

**STEVE STEVENS: THE BILLY IDOLMAKER**

# MUSICIAN

\$2.25 NO. 81 JULY 1985

ICD 080857

**SOLO**  
**STING**

**THE INSIDE  
STORY**

**BY VIC GARBARINI**

**GRAHAM  
PARKER**  
**AN UNDERRATED  
ROCKER**

**GETTING SIGNED: A NEW OPTION  
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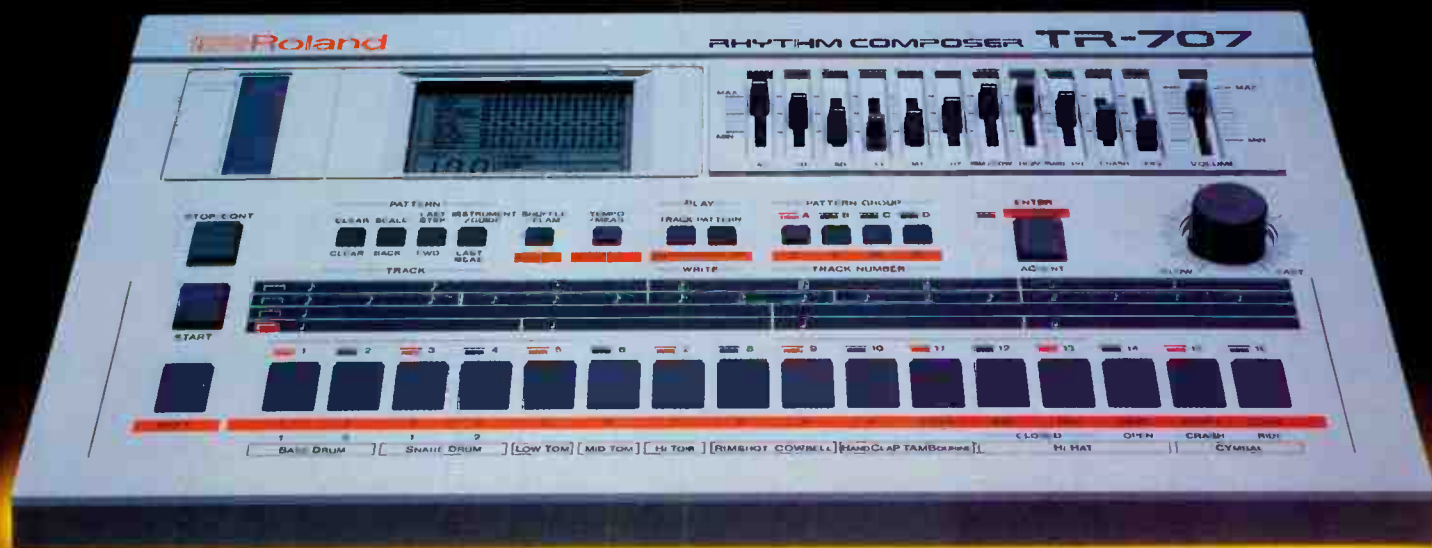
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# MUSICIAN

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**STING goes jazz?** Maybe the surprise here is that he's been doing it all along. In the first part of a double-barrelled epic, we take you behind the scenes, and the mind, of a pop star who can't rest on his record, **Police or otherwise.**  
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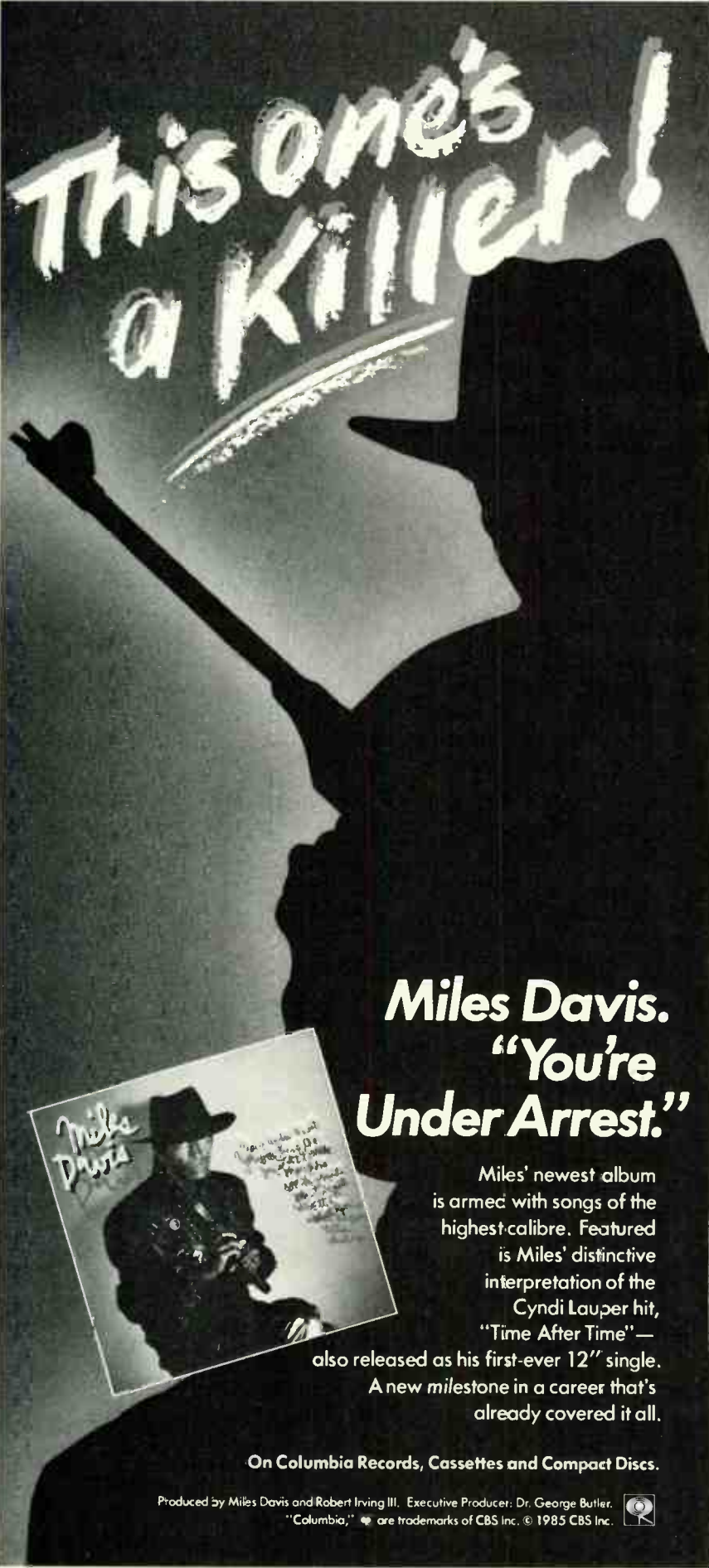
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## Assoc. Publisher/Promotion

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## Executive Editor

Bill Flanagan

## Advertising Acct. Mgr.

Ross Garnick

## Staff Photographer

Deborah Feingold

## Associate Editor

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## Contributing Editors

Nelson George David Fricke

Brian Cullman J.D. Considine

Timothy White Charles M. Young

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## Dealer Sales Director

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## Sales/Promotion

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## Production Manager

Nancy Englehardt

## Assistant Editor

Keith Powers

## Assistant Art Director

Lisa Laarman

## Production

Will Hunt Ruth Maassen

## Typography

Don Russell

## Asst. to the Publisher/Office Mgr.

Michelle Nicastro

## Administration

Dee Dee Davis

Annette Dion

## Main Office/Production/Retail Sales

31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701  
Gloucester, MA 01930 (617) 281-3110

## New York Advertising/Editorial

MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl.  
N.Y.C., NY 10036 (212) 764-7395

## Group Publisher

Gerald S. Hobbs

## Circulation Manager

Barbara Eskin

## Subscriber Service

Gregory Thompson (212) 764-7536

## Founders

Gordon Baird & Sam Holdsworth

MUSICIAN (USPS 431-910) is published monthly by Amordian Press, Inc., P.O. Box 701, 31 Commercial St., Gloucester, MA 01930. (617) 281-3110. Amordian Press, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Billboard Publications, Inc., One Astor Place, 1515 Broadway, New York City, NY 10036. MUSICIAN is a trademark of Amordian Press, Inc. © 1985 by Musician, all rights reserved. Second class postage paid at Gloucester, MA 01930 and at additional mailing offices. Subscriptions \$20 per year, \$38 for two years, \$54 for three years. Canada and elsewhere, add \$8 per year, U.S. funds only. **Subscription address: Musician, Box 1923, Marion, OH 43305. Postmaster send form 3579 to above address.**

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## The Rascal Is Back

The article on the Rascals was extremely well done and helped to answer some nagging questions about this tremendous group. As an early teen, I happened to catch the band at a little roller skating area in Portland, Oregon in '66. Many "larger" acts later blew through town: the Stones, Hendrix, the Doors, and dozens more. The memories of those concerts are less vivid today than Cavaliere and Brigati wailing away on "Good Lovin'." A reunion might not be the same, but I'd be first in line to buy a ticket.

Paul Kaza  
Shelburne, VT



Anyone who ever saw their live show knew that on any given night Felix & the Rascals could blow anyone off the stage. To say they were ahead of their time is an understatement; remember, they were using Hubert Laws and Chuck Rainey on record in 1966! Make no mistake, the Rascals were hot!

Richard Neumann  
Las Vegas, NV

This is just a short note to say that I truly enjoyed your excellent article on the Rascals. Your article mentions six albums by Felix Cavaliere since the breakup of the Rascals. I have both Bearsville releases, the solo Epic and the Treasure album—what are the other two?

William Migicovsky  
Montreal, Quebec

[Mr. Baird was speaking of Felix's six albums since the original Rascals broke up, including (besides those four) Island Of Real and Peaceful World.]

While you are certainly justified in claiming that the Rascals were one of the most

important American bands of the 60s, they were hardly the only one besides the Beach Boys to compete against the British Invasion. Even defining the Rascals in the narrowest sense, as a self-contained band, still allows Paul Revere & the Raiders and the Lovin' Spoonful to share the hit honors with the Beach Boys; all had seven hits in the top twenty in the period the Rascals placed nine. Expanding the category to include any re-recording group means including the Supremes (eight discs in the top twenty), Temptations (eight), Four Tops (seven), Mamas & Papas (seven) and Monkees (seven). The Four Seasons, Tommy James & the Shondells, Gary Lewis & the Playboys, Simon & Garfunkel and the Turtles all placed six hits apiece in the top twenty between early 1966 and late summer 1968.

Ed Osborne  
East Brunswick, NJ  
[Ed - Nice work Ed. Wanna job in our research dept.?)

I was disappointed with the cheap shots aimed at Gene Cornish and his musical ability. Felix would do well to remember that it was Gene's rhythmic style of guitar playing that gave the Rascals their first few hits. If Felix was all that concerned with the musicianship of his band, perhaps he should re-examine his own lounge lizard style of playing, typical of the Holiday Inn circuit. It was a group effort to be successful, thus enabling Mr. Cavaliere to be a has-been instead of a never-was.

John Weissend  
Lawndale, CA

## Page Plugs and Pans

Never have I learned so much about Jimmy Page as I did from Max Kay's article in your April issue. It's always a big deal to find out what Page's views on music are, because he is so elusive. There's no doubt that he's

one of the world's greatest guitarists.

Blake Gehbauer  
New Orleans, LA

In his interview with Jimmy Page Max Kay quotes Page as saying that he had sent a Les Paul to Clarence White for the installation of a Parsons/White Stringbender. If Page really said that, I would be interested in learning his secret; White died a number of years ago. My guess is that Page actually said he had sent the guitar to Gene Parsons (mentioned later in Kay's article), who currently lives in northern California and customizes guitars with his and White's modification (not only to the B-string, but to the E-string as well).

Debra Brackett  
San Francisco, CA  
[Ed. - Somebody musta goofed. Sorry Clarence.]



It's no wonder it took Max Kay four years to get an "interview" with Jimmy Page. Those questions he asked Page and Paul Rodgers were ridiculous. Anyway, the Firm deserves every bit of success they get. Good luck guys!

Steve Taber  
Tulsa, OK

## 'Mats Backers

It's about time my favorite magazine did a piece on the world's greatest rock 'n' roll band, the Replacements. The Replacements don't just play rock 'n' roll, they define it. Pity they couldn't have graced your cover instead of what's-his-name. Come to Minneapolis, folks. There is life beyond Prince!

Lou Santacroce  
Robbinsdale, MN

Critics have always placed

emphasis on the rebellious streetwise attitude of rock, so it's not unusual that Replacements have found a place in the heart of the rock crits. What is unusual is that with all the excellent musicians we have here in Minneapolis, I should read about Replacements in a magazine called *Musician*. Ironic.

Mike Michalski  
Minneapolis, MN



## He's Boss

When I was twelve years old, I found myself mesmerized by a young musician; his band, the Rolling Stones, were the rebels of the music industry. When the Stones appeared on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, they so offended Mr. Sullivan that the man swore he'd never have them back. He had to eat his words a year later when the band became too big to ignore. Mick Jagger is now a megastar, an astute businessman, a knowledgeable musician and a legend that you've honored with your April cover story. Thank you Bill Flanagan for this wonderful article.

Debra Johnson  
North Adams, MA

Many thanks to Bill Flanagan for writing about Mick musically with such insight and expertise. His descriptions of the modes of communication between the musicians involved in *She's The Boss*—verbal, danced or shrugged—was fascinating.

But no thanks whatever for Mark Rowland's clumsy review. Mr. Rowland sounds as though he wouldn't know a melody if it hit him over the head. His review was uninformative, uninformed and plain bitchy.

June Schneider  
Atlanta, GA



# DIRE STRAITS

THE NEW ALBUM

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- 7/24 QUEBEC
- 7/25 OTTAWA
- 7/26-29 TORONTO
- 8/1 MINNEAPOLIS
- 8/2 MILWAUKEE
- 8/3 CHICAGO
- 8/4 DETROIT
- 8/5 CLEVELAND
- 8/6 PITTSBURGH
- 8/7 PHILADELPHIA
- 8/8 WASHINGTON, D.C.
- 8/10 ATLANTA
- 8/11 MEMPHIS
- 8/13 OKLAHOMA CITY
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- 8/21 ORANGE COUNTY
- 8/22 LOS ANGELES
- 8/23-24 SAN FRANCISCO
- 8/25 SACRAMENTO
- 8/27 PORTLAND
- 8/28-29 SEATTLE
- 8/30 VICTORIA
- 8/31-9/1 VANCOUVER
- 9/2 EDMONTON
- 9/3 CALGARY
- 9/4 WINNIPEG
- 10/1-3 NEW YORK
- 10/4 PROVIDENCE
- 10/5-6 BOSTON
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# 'TIL TUESDAY



Autocracy in motion: Robert Holmes, Aimee Mann, Joey Pesce and Michael Hausman.

MICHAEL GRECCO

## BILL FLANAGAN

### VOICES CARRY— BUT SOME VOICES CARRY MORE THAN OTHERS

**W**hen people tell you you're just being selfish and democracy is the way to go," Aimee Mann says, "you have to have a lot of confidence in yourself to realize that's not true."

Mann is sitting in a restaurant in New Orleans, talking about being the leader of 'Til Tuesday. "There's nothing wrong with being ambitious, with wanting to make your own way in the world. It's not a matter of ego; it's a matter of getting the job done."

Mann's self-confidence and ambition have caused her some hard times personally, but are starting to pay off. 'Til Tuesday were unknown outside of Boston when their debut album, *Voices*

*Carry*, was released in March. By early May they were finding fans all across America's boondocks and backwaters. The MTV-led popularity of their "Voices Carry" video was pushing sales of the single and album up the charts in great leaps, forcing radio to play catch-up.

"At this point we've sold more records than the radio play would lead you to believe," says keyboard player Joey Pesce. "We get the most yells and screams in areas where MTV is strongest. In Lincoln, Nebraska we couldn't get our van out of the building because there was a whole troop of people out there."

It's no wonder. 'Til Tuesday have all the pop star attributes—good looks, good hooks, slick production and a striking video—that lead teens to frenzy and more jaded observers to cynicism. But if attention to style meant lack of substance, the Beatles would've been forgotten by '65. There's a lot of depth under 'Til Tuesday's cool facade.

Musically, the band has two hearts. Pesce's keyboards, emphasized by LP producer Mike Thorne, set Mann's careful melodies and open-hearted lyrics in moody aural washes. In live performance, though, attention is shifted to

Robert Holmes' rougher, more sharply phrased guitar riffs. The record is precise and gracious, but 'Til Tuesday kicks a lot harder live.

"I can imagine us going in a really different direction on another album," Holmes admits. "I can see saying, 'Yeah it's distorted—but it sounds good so crank it up!' I don't think I could get away with overplaying in 'Til Tuesday. When I hear somebody else overplaying now it embarrasses me. It's so MeMeMeMeMe. I say, 'God, doesn't that guy want to shut up?' You should just support the song."

Supporting the songs, submerging individual to collective egos, has been a reason for 'Til Tuesday's creative success and a source of personal friction. Aimee Mann assembled the band two-and-a-half years ago to play her stuff her way. The lyrics are all credited to Mann, music to all four members. This socialist distribution of riches was designed to open all songs to contribution by all members, avoid squabbles, and divide the wealth. But the effect has been less utopian. Pesce, who was leader and songwriter of his own pre-Tuesday band, has felt he's not gotten all the credit he deserves. Mann has

responded by deciding to just do all the basic writing herself. "I would rather do more of the work and get less than my share of the publishing," Mann sighs, "than have somebody else feel they're getting less than *their* share."

Which brings us back to ego and ambition: "You shouldn't let yourself be intimidated by people," Mann says, "just because they say you're egotistical. I get that in this band, too. People say 'You always want your own way.' At first I denied it, and then I realized I started this band because I wanted my own way and I think my own way is right. And—just incidentally—I think my own way is what's going to bring *all* of us to success.

"Constantly trying to deny you're am-

bitious is just a false humility. It doesn't get you anywhere. You have to be able to say, 'Yes, I am ambitious.' If you're not, then feel virtuous about it. But I'm ambitious and I want to work, so don't get in my way."

Most of the audience at New Orleans' Riverfront Stadium have come to see Hall & Oates. But as 'Til Tuesday tear through their opening set, groups of girls scream at "AA-MEE!" When that fails to get the singer's attention they try "JOE-EEY!"

After their half-hour set, when the band heads out the arena's back door, flashbulbs pop and autograph books are offered. These kids paid \$17.50 to see a thirty-minute set by 'Til Tuesday, and left before Hall & Oates came on.

'Til Tuesday got the call to open on the *Big Bam Boom* tour after Daryl Hall saw their video on TV. Now, with the tour winding down, their manager gets a call asking if the group would be willing to go out with Tom Petty. He says sure, although it means turning down Don Henley.

Summer will be over by the time 'Til Tuesday have a chance to get out and headline on their own. Meantime they're criss-crossing America in a rented van, playing to 10,000 people a night.

"It's sheer self-indulgence to let yourself get nervous," Mann says. "You can't do it. You have to say, 'This is my business!' Besides, it's *fun*. So many people stop themselves from having fun. In a myriad of ways."

Mann says her idea of fun doesn't include drugs or sexual flings. "I can't get into the rock 'n' roll lifestyle," she says with just a tinge of regret. "It holds no attraction for me. If I could I'd be all set, but I know it's not what real life is about. It's not what's important. Sometimes I'd like to just get drunk," she laughs. "But I know if I drink my skin will break out, I'll put on weight.

"In this...structure...you have to have either no conscience or a huge conscience, because nobody will ever tell you you're doing anything wrong. They support whatever stupid whim you come up with. If you want drugs, fine, you have drugs. If you want roadies to go get girls for you, they're there.

"You're allowed to be wasteful in a thousand little ways. You can order a meal and then change your mind and not eat it. Nobody ever reminds you of how many starving people there are. Sometimes when we go into our dressing room, after dinner, I look at that big deli platter and go, 'I can't eat this—it's going to go to waste.' I feel really guilty about that. If you have a big conscience you start to feel terrible. Sometimes I wish that I were of a temperament that I had those other things to fall back on. I wish I could lose myself in drugs or stupid, mindless relationships."

When it comes to strange bedfellows, ambition and compassion pull each other's covers right off. Mann is cursed with a conscience as developed as her career drive; while she can put her foot down and assert leadership, she cannot *not* care if feelings get hurt.

Her openness to emotions—other people's and her own—is part of the personality that makes her songs so moving. The common denominator in almost all 'Til Tuesday's songs can be summed up in two words: Have mercy.

"If I had the chance to talk to a lot of people," Mann explains, "I always wanted to say, 'Be nice to each other.' It's not the kind of thing I can really talk about in a song, which is too bad. I think



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# TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS



## *Southern Accents*

## 1985 SOUTHERN ACCENTS TOUR

The Tom Petty Southern Accents Tour will kick off in... **Meadowlands, NJ** on 6/16 and proceed to the Performing Arts Center in **Saratoga, NY** on 6/16, Blossom Music Hall in **Cleveland, OH** on 6/18, Music Sports Center in **Indianapolis, IN** on 6/19, Pine Knob in **Detroit, MI** on 6/21, Poplar Creek in **Chicago, IL** on 6/22, Alpine Valley in **E. Troy, WI** on 6/23, Civic Center in **St. Paul, MN** on 6/25, Civic Arena

in **Omaha, NB** on 6/28, Mohawk Park in **Tulsa, OK** on 6/29, Lloyd Noble Arena in **Norman, OK** on 7/2, Frank Irwin Center in **Austin, TX** on 7/3, Union Hall in **Dallas, TX** on 7/6, The Summit in **Houston, TX** on 7/7, Omni in **Atlanta, GA** on 7/11, Sun Dome in **Tampa, FL** on 7/12, Coliseum in **Seattle, WA** on 7/24, Greek Theatre in **Berkeley, CA** on 7/26-27, Forum in **Los Angeles, CA** on 8/1-3.

Tom will be performing selections from **Southern Accents** including "Don't Come Around Here No More," "Make It Better (Forget About Me)," and "Rebels."

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it's a serious flaw in my character to not be able to do that. I can't write about the Big Picture. I have to translate it into personal things. 'Winning The War' is like that. It's easier to write about something as if it were a personal relationship."

"Winning The War" (and losing every battle) is about lovers who destroy what's best in their love by trying to come out on top. "Voices Carry" is about a woman unable to be herself, and a man unable to understand what she wants. "He said shut up," the song goes, "Oh God, can't you keep it down? Voices carry."

All Mann's love songs have a sad twist, a dark lining in even the brightest cloud. The only song on 'Til Tuesday's album in which the love expressed is unblocked is "Sleep," in which the person loved is dying.

"I've seen Aimee have a bad experience with somebody," says drummer Michael Hausman, "write a song the next night and it's *there*. Sometimes it's very autobiographical."

Hausman and Aimee were living together when they formed 'Til Tuesday. They broke up as the band was catching fire. It's easy to imagine that many of Aimee's songs are about their relationship. "Some things that happened

with us turned into songs," Hausman admits. Then he smiles. "Actually what kind of sucks is that they're *not* all about me."

A half hour after driving away from the stadium Hausman backs 'Til Tuesday's rented van into a parking space in New Orleans' French Quarter, an adult wonderland of music, gin joints and hoochie-coochie parlors. The band members walk only half a block before a taxi squeals to a stop and disgorges two teenage girls with Instamatics. They've followed the band all the way from the arena, a long trek of side roads and cul-de-sacs. The four group members pose with the girls while the taxi driver snaps photos. The fans talk to Aimee a bit, and leave so happy they're close to tears.

As they walk along Bourbon Street a few swamp-billies make cracks about Robert's eye make-up or Aimee's wild hair, but a startling number, black and white, come up to say how much they like 'Til Tuesday. Hausman and Aimee take a seat in a honky-tonk where a singer/guitarist is belting out country soul. When he takes his break he heads over to their table to tell them he's a fan of "Voices Carry."

Hausman credits MTV with breaking more than his band; he notices a big

shift in small town acceptance of rock 'n' roll oddballs. "Even if people don't like the way you look," the drummer says, "if they think you're weird or a  
*continued on page 30*

### Equipment Box

**Robert Holmes'** two Strats were ripped off recently, so he's getting used to a Washburn G35-K and a Kramer Focus 3000. He plays on GHS Boomers through a Marshall and a Roland JC120 with JBLs. He uses a Roland SDE 3000 echo, a DOD delay and a Boss overdrive.

**Joey Pesce's** keyboards include an Oberheim OB8, a Roland Juno 60 and a Yamaha DX7 for which he made all the patches—which vanished in New Orleans, breaking his heart and testing his stamina. He uses a Roland SDE 1000 echo, a Studiomaster mixer, AB Systems Precedent 600, an Acoustic EAW cabinet and JBL bottoms.

**Aimee Mann's** basses walked off with Holmes' guitars. "A Fender Precision is all I will play," Mann says, and though the band pretends the black electrical tape covering one "adds warmth and tone," it's really just to make it look cool. She plays through a Gallien Krueger and a Fender Dual Showman. "I get the biggest, heaviest brass bridge I can find and stick it on." Strings: GHS Boomers.

**Michael Hausman** plays Sonor natural beechwood drums, except for an old Tama wood snare and Zildjian cymbals.

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- Name, age and address of each band member, plus photo of band or artist must accompany each cassette and entry form
- Travel and hotel accommodations will be limited to only the musicians listed with entry
- Bands must still be together to be eligible for the grand prize
- Artists or soloists must assemble a band at their own expense to be eligible for the NAMM performance
- Tapes become the property of MUSICIAN Magazine and JBL Professional and will not be returned
- Artists will retain the rights to their music
- Void where prohibited
- All decisions are final
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- Band/Artist cannot be signed to a major label

Name of artist/band \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Contact name \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted song title \_\_\_\_\_

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World Radio History



# JOHN ZORN

**PETER WATROUS**

## RAW, FUNNY, NASTY, NOISY NEW MUSIC FROM A STRUCTURAL RADICAL

Imagine a stage littered with duck-calls, deconstructed clarinets and saxophones, bowls of water, turntables, keyboards, guitars, a trap drum and an electric drum machine, two harpists, and maybe a cellist or two. In the middle of this stage sits a prompter, surrounded by cue cards. As John Zorn's composition "Cobra" takes off, the players onstage start raising their hands, just like in Social Studies class with Mrs. Butterworth. Next, the prompter points to a musician, who in turn demands a card from the prompter. Each time this happens, the music changes: two people play a duet, then guitars smash the tranquility, or else Zorn himself bubble-baths a solo by blowing parts of his various reed instruments into the bowls of water. It all happens very quickly; musical episode rolls over musical episode. And as players wave their hands to get the prompter's attention, and the audience follows every move they make, something else happens—the show takes on the euphoric unselfconsciousness of a high-school bullshit session. Musicians are tossing sounds and ideas around like baseballs, and the audience is having a blast.

Welcome to the world of John Zorn; Zorn the bop saxophonist who first created minor groundswells in the New York jazz community by resuscitating the compositions of Ornette Coleman, Hank Mobley, Kenny Dorham and Sonny Clark; Zorn the dialectic balancer who composes for free improvisers; Zorn the musicologist whose favorite easy-listening music includes Swiss yodels, Latin orchestras, and Burt Bacharach; and finally, Zorn the revolutionary, whose compositions and method owe as much to game rules and strategy as they do to traditional forms.



The irreverent Zorn: "Solemnity is something I reacted against as a kid."

As a result, his music—raw, funny, nasty and noisy—is a whole lotta fun, and very, very smart.

"Solemnity is something I really reacted against when I was a kid," explains the thirty-one-year-old Zorn, peering owlishly through his black-rimmed glasses. "That's why I was attracted to the jazz scene, because it was all life. It was wow! And that's what I wanted in new music."

But Zorn's reputation isn't limited to composition; in fact, ask any other New York musician about Zorn and chances are they'll want to talk about his ridiculously low rent—\$52 a month—or his record collection, which isn't just big, or huge, but well, just like his rent, ridiculous. Zorn's lower East Side apartment is flooded with records, all the way up to the ceiling. Thousands, possibly millions. There's a whole shelf of Occoras (an ethnic label), an entire shelf of Duke Ellington, of Stockhausen. Books take up most of the other

space—a shelf of strategy books sticks out—and in front of the books cassettes, most with funny little flowers printed on them. The cassettes are Chinese, and damn if Zorn doesn't know all about them, where they're from in China—"These are to these," Zorn points out helpfully, "as New Orleans R&B is to Chicago blues." What's left of the apartment is as compact as the inside of a boat, with a shower built into the hallway, a corner cut out of the bathroom door to allow Zorn's cat entry to the litter box, and blackboards scribbled with diagrams and his monthly playing schedule suspended from the walls. Zorn leads a compact, well-structured life, but then structure, ironically, is what Zorn is really all about.

Zorn came to give order to this chaotic world in 1953. As a kid he attended the United Nations school in Manhattan, and studied with Leonardo Balada, the Argentinian tangoist and classical composer. He started out playing guitar à

LARRY BUSACCA



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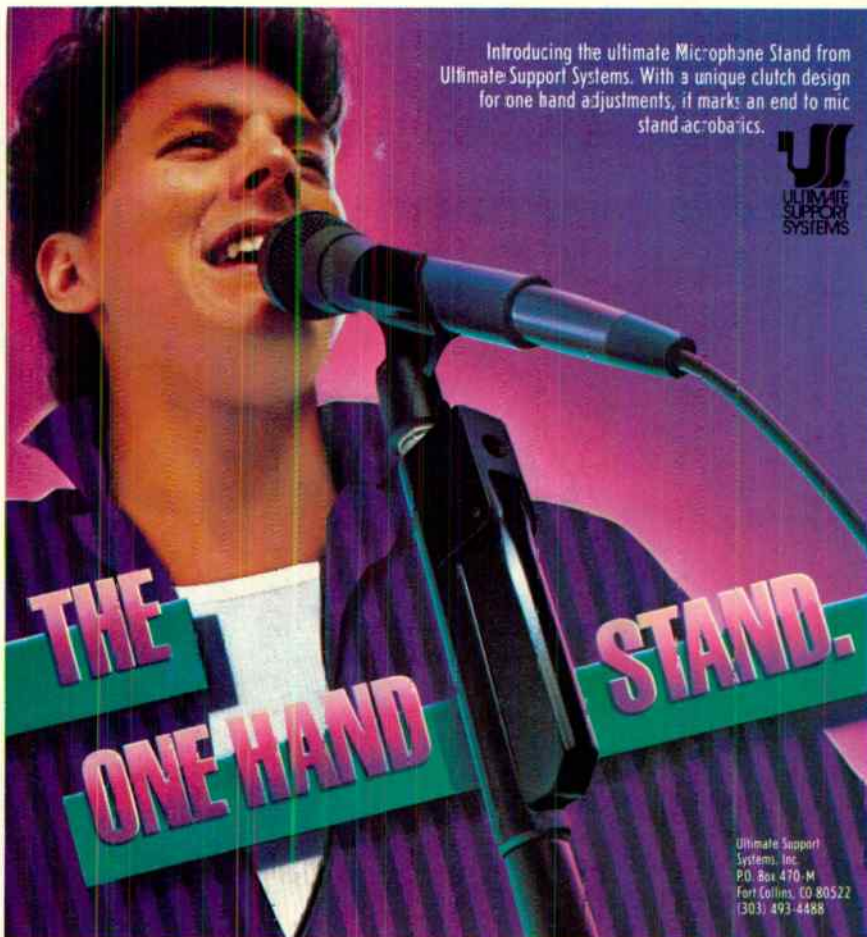
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la the Fab Four, and from an early infatuation with the *Phantom of the Opera's* organ playing, drifted from the Doors' Ray Manzarek to Bach, influenced along the way by the quick musical juxtapositions of Warner Brothers cartoon music composer, Carl W. Stallings. During the 60s he trekked to Webster College in St. Louis, which "used to be a Catholic girl school, and in the hippie period turned into a coed freak-out center," where he discovered that he could do his thesis on Stallings and Stravinsky while at the same time absorbing the lessons of Oliver Lake. He also discovered that St. Louis' influential Black Artists Group and the European tradition weren't necessarily contradictory.

"I had been a bit involved in improvisation, mixing it with composed elements via aleatoric John Cage and Christian Wolf, and I was saying to myself, 'I'm playing the music here, and I'm just staring at the page. I might as well do it myself.' I thought Michael Mantler's work with the JCOA (e.g. the Mantler double LP with no title, silver cover) was interesting at the time, but it was Pharoah Sanders and Cecil Taylor who really turned me around. I got involved with the saxophone as a sound source, via Braxton's *For Alto*. At that time I was into 'out' jazz—Ayer—and I loved be-bop, but couldn't do it. It was *difficult*. But I would even claim Jack Benny as an influence, even George Burns. Comedians *really* have timing down."

So Zorn's evolution into one of new music's most important player/composers has diverse roots; oddly, none of them show. Some people claim that a Zorn performance sounds like Charles Ives at his knottiest and most American, but I would describe it as closer to the expressionistic jazz of the 60s. But on records and in concert, Zorn's compositions flit by extremely rapidly, just like segmented cartoon music. Little twitters of sound follow blast-off guitar and saxophone squalling, followed by turntable manipulation of opera or surf music, combined with filtered voice. Since Zorn skips working within the confines of conventional harmony or time, and since the instrumentation is unique, it doesn't really sound like anything you've heard before. Zorn sculpts *blocks* of sound. Whether he's using a small group—like the groups on *Locus Solus* (all his records are available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012), or a large group like on *Archery*, free improvisation is tempered by a type of composition that sounds unforced yet economical, tightly exuberant but random and prickly.

Zorn names a lot of his compositions



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though I had always wanted to have my own group, and travel and play a repertory of pieces. Now I don't. It would be too regimented. You need to throw a wild card in there, someone who's never played the piece before, and is really going to be on edge, and put everyone else on edge."

Though Zorn's most important works are his own, he's also collaborated and recorded with New York's crit-fave band the Golden Palominos (Celluloid/N.M.D.S.), which features chic funksters like Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Michael Beinhorn, Bill Laswell and more. He plays with Derek Bailey and George Lewis on *Yankees*, an LP whose long and gently undulating group improvisations underscore the unpredictable changes and dynamic fluctuations of Zorn's own works. On his newest record, a brilliant series of duets with Japanese shamisen player Michihiro Sato, *Ganryu Island*, Sato sets up melancholy riffs that in the hands of an uninspired collaborator would probably beget long, wailing, mimicking notes. Not from Zorn the subverter: instead he yips, shrieks, howls and in general raises a ruckus, capsizing the solemnity of the occasion.

But Zorn's penchant for surprise isn't limited to his own compositions. He's equally capable of reviving the canons of black jazz composers revered and obscured, from Dorothy Ashby ("I like digging up underestimated players who deserve to be heard and doing a little more on them") to Thelonious Monk. Zorn's arrangement of Monk's "Shuffle Boil" featuring Arto Lindsay, Wayne Horvitz and Mark Miller appears on Hal Willner's tribute to Thelonious, *That's The Way I Feel Now*, and is easily the most oblique reading of Monk on the album. "Monk for me was humor and outrageousness, and really taking it to the edge," Zorn explains, "but (he was) rooted in a certain type of bluesiness....To attack all the parameters—rhythm, harmony, pitch organization, orchestration—all the elements that make a piece of music what it is, and try to radicalize every one of those, that's the important thing. To me, *that's* Monk."

Zorn's music is unique, and when he plays at New York's club 8BC, or in Japan, or at the Moers festival in Germany, he's playing like nobody else. No one has developed similar systems of musical composition or performance; no one sounds the way his groups sound. And astonishingly, in the age of Ronald and Julio, people actually like the music, radical sonic assault or not. John Zorn's playing schedule is packed. He doesn't have to carry a day job. "I'm playing very weird music and it's not accessible at all," Zorn observes happily. "I'm doing exactly what I want to do. And I'm making a living." 



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# DAVE EDMUNDS

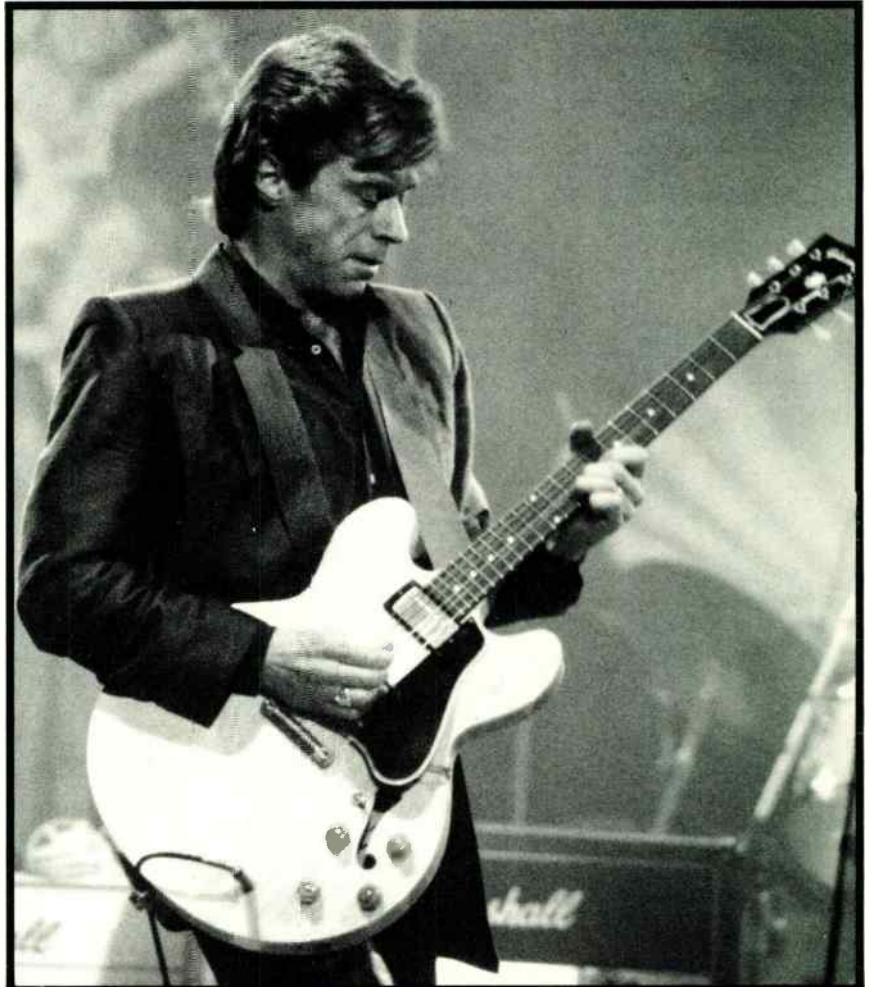
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## TOO BUSY TO ROCK: A HOT GUITARIST FINDS STUDIO LIFE AFTER ROOTS

He's a singer and hotshot guitarist whose stunning technique is wedded to a passionate love of rock 'n' roll. He's a flawless one-man band in the studio. He's an in-demand producer of rootsy artists looking for expertise without exploitation. He's also a lousy conversationalist. Dave Edmunds, forty-two, tends to answer questions with "oh, I don't know" or equally unpromising brush-offs. If he ever had to depend on the gift of gab, he probably would have returned to being an auto mechanic a long time ago.

Fortunately for everyone, the taciturn Edmunds is a whiz behind a guitar, a studio console, or both. He burst into public view as a member of the group Love Sculpture; his six-string pyrotechnics on a souped-up version of Khatchaturian's "Sabre Dance" in 1968 typecast the band as classical-rockers. After Love Sculpture split up Edmunds reverted to 50s music, his first love, and scored an international hit with Smiley Lewis' "I Hear You Knocking." Next he set himself the task of recreating Phil Spector's wall of sound—by himself. Edmunds had been producing or co-producing his records since "Sabre Dance"; his solo re-creations of the Spector approach on the singles "Baby I Love You" and "Born To Be With You" were valuable lessons in studio craft.

Since 1977 he has released annual albums showcasing his good-timey rock 'n' roll. His career as producer picked up with his involvement with the Stray Cats. Last year he must have fulfilled a dream of sorts when he produced *EB 84*, the Everly Brothers' first new studio recording in eleven years. (Edmunds has recorded his own versions of Everly tunes and duetted Everly-style with former colleague Nick Lowe.)



For 50s time capsule escapee Edmunds, living well is the best *Revenge*.

Along the way he has also amassed an impressive circle of friends.

Paul McCartney, for example, contributed his best song in too long to *EB 84*. Edmunds got the ex-Beatle to write "On The Wings Of A Nightingale" when "I picked up the phone and asked him. He came back in about four or five weeks with it. Hell of a thing, you know, picking up the phone to ask Paul McCartney for a song. I just thought he would get off doing it."

Edmunds doesn't gloat about his entree to McCartney, with whom he worked earlier on the film *Give My Regards to Broad Street*. He seems slightly amazed himself. It's not like they're neighbors. No, Edmunds' neighbor is this other guy—also a musician, though—by the name of George Harrison.

"He lives up the road," Edmunds admits, in the same tone of voice you'd use to describe brushing your teeth. Being a neighborly sort, Edmunds was discussing a then-current project—pro-

viding the soundtrack music for *Porky's Revenge!*—with Harrison, who suggested an unreleased Bob Dylan song. "We were in his studio," Edmunds says, "so he started recording it." "I Don't Want To Do It" is Harrison's first new recording in four years. All in a day's work for Dave Edmunds.

The *Porky's Revenge!* soundtrack has been regarded as the best thing about the trashy film. "The attraction of doing soundtrack work," Edmunds says, "is you get the opportunity to do stuff you never would normally do." In this case, Edmunds treated the assignment as "an excuse to do the old favorites I've always liked." With a crack band of Chuck Leavell, Kenny Aaronson and Michael Shrieve, he plows through a pair each of oldies and neoldie originals. Other contributors include Jeff Beck, Clarence Clemons, Carl Perkins backed by Stray Cats Slim Jim Phantom and Lee Rocker, and the Crawling King Snakes, a Honeydrip-

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Tommy Stinson in concert. Jerry Kramer, Management. Photo by John Bellissimo.

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pers-like pick-up group with Robert Plant and Phil Collins. (Edmunds: "I put some guitar on it and we remixed it.")

Despite his strong associations with 50s rock 'n' roll, Edmunds' own records are departing from traditionalism. The prime suspect for the switch is Jeff Lynne, Edmunds' first outside producer since he started recording; "I just wanted to work with someone else to see what it was like." He chose Lynne solely because "I think he makes phenomenal records." Their first sessions together yielded "Slipping Away," Edmunds' return to the top forty after a dozen years' holiday. After working with Lynne on two albums, though, Edmunds isn't sure the two will get together again: "I haven't the faintest idea

what I'll be doing on my next album," he declares.

Probably because he hasn't had time to think about it: "I've never been so busy, actually." After producing the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Edmunds is about to tackle a second Everly Brothers album; produce British rock 'n' roller Shakin' Stevens (whose debut album Edmunds also produced, in 1970); possibly get involved with a Carl Perkins TV special; and produce three songs for Glenn Frey. Glenn Frey??

The former Eagle has little in common with the other figures above, yet he contacted Edmunds. "Will it work? That's the first thing" Edmunds asks himself "when someone asks me to work with them. Otherwise you don't want to go

in and just waste time."

Besides all the studio work, he undertook a one-week tour of Japan in May, more for sightseeing than promotional purposes. He last toured the U.S. in 1983, and doesn't seem overly eager for another long-term concert haul. "I'd rather stay at home.... What I like doing is working in the studio, whether for myself or other people. I prefer to be in the studio than onstage."

Those who've seen Edmunds' hard-pounding live shows will be alarmed at these studio-hermit tendencies. (Since Rockpile, the band he fronted with Lowe, dissolved in 1981, Edmunds has toured with long-time Welsh cronies Mickey Gee on guitar, Geraint Watkins on piano, John David Williams on bass and Dave Charles on drums.) He has to satisfy himself first, and bristles at those who criticize his work with Lynne for breaking out of a 50s time capsule.

"I can't just dedicate my life to keeping a handful of fans happy, who then get on with what they have to do and maybe listen to an album of mine once in three months. It's ridiculous. As well as rock 'n' roll, I like loads of different types of music. I was just listening to ABBA's *Greatest Hits* in the car. Wonderful—brilliantly made record. I like any good music, really—anything that's well done."

His views on the Stray Cats underscore this catholicity. Having produced two of the Stray Cats' three albums, Edmunds understands their demise. "That music doesn't go anywhere. Once you try to change it in any way, it stops being rockabilly. If people have had enough of listening to that, that's it, they won't keep buying it. It's a sad fact of life, and rock 'n' roll." Why does he think the Stray Cats were so big in the first place? "God bless MTV, I guess."

Edmunds remains staunchly old-

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### Play, Don't Worry

Dave Edmunds' electric guitar of choice is still his unmodified Gibson 335 "dot." Strings? "I'll get someone to put them on for me. I have no idea what they are." He doesn't use effects or signal processors "as a rule." He plays through a MESA-Boogie or new Vox AC-30 amplifier. His acoustic guitars are two Gibsons, a J-200 and Everly, and Martin D-45. He hires keyboards as he needs them, which isn't that much, but has played a Korg C-1. Considering his studio expertise, Edmunds' home set-up is surprisingly small, centered around a Fostex 4-track cassette deck and "little tiny monitors with amplifiers inside." "I don't like the idea of home studios in principle," he adds. "They tend to miss the point. You spend time mucking about, doing a riff with all kinds of different effects on it and end up with nothing. If you're paying for a studio, it keeps an edge on it; you know you're there for a purpose."



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fashioned in his approach to the recording studio. "It was quite fun working with Jeff, recording in a way I'd never done before, with click tracks and drum machines. But if I have to state a preference, I'd rather come down on the other side of using a studio to capture a performance by a group of musicians. I did that a lot for *Porky's Revenge!*—no click tracks, just go out and play it. You can still use synthesizers, if it works. That's just an instrument that makes a sound, that's all. That it's electronic really makes no difference to me."

And so Dave Edmunds goes his idiosyncratic way, bringing rock 'n' roll gospel to the masses. Not a prolific songwriter, he has more trouble finding material for his albums than anything else. When he does, other artists confirm his good taste by recording the same tunes. Juice Newton's smash "Queen Of Hearts" followed Edmunds' version by two years. Last year his and Tina Turner's recordings of Paul Brady's "Steel Claw" appeared almost simultaneously. At least he knows he's on the right track.

He is also characteristically modest about his career. "It's great to be working, really. It never goes deeper than that. I just hope it keeps up as long as possible."

Dave, don't ever change. ☐

### Stooges from page 122

note that album, the bleached blond popsters released a video that showed them dancing at a classroom chalkboard in robes and mortarboards, an obvious visual reference to that same seminal Stooges short.

Yet of all the rockers who found their own philosophy in the Stooges vision, none re-created their personas so perfectly in the glow of that spiritual city of light we call Moe-town as did Crosby, Stills & Nash. These three folkies virtually dedicated their lives to becoming Stooges incarnate. In the end they succeeded far more gloriously than Joes Besser and DeRita ever did.

From his lovey dovey "We're all brothers" beginnings, Stephen Stills evolved a full Moe persona. He became angry, belligerent and downright rude. Stills would perform in huge hockey rinks and then chew out the audience if anyone talked during one of his songs. Insiders are sure Stephen once told a lackey, "Remind me to kill you later." (Neil Young, sheepdogish with his shaggy black hair parted in the middle, was Shemp to Stills' Moe. Shemp and Moe had been partners before the Stooges, and when there was a chance, Moe brought him into the later act. Stills, their long relationship periodically exploded into conflict and Shemp, like Young, finally left for a solo career.)

Graham Nash, wimpy and equivocating, was the finest Fine since Larry himself.

That left it to David Crosby to achieve the most difficult transmogrification of all—to go from a talented and articulate singer/songwriter to an overweight, shiny-headed, pratfalling buffoon. Curly's own hobbled gait was the result of having once shot himself in the foot, and if Crosby never duplicated that stunt literally, he pulled it off figuratively a dozen times. It is perhaps the greatest tribute to his Stoogely influences that when we think of Crosby in years to come, our image of him will surely be of a rotund maniac, madly fleeing a pursuing gaggle of police, those once lovely harmonies now a trilling, fading, "wo-w-wowowowowo." ☐

(Excerpted from Bill Flanagan's forthcoming book, *Last of the Moe Haircuts: The Influence of the Three Stooges on Twentieth Century Thought & Culture*)

### 'Til Tuesday from page 14

punk—they'll come up and ask you about it. They're really curious now. They won't be obnoxious and beat you up."

As they wander through the French Quarter, one drunk sees Aimee, shakes her hand, congratulates her on her records and video, and rushes back to tell his co-drunk, "I just met Cyndi Lauper!"

Extra irony: Cyndi Lauper heard an early tape of "Voices Carry" and asked for the song. 'Til Tuesday's managers told them how many thousands of bucks in royalties they could earn from that, but the band declined.

"We didn't want to be known as the band that wrote Cyndi Lauper's hit," Hausman explains. "And if it was a hit for her, wouldn't we think we could've done a version just as good?"

Originally "Voices Carry" took the man's point of view. The recording poobahs were afraid the first version could be taken as lesbian, so Aimee changed the lyrics from "she" to "I," from the perspective of a man to that of a woman.

"At first it was about somebody else's situation," Mann explains. "And I re-wrote it to be very very personal indeed. That's always fine with me."

Asked if her broken romance with Hausman inspired some of 'Til Tuesday's emotional subject matter, Mann says, "My relationship with Michael was really really good. Our break-up was pretty amicable. So there's a lot of regret but no anguish associated with it. And anguish is usually what drives me to write."

A wounded romanticism is Mann's great vice. "I'd rather be a junkie than  
*continued on page 75*

# TECHNOLOGY DOESN'T CREATE MY MUSIC, I DO.

HERBIE  
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## KATRINA & THE WAVES

### *A Successful Transplant*

**A** young, midwest-born woman relocates to England and joins a quartet as lead singer and rhythm guitarist. They release a debut album bursting with star potential and versatility—from a brassy, Motown-ish hit single to barrelhouse country, harrowing ballads and sneering macho-baiting. Sound familiar? "Yes, we get compared to the Pretenders," says **Katrina Leskanich** of Katrina & the Waves. "But only by people who don't really know a lot about music."

People who do know a lot about music may remember Waves songwriter/guitarist Kimberly Rew from the Soft

Boys, a daft Cambridge group with a cult reputation. Rew subsequently released two solo 45s and started playing with drummer Alex Cooper, an old college friend. The latter knew Leskanich and bassist Vince de la Cruz, who had met one another in a church choir. The four debuted as the Waves.

At first Rew was lead singer. Then he began to write for Leskanich's big, soulful voice, and gave her some Etta James records to combat the remnants of a youthful Linda Ronstadt/Heart infatuation. Katrina & the Waves emerged.

Oddly, the half-Brit/half-American band got their biggest welcome in Canada, recording two LPs on the Attic label. When the Bangles heard "Going Down

To Liverpool," they grabbed it for their own debut LP. When Bruce Springsteen heard their albums, he asked for his own copies. When Capitol Records heard all this, they signed Katrina & the Waves for the U.S.

The band rerecorded and remixed their ten best songs, including two by de la Cruz, for *Katrina And The Waves*. Leskanich has also begun to write. She feels that, regardless of songwriter, the material is rooted in American pop: "Walking On Sunshine," modeled after "You Can't Hurry Love," was intended to be a summer song.

It's a far cry from songs like "Hey, War Pig." "We were still floundering then," Leskanich smiles. "But I think we're on to something now."

—Rob Tannenbaum

### *A New Beatles Album?*

Capitalism works in strange and wonderful ways. Capitol Records and its British parent, EMI, would like to put out an album of previously unissued Beatles recordings. "We knew we had unissued material," says **Brian Southall**, EMI's general manager for public relations. Recently discovered alternate versions of released Beatles songs filled out an album tentatively called *Sessions*.

The stumbling block to its release has been the ex-Beatles themselves. "The response from their representatives was that they were unhappy for artistic, creative and musical reasons," Southall says. EMI's proposed track listing included "Come And Get It," a Paul McCartney song that was a hit for Badfinger in 1970; a 1963 recording of "One After 909"; "If You've Got Troubles," a Ringo Starr vehicle that never made it to *Rubber Soul*; "Leave My Kitten Alone"; and an acoustic version of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" with an extra verse. There were thirteen tracks in all.

"It was a project suspended rather than an album pulled," Southall says. "We merely suggested some ideas and they said, 'We don't like your ideas. Let's go back to the drawing board.'" A spokesperson for McCartney confirmed the project is under discussion. If McCartney, Starr, George Harrison and John Lennon's estate can agree on a track selection and cover art, *Sessions* may yet become a reality—preferably before the Beatle-boomers outgrow their record-buying habits.

# GLADYS KNIGHT

## A Visit to Techno-Land

**T**hink of chocolate ice cream and Chinese mustard...Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev...Donny Osmond and Grace Jones. The clash of styles on Gladys Knight & the Pips' *Life* album is just about that pronounced. It's definitely East meets West as Knight's warm, wonderfully elastic voice and the Pips' snappy harmonies come up against an awesome array of synthesizers, delays and other techno-toys. Euell Gibbons meets the computer nerds.

Sure, the name of the game is hit records, but this is ridiculous. This...this...this works—at least in part. Pieces of the album sound contrived and forced, yet the title track and the single, "My

kids lost in a computer store, well, as Gladys sees it, "That's the fun part. We learned a lot about the technical aspects of it and we had some good engineers, thank goodness, that were willing to experiment with sounds and machines."

You'd think this would be quite a stretch for a singer with Knight's deep-soul roots. The lady from Atlanta, though, says she's always liked to experiment with different sounds. During her formative years, "We were listening to everybody: Nat Cole, Patti Page, Elvis, the Five Royales, Big Maybelle, Lightnin' Hopkins, Little Willie John, the Lennon Sisters...it was a real mixture. I just liked good music, and I'm still like that, even today."

Nevertheless, she admits that when the quest for a hit record took her into techno's unfamiliar terrain, she didn't hesitate to call on experts:



JOHN BELLISIMO

Time," sizzle. And "Till I See You Again," a churchy, slow-burn ballad, is a killer.

Who put Gladys Knight & the Pips in techno-land? Don't blame Jimmy Jam, Terry Lewis or Thomas Dolby; Knight herself, brother/Pip Merald "Bubba" Knight and Sam Dees co-produced much of the album. If it sounds like three

her and the Pips' kids. "They're more critical, probably, than the average person would be. They have a vested interest. You know, 'I don't want my mom goin' out there lookin' ignorant.' We look at and listen to what they have to say, because they are in tune. They're part of it. They are it."

—Leonard Pitts, Jr.



ANDY FREEBERG

## BILLY COBHAM BLOOD ULMER

### A Class Menagerie

**B**lood Ulmer whispers conspiratorily, his eyes bulging. "I never realized where Shannon was coming from until this weekend: Billy Cobham. 'Course Shannon made something else of it. He plays good drums. I could fit right in with what he's doing."

Wasn't in the cards though. The pairing of Cobham's Glass Menagerie and Ulmer's trio at New York's Bottom Line club was intriguing enough without the extra tease of collaboration between the ghosts of fusions past and present.

Billy Cobham always knew what he could do best, and with the demise of the thunderous Mahavishnu Orchestra he pursued his goals with singular shrewdness. In a series of endorsements, clinics and increasingly mundane recordings Cobham solidified his rep as a master drummer. Pity that Glass Menagerie's monolithic and unchanging arrangements double the rhythm line without adding any fresh melodic counter-

point or contrasting harmonies. Pity, because Billy Cobham has it all.

Ulmer's quandary stems from being heralded as the greatest thing since pitted prunes. His earthy, fulminating bush music was hyped as harmolodic funk, cosmic dance music or the second coming of Jimi Hendrix—and outside of N.Y.C. critics, the verdict was a resounding NO COMPUTE. Sensing this, Ulmer's gone back to basics with a primal blues trio. His chunky Jimmy Reed/John Lee Hooker-inflected chording is anatomically correct, but his nebulous vocabulary of grunts, whinnies, hollers, barks and slurs suggests Wes Montgomery's voicings with all the tonics and dominants burned away.

Ulmer occasionally animates his rough-and-tumble rhythm with a moment of tenderness so surreal and dreamy you sigh in contemplation of what he could do if he got all his different style-selves harmolodizing in one program. Perhaps somewhere in between Cobham's stylishness and Ulmer's primal scream a new music lies waiting to be born.

—Chip Stern

# THE FALL

## What Are Words Worth?

**M**ark Smith is a genius. His lyrics are about a thousand million times better than any lyricist ever in the world." These cautious words are from Smith's wife Brix, a native of Los Angeles and guitarist in her husband's ongoing obsession, the Fall.

If the world in general avoids such lofty linguistic planes, the Fall has always generated fanatical reverence from a few. Seven years and innumerable lineup changes into its recording career, the Manchester, England group has built a committed and growing cult fol-

though. I like to go around in circles. This is what keeps the group going: I get different viewpoints and I want to put them across."

The constant with each new viewpoint is a deliberate absence of conventional "progress." "I like music primitive," Smith explains. "I like it experimental. It's a lot of work to keep it that way. It's like non-laziness."

Among the viewpoints Smith has left behind is identification with the Manchester working class. "I used to do that because it was a good crack, and nobody used to write about that. What people didn't realize was that I was being satirical. Now it's very trendy to write like that."

People don't always catch the satire. Smith's lyrics,



## "Louie Louie" Goes Home

It started as a simple enough gag: a proposal from Seattle, Washington's KING-TV comedy show *Almost Live* to make "Louie Louie" the official state song. After some petitioning in shopping malls, though, the concept started barreling out of control. By April 12, an official "Louie Louie Day" celebration drew about 5,000 people to the steps of the state capitol building for stirring renditions of the tune by the Kingsmen, the Wailers and Paul Revere & the Raiders.

Will the government heed the *vox populi*? *Almost Live* host **Ross Shafer** says twelve state senators have already declared in favor of "Louie Louie" over the current state

song, "Washington My Home." "Louie Louie" composer Richard Berry has even written new words for the occasion. Washington's governor claims he has heard neither "Washington My Home" nor "Louie Louie"—which, in the latter case, at least, is hard to believe. A petition to get the issue before the legislature or on the fall ballot requires over 150,000 signatures. Having given away 10,000 "Louie-buster" buttons, Shafer isn't ready to give up yet.

"The timing was right," he says of the gimmick that exploded. "The baby boomers are active." Besides, Shafer adds, "Louie Louie" has the ultimate argument working in its favor:

"It's very easy to dance to."



LISA HAUN

lowing for its harsh industrial art-punk. The faithful—who have watched Smith consistently find fresh, contexts for his grating rants—have just been treated to a break in the clouds: The almost upbeat new album, *The Wonderful And Frightening World Of...*, softens the band's trademark dissonance. "You can only go so far without that becoming routine," the idiosyncratic singer says. "I want to get back to that soon,

observed by the band, his garbled delivery and heavy accent, are cryptic to begin with. Like the Fall itself, they are a very personal projection of a twisted sensibility, not meant for casual consumption. "I don't think it's important that anybody understand the group," he says. "If you enjoy it, that's the main thing. I think people are genuinely stimulated by it, whether they understand it or not." — *John Leland*

## Trouble Inna Cabbage Patch

Always in the forefront of social movements, **NRBQ** has lately taken to providing death certificates for Cabbage Patch dolls. "We're opening a cemetery for them," says guitarist Al Anderson. Bereaved Cabbage Patch doll owners can send their expired loved ones (and a nominal fee) to the group, who will issue a death certificate and provide "a decent burial, complete with headstone."

To make sure the dead dolls have company, NRBQ started killing a few themselves during their shows. In January they exploded five

in various cities. In Los Angeles the head just blew off and flew in an arc over the crowd," says keyboard player Terry Adams. "It was beautiful." By March they had progressed to tar and feathers.

Adams explains the method to the group's madness: "People give these things life. If you're gonna be honest with kids about life, then you have to be honest about death as well." So far they haven't heard from Coleco, the doll manufacturer, but Adams doubts NRBQ's mayhem is causing any corporate concern. "They're happy 'cause we have to buy 'em. We do have quite a few dead ones."

MICHAEL OCHES ARCHIVES





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## POETRY IN MOTION

### Media Bake-off In L.A.

**O**kay, so it makes sense that a thriving spoken-word performance scene could flourish in literati-infested burghs like New York and San Francisco, but something about poetry and Los Angeles just doesn't jibe. Then what accounts for a full house of 150 squeezed into McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica for a reading by prize-winning poet **Wanda Coleman** and **Exene Cervenka** from X?

Credit former musical journalist/A&R person Harvey Kubernik's passionate proselytizing for a rash of appearances by verse-spouting musicians and wordsmiths at several small L.A. venues. His Freeway Records label released three spoken-word double albums that are every bit as sprawling and inconsistent a mixture of genuine insight and self-indulgent artbabble as the city which spawned it (or your town, for that matter).

Kubernik preserved the Coleman/Cervenka evening for posterity. *Twin Sisters (Live At McCabe's)* (Freeway/Rhino) offers plenty of ammunition for debating the

relative merits of rock lyric writing versus poetry in the formal sense. Coleman, a veteran of two hundred readings, used vocal inflections and phrasing like a savvy singer to enhance the dramatic impact of her words. Her poems of growing up black, female and intelligent in Los Angeles were equally capable of leaving the audience laughing or chilled to the marrow.

Exene may have come full circle—she met X-mate John Doe at a poetry workshop in nearby Venice, you'll recall—but her segment paled in comparison. Effectively animated at first, her delivery grew progressively flatter as the evening progressed; the material consisted of little more than earnest observations and reflections setting up one-line zinger finales. Long excerpts written during X's '83 national tour repeatedly slammed the new breed of English bands without much literary flair—X made the point far more forcefully on "I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts."

Result: a home turf win for Coleman. But could she convincingly put across "We're Desperate" to a couple thousand tanked-up fans on a weekend night?

—Don Snowden



SUZAN CARSON

## XTC

### Takes a Trip

A new era must have new music. The **Dukes Of Stratosphear** don't care about yesterday's conventions, the stale morality and petty wars of old people. The Dukes groove on the Love, Spirituality and Dreams of tomorrow, of the day after tomorrow, of three months, two weeks and ten minutes from tomorrow, the electric vibe eternal....

Actually—as anyone who's heard the 25 O'Clock mini-LP will attest—the Dukes of Stratosphear is the most accurate spoof of 60s

psychedelic pop music likely to be attempted in our lifetime. The album cover looks like an out-take from *Disraeli Gears*; "band" members have names like Sir John Johns and the Red Curtain. Yet the faces pictured atop the Nehru jackets and behind the granny glasses seem familiar, and no wonder: It's an open secret that the Dukes are a put-on from England's merry pranksters, XTC.

Singer/guitarist **Andy Partridge**, fresh from a bout of transcendental meditation, admits the project has its origins in "my love of forgery." But it's also an homage to a moment in pop history. "Some of my favorite tracks are from then," Par-

tridge says, "so I just have to say 'thank you' in some way."

The other members of XTC were "a bit apprehensive at first," but "they really got into it." Partridge's concern for authenticity only started with the music, a pastiche of early Pink Floyd, Electric Prunes and the inevitable sitar. He made his lyrics to songs like "Bike Ride To The Moon" "as loopy and period as I could." The band used old instruments and microphones; "we wanted to do it on four-track equipment but couldn't get it in time." The crowning touch was co-producer (with the band) John Leckie, who really is Swami Anand Nagara since becoming a follower of guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Leckie/

Anand, whose studio credits include Pink Floyd and late Beatles recordings, attended the Dukes sessions in robes and beads.

The six songs, taped in December, were issued on April Fools' Day—"a nice piece of coincidence!" Partridge laughs. Press releases made sure outsiders knew who the Dukes of Stratosphear really were. Strangely enough, the album wasn't designed to cash in on any psychedelic music revivals. "As we began making the record, we started to realize lots of people were doing this for brand new," Partridge says incredulously. With the Dukes of Stratosphear, though, "the floral tongue is well sewn in cheek."

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**By Mark Rowland**



BEHT STEIN

Graham Parker has a new band, a new album, a new label and the same old problem: how to get on the radio, how to reach the audience that a talent of his magnitude deserves. "I'm not avant-garde you know," he declares in what he calls his "guttersnipe" cockney twang. "I'm making pop, beat, rock 'n' roll songs. I'm *always* trying to make a commercial record." Parker was amused when the British pop press accused him of selling out to America with 1982's *Another Grey Area*. If selling out means making a commercial rec-

ord, Parker's been trying to do that since he hired Mutt Lange to produce *Heat Treatment* in 1976. "Maybe it doesn't sound that way," he observes with rueful understatement, "but that's what we were trying to do. Yet it never ends up like anything so much as a Graham Parker record. I think my singing stamps them in some way."

He's got a point. It's hard to imagine a voice less suited to AM's modulated frequencies than Parker's, whose reedy tenor makes Tom Petty sound suave. Yet it's a great voice; like

ately—Elektra was there to sign me. But 1984—whew! It seemed you weren't respected unless you had platinum sales. In some ways I was glad I didn't have a record out in '84, though it was also frustrating, since most of these songs were ready last January. But lately there seems to be a new feeling about. Richard Thompson and Los Lobos seem to be getting great respect. I just hope record companies will keep committing themselves to people who are just plain good. Last year it was more like, "We've got our heavy metal bands, we've got to make some money here!"

**MUSICIAN:** *Those trends tend to move in cycles, I think.*

**PARKER:** Thank God! Because it happens to me as well. There wasn't much guitar on *The Real Macaw*, for instance, largely because when I was listening to what was going around at the time, I didn't hear guitar solos. There were

thought we were part of Kiss, because they were so naive, or so *dumb*. "Hey, another circus act..."

**MUSICIAN:** *I'm surprised to hear you say you dislike touring. Your live performances are unusual for their intensity and audience rapport.*

**PARKER:** I like being onstage. I usually like the gig. I think if I couldn't make a record I'd be frustrated to madness—especially if I kept writing songs. But if I never went onstage again it would be fine. Plus I've got a two-month-old baby daughter, and missing any day of her life is a real drag for me.

You can't possibly go out on tour if you're not excited about it, and now that I'm rehearsing with the band I am excited again. So things change. And I think I've got more energy for this one because I play all the rhythm guitar. It's just me and Brinsley and I play on everything. I can't just move around and sing; I've got to be part of the band.

**MUSICIAN:** *What inspired you to do that?*

**PARKER:** It was a hard decision. I wanted to strip things down a bit, and I had played rhythm on the record. It seemed to work out well. And for a forty-five-minute set, do I really need to put the guitar down for five songs and reach the audience with my finger?

Plus I wanted to shock my system. It has always been easier for me to get a more prolific guitarist who understands the mechanisms of a band. I still don't really myself. By forcing myself to do it I've learned to adapt, and to leave a few holes here and there. It's a challenge. I hope it works.

**MUSICIAN:** *You never appear on anyone else's records, or keep much of a public profile when you're not touring. Is that by accident or design?*

**PARKER:** I can't hang out too much. My energy works best in spurts. I'll write and play furiously and then breathe a sigh of relief and lounge around. I've always had that kind of energy that builds up and then explodes.

I guess that's why the gigs are intense. It's saved for that hour and a half onstage. I don't mix with a lot of people, I don't "jam"; I'm not involved with several projects at once, which seems to be the trend. I'd like to see my name on more things, but don't really feel the need. I'm pretty reluctant to take on many things. On the other hand I am a bit lazy.

**MUSICIAN:** *You're reminding me of your own line about L.A. in "Stupefaction": "I can't see the point but I get the attraction."*

**PARKER:** Right [*laughs*]. I can definitely see the attraction. I like to go on holidays to tropical islands in the Caribbean, and I like to be where people don't know about the latest hit record. Where people don't know there might be a war between Russia and America. It vaguely filters through the jungle grapevine there, but it never feels imminent. I'd really rather live in the country than the city. I don't know if I'm ready to do that, but I do live there in my head. I don't need New York City to write "tough" songs.

**MUSICIAN:** *Where do you live?*

**PARKER:** About two blocks from here [*laughs*]. I'm between New York and London actually. I'm a British citizen but we just had our baby here and the tour is in America. I'm fairly confused as to where I live.

**MUSICIAN:** *Most people who live here are.*

**PARKER:** Yeah—I miss it when I'm gone. And England I'm finding a very strange place. Because I've acquired this bizarre blend of cockney and New York accent people there think I'm from Australia. But now I find the way they talk to be totally ridiculous. "Oh, ullo luf, ow ah you? Oh now, we downt pie too much attention to the minuh's strike." And I think, "Who are these people?" Which is how I used to feel about America. So I think I'm beginning to understand the American way a lot more now. I love New York, and I hate it—like everybody else.

**MUSICIAN:** *On Steady Nerves, your songs address several topical issues. "Break Them Down" refers to the conversion of South American Indians by Christian missionaries, and*

LAURA LEVINE



### Will Parker ever hit big in a fast food pop universe?

these strange synthesizer things and vocal chants. I think I was spending more time in England then. There was an emergence of synths and away from rhythms and lead guitar. And when I wrote these songs it seemed time for more guitar—"Let's give Brinsley a solo here." It felt natural but also kind of sponge-like—soaking up what's going around.

**MUSICIAN:** *So you are influenced by pop trends.*

**PARKER:** Definitely. I think I pick up on what's going around. And I think right now I'm on time again. People seem to want to hear live music again. Look at U2, they don't have an album high on the charts but they're selling out arenas. That sort of thing wasn't happening a year or two ago.

**MUSICIAN:** *On your current tour your band is opening for Eric Clapton, which is quite a switch. You've toured as a headliner for several years. How do you feel about that?*

**PARKER:** I've been playing to pretty much my own audience the last tours, and I don't want to repeat myself again. I'm not somebody who likes to be on the road all the time; I do not consider myself a journeyman in that sense. When I make a record, promoting it with a tour is not that important to me. So what else is there for me to do? Perhaps I could go out with an acoustic guitar and play pubs and have people lined around the block [*laughs*]. Or else a support tour. And Eric Clapton seems feasible. When I go on at eight I know the hall won't be full, but maybe I'll get across to a few fans with enough gray matter to say, "Hey, these guys are playing songs. That guitarist isn't bad. Hey, the songs are a bit bluesy, like Eric's." So maybe I'll have a chance. He does attract a cross-section, and besides, I like Eric Clapton. I'm a fan. I'll love to watch him play. At least it won't be like 1979, when I was supporting bands like Journey and Styx. I supported Kiss once, in Georgia, and the audience went crazy. They



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"Everyone's Hand Is On The Switch" to electrocutions here in America. Have you been reading the papers more?

**PARKER:** "Break Them Down" was specifically about an article I'd read in the color supplement of the *London Sunday Times*. It had a picture of an Indian on the front and the title "Is God A Colonialist?" I'd known about the subject previously by reading Peter Matthiesson's *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, and it affected me. I don't think I'd ever written a song based on an article before.

And then I heard about that guy Sullivan who'd been electrocuted in Florida, and I remembered how there was a guy before him that they tried to kill and he wouldn't die. They had to keep jolting with the power until he was, like, smoking. And all this was reported very "factually." The popcorn and soft drinks images in the song sort of sprang from that. I could see people in middle America sitting there and eating popcorn and watching it all on TV. "Well, look at thaaat, honey, he hasn't died yet. They're gonna give him another jolt—can you bring in some more Pepsi? Okay, he's dying now, oh great, gee, look at that! Isn't that strange, he's turned black around the head...."

I remember the Pope called up to say, "Don't execute this man." I mean, the poor guy doesn't have the energy to do it for all the other people who are being bumped off every day, but he did it for this one. I saw it on the news and thought it was fairly amusing.

**MUSICIAN:** Do you consider yourself musically adept?

**PARKER:** I'm really bad. When I play songs I say, "What chord is that?" They tell me and then I forget what they said.

**MUSICIAN:** I heard a story that during the recording of *The Up Escalator* you kept insisting that one note on a backing keyboard track was off. And everyone else in the studio insisted that it was okay, and then it turned out you were right. So you must have a pretty acute ear.

**PARKER:** For some things I do. Other times you can play a record for me and I can't pick out the keyboard or the backing vocals even though I sang them. But I do often know when something is wrong, and often when it's right as well.

Some of the chord structures I put together amaze the musicians who play with me. "Discovering Japan" is almost in a Japanese scale. It's not at all regular, it's just instinctual.

**MUSICIAN:** You don't really know Japanese scales?

**PARKER:** I didn't know what it was. Explaining "Sounds Like Chains" to the musicians was a real pain as well. It's like a 7/8 reggae rhythm. I had to say, "Listen very carefully. You bounce off this rhythm to get to that." But I don't know what I'm doing.

**MUSICIAN:** "Sounds Like Chains" is also the only lyric you've ever printed on an album sleeve. Why don't you do that more often?

**PARKER:** Until recently, I've wanted people to listen and find out for themselves. I'm not a poet, I'm a songwriter. For this album I did want to print lyrics. I wanted people to read about the South American Indians. But printing them would have cost me eight cents a record, because Elektra already had their sleeves printed. I couldn't afford it. When you finally want to do something, you can't; that's the way things work out though, isn't it?

**MUSICIAN:** Your new record, produced by Bill Wittman, is the first album in which you haven't used a "name" producer. Was that deliberate?

**PARKER:** Yeah. I wanted to totally avoid the "name" producer who'd had a hit on the charts at the moment. At first Elektra wasn't in agreement with me. I'd just signed with them and here was problem number one. But they eventually allowed me to do three tracks with Bill and then they saw that we were on to something. Bill was fan of Graham Parker & the Rumour; that is, he wanted a *band* record as opposed to a production of my songs, and I agreed with that. That's what this material needed, I did not want to go with some top producer to make a Graham Parker record the way he sees it.

**MUSICIAN:** Was charting a consideration when you were looking for a producer on your previous records?

**PARKER:** To a certain extent. When I picked Jimmy Iovine he'd just done Tom Petty [*Damn The Torpedoes*] and that was a big hit at the time—so it was like, "Let's get a producer who knows what he's doing." Jack Douglas had a slicker sound, like on *Double Fantasy*: that very even sound that's so good on the radio. And after years of working with the Rumour and people playing in all the holes and everyone playing solos at the same time, I'd had a bellyful! I wanted to go in the other direction.

**MUSICIAN:** Were you surprised by the results?

**PARKER:** I usually am, because I'm not really that technical. Once the producers get a track down and everyone's enjoying it, I can't see it going too far from there. I'll tell you, you get the basics back and they're often much better than the mixes, much more fun and exciting. The sound loses its spread once you put it all through a mixing board and into this tight thing that means "a record."

And I'm a bit lazy too, in that I'll be satisfied with something that feels good, and I don't know how to fill in the spaces. Bill Wittman may not be the "big producer," but he knew how to fill in the spaces with ambient keyboard sounds and balances, where I probably would have said, "Well, that's it, isn't it?" [*laughs*] I'd really like to make a record in two weeks and see it on the streets in three.

**MUSICIAN:** Your albums have become much richer texturally over the years, yet they still sound best when the sound is raw and direct. Is it tough to strike that balance?

**PARKER:** It is hard. This album was mostly live takes—drums, bass and rhythm guitar. Many of the vocals were live. "Break Them Down," for instance, is all one take, with a few little things added on top afterwards. We didn't do that on *The Real Macaw*—we had to sing on top of a LinnDrum machine. So there's definitely more of a live feel to this album.

**MUSICIAN:** I think most of your fans prefer that sound. But I also think the experimental approach of your last two records was admirable. It seemed as if you were testing your range as a songwriter. With *Another Grey Area*, you were looking for a studio sound, and you got one.

**PARKER:** Because I liked those kinds of records! Right now I'm into Aztec Camera's and R.E.M.'s first records more than that slick hi-fi sound. But I'll keep changing. I find that it's exciting to keep refreshing yourself. It's like when spring comes along and you can feel the biological changes in yourself. It makes you want to keep on living. "Hey, I don't want to end it all—life is different again." You don't have to commit suicide yet. That's what rock 'n' roll should be about. ☑

### Parker's Picks

Graham Parker's current axe of choice is a Seymour Duncan "Telecaster" that arrived during the recording of *Steady Nerves*. He expects to use it on the tour as well, plugged into two Roland Jazz Chorus 120's, one with the chorus off and one on.

At home Parker prefers to compose on an acoustic guitar. "I have a Martin and a Guild," he explains, "but I prefer to use Ovations because the sound is more electric/acoustic. It gives me more of the feeling of a band, which I'm writing for. I wrote most of the album on Ovations. They made a Collectors Series of about 2000 guitars that have a "1983" (engraved) on the fretboard. I have two of those. Plus a spare Gibson ES335."

In concert Parker also uses a Boss compressor on a few songs, and an occasional overdrive. "I'm not at all adept at putting my foot on a pedal, singing, and playing rhythm at the same time though," he admits. "Maybe I'll get into it as the tour goes along."

Parker also purchased a Yamaha piano for his last tour, but recently placed a video game on top of the piano and plays that instead. He doesn't have a home studio set up. "I go over to George Small's house—he has a Tascam Portastudio. I'm just very reluctant to get into knob-twiddling. I could probably muster it though, as Nigel Tufnel said about working in a shoe shop."



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# Getting Signed:

## A Reasonable Alternative

Push Push and Capitol Records develop an important new option for young bands in search of a deal. By Jock Baird

It's an ordinary practice room scene. The January Boston morning is seasonable and a dense chill still permeates the air. Uncovered styrofoam cushioning is stuffed between the ceiling joists, and a couple of creased posters hide the cracks in the plaster walls. The accent lighting is bare-bulb direct, the carpet tastefully styled in seashell grunge moderne.

The members of Push Push gamely don their instruments, rubbing fingers and wrists, and plunge in. The stiffness begins to melt away as the battle-scarred rhythm guitarist throws himself into a series of smart, bare-wire pop songs with smokey, unaffected abandon. The fresh-faced lead guitarist carves clean, ringing textures from a Strat. The bassist and drummer kick out a rock 'n' roll four-on-the-floor with an R&B-informed subtlety. The stuff is tightly arranged and very hummable, with the fierceness of the lyrics and vocals mirrored in skeletal guitar construction and textbook whoomp. Clothes horses and hairdresser's goldmines these guys aren't.

What's *not* ordinary here is that the band is working their new job: rehearsing six to eight hours every day. Their employer is Capitol Records, but Push Push has not been formally signed; this is not first-LP pre-production. Rather, a major label has decided to fund the development and refinement of future talent by paying

for four months of subsistence wages and for demos. The implications run deep: a record corporation putting out cash to invest in its future roster; a substantial reduction of the "crapshoot" mentality that afflicts new signings; an economy of operation more associated with indie labels; far more creative freedom for the musicians; and a deeper understanding and confidence in the artist from the record company.

The joint venture that follows may not be right for everyone—the untypical abilities and experience of this particular manager, band and A&R man have shaped the Capitol/Push Push development project. But as a much-needed alternative strategy for new bands, it bears a closer examination.

Manager Steve Berkowitz is sitting in the living room of a Chestnut Hill three-decker in January 1985 talking animatedly about his band. He bears an extraordinary resemblance to mixmaster Arthur Baker, save for the small goatee. Berkowitz, himself a guitarist/singer who studied with Max Roach at UMass and who was once an NCAA basketball referee ("it showed I could make quick decisions") became road manager for the Cars around the time of their first album. When the Cars became embroiled in a lawsuit with then-manager Fred Lewis, Berkowitz, along with attorney Peter Thall, succeeded Lewis under the auspices of Lookout Management. Serving

Illustration By Renee Klein



through *Panorama* and *Shake It Up*, all the while working out of the Cars' Syncro Sound studios, Berkowitz then fell into disagreement with Lookout, "separated amicably," and prepared to launch his own Serious Business management company.

"If there was something philosophically that was my undoing at Lookout, it was that I fancied myself a producer as well, even though I hadn't done very much of it. So after leaving, I decided to start with a brand-new band I could manage and produce, rather than acquire some already-famous acts like commodities. I particularly wanted to work with groups who do very well very quickly. My models were people like the Cars, the Police, the Pretenders, people whose first record made you take them seriously. I wasn't looking to work with a lot of baby groups who were going to take five albums to mature, because most artists either have it at the beginning or they don't.

"I made a couple of trips to England and Europe in 1983. For some reason the English system seemed to break all the bullshit right out of the way. I spent a lot of time talking to people like [Elvis Costello manager] Jake Riviera, [F.B.I.'s] Ian Copeland, and John Telfer and Eileen Tracy at Basement Music, who manage Joe Jackson. Now that's a very interesting project, and if there's anybody I'm basing my new company on, it's probably Basement, because they built themselves around a guy who was a very good songwriter, and very emotional.

"I liked the idea of starting with something that you believe to be very good and being pretty well equipped to put a good record out right away. They slapped the first couple of Joe Jackson records out, and they're good records. The same with Elvis Costello's. And Ian told me the Police made their first album for way under \$10,000, basically brought it to the record company and said, 'We're going to give you this record—now you give us the promotion money to back it up and we'll go on the road and sell this thing.' So I saw there had to be a better way.

"The more money that you take from a record company, the more responsive the artist has to be to the idea of what the company thinks it's investing in. What the artist thinks and what the company thinks are often quite different. It just doesn't make sense to invest these kind of guess-work dollars into an artistic project. My whole thing is to stay away from the negative dollars, stay away from the record company's money, because ultimately that's the band's money."

Berkowitz goes on to cite as negative examples two bands who have just released major-label LPs. "These two bands seem like pretty good bands, several labels bid against each other, and they get signed for 'substantial dollars'—you never really know what that means. Then they take six months or more to hang out, do pre-production for several more months, in one case go to another city and live in hotels to do their album with a foreign producer.... How much did it cost to make those two debut albums? What happens when you take three or four hundred thousand dollars from a label and sell eighty thousand copies? Gulp. You're in big trouble, not to mention the huge debt they've got to pay back before they see any royalties. The record company's either going to drop you—end of your career for at least some time—or they take artistic control of your second project and make sure they get what it is they thought they signed. If you're a genius, you can create successfully on demand, but otherwise you've become another manufactured product, not an artist.

"Another trap new bands fall into are almost-by-the-grace-of-god deals, similar to P&D [pressing & distribution] deals: 'Okay, we'll let you put a record out.' Well I'm not going to thank a company for putting my records out. They should put 'em out because they're good and we're going to sell a lot of them. It's no big favor. And unfortunately, so many young bands are chomping at the bit so badly that the labels

give them a bad deal and set the artist up to be unsuccessful and have their careers squashed because they don't have time to develop, don't have enough money to make a really good record, get the wrong producer, get no promotion. There's far too many mistakes like that made. Why work so hard all those years of practicing and playing, sleeping on floors, always making do, just for a bad time? I can't understand the sense of 'Let's hurry up and make a mistake.'"

Tough talk from the manager of an untried act. Clearly Berkowitz needed a special band to back those words up, and as he cast about for his first clients, he was given a tape by a singer/guitarist named Dennis Brennan in early '83. Brennan had been the lead singer of a Brinsley Schwarz-meets-Stax/Volt group called the Martells. He played Berkowitz a series of tapes he'd made with a young guitarist named Adam Steinberg—simple two-guitar renditions of some original tunes. Berkowitz was impressed: "I'd known Dennis for several years, and had always thought he was a real good singer, a very intense, serious, real performer. But then he played me a tape of a song called 'Calling All Lovers,' which I still think is incredible, almost an anthem. I didn't know there was that dimension to his songwriting. Obviously something specific had happened to him when the Martells had broken up, for him to say, 'Okay, I'm not going to be Tyrone Davis anymore.' I said, 'Wow, you can do this?'"

Brennan had been schooled in pop by his older siblings, "but by the time Alice Cooper and those bands came around, I got really disillusioned and started listening to nothing but old blues, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker...." This immersion gave his music a directness and emotion it would not lose even after he joined the Martells and listened again to the radio: "The bassist in the Martells, Jay Feinstein, turned me on to a lot of pop music I hadn't really been listening to. The rest of the Martells began growing one way and Jay and I grew the other. All of a sudden, it was time to do something else." Brennan began writing his own songs and working them out with Steinberg.

The guitarist was the perfect foil for Brennan. Where the latter's approach was instinctive, raw and purely expressive ("I'm a musical primitive, I'll gladly admit that"), Steinberg's playing was refined, organized and highly melodic. "There was a lot of formal music training in my family," Steinberg reflects, "and I learned to read and write music at an early age and played a number of instruments. But I started getting into rock 'n' roll when I was ten and later on I was playing a lot of Aerosmith and Led Zeppelin—I knew every Aerosmith guitar part through *Toys in The Attic*. I never heard any traditional R&B until I met Dennis and Jay. They taught me the most important thing can be the groove, the feeling. You can take just one idea and develop it instead of relying on a great deal of production."

The three attempted to form a band, but were unable to find a compatible drummer, so Feinstein drifted off. Some months later Steinberg took to hanging out with David Birmingham, a powerful young drummer in a rival band. One afternoon, Birmingham casually asked Steinberg what he was up to that week. "Oh, we're auditioning drummers," Adam replied. "Can I get an audition?" Birmingham laughed, and Steinberg jumped at the opportunity. "We liked his surly attitude," Brennan dryly notes. "And then I personally sleazed him out of his other band," Steinberg adds brightly. In the fall of '83, Berkowitz returned from his world travels and became the band's manager, Jay Feinstein rejoined his pals, and they settled on the name Push Push. The raw material was in place; now would begin the process of molding it into a coherent shape.

To accelerate the band's development, Berkowitz recommended they learn some covers to fill out their growing set of original tunes and have some "musical fun." "I thought it would help speed up their learning to play together and become more of a band," he recalls. "They don't want to



STEVE MARSEL

**Push Push: bassist Jay Feinstein, drummer David Birmingham, singer/guitarist Dennis Brennan & guitarist Adam Steinberg**

admit it now, but at the time they learned some Creedence, Stones, Elvis Costello, the Police. I think they even learned a John Cougar song once."

"But we had a rule about all these covers," rejoins Steinberg, "which was that we wouldn't rehearse them more than twice. And some of them sounded like that!"

By February of '84, Berkowitz felt they were ready to record some original songs; "We went into this crummy studio and bashed out half a dozen songs in two days." They borrowed the funds from Steinberg's mother, gradually paying it back with revenues from gigs as "the Gentleman Callers," their cover-band alter ego. Berkowitz got some local airplay and took the tapes to New York and L.A. for some major-label reactions. A couple of A&R men were interested. Some were not. Berkowitz recalls with relish one response from a big west coast label: "The guy said, 'Hey man, it's not metal, it's not dance, I can't use it.' I said, 'Then you're an asshole!' He said, 'Whadaya mean?' I said, 'You're so targeted? Then you're stupid, this doesn't belong here, goodbye.' That one was fun."

Berkowitz got a better listener in the office of Andy Fuhrmann, who had just come over to the Capitol Records New York A&R staff from Ze, an indie label noted for Kid Creole, Lydia Lunch, Cristina and Alan Vega. Says Berkowitz, "I had worked with Andy when Rick Ocasek produced the last Alan Vega at Syncro Sound, and he was *real* interested. even came up to Boston and saw them a few times. I thought it was very interesting that a big, established label would take such a left-field guy and place him right in the middle of things. You have to find one person who really believes and then use their power in the company to have it roll over. Andy really believed, they had just hired him, they were paying

him money; obviously they would pay attention to him."

"Well, I believe they didn't hire me to be like everybody else," Fuhrmann says modestly. "They didn't want to change me, they hired me for what I see and think about. You've got to keep things fresh, things have to change a bit. I see the rebirth of a serious underground music movement and I look forward to it. It has to happen, homogenization of radio can't go on. Something's got to give. Things are going to start popping up."

"One thing about Push Push that I love is that they're not a bunch of spoiled brats, they haven't had every piece of new equipment they've ever wanted. Dennis was a janitor, Dave and Adam were working in a grocery—God, that's what it's all about. It sounds like a fabricated story! It's great, because they're real people, and that honesty is reflected in their music. As things become more technological and synthesized and processed, I think humans are craving real sounds, that human element. Push Push has that element."

Buoyed by Fuhrmann's enthusiasm, Capitol paid for a 24-track tape in August of 1984 in a fairly conventional demo agreement. It was the first test of Berkowitz's philosophy of recording: "I don't see where the recording studio is the place where you work the material out. The songs and the arrangements should already exist. Certainly great performances and inspired production and extended parts of songs can happen in the studio, but to just go in and see what happens is ridiculous." Taking the producer *heim*, he suggested a rap intro be put on one of Brennan's tunes, "This Kind Of Love." The singer "hated the idea! I said this is crazy, and then I heard it and it sounded great. Steve's whole idea was, 'What are you worried about? It's fun, it's for fun.'" Berkowitz shrugs modestly: "I thought it would be

a great quick history of rock 'n' roll—from Afrika Bambaataa to Buddy Holly in twenty seconds." Later that fall, the taut, snarling "This Kind Of Love" became a Boston hit, topping WBCN's local charts for four weeks.

At this point in his signing strategy, Berkowitz was still going for all the cookies: "We did try to work out a full-blown deal right away," relates Fuhrmann. "Steve, like any good manager, is going to want the best and the most for his group. But the consensus in the company was that they were just not ready yet. Capitol is very careful; we don't sign things unless we're pretty sure. We don't sign ten acts a month and throw 'em against the wall and see if they stick. Things take time to develop."

Other things took time. East coast v.p. of A&R Bruce Garfield, who had liked the band and approved the demo deal, moved over to Capitol's sister label, Manhattan (Berkowitz: "This company's so incestuous!"). Fuhrmann's superior was now v.p. Don Grierson on the west coast. "Don wanted to go forward," Steve recalls, "but the way he wanted to go forward I wasn't pleased with. I wasn't convinced that he was convinced, and I knew I had to convince him further. I don't remember whether what we finally did was Don's idea or mine, or all three of ours. And so we came up with the idea of the development deal."

All could agree that one barrier to Push Push's full potential was their economic support system, however a good source of song material it was. Says Fuhrmann, "Here was a situation where the band couldn't really rehearse every day and have day jobs. They had to concentrate on their music and come together as a band. Although they'd been playing together for a long time, they'd never had the luxury of being a band first. They'd go gigging in Providence or New Hampshire and have to start work the next morning—that's different than knowing you can get up and write something. There was clearly some talent there that needed to be nurtured. Labels need to experiment, to try things out. It's important to not always do a huge deal, to find out what you may be able to find out for a bit less money. That's the corporate side of it."

"I can say that the amount of money it cost Capitol enabled the band to quit their day jobs. The actual figure isn't that important because if the band were living in New York it would be more and if they were living in Raleigh/Durham it would be less. We didn't give 'em a fortune certainly, because I think you still have to be hungry for it." Berkowitz adds, "It's poverty-level wages, yet it's not too different from the jobs they had before. They only made \$150 to \$200 a week anyway."

Capitol also agreed to fund another demo tape at the end of the four months if not satisfied with the band's progress. What did the label get in return? "We've legally secured certain assurances," says Fuhrmann. "We have first rights to this band, and the option to match a later offer built in." Berkowitz feels they bought something else: "They're buying insurance that they're not going to waste three or four hundred thousand dollars. They're buying insurance that this band will make a good record, because at the end of four months we're going to know whether we have a good album here or not. And if we do, great—we already know how to play it! And because it'll cost the company less to get a good product, they're going to be far more willing to spend that money on promotion."

Still, to the practiced cynic, the advantages seem to accrue more to the band than the company. "Well, it's the chance you take every day," says Fuhrmann philosophically. You could take the same chance by giving a thousand dollars to a band for a demo. If you pass and someone else signs them, well, we can't be everywhere all the time; we can't always make the right decision, we're not superhuman. And things like this will happen all the time—another company finances demos and we'll end up with the band. When the day is over, it evens out."

Thus in November Push Push began its daily regimen in a laundromat cellar a few blocks down the right-field line of Fenway Park. The consistent work paid immediate dividends in tightness, but far more valuable was the band's willing experiments. With Berkowitz as "coach" and producer, Brennan's songs were relentlessly taken apart and reassembled under with the band's new motto, "We try anything!" "Because the group's influences are so varied," drummer David Birmingham says, "the music is inherently give and take. Sure you get attached to parts, but the one thing I've learned is that you have to have the freedom to try ideas and listen to them on tape."

"That's what makes us a band rather than a project," adds Jay Feinstein. "We'll try eighteen different things for one section, tape it in the room with our boom boxes, and go home and listen to it while we eat. And then Steve will come in and go, 'Now let's try this.'" "That's grown very well in the past year," Berkowitz nods. "As he said, David used to not want to try stuff, had to think about it, had to ponder it for a while. Fortunately for everybody, and me too, that's just changed. Of course there are times when I'll harp on a part: 'Ya gotta do this, ya gotta do this!' and finally they'll all say NO."

For Dennis Brennan, one of the most compelling singer/songwriters to come down the pike this year, the four-month practice period led to many more songs. Brennan's lyrics explore the obsessive, desperate quality of sexual love and painful, compromised relationships. "Anybody who writes lyrics in this band takes a real-life stance," he shrugs. "There's not a lot of glossing over and making things happy. We're not into English poetry. It's more direct." Still, when Brennan pens a song about criminal chromosomes called "Extra Y" and spits out punch lines like "This kind of a love is just a big, big fuckin' mistake," will fantasy-drugged pop programmers be scared off? "Well, it may not be the most commercial thing," he says, "but then again, people can't go on avoiding conflict forever."

Another growth process was taking place: Brennan, once a reticent, ambivalent stage presence, began to open up. As Andy Fuhrmann explains, "I think vocally Dennis' whole attitude has changed. In the beginning he had some problems—he was too excitable somehow, he would just choke up. There's a certain calmness now which is enabling him to sing better." As November became February, Fuhrmann became more and more impressed with the changes in Push Push: "It's just incredible what happened. It's really given them a chance to blossom, taken a lot of stress off them and given them a certain confidence. It's the confidence any new band gets when they hear their album or see their video for the first time, or sees their first interview in print. Suddenly they start to see who they are. I always say you can't see the back of your head when you're walking down the street."

Push Push was also aware of a change: "It's been a big catalyst for us, given us the chance to be what we are," enthuses Birmingham. "We get to spend the time to delve into the music and I think we've gotten a lot closer musically and as a result of it, a lot more coherent ideas." "The band has gotten a lot better," says Steinberg bluntly. The songs are improving, they're more easily adaptable. "We're starting to figure out who we are, what we sound like," adds Brennan. "Which is nice. And then in a while we'll have to change so we don't get boring to ourselves."

Although an essential facet of the arrangement was the enlarged opportunity for the band and manager to "be our own A&R department," Capitol kept its hand in. Fuhrmann was in touch regularly during the four months, offering creative suggestions; as he puts it, "There's no point in doing this if you can't say, 'Listen, you gotta do this.' Then it's not a partnership." To allow Fuhrmann the maximum opportunity to steer the project, Push Push recorded over twenty-five new songs and asked him to suggest which ones to work on. "If it makes the company happy to like six of the songs

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more than the others, great," says Berkowitz.

But a major unresolved issue was whether Berkowitz would become the official producer should Capitol sign the band. A vigorous band discussion on the risks of using an untried producer on their crucial first album found the band members militantly pro-Berkowitz, even if there was some sacrifice in expertise. "I personally don't want our record to sound like the latest up-to-date thing," opines Brennan. "I have a friend who made an expensive record a few years ago, and it got lost in the production, sounded like everything else. It died a thousand deaths and it *deserved* to. I would rather go in and make something that didn't sound as up-to-date as long as the songs get across and hit somebody in the gut." "And if the record company likes what he's done so far, why impose someone else and risk screwing it up?" rejoins Birmingham. "It's not smart business."

As the development period wound down at the beginning of March, 1985, a new complication ensued: Capitol's A&R staff of eight lost five members. Fuhrmann was not only unable to assemble a quorum for a decision, but became deeply involved with both Katrina & the Waves and the Power Station. The subsequent success of both greatly enhanced Fuhrmann's clout within the company and increased his chances of spreading his undimmed enthusiasm for Push Push, but the extra months waiting became frustrating for the band and its manager. To shore up what he perceived as a possibly eroding negotiating position, Berkowitz circulated a 2-track live tape the band had done in February to at least twenty other labels, receiving far more interest than his first pass the year before. Since Capitol still had the rights to the band, this was as much show as exploring real alternatives. Fuhrmann was aware of Berkowitz's activities, but remained cool about the overdue deadline: "Sure, decisions have to be made. On paper there are deadlines, because

a contract is a contract, but both parties mutually understand you can't suddenly say, 'This is it.' This is a partnership between the band and us; you enter into these things with a smile on your face, and in this case it's still a smile. I love the band—that's why we did the deal in the first place. I think the most zen way to leave it is that whatever happens will be the right thing."

Fuhrmann adds that the extra months seem to have helped the band, especially their stage presence. At an April Paradise show opening for Tommy Keene, Push Push put on what Berkowitz called its best set ever—the contrast between that and a small-club gig the writer saw in November was marked, especially in the band's overall animation and focus. David Birmingham's drumming seemed a quantum leap stronger and Adam Steinberg's tougher, more high-watt approach looked good on him. Fuhrmann saw the band a week later and heartily agreed. By early May, with Capitol having replaced three of its five A&R staff, the day of decision finally seemed near.

Given how much Push Push had accomplished in six months of accerated development, what advice would Fuhrmann give to other young bands looking to get signed? "In general, even if their ideas are good, it's important that they make other people—a mass audience or A&R and marketing executives—understand them. It becomes a question of communicating ideas more effectively. Even a great band needs to give their company and their audience a little bit more, maybe a melody line you walk away humming. What you think is obvious isn't necessarily obvious. You have to animate yourself onstage. It's a thin line. Being more accessible without compromising. The band has to remain true to what they're trying to do. I think it's possible. Katrina & the Waves were hell-bent on not compromising and still made a terrific album. I think Push Push has the same goods." □

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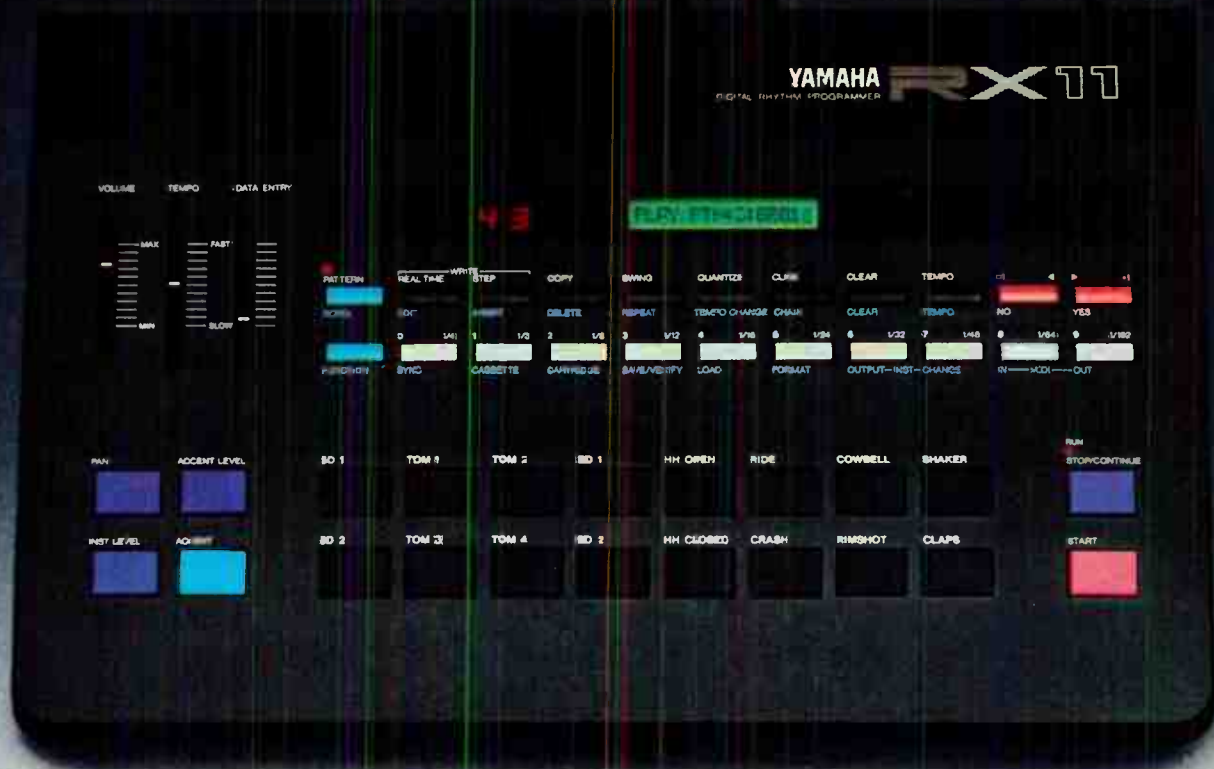
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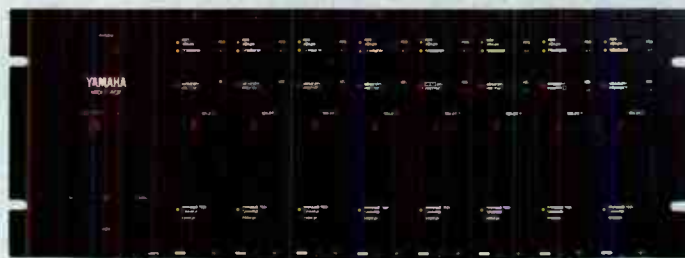
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# STING'S SWING SHIFT

A POLICEMAN  
BECOMES A PRIVATE EYE

BY VIC GARBARINI

**H**ey, are you awake yet? Is anybody there...?"

Aaarrgghh! I groan inwardly and make a feeble attempt to roll myself to the other end of the bed, desperate to escape from the squawking voice in my answering machine. What kind of an asshole would call at 9:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning without....

"Look, this is Sting in London, and I need to talk to you about...."

Okay, I'm awake. I'm awake. I leap out of bed and grab the phone. "Hi, I'm here. What's up?"

"Hope I didn't wake you." (Me: "Nah, you kidding?") "I've got a job for you, if you're interested. Remember in the fall when I told you I wanted to work with some jazz musicians on my solo album? Well, do you think you could help me get a band together?"

"I'll give it a try. How many pieces?"

"First of all a keyboardist. That's the foundation. And I'll need a drummer, saxophonist, and maybe a trombone...and a bass player. I'll play guitar and dabble with the Synclavier a bit. I guess what I'm looking for are jazz musicians who'd be willing to play pop—and maybe stretch the boundaries of both."

"Okay," I decide, clearing my throat and putting on my critical perspective, "I think what you're looking for are some of the younger generation of black jazz musicians who've grown up listening to funk and rock. They have a lot of the same cultural signposts as whites the same age. The trick is for them to acquire the sophistication to move easily through the culture without losing the passion and spontaneity that made earlier black music so vital."

"You think guys like that will want to play with me?" he asks doubtfully.

"I don't think that's a problem. The jazz community feels the Police are hip. One person I'd recommend off the top of my head is Branford Marsalis. Remember I played his and his brother Wynton's album for you this summer? Wynton's gets all the acclaim, but Branford is just as brilliant. Miles called him the 'greatest saxophonist since Coltrane.'"



"I loved that album," enthuses Sting. "But you don't audition someone of that caliber. Go ahead and ask him if he's interested."

"I think he will be. He told Andy the Police were his favorite pop group. Knew all the tunes. If you'd like, I'll set an audition/workshop thing and bring in a few people for you to hear."

"Sounds great," offers Sting. "I'll be over in mid-January. Do you think I'll get any negative reaction from people thinking I'm being the imperialistic white rock star? Or from racists?"

"I'm not sure. Why, you worried?"

"Yeah," he laughs, "I'm worried it won't cause any trouble."

"What kind of music should I tell them they'll be playing?"

"The same stuff I played for you when you were over here this summer. God bless and thanks."

"One more thing. Do these guys have to supply their own blond wigs?"

(Long pause) "Goodbye, Victor..."

## Late Summer 1984, London

I follow the music through the kitchen of Sting's north London home, and past the billiards room. I find Sting sitting in a small cubicle. The tiny, closet-like space is crammed with various guitars and basses. Yellow legal pads filled with lyrics-in-progress spill across the desk. A lilting, offbeat waltz—all piano, bass and drums—pours forth from the Yamaha Portastudio in front of him. As I come up behind him he grins wryly and pretends to hide the hefty, bright yellow book he'd been engrossed in.

Filled with a sudden journalistic Lust for Truth, I snatch the book from his hands. *Walker's Rhyming Dictionary of the English Language*. Sting cheats! "Okay, okay," he laughs boyishly. "I confess. I use a rhyming dictionary 'cause it's a great tool." He turns up the music and reaches for some

battles took place. Of course, the poppy is a symbol of death in that heroin comes from poppies, and so in the third verse I link that with the ghostly industry built up around people's addiction to heroin."

Sting pauses, lost in thought for the moment. Suddenly he's up out of his chair and bounding towards the kitchen. "C'mon," he calls. "I'll play you the rest of the demos." Midway through the sunny kitchen we spot Sting's six-month-old daughter Mickey, playing on the floor. Sting hands me an acoustic guitar and suggests I play something for her. I awkwardly pick out an old folk tune. Mickey stares blankly at me and drools. "Not like that," he grumbles, grabbing the guitar, "like *this*." He knocks out a chugging Chuck Berry rhythm and stomps a steady four with his right foot. Mickey rises unsteadily to her feet and commences a wobbly but enthusiastic dance, a look of sheer delight plastered across her tiny face. "That's my rock 'n' roll baby," Sting coos. He gently scoops her up and plants a tender kiss on her nose. "The new album is just crawling with kids," he says.

The living room is cozy and comfortable, all light, muted earth colors suffused with the cheery glow of the working fireplace. Sting pops a cassette into the tape player and curls up on the couch like a sleepy lion. "See if you can catch the references in this one."

It's a haunting ballad called "Moon Over Bourbon Street"—a melancholic melody sung over a synthesized orchestral arrangement. The song's protagonist seems to be harboring some dark, terrible secret.

"Bertolt Brecht," I suggest. "Or Kurt Weill. *Threepenny Opera*?" Sting seems pleased. "Yeah, I've been studying Brecht and Weill the last few years. They're master storytellers. But can't you guess who the song's about?" I shrug, mystified.

"A vampire." Sting smiles wanly. "It's told from his point of view. I wrote the song very late one night in the French Quarter of New Orleans. It was a full moon, the streets were

## "I exist in a perpetual state of hysteria. I cry a lot. I'm moved easily by a chord progression."

notes. "I'm working on juxtaposing these two sets of images, one about the First World War and the other about heroin addiction in the 80s, with the poppy as the unifying image. And I'm trying to make it all fit this reggae waltz." I look skeptical.

I know he's a wiz at reconciling and blending disparate musical and lyrical ideas. But a pop song linking World War I and smack? And in waltz time?

"Look, you've got to trust me on this. It'll come together. Nobody uses waltz time anymore in pop music, except in a clichéd sentimental way, which is a shame. There's real tension in the way that three pushes against the four." I remind him that the First War isn't remembered as vividly in the States as in England, where almost an entire generation was lost in the trenches.

"You grow up with it over here," he responds quietly. "One of my first memories as a child was of living very close to the war memorial in my hometown. There were two statues of soldiers with their rifles turned towards the ground, and a plaque with the names of hundreds and hundreds of the local young men killed in the Great War of 1914-1918. It looked as if the whole male community had been wiped out—which wasn't far from the truth. It's all really a function of the ignorance of the people who sent them over there. In England we have Remembrance Sunday," he continues. "Everyone wears a poppy in their lapels on that day, which I think is a reference to the poppy fields of Flanders where a lot of those

empty, and I remembered very vividly a book by Anne Rice called *Interview With The Vampire*. It's about a well-educated gentleman who becomes a vampire. But he's been left with a conscience, which is tragic for a vampire because he has to do all these terrible things. It's basically a song about loneliness and alienation. But it's also about being pulled toward things you know you should stay away from." "Just like most of your songs," I add.

Now we're into "Set Them Free." It's more up-tempo than the others, very catchy. Seems the most likely single. The song's theme is intriguing and paradoxical at first glance: having to let go of people to come into contact with them in a deeper and more satisfying way. I remark that, for me, this song is the antidote to the enervating paranoia of "Every Breath You Take."

"You're right," Sting agrees. "It is a paradox and a companion piece to 'Every Breath You Take,' which I consider to be really a quite evil song about surveillance and controlling another person. The fact that it was couched in a seductive and romantic disguise made it all the more sinister for me. Having lived through that feeling in quite a real way and seen the other side, I think the highest tribute you can pay another person is to say, 'I don't own you—you're free.' If you try to possess someone in the obvious way, you can never have them in the way that really counts. There are too many prisons in the world already; we don't need a prison in every home." He pauses for a few moments, then sits up



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as if to emphasize what comes next. "It's not just a clever thought; it's a genuine feeling. I've lost the emotion of jealousy, I really have. Some people may see that as being cold...."

"It could," I suggest, "be just an excuse to avoid making commitments."

Sting stretches out on the couch, staring at the ceiling. "Well, I do seem to be the type of person people like to trap...."

"Trap how?" I wonder.

"In relationships I feel very susceptible to entrapment. I see the bars go up and I try and escape, usually in the most violent and vicious way. I've destroyed one person totally; I've left people in a bloody pulp as I've felt the bars go up. If anything, 'Set Them Free' is a kind of warning. I'm not really into the idea of permanent relationships. I find that phoney, shallow and unrealistic in many ways. That's not to say the relationships I have are in any way inferior. I think they're

more intense because of that belief."

Like many of Sting's positions, this one reflects both his strengths and weaknesses. Might as well pursue the point with him in another arena. "Well, I assume this applies equally to your relationships with Andy and Stewart?"

"I have to be honest about this," he answers with just a hint of irritation. "There's no point in being in a group just for the sake of being in a group—in carrying on forever just for sentimental reasons and getting to be an old man and always a member of some fucking gang. That's not my way. The only reason to be in a group is if you have a unified musical idea. The old idea that the Police had has been taken to its logical, monumentally successful conclusion. The temptation is to sit in that rut and carry on and get all the acclaim and all the money—and that's wrong. I'm not saying that we're breaking up. But this time away is very important so that we can *not* be in the group. If there were a fresh way of presenting

the Police and creating music together, then the Police would play again. But I don't want to become like all the other aging rock groups—bonded together by panic. I'm not fearful of losing success or not being in the limelight."

"Yes, but being one of those rare artists who can get across to vast numbers of people while still maintaining your artistic integrity, you almost need to sustain a certain level of popularity. Not for egoistical reasons, but because having a wide impact is part of your artistic purpose."

"The real pull is between needing to stretch yourself as a musician and needing to stretch your audience at the same time, and yet being held back by inertia. And you're right, if it is important to communicate to a lot of people then you can only hope to stretch so far. But that's where the creative tension is for me. I like the challenge of writing songs that are both accessible and stretchy. Speaking of which...." In an instant he's up and heading for the stereo. "Here's another one I put together on the Synclavier." "In Europe and America/ There's a growing feeling of hysteria...." A Slavic, minor-key melody trudges through an almost nineteenth-century classical orchestration. The theme is the growing tension between the U.S. and the Soviets. What saves the song from being a mere rhetorical exercise is the way he delivers the line, "I hope the Russians love their children, too." I admit that, at first, the song struck me as didactic.

Sting agrees: "That line about them loving their children, too is self-evident, isn't it? *Of course the Russians love their children*, but I don't think we're meant to think that. If we're to consider them our enemies it would be easier if we thought of them as being unfeeling, robotic, insects almost. I'm not defending the Soviet model at all," he insists. "I'm just saying that if we're going to save ourselves we have to learn about them and they about us. I don't know how they'll react. Maybe they'll think, 'Who the hell is he to even *imply* that we don't love our children!' That might piss them off. But really, the song's neither pro-Western nor pro-Soviet...it's pro-children."

Sting flips on the TV and we settle down to watch *Top of the Pops*, Britain's weekly pop extravaganza—and obligatory viewing for everyone under twenty-five. "I forgot something, I'll be right back." Sting bounds off into the kitchen and quickly returns with a bowl of orange rinds, bits of banana and other week-old fruit. On TV a well-coifed wimp bleats out some pseudo-Motown over a whining synth. *Thunk*. The first orange rind hits the screen. Sting's girlfriend Trudy Styler

rolled into one."

"Sadness is something to work with to enable you to get to something deeper," I suggest. "It's not an end in itself. You sometimes seem to dwell on it a bit much...."

"But there's more to my life than sadness," Sting replies. "There's a great deal of happiness in my life. I don't just mine sadness. I have written happy songs...I wrote a happy song once...now what the fuck was it called." We both laugh, leaving the main road and entering the woodlands of the Hampstead Heath.

"It certainly does me good to excavate my feelings," he admits. "I certainly don't have to dig very deep. I exist in a state of almost perpetual...hysteria. I cry a lot. I'm moved very easily by a chord progression, or a painting or...."

"A movie like *Amadeus*," I suggest.

"That's easy. it's engineered so you'll cry... God, when they threw his body into that common grave and poured quicklime on it.... Things that are beautiful move me. I think life, in many ways, is very beautiful and very sad at the same time. All I'm doing is pulling those things out and expressing them. I haven't really analyzed it that much. It just seems to work for me.

"The Romans had a great word. They'd describe how they felt after meals as 'satis.' It's the root of 'sad' and 'satisfied'; after a meal you feel those two almost conflicting emotions."

Being around Sting you become sensitive to the seeming contradictions in his character. Most striking is the contradiction between his public and private selves. The public image is well known by now: The regal, leonine bearing, the self-assurance bordering on arrogance—the charismatic, golden machine. The outer facade is real, but only a facade.

What's behind the screen? The ghost that inhabits the machine. It is odd how like a ghost he can be at times. Behind the edifice is a surprisingly gentle, reflective soul quietly assessing the world around him. But the polarities between the inner and outer man, between the lion and the lamb are apparent. He is aloof yet dependent. Impervious yet terribly vulnerable. He's a loner who longs for community—for a chance to bring people and ideas together. He is self-directed and self-willed, yet seeks advice, and criticism, from those he trusts. He's devoted and loyal, but fears commitments; sensitive yet oblivious. Behind that cool exterior beats a heart not merely warm, but incandescent. But then, there has to be an invisible sun, doesn't there?

## "I don't want to become like all the other aging rock groups—bonded together by panic."

joins us. Trudy is currently starring in a West End play entitled *The Key to the World*, in which she plays a degenerate rock critic. In real life, she is bright, sensitive, and gutsy enough to tell the old man off when he needs it. Sting throws on a heavy tweed jacket and we head out to walk his dog. Sting's hair is still quite long from his role as Dr. Frankenstein in *The Bride*. I ask about the picture as we amble through the cobbled backstreets of Hampstead. Sting explains that as Frankenstein, his character deteriorates until he emerges as the true monster. Not this again. "Look, why do you find evil so seductive?"

"Because I feel it's one of my potentials to be evil. If you don't become aware of that part of yourself it can control you from behind the scenes, so it's good therapy."

"Sometimes I think you also fall in love with your own melancholy."

"My stage act is hardly morose. I'm far from that. Some people paint me as the Prince of Doom or the blonde Apollo or whatever, and I'm not any of those things. I'm many things

Sting admits that beneath his placid exterior he's often "hysterical." His emotional life is deep and volatile, but rarely breaks through the surface. Yet he taps into those subterranean pools for his work. Like most Englishmen, he's uncomfortable with his feelings; he fears that being open to his emotions will lead to loss of control. Yet like most artists, Sting's feelings control his art. The tension between needing and fearing his deepest emotions is palpable.

In Sting's studio there's a Munch print of the artist's sister standing terrified on a bridge, her mouth a frozen oval of terror. It's called "The Scream." With all the attention and adulation directed towards Sting's public image, there's a danger of becoming a *persona* with no person behind it, a constant temptation to take the path of least resistance and live inside the charismatic, golden Machine. That, to his credit, is Sting's nightmare. He fights the threat of spiritual stagnation by constantly challenging himself, forcing himself to take inner and outer risks.

Back in the forest we've come to an open meadow domi-





**Bertolt Brecht? Kurt Weill? Walker's Rhyming Dictionary?!**

nated by an eighteenth-century manor house. I'm reminded that Keats and Shelley lived in this neck of the woods. "I've had another of those strange dreams," confides Sting as we watch the sun dip below the treeline. "There was a wise man in it, and he was forcing me down a well—trying to drown me in it. I was frightened, but I didn't resist because I somehow knew it was good for me. Strange."

We sit in silence for a while. "I've got this idea I want to talk about," he offers. "I've been thinking about working with jazz musicians on the solo album. How about if I just give you the checkbook and you go and hire me a band?"

I laugh.

## January 1985, New York City

Sting pops a cassette of Branford Marsalis' *Scenes In The City* into the limo's tape deck. We are heading downtown to catch Branford's set with Larry Willis. "Solstice" is the tune. "That sounds like Coltrane," says Sting, amazed. I tell him that Branford's gotten flak for allegedly copying Coltrane and Wayne Shorter. "Why would he want to work with me?" Sting asks. "Because he's not a strict jazz purist like Wynton," I say. "He thinks you're a great musician, the best in your field, and he admires that. Hell, he told me he was out there at Shea Stadium for the Police show, screaming his lungs out with the rest of them."

We arrive at the club just as Marsalis takes the stage with Willis' quintet. "So is this gonna knock my socks off?" asks Sting. I smile. Mary Ellen Cataneo, the Columbia publicist who first introduced me to Branford, leans across the table. "What the hell are we going to do if they don't like each other?" she whispers. For a moment I try to picture myself explaining to Branford how there's this slight problem, and he won't be needed after all. As the first twinge of nausea hits I block the whole question from my mind.

Marsalis steps up to the mike and uncoils a mesmerizing solo that demonstrates his ability to bring fresh ideas to the tradition that he's absorbed and mastered. Sting is delighted.

"The man can certainly play the saxophone," he enthuses. "And he's not just playing from his head. When a truly great musician plays it's almost a sexual thing, and Branford has that." After the set Sting gives Branford an affectionate hug. Over dinner the two musicians trade stories. Sting reminisces about his days playing trad jazz in Newcastle clubs, while Branford recalls himself and Wynton learning P-Funk tunes for his high school band. They talk about integrating their respective musical approaches and Sting asks what Branford hopes to get out of the collaboration. "Basically, if you want to play saxophone today in a pop context, you have to base everything on King Curtis. You learn all your clichés, and where to drop 'em," says Marsalis. "It's not King Curtis' fault—it's all these guys who are coming along and doing poor imitations of him. I'm not going to even *deal* with that. I'd like to take some of the things I've learned from playing jazz and apply them in a new way. And a lot of that comes from Wayne Shorter." Sting expresses his admiration for Shorter's work with Weather Report. "Wayne has a fantastic knowledge of traditional harmonies," explains Branford, "and as a result he could extend those harmonies and spread chords out to previously unknown parallels. To the conventional ear it sounded 'out.'" Branford shakes his head. "Critics sometimes call the stuff Wynton and I do 'out,' but it's not. We're playing on chord structures, but not the way they did forty years ago. The stuff we're doing is based on tradition, but it's not traditional. We're not archivists." I ask if he believes it's necessary to work through a tradition. "Most definitely," he insists. "We have guys who are playing avant-garde music now who can't even play a twelve-bar blues. That's not what's supposed to be happening, man. That's retrograde."

"But," I counter, "some people who aren't technically accomplished can still put an incredible amount of presence and spirit into their music, often more than the technically proficient people."

"Yeah, that's true," admits Marsalis. "But that doesn't make what they do jazz. Jazz is a standard tradition with certain laws and strictures, like classical music. I mean, you can't say, 'Well, I don't have the technique to play Bach but I'll just do my own interpretation of it and it'll be cool.' At this point in my life I'm not listening for feeling. I'm listening for lyricism, I'm listening for the conjunction between melody and harmony. It's a very analytical approach, but that's what I'm working on at the moment. The *feeling* deepens as you get older." He laughs. "I'm only twenty-four!"

As we leave the restaurant Sting pulls me aside. "Branford's fantastic. He's going to be a star, I'm sure. But does he ever just cut loose onstage and let it rip?"

"Not in this context," I answer. "That's why I introduced him to you."

One down. Three to go.

## Tuesday, January 15, 1985

A steely, choking wind sweeps down Ninth Avenue outside. The wind chill factor plunges to a brutal  $-20^{\circ}$  F. But inside SIR Studios Room C, things are beginning to warm up. It is day two of the workshops. Twenty-two-year-old Darryl Jones, currently with Miles Davis, checks the tuning on his white Fender, while Weather Report drummer Omar Hakim works at tightening the head on his snare. During the past hour they've loosened up by jamming on three Police tunes: "Driven To Tears," "One World," and "Demolition Man." Sting, looking semi-formal in his white dress shirt and black suspenders, is deep in discussion with Danny Quatrochi, his faithful roadie/secretary/man Friday. There seems to be some problem with the Synclavier's computer hook-up.

Branford Marsalis is sitting across the room, his feet propped up on an empty equipment case. He's wearing a bright orange St. Louis Cardinals cap. He devours the *New*

York Daily News sports section and hums an irritatingly familiar melody to himself. Some old jazz standard, perhaps? A forgotten Duke Ellington melody? Nope, it's the theme from the *Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*. "Heyyyy Rockeeeee!" hollers Branford from behind his paper. The man does a perfect Bullwinkle. Tomorrow, Sting will hail him in the *New York Times* as a "genius." Branford, that is. Not Bullwinkle. But it's said Einstein did a mean Donald Duck.

"Okay, we're going to try something new now," announces

Jones suddenly kicks in his octave-divider, boosting his tone into a throaty roar. Hakim, his arms and legs flailing like some multilimbed Hindu deity, rolls and thunders around his kit in an ecstatic, disciplined frenzy. The Marsalis-Hakim-Jones triad spur each other on to near orgasmic heights, then smoothly wind down and pick up the verse one last time. The song ends in a crescendo. There are smiles everywhere I look, and the sound of many hands clapping fills the room. Sting slowly shakes his head in bemused won-

## "I consider 'Every Breath You Take' quite an evil song about surveillance and control."

Sting. The demo tape of "Children's Crusade" is played once over the studio P.A. Sting quickly goes over the chord sequence with everybody. "Right after the second chorus we'll open it up. Branford, you solo there for as long as you like."

Branford emits a friendly grunt from behind the paper. Sting counts off the 3/4 beat and the band launches confidently into the tune. Jones' bass lines are solid and economical, with inventive little flourishes that never detract from his supportive role. Sting blocks out chords on the Synclavier. Hakim carries the waltz time with grace and vigor. Branford continues to check out the sports page. As they come out

der. "That was amazing. I think we have the band here."

"Fantastic," I say. "But what the hell are we going to do with the dozen or so people that we've scheduled to come in over the next week or so?"

"Don't worry," says Sting reassuringly. "I still want to hear some alternatives. But I'm ready to make at least one decision right now. Hey, Darryl," he calls, "can I see you a minute?" Darryl drifts over, hands in pockets. "Look," explains Sting, "I don't really want to see any more bass players...."

"Uh, okay," mumbles Jones, who turns and begins to shuffle off.

"No, wait!" laughs Sting. "I mean I want you to be in the band!"

"Ah-hah," responds Jones in mock surprise. Sting gives him an affectionate hug. There's an extraordinary polarity between Branford's saxophone and Sting's voice. As if they were drawing from the same wellspring: the twilight zone between joy and sadness. Sting nods thoughtfully. "Yeah, I know...I wonder if he does?" He looks over at Branford, who glances up from his faithful paper and beams a smile at us. "Yo, Sting, c'mere. The Superbowl's coming up and we gotta explain football to you."

"Well, English football..." begins Sting.

"Forget that Anglo shit," laughs Branford, "you're hanging with the brothers now."

Darryl, nicknamed "Munch," reflects on his good fortune as he packs up his bass. "Getting a job with Miles at the age of twenty-one was the greatest thing that could ever have happened to me," he explains. "Now here I am with the two top guys in the two fields I'm most interested in. But what really excites me is the statement being made here about breaking down barriers, the barriers between jazz and rock, and between black and white musicians. There's a possibility of creating a hybrid here that could create a totally new direction in music." Sting joins us, curious about Darryl's work with one of his heroes. Miles Davis is a legend among jazz musicians, who relish trading stories about his unpredictable and often outrageous behavior. Jones, a Chicago native, had been playing in a band with Davis' nephew, who one day called from New York to say that Miles wanted him to audition for his band. Right now. *Over the phone*. "When I finally realized he was serious I frantically ran around the house looking for my bass. I'd been practicing on the Chapman stick that day and I'd apparently left my bass in the trunk of my car. As I was explaining this to the guy, Miles got on the phone and asked when could I be in New York. It was a Wednesday. So I suggested Friday. Miles says, 'What's gonna take you so long, you gonna walk?' Jones chuckles. "I flew in the next morning, auditioned and he told me I had the job. So I talked to him Wednesday; met and auditioned for him Thursday; rehearsed with the band Friday; and the following Tuesday played onstage with him in St. Louis." Someone suggests Sting pay Miles a courtesy call. "No thanks," he responds. "I think I'd be terrified."



**Top: Branford Marsalis, Omar Hakim, Kenny Kirkland & Janice Pendarvis; bottom: Dollete McDonald & Darryl Jones**

of the second chorus, Jones begins to repeat the circular, six-note bass foundation. Sting looks quizzically in Branford's direction. At the last possible moment, Branford drops the papers and sprints to the stage, where he scoops up his waiting soprano. Tilting his head to one side, he cocks his right leg over his left knee like a stork and begins to play. There is an exquisite tension between the other-worldly beauty of Marsalis' melody and the bittersweet sadness of his tone.

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## Day Four, Thursday, January 17th

"Who is that guy?" whispers Sting.

"You're referring to the short, stocky, bespectacled chap over by the DX7? The one smoking a pipe? Kind of looks like an English Lit. professor?"

"That's Kenny Kirkland," explains Branford. "He's Wynton's pianist. He's the most accomplished keyboard player in jazz or rock today. He's kind of shy at first and he'll tend to underplay till he's sure of the material. But do not underestimate him, man." Within an hour Sting's initial skepticism has melted away, replaced by appreciation for Kirkland's abilities. "It's not just that he has the chops," insists Sting. "Did you hear the way he layers his sound? Such taste and restraint."

"And you haven't even heard him open up yet," adds Branford.

"Well," Sting nods, "I think we've found our keyboard man."

"Do you want me to tell him?"

"I think he already knows."

Sting invites Kenny to try out the Synclavier. As the program engages the synth lines to "Set Them Free" fill the room. The computer's printer begins to chatter, and as fascinated band members gather around, it spews out the song's sheet music. "It'll notate anything you play," explains Sting. "Plus it's got 32-track digital memory, which is like having a recording studio."

"I do find if you use machines solely, you lose that human dimension," he admits. "So if I'm playing a sequence or using a LinnDrum I'll always play some of the parts manually, in order to inject a bit of personality. Fingers can find things that machines never will." "Is that a LinnDrum on 'Set Them Free'?" Omar asks. Sting looks sheepish. "Uh, Omar, did you play on Bowie's 'Let's Dance' single?" "Yeah," beams Hakim. "That's me." "Well, then that's you on the 'Set Them Free' demo too." Omar looks baffled. "We sampled your drum part and used it," Sting confesses. "It was perfect."

Over the next week some of jazz's best and brightest passed through the portals of Studio C. But in the end, it was Kirkland and Hakim who got the nod. Omar first met Sting while working with Dire Straits in Montserrat. "Sting had come over for dinner with Mark. He said he was going to New York to put a band together. When he mentioned Branford's name he really got my attention. I asked if he had a drummer yet. He said no. So I said, 'You just found one!' He looked at me funny until Mark explained that I actually was the drummer with Weather Report."

When the chips were down, though, Hakim was hesitant about committing himself till he was clear about the band's direction. "After I went to the auditions and realized what was going on I felt good about it. This band is going to knock down a lot of barriers. Someone like Sting realizes that when you have an audience of eleven to fifteen million you have a responsibility to hip them to something else. I think what we're doing with a song like 'Children's Crusade' is indicative of the future potential of this band. And that excites me."

Kenny Kirkland had precisely the opposite experience. "At first I told Branford I wasn't going to do the audition because I didn't know if I could do this kind of gig any more. Playing with Wynton's band is real conservative to me, and I got stuck into being conservative." But Kenny's no stranger to pop. Classically trained, he's worked with Angela Bofill, Chaka Khan, and, of all people, Crosby Stills & Nash. As Wynton is compared to Miles and Branford to Shorter, Kirkland is pegged as a Herbie Hancock protégé. He freely acknowledges his debt: "Headhunters is what got me into jazz over ten years ago. When I tell Wynton that we argue." Kirkland is also keenly aware of Wynton's unhappiness over Branford's growing involvement with Sting.

"I think Wynton feels that if you don't study music or listen

to jazz or classical music every day you can't be legitimate. He probably doesn't think Sting is a good musician, which he definitely is." And what does he see as the main differences between the two brothers? "Wynton is a real stick-to-his-guns person. He's made his stand with jazz and now he's upset because Branford wants to do other things. He thinks Branford should be like him and just carry this message about jazz to the world. But Branford isn't like that. He loves jazz, but he's also open to other kinds of music. I'm the same way, and Wynton knows it. I think he feels that since we're jazz musicians in his band, by playing with other people we're making their stuff look like it's happening when it's not. You saw how he was in that *Musician* interview about Herbie playing with Mick Jagger. I don't look at it that way. Sting's a great musician, and he knows what he wants his music to sound like, just like Wynton does. It's just a different kind of music."

It is mid-February, and the pace is accelerating. Recording will begin at Compass Point studio in the Bahamas in early March. Sting wants to play a surprise club date at the end of February in a New York club. "The idea is to put the band through a baptism of fire to help fuse our identity before recording," says Sting. This leaves only a week to rehearse before a show at the Ritz. Then it's off to Nassau almost immediately. This, of course, is exactly the kind of insane challenge Sting thrives on.

## Last Day of Rehearsal, New York City

Sting is sitting by himself on a stool behind his Synclavier, softly strumming his black and white Fender Stratocaster. He begins finger picking the Villa-Lobos-inspired opening to "Bring On The Night." When he reaches the chorus he hesitates. "I've always hated that chorus," he growls. "Maybe it's time for a change...something a bit jazzier, more sublime...." Instead of going from Em to G and Gm7, he shifts down to Bm, Am and C. He's pleased with the results. By now the other band members have filtered in, including backup singers Dollette McDonald and Janice Pendarvis. "My songs are still in a state of evolution," says Sting. "I'm not one of those people who refuse to perform old material in a new context. Sure, you've got to challenge your audience with new things. But it's okay to give them some reference points."

"Driven To Tears," "Demolition Man," and "One World" worked well at the auditions and are retained, but recent Police mega-hits are shunned, to avoid comparisons. Sting decides to open the show with "Roxanne," performed as a duet with Branford, and close with a solo "Message In A Bottle." A hard-driving R&B version of "Shadows In The Rain" is thrown in. (Sting: "That's the style I did the demo in originally.") I suggest "I Burn For You," a lost Police gem originally slated for *Ghost In The Machine* but shunted off to the *Brimstone And Treacle* soundtrack instead. Like "Children's Crusade" it has a repetitive bass figure in the midsection that provides a ready launching pad for improvisations. The band runs through the song, building on the mid-section like *Bitches Brew*-era Miles Davis—but with more punch. "God, this band can soar," says an awed Sting. "Now we've got to learn to cruise, too." He's right. Where the Police are light and agile, this band is earthy and forceful. He can teach *them* a more subtle use of dynamics. "Songs like 'Set Them Free' require the band to 'float.' That'll come in time."

"Branford and Omar are overplaying a bit," Sting says. "But I don't want to chance losing this amazing energy by reining them in now. The pruning can come later." Sting walks the band through "Bring On The Night." Something's not meshing. He asks Omar to shift to a steady four on the bass drum. Suddenly everything locks in. Just after the second chorus Sting begins vamping on seventh chords. The band

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kicks in behind him, instantly transforming the song into a James Brown-style romp. Branford abruptly stops playing and trots across the bandstand. He whispers something to Sting, who nods and grins. Turning back to the mike, he sings the opening verse to "When The World Is Running Down" over the vamping chords. It fits perfectly. Branford was right—they are the same chords! Thus are medleys born. Afterwards, Darryl seems in a rush to leave. "Where you going?" asks Sting. "I'm recording with Miles uptown," replies Jones. "Wanna come?" Sting looks uncertain. "I'll call and ask," offers Jones.

Forty minutes later Sting re-enters the studio, looking a little stunned. So what happened? I ask. "I'm...not sure," he answers hesitantly. "As soon as we walked into the studio Miles asked me if I spoke French. I said yeah, and then he asked me to translate a sentence into French for him: 'You are under arrest, anything you say will be held against you...so shut up!' Then he pulls me over to the mike and has me recite it over the music. When I finish, he grabs his crotch and says, 'Arrest *this*, you motherfuckers!' and laughs. Next thing I know he's escorted me to the door and I'm out on the street." Congratulations, I say. You now have an honored place in the annals of Miles Davis folklore.

A few minutes later I find Sting over at the Synclavier. He locks a simple repeating three-note figure into the machine's memory. Over it he picks out a simple, modal melody. "Folk music is the same all over the world," he muses. "I'm working on a modern folk song about the coal miners' strike in Britain." He locks in the melody, then maps out a counter-melody for the chorus. He works at getting the machine to synch that up with a counterpoint bass line. It's a struggle. "Looks like an aural video game," I say. "That's *exactly* what it is!" he beams. "Kenny amazes me," he continues. "He has an ability

to play instinctively and spontaneously. I have to gather bits and pieces and vector them together on a machine like this till the different pieces fit." "But that's what they admire about you," I counter. "You have a conceptual ability they envy. They, on the other hand, can help you get more in contact with your feelings and instincts." Sting nods. "I've had another one of those odd dreams," he relates. "I'm in my back yard at home, and suddenly these immense blue turtles appear. They frolic around, wrecking the flower beds and knocking things over. One of them does a back flip and smashes my little shed to splinters. I'm a fox sitting up in a tree and watching all this. The funny thing is that I don't mind at all what they're doing." He pauses, lost in thought. "I'm sure it relates to what's going on with the band. It's like something in me being broken down, and I welcome it."

It's Sting's nature to rationalize his emotions rather than experience them directly. This makes for perceptive if detached songwriting, as in "Every Breath You Take" and "Roxanne," where the emotional release is always imminent but never realized. The jazz artists he's fond of are pulling him toward emotional directness to which he aspires.

The Ritz gigs were a resounding success. Any doubts about the group being accepted by Sting's audience evaporated before the end of the first band number, "Shadows In The Rain." Later that week Sting calls from the Caribbean. "How's Nassau?" I ask. "Nassau sucks," says he. "Too Americanized, like Miami Beach. They even have a Howard Johnson's there. I'm with my engineer Pete Smith at Eddy Grant's studio in Barbados. We'll start recording here next week. Why don't you come along as resident critic? Things could get really interesting down here...." ☐

**Next Month: Part Two—Fear and Loathing in the Caribbean**

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# OMAR HAKIM

## CHOOSING A MULTI-SOUND CYMBAL SET-UP

As a musician growing up in New York City, Omar Hakim was called upon to play *everything*: funk, rock 'n roll, bebop, salsa and all the variations in between. His diverse background is put to good use in Weather Report, where his powerful and supple drumming fuels the band's heady blend of exotic rhythms, electronic textures and shifting dynamic levels.

Omar's *multi-purpose* drum and cymbal set-up has been chosen with meticulous care to produce the extraordinary variety of sounds he needs for Weather Report and sessions with David Bowie, Dave Sanborn and others. How the cymbals are used and where they

are positioned around his kit has more to do with enhancing his musical possibilities than following the "rules."

"I've been changing roles with different cymbals. Since Weather Report is mostly electric, I've been balancing the 'wash' type sound with a more defined ride type of thing on the bell of the cymbal. I might be riding through Joe's solo passages or setting up a groove with the 22" Ping Ride on my right. So I'll keep the right hand going

and do accents and other stuff with my left hand on the 19" Medium Thin Crash on the left. It's an excellent crash/ride cymbal and it gives me enough different sounds to free me up for this *ambidextrous* approach."

The innate ability to pick the right cymbal is an art that Hakim has refined by spending a lot of time in the city's music stores, playing and listening closely to cymbal after cymbal.

"You should be patient. You've got to know how to really *listen* to the cymbal you're going to play for years. And when you pick a cymbal, you've

got to do it with the same sticks you intend to play with.

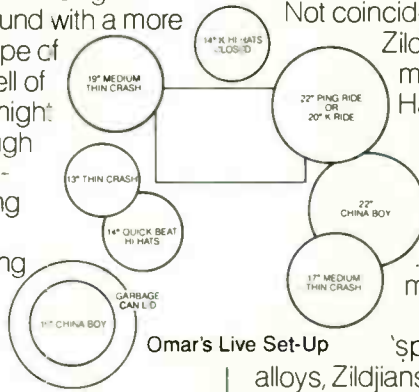
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LISA HAUN

# MUSICIAN WORKING

## The Sugar Hill House Band

*The musicians who toiled in the shadows making rap classics like "The Message," "That's The Joint" and "Eighth Wonder" finally find their place in the sun.*

### Steve Stevens . . . . . 70

*Billy Idol's guitarist and musical director is no mere haircut-happy, heavy-metal hack.*

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*An ex-AWB bassist talks about turning his home-studio tracks into a state-of-the-art LP.*

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Photographs by Waring Abbott

By Rob Tannenbaum

Every guitarist talks about their inspiration," Steve Stevens sighs, "and it's always the same—Jimi Hendrix." Stevens strides into the living room of his New York apartment shaded in purple (shirt, stiletto boots, eyeliner) and black (hair, pants, more hair). One wall is dominated by a stereo and a collection of robot toys he cites as musical inspiration. Stevens admits he likes heavy metal, but gets downright passionate about Bartok.

"There's no new classical music being written," he complains. "The symphonies are funded by these rich families, and they just wanna hear Holst's 'Planets.' None of the new classical writers are getting commissioned.

"Classical guitar was more interesting to me than learning to play jazz, which I never liked because it didn't have any heritage. When you're dealing with classical music, you're dealing with history. If you take the tradition seriously, you can find out why the guitar was invented in the first place."

Is this the right apartment? Could this be the same guy whose solos are the aural equivalent of partner Billy Idol's fabled sneer? Have we stumbled onto Andres Segovia dressed for Halloween? *Classical music, Steve?*

"Yeah," he smiles, "Vivaldi and the guys that wrote those early guitar pieces were pretty wild fuckers."

Behind every pop pin-up face is a musical collaborator whose skills outweigh his fame. Although he looks the part of Billy Idol's sidekick, and enjoys the "shock value" of vertical hair, Steve Stevens knows his proper role. "If the image is strong and the music is not there, then you're in trouble. But with Billy, it works out well because there's someone like



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# STEVE STEVENS THE IDOLMAKER

myself, who's there just for the music. I think if Madonna had someone like that, she might get more respect."

As the co-author of Idol's songs and musical director of their band, Stevens grounds the singer's darkly impressionistic lyrics with some of the wildest, most inventive guitar work to be found. They're a blatantly odd couple, the snarling proto-punk from England who revealed his "secret sex life" to *Penthouse* and the short, dark New Yorker who mixes British slang with a Brooklyn accent. The tension between their styles makes for a motley music with broad appeal; "At concerts, the people in front of Billy wear Public Image T-shirts, and the ones on my side have Ozzy T-shirts," Stevens delights.

That's probably not quite what Mr. and Mrs. Schneider had in mind when they gave six-year-old Steven his first guitar. "My dad bought it, but he sounded terrible on it, so my mom threw it in my room. I made up my own tuning, but then somebody came in and properly tuned it. That fucked up my whole style, so I had to go for lessons."

There weren't many guitar teachers on Rockaway Beach back then, so Schneider started taking lessons from a pianist who concentrated on theory and notation. Private lessons on classical guitar continued for many years, but when he heard Pete Townshend's inspired bashing on *Tommy*, Stevens became convinced that he could make a career out of his own abilities. He applied to New York's famed School of the Performing Arts. "I was one of the first people to get admitted to the school by playing an original composition. But they didn't want me to play guitar, because it's not a symphonic instrument. I hadn't spent all those years perfecting guitar to play the viola, so I began to lose interest."

When he dropped out of school at seventeen, he found a different sort of education brewing in the city's club scene, where bands like the New York Dolls, Suicide, the Stilettoes and Television were planning an assault on rock's future. "I was a kid from Queens, and there were some freaky-looking people in Manhattan. I'd ask, 'Where you goin'?' They were all going to the Mercer Arts Center. There was all this great music coming out of such a dismal area."

While hanging around Mercer, CBGB's and Max's Kansas City, Schneider caught the spirit—he moved into a grimy loft "with twelve other people" and joined Elixir, "a really strange theatrical group that nobody was even willing to listen to." He also met Dolls' guitarist Sylvain Sylvain, who jokingly dubbed his new friend Steve Stevens. "We were gonna have a band, with a bass player named Ed Ed and a drummer Mike Mike." The band didn't



**Hands without a face: "Billy changed a lot and so did I. We met at a certain point."**

happen, but the name stuck.

Because he was "too young to hang out or pick up girls," Stevens says he "wasn't a part of any scene in New York." But while he was practicing guitar for hours every day, he also "took the whole scene in, and saw what was wrong with it and what was right."

His next group, the Flying Malibus, were signed to record in Nassau with Jimmy Miller (Stones, Blind Faith, Traffic), but when the sessions were aborted, Stevens was left deep in debt to the record company. "I auditioned tons of people back in New York for my own group; I found good drummers and bassists, but I couldn't find a good singer. They all played role models. A guy would walk in and you'd know right away, 'Okay, this one's a David Bowie.'"

At the same time, Billy Idol had fled London, where "Dancing With Myself" was taken as a betrayal of his punk origins, and moved to New York to find a new band. "I had seen Billy around the clubs," Stevens recalls, "and I kept saying, 'I know a lot of musicians. I don't

want to be in the group, I'll just help you find one.' We finally got together to talk about records, and found we knew the same stuff."

Idol was impressed by Stevens' knowledge of Lou Reed LPs, and by the guitarist's friendship with Sylvain Sylvain and Johnny Thunders, two of Idol's original heroes. Stevens, in turn, had found his elusive singer, even if he was wary of Idol's fondness for swastikas. "That's not punk rock," Stevens frowns. "But Billy changed a lot and so did I. We met at a certain point."

They also met in Los Angeles. Stevens and Idol had begun co-writing songs, but the record company was anxious to have an album for "Hot In The City," an obvious summertime hit. With only two finished tunes, the pair went to L.A. to record *Billy Idol* with producer Keith Forsey, a Giorgio Moroder disciple whose other credits include the lighter sides of Simple Minds and the Psychedelic Furs.

In retrospect, Stevens is dissatisfied with the band he assembled for the LP.

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There are some impressive moments on the record—the rousing “Come On, Come On” and the skittery, Fripp-ish motif of “Shooting Star” (the two collaborative songs), as well as “White Wedding,” which became a club and radio hit powered by the tension between Stevens’ compressed chords and a rising, quasi-surf melody line. But before the partnership had really melded, Stevens had to return all his rented effects and amps; the inclusion of tracks recorded earlier gave Idol’s debut an unfinished feeling.

After the tour, Stevens fired the band, moved back into his parents’ house and began making tapes on a Tascam Portastudio, aiming for a sound totally unlike “Dancing With Myself.” The success of the first album gave the duo the luxury of time. “Billy and I got more comfortable with our partnership. The second album was recorded in New York (at Electric Lady Studios on Eighth Street) and that made a big difference. You walk out of the studio and you’ve got the fear of death in you. It makes you play with an edge.”

The multi-format success of *Rebel Yell* is partly a reflection of Stevens’ playing, which layers simple rhythms and darting leads as though Pete Townshend was playing with Chic using Eddie Van Halen’s equipment. The overall effect is both metallic and melodic, a style that recalls mid-period XTC. But there are endless variations on *Rebel Yell*, from the African ostinato at the fadeout of “Eyes Without A Face” to the Hendrix overload on “Blue Highway” and the industrial intro of “Rebel Yell,” which recalls the *musique concrète* explosions of the Test Department and Einstürzende Neubauten.

“A lot of guitarists say, I’ve gotta have my own sound. For Eddie Van Halen it’s always that one sound, and for Andy Summers. I’m not that kind of guitarist. I do run into the problem of whether there is an immediately identifiable sound—but the saving grace is that I co-write the songs, so I don’t much care,” Stevens laughs.

Most of his tracks have two guitar parts, with a solid, T. Rex rhythm anchoring Stevens’ wild robot imitations. “The resurgence of the guitar hero is coming about because of great riffs, not great solos,” he observes. “Look at Eddie Martinez’s work with Run-D.M.C. Guitar is a percussion instrument, by nature. It can be just as important to a dance track as a snare drum, if you make it memorable. ‘Beat It’ is basically a heavy metal dance track, as is ‘Eyes Without A Face.’ That’s the direction we’re trying to go in.”

“Eyes Without A Face,” actually, is one instance where Stevens builds layers of guitar tracks, including his own

staccato bass line and two acoustic guitars (6- and 12-string), plus a startling electric bridge and a one-take solo. What keeps him from similar extravaganzas on other songs? "I've got the Punk Police," he glares. "Billy cleans all my stuff out. There was a real diddley solo on 'Crank Call,' and the Punk Police came in and wiped that shit right out."

Onstage, though, where "the notes are there just for the energy," Stevens has more freedom. On the last tour, he used Bach's *Toccatina And Fugue In D Minor* as a showy prequel to "(Do Not) Stand In The Shadows."

"I always liked keyboard music," he proclaims, "especially Keith Emerson's work with the Nice, Jimmy Smith and Martin Rev (the instrumental half of the aptly-named noise duo Suicide). Marty showed me how to play a Bo Diddley riff without sounding like Bo Diddley."

"You've got to look to other instruments. Allan Holdsworth, for example, really does want to be a sax player. Guitar players are trying to sound as un-guitar-like as possible; Adrian Belew wants to sound like elephants, and I want to sound like robots."

Stevens' inability to find musicians who are "flexible, energetic and determined" (only drummer Tommy Price is a constant in the Idol band) forced him to play bass and keyboards on much of *Rebel Yell*, and he's also watched Keith Forsey's production carefully. "I'm a techno-head, and I've gained knowledge of the studio from our recording. I think that's why Billy Idol records don't sound...(Stevens considers some uncharacteristic diplomacy, then shrugs)...like Simple Minds records or Psychedelic Furs records."

Although he admits that "guitarists, by nature, don't make very good producers because they're too concerned with the guitar sound," Stevens thinks he'd be an exception. A production assignment with Dez Dickerson was recently scrapped, but he may still do some work with Nona Hendryx or David Lee Roth. And when he went to Paris to toughen up some tracks for the Thompson Twins (including a cover of John Lennon's "Revolution" and "Roll Over," which Stevens describes as "typical Thompson Twins, then suddenly heavy metal"), he found himself resisting the urge to offer them help with their self-produced tracks.

Stevens also did some sessions with Ron Wood (where, typically, he convinced the laconic Stones guitarist to let him re-record some inadequate bass parts) and joined with Andy and John Taylor, Mick Ronson, Robert Palmer and Kasim Sulton last winter in a pre-Power Station celebrity jam. And he's dying to find a female singer to record some

"classical dance music, with cellos and LinnDrums." But Stevens swears his ultimate fidelity is with Billy Idol.

Together, the pair have two new projects to consume their energy—a movie version of Nik Cohn's *King Death* (Idol has the title role, Stevens will score the film) and a new LP which, the guitarist predicts, will have more electronics and horns, and will employ his classical training on guitar synthesizer.

"It sounds tacky, but the British groups have so little to live for that they really dive into that thing of having your mates in a group. Even Duran Duran are like the Boy Scouts—they really stick by each other." Stevens looks out of the window of his plush new apartment, just a few blocks from where the Mercer Arts Center stood. "It takes a lot of determination to stick by what you want to do, without being influenced by drugs or sex. If you get caught in that, then you've got nothing new to write about, nothing new to say. You become exactly what it is you thought you'd never be." □

**'Til Tuesday** from page 30

be in love," she sighs. Then catching herself she laughs and adds, "What an awful thing to say! But sometimes it's so fucking painful."

But art has given Mann an outlet for the Holy Hurt: "The first time we played in a big arena we were walking onstage and I turned around to the other guys and said, 'This is it. This is the big time. Good luck. I love you all.'"

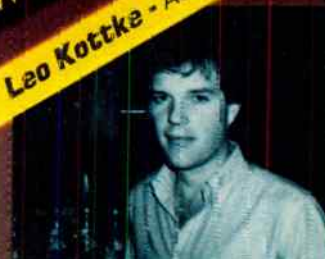
"We were all nervous," Hausman recalls. "If no one in the band looks at me I feel like I'm all alone up there. The first night Aimee turned to me during the set, gave me this big smile and said, 'This is great!' From then on we had a good time."

The second arena date was at home, at Boston Garden. "I was just beside myself," Aimee says. "I was glowing with happiness. Backstage Eliot Easton came up to me and said, 'I know how you feel, and I know you're going to make it.' He knew that feeling from when the Cars were just starting to happen. It's that moment when everything coalesces and you're dreams about everything come true. You think, 'I knew this was going to happen, but I didn't think it would feel like this.'" □

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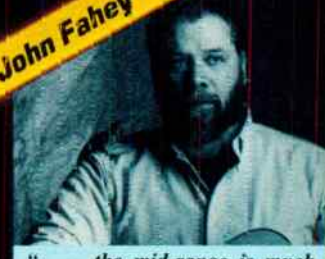
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# THE SUGAR HILL HOUSE BAND

## The Baddest Band Around Remains America's Best Kept Secret

By John Leland

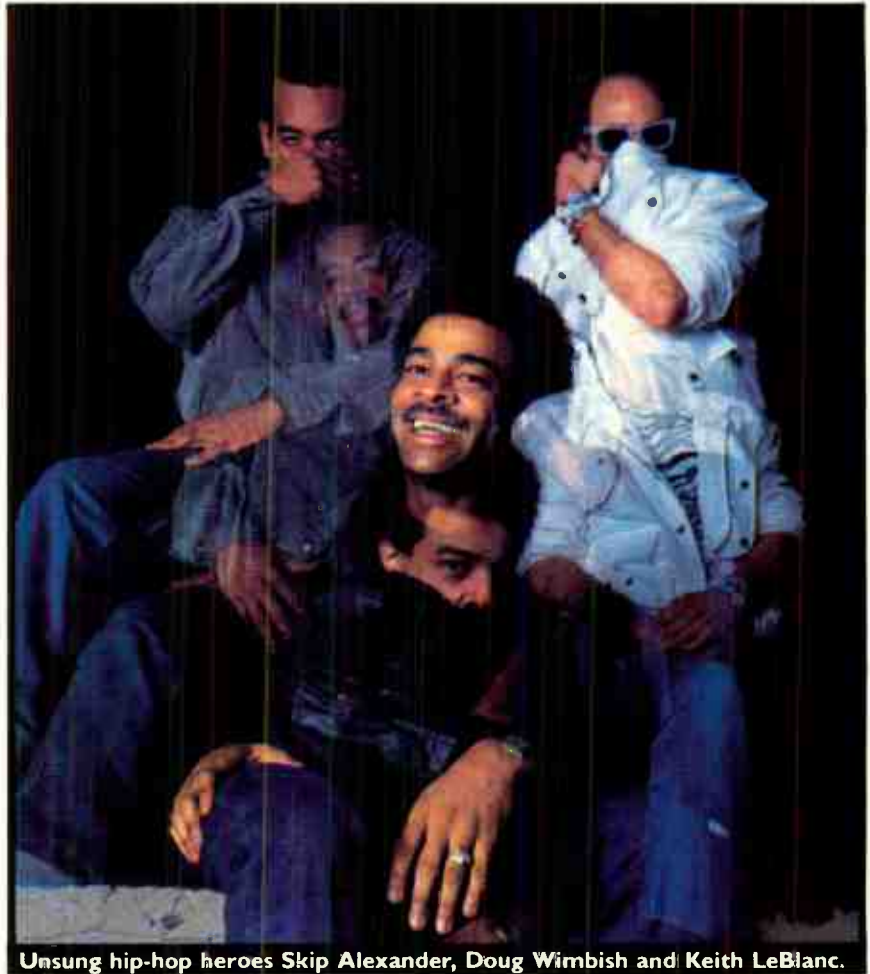
**E**nglewood, New Jersey. The endurance test known as a recording session is finally over. The producer is satisfied; the engineer is fried. The ashtrays are standing room only. The percussionist, fighting off an attack of ennui, lays his palms to the studio water cooler. A jungle beat. The arranger joins in. The producer perks up her ears and gives the word to roll the tape.

Nearly a year later, the beat is still just another spool of tape cluttering up the stockroom. The arranger hits the percussionist for a hook to make it click. The percussionist, sprawled on a couch, looks up from the TV and says, "Oh man, it's like a jungle, sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under." And so, in this atmosphere of freedom and parsimony, two casual gestures become one of the most innovative (and the best-selling) records in the history of rap: "The Message."

The studio is that of Sugar Hill Records, the independent label that broke rap music. The musicians, variously known as Chops, Double Edge and Duke Bootee, were the Sugar Hill house band from 1979 to 1982. They cut the big hits: "The Message," "That's The Joint," "Eighth Wonder," "Funk You Up." The list goes on and on—the band cut behind twenty-seven different acts.

Together with producer/arranger Clifton "Jiggs" Chase and executive producer/label president Sylvia Robinson, they forged the stark, aggressive sound of rap music. This is the band that put the bass in your face. The unit did more with the James Brown funk groove than anyone since George Clinton. They're a throwback to the classic Stax and Motown house bands: behind-the-scenes wizards who, without attaining fame or fortune, became the most influential and imitated musicians of their day. Until Afrika Bambaataa's electro-boogie "Planet Rock" broke the spell, virtually every rap record followed Sugar Hill's lead.

The musicians have since branched



Unsung hip-hop heroes Skip Alexander, Doug Wimbish and Keith LeBlanc.

out from Sugar Hill. Singer/percussionist Duke Bootee (Ed Fletcher), best known as the soft-spoken voice of "The Message," recorded a debut solo album, *Bust Me Out*, for Mercury, and then formed his own label and production company. Chops, the horn section, released a self-titled debut on Atlantic. Drummer Keith LeBlanc has joined forces with Double Edge (bassist Doug Wimbish and guitarist Skip Alexander) to form a three-piece band, a label and a production company. In addition to playing on each other's records, they've all cut with everybody going. They're all on "Unity," the James Brown/Afrika Bambaataa collaboration; Chops toured with the Police and has cut with the Stores, O'Jays, and Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes. The rhythm section has become one of the most sought-after in contemporary music: Their credits include sessions with George Clinton, Lou Rawls, Soulsonic Force, Arthur Baker, the Force M.D.'s, Dufford & Tilbrook—even Edgar Winter.

### Taking The Hill

Guitarist Bernard "Skip" Alexander (a.k.a. McDonald) was the first one in the water. Something of a legend in his home town of Dayton, where he went to school with Junie Morrison, he came to Sugar Hill—then called All Platinum—at the age of twenty-one, in 1971. Bassist Doug Wimbish, the other half of Double Edge, joined in 1974. He was seventeen. With drummer Keith LeBlanc, they formed Wood, Brass and Steel, which released one record on All Platinum and saw another one die in the can. When the company changed from All Platinum to the more inner-city Sugar Hill in 1979, Wimbish says, "Sylvia put an A.P.B. out on us" to rock the studio.

Meanwhile, Ed Fletcher and Jiggs Chase were working the New Jersey bar circuit in a group known (prophetically?) as Fresh. After Chase impressed Sylvia Robinson with a demo tape he produced of a disco singer, he and

Fletcher auditioned for Sugar Hill, backed by Double Edge. They figured they'd get the job, get Double Edge fired, and bring the rest of Fresh onto the scene. At the end of the day, Fresh was looking for a new percussionist and keyboard player. As they had with LeBlanc, Wimbish and Alexander threw the bass to get Fletcher and Chase in. "Me and Skip had the power where if we wanted to thrash somebody, we could thrash," Wimbish explains. "We'd just say, 'Look, Sylvia, we've got to have this motherfucker.'" Chase in turn brought the Chops horn section onto the set.

By the time this band came together,

"twenty-four-hour-a-day, give-it-to-me-quick-I-need-it-in-a-hurry groove maneuvers."

"You might have to work three days around the clock," Fletcher says, "and have your bags packed in the studio because you were going on tour for ten days." It wasn't uncommon for musicians to grab what sleep they could right in the studio.

Fortunately, the label has its own studio—two of them. With no one buying time, musicians felt free to stretch out. "When you're not watching the clock," Chase explains, "you can try different things. We'd keep the engineer up all night, saying, 'Let's try this, let's

else," Wimbish agrees. "If the shit sounds right, if Beaver's breakdancing, if Ward is slapping June, it's a hit." Fletcher compares her with Vince Lombardi: "If the sweep is running, she's going to run the sweep until they stop it."

Or, if the public is buying a record, she'll give it to them until they put away their wallets. Up to "The Message," Sugar Hill's rap records were cover versions—fully credited, but with different titles, and raps instead of vocals. "Sylvia would be at Harlem World or Disco Fever," LeBlanc says, "and she'd watch who was mixing what four bars off what record. She'd get that record, play us those four bars, and have us go in and cut it better."

"A perfect example is (the Sugar Hill Gang's) 'Eighth Wonder,'" Alexander elucidates. "The lick was on the tail end of a record by Seventh Wonder. DJs were picking up on it. We took the tail and made it into a whole song."

Robinson's hit-making formula was simple. According to Fletcher, "Sylvia realized that motherfuckers wanted to be able to hear the groove from anywhere they put the needle down. It wasn't about building. The whole record had to be hot from beginning to end. When you get to the fade and other people are just getting hot—that's where she'd try to start."

The all-covers strategy reinforced the band's groove maneuvers. "We've gone from serious Latin to serious reggae to straight rock all in one day," LeBlanc says. "If you listen to the records," Wimbish adds, "you'll hear almost any possible style in my bass playing or Keith's drumming. We'd throw in stuff that you hear on Talking Heads records, some Jaco shit."

For their contribution, the musicians got little, if any, recognition. "The Message," a particularly flagrant case, was a monster smash for Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five—except the Grandmaster is nowhere to be found on the record, and the Furious Five, except for Melle Mel, figure only slightly at the end. The raps belong to Mel and Duke Bootee. And yet, while Flash and the Five skyrocketed to fame and quality leathers, Duke Bootee remained under wraps. They were signed to Sugar Hill; he wasn't.

"Everybody was running to Flash, saying, 'You're the second coming,'" Fletcher says. "The European press was the only place that said we wrote it, we produced it."

Getting beaten for credit was pretty much the rule at Sugar Hill. "We'd be in the studio," LeBlanc remembers, "and there was no one there. Joey Robinson [son of Sylvia and Joe] was supposed to be producing. We'd get halfway through the track and he'd call up from the Bahamas and say, 'Are you



LISA HAUN

**Groovemeisters: "If Beaver's breakdancing, if Ward is slapping June, it's a hit."**

"Rapper's Delight" by the Sugar Hill Gang, backed by a band called Positive Force, was in the racks, on the street and in the discos. Rap had graduated from subculture to marketplace.

Which isn't to say it was established. Duke Bootee: "We were there when the genre itself got no respect. When we first got there, we didn't even respect it." Musicians thought it was a fad; audiences thought it was low-rent.

"Because it was rap," Alexander says, "people just took it for granted that the musicianship was below par. But everyone in the group was a highly specialized musician, and everyone was basically from a jazz background." The rappers gave the music its raw energy, the musicians gave it solidity.

Just as important as musicianship was the working atmosphere. Sugar Hill is no ordinary label. "It was more like a family," Chase says. "In how many record companies can you go to the president's house and sit in her kitchen?"

Of course, players did more than just hang out at the Robinsons'. Wimbish describes their work schedule as

try that."

Far from being hired guns, the session people were part of the creative collective. They often engineered at their sessions, and helped shape their distinctive groove. "We all produced our own sound," Fletcher says. "Jiggs would produce from his office. If I was playing percussion, I'd tell him I wanted to use this or that. Keith would produce his own drum sound."

Materfamilias Robinson's trust was worth everything. "We were in her confidence," Fletcher says, "and we wouldn't bullshit her. Everybody in this business says everything is a smash. She'd ask us what we thought, and if the shit wasn't right, we'd tell her."

Not that she always listened. But she didn't play dictator, either. There was a healthy dialectic between the ranks and the brass. "We try to make people rise to the most creative thing possible," Fletcher explains. "She's trying to find the lowest common denominator: what's going to make the most people groove."

"Sylvia didn't care about anything

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World Radio History

done with it yet?' When the record came out, his name was on it for production and writing the track."

But the musicians don't complain too loudly. Wimbish, for one, realizes that "none of us would be here right now if it weren't for Joe and Sylvia Robinson. What you learned there is unthrashable. I got out of high school, I was seventeen years old, and I went straight there." And got just about everything, less fame and fortune, that a musician could ask for: experience, exposure, education.

"At Sugar Hill," LeBlanc says, "what you lost in credit, you gained in experience and knowledge. It was like going to school. You got on-the-job training and you got paid." Tenor player David Watson agrees: "I really think the Sugar Hill years were when we developed as a studio horn section." Chase calls the label "a prep school for the big leagues."

While they were in school, the musicians just happened to create the toughest sound in dance music.

### The Bass Is In Your Face

The classic Sugar Hill sound started with bassist Doug Wimbish, the most powerful figure on the instrument since Bootsy Collins. In the Sugar Hill band, he elevated bass from a support role to the lead line. Other bands toyed with the idea of bass at the front (e.g., Chic's "Good Times"); Wimbish and company made it an imperative.

The bass-first mentality gave rap music its spare sound. Instead of guitar or keyboard chords, or horn arrangements out front, the Sugar Hill band had single bass notes. Wimbish had plenty of room to work, since everyone else underplayed. He embellished figures, and threw in stop time and lots of harmonics.

The band got its bite from the drums of Keith LeBlanc, whom Alexander calls "the funkier white boy I ever met." As dance music becomes more and more drum-oriented, LeBlanc's contribution to the Sugar Hill sound looms mightily—like his introducing sixteenth notes on bass drum. At the time, everything was four on the floor. "I wasn't the first," he admits, "but I was the first to do it consistently." Years before the beat box, he created lines that were as aggressive (rhythmically) as the raps themselves.

Chops deserves a place in the annals of pop music if only for their three-beat hook in Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five's "Freedom." The horn section, though, was the least integrated part of the band. When they came into the studio, the rhythm track was usually done and the arrangements written out. They played spare, percussive lines, adding another dimension to the band.



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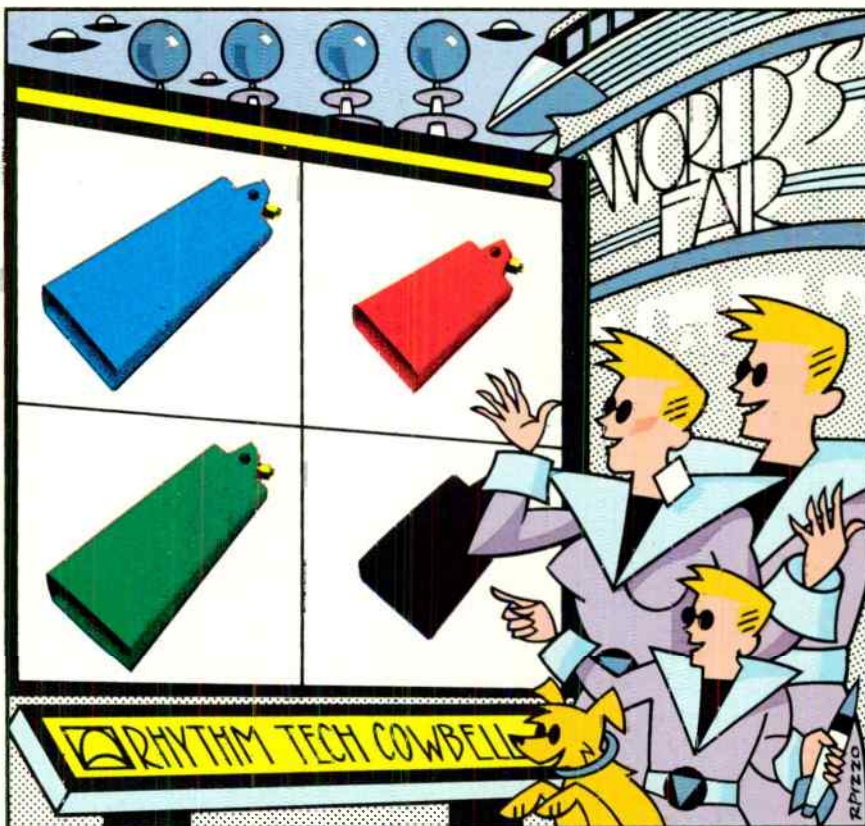
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Chase claims that "if you took out all of the instruments and put a swing beat behind the horn section, you'd hear that they were really playing jazz."

Ed Fletcher, with Melle Mel, wrote "The Message," a radical move on a number of fronts. It was the first record on which the rapper took control of the tune, the production and the words. Fletcher's hard-edged portrait of the social conditions underlying the music gave rap new relevance: This "message" was that rap wasn't just about boastin'. It was the first rap to make sense to people outside the uptown subculture.

"There aren't many blacks talking about the kinds of things I try to talk about," Fletcher says. "I think a lot of black artists are totally involved with just the groin. What I want to do is show the head, the heart, and the groin."

He initially had a hard time selling his expanded anatomy lesson. "People were telling me that 'The Message' was too dark. A lot of people said that people just didn't want to take their problems into the disco. They said I was cutting my own throat. Flash and them didn't want to do it. Mel was the only one that wasn't bummed down about doing it."

So Fletcher did it with Melle Mel and the record went down big, both in the streets and among coffeehouse urban sociologists. It created a crossover that Michael Jackson and Prince haven't touched: whites dancing to and absorbing a black social phenomenon.

Perhaps one reason "The Message" caught on with outsiders was that Fletcher himself was an outsider. "I'm basically middle-class," the former English teacher says. "My parents are school teachers. And I'm hearing that this is the most ghetto record ever written, and could only be written by someone who comes from the depths of poverty. I'm a middle-class, lukewarm punk from New Jersey."

### Over The Hill

One by one, beginning just before "The Message," the musicians stopped working exclusively for Sugar Hill. They still return for an occasional session, but the majority of the cutting at the Englewood studios is now done by one-man bands: first Reggie Griffin, then Clayton Savage. The label still has impressive hits—like Grandmaster Melle Mel & the Furious Five's "White Lines (Don't Do It)," on which Wimbish contributed the killer bass hook—but never regained the magic and power it enjoyed when it could boast harboring the baddest band in creation.

"We've all seemed to survive the Sugar Hill syndrome," Wimbish says. Among the benefits of graduation are



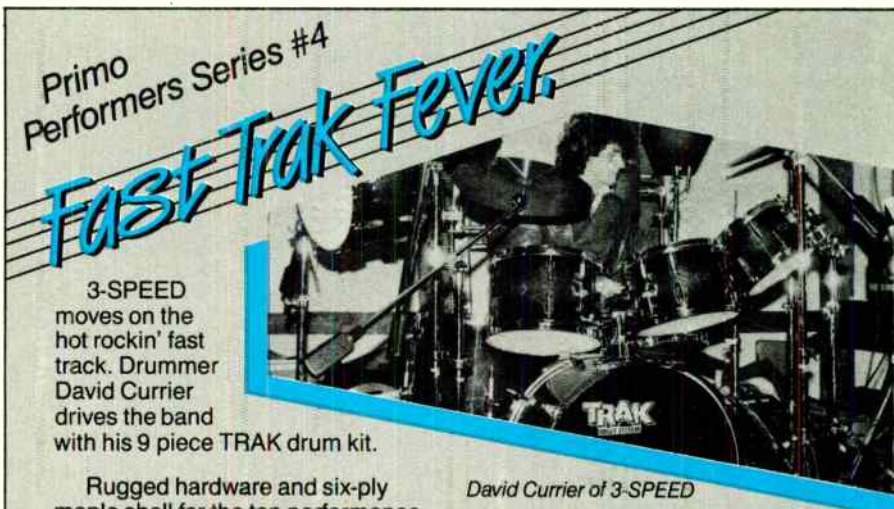
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shorter hours, better money, and credit for their contributions. They're collecting on their dues. And they're branching out.

"Chops has a deal which is probably as substantial as we could have gotten under one head," Fletcher explains. Until PolyGram Records cut its losses after one unjustly ignored album, Fletcher had a similar deal himself. But he's on the rebound. He formed his own label, Beauty and the Beat, and just produced his first single—"King Kut," by Word of Mouth featuring DJ Cheese. It's hot. He's planning a project with Sun Ra, and intends to join the anti-hip-hop movement, cutting some go-go with ex-Mothershipmate Dennis Chambers, Sugar Hill alumnus Gary Henry and some Baltimore locals. He also has his eye on club gigs and a possible assault on the New York downtown scene.

Meanwhile, LeBlanc, Wimbish and Alexander are beating 'em away with a stick. They'll still cut an occasional track—with Mick Jagger, say, or Jeff Beck—but they're concentrating on their own group and label, World Records. They recorded an album for Mar-

*continued on page 112*

### Breakin' It Down

The Sugarhill sound began with **Doug Wimbish's** 1963 Fender Jazz bass, strung with Rotosound round-wounds, and treated by "any effect that I can get my hand or foot on." These include a Roland Chorus and Echo and Roland Programmable Digital Delay. Since the lean Sugar Hill days, he's added a Chapman Stick (gift from Marshall Chess), Wal bass ("it even has cannon plugs"), and Voyetra bass synthesizer. It all runs through an Ashley pre-amp and Crown PS 800 power amp with Bag End speakers. Wimbish is available for endorsements. **Skip Alexander** sticks with the basics: one of several Strats "with one effect, maybe a delay, and a pretty powerful amp." This might be a MESA-Boogie, Roland, Fender or Marshall—he switches a lot. **Keith LeBlanc's** acoustic drum sound emanates from a Yamaha seven-piece set: two 10-inch rack-mounted toms, a pair of 12's on a stand, a 14 on the floor and a 22-inch bass drum. He also gives it up on a Simmons SDS 7 set and an Oberheim DMX machine. His cymbals are Paiste, his foot pedal a Ludwig Speed King. When the three get together, they add a couple of Yamaha DX7 keyboards, Emulator IIs, MSQ MIDI sequencers, and AMS sampling devices. Plus whatever else is handy.

**Ed Fletcher** plays Latin Percussion congas and timbales. Daryl Dixon blows a Selmer alto, but has been known to wield a King tenor, King soprano, and Armstrong flute. The high-frequency chops come from Marvin Daniels' Schilke or Benge trumpet. David Watson fills out the sound with a Selmer tenor and Berglar-sen mouthpiece.



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## ALAN GORRIE'S DEMO FRAME OF MIND



Gorrie's home studio savvy helped him keep an N.Y.C. grittiness in glossy L.A.

An Ex-Average White  
Bander Turns  
Homework Into Albums

By Jock Baird

**B**eing a good Scot, Alan Gorrie is cheap—or as he likes to put it, “canny.” Being an unusual Scot, Alan Gorrie is also funky. So funky that as bassist, singer and writer for the Average White Band, he spent the better part of the 70s cutting the cake on the black charts as well as picking up good-sized pieces of top forty action. Today, as a solo artist, Gorrie has retained his funkiness, his familiar husky high vocals, and his songwriting leaps of chordal logic. And he’s still cheap—uh, canny.

His fine new LP, *Sleepless Nights*, which seems to have been undeservedly passed over in the spring sweepstakes, is a spectacular example of how to use a home 8-track studio to maximum advantage. Loaded with what monitor-room pundits call “production value.” *Sleepless Nights* takes a solid core of songs Gorrie wrote with East Coast compadres like Michael Mugrage (ex-Orleans guitarist) and

keyboardists Jeff Bova and Onaje Allan Gumbs (Ron Shannon Jackson) and populates them with big-name west coast hit squad sessioneers. Choice cuts like “Electric Between Us,” “The Age Of Steam” (a paean to locomotives? Why not?) and the gorgeous title track prove Gorrie has ably assimilated the synth/drum topography of the 80s and turned them to his own good use. The credit for this successful multi-decade survival, Gorrie insists in his strong Sean Connery brogue, goes to his home studio—“It’s my toy. It keeps me out of trouble.”

**MUSICIAN:** *What are the biggest changes between the 70s and 80s?*

**GORRIE:** The technology—it’s the reason you don’t need to have a whole band standing around anymore to do what you need. And the other thing is that music’s got a harder edge now. I think the 70s got a bit soft—the musical state of affairs got a bit too complacent. Frankly I quite prefer the 80s edge, the challenge that things have to be up-’n’-at-’em, not staid.

**MUSICIAN:** *Did you feel Average White Band went a little bit that way?*

**GORRIE:** Oh yeah, I think I got conservative after a certain point, especially after *Feel No Fret*, which to me was the last challenging album. I was probably more oriented towards charging ahead—that’s just in my nature. I wasn’t always

right, I quite often bumbled things, but that’s just the role I tend to take.

**MUSICIAN:** *When did you first start doing your own recordings?*

**GORRIE:** Towards 1977, the band was doing a lot of rehearsing at my place, and I started working with the old TEAC 3340 4-track, that famous army machine. I’d tape the band rehearsals, and then I’d chop things up. I would occasionally bring up cassettes to the studio to say, “Well here’s an idea of how I think the thing should go.” That was a good point of reference, saved a lot of time and explaining. So getting into that demo frame of mind became a useful tool. I quite like being able to get up at three o’clock in the morning with an idea going ‘round your brain and get working on it right then. That was also around the time I taught myself how to play piano and got more involved with synthesizers.

**MUSICIAN:** *What’s your typical sequence of building tracks at home?*

**GORRIE:** The deck I use influences how I record; it’s the Tascam 30-8 with a couple of dbx DX-4D noise-reduction units on-board, which means you can literally have 14-track recording, because I can bounce the basics down onto two tracks and come back on six more. There’s almost no perceptible generation drop. What I’ll do is put down a stereo drum track, then I’ll do a stereo keyboard track, either a keeper or a guide, and then a bass track; that’s five. Leave track six open if possible, because you don’t like bouncing onto adjacent tracks, and then bounce the mix of the whole kit-and-kaboodle down to tracks seven and eight, and that means you’ve got one through six to use again for overdubs, which is generally enough for any experimenting.

**MUSICIAN:** *You did the record with hired guns out on the west coast. Weren’t you tempted to do more of it at home?*

**GORRIE:** A&M wanted me to do the album in Los Angeles—it was my first album for them and they wanted to keep a close eye on it. They didn’t want to meddle, they just wanted a close eye. But I always like to do the final record in a big studio anyway because when you come to record your own stuff, I think it’s really good to get out there and get a full-fledged hot-shot engineer and use those kinds of musicians. A cottage industry can only carry you so far. It helps to have the brassy sound of a nice Neve desk and huge monitors and things. There’s no room for anything that’s half baked.

It also helped my vocals. My co-pro-



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**MUSICIAN:** *The L.A. session mafia sound fresher on Sleepless Nights. Was there a trick to that?*

**GORRIE:** I don't try to get too perfect at home. I want to leave something for the big session, some spontaneity. There's a danger of overworking things out, so there's nowhere to go. If you've got a John Robinson, a Larry Williams or a Michael Boddiker lying around, you want to say, "This is a sketch. One or two things we're going to keep, be-

cause they just plain work. The rest I want to leave up to you guys." And that's how we did it.

Another thing we did was we only cut one track a day, we didn't try to swing for two. I think we got the best out of them that way, because some days we'd be all done by four. Then just a couple of us would stay behind and do the first layer of overdubs, and let everybody get off. Then they could come back the next morning fresh, and not over-baked from burning too much midnight oil. You rarely get two tracks with the same intensity on one day.

The west coast is good for glossy, golden, laid-back music. It's just something I think is true. In New York you get dirtier, spikier music. It's just funkier.

I didn't let that slip away. And I think that comes from the long hours spent working in your own studio. When you're saying to an engineer, 'No thank you, not that approach, I want *this* approach,' you're not just saying it arbitrarily. You've worked it out already, and don't need to go through it again.

**MUSICIAN:** *Your songwriting tends to take sudden, surprising leaps.*

**GORRIE:** I have a real like of things that harmonically or chord-wise take unexpected turns. I like that, I like to get my head zapped 'round: "Whoa, why did it go *there*?" I enjoy doing that in my tunes. Some of that is definitely in the chord-plotting to start with.

I'm really intrigued by something David Foster once said to me: "There's two ways you can make things interesting. One, between two horribly disconnected chords, find a common note that you can sing to link them. Or two, have a real jagged graph of a vocal plot over a couple of sympathetic chords that almost never move. You take the thing to different places by using vocal range. I don't want my music to become samey, don't want one aspect of anything to stick around too much. I want things to keep changing, to keep apace of my times. ☐"



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**MODERN DRUMMER MAGAZINE**

### The Gorrie Details

"I don't buy equipment indiscriminately; I look really carefully at what's going to be a good buy. All the things I've got are very functional and don't break down, which I can't stand. My old mixer was a TEAC 35, but I'm getting a new Yamaha RM1608 mixer, the Cadillac of the line—it's a terrific board. I mix from the Tascam 30-8 onto a big black isolated-loop Technics, the 10-A02. I've also got an old Pioneer 2-track 1050 which I use for tape echo and tape delays. I do use a digital delay, the Roland SDE 3000, and a real good cheap unit, a Boss DE200, which samples sounds—I use it to sample snare and kick drums and trigger it with my LinnDrum. I've also got the new Lexicon PCM-60 digital reverb; it's a terrific value. My compressor/limiters are a Valley People Dyna-Mite and a couple of dbx 160s—they're nice for vocals. I don't use much eq; if I'm lacking something, I prefer to move the the mike around. If I had to die with one mike in my hand, it would be an AKG 414. I've also got a couple of AKG 2000 dynamic mikes.

"My monitors are old JBL Century L100s, the earlier model of the 4311s which most people have. They're big and warm. I've also got a pair of little Yamaha NS10s. I still use my Auratones for a radio mix. I use a Yamaha P2200 power amp to drive the JBLs; the little guys I drive with a Pioneer SX1050 power amp. My bass is a Yamaha BB3000, a great bass! I've also got a Gretsch Beast guitar. My synthesizer is a Yamaha DX7; before that I used a CE25."

A black and white advertisement for Pearl Professional MLX Series drums. The background features a close-up of a drum set with a black 'piano' finish. A gold badge in the top left corner reads 'Pearl MAPLE SHELLS PROFESSIONAL MLX SERIES'. A large white box in the center contains the text 'BLACK "PIANO" FINISH ... FOR UNDER \$2,000!'. In the lower left, red text reads 'MLX 8500/8300 SERIES'. On the right, a paragraph of text describes the features of the drum set. At the bottom left, there is a promotional message and contact information. The Pearl logo is visible on the drum shells and at the bottom center.

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## NEW GUITAR AMPS



ILLUSTRATION BY MARK FISHER

## Staggering State-of-the-Art in an Old Package

By Josef Woodard

**H**istory and technology don't always march arm in arm, in bold lockstep towards a bright utopian tomorrow. This much we know of the world where military might and nuclear sophistication have run amok and rendered the supply-and-demand quotient a pitiful joke. Or take the case of the spate of teen-lust-on-the-loose films inundating theaters and drive-ins near you; just when a few of them seem to have fine-tuned an initially suspect formula, the thrill is wearing off. So much for synchronization.

What has this to do with guitar amps? Nothing and everything. On a much more benevolent front, there is a similar disparity of supply-and-demand interplay in the realm of guitar apparatus. Now that the keyboard (and its offspring) has toppled the once-lordly guitar as the ruling class of instruments, we are forced to reconsider the rock 'n' roll axiom: a guitarist in every household

and two amps in every garage. But ironically, this comes when there has never been a better time to be a guitar player. Several decades of development, experimentation and high-tech tinkering have brought the state-of-the-art in amp design to a level that can be a little staggering. Where once Fenders and Marshalls dwarfed the other options, a number of fine units now available have complicated the decision-making process for the guitar consumer.

A lot of this has to do with the domino theory of innovation—refining and up-scaling existing technologies, building the perfect amplifying beast. And so, while there are several attractive small midline amps offered by larger manufacturers, like Peavey, Roland, Yamaha, and Fender—all flaunting channel-switching and other seductive features at a moderate price—more exciting guitar amp activity is taking place a few rungs up on the scale of engineering and price tag. There are now several world-class contenders in the field of powerful, flexible, combo-sized amps made by smaller, quality-conscious outfits and priced around the \$1,000 mark.

The new breed of amps—armed with power to spare for almost any playing context, equipped with a high degree of variety in tone, pre-amp and power amp manipulation and still portable

(which doesn't necessarily mean light)—can safely be traced in spirit back to Randall Smith, who put together his first MESA-Boogie amp back in 1971. Smith, a repairing Merlin out of northern California, began by introducting Princetons—turning them into little Davids to compete with Marshall stack Goliaths. His Boogie combo amps have been legendary, available only by waiting list through the 70s, despite the price-no-object status.

Boogies are no longer competitors in a field of one. The 80s have seen well-considered variations on the theme; perhaps the most intriguing of these is the Seymour Duncan Convertible, unveiled at the '84 Winter N.A.M.M. and gradually percolating into the industry. The Santa Barbara-based Duncan, once repairman to Hendrix and Beck, has made a respectable cottage industry out of his replacement pickup line.

Just as that effort grew out of a dissatisfaction with the idiosyncracies of stock pickups, Duncan sought to address common complaints with his Convertible.

Principal among these: Why must an amp have only one personality? The key innovation of his amp is the use of interchangeable modules, accessed by a cavity atop the amp, which can drastically alter the very sound of the two switchable channels by coloring at the pre-amp stage. Thus, it's an eclectic's dream; you can vary your effect from gig to gig or from set to set with the works-in-a-drawer concept. There are five modules in play—one general and two for each channel. The normal clean sound, with a crispness and body, can be further glossed up by inserting the optional IC module. On the other end of the spectrum, the varieties of distortion possible are many; by adding a High Gain Hybrid module (which grafts a tube and FET approach), you get a metallic bite, whereas two High Gain modules will earn you the smooth-yet-massive Boogie-type distortion.

Further distortion tweaking is possible by adjusting the two volume controls (Master and "Overdrive") with an infinitely variable power attenuator knob—from the amp's maximum one hundred watts down to a piddly five watts. The lower wattage level allows a full range of effects and harmonic snarl even at suburban living room volumes—a very socially redeeming feature. The tone

controls have a fair amount of impact and can be used in conjunction with two other unique features on the back of the amp to get desired effects; the damping control knob affects the actual flap of the speaker cone—maximum damping for a clenched, controlled sound, minimum for a looser, bluesier sound surface; the Pentode/Triode switch enables you to choose between a hundred and sixty watts' worth of the power tube output, with according tonal distinctions. It all adds up to a subtle network of controls and sound-shaping potential, demanding curiosity and experimentation to fully reveal its charm.

First impressions being often deceiv-

ing, the new Sundown amp, designed by Dennis Kager, looks surprisingly conventional compared to the more streamlined, rethought visual design on the panel of the Duncan (except for the Sundown's clever orange setting sun behind the logo which tells you if the amp is on or not). Yet across the ten-knob panel (with reverb and presence knobs in the back), the spectrum of variables is fairly impressive. Spending an hour or so twiddling knobs on the amp will acclimate you to its sonic character: it's not a plug-it-in, wind-it-up and watch-it-go proposition.

Highly sensitive tone controls—even in the heat of crunching distortion—with

a midrange boost on the red channel (nice touch) give you flexibility of tonal hue. The real action, though, is in the volume/power configurations. Once in the red (which quite logically has become the standardized channel for things dirty, hot, hellbent, etc.), you have the expected Master and Gain controls, with a pull switch for gain and high end boost in the latter. The two knobs on the right can be brought into play to broaden your options; the Governor operates, on principle, like the inverse of a master volume, attenuating the power amp as it is turned up, while the RMS control continuously varies the actual power output of the amp.

One nice feature is the parity of effect between the two channels, where much of the engineering energy typically favors the lead channel in these kinds of amps. The Green channel can be modulated by the Governor control if desired, and in fact, for those who equate cleanliness with godliness, both channels can produce clean sounds of note, from squeaky to beefy.

The owner's brochure stresses the amp's safeguards against the poltergeist of *intermodulation distortion*, and the proof is in the pudding; at various volume and timbral levels, the amp delivers its hundred watts of power with virtually no break-up. Also featuring dual effects loops—a good idea except when you want the same effect for both channels—a meaty Celestion G-12 speaker (an EVM is also available) and power tube clamps that offer shielding and a heatsink effect, the Sundown is a well-considered lunge at the market, banking less on uniqueness of design than on sturdy usability. Recently distributed by Ibanez and endorsed by guitarist's guitarist Allan Holdsworth, the \$1200 amp, with a few small improvements, is now distributed directly by Sundown (201-321-1155). Sundown is also readying a 50-watt version with reverb called the Formula 50 that incorporates much of the same features into a near-\$500 entry that should raise quite a few eyebrows this fall. Both Sundowns stand a chance of becoming the post-Boogie model of widest circulation.

That is, if the Dean Markley doesn't get to the American public first. The Markley line, a little more affordable, has been making a reputation as punchy units with a versatility that vies favorably with their peers. The recently launched CD model, a self-contained powerhouse (30-, 60- and the muscular 120-watts available), has treble and midrange boosts, a drive/gain/master volume matrix and a fifty percent power attenuation switch. The CD seems to lack a bit of the clean channel crispness found in other amps, but the sheer wallop of its tube overdrive sound puts it



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For greater diversity of sound potential, move up to the RM DR series of Markley combo size amps. The key features here are a tube/FET duality that allows access to either mode and the enticing rack-mountability factor (hence the RM). The amp brain can be easily yanked out of its cabinet and interfaced with an existing rack of effects, depending on the playing context—after all, a combo amp needn't always be a combo amp. For this purpose, the RM 150 DR model (list: \$1085) is advisable; a higher threshold of output gives leeway and adaptability—volumetric upward mobility.

Another amp engineer from the same

general school as Randall Smith is southern Californian Jim Kelley, whose hand-crafted, personalized amps have garnered a formidable word-of-mouth rep. Jim Kelley owners tend to swear by the caliber and dependability of the units, and Kelley himself is a very approachable CEO, open to dialogue and willing to offer advice on individual technical problems. The latest of Kelley's models is the \$1300 FACS (for Foot-Activated Channel Switching) Line amp, a sixty-watt, four-power-tube unit with frightening potential in the volume department. The amp face is, again, deceptively unassuming, but within the basic design of the knobs are such fea-

tures as a push-pull function on the lead channel, enabling you to get an over-driven power amp sound with a line-level signal—ideal for going straight into the recording or P.A. board with no loss of mondo tubal one-two.

Kelley's product is clearly one of the prizes of this generation of amps. There is a tangible immediacy and compactness of sound—clean and collected or with a bone-wrenching distortion that retains a velvety texture.

Another recent addition to the pack is the solid-state Pearce G1, with seventy RMS watts of power, channel switching (but of course) and independent effects loops—this is the amp that Allan Holdsworth used before he went to the Sundown. The New York-based company is venturing boldly into the market, with good progress reports. The G1 is harder to find, but worth an audition.

Marshall has not let itself become a mere hall-of-famer in the new amp wars. Having recently introduced a solid-state MOSFET circuitry bass amp which has been getting rave reviews (a new version has a parametric eq), and having incorporated channel switching into its classic models, Marshall is also designing an all-new series of 15- and 30-watt studio tube amps. These rack-mounted specialists feature XLR connectors, a Celestion Sidewinder speaker Marshall's engineers helped develop, and a few other rather untraditional wrinkles.

Another worthy new amp arrival is the lightweight, heavy-output Gallien-Krueger series. The compact front panels of these bi-amped mini-brutes control a whole range of tonal and crunch changes, including fine tuning of the crossover point and relative high and low volumes. Also consider British power amp and recording equipment maker Studiomaster's new entry in the guitar combo sweepstakes, the Leadmaster, complete with triple volume controls, parametric eq and reverb for \$300. And let's not neglect MESA-Boogie's own relentless improvement of its original amp line: at least eight models, including bass versions, are now available without the wait, and intensive research into power tube improvement and speaker design (their Black Shadow line of hybrids designed in conjunction with other major manufacturers) bode well for the original revolutionary's future health.

Thus the Boogie begat a generation of amp builders with better ideas, knowing that there are discerning players out there who are willing to pay through the nose for quality and versatility (and willing to lend the extra muscle exertion to carry these heavy suckers around). Rejoice. It's a specialist's market, in an ostensibly off-the-rack world. ☐

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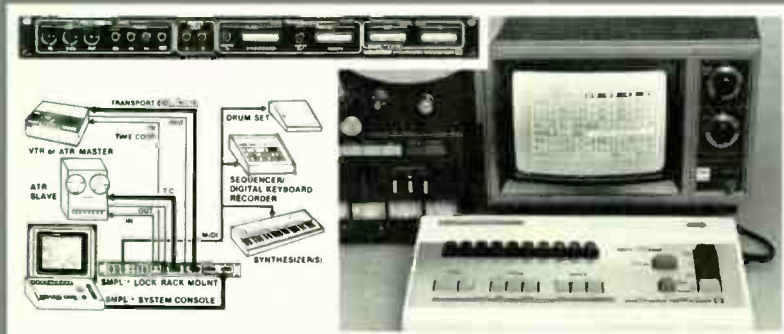
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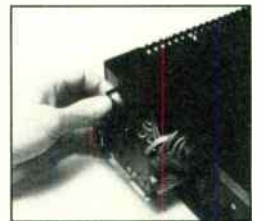
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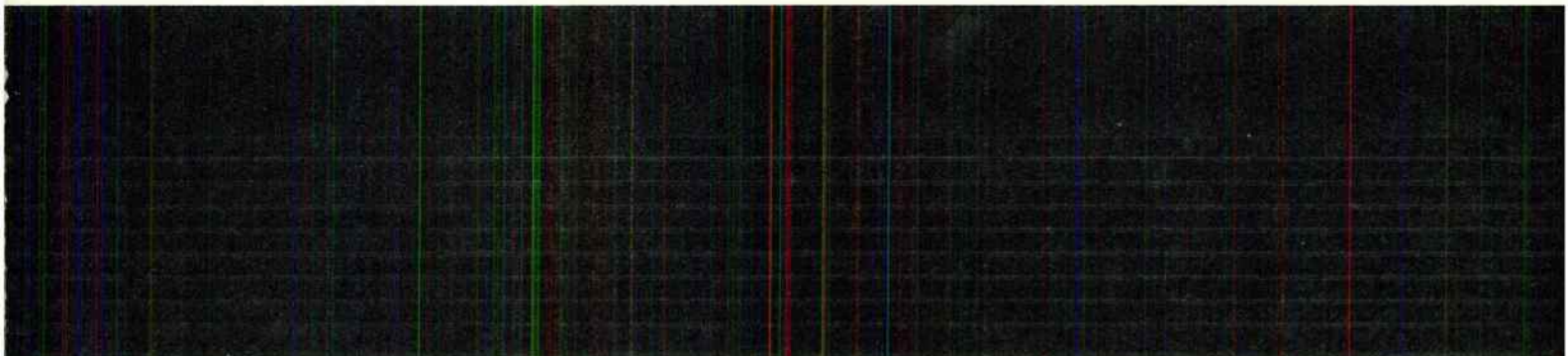
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# SOFTWARE CITY

By John Amaral

**H**igh quality music printing is on a lot of people's minds these days. Passport's Polywriter, while useful, runs on the Apple II and does not print "publishable" sheetmusic, and so there has been much speculation when better printing might be available for the **Macintosh**, which is capable of sophisticated graphics and practically puts a **printing press on your desk**. The long awaited product has arrived in the form of Professional Composer from Mark of the Unicorn (617) 576-2760.

First off, one thing that separates Professional Composer from other Mac music products such as Musicworks and Concertware, is that it prints beamed notes. Beams are **absolutely necessary** if anyone including yourself is going to try to read what you've written. Secondly, it costs \$495, which amounts to a lot of money for many musicians, but for many others it provides so much functionality that it will pay for itself quickly as a **business tool**.

Bobby Maruvada, whiz-kid musician from the Berklee College of Music, helped me develop a list of pros and

cons. First the pros:

1. Professional Composer allows you to work on **forty individual staves**, although you can see only four in the window at a time.

2. The printing is beautiful in standard mode, but can get a little difficult to read in high quality mode if you have a lot of notes to print.

3. The people at Mark of the Unicorn did a good job of researching the various symbols, which are divided into six separate groups: **notes, rests, clefs, dynamics, ornaments and articulations**. Although there is a group of special markings such as coda symbols and comping slashes, you can't currently create your own.

4. Composer provides you with **instant transposition** of any part, which saves tons of time when writing for wind instruments and singers. You can also transpose an entire piece of music either by key signature or by interval within the same key signature.

5. The documentation is easily understood by the average musician/composer.

6. There is great customer support from a person who knows what she's talking about (Robin Briggs), since she helped write it!

Now the cons:

1. The method of putting in the music, with mouse in the right hand and left hand on the Mac keyboard, is difficult to get used to if you've never used a Mac before, maybe even if you have.

2. There are some bugs in Professional Composer, most of which are related to screen updating and text entry. This is still true in version 1.1.

3. There is no flat symbol in the text mode. The addition of an eraser, pencil and fatbits would be very helpful.

4. The program is **painfully slow** in almost everything that it does. It's close to being reliable enough to use all the time and not be afraid of system crashes, which would result in lost data, but the main problem is the speed. It's too slow to input a large score easily.

What many people would like to be able to do is to play their music with a MIDI instrument into some kind of

*continued on page 112*

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vides you with valuable insights into stage and studio performance techniques. Some of the topics explored are "The Physics of Sound," "The Synthesist as Magician and Impersonator," Programming FM Synthesizers such as the DX-7, and an in-depth tour of virtually every major manufacturer's synthesizer product line.

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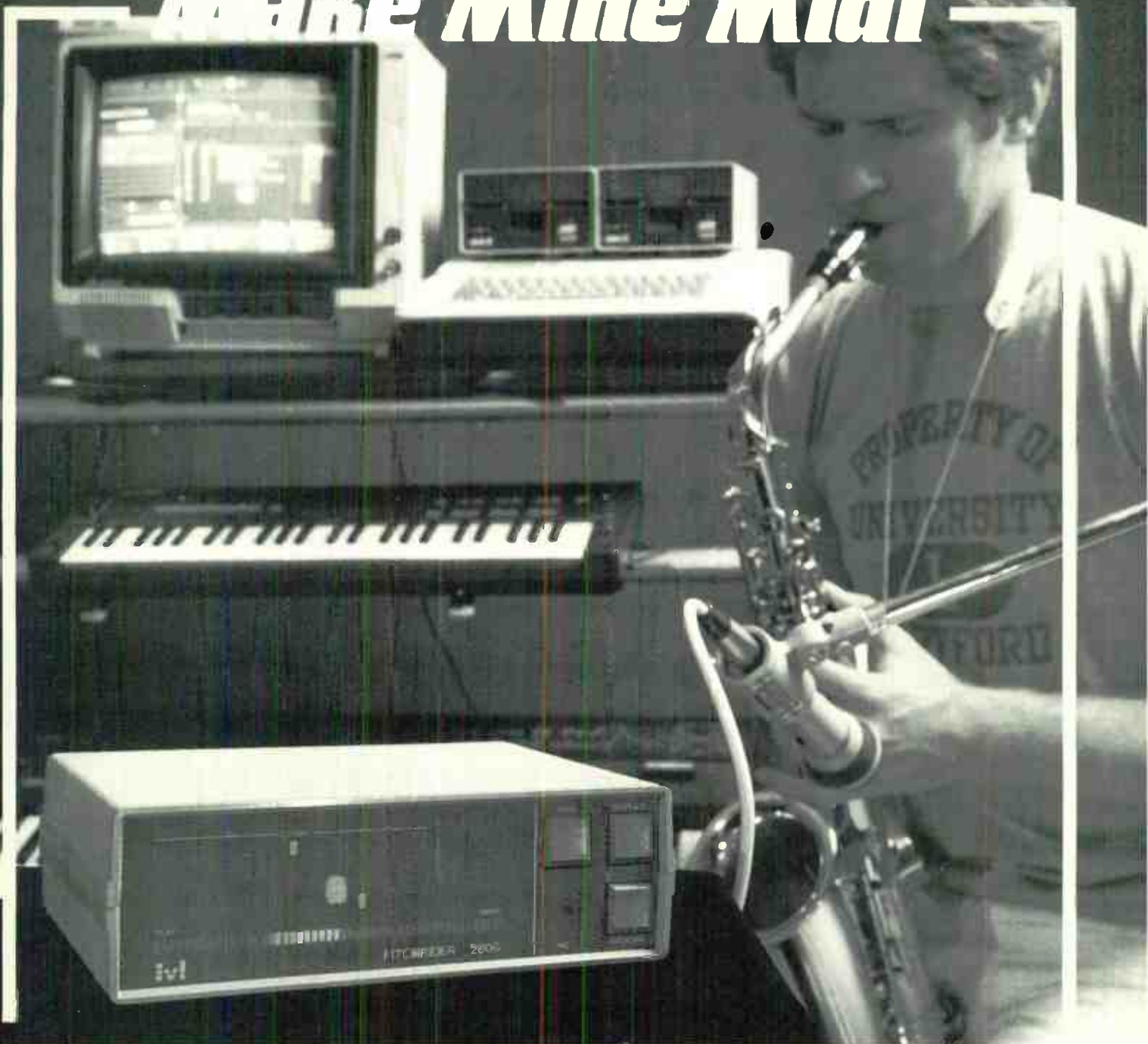
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The SynthArts courses were written by **Steve De Furia**, synthesist/programmer with such recording artists as Frank Zappa, Stevie Wonder, John Farrar (Olivia Newton-John), David Paich, Steve Porcaro, and Lee Ritenour. Mr. De Furia is a former faculty member of the Electronic Music Department of Berklee College of Music.

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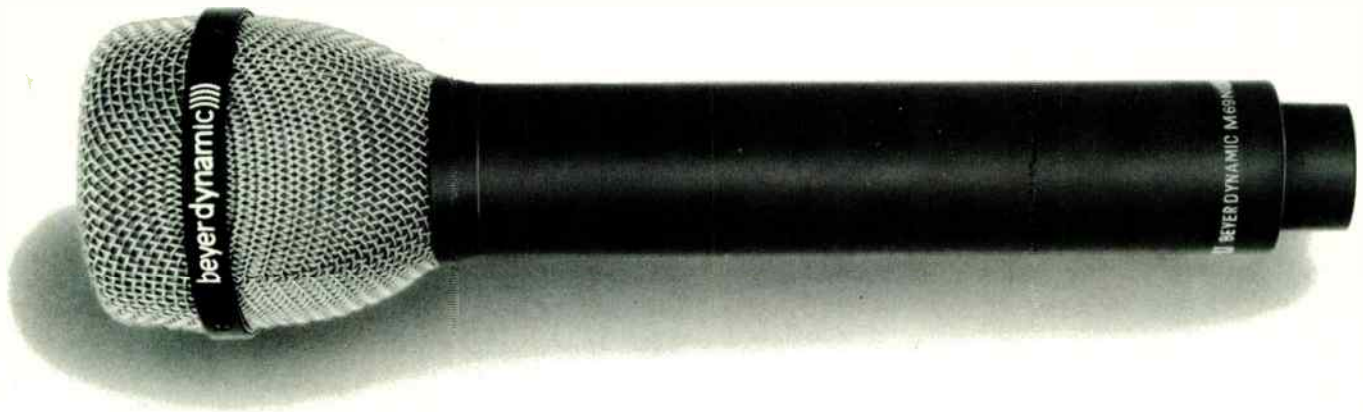
You've undoubtedly seen the curiously distinctive "flat-top" shape of the Beyer M 69 being used by leading artists in a variety of contemporary musical styles and situations. And since the M 69 is a German precision microphone, you might assume that it is priced well beyond your means.

We happily acknowledge the "professional" consensus about the M 69's superior sound and performance, but we must also point out that it is definitely *not* expensive—\$165\* to be precise. Competitive mics at this price point are hard-pressed to match the integrity of design and construction offered by the M 69, not to mention its extraordinary dollar-for-dollar value—a critical factor in these cost-conscious times.

The M 69 has an exceedingly high output and its full, balanced sound is characterized by a strong, smooth

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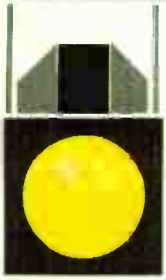


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# BRIGHT IDEAS IN CLUB LIGHTING



## Now It's Easier Than Ever to Bring Your Own System

By Alan diPerna

Let's face it: We live in an MTV world. As performance videos have established a set of visual signatures for each pop genre, sophisticated stage lighting has become de rigueur—even for fledgling bands. Club audiences now come in the door with ears and eyes primed for a spectacular show; and aspiring artists are expected to deliver the multi-media goods.

Champagne tastes on a beer budget? Well, by one of those curious laws that govern the interplay of Art and Commerce, the cost of club-oriented lighting gear has come down dramatically in recent years. With entry-level systems starting at about \$1,000, it has become very feasible for bands to bring their own lights on the road.

If you're thinking about shedding some new light on your act but don't know the first thing about the equipment you'll need, there's some good news: Lighting systems bear an uncanny resemblance to P.A. systems. Like an audio mixing console, a lighting control board has a row of faders (or sliders, as they're often called in the lighting biz). Each slider regulates the brightness of its own channel of lamps by means of a variable control voltage. The signals are sent to dimmer packs, which supply the necessary amounts of power to the lighting fixtures—just as power amps drive the speakers in P.A. systems.

Of the companies that manufacture lighting equipment, some (such as Spectrum Design & Development and LSS Laboratories) specialize in the electronic components of a lighting system—the controllers and dimmer

packs. Other companies, including ETA Lighting, Dyna-Might Sound & Lighting and Sunn Electronics, also manufacture lighting fixtures, rigging and cables. In all of these areas, design engineers are constantly seeking ways to make the equipment lighter, more compact and less expensive.

Improvements in lighting fixtures have helped bring down the cost of entire systems. As manufacturers figure out how to make lamps put out more light (or candlepower) and use less electricity to do so, it becomes possible to operate a lighting system on standard wall current (120 VAC, single

phases). eral manager Bob Harris. "They're not like some other types of fixtures, where you can vary the focus of the bulb itself. PAR fixtures are therefore quick to set up and relatively inexpensive compared to some other types of lamps."

By now, you're starting to get the picture. Anything that can cut down on costs, weight, power consumption or on-the-road hassles is an important benefit for a club lighting system. This line of thinking inspired Sunn to come up with their multiplexed lighting system. It can transmit up to 32 channels of lighting control voltages via a standard mic cord with a three-pin XLR connector. As Sunn marketing engineer Robert Hick will tell you, the idea was to do away with the heavy, cumbersome multiple cables that most lighting systems require—cables which often use non-standard, hard-to-find connectors. Instead, any of Sunn's control boards can be connected with onstage Sunn dimmer packs via a P.A. snake. Up to thirty dimmer packs can be daisy-chained, and each can be preset to respond to any four control channels emanating from the lighting board.

Perhaps the most exciting developments in club lighting are those related to microprocessor technology—the same stuff that is now shaking up the musical instrument industry. ICs are what made lighting systems portable in the first place. Control boards have long been equipped with digital memory circuits for storing multiple scenes (preset

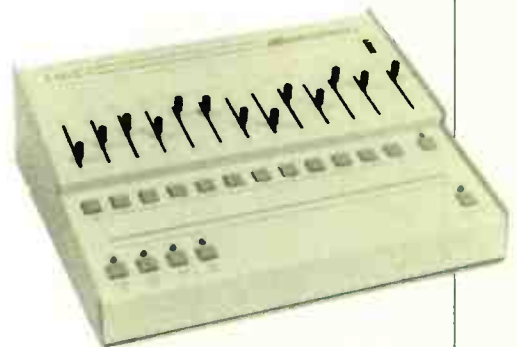


ETA 1221 dual-scene lighting controller

phase). The need to buy and carry a separate power supply is thus eliminated. Also, lighting fixtures lose weight as they become more efficient, so they're easier to set up, tear down and carry. They can be mounted in lightweight, inexpensive rigging and hung from suspension ceilings or elevated on tripods.

The favorite lighting fixture of the music industry—from clubs to arenas—is called a PAR, which stands for Parabolic Aluminum Reflector. It's a sealed container with an aluminum reflector at the back, a lens on the front and a lamp in the middle. PAR lights are available in a variety of diameters, from the 4¼-inch PAR 36 to the 8-inch PAR 64.

"The reason why music people like PAR fixtures so much is that they're pre-focused," explains ETA Lighting's gen-



J.L. Cooper MIDI Lighting Controller

lighting combinations) which can be called up quickly during a show. The same type of storage capabilities have allowed onstage footpedal controllers to evolve from primitive on-off switches to subtle mood changers that can save a starving band the expense of hiring a lighting operator.

One of the next steps in this microprocessor evolution is represented by the Moto Light, a digitally controlled, motorized fixture that Dyna-Might began marketing this year. The lamp can be moved horizontally and vertically by means of a joy stick. When Moto Light memory module is added, up to ninety-six lamp positions can be stored and recalled from the console. The Moto Light will even change color in response to a digital control command. Although they carry a fairly high price tag (about \$5,000 for four lights and a controller), these intelligent, mobile units promise to add some new sparkle to club lighting.

Another new microprocessor marvel has brought club lighting under MIDI control. J.L. Cooper, whose MIDI conversion devices are well known to synth players, has come up with a 12-channel MIDI lighting controller, the MLC-1 (\$895). What it does is convert lighting control voltages into MIDI data and vice

versa. This lets you store complex lighting routines in a MIDI keyboard sequencer and then "play back" the lighting sequence in perfect sync with the music.

"The usual procedure," Cooper explains, "would be to start by entering music parts in your sequencer. Then you can slow the tempo down and 'teach' the lighting cues to the MLC-1 by moving its sliders and other controls to suit the music. You can 'overdub' lighting parts just like you can do keyboard overdubs on a sequencer, so you only have to worry about one or two sliders on each pass. And once you've entered a part, it's locked in—down to the sixteenth note. It's never going to miss a cue, and you don't need to have an extra person to run your lights."

Now that lighting has entered the musician market in a big way, it's only natural that lighting technology should start to borrow from electronic instrument design, and vice versa. The beauty of this goes beyond the new affordability of lighting gear. Devices like Cooper's put lighting under the direct control of musicians, letting them manipulate it with equipment they're already used to. How players will use this new expressive potential remains to be seen; but it's sure nice to know it's there.

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# DEVELOPMENTS

By Jock Baird

**B**iggest product story this month? The new **Simmons SDS 9** electronic drum kit. Remember hearing Terry Bozzio complain a few months back that he couldn't get a rim-shot or a stick-across on his Simmons snare? Well, someone was listening, and that's one of the SDS 9's innovations. There's also the new injection-molded pads with more natural feel and a microprocessor which logarithmically expands the signal before instructing the voice to sound, greatly enhancing dynamic control. The SDS 9 brain has separate synthesis systems for each drum: digital for the kick, analog for the toms (with a "second skin" feature that emulates



**Sequential Split-Eight**

which splits the five-octave keyboard into two groups of four (the split point is at your discretion). The memory holds sixty-four presets or custom sounds you can create with the aid of a graphic matrix. Each voice has a multi-waveform VCO, a 4-pole bypass filter, a VCA, two ADSR envelope generators and an LFO; there's also a built-in chorus effect. The Split-Eight has an array of MIDI features, including the ability to assign half the split keyboard to a separate MIDI channel. From Sequential Circuits, (408) 946-5240.

It may not be cheap, but quality like **Sennheiser's** never is. The maker of one of the top recording mikes in the world is debuting a new blue-chip wireless system, the EM 2003-9. This narrow-band VHF receiver employs true diversity circuitry and front-end helical filters for high selectivity of RF and a minimum of intermodulation from stray carriers. There's also an integral splitter for its two antennas and LED displays for audio modulation and RF strength. From Sennheiser, (212) 944-9440.

aluminum-ribbon voice coil, copper-plated pole piece and signature diamond surround. The crossover system also provides power response compensation for the high frequency driver. The low-end of the 4425 is a 12-inch driver



**JBL 4425 studio monitor**

with an edge-wound copper-ribbon voice coil and incorporates JBL's symmetrical field geometry (SFG) for ultra-minimal distortion. Other action on the JBL front includes a nifty new two-way stage monitor with controlled dispersion, the 4604B, and a small-hall vocal reinforcement speaker system using a flat-front version of the Bi-radial tweeter, the MI-630. For a good hard listen, contact JBL, (714) 541-5188.

If you're an upwardly mobile bass player, try to catch the video **DCI** did with Jaco Pastorius entitled "Modern Electric Bass." The interview with Jerry Jemmott includes all kinds of goodies on left- and right-hand technique, picking, harmonics, even practicing. There's also a tasty trio performance with John Scofield and Kenwood Dennard. Give DCI a call at (212) 924-6624.

Recent ads from **Casio** neglected to mention their full-scale swoop into MIDI. Quite a few new Casios, including the extraordinary CZ-101, are MIDI-compatible now; contact your Casio dealer or call (201) 575-7400.

Happy sixtieth birthday to **Shure!** Sixty years? Jeez, some of these little software companies haven't been in business sixty days yet.



**Simmons SDS 9**

the interaction of two vibrating drum heads) and three interchangeable snare samples loaded on EPROMs. Individual controls for pitch, bend, decay, noise, click and filter pitch and sweep are also part of the panel, plus on-board digital delay. Program loading, with twenty presets and twenty user programmable memories, and MIDI make this an unbelievable steal at \$1850. From Simmons, (818)-884-2653.

A sporting new entry in the synth derby is the new \$1200 Split-Eight from **Sequential Circuits**. A fully programmable 8-voice workhorse, the Split-Eight has four modes, one normal, one unison which stacks all eight voices behind a single note for killer single-note lead sounds, one double mode which lets each key trigger two sounds, and one



**Sennheiser EM 2003-9 wireless**

Finding there isn't enough high end in your studio monitors to go around? One of three monitors with **JBL's** new Bi-radial horn will spread those highs from wall to wall, with constant vertical and horizontal polar coverage. Two existing full-size editions are the 4430 and 4435 models, and the latest is the compact 4425 for smaller studios. The Bi-radial horn uses JBL's titanium diaphragm compression driver with edge-wound



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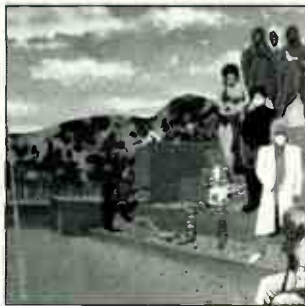
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# RECORD REVIEWS

JOHN BELLISIMO/RETNA

**T**he Shrinking Violet expands his world view and musical vocabulary – then exits, stage up.



## PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION

*Around The World In A Day*  
(Warner Bros.–CD)

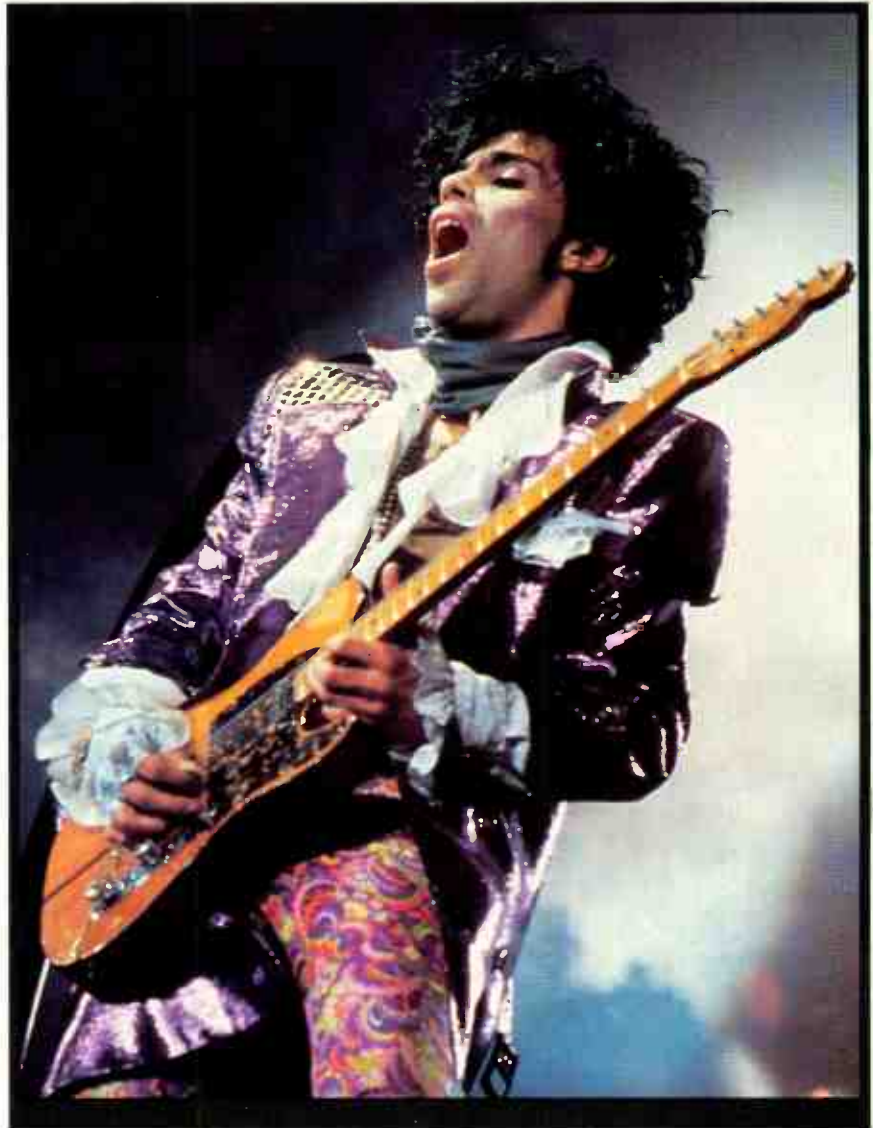
**A**round *The World In A Day* lists Prince's accountant among the credits. This may or may not be a recording first, but it certainly indicates the rarefied realm Prince now inhabits. So imagine the scene at Warner Bros. Records when Prince dropped off the tape for his new album: WARNER BROS. EXEC: [trying to make eye contact with His Purpleness, concealed by bodyguards] "Gee, Prince, that's great, that's really, er, different." Meanwhile, the exec's mood ring has imploded while he's contemplating the where's-the-beef crux of broadcasting: What's the single? "Paisley Park" (also the album's subtitle), with its straightforward beat, paradisiacal theme, catchy chorus and cute merry-go-round organ? "Pop Life," with its *au courant* pro-education, anti-dope sentiments?

The cheerfully misogynist "Raspberry Beret," with the line, "I put her on the back of my bike/ And we went riding"? Hey, *Purple Rain*!!!

Prince, meanwhile, shows less concern with such material affairs. The album's title track opens with Indian flute and percussion, and proceeds to modal licks. It could be a vintage Donovan recording ("open your heart, open your mind") but for Prince's distinctive vocals, a whomping bass drum and trademark keyboard sound. Besides continuing Prince's purple fetish (we're exhorted to forsake the "red, white and blue" for "purple"), the song even scans similarly to "When Doves Cry." But the latter makes a direct emotional appeal; "Around The World In A Day" is all hazy platitude.

Perhaps Prince's earthy revolution,

and his new emphasis on spiritual progress, has left him a little dizzy. *Around The World In A Day* still has its share of familiar Princely musical elements—a falsetto ballad ("Condition Of The Heart," complete with noodling piano introduction), now-token funk ("Tamborine" [sic] and heavy guitar ("Temptation"). But the portentously titled "America" makes you wonder if Prince still wants Ronnie to talk to Russia or just nuke 'em and the hell with it: "Little sister making minimum wage...may not be in the black/ But she's happy she ain't in the red." (Suggested antidote: Malcolm X, "No Sell Out.") Or "The Ladder" Prince modestly discusses "a king who didn't deserve to be" and presumes "everybody wants salvation of the soul"; the song also includes a classic Prince conflation, "The love of



God's creation will undress you."

Prince's ingenuousness remains his saving grace. The embarrassingly personal "Condition Of The Heart" wallows in the self-pity of a jilted, "sometimes lonely musician" whose "dame" has "left him for a real prince." Whether or not Prince is writing from experience, you have to admire his nerve. The killer is the concluding "Temptation," Prince's sermon on the *mons veneris*. He screams, shrieks, croaks and croons about "sssssexual temptation" ("not just any old kind") over a crushing fuzz-beat that gives way to a more heavenly pulse as Prince sees the light and stammers, "I'm sorry, I'll be good this time, I promise." And there he goes, up the ladder, with a hasty "I don't know when I'll return...goodbye" to leave his fans in tears. It's a classic.

Never mind that somebody once summed up "Temptation"'s bombast with the succinct phrase, "Without love, it ain't much." Great pop music of any era thrives on the grand gesture, and *Around The World In A Day* is as grand as they come. Prince's message, whatever it is, sounds admirably idealistic. Let's hope he really has disappeared up a ladder—and not just his own shapely ass. — **Scott Isler**



## R.E.M.

*Fables Of The Reconstruction*  
(I.R.S.)

**M**ichael "Demosthenes" Stipe, the kid from Athens who sings with rocks in his mouth, is back to give literal-minded rock critics the heebie-jeebies. R.E.M.'s third album is not unlike its predecessors: it defies interpretation as stubbornly as Georgia kudzu resists the services of a gardener.

*Fables Of The Reconstruction* is less immediately inviting than last year's *Reckoning* (with its appealing singles "So. Central Rain" and "Rockville"), but the new LP's darker, more challenging texture ultimately bestows rewards. The driving "Can't Get There From Here" is an immediate choice for radio popularity; the doozier "Feeling Gravity's Pull"

and "Old Man Kensey" are the most seductive and atmospheric of the record's eleven songs.

Producer Joe Boyd, whose credits include albums with such notable English folk-rock eccentrics as Nick Drake, John Martyn and Richard Thompson, proves an ideal foil for R.E.M.'s dense, detailed sound, and even adds fresh fillips to the band's basic approach. A lean string quartet fills out a couple of numbers, a hint of horns and keyboards are present, and a melancholy banjo elaborates the album-closing "Wendell Gee." But the familiar ensemble sound of guitarist Pete Buck, bassist Mike Mills and drummer Bill Berry—that chiming, occasionally hard-rocking folkishness—remains firm and uncluttered. Stipe's vocals, meanwhile, remain a cloud of metaphor and allusion.

At this point in their career, it would be folly to imagine that R.E.M. will ever produce an album's worth of songs which lend themselves to neat, English-class explications. Stipe's almost private vocal style tortures already impressionistic lyrics; the listeners are encouraged to make what they will of such lyrical shards as "It's a Man Ray kind of sky/ And I'll show you what I can do with it."

Critics are similarly at a loss to offer that crucial insight that can decipher R.E.M.'s introverted take on the world. This isn't a group that gives fans the keys to understanding rattling upon their chain—the truth of their music lies somewhere deep in the back of the brain. Stipe and company may have provided their own best definition of R.E.M. on "Wendell Gee": a band that "takes a tug upon the string that held the line of dreams." — **Chris Morris**



## MARVIN GAYE

*Dream Of A Lifetime*  
(Columbia)

**J**ust when you thought it was safe to go back into the bedroom, here comes *Dream Of A Lifetime*, an appropriately kinky coda to the life of one of the more bizarre and brilliant artists of our era. Marvin Gaye was one of

a kind, and at this point any additions to his recorded oeuvre are welcome, no matter how truncated their form. This record proves it.

*Dream* comprises the sessions Marvin was working on before his father decided to reverse the Oedipal curse, so we'll never know exactly what he would have done with this music. My guess is that his final versions would have veered considerably from those put together by producers Gordon Banks and Harvey Fuqua. Certainly he would have raised a ruckus over the gospel chorus that exists for no other purpose than to sanctify "Sanctified Lady" for radio airplay, thus distorting the spirit and the letter of Marvin's frankly sexual message ("Louie Louie" fans take note). Of course the unexpurgated version still pales before the tracks that follow—"Savage In The Sack" (clearly a mere fragment of the intended funk offering) or "Masochistic Beauty," Gaye's S&M version of the "Monster Mash." Marvin even affects Bobby "Boris" Pickett's deadpan narrative as he commands his "nasty little slave" to "kiss my feet," (etc.) and drily suggests that "It's my duty/ To smack your booty." No doubt this will rouse a protest from the ASPCB, but the song's overall effect is more like camp—try as he might, Marvin's tender tenor can't muster the properly fascistic flourish.

Elsewhere, the producers have tried to shroud Gaye's sketchy vocal tracks with ornate arrangements that recall late Motown and early Phil Spector rather than the relatively spare and tasteful tracks Gaye constructed on his last LP, *Midnight Love*. "Symphony"? sounds too much like Marvin at the Copa, and "Life's Opera," a crypto-spiritual that invokes the holy trinity of Jesus, Jehovah and Malcolm, sounds more like a loosely sketched suite of musical ideas. But a few other tunes showcase Marvin at his best. On "Ain't It Funny (How Things Turn Around)," Marvin uses a relaxed, jazzy groove to croon knowingly about the way love relationships can suddenly reverse themselves, while "It's Madness," a truly haunting ballad about lost love, could as easily serve as a metaphor for Marvin's lost life.

Finally there's the title track, a lovely farewell number which works as a kind of "My Way." Marvin thanks his creator for the "dream of a lifetime," and ruminates about "the dreams that I've lost. But whatever the cost," he sings at last, "the parade isn't passing me by." It's a poignant and fitting sentiment from a true poet of the heart. No, Marvin, the parade didn't pass you by. You were the parade. And we miss you still.

— **Mark Rowland**



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

*Radio Tokyo Tapes, Vol. 3*  
(PVC)

## DAVE VAN RONK

*Going Back To Brooklyn*  
(Reckless)

Now that Bob Dylan is establishing himself as a born-again rocker, why shouldn't the new wave stage a folk revival? But listening to *Radio Tokyo Tapes, Vol. 3*, an all-acoustic compilation from L.A., it quickly becomes clear that "folk" is no more strictly defined in the City of Angels than is "punk." Take, for example, the Knitters, the folk alter-ego of John Doe, Exene Cervenka, Dave Alvin and D.J. Bonebreak. Although the name is an obvious tribute to the Weavers, their performance—a medley of "Wild Side Of Life" and "Honky Tonk Angels"—is, like the music of X and the Blasters, far closer to Nashville than Greenwich Village. Black Flag's Henry Rollins, on the other hand, manages to get to St. Marks' Place with "Al Jolson's Bedroom," a patricidal poem with guitar accompaniment that's less likely to remind you of folkies than the beats.

But accuracy is hardly the point. While some of the echoes are fairly exact, like Balancing Act's Simon & Garfunkel harmonies, Phranc's neo-Joan Baez soprano or Revolver's rasping Dylan impression, most of the cuts here aim for a more generalized nostalgia, turning the album into a musical dress-up night. *RTT3* is no manifesto—it's a goof, and stronger for it.

The real folkies, after all, never passed up a punchline. Dave Van Ronk's *Going Back To Brooklyn* boasts some of the funniest songs you're likely to hear this year, from the gain-through-pain "Tantric Mantra" to the brashly bawdy "The Whores Of San Pedro." But there's more to this album than yocks, just as there's more to Van Ronk than his ribald wit. In fact, this album does an amazing job of presenting Van Ronk's stylistic range while still giving a clear picture of the performer today. And that conveys the vitality of folk far

better than any of the signals emanating from Radio Tokyo. (Reckless Records: 21 Lakeview Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138) — **J.D. Considine**



## DAVID MURRAY BIG BAND

*Live At Sweet Basil, Vol. 1*  
**DEWEY REDMAN  
& ED BLACKWELL**

*In Willisau*  
(Black Saint/PSI)

The wailing tenor saxophonist raising the roof and sanctifying an audience remains one of jazz's enduring images. Since the heat is best experienced live, it makes esthetic—and financial—sense that two of the hottest tenor players around, David Murray and Dewey Redman, have both released live records.

The version of Murray's big band on *Live At Sweet Basil, Vol. 1* boasts some of the best young soloists in New York—Murray, Olu Dara, Steve Coleman, John Purcell, Craig Harris—an untouchable, hard-boiled rhythm section, and charts arranged by Murray and cued and conducted by Butch Morris that are alternately sumptuous and hard-ass. When they play for keeps, the band is as good as any that's set foot onstage. Unfortunately, the LP's mix is terrible. What had been one of the band's strong points—braying, willingly independent voices meshing into a whole—has been reduced here to sonic porridge.

One solution: put on headphones and crank the old Sony. With a bit of volume, the waves of horn riffs welling under Murray's solo on "Silence" become more distinct; their dissonance spurs Murray, who measures out one of the most hair-raising, scarily pathological solos I've heard in years, laden with rhythmic shudders, moaning glissandos, and an eye-rolling climax. It's also easier to feel the excitement generated by the riffing duel between trombonist Craig Harris and cornetist Olu Dara on "Bechet's Bounce," or appreciate the rhythm section's response to Dara's joyously melancholic solo laid out on "Duet." Cranked, this band is hot.

Dewey Redman and Ed Blackwell are old pals, having worked together for years as part of Ornette Coleman's group and Old and New Dreams, plus more than a few record dates. On *Willisau*, a series of duets, it shows. The record is a forty-six-minute example of rhythmic telepathy; every space between Redman's tenor musings is ornamented by Blackwell's tap-tap-tapping. Murray's band may be powerful, but Blackwell's genius with rhythmic and textural variations, Redman's pliable, gruff tone, and the hellacious swing both players generate simply render other instruments moot.

— **Peter Watrous**



## NEW ORDER

*Low-Life*  
(Qwest)

As Joy Division, they ignited a trend of anguished confession that turned punk's Angry Young Men in Leather to post-punk's Sad Young Men in Analysis. As New Order, they assimilated Arthur Baker's beat-box blasts before Hall & Oates and Springsteen made rock remixes hip (hop). So if this English quartet's first album in two years disappoints, it's because it offers only masterful moods and textures, rather than big, new ideas.

New Order's strengths are the smoothed remnants of their punk heritage—the aggressive rhythmic turns of bassist Peter Hooke and drummer Steve Morris, the simplicity of Bernard Albrecht's and Gilliam Gilbert's woven guitar lines and the unsettling strain of Albrecht's thin tenor. And as usual, they've hidden some surprises in the vague, offhand lyrics; "Love Vigilantes" has a *Twilight Zone* tag line, and the sprightly "Perfect Kiss" proffers winking as ideal entertainment. But bouncing sequencers and conventional synth washes flatten "Subculture" and "Sooner Than You Think," and turn the instrumental "Elegia" into a misty ECM parody.

While they're entitled to shed their dreary image, New Order still sound best when mining some minor key mel-

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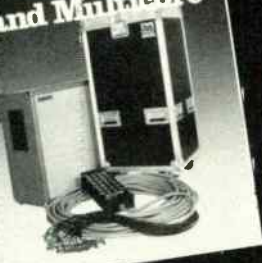
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anchoia. A hushed nightmare ("This Time Of Night"), a storming clatter ("Sunrise") and a poisoned declamation ("Face Up") comprise this LP's best tracks. As hard as it is to believe, these musicians are fast approaching the end of their first decade. While their paternal stature entitles them to some laurel-resting, here's hoping their next album offers some braver ideas, at least so other bands will have something to copy.

— Rob Tannenbaum



### EURYTHMICS

*Be Yourself Tonight*  
(RCA-CD)

Perhaps the title is meant to be ironic, for Annie "Zelig" Lennox is one pop chameleon who adapts to her surroundings. Here that includes echoing Stevie Wonder's percolating harp on "There Must Be An Angel (Playing With My Heart)," scat-singing with Aretha Franklin that "Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves" and crooning a duet with Elvis Costello on the lilting ballad, "Adrian." What *Be Yourself Tonight* makes more explicit are Eurythmics' roots in horn-laden R&B, accented by Annie's full throttle wail and partner Dave Stewart's Stax-Volt affinities. Trouble is, the real Annie, whoever that might be, tends to get lost in Stewart's shimmering funhouse arrangements. She's at once too chilly to be Queen of Soul and too upfront for Synth Goddess.

Instead, *Be Yourself Tonight* flaunts Annie's vocal pyrotechnics, which range from the breathless attack of the single, "Would I Lie To You?" to the echoed telephone call-and-response of "Here Comes That Sinking Feeling." Stewart's canny showcases are far more impressive. Fresh from his own successful collaboration with Tom Petty, the Other Eurythmic proves a studio whiz by creating a unique *mise en scène* for each track. A speaker-to-speaker stereo mix on "I Love You Like A Ball And Chain" lets the prisoners march from one side of your room to the other. Muted trumpets and swirling synths underscore the cinematic vision of "Here Comes That Sinking Feeling"

while Oriental flutes and vibes set the table for "Conditioned Soul." In fact, Stewart's backdrops, along with his guitar lines, give *Be Yourself Tonight* all its staying power. Not until the chorus of the aptly-named "Better To Have Lost In Love (Than Never To Have Loved At All)," does any Lennox vocal really catch fire. The Eurythmics seem to be one band that's only as good as their latest hook, and *Be Yourself Tonight*, while undeniably ambitious, does not deliver. It's a musical you don't leave the theater humming. — Roy Trakin

### SAM COOKE

### SAM COOKE

*Live At The Harlem Square Club, 1963*  
(RCA)

Devil or angel—Sam Cooke couldn't make up his mind. Like other 50s R&B stars, he'd honed his vocal chops on gospel music; unlike them, he'd ended up at RCA, a label rarely revered as a hotbed of greasy funk. So besides facing the religious-vs.-secular dichotomy, the singer also had to contend with a corporate mindset that could hardly have been sympathetic to "Mr. Soul." No surprise, then, that RCA initially passed on these Harlem Square tapes and released *At The Copa* instead. While that live LP may be sonically superior, there is something to be said for *Live At The Harlem Square Club, 1963* is soaked in it.

Although the three-track recording minimizes the audience, everyone obviously had a hot time at the North Miami venue that January evening. Cooke barely pauses between numbers during his forty-minute recap of recent singles sides and a couple of (comparative) oldies. Stripped of their studio gloss, originals like "Feel It," "Chain Gang" and "Having A Party" barrel along on guitar, bass and drums with occasional brass pedal-points. And the singer himself is decidedly grittier than we're used to hearing, which alone makes these performances valuable documents of the "real" Sam Cooke. Just as revealing are his asides—a reference to leukemia (!) on "Somebody Have Mercy"—and count-offs "ah-one,



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ah-two, put it anywhere!"

Even if you've never wondered where Otis Redding or Rod Stewart (among many others) came from, this album will work wonders at unclogging your pores. Cooke devises a little scenario to link three songs together; it's a clever if unnecessary touch. A tenor sax barks solos. The crowd squeals and sings along. The band ends "Cupid" rather chaotically. Thanks to the smoky audio, you are there, until a cruel fade-out and crueller bullet twenty-three months later silences a divine voice.

Long live Sam Cooke. — **Scott Isler**



## JULES SHEAR

*The Eternal Return*  
(EMI America)

One of the less-anticipated benefits of Cyndi Lauper's ascent to glory was that her heart-felt cover of "All Through The Night" managed to drag Jules Shear along for part of the trip. Since his days with Jules & the Polar Bears, Shear has long shown a gift for effortlessly flowing melody and the ability to compose lyrics that are clever for what they say, not merely the way they say it. Unfortunately, that's something only his fans know, as Shear hasn't yet managed any hits on his own.

*The Eternal Return* may change all that. There are more than a few songs that sound like hits; more to the point, Shear has managed to find the right stylistic vehicle for his songs, a sort of high-tech retro approach that lends his music a contemporary sheen while firmly anchoring it in the realms of more traditional pop.

If that seems like a tricky concept, consider the way it works for "Steady," which Shear wrote with Lauper. The feel is soulful and smooth, somewhere between the sentiment of mid-70s James Taylor and the groove of such Philly Soul hits as Jackie Moore's "Personally." Yet the production veneer, with its crisp synths, gated drums and chorused guitars, sucks any excess sweetness out of the song, so that the lyric's essence—holding together for other people's problems even as your own

tear you apart—comes off as emotional realism, not maudlin heroics. It's a complex message for such a simple song, and the fact that Shear makes it work speaks volumes for his craft.

But "Steady" is hardly the exception here. From the circuitous logic of "If She Knew What She Wants" to the vivid metaphor of "Empty Out The House," Shear's songs speak with a quiet eloquence. And when he's capable of backing his observations with music as instantly evocative as "Here S/He Comes," which at once recalls the Crystals, the Who and the Cars, it's hard to imagine any rock fan not making his or her own eternal return to this album.

— **J.D. Considine**



## ANTHONY BRAXTON

*Seven Standards 1985, Volume I*  
(Magenta)

Who does this Braxton guy think he is anyway? Hasn't he heard that "jazz" players aren't supposed to embrace Cage and Weber with the same spirit as they do Monk and Ornette? Doesn't he realize that it looks pompous to try to play every woodwind ever invented, or write extended works for four simultaneous symphony orchestras, or waddle through Bird's "Ornithology" with a contra-bass clarinet? And wouldn't he suspect that he's going to ruffle more feathers with these very personal interpretations of evergreens like "Spring Is Here," "I Remember You" and "You Go To My Head"? Anthony Braxton appears to be very much the innocent as he tackles projects that so obviously open him up to criticism. But if you're like me, you'll find that his sincere and ultimately courageous explorations are like breaths of fresh air in today's musty, conservative jazz atmosphere.

Braxton's approach to these standards is far from standard. His improvisations avoid the usual saxophone clichés, maybe because he's less familiar with the genre. In any event there's real joy in Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring" and an honestly sentimental lyricism to "Old Folks." And the juxtaposition between Braxton's "outside" playing with

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a traditional rhythm section makes this LP doubly rewarding. After all, Hank Jones, Rufus Reid and Victor Lewis are masters of straight-ahead jazz, and their ensemble sound here is rich, tasteful and extremely musical. Jones' work in particular constitutes a master's class in creative playing within a traditional perspective. Meanwhile, that devilish Braxton is still thinking and exploring—"postulating" as he'd put it—and in turn expanding our collective horizons. Here's looking forward to *Volume II*.

— **Cliff Tinder** ☐

**Software City** from page 96

ording package, then print it out in standard music notation which looks good enough to sightread and publish, at least such that members of a band or an orchestra can get instant parts. I'm aware of at least three computer companies that are preparing integrated MIDI recording and printing packages, which should probably be available soon, perhaps by the time this is in print. I do expect that Professional Composer will remain the highest quality music printer for the Mac, and that the Mac will become the computer of choice for many musicians.

All in all, Professional Composer is a good package with good support, but

not perfect. If you need good music printing, but can't afford a Synclavier, it's the best way to go. By the way, the Kurzweil and Emulator now have associated packages which use the Mac, and New England Digital has one in the works for the Synclavier which should be available in the fall. ☐

**Sugar Hill** from page 85

shall Chess' Jamar label, but because it isn't recognizable hip hop, Chess can't market it, and is shopping it around. They released one single as Fats Comet & the Big Sound, and plan another in conjunction with Rough Trade.

Chops' record is nothing to write home about—short on personality, songwriting and tasteful arrangements. But the title track of Duke Bootee's *Best Me Out* is the hardest-hitting piece of urban claustrophobic intensity since "The Message." The album proves he has always been as much songwriter as rapsmith.

Under the influence of British producer Adrian Sherwood, LeBlanc, Wimbish and Alexander have gone way into electronics. MIDI sequencers, Emulators, AMS sampling devices and drum computers—besides guitar, bass, and keyboard synthesizers—create a mon-

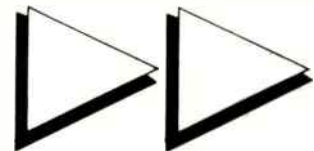
strous sound with just three musicians. Their orphaned album, LeBlanc says, "goes from straight tack-head nut music to jazz." The treated spoken vocals, which Wimbish describes as "Last Poets meet Eddie Murphy," owe a debt to Was (Not Was)'s "Tell Me That I'm Dreaming" and the LeBlanc-created "No Sell Out," by Malcolm X. The single, "Bop Bop," adheres to a similar strategy, but is steadier. This sound, while a bit capricious, always maintains an irrefutable groove. LeBlanc terms the songs "science fiction dance hall classics."

The only step remaining for these musicians is to unite under one banner as a consolidated, democratic band. "I think we've got the future of American dance music," Fletcher modestly declares. "I think we're the baddest band on the planet, and I think we can change a lot of people's ideas about what dance music is about. People are just beginning to hear our sound—what we do, as opposed to what we do for other people. We've got to go ahead and prove we're as bad as we think we are."

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# ROCK

## S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



### Lone Justice

*Lone Justice* (Geffen)

Rock 'n' roll bands with country and western hearts seem all the rage now, and Lone Justice is at the top of the hype. No surprise, given that the band's stand-out feature is Maria McKee, a singer who supports an expressive Dolly Parton warble with the sort of lung power Linda Ronstadt would envy. But despite a couple stand-out songs—"Soap, Soup And Salvation" in particular—Lone Justice never quite deliver on McKee's promise, mostly because there's too much emphasis on the sound of the music, and not enough on its sense.

### The Dukes of Stratosphere

*25 O'Clock* (Virgin Import)

According to the liner notes, "It's time to visit the planet smile," so excuse yourself from Paisley Park and prepare yourself for an *intentionally* funny psychedelic revival. The Dukes, who bear more-than-passing resemblance to XTC, know all the best jokes, from the light-hearted Beatle-isms of "What In The World?" to the *Dark Side* stereo tick-tock of the title cut. Yet there's enough affection for these affectations that these six songs remain listenable even as you laugh. A sure antidote to everyone else's flashbacks.

### Suzanne Vega

*Suzanne Vega* (A&M)

Like any bright young singer/songwriter, Vega goes for the poetic in her songs, but unlike most of her colleagues, her best work actually arrives at poetry. As such, these songs build from the rhythms suggested by her cadences. Sometimes that's little more

paniment, but with songs like "Marlene On The Wall," she achieves the marriage of words and music Paul Simon has chased after for years, and does so with such casual grace that this album will leave you sitting slack-jawed in amazement.

### Tears for Fears

*Songs From The Big Chair* (Mercury)

Though these techno-poppers tend to prefer the moody appeal of minor-key melodies to the instant gratification of dance-floor derring-do, they've nonetheless made their music delightfully addictive. Granted, their pop is often lightweight, but that won't stop you from returning to the slow wind-up of "Head Over Heels" or the hypnotic clank of "Shout."

### Glass Eye

*Marlo* (Glass Eye)

Interesting indie bands are a dime a dozen, but finding a record as distinctive and hypnotic as this is enough to restore any fan's faith in American ingenuity. This Austin quartet is fashionably beat-happy, but channels that momentum into a guitar-based sound that's halfway between the B-52s' surf-rock silliness and R.E.M.'s folky drones. More important, though, *Marlo* lends Kathy McCarty's moody, obsessive songs enough textural variety to leave you hanging on every verse. (1300 S. 6th, Austin, TX 78704)

### Allan Holdsworth with I.O.U.

*Metal Fatigue* (Enigma)

With Holdsworth concentrating on thickly chorded rhythm work instead of fleet-fingered leads, there's more of an emphasis on composition and form here, bringing an added focus to Holdsworth's playing that's even more impressive than the technique he uses to achieve it. All of which makes his insistence on overwrought vocals all the more mystifying. (POB 2896, Torrance, CA 90509)

### Andrew Lloyd Webber

*Requiem* (Angel Digital)

### Daniel Lentz

*Missa Umbrarum* (New Albion)

Music for the masses? Not hardly, and yet these obviously serious works remain utterly approachable by the pop listener. That's typical of Lloyd Webber,

he of *Jesus Evita Superstar & His Amazing Technicolor Cats* fame, but apart from some gratuitous tambourine in the "Hosanna," he avoids playing to the cheap seats. His lyricism is impressive, and the music, despite a heavy dose of vocal fireworks, never tumbles into operatic exhibitionism. Lentz takes a more austere approach, balancing voices and percussion in a way that recalls both Steve Reich and David Hykes while remaining grounded in a far older American tradition. (Lentz available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012)

### Kenny Loggins

*Vox Humana* (Columbia)

In his attempt to become funkier-than-thou, Loggins has taken Robin Gibb's macho falsetto and Michael McDonald's soulful wheeze and spun them into a vocal style that's as annoying as it is affected. Which is a real drag, especially considering how catchy "At Last," "I'll Be There" and the title cut are.

### Fishbone

*Fishbone* (Columbia)

Had this willfully eccentric sextet sprung from Cambridge instead of California, we'd be awash with hosannas over their warped wit and wildly eclectic (ska-cum-funk-cum-punk-cum-you-name-it) sound. That they're black Los Angelenos certainly doesn't hinder their music—in fact, it's largely responsible for the unlikely fusion—but will likely lower their visibility on the Anglophile new music scene. A shame, because Fishbone has more to offer, both in energy and originality, than any underground Brit band you could name. Yet another reason to buy American.

### Paul Young

*The Secret Of Association* (Columbia)

Young's status as England's pre-eminent soul man clearly has gone to his head—how else to explain the gratuitous melismas and recurrent falsetto leaps that litter this record? But that doesn't always work against him. It does overload the likes of "I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down," though the over-ambitious arrangement hardly helped. Sic Young on something leaner and meaner, like "Soldier's Things" or "Everytime You Go Away," and all those illusions suddenly seem more substantial.

J.D. Considine



In the early evening of Sept. 17, 1973, Jay Barth was at the wheel of a 22 ft. utility truck that was loaded with sound equipment. Just south of Benton Harbor, MI an oncoming car crossed the center-line; fortunately Jay steered clear of the impending head-on collision. Unfortunately, a soft shoulder caused the truck to roll two and one half times. Exit several Crown DC-300A's through the metal roof of the truck's cargo area.

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# JAZZ

## S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



### Willem Breuker Kollektief

*Willem Breuker Collective* (About Time) Breuker is a Dutch reed player and composer/arranger, a dropout from the European free music scene who has elevated the generally inadvisable tactic of pastiche to a level of nosethumbing art. Here he juxtaposes nettled free improvisations, knucklehead peasant dances, sleazy Broadway ballads, leftish solidarity marches, mercantile hymns to progress, reasonably faithful Kurt Weill adaptations, and recycled big band riffs that were probably ripped off from nineteenth-century European composers in the first place. The effect is as exhilarating as it is disorienting—even if you miss most of the musical non sequiturs, sendups and external signifiers, the brawling fervor of Breuker's nine-member Kollektief sweeps you right along, surprising you most when you *think* you know what's coming next. This studio album, recorded during Breuker's 1983 American tour, is a perfect introduction to his music, and it's easier to come by than his many albums on European labels MPS, FMP, BvHaast and Marge. (All of which are well worth seeking out—particularly *Driebergen-Zeist*. Available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012.)

### Michel Petrucciani

*Live At The Village Vanguard* (George Wein Collection/Concord Jazz) This two-record set is a revelation—a far more convincing demonstration of the young French pianist's harmonic acuity, lyrical ardor and rhythmic bite than last year's mauling solo album *100 Hearts*. There is no filler here. Pet-

rucciani's invention never falters, and with fleet bassist Palle Danielson and drummer Eliot Zigmund, the three-way simpatico invites comparison to the classic Bill Evans trio with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian.

### Phil Woods

*Live From New York* (Palo Alto) Until the promising Phil Woods Quintet (with pensive trumpeter Tom Harrell bolstering the front line) makes its recording debut, this 1982 quartet date from the Vanguard will more than suffice. The altoist strings choruses together with zip and contagious abandon, and in pianist Hal Galper, bassist Steve Gilmore and drummer Bill Goodwin, he has assembled a rhythm section that shades lines with unerring accuracy.

### Mike Westbrook Orchestra

*On Duke's Birthday* (hat Art/N.M.D.S.) This is an Ellington homage, not an evocation—which is to say that British composer/arranger Westbrook updates Duke's *sensibility* knowing full well that the Ellington *sound* is beyond appropriation, especially by a quirky, modernist writer. And one secret to Westbrook's success is that, like Ellington, he pulls off the coy deception that he is no more than the piano player in the band. This two-record set reaffirms Westbrook's position as a bandleader of international stature.

### Dave McKenna

*The Key Man* (Concord Jazz) The most remarkable thing about McKenna is the knockabout charm that prevents his latter-day stride piano style from sounding retro or overly genteel. This latest effort hardly differs from the many earlier solo piano albums he's recorded for Concord and Chiaroscuro, yet I find it definitive for its abundance of jaunty pop tunes from the 20s, 30s and 40s—the kind of ephemera only McKenna seems drawn to these days, and the kind he happily makes his own.

### New York City Artists' Collective

*Plays Butch Morris* (NYCAC/N.M.D.S.) Whether the problems are related to conception or execution is difficult to say, but the first album to focus attention on Morris' compositions, though not without its imaginative moments, is murky in the extreme. Sure this is en-

semble music, but it's still too bad that the composer/conductor left his trumpet at home, because there's no instrumental voice (or blend of voices) here self-possessed enough to balance Ellen Christi's quietly powerful vocals.

### Emily Remler

*Catwalk* (Concord Jazz) This young guitarist's fourth album shows her becoming more lyrically expansive to match her rhythmic finesse. She's blossoming into quite a soloist, and here receives solid support from bassist Eddie Gomez, drummer Bob Moses and trumpeter John D'Earth.

### Andy Jaffe

*Manhattan Projections* (Stash) I guess the idea was to make a record reminiscent of those great old Blue Notes and Prestiges. But this LP is as predictable as its lineup is promising (pianist Jaffe, Branford Marsalis, trumpeter Wallace Roney, alto saxophonist Ed Jackson, baritone saxophonist Tom Olin, bassist Lou Harless and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith). Maybe it's because the Blue Note and Prestige guys weren't educated enough to *know* they were playing bebop clichés.

### Teddy Wilson

*Sunny Morning* (Musicraft) One of 1985's most welcome reissues. Wilson mid-40s solo piano recordings have never been accorded the classic status they warrant because the label he recorded them for folded shortly afterwards. Now that they're back in circulation, these Astaire-like solos should help to restore Wilson to his rightful position as the most innovative jazz pianist between Art Tatum and Bud Powell.

### Max Roach

*Plus Four Plus More* (Emarcy) This Japanese import (distributed by PolyGram Classics in the United States) gathers together the leftover masters from two 1957 classics—*Jazz In 3/4 Time* (with Sonny Rollins and Kenny Dorham) and *Max Roach 4 Plays Charlie Parker* (with Dorham and Hank Mobley). This is an essential purchase—unless you bought last year's twofor *Standard Time*, in which case you'd get just three new tracks. The jazz record business is never easy to comprehend.



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# VIDEO

# S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



## This Is Spinal Tap

(Embassy)

In some ways, this awesomely funny film is better experienced at home, where you can discover the gags hitherto buried by audience laughter. On a TV set, Spinal Tap's clone theory of parodying the seemingly un-parodiable absurdities of heavy metal seems even more like the much-missed SCTV. Like SCTV, this ain't just comedy: the characters are *empathetic* as well as just plain pathetic.

## Golden Earring

(Sony Video EP)

This tape's superiority should come as no revelation. After all, it does include the classic "Twilight Zone," a mini-movie filled with wit, sexy style, and high production values. The other four clips all maintain that level of accomplishment. Director Paul De Noojier's "Something Heavy Going Down" and "N.E.W.S." make beautiful use of masks, special effects and self-referential games, all accented with deadpan comic flair. "Twilight Zone" director Dick Maas proves he's got panache to burn with "Clear Night Moonlight"—basically a *Bonnie and Clyde* gloss with a brutal coda—and the Freudy-cat-and-mouse psychodrama of "When The Lady Smiles." The best clip compilation, of short length and without connective scenes, ever? The music...well, it backs the visuals nicely.

## Ready Steady Go! Vol. 2

(Thorn-EMI)

Another batch of all-star performances from the mid-60s British TV show. Revelatory moments include the Beach

Boys fucking up the a *cappella* opening of "When I Grow Up"; hostess Cathy McGowan introing Marvin Gaye by gushing, "Even the Beatles think he's simply *fabulous!*"; and the Who embarrassing themselves with incredibly lame "Shout And Shimmy." The rest—like Dusty Springfield blowing her lip-synch on "I'm Losing You," and a proto-*Puttin' On The Hits* "Mime Time" segment—is typical mod-nostalgia, though don't miss the Rolling Stones' slapstick lip-synch deconstruction of Sonny & Cher's "I Got You Babe." Since Dave Clark owns these archives, he's tacked on non-*RSG!* clips of his DC5, with screaming audience reaction shots obviously from elsewhere. Tsk, tsk.

## Urgh! A Music War

(CBS/Fox)

This is no less nostalgic than *Ready Steady Go!* for those who came of musical age in the late 70s and early 80s. *Urgh!* has played the midnight-movie circuit for so long that it's in danger of being taken for granted, but it's outstanding. Derek Burbidge's in-concert direction is straightforward and unobtrusive, and the selection of U.S. and U.K. bands is first-rate. Highlights include the Cramps, Devo, Magazine, Orchestral Manoeuvres, Dead Kennedys, Fleshtones, Steel Pulse and UB40; the late Klaus Nomi, Gary Numan and Skafish redefine camp for this decade. A loving memento of new wave before it devolved into "new music."

## The Residents

*Mole Show/Whatever Happened To "Vileness Fats"?* (Ralph Records)

The first half of this hour-long tape provides a rare glimpse of the mysterious mutants onstage, intercut with intriguing *faux*-primitive computer graphics. The last half is a blitheringly bizarre descent into the recut remainder of the Residents' long-abandoned (mid-70s) "video movie." As usual, there are stupendously imaginative sets and costumes. But this stuff is *strange*, even more so than *Ralph Records Video Volume 1*, which was half as long, twice as disciplined, and \$15 cheaper. Still, the Residents cannot be ignored by anyone interested in musical-visual synergy with originality and integrity. For those who dare, it's worth a look. (109 Minna #391, San Francisco, CA 94105; \$50)

## Adrian Belew

*On Electronic Guitar* (DCI Video)

Ostensibly instructional, this is as much a portrait of the artist as anything else, thanks to Belew's idiosyncratic high-tech effects and appealing low-tech sonic spelunking. Anyone interested in his fretboard lunacy need look no further. If you have a hard time picking something up, you can always hit the scan button, right? (541 Sixth Ave., New York, NY 10011; \$59.95 plus \$4 postage.)

## The Jazz Life: Johnny Griffin

(Sony Video LP)

One of Chicago's finest tenor saxophonists, live at New York's Village Vanguard with a quartet including pianist Ronnie Matthews, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Kenny Washington. Solid-smokin' bebop, straight up—without even the pleasant if insubstantial interview segments in Sony's previous Alberta Hunter and Art Blakey video LPs. Griffin's playfully crusty between-songs patter adds a nice touch, though.

## Razorback

(Warner Home Video)

Russell Mulcahy has directed some of rock's most eye-catching videos: Duran Duran's "Hungry Like The Wolf," Fleetwood Mac's "Gypsy" and Billy Joel's "Pressure," to name but a few. So how does a micro-movie *auteur* manage with his first feature? Not well enough to get it released theatrically in the U.S., even though it is as showily art-directed as one might expect, and does have one marvelous scene midway through. *Razorback* is a dumb, uninvolved, overdone stalker-slasher saga set in the Aussie outback, and starring a humongous killer boar. Killer *bore*, get it?!? So bad it's gotta be a video hit.

## Blues Like Showers Of Rain

(Rhapsody Films)

Thirty overwhelmingly poetic minutes of country-blues documentary as meditative exegesis. Producer/director/editor John Jeremy matches sepia-toned historical photos with field recordings of Otis Spann, Sunnyland Slim, J.B. Lenoir, Lightnin' Hopkins and narrator Blind Arvella Gray, among others. The result is not only entertaining and enlightening, but profoundly moving. (30 Chariton St., New York, NY 10014; \$60 including postage)

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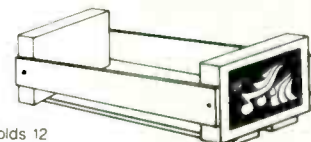
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It has been said that all rock 'n' roll since the mid-60s has been a variation on either Bob Dylan, the Beatles, or the Rolling Stones. That this is true does not preclude a universal antecedent even earlier; *all* rock music can be finally traced to either Moe, Larry, or Curly.

The Three Stooges, before Elvis or Little Richard, before Brando or James Dean, blasted apart the consciousness of the postwar generation and reassembled it in their own image. As quick as the pure product of Howard, Fine and Howard was picked up by television, kids across America went crazy. Parents reacted with a horror typical of (but by no means restricted to) the McCarthy era. Mothers campaigned to have the Stooges banned and dozens of TV stations knuckled under. PTAs condemned their "harmful, morally debased" influence. The reaction of 50s Middle America to the early rockers was tame compared to the panic the Stooges excited.

Rock 'n' roll only reflected the cultural hegemony of Moe, Larry and Curly. If the new music was mothered by country and the blues, it was fathered by the Three Stooges in a riotous gang-bang of post-Hiroshima rebellion. "We want the world and we want it NOW," a generation screamed—but it was a child's tentative imitation of Moe Howard's ambitious "Who do we have to kill?"

## NYUK ROCK

**BILL FLANAGAN**

But if the Stooges provided the soul and inspiration, can rock at least take credit for coming up with the melody? Certainly not. The Stooges themselves were often portrayed playing musical instruments (with somewhat more technical dexterity than, say, Presley or Dylan), singing in close harmony (Brian Wilson, among others, appropriated many vocal arrangements from Curly and the boys) and improvising lyrics that defied the accepted moon/June banalities of the day. Yet if their influence on music was all-pervasive, if their anti-authoritarian politics were finally globe-shaking, it was their haircuts that revolutionized the Aquarian generation.

Moe was, of course, the leader, the asserter, the oldest brother, and for a time the flower of rock—the leaders and asserters—all appropriated Moe Hair. When the Beatles copied Moe's pudding bowl coiffure to the finest detail the civilized world followed suit.

Just as the leaders followed Moe, the passive, docile and sensitive emulated Larry Fine's locks. Art Garfunkel was the most prominent among the sons of

Larry. Like Larry, Garfunkel had a Moe-haired Paul Simon threatening him, pushing him around, and generally leaving him "low man again."

Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell of the Jimi Hendrix Experience were forced to play *dual* Larrys—posing on the cover of *Electric Ladyland* in a loving re-creation of the portrait that introduced the Stooges' earliest shorts.

Curly's followers were, like himself, misfits, morons and geeks. Ian Dury capitalized on being slightly crippled (as Curly was) and shaved his head to affect a Curly-do. Later the most despairing and nihilistic of Britain's punks—the skinheads and Oi Boys—continued the cult.

Lyricaly the Stooges had the most obvious influence on Steely Dan, whose songs often seemed stylized, jazzed-up versions of Stooge tunes ("Swing it!" cried Curly to the band again and again, his prototypical pre-bop hipster the model for Steely Dan's Deacon Blues.) It takes little imagination to picture Curly loose in a hospital, wheeling a gurney down a corridor warbling, "Is there gas in the car? Yes, there's gas in the car."

No rock act, however, approached the elegant simplicity of the Stooges' great "Swingin' The Alphabet" ("B-i-bee, b-o-bo, b-i-bickey bi") until the Police copped the formula with "De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da" in 1980. To pro-

*continued on page 30*

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