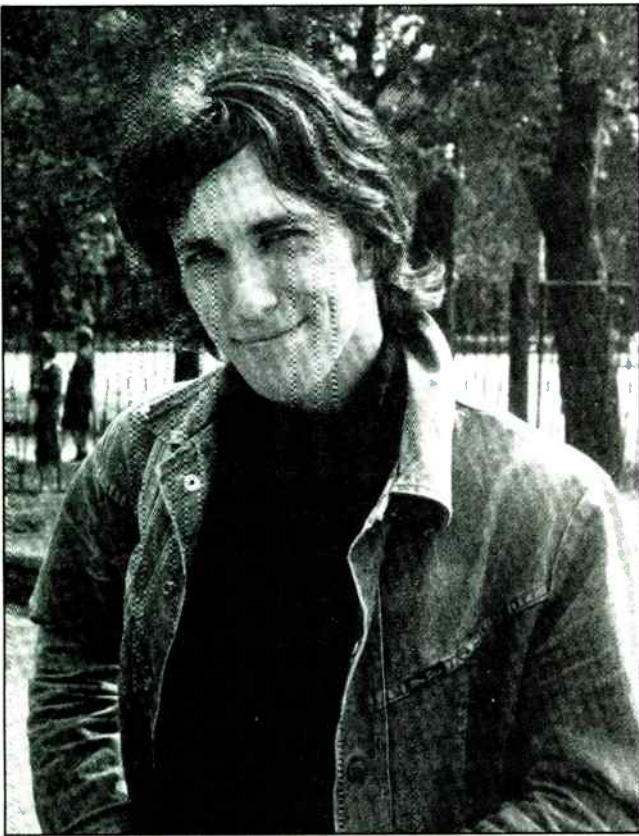
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Piano virtuoso (and plano-sawing) "neurotic" Sergey Kuryokhin.

lines on a home-made basset, while Chekasin double tongues saxophones à la Roland Kirk), and often several in tandem. Upon release of their first Leo album, *Live In East Germany*, several reviewers refused to believe that the music was the creation of only three musicians.

"Mind you," warns Feigin, "what I have on record are maybe not their best performances. They don't really do them full justice." Still, he notes that sophisticated jazz listeners are often struck by the group's unusual passion and musical precision. "I played the beginning of *Live In East Germany* for Jamaaladeen Tacuma," Feigin recalls, "and he was standing there for three minutes with his mouth open. He said, 'My God, what power, what knowledge—how do they do that?' Don Cherry keeps talking about it. So their music is really..." his voice trails. "Especially when you see them onstage, if only you could. It's an entirely different feeling."

The Ganelins, it turns out, have a penchant for theatricality in live performance to rival Kuryokhin, for imaginative concepts if not sheer outrageousness. "They used to stage happenings in the mid-70s, and some of them were hilarious. For example—and you must remember it takes a lot of courage to do this sort of thing in Russia—the curtain was raised and they were onstage; Tarasov and Chekasin were playing, and Ganelin was lying on the sofa reading *Pravda*. And these two go on playing, really beautifully too, while Ganelin reads the paper. After a while he gets up, pours himself a cup of tea, goes back to lying on the sofa. He picks up the phone and dials his friends: 'Yeah, I've got these two freaks over playing music. Fantastic—well, not bad. Tomorrow, let's go skiing tomorrow.' He comes back to the sofa, makes some coffee. When the curtain falls, he's never played a note.

"Now Chekasin," he goes on, "Chekasin can be very expressive onstage, and at the same time a great improviser. And he can do it because he truly doesn't give a damn about anything and anybody but music. He expresses what he wants to. Some of his performances are, I think, very sensual. I can't say sexual, but—somehow it's in the way he puts the microphones. Instead of playing with the saxophone, he puts the

microphone inside the saxophone, playing with the *sound* you see. And then it comes to him you see, it is like he is reaching an orgasm with his sound."

Such performances, as Feigin observes, give voice to emotions and ideas that would be dangerous to express in any other form. In Russia, "Music is the only way out. If you think about it, everything else is censored, everything but improvisation. They can express this spirit of freedom. Because if you do not express it through music but through something else, you become a dissident."

And, for all their radical form, these Russian musicians do tend to disassociate themselves from dissident concerns. "We speak totally different languages," declared Kuryokhin in an interview with the underground Russian jazz journal *Kravrat*. "They are on an exclusively political wavelength. I am striving for the freedom of art."

"Kuryokhin is a dissident in terms of the ideas he is expressing," notes Feigin. "He is *expressing* ideas, and that is what sets him apart. But first and foremost he is a musician. John Coltrane didn't consider himself a dissident—maybe if he was a lesser musician he would have made a fuss about it. But he was professing music as a healing force. So these musicians are, I think, in the same position. They cross this border into something bigger and more free—into freedom itself. And this tradition still lives in jazz for the Russian people."

Since the release of *Con Anima* on the Soviet Melodiya label in 1976, the Ganelin Trio has achieved a status and level of privilege unique among their peers, notably the chance to perform in Western Europe (in March of this year they toured England) and interact with Western musicians. Skeptics note that such exposure has its benefits for the state as well; proof that free jazz can flourish within the Soviet Union, while the tours help pump foreign currency into the economy. Not that musicians are themselves treated with any great deference; Ganelin complained to *Kravrat*, for instance, that the release of the trio's second Melodiya album was delayed for two years. And he still performs with his hand-made basset (a small bass keyboard) for lack of access to more sophisticated Western synthesizer technology. And some of Chekasin's more lyric wind effects on *Con Fuoco* were produced with folk whistles he bought for fifty kopecks at Tashkent market.

For Russian musicians, lack of access can be a serious occupational hazard—to tapes and records which could expand their musical vocabularies, to better instruments with which to refine their talents, even to each other. The U.S.S.R. is a big country after all, and cultural centers are few and far between; musicians living in the sticks, like Tashkent trumpeter Yuri Parfenov, may be fated to forego the kind of creative interplay with other artists necessary to foment artistic growth. To develop as a player thus requires fortune as well as dedication. It should go without saying that one does not actually make a living as an avant-garde jazz musician in the Soviet Union (or, for that matter, anywhere else). Two of the members of the Siberian Four, for example, are professional surgeons.

State-of-the-art recording equipment remains a fantasy. Just getting hold of a decent instrument can be fraught with tribulations; a good saxophone on the Russian black market (the only place they're readily available) costs up to 10,000 rubles, or a hundred months' salary.

"I have a friend who played saxophone in a Russian orchestra for ten, fifteen years," Feigin recalls. "And it was only when he came to the West that he realized he's been playing a faulty instrument. He brought it to a repair shop to have it cleaned, and the guy noticed that the valves leaked. After he repaired it, my friend had a completely different sound. But by then he'd nearly damaged his health, you see, because he'd been straining so hard to produce that kind of sound."

Despite such daunting conditions, the progressive jazz movement seems to be flowering, via that same mix of resourcefulness, concentration and esprit that informs the



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“IT IS VERY NECESSARY,
IN THE STRUCTURE, TO
HAVE A CONTRADICTION
ALL THE TIME.”

I was talking about Russian culture being isolated from the West. Some people see it as dependent on Western culture, subordinate yet detached. This sensation of inferiority gives Russian culture its special colouring and distinctive features, and at the same time an element of self-confidence...it could be said to be looking toward the West while being influenced by the East.

—Sergey Kuryokhin

best of its music. When records become available, they are ritually scrutinized, then passed along the musicians' network. When Chekasin left Sverdlovsk, for example, he left his record collection to Vladimir Tolkachev, now alto saxophonist in the Siberian Four; Tolkachev credits that and the influence of Chekasin's formidable personality as the impetus behind his own acceptance of new jazz.

Though the Four's music is still somewhat emulative of late-60s Coltrane (John and Alice), Don Cherry, Archie Shepp and New York loft jazz, there are moments on *Homo Liber* when it promises to blossom into a thoroughly original Russian form that combines those styles with more spatial, native folk idioms. "In Siberia, European and Asian cultures have intermingled," notes drummer Sergey Belichenko. "For instance, I listen to the music of the Tuvinians—marvelous improvised music. They are Buddhists and their music is full of echoes of China and India. I listen to Central Asian music, particularly Uzbek. It seems to me Siberia has in concentrated form some essence of a pre-European past...all these musical influences could be very fruitful for the future of our jazz."

"I feel very close to the ideas of Alice Coltrane, Sun Ra, and [Pharoah] Sanders," adds Belichenko, perhaps more tellingly, "about music as an emanation of the universal spirit, as an expression of man's belonging to the cosmic world."

"For me," says Tolkachev, "music itself is a religion, which I value above all, an opportunity to go beyond the limits of everyday experience—to exist in another world."

The Ganelin Trio lead the avant movement in Western exposure.

Whatever the future of Siberian jazz, the Ganelin Trio is still the standard bearer for the avant movement, and, with seven records available in the West, also the only artists whose development can be reasonably assayed. Formally the Trio seems headed toward bigger and better musical canvases. I'm impressed by the scope and grandeur of their recent projects, though for my own taste prefer their scaled-down and considerably more accessible works (but hey, I also prefer *Dubliners* to *Finnegans Wake*). Into this latter group I'd include *Live In East Germany*, recorded in 1978 but still fresh today, a soulful and meticulously organized tableau that combines the finesse of Air with the majesty of the Art Ensemble Of Chicago. I also like the pun-filled *Con Fuoco* (favorite title: "Swan Cake") in which brevity proves the soul of wit; and the Trio's latest release, *Vide*, in which drummer Tarasov's driving, boppish pulse helps congeal elements as disparate as the drunken, zingy march that ends one side, and the eerie, celestial textures of Sun Ra which dominate the other. Their more ambitious double sets (*Ancora De Capo, Parts 1 And 2*, on Leo, *Non Troppo* on Enja and its companion piece *New Wine* on Leo) certainly have their moments of excitement and raw beauty, but there are stretches when the Trio appears to meander and lapse toward dissolution—though perhaps their journeys have simply become too convoluted for me to trace. According to Feigin, *Non Troppo* is a complete musical disassembly and recasting of a few bars from the jazz standard "Too Close For Comfort"; maybe so, but following the blueprints of such Byzantine architecture is not my idea of a high time.

Perhaps the most revealing music of all, however, can be heard on the frankly Dadaist *Exercises*, starring those wild and crazy guys Chekasin and Kuryokhin. From its start, a series of onomatopoeic vocal scattings followed by crazed and woolly saxophone rantings, *Exercises* embarks upon a wacky, jarring and frequently perverse rollercoaster ride into the maw of the absurd. One track is capped by a limp and rather pathetic waltz; on another Kuryokhin satirizes traditions of popular Soviet entertainment while Chekasin dismantles standards like "Misty" and "Bye Bye Blackbird" with a disdain for sentiment and nostalgia that would make Camus cringe. Yet one never senses melancholy or despair amidst this cultural dissection. Rather it seems a passionate importuning by two vital artists to move beyond the lethargy of everyday existence; and judging from the reactions of their audience, Kuryokhin and Chekasin have effectively driven their points home.

Whether the music of the Russian jazz avant-garde will eventually rank among the more important musical developments of our time remains to be seen; ultimately, I suspect that its spiritual significance will prove more profound. It is not so much the revelation that "free" music can grow and flourish in an atmosphere of repression and subjugation—the history of jazz in this country should have already taught us that much. Rather it's the lesson of how imagination and strength of character can transcend, and thus transform one's environment. It is the reminder that, beneath the weight of two intractable political systems whose reptilian insistence on seeing each other solely as mirrors for the reflection of their own virtue threatens to send us all to hell in a fireball, lies a commonality of souls, of dreams, and of destiny. And it is the story, already told across centuries, that spirit can be made manifest through music. ☐





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by Charles M. Young

Van Halen is

(A) The Four Stooges, (B) More Murderous Than Abdullah The Butcher, (C) What Would Happen If You Put Al Jolson In The Studio With Beethoven, (D) Lucky It Hasn't Run Into A Bridge Abutment, (E) The Best, (F) All Of The Above.

No question, it's a problem: you wake up in the morning and there are all these new noises in your head. Either you get them out of your head and onto some tape, or whatever is dispensing those new noises is going to get mad and quit. So you go into your studio, make aural reality of those new noises, and pretty soon there's a whole bunch more new noises demanding to be heard. And pretty soon it's three days later, you've had no sleep, even more new noises are screaming for reality, and suddenly your wife wants a cuddle. A man must choose: new noises or Valerie Bertinelli?

"She wants to spend more *time* with me," says Edward Van Halen backstage before a show at the St. Paul Civic Center. "But it only happens when she's not working. When she's sitting around watching TV, she wants to spend *time* with me when I have to work. I'm not saying I always work, but I'm always writing. I like to get my ideas down so I don't forget them. At least it's at

my new studio [in his backyard] and not some studio in Hollywood."

On a scale of marital problems, this one seems to score way below divorce.

"Put it this way," says Valerie Bertinelli, now retired from the sitcom *One Day At A Time*, between acting jobs, and much nicer than any journalist would expect of someone so ungodly pretty. "I know who his mistresses are and they aren't female. My only threats are the guitar and the synthesizer."

And Eddie carries his share of the responsibility for the problem, carries it like Sisyphus did his rock, or maybe Jesus his cross. Anyone so blessed with talent—so goes the inevitable equation—is going to be equally cursed. Try another analogy: rock 'n' roll talent is like giving a Ferrari to a fifteen-year-old kid with a learner's permit. He's got a good chance of driving it into the nearest bridge abutment and ending up a drug overdose, a drooling lunatic, a raving asshole, or a deaf megalomaniac. But if he teaches himself how to drive (ain't no driver's ed yet), he's the coolest thing on the road. Eddie Van Halen's guitar is probably the meanest, most dangerous Ferrari now on the road. He has learned to keep it under control, however, by hitching it to a semi-trailer full of guilt and humility. The key word here is "different" or, as Eddie pronounces it, "diffirnt." Sometimes he will go so far as to accept a compliment on his music, admitting he rates it "more interesting" than the usual stuff one hears at the heavy/hard/high/big end of rock. But then he's got to lacerate himself a little, call himself "weird" or worse to get his equilibrium back. All in all, if you must deal in words, the non-judgmental "diffirnt" ranks as the optimum adjective.

"It's not really a talent," says Eddie, impaling an unfiltered Pall Mall on an inch of guitar string sticking out of a tuning knob. "It's an obsession. I'm not saying I'm better than anyone else. I'm diffirnt. I play diffirnt... I'm totally into... I'm obsessed with music. I'm selfish. I'm a sick fuck. Name of my studio is 5150—that's police code for escaped mental case. Donn Landee and I are both... he engineered all our records, but he's more than an engineer. He and I basically produced the last record. We're both 5150s. I'm not saying I'm an unsocial asshole, but I don't need humans a lot. I got my wife. I got my brother. I got my parents. I got Donn. That's it, concerning deep

humans. Donn, he did a lot to get me mentally healthier, to be able to let all that stuff out and not worry. I have some things on tape that would clear the room."

That doesn't necessarily make him insane, a 5150.

"For me, it's normal." Everyone else is sick.

"No! I'm not saying I'm holier than thou!"

He stutters around for the right words. "If there were ten people in a room, nine of them would not be like me. That makes me the weirdo, but not in my mind. 'Cause they don't understand the things that I do, doesn't make me crazy. But I'm not saying they're crazy either. In this society, I'm 5150. In my mind, I'm not. I'm just diffirnt."

Another area where Eddie Van Halen is diffirnt is his attitude towards money. In his view, it distorts the artistic process, so he doesn't think about it. He did not, for example, receive any payment for his arranging or guitar solo on "Beat It." This was, of course, one of the all-time great guitar solos, an electrifying



NEAL PRESTON

moment on the best cut of an album that has at this writing sold more than thirty million copies. Eddie counts himself lucky to have made friends with producer Quincy Jones and Michael Jackson ("Maybe he'll give me a dance lesson someday."), expresses mild annoyance only with his fellow

band members and manager for thinking him foolish. This disregard for money extends to Van Halen as well. He's the only guy who writes music, yet he shares the publishing credit with everyone.

"Ten years ago, we sat down at Dave's father's house and said, 'Well, what are we going to do if we make it?' I said, 'Split it four ways. There are four people, right?' That was before we found out I'm the only one who writes. I made my own bed, so I'm sleepin' in it. It's like bein' married. You find out things about your wife later on, but you're still married, so what the fuck. I could be an asshole about it, but it would just create problems."

Not a unique attitude among young musicians—this disdain for money—but rare in a veteran of eleven years and six albums: *Van Halen*, *Van Halen II*, *Women And Children First*, *Fair Warning*, *Diver Down* and *1984*. It is an astonishingly eccentric body of work—some of the most commercial hard rock ever played, mixed with interludes of 5150 music that just leave you stunned (can anyone explain "Sunday Afternoon In The Park" on *Fair Warning*?). The obvious comparison is Led Zeppelin, an equally eccentric band who also appealed first to teenagers—in their capacity for wonder—and only later to critics. But where Led Zeppelin went for drone and moan and high decibel alpha waves, Van Halen goes for pure adrenaline, packing eight musical ideas into a time frame that most bands would take to establish one idea.

"They were hypnotic," says Eddie. "That's something I'm not allowed to go after."

Meaning David Lee Roth doesn't like hypnotic songs?

"Well, what's he going to do? He can't dance to them. I like hypnotic. You haven't heard all my music. Nobody knows what I do. They've only seen the one of me which is Van Halen."

Roth's vocal energy—as integral to the VH sound as Eddie's guitar—has never garnered much critical praise.

"People don't see past his image to listen to him, and he's good. A complete motherfucker, man. Okay, so he's not an opera singer. Is Jagger? Kicks come because they would like to live the fantasy of Dave. That image: fuck all night and get wasted. But that's Dave and not me."

It's never been Eddie?

"In '78 I ran around squeezing everything that walked. I thought that's where I would find happiness. But I rapidly found out diffirnt. I would just lie in bed, staring at the ceiling, thinking, 'Is this it? There's got to be more.' So it made me get into this more..." (Eddie strokes a thunderous power chord) "...because I get more out of it."

Ever worry what your mother might think of some of Roth's lyrics?

"I don't know what the lyrics are."

If you locked David Lee Roth in a Texas Steel-Cage Death Match with Journey, Quiet Riot, Iron Maiden and Abdullah the Butcher, Roth would be the guy to walk out alive, spit on the bleeding cadavers of his enemies, and incite the crowd to tear up their seats and club any vestiges of civilized authority into the cement. This is no shit. The guy's been taking kick-boxing lessons from Benny "the Jet" Urquidez, a champion in Hong Kong and Japan where anyone who ain't a kick-boxer is a wimp.

"It's a good way to get your ya-yas out," says Roth, who exudes a quiet confidence—make that loud confidence—stemming from the certain knowledge that he can kill any



ROBIN KAPLAN RETINA



interviewer instantly with his bare feet. "I wanted the most severe training I could put myself through. So I went to Benny the Jet and said, 'I want to do this five mornings a week,' and I did for...let's see...ten and a half months. The rope, heavy bags, speed bags, shin training technique, the throws. And I did road work every night. When I started, I couldn't run around the block without heaving and blowing. I got up to six, eight miles by the end. Of course, you can't train like that on tour. You have to gird all your energy for that one night-time shot. That's a two-hour bout right there, and you don't get to sit in the corner after every round. This is not just standing there projecting. I spend fully thirty-three percent of my time off the ground."

Yeah, but why kick-boxing as opposed to say, aerobic dancing?

"It's competition at the maximum," says Roth who looks almost as healthy at 4 a.m. in a St. Paul hotel room as he does performing at a distance. "There's no chess pieces between you, not any form of equipment. Hitting somebody else—anyone can do that. The trick is not getting hit and taking care of your business. There's a whole lot of strategy involved, a whole lot of developing incredible presence of mind. Focus.

"It's not really a talent. It's an obsession. I'm not saying I'm better than anyone else. I play diffirnt. I'm totally into... I'm obsessed with music."

Control. Control of your most basic instincts: fear, anger, vengeance."

He can summon up this mindset at will?

"It's something you learn over hours and hours of practice. I'm not exaggerating: hours and hours and hours and hours. That's the only way to do it. You can concentrate more on any one thing, whether it's a lover or a contract or an audience. Audiences fall somewhere in between."

Given to flamboyant jumpsuits and scarves around the neck in his private as well as public dress and an entourage of dwarves in karate suits, Roth smokes, drinks, consumes a fair amount of junk food, and generally tears himself down with an exuberance to match the discipline with which he builds himself up.

"You gotta balance it out," says Roth. "I don't do anything all the time."

When critics are not complaining that Roth is boorish, cynical and an evil influence on today's youth, they object that his voice is a one-note piano, or, more accurately, bellow.

"We have songs that run at a different intensity, but they're still high-pressure, songs like 'I'll Wait.' Totally different feeling from something like 'Jump.' 'I'll Wait' has a very somber tone, almost sad, but it still has a lot of torque. It gives the impression of being fast. Throughout the history of the band, we've had a number of different sounding songs."

But because of the band's let's-get-wasted-and-fuck image, it's been hard for people to hear those songs or Roth's vocal range (guy's got a falsetto that sounds just like Janis Joplin), even when the proof is right there in the black plastic grooves. "I'll Wait," to

stick with one example, must be the first time they've ever sung about delayed gratification.

"That's not something we've aspired to, no," Roth rasps.

But if you listen to the song, it's remarkably sensitive, dealing with one of Roth's favorite themes, whether in lyrics or in interviews: image vs. reality. In this case, it's the image of a particular woman he's fallen in love with while wondering about the truth of her real personality. In Jungian terms, it's about the anima, a man's ideal woman, his female soul image....

"It's about the girl in the Calvin Klein underwear ads," says Roth, cutting loose with a long, low, wet laugh. "You know the one where she's wearing the guy's underwear? I cut her picture out of the newspaper, pinned it in front of the Trinitron and wrote the words to her. Any other poignant questions?"

How about the rest of the lyrics on 1984?

"I wrote them in the back of a 1951 Mercury lowrider. I'd call up Larry the roadie, he'd show up after lunch, we'd hop in the car and go driving all through the Hollywood Hills, up the Coast Highway, through the San Fernando Valley. I'd sit in back and write the words for whatever music I had on the cassette. Every hour and a half or so, I'd lean over the front seat and say, 'Lar, what do you think of this?' He's probably the most responsible for how it came out."

Eddie just comes by with a cassette and says, "Here's the riffs. Sing over them."?

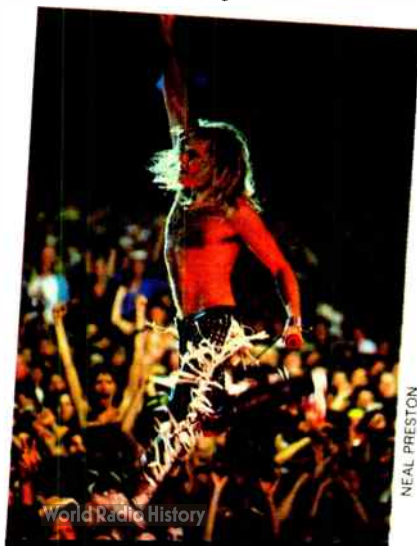
"We hear 'em in the studio. We all put the material together. He has the music, the original four or five different parts. 'Yeah, that might be a good chorus... we'll play that just once, call it a b part... that'll be a verse there... let's chop this up... we'll save this for another song.' Once that process is completed, I'll get it on a cassette and I call Larry."

Not a primary creative force in the music beyond the lyrics, in which he claims no pride, Roth does seem to occupy a position of arbiter between Eddie and the public. He exercised his veto power over "Jump"—the number one single in the country for five weeks—for two years before agreeing to sing it.

"Man, there is so much music, so many snippets of good riffs and bad riffs—who knows what is getting thrown out after awhile? I don't remember from two years ago. Maybe it wasn't right for two years ago. We hear all these bits and pieces and then we have to sift through them. We can't possibly put everything on the album. 'Jump' made it there eventually."

One thing the critics have not accused Roth of is pretension.

"The music is so much *sturm und drang*. The whole parade is so much *sturm und drang* and chaos and hysteria. It becomes so much larger than life, I keep waiting for it to bust. Here you have a road crew of seventy-five people, a hundred tons of equipment, nine semis, five buses, all to support what? We're not even selling soap here. We're selling the Four Stooges, four guys pounding away at the simplest



NEAL PRESTON

instruments, playing the most simple songs, falling down occasionally. It's a mockery of the whole corporate process. All the personalities—the agents, the promoters, the managers, the newspaper critics, the groupies, the truck drivers—they're all like cartoon characters. If you look at it like that, like a cartoon, you're going to have a good time."

There's more than a cartoon going on here.

"Lemme tell you something. Somebody asks me, 'Dave, what's it mean when you say somebody's rocking or when somebody's not rocking.' I say, 'I'll illustrate: a guy with black socks, black shoes, blue and white Bermuda shorts, Hawaiian luau shirt, a Nikon and a jackknife around his neck, zinc oxide on his nose, a pair of sunglasses, a fishing hat with all the badges on it, and he's staring up at the tall buildings—that's rock 'n' roll.' Now the freedom to do that is very serious, but the picture is a crackup."

This is important, because a lot of *Musician* readers are looking for the secret formula of rock 'n' roll, some attitude, some piece of equipment, some article of clothing that will make them a star. Roth has just given away the game. To rock 'n' roll, one must be a nerd.

Breaking the general rhythm of the interview, Roth doesn't laugh.

"I'm primarily motivated by fear and revenge. My songs, my interviews, the way I dress.... Every time we play, I'm dancing someone into the dirt."

"There's *nothing* to give away. The music is a matter of luck. It's magic. If you could duplicate it, there would have been a whole lot more Beatles. All I can do is answer questions that have nothing to do with the music, try to illustrate where it comes from. People can judge whatever they want: 'Oh, well, that's an interesting way to live your life. Perhaps if I tried that, I wouldn't play all sad songs for a change.' You know how often I hear that? Ninety-eight percent of the people who pick up an acoustic guitar think that means sad. I'm no teacher, but I say, 'Hey, have you tried anything a little more positive? Why don't you take a sad subject and *win* for a change?' All I can do is tell stories, make funny asides. You can't explain the music, only the people it comes from. The most exciting thing to anybody, it seems to me, ought to be to know another person's personality—whether it's your wife, your boyfriend, a politician, a rock star, a ballplayer. It doesn't matter. There's always somebody else."

One personality Roth seems uninterested in knowing better is Eddie Van Halen. The situation appears similar to the mid-period Who when the tensions and creativity seemed to reach an optimum balance—enough to keep passion in the music, but not enough to destroy the band. Their quotes hint at deep wounds—Eddie omitting Roth from his list of "deep humans," Roth portraying their show as The Four Stooges with no credit for Eddie's artistry—yet neither is willing to pull the scabs off in public.

"Two different personalities," Roth mutters. "Two different worlds. Two *completely* different worlds."

One difference in the worlds is that Eddie's doesn't have that much money.

"It depends on what you do with it once it crosses your palm.

He's got a great new studio. How many tracks is it? Nice microphones. Pretty floor. All those little pieces of wood that just fit right together all the way to that big door. *I don't got that.*" Roth's tone drops a reeking load of sarcasm on Eddie's temple to his muse.

What does Roth got?

"A bathing suit. I choose to wear it in Tahiti more often than not, but as far as material possessions go, I own a bathing suit. There's been money made. Making it is the easy part. Keeping it is the whole ball game. It's like jumping. Going up is easy. I can teach you that in twenty minutes. Going down, it'll take you three years."

Back on the subject of nothing being more exciting than getting to know another personality, who was the first to make such an impression on Roth?

"Al Jolson."

What?

"Al Jolson. He was doing something completely off the wall. Had a great voice, lot of conviction, determination, a show that shook the world. White gloves to this day are the hottest thing going. Each song created a different feeling, a different mood. Showbiz, glamour, big time stage with velvet curtains and glitz and all the razzmatazz. And it was just old country-type, bluesy, rural shit. I learned all his greatest hits by the time I was seven. And ever since I've known that I would make music onstage."

Roth snuffs out a cigarette and rasps a Jolson medley: "You Made Me Love You," "Toot, Toot, Tootsie," "Dixie Melody," "Sonny Boy," "There's A Rainbow On My Shoulder." Not really an *oeuvre* that created a lot of different moods and feelings but it did create one feeling very well: joy. Like a Van Halen show. Joy for teenagers, a celebration of the physical....

"No, no. I'll sync it up for you exactly. I am primarily motivated by fear and revenge."

What???

"Fear and revenge. You'll find it in all my presentations: my songs, my interviews, the way I dress, the way I walk down the street. Granted the fabulous success of 1984, but we've had our problems with management, accountants, lawyers, all the attendant things that come with working your way out of the bar scene. People think this has to be paradise, but I'm telling you, these thorns linger with you. And you pluck them out one at a time with each success. You're number one, you can pull this one out of your shoulder. Ya know, *that sonofabitch*. It's part of arriving. Every time we go out and play, yeah, I'm having a great time, but I'm also dancing someone else into the dirt."

Such feelings inspire a counter-load of guilt in most people.

"I'm not even going to plead *nolo contendere*. Not guilty, Judge Wapner. Life is one big party, and it's our duty to dance."

Was there ever anything he felt guilty about?

"There are some things I wish I'd done differently, but as far as guilt and shame, no. Life is not a popularity contest. That's a simple equation, but to take it to heart and believe it and act on it, that's a whole different thing. You make a few good friends, you burn a trail across the world, leaving a permanent shadow of groupies and rubble as never before in the history of rock 'n' roll, and one day, it's Miller Time. It's a big art project. A lot of times it's fingerpainting, but nonetheless art. I can't imagine being any happier. I just don't see where the guilt and shame would come from. Unless it's from your psychological background."

Precisely. Most people grow up anchored to shame as a form of social control. They never throw off their parental influence and end up cogs in the machine.

"I threw off my parents super early. They sent me to a child guidance clinic when I was seven. So I disposed of all those vestiges of society way back."

What was wrong?

"No guilt."

That got him into the clinic?

"Whatever it was, I just wasn't ashamed of it. That's what



threw them."

There's a lot of people out there who are frightened and resentful of that lack of shame, people stuck in jobs they hate—or even like—but they're anchored to a mortgage, raising their kids according to traditional morality....

"You know what I tell people like that? 'I may not go down in history, but I will go down on your little daughter.'"

To appreciate Van Halen fully—which is to appreciate as Paul did light on the road to Damascus—it is not mandatory to undergo a ten-and-a-half month regimen of full-contact kick-boxing and roadwork. Nor is it necessary to spend all your waking hours for fifteen years with a guitar in your hand. Nonetheless, a certain amount of mental preparation is strongly recommended. The serious acolyte, for example, should move to St. Paul in the middle of December and experience nothing that is not slush until Van Halen comes to town in March. To experience slush and then to experience Van Halen is to know joy. If one is a teenager, one must fondle one's ticket for thirty minutes every morning and evening, speak of nothing else for six weeks (even in algebra class) (*especially* in algebra class), and get physically ill with anticipation as if it were Christmas. If one is an adult, one must meditate unceasingly on the mantra: "God help me erase all image from my mind of David Lee Roth going down on my daughter." Whatever one's age, it is essential to identify with Roth's enthusiasm, see in him one's own potential to dance demons into the dirt. Do not envy him his naughtiness. Do not think: "I tell a joke like that at home and my parents would whack me," or, "I do a sword dance in a jumpsuit with most of my ass hanging out and Fireman's Fund will consider me a weak candidate for middle management." Just accept that he gets away with stuff that you can't. He is—to cite a 4,000-year tradition—a Trickster; amoral, driven by appetites, tells too much of the truth when he isn't omitting too much of the truth, gets away with it all because of his enormous charm. Not everyone in the tribe can be a Trickster, or the maize would never get picked. But he is necessary to the collective spiritual life. Can you really hate Bugs Bunny with genitals?

Even if Roth's singing remains offensive (he doesn't sing so much as exuberate), you can watch the light show, which puts *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* on the level of a wienie roast. Or you can watch Michael Anthony throw his bass off a stack of amplifiers and stomp on it. Or you can figure out how Alex Van Halen could possibly play so many drums. Or you can wonder what Roth and Eddie Van Halen are doing in the same band. It's hard to imagine two guys with less in common

psychologically, yet together they seem to make a complete personality. Extrovert balanced by introvert, logic by intuition, entertainment balanced by artistry. Sometimes it comes together, which is thrilling, and sometimes it sounds like all four of them are playing different songs as fast as possible, which is pretty funny. Attempts at intricate ensemble playing—such as voice/guitar duels—appear to leave the participants as bewildered as if they were actually talking to each other. This they compensate for with long solos. If the hero is the guy who can absorb the most absurdity, as the existentialists propound, Van Halen cops this year's Camus Cup.

Unlike most guitarists, Eddie smiles and rarely grimaces. But even when 20,000 kids are chanting, "EH-DEE! EH-DEE!" the smile is shy. He just doesn't need, as he says, humans. What he needs is a 60,000-watt sound system with 600 speakers to make new noises. And if 20,000 kids happen to be sitting there listening at 116 decibels, it's okay, but he's going to get on with arpeggiating all over his guitar neck. Which is the amazing thing about Eddie Van Halen: he arpeggiates and doesn't jerk off. Neither does he play bar chord progressions, as does everyone from the Ramones to Def Leppard. He plays actual, honest-to-God guitar riffs, which nobody has done on a consistent basis since the heyday of Hendrix, Page and Beck. "Unchained," "Hot For Teacher," "Panama," "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love," "You Really Got Me"—it's ecstasy for guitar worshippers and slushjumpers (ever hear a crowd cheer louder than 600 speakers?). Or as Al Jolson and David Lee Roth would say, "Is everybody happy?"

YEAHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

There is, of course, a price to be paid: twenty percent of the upper end of Alex Van Halen's hearing, according to a recent article in *Modern Drummer*.

"It's thirty percent now," Alex chuckles backstage in a dressing room. "I did that interview five months ago."

Another ten percent after a third of the tour?

"I'm hoping it will come back. There are certain frequencies which do regenerate in your hearing. I notice myself going, 'Huh?' and 'Whah?' a lot more these days. It's annoying but if you dance, you gotta pay the piper. Remember I've been doing this since I was twelve years old, eleven years with this band. I don't know if people are generally aware of how decibels work, but 113 is twice as loud as 110, 116 is twice as loud as 113. Back by the drums, it's over 130. We had a doctor come in once to measure and he just said, 'Give me back my dB meter. I don't ever want to see you again.'"

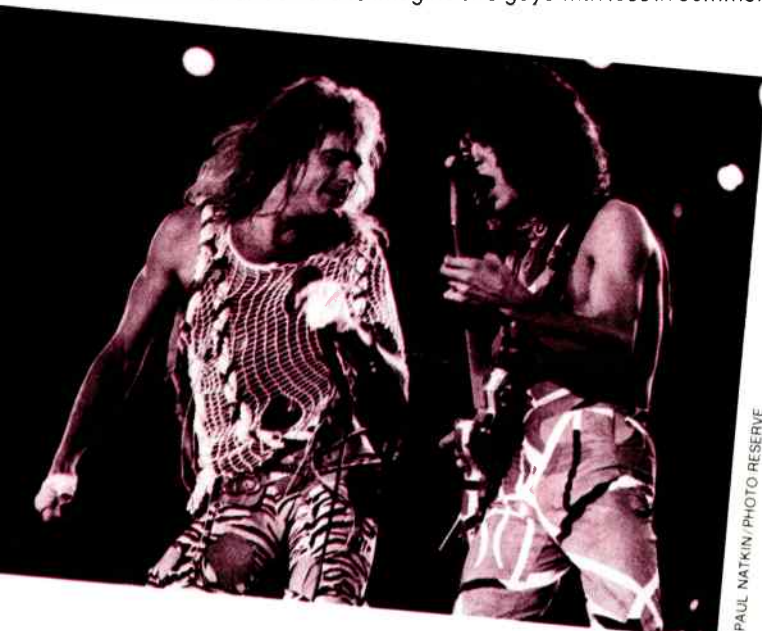
Broader and more muscled than older brother Eddie, Alex throws back his head and laughs.

"Most of the people I know who have been playing loud music a long time are basically deaf. Pete Townshend, you could stand in front of his face and say, 'Hey, Pete, I'm fuckin' your wife,' and he'd nod his head and go, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah.' It's a shame it has to happen. Because without ears, you won't be able to hear music anymore. At some point they're just going to have to figure out a way for musicians to hear everything while they're playing without destroying their ears."

(It should be pointed out that this interview took place *before* the show, which had much to do with Alex's hale-and- hearty attitude. After the show, the guy looks dazed and a little mournful, crucified in the ears.)

When Eddie got a paper route at the age of fourteen to pay for his set of drums, Alex stayed home and played them. Eddie soon switched to guitar, found a hero in Eric Clapton (used to reserve bowling lanes for himself in Clapton's name) and started a succession of bands: Trojan Rubber Company, Bald, Genesis, Mammoth and Van Halen. Their father was not pleased.

"He was a professional musician himself, and he knew what you had to go through to raise a family or lead any sort of good life," says Alex, recently married, more recently divorced, and bummed out. "That's where I think Van Halen is a lifestyle.



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

SIGHT FOR SORE EARS.



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Dave used to have an expression that carries a lot of truth: we aren't this way because we're in a rock band. We're in a rock band because we are this way. You can't force it. You can't fake it. Traveling ten months a year, being in the studio, staying in close quarters with three other humans: it can get on your nerves if you're really into it. If you approach it as a business, as a means to an end, you're in the wrong place."

Massive, gnarled and fat-fingered, Alex's hands are the sort you would expect on guy who'd been tearing face masks off of quarterbacks for the L.A. Raiders.

"See this?" asks Alex, indicating a jagged brown scar on his left forearm. "Hey, I bet fifty grand for this. You put your arms together and drop a cigarette in the middle. *Four hours of*

"You haven't heard all my music, just the part of me that's Van Halen. Nobody knows what I do. I have some things on tape that would clear the room."

smelling burned skin. It was like fried chicken after awhile."

For four hours they sat there with a burning cigarette between their arms?

"Not a cigarette. Two packs. It burns and burns and burns. The first guy to move his arms loses."

Jesus.

"Jesus? You wanna see Jesus? I was at a friend of mine's birthday party at a Japanese restaurant. There was a little grill at the table where they cooked the food. And I finished. And I flipped a few sakes. And I decided, 'Come on, let's dance naked.' So I took off my clothes and got on the table. I was having a pretty good time when I stepped on a sake glass and fell right on the grill. ZHZHZHZHZHTTTT! I burned the shit out of myself. Ended up at the same hospital where they took Richard Pryor." Alex laughs uproariously and rolls up his sleeve, revealing a large, squarish scar. "What's it look like? The Shroud of Turin, right?"

"That's my Uncle Otto," says David Lee Roth, pointing to a short but erect old man. "He's eighty-one and walks five miles to work three days a week. And people ask me how long I think this can last." Turning his attention back to a large group of concerned relatives backstage in Chicago, Roth loudly explains that when critics use the term "gleefully obnoxious," it means "Mercedes."

"That's our grandmother there," says Roth's cousin Lori Simon. "The last time she saw a concert, she just turned off her hearing aide and she could hear everything. After tonight, she won't talk about anything else for months. We gave her a video of 'Jump' and it put five years on her life."

Having no relatives to entertain in the immediate geographic vicinity, Michael Anthony sits in a side room expounding bass philosophy.

"When I started playing bass, everyone said, 'Well, the bass isn't the lead instrument, so you'll never be a front man. You're just going to stand in back by the drums and play,'" says Anthony, who has never stood in back by the drums and played. At first he was singing lead, booking the gigs and driving the van (as well as playing bass) for a band called Snake. Then he opted for a more subordinate role with Van

Halen, if you can call wearing gold lame jumpsuits, singing backup, throwing your bass off of a twenty-foot stack of amps and stomping on it (kids never tire of broken guitars) subordinate.

"If I had my way, I'd just wear a T-shirt and play," says Anthony. "I'm a musician first. I'd still move around, 'cause that's what I like to do, but, ya know, we got Dave who's always pushing—*choreograph! choreograph!* He's always been that kind of person, more into the show. I'm sure stomping on the bass looks good out there in the audience. It's just so far from what a bass player would normally do. So what the heck."

How's the hearing?

"Very good. I've got the best spot onstage monitor-wise. On Ed's side, you get all that guitar with those high frequencies that, by the time they reach me, aren't all that piercing. On my side, it's all bass and just enough drums to where I feel comfortable. When I jump on the drum risers, standing next to one of those cymbals is like..." Anthony grimaces with pain. "It doesn't compare to where I'm standing. He's got all this high-end stuff just blazing up there, plus he's got one of Ed's cabinets—a two-by-twelve, right there in his ear. If I was behind a kit like Al's—the level it has to be pumped just so he can hear the set—it would collapse my head."

"At the speed and volume Van Halen plays, you walk a very fine line between having it too loud—in which case it becomes a *blurge*, a totally inaudible mess—and having it too soft, in which case you can't feel it," says Nigel Buchan, current sound engineer for Van Halen, former sound engineer for Billy Squier, Judas Priest, Uriah Heep, Wishbone Ash, City Boy, Coliseum, Andrew Lloyd Weber and Rockpile. "You have to feel rock 'n' roll as well as hear it, have both clarity and punch. A band this powerful visually must be equally powerful musically. The kids expect to hear what they see in David Lee Roth."

Buchan has a humongous sound system (see instrument box for details) to create just that aural environment. You can tell when he's achieved it because he'll start dancing at the soundboard. "And if I start dancing," says Buchan, who has lost none of his hearing, "I very well know that 15,000 kids around me are going to be dancing."

That's when his job's easy. When it's difficult is getting the four musicians to dance.

"I have a different view of mixing than probably a lot of engineers," says Buchan. "I don't start with myself. I start with the source. I can't deliver the sound to the audience if the musician that is delivering the sound to me is not happy. I set up the monitors myself. I sit down with the band, hear exactly what they want to hear, when they want to hear it and at what volume. I stand there with the band and call out frequencies to make the sound better: 'We need 5 dB at 2k,' or, 'We've got too much low end so let's take minus 6 dB at 160 hertz,' and I'll sweep the spectrum until the monitoring system is crystal clear."

"Every guitarist has a sound. The Eddie Van Halen sound is very, very special. It's hard to talk about, but it has a warmth. Almost every name guitarist in the world, when they do their solos, makes the most awful screeching sound, like cats squealing. When Ed plays a solo, it doesn't screech. We do a lot of work to get that sound that a lot of musicians wouldn't bother with. Spend hours re-valving his amps or whatever. But Eddie lives for his guitar, lives for hearing it the way he wants to hear it. If you put it into a color, it would be brown. That's what he calls it: the brown sound."

"This is me and my brother on New Years Eve. I'd just finished pukin'," says Eddie Van Halen, slipping a cassette into a portable four-track a few hours after the show in his hotel room. An unearthly bass and drums duet comes over the tiny speakers as he keeps a couple of Pall Malls lit—one in his mouth, one burning a hole in the lamp table. Every ten seconds

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or so, he flicks Fast Forward to pass over the noodling and arrive at some musical point he seems desperate to communicate. Contrary to rock 'n' roll custom, he carries no "road tapes" of his favorite music. No old Motown, no Beatles, no Stones, no Marley, nothing contemporary to hear what the competition is up to. Just a pillowcase of cassettes documenting his own endless quest for new noise: the soundtrack to his wife's last movie, *The Seduction of Mimi*; the original "1984" (an album in itself) from which the 51-second album version was excerpted; and a synthesizer concerto of "bathtub farts."

"This one is what makes me think I'm nuts," says Eddie, popping in a cassette that could be called *Instant Alpha Waves* for its primordial effect, music from before the cerebral cortex was invented. "That's Marvin Hamlisch's piano. Valerie and I rented his beach house...there I'm scraping with a knife...plucking the strings harmonically...that's a drumstick on the cover...muffling the strings and hitting the keys...there I'm throwing a fork at it...that's Valerie going, 'Shut up, I'm watching David Letterman!'"



NEAL PRESTON

"Strange" Eddie manipulating the indescribable Brown Sound.

Eddie picks around in his cassette pile for a moment and then gets to the point: "Do you think I'm strange?"

Well, yeah. There is something eerie about Eddie Van Halen, almost holy, Michael Jacksonly. Anyone who can throw a fork at a piano and make more music than most people on the charts do with entire bands—that's very very strange. Just being in its presence, let alone living with it is a little frightening. The guy has *no* persona, no wall of normal behavior between him and his suspicious world. Just pure essence of feeling. When he likes you, he kisses you. When he's frustrated, he throws one of his delicate hands into the wall and busts a knuckle. It would appear to be the only route to the Brown Sound. "Alex originated the term, and Nigel understands it, and Donn Landee understands it better than anyone. It's tone. It's wood, as opposed to cinderblock. You can have the AM radio in your car blaring, and the actual sound level is not loud at all, but it sounds hurting to the ear. Whereas you can have a nice home stereo at much higher dB level but it's warm. One is brown, and one isn't."

But Van Halen is the band that achieved a portion of its notoriety by contractually forbidding *brown* M&Ms in their hospitality rooms.

"M&Ms are chocolate. They have nothing to do with sound."

Brown doesn't make any more sense. It's a color that has nothing to do with sound.

"It has nothing to do with M&Ms! It's wood! Imagine someone hitting a piece of wood as opposed to metal or cement. It develops a tone that is pleasing to the ear. It's just a word. I could call it anything, but the only word I can think of is brown. *The brown*. I am into *the brown*. They should add a few words

to the dictionary. There are a lot of things the dictionary doesn't explain."

For a dictionary to explain these things....

"They'd have to feel them."

Where would a lexicographer feel the brown sound to come up with a definition?

"There's a lot on 1984. Al's snare drum. Instead of *shshshsk*, it goes *toonk*. The only way I can relate *this is to tell you who* doesn't have it, and I don't want to put anyone down in print. It's something that hurts when it's not there. And when it is there, no matter how loud it is, it feels warm. Most people cannot understand the brown, can't put a finger on it, but it affects them subliminally."

Let's follow up on subliminally.

"People can sense the brown and not know what it is."

Sometimes in writing a passage it will just be there, and sometimes either you blow it or something as small as a comma will get changed and there goes....

"Your brown sound."

Yeah.

"So you're asking me what it is?"

There's still no working definition, no way to convey....

"Forget it. You can't. It's too deep, and they don't care to find out. It's a warmth concerning *anything*, man. It's like when you really love someone and you're getting the feeling back. It's tone. It's feeling. It's warmth. And only the 5150s know." ■

HOW NOW, BROWN SOUND?

Sound engineer Nigel Buchan delivers the brown sound to the world through an Audio Analysts P.A. consisting of sixty S-4 cabinets with 1,000-watts and ten speakers each (two 18-inch, four 10-inch, two horns, and two high frequency units, all JBL). The system is highly modular, taking just an hour and forty-five minutes to go from truck to blasting.

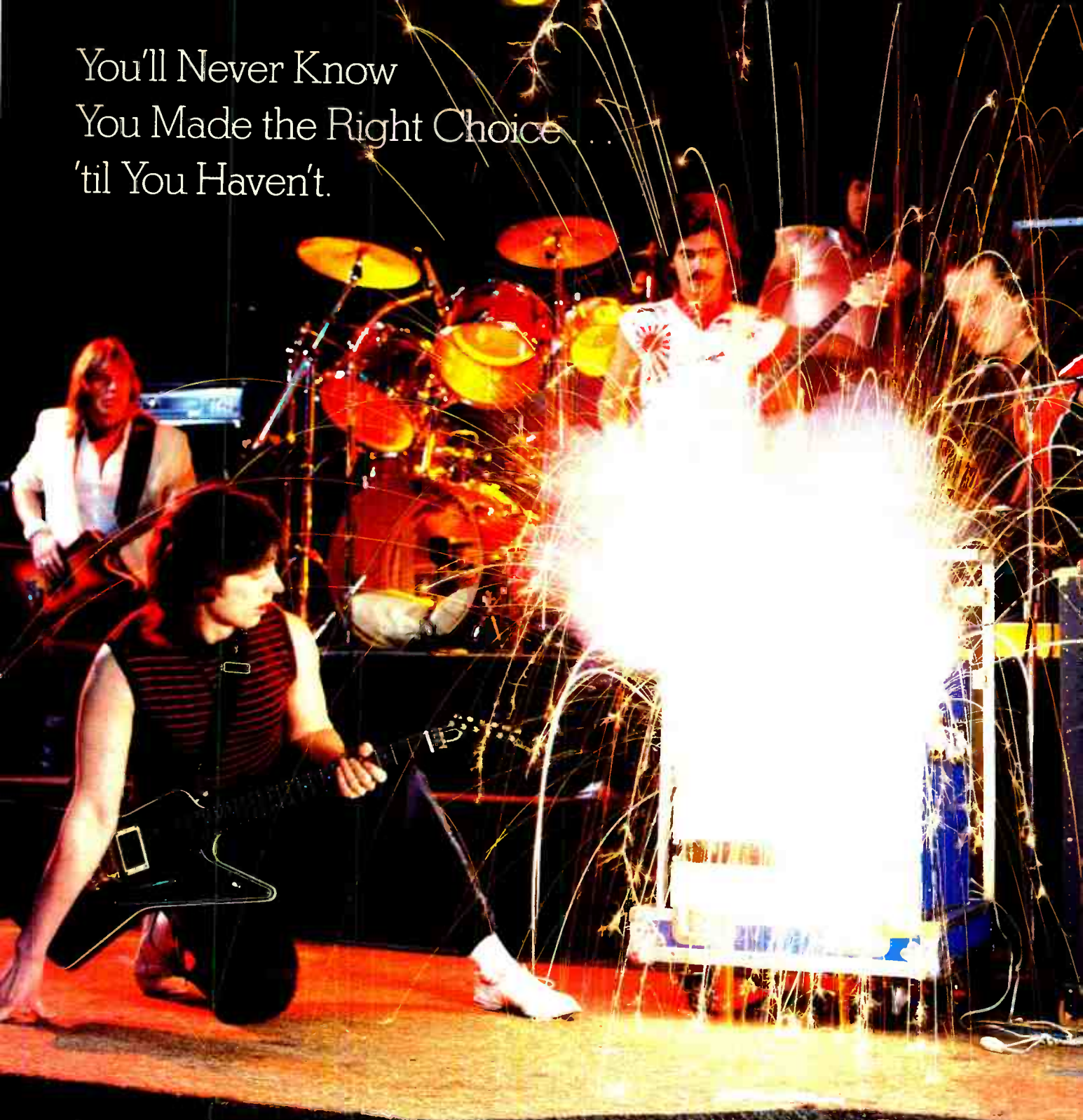
The monitor system, which has wedges (with two 15-inch, two horns and a high frequency unit) buried under grates all over the stage in strategic areas, contributes another 16,000 watts. "That's bigger than most bands on the theater circuit take out for their house system," says Buchan. "Van Halen plays at a staggering volume onstage, 134 dB. And we have no monitoring problems whatsoever. This must be the first band in history to ask for the monitoring system to be turned down."

Through this aural colossus, Eddie plays a Kramer copy ("The simplest, most stripped down form of musical instrument there is.") of his original customized Stratocaster that is now out to pasture except for studio work. His amps are the usual old Marshalls. His synth is the Oberheim OB-8.

Michael Anthony has four basses of choice: 1) a Yamaha Broadbass 2000 (never actually produced in the States) with Schecter pickups and a neck he has narrowed for better access to the top frets; 2) a custom Zeta in the shape of a Jack Daniels bottle with pickups in the saddle of the bridge ("sounds punchy as hell"), a body carved by Charvel and a paint job by Chuck Wild Studios; 3) a Kramer for throwing off the top of his amp stack ("I've never had a problem with the neck snapping and I jump on it full force."), and 4) a Steinberger with split EMG pickups for studio use. As for amplifiers, he's all SVT onstage and in the studio prefers an old Ampeg B-15 with the flip head.

Alex throttles a drum kit that could double as the set of the next *Star Wars* installment: two double-headed kick drums in the middle (24-inch and 26-inch) and two single-headed kick drums (same width) on the outside. Inside each he has mounted a radial horn. All the shells are Ludwig for aesthetics with Simmons electronic drums mounted inside. Across the top he has mounted a set of Octabans and keeps his high end blazing with Paiste cymbals.

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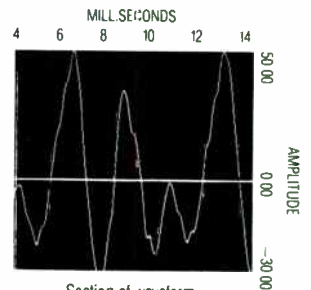
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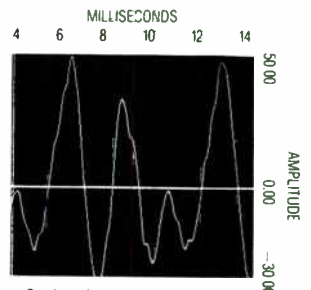
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World Radio History

the

take another hairpin curve....

Cars

Rick Ocasek, Greg Hawkes and I are sitting in a small lounge downstairs at the Cars' Syncro Sound Studios in Boston. At one end of the room a television glows soundlessly as a house fire wreaks havoc on one of the soaps; upstairs, an unnamed band hammers stoically through its second hour of drum check. Just another day in the music business.

'When you get tired of fitting in, then you'll be what you are.'

The topic at the moment is Songs We Like, with Van Halen's "Jump" the current focus of discussion. Perhaps surprisingly, perhaps not, both Hawkes and Ocasek like it. "A good song is a good song," Ocasek shrugs by way of explanation. I agree, but add that not everybody hears things so fairly. To some people, "Jump" isn't a good song, it's a Van Halen song, and Van Halen shouldn't be too lavishly praised because, well....

"Because it's not cool?" Ocasek asks, with a tinge of sarcasm. "Who cares! I like anybody who does something good."

"There are a lot of elitists who feel that if you like what the masses like, it's uncool," he continues from behind his dark glasses. "I think the best thing you could possibly be is uncool. When you get tired of fitting in, then you'll be what you are."

J.D. Considine

"Be what you are" is something of a Cars by-law. In the roughly six years since the band first burst forth from the Boston club scene with an eponymous debut album and two top-forty hits, "Just What I Needed" and "My Best Friend's Girl," the Cars have been a band in a category by itself. On the one hand, the Cars' songwriter, Ric Ocasek, wrote songs that were as self-conscious, alienated and emotionally distanced as anything washed ashore by rock's new wave. These were dressed up by his bandmates—keyboardist Greg Hawkes, bassist Ben Orr, guitarist Elliot Easton and drummer David Robinson—in an array of blank rhythms, quirky textures and angular hooks. Yet on the other hand, this pointedly avant-pop approach was quickly embraced by fans and radio alike, and

sold like hotcakes while other new wavers remained buried underground.

As a result, the band has been seen as the product of extremes. "We've been written up a lot for having a duality," says Hawkes, "the pop band on one side and the 'arty band' on the other." Though it's true that the Cars' singular sound can easily be broken into two separate parts, it would be a mistake to claim that the band's sound and success is simply a matter of formula. After all, there have been plenty of other bands that have exhibited similar characteristics with far less success, from the early days of Roxy Music to the current struggle of XTC.

You might even go so far as to wonder if the Cars' avoidance of formula is part of the reason they've done so well. Ocasek does. During the Songs We Like symposium, I asked him what



Ben Orr rows, Ric Ocasek grows, Elliot Easton flows.

songs by other people he liked to play when he was starting out, and he answered, "I never did that. I've played maybe two covers in my life. Three. Which I think is an advantage. I never really learned other people's songs, and never really learned those forms. I sometimes wonder if that's not the reason the stuff I do is not reminiscent of those things...."

Still, there is a Cars sound, and even if you can't categorize it or pinpoint its lineage, it's easy enough to identify. Hawkes: "There are little specific things that are Cars trademarks, like the clicky guitar eighths with a few quirky synthesizer lines around them and a fairly straight rock beat. To me, that is the Cars sound. Some of the vocal mannerisms seem like trademark touches, too. Even the way the background vocals are recorded, with a kind of multi-tracked sound so they're not way up front, but are still kind of thick."

A good description, and one which is instantly shattered upon hearing *Heartbeat City*, the latest Cars album. From the flanged smear given the opening vocals in "Hello Again" to the warm blanket of synths wrapped around Ben Orr's croon in "Drive," it's clear that this is not the strangeness with which we have become so familiar. Some, like "Drive" and "Why Can't I Have You," seem to have been softened for the mainstream market of housewives and Hot Hits; others, like "Magic" or "It's Not The Night," sound like they've been beefed up to make the qualifying weight for AOR muscle-band fans. By the third or fourth listening, you can pick out many of the familiar devices, but only after you've realized where to look for them, because for the most part, *Heartbeat City* downplays individual quirks to go for a more unified, wholly integrated sound.

"It seems like a natural progression," says Hawkes of the difference between the stereotypical Cars sound and that of the new album. "Yeah, I think it was just the next logical step," agrees Ocasek. "Those songs were the ones we did, and the way it worked out was the way it came out. There was definitely no attempt to do it in a different style."

But what's so natural and logical about an album that sounds so different?

Why, the fact that it sounds different, of course.

Consider the confusion over exactly where the band sits in

the rock world. If the Cars were totally predictable, it would be much easier to slide them into a convenient pigeonhole. Therefore, once the band has established the basics of a sound—the clicking guitar and quirky synthesizer Hawkes described—the next step would be to walk away from it, so that the audience is thrown off balance. Just as they were when they heard the first album.

"You go through and you make all kinds of records," Ocasek says. "This is the fifth Cars album; it *should* have a different sound than the fourth record. That's really the crux of the thing. It's not like any prior Cars album. It doesn't sound like one. With time, it's going to sound like a Cars record, because the vocals are the same. But in a sense, it's a change. And change is always good."

The way you change is also a consideration, of course, and the fact that the Cars hired a very mainstream producer, John "Mutt" Lange of AC/DC fame, is in its own way more surprising than if the band had turned in a hair-raisingly avant-garde effort. "It would be easy to make a record that nobody would like," Ocasek muses. "That's not very difficult. I could make a record for the critics, or I could make a record for 10,000 people. The point is whether that's the real reason you're doing it."

Besides, argues Hawkes, the seeming conservatism of *Heartbreak City* is just another swing of the band's internal pendulum. He explains: "Up until this particular album, I've always felt proudest of *Panorama*. I think that was our most adventurous, as far as doing whatever we wanted. Not that we don't do what we want on the other records, but *Panorama* seemed to be the one that swung to the left the most. I guess this record is really just a swing in the other direction."

"We were using Mutt for pretty much the same reason," adds Ocasek. "We wanted a change. We could have produced it ourselves if we wanted to. But as a sound person, I really like Mutt's sound. I thought that the combination of the sound he gets and what we do would mingle pretty nicely. Mutt's never done a band like us; he's done a lot of heavy metal. But I thought the two could mix."

Indeed they did, but not in the way one might have expected. Certainly there's a lot of Mutt Lange in the beefy crunch of "Magic" and the crisp shifts in dynamics that spur "It's Not The Night," but that's largely a function of his way with guitar sounds, and there really isn't much guitar on the album. "Strangely enough," says Hawkes, "part of that was working with Mutt. I say strangely because you would expect that for a producer with his background there would be *more* guitar and less synthesizer. But I think Mutt was really intrigued with working with keyboards a lot. I think it was a way for him to do something different."

In making *Heartbeat City*, the operative phrase was "working with keyboards a lot." Among the many gadgets on hand at Battery Studios in London, where the album was recorded, was a Fairlight Computer Musical Instrument, which the band decided to use on the new album. Why? "To learn about it," shrugs Ocasek. "Because your parameters are widened by



David Robinson gets to pound, Ocasek gets profound.



"Clicky guitar eighths with a few quirky synth lines around them"

what you can do with it, sound-wise and on almost any level of playing. Because it's here today and is there to be used if you want to use it. It's just another instrument. We just chose on this record to get very involved with it."

"Very involved" is an understatement. It took Greg Hawkes, Andy Topeka and David Robinson a month just to learn how to use the thing. And use it they did—"maybe between seventy and eighty percent of the keyboard parts are programmed on the computer," says Hawkes. "But you've got to realize that it might take eight hours of preparation on one part, programming it a certain way. Then maybe it sounds stiff, so you have to try programming it in a different way. You really do have to work with the typewriter as far as entering the various functions and parameters goes. It's not easy to change a sound, as with the twist of a knob—and I'm used to twisting knobs."

But once it's all in there, playing it back is just a matter of pushing a button, right? Nope. "It's kind of misleading to say that once you have it in the computer you can get it with one take," replies Hawkes. "Because you might spend literally hours playing around with the sound and all the other parameters before you actually turn on the tape."

Aside from making more work for Hawkes, the use of computers didn't really change the songs on *Heartbreak City*, just the way they sounded. "The only thing I'm concerned about is the feel of everything," says Ocasek. "The sound is important as well, but you can try sounds and more sounds until you find exactly what you want. The real momentum is in your feel, as opposed to the technology part of it. Technology is just a by-product, something that, if you want to use it, you can use it."

The process begins with Ocasek's writing. "The songs are written first, written for the most part on a cassette recorder or on an 8-track. I put everything down live, and it usually takes me about a night to do one. But it obviously depends on the song.

"Then, to reproduce the song in a studio situation, it's just a matter of finding the basic elements of a song, and using that as a guideline. The arrangements are basically on the demo, and between Greg and myself and the band—whoever is in the rehearsal situation before recording—we work it out. We might move things around a little bit, embellish things more, because those are rough tapes. But the song is already there, so that one could refer to it all the time, as to what it will ultimately sort of sound like."

"Ric writes the songs, which generally consist of the basic structure, all lyrics...and sometimes that's all it consists of," elaborates Hawkes. "Sometimes it consists of a complete arrangement, with all the keyboard melodies and background parts. On this particular record, most of the songs went through at least one or two complete changes.

"This is how it would happen: Mutt would suggest something, and I'll come up with my own little variation, and maybe Ric will be out in the other room hearing all this, and will come into the control room with another suggestion. There was a lot of playing around with arrangements on this one."

All that effort wasn't simply a matter of getting the right gloss finish on the album, however. It was to get the right sense of guts. "Mutt's a definite stickler for feel," says Ocasek. "He'd sit there with somebody for hours working on a part, and only looking for the feel. If he didn't hear the feel, it wasn't down on tape.

"Writing's different than recording. When I'd write it, the feel

was all there. Mutt would always refer to the demos and say, 'You've got to have the feel of this,' or, 'This doesn't have the feel of the demo—do it again.' That's the point of creativity, it's always trying to get that feel. Because the demos, when they've got it, just naturally work, whether they're out of time or not, no matter where they sit. They just work, because they're done quickly and at the point of inspiration. You have to marry the feel to the technology to get it right."

Unfortunately, that's much easier said than done, particularly when dealing with the level of automation the Fairlight CMI entails. People are fallible, and unlike computers, don't always land each note smack in the middle of the beat. That's what makes so much music feel human. That's also what makes programming for feel hell on the programmer.

"We spent quite a bit of time moving some of these parts around in literally milliseconds—a little ahead, a little behind the beat—until it felt right," reports Hawkes with what sounds like a mixture of weariness and pride. "That was really how small the units we were working in were. Sometimes, when we put down a part, if it read out mathematically correct, it did feel wrong. It would feel slow, or maybe there was a characteristic of the sound that would make the part feel late. So we would spend quite a lot of time advancing things in very small steps, or delaying them in very small steps, until the flow was right."

By now, perhaps you've noticed that, as with the way their music is perceived, there's something of a duality between the way Ocasek and Hawkes work, Ocasek with his quickly conceived demos and Hawkes with his patient piecework. One lauds his demos because "they just naturally work, whether they're out of time or not," the other argues that "I like working with drum machines better than working without 'em." Even their appearances seem poles apart, with Ocasek's lanky height forever draped in black to artistic effect while Hawkes remains an average-looking fellow dressed in neutral colors and possessed of the sort of demeanor generally reserved for math whizzes.

On the other hand, all that may be smoke, for Ocasek and Hawkes seem at times little more than the opposite sides of the same coin. Towards the end of the interview, Hawkes is summing up his sense of the band, following my suggestion that the secret of the Cars is that they are five musicians with an avant-garde sensibility but pop tastes.

"Yeah," he says, "we really, as a band, try not to take things too seriously. I think if you actually meet the people in the band, you get the sense of playfulness that certain writers don't seem to have found yet. Because they haven't seen that, they see the Cars as a very serious, very calculated, very thought-out enterprise. Which is really not the case. We're spontaneous, but structured at the same time."

Sort of humor with discipline?

Ocasek answers by tossing a paper airplane from across the room.

"That shows you what I mean," says Hawkes. "I'm sure he was planning that all day...." ☐

Catalytic Converters

Rick Ocasek is a Gibson guitar man, playing mostly a '55 Les Paul Jr. or an SG. Occasionally, he'll switch to a Fender guitar usually his pink Jazzmaster. All are sent through Marshall amps with a minimum of treatment.

At home, he uses a LinnDrum supplemented by "a lot of cheap drum machines, which I love. I even have an old Hammond organ that has the 'Mersey Beat' on it." His keyboards are Prophet synthesizers, the Roland Jupiter 8 and the Memorymoog. He tapes onto an 80M TEAC, through a Sound Workshops board with out-board processing gear that includes Roland Space Echoes, Eventide harmonizers, Marshall time modulators and the Lexicon 224 delay. Both Ocasek and Elliot Easton own Scholz Rockmans.

Greg Hawkes used the Fairlight CMI extensively on *Heartbreak City*, but also used the Roland Jupiter 8 and Vocoder, the Memorymoog, the Yamaha DX7 and DX9, the Mini-Korg, a Prophet 5 and a PPG 3.2 Wave synthesizer.

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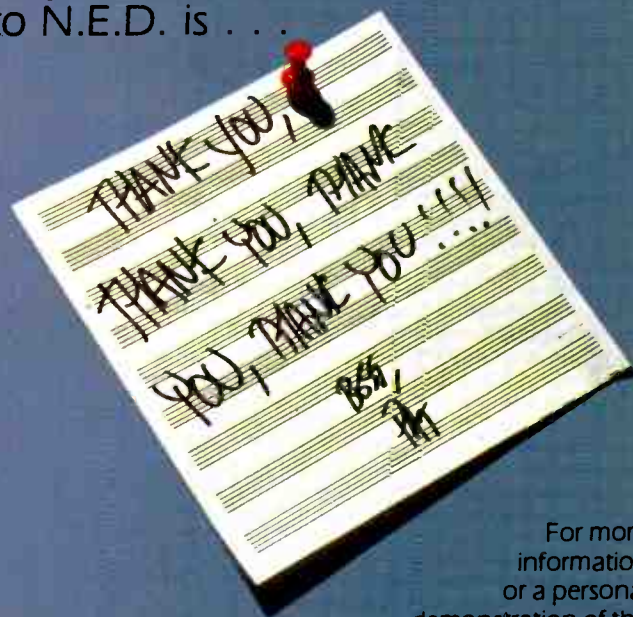
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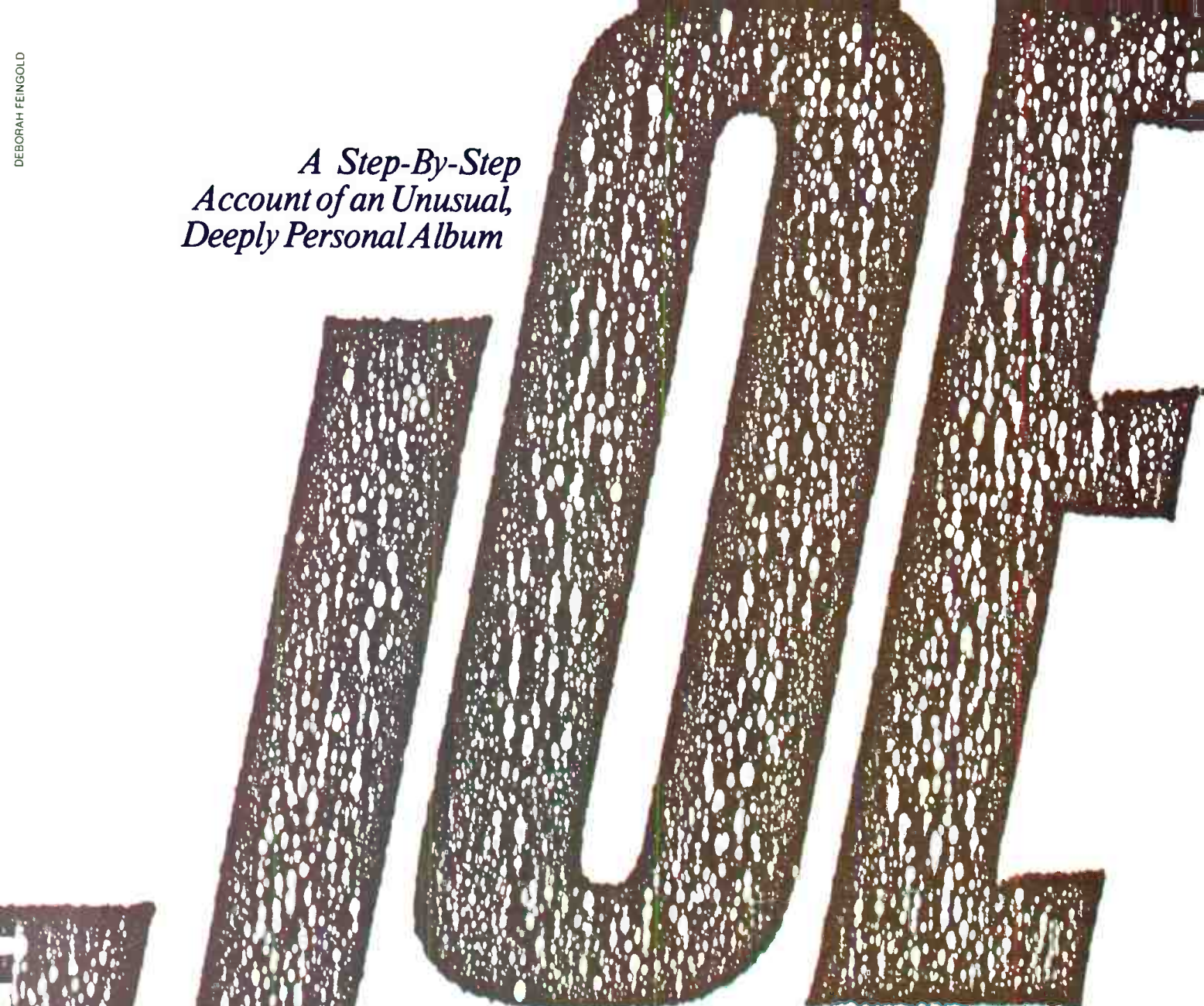
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DEBORAH FEINGOLD

*A Step-By-Step
Account of an Unusual,
Deeply Personal Album*



JACKSON

THE MAKING OF *BODY AND SOUL*

The word from rehearsal on West 20th Street last November was that Joe Jackson's next record would be a departure from his last one. For some recording artists this might be big news, but coming from someone who had made a practice of changing musical styles, this revelation wasn't considered particularly earthshaking. As it has turned out, though, the record that resulted from those rehearsals, *Body And Soul*, has caused tremors of surprise among even his most devoted fans. There had been stylistic hints on previous albums that the rabidly eclectic singer/songwriter was leaning toward the more orchestrated, cinematic sound of *Body And Soul*, but most people in the Joe Jackson camp were caught off guard by the final product.

BY ALLEN W. HARRIS

Firmly focused on confessional vocals and acoustic

piano, with a full horn section assisting, *Body And Soul* includes touches of Latin-influenced music, which was so important in *Night And Day*. Steely Danisms and the movie-score quality reminiscent of his work for the ill-fated movie, *Mike's Murder* (work which was for the most part undeservedly axed from the final version). As conservative as the basic form of the album is, its overall impact and implications are radical. In bucking the current trend of synth-laden techno-pap and producing an album of classically arranged songs, many of which are ballads and few of which feature electronic instruments, Jackson may have made his most dramatic statement to date, a statement further fortified by a noticeable maturing of his powers as a lyricist. What follows is the story of how this unusual, already controversial album was made.

During those November rehearsals it was hard to know exactly what the overall plan was. All anyone would say was that Joe had some new ideas, some of which were being tried, and others of which were still only in the talking stage. One of those had come out of a conversation he had had with his long-time producer and friend David Kershenbaum "over too many cups of sake." David remembers, "In our early talks Joe said that he wanted to try to capture the power of a live sound without compromising the overall sound quality of the record. He felt too many modern studio recordings sounded sterile and contrived."

They decided to record the new material live, direct to two-track digital recorder. In one respect, it was an attempt to capture some of the sound qualities intrinsic to earlier recordings, when one mono track and two mikes were all an engineer had to work with. On the other hand, in the noiseless atmosphere of digital recording they hoped to capture the dynamics of Joe's music with startling clarity. One of the keys, they felt, to a good-sounding live record was a good-sounding room. Finding that became a major project all by itself, because what constitutes a good-sounding room involves even more voodoo than Ronald Reagan's economic theories. Virtually every engineer and studio owner in New York had their own very subjective opinion on what made a room sound right.

"We scouted a number of clubs and dance halls with no luck," Kershenbaum recalls. "Then a friend of mine who owns a major studio in New York suggested that I check out Vanguard's studio on 23rd Street, which I did, but it still wasn't quite right." When Kershenbaum voiced his reservations to the people at Vanguard, they suggested that he look at the Masonic Lodge down the

street from their studio. They had done a number of classical and jazz recordings there with good results. Conveniently, they also rented office space down the hall from the lodge, a perfect site for a temporary control room. "We fell in love with it immediately," says David.

Another idea which had jelled by the time rehearsals had started was the band, new in two respects. First, it was large by pop music standards, with seven members including Joe, and featured a horn section. Secondly, most of the players had only been working with Jackson a short period of time. The only exception to this was bassist Graham Maby, who had been with Joe since his first album. Though unfamiliar with each other musically, the ensemble had one thing in common: chops. Everyone knew how to read music, and was familiar with a broad range of musical styles—skills that would later come in handy. While not quite the musical smorgasbord that was *Night And Day*, the menu for *Body*



Joe and Kershenbaum awaiting the verdict.

And Soul had some interesting appetizers: a cha-cha, a Stax/Volt send-up, a self-described "boy-meets-girl 60s pop song" and a tasty funk number.

The organization of the rehearsals impressed even the most veteran of the players in the band. There were charts for most of the material—good, workable charts. This is not the usual procedure in these situations; most recording artists will have only lead sheets with chords on them, and sometimes not even that. Because he plays a number of instruments—drums, piano and sax—Joe is able to write charts that are not only playable and make sense, but which show a high level of sensitivity to the specific sound and requirements of individual instruments. In fact, one musician expressed his firm opinion that Jackson understood the role of the drummer better than any artist or arranger the musician had worked with.

The enforced discipline did have another effect besides tightening the band. Many of the musicians used to winging it in rehearsal began to feel pressure. The task of faithfully reproducing written music is not unfamiliar to

someone who's gone through the conservatory process of recital after recital, as indeed Joe had, but in the world of contemporary music, this skill is rarely tapped. Joe was tapping it on a daily basis. The players would wander out of the rehearsal studio exhausted. Over coffee in a nearby diner, the conversation would return again and again to "the job." This was real work, perhaps some of the most demanding of their careers, and they were at once excited and intimidated by what the next day would bring. Everyone agreed that Joe had done his homework, but was there ever going to be room to breathe? As one of them would later reflect, "In some cases, such as 'The Verdict,' the charts used in rehearsal were almost note for note what was recorded."

In addition to charts, band members also had very complete demo tapes of the new material to work from. Standard operating procedure for Jackson involves spending a week or so in the studio making demos of the material he intends to record, generally playing all the instruments himself.

Ben Rizzi, owner and chief engineer of Master Sound Productions' recording studio on Long Island, where Jackson has done many of his demos, describes his work style as "totally professional": "He's very specific, he knows exactly what he wants. He comes in here and does one part after another. I mean *all* the parts: drums, vocals, string lines, horn parts... everything. He spends ten hours a day for a week."

By December, the band was fully rehearsed and ready to do some live dates. "We wanted the band to have the experience of playing the songs live before they went into the studio to record," recalls Kershenbaum. "They played about three dates on the East Coast, mostly in small clubs with little notice beforehand. The new material went over great and we discovered this was the best band he's had yet."

Also in December, the band entered the Masonic Lodge for the first time, to do a three-day run-through of the album. It was during these dates that the two-track digital live recording of the band was tried and dropped. They also began to experience some technical problems in constructing a control room from scratch. For the sake of simplicity it was decided that a more traditional approach to recording would have to be taken. Instead of a direct to two-track recording, it was decided to go to a 32-track 3M digital recorder.

"The only real drawback to recording under these conditions," according to David Kershenbaum, was "communicating with the band in the main room. There was no window between the control room and the main room and some-

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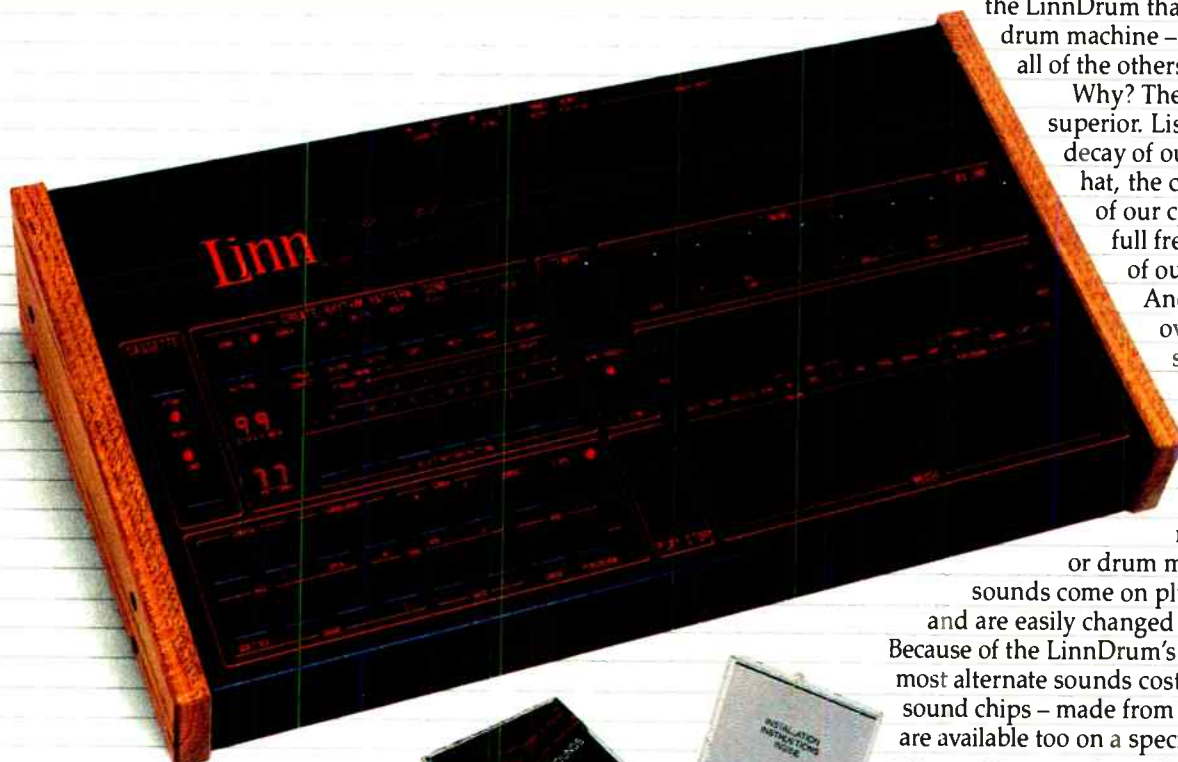
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times the lines between rooms were faulty."

During the warm-up phase of the project there had been no air of panic, and there was none during these trial recording dates. Joe would arrive in the studio at pivotal points to make decisions and then would leave to allow the technical people to do their work. This was typical of Jackson, whose MO has always been to hire people and then to stand back and give them the freedom to do the job. The lines of responsibility were clearly drawn for *Body And Soul*: Joe on the artistic side and David Kershbaum on the technical side. This clear-cut delegation of power kept the technicians and musicians comfortable even when things weren't going smoothly. David observes, "It's always been that way with Joe since the beginning. The only thing that has changed is his style of music."

After a two-month period of almost constant work, Joe, David and company took a rest over the Christmas holidays before the recording was to begin.

Early one Sunday afternoon in the first week of January, 1984, band members made their way through the remains of a snow storm, now brown mush in the Manhattan gutters, and up the elevators at 71 West 23rd Street to their new home for the next week, the Masonic Lodge. There in the cavernous, ornate wood and stone room, they would set up shop, tune drums and guitars, fix synthesizers, create isolation booths, place mikes... and wait.

After setting up their equipment, one player after another wandered down the long hall outside of the lodge to the newly created control room. Civilized intensity reigned, with engineers and assistant engineers working quickly and efficiently. "How long before you need me for sounds?" one of the players asked the room in general and no one in particular. "I just thought I'd go out and get some food if it's okay." One of the more serious engineers shot back, "I don't know. Why don't you call in from wherever you are in a couple of hours? We should have a better idea then." It could've been a long lunch; it would be three days before the first tracks were cut.

The main problem was the console in the control room. It just didn't work. One thing after another went wrong with it, until finally the decision was made to pull it out and to bring in a new one. The new desk was a Soundworks 32-in, 24-out, along with a Studer remote console. The band waited. They began to run down tunes to get sounds and to establish an overall balance. With every run-down there seemed to be a new problem; it looked as if this recording would never get off the ground.

After three days of waiting, the band picked an easy tune to run down, the ballad "Not Here, Not Now." By this point, after three days of everything going wrong, most naturally expected more glitches to pop up. The song was played and casually recorded, in what everyone assumed was a run-through. After listening to it in the control room, Joe came back into the lodge and announced, "Let's go on to the next one." The musicians just stood there, mouths open. It was literally a first take.

They were off and running. That day they did one more tune and the next day did five more basics, of which four were kept. The pieces had fallen into place in only two days. But that was deceiving: there had been the rehearsals with charts, the run-through at the lodge and the live dates, all of which had slowly changed them from a hired back-up band to a true ensemble able to perform under pressure.

The recording techniques Kersh-



GARY GESHOFF/RETNA

Joe takes his band out for a pretrial spin.

baum employed were designed to enhance band chemistry. "Almost all of the instruments were recorded live at the same time," he explains, "with the exception of a couple of tracks where we overdubbed some horn parts. Also, for the most part we re-recorded the acoustic piano by itself in that big room with the lid wide open and mikes at various distances. For overall room sound we just put a pair of vintage Neumann M-50s fifteen feet in the air. We also close-miked the band, of course. The vocals and mixdown had to be done at another studio because we ran out of time. There was going to be an event or something there the very next day."

After ten days at the lodge, they moved over to Atlantic Studios. By all accounts, the time spent there went smoothly. Lead and background vocals were cut, using Ellen Foley and Elaine Caswell for background vocals, with Elaine's reedy soprano sharing lead vocal duties on the romantic duet, "Happy Ending" (a tune with definite Hot Hit possibilities). Joe also added some percussion overdubs on "Cha Cha

Loco," which, like the rest of the overdubs, were designed to fit perfectly with the basic track. Even at the final stages, control and restraint remained the order of the day.

Long days were spent doing the mixing, but, miraculously, very little went wrong. Only in a couple of songs where they had wanted to do an automated mix was there any frustration. There were compatibility problems between the 3M digital and the board at Atlantic, so it was decided to mix the old-fashioned way, manually. Kershbaum favors a manual mix anyway. "I like the edge you can get with a hands-on mix. You never know when you'll give a fader that extra nudge that will make all the difference in the impact of a mix."

Body And Soul had been recorded digitally, and so to maintain the integrity of the process, digital machines were used in the mixdown. This was done by mixing simultaneously to both a 3M four-track digital machine, for the analog masters, and to the new Sony PCM 1610, for compact disc masters (this last step was advised by high-rent digital consultant Roger Nichols). Kershbaum figures that "the total time to record and mix was probably about twenty days."

By the final day of recording, a picture
continued on page 102

Joe Jackson Band Equipment

Gary Burke used his Gretsch drum kit and Zildjian cymbals with a variety of snare drums, a 1940 Slingerland Radio King, a 1930 Super Ludwig Brass and a 1930 Black Beauty; **Tony Aiello** used an Artley flute, and Selmer alto and tenor saxophones; **Michael Morreale** used a Bach trumpet and Yamaha flugelhorn; guitarist **Vinnie Zummo** played a Steinberger prototype through two DeltaLab Super Time Lines, Ibanez Digital Line Delays, Yamaha Digital Reverb and power amp, Roland mixer, an Alembic pre-amp, two JBL 12-inch bottoms, and finally an Audio 3-Stage FET pre-amp; **Graham Maby** used only a Fender Precision bass and an Ampeg B-15; **Ed Roynesdal** worked with a Yamaha DX7, Hammond B-3, Steinway Concert Grand, Ibanez Harmonic Delay, and a DeltaLab Time Line. Oh, let's not forget the boss. **Joe Jackson** played a Yamaha alto sax and a Steinway Concert Grand.

The first demos of *Body And Soul* were done at Long Island's Master Sound Productions. The main board there is a fully automated Trident TSM. Monitors are JBL biradials, tape machine is an Ampex ATR-100, mikes are Sennheisers and Neumanns. The temporary outpost at the lodge finally settled on a 32-in, 24-out Soundworks board connected to a Studer remote console. The main digital multi-track deck was a 32-track 3M, with Urei 813As for monitors. Mikes were Neumann M-50s and C-12s. The overdubs and mixdown at Atlantic's Studio B were done on a Neve 8108 board.

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NDUGU CHANCLER TRIPLE THREAT

**Evolutionary Jazzman,
Hit Sessionman,
Songwriter/producer**

By Don Snowden

The first thing I had to fight is drummers are not supposed to understand the music they're playing," says Ndugu Chancler, the newly installed occupant of the Crusaders drum chair. "Drummers are not supposed to read or write music, produce and arrange or have any feelings about anything but the beat. My whole philosophy is that I'm not just your drummer; that's only one of the instruments I play."

Living that philosophy has produced one multi-faceted career that's found the thirty-two-year-old Chancler donning a succession of musical hats with equal facility. Peek beneath the traditional jazzman's pork-pie model and discover a wealth of youthful experience playing behind Miles, Monk, Herbie Hancock, George Duke and Freddie Hubbard.

Doff the creative producer/arranger/songwriter cap and find selections from Santana's *Amigos*, Duke's *Reach For It* and the Dazz Band's *Let It Whip*. Lift the sessionman's chapeau and watch a multitude of gold and platinum credits, including half the tracks on Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, tumble out.

The intertwined strands of jazz upbringing and marketplace demands

seem altogether fitting for a musician whose first significant record credit—Herbie Hancock's *Mwandishi* LP—was a pay-back for bailing out the drummerless Hancock at a L.A. Forum gig opening for Iron Butterfly. Ndugu's journey through the music industry has shaped some blunt opinions:

On the session world: "It's based on being in the right place at the right time. Very seldom am I challenged to any heights of my musical ability and a lot of times my reading ability is not really challenged.

"All the bullshit is cut between February and June. Then you start having fun because you get down to the guys that are going to sell the bulk of the records."

On drum machines and related technological advances: "I give all that stuff credit for two things—weeding out guys that can't play and the drummers that can't keep good time."

On the hitmaking process: "Laymen determine hit records. It wasn't because Thomas Dolby has the name of the noise reduction system that his record was big. It was all electronic, a clean-sounding record, the subject matter was different, a great record.

"Most hits are not created conceptually in the studio. They're conceptualized by some guy in a remote area that believes in a direction. The music we play as studio musicians is a result of those trends."

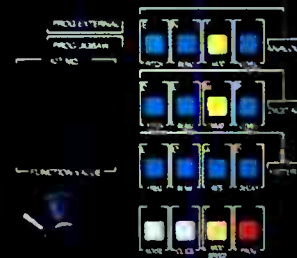
Born in Shreveport, Louisiana, Chancler's family made the westward migration to Los Angeles in 1960 and Ndugu took up drums four years later at age twelve. His skills were honed during formative years in the fertile atmosphere of Locke High School among contemporaries like Patrice Rushen, Danny LeMelle (saxman for Rick James) and Raymond Pounds (drummer with Stevie Wonder).

Between playing in the house band at Shelley's Manne Hole, weekend freelancing and running the L.A. club circuit with good friend James Mtume, Ndugu racked up stints with Willie Bobo, Eddie Harris, Hugh Masekela and Donald Byrd by the early 70s. A brief stretch with Freddie Hubbard took him to New York, but Chancler credits a six-month stay with (surprise!) Miles Davis for starting his transformation from a teenage jazz purist.

"Miles began to open my head up to Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone, James Brown, the Chambers Brothers, and to think about incorporating those styles into my musical taste," he explains. "He got me into using larger drums and taking the

continued on page 85

the next step



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What's a band-on-the-rise to do these days to get heard by the powers-that-be? Videos, right? Wrong, according to David Hewitt, who engineered such live classics as Bob Seger's *Nine Tonight*, the Stones' *Still Life* and the Who's 1982 satellite broadcast from Toronto: "Music videos have been receiving the lion's share of the attention lately, but audio tapes of live performances remain a primary resource for musicians. They can be used to review and fine-tune a stage show; to convince a manager, booking agent or record company to sign an act; or as material for a finished product released to the listening public."

Live demos can also be a necessity for bands that haven't logged much studio time. Tentative, careful performances that session pressures can produce will be replaced with a free-wheeling, comfortable dynamism that can represent a band's skills far more effectively. Here are some of the basics of quality live recording, from the simplest mono pickups to the most complex multi-track miking techniques.

If you want to make a quick reference tape of a performance at a club, J.T., the engineer for My Father's Place, a showcase club located in Roslyn Village, New York, suggests setting up two microphones approximately fifteen to twenty feet apart and thirty to fifty feet from the stage. "Take a piece of masking tape and hang the microphones from the ceiling so they won't be inadvertently moved during the show," J. T. explains. "Then run the microphones directly into a tape deck. You won't have to spend time adjusting faders on a mixing console. And you'll be recording the sound of the room the way your ears hear it."

When positioning these room mikes, be sure to avoid two common errors. One is securing the cords of the mikes to the ceiling and letting them hang straight down—that's right, you'll hear more of the audience than the band. The second is placing the mikes too close to the ceiling—there's too much air movement, ventilation system noise and reflected sound up there.

A more effective way to place the room mikes is to employ what's known as "coincident" or X miking. The two heads of the microphones are practically touching, but they're both pointing at opposite sides of the stage. Another variation, called "near-coincident" or Y miking, has the backs of the mikes touching with the fronts aimed at the edges of the stage. These techniques produce far better imaging, particularly if

HOW TO MAKE A GREAT LIVE DEMO

Bringin' 'Em Back Alive for Maximum Punch

By Jock Baird & Stan Soocher

the mikes are accurately aimed. (It's also easier to bring both cables down from the same perch.) Shure makes a special adapter, the A-27M, for putting two mikes on the same stand and swiveling them to any position. They also make a special 15-foot mikestand, the S-15, to get them above the crowd. AKG makes three big-budget mikes with two movable diaphragms that can be displayed for X-Y miking, the C-422 (which has narrow-beamed LEDs to exactly check the aim—wow!) and the C-33 and -34.

General room miking is best done with a cardioid condenser type mike. A what, you say? Well, most mikes are either *omnidirectional*, that is they pick up sound equally well in all directions, or *unidirectional*. The pickup pattern of the latter resembles an upside-down heart, hence the term *cardioid* (it can be more accurately described as an upside-down apple). Super-cardioids and hyper-cardioids go even further in rejecting off-axis sounds. In a room full of alcohol-crazed listeners, the use of an omnidirectional mike for general room miking will reveal more about the mating habits of your audience than your performance. We recommend a cardioid.

Now, what's this condenser business? Well, most mikes convert acoustic sound to electric energy in two ways. The first, known as a dynamic generating element, is essentially a moving diaphragm attached to a coil of wire near a magnet; when the voice coil vibrates, a voltage is produced. *Dynamic* mikes are simple, rugged, can't really be blown out and don't cost a bundle. *Condenser* mikes are more complicated—and more expensive. They use two plates (with an insulating material in the middle) to electrify sound waves, one of these being the diaphragm, the other a fixed backplate. A "polarizing" voltage is supplied between the two plates, and the motion of the sound waves hitting the diaphragm changes the output voltage, converting it to electrical energy. In modern condenser mikes, a "pre-polarized" *electret* material is used for the diaphragm. The low-voltage signal is then sent to an internal preamplifier (or a "phantom"

external one) and beefed up for its shipment to the mixer. Thus condenser mikes need their own power supply, usually batteries. Condensers are generally more fragile (though some of the new breed of condensers can take physical punishment cheerfully) and can be over-sensitive to high-gain input, but they handily repay these negatives with wider, smoother frequency response, especially in the high end, and good transient accuracy. You may not be able to mike everything with condensers, but room mikes and important instruments and voices deserve them.

There is also a third type called a *printed ribbon* microphone. These used to be too expensive and fragile to bring on a live demo, but some manufacturers have recently been able to reproduce the high sensitivity and warmth of the printed ribbon sound in a less expensive, shock-resistant format by etching a fine aluminum ribbon wire coil onto a thin polyester diaphragm. Fostex's RP series, Shure's SM33 and Beyer's M-500 are notable innovations in this mike type.

Unfortunately, room miking alone won't give you what you really want in a great live demo. In addition to crowd noise, you'll find lack of definition, general distortion, poor room acoustics, and P.A. shortcomings all conspire against you. But you need the ambience, so room miking is still necessary even if you go further and mike the instruments individually. That's why J.T. recommends combining both:

"Run a room microphone into one channel of your tape deck and the board signal into the other channel. Forget about true stereo in a club, unless you're doing a 24-track mix in a mobile unit. When you record with a room microphone on one channel, you'll have ambience, while on the other channel you'll have control over the electronics through the mixing board. I've engineered many radio shows from here exactly the same way."

Direct recording can be a breeze if you've already got all the instruments miked for concert reinforcement, but this system does have its drawbacks, since the sonic demands of reinforce-

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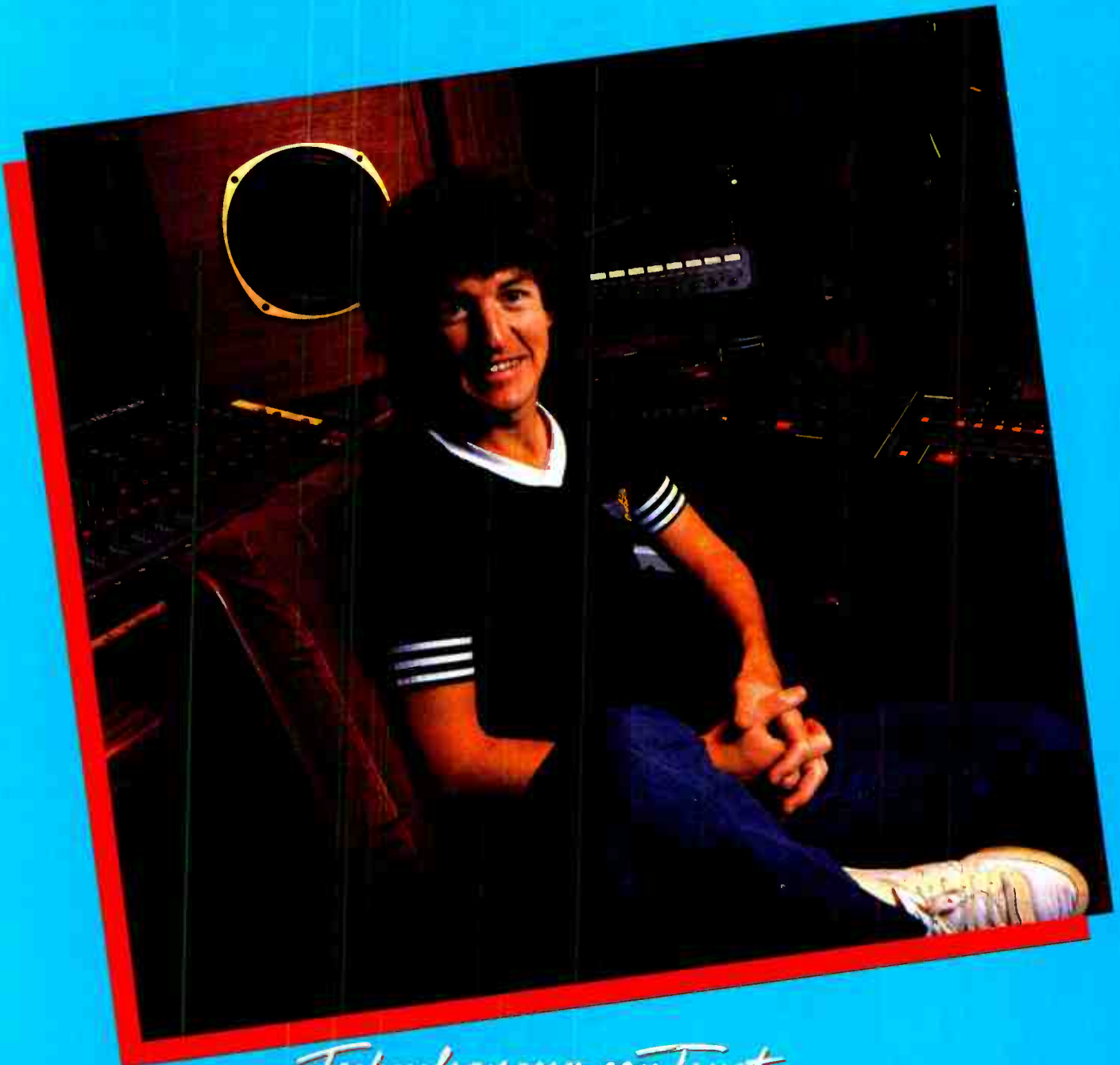
"Keep writing. Keep recording. Keep

making demos. Even when you're turned down, keep trying. Someone will hear you and respond."

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ment are different from those of recording. It's usually better to get a separate mixer for the recording and either Y-plug each mike to both mixers or add new, more appropriately placed mikes. If there's any way you can, set up that mixer in an isolated location so your engineer can monitor what's going down on tape uninfluenced by what's pumping into the room. Try to bring two tape machines so that you can overlap the tape and avoid stopping the deck; as long as both are running simultaneously for a second or two, you can splice it together later. If you can't swing an extra deck, at least bring along an extra take-up reel. When a song ends and you know you don't have enough tape for the next, you can remove *both* reels on the machine and thread the next reel of tape without the usual embarrassing pause between songs for rewinding.

Assuming you don't make extensive use of Microphone Substitution Devices (MSDs)—a.k.a. Direct Injection boxes (DIs)—you'll need to know something about mike placement. Choice of mike and location can actually be the single most important step in eliminating the roar of overdrive that most first attempts at live taping produce. An important consideration is what is known as *proximity effect*. This is the property of a mike to raise the bass frequencies, or boominess, as you get closer to it—any vocalist worth his or her salt knows what that's about. In miking an instrument, that change in response can drastically muddy up the sound and overload the recording levels, especially when the mike is set closer than two inches. Avoid the common error of touching the grill cloth. Another universal screw-up that everyone's done at one time or another is simply dangling the mike down in front of the speaker. No no no... point it directly at the speaker. The most accurate reproduction comes from placing the mike about four inches from the grill cloth at the center of the speaker cone. Special brackets like Shure's A45Z help immensely. Sticking a finger in one ear and listening at various points on the speaker cone will tell you a lot: if the amp is unusually hot or hissy (as guitar amps are wont to be), try moving the mike off-center a few inches. Experiment profusely for best results.

There are a number of ways to defeat the potentially deadly proximity effect. Omnidirectional mikes have no proximity effect at all, so even though they will pick up sounds in all directions, putting them right on the speaker will make the signal so much louder than the background noise that relatively little leakage will ensue. (Some go so far as to suggest omnis for trouble instruments like electric bass or kick drum). Another way around the dangers of being close are

newer microphones that have substantially reduced proximity effect, particularly the Electro-Voice Variable D and Multiple D series, AKG's D-222EB and D-224E and Fostex's M11RP and M77RP. These have multiple diaphragms or entry ports to reduce the boom-causing low-end pressure. Shure's SM53 and TOA's RD-10 also have controlled proximity effect. Some condenser mikes like Fender's M-1 and Fostex's M11RP and M77RP have notch filters that can spike out a choice of several troublesome frequencies. Other condensers like AKG's C-460B, C-451EB and C-535EB, Fostex's M-88, TOA's RD-17E and Fender's P-2 roll off the lows. These so-called high pass filters are finding their way into dynamic mikes too, as evidenced by Shure's SM7 and SM54, AKG's D-222EB, D-224E, D-320B and D-330BT, TOA's RD-16 and others. These reduced-proximity-effect mikes also aid vocalists who, once the show starts, forget all about the levels you so carefully set during soundcheck and eat their mikes (Elvis Presley, a habitual mike-eater, preferred the SM53).

Speaking of singers, you should be aware when using vocal mikes for instrument miking that they often will have what's called a "presence peak," a hump or plateau in the 2 to 5kHz area that gives the sound a little crispness. This may be what you want for instrument miking, but if it isn't, compensate for the peak with a little eq on the mixer. Many vocal mikes have multi-position switches for high end tweaks, similar to the low end roll-offs mentioned above. Others are specially designed for either male or female voices. Read the literature and study the frequency response curve carefully before buying.

Probably the most sophisticated miking techniques are those used for

drums. A drum kit has four separate types of miking problems and a different solution is needed for each. The kick drum and electric bass share a propensity for high sound pressures and dangerously low frequencies. A large diaphragm mike like a Shure SM7, an AKG C-414EB or D12E, or an Electro-Voice PL20 (a Variable D cousin of the much-used RE20, the professional standard for recording kick drum) can handle all that air magnificently. Many new condensers like the Fender P1, P2 and M1 have a slowed or "graceful" overloading characteristic, a quality shared by many tougher dynamics. (We won't bother to tell you to put the kick mike on a pillow to control resonance—you knew about that.) For miking the snare, a good general-duty dynamic (a presence peak is acceptable here) or condenser cardioid should be used to keep a bit of zing, but toms should sound slightly darker, so avoid high-end effects if possible. Toms and snares are best miked an inch or so from the rim for the least possible leakage, but can also be effectively miked from below. Some miniatures can be clipped directly on the rim. You can double up two toms to a mike, a process aided considerably by the use of two-way microphones which pick up each side of the pattern but not the front. Fostex's M80RP and M88 and Shure's 300 are good examples of these. Because of insane leakage problems, don't use an omni for toms, unless you plan to put it inside the tom (the Ringo *thwump*). Tape the drumheads lightly to cut down on overtones.

The final drum problem is overhead cymbals, which illustrates another potential pitfall for the uninitiated: when you point two mikes at the same general sound source, you can get what's called

continued on page 104

	Room Miking	Lead Instr.	Chord Instr.	Bass	Toms & Snare	Kick	Cymbals	Vocals	Omni	Economy
AKG	C-422 C-34 C-414EB C-451EB	D-224E C-460B D-330BT	C-460B C-535EB D-320B D-330BT	D-12E C-460B D-330BT D-222EB	C-451EB C-535EB D-224E D-330BT	D-12E D-330BT C-414EB C-535EB	C-414EB C-451EB D-330BT	C-414EB C-451EB capsules D-300s	C-567E CK-2X D-58E D-80E D-109	D-125E D-58E D-80E D-109
Astatic	BL84	BL64	BL64&84	BL64	BL64&74	BL64	BL84	BL94&74	BL54	BL34
audio-technica	AT811 AT813	AT812 AT836 ATM63 AT814a	AT811 AT813 ATM63 AT812	AT802 AT836 AT812 ATM63	AT836 AT811 ATM63 ATM41a	AT836 ATM63	AT811 AT813	ATM41a AT814a AT6M AT836	AT801 AT802 AT803a	
Beyer	M-201 M-88 M-500	M-88 M-101	M-88 M-101 M-201	M-400 M-600	M-88 M-201	M-400 M-88	M-201 M-88 M-500	M-500 M-88 M-600	M-101	
Electro-Voice	CS15P PL9 PL76B	PL5 PL9 PL11	PL20 PL11 PL6	PL20 PL11 PL6	PL11 PL6 PL20	PL20 PL11	CS15P PL76B BL77B	PL95 PL80&86 BK1	PL9 PL5	PL88 PL91A
Fender	P1&2 M1	P1&2 D2,M1	P1&2 D2,M1	P1&2 D2	P1&2 D2	D2,P1	M1 P1&2	All Ds&Ps		D1
Fostex	M22RP M910	M85RP M11RP M55RP	M11RP M55RP M85RP	M77RP	M85RP M80RP M88	M77RP	M22RP	M11RP M55RP M77RP		M505 M110
Shure	SM81 SM80 SM76	SM81 SM53 SM57&58 SM59	SM81 SM53 SM57&58 SM59	SM7 SM53 SM76	SM85 SM57&58 SM56 SM81	SM7 SM63 SM56	SM81 SM80	SM7 SM33 SM85 SM53&59	SM80 SM63 SM76	PE86 PE66 PE9 PE35
TOA	RD-15C RD-17E	RD-16 RD-10,14	RD-15C RD-16&10	RD-16 RD-10	RD-12 RD-17E	RD-16	RD-15C RD-17E	RD-10,12 13&14	RD-18	RD-14

Harmonica: Astatic BLJ30; Shure Green Bullet
Economy Overachievers: G.L.I. Models 55, 58 & 88; Peavey CD-20, 30 & 40

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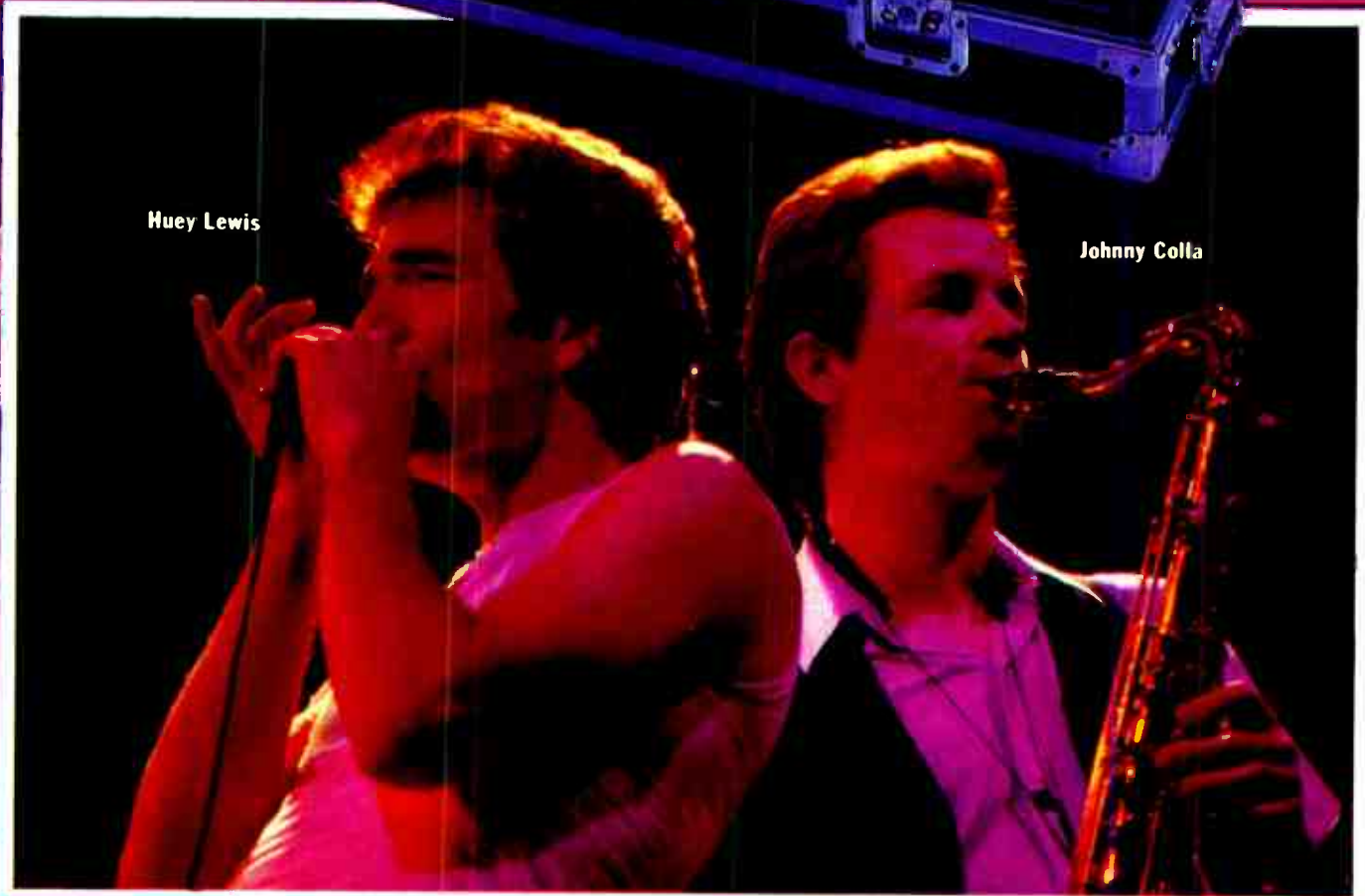
Catch Huey Lewis & The News in action if they're in your area or "take a listen" to their latest album, *Sports* (featuring the hits "Heart and Soul" and "I Want a New Drug"). You'll see for yourself why these artists and Peavey are receiving rave reviews.

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Huey Lewis

Johnny Colla



GARY GESHOFF/RETNA



Mario Cipollina, Sean Hopper, Chris Hayes, Lewis, Johnny Colla and Bill Gibson

HUEY LEWIS GETS NEWSWORTHY

The Curious, Complete Education of a Relaxed Hitmaker

By Bill Flanagan

The truth is, we've always been a pretty good live band," Huey Lewis says emphatically, "but we haven't always been a good studio band. I think we've become one now."

Indeed, with *Sports*, their third self-produced album, Huey Lewis & the News have made the jump from commercial lightweights to serious contenders. But that transition almost fell victim to major-label politics: although the

band's second LP, *Picture This*, included a couple of popular singles ("Workin' For A Livin'" and "Do You Believe In Love?"), *Sports* sat unreleased on the record company's shelf for months while the independent Chrysalis label was absorbed into giant CBS. Only after a hard lobby by Lewis & the News did CBS give *Sports* its release, a decision they haven't regretted. The first single, "Heart And Soul," became a hit and earned the band a Grammy nomination for best group performance. The follow-up, "I Want A New Drug," overcame its controversial title to ascend the pop charts and become an MTV fixture. By late winter, Lewis and the boys were riding high: touring the country as a support act for *.38 Special*, the News were giving the headliners a run for their money

most nights even as CBS was preparing to release *Sports*' third 45, "The Heart of Rock & Roll."

Despite Lewis' trendy Young Republican looks and formidable video skills, though, his success is not one more MTV overnight sensation. Huey's view-from-the-trenches attitude and loose, almost fatalistic approach to making gold records is firmly rooted in years of serious ambition and greater disappointments with the country-rock California group Clover. "Clover spent a long time," Lewis recalls, "trying to come up with a *hit* so a record company would sign us."

To fully appreciate Clover's frustration, consider the unsung talent: besides Lewis on harmonica and Sean Hopper, now keyboardist for the News, the group included guitarist John McFee, who later replaced Skunk Baxter in the Doobie Brothers, and singer Alex Call, who wrote the smash "867-5309 Jenny" for Tommy Tutone. Clearly this was not your ordinary West Coast bar band. Yet in the mid-70s Hollywood rock world, Clover couldn't get a listen.

Finally the band was offered a deal with British Phonogram by Dave Robinson and Jake Riviera (who would shortly change rock history with Stiff Records in general and Elvis Costello in particular). Figuring they'd go where the luck was, Clover moved to England. Luck saw them coming and split. The long-haired Californians arrived just as the Sex Pistols and Clash exploded. Clover stayed in England for two years, but never really had a chance in the punk marketplace. Still, the group (minus Lewis and Call) backed Elvis Costello on *My Aim Is True*, and Huey learned that the pop rules he'd been forced to swallow in California might no longer apply.

"These kids were singing quirky, funny lyrics in gruff voices," Lewis recalls. "Not perfect radio tenors. And there was Nick Lowe and Rockpile playing Chuck Berry—that kind of stuff I liked! And record companies were going for it!"

"Nick Lowe's whole attitude was, 'To hell with the music business. I'm going to get my buddies and play Chuck Berry tunes. That's what we like. That's rock 'n' roll.' And I thought, 'Wow! What a relief! What fun! Not to have to go for A HIT!' So when Clover broke up that's exactly what I did."

Exactly what Huey did was return to San Francisco and start a regular Monday night jam session with Sean Hopper and other local pals. In 1978 the pick-up band was offered some free studio time and used it (keep Huey's new-found

continued on page 87

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weren't enough, each voice also has capabilities for extensive frequency modulation (FM), with twenty-seven possible modulation sources and forty-seven destinations, all routed through eighteen independent modulation busses. Not bad.... The Xpander interfaces with any keyboard, sequencer, guitar or computer with MIDI or control voltage/gate outputs, though naturally it works most impressively with the Oberheim Music System.

The hundred available patches store all of the parameters (as well as the name) of each sound program; patches can also be combined. The three forty-character alphanumeric displays and an interactive block diagram simplify what could otherwise be a very complex programming process. The Xpander should be available as you read this, listing for \$2,995 from Oberheim Electronics, 2250 South Barrington Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90064. (213) 473-6574

Unbasic Bass

The Jayne is one of the overachievers in the recent profusion of fine new electric basses. Designed by Harry Fleishman,



one of the pioneers of right-hand tuning electric basses (he made his first one in 1971, well before Ned Steinberger popularized reverse tuning), the Jayne is durably constructed with a solid maple center, a graphite core for extra rigidity, two adjustable truss rods for minute neck adjustment, and an ebony-like fingerboard. Throw in Shaller tuning pegs, a solid brass bridge, a two-octave neck and active electronics (with boost or cut of treble and bass plus coil-switching capability), and you're looking at some kind of electric bass for \$1,400. Fleishman Instruments, 760 Santa Fe Drive, Denver, CO 80204. (303) 573-7296

Expandable, My Dear Holmes

The Holmes Corporation (from good ol' Greenwood, Mississippi) has packed plenty of wattage and mixing capability into their new XM-Series of powered mixers. Available in six, nine and twelve channels, the Holmes offers three bands of eq control and two effects loops per channel, separate seven-band eq-ing on each side of the mono main output, and three-way headphone cueing. The six- and nine-channel versions come with 135-watt amps, while the twelve channel model sports 250 watts. You can double that output by ordering an additional monitor amp stage in the same unit. For maximum



flexibility, the amp stages can be strapped for increased wattage, bypassed for recording fun, or used alone with another mixer. All the XM-Series models can be expanded in six-channel increments for inexpensive system growth. Prices range from \$799 to \$1,450 from the On-Site Energy Systems Corp. (who brought you the M.P.C. "Kit"), 3000 Marcus Ave., Suite 2W7, Lake Success, NY 11042. (516) 775-5510

Jumpin' Juno!

Not to be outdone by the general improvement of cheap polysynths, Roland has replaced its popular Juno 60 with the new Juno 106. Already a strong six-voice, five-octave keyboard with six DCOs (all with their own VCF, VCA and envelope generator), an LFO and chorus circuit, the Juno now has expanded memory for 128 presets (add off-loading tape interface for a million more), portamento controls and full MIDI interface



capabilities. For program switching while under fire, a foot pedal can be plugged into a patch shift jack on the rear panel. Output is mono or stereo, with a headphone jack thrown in for good measure. A lot of sound for \$1095. Contact Roland Corp US, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040.

Commodore and More

Waveform has indeed made computer waves with its potent 3-part MusiCalc software especially designed for the popular Commodore 64. MusiCalc 1 converts the Commodore into a fully



interactive sequencer and a three-voice synthesizer for \$75. MusiCalc 2 is a scoring software system that translates sequences into standard musical notation in up to three parts for \$30 (you'll need a printer to get hard copy, though). The MusiCalc 3 package transforms the QWERTY keyboard into a musical keyboard that can be played in any scale or melodic sequence. MusiCalc 3 also includes a library of seventy scales and modes, one of the most complete collections of international scales found anywhere, and allows for instant transposition of them all. It can rearrange the keyboard, visually edit, combine different scales, store what you've written and arpeggiate, all for \$30. Waveform, 1912 Bonita Way, Berkeley, CA 94704. (415) 841-9866

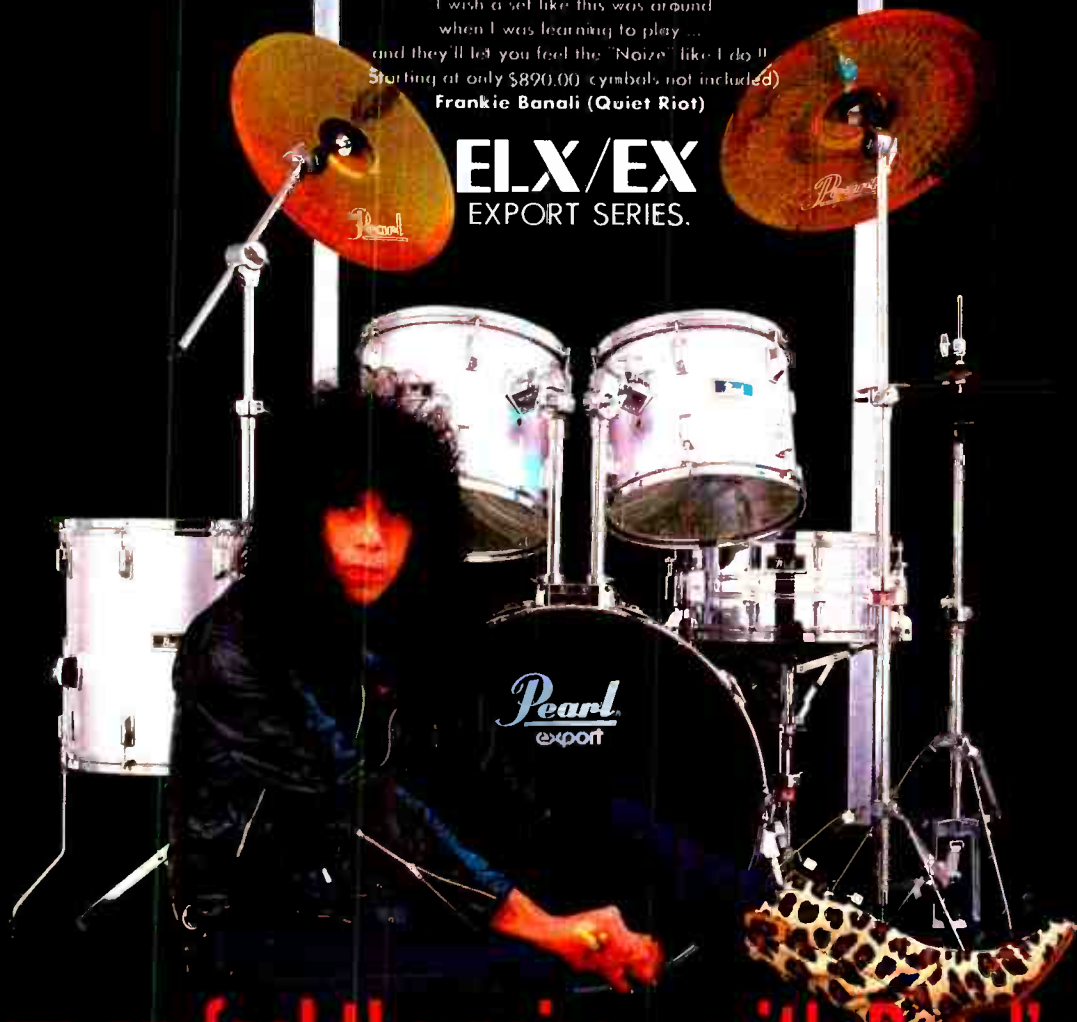
Ernie Ball Acquires Music Man

Ernie Ball Inc. recently announced its acquisition of the Music Man trade name and its respected line of guitars, basses, hardware and electronics. Head engineer Mark Wentling and president Tom Walker will be staying on with the company. Music Man product owners may rest assured that Ernie Ball will honor all existing warranties. The SoCal string-makers did not acquire the amplifier part of the MM line, however, as they are promising some home-grown surprises in that area. For a fuller explanation, contact Ernie Ball, Box 2117, Newport Beach, CA 92663. (800) 54E-BALL

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from page 74
front head off.

"Prior to that, I was more in the bebop/Tony Williams mode where you have a four-piece drum set, front head on the bass drum, a lot of ring and overtones. That didn't lend itself to blending with electronic music but it was something I had to experience to accept."

Back in Los Angeles, Ndugu inaugurated long-standing associations with both George Duke and Ujima (later Karma), the latter group co-led by his former Locke student teacher and future production partner Reggie Andrews. Working with Alice Coltrane led to a 1974 offer from Carlos Santana, then sampling jazzier waters in the wake of *Caravanserai*. Chancler initially declined but when projected roadwork with Marvin Gaye fell through—"He was going to record a live album in Oakland but they were going to use studio musicians. My rap was, 'If I can't do the record, I don't join the band.'"—he joined Santana and faced the fires of controversy attending the advent of the fusion era.

"I always wanted to have control of my own destiny in terms of how long I was in the business, what I played and not be forced to be obscure or dated," Chancler declares. "My personal feeling is that there really is no jazz music per se at this point. There is a creative form of commercial music which has been called fusion."

Step one in entering what Chancler

terms "the mainstream of commercialism" was co-producing *Amigos*, the LP that brought Santana back from the relative commercial limbo of his spiritual phase. Number two was a two-year stretch working exclusively with Duke that culminated in the "Reach For It" hit. After a pair of abortive late 70s LPs as a bandleader, stage three was a series of production collaborations with Andrews on mainstream R&B/funk bands including *Klique*, *General Caine*, *Kiddo* and, the big payoff, the *Dazz Band*.

Making a name behind the console wasn't the only item cluttering Ndugu's agenda. With no appealing outlets for live performing in 1980, he plunged full-force into the parallel studio musician career he started cultivating in 1976. There were occasions, like the night Ndugu the producer of Rocky Robbins met Ndugu the *Thriller* sessionman, when juggling roles presented problems:

"The most important thing about doing sessions is forgetting what and how you did a performance by someone else. 'P.Y.T.' took me the longest on *Thriller* because I was bugged by something on the project I was doing. The first hour was me getting my head clear to give them the maximum performance—I had to forget how I was recording Rocky Robbins and get into how Quincy was recording Michael Jackson."

Ndugu regards his work on *Thriller* as a turning point: "Musically it wasn't a challenge but conceptually, how it was

recorded, was. A few of the songs reminded me of how I used to record with Ike Turner. We laid the bass drum, high-hat and snare down and buttered it up."

The album's crowning achievement for Ndugu reflects the maxim that simplicity is a virtue. "'Billie Jean' is the simplest beat that could ever be played by a drummer. There's a great deal of discipline involved in giving someone something that simple to play for five minutes. It's like putting on handcuffs and saying, 'Okay, I'm not going to move here.'

"That's still a very special song to me, not based on what I played but the feeling I got from the whole song. I think I played better on 'Baby Be Mine' or 'Thriller' in terms of hip licks but that's not what they're calling you for as a studio musician. They're calling you to do a job so I think I did a greater job on 'Billie Jean.' It speaks for itself."

Despite the lucrative immersion in the session treadmill, Ndugu kept his ears peeled for the appropriate vehicle for returning his sophisticated stickmanship to the performing arena. Enter old friends the Crusaders with the proverbial offer he couldn't refuse.

"After George Duke, I vowed not to be in any more bands unless I was an integral part conceptually and economically. My days as a sideman are over and the Crusaders is one of the last groups where I can exercise total creative freedom. In a nutshell, I'm one of the three leaders of the Crusaders."

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Besides psycho-acoustics, that is.

With the newly cemented Crusaders connection, a well-established production career and a solo LP due before year's end, expect no gloomy portraits of the state of popular music circa 1984 from Ndugu's corner.

"If I stopped playing tomorrow, I would rest assured that I was successful as a jazz musician and a commercial musician. Having worked with Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, George Duke and then Lionel Richie and Michael Jackson, I know I've been involved with the best."

EQUIPMENT

Chancler's keyboard equipment includes a Fender Rhodes 73 suitcase, Arp Odyssey, Minimoog and a Yamaha CE20, PS55 and CS01. "I use the Minimoog a lot for bass lines and I do all the writing sitting at the piano or bass synthesizer with the LinnDrum machine."

Apart from two sets of vibes and a full complement of Latin and hand percussion, Ndugu favors the custom-made nine-ply Yamaha kit (he has the only two sets) employed on *Thriller* and all his projects over the past eight years.

"It's made of jacaranda wood, the same wood they make their guitars out of. I use a 6½ inch wooden snare, two Remo Rototoms, Paiste cymbals and Remo Fiberskin II drum heads.

"I have six toms—8-, 10-, 12-, 13-, and 16- and 18-inch floor toms—because that way I basically have all the ranges covered. I don't have to re-tune. If a guy wants a particular tone, all I do is pick which drum to hit and the pitch is basically in that ballpark." □

from page 80
sense of fun in mind) to record "Exo-disco," a disco version of the theme from *Exodus*.

Shortly thereafter Lewis went back to England to play harp on Nick Lowe's *Labour Of Lust* album. While in London he played the disco parody for a friend at Phonogram. The record company, to Huey's amusement, thought the novelty tune was a hit and gave him a singles deal and six thousand dollars. He brought the money home and used it to pay for the demo session that got the News their deal with Chrysalis.

Lewis & the News' first studio attempts were strictly seat-of-the-pants: "On the first album, I wanted a live sound. We figured if we just set up the mikes and did a maximum of three takes, it would sound live. Unfortunately, you can't do that. You have to get a tone first, take your time and be patient. I've never been a perfectionist before.

"I think we figured that out a little between the first and second albums, and a lot between the second and third. We got to be better at production and better players in the studio. Now we let the tracks breathe. I'm really intent on keeping the old, emotional, *passionate* feeling in our music, but we still use synthesizers and drum machines on most every track. They're wonderful tools as long as you play them and they don't play you."

While Lewis' coming of age as his own

producer is mostly complete, he says he still dreams of working with two producers he most admires: Mike Chapman (who co-wrote "Heart And Soul") and Mutt Lange. Lange, as it turns out, is one of Lewis' friends and favorite subjects. The South African hitmaker even produced two albums by Clover. Huey says he has approached Lange about recording him, but that the autocratic Afrikaner has declined. "I'm not sure Mutt really *reckons* me as an artist," Lewis smiles, adding that Lange doesn't care to record less-than-platinum acts.

Won't *Sports* establish his credibility? Football fan Lewis smiles and shrugs: "Mutt Lange is the Tom Landry of rock 'n' roll. He's driven. He's also the best. Year after year—consistently—he doesn't miss. I'm much more of a go-for-it type. I'd rather jump in there and do one or two takes and get spontaneity. But time will tell you that if you want to make successful records that's not the way to do it. Make 'em perfect. That's what Mutt does."

Lewis may have been a reluctant convert to studio perfectionism, but *since* converting he's approached his new belief with the evangelical zeal of the twice born. To the suggestion that Mario Cipollina's bass moves a hair ahead of Bill Gibson's drum beat on the second verse of "I Want A New Drug," Lewis says firmly, "No. It's absolutely perfect." Then he explains, "It's locked into a

continued on page 100

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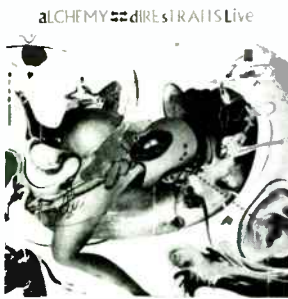
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RECORD REVIEWS

Dire catches fire with a double-disc live set that exudes vitality and virtuosity.



DIRE STRAITS
Alchemy
(Warner Bros.)



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

A live double-album isn't the last thing you'd expect from a band like Dire Straits. It's the *least* you'd expect. Of all the truly lasting groups thrown up by the 1977 British pub 'n' punk upheaval, Dire Straits—now basically singer/guitarist Mark Knopfler and a small army of dedicated sidemen—stayed truest to the white blues-rock tradition of extended guitar monologues and earthy Dylan-esque whining. More old wave than old hat, Knopfler brought new substances to the form with his poignant narratives and pastel shades of country blues.

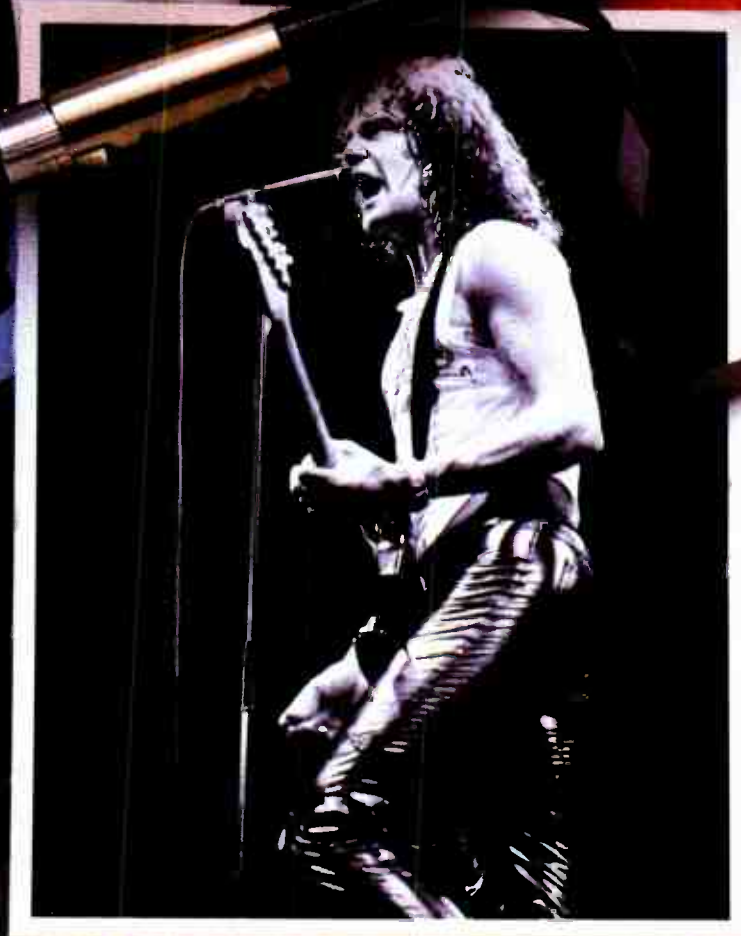
Like a ninety-minute greatest hits collection, *Alchemy* confirms with blithe confidence Knopfler's greatest strengths. His asthmatic growl on "Romeo And Juliet" and "Private Investigations" is like a hushed bittersweet prayer—in one the sad complaint (echoed by his sour pluck of an acoustic guitar) of a great love gone wrong, in the other the quiet

agony of someone who's seen plenty more. Taken at a faster, harder pace, his guitar clucking with impetuous harshness, "Sultans Of Swing" is still a haunting lyrical portrait of everyday jazzmen compelled to play for feeling rather than fame. After hearing Knopfler stretch half the songs here with shimmering riff motifs and urgent solos for an extra five or six minutes (real airplay suicide—most FM DJs can't count that high anymore), you may feel the same about him.

That's what makes *Alchemy* such a pleasant surprise. Recorded *au naturel* with no cosmetic overdubs to disguise the clunkers, it is the first time on record that Dire really catches fire, free of Knopfler's compulsive studio perfection. "Expresso Love" and "Two Young Lovers," the latter from the underrated 1983 "party" EP *Twisting By The Pool*, become wicked boogie torpedos with

drummer Terry Williams pacing the band with his eager Rockpile slam. Team players with aggressive dramatic savvy, support guitarist Hal Lindes and main keyboard player Alan Clark rise and fall with Knopfler in "Tunnel Of Love" and "Telegraph Road"; they navigate lengthy solo passages like mind-readers, and often well up with a celebratory fervor that eggs him on.

Not all of this album's bright moments are roaring bonfires. "Once Upon A Time In The West" is drawn out to nearly a quarter of an hour like a fragile spiral of cigarette smoke, Knopfler's own gray wheezing vocal spiked by the telegraphic bursts of arcing solo guitar. (There is method even in that, a careful mapping of emotions and energies that leaves only the minimum to chance.) But *Alchemy* is, in the end, great Straits because he hasn't forgotten the magic in it, too. —**David Fricke**



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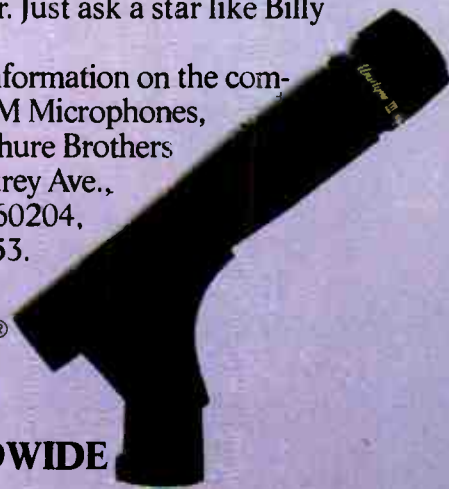
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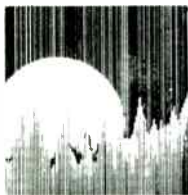
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THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS

Mirror Moves
 (Columbia)

The Psychedelic Furs' leader, Richard Butler, could be the spiritual brother of Henry, the unlikely hero of Tom Stoppard's latest play, *The Real Thing*. Butler and Henry (as British actor Jeremy Irons portrays him) share a throaty, haughty voice, an urbane wit, and the dubious gift for sharpening words into shards of cruelty. Both adopt a peevish, cynical pose which doesn't quite hide their vulnerability and idealism; and while Henry is obsessed with and guilty of marital infidelity, he ultimately proves a true romantic.

The same goes for Butler, who began as a Rottenesque bawler ranting "stupid, stupid, stupid" over the darkly textured guitars and erotically mewling saxophone of the Furs' 1980 debut. He became more articulate on the band's second album, *Talk Talk Talk*, writing with haunting, often self-mocking sadness about vows that don't mean what they should ("No Tears"), love that comes too cheap ("Pretty In Pink"), and love that costs too much ("All Of This And Nothing"). But on the Furs' third and finest album, *Forever Now*, Butler unexpectedly shed the "knee-jerk negativity" that rumbled through the band's previous records; with elegantly ravaged vocals, he affirmed love, trust, and political action, just as the chiming single "Love My Way" set the album's tone of pop sunlight breaking through punky gloom.

Mirror Moves continues Butler's born-again optimism, while the Furs can't duplicate the thrill of self-discovery that fueled *Forever Now*, they deliver their most consistently delicious bunch of songs yet. Producer Keith Forsey cuts John Ashton's dense guitars with a clean dance-pop bite; indeed, "Heart-beat," with its sexy squawking sax, high-powered synths and strutting bass, will likely be the band's first real dance hit. All is not gloss, however; "Alice's House" is a rolling piano/walloping drums/buzzing guitar raver that drips with Stones-ish zonked decadence. *Forever Now's* political sarcasm echoes

through the distortion-riddled, anti-Reagan thrasher "Here Come Cowboys," and again on "Highwire Days," in which Butler looks grimly toward the future ("They pushed all the buttons and things... we paid for the cross and the nails") while his backing vocals urge us to "get smart/get scared." Once again, it's Butler's empathy that bowls us over. "There's a song on the air with a 'love you' line/ And a face in the glass and it looks like mine," he sings atop a joyfully skipping piano on "Heaven"; he's as surprised as we are to find that in a "world gone underground," our hearts retain the capacity for hope. And when Butler holds out a hand to a despairing friend on "My Time," the transformation of the Furs from fashionable pessimists to openhearted pop activists certainly feels like the real thing. — **Joyce Millman**

Carla Bley Heavy Heart



CARLA BLEY

Heavy Heart
 (Watt/ECM)

This is a very good jazz-pop album, the second such creature Carla Bley has sent forth from Grog Kill to the world, the first being 1976's *Dinner Music* (wonderful title), and although I'm a very big, practically inexhaustible fan of Carla Bley I have only a negative interest in the jazz-pop genre, as in is it dead yet and if not, when? *Heavy Heart*. I gritted my teeth through a few listenings, looking for small things to like about the project—I have the feeling I'm exactly the kind of longtime fan Bley would like to irritate—and bedad if she didn't get me to actually like the thing by the fourth or fifth hearing. Side two, anyway. Sure I'd be happier with the long-threatened opera *Holy Roller Coaster*—pure and synthetic humans, the amusement cathedrals of the future, that kind of thing—full of brass bands, questionable choruses, infinite ironies and large-scale outrage, and no, *Heavy Heart* probably won't revolve in my house as frequently as *Escalator Over The Hill* or *European Tour 1977*, but I'll be damned if the album didn't finally make my surly, snobbish heart go pit-a-pat. I'm amazed and a little appalled.

It opens with "Light And Dark," breezy

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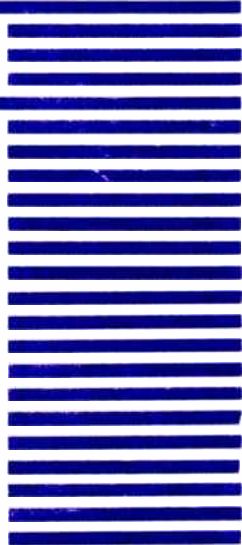
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THERE IS AN APOCRYPHAL (look it up) story that Paul Weller, former front-man of the Jam, and Mick Talbot, formerly of Dexy's Midnight Runners, met on the ground floor of Bloomingdale's and decided to form a band called **Style Council**. Another story indicates the two attended grammar school together, and although never popular enough to be elected to Student Council, vowed someday to establish their own. Wherever the truth lies (and it's clearly not on this page), Weller and Talbot's Style Council presents a vision that's both personal and upbeat. That personal vision is reflected in the title of their new Geffen album, **My Ever Changing Moods**. We like the title. No we don't. Yes we do. Shut up.



Vol. 84, No. 2

THIS IS

HE WRITES, HE PLAYS, HE RECORDS, HE BUYS, HE SELLS. He's **Steve Tibbetts**, and he may very well be the ultimate music machine. Steve "O-Matic" Tibbetts works in a record store one day a week, dividing the balance of his time between duties as an ECM recording artist and a compulsive music composer, consumer and listener. You can hear Steve's masterful guitar on **Safe Journey**, his latest ECM album, and you can meet him Mondays at the Wax Museum (a record store) in Minneapolis. Hint: he even *signs* records.

THIS PARAGRAPH USED TO BE VERY FUNNY. So funny, in fact, that the lawyers wouldn't let us print it. There was an elaborate joke about . . . Oh. Never mind. At any rate, **Through The Fire** is an album of high-energy rock and roll by super-rockers Sammy Hagar, Neal Schon, Kenny Aaronson and Michael Shrieve. The Geffen release was inspired by **Hagar/Schon/Aaronson/Shrieve Bay Area** concerts, and in turn inspired the HSAS Theorem: *The number of lawyers required for a given record project is geometrically proportional to the level of public interest in said project.* The proof? You're reading it . . .

Communicable Information

and Useful Diseases

From the Home of

Warner Bros. Records

AUSTRALIAN CRAWL has nothing to do with kangaroo belly races. The Crawl is an Australian sextet that's sported no less than four Top Five albums and a No. 1 EP in recent years — now their hit tracks have bounced Stateside on a Geffen LP entitled **Semantics**. It's pop music in the best and most enticing tradition of that genre, and if you think you can do any better, we'll send *you* to the outback with nothing but a Telecaster and a Pig-nose amp.

"THE SMITHS AREN'T JUST A GROUP, they're a crusade. Through their music and the ideals it embodies, The Smiths are determined to rekindle the optimism they fear is nearly extinguished. For Morrissey, the decadent kick of living life on the edge of the apocalypse is one more dead end drug." So *Melody Maker* summed up a band that has set both England and Burbank buzzing, **The Smiths**. Fronted by Morrissey (one name, thank you) the group combines a sound (vocals that work *across* the music rather than *with* it) and a style (the single-handed reinvention of flower power) that shouldn't be missed. Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the florist . . . On Sir.

THIS SPECIAL blood, guts and sarcasm issue of "This Is Advertising?" was brought to you by a failed love affair and mounting psychiatric bills. And if you don't like it buddy, why don't we just step outside and settle this thing here and now? You can still write to "TIA?" at P.O. Box 6868, Burbank, CA 91510, although given our current mood, you'd have to be a masochist to consider it. Stay linear.



RICOCHE'T DAYS, FALL-OUT NIGHTS. "I Melt With You" was a major hit for **Modern English** last year, a favorite in the U.S., Europe and Japan. Now the band is back with **Ricochet Days**, a Sire album of new material led by the inter-continental "Hands Across The Sea." Modern English has expanded an already impressive vocabulary, and the resulting record finds nouns, verbs and even an occasional adjective cohabitating in a package that's aurally and visually glowing.

ADVERTISING?

small-band pop partly subverted by dissonance and odd harmonic suspensions. The rhythm section of Bley, Kenny Kirkland, Steve Swallow, Victor Lewis and Manolo Badrena is first rate and the solos by Hiram Bullock and Steve Slagle fine, but if you played the music for me cold I might never guess it was written by Carla Bley, and this I find a little scary. It's one thing to want to sell a few more albums than usual to a different clientele; it's another for one of the great originals of contemporary music to want to so completely cover her tracks that no trace of her can be found in the forest. It's an artgame that leaves us all outfoxed. There is a kind of artistry that conceals its own effects, but I'm not sure how well it can ever suit someone as

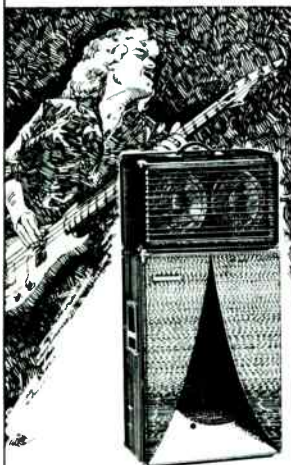
extravagant and unassimilable as Carla Bley: there is no conceivable background into which I can conceive of this woman blending. Which may of course be part of the problem. I mean we're all out here wrestling with the fact that we're impossible, right? I just don't think chameleon anonymity is anyone's way out of the dilemma. End of uneasy thoughts prompted by repeated hearings of side one.

Side two has a lot more tang and pep, and a far more indelible Bley signature. Gary Valente has a typically braying, bravura trombone solo over wonderful harmonic suspensions on "Ending II"; "Starting Again" flies along with great rhythm section work and a particularly fine piano solo from Kenny Kirkland and

ends by phasing into the title tune, with its lovely three-note monogram, good Slagle alto solo and knock of taking an unpredictable turn each time it's about to turn into a conventional bluesy flag-waver. This is the stuff that won me over, and I wish the album luck.

Meanwhile, there's *My Father's Record*, a solo piano 7-inch EP by Carla Bley's eighty-four-year-old father Emil Borg, and it's wonderful. Side one features four hymn-tunes, side two three brief classical selections. Borg plays well and with genuine feeling, misses more notes on the classical side than on the sacred, and announces the tunes himself. I particularly liked his mention of "Echo Sauce," which he says Beethoven played while surrounded by rich people. *My Father's Record* is an affectionate and mysteriously complete registry of this person Emil Borg, a gem of a short story. The music's fine and the cover photo is an outrageous visual pun I won't spoil by giving away. I hope you can buy the record; it's not on any label, but if you pester the people at New Music Distribution Service (500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012) they might find a way to sell you a copy. It's a great Carla Bley record. -Rafi Zabor

ART

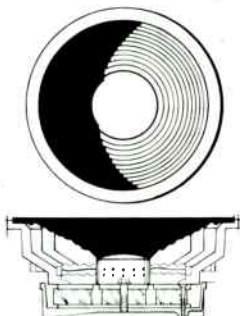


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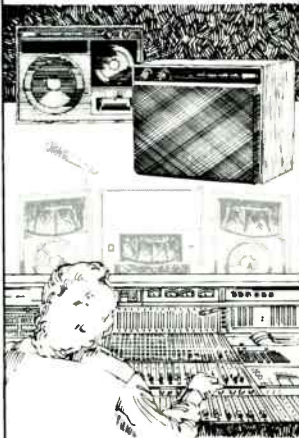
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THE STYLE COUNCIL

My Ever Changing Moods
(Geffen)

Angry adult Paul Weller says he split the Jam because after seven years that mod squad lost the power to "surprise and subvert." In his new partnership with ex-Midnight Runner keyboards-man Mick Talbot, Weller has regained that power in spades.

The Style Council's debut LP, coyly titled *My Ever Changing Moods*, will surprise the decibel-damaged ears of Jam fans with its soul stirrings and almost easy listening cabaret jazz polish. But the feral political content of Weller's lyrics within the context of this music's very self-conscious sophistication makes this disc as subversive as anything by the Sex Pistols, Clash, PiL or Gang of Four.

Musically and thematically, *Moods* represents a more ambitious and



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accomplished version of last year's impressive calling-card EP, *Introducing The Style Council*. In fact the album resurrects and embellishes two cuts from *Introducing*, pumping the Hammond-and-acoustic-guitar duet "Headstart For Happiness" into a full-tilt R&B rocker and turning the smokey vocal on a slinky, slower-paced "The Paris Match" over to chanteuse Tracey Thorn.

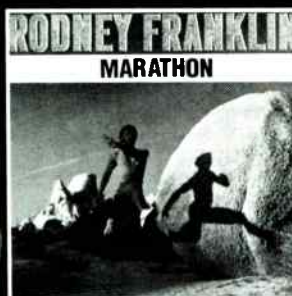
But such stylistic upscalings, striking as they are, pale beside the jolt of realizing that over the elegant, jazzy solo guitar of "The Whole Point Of No Return," Weller is smoothly crooning a Marxist parable: "Rising up and taking back/ The property of every man/ Oh, it's so, so easy." Similarly, the raucous street-funk rap, "A Gospel," vocalized by Dizzy Hite, rips the passivity of the rock crowd ("A cocaine culture that has no fight...the common excuse is, 'just be yourself'") and then rhapsodizes the day on which tyrants and greed-junkies "do the lamppost swing."

This is tough, bracing stuff: the *sans-culotte* cafe music of 1789 in 1984. Anyone who thinks Paul Weller has mellowed (or even more wrongly, "sold out") because he's no longer blowing speakers into oblivion or savaging his vocal chords should give this record a close hearing. Now that the posturing's past and the music's more measured, the message kicks in harder than ever.

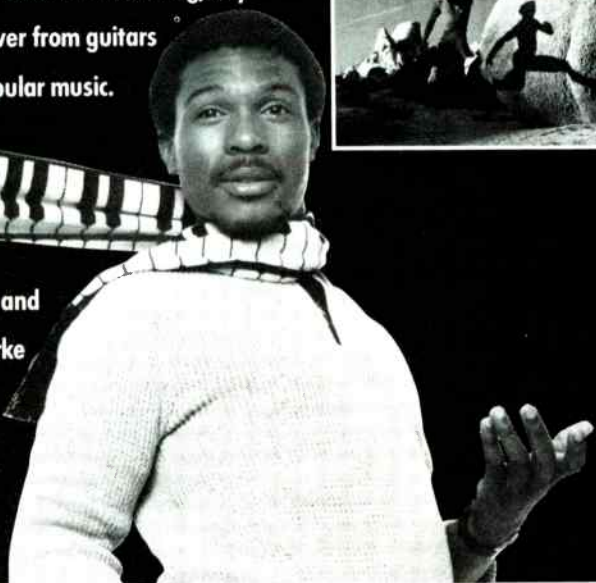
-Anthony DeCurtis

RODNEY FRANKLIN.

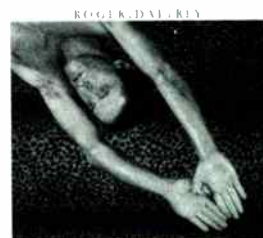
During the five years he's been recording, keyboards have taken over from guitars as the "sound" of popular music.



On his new album, "Marathon," Rodney and producer Stanley Clarke boldly lead us into tomorrow.



WEATHER REPORT. "DOMINO THEORY." RODNEY FRANKLIN. "MARATHON." Key albums, on Columbia Records and Cassettes.



ROGER DALTRY

Parting Should Be Painless
(Atlantic)

You'd think that it would be Peter Townshend who'd have the toughest time of distancing himself from the Who, but as his back catalog all-too-plainly shows, it's Roger Daltrey who seems most closely wedded to the group's identity. That's one of the reasons *Parting Should Be Painless* is such an important album for Daltrey, because now that the Who are just a matter of history, his whole singing career depends upon his establishing himself as an independent. Unfortunately, it turns out to be the wrong step in the right direction.

On the plus side, Daltrey and pro-



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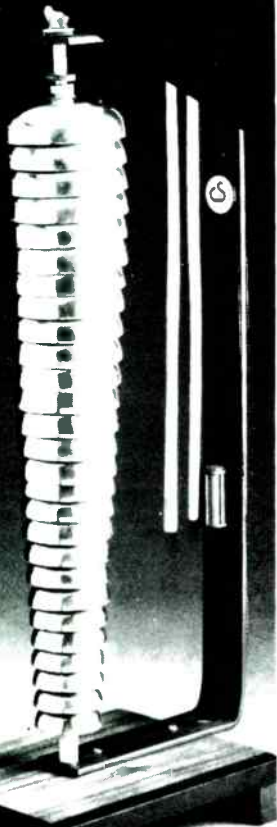
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ducer Mike Thorne have done an admirable job of selecting material, easily the trickiest part of the undertaking. Because Townshend's writing with the Who was so obviously tailored for Daltrey's voice, finding songs that match his strengths without obviously aping Townshend's formula is essential, and by and large Daltrey and Thorne have succeeded. Most of the songs here emphasize the sort of wistful regret and mournful passion that Townshend's best ballads captured, but without the histrionics. It's not a matter of coolness, although that's a factor in "Would A Stranger Do," so much as it is a conscious setting of emotional boundaries. Occasionally Daltrey restricts himself too much, as when he digs into Bryan Ferry's "Going Strong," but when his limits match those of the song, as is the case with the title track, the results are impressive.

Trouble is, they would be even more so had Thorne given Daltrey a bigger piece of the mix. It's understandable that the two would want to avoid the sort of full-throatedness that characterized the Who, but at times it sounds like Daltrey recorded the album from under an inch of gauze. His voice needs to scrape at the edges of these songs, not merely admire them from a distance. Had this album been recorded with a little more heat, the performances would crackle with the sort of energy we expect from Daltrey. As it is, we can only fill in the blanks with our imagination, and hope for a different producer next time around. -J.D. Considine



NONA HENDRYX

The Art Of Defense
(RCA)

If you believe, like I do, that Nona Hendryx's second greatest asset on her long and winding road to rock stardom is her powerhouse band Propaganda (the first being the sensual aggression contained in that singular voice), you'll probably have the same problem with her new LP that I've had since her last one: Material's techno-pop production neuters visceral punch in favor of a sound dominated by metronomic, goosestepping

electronic percussion. While Material deserves its share of credit for the chart success of Nona's previous album, so does the band's songwriting chops, honed by two years on the road.

The Art Of Defense proves equally frustrating by offering tunes which beg to be throttled into throwing down by an alive and kicking band. True, if you have heard Nona & Propaganda rock out, you can easily project their live presence into this less than swinging affair—even come up with a rush. Without that leap of imagination the record pretty much falls flat on his mechanized ass. "I Sweat," scheduled to be the first single, is an exception, strong and in the pocket, with an underlying rhythmic and melodic kineticism suggestive of recent Talking Heads and early Martha Reeves & the Vandellas. Hendryx's saucy strut of a vocal jacks up lyrics which satirize the compromise and folly involved in funk'n' solely for the dollar. "Electricity" also grips the nerves, thanks to brainfrying, high-tech guitar overdubs by Eddie Martinez which effectively humble the current crop of Adrian Belew clones. Otherwise however, *The Art Of Defense* tracks more like a plea for mercy by a stone soul survivor than an artful (or bootysnatching) call to arms. -Greg Tate



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Jumpin' In
(ECM)

KENNY WHEELER

Double, Double You
(ECM)

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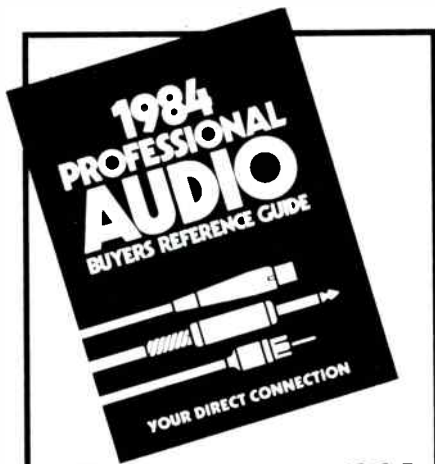
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mark. Paling somewhat before the awesome radiance of his 70s masterwork *Conference Of The Birds* (an essential part of any contemporary jazz collection), *Jumpin' In* ties together the best qualities of contemporary avant-garde with a trenchant feel for mainstream and its attendant swing. "Free Bop" was the term often used to describe *Conference*; "Free Post Bop" or "Post Free Bop" might be the appropriate extrapolation here. By juxtaposing the cool, angular lyricism of altoist Steve Coleman and its explosive horns (trumpeter Wheeler and trombonist Julian Priester) and a tenacious rhythm section (Holland and drummer Steve Ellington), Holland's ensemble dynamics are perfectly coordinated. But with the recent addition of the audacious young drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith (who took over Ellington's seat for the group's smoldering week at Sweet Basil), this ensemble could easily become one of the pivotal forces of the decade. Holland's up-tempo compositions (like "Jumpin' In" and "Shadow Dance") combine a modernist's sense of harmonic sophistication, mercurial melodic perspective and rhythmic propulsion with the kind of collective improvisation and highly controlled tempo/meter vacillations that once permeated the music of Charles

MORE CLASSIFIEDS ON PAGE 112

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Mingus (to whom the album is dedicated). My only problem with these tunes is that the thematic structures become too repetitive. Holland's meditative hymn-like ballads however, especially "First Snow," are serene and dreamy, yet focused in a very original way. And let's not forget that you also get to hear one of the most devastating bass techniques in this solar system.

Double, Double You also features the amazing Holland. Wheeler is playing with more conviction than ever, and Jack DeJohnette is typically great (John Taylor plays piano while "brother" Mike Brecker is competent if not inspiring). But here the aggregate seems less than the sum of the parts. The second side suite is mature and strong, as is "W.W.," but the Carla Bley-like "Foxy Trot" just isn't very hot to.... This isn't a bad album, but it never quite takes that quantum leap into the realm of art the way Holland's does. While Holland is *Jumpin' In*, Wheeler is still testing the water. — **Cliff Tinder**

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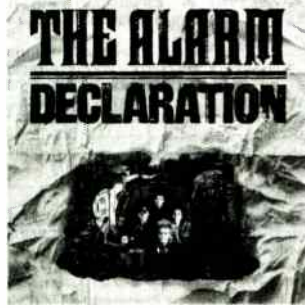
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THE ALARM

Declaration
(I.R.S.)

The Alarm have lots of problems. Their lyrics sometimes do little more than point fingers, they sound like U2 without the vision, and they have horrible haircuts. But *Declaration*, their debut LP (a five-song EP appeared last fall), offers proof they're capable of writing tight songs that rock as hard lyrically as they do musically. At their best, the Alarm balance the rhetoric with a tough, winning pop sense.

The English hit "Sixty Eight Guns" exemplifies the band's indecisiveness. Dave Sharp's killer guitar lines and a wall of horns lead into Mike Peters' concise anti-war lyric. Fine so far; but half-

way through the song, the music stops dead and Peters starts raving, nullifying the momentum the first verses have built. Peters shouts a *cappella*, the band occasionally joining in, apparently for lack of anything better to do. Plod plod. After a minute of this indirection, the band comes back like hungry soldiers for a rousing, anthemic finale, almost transcending the song's excesses. What gives? The Alarm, so obsessed with "making a statement," sacrifice their music for their message.

Overreach aside, *Declaration* is worth hearing for three songs. "Where Were You Hiding When The Storm Broke?" and the re-recorded "Marching On" (it also appeared on the EP) are political rock 'n' roll at its best, getting the message across without obscuring ferocious music even Midnight Oil must envy. Here the Alarm are like the Clash at their *London Calling/Sandinista!* peak, pop enough to get noticed but subversive enough to say something deeper.

The album's real gem, though, is the brief (seventy-five seconds) reprise of "The Stand" buried deep in side two. The version of the song that put the Alarm on the radio last summer was nothing less than a call to arms—"White Riot" propelled by acoustic guitars. The musical derivativeness that plagues *Declaration* (echoes of U2, Bob Dylan and Rod Stewart circa *Every Picture Tells A Story* pop up incessantly) is nowhere evident in this snippet.

This is the Alarm, not the good-intentioned but failed "statements" that pervade so much of *Declaration*. The band clearly has what it takes to be a major band, but they're going to have to grow first. Everyone in the Alarm is in his early twenties—it should be fascinating hearing them do it. Their enthusiasm is infectious and powerful enough to warrant plowing through their excesses. Be wary, but make the stand.—Jimmy Guterman

LEWIS

from page 87

machine. There's a LinnDrum machine and real drums. The toms are real, the snare is both, the kick is Linn, the high-hat and kibassa are Linn drums. The bass is triggered from the Linn through a Roland JP8. He only has to hit the note once. So it's impossible for it to be anywhere but right on the beat."

Bits of ghostly echo and faint hint of delay helped make "Heart And Soul" distinctive. Lewis shares credit for these and other aural fine tunings with super-engineer Bob Clearmountain, who mixed *Sports*. "The first thing Bob Clearmountain does," Lewis explains, "is synchronize his tape slap to the track, so it's right in time. That's the real key. When

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you hear, 'Hey! Hey!' it's right in time. But there's no secret—no one way to do it. It's whatever feels right. Bob is not a very technical guy." Lewis smiles. "Isn't that amazing? He's a *musician*. He plays that board as well as anybody plays an instrument. The man is a pure artist." Yet for all Lewis' faith in Clearmountain, he admits he could not stand to simply turn over the master tapes to the engineer; he had to be there to kibitz. "I don't just turn it over," the singer concedes. "I go and sit there. I couldn't surrender anything."

For all his studio savvy, though, Lewis never misses a chance to remind the interviewer that Huey Lewis & the News

is "a real band," not just an artist with a backing group. "The vocal arrangements are mainly done by Johnny Colla (News guitarist and saxman) because he is the best vocal arranger in the band. That doowop vocal arrangement on 'Bad Is Bad' is his. In fact, I wrote that song four years earlier as a fast shuffle. He took the song, slowed it down, and added a four-part vocal to it on his 4-track. It sounded so great, we just copied his arrangement."

As fame grows, though, one expects this real band to feel pressure from the public perception of Huey Lewis as the whole act. The singer demurs: "There isn't *really* more emphasis on me as the

band gets bigger. In fact, there's more emphasis on the other guys. It's just initially. Everybody first hears of Huey Lewis. *Then* they figure out there's a band.

"But we've known each other forever—before we were in bands together. I think that helps a lot when you're dealing with success. I want to keep that band feel."

Lewis buttresses this argument by pointing out that when he was in Clover he was happy to play harmonica and let singer Alex Call have the spotlight. "I sang one or two tunes and that was it. I was content just to be *in* a band. But it came to pass that the best way to get a record deal was to put the focus on me, to give them something to market. We said, 'You want to call it Huey Lewis & the News? Okay, we don't care. You can call it the Aardvarks.'"

Huey finds a moral in all this that underpins his new-found pop stardom: "No matter what happens now," he shrugs, "we got signed on a lark *anyway!* It wasn't like we had anything planned out. It all just fell together."

Huey Lewis sits back and smiles. "I guess the best things are always like that." ☐

Huey Lewis plays a Hohner Special 20 harmonica through a Shure Green Bullet mike. **Chris Hayes** plays a Gibson Les Paul custom through a Peavey MX Flite Case amp and a 410 Scorpion speaker enclosure. **Johnny Colla** plays a Fender Strat through the same amp setup as Chris, and blows Selmer saxes. **Mario Cipollina** plays a Fender Precision bass through a Peavey Mark III bass amp with two 15-inch Black Widow speakers. **Sean Hopper's** keyboard stack includes, among others, a Roland synth and a Fender Rhodes piped through two Peavey CS-800 Stereo power amps and Peavey Custom cabinets. The News' monitor system is all Peavey, with a Mark IV mixer, eight CS-800 power amps, eight EQ-27 equalizers, six 1545 monitor enclosures, two Project V side fills and a 3620 drum monitor cabinet.

JACKSON

from page 72

of Joe Jackson had emerged side by side with the completed *Body And Soul*. It was a basically flattering one, Jackson as the mature professional, true believer of the work ethic. It became more and more obvious that Joe had known well in advance exactly what musical avenues he wished to explore with this album, and he'd left absolutely nothing to chance that this vision would not become reality. If there is any flaw to *Body And Soul*, it is that it sounds over-planned and perhaps over-controlled. For all the things Joe's extensive preproduction added, it may also have sacrificed an essential ingredient needed to make fine music that is also exciting: spontaneity. In many ways, this is Jack-

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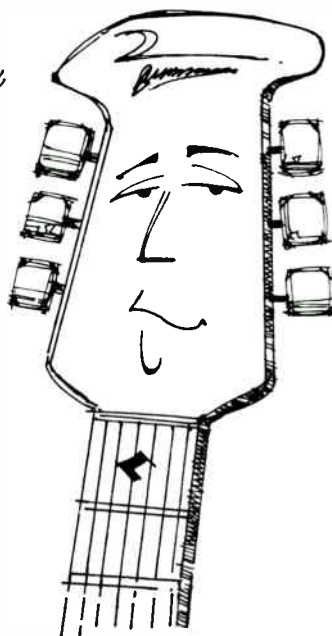


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son's most conservative album. It's almost as though Jackson the conservatory graduate approached *Body And Soul* as a compositional statement rather than writing heartfelt songs one at a time.

But despite these weaknesses, Jackson's tendencies toward control and discipline are important factors in his continued commercial success. His organization is an unusually stable one: many of his current management and technical people have been with him since his angry young beginnings. Joe Jackson is making plans to stay, but clearly on his own terms. He has even opined lately that he's taken song lyrics and vocals about as far as he feels like going with them, and that his next projects may not be in the realm of pop music at all. Remember, this is a guy who gets far more excited about a local appearance of the Vienna Philharmonic than a U2 show. It will not surprise anyone in the least if months from now, we hear that Joe is again up to something new and preparing once again to shake up an unsuspecting musical community. ☐

LIVE DEMOS

a phase cancellation. In a nutshell, the same sound wave hits each mike at two different points on the wave, producing an out-of-phase distortion called "comb filtering," (so named because the resultant sound wave starts looking like a comb). To avoid phasing, a rule of thumb is to have the two mikes at least three times further apart than the distance between each mike and its intended sound source. A more natural technique for miking cymbals is the same one used for general room miking, an X-Y type of orientation. Beware the common error of having the cymbals too loud; they'll be on other tracks too, so all the overhead should do is give them some highs and imaging, a job best suited to condensers. Also keep these two-fer phasing problems in mind with all your stage mikes. Be wary of reflected sound that will cause phase glitches, feedback and bleed; if you can drape the sides and back of the stage with some muffling material, it will help mightily. The mike application chart on page 78 will give you an idea of the best available mikes for each instrument, but because of space we left out many deserving dynamic cardioids.

Here are a few other common distortion-causers: your cables—if you've got an inexplicably dirty sound on an individual mike, that's the likeliest source; try jiggling the chord and see if the sound changes. A few spares will come in handy. For low impedance mikes (which most of the better ones are), long cable runs are fine, but high

continued on page 110

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ROCK

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S

MADNESS



Keep Moving

Madness — *Keep Moving* (Geffen). Because this is far closer in sound and spirit to the British LP *Decline And Fall* than the hit-packed American compilation Geffen put out last year, a lot of stateside listeners might be left wondering what happened to the group's bright-and-cheery attitude. True, there's nothing here as rambunctiously appealing as "Our House," even though "Wings Of A Dove" does at times seem like a more convincing "All Night Long." But so long as the members of Madness remain as deftly observant as they are on the wistful "Michael Caine" or "Victoria Gardens," there will undoubtedly be enough to their records that you won't miss the hits.

Bobby Womack — *The Poet II* (Beverly Glen). Not that the title is without merit, but the real reason to listen to this one is the singing, not the songs. Womack is in superior shape here, hustling the lyrics along with intoxicating confidence and pushing his occasionally ragged voice to new plateaus of emotional release. And when paired with Patti LaBelle, as he is on three of the nine cuts here, the performances rise to a fevered pitch that almost makes Otis Redding and Carla Thomas sound like Karen & Richard Carpenter. Who said soul singing was a thing of the past?

Queen — *The Works* (Capitol). Let's see: "Tear It Up" cops the riff from "We Will Rock You"; "It's A Hard Life" is a second hand "Bohemian Rhapsody"; and "Man On The Prowl" is, like "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," lukewarm rockabilly. Yep, they sure gave us the works this time. Too bad none of it really does.

Marshall Crenshaw — *U.S. Remix* (Warner Bros. import EP). If, like me, you

were bugged by how Steve Lillywhite's production got in the way of Crenshaw's songs on *Field Day*, here's the second chance we usually don't get. Three deliciously lean, unencumbered remixes, plus an extended "For Her Love" and a live "Little Sister" that will leave you drooling for a concert album. Marshallmania lives! (Important Record Dist., P.O. Box 30561, Airport Station, Jamaica, NY 11430.)

"Weird Al" Yankovic — *In 3-D* (Rock 'n' Roll). Granted, the gimmick—joke lyrics to familiar songs—is grade-school stuff, which no doubt explains why almost every second-grader in America already knows all the words to "Eat It." But some of the jokes make pretty good rock criticism as well; how else to explain the aptness of "King Of Suede"? And if "Polkas On 45," which gives "Smoke On The Water" the same treatment as the "Beer Barrel Polka," doesn't get a laugh out of you, nothing will.

Laid Back — *Keep Smiling* (Sire). Because "White Horse," with its snaky bass line and sleepily percolating synths, is such an hypnotically alluring single, it's not really a surprise that the rest of the album pales in comparison. Not that much, though, especially if you have a weakness for slick, studio-savvy Europop.

Wham-A-Rama — *Shut Up And Kiss Me* (Flipside). This record is a killer, matching husky white-soul singing with the sort of perky, post-Stax groove that's sure to convince anyone that there's more to Beach Music than oldies. Best of all, the songs are so crisp and effortlessly catchy that it's tempting to cast singer Jim Boylston as the Marshall Crenshaw of the South. One listen, and you're sure to be smitten. (105 Ventura Drive, Sanford, FL 32771.)

Tracey Ullman — *You Broke My Heart In 17 Places* (MCA). "They Don't Know" is the sort of song that would be a winner in anybody's hands, but which is particularly appealing when handled by a voice as fruitfully sweet as Ullman's. The rest of the album wanders from mediocrity to mediocrity, though, and even Ullman's best Patti Page impression doesn't help. But what would you expect when the selections include a cover of "(Life Is A Rock) But The Radio Rolled Me"?

Trouble Funk — *In Times Of Trouble* (D.E.T.T.). The studio half of this double album is a little too slickly upscale to

carry the same kick as the band's singles, even if it does make half of what's on the Black charts these days seem about as funky as John Denver. The live half, on the other hand, is a trip into the heart of D.C.'s go-go scene that does more to define the possibilities of a concert groove than any album since James Brown's *Live At The Apollo, Vol. 2*. (3842 Ironwood Place, Landover, MD 20785.)

Johnny Copeland — *Texas Twister* (Rounder). You'd have to go back to Cleanhead Vinson to find a performer with a surer feel for jump blues than Johnny Copeland, and these nine new numbers manage the seemingly impossible trick of sounding sharper than what was on his last two albums. Maybe it's a little more muscle in the rhythm section, but the gritty guitar of guest-soloist Stevie Ray Vaughan on two cuts and a raspy eloquent Archie Shepp tenor solo on a third surely had a lot to do with it. (P.O. Box 154, North Cambridge, MA 02140.)

Talas — *Live: High Speed On Ice* (Combat). The songs are just basic metal, but the performances boast intensity-plus. Bassist Billy Sheehan turns in a solo that sounds like Eddie Van Halen two octaves down, while guitarist Mitch Perry doesn't do too badly in the normal register. If you've ever wondered what chops-intensive heavy rock could really do, here's your answer. (Important Dist.)

Yellowman — *Strong Me Strong* (Columbia EP). In an attempt to make Yellowman safe for American consumption, CBS brought in Material to give the toaster suitably high-tech polish. At least that was the idea; the reality amounts to a gloss on Sly & Robbie's Compass Point groove, although one that suits Yellowman well enough on the dub versions. Serviceable, but hardly essential.

Hagar/Schon/Aaronson/Shrieve — *Through The Fire* (Geffen). Fred Zeppelin.

Cameo — *She's Strange* (Atlanta Artists). With each move closer to the mainstream, Cameo's sound seemed to turn less and less quirky, which is why the full-freak funk of "Talkin' Out The Side Of Your Neck," a nasty put-down of Massa Reagan, is such a refreshing reminder of what put this band on top in the first place. But the subtle kink of the title cut and their idiosyncratic harmonizing on "Tribute To Bob Marley" isn't bad, either.

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JAZZ

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



Bobby Bradford — *Lost In L.A.* (Soul Note/PolyGram Special Imports). Guiding altoist James Kousakis through some euphoric contrapuntal improvisations as drummer Sherman Ferguson bobs merrily along beneath them and bassists Roberto Miranda and Mark Dresser alternate low rhythmic stabs and high horn-like leads, Bradford captures much of the vibrancy and spring of early Ornette Coleman. Best known for his brief tenure with Coleman and his enduring partnership with John Carter, the cornetist is a fulgent and animated soloist so pitifully underexposed as a leader that this would rank among 1984's most welcome releases even if it weren't also among the year's very best so far.

Jazztet — *Moment To Moment* (Soul Note/PSI); **Benny Golson** — *California Message* (Timeless, from Roundup Records, P.O. Box 154, N. Cambridge, MA 02140). One of the most sparkling small units of the early 60s, the Jazztet sounds even more refreshing now, with co-leaders Golson and Art Farmer happily reunited at last and trombonist Curtis Fuller back in the fold. Farmer's fragrant lyricism and Golson's uncanny ability to wring orchestral nuance out of a three-horn front line are still the group's most distinguishing characteristics, and the new material here actually outshines the old. *Moment To Moment's* only drawback is Golson's rust as a saxophonist, an even more serious problem on the Farmer-less *California Message*, where both Golson's writing and the overall group ambience are more commonplace.

Ellis Marsalis — *Syndrome* (ELM, from New Music Distribution Service, 500

Broadway, New York City, NY 10012). What we find here—in descending order of interest—are solo piano, trio with bass and drums, and a quartet with flutist Kent Jordan. Still, the concision and outward reach of the piano solos are enough to make this a triumphant as well as a long-overdue debut.

George Adams & Don Pullen — *City Gates* (Timeless, from Roundup). The lustiest effort so far from a quartet that seems to grow tighter and more adventurous (albeit within well-defined boundaries) all the time. Highlights: Adam's stinging dialogue with drummer Danny Richmond on a tribute to Mingus; Pullen's cartwheeling solo turn on a witty caricature of Monk; and a moving duet by the co-leaders on "Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen."

Frank Wess & Johnny Coles — *Two On The Top* (Uptown); **New York Jazz Quartet** — *In Chicago* (BeeHive). Wess' pioneer status among flutists tends to obscure the fact that he is a magisterial tenorist in the noble Hawkins/Webster tradition as well. Both of these splendid albums spotlight Wess' tenor, with the Uptown also focusing attention on his gliding alto (and offering a rare opportunity to savor Coles' plangent flugelhorn at some length). The BeeHive celebrates the many virtues of the long-standing cooperative group featuring Wess, bassist George Mraz, drummer Ben Riley and elfin pianist Roland Hanna.

Hyde Park After Dark (BeeHive). The rumped elan of Cy Touff's bass trumpet, the quiet sizzle of the Norman Simmons-Victor Sproles-Wilbur Campbell rhythm section, and (best of all) the delicious, almost comic contrast between tenorists Von Freeman and Clifford Jordan all combine to lift this reunion of Chicagoans current and former far above the level of most ad hoc gatherings, while offering conclusive evidence that Chicago was the home of rugged individualists even before the advent of the AACM.

Red Norvo — *Just Friends* (Stash); **Svend Asmussen** — *June Night* (Doctor Jazz). Swing is a virtue best defined by example (assuming it can be defined at all), and there are few better examples than the indefatigable Red Norvo, a vibist as remarkable for his melodic invention as for his rhythmic ease. Norvo is always delightful, but never more so

than in the kind of informal but supercharged atmosphere guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli's trio creates for him on the Stash LP. Pizzarelli is also a key to the success of the album by Asmussen, a spirited swing violinist from Denmark who is perhaps most familiar to American audiences from his work alongside Nance and Grappelli on Ellington's *Violin Session*.

Bill Hardman — *Focus* (Muse). Focus is what the ensembles lack, but the gritty, streamlined solos of trumpeter Hardman, tenorist Junior Cook, trombonist Slide Hampton and pianist Walter Bishop are ample compensation. Q: Who's the guitarist on "My One And Only Love"?

Scott Hamilton — *In Concert* (Concord). Seems to me all this prattle about New Traditionalists ought to include some mention of Hamilton, whose fealty to Webster, Young and Hawkins serves as a reminder that the tradition didn't start with *Kind Of Blue*. He's slowly emerging as an immensely likable soloist in his own right, and here he leads a spry five featuring pianist John Bunch.

Claude Bolling & Yo-Yo Ma — *Suite For Cello & Jazz Piano Trio* (CBS). Jeez, I remember when everybody I knew wanted to be black; now they just want to be rich. The Gentrification of Jazz, Part VIII. Slight, to say the least—but Ma's cello sonority is so bouyant and resounding, and he phrases with such effortless, jazz-like repose, even Bolling's rehabbed John Lewisisms begin to glisten. Am I trying to say I like this? What's happening to me (and which way to the fern bar)?

Barbara Donald — *The Past And Tomorrows* (Cadence Jazz). Moody and combustible freebop, tentative in its rhythmic gait at times but always powerful and searching, from a trumpeter who lit up several Sonny Simmons LPs a decade ago and lives in Seattle now.

George Marsh & John Abercrombie — *Drum Strum* (1750 Arch/N.M.D.S.). These duets between a resourceful West Coast percussionist and an estimable guitarist/electric mandolinist could use more narrative scaffolding (I'd judge at least half of them to be spontaneously improvised, on the basis of the frequent excitement and their just-as-frequent longeur), but every note testifies to the instrumental ingenuity and the improvisational acumen of both participants.

Francis Davis

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impedance mike cables can only be run about twelve to fifteen feet before the signal starts to degrade noticeably. Don't use an extension cord on these, and *please* don't Y-plug two mikes, low or high impedance, into the same input at the mixer—the impedance becomes shared, producing distortion and wimpy frequency response. In general, don't keep your recording levels as high in a live recording as you would in a studio; expect the unexpected, be it general distortion or a slam-dunk tom roll, and leave a little headroom. Try to get mikes with good shock mounting for heavy footed singers and players.

The musicians themselves can serve as problem-solvers by adjusting amp settings and attack techniques. The bass amp, for example, can maintain its

presence at lower levels with the addition of more mid-range and the rolling off of some low-end frequencies. The same mid-range technique can be applied across the board.

For David Hewitt, stage monitors are a major cause for alarm. "They project an extraordinary amount of garbage into the stage microphones," he says. "The biggest favor you can do for yourself is to keep the damn things down. Learn how to deal with them at a lower level and you won't end up going deaf."

In the end, the quality of the concert recording you get may well be proportional to the amount of time you spend planning the project. "Make sure that you've done all your homework," David Hewitt warns. "Make sure the venue is right, the setup is good and that the

promoter and unions are happy. Then you can concentrate on recording your music. You don't want some guy tapping your engineer on the shoulder in the middle of a show saying, 'Excuse me, but I need to plug my ice machine into the outlet you're using to power your mixing board.'"

Faces from page 26

recorder were shelved for trumpet and flugelhorn after his first listen to the Haydn Trumpet Concerto; and then, at fourteen, "I was scanning across the radio and I heard this music that just changed my thinking." The sound was Cannonball Adderley's, and Isham was rapidly drawn into jazz.

Isham's balance of a classically pure tonal palette and atmospheric jazz phrasing was already evident by the time he cut his first tracks with Rubisa Patrol for ECM; he still considers himself a trumpeter first, and admits to being unimpressed by "ninety-nine percent" of those keyboard players who have transferred to synthesizers. Thus, when he was enlisted by Morrison, then searching for someone who could play piccolo trumpet, Isham's first contributions were coolly ethereal trumpet solos and section work. Partnered with saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis, Isham brought the Miles-inflected upper register to such late 70s Morrison triumphs as *Common One* and *Beautiful Vision*. Of the former, he verifies, "Van was completely under the spell of *In A Silent Way* when we were making that record."

As for Isham's own *Vapor Drawings* and the Ballard soundtrack project, Isham sums up his approach to synthesizers as governed by mood, rather than effects. "The synthesizer has yet to evolve to a high level as a true performance instrument," he observes. "I'm more impressed by the use that Eno makes of it, for example. I was always more interested in the textural applications." His own array includes a "heavily modified" four-voice Oberheim, Prophet 5, Moog and ARP 2600 synthesizers and both Simmons and LinnDrum percussion. (He uses Martin horns.)

Even with his mixed bag of projects, Isham admits to some concern over possible typecasting within the "new age" camp as a result of his Windham Hill association. "I'm a bit wary of the phrase, because there's so much garbage that's been marketed as 'new age music' and portrayed as some kind of healing, spiritual balm," he explains. It seems unlikely that Isham will be so easily pigeonholed, however. The reformed Group 87 will surface soon on Capitol, and is close to clinching an opening slot on the Weather Report tour this spring. That would be a fit pairing indeed, given Isham's own line of musical descent. — **Sam Sutherland**

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MARVIN GAYE

1939-1984

Marvin Gaye had always seemed a tragic, confused and confusing figure throughout his two decades in popular music. He married Anna Gordy, one of Berry Gordy's ambitious older sisters, and a woman seventeen years his senior in an era when such June-September marriages were virtually unknown. From his first hit, the bubbly R&B of "Stubborn Kind Of Fellow," to the sweet mid-tempo "How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)," through the pioneering funk of his "Heard It Through The Grapevine," to the majestic "You're All I Need To Get By" with Tammi Terrell, Gaye worked with almost every important Motown producer/writer of the 60s and still managed to maintain a distinctive, yet remarkably flexible, vocal personality.

Yet despite the cajoling of Motown's now defunct charm school, the fury of concert promoters, and the disappointment of fans, Gaye was, at best, a diffident performer. Whatever plans for Sam Cooke-style showmanship his brother-in-law may have imagined Gaye defeated with his attitude. For their part, Motown never viewed Gaye's rebellion as the arrogance of a mature artist so much as the disobedience of a little boy

in need of a wrist slapping.

Athletics was one of his life's obsessions; at touch football games and pickup basketball contests Gaye went out of his way to prove his sports prowess. He even attempted to try out for the Detroit Lions as a George Plimpton, and took his rejection hard. It was as if he sought in the teamwork of sport that same sense of community he gave lip service to at Motown in the 1960s, but that, as Gaye later suggested, never ran deep.

After Tammi Terrell collapsed in his arms onstage (she died from a brain tumor in 1970), Gaye retreated from a spotlight with which he'd never been comfortable. During this period of musical isolation he took command of his music, making profound changes in his production, songwriting and vocal approaches. The resulting *What's Going On*, packed with jazzy chords, haunting orchestral arrangements, anti-establishment lyrics, and Gaye's piercing vocals overlaid into infinite textural combinations (influencing among others Michael Jackson), was arguably the greatest single unified artistic statement of the rock era.

But never again did Gaye reach outside himself for material. Instead, using the production ideas of *What's Going On* as a musical base, Gaye made *Let's Get It On*, an album of aural erotica that reflected his hedonistic lifestyle. There were sporadic commercial triumphs after that ("Trouble Man," "Got To Give It Up"), but with *Here, My Dear*, a scath-

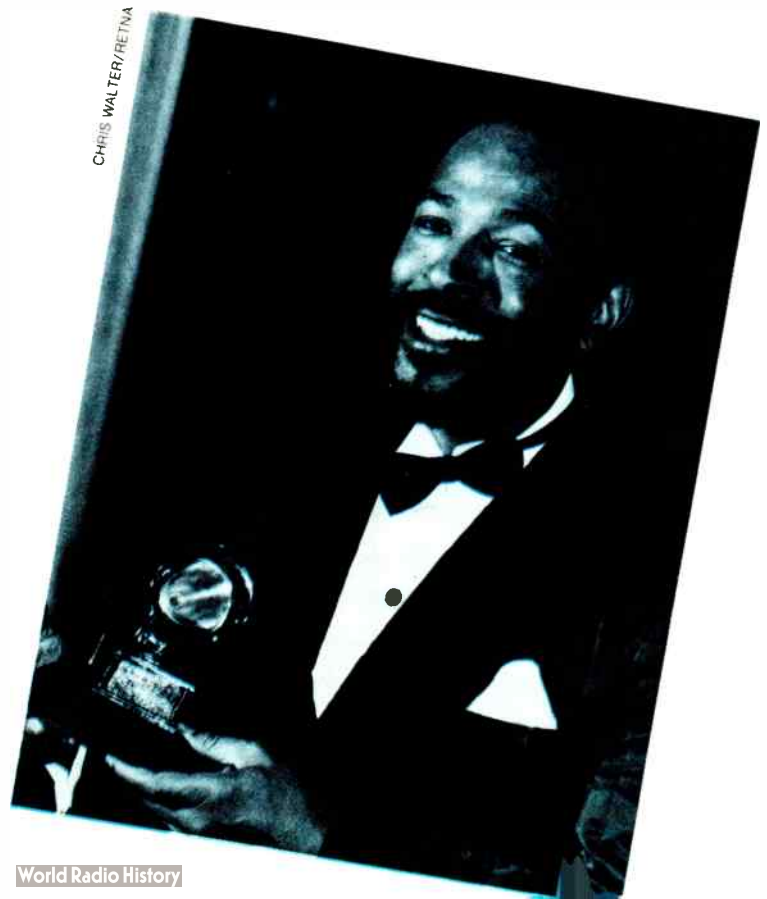
ing double album recapitulation of his marriage to and divorce from Anna, Gaye entered a dark period marked by cocaine, a new marriage to a woman seventeen years his junior, and money worries.

For several years he was a tax exile in Europe. His underappreciated *In Our Lifetime*, full of images of heaven and hell, the Devil and the Lord, and supported by moody third-world rhythms, suggested a man battling the world, seeking a way out from the darkness. He seemed to have found it with *Midnight Love* and a deal with CBS that cleared up much of his IRS obligation. "Sexual Healing" was as powerful a single as "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" and "Let's Get It On." Marvin Gaye was back. He even turned out the national anthem at the NBA All-Star game.

But back also meant a life in Los Angeles where he was haunted by old demons. He'd had a long-standing antagonism with his minister father over religion, lifestyle, and money, which fed his unhappiness. Who knew it would end in death?

Last year at the Bay Area's Circle Star Theater Gaye put on an incredible show, using his voice like a saxophone, sliding through twenty years of music and showing why he was a master vocalist. Put on the *Anthology* album or *What's Going On* or *Midnight Love* and you'll feel his greatness ooze through your speakers. That voice, that passion, that spirit, that skill...that's how I'll remember Marvin Gaye.

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