INSIDE THE STING SESSIONS

MUSICIAN

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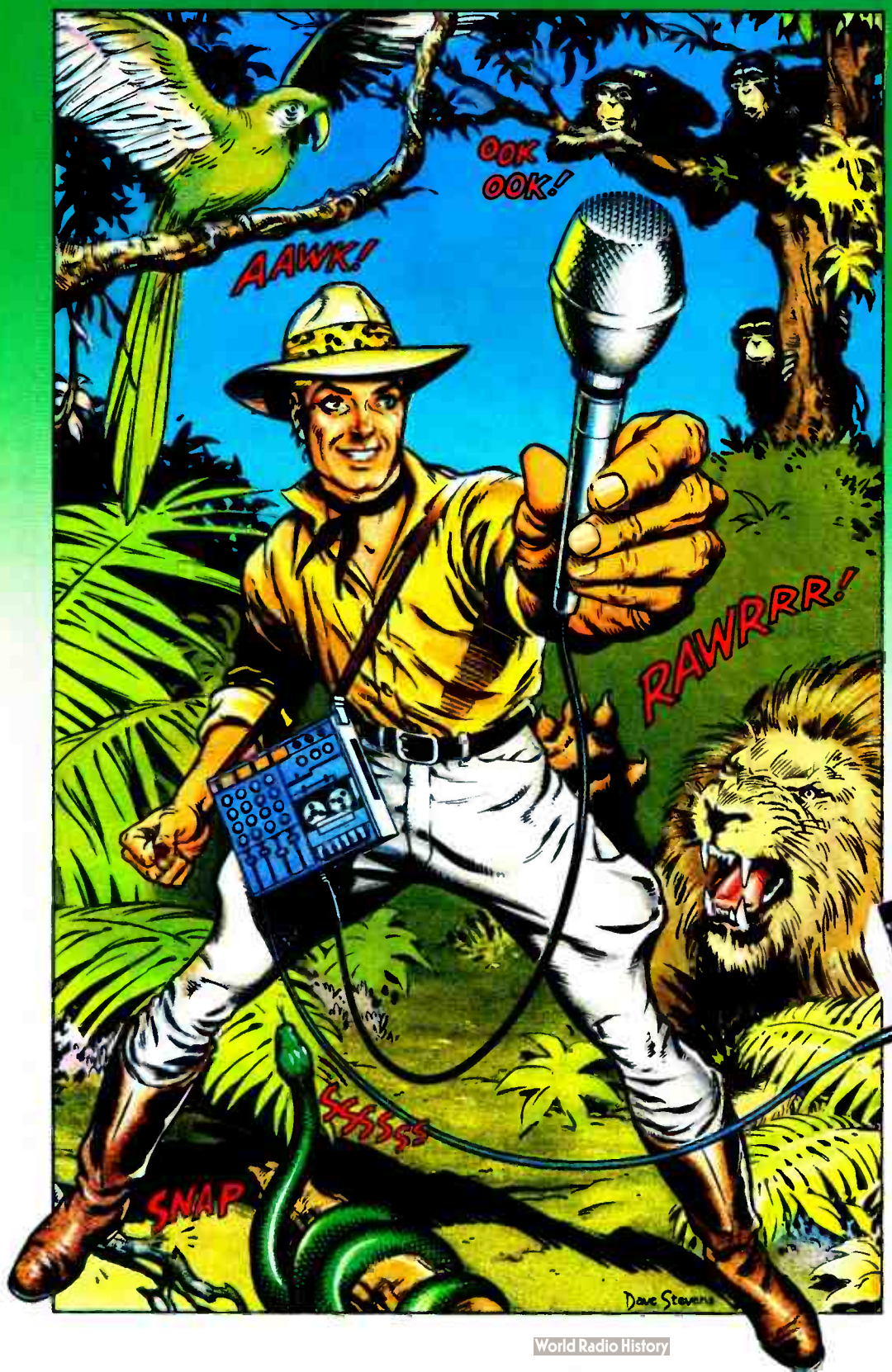

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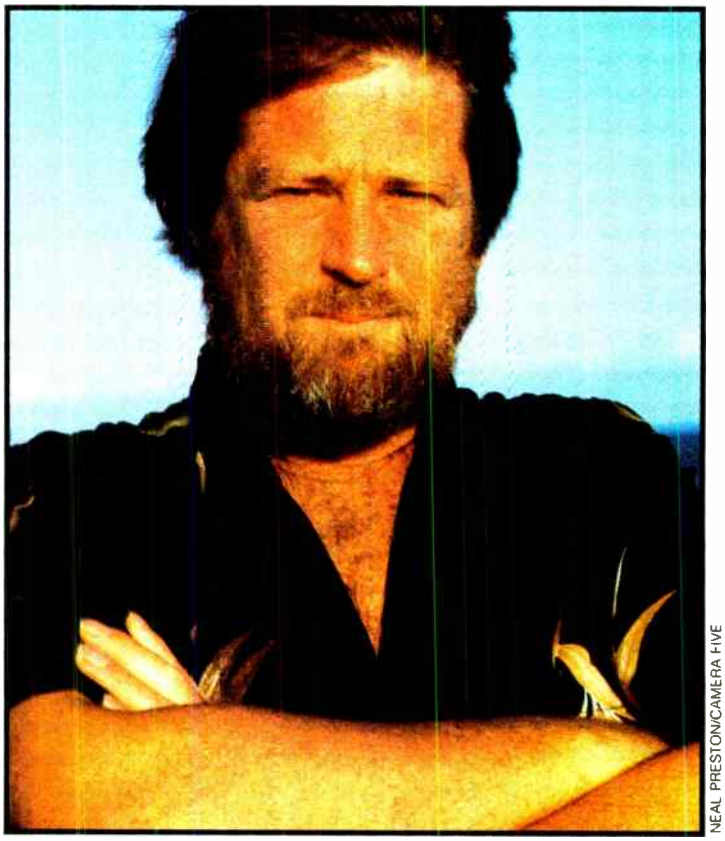
MUSICIAN

DANIEL QUATROCHI/RETNA

COMPUTERS & MUSIC: WHAT, WHY AND HOW
The most important part of the mind-boggling MIDI explosion: how to make it work for you.

BRIAN WILSON: The enigma of rock legend Brian Wilson has been much discussed but never explained. Long-time confidant Timothy White went to Brian's home and came back with the real story of the Beach Boys, told for the first time in these pages.



NEAL PRESTON/CAMERA FIVE

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

Cover Illustration by Stephen Elston; Photo of Brian Wilson by Harry Langdon
Beach Party Photo: Movie Star News; Sting Cover Photo by Brian Aris

AUGUST 1985 NO. 82

MUSICIAN

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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.

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.**

Current and back issues are available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

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JERRY GARCIA: BUSTED BUT UNBOWED

"I can't take freedom for granted anymore. It's a different U.S. now, and everybody just better walk right. I find it chilling."

F-STOP FITZGERALD

RIP RENSE

AS THE DEAD TURN TWENTY, ITS LEADER RETURNS FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Not since Ringo Starr noted that he liked Beethoven—"especially his poems," has there been such a shocking mingling of rock 'n' roll and High Culture: There in one of the prime boxes at the San Francisco Opera Company's staging of Richard Wagner's four-opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen* sat half of the Grateful Dead.

The Dead, for those too young or highbrow to care, are not part of Wagner's mythological troupe of gods, dwarves and Valkyries. They are an American musical institution together for twenty years as of June 5. They were represented at the opera by Mssrs. Phil Lesh (bass), Bob Weir (guitar) and Jerry Garcia (guitar, beard).

That's right, Jerry Garcia. (Well, give him an eyepatch, and he *does* look a little like Wotan.) Wagner, Jerry? "It's one of those things that's only going to happen once in our lifetimes in the Bay Area, and Jesus, we couldn't resist it," he said. "That's some of the most transcendental music there *is*. It's so extraordinarily beautiful, and has such incredible intelligence functioning in it. It's a real inspiration to hear."

It was sufficiently inspiring to prompt Garcia & co. to vote to reschedule some Grateful Dead concerts that conflicted with the operas, an unusual move for a band that lives by its live shows. But then, the Dead have a history of unusual behavior.

In fact, practically everything about the Grateful Dead is out of whack. They *invite* their audience to tape their shows; they have not had an album of new material since 1980, yet their concerts sell out without advertising, often months in advance; they are among the top ten money-making groups in the country each year, though their concerts are characterized by lengthy, spontaneous jams that do not always work; they have a working repertoire of about two hundred songs, and are likely to break into any one of them at any time. All this makes a Dead concert a unique joy to their fans and an unbearable ordeal to their detractors. The Grateful Dead are, in short, an acquired taste.

And it is still being acquired. "It's actually been a slow, more or less steady climb. Every once in a while the world *notices us*. It's 'Hey, the Grateful Dead are still in existence!'" chuckles Garcia, now forty-three. "We have never experienced a decrease, just this slow, steady increase. To my eyes, the audience looks younger than ever, and I like that just fine. I don't feel they're *missing* anything. If they're younger, they're certainly not dumber. They're bright, just like our audiences have always been."

The band, as well as the audience, is experiencing new life. There is a bounty of new, unrecorded material; according to Garcia, keyboardist Brent Mydland, after five years, finally feels like a member of the Dead; bassist Lesh has taken up singing and writing again, after a layoff of ten years, and Garcia, almost totally gray, is approaching the Dead with new enthusiasm. "We have our cycles of birth, death and rebirth," he says, "and now we seem to be picking up a new plateau."

Just how does this plateau fit in with the 80s? "Well, we haven't made any conscious effort to adjust to the 80s. The changes that go on in America—socially, economically, all the things that just *happen*—they affect us just like they do every other American. We don't really adjust to it consciously, except by paying just enough attention to the rest of the world to know whether we're terribly out of step with it. Usually, we're a little bit out of sync with everything, and it would be weird if suddenly the whole world was *agreeing* with us."

Might be nice....

"Maybe, but that would be surprising. I think we're just about as out-of-whack with the 80s as we were with the 60s and 70s."

Garcia giggles at the statement, a friendly, impish laugh that once prompted a writer to speculate that cats were hiding in his beard. Garrulous and energetic, Garcia has always been a

unique presence on the music scene. He is a man with as much mythology about him as one of Wagner's operatic figures. This graying guru image, something he disdains, is belied by a warm, cheerful presence, and an unexpected intensity. He is, in fact, more *intent* on the Grateful Dead experience than ever before:

"The band is virtually inexhaustible as a resource, but more than that, it's really *rich*. There's a lot of sides to it in just about any direction that you'd want to take it. It's available, and we've really been relatively narrow. We feel like we're just gettin' into it."

That's a happy reaffirmation from a musician whose health was rumored to be seriously deteriorating not too long ago. Garcia has reportedly been getting himself into shape since his arrest last winter in San Francisco for possession of heroin and cocaine. He was sentenced to participation in a drug diversion program and a couple of benefit concerts (old hat for the Dead, who've probably performed more benefits than any band in history).

"I really feel that's not anybody's business," Garcia says regarding the bust. "But on another level, it's kind of an occupational hazard. Above and beyond all of that, it's also like the way they just busted the Hells Angels back east. They used that organized crime routine for the bust. When they can bust Hells Angels and people like me, regular citizens are next. Because I'm basically a regular citizen. I pay taxes—a lot of taxes, in fact. I'm sort of a vital, stable force in the community, and I'm no criminal. And I also know that's true for *most* of the Hells Angels. They're not criminals, but they're definitely on the outskirts of the concept of freedom.

"Americans have to see these things sometimes, but I'm not going to tell 'em about it. I'm no martyr in the cause of the public arming itself with knowledge. But man, if people don't have the eyes to see what's going on, what's happening to the Constitution...."

The Constitution?

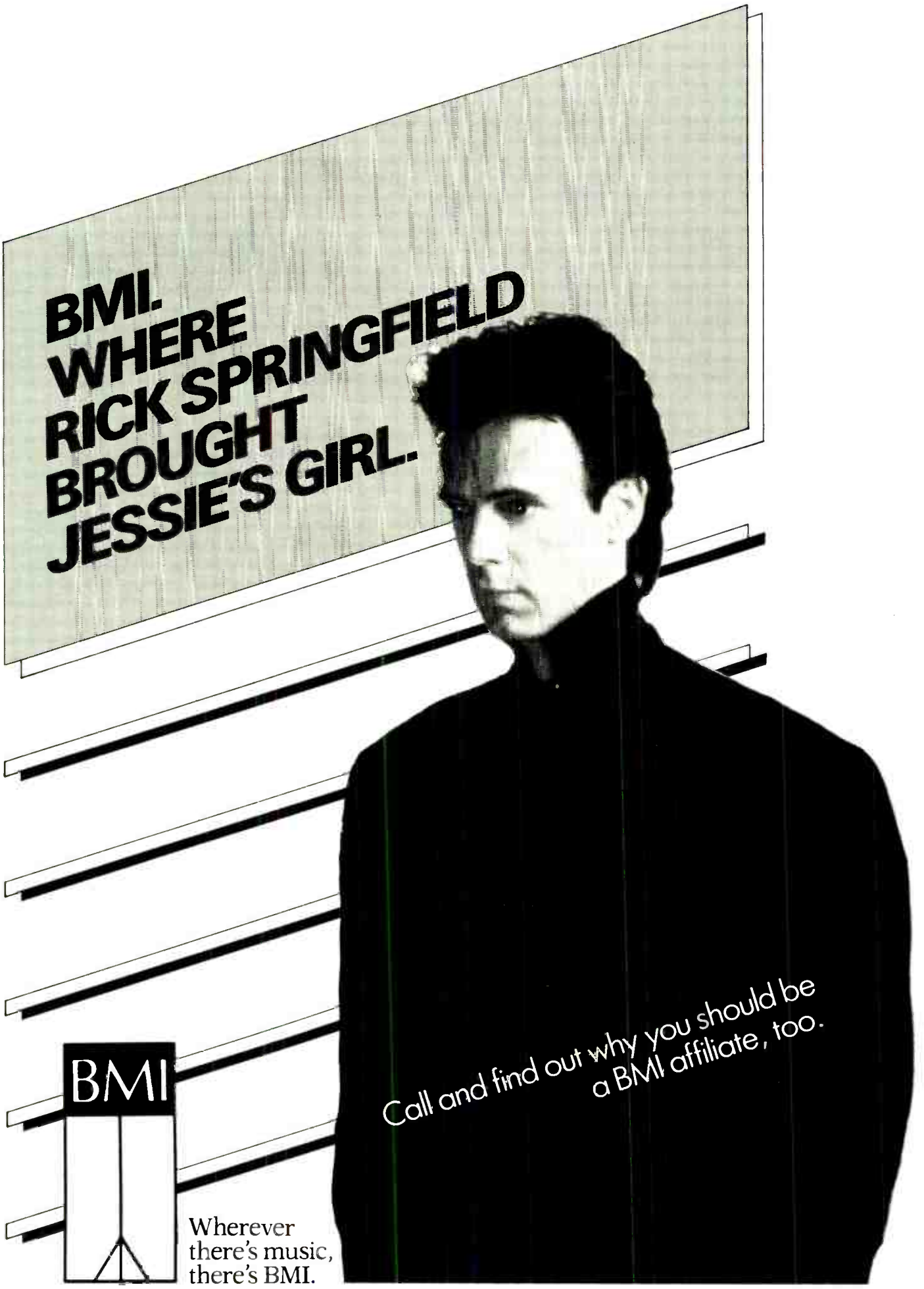
"I got busted under that new thing, where they no longer need probable cause, just this so-called 'good faith.' That means they can work backwards from what they find. And just about everybody can be found in some illegal position at some point in their lives. So all I'm saying is that if it's me, it's you. I learned something from it. I can't take freedom for granted anymore. This is a different United States now, and everybody better just walk right. The people have been stampeded into being so afraid of crime that to them, it seems reasonable to give up some freedom for the illusions of safety, and that's where it all starts. I find it chilling."

"It was a sobering blow for everybody," Bob Weir said of Garcia's arrest. "I think everyone has to look at themselves and wonder if they're slipping...to decide whether or not to do something about it and make adjustments."

In what may be an appropriate assignment, the Grateful Dead have recorded the theme music for a new TV version of *The Twilight Zone*. "Phil de Guerre, the producer of the show, told Merle Saunders he was interested in getting to us," Garcia explains. "We thought, 'Hell, yeah, that's really a natural for us. That's right up our alley.' We were honored and pleased to do it. The shows themselves are really nicely produced."

And so, the band hopes, will be forthcoming Dead projects. There is nothing in the works as dramatic as when they performed a charity benefit outside the pyramids of Egypt, but the new plans are intriguing nonetheless. Garcia is currently touring with old pal John Kahn, playing only acoustic instruments "for the fun of it." The band is putting together a mysterious video project that is said to include footage from the halcyon days of Ken Kesey's psychedelic Acid Tests. Computers are working their way into the Dead in the form of eventual onstage programmed instruments ("We're talking to the guy who designed the Macintosh") and yes, there will finally be a new Grateful Dead LP.

"Our material always does come to life after we've been playing it for



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awhile," says Garcia. "This time, when we go into the studio, our material will be worked out. The main thing is getting a nice spirited performance. We've got a lot of songs that are pretty hot. our new one had a chance of being—dare I say it?—a *successful record.*"

Pretty extravagant statement, considering the band's last hit was "Truckin'," in 1972. Still, the new material *is* the band's strongest in years. Recording of their last Arista album will begin this summer. On an endearing new Garcia/Robert Hunter song, the singer admits, "A touch of gray suits you anway." The tune sprinkles a chorus of "I will survive" around verses like: "Though the rent is in arrears/ Dog has not been fed in years/ It's even worse than it appears/ But it's alright...."

Another track, "Throwing Stones," might quiet charges that the Dead are not topical or contemporary. Sample lyric: "Commissars and pin-striped bosses roll the dice/ Any way they fall, guess who gets to pay the price?/ Moneyed green and proletariat gray, sending guns instead of food today...."

Rather than go into the studio and work the songs out, the band has been doing what any beginning group would do: honing its repertoire in performance. After five years out of the studio, Garcia hopes the new Dead LP will be as strong and fresh as a debut album. But it's the spontaneity and heart of it all that counts, he says, not the conscientious planning and plotting. What other bands work like this?

"None that I know of," Garcia admits, "and I think there's really room for a lot more people to be doing it. So many bands are doing nothing but playing well-rehearsed licks night after night. In fact, that's the death of most of them. They bore themselves to death, finally, and that's tragic. To me, it's an insult to the audience.

"I wish there were more people who just *went out and played*—trusting the audience and trusting the music, you know? That's what it's about, really." Ⓜ

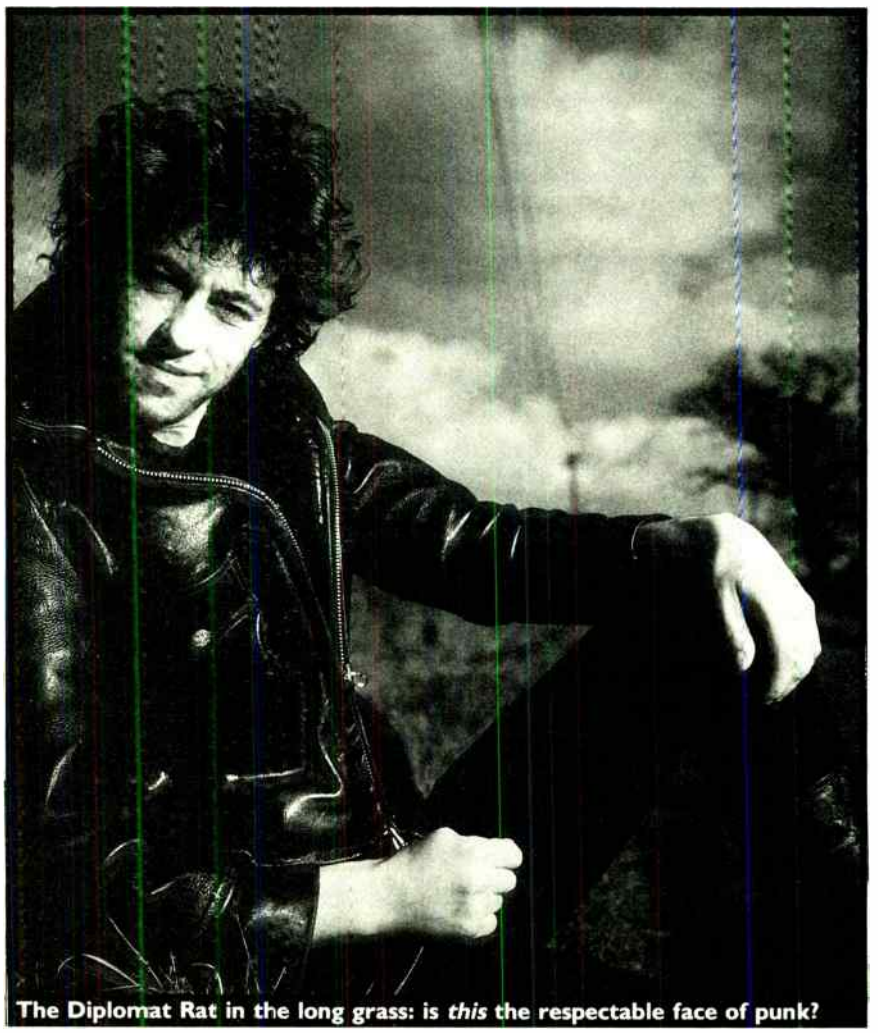
Deadgear

Garcia's main guitar was custom made for him by Doug Irwin, the electronics modeled after a Stratocaster's. Jerry uses Adamas picks, Vinci strings and a Fender reverb amp—only pre-amp stage is used. He also uses a McIntosh 2300 power amp, and a custom effects switching system built by John Cutler controlling the following: a Mu-tron octave divider, a Mu-tron III envelope filter, an MXR distortion, Phase 100 and analog delay, and a Roland SDE 3000.

BOB GELDOF

FRED SCHRUERS

CONSCIENCE, IRRITANT, "MINOR" POP STAR AND (OH YEAH) BOOMTOWN RAT



The Diplomat Rat in the long grass: is *this* the respectable face of punk?

SUTETNA LTD

Bob Geldof is hunched over a borrowed desk with a phone cradled to his ear, momentarily on hold. "Unhh," he says, making a note and flashing a glance of greeting. "How are ya?" It's curious to meet a man who's actually taken a portion of the world's weight onto his shoulders. The leader of Ireland's Boomtown Rats calls himself a "minor" pop star, but shouldn't Mr. Band Aid look grander than this lanky, unshaven guy in work shirt and scruffy shoes? This is the man who, thank goodness, "made compassion fashionable."

He leaves his number with the manager of a very big name and hangs up. Geldof is trying to add to Band Aid's previous accomplishments with tandem concerts in London and New York, to be broadcast by satellite in mid-July. His prohibition against mentioning names is succinct: "It would blow everything open, then artists withdraw, and if artists withdraw, people die."

His pragmatism sounds only slightly weary. If Geldof is suffering from what he fears the public will succumb to—"compassion fatigue"—he's biting it back: "If this concert doesn't happen it won't be for lack of trying."

Late last November, he was watching the latest in a series of grim television broadcasts from drought-parched African areas like Ethiopia and the Sudan, when he realized, "You reach a point where you can no longer accept yet another child dying in your living room." The forces he set in motion with Band Aid became pop and political history.

As we talk, Geldof is interrupted by messages and phone calls, responses from various American artists about the summer concert. Now he's summoned to a press conference for college radio and press. If the Rats are to get a toehold on the American charts (a fairly unlikely prospect with their new LP already stiffing in Britain) it will be via the pockets of interest these forty-odd guests represent. "Thanks for playin' the record," he says for starters. But one reporter perturbs him immediately by saying that Duran Duran's arrival at the "Do They Know It's Christmas" session in a limo (conspicuous in the video) undercuts the meaning of the event. "You're dealing in tokenism," says Geldof evenly. "Which is pathetic, and stops the middle classes from ever acting. Duran Duran gave up two nights' performance and a TV show—and these are Young Turks in the middle of their career—to fly all night to be there. They had lawsuits threatened (for missing the gigs). To denigrate their gesture because of their choice of car to ride ten miles in is silly. If that's what you got out of their gesture...."

"I think a lot of people did...." says the questioner.

"Well I can tell you how many millions didn't," snaps Geldof. "We've got about eight million dollars so far. Did that prevent ya from buyin' the record? No? Good." A pause. "Thanks."

Bob Geldof has emerged as a rock 'n' roll diplomat, and a voice of conscience in a self-indulgent business. Looking at his career helps explain why this scruffily handsome singer/actor was so ideally placed to make a difference.

Unlike some recording artists, Geldof didn't have the spare cash that might have tempted him to buy some peace of mind with a donation to an aid program. The Boomtown Rats, in fact, were a debt-ridden band who "rationalized" their business ("That's a Wall Street euphemism for having to fire a bunch of your friends," says Geldof) and are viewed as a dubious quantity by their record label. They cut their new LP, *In The Long Grass*, with a strict eye on the budget, and had to wait out two unsuccessful attempts at a hit single before

"Dave" [changed to "Rain" on the American version of the LP] nudged the British top one hundred and the label felt confident enough to put the record out. It was the Rats' sixth album.

Geldof was twenty-one when he formed his band in 1975. They moved to London, as hungry and heady as the title of their first single, "Looking After Number 1," would imply.

That August, 1977 hit was the first new wave single to make the BBC's playlist. The band's detractors thereafter regarded them as the acceptable face of punk. By 1981 they had scored nine consecutive top fifteen singles. Their sound, like Geldof's Jaggeresque onstage posturing, was more traditional than punk. They were likened to Mott the Hoople, Dr. Feelgood and Bruce Springsteen, the last especially in the case of songs like "Joey's On The Street Again" (from their self-titled debut LP) and "Rat Trap" (from their best album, 1979's *A Tonic For The Troops*). "I was trying to rip off Van Morrison," says Geldof, "not Bruce Springsteen. I'd like to make that clear."

The Boomtown Rats had little impact in the States until 1980's "I Don't Like Mondays" (based on a news report about the San Diego schoolgirl who said as much to explain gunning down eleven people) reached number seventy-three. But the single didn't elevate its LP (*The Fine Art Of Surfacing*), and after *Mondo Bongo* stiffed in '81, CBS stateside lost faith. What seemed to catch up with the Rats, after years of varying their approach with each outing, was the lack of an identifiable sound. "We never repeat what we've done before," says Geldof, "which irritates a lot of people. The only 'sound' we have is my voice—or lack thereof."

While that voice does lack exceptional range, and claims neither the creaminess of the currently fashionable Brit pop crooners nor the raspiness of a gut rocker, Geldof sings with passion and intelligence. As writer of virtually all the Rats' material, he's shown a gift for melodies that match his chops—like the gravelly sing-song of "Up All Night," which may have blown its shot at MTV with an unsavory video of Bob rolling about in bed with a fang-flicking boa constrictor.

Ugly as that video was, it could not have been so hideous as Bob's screen debut as the centerpiece of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. Needing money and new horizons as the Rats stagnated, he signed on for the part even though he felt the film and its score were "silly." Geldof remembers riding to the airport in a cab with his then-manager, who was trying to talk him into doing the film.

"I told my manager, 'Look, I'll open the script at any page and read you the lyrics, and if you don't laugh I'll do this film.' So I opened it at random and read these lyrics. They were complete nonsense and he started laughing. So I said, 'That's it, goodbye.'"

The Wall earned poor reviews but a decent box office. One evening Geldof found himself at dinner with Roger Waters, the man responsible for the script he'd mocked so heartily in the cab, and Waters' wife. "She says to Roger, 'Tell him about your brother.' Turns out Waters' brother had been driving the cab."

Though the wordless role had been no fun to play—"Making people come down into this abyss of despair and watch you be a self-pitying prick"—Geldof saw there was a good living to be made in films. Recently released in England was his follow-up, *Number One*, about a charming rascal who specializes in snooker and scams. This summer he's scheduled to begin work on a film in which he plays a suspect in a series of sex crimes. "To be honest with ya," Geldof says, "the movies kept me alive over the last couple years while the Rats were broke."

Part of the financial problem, Geldof notes, was his band's predilection for touring their way through such commercial sinkholes as Israel ("During the first week of the Lebanese War"), India and Malaysia. "Places where they didn't expect anything of you, that didn't—thank God—have a rock culture. So you could just enjoy yourself. You didn't have to put on a show, you were just playing

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well in the freedom they gave you. The great, interesting thing was that they behaved precisely like an audience in Cleveland, Ohio or Manchester, England. In Bangalore, India we played for three hours in this huge field with two electric bulbs for lighting and 30,000 jumpin' turbans in front of us."

So as they descended blithely into debt, the Rats kept their credibility among their English pop peers; Geldof was known as a sometimes quixotic, always outspoken man of conscience, and his friends were people who would figure heavily when Band Aid was formed—Midge Ure of Ultravox, Simon LeBon of Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet's Gary Kemp, Martyn Ware of Heaven 17, and Sting. It didn't hurt that Geldof's longtime girlfriend, Paula Yates, was a powerful scenemaker who co-hosts *The Tube*, a high-impact television show covering pop music.

Thus, after his moment of realization during the televised report from Africa last November, Geldof was able to act quickly. He called Midge Ure, proposing they co-produce a single that could be rush-released for Christmastime sale with the proceeds (and publicity) going to relieve the famine. This gave them roughly three weeks to get the record into stores. They took a snippet of a song Geldof had begun for the Rats and added in a Ure demo track which Geldof said was lifted from the popular British TV series *Z Cars* (but which Ure insisted was stolen from the theme of TV's *Dambusters*). Geldof scribbled down most of the words in the course of a cab ride. When they came to the transitional "Feed the world/ Let them know it's Christmastime" section, they copped a melody from Ultravox's "Hymn." They hurriedly recorded backing tracks, and a celebrated gaggle of British pop stars began arriving at the studio early on a Sunday morning. "Believe me, there's no love lost between a lot of those people," Geldof says. "By and large they're jealous of each other. And yet they made the gesture."

Geldof has been nearly fanatical in pursuing his stated aim of turning record royalties into actual aid with as few pennies as possible slipping into the bugaboos of "administration" and "expenses." He chairs the Band Aid Trust with six British plutocrats (e.g. Michael Grade, head of BBC Television) who meet each Thursday at six p.m. As the money came in, Geldof visited Africa: His arrival spurred a landmark meeting between private and governmental aid agencies that sometimes work at cross-purposes. He came back home with a shopping list for not just food, but vaccine and plastic shelters to stem the diseases preying on the starving population. He came back, too, with an even

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grimmer picture than TV had shown. "The camera subjectifies. It focused on a dying infant, or adult, as representation of the horror. What you don't see is the enormity of scale—thousands upon thousands of children dying. There are not words adequate to describe it. You cry in despair and rage that we allow this to happen. Then you realize that crying achieves nothing. It gets in the way. You come home and you're greeted by your healthy daughter and thank God you just happen to live in a world where you don't face these kind of problems. Then you get on with it."

Geldof avoided being photographed in the tent cities of the dying, but he was seen on British TV quite literally ranting at Sudanese government officials who were dodging the crisis. Back home, while receiving an award from Margaret Thatcher, he had a televised tiff with her as well. They argued over a shipment of butter, and when Thatcher said, "We all have our charities," Geldof said, "I'm afraid I don't call the potential death of a hundred million people a charity. I call it a disaster."

With donations, and volunteer help, and breaks from the likes of Saudi King Fahd (free refueling) and Egyptian Prime Minister Mubarak (a lifting of the hefty fees for use of the Suez Canal) the first three shipments (on 8,000-ton freighters called Band Aid One, Two and Three) got through.

As Geldof finalized arrangements for the summer Band Aid concert, he was determined that the event itself not generate a bogus sentimentality. "I don't like confusing the emotion of 'This is beautiful, we're all together' with the purpose. To keep that emotion locked up actually drives you further in a pragmatic direction. If the object is to keep people alive then perhaps it's better to keep that in front of you all the time."

Geldof, who has steadily resisted the solo album idea ("What have I got to moan about? I write ninety-eight percent of the material for one of the best British bands") will see to it that his fellow Rats take the stage. "Hey, it's my ball," he jokes, "and if I can't play with it, I'm going home." They have not, he says, resented his divided loyalties as he organizes Band Aid. "One thing is like being the manager of the biggest pop band in the world and the other like managing the smallest. As for the acting thing, it's like, good money for six weeks and it's still a break—I'm not very good at lying on beaches."

He points to the fact that the Rats managed to play forty-four British dates this past winter amidst all the Band Aid excitement. He's hungry to do more Stateside if they get "a tickle" from record buyers here. "I would do anything I can to help it—I want people to hear

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our record." In fact, he acquiesced when Columbia Records execs told him that the British single, "Dave," would do just fine for U.S. markets—with one small change: it's gender. "They said, 'Bob, if you were Diana Ross and you sang "Dave," great, but you're not Diana Ross, are ya?'" Geldof explained that the song was written for a friend, actually named Dave, who called up drunk and crying at two a.m. one night after his girlfriend committed suicide. "They wanted to call it 'Babe.' I said, 'I'm not gonna change anything, screw you,' walked out, then I thought, 'Whoa.'" He admits his band has long been desperate to crack a U.S. single. So, keying in to the sadness of the drone sound that runs through the record, he renamed it "Rain," made it slightly less specific (to its betterment, he insists) and gave the vocal a more fervent reading. The entire album, though recorded fairly cheaply, was brought to New York to be mixed by Bob Clearmountain, for a bigger sound than even Tony Visconti's production jobs on the third and fourth LPs. Geldof's favorite song is the full-throated "A Hold Of Me": "That sews up the manifesto; the whole album—and it was written long before the Band Aid thing, by the way—is about thinking for yourself."

That Geldof certainly does. After more amiable sparring with the college reporter who didn't like the limos ("Come on, talk to me," he encouraged) he treated them to a few of his trademark jabs and uppercuts—that the only good actor among pop singers is Frank Sinatra, that the two best names for current pop bands were the Exploding Mountbattens and Angela Rippon's Bum ("That's like Barbara Walters' Ass here"); that the lyrics to Pink Floyd songs were "silly and abominable"; that most videos simply waste money ("If I see another ugly boy in the band throwing the most beautiful girl in the world out the door and saying, 'Don't come back...'"), that the worst of the numerous international Band Aid spin-offs were the Yugoslav and Italian ones (he swore that, after considerable dispute,the Italians settled on "Volare").

"I'm not a stupid person," says this thirty-one-year-old who squabbles occasionally with heads of state, "I'm quite satisfied with what I've said on this album—that the only act of revolution left in a collective world is to think for yourself. So long as I can provoke discussion and dissent and thought, and people ask my opinion of all and sundry, I will do my best to be irritating. But I will be seen purely as 'that frigging lad, the pop singer.' Which is all right—'cause that's a pretty apt description."

DEAD KENNEDYS

Regaining the New Frontier

"We've held on to our cutting edge and our principles more than any other band that has gotten as far as we have." After nearly seven years of preaching to the short-haired masses, Dead Kennedys singer **Jello Biafra** (Eric Boucher) has lost none of his outspoken irascibility. Overbearing, obnoxious and possibly-messianic, he is a man of unquestionable conviction. His vituperative rants set to the band's loud, crunching rock have generated more adulation, imitation and vehement, self-righteous backlash than any punk band since the Clash and the Sex Pistols.

So why have the Dead Kennedys been so quiet lately? Even though they control their own label, Alternative Tentacles, the San Francisco-based group hasn't recorded since 1982. Biafra blames "a series of massive ripoffs"—specifically, by their ex-manager and bankrupt distributor.

Alternative Tentacles has remained active, releasing discs by the Butthole Surfers, Flipper, Tragic Mulatto and Lionel Richie (oops, sorry), among others. DKs guitarist **East Bay Ray** Glasser cut a solo single, "Trouble In Town." And the band has stayed loosely together. "We take long breaks from each other," Ray says. According to Biafra, "We put a lot of thought into what on earth we wanted to do with the band. Should we exist? What should we mean? What should we do? We figured we had not yet accomplished what we set out to do. There was a lot more ground we could cover that if we didn't cover it, no one would."

An album scheduled for early fall should cover some of that ground. Judging from an oversold two-night stand in New York this April, the Dead Kennedys still draw a large, enthusiastic audience. And they still willfully defeat expectations: They opened with a Johnny Paycheck song. It's nice to have them back.

– John Leland

LAURA LEVINE

McCOY TYNER

Big Bands Are Back!

After a dozen years at the helm of various fire-breathing quintets, sextets and septets, McCoy Tyner decided about a year ago that it might be nice to lead a simple little piano trio. "I was ready to play more of a role in my own group rather than just supporting people, and to play in a more nuanced, more refined context," he notes. "It was also more practical from an economic point of view."

But economic considerations are not the only thing on the former John Coltrane sideman's mind. If that were the case, it's unlikely he would have put together a thirteen-piece big band earlier this year.

"The trio is my main format these days," the pianist says. "But I've wanted to work with a big band ever since I did the *Thirteenth House* album with that instrumentation a few years ago.

"A lot of people have told me we need something like

RON DELANEY

this. I *know* we need something like this. I mean, Ellington and Basie aren't around anymore. We have big bands, but we don't have too many with a distinctive sound. I don't think of this as a typical big band."

It's a young, energetic ensemble, boasting first-rate if underappreciated talents like trombonist Robin Eubanks, trumpeter Charles Sullivan and saxophonist John Stubblefield. The music they play is for the most part, an expanded and reorchestrated version of the high-powered modal fireworks Tyner has been setting off for years—plus such added colors as a gorgeous Eubanks arrangement of "Lover Man."

Tyner has done a few well-received gigs with the big band, and he hopes to line up lots more. He's realistic enough, though, to be cautious about the ensemble as a full-time proposition.

"If you romanticize about it, having your own big band is great," he says. "Of course I'm excited about it. But I'm not too excited about the expense."—*Peter Keepnews*

NIK KERSHAW

The Riddle of Fame

Nik Kershaw is dissatisfied with success. It's not popularity *per se* that bothers him, mind you, but the *kind* of following he enjoys. Back home in England, the twenty-seven-year-old singer's brooding good looks and au courant pop have made him that least credible of rock institutions: the teen idol.

"It's very bizarre," he confesses. "I don't pretend to understand my popularity in the slightest. But then, I'm not a fifteen-year-old girl, so I don't know how they feel."

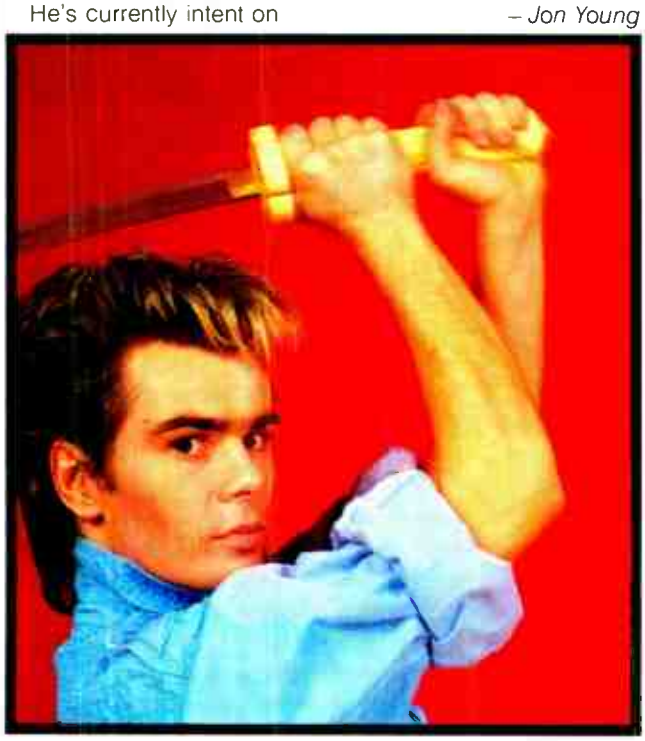
Kershaw is discontented in part because he used to be a "serious" musician. In his hometown of Ipswich, he toiled as guitarist in a jazz-funk band called Fusion before going solo in 1982. Then (and now), his artistic guiding lights included Weather Report and Steely Dan—hardly the stuff to inspire mass hysteria.

He's currently intent on undoing the careful image-building that began with his 1984 debut LP, *Human Racing*, and led to a series of U.K. hit singles. "Before, I was too inexperienced to know what was happening," Kershaw notes. "Now, if anyone asks what color socks I wear, I tell them what to do with their question."

Kershaw expects his second LP, *The Riddle*, to bring musical respectability. Its richly textured but accessible tunes are not likely to be mistaken for the breezy entertainment of Duran Duran or Wham! The title cut acknowledges Dada artist Marcel Duchamp; "Save The Whale" closes the LP with melancholy observations.

The modest Kershaw downplays his contribution to blubber-saving compared to more activist types. "I wish *I* had the guts to sit in a dinghy and get harpoons thrown at me," he observes, "but that's not my style. I can't stand physical pain. On the other hand, it doesn't hurt to sing 'Save The Whale.'"

—*Jon Young*



GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

Their Lips Are Sealed

Band breakups are the soap opera of the music biz, and the closing chapter of the **Go-Go's**' history is no exception. On May 10 singer Belinda Carlisle and guitarist Charlotte Caffey announced to their fellow musicians—guitarist Kathy Valentine, drummer Gina Schock and bassist Paula Jean Brown—that they were leaving, ending the seven-year career of the once phenomenally successful group.

The Go-Go's have had a troubled history. Each of their three albums sold in decreasing amounts, although last year's *Talk Show* still went gold. Guitarist/songwriter Jane Wiedlin left last October; the band with replacement Brown played only one date. They'd recorded the theme song for a forthcoming film, and were about to start work on a new album when Carlisle and Caffey, the other two original members, left.

The reason for the split? Take your pick: Valentine, not a major Go-Go's' songwriter in the past, reportedly wanted to change one of Caffey's new songs. One source says Valentine and Schock lacked artistic self-confidence and wanted to hold on to the group's past sound and image. "It was one of those things that built up," Valentine says. "There wasn't much enthusiasm on some people's part."

Friends of the band also mention Carlisle's budding acting career as a source of friction. The singer appeared in a production of *Grease*, has been taking acting lessons and recently signed with the William Morris Agency. "Kathy and Gina were giving her a hard time," says one associate. Currently happy with paramour Morgan Mason, Carlisle wasn't looking forward to touring again either.

With the Go-Go's gone, Carlisle is planning a solo

album with Caffey and Brown helping out. Caffey is also working with Lindsay Buckingham. Valentine and Schock are recording with Carlene Carter, possibly assisted by Eurythmic's Dave Stewart.

Wiedlin, finishing a solo album of her own, maintains a zen facade about the antics of her former bandmates. "For curiosity's sake I wish they'd stayed together," she says. But "everything ends."

Yesterday Now!

Every once in a while Keep A-Rockin' Records knocks out another mono, red-vinyl 45 by the **Upsetters**, a seriously roots rock 'n' roll band fueled by Charles Connor, Little Richard's original drummer. The latest disc couples the south-Louisiana rhythms of "Filé Gumbo" with a frenetic reading of Larry Williams' "Bony Moronie." For a fresh whiff of the past, write to Keep A-Rockin' at 1972 Palmerston Place, Suite 201, Hollywood, CA 90027

BEAT FARMERS

Serious Lunacy At the Bar

San Diego's Beat Farmers—four devil-may-care saloon vets working their way out of the bar circuit into the big time—are often described with a term applied to particularly aggressive professional wrestlers: "dangerous."

With good reason: A typical Farmers set at San Diego's Bacchanal climaxes with drummer/founder Country Dick Montana (Dan McLain) weaving his way into the audience and precariously perching his six-foot-six form atop a table. Baptizing his foul-looking greatcoat and nearby customers with Budweiser, he tears through a gusty *basso profundo* rendition of the sub-Marty Robbins gunfighter ballad "California Kid"—a number that ends with Montana's collapse onto an unfortunate spectator.

"I do drink as much as it looks like up there," Montana says with pride.

Some of the band's unrestrained live hijinks have found their way onto *Tales Of The New West*, a debut album on Los Angeles oldies label Rhino. On vinyl, though, the Beat Farmers' bar-bred tactics take a back seat to more serious roots-derived material. The record runs the gamut from steaming versions of Bruce Springsteen and Velvet Underground numbers to soulful originals.

But onstage veering lunacy still predominates. Montana admits the Farmers' anything-goes methods have their drawbacks: "There's a lot of shit breaking and falling around. People are starting to throw bottles that aren't in the band. Dammit, I'm a *professional* at this. Maybe we ought to post warning signs or something."

A&R reps from Columbia, Warner Bros. and RCA, among others, have already sniffed out the group's rock 'n' raunch. Montana is skeptical about the big labels' abilities to merchandise woolly rootsmanship.

"It's not an easily packaged thing," he chuckles. "Now we'll see who has enough guts to do it."

– Chris Morris

LISA HAUN

AUGUSTUS PABLO

Jazz in the Dub Degree

For over a decade, Augustus Pablo has been one of reggae's most accomplished and influential dubmasters. Just ask Gang of Four, Joe Jackson or the Hooters, who've all appropriated Pablo's melodica stylings.

Pablo's composing and arranging hallmarks—Middle Eastern exoticisms and minor-key modalities—have given both him and his music a mystical image, accentuated by his own reclusiveness. Like most dub scientists, he spends most of his time in the studio, or heads for the hills of Jamaica to seek spiritual enlightenment and divine musical inspiration. He hardly ever plays live in his homeland, much less anywhere else.

It was a Big Event, then, when Pablo and his Rockers International band played two mid-April shows at the Kitchen, a downtown Manhattan performance space. The unlikely venue turned out to be suitably offbeat for the humble musician/composer/producer. During a ninety-minute set his slender fingers danced a spidery ballet over the keys of his melodica. Longtime sideman Earl "Chinna" Smith alternately doubled the riddim on a vintage sunburst Telecaster and elaborated with suspended chords and single-note runs. There were no vocals, and Pablo spoke only briefly in a thick patois. When the set was over, it was as if the crowd had awakened from an especially pleasant dream.

Jim Quinlan, the booking agent for Third World Agency who arranged the dates, sees the Kitchen shows as a first step toward "recognition and acceptance in the jazz world for Pablo." Pablo himself readily acknowledges Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman, Lionel Hampton and Milt Jackson as faves; their influence is readily apparent in his phrasing and sensual swing. Regardless of bag, Pablo's unique mixture of tuneful grace and deep-funk rhythm, of Arabesque spices flavoring a bubbly Jamaican stew, is entrancing. "It is time for more people to hear my music," he says of his pioneering mainland shows. He should be back in July and August playing scattered dates on both coasts. Don't miss him.

– Michael Shore

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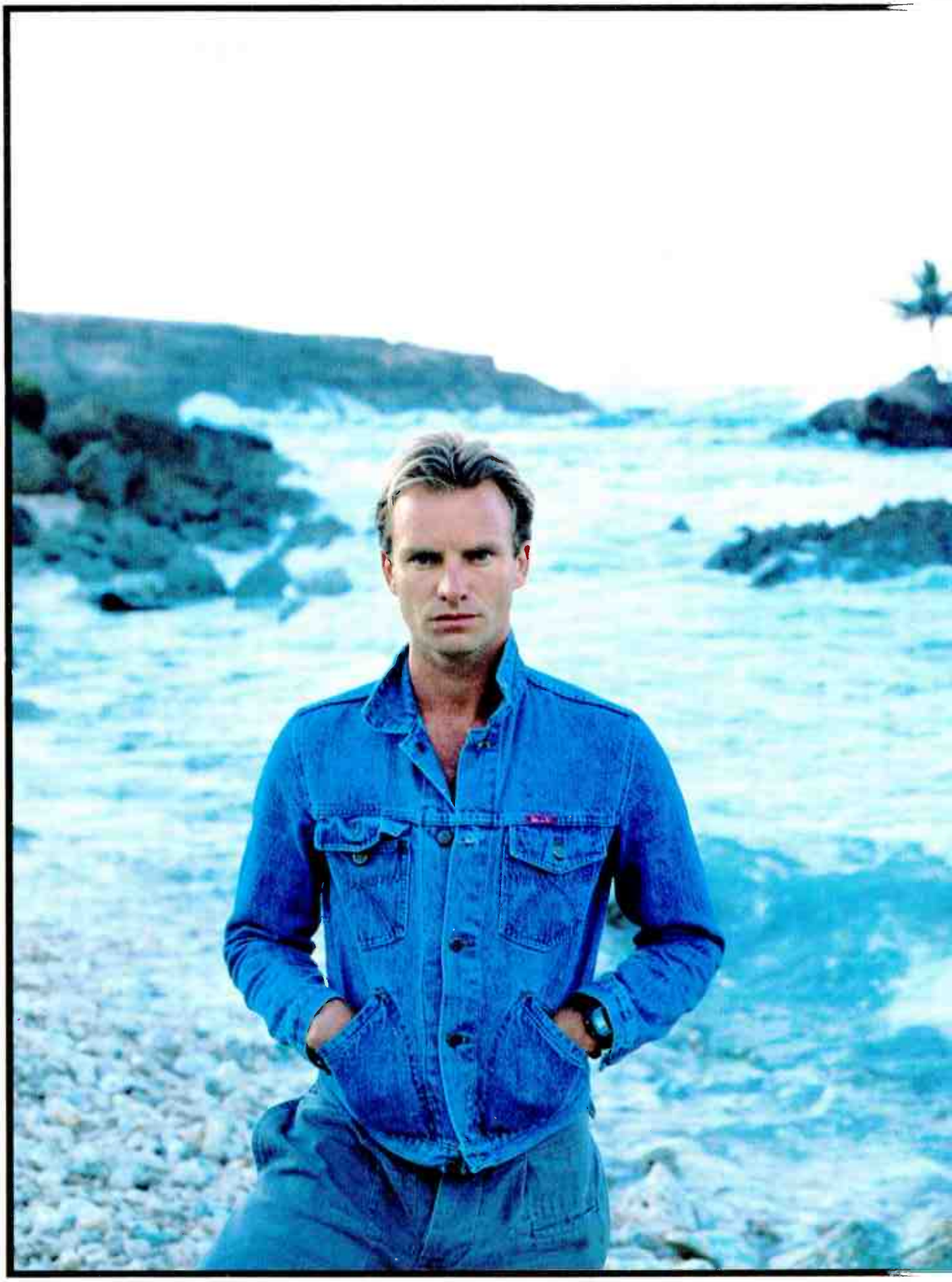

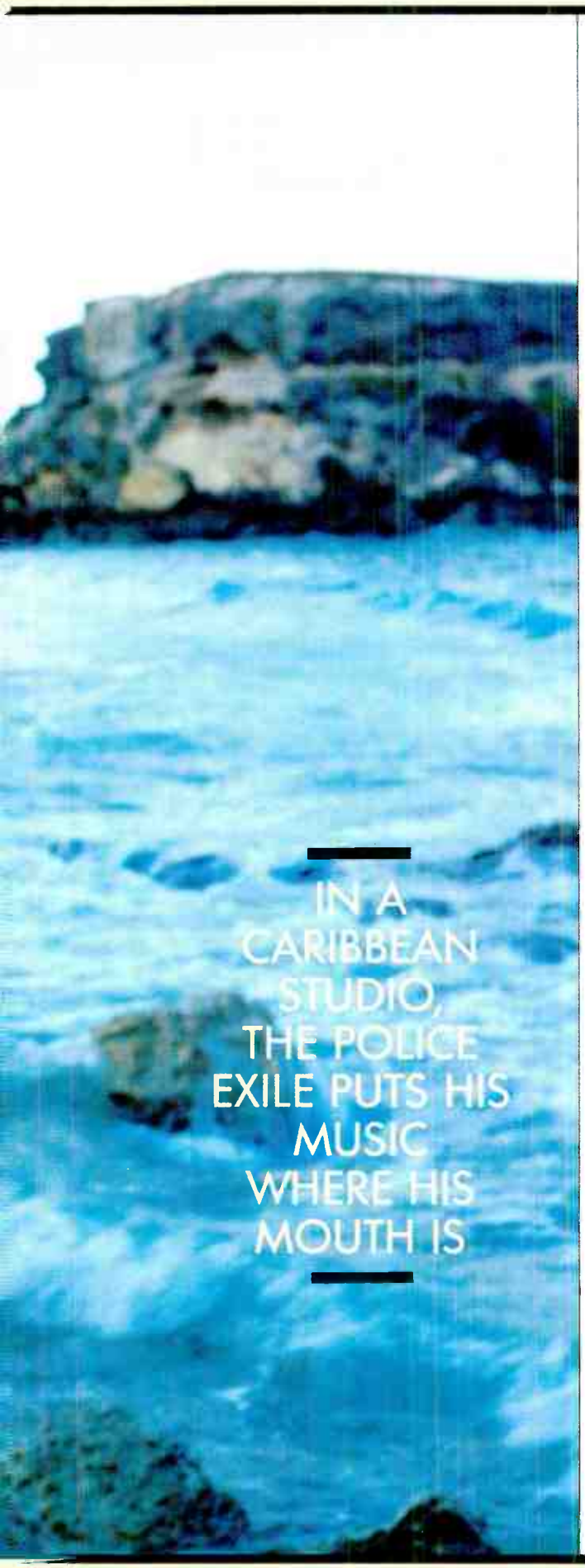

STING
UNDER THE GUN

BY VIC GARBARINI

The strangest thing happened today. I was out windsurfing on my board and suddenly the rudder was gone. It just snapped off for no apparent reason." Sting is lying face up on a pool table at Eddy Grant's Blue Wave Studio in Barbados. "I believe that everything happens for a purpose, so I asked myself why did this happen now? Then I realized the truth. I'd lost my sense of direction." He shields his eyes with his forearm and continues in a low voice. "Is the album any good? I don't know anymore. My voice, it's so weak. I was very tearful before. I just wanted to forget the band. I wanted to go home, crawl into bed, just forget the whole thing because I can't sing."

Sting took on this risky project to force himself to grow. No one said it would be easy. Intellectually, he still can't explain why he chose to work with young black jazz musicians on his first solo album. Maybe the inspiration didn't come from his intellect. He's been having dreams and intuitions pulling him towards this project. Something in him knows he needs to get more in touch with his ability to express his deeper emotions. By working with musicians whose emotional and intuitive expression is much more immediate, maybe he can loosen something in himself. Still, the mind doesn't want to let go.

"I knew I needed to find musicians who complemented me on some level, and I know I'm right in doing this thing," Sting goes on. "But I'm doing it for reasons I still don't really understand." So trust your instincts, I offer. You're using risk as a tool. "Oh, risk is a total tool," agrees Sting. "I mean, there is no greater risk than this project. The safe route, the sensible route, is just to make another album with the Police. Yeah, very good; *write ten hit songs, you can easily do it. Keep dyeing your hair; just go out on the road for another ten months.* This is nonsense. This risk is both more logical *and* more in tune with what my instincts tell me." Has he ever pushed himself too far in the past? "I survived what I would consider hell about two years ago," he confesses. "It was a domestic crisis, it was linked to everything—to my career, to the people I was working with. I just wanted out of *life* basically. I was considering the most drastic measures to stop this torment which I

created myself. Having lived through that mortally dangerous time, I now find the concept of taking *artistic* risks laughable. They're not dangerous—they're essential. What I find horrifying is what some people would consider the right route. That scares the shit out of me."

"Time for bed," concludes Sting wearily."Tomorrow I'll have another try at 'Set Them Free' and 'Shadows.'"

"Shadows In The Rain" is the first track Sting's new band will record. Miles Davis bassist Darryl Jones, Weather Report drummer Omar Hakim, and Wynton Marsalis keyboardist Kenny Kirkland assemble in the stone-walled main studio. Sax-man Branford Marsalis is due in momentarily. Behind the glass partition in the control room engineer/co-producer Pete Smith and assistant engineer Jim Scott prepare the boards for the first take. Sting, also in the booth, plugs his Telecaster directly into the board. "We're going to try 'Shadows In The Rain' in the new arrangement," he announces to the players in the studio. He explains that he wrote the song as an uptempo R&B romp, but the Police version wound up more modern/abstract. Now he'll go back to the original idea. "Often I felt the demos were better than what we used on the record." Sting suggests that Omar lay out a solo drum pattern to start a vocal over. Omar obliges, but Sting calls a halt seconds into the first take. "That swings too much, Omar. It telegraphs what's coming next." Omar plays a series of snaps and rolls. Sting nods and begins the reference vocal. At the end of Omar's roll Kenny and Darryl kick in full tilt, as does Sting's guitar. The track explodes into life. "Okay, Kenny, take it!" shouts Sting. Kirkland launches into a mind-warping roller coaster of a solo on his Yamaha DX7. "Okay, now this is Branford," announces Sting: the singer mimics a sax solo with his voice. It's an exhilarating take.

Saxophonist Branford Marsalis sprints into the studio. "Did I miss something?" he asks in mock horror. Branford, brother of trumpeter Wynton, is the band member Sting has grown closest to. Like Wynton, Branford is a jazz purist. He believes that black music—particularly jazz—has not been granted the respect it deserves. But unlike Wynton, Branford respects pop music as a legitimate musical vehicle. He's incredibly mature for a twenty-four-year old, though he's still a kid at heart: Gary Coleman crossed with Wayne Shorter. Sting and Pete play Branford the basic track of "Shadows." Branford agrees to take a shot at overdubbing the solo. He enters the studio, grabs his sax, and puts on a set of cans. Pete starts the track rolling. Branford panics. "Wait a minute!" he shouts into the intercom. "What key is this in?"

The entire control room cracks up. "A minor," chuckles Sting. Branford begins his solo by precisely imitating Sting's "sax" solo on the original track. Sting and Pete crack up again. Fists raised, they both jump up and offer encouragement. "Come on, Branford!" shouts Sting. "GO FOR IT!" Marsalis rips off a terse solo that rides the line between rock and jazz. Everyone seems pleased with the playback. "You like the way I quoted you quoting me, huh?" Branford asks Sting. "White musicians compliment each other by saying nice things about each other's work...even if they secretly *hate* the shit. Black musicians show their respect by stealing the cat's licks. It's the ultimate compliment."

"Did you see the surprised look on Kenny's face as I ended my solo?" he asks. "That's 'cause I copped some of *his* licks there." "That's cool," retorts Kenny. "'Cause I copped part of that line from Victor. Remember when you played that Jimi Hendrix riff the other day?" Kenny laughs. "I learned that off you and I use it all the time now."

Branford continues: "I don't want to just turn out rock clichés, and I don't want to wind up playing old bebop licks over this stuff. I've got to find a new approach for this music. And that's going to take some thought."

Sometime methinks he thinks too much. "Yeah, well, this is how I attack things now," offers Branford. "It's just going to be a bit untogether until I figure it all out." I'm reminded of how hard Branford and the rest of the bandmembers work at their craft. Marsalis will spend hours analyzing Joe Henderson solos; he even takes his mini-Walkman stereo on the tennis court with him. It's important for him to show that black musicians are not just operating on "instinct"—that they can conceptualize their music. He knows his intuition is strong so he works to strengthen his analytical abilities. When you ask band members what they most admire about Sting they all give the same answer: his songwriting; his ability to conceptually pull together all these disparate elements into one whole. They are attracted to his analytical skills; he's drawn to their emotional directness and spontaneity. Like right and left spheres of the brain, they're complementary.

Sting: "Branford, I'd like you to work out some more fills for the verses of 'Shadows.'"

Branford: "Okay, let's go. I know what I want to do."

Sting: "It can wait till the morning. Just write out the charts and...."

Branford: "No, man. Let's do it *now*. I work better that way." And so it goes.

On the second night of recording Sting leads the band through the stately, waltz-time chords of "Children's Crusade." Midway through the track he motions for Branford to begin his solo. It's a respectable effort. Sting calls for another take over the intercom. This time there's magic in the air. Step by step, level by level, Branford's solo builds in intensity, goosed along by Omar's sensitive but forceful drumming. At the height of tension, Branford teeters for a moment on the brink of release, then breaks through with a high, keening note.

"Okay," announces Sting over the intercom, "I think the first take was more even." Omar and Darryl are shocked. They rush into the control room. "Wait a minute," pleads Omar. "Didn't you hear what Branford *did* on the second take?" Sting and Pete are mystified. They had turned down Branford's track in the control room in order to hear the rhythm section. Sting asks Pete to play the second take. After the playback there's a moment of stunned silence. Then cheers. Sting is delighted. "It has real passion. I love it. We really came together there as a band for the first time."

Did Omar somehow know that Branford would make a special effort on this take? "Sure. I knew because I had him up in the mix," explains Hakim. "On the first take the solo was shorter. But the second time I intuitively knew he was going to keep playing. It's the sensibility of 'playing that jazz music.' It lets me know the cat's going to keep playing, and that gives me a kind of permission to push it up one more level underneath him. I guess Pete and Sting had been doing pop records for so long that maybe they're trying to be a little more...careful."

The following night Sting teaches the band a new tune, "Consider Me Gone." "It's another in my series of songs about spite and ingratitude," Sting says. "Like 'Demolition Man' and 'Don't Stand So Close To Me.'" The band attempts three or four takes, but the feel isn't right. "It just isn't floating," muses Sting. Suddenly, Eddy Grant enters the studio, impeccably dressed in a three-piece suit. "Sting, can I bring in a guest for just a minute?"

"Sure," nods Sting. "Who is it?"

"Well...it's the president of my home country, Guyana."

The Great Man and his entourage of cabinet members, journalists and armed bodyguards file into the tiny control room. In the studio behind the glass partition rubbernecking band members wonder what the hell is going on. Smiling nervously, Sting shakes the president's hand and apologizes for being shirtless. "What the hell do we do now?" he whispers tensely. "Try another take?" I suggest. He begins the guitar riff and the band swings in behind him. This time the groove falls into place and all the musical problems disappear. The Great Man loves every minute of it. Ten minutes later, still

LESLIE FRATKIN

Sting and Omar Hakim at the Ritz: For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his rudder?

smiling and bopping, he's escorted out by Eddy. As soon as he's gone Sting and Branford simultaneously break into "The Beverly Hillbillies" theme.

"That was great," says Jim Scott. "Now all we have to do is find ten more presidents of obscure, third-world countries so we can finish off the rest of the tracks."

"Let's set down a couple of grooves," suggests Sting, "and see what we come up with." They swing into a country-rock tempo with Sting singing "I'll Be Your Baby Tonight" over the changes in his Dylan accent. "I wanna sing about... Cheeeeeez!" he howls. He next calls for a funk groove, and the band rockets off. Branford improvises a rap based on his nickname, Steep-Pone:" "My name is Steep, you can call me Pone, 'cuz I do it to the girls with my sax-a-phone!" Sting is in stitches. Finally, Sting calls for a reggae, and skats some old Jamaican melodies over the groove. "I think we have something here," he says. Later, this track will become the foundation for the tune "Love Is The Seventh Wave." "Omar, you were perfect," commends Sting. "One-take Hakim does it again." Omar twirls his sticks and grins, "Anything else I can do for you?" "Yeah," Pete Smith replies over the intercom, "next take, can you stick a broom up your ass and sweep the floor while you're playing?" The band, led by Omar, collapses in hysterics.

Over the next week, the band lays down basic tracks for "Fortress Around Your Heart," "Russians" and "We Work The Black Seam." The latter song was inspired by the recent British coal miner's strike. "I wanted to deal with what drove these men to take such drastic actions," explains Sting. "The government wanted to close coal mines that were deemed 'uneconomic.' They were talking about getting rid of creative communities and offering nothing to replace what gives them their sense of cohesion and identity, which is the work they do. Simple economic efficiency can't be the sole determinant of everything of value. Obviously, some of life's most meaningful and nurturing activities can't be measured in just pounds and dollars."

I note that he stuck that idea in the chorus of "Set Them Free." Sting smiles. "Man can't live by greed alone." I offer that "Fortress" seems to be about countering the spite and possessiveness of songs like "Wrapped Around Your Finger." "It is linked to 'Wrapped,'" he concedes. "'Wrapped' was a spiteful song about turning the tables on someone who had been in charge. 'Fortress,' on the other hand, is about appeasement, about trying to bridge the gaps between individuals. The central image is a minefield that you've laid around this other person to try and protect them. Then you realize that you have to walk back through it. I think it's one of the best choruses I've ever written."

As much as I agree with the points of view expressed in the new songs, I confess that I find them all pretty didactic and preachy, the imagery often forced and linear, rather than poetic and inspired. I'll concede that each song is redeemed by a chorus or line that punches through to another level. But, for someone who's trying to feel his way into something deeper, this intellectual approach seems wrong.

"Yes," Sting admits, "These songs *are* didactic and I *am* being overly intellectual. But I think they're pretty subtle and seductive, and I feel there are certain issues that have to be addressed, to the best of my ability, at this moment. These songs are in the troubadour tradition of traveling around and dispensing information in song about political and social issues."

We talk about balancing left and right brain functions in songwriting, how the right mixture is crucial. "The really good lines in my work come through just that kind of inspiration," Sting agrees. "I always start with one line that pops into my head—like 'Don't Stand So Close To Me.' Then I create a scenario around that central image. The linear craft comes with trying to dress that central line. My songs serve different functions. I have songs about faith in something greater than ourselves, like 'Love Is The Seventh Wave' or 'Invisible Sun.' There are also songs about being lost. And there are songs that provide information. I have to view them as a whole

rather than in isolation."

Branford and Pete Smith materialize behind us. "Is he giving you a hard time again?" they ask Sting. "Fucking critics!" sneers Pete, in what I hope is mock disgust. "What have you got against 'Fortress' anyway?"

The next morning, Sting attempts to lay down a vocal for "Set Them Free," the proposed first single. It does not go well. In take after take, Sting's voice breaks, cracks and slurs. He sits over the board, cradling his head in his hands, his confidence shaken by the repeated failures. Pete moves quietly to his side. "Okay, you're a bit raw..." he begins.

"I don't want to talk about it," moans Sting.

"It's coming along," insists Smith. "Just go back in the booth and give it another try." Sting trudges obediently into the isolation booth. He puts on his cans and closes his eyes in concentration, clutching both fists. "You can never, *ever*, let a singer think he can't do it," insists Smith. "If he starts to believe *that*, we've fuckin' well had it."

The next take's a marked improvement. "That's the stuff, Matt," enthuses Smith, calling Sting by his nickname. "You're getting there!"

"Yeah, I guess so..." responds Sting over the intercom. "I guess it was just...fear, wasn't it?"

"It isn't just the vocals," Pete confides later. "There's something missing in 'Set Them Free.'" Branford disagrees: "Leave it alone. It's got a groove. What more do you want?"

Next morning, Sting and Pete discuss the missing link in "Set Them Free." Sting asks Kenny if he can come up with a line on his DX7 to give the intro a bit of character. Kirkland finds a circular, modal figure in a clavinet setting. "That's it!" exclaims Sting.

A determined Sting heads into the vocal booth. At the end of the afternoon, we're called in to hear the results. Sting's vocal is exhilarating—passionate and intense. Combined with Kenny's synth riff, it gives the song the lift velocity of a 747. Everyone knows that the turning point has been reached. The single is in the bag.

Sting is breathing easier. "I think it's a very good vocal, very committed," he ventures. "I had to spend about four hours to get it. I had to drag myself through the most humiliating playbacks because I just didn't have the confidence. There's actually a joyful swagger in there, because I *knew* I'd done it."

So is Sting really changing? His girlfriend Trudy thinks so. "I think the band is helping him open up. It's difficult for him in some ways, but he's loosening up and having more fun. At least he doesn't read so many books anymore," she laughs. "That's gotta mean something!"

But Sting is challenging as well as being challenged. "The band can feel their way into things, yes. But sometimes they play too comfortably. What they do very easily, very adeptly, I don't particularly *want*. I want them to feel a certain amount of pressure."

He offers a thumbnail sketch of each bandmember: "First of all there's Branford Marsalis, who isn't good at anything. Then there's Omar, who thinks he's a good drummer, but really he's nowhere as good as me. But I like him. Then there's Darryl, whom I'm trying to teach to play the bass. He's kind of cute. Finally there's this joker called Kenny Kirkland who sounds as if he's playing with boxing gloves on. It's a pretty good band."

After months of being the butt of the band's jokes, Sting is learning to play the dozens. Maybe he *is* loosening up.

And while Sting might not be certain what part of his being is forcing him through these changes, he's confident of his direction. "I know I'm right in doing all this," he insists. "It hasn't taken any personal courage at all. My voices are just saying, 'You're absolutely right, Sting. Go for it.'" M

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Marc Savoy and daughter Sarah: "No gimmicks, just music."

Canray Fontenot's grinning performances are as energetic and immediate as they come.

Born on a Bayou

Cajun Music Gamely Survives and Prospers

By Ben Sandmel

Photographs by Philip Gould

Clifton Chenier blended French roots with Ray Charles and Fats Domino to found the zydeco sound.

The Cajun Music Festival: The prime function of the music is to make you move.

Clento's Fais Deaux Deaux, Point Blue, Louisiana

Midway between New Orleans and Houston, a collection of tin shacks lies tucked away in the flat farmlands near Point Blue, Louisiana. One building houses an upholstery shop; another sports crude rows of bleachers for watching cock fights. A third haphazard structure, adorned by strings of bare light bulbs, is a bar and Cajun dance hall known as Clento's Fais Deaux Deaux.

Inside Clento's, the dim honkytonk haze reveals beer signs, barstools and a multicolored jukebox in one corner. Two women in beehive hairdos stand transfixed by its pastel hues, pondering selections by Nathan Abshire's Pine Grove Boys. The rest of the rough-hewn crowd — farmers and oil rig workers, mostly — seem entranced by afternoon reveries. For several minutes the room is almost silent.

Five burly men in work clothes stand up together as if to leave, but stride instead to the bandstand, an alcove so cramped that the players must position themselves one at a time. But if the arrangements aren't exactly to their liking, you'd never guess it once these musicians kick into gear.

The prime function of Cajun music is to make you move, and the band, propelled by the bluesy, gritty accordion riffs of Clarence "Clento" Gotro, and

the swirling, soaring fiddle of Rodnis McGee, gets right to the point. Tempos accelerate from three count waltzes to frisky two-steps with a distinctly rockish beat. But mainstream pop audiences have never heard anything quite like Gotro's strange accordion voicings. Then there's singer Roger Chapman, who attacks each melody with raw, nasal wails, enjoying soulful release at its absolute funkiest. The music soon achieves its desired effect; exuberant couples are dancing across the battered plank floors.

The last dance ends around five o'clock, which at Clento's means cock-fight time. Though no announcement is made from the bandstand, most patrons drift back to the bleacher-filled shack known as Clento's Cock Arena, a small barn-like enclosure some fifty feet square with a dirt floor. One of the cock owners, a muscular man in rolled-up short sleeves, a ten-gallon hat and pointed boots, is taping razor sharp metal spurs to the heels of his roosters.

When the bleachers are full, the series of fights begins. A referee calls out "Get ready!", then "pit your birds!" The two opposing cocks are set down within a eight-foot square marked in the dirt. When they ignore each other without a trace of interest or belligerence, the handlers goad them by "crowing" loudly, then thrusting the birds against each other. All too soon the cocks get the message, and begin to attack. Feathers fly; patches of blood appear in the dust.

A shrewd wager here can earn a bettor several hundred dollars per fight, so the gamblers in attendance are naturally excited. Shouts of "tear 'em up boy!" (and French equivalents) fill the air along with mimicked rooster calls, which excite the cocks further. There's a decidedly surreal tinge to the sight of grown men in cowboy hats guzzling beer, waving money and shouting out variations on "cock a doodle-do" as two birds tear each other to pieces.

Cajun and cockfights are hardly a package deal, of course; Cajun is also the music of choice at more convivial local affairs such as weddings, town festivals, crawfish boils and the annual blessing of the shrimp fleet. But their combined presence at Clento's does provide some insight into the rural community which Cajun serves. To many outsiders, Cajun country suggests a backdrop of alligators, egrets and primeval marshes, and in fact the legendary Louisiana bayou country *is* close by. The music's true heartland, however, is a region known as "the prairies," a rather mundane expanse of sugarcane, soybean and rice fields. (Musical activity in the fabled swamplands is far less extensive.) But if the prairies fall short of film-set status, they still comprise a fascinating, self-contained world.

Here it's possible to spend an entire musical evening hearing virtually no English at all. Many town names—Mamou, Chataigner, Prairie Ronde—are French; on weekends there is Cajun French radio. The family names on businesses are predominantly French, while fine mouth-watering dishes like etouffee, boudin and andouille spice local menus. A newcomer may feel miles away from America.

There's also ample evidence of our modern consumer society. Many rural villages with seemingly idyllic map locations prove on arrival to be tacky collections of identical suburban houses. Brand new trailers dot the countryside, and convenience stores pop up at remote crossroads. Rustic gems like Clento's don't wait down every blue highway.

Still, Cajun French remains the language of some 400,000 people, and today their passionate, ultra-danceable music is more popular than ever. How does this old-fashioned genre manage to flourish in the MTV era? One reason is that South Louisiana was an isolated backwater for nearly two centuries, and gradually developed one of this country's most distinctive cultures. Another, more basic factor is Cajun music's infectious character, which is typically showcased in friendly, atmospheric clubs and dance halls.

One of the best is Slim's Y-Ki-Ki in Opelousas. Slim's patrons are "mulatre" Creoles of all ages, and they come in droves to dance to live zydeco music, the black/Cajun mixture of local folk tunes with rock, soul and R&B. ("Zydeco" usually specifies a black style, while "Cajun" refers to white bands. The two traditions overlap considerably.) Accordionist Clifton Chenier is zydeco's leading emissary, while players like Buckwheat Dural, Rockin' Dopsie and Queen Ida are gradually achieving national recogition. And the Gulf Coast "Crawfish Circuit" is worked each weekend by others equally exciting.

Terrance Simien is one of these impressive young hot-shots. As he stalks Slim's bandstand, furiously pumping his accordion, it's obvious that the squeeze-box's funky potential was never tapped by Lawrence Welk. Simien plays on his knees, behind his back, and even down on the floor, limbo-style. He's joined in this frantic choreography by Earl Sally, who plays the rub-board or "frottoir," a corrugated metal vest which he scrapes against his chest with a handful of bottle-openers. When Sally limbos to his lowest, the dancers intensify their gyrations while groups of old women wave their hands in the air and shout, "Fais 'tention! Look out now!" Simien then leads his Mallet Playboys into zydeco's latest jukebox smash—Rockin' Sidney's "Don't Mess With My Toot Toot"—and the crowd goes even wilder.

Younger accordionists like Simien, Rockin' Sidney and Buckwheat all lean heavily on blues and soul. But there are other black Cajun or "Creole" players, like fiddler Canray Fontenot and accordionist Alphonse "Bois Sec" Ardoin, whose sound is far more folk-rooted. Their acoustic, pre-zydeco style is also known as "La Musique Creole," and it too draws dancing crowds to remote spots like Morris Ardoin's Cowboy Club near Duralde. Like Clento's, the Cowboy Club's dirt road, in-the-pines setting conjures up visions of another era.

It was here that Clifton Chenier blended his French roots with Ray Charles, Fats Domino, horn sections and hot guitars, to shape today's zydeco sound. Until a year or so ago Chenier was still in top form, beaming broadly and playing marathon four-hour sets. "If you can't dance to zydeco," he would warn in his thick accent, "you can't dance, period! Old people come to my dances walking with a cane, but at the end of the night they can't find it no more. I ask 'em, 'Quoi qu'arrivai avec ton baton?', and they tell me, 'Oh, j'ai pas de baton, je l'ai jetté dehors.' They forgot about it and threw it away, 'cause

Lawrence Welk never stomped like this: Earl Sally (frottoir) and Terrance Simien (accordion) pump out the Cajun beat at Slim's Y-Ki-Ki in Opelousas.

they didn't need it no more!"

Chenier remains a keen observer of music, and a hard man to impress. "In the 40s and 50s," he opines, "up to the 60s, that was *music*. Now all you hear is the bass and drummer, this disco thing. That's all right for the youngsters, but it don't show me nothin'. I like to hear something with *ideas*, you know. Maybe your wife walked off and left you? Why she left you? You did something you ain't had no business doing, or maybe she was wrong, but *something happened*.

"See, a lot of people go cut a little record but they don't tell no story, and you know why? They ain't got no story to tell! Now, you catch fellows like me, Fats Domino, B.B. King, Big Joe Turner, them fellows can tell you something."

This self-identification with such blues/R&B luminaries underscores a frequent complaint about his current musical direction. "Clifton changed his music," charges Rockin' Dopsie. "He used to play a lot of French, but now he don't." Chris Strachwitz of Arhoolie Records feels that "in recent years Clifton has not wanted to do much French stuff. He feels that the kids like R&B better, that it sells better for him."

Chenier sees himself as a pragmatist: "We might go out tonight, and people don't want to hear nothin' but the blues. Go out tomorrow night, they don't want to hear nothin' but French music."

The accordionist defines zydeco as "rock and French mixed together, with a beat to it," and he is fiercely proud of his rural Creole background. "I come from out a hole, man, from out the mud. A lot of people don't like to say where they came from, but it ain't where you came from, it's what you is. My daddy was a farmer, but he played the accordion too, and the little money he make go to feed us. Things was rough, you know, in the 30s when I came up."

"All my people speak French," Chenier continues. "Some people were 'shamed of French, but they didn't know how important French is to 'em. Let me tell you a story: Me, Earl Hooker, Magic Sam and Whistlin' Alex Moore from Dallas, we all met in New York and got on a plane to France. [This was for the 1969 Blues & Folk package tour of Europe.] Those boys from Chicago, Magic Sam and Earl Hooker, they laughed at me. Said, 'Oh, where y'all get that French from? Can't you talk?' I ain't said nothin' to 'em. So we get to Paris, we walk into a cafe. The lady asks me in French, 'Can I help you, mister?' I told her, 'Oui, madame.' I said, 'Give me les oeufs, les grits, et du pain.' That's eggs, grits and toast. Now she got to them fellas, and they couldn't order nothin'. So I said, 'Don't worry about them, I'm ordering their food.' And you know what I order them? A whole platter of raw fish! I said, 'Now eat that, all y'all so smart.' They said, 'No, man, we want what you got!' And I said, 'Well, then order it!' They couldn't do it, they had to eat some raw fish, and man, they wanted to kill me. And from that day on, all our tour of Europe, they never would tease me no more."

Lately Chenier has had both serious health problems and squabbles with his Red Hot Louisiana Band; as a result, some of the younger accordionists have taken to wearing copies of Chenier's "Imperial margarine" crown, while waiting like vultures for him to pass on. But in truth none of the pretenders, neither Dopsie, Buckwheat, nor least of all Queen Ida, can touch Chenier's musicianship. One serious but humble contender is Fernest Arceneaux—also a scorching singer—who's content to bill himself as the accordion's "new prince."

Such heritage-preserving competition is remarkable considering what the Cajuns and Creoles have already endured. The first Cajuns, French colonists whose name is a variation of the word Acadian, migrated to south Louisiana following their expulsion from British Canada in 1755. Well into this century their culture—and the Afro-Caribbean/French world of the slave-descended Creoles—were pretty much left alone. Then oil was discovered, and highways constructed, and Cajuns suddenly found themselves subjected to the intrusions of an alien society that showed little respect for their customs or environment. Cajuns became self-conscious and embarrassed about their "coarse" dialect and "hick" music. Most Cajuns over fifty remember being punished for speaking French at school. For a real study in alienation, consider the status of black minority French-speakers living in the rural south.

After World War II, an oil boom led to rapid modernization. Cajun Louisiana's main centers, Lake Charles and Lafayette, became cities of 100,000 with all the trappings of American mass culture.

Fortunately this rampant modernism triggered a Cajun cultural backlash. Militant musicians like Zachary Richard—who fancies himself the Cajun Mick Jagger—raised the consciousness of his compatriots with political lyrics and a militant refusal to speak English. The formation of CODOFIL (The Council for the Development of French in Louisiana) in 1968 has also revived French usage, though some critics complain that the council has its own elitist agenda. In any event Louisiana is now well-connected with the rest of the French-speaking world. European exchange programs are frequent, and the government of Quebec has opened an official delegation in Lafayette. Instead of assimilating, the traditional culture is now supported and celebrated by those who were never impressed by "progress" in the first place, and by those merely determined to resist its seamier aspects. Cajun music and zydeco thus have become trendy; trends lose their force, but the music is holding its own. Radio airplay has increased dramatically, and the highly-recommended Festival Acadien, held each September in Lafayette, is turning into a national event. Scores of clubs and dance halls in twenty-three Louisiana parishes (counties) and on into east Texas book Cajun and zydeco bands as their weekend moneymakers. Not surprisingly such venues have expanded beyond earthy, blue-collar joints.

One slick entry is Mulate's, a restaurant and dance hall in the small town of Breaux Bridge. Mulate's caters to a mixed crowd of Lafayette yuppies, collegians and family groups, along with tourists drawn in by a large billboard on Interstate 10. The club's ambience is commercial and self-conscious, which understandably annoys some Cajun purists. Yet there's no attempt to dress up the music. Mulate's regularly presents a thorough cross-section of Cajun styles,

Clifton Chenier in his "Imperial margarine" crown: "Old people come to my dances walkin' with a cane, but at the end they don't need it no more!"

Fiddle master Dennis McGee (left) gives tips to Michael Doucet, Cajun's leading young innovator.

Marc and Ann Savoy: "Cajuns are turning their backs on a hot bowl of gumbo for a tasteless American hot dog."

from the 30s to the present, from Octa Clark and Hector Duhon to Michael Doucet and Beausoleil.

Doucet is Cajun music's leading young innovator, and his approach is comparable to Fairport Convention's and Los Lobos' respective work with British and Mexican folk tunes. Doucet learned Cajun fiddle while doing folklore research, interviewing old masters like Varise Conner, Dennis McGee and Canray Fontenot. While absorbing their concepts he also listened to avant-garde jazz, and played in the first Cajun rock band, Coteau. In this Grateful Dead-like setting Doucet's fiery style began to emerge, with its daring suspensions of rhythm, sudden interval jumps, and spacey outside excursions. Such calculated wildness sometimes startles his older idols, but Doucet can also work in a conventional vein, and he's a fine singer in the best wailing Cajun fashion. The band's material is drawn from little-known, often archaic tunes which Doucet has researched and revived; he avoids overworked war horses like "Jolie Blon."

At the other end of the Cajun spectrum, Snooks' in Ville Platte has featured the same band—Maurice Berzas & the Mamou Playboys—for over thirty-five years. Vorance Berzas, the drummer, is also a hair-raising singer, while his father, accordionist Maurice, anchors a dance-band sound that's been popular since World War II. And at clubs like Snooks'—or Fontenot's in Basile, or La Poussier in Breaux Bridge—there's no generation gap. Teenagers share the floor with retirees, and everyone dances the same graceful, intricate steps.

Similar scenes unfold in surrounding towns each weekend, but reach their apex on Mardi Gras Day. Parades are held, just like in New Orleans, only here they're on horseback, led by a flag-waving "capitan." Riders are elaborately costumed, many wearing tall, pointed hats with a decidedly medieval look.

The parade travels miles of back-country roads, stopping at farmhouses to solicit contributions—"charité"—for a large, communal bowl of gumbo. Sometimes the donation is a sack of rice, or cold beer for the ever-thirsty riders. More often, though, it's a chicken or a rooster, which the rowdy gang chases, captures and dispatches. (If this custom seems cruel, remember that these are country people who routinely butcher their own meat.) Most households welcome the riders, but a few homeowners stand in their yards with shotguns, and tell the capitan to wave his troupe on.

Such festivities naturally call for music, so the parades include live bands set up on flat-bed trucks. The bands play continuously, but work hardest at the charité stops, when the dismounted riders who aren't chasing chickens dance furiously till it's time to move on. In remote Creole communities like Frilot Cove the band might be a zydeco group like Delton Broussard & the Lawtell Playboys. In Eunice the parade band is led by Marc and Ann Savoy.

The Savoys have made important contributions to Cajun music, but maintain a low profile. Accordionist Marc is a fine player and master instrument builder; Ann, his wife, is a solid guitarist and singer, and author of the definitive *Cajun Music: A Reflection Of A People*. "We don't perform," Marc is quick to point out, "we *play*. No gimmicks, just music." Their duet style is subtle and intricate, and certainly worlds apart from the music's coarse stereotype so prevalent in non-Cajun Louisiana. Like Michael Doucet, the Savoys revive obscure, near-extinct songs, and encourage others to adopt them as well.

"I used to enjoy playing festivals," Marc Savoy explains, "until I realized that the people who go to them are searching for folk heroes, and they have a distorted image of what Cajun music and this area are all about. They would project their fantasies on me, and expect me to be something that I'm not. I build accordions, I run a store, I play Cajun music, I work in my garden, I raise sheep and turkeys. It's all part of the same thing, and I don't want to see it gimmicked."

Savoy's store near Eunice has become an unofficial center for this traditionalist outlook. He bristles with indignation at modern America's eroding effects on Cajun music and culture, and refers to his store as "the bunker." "I don't go to work," he states quite seriously, "I go to war! War against bad music and phony affectations, war against cutesy plastic merchandising and all this mainstream John Q. Public crap! The Cajun people don't need to Americanize. What we have here is so real and natural and down-to-earth, but there are some Cajuns who think that they have to give up what they are in order to be successful. They're turning their backs on a hot bowl of gumbo for a cold, tasteless American hot dog."

Despite Savoy's impassioned eloquence, he's declined invitations to amplify his views on forums like NBC's *Today Show*. "I prefer to help the culture from behind the scenes," he asserts. "My energy belongs in Eunice and Mamou. I don't represent the Cajun culture beyond my little seminars at 'the bunker.'" These seminars usually take the form of informal Saturday morning jam sessions. Michael Doucet often drops by with Dennis McGee, the friskiest ninety-three-year-old in music. Accordionist Don Montoucet visits frequently, and Rockin' Dopsie may stop by to pick up some equipment enroute to a gig. When the music heats up, Savoy takes the phone off the hook and lets business wait while he revels in his element.

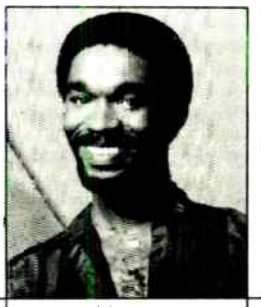
Just like the Cajun bar scenes, these unpretentious affairs capture the grassroots essence of Cajun and zydeco music. Once things get too slick that essential spirit is lost or distorted. Some Cajuns fear that just such a loss is inevitable, and that the music's current resurgence is only a fad. "You're not going to save this music just by making a gumbo and singing 'Jolie Blon,'" as Michael Doucet recently told writer Ed Ward. "There are some things that have to be passed on, understood and accepted—that this is how you live, how you survive. The knowledge of that stuff has to be maintained in the family."

My own frequent visits to Cajun country leave the strong impression that Doucet's extended "family" is in fact heeding his advice. Their exciting and soulful music is flourishing, and gradually acquiring a larger outside following—and not just because of its obvious danceability. The Cajun and Creole community of southwest Louisiana has regenerated a sense of pride in their heritage. They are nurturing a growing self-image of a rich unique world that works on its own terms. M

CONSIDER WHO PLAYS YAMAHA DRUMS.


Steve Gadd


John Robinson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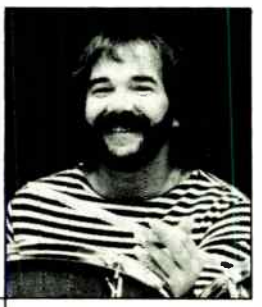
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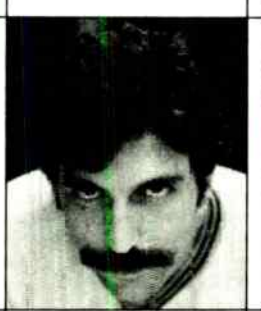
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YAMAHA

The King of Summer Comes Home

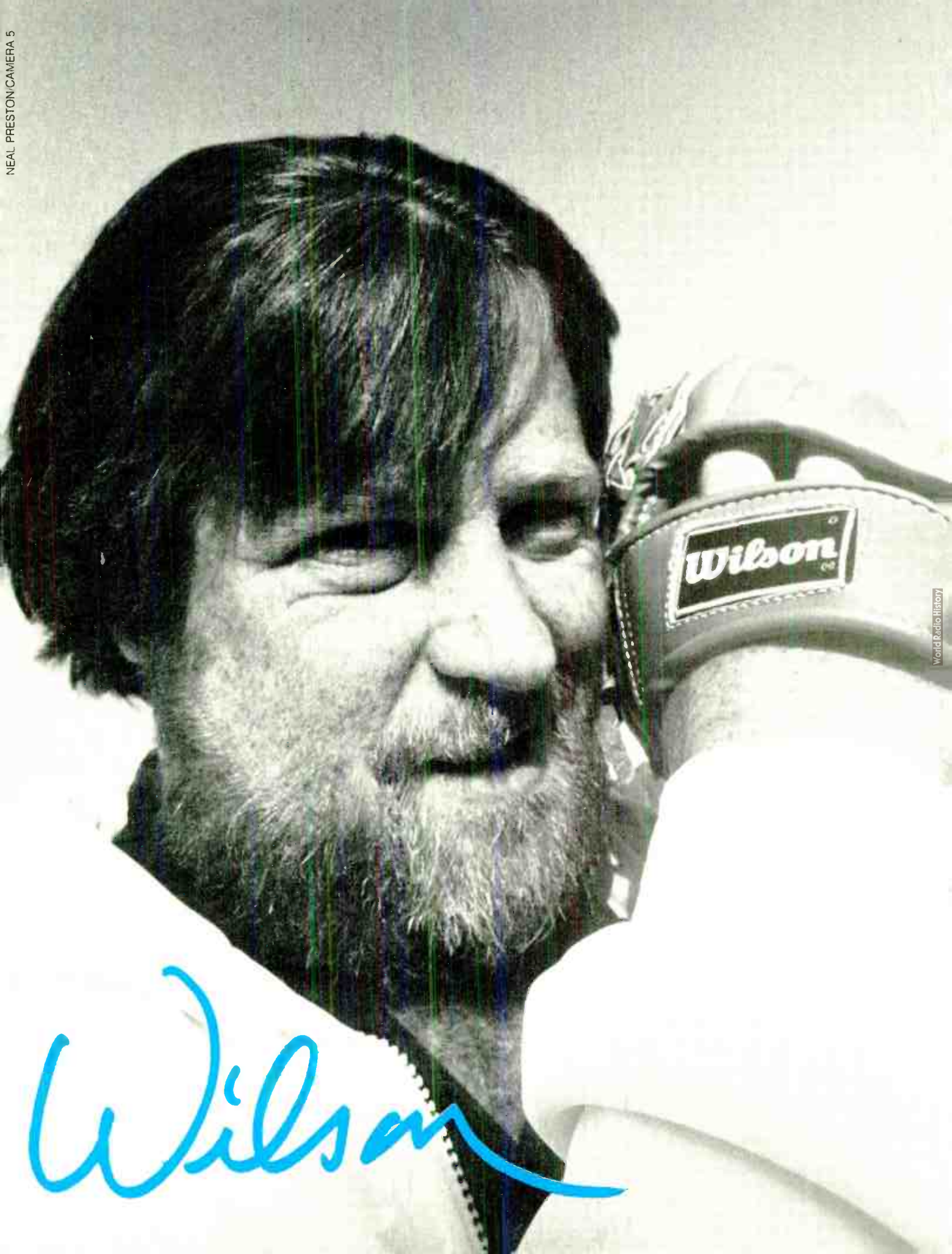
"Whoa, Brian!" yells a grinning, sunglassed black man from the passenger seat of a speeding yellow Ferrari, calling out to a preoccupied jogger headed in the opposite direction. The tall, big-boned runner responds with a small wave as he scuffles along the gravel shoulder of Old Malibu Road. Then his tanned, bearded face brightens with a shy grin as he picks up the pace on his daily six-mile jaunt. Only in Southern California can one encounter the cloistered likes of Stevie Wonder saying a sunny good morning to rock 'n' roll hermit Brian Wilson as each commences another busy day of pop immortality.

Wilson, attired in white shorts, windbreaker and Nike sneakers, wears the glaring expression of one either lost in grievous reflection or rudely reawakened from a protracted slumber as he presses on. The sun intensifies; sweat appears in gleaming droplets at the edges of his copper and gray whiskers. The freckled, putty-like skin loses all its light crinkles as

By Timothy White

HARRY LANGDON

Brian


NEAL PRESTON/CAMERA 5
Wilson
Wilson
World Radio History

it relaxes upon his small, squarish skull and it is not difficult to see the open, pained boy still lurking behind time's harsh abrasions upon the man.

Several hundred yards to his left lies the Pacific, rolling and breaking with a mid-spring vigor. Brian's slack features stiffen again as a blustery ocean breeze races up through the thick pockets of yellow ganzanias and reddish-purple rosea ice plants that cover the stepped Santa Monica Mountains rising on his right. Perched on a broad shelf in the middle distance is the handsome campus of Pepperdine University, whose huge swimming pool and Nautilus-equipped gym Wilson uses on a thrice-weekly basis. Physically, the forty-three-year-old founder of the Beach Boys is in sensational shape, perhaps the best since he played quarterback in 1958 for the Hawthorne Cougars in his California hometown. As he leans into the gradual incline and rounds a wide turn in the road, he begins to sprint, literally leaving his guest and young aide behind in the wind-stirred dust.

"Keep it up Bri," shouts Evan Landy, twenty-three-year-old son of Brian's self-described "'round-the-clock shrink" of the last two-and-a-half years, Dr. Eugene E. Landy. "At this rate you could break forty-seven minutes and set a new record. Go for it, Brian, go for it!" Sure enough, Brian hits a formidable stride on the return trip and clocks in at 46.7 on the stopwatch. Heading through the guard gate in the Malibu colony, he strides back to his comfortable, two-story beach house in a buoyant frame of mind.

"Dr. Landy taught me that exercise is the only way to go!" he enthuses, his shy blue eyes showing a curiously sad cast. "I always knew in my heart that exercise was where it was at, but I never had the guts to get out and do it until Dr. Landy came along and forced me to get the message. He initiates the times when I do it, but I'm all for it, you know. I *endorse* it. It opens up your goddamn arteries, it opens up those canals that lead to your heart, and it makes it much easier for your heart to pump blood through your body.

"I'm up for doing a lot of work now. I've written seventy songs in the last two years, and I'm still roaring. And after we eat, you gotta hear my new stuff. And I'm really excited about the new Beach Boys album; we're just gonna call it *The Beach Boys*, 'cause we've had enough dumb titles in the last few years. Guess I'm feeling good about stuff because I'm active.

"You can't feel good about doin' nothing. It's a fact—of *life*," he rules with finality as he presses a buzzer on an anonymous intercom affixed to a high, blind redwood plank fence and slips into a narrow courtyard leading to his house. He takes the back porch steps two at a time and enters the kitchen with a sheepish flourish of his long outstretched arms. Seated in the expansive cooking and eating areas are Chad, a rangy, wiry-haired jock type who is a psych student and parttime helpmate around the premises; Stephanie, a petite blonde French woman in her early twenties who acts as cook and au pair girl; and Carlos Booker, a robust young black man from New Jersey who works, as do the rest of the staff, for Dr. Landy. Booker has been the "house manager" since Brian relocated here from a previous Malibu residence.

Each is introduced by Brian with the awkward over-earnestness of a first-time cabin boss in a Boy Scout camp. Chad is helping Stephanie prepare a healthful noon breakfast. Carlos is seated at the kitchen table, carefully cataloging the half-dozen shallow boxes containing neat rows of cassette tapes filled with various takes of Brian's recent song demos.

Brian surveys the activity with a faint air of wounded detachment. "Usually I do the cooking," he says pensively, "but I got a late start this morning. I'll...I'll...make toast!" he announces in a triumphant brainstorm. Then he turns and pads through the high-ceiling, many-windowed white living room, magnificent views of sea and sky prominent on all sides, and ascends the stairs to the master bedroom. He slowly shuts the door behind himself. Minutes later, the sound of the shower is heard, Brian's plaintive tenor raised lustily over the rushing water:

Cover me, cover me,
I'm looking for a lover
Who will come on in and cover me!

Things weren't always so homey and tranquil in Brian Wilson's corner of the world. When the recently-divorced Beach Boy was first moved to this residence by Dr. Landy in January 1983, it was amidst *Hawaii Five*-O-styled charges by his former nurse-companion, Carolyn Williams, that he'd been kidnapped on January 16th from a hospital bed and shanghaied to Oahu. Williams asserted in a prepared statement that she was being evicted from Brian's old Malibu address, where she'd been staying since April 1982, without Brian's knowledge or approval. At the Kahala Hilton in Honolulu, Wilson held a press conference in which he countered, "We are trying to get rid of her, yes, so that we can sell the house. It sure is weird."

Dr. Landy offers a more cogent overview of the peculiar turmoil at that juncture. "No one thought there was hope for Brian," says Landy, "but four people decided to take the shot anyhow: his brother Carl; Carl's manager, Jerry Shilling; Brian's lawyer, John Branca; and the Beach Boys' manager, Tom Hulett. They got together in January 1983, took Brian away from these other people, and called me. I said, 'There are certain conditions. I want him in a hospital first; I want to check the man out physically.'"

Landy says that Brian weighed 320 when he was admitted to Cedars-Sinai Hospital, and was in a chemical daze from the recreational drugs he'd been taking, as well as from the psychotropic drugs and anti-depressants prescribed for him. According to the doctor, Brian had been living on four steaks a day, along with a steady diet of cigarettes and alcohol. Associates Dr. Murray Susser and Dr. Sol Samuels put the obese Beach Boy on a bio-medical diet of intravenous vitamins and organized a program of rehabilitation and what Landy terms "heavy de-tox."

"We put Brian through every test imaginable to see what food allergies he had, the levels of medication in his blood stream. This man was on so much shit! He had forty percent lung capacity and no liver!"

After two weeks, Brian was flown to Hawaii with his doctors for another fourteen days of reorientation. In L.A., Dr. Arnold Dahlke, the man who shares Landy's Westwood practice and helped him formulate the innovative twenty-four psychotherapy, prepared a new living situation for Brian with a three-person staff that would be rotated every two months or so. Brian arrived in Hawaii on a Sunday. Monday morning, Landy suggested he and Brian take a walk.

"No, no, no," said his fear-frozen patient.

"How about a drive?"

"Okay."

The two men and the other doctors got into the rented Chrysler convertible and rode a quarter-mile to a beach.

"Let's look at this pretty beach," said Landy, "then go to breakfast."

"Okay."

After a few minutes, Landy motioned for Brian to follow him.

"How we gonna get to breakfast?" said Brian, unnerved.

"I'm gonna walk," said Landy with a shrug. "It's only another quarter of a mile to the restaurant."

"How am I gonna get there?" said Brian, trembling. "I can't walk that."

"Well, we'll come back for you."

"You're...you're gonna *leave* me here!" said Brian.

"Unless you walk with us," Landy answered, nodding. "Or you can wait in the car...."

A journey of a million miles begins with a single step to-

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

Battered children, bruised adults, unforgettable music: Al, Carl, Dennis, Brian & Mike. Insert: with Bruce Johnston today.

wards breakfast, to paraphrase an old maxim, and Brian Wilson took it, moving gingerly down the shoreline toward the coffeeshop.

The Beach Boys' halcyon era began on December 8, 1961 with the release of the Brian Wilson/Mike Love-composed "Surfin'" on the local X label and two months later on Candix. The exotic, Hawaii-derived sport had received its first national exposure in 1959 with the Sandra Dee film, *Gidget*. Younger brother Dennis—the only Wilson who actually waxed a stick (board) and achieved even semi-gremmie (novice status) alongside the bitchin' early stars like Joey Cabell and "No-Pants Lance" Carson at Manhattan Beach or Motherbu (Malibu)—suggested to Brian and cocky first cousin Mike Love that the mounting craze be given a theme song. "Surfin'" broke nationally in gloomy Detroit and land-locked Phoenix, Arizona. The frenetic falsetto-soaked single came surging out of the dashboard radio in Brian's 1957 Ford as the boys were making an afternoon reconnaissance of Hawthorne Boulevard. Love and buddy Al Jardine were the only absent members of the original core group (which also included Dennis, Carl Wilson and nextdoor neighbor David Marks). Brian began to scream like a schoolgirl. Carl threw up.

In 1963 Brian executed his first solo production, a revamped version of the original 1961 "Surfer Girl" demo that was issued just as the hot "Surfin' U.S.A." was losing ground on the national surveys. The song turned up that September as the title track of the group's third LP, an all-Brian production that marked a milestone in the industry: for virtually the first time in the pop record annals, a major group enjoyed complete studio autonomy. Brian's avowed intention to better the Four Freshmen's signature harmonies and Phil Spector's mighty, ambient "Wall of Sound" had been wholly realized—and at the tender age of twenty-one he also enjoyed the dictatorial wherewithal that Spector wielded over his stable of acts.

On December 23, 1964, while on a plane enroute from Los Angeles to Houston on a tour promoting their new 'Dance, Dance, Dance" Capitol single, Brian began to shriek, suffer palpitations and sob convulsively. He buried his head in a pillow and threatened not to leave the aircraft when it landed. The band had by now become the stuff of suburban American mythology, extolling the "Fun, Fun, Fun" to be had on surfin' safaris and in deuce coup shut-downs. with a nubile Wahini (surfer girl) whispering "don't worry baby" in your ear—preferably the left one in Brian's case, since the hearing in his right was virtually nonexistent after a mysterious early-childhood mishap.

The vision was a gently intoxicating one, but neither the nation nor the Boys could keep up with such teen dream epiphany-mongering. The citizenry was reeling from the recent report by the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Brian was rocked by the sweeping manner in which the Beatles had eclipsed his crew in the hearts and minds of his countrymen, and feared he could not compete with the British *wunderkinder*. For Brian and others, the beach party was over, the endless bummer on the horizon.

The day after the Houston concert, the road manager put Wilson on a plane home, and his mother Audree met him at the airport. She drove them back to the house in which he'd grown up at 3701 West 119th Street in Hawthorne. (The pros-

pering Wilsons had recently purchased a new place in Whittier, but they'd kept the expanded bungalow.) Once inside his old bedroom, the bittersweet inspiration for his 1963 single, "In My Room," the emotional floodgates burst and Brian unloaded all his secrets. He described his rage with father Murry, his ego-maniacal bully of a father; his fear of touring; his deepest self-doubts and demons. Upon advice from his doctors, who ruled that neither his psyche nor his left ear could take the stress of the concert hall grind, he retired from the road in 1965, experiencing a series of nervous breakdowns in the years that followed.

And so began the woeful legend of the Beached Boy, the studio genius who could not escape the pipeline of his own collapsing personality. He started a baroque project in 1966 with lyricist Van Dyke Parks called *Dumb Angel* (retitled *Smile*). While undergoing another drugs-incited breakdown during the recording sessions for a song called "Fire," he reportedly damaged or deliberately ruined a number of the tracks-in-progress. The final album, which featured nearly two dozen tracks (among them the one noted above), was twice scheduled by Capitol, but never released, the drastically revised *Smiley Smile* hitting the stores in its stead in July 1967.

"The night that Brian was making the 'Fire' tapes there was a huge fire across the street," Dennis Wilson explained in 1976. "By coincidence, Brian had gotten into a hypnotic rhythm thing, really *grinding*, a farout sound. Poor Brian—for the guy to be completely into a piece of music, to believe in it *so* completely and then a big fire occurs right there! So he *flips*, and he stops the work completely, just discards it. I'll remember that for a long, long time...."

After the alarming *Smile* episode, Brian shunned the conventional studio environment, saying he could no longer stand its pressures and suffocating confinements. Instead, work emerged sporadically from the den of inexplicability that was his Spanish-style mansion/citadel on Bellagio Road in Bel Air, much of it marvelous. *Wild Honey*, recorded on a portable sixteen-track in the living room of the house while Brian sat at a grand piano set in the center of a giant, custom-built (and dog-shit-strewn) sandbox, boasted such gems as the title track and "Darlin'." But his once-prodigious output was soon slowed to a relative trickle, Brian relying on his cohorts to help him to mold, flesh out or complete material that sank in tone from morose to despairing and eventually to melodiously infantile.

Friends, the Boys' followup LP, rose no higher than 126 in *Billboard*, but their final Capitol album, *20/20*, managed two top twenty-five hits in 1968-69, "Do It Again" and "I Can Hear Music." Nonetheless, the band and its concerns were generally considered cultural anachronisms. When the surfing bug belatedly bit America's hapless First Family on Father's Day 1969, Richard Nixon receiving a custom-made blue board from ditzy daughter Tricia, Tricky Dick sniffed, "I rode a surfboard thirty years ago, it doesn't impress me a *bit*," adding, "I'll never ride it."

By the summer of 1974, Nixon had snubbed his last wave, and succumbed on August 8th to the undertow of Watergate. Up the coast from San Clemente, the Beach Boys were sufficiently disheartened by the chill winds of prevailing vogues that they seriously debated changing the name of the band to the more arty, adult "Beach." And Brian Wilson's brothers, family and few trusted friends were increasingly overwhelmed by the disintegration of their swollen and inert charge. The Beach Boys had moved to Warner Bros. four years before, issuing a superb but summarily ignored Brother-Reprise LP, *Sunflower*—a record in which Brian's involvement was minimal. *Surf's Up* was assembled with similar detachment on his part. And so forth.

When concerned advisors proposed a change of scene in 1973, the Beach Boys and their families packed themselves off to Holland to create the album of the same name. Brian, however, repeatedly missed his flight. On the third pass, Brian appeared to board the plane to Amsterdam, but when it landed there was no sign of the man, save his passport and a ticket made out in his name, both found lying on his vacant seat. An hours-long search located him lying, sound asleep, in the Dutch air terminal's duty-free lounge. During the Beach Boys' extended stay, Brian would spend most of his waking hours slumped motionless in a corner of the lavish studio they built in a converted barn in Baambrugge. He refused to pitch in on any ideas but for a slip of a song dragged out of him called "Funky Pretty," and "Mount Vernon And Fairway," a twelve-minute fairytale set to music that eventually was added to the finished product as a "bonus record" insert.

Returning to L.A., the group was confronted with the grotesque spectacle of their LP—which had cost them a personal fortune to create—being curtly rejected by their disgruntled record company. Chief objections centered on the fairytale, the impressionistic ten-minute "California Saga," and the lack of a strong single. Help arrived in the person of Van Dyke Parks, who showed up in Warner Bros.' Burbank offices with a live demo tape for a track called "Sail On Sailor." A humble fits-and-starts revelation, the tape contained the repeated pleadings by Brian to "hypnotize me into thinking I'm not insane!" while Parks admonishes, "Cut

Dennis Wilson: after the boys of summer have gone.

the shit, Brian. I want you to write this tune right here." Warners demanded the fragmented but worthy tune be recast and added to *Holland*; it reached #79 in March 1973.

In the Wilson household, equally abstract episodes were taking place. Marilyn, Brian's spouse of some nine years, could find no solution for his malaise, no antidote for his accelerating slide into apparent madness. Moreover, her and Brian's two small daughters, Carnie and Wendy, were both growing up—and growing increasingly confused by their father's queer behavior; Dad had advanced from a fitting playmate to a lousy role model.

In 1976, the Beach Boys celebrated their storied union with *15 Big Ones*, a creaky but harmless collection of covers of golden oldies ("Rock And Roll Music," "Blueberry Hill," "Palisades Park") and the often childlike woodshedding ("Had To Phone Ya") that the overweight and overwrought Brian Wilson had been doing since he'd been induced to leave the confines of his Bel Air home of nearly a decade. Wilson had been holed up in his upstairs bedroom for the

better part of seven years, doing cocaine, pills and acid, subsisting on candy bars and milk shakes, attired in striped bathrobes that concealed and then accentuated his burgeoning bulk.

It was in the winter of 1976 that I first met Brian Wilson. He was a scraggly mountain of indolence, his two most prominent features being a pale pot belly of manatee proportions, and small, hollow eyes darting aimlessly in their pinkish sockets. Lumbering around the since-sold Brother Studios in Santa Monica, he could scarcely hold a thought or impression from one moment to the next. As the rest of the group hustled around the complex, intent on various errands, Brian fretted in a tiny-tot voice about the strict diet and athletic regimen he'd been put on, and ruminated on the transcendental meditation techniques Mike Love had introduced him to.

"It gives me a chance to see a side of life I don't see often," he stated blankly as Love looked on approvingly. "But I sit down in a chair; I don't fold my legs like a yogi, because my legs are too big 'cause I'm out of shape. So Jeese, it's a big *pain*."

Love's face fell, and the ever-waggish Dennis Wilson clambered into the room, spinning a new snare drum head on his index finger. "Hey Dennis," said Brian, "are you going to the meeting at Carl's house?"

"Yeah! You comin'?"

"Nah," said Brian, furtively reaching for a pack of Marlboros on a nearby table. "I don't like business meetings."

"Who brought these damned cigarettes into the studio when they're destroying Brian's damned voice?" said Dennis, snatching them away. "Everywhere I see the Loves I see meditators, basketballs and cigarettes. What gives?"

Mike ignored Dennis. Stan Love, Mike's towering younger brother and former forward for the Baltimore Bullets was also on hand. Then acting as Brian's coach/bodyguard, Stan tried to be a diplomatic buffer between the other three men, laughing weakly at Dennis and chiding Brian.

"Aw Brian," he chimed, "why don't you go to the meeting? You might like it."

"No," Brian replied sternly, chin against his chest. "I feel like a piece of *material* there." He coughed and wheezed as Dennis fumed and pointed to his lung cavity. "You hear those cigarettes in there?!" Brian fell silent as Dennis railed on...then interjected softly, "I don't know why I feel that way about meetings. I don't know why."

"Lissun," said Dennis, pulling me into the adjoining room, "Brian Wilson is not a good looking human being, yet his music is beautiful. Look at Nat 'King' Cole; he looked like a real piece of shit but he had a beautiful voice. Look at Aretha Franklin; she would scare me in a dark room, yet her voice is fantastic. Roy Orbison too. The thing I listen to is the *music*."

The afternoon wore on, Brian scrutinizing the dubdown for "Blueberry Hill" but offering directives only when solicited. A short break was called, and Dennis, Mike and Stan ambled into the plant-filled lounge in the front of the "Brother Building" to unwind. A smiling Brian brought up the rear.

Talk drifted from business matters to a possible recreational trip to New York for Brian—which he immediately vetoed: "Are you kidding! New York, that's a lonely place, with all those tall, dark, unfriendly buildings."

Dennis began to complain about the "creeps" he sometimes is subjected to in New York interviews.

Brian: [*softly*] "Someone should interview my psychiatrist."

Dennis: "What was that, Brian?"

Brian: "I saw a doctor, today. Somebody should talk to *him*. You know what he told me? He said, 'Okay, we're gonna start on *self-nourishment*. I didn't know what that was. He said, 'Read this little paper.' He handed me the piece of paper and said, 'Read it to me.'

"It said, 'I love you.' You're supposed to read the paper three times a day for five minutes each time, no matter where you are, saying, 'I love you, I love you,' to yourself....Heck I lost the paper. I thought the guy was *crazy*."

The doctor in question was Eugene E. Landy, a pricey, Pittsburgh-born clinical psychologist licensed in California and Hawaii. The dyslexic, hyperkinetic son of a physician and a therapist, Landy was tested at the University of Pittsburgh for an IQ of 150 at the age of five, dropped out of school at twelve, but eventually completed his education, earning a B.A. in psychology at California State in 1964, an M.S. in psychology from the University of Oklahoma in 1967 and a Ph.D. (in philosophy) from the same university in 1968. He made his initial reputation treating problem adolescents and drug addicts, and training Operation Headstart, Job Corps, Peace Corps and VISTA volunteers in rehabilitation procedures. He also worked with returning Vietnam vets with dope habits, and published the successful *Underground Dictionary* (Simon & Schuster), an extensive glossary of drug and street jargon for practical use in dealings with denizens of the "other side of life."

Marilyn Wilson had been instrumental in bringing Landy into the picture, but friction ensued between the doctor and the Beach Boys' manager at the time, Steve Love. Not long after a Brian solo appearance booked by Landy for a November 1976 installment of NBC's *Saturday Night*, the $200-an-hour doctor was no longer in charge. Brian had appeared on-camera in a mockup of his famed sandbox, a piano at the ready, a beach ball at his feet. On the sidelines, Landy held up cue cards that read "Smile" and "Relax." Wilson played the complex "Good Vibrations" (his own choice) by his lonesome. He looked like an orphan of a hurricane. It was live television at its most distressing.

Reached for comment in March 1977, just as *The Beach Boys Love You* (originally titled *Brian Loves You*) was about to be released, Brian Wilson stated that Dr. Landy "withdrew from the case about two months ago. He had some difficulty with my business manager and they decided to go their separate ways. I'm a very neurotic person; neurotic and nervous and uptight all the time. Meditation don't help me. Now I'm seeing someone else twice a week, Dr. Steve Schwartz; he's a very mild man, doesn't have much to say, just listens.

"In my program with [Dr. Landy] I was being monitored every twenty minutes by him. [He had] control of my life legally through the commitment of my wife—my wife committed me to him—'cause I had gotten very low with drugs and got myself in a bad position, mentally, physically and emotionally. I was taken over by the doctor and I straightened up. He definitely helped me. It cost over a hundred thousand dollars—he charged me a hell of a lot per month."

The next day, Landy gave his side of the parting, stating, "I think it was an excellent idea to have him on TV. It was my decision, in fact, but it's irrelevant. As a one-shot it was a terrible thing, but *not* if we'd done the four or five we were planning on. By the fourth one you would see the flow that is really there when we sit down in his living room together.

"It was taken out of my control by emotional responses rather than knowledgeable decisions. That's the way most Beach Boys things are, though. We were ready to do more."

Indeed, prior to *The Beach Boys Love You*, Brian had produced *Adult Child*, a still-unreleased album, that contained twelve songs: "Life Is For The Living," "Hey Little Tomboy," "Deep Purple," "H.E.L.P.," "It's Over Now," "Everyone Wants To Live," "Shortenin' Bread," "Lines," "On Broadway," "Two Can Play," "It's Trying To Say" and "Still I Dream Of It."

After *The Beach Boys Love You*, the group tried to fulfill its Warners contract with their first Christmas album since the 1964 outing that gave them a hit with "Little Saint Nick." Warners reportedly was highly skeptical that Brian appeared anywhere on *Merry Christmas From The Beach Boys*. The record, which contained such tracks as "Santa's Got An

Airplane" and "Michael Row The Boat," was shelved.

The final Brother-Reprise product accepted was intended to be called *California Feeling*, named for one of the first songs Brian penned during his reemergence early in 1976. Both the track and the title were initially nixed in favor of *Winds Of Change*, but the record reached the stores in September 1978 as *The M.I.U. Album*, in honor of the Maharishi International University to which Mike Love continued to devote much of his energy.

The Boys signed an $8 million deal with Columbia Records in 1979, and *L.A. (Light Album)* surfaced on James William Guercio's Caribou label, yielding a top forty single, Brian's "Good Timin'." A year later, *Keepin' The Summer Alive* was issued. Commercially, the years between 1979 and 1983 were relatively quiet ones, during which Carl Wilson did two enjoyable solo records, *Carl Wilson* and *Youngblood*, and Mike Love knocked out *Looking Back With Love*. The biggest excitement occurred in 1983 prior to the annual July 4th Mall celebration in Washington, D.C., when Interior Secretary and self-appointed political A&R ace James Watt disinvited the band as headliners, opting for pencil-moustachioed showboater Wayne Newton. The Reagans stuck up for their fellow Californians, and the Beach Boys have been White House habitues ever since, while James Watt was last seen leaving

Brian Wilson: "Hypnotize me into thinking I'm not insane." Van Dyke Parks: "Cut the shit, Brian. Write this song right here."

town facing the wrong way on a jackass.

Pity the band did not have its own act together. Considering the highly uneven, and at times almost amateurish quality of many of the recent albums, the loyal fan was torn between unquestioning goodwill and logical reappraisal. And the critic could scarcely deny that the bulk of the music (not to mention the harmonies!) simply did not compare to even the band's water-line standards of the early 1970s. Restlessness in the ranks was a contributing factor. Alan Jardine was one of the group's strongest singers and songwriters, but he seemed more interested in ecology and movements to protect the California coastline (especially the areas around his Big Sur ranch). And when the frequent Wilson-Love squabbles escalated, Jardine usually sided with the Loves. Bruce Johnston, who stepped in for Brian in 1965 after replacement Glen Campbell took ill, had accepted the responsibilities of mediator and in some cases peace-making and idea-generating producer, but the internal turmoil got ugly in the 1980s, the members fighting openly, sometimes onstage. A mutual restraining order prohibited Mike and Dennis from provoking each other in or out of the spotlights. And, worst of all, the group was soon to be decimated by the drowning death of Dennis Wilson.

Wearing only cut-off jeans and a face mask, the thirty-nine-year-old Dennis drowned in thirteen feet of fifty-eight-degree water after diving off a boat slip in Marina del Rey on December 28, 1983. An autopsy showed he was legally drunk. Shawn Love, nineteen, his fourth wife, mother of his fourth child, and the daughter of Mike Love, insisted on a burial at sea; it had been Dennis' wish.

As the 1980s reached the halfway mark, the best guess was that the Beach Boys just weren't made for these times. And as for the future prospects for the band's perturbed skipper, God only knew. Until now.

Brian is done changing his clothes. Humming the opening bars of "California Girls" to himself, he reappears in the kitchen in white canvas loafers, white chinos and a white and blue Santa Monica souvenir T-shirt. After inviting me to use his room to change out of my running outfit ("Gosh, you're sweaty! You gotta clean up!"), he begins popping slices of wheat bread into the toaster.

The bedroom, which overlooks the beach, is simply furnished, with several expensive hardwood chests of drawers and an ornate antique double bed. Scattered around the walls are Beach Boys memorabilia, assorted citations and testimonials, and a spacy Celestial Arts poster-poem titled "The Spectrum of Love" is taped to the bathroom door. Standard beach house accoutrements—but for the odd one-word note, written in bold capital letters on a large sheet of paper, that is firmly taped to the outside of Brian's valet: "BEEPER!"

Downstairs, the staff has decided to redefine the impending meal as "brunch," a development that Brian ponders and then brushes aside with a sensible, "Hell, who cares what we call it, I'm starving to death!"

A fruit salad, a steaming bowl of eggs, and Brian's proud pillars of toast are set out on the dining room table beneath a large vintage photo portrait of the Beach Boys, circa 1962, an outtake from the session used on the *Surfer Girl* album jacket. We all take our places and begin passing the food when Brian calls a halt and asks Carlos to "put on *Blue*."

"Huh?" says Carlos, his eyebrows halfway-arched in a discreet request for clarification.

"Please put on *Blue*. Play it a little bit loud."

Carlos hesitates, trepidatious. Twenty-four-hour therapy notwithstanding, Brian Wilson is a formidable presence when he's raising his voice with what sounds like a reasonable request for a Joni Mitchell album—except that there's no copy of the record in the house.

"Nah," Brian corrects before the question is posed. "I mean *Rhapsody In Blue*.

"It's my favorite," he tells me, his gaze averted, as he hands me the eggs. "Could you please pass me extra toast?"

Brian first heard the Gershwin classic on a Victrola at his grandmother's house when he was two weeks old. "It sends me back to being a little boy, being a baby," he declares bluntly over the music, which fairly booms in deference to his impaired hearing.

Asked about the BEEPER sign, he lifts his shirt to reveal the beeper unit that is attached to his belt.

"I wear it every day, all day," he says, "in case we go somewhere and Dr. Landy wants to get in touch with us, he beeps us and we go to a phone and call him."

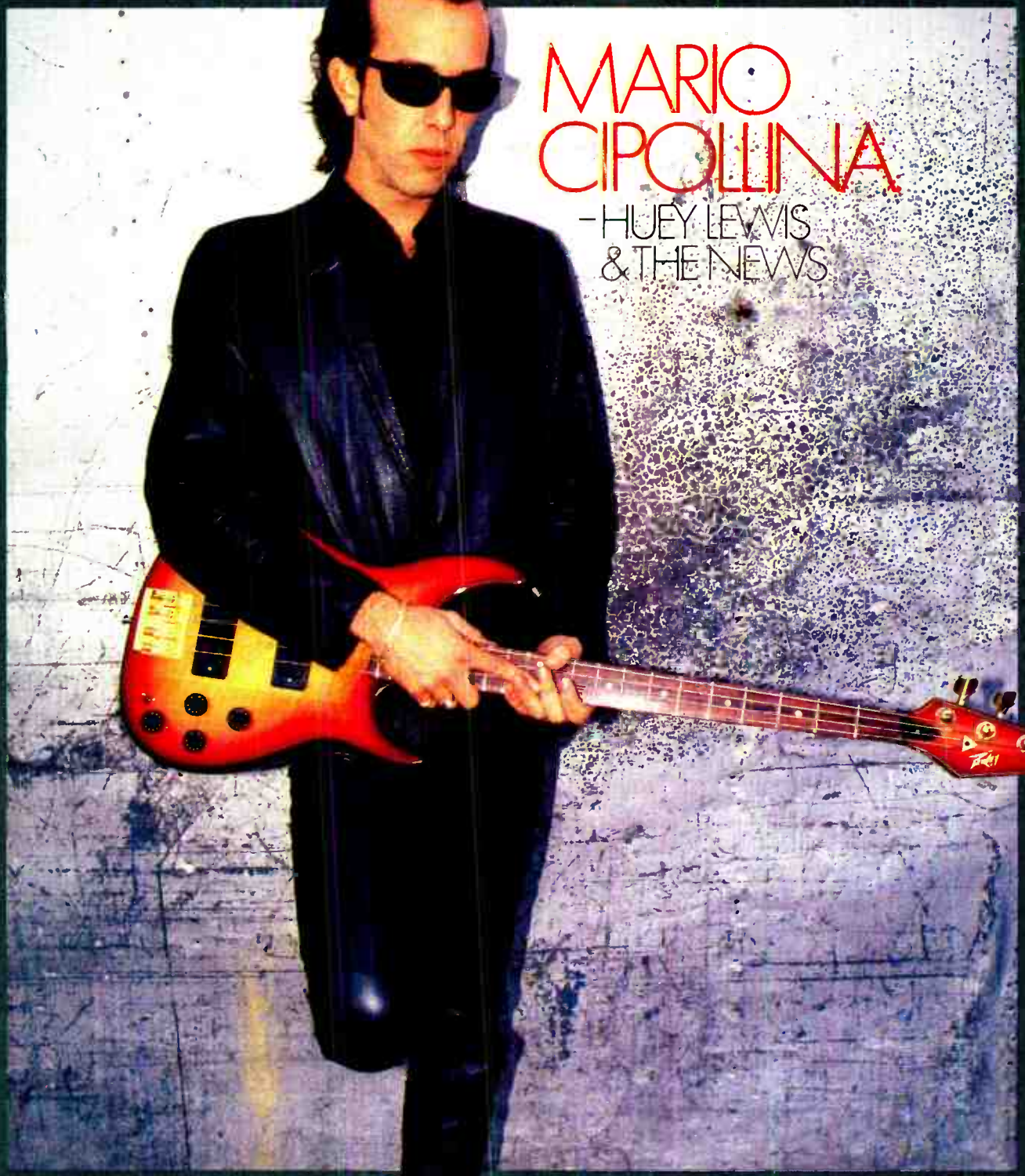
Everyone at the table does likewise, as if part of some freakish fraternity; I have a sudden sensation of airlessness in the room, as if the oxygen is being sucked out, and then I'm filled with an odd sadness.

"We've got a house project going on," Brian volunteers. "We've got a communal living situation my doctor set up, and it includes these staff members and me. I've been feeling pretty good, pretty good. We're having a lot of fun. I go to bed around 11:30 every night, and I get up about 10. I usually make a little tea in the morning and relax for about a half-hour, and then I exercise. Then I try to write songs. I've become more stable; I'm not as radical. I don't take drugs like I used to. I'm much more refined."

What made him so radical in the first place?

"It was the fact that I had money. When you have money you can buy things that aren't good for you, you can buy drugs—all the time. You have the choice to buy them or not,

"...The Bad Boy on the Peavey Bass."



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"THE MUSICIAN'S EDGE"

so you do. Like when we were doing *Holland*, I was on a bummer. I was very lonely, very lonesome and I didn't feel good, and I didn't enjoy myself the whole time we cut the album. I was laying on the floor while everybody else was working. I really was feeling bad.

"I took acid, drugs like that, that taught me a lot about myself. But Dr. Landy taught me things that I didn't know. He taught me that a glass or two of wine every other night is just as good as actually taking drugs. You can carry on a good conversation, and appreciate the conversation. And he's taught me things like manners. I never realized that I used to rush through my meals. He's taught me to eat slower and enjoy them! God, I could never mention all the things he's taught me."

"When Brian first came to me," Landy later tells me, "I saw him totally different than I think any other doctor's ever seen him. They all saw him as crazy. I saw him as scared. Although his behavior was diagnostically called paranoid schizophrenia, I never saw him as schizophrenic. To be creative, you have to be *not* average. Being absolutely normal, doing nothing to deviate from the mean, is very boring. But the further you got out on that deviating bell curve, the closer you get to a point of bizarreness.

"Brian got to a point of being very bizarre, and it was because it was his way of keeping people away from him, so that he didn't have to deal with them. Back in the early 60s, he was a pure tyrant. Writing music in his head, he knew exactly the way he wanted something to sound, and there were monstrous difficulties between himself and his brothers and his father in the studio. He drove people away. Brian is smart enough to get out of doing things or dealing with people, scared enough to be able to make it uncomfortable for everyone so that they want to leave well enough alone, and has been a star since his youth so everybody has been taking care of *everything* for him all his life. I mean, that's a *Howard Hughes*.

"It's been my job to teach him how to overcome fear and learn that the intensity that creates fear also creates joy. The object is that he be able to moderate himself so as not to go off the deep end, not get too fearful, because he does have, I think, a hypothalamic disorder, which a lot of people have. If you snap your fingers, he hears it like a loud *clap!*, which Brian's had to do to compensate for no hearing in his right ear."

The rest of the meal in Malibu proceeds under Brian's courteous stewardship. He is careful to monitor the flow of food to others, to query us all about seconds, to see we have enough to drink. The conversation turns from living arrangements to a casual discussion of the states and home towns represented around the table.

"It's easier growing up here than New York, easier than those kinds of cities," Brian says, gobbling his eggs with reflex gusto. "California is an easier-going place. It's spread out, it's very big. And L.A. is a great city.

"Hawthorne was a *cowtown*," he continues, his high nasal delivery dropping suddenly. "When we were growing up there were no sidewalks for a while. I was born in Inglewood."

Brian Douglas Wilson entered the world at Centinela Hospital in Inglewood on June 20, 1942, the first son of Murry Gage Wilson and the former Audree Neva Korthof (her name was misspelled as Karthof on the birth certificate). Murry was a native of Hutchinson, Kansas, his bride hailing from Minneapolis. The offspring of ambitious parents who left the Midwest for the coast with the Sunshine Promise aflame in their imaginations, they met while attending Washington High School in Los Angeles and married in 1938, both of them twenty years old. They rented a cottage on 8012 South Harvard Boulevard in Los Angeles and Murry worked distributing gas, as a skilled laborer with the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company (where he lost an eye in an industrial mishap) and then started his own heavy machinery rental company, Always Better Last Equipment, or ABLE. His best clients were the aeronautic sub-contractors in the South Bay area.

Murry always saw show business as his true avocation, specifically songwriting. He bought an upright piano while Brian was still a toddler and he and Audree would compose little ditties, singing duets for the child. But when Brian and his other sons showed the first hints of musical prowess in their early teens, Murry's offhanded recitals turned into drill sessions in which his expectations turned ravenous.

"The thing that happened in 1964, on the plane, it had to do with the way my dad treated me," says Brian. "He was always overbearing. And it just got to the point where I couldn't handle it anymore. I'd fuck up on something and he'd say [*throwing his head back and hollering*], '*Goddamn it! What the fuck is going on!*' Or something like that—a hard-nosed kind of guy. He was hard on my mother, he was hard on Dennis, he was hard on Carl."

As Dr. Landy tells it, Murry was all that and then some, and that the Wilson boys were battered children, Brian in particular. "It's well noted that Murry was very aggressive physically, psychologically, intellectually, emotionally; an abusive person," Landy assures. "*Very* cruel. While Audree was and is very nurturing and supportive, Murry was a major crazy, who was excessive, with any lack of control; he terrorized all the children."

Besides cuffing and berating his sons, Murry was given to hideously calculated forms of mental cruelty and shock treatment, one of the more unspeakable being the practice of removing his glass eye and coercing Brian into looking into the open socket as a form of punishment.

Perversely, his musical expectations of himself and his children became for them both a forbidding blueprint and a thankfully acceptable refuge. Whenever Murry would go off on one of his tirades or physical rampages, Brian would sit down at the piano and begin playing, both to drown out his dad and to create some spiritual distance.

"I'd go and take it out on the piano," Brian affirms. "We all learned to bang around. Dennis would take sticks and slam anything. Dave Marks, his friend Johnny Moss taught Carl how to play guitar. Carl couldn't play guitar for *shit*; he tried to play and got practicing and this guy taught him how to play guitar like a champ, and Carl took off on all kinds of Chuck Berry riffs. It was fantastic how he grew in steps and stages. And so we got a group, but it was a hobby at first. When I realized we were doing it professionally, I was kind of amazed. Our first important show was in Long Beach, a Richie Valen's memorial concert on New Year's Eve, 1961.

"But my dad could take the fun out of the thing. Dave Marks, his main reason for leaving the group was an argument with my dad [during the band's first tour, a forty-day midwestern bus barnstorm]. Our dad was our manager in the beginning and eventually we had to fire *him*."

Brian grins mischievously. "He was *upset*."

But Murry remained determined to see his own music associated or commingled with that of the Beach Boys. After being bounced by his brood, he produced a string of singles for the Sunrays, schoolmates of Carl Wilson's at Hollywood Professional High School, between 1964 and 1967. Two of them, "I Live For The Sun" and "Andrea," did well, and Murry had a habit of referring to the five-man group as his "new Suns." He also hounded the A&R man at Capitol into floating an LP of his own compositions in 1967, *The Many Moods Of Murry Wilson*. In 1969, as the Boys were leaving Capitol, he realized a personal dream of sharing a writer's credit (he used the pseudonym of Reggie Dunbar) with Brian on the moderately successful single, "Breakaway." By all accounts, he took the record's non-hit status with some bitterness. Four years later, he was dead from heart disease.

"It's amazing that Murry wasn't happy with what he had,"

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says Landy. "You'd think he would have just been happy with the success that occurred. He had a once-in-a-lifetime situation. People *die* to get into that place. Audree is to be commended for having survived Murry; they all are. He was a rock 'n' roll character, Murry was."

After brunch, as each of us take our own plate back into the kitchen (house rules), Brian begins to ponder his adolescence aloud, drawing a conscious line of demarcation between his "tough" years (meaning his childhood) and his "great" years, which coincided with his senior year (1959-60) at Hawthorne High and the independence the Pendletones—soon to be the Beach Boys—presaged.

"In my last year of school...I was *very* happy," he recalls haltingly, moving to a couch before a picture window revealing a brick patio and, in the distance, a group of giggling children dodging the ripplets on a sandbar. He lowers himself into a spot facing his elaborate stereo system and speaks with a mixture of awe and befuddlement, as if uncertain he's delving into his own past or that of an old acquaintance.

"I wouldn't say I was popular in school. But I was associated with popular people. One of my best friends was the president of the senior class, Steve Anderson. Another one of my friends was like a top athlete in the school, Ted Sprague. And another of my friends had epilepsy. "It was a *strange* relationship we had," his voice twisting in a baffled squeak. "In fact, he took Dilantin. The drug kept his seizures down to a minimum. His name was Robin Hood—that was his real name!

"Anyhow, later on, when the Beach Boys got rolling I started to become a little better on the chick circuit. It kinda slowly developed. I wasn't something that overnight was *wow*!

"All these chicks—these were after Dennis! When we first got going, the chicks would stomp on our asses to get to Dennis behind the drums. [*High-pitched squeal*] DEN-NIS! DEN-NIS! And we'd watch the chicks run by. And then later on I began to get a reputation with the chicks, kind of as a loverboy kind of guy, but in a very subdued way. I was subtle, you know? I'm not like Dennis was, I'm not a real cocksman. I'm a subtler kind of guy. I do it all on the conversational level. I get across my thing by just talking."

How are things between him and his ex-wife? Is he in touch with their children?

"I never am," he declares flatly. "I hardly ever talk with them. They're living in Encino, in the San Fernando Valley. I'm going through a bachelor period in my life."

He wonders if I would like to hear "Male Ego," an outtake from *The Beach Boys* that is the B-side to the first single, "Getcha Back." Carlos, as if on cue, hurries in and slips a tape into the deck. It is a wry, engaging song about getting up the courage to relate on an equal basis with women, coarse in its construction but lacking the juvenile traits of Brian's songs on, say, *The Beach Boys Love You*. The jittery, huff-and-puff quality that ran through his singing on the last four albums is gone, supplanted by a quirky forthrightness that disarms the listener. I ask to hear it again, but before it's played Brian turns to me, looking me straight in the eye—an unusual occurrence—and says, confidingly, "These days my themes are still love, mostly love. But adult love; a level of maturity, a higher level, a more refined kind of love."

There is a tenderness in his statement, an utterly unguarded directness, that jolts me into a dimensional recognition of how far Brian has come as an individual since 1976. A decade ago, he behaved like a petrified ten-year-old. Today his manner is that of a timorous young man. Besides the welcome fact that he is in good physical condition, he gives indications of forging an identity and an agenda that have little to do with his personal or professional past.

As "Male Ego" plays again, a conversation I had with Eugene Landy, the two of us sitting on the seaside deck of his house several miles down the Pacific Coast Highway, takes on a new gravity.

"Regardless of what your parents may have done to you—meaning Brian—you're stuck with it, whether they beat you, they this or they that. I'm not trying to make Brian well again or happy again, because I don't think he ever *was*. I think he will get there, but for the *first* time. *Amadeus* is a perfect example of another man, treated as a boy wonder and toy by his father, who was torn apart in the process while the whole world goes around loving his music. Which is most important, the world and his music, or the guy and his life?"

"I saw it on the news and thought, 'Oh God, there he is, laying there dead.' I was blown away by the idea that Dennis drowned."

In a very real way, the "Where's Brian?" stigma that has dogged the Beach Boys for so long is finally starting to fade away, a blessing that is accentuated when I hear the final mix of *The Beach Boys* in its entirety.

"Getcha Back," which resembles a sandwich of "Don't Worry Baby" and Springsteen's "Hungry Heart," is the catchiest song on the first side, a surefire summer score, but the least of the album's uniformly stunning material. As the record progresses, it is plain that while Brian has contributed five collaborative efforts, he is a fully integrated, and therefore more dignified, presence. The three actual stars of *The Beach Boys* LP are: (1) the harmonies, which have never been so intelligently and adroitly lush, making one appreciate with delight the verity that there are no other voices who can duplicate that singular sound; (2) the digital recording technology that makes such an unsterile refinement possible, while opening up new possibilities for a consummate studio group; (3) Carl Wilson's singing. The exquisitely ominous "It's Gettin' Late," with its churchy, swelling harmonies, is a superb vehicle for an entreating performance that's redolent of his fine vocals on *Holland*. But there's such an embarrassment of vocal riches from his quarter on "Maybe I Don't Know," "She Believes In Love Again," "Passing Friend," "Where I Belong" and "I Do Love You" that it's wrong to lionize any one selection.

"I wrote the basic part of 'It's Gettin' Late' last year with Bob Johnson, who's in a group in Nashville called RPM," says Carl Wilson. "I met Bob through Jerry Schilling and he came to stay with me for a few days at my home in Colorado, a place about twenty miles outside of Boulder. We started playing that chord progression one evening, around nine or ten o'clock, and adding the little 'Midnight Hour' bassline, the mood of the night coming on just took over the music, and we started singing, 'It's gettin' late, it's gettin' late,' and suddenly we had this pretty little core of a tune. The words got polished up with Myrna Smith Schilling, my songwriting partner.

"I love working with new people—Beach Boys albums have always involved interesting collaborations, and I think the new album reflects that in ways that are both dramatic and subtle. The Boy George song was this surprise gift from George and Roy Hay of Culture Club. They came down to the Red Bus Studio in London where we were working and did a scratch vocal to get me oriented, and then I jumped

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in. Frankly, my vocal on that track is almost me doing George. The Stevie Wonder song was also an unbelievable present from out of the blue, and we all figured, 'This is one tune we *can't* screw up, it plays and sings itself.'

"I think there is a feeling with this album that we've crossed over into a new realm of well-being after a terribly trying and rocky time. And people are up to hear us. I got a charge out of the David Lee Roth hit with 'California Girls.' Christopher Cross gave me a call about the session and said [producer] Ted Templeman wondered if I'd be put off if he asked me to sing on the track. I said, 'Hell no!'

"As for the Beach Boys, we're very much a vital band again, and we're also taking advantage of the most advanced recording technology once more—that was always a facet of the best stuff we've done in the past. The digital approach is so new and it can be quite tedious until you learn it. I was pleased for Brian and also for Alan, that they dug in in England, and then later in L.A., and figured it all out with the help of Steve Levine and his partner, Julian Lindsay.

"Almost everything on the record was programmed note-for-note, sound-for-sound, beat-by-beat, and then we wouldn't hear it until we sent it through the computer. There are almost no real instruments on the record, but when we needed a real acoustic sound we did the kinds of things Brian would do on *Smile*, getting certain sounds by recording instruments in empty gyms or at the bottom of empty swimming pools. The snare drum on the record was taped in the racquet ball court at the Century West Club in L.A. Steve Levine gained a little of Brian's playfulness and Brian got Steve's digital smarts."

Bruce Johnston, who was responsible for bringing Levine on board, agrees. "I knew Steve when he was the house producer at the CBS London studios. He'd had the early Boy George hits at the time and I guess people thought I was proposing a Smokey-Robinson-meets-the-Beach-Boys concept, but I knew that he was very open and adaptable to any musical environment he was working in. The beauty of his participation is that he's giving us a new *clarity* on record, something that Brian always knocked himself out aiming for. In the Capitol days, they had the Duophonic sound, which was *bad* stereo. Brian took us to a new high aurally with *Pet Sounds*, and then we had a breakthrough again with *Sunflower*. *The Beach Boys* is a new chapter, a marriage of the Beach Boys vocabulary with the playing and arranging of the 1980s. The first songs on each side, 'Getcha Back' and 'California Calling' are exactly what you'd expect from the band yet so fresh."

But the new ground was gained only with considerable effort, according to Steve Levine.

"It was both a pleasure and a nightmare," he assures with a laugh. "Like any group that's been around for so long, the Beach Boys are set in their ways. And, of course, they usually had Brian as their producer. But so much has changed, and they must be knowledgeable enough to compete with the younger groups in the marketplace. The Fairlight synthesizer and all the rest was so alien to Brian and the group, but then it slowly began to dawn on them how enormous the potential was. This record was done so meticulously that the harmonies, particularly, are finally the idealized actualization of what we've had in our minds all these years when we think of the Beach Boys—and wait until you hear it on a CD!"

"We're coming into our twenty-fifth anniversary," adds Al Jardine. "It's been a long time since Brian chased me halfway across the campus at El Camino college and asked me to start a garage band with his brothers. When I wrote 'California Calling,' a neo-classical surfing song, with Brian, so many great memories flooded back: me teaching 'Sloop John B.' to the band, Brian hiring the theremin player (Paul Tanner) for 'Good Vibrations,' Mike cutting 'I Get Around.' I'm still glad I left dental school, still thrilled to be a Beach Boy."

All that's missing, of course, is Dennis. And yet his presence on *The Beach Boys* is a ghostly one. "Getcha Back" for instance, opens with the echoey lockstep drum pattern that the undextrous but purposeful drummer made a hallmark of the band's sound. No offense to Omar Hakim or Stewart Copeland, but they couldn't play on a Beach Boys record—they're too facile, too nimble-handed, too broadly adept. Dennis never left the garage.

"God, my mom had to beat them to let me in the group," a sinewy, bronze and bright-eyed Dennis told me with a grin one afternoon late in 1977, while we ate lunch in a little Mexican restaurant in Venice, California. "She said, 'Come on, Brian, let him in, or it'll break his heart!' Mike and Brian went, 'Nah, we don't want him.' But then Brian softened up, gave me a hug and, 'Aww, what the hell.'

"Around the time when we put out the first live Beach Boys album [1964], we were doing a show with the striped shirts on and the whole bit, and I found myself totally gazing at Brian, thinking, 'This guy's my brother?' I was famous because some guy was *beautiful*, and I got the chance to play drums and sing with him and take part in this great ride.

"God," he said, his eyes welling up, his voice choked with emotion, and then with laughter as he wiped his tears away with his taco hand, "what a lucky fuckin' honor!"

It's difficult to know how Brian has dealt with the loss of Dennis, whom he delights in bringing up during the course of the day. But when Brian mentions that *The Beach Boys* carries a special dedication ("...to our brother, our cousin, our friend") the topic of his brother's death is unavoidable.

"The problem with Dennis," says Brian, shifting nervously on the couch, his expression grave, his eyes squinting as if trying to scrutinize some indistinct object, "was that he was totally out of control. He had a little bit of a hassle with his wives, a divorce situation. He was married five times, so he got clobbered in the divorce laws. So did I, too.

"Carlos told me there was a message on my answer phone at this other house down the street that we used to live at," he continues, his voice growing quieter. "I went in there and this guy Jerry Schilling, who's Carl's manager, told me, 'I'm sorry to have to tell you that Dennis drowned.'

"I felt real *strange*. It's a weird feeling when you hear about a death in the family, a weird trip. It's not something you can really talk about or describe. I got tears after about a half-hour. Then I saw it on the news and thought, 'Oh God, there he is, laying there dead.' I was blown out by the whole idea that he *drowned*, although I just let it lay; I didn't fuck with it, I didn't think too much about it. I let it lay.

"He and I were pretty good buddies," he says, rising slowly from the couch. "It pissed me off when he drowned because I felt I wasn't just losing a brother, I was losing a friend, and that compounded it even more."

Brian excuses himself in a near-whisper and leaves the room.

A half-hour later, Dr. Landy arrives to check on his patient and to make sure that arrangements are in order to take Brian and some friends to a Chicago concert this evening. Brian is in the den where he writes, fiddling around at the upright piano, drifting in and out of "I Dream Of Jeannie With The Light Brown Hair" and on to new melodies.

"Brian always plays that old chestnut when he's thinking out loud," says Landy, a short, thick-set balding man with a constant, eruptive laugh. "It's his mantra." Landy and Wilson are an unlikely alliance, the good doctor still hyperkinetic and effusive to where some might sometimes find him borderline obnoxious, while Brian remains a diffident man who lives for the most part in his head. Yet it takes a person with Landy's sheer energy and focus to have an impact on someone as uniquely stubborn as Brian. Comparing the Brian Wilson of 1976 with the Brian of the here-and-now, it could be said the controversial psychologist saved his life.

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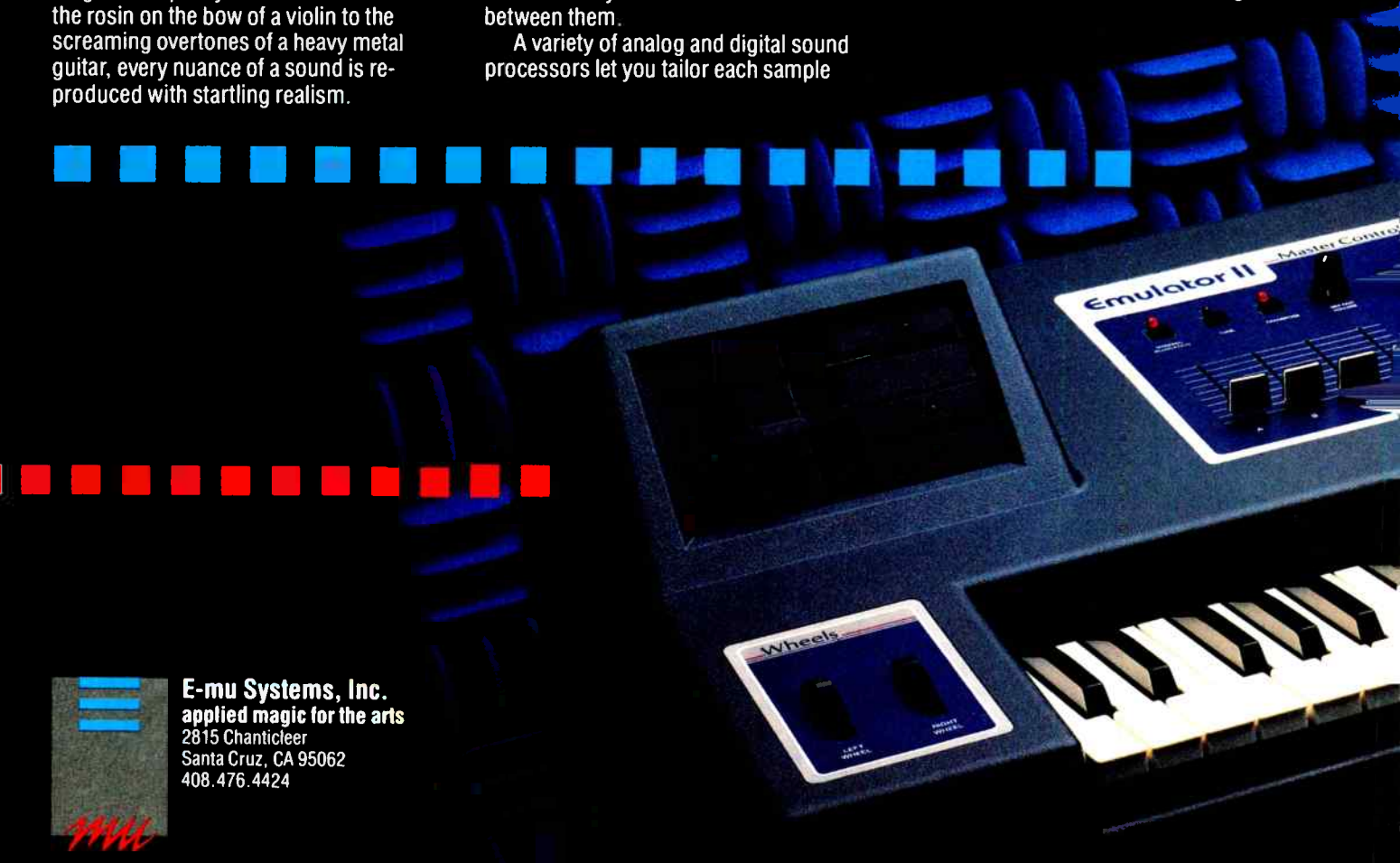

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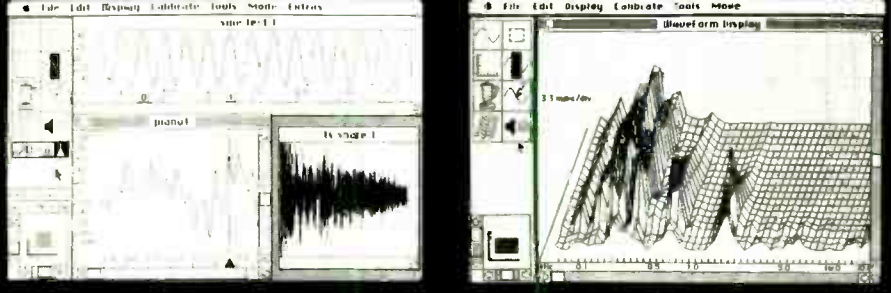

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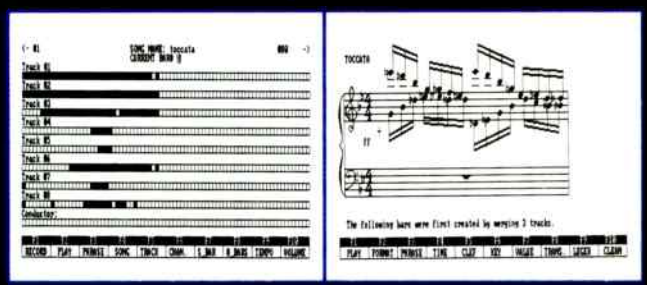

Song Mode, Arrange Page

Score Mode, Analysis Page

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MUSICIAN WORKING

Frankie Goes To Hollywood

Frank Serafine's Movie MIDI Studio, Where Sonic Worlds Collide

By Craig Anderton

HOWARD ROSENBERG

Over the centuries, a number of mystics and philosophers have posited the theory that what we call reality is simply an illusion. A look at how modern films are produced would probably support their conclusions. Shots are done out of sequence, dialogue is dubbed in after the fact, one-inch models are made to look like giant spaceships, and some scenes are constructed entirely inside a computer. So what ties all these disparate elements together? Obviously, good directing and editing have a lot to do with it, but perhaps of even greater importance is the sonic ambience—called "sound design" in the industry—that lends continuity, provides dramatic effects and helps further the concept of illusion as reality. And these days Hollywood's hottest sound designer is an enthusiastic musician in his early thirties named Frank Serafine (pronounced Sehr-ah-*fee*-nee).

So how does one become a sound designer? In Frank's case, it was a combination of the right background plus the infamous lucky break. As a musician in Colorado, Frank earned $300 a week doing local gigs. Eventually he got one of the first Mellotrons in his area, which was his ticket to session work. This led to a planetarium music gig, where it so happened that some folks from the Disney organization heard his work. Disney needed a grand opening for their Space Mountain exhibit, and promptly hired Frank to put it all together—hire the

musicians, write the music and generally co-ordinate matters. Frank went to Hollywood and never looked back.

This led to him doing sound for *Star Trek–The Motion Picture*, and from there to a variety of films including *Tron, Ice Pirates, The Fog, The Sword and the Sorcerer, Star Trek III, The Day After,* and a number of commercials. For Frank, being a musician was one of his strongest assets in getting gigs; the fine line between sound and music, so often crossed by people such as John Cage, ceases to exist in Serafine's work. To him, putting a sound behind a scene in a movie is more than just plugging in a noise—it's equally important to have the right phrasing, timbre and emotional impact.

I've conducted interviews in restaurants, in planes, in cars, on the phone and backstage; but this is the first one conducted in large part while riding on a bicycle, Frank's preferred mode of transportation. His commute is about a forty-foot walk from his home to his newly-constructed studio, but only after sufficient psychic preparation, like hanging out in a hot tub or bicycling to the beach and back, is it time to work.

Frankie say relax? Not exactly. When Frank gets into work mode *he works*, handling most of his own business, making his phone calls, and dealing with "the substantial amount of politics" inherent in his gig. But he's adamant about keeping life simple. And enthusiastic about keeping things solo:

HOWARD ROSENBERG

"Musicians were always so moody, never there on time."

"I like to close the studio door when I'm creating; I do things when I'm by myself that I wouldn't do when other people are around. Music is a very intimate art form, and that's why MIDI is so incredible. It lets me have a bass player, drummer, guitarist and multiple keyboard players on call, yet I'm the only one who has to operate this stuff. I think being a one-person band is an elevating experience beyond belief. Once people figure out what MIDI can really do, the results will be revolutionary...it's beyond human comprehension right now. Let's face it, MIDI has really only been here one year. We're the pioneers in this."

Frank sees a future there with fewer session players, and more music done via MIDI by producers and the artists themselves. He elaborates: "I think for the most part this is due to economics—if something can be done better and cheaper, people are going to go that way. Creatively it's phenomenal too. One of the problems I always had with musicians is that they were always so moody, they were never there on time, stuff had to be set up, and in the studio time equals money. When you're dealing with egos and personalities and schedules, it's a stressful job. I don't have to worry about someone being on time anymore, or about where to put the mike on the bass drum.

"I think the future is in the MIDI studio. People will work out their tunes at home on a little MIDIfied Casio or whatever, or maybe even use portable equipment and compose stuff while traveling. After you have your tunes worked out, you bring your sequencer disc into a studio that has twenty-four MIDI synthesizers rather than twenty-four analog tracks, play back your sequences, and mix the whole thing down to digital. That's the future."

Sounds good, but wouldn't that require that a composer be very familiar with all the characteristics of the synthesizers being MIDI'd? What if you work out a bass part with a particular synth in mind, then find that the studio doesn't have that synth available? As it so happens, Frank considers this an advantage, not a problem. "That's the amazing thing about MIDI—it can be full of surprises. Like you can write a composition around a koto sound, but if you try running through an instrument's presets you might find that marimba works better than koto. Or blending two sounds might be best of all. What I like most about MIDI is that it can go beyond what you can think of—once that sequence starts rolling, all you have to do is start pushing buttons and your composition will do things you hadn't anticipated or expected."

When Frank starts work on a soundtrack, he has two favorite instruments: the E-mu Emulator (soon to be supplemented by an Emulator II) and a fifteen-year-old Minimoog. Sampling is a vital part of Frank's work, much of it inspired by the work Ben Burtt did in *Star Wars* (its soundtrack contained no synthetic sounds, only altered "real" sounds).

The process of creating the sound design for a film is long and tedious, but for the special-effects-laden films towards which Frank seems to gravitate there are additional drawbacks. Most of the time he doesn't even have an image to refer to when coming up with a sound—all he gets is a drawing of what the image is supposed to look like when it's finished, and the amount of time he is required to fill. Things often have to be done this way because computer graphics and many other effects aren't finalized until the very last stages of production of the movie.

Up to thirty-two tracks of sound may be required for one effect, but in the final mix of dialogue, music, sound effects, narration etc. these multiple tracks are *pre-dubbed* into four tracks, thus making it much easier when doing the final mixing job. Then everything gets transferred from digital tape to "mag" (35mm magnetic tape). That's what the film editors use when transferring sound to the actual film itself; they will take a 35mm "stripe" of sound and lock it mechanically to the 35mm film sprockets, thus insuring proper audio and video sync. Each "perf" (slot in the film) represents a fraction of a second of time change, and the stripes can be offset by a perf or two to clean up any remaining timing problems. In *Tron*, Frank did most of the editing until the last "manicuring" stages, when eight additional editors were brought in.

But what I found more interesting than the technology is how a sound designer makes the connection between a sound recorded in the field and a visual cue that needs audio. I was surprised to find out that the bomb blasts in *The Day After* had a slowed-down lion's roar mixed in very prominently with the actual sound of the explosion (once you know it's there, though, you can hear it easily), and that the human screams were supplemented by pig screams. The disk tosses in *Tron* were a mix of processed bullwhip sounds and monkey screams. And in *Star Trek—the Motion Picture*, at one point the Enterprise was going into a black hole accompanied by the sounds of a barroom brawl played backwards (although purists could argue that there's no sound in space). How does Frank make those connections?

"Sometimes it's obvious what's needed. In *Star Trek III*, the sound effects supervisors and Leonard (director Nimoy) requested a sound representing major amounts of debris,

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and I knew at that point I had to get a bunch of metal debris and process it or whatever to make it fit into the picture. I ended up going to a junkyard and having stuff thrown around.

"As to how I chose the backwards barroom scene, it was mostly experimentation...you pull things out of the library and start messing around with them. In this case physics gives you a clue; a metal bang or explosion turned backwards creates a suction feeling. Since the barroom brawl had a lot of bangs and hits and crashes, it created the perfect effect."

Gathering the sonic "raw materials" for the library is another matter altogether. Frank almost always uses a portable VCR and Sony PCM-F1 digital audio adapter for his field recording. The F1 converts audio into a wide-bandwidth signal suitable for recording on the VCR's video tracks; the sound quality is rivaled only by devices such as the Compact Disc.

Sound hunting begins with figuring out what kind of sounds are needed, then scouting out the locations necessary to get the sounds. Once his gear is together (there are myriad little cables, chargers, adapters, mikes, etc.), he'll stay out on the road for up to a week until he gets the sounds he needs. *Star Trek* movies require, as he says, "major work" in order to collect all the necessary sounds.

Recording sounds is not easy. You might think that if you wanted a jet airplane, no problem; after all, you just go out to the airport and...."The problem with recording airplanes," says Frank, "is that if it's during the day, you'll pick up birds, or a dog barking in the distance; if it's at night, you have crickets to contend with. The way I finally got some good planes was over the Christmas holidays in Colorado, when there was a blanket of snow on the ground. There were lots of planes flying in, the snow absorbed any ambient sounds, and there weren't any crickets." And speaking of recording crickets, Frank has a tip: "Go to the pet store and buy a couple of crickets, then put them in a shoe box. Record them digitally, then multitrack them."

I always wondered how one would record good bomb blasts; after all, you can't go around blowing things up for the fun of it. But the Marines can, and it was the soldiers at Camp Pendleton who provided some of the best explosions in Frank's library. Lockheed let him record their wind tunnel, which lets out a thousand tons of air per second. Frank has a few other stories: "For *Star Trek,* the Jet Propulsion Laboratory let me tap into their radio communication system when Voyager was crossing over Jupiter or something so we were able to record all this incredible tech talk. Once I went up in the Goodyear blimp and hung microphones over the side as we flew around L.A.; that ended up being the sound of the aircraft carrier in *Tron.*"

However, Frank does not deal exclusively with real-world sounds by any means, and synthesis is an important part of his act. With all the advances in digital synthesis and emulation, did he still find analog synthesizers useful? "I've had my Minimoog for fifteen years, and I still use it every single day. I use it as much as my Emulator. I don't cancel out any form of technology just because it's old; low-tech is as valid as high-tech. The DX7, for example, sounds okay by itself but when you MIDI up the Minimoog (with a J.L. Cooper MIDI to CV box) and play that along too...wow! It gives its own sound which is neither Minimoog nor DX7. I think the blend of analog and digital, the hybrid, is what's happening."

Frank treats MIDI as an "intelligent interface" between his various electronic instruments and uses SMPTE as the master timing reference for his studio. He records SMPTE time code on track sixteen of his 16-track Tascam, then records a MIDI-compatible sync track on track fifteen. Because the two sync signals "co-habitate" on the tape, they always maintain proper timing with respect to each other: SMPTE keeps the audio tape in sync with the video, and MIDI keeps the instruments in sync with the SMPTE code. This may not be as elegant as using a single time code track and feeding it into a "black box" (like the Synchronous Technologies SMPL System, Roland SBX-80, or Garfield Master Beat) to derive sync from a master track, but his system works and works well. The Passport MIDI/8 sequencer, connected to an Apple II computer via the Passport MIDI interface, is the heart of Frank's MIDI setup.

When it comes to drum machines, Frank tends to rely on the E-mu Drumulator, modified to include a J.L. Cooper three-kit board so that he has access to Latin percussion, a "Simmons," and the standard Drumulator sound. He also likes the Yamaha RX-15, says the Linn 9000 is "a real nice box," and thinks that the Oberheim DMX is "probably the best-sounding of all of them."

Frank is not exactly a wild-eyed political acitivist, but it's obvious he relished being a part of *The Day After.* As he said right after doing the film, "It was great to do some scary effects that would actually educate people instead of just scare them." So given this anti-war inclination, tell us Frank, how this "Simnet" stuff fits in?

"The 'Simnet' is a system that simulates the U.S. military's three-million-dollar M-1 tank. I went to Fort Knox, met the various generals, went out on a training mission and recorded all the M-1 tank sounds. It's sort of like the ultimate video game, except that it costs $150,000."

But how he can reconcile working on *The Day After* in the hopes that it will keep people from blowing themselves up, and then working on something for just the opposite? Frank, not at all taken aback by the question, simply says, "I've always been a firm believer that you don't beat the system by fighting it, you beat it by joining. I'm not into war, but you need precautions...a deterrent. At least the emphasis is on conventional, not nuclear, warfare."

So did doing *The Day After,* and seeing those scenes of destruction over and over again, mess around with his psyche? "No, but I did build a bomb shelter with the money I got from the job," he laughs. "It scared me!" When asked whether he really built a bomb shelter or a wine cellar disguised as a bomb shelter, Frank nods. "Yeah, you got it. But hey, it's a *cement* wine cellar."

So who cares what Frankie say? Musicians should, for one. Sound effects are *musique concrète,* as are sampling devices, and one listen to the Art of Noise or recent Peter Gabriel should be enough to convince any musician that sound can be used in highly musical contexts. John Cage postulated in the 1920s that music would go through a period of emphasis on rhythm before transitioning into a new type of music based purely on sound; that prediction seems to be coming true. Frank feels sound effects are going to be-

continued on page 90

Serafine Machinies

Frank's keyboards include an E-mu Emulator, MIDIfied SCI Prophet 5 (Rev.2, or "the one with the good sound" as Frank says), Minimoog, Yamaha DX7, and Fender Rhodes. Other devices include the Roland CSQ-100, Apple II computer (for the Passport MIDI-8 and alphaSyntauri software), and E-mu Drumulator. For processing his sounds, sometimes beyond recognition, Frank uses the DeltaLab DL-2 delay line with memory module, Audio/Digital TC-2 delay line, Audio + Design SCAMP rack, DeltaLab DL-5 "Harmonicomputer," Lexicon 224 digital reverb, EXR 3 "projector," Roland Vocoder, and Roland pitch-to-voltage converter (which he once used to track acoustic feedback, thereby generating a control voltage to feed to his synthesizers). Most recording is done with a TASCAM 85-16 16-track recorder with Telefunken (Telcom) noise reduction; he also has a Sony TC-766-2 2-track, TASCAM M-16 mixer, and EV Sentry 500 loudspeakers powered by Nikko power amps (which Frank says are "just great"). Video equipment includes a Beta SL2000 portable VCR, Sony 2600 ¾-inch machine for making dubs, Sony 5850 ¾-inch mastering deck, SLO420 Betamax editing deck for digital audio effects editing, and a V/Star video and computer projection system. Finally, to lock all this stuff together he has a BTX Shadow to slave the video, and a BTX 4600 editing controller to serve as the video editor for audio.

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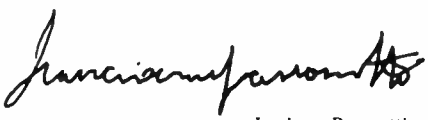
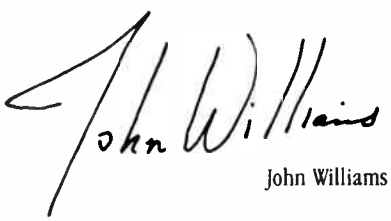

Luciano Pavarotti


Georg Solti


Aaron Copland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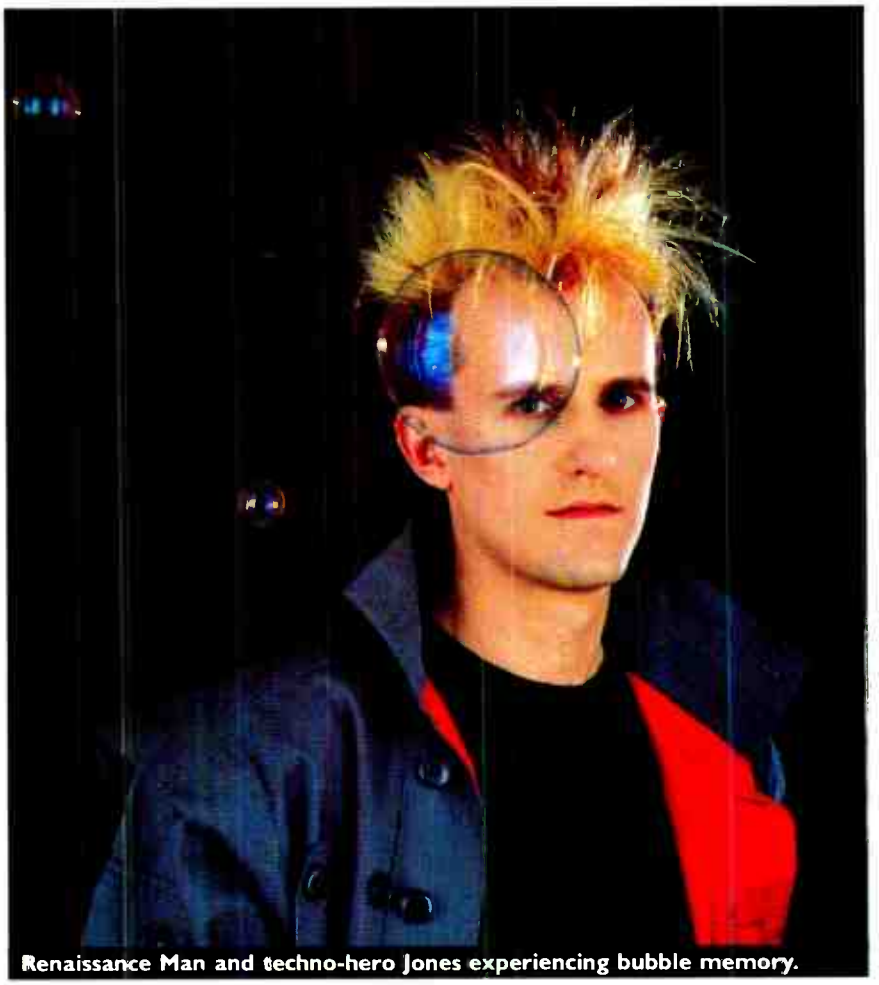
HOWARD JONES' COCK-EYED OPTIMISM

Things Only Get Better For the First Truly MIDI-Based Pop Star

By Jon Young



Renaissance Man and techno-hero Jones experiencing bubble memory.

BRIAN ARIS

There's something wrong here. Big kids are supposed to make those hard adult choices, not get everything they want. You can be popular, but don't count on respect. You can be accessible, but it may be at the expense of substance. If the lyrics are smart, the melodies may suffer. It's pretty darn tricky to touch all the bases, and audacious to even try.

Howard Jones, however, is having his cake and eating it too, just about any way you cut it. His second chartworthy LP of electronic pop, *Dream Into Action*, which spawned the hit single "Things Can Only Get Better," showcases Jones' still-evolving gift for interfacing a variety of synths, not to mention more traditional instruments. He could be tagged a techno-whiz, except that would overlook his considerable lyrical strengths—employing a minimum of five-syllable words, Jones uses *Dream Into Action* as the blueprint for a positive, practical approach to everyday life. To boot, Jones' spiky yellow hair and slight elfin bearing make him a good candidate for his own Saturday morning cartoon show. Whoever has the license to produce Howard Jones dolls is sitting on a gold mine. On a hipper note, he recently appeared at the Grammys with Stevie Wonder, Herbie Hancock and Thomas Dolby in a "salute to synths" sequence, confirming his cool status. In short, this little Limey can't miss.

Assuming, of course, that he survives the grueling promotional activities in support of *Dream Into Action*. Having just completed a European tour, Jones has hopped over to New York from London for thirty-six quick hours of business. And you'd best believe your star is rising when the record company will spring for a seat on the Concorde.

Parked at an oversized conference table in the Elektra-Asylum beehive in Rockefeller Center, Jones qualifies as expense money well spent. Although his day began in London many hours before, the soft-spoken, diminutive synthesist graciously discharges his interview duties. Of course, that's hardly an onerous task when everything's breaking right.

Dream Into Action's most immediately striking achievement is the avoidance of the sophomore jinx. After all, the second album is a pitfall that's snared better men than Howard.

"I was extremely aware of that tendency," he acknowledges. "I've seen a lot of people bomb on their second album and I was determined that wasn't going to happen to me, so I started writing as soon as I finished *Human's Lib*. The second LP should be better than the first, really."

To keep the material fresh, Jones varied the way he composed. "Sometimes I did the whole song at the piano and then saw if it stood up when I transferred it to other instruments. Sometimes I got all my machines going and wrote to the sound of the drum machine. Sometimes I took a single keyboard and wrote that way. I get different inspirations from different setups.

"'No One Is To Blame' was written at the piano. I think that's obvious. For 'Assault And Battery' I wrote using all my machines at once. I set up several drumulators and MIDI'd my keyboards to get a layered sound. I had two Yamaha DX7s, a Prophet T8 and a Roland MSQ-700 all going at once."

In effect, Jones can create a song and its arrangement at the same time. "Yeah, the bare bones, anyway," he says. "Actually, I like to write sections of songs separately and decide later the best way to line them up."

For someone who's accustomed to functioning essentially as a one-man band, Jones is surprisingly receptive to outside input. In fact, he likes to expose works in progress to others and get their feedback. "I'll play songs to anyone who's around—the milkman, my wife Jan, or my dad," he reveals. "I've always found that people will give you interesting opinions. For example, when I played the original recording of 'Look

Mama' for my dad, he said the drums were too loud. So I thought to myself, 'What does that mean in musical terms?' I decided that meant the snare was too harsh and ended up making it softer, which resulted in a better track."

Jones' openness to second-party assistance also led to a return engagement for Rupert Hine, the producer of most of *Human's Lib*. Asked to explain Hine's involvement in what seems to be a one-man show, Jones hesitates in formulating a response.

"Rupert's role is like that of a film director," he observes slowly. "He comes in with an objective view and tells me if I'm putting too much in. He's brilliant at adding little suggestions that create a different atmosphere for each track. I don't want to underestimate his input, but it's difficult to describe how we work in the studio unless you're there."

Jones calls *Dream Into Action* a "more colorful, punchier record" than *Human's Lib*. "The sound is bigger because we used sampling a lot more, and that gave me a greater variety of sounds. You can sample any sound you want. I sampled my voice and that was great fun, because we could create choral textures that are really emotive. We sampled recorders and pianos—we messed about with filters to make the pianos sound more like flutes. I wrote brass parts on emulated brass and then got a real brass section (TKO Horns) to play it, 'cause it sounds better."

For all that, do not—repeat, *do not*—call Jones a techno- or synth-musician. "You listen to something like 'Life In One Day' and you don't think of it as synth music, do you?" he asks. "I'm a songwriter who dresses up my songs with the most modern sounds I can find. But I also like traditional music and I want to have a link to the past as well. I can play all my songs on the piano, so I don't think of myself as high-tech."

By contrast, Jones observes, "I would definitely call Depeche Mode a synth band, in fact the only real synth band left." Lest there be any confusion, he adds quickly, "I love their music. They break new ground with their sounds."

In the final accounting, Jones would prefer to be known for what he says, not how he says it, commenting, "I wouldn't mind being known as a 'message' performer. I'd *rather* the music be overshadowed by the lyrics. I'd love to be known as someone who has something to say."

The animal-protection sentiments of "Assault And Battery" confirm that Jones has more in his head than circuit boards. "The lives were taken/ For feasts at the table/ A life of misery/ Ending with a shock," reads the first verse of this chilling tune, remarkably similar to the Smiths' "Meat Is Murder." Says Jones, "I was delighted when I found out they were calling their album *Meat Is Murder*. The more people that talk about the subject, the better.

"I've been a vegetarian for nine years," he continues. "It's not a fad for me." What originally inspired his sentiments? "A conversation with my brother, who'd met somebody who worked in an abattoir. The stories were so horrific that I resolved to stop eating meat right at that moment."

Most of the songs on *Dream Into Action* are less pointed, with tunes like "Is There A Difference?," "Life In One Day" and "Bounce Right Back" gently counseling responsible and positive conduct, even in the face of discouraging realities. Does his sensible attitude stem from a fixed set of beliefs?

"No," says Jones firmly. "I just want to promote the idea that people should question everything—not have others' opinions rammed down their throats—and arrive at something that suits *them*. I don't actually have any beliefs. It's impossible to have them. That's my whole point. There's nothing that you can say is concrete and absolutely irrefutable.

"'Is There A Difference?' deals with the relativity of everything—that attitude is the opposite of bigotry. You must never go around bludgeoning people. Reason must prevail. If I said, 'Everyone *must* be a vegetarian, or they're wrong,' that would be pathetic. Reason and seduction are more my style."

continued on page 106

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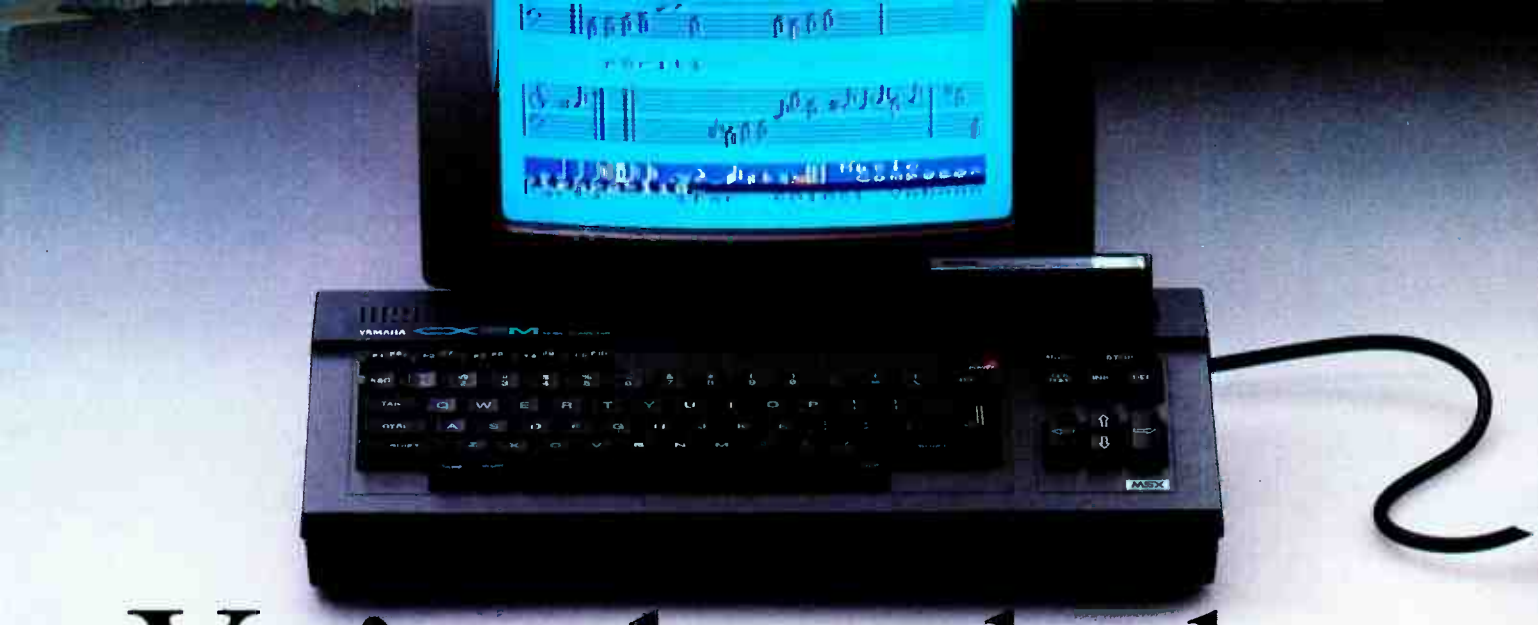

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The MIDI Recording Studio

How to Buy It, How to Set It Up, and How to Run It

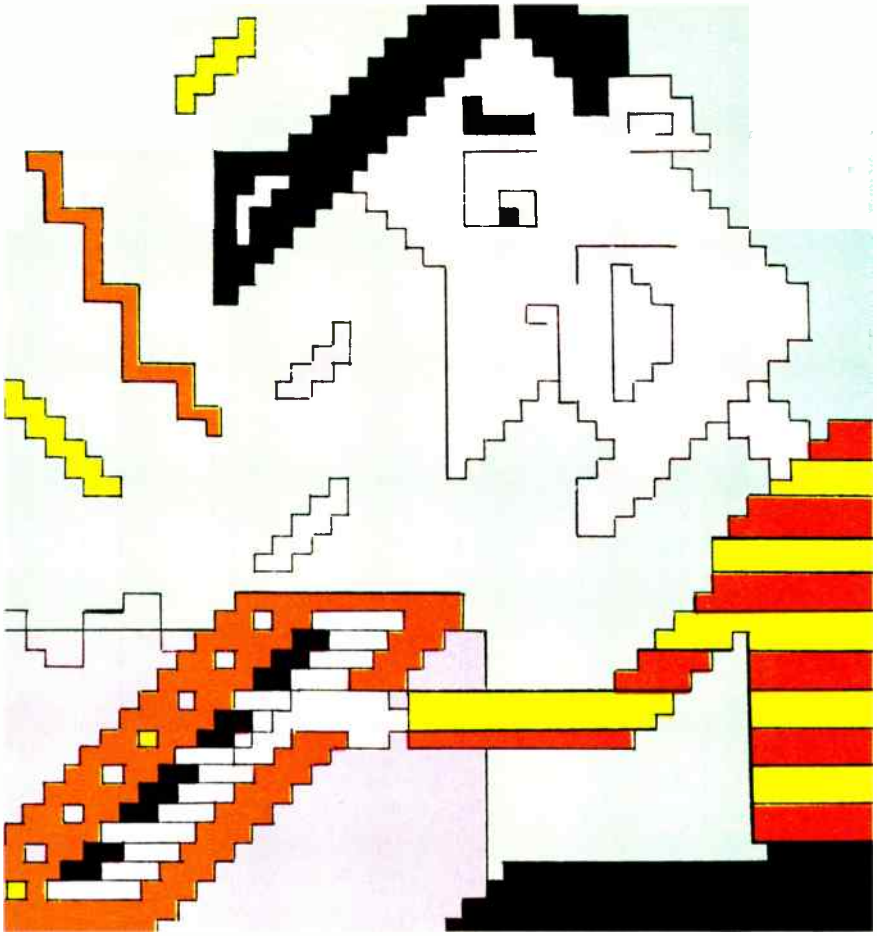


ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY ALLEN

By Craig Anderton

MIDI has received a lot of hype, but as more and more people are finding out, there is substance behind the hype. The MIDI sequencer has now made it possible to create an entirely different kind of recording studio for electronic music. As you play a melodic line on a MIDI keyboard, the computer-based sequencer "remembers" what you play and assigns this data to a track in the sequencer. You can build up multiple tracks, and on playback, send this musical data to multiple MIDI slave keyboards—thus producing the same effect as if you had multitracked the keyboards with a conventional multitrack tape recorder. This sequenced composition can then be mixed and recorded onto a conventional 2-track analog recorder, or (for maximum fidelity) PCM adapter/VCR combination to produce a master tape. Let's consider some of the advantages of this approach.

- First generation sound quality. What you hear on your final master is the sound of the MIDI instruments, with no intervening tape processes to degrade their clarity. With MIDI, the multitrack recorder is an option, not a necessity.
- No rewind time when working out compositions. Until the final mixdown, everything is stored in computer memory for virtually instant access.
- Zero fidelity loss when bouncing, no matter how many times you bounce. After all, you're bouncing computer data instead of sound.
- The ability to edit as little as one thirty-second note of one instrument on one track. Forget about the tortures of such techniques as the "window splice" (where, with tape, you splice a tiny window out of a multitrack tape to eliminate one bad note).
- Dramatically lower tape and maintenance costs. You don't have to align the bias or azimuth of a MIDI sequencer, or oil the motor, or worry about temperature and humidity extremes.
- Instantly change the sound of a track. Would that violin sound better as a trumpet? Punch a few buttons and find out; there's no need to do any re-recording.
- No noise reduction needed.
- And even more amazing stuff you'll find out about during the course of this article. The MIDI recording studio is the most exciting development since inexpensive multitrack tape decks became available in the mid-70s. Don't sell your faithful multitrack recorder (yet); but if you were considering upgrading to sixteen or twenty-four tracks, you might want to reconsider. MIDI can help you upgrade your studio to a lot more tracks for a lot less bucks, so let's see exactly what the MIDI studio is all about.

MIDI BASICS

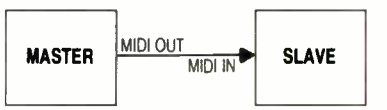
Many musicians think of MIDI solely as a way to get two keyboards to "talk" to each other. But MIDI goes beyond simple keyboard-to-keyboard hookups—think of MIDI as a *language* that conveys musical information such as pitch, duration of a note, dynamics of a note, what song you're playing, the current measure of the song you're playing, and so on.

To understand the significance of this language, consider the player piano, which is conceptually very similar to a one-track MIDI recording studio. With the player piano, a paper roll contains data (the "words" of the player piano's language) concerning the notes of a composition; this data takes the form of little punched holes. Playing back this data into the player piano polyphonically activates appropriate key depressions, thereby providing a replica of the particular performance recorded (stored) in the paper roll.

MIDI presents a far more efficient way of creating pre-programmed compositions. First, instead of coding data on paper rolls, MIDI data is recorded in computer memory. This allows for much easier editing, since computer memory can be recorded and erased at will (try doing that with a paper roll!). Second,

MIDI carries much more data than simply which notes are on and which are off, including dynamics and the other elements of the "language" we alluded to earlier. Third, MIDI lets you send out different data to different instruments over sixteen MIDI "channels": that's sixteen player pianos, playing their own individual polyphonic parts, and all being fed from one piano roll containing the score for all sixteen pianos.

Figure 1:
MIDI instrument to instrument hookup



In a standard instrument-to-instrument MIDI hookup, one instrument is the master and sends data out to a slave over the MIDI cable (see **Figure 1**). When the slave receives MIDI data from the master, it does whatever the master tells it to do—play a certain note, for a certain duration, etc. However, in the MIDI studio the master is usually not a keyboard, but a computer-based sequencer feeding multiple slave keyboards (we'll describe how to hook these together later). Using a computerized sequencer to control MIDI instruments is not as expensive as you might think; over the past few years, computer memory costs have declined to the point where you can store thousands and thousands of pieces of MIDI data in a very inexpensive computer. You could very easily base an "entry-level" MIDI studio around the Commodore 64, which sells for as low as $110.

Now let's consider the components that make up a MIDI studio, and what is involved in MIDI recording.

MIDI INSTRUMENTS

The first step in buying is to gather together some MIDI instruments; after all, these are what make the sounds. Your choice of instruments will largely be a matter of taste and budget, but I do have some suggestions.

A MIDI sampling keyboard is an expensive but important item. While sequencing all-electronic sounds can be very satisfying, adding in some "real-world" sounds gives you a much broader sonic palette. I've also found that doubling sampled sounds with synthetic sounds usually comes across more forcefully than either sound by itself. Even a relatively inexpensive instrument such as the Ensoniq Mirage (or the Decillionix sampling program hooked up to an Apple II) can do wonders, and naturally a high-tech instrument like the Emulator II or Kurzweil 250 can do proportionately more.

You will also want some kind of expander sound module. An expander is basically a synthesizer without the keyboard; it is accessed solely via MIDI. Because it doesn't have a keyboard, you can save some bucks compared to a standard keyboard instrument with equivalent capabilities. There are many good expander modules out on the market. I particularly like the Oberheim Xpander because the MIDI implementation is very complete, it sounds great, and it is far more flexible than the average synth. In the low-price category, Casio's CZ-101 mini-keyboard makes a fine expander module because no one else gives you such good-sounding voices for such little cost. And in the one-size-fits-all category, Yamaha's TX816, a rackful of DX7 expander modules, makes all those wonderful digital sounds which are all over the airwaves these days (doesn't anybody program their own sounds anymore?). Yamaha also recently introduced the TX7, an expander module version of the DX7. Roland makes a number of their products available in an expander box format, as does Korg, and some of Sequential's low-cost keyboards (like the Six-Trak and Max) make cost-effective MIDI expanders.

I'm particularly partial to expanders and keyboards that offer multi-timbral capability. This lets you choose an individual timbre for *each voice* in the synthesizer, as well as assign each voice to its own MIDI channel. Thus, multi-timbral instruments such as the Xpander or Six-Trak can give you six independent melody lines (one per voice).

Guitarists are not out of the picture by any means. Roland's GR-700 has a MIDI output that lets you interface one of the GR-series guitars to MIDI gear, and IVL, a Canadian company whose products are distributed in the U.S. by Cherry Lane, are as of this writing nearing completion on a polyphonic guitar-to-MIDI converter that has a target price of around $1,000. Top guitar makers like Gibson and Steinberger are adding new models with Roland circuitry aboard. Devices such as the Fairlight "Voicetracker" and IVL "Pitch Rider" even let vocalists, woodwind players, and others program MIDI devices from their instruments. As you might expect, these tend to have more limitations than keyboards since non-electronic instruments are much harder to adapt to MIDI. As one example, the GR-700 cannot send pitch bend information over MIDI, but instead quantizes all notes in semitone steps. Also, there is a fair amount of processing lag as the GR-700's computer analyzes the string and converts this data to MIDI information. Still, most of these limitations are well worth working around in order to gain the advantages of interfacing traditional instruments with the MIDI studio; there's something about playing a sampled piano sound from a guitar that is really quite mind-boggling.

You'll also need a MIDI drum machine, hopefully one which responds to velocity information and song data (i.e. the drum unit automatically switches to the desired song upon command). Fortunately, though, many older non-MIDI drum machines will work with MIDI sequencers that can send out a drum-compatible clock pulse signal.

The most important point to remember for any MIDI instrument is that to be most effective in the MIDI studio, the instrument should have as complete a MIDI implementation as possible. You should at least be able to receive, and preferably transmit, on all sixteen channels. Being able to transmit a keyboard's velocity (dynamics) information over MIDI is also very important, because it lets you do your own "mix" as you play (velocity keyboards are also great for programming those MIDI drum units that accept dynamic information). Expander boxes need to be capable of receiving this velocity information and responding to it.

Program change over MIDI, where changing a "patch" on the master also causes a corresponding program change on slave instruments, is also convenient. Most MIDI instruments let you program them to either accept or ignore program changes. Program change can also function as a sort of pseudo-automated mixdown if you copy a patch over to several different program numbers that differ only in

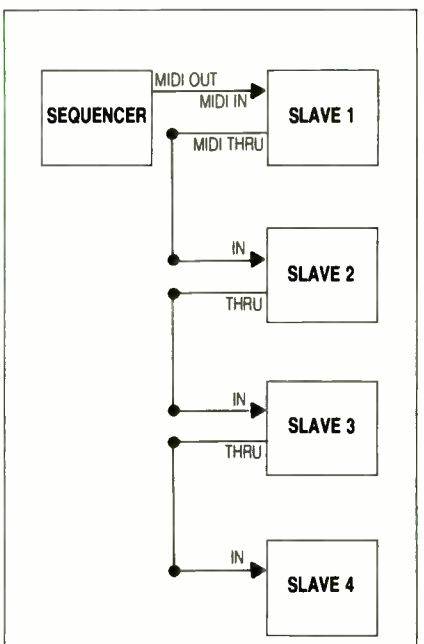


Figure 2: Typical 4-track MIDI studio

level: when you need a change, call up the program with the desired level.

Finally, the instrument controllers (pitch blend, modulation, breath controller, etc.) should be assignable to different MIDI controller numbers. (MIDI can send individual controller information for each basic channel.) Assignable controllers are great problem-solvers since there is no standardized correlation between controller number and function (except for pitch bend, which is MIDI controller 0, and sustain pedal, which follows a de facto standard of MIDI controller 64).

Once you have MIDI keyboards, a MIDI drum machine, and some expander modules, it's time to add the heart of the MIDI studio—a MIDI sequencer.

THE MIDI SEQUENCER

This has the same relationship to a MIDI studio as a multitrack tape recorder has to a conventional studio, and should be chosen with equal care. A good MIDI sequencer lets you do lots of tricks you can't do with a normal tape recorder. There are three types: the *add-on* sequencer for commercially available computers, the *built-in* that is part of a MIDI instrument, and the *stand-alone* which is conceptually closest to a tape recorder. Let's look at each type.

● **Add-on.** There is a seemingly endless stream of MIDI add-on sequencer programs: Waveform, Musicdata, Cherry Lane, Sight & Sound, Yamaha, Passport, Sequential, Roland, and a zillion others seem determined to get us using our home computers as sequencers. Whether you have an Apple, Commodore, or IBM computer, there's a MIDI sequencer for you. In addition to the software that tells the computer how to be a sequencer, most of these require some sort of hardware interface that hooks the computer up to a MIDI IN and MIDI OUT connector. The typical interface costs $100 to $200.

● **Built-ins.** Sometimes sequencers are included as part of an instrument. E-mu's Emulator II, for example, includes a very complete eight-track MIDI sequencer. The Linn 9000 is another "MIDI-ready" device, which combines a high-tech drum machine with a sophisticated built-in MIDI sequencer. The OB-8, when retrofitted for MIDI, can send DSX sequencer info through the OB-8 MIDI OUT connector. The advantage of the built-in approach is less redundancy, while the disadvantage is less flexibility.

● **Stand-alones.** Yamaha's QX1 is the first true, highly complete MIDI sequencer I've seen so far. This is the functional equivalent of a conventional multitrack recorder, right down to the "fast forward" and "rewind" buttons. I expect we'll be seeing more of these kinds of machines in the future. Roland's MSQ-700, while somewhat less sophisticated, is another very popular stand-alone sequencer.

No one sequencer can be all things to all musicians; the following list includes some of the most common and important features you can expect to find as you look at sequencers, and can serve as a check list when evaluating different models to see which one most closely meets your needs. Caution: As with synthesizers, not all manufacturers refer to a feature by the same name.

● Number of tracks. Sequencers typically come in 4-, 8-, 12- and 16-track versions. I've found eight to be adequate; I would feel differently, I'm sure, if I had sixteen MIDI keyboards.

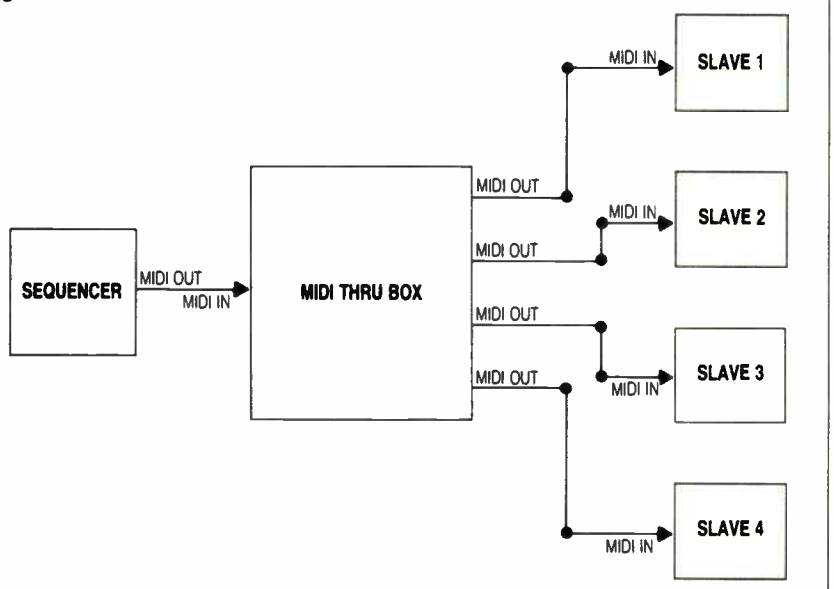
● Reasonably complete MIDI implementation. The sequencer should be able to send note-on/off data plus dynamics as a bare minimum, and be capable of assigning any track to any channel; pitch wheel change, pressure change and program change are also very important.

● Programmable auto correct (also called quantization). While recording, auto correct rounds off timing errors in your playing to the nearest note value you specify—quarter notes, eighth notes, triplets, etc. Generally, a high resolution or real time mode will also be available so that you can defeat auto correct. Some sequencers auto correct only during playback, which is a useful feature since you can change auto correct on an already recorded track.

● Disk storage option. This is a lot faster than saving data on cassettes, and more reliable too.

● Real-time, modular and step time programming. Real time lets you record like a tape recorder, where you put the sequencer into record and play away. Step time lets you move one-step-at-a-time through each and every step in the sequence, deleting or adding notes as you see fit. Some sequencers only let you do one or the other. Modular recording lets you create individual patterns which are then linked into songs (like drum machine programming). These patterns may usually be recorded in real time or step time. Note that step time, while useful, can often be simulated on real-time-only sequencers by simply slowing the tempo way down.

Figure 3: Use of a MIDI THRU box



● Punch-in and punch-out. Careful, though; there are some subtleties to MIDI punching. If you punch right after a "note on" command and don't program anything to turn that note off, the original note will sustain in the background. A pre-roll feature is also handy, where you can program a section to start playing a couple of measures before the punch occurs.

● Programmable tempo changes. Being able to change the tempo for a song is very useful. Unlike tape, speeding up and slowing down a MIDI sequencer doesn't affect the timbre of the instruments. This makes it very easy to play complex parts at a slow speed, then boost the speed up for playback. Being able to program relative tempo changes—accelerando and ritardando—helps considerably to humanize a track.

● Track re-assignment. Maybe you want to drive your Mirage instead of your DX7 from track 5 without having to do any repatching; this option will let you do it.

● Easy commands. You want to do the least amount of typing necessary. A program which requires only single-letter commands and lets you move a cursor around to make selections is better

than one which makes you type in stuff like "SAVE: COMPOSITION #1 IN B-MINOR: DISK A."

● Printout option. Some score/lead sheet printout programs are better than others, but just about all of them beat doing it by hand.

● Ability to name sequences and tracks. It's much easier to remember a song title than a number. Naming tracks is also handy; that way you know which instrument is driven by what track.

● Programmable countdown. I don't know about you, but I always need a few beats before a song starts in order to prepare myself for recording.

● Programmable metronome. Being able to program fast metronome times means that you'll still have a solid click reference if you slow the sequence way down when overdubbing.

● Expandable number of events. Most sequencers seem to be able to remember somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 events (with note on, note off, pitch bend and so on being considered as "events"). This is fine for working on a song, but not always enough for a set of music. Being able to expand the memory to, say, 70,000 events with an optional memory expansion package leaves more space for sequences.

● Memory space status. You should be able to check how much memory is left.

● Readable manual. Make sure the person writing the manual is trying to instruct you, not impress you. If the first few pages make good sense, the rest probably will too.

● Sync-to-tape and external clock facilities. The ideal sequencer would be able to sync to anything—MIDI timing information, SMPTE, click pulses and so on. Generally, sequencers don't have all these capabilities, although you can usually find a suitable adapter box (try J.L. Cooper, Roland, Garfield Electronics, Synchronous Technologies, etc. for specific situations).

● Non-destructive editing. When editing a sequence, some sequencers create a copy which you edit. This preserves an unedited version of the original in case you end up not liking the edited sequence as much (don't you wish tape recorders would save a previous track when you did an overdub?) Once you get an edited version you prefer, then over-write the original.

● Fast forward/rewind. It's fun to hear the sequence whiz by as you look for a part towards the beginning or end of a song.

● Search. Search looks for a particular part of the sequence, or places you a certain number of measures into it.

● Bounce. You should be able to bounce around data for tracks, and combine tracks together (thus, you could play sections of a complex part for one instrument on several tracks, then bounce them all down to create one composite part on one track).

● Transpose. So you can't sing that song in D# after all? Then transpose until you hit the right range.

● Filter. I first saw this used in Roger Powell's "Texture" program to selectively eliminate data from a track. For example, suppose you played left and right hand parts on a single keyboard, and wanted to split off the left hand part to a different keyboard. You could copy the track and filter the low notes from the original, thus sending the right hand part to one instrument; then, you could filter the high notes from the copy and send the low notes (the left hand part) to a different instrument.

● Mute/cue function. This lets you selectively silence tracks while recording. One use is to record four or five different solos, and listen to each one individually. For live use, this means you can play different solos at different performances so you don't get bored with hearing the same sequenced part over and over and over and over again.

● Free software updates. According to Anderton's Law of High-Tech Equipment Purchasing, never buy anything that says "Version 1.0" unless the company will upgrade you to the next

continued on page 92

THE WELL-TEMPERED COMPUTER FAMILY

How the Hell Did All These Computers Get in My Studio?

By Freff

Freff composing on his PC keyboard while baby SMPL minds the tape machine.

RANDY MATUSOW

In my hard-won studio there are many tools: guitars and basses, microphones and mixers, signal processors and synths. And four computers. *Four* computers? (Six, actually, if you count the two I keep down the hall.) For a recording studio that used to be a modestly-proportioned bedroom? How the hell did this happen?

Flippant answer: one by one. Real answer: because they do the jobs I need done, and they do them superbly. I wouldn't be helpless without them, certainly not that...but I'd have a damn sight less power at my disposal. And with them, this once-upon-a-bedroom can hold its own with the most sophisticated recording studios in the world.

Think that's hype? I call it heaven. Come meet my microcomputer family and decide for yourself.

Computer #1: GRANDPA

THE APPLE II–PLUS: 64K of RAM, two disc drives, Sakata color monitor, various peripheral cards, extended game paddle port and a variety of joysticks to choose from.

This was my first computer, and I have an incredibly soft spot in my heart for it. The disc drives should probably be replaced, and 64K isn't much memory, and I've never been sure exactly what color it is (other than not quite beige and not quite green)...but oh, what unexpected doors it opened.

They began opening five years ago, when I was trying to borrow a typewriter. An engineer friend—with all the calculation of a pusher eyeing a likely target—loaned me his thoroughly customized Apple II, an early word-processing program, and a used teletype loud enough to drown out thunderstorms. In two weeks I wrote what normally would have taken me two months. Did I call him a pusher? Call me an addict. I was *hooked*.

In 1981 I got my own Apple, from the first computer store to open in Manhattan. The complete setup, with software and dot matrix printer and all the expensive bells and whistles set me back over five thousand dollars. I stayed with Apple for two reasons. First, there wasn't a lot of choice in those days—remember, this was eons before you could buy a computer at K-Mart for less than good seats at a Prince concert. Second, and more important, *an Apple could be used for music*. It had a built-in speaker, there were these digital oscillator cards you could buy for it, and...well, if this thing could bleep on cue, I was for it. As it happened, it did a lot more than just bleep; which is why it now lives nestled comfortably in my studio, in the keyboard racks, below the CAT SRM II and above the DX7, lid removed for easy access and maximum air cooling.

I use it in five ways.

First, it's the heart of my alphaSyntauri system. This is a hardware/software combination that turns the Apple into a digital synthesizer with sixteen oscillators, a five-octave keyboard, the capacity for microtonal scales, and a 16-track sequencer. The sound is a bit thin in character and needs a lot of signal processing to work on tape, but there are pluses enough to balance the scale, like neat special effects and the fact that it can generate eight different timbres simultaneously (add in the sequencer and you've got a powerful tool for sketching out orchestrations). I wouldn't trade or sell mine. It also illustrates an interesting phenomenon of life in these computer times a sort of *pseudo*-obsolescence. The Syntauri Corporation itself is dead and gone. Look for it in data heaven. But there is still plenty of alphaSyntauri-related software and hardware being developed, by both the original designers (most of whom now work for a music software company called Mimetics) and talented users. The company is dead, but the instrument lives on, and actually improves. It didn't used to work like that!

My Apple's second use is that of music tutor. There are over fifty different theory programs available on the market today, covering topics from sight reading to ear training, at levels of complexity from kindergarten to college. It's nice to be able to study at my own rate, and the programs that take an arcade-style approach are a nice break from routine. (Avoid any ear training pro-

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grams that use the Apple's own speaker instead of an external synth, though.)

Third use is as a controller for my Drumulator, using E-mu's GRC (Graphic Rhythm Composer) program. I find this more flexible and expressive than programming patterns from the drum machine's front panel...especially when going for those quirks of timing and volume changes that humanize a track.

Fourth use is as a programmer and librarian for my Yamaha DX7. If you've ever tried to edit voices on a DX7, you know how crazy the single data slider and little display can make you. Tackling the task with a computer keyboard and full-screen color graphics is a whole different story. In fact, right now I'm using four different Apple/DX7 programs, trying to decide which combination I like best.

They're all basically good and useful; choosing between them comes down to a matter of personal style. Yamaha's DX-PRO has got a great visual interface that makes voice design easy to understand. But on my computer, at least, the program is quirky. Cherry Lane's HEAVEN has simpler graphics that pack more voice parameters onto a single screen. Some people will like seeing everything at once; others might find all the numbers a bit overwhelming. Then there is Mimetics' DATA-7, less a programmer than a good analyzer; you still have to do all your editing from the DX7 itself. The computer just makes it easier to see what's going on.

A bonus with all these programs is that they let you store your DX7 voices on floppy discs. Keeping a voice library using RAM cartridges is expensive, what with every 32-voice cartridge costing you $90. But a floppy disc only costs $2 to $3 and stores *800* voices.

Which brings me to Mimetics' PERFORMANCE-7, a stage and studio godsend for any DX7 owner with a good voice library. PERFORMANCE-7 does one thing, and one thing only. It keeps ten different banks—320 voices—instantly available. To load a new bank you just tap a number on the Apple keyboard and wait a couple of seconds.

Lastly, my Apple becomes part of the studio MIDI network whenever I run MIDI/4, a 4-track recording program from Passport Systems. Frankly, that isn't very often these days. MIDI/4 is a simple, solid program that gives good service for a reasonable price. But it is limited by the Apple itself, which doesn't have enough memory to run the *really* hot MIDI recording packages.

#2: JUNIOR

The SMPL SYSTEM : Commodore VIC-20 converted by Synchronous Technologies of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. One interface card and Zenith monochrome green monitor.

Nobody takes a Commodore VIC-20 seriously. It's a toy computer, designed for and sold in a kiddie computer marketplace that wasn't even dreamed of in the days I bought my Apple. But the fact is that even this "toy" computer has a lot of power when properly tapped. You just have to see the potential.

John Simonton, of PAIA and Synchronous Technologies, had his eyes open. And so he created his SMPL System around a heavily converted VIC-20, in one sweep making SMPTE and computerized tape recording affordable for people with less than astronomical budgets. Like me.

Basic operation is very simple. I start by using the SMPL unit to lay down a track of SMPTE timecode on my 8-track. From then on I can ignore the transport controls on the Otari and operate everything from SMPL. It reads the timecode on the tape and uses it as a guide for both auto-location and automatic punch-in and punch-out. The effect is eerie. SMPL is always accurate, but at the beginning of a session it takes time searching for its marks. This search time gets shorter as the session progresses, until it's almost nonexistent and SMPL is whizzing right along. It's like having the Invisible Man for an assistant engineer, doing perfect punches for you from across the room. SMPL also sends out sync pulses in 24-, 48- or 96-pulse formats, to drive drum machines and—if you have the right interface—MIDI sequencers.

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SMPL costs about $1,000. And coming out sometime around now is an expanded interface with MIDI, simultaneous and separate sync outputs, plus the ability to do gen-lock and chase-lock with separate recorders, or a recorder and a VCR...for only $500 more.

#3:THE TRANSIENT COUSIN

THE APPLE MACINTOSH: sometimes 128K of RAM, sometimes 512K, external disc drives, Imagewriter printer.

Macintoshes come and go around here, usually rented. I don't own one yet and I'm not really sure I want to, not until they do something about that incredibly slow and annoying DOS (Disc Operating System). My old Apple II-Plus is faster. (If you're thinking of buying a Macintosh, for heaven's sake don't do it unless you get the 512K version with an external disc drive.) But I do have to admit I like the two musical programs I've run on it.

The first is called MUSICWORKS, from MacroMind. It's pure fun. Somewhat limited, because it generates sound with the Macintosh oscillators instead of external synths, but a MIDI version is supposed to be in the works. In the meantime, the musical graphics are superb and you can get some interesting accidental compositions by sweeping the computer's mouse around at random. A good buy for its $49.95 price.

Not nearly so inexpensive is the MACATTACH communications package for the Kurzweil 250. But then, before you even need the $1,800-plus Mac and the $150-plus software, you'll have already spent somewhere between fourteen and sixteen thousand on your K250 (with sampling option). What's a couple thousand more? MACATTACH is the software that coordinates data transfer between the K250 and a Macintosh disc, so you'll need it to build your own library of sounds.

More exciting for the Mac are two programs that should be in release by summer's end: Digidesign's SOUND DESIGNER for the Emulator II and Southworth Music System's TOTAL MUSIC. TOTAL MUSIC is an extremely comprehensive MIDI hardware/software package, judging from specs and some advance demos I've seen. And SOUND DESIGNER makes an Emulator II act like a Fairlight CMI for about a third the total price. (A new program for the Apple makes similarly incredible enhancements to the Ensoniq Mirage sampler.) If these live up to advance word, I may buy a Macintosh yet.

#4: ALL KNOWING FATHER FIGURE

THE IBM PC: 640K of RAM, two disc drives, Hercules Graphic Card, Amdek monochrome amber monitor, Roland MPU-401 MIDI interface.

This computer is my favorite. Power is up and price is down. Mine only cost $2,800. It is common to sneer at the IBM PC and its parent company in some

computer circles. But the hardware itself is perfectly respectable, and in any case the real question is always software, software, software: are the *programs* out there?

Well, let's see....

I'm using XYWRITE II-PLUS for word-processing right now. (Word-processing isn't musical? I write song lyrics on it—that counts.) I'm using DBASE III for my databases. What good are they in a studio? Plenty. They're invaluable for keeping track charts, tape catalogs, synthesizer voicing data sheets, equipment maintenance schedules, musician contact lists and expenses.

There's only one synth programmer/librarian so far, a program for my Voyetra 8 from Octave Plateau. I'm hoping for CZ-101 and DX7 programs for the PC, someday, but there are none out yet. (A good CZ-101 progammer for the Apple, by the way, is Cherry Lane's CZ-RIDER.) This is an excellent argument for two computers in the studio, incidently—one is always free for sequencing when the other is voice-editing.)

But wonderful though all of these are, they wouldn't be enough to replace the old Apple in my estimation. Except, see, there are these three devastating MIDI recording programs....

In order of release they are Jim Miller's PERSONAL COMPOSER, Octave Plateau's SEQUENCER PLUS, and Cherry Lane's TEXTURE, written by Utopia's Roger Powell. Although they all work though the Roland MPU-401, each takes a totally different approach to the problems of multi-track MIDI recording. As a result, I find all three useful at different times, and haven't got a clear favorite.

PERSONAL COMPOSER's strong suit is notation. It works in several ways. On one side, you can write actual scores on the computer screen, scores of up to orchestral complexity, using a mouse or the computer's keyboard, and when you are done that score can drive a network of MIDI synths. If you put in *The Rite Of Spring*, by God, *The Rite Of Spring* is what you hear played back. Also well-organized is a 32-track sequencer. But the most interesting features in the program are still taking shape. Ready for this? You can MIDI-record a keyboard performance and have PERSONAL COMPOSER *convert that into music notation*. I could give music printouts from this program to session players without the slightest hesitation. It's very clean. And coming in future versions is something called "midi-graphics," which will let you create your own notation characters, assign MIDI meanings to them, and then use them in your own scores.

TEXTURE takes an approach Roger Powell calls "modular recording." Using it to compose is like constructing a

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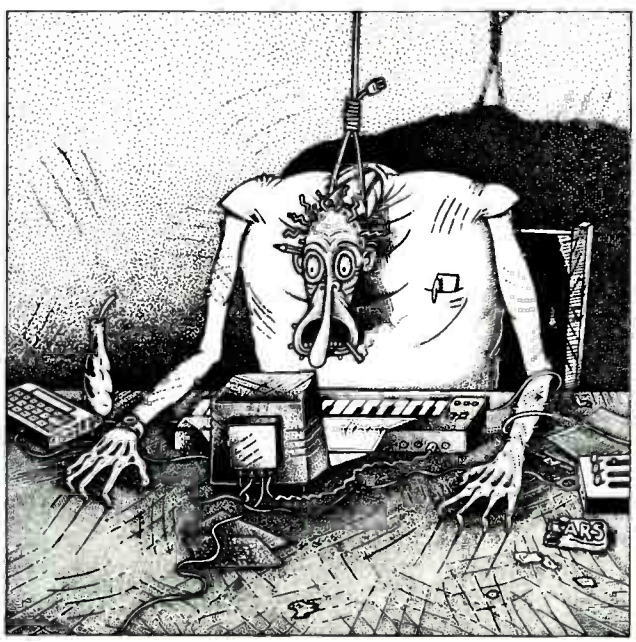
I WAS A COMPUTER IDIOT!

Kicking and Screaming, a Guitarist Enters the Digital Age

By Josef Woodard

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am your Average Guitar Joe, blithely living out the existence of a rock 'n' roll proletariat. Until recently, I was harboring a dark and terrible secret. I was a computer idiot, a walking anachronism who didn't know software from footware or floppy discs from a hole in the ground. Us guitar players, no matter what we claim, are still essentially affixed to the wild west mythos: Outlaws flauntin' a hot piece they ain't ascared to use iffen they hafta. Somehow, it's hard to play the same role armed with a pc terminal.

But stubborn pride gave way under intimidation from my editors. I had my first close encounter with a computer—and I not only survived with my psyche intact, but became a convert. If you've got my ailment, repeat after me...*I am a computer idiot. I am a computer idiot. I am a computer idiot.* Good. Help is on its way. Take it from me; I was blind but now I see.



My own personal tourguide to computer awareness was MusicData. Presently an unassuming image on the third floor of the old Wilshire Theatre building on the edge of Beverly Hills, the company was born when synthesist Lance Ong met marketing wizard Ron Wilkerson at a N.A.M.M. show. The company's first endeavors were along the lines of data cassettes programmed by big names to expand your stock synth sounds shipped from the factory. MusicData's next logical step was toward software that serves as a bridge—not only between the synth and computer manufacturers, but between all that technological sophistry and Average Joe/Janes like me.

Lance Ong and technical partner Jeff Burger sat me down at the screen with a bit of cheerleading: "From a compositional standpoint, computers are a god send," Ong states flatly. And given the organizational latitude of the sequencer, song assembly takes on an eerie mutability. The program is ideally suited to the art of pop songcraft. Pop songs, after all, are highly modular entities, sectional roadmaps of repeating verses, choruses and the odd bridge or coda. Aided by software, shifting parts around is as easy as punching the right key—no razor or splicing tape required. What better way to road test this newfangled gadgetry than by rolling up the sleeves and digging in (without getting my fingernails dirty, of course). I was the perfect, innocent, guitar-based subject, armed only with a riff and a prayer. The odds got a bit stiffer when I found out that I wouldn't be able to use a Roland guitar controller to input the musical parts; I would have to tap my threadbare keyboard abilities on this perilous journey. Cold fear gripped me as I booted the disk and peered at my first menu. But when the going gets tough....

I intentionally started with only a single four-bar funk riff in mind; I wanted to see what kind of creativity these babies could spur on. I started the process by programming a LinnDrum beat, one of those unwittingly awkward grooves that a drummer would never think of, or care to (to further betray my naivete, this was my first hands-on experience with a Linn). It was drunken drums along the Mohawk.

Synched into the Commodore to provide a clock pulse (tempo variable from either the Linn or the keyboard), the Linn provided the foundation. Using a Yamaha DX7 as my inputting keyboard, I next laid down the central riff with a slap bass sound, slowing down the tempo to suit my sluggard fingers. Only four bars of clean execution were needed, after which a one-note trigger on the next downbeat would seal off a loop. Many takes later, my misbehaving digits pulled it off, and I got a taste of one of the large advantages of recording with the system: there is virtually no rewind time, because you're not rewinding.

Playing back the riff, I accidentally changed the DX7 patch to a log drum-sounding *marimbone. Eureka, an inspired flub!* The figure was too busy as a bass line anyway. So it was time to go back and put down a real, pithy bass part—something meaty and to the syncopated point. It was all sounding too linear, this complement of cycling loops, so I added a few simple chords to the stew, but quickly ran afoul a basic problem. The computer is an exacting stenographer, needless to say, and I had trouble telling it to violate barlines and to anticipate the downbeat without throwing the groove out of phase. also, the prior loops had to fit into the longest loop evenly; I had a two-bar phrase, a four-bar phrase and a three-bar phrase, which adds up to *Help, Mr. Wizard!*

Getting around on a computer-generated sequencer, like the Los Angeles freeway system, requires some forethought. Computers, unlike live engineers, thrive on commands. They never take coffee breaks, it's true, but they also will never second-guess a musician in creative midstream. Get to know your downbeat. You don't have quite the fix-it-in-the-mix safety net where software is concerned. With MusicData's sequencing program, you check your status—which track is being engaged, tempo, transposition position, outgoing assignment (which track is triggering which synth in the playback) and an easy-to-read chart of sequence order—all on one screen at one time. An idiot's delight. You can squeeze a lot of musical substance out of scant actual ideas. For instance, I had set up my A section—a nice

continued on page 90

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK FISHER

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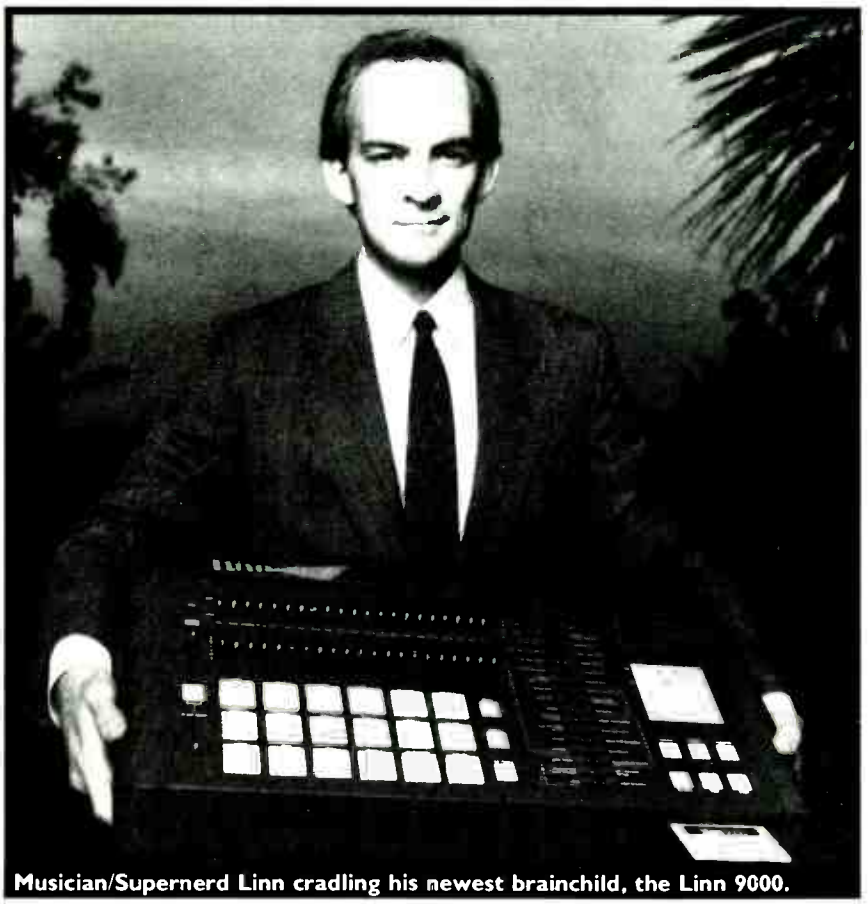
ROGER LINN, THE MISSING LINK

Musicians & Computers Meet in the Mind of a Modest Revolutionary

By Jock Baird



Musician/Supernerd Linn cradling his newest brainchild, the Linn 9000.

HOWARD ROSENBERG

"One way to tell if you're good at something is to find out how much money people are willing to pay you for it," says Roger Linn, the musician/inventor who shook the world. "Someone can say you're a good guitar player, but will they hire you for a session? Someone can say your drum machine is nice, but will they shell out the money for it? My finances when I was a guitar player and a songwriter proved to me that drum machines are what I'm good at."

Technology, like Roger Linn's invention of the first commercial programmable real-sound drum machine, seldom develops in straight lines. Far from a footnote, Linn's unsuccessful 70s career as a "jack of all trades, master of none" was the foundation of the first computer music product ever to be widely accepted by musicians. That's right, all you technophobes who swear you'll never go digital; that drum machine you've been using all this time is a computer, although as Linn laughs, "We do the most we can to hide that."

So how *did* a kid from Hollywood High with no college education catch the entire musical instrument industry napping? Born twenty-nine years ago, Roger Linn grew up in Los Angeles, his father a professor of music theory and composition at USC. At age eight, Roger began studying classical guitar, until four yours later a rabid fascination with George Harrison's guitar sound led him into rock and electronics. By the time he graduated from Hollywood High in '73, he was a good enough guitarist to catch the ear of Leon Russell, who took Linn on the road, first to play in singer Mary McCreary's band, and then after she married Russell, in their combined ensemble. Linn even moved to Leon's beloved Tulsa for a spell.

"The truth of it is, I wasn't a great guitar player," says Linn with typical modesty, "but I was also the recording engineer and I was really into synths. I also did some songwriting—another person and I wrote a song called 'Promises' that Eric Clapton did around '79 or '80. The songs I wrote were not that great, but my feeble attempt at songwriting did give me some perspective on what a songwriter needs."

"I had a little studio in one room of the house I was living in, and around '77 I decided I needed a drum machine. I went down to one of the guitar stores, and all these machines were like seven hundred bucks. I said, 'I can't afford that!' Returning home, he resolved to build his own. His revenge had begun.

"I'd always been sort of an electronics nerd anyway, pens in the pocket and the whole bit. A year or two before, I'd bought my first computer, called a Compal 80. I saw it, and bought it on the spot. I already knew something about electronics—I'd I'd taken a couple of high schoo' and correspondence courses. I took some new courses in programming, and developed a close friendship with the repairman at the computer store. I learned enough to get in trouble. All of a sudden I became totally enthralled with the Compal. I found myself writing little novel programs, playing with it all day.

"So I did a program that would send out electrical signals on the computer and then I hooked up some simple circuitry to make very simple analog drum sounds from a drum generator board from a Roland machine. It sounded pretty bad, but at least it was programmable. The TV screen had a grid, with the different drums represented vertically and the sixteenth notes horizontally, and you'd plug an asterisk into the grid where you wanted the drum to sound. Actually, my first program was able to do a bassline, too, on a monophonic synthesizer. But it turned out the drum was more important."

Applying Linn's Law of career-evaluation, Roger had clearly stumbled on something. "My friends were so excited about what I'd put together. They were saying, 'Hey, let me buy one from you,' and they were quoting these outrageous figures! But I decided to spend more time and improve it."

While developing the operating system for his first commercial prototype, Linn made a number of discoveries and decisions that established the architecture of modern drum machines. His first big change was eliminating the TV

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monitor. "I went away from the video screen idea, because when I had the non-real, step entry system on the screen everybody said, 'I can't use this, I need to just tap a button.' It's hard to think in non-real time; that skill has to be learned, and I wanted a machine where people didn't have to think."

While developing real-time programming, Linn stumbled across an important innovation: error correction. "It appeared to me, actually, through a mistake. I knew that I wanted to be able to save memory, so I said, 'Sixteenth notes are very common, so I'll round everything off to the nearest sixteenth note.' But then everything you play will be corrected. I thought, "Hey, this is a great mistake!' The chain system, or song system, came about the same way: not enough memory to record the whole way through. So I thought, there's a certain number of rhythms in there, why don't I stick them together as verse, chorus, bridge...."

A further Linn invention was quantifying and programming swing, born of Leon Russell's passion for shuffles. But Linn's most enduring achievement was his decision to use digital recordings of his drum sounds: "Digital recording, the process of taking an analog wave form and converting it into a series of numbers, had been around for a long time. And it was just the connection of the two thoughts: digital recording exists for music, and memories can be solid state memories. And even though what you could record was very short, who cares, since one strike of a drum lasts perhaps half a second. If that."

It was a "real rough" year for Linn: "It was very, very nervewracking and I did very little else. I was just being a total lock-myself-in-the-room nerd. I was working twelve hours a day. There were some bad power problems in my house, and I remember one summer when I was doing a lot of the development work, whenever the neighbor would kick his air conditioner on, it would cause a power surge in my Radio Shack Model One, which was a pretty unreliable computer. So I did much of my greatest programming after people turned their air conditioners off, from about ten o'clock in the evening to about four or five in the morning."

One thing kept Linn going: stubbornness, the stuff of champions. "It's funny, I'm usually very hesitant to jump out into the unknown," he shrugs, "but once I've taken one step and I've already started, it's impossible to take a step backward. I had these bills I had to pay, I had made promises to people, taken their deposits. there was no question I was going to make good on that." At last, the prototype of the LM-1 was ready. It was not lovely: "What I had was a cardboard box—I was still having the casings made up—with some circuit boards in it, wires hanging out of it...." But it caused a sensation.

The LM-1 appeared in the spring of 1980, manufactured at first by out-of-work musician pals of Roger and later by friend Bob Easton's 360 Systems plant. There were only about five hundred made, "but they went to all the top musicians in the industry." Linn went from a one man show to a real company, and his fame grew. By 1982, when the declining price of memory (and competition from Oberheim) ushered in the LM-1's successor, the LinnDrum, the issue of electronic drummers putting human drummers out of work had been hotly joined.

"It was never my intention to replace drummers, but in some cases that happened, definitely. Still, I think drummers are considering different priorities now—I don't think it's as important to just be an absolute steady-time drummer anymore. What we're really talking about is the effect of technology on art. Every time an engineer comes up with a new circuit, it will be the artist who follows that will make it into an art form. A parallel would be the invention of photography. Before it existed, the purpose of artists was to reproduce someone or something. Then photography

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came along and they were out of a job. But soon artists began adding more than photographers could do, leading to abstract art. Ultimately photography led to *more* creativity."

About two years ago, Linn set his company working on another breakthrough, a 32-track keyboard sequencer in the same box with an improved (touch-sensitive pads, high-hat open & close slider) drum machine. Roger dubbed it the Linn 9000, after the HAL 9000 series rogue computer in *2001*. "If you're going to have the band in there, why limit it to the drums? The original machine I made had a bass sequencer, after all. It was becoming clear to me that a sequencer shouldn't just make sixteenth notes, a bass line that repeats for five minutes.

"Even the word sequencer to me is

continued on page 95

Idiot from page 84

enough, bubbling ditty—with a total of maybe thirty seconds playing time.

I then makeshifted a B section by instructing the Commodore to transpose everything but the bass up a fifth and swapped sounds. A Casio CZ-101 played the bass, the DX7 played *Marimbone* and an Oberheim OB-8 offered a brass sound, the latter two trading sounds between sequences of the tune. To give the illusion of musical direction, I cooked up another bass riff with an interlocking motif as a C section and played an actual solo, recorded at maybe two-thirds the eventual tempo. Getting the hang of this arrangements-while-you-wait enterprise, I plotted the different sections in a carefully random fashion on the sequence chart. As a sort of coda, I had the bass transpose down a fourth, reaching a sad and wonderful harmonic resolution that sends listeners pondering the whole art versus technology issue, or dinner.

Shockingly, my little untrained foray into the software resulted in a five-minute piece that bears an uncanny resemblance to music. It will never wend its way to vinyl, but this etude, which I humbly call "Blinded Me With Parlance," has a quirky, perky charm; it's an example of neo-expressionist, post-Jazzercise dogma. Available through modem only.

Most of all, my cassette copy of the tune acts as a verification of a rite of passage. I communed with a Commodore and found that we are not nemeses, that we could more than just peacefully coexist. In fact, the ease of musical operations afforded through computers raises a nasty question; will data-processing, by making musicians sound better than they actually are, erode the standards of modern musicianship? Is the computer musician a more indolent sort than his/her acoustic/analog ancestor? And will computers alter the way music is constructed and absorbed, resulting in more sterile, programmatic pragmatics, a more paint-by-the-number creative aesthetic? Will it change the contours of our thought patterns; is it apparent, for example, by the nature of my sentences that this manuscript was pecked on a rickety Smith Corona, when all about me have graduated to word processors? What's it all about, Apple? Ⓜ

Serafine from page 66

come increasingly a part of the fabric of a tune. Besides, he adds, "It seems like sounds are the only free things left in the world."

What's the best way for musicians to become more sound-conscious? Is there any kind of ear training? "No, I don't think so. Experimentation is the key to getting good sound effects...going out and recording sounds, playing them backwards, stretching existing synthesizers, using sampling devices...stretch your mind, ideas, and experiment. I think that's why Jimi Hendrix was so outrageous; he took music into the world of sound effects.

"As soundtrack technology moves into the music industry, musicians will have a lot to gain. With video music and computer graphics becoming more of an entertainment source, sound effects will become an integral part of the music medium, and musicians will be creating their own as part of the package." Ⓜ

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Computer Family from page 83

mosaic—you build up larger pieces from the selected repetition of smaller fragments. Each song can have up to sixty-four "links" made up of different combinations of sixty-four different "patterns," arranged over eight tracks. I haven't had this program long, but I'm finding it quite pleasing to work with.

SEQUENCER PLUS' strong point is *control*—no, make that CONTROL! It has sixty-four tracks for recording, with room for around 60,000 notes in a 640K IBM PC like mine, and every single one of those 60,000 notes can be edited for length, pitch, start time, volume...even release velocity, if you have synths which use that data, like Prophet T8s and Chromas do. Music is notated in graphic form, as bars on a grid. The higher the bar, the higher the pitch. The longer the bar, the longer the note. It's such a simple interface that its power is not immediately apparent, but after a short time you'll likely find standard notation stiff and a little disappointing to work with. I know I do.

In addition, it can be synched to tape through the MPU-401 (or SMPL, using a Nano Doc from Garfield Electronics). In my studio this has two immediate and overwhelming benefits. First, I'm not limited to eight tracks anymore. Instead I have seven "acoustic" tracks to record on with microphones, one for the sync code, and then *up to sixty-four MIDI synth tracks that will always by in sync with the miked stuff.* Suppose I make a tape recording and a MIDI-recording simultaneously. Three days later I change my mind about something, maybe a note or a timbre. All I have to do is edit the computer score, sync the computer and the tape back together, hook up the synth of my choice, and drop the new track perfectly into place. Even total garbage can be edited into perfection if you take the time.

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Right now I'm surrounded by networks. There's the network that feeds the patchbay for the recording chain, the patchbay made up of instrument outputs, the MIDI net, and all the various control systems. I've arranged my little room so that I can sit in a couple of different places and reach the three or four control panels that *count*—the PC keyboard, SMPL, the Otari recording remote, any (or all) my MIDI synths through a Casio CZ-101 I can hold in my lap—and that's wonderful.

But gosh, if I just had a little more computer power, and more of the signal-processing gear had interface jacks built in, and the networks could be merged into one...oh my. Oh my my. Ⓜ

Linn from page 90

a misnomer; what it really is is a digital keyboard MIDI recorder. There's no chain or song system—it's recording in real time all the way through, on one long string of memory—though if you *want* to use a chain system or error correct you can. If you want a fill in bar 71, you go forward to bar 71 and punch it in." There's also musician-friendly features like transport buttons resembling a tape machine's, and a HELP button that turns the display into a user's manual.

"I try to stay away from getting too locked in to little details and keep looking at the overview. What we're really trying to find is the best way to get the music in a musician's head onto a tape recorder or out to an audience. Everything in between is an obstacle we're trying to remove. Someday a musician might have a little jack on the back of his head, and just think things and the audience will hear it. That's the ideal. Until then...."

"Ideas are never really a problem for me. It's the implementation, all the work involved. I love to design products on paper. When I was eight or ten I used to draw pictures of the ultimate guitar, amplifier, keyboard, things like that—I remember one was a guitar amplifier with every single effect built in. They were all just kid's dreams. And that's what I do now—make the machines of my dreams."

Post-Avalon elan: Still crying in his Perrier, Ferry perfects his smooth white whine.

MICHAEL PUTLAND RETNA

BRYAN FERRY

Boys And Girls
(Warner Bros.)(CD)

In the world of Bryan Ferry, sensation is the currency and the air is emotionally intoxicating. Boys and girls score love the way junkies score smack, enslaved or annulled by their passions. To anyone who has never felt the grip of such obsessions, who has never known, as Ferry puts it, "how the strong get poor and the rich get weak," these *crises de conscience* must sound a tad melodramatic, or perhaps merely dreamy. In the hands of an ordinary artist, they would probably just fall flat. But Bryan Ferry has never sounded ordinary, and the siren songs of *Boys And Girls* are at once stormy and shimmering.

The record is Ferry's first solo LP since 1978's *The Bride Stripped Bare*, but its themes and musical conception bears closer resemblance to Roxy Music's 1982 offering *Avalon*, an album that's finally receiving its just recognition as a pop classic. Ferry's music has grown more groove-oriented over the years, and his eerie colors and voicings—in the past oft-rendered by Phil Manzanera's space-age guitar and Andy Mckay's Black Forest oboe—can be both emotionally jolting and musically refined. Neither sideman appears on *Boys And Girls*, but their legacies are echoed by a core of studio musicians, while guest guitarist Mark Knopfler provides languorous embellishment to the title track and to "Stone Woman," a paeon to sensual detachment suggestive of "Flesh And Blood." Meanwhile, erstwhile Roxyites Andy Newmark and Alan Spenner help ignite those formidable Ferry rhythms, equally applicable for getting it on the dance floor or standing in the shadows and brooding over your drink.

But the real show here is Ferry himself, who has rarely sounded quite so blue or so elegantly seductive (listen to the way he shapes "Windswept"'s pleas) and whose odd yet delicate phrasing is a match for any other pop singer today. Ferry's musical arrangements are the epitome of cool, yet his vision remains restless and bleak, here lacking even the guardedly optimistic spirit which occasionally graced *Avalon*. And on songs like "Sensation," "The Chosen One" and "Slave To Love," Ferry melds dire sentiment with an opiated musical atmosphere—the reflection of a heart torn between yearning and despair. *Boys And Girls* may well be the most extravagantly romantic tableau since Lawrence Durrell's *Justine*; at the very least, it's a great cassette to have on your Walkman for cryin' in the rain. Love is the drug, indeed.
– **Mark Rowland**

BOB DYLAN

Empire Burlesque
(CBS)(CD)

A friend of mine once saw Bob Dylan walking around Greenwich Village and later claimed—quite seriously—that Dylan had a halo. My initial reaction was laughter, then sorrow, because Dylan had to live in a world full of people like

my friend. How could the guy *not* be screwed up in such an environment? A couple years later, Dylan became born again and it seemed a reasonable reaction to all that distorting pressure: "Hey, I'm not Jesus! Jesus is Jesus!"

Most of his fans accepted the first half of that message, anyway, and Dylan was allowed to function for the few years of his fundamentalist period without a halo. On 1983's *Infidels* he appeared about halfway into remission—having apparently loosened up his Biblical literalism—but still sounded too self-righteous for my taste.

The Good News for Modern Man on *Empire Burlesque* is that Dylan has finally made an album about love that is not emotionally reminiscent of Jerry Falwell. Not a mean-spirited line on the record, and a lot about love as friendship and romance and illusion and disillusion and religion that'll ring the truth bell in your brain. Furthermore, he's taken another couple of steps toward aural excellence. The musicians here rank among the best available (several of Tom Petty's wandering Heartbreakers, Sly & Robbie, Mick Taylor, etc.), and Arthur Baker's re-mix seems to get the most out of what's on the tape.

The bad news, which does not outweigh the good, is that the music still sounds unfinished. Much of the guitar embellishments in particular are a shade inane. Several of the songs rock, but nothing kicks ass in the manner of, say, "Subterranean Homesick Blues." Even if "Tight Connection To My Heart" is a hit, I shall continue to insist that there is no 1965-style rollick here, so don't even think about writing me a letter arguing that it does rollick. Because you're wrong, and that's that.

The most powerful song to my ears is "Dark Eyes," which is just Dylan's voice, guitar, harmonica and a lyric that'll immobilize you with introspection for several decades. The lyric is, oddly enough, about Jesus:

A cock is crowing far away and another soldier's deep in prayer,

Some mother's child has gone astray, she can't find him anywhere.

But I can hear another drum beating for the dead that rise,

Whom nature's beast fears as they come and all I see are dark eyes.

If my reading is correct, that's the crucifixion and the resurrection in imagery that creates an almost Night-Of-The-Living-Christian feel. Dylan is not denouncing evil here or demanding God smite Mr. Jones and the other sinners in his Pantheon of the Unclean. He is staring at evil, properly mystified at its ultimate mystery but secure in his own capacity for love. I know he's secure in his capacity for love because most of the previous nine songs are addressed to various "yous" whom Dylan likes, cares for, worries about the flaws of, admires the strongpoints of, and hopes he is worthy of the friendship of. The closest he comes to righteous denunciation is in "When The Night Comes Falling From The Sky" when "you" forces him into his old position of guru to a generation: "I can't provide for you no easy answers/ Who are you that I should have to lie?" Hope my halo-hallucinating friend is listening.

When Dylan was singing more overtly and far less skillfully about Christ a few years ago, his own archetype remained the Old Testament prophet: the wild-haired figure from the desert screaming God's retribution on the sinners. *Empire Burlesque*, besides being a great new title for the New Testament, indicates that Dylan has moved closer to the spirit of the Gospel, even as he has moved away from its literal word. Maybe next time he can rollick. – **Charles M. Young**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Go Go Crankin'
(4th & B'way)

To those of us who live near Washington, D.C., the big question has never been whether Go-Go music would catch on, but "How long will it take?" With its heavy funk bottom, roiling Afro-Cuban percussion, jabbing horn lines and classic call-and-response vocal patterns, it has always been party music of the first order, combining the best elements of James Brown, Wilson Pickett and Parliament-Funkadelic into a single, irresistible package.

Should that description strike you as just so much hype, simply cue up a copy of this album and prepare to be converted. If the sounds of Trouble Funk, E.U., Redds & the Boys or Chuck Brown don't get you up and ready to dance, it's time to cash in your Arthur Murray membership.

Listen to "Movin' And Groovin'," and notice how Redds & the Boys fill out the basic beat, a syncopated bass/drum pulse, with overlaid percussion, choked rhythm guitar and swaggering horn lines. But the band doesn't settle for simple searing the rhythm into your cerebellum; there's also enough melody in the mix to keep your mind humming while your body pops. Mass Extension's "Happy Feet" and E.U.'s "Happy Feet" take similar strategies, but the Go-Go sound is by no means defined by this approach. Trouble Funk's "Drop The Bomb" and "Let's Get Small" go straight for the gut, massing drums, bass, percussion and synths into a single intoxicating throb, while Chuck Brown's "We Need Some Money" applies a lean, mean approach that's the Go-Go equivalent of James Brown's cold sweat.

As an introduction to Go-Go, you couldn't ask for more. Rabid fans may wonder why the album ignores the vocal version of Ice Berg Slim's "In The Mix" in favor of an excerpt from the instrumental version; otherwise, the changes here ("Drop The Bomb" and Slim's "Good To Go" were re-cut for the album) are all for the best. In fact, the only real gripe about the album is that the cover erroneously advertises Hot, Cold Sweat (who do appear on the British import).

Then again, that's reason enough to look forward to *Go Go Crankin' II*. – **J.D. Considine**

ROBERT PLANT

Shaken 'n' Stirred
(Es Paranza/Atlantic)(CD)

Robert Plant...wasn't he in a group before the Honeydrippers? No, but Plant had interrupted a succesful solo career to indulge in some equally successful rock revivalism. Back in the 80s, he's released a third album under his own name that owes little to nostalgia—for either the rock 'n' roll era, or any of the singer's previous musical associations.

Shaken 'n' Stirred sounds like a promising debut. That's a compliment. The music darts in several directions, never staying in one place long enough to be pinned down. Plant shares composer credit with his band; not surprisingly, the songs are loosely structured blocks of one-chord jams exploiting texture over harmonic development. The open-

ing "Hip To Hoo" has an offbeat rhythm alternating with a jazzily accented 4/4. "Too Loud" employs dubwise bursts of sound and rapid-fire tape edits. "Doo Doo A Do Do" features a twangy bass drone and female vocal chorus; "Trouble Your Money"'s light touch shifts to a blaring *tutti* at the end. Each of the album's nine tracks reveals different colors and tactics.

Plant's pungent voice ties it together—that, and a lyric theme of romantic loss that darkens nearly every song. (Two cuts in a row even have the same phrase, "You're breaking my heart.") Whimsical titles and restless arrangements don't hide the record's emotionally bleak core. The cumulative effect is of despair channeled through artistic creativity.

Compared to recent going-through-the-motions by a former Plant coworker, *Shaken 'n' Stirred* is daringly innovative. After all those years as a moronic icon, Plant on his own displays a freshness and intelligence to humble his former critics. Honeydrippers to the contrary, there's no time like the present. – **Scott Isler**

DIRE STRAITS

Brothers In Arms
(Warner Bros.)(CD)

You've got to hand it to that Mark Knopfler. The driving force of Dire Straits couldn't be more than thirty or thirty-five years old, yet he sings and plays with the exuberance of someone twice his age! His premature pop performer isn't unique, of course—the Band had a chronic case of those old rockin' chair blues, and J.J. Cale still cuts records despite catatonia. But Knopfler *is* a gifted young fogey, and the stodgy *Brothers In Arms* impresses mightily in spite of itself.

Hardcore Straits fans, in fact, are in for a treat; the LP's nine sprawling tracks run over forty-five minutes, and sport ample supplies of Knopfler's trademark grainy vocals and gracefullly piquant guitar. Others may find the length, combined with Knopfler's disdain for dynamics, to be simply a cure for insomnia. "Why Worry," for instance, perversely stretches a slight, snail's-pace love song to five minutes length. "Your Latest Trick" approaches monotony from a different angle, blending urbane sax with self-consciously hip lyrics ("...most of the taxis and the whores/ Are only taking calls for cash") for a reasonable facsimile of Steely Dan.

But Knopfler isn't always a stuffed-shirt; on the sly "Money For Nothing" he even adopts a Randy Newman MO to illuminate the gap between rock stars and fans. Over a chugging ZZ Top-style boogie, Knopfler plays an ordinary schmoe who watches MTV and enviously declares "that ain't workin'" and "them guys ain't dumb." Sting, meanwhile, harmonizes, "I want my MTV," to the tune of "Don't Stand So Close To Me." (It's kind of a literary allusion.)

Ultimately, *Brothers In Arms* transcends its shortcomings with a suite on war's stupidity that comprise side two, four tracks highlighted by Knopfler's wide-screen guitar excursions. He may be self-indulgent, but there's still no denying Knopfler's flair for conjuring vivid heat-and-dust images with rolling guitar licks. *This* is the guy who should score Clint Eastwood's next western.
– **Jon Young**

LUCKY THOMPSON

Lucky Thompson, Vol. 1
(Swing)

Brown Rose
(Xanadu)

In the early 70s saxophonist Lucky Thompson walked away from jazz and never looked back. But tracing his career is like leafing through a jazz social register; in his thirty years on the music scene, Thompson recorded with Miles, Bird and Monk (he was one of Monk's favorite musicians); he gigged and recorded with Basie, Hampton, Dinah, Mingus and Quincy; and worked in that infamous bop nest, the Billy Eckstine band. He wasn't much on cornpromise, though, and by the time he quit, rumor has it, he was so fed up with the music business that he was refusing to cash his royalty checks. Thompson is still alive—he's only sixty-one—so it's nice

that, ten years or so after his last record was released in the states, the Lucky Thompson vaults are showering us anew; two dates previously unavailable here, and the third, *Lucky Strikes*, a session that, shortly after its arrival in 1964, ended up in history's cutout bins.

By 1956, when the five session on *Lucky Thompson, Vol. 1, and Brown Rose* were recorded, Thompson had digested both the contrasting styles of Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young, plus all the rhythms of bop: his playing is startling and original. On "Thin Ice" Thompson solos in front of just bass and drums—a favorite setting—and idea after idea pours out.

Brown Rose shares with *Vol. 1* the quietly subversive accompaniment of the brilliant Algerian pianist Martial Solal. The nonet arrangements owe a bit to the buttoned-down West Coast sound of the 50s, and a bit to Birth of the Cool. Thompson sounds a bit less comfortable in the stiffer setting of a big band, but his solos still resound with authority.

The ringer, however, is *Lucky Strikes*, one of three albums Thompson recorded for Prestige in the 60s. The LP features Hank Jones, Richard Davis and Connie Kay, and showcases some of Thompson's best writing and playing. On songs like "Prey Loot" and "Mid-Nite Oil," his sound is surprisingly optimistic, only occasionally undercut by the deep melancholy of an "I Forgot To Remember." And the solos, on tenor and soprano (he recorded on soprano a year before Coltrane) ring with an almost unimaginable emotional intensity. Lucky Thompson has the courage to bare his heart. Listen to him because he did it in his own way, with his own voice. – **Peter Watrous**

KRONOS QUARTET

Monk Suite
(Landmark)

When you look at Thelonious Monk's terse, angular music "from the inside, you find an incredible structure. It is monumental." Abdullah Ibrahim said that, and it's one of the best lines on Monk I've ever heard. It also suggests the kind of hopes I had for this album. Nothing beats a string quartet for simultaneously articulating a structure and laying it bare, and maybe a quartet could tug some of Monk's hidden significations into fuller view. Besides, for all the piss and vinegar of twentieth century classical music, no one ever spiked the guns of consonance quite the way Monk did, and it would be interesting to see what he sounded like treading down the roses in his neighbor's garden. The project's negative potential was just as obvious: No one should try to make a lady of Monk, and his music needs a string quartet like a dancing bear needs a tutu.

This album unveils a third possibility. It's an entertainment, with a more than occasional air of period reconstruction—Monk now and then resembles Scott Joplin, Stephen Foster, a cafe orchestra, the soundtrack of a cocktail party sometime next month. It is a warmhearted, gracious, canny album that is never ossified by inappropriate respect for its subject, and, as arranged and adapted by Tom Darter and played by the Kronos, it's very well done indeed.

On one side, the "Monk Suite," of the title, the quartet is accompanied by Ron Carter on bass playing his impeccable Eastern Standard time; the heads of five tunes (the little red wagon album) are spelled by transcriptions of Monk solos and improvs by Carter. It's tuneful, it's a delight, but the solo transcriptions don't begin to exploit the polyphonic possibilities of a quartet, though there is a wonderful segment on "Off Minor" in which fragments of Monk's solo are whirled from instrument to instrument. The digital sound is impeccable; occasionally Ron Carter's steel string timbre can be heard to clash marginally with the quartet's gut.

Side two has the quartet unaccompanied on a "'Round Midnight," with moments of startling beauty—the intro, the first four bars of the bridge, the coda—and a too courtly "Mysterioso"—I'd hoped for a transcription of Monk's brilliantly architectonic 1971 version with McKibbon and Blakey. Then come two Monkifications of Ellington tunes, not so successful, and finally the album's most probing treatment, "Brilliant Corners," which, however good, when compared to the original is strictly no contest. Monk is Monk is irreducibly Monk. One splay-noted, cubist chord played by those gone and inimitable hands is as primary and inarguable as a crag of rock. Long time Monkmen will enjoy this album for love and the warmth of memory, but interested neophytes are directed to the originals. The memorial album on Milestone might be a good place to start. – **Rafi Zabor**

SHORT Rock TAKES

J.D. Considine

Nils Lofgren
Flip (Columbia)
Considering how strong *Wonderland* was, it seems stupid to suggest that life as an E-Streeter has dramatically improved Lofgren's output. Nonetheless, he's never sounded better. Maybe it's that he's adopted his boss' ability to reinforce a song through understatement, for his singing and writing are supremely focused, building on strengths and avoiding superfluity. The hooks catch, the melodies surge, and the guitar work is sharp enough for shaving. Yet another reason to keep believing in rock 'n' roll.

Hooters
Nervous Night (Columbia)(CD)
At heart, the Hooters are technicians, better at framing an average idea than developing an original one, which is why the deep thump and nervous mandolin of "All You Zombies" pulls you in more than the song itself. But the Hooters never turn cynical, which absolves all guilt from the pleasures here, leaving the listener free to exult in the rich textures and driving rhythm arrangements that power this album. Rock bands just wanna have fun, too.

Katrina & the Waves
Katrina And The Waves (Capitol)
Katrina Leskanich has a great voice, Kimberly Rew writes catchy melodies, and the Waves play with vigorous enthusiasm, all of which should add up to a great album. But instead it's a record of mere moments ("Red Wine And Whisky" for one), because Leskanich overreaches (her attempt at blues is laughable), Rew's writing is cliche-ridden ("Que Te Quiero" has more to do with "Spanish Harlem" than Spanish speakers), and enthusiasm just isn't enough.

Everything But the Girl
Love Not Money (Sire)
They've already chucked the cafe jazz act for a folk-tinged pop sound that seems calculated to follow Sade into the charts, yet for all that *Love Not Money* is even more likeable than its predecessor. Part of the credit belongs with Ben Watt, whose canny melodicism excavates haunting refrains from the simplest tunes. But the lion's share belongs with Tracy Thorn, whose resonant, unaffected alto fills these songs with such intensity they seem to buzz.

John Cafferty & the Beaver Brown Band
Tough All Over (Scotti Brothers)
Cafferty claims that he developed his sound independently of Bruce Springsteen, which may be true but hardly matters: Cafferty's ideas are so obvious, and his writing so predictable, that he'd sound derivative no matter what style he worked in. Of course, that doesn't keep his bar-band sound from satisfying in its limited way. It just keeps it from mattering much.

Shannon
Do You Wanna Get Away (Mirage)
The title track is giddily electric and wholly addictive, a perfect dance single. The rest makes you wish you'd stuck with the single.

Willie & the Poor Boys
Willie And The Poor Boys (Passport)
"Willie" is Bill Wyman, who recruited Charlie Watts, Andy Fairweather-Low, Paul Rogers, Jimmy Page and other waifs for a session of oldies to benefit A.R.M.S. The feel is loose and the playing affectionate, and at its best, sounds like the pub band of your dreams on a particularly good night. (3619 Kennedy Road, So. Plainfield, NJ 07080)

Men at Work
Two Hearts (Columbia)(CD)
These guys work too hard—there's always more going on in their songs than necessary, and you end up hacking through the underbrush to get to the melody. A shame, too, because this could have been their best yet, an album that matches ambition with depth, strength with purpose. As pop, it simply fizzles.

Amy Grant
Unguarded (A&M)(CD)
The big deal here is that Grant has sold enough records on the gospel circuit to "graduate" to a pop label, which makes sense when you consider that her sound is about as sacred as Toto's. Trouble is, Grant performs with similar conviction, suggesting that even here, product is still product. Give me that old time religion....

Ratt
Invasion Of Your Privacy (Atlantic)(CD)
In metal, the slick always get slicker, so it's no surprise to find yet another layer of polish on the Ratt sound. Funny thing, it hasn't toned them down; if anything, their carefully airbrushed sound lets the hooks hit home with greater ferocity than before.

Danny & Dusty
The Lost Weekend (A&M)(CD)
Forget Waylon & Willie; for sheer, drunken fun, this exercise in rowdy abandon beats anything the Austin outlaws ever cut. In part it may be that neither Danny (Green on Red's Dan Stuart) or Dusty (Dream Syndicate's Steve Wynn) take themselves all that seriously, but it couldn't hurt that the backing band, culled mostly from the Long Ryders, rocks steadily throughout.

The Blue Riddim Band
Alive In Jamaica (Flying Fish)
"Nancy Goes To Moscow"
(ORA 12-inch)
Who'd have believed a reggae band from Kansas City? Anyone who has heard these records, that's who. Whether skanking through an upbeat set at the Reggae Sunsplash festival (the album) or getting nasty about Nancy Reagan with guest Ranking Roger (the 12-inch), this band is never less than irie, with a groove that's deep and sure throughout. Highly recommended. (Flying Fish: 1304 W. Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614; ORA: Box 3025, La Habra, CA 90632)

Lonnie Mack
Strike Like Lightning (Alligator)
If you remember Mack's guitar instrumentals from the early 60s, no matter; what counts is that Stevie Ray Vaughan does, and built his style from them. Consequently, this Vaughan-produced "comeback" is both affectionate and appropriate, updating Mack's sound without compromising it. If soulful, stinging blues guitar is what you crave, this should keep you happy for months. (Box 60234, Chicago, IL 60660)

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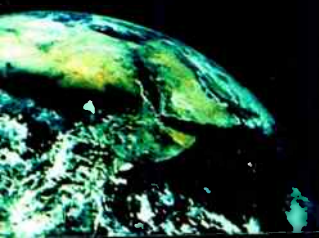

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SHORT JAZZ TAKES

Francis Davis

Dizzy Gillespie
New Faces (GRP)
If Dizzy horses around less than usual, if he for once seems more committed to making music than making merry, it might be the rejuvenating effect of playing with youngbloods Branford Marsalis (saxophones), Kenny Kirkland (piano), Lonnie Plaxico (bass) and Robert Ameen (drums). Too bad more of his nitty gritty didn't rub off on them, the stiff-wristed drummer in particular. Still, when Dizzy is on, no other trumpeter can touch him, and here he's in peak form.

Anthony Braxton
Composition 113 (Sound Aspects/PSI)
The album-length *Composition 113*, which calls on a lone improviser (in this case, the composer on E-flat soprano saxophone) to juggle an eleven-note pattern in such a way as to suggest six conflicting character traits (humor, acceptance, strength, dependability, courage, belief) is hardly as schematic or daunting as it sounds. It's a suspenseful, imploding work that might represent Braxton's finest hour as a composer and improviser.

Keith Jarrett
Standards Volume 2 (CD)
It picks up where Volume 1 left off, with the pianist steering bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette through a program of pop ballads (plus one Jarrett original in a similar vein). Pretty melodies married to stimulating chord changes should yield something airy and effortless. But hey, this is Jarrett we're talking about, so what we get instead is the usual heavy labor, with grunting to prove it.

Barry Harris
For The Moment (Uptown)
The pianist's first trio date in a while was recorded live at New York's Jazz Cultural Theatre, of which he just happens to be proprietor. Which only goes to prove some people do their best work for themselves. It would be difficult to imagine a more bracing album of bebop piano; more difficult still to imagine a contemporary pianist with deeper insight into Thelonious Monk, who is here the subject of both a medley and a stirring evocation.

Gary Burton Quartet
Real Life Hits (ECM) (CD)
Fine as usual. Though new pieces by Carla Bley, Quartet-alumnus John Scofield, current member Makoto Ozone, and the vibist/leader's longtime aide-de-camp Steve Swallow might indicate that jazz musicians have recently been paying close attention to minimalist composers, Bley's "Syndrome" and Ellington's "Fleurette Africaine" remind us that jazz has its own proud history of minimalism. Piano prodigy Ozone, by the way, makes a much more favorable impression here than on last year's preening CBS debut.

George Adams & Don Pullen Quartet
Live At Village Vanguard
(Soul Note/PSI)
The quartet co-led by tenor saxophonist Adams and pianist Pullen (with bassist Cameron Brown and drummer Danny Richmond) is a band that knows how to play for an audience without playing *to* it, and it's about time someone recorded them live. This is far and away the group's best album.

Sathima Bea Benjamin
Memories And Dreams (Ekapa)
This South African singer (who emigrated to the U.S. with her husband Abdullah Ibrahim at the urging of Duke Ellington in 1965) has a catch in her voice it would be easy to dismiss as kittenish were it not for the sorrow and the pity it conveys—especially on this album's centerpiece, the side-long "Liberation Suite." A stirring piece of work. (222 W. 23rd St., Suite 314, New York, NY 10011)

Khan Jamal
Infinity (Jam'brio)
Three (SteepleChase)
With alto saxophonist Byard Lancaster, pianist Bernard Samuels, bassist Reggie Curry, harmonica player Clifton Burton and percussionists Omar Hill, Dwight James and Sunny Murray on hand, the self-produced *Infinity* excavates vibist Jamal's Philly roots. *Three* is more international in flavor, with Danish guitarist Pierre Dørge and South African bassist Johnny Dyani joining the leader for cerebral but rhythmically surefooted three-part inventions. Give *Three* the edge over the uneven *Infinity*, but both establish Jamal as a force. (Box 18902, Philadelphia, PA 19119)

Cosmetic with Jamaaladeen Tacuma
So Tranquilizin' (Gramavision)
Despite tony lyrics that confuse attitude for thought, Tacuma's funk is sleek and unpretentious. In other words, it's *funk*, not fusion; what's missing, however, is passion, adventure, soul. But as Billy Crystal's Fernando might point out, it's better to look good than it is to play good; and Tacuma looks *marvelous*.

DRG Swing has released the first eight in a planned series of sixty-four albums from the vaults of such French labels as Pathe Marconi, Disques Swing, Ducretete Thompson and La Voix de Son Maitre. Much of this material is previously unissued in the United States, or was previously issued in extremely haphazard fashion. *Coleman Hawkins & Benny Carter, Bill Coleman: Paris 1936/38, Eddie South* and the two-record *Willie Lewis & His Entertainers* all date from the 1930s, a period during which few American record companies were documenting small group jazz (sound familiar?). The Hawkins/Carter item is essential listening; the Coleman and South LPs are valuable introductions to inimitable stylists overlooked by other reissue programs (and like the Hawkins/Carter LP, both feature generous helpings of the great Django Reinhardt); and the Lewis double, though hardly classic, is great fun. Four albums from the 1950s complete the first release, the best of them being *Lucky Thompson: Paris 1956 Volume One* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), but *The International Jazz Group, Volume One* boasts a tremendous front line of Budd Johnson, Vic Dickenson and Trummy Young; *Jonah Jones: Paris 1954* is a surprisingly palatable effort by a trumpeter who has always blown hot and cold; and *Clark Terry: Paris 1960* highlights probing work by the French pianist Martial Solal. What promises to be an invaluable and insightful series is off to a great start.

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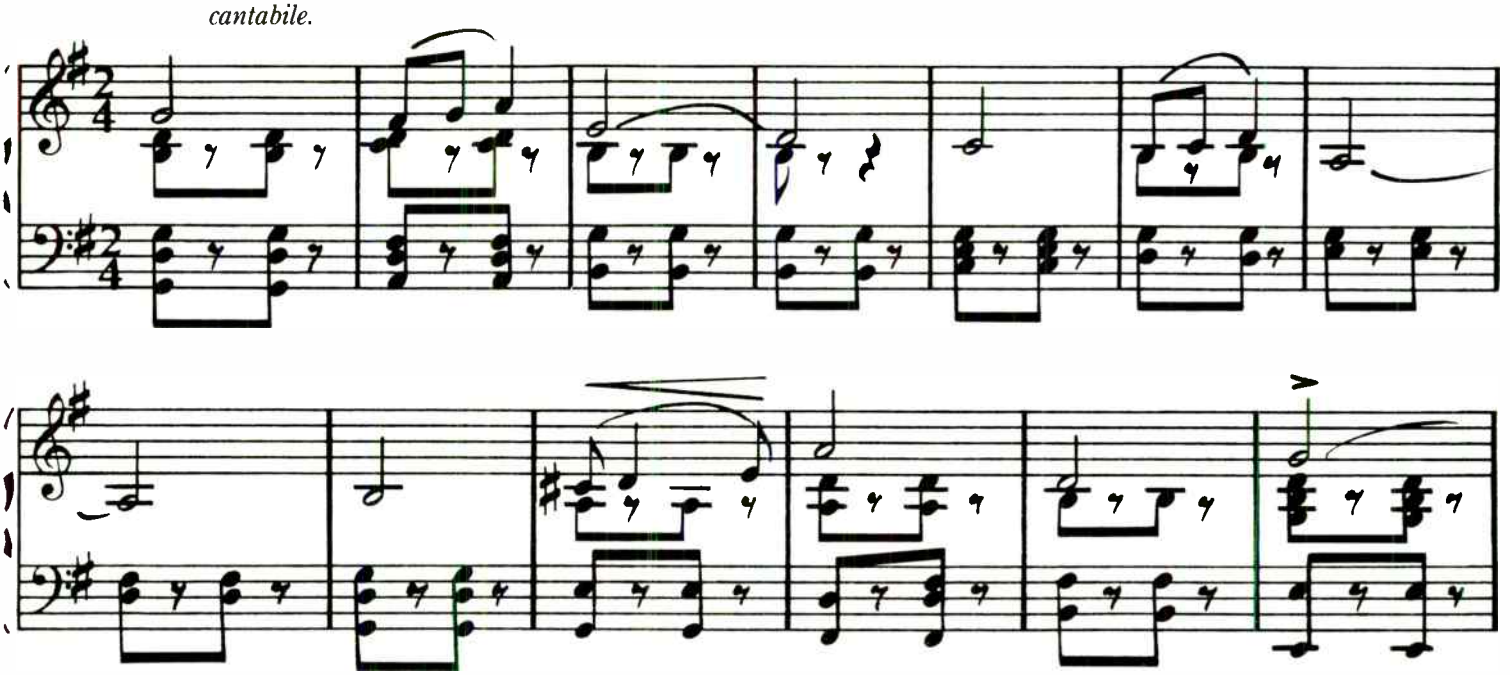

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Jones from page 70

Philosopher or technician, Jones does take great pride in the mechanics of his craft. "A recent article in Britain said that my onstage sound was so perfect that it must all be on tape. In a way that was an incredible compliment but it was also very upsetting. I've spent five years putting together all the things that make my live show and I definitely don't use tapes. My whole show is based around live performance."

Detailing his onstage operation, Jones explains, "The main brain is a Roland MSQ 700, which is a sequencer that I've programmed to play things you can't do with your fingers. It sets up a click track that Trevor (Morais, drummer) plays to. My brother Martin plays bass and I do the rest by hand.

"I've got a remote keyboard, a Yamaha KX5 that can be routed to play any of the other keyboards from anywhere on stage; it's radio-MIDI'd. I use a Roland Jupiter 8, Juno 60, SCI Prophet T8 and Pro One, an Emulator II, a Moog Prodigy (his first synth), two Yamaha DX7s and a TX8. For digital drums I have two E-mu Drumulators, a Roland TR-808, a Simmons SDS6 sequencer and a set of SDS7s. I also just got a Linn 9000—the variation you can get on that is incredible. For sampling, I also use an AMS 15-80S digital delay. The whole setup is complicated, but it produces quite a big sound."

Having evolved quickly in just a few years from "a Fender Rhodes, one mono synth and a clapped-out old drum machine," Jones isn't through growing yet. He only recently added backing musicians to his formerly one-man show. "I'd proved my point," he explains. "Once you've done it, it's time to move on."

As for the future, "I'm up for anything that will do the job. I'm going to record orchestral arrangements for a couple of my songs ('Hide And Seek' and 'Hunger For The Flesh'). You can't get more traditional than that."

On the other hand, he says, "I'd love to do a whole show using a remote keyboard, playing keyboards you wouldn't even see onstage."

Thoroughly modern Howard Jones has remained on the cutting edge of change without losing his humanistic values. Does he see any reason to hope mankind as a whole might do the same? An optimist, Jones nods. "If people get it together, technology will work for good. I know my songs have an effect, because people write back. And if I can get through in my way, it can happen on a larger scale."

In the meantime, keep an eye out for those Howard Jones dolls. M

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