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THE BIG GUITAR ISSUE WITH YOUR HOST: PETE TOWNSHEND

BY BILL FLANAGAN

JIMI: THE FINAL DAYS

BY NOEL REDDING

U2'S EDGE

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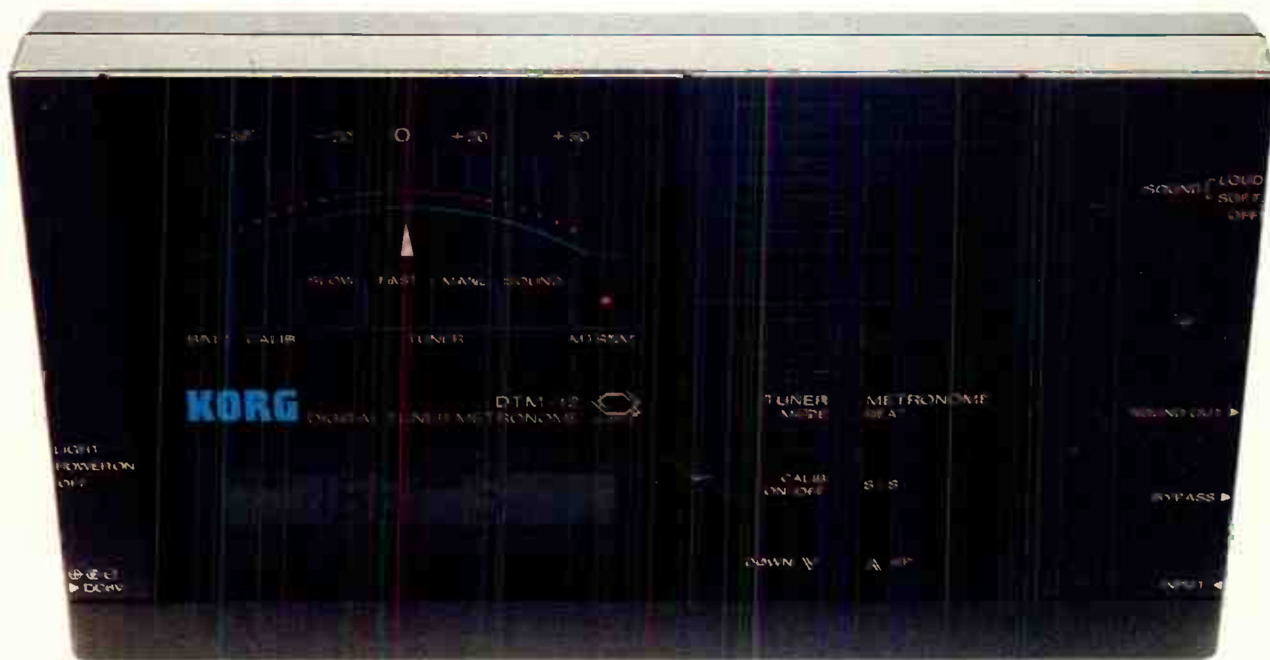

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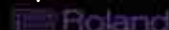

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LETTERS

Rotten Response

As subscribers and avid listeners of music from Al Di Meola to the Pistols/PiL, it is obvious that Charles M. Young is not qualified to write on Johnny Lydon. Like his

38.6 percent surveyed, Young could never understand the desperation that exists outside the white middle class. While PiL has influenced the likes of U2 to the Dead Kennedys, you chose to speak to his father rather than about his music and lyrics, more like *People* magazine, not *Musician*....

G.T. & J.G.
Brooklyn, NY

The last John Lydon interview that I read in *Musician* [*November, 1984*] was concise, informative, powerful and entertaining. Charles M. Young's barrage of slanderous rubbish in the June, 1986 issue is a deplorable example of rock journalism. Mr. Young is obviously incapable of interviewing an artist who refuses to kiss his ass.

Ian Gittler
New York, NY

If you must edit the last line to print my letter, please do.

[*Edited version of last line: "Mr. Young is obviously...an artist."*]

How could Charles M. Young compare Johnny Rotten to Rick Wakeman? Next to come, I suppose, is an article where this putz will compare Johnny Cash to Edward Van Halen. Also, who gives a damn about Johnny Rotten's zits or the story hour, complete with "darkies," with his old man?

Bob "Hosebag" Ward

I personally am not fond of the music of the Pistols, but I strongly believe that without people like Johnny Lydon and his lyrics, music today would be dreadfully boring. Since Johnny Rotten's first PiL album Lydon has awakened a thirst for honesty and frankness in the people that take pride and pleasure in listening to, dancing to and creating the new wave of pop lyrics and music that has evolved during the past ten years. Your interview was smart and I thank you for having made buying this magazine worth it.

Allan McCarthy
(Men Without Hats)
Montreal, Canada

Big Words

Your Joe Jackson interview was astute and intelligent, and Jackson's attitude is a guidepost for the modern age: *be flexible!* During the tumultuous punk period, there was nobody else that had that rebel spirit more than Joe Jackson. Yet because he enjoyed so much commercial success, many punk and new-music types rejected him as a somehow obvious sellout. I suggest that those who resent his success check out the man's work; surely there is some facet of his genius that can touch them if they but listen.

Bill Kates
Assistant Director of Production, WBCN
Boston, MA

Okay, we know Joe Jackson is a creative genius, an artiste cérébral, but does that grant him license to censure almost everything and everyone? I suggest he have a closer listen to some of his own piano "noodlings"—he ain't no Art Tatum. I've bought his records and admired his knack for musical inconsistency, but I'm rather sorry I got to know the man behind it all.

Alexa Conrad
W. Caldwell, NJ

Seger Sentiments

Thank you Timothy White for a great article on one of the best American rock artists ever, Bob Seger. Not only is Seger a prolific song writer, he is also one of the most dynamic live performers I've ever had the honor of seeing. I know rock 'n' roll will never forget Bob Seger.

Rick Frederick
Castalia, OH

Thank you Timothy White for a great article; Bob Seger for being so honest, open and so very talented; and *Musician* for another terrific issue. For years Bob has given us the best he has to offer—and *Like A Rock* is no exception. Big, bad Bob still rocks with the best of them!

Jeanie Wrenn
Fairfield, OH

Van Hagar vs. Van Roth

Roy Trakin, I have to ask: Is your job going to be available soon? *5150* is Van Halen at its finest, and it's about time you people realize that their music is a lot more believable and creative, now that they have "a real lead singer" and not some howler who does Bruce Lee and Mary Lou Retton impressions onstage.

T.D. Oliver

On May 13 at 4:00 p.m., I read the album review of Van Halen's *5150*. I wanted to tear my concert tickets up for the Van Halen show in Pittsburgh that night. At 7:30 p.m., I attended the greatest show on earth. At 11:30 p.m. that same evening, I burned the June issue of *Musician*. Hey Roy Trakin, try again.

Sean Maloney
Corry, PA

How can Roy Trakin say "Why Can't This Be Love" sounds like a clunkier version of Foreigner's "I Want To Know What Love Is," when anyone with a pair of ears knows it is a *major* rip-off of Billy Idol's "Flesh For Fantasy"...and a horrible version at that! Van Halen *sucks*!! Billy should sue!!

M.J. Wieland
Kawkawlin, MI

Easter Ire Lands

I'm sorry that J.D. Considine chose to waste review space on the supposed "nasty notions" of my songs "Fell" and "Talking To Myself," since that's the last thing I intended. I just hope listeners will figure out what the lyrics are *really* about. As for Considine's condescending remark, "love isn't just a matter of chord changes"—no shit! Also, I'd have to thank him for the criticism that I play "too well." I'll try to suck harder in the future.

Mitch Easter

I would like to offer my sentence-by-sentence interpretation of J.D. Considine's short review of Let's Active's *Big Plans For Everybody*: "The skill with which Mitch Easter makes music provokes some jealousy in this writer. It isn't the subtle tastefulness of his playing, or even his ability to recall the great masters of pop with such an honest informality. What makes me most bitter about this album is my own inability to fathom the fine shades of irony created by the juxtaposition of bright, well-played pop music with slightly sad, introspective lyrics like those of 'Fall' and 'Talking To Myself.' I don't really understand love songs."

It's amazing, the difference word choice can make.

Phil Morrison
New York, NY

Errrata

Due to an editing error, Jimmer Podrasky's name was misspelled in the Rave-Ups article in the June issue.

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JIMMY "JAM" HARRIS & TERRY LEWIS

BY MARK ROWLAND

FROM "TENDER LOVE" TO "NASTY," THEY'RE ALWAYS IN CONTROL

There's no shortage of contemporary pop stars who owe some of their success to favors from Prince. But Jimmy "Jam" Harris and Terry Lewis are the only ones who can trace their good fortunes to getting fired by Prince. That happened four years ago, when Harris and Lewis held the keyboard and bass slots, respectively, in the Time, an aggregate of unusually supple funkdom whose creative possibilities rested pretty much under the thumb of the Purple Fist. Harris and Lewis had begun moonlighting as producers and songwriters for then-struggling acts Klymaxx and the S.O.S. Band. Their dual duties dovetailed nicely until one fateful night when a snowstorm in Atlanta (where they were producing) caused them to miss a plane to San Antonio (where the Time had a gig). A few days later, Prince summarily canned them from the band.

"Until that point," Harris admits, "producing was just something to do for fun. But that forced us to take it more seriously. Suddenly, we weren't in a band anymore," he laughs. "Suddenly, that was our career."

These days, Harris and Lewis can afford to laugh. The song they'd been mixing when Prince handed them pink slips, "Just Be Good To Me," became the biggest hit of the S.O.S. Band's career; for the next few years, Harris and Lewis developed a steady if unspectacular track record for a variety of black pop acts, specializing in songs and productions for pop singers like Gladys Knight, Cherrelle and Cheryl Lynn.

Ah, but what they've done lately: In the last few months Harris and Lewis have composed and produced an astonishing array of concurrent hits, including the gorgeous ballad "Tender Love" for Force M.D.s, Alexander O'Neal and Cherrelle's infectious duet "Saturday Love," Patti Austin's "The Heat Is Heat," "The Finest" for the S.O.S. Band, and most notably the back-to-back smashes "Nasty" and "What Have You Done For Me Lately" which now threaten to turn Janet Jackson into the Whitney Houston story of 1986. At one point all six Harris-Lewis singles resided in the *Billboard* top one hundred pop charts and top thirty black charts—a feat which Prince, for all his Svengaliisms, has yet to equal.

You might figure that Harris and Lewis have thus become a warm commodity in the music industry, and you'd be right. You might also imagine that, having exhibited the Midas touch with such consistency, they're ready to rent bungalows at the Beverly Hills Hotel, hire a couple of pro wrestlers for bodyguards, and take lunch by the pool with Ken Kragen. Well....

"Actually," says Harris, "We're planning for the down time. We're confident of what we do, but not that the public is gonna buy it. When they don't, we'll be in trouble. Not that it bothers us—I mean, that's like being concerned about dying. You know it's gonna happen; you just try to prolong it.

"We're trying to be good businessmen—we learned a lot more about business than music from Prince—so that when the hits run down we'll be solid. Maybe we'll open our studio and have a recording business here, know what I'm saying? We were enjoying ourselves before all this happened anyway. Success is the icing on the cake; the cake was pretty good by itself."

Harris is speaking in the pair's recently completed studio in—where else?—Minneapolis, where they are currently preparing an LP with English postnuwavers Human League. The proj-

GERSHOFF/RETNA

Harris and Lewis: "It scares some people that we're so relaxed."

World Radio History

ect signals a departure of sorts, as Harris and Lewis usually work with singers rather than bands. The preference is logical enough: "We can do singers a lot faster," says Harris. "With groups you have to deal with more people, and the more people and the more opinions, the more that can go wrong.

"With singers like Cherrelle, we usually laid down all the tracks before she walked into the studio. But this time we wanted to be involved with everyone and everything from the start."

Still, it's no coincidence that Human League is in a career rut similar to the ones once occupied by Jackson or the S.O.S. Band—exhibiting the potential for stardom but without any clear sense of musical direction. Lewis and Harris recently turned down offers to produce bands of such similar haircut as ABC and Heaven 17, but eagerly accepted the Human League "challenge" as Harris puts it, "because they seemed like a band we could help."

"I remember the first time I heard 'Fascination,' and at that time it seemed like they were at the forefront of the bands which were mixing funk with that synthesized keyboard sound," Jam recalls. "Since then they've moved away from what they did best, I think. So we felt we could complement their strengths. They kind of struck a chord with us."

That explanation helps illuminate the secret of Harris and Lewis' appeal to other musicians as well as the public; unlike certain more celebrated colleagues, they never sacrifice musical expression on the altar of ego. They'd rather look good by making their artists sound good. (Or do you think Janet Jackson's singing naturally rates comparison with Patti Labelle and Whitney Houston?) In the studio their MO is as well-grooved as their rhythm beds: "It scares some people that we're so relaxed," Harris giggles. At the same time they're not likely to be intimidated by their artists—mainly because, as Harris admits, "there's nobody we really want to work with. No, really! People always ask us that, and our minds go blank.

"See, our overall attitude hasn't changed much since we began. Our attitude is, 'Relax, and everything will get fixed in its own time.' There's no reason to get anxious. So we never do demos, we never 'spec' songs out, and we never give out cassettes before we're done. People hire you to do a job well; we figure, don't bother to hire us if you don't think we can do it, or you need to check up on us. You have to have confidence in *yourself*. Otherwise, nothing would ever get done."

James Harris and Terry Lewis have been friends since childhood. "My dad played in a jazz band," Harris remembers. "When Terry got into a band, he said to me, 'Your dad plays piano so you must know something about it. You're our keyboard player.' Terry started on bass around the same time. We were about fourteen. Mostly we were listening to Kool & the Gang, Tower of Power, Earth Wind & Fire. Now people make comparisons between Prince's music and our own, and maybe that happens because we all grew up listening to the same things and under similar circumstances. I think that always stays a part of you."

A few years later Terry invited his pal to join another dance band, Flyte Time. Harris resisted, noting that the band already had a keyboard player. "But Terry said, 'No we're gonna need two—that's gonna be our thing.' He had that foresight before the Time existed."

Flyte Time (the name taken from the title of a Donald Byrd tune) turned out to be a prescient collection of pop talent, including guitarist Jesse Johnson, singer Alexander O'Neal, and a drummer by the name of Morris Day. When Prince offered to put together a recording deal for his friend Morris, Day naturally brought the band with him, who became simply the Time. But Prince's insistence on calling the shots alienated O'Neal, who left

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Harris and Lewis' deft arrangements suggest the Motown and Philly eras of black pop classicism.

Their ability to avoid typecasting has become its own signature in a business where musicians are inevitably expected to reprogram their previous hits. Harris admits that "for a while everybody wanted a song like 'Just Be Good To Me.' People still ask us to 'put one of those S.O.S. sounds' on their records. But we reserve that for S.O.S.—it's *their* sound. No one else will get it. We even got asked about it for Janet's record, but she really didn't need one.

"We don't reproduce tracks, and they're not interchangeable. Cherrelle had no particular statement to make, but she's a fun, energetic person, so we tried to capture that on her album. But Janet did have one to make, so we went for that. 'Course you can talk 'til you're blue without a melody that hooks people. That's the balance we were looking for.

"We held a couple of pre-production meetings in Los Angeles and asked Janet to write down her ideas. We found out she plays keyboard, though she said not very well. But to involve her as much as possible, we forced her to play [keyboard] parts on the record. She'd be saying, 'It's okay, get someone else', and we'd go, 'No, you play it.' And by the end of the sessions she was really into it."

Janet Jackson concurs. "I had a great time working with them," she says. "They're great people. They really made a difference in the way I thought about music. I learned a lot from their process, and it allowed me to think of myself as a musician, and not just as a singer."

At this writing *Control* has passed the one and a half million sales mark (Janet's last LP sold approximately one-tenth that many copies) and, thanks to Harris and Lewis' time release strategy, will probably stick around near the top of the pop charts for months.

"We deliberately put all the dance tracks on one side," Harris explains. "In fact, we did the same thing with Cherrelle. It was a conscious decision designed to give the record more longevity. People will naturally play the first side over and over, but when they burn out on that, maybe they'll start to discover some of the ballads. We were looking for a four or five-single album, and I think we have one here."

Harris and Lewis' refusal to coast on formula led directly to the creation of "Lately," the album's breakthrough single. "We'd already finished the record when John Maclean, the executive producer called us. He said "Nasty" was his favorite song and wanted a couple of others, just like it. We told him, 'Sorry, we don't do that, but we will put together a

continued on page 114

THE CONTROL ROOM

As befits their current status as state-of-the-art hitmakers, Jimmy "Jam" Harris and Terry Lewis have recently put together their own studio in Hitsville, U.S.A., otherwise known as Minneapolis. The main deck is an Otari MTR 90, with a Harrison MR 4 mixing console. Signal processors include a Lexicon 224 DR and PCM 70, AMS reverbs, Quantec and AMS delays, as well as a Lexicon PCM 60. They use JBL speakers and Hassler amps for the main monitor system, with Yamaha NS10M and Auratone speakers for cue. They also employ dbx 165 limiters. Mikes include AKG 414s and Neumann U87 for singers.

Musical equipment includes a Yamaha C800 acoustic piano, and a raft of electronic keyboards including an Oberheim OB8, Yamaha DX7, Roland JX8P and JX3P, and an old ARP. Rhythm machines are the Linn 9000 and Oberheim DMX, a Roland TR-808, "and combinations thereof," according to Jimmy. There's also a Yamaha trap set (Zildjian cymbals). Terry Lewis plays Fender Jazz bass, and just bought a Rickenbacker. There's but two guitars in the place—a Fender Telecaster and Kramer Focus.

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primeiro no mundo." Zilch response. Finally someone asks where I learned my Portuguese and I blurt out, "Oh, in bed. My Brazilian boyfriend doesn't speak English." At that, finally, the smile I had been waiting for, the one that looks attached to his toes and every fiber of his body, electrifies the room.

Gilberto Gil, Brazil's other pillar of popular music, tries to unravel the mystery of Milton, but it's the musings of an extrovert explaining an introvert. Though as black as Milton, Gil is all sparkle, a glamor-boy mystic from Bahia. I tell him that I feel he is a different kind of black than Milton.

"Yes, yes," Gil explains, "I'm from Bahia and Milton is from Minas. Bahia, despite white domination, has a very joyful type of social system. Blacks mixed Catholic values with tribal ones, so everything became chanting and dancing and beating. But the slaves in Minas

A voice transformed into an instrument

were very conservative and serious, very much into *a culpa*, that religious feeling of guilt. Imagine living in a 'doll' kind of society. They weren't able to impart any good African feelings—Mineiro society was too heavy to permit it.

"The other thing," Gil says, smiling broadly, "is the distance from the sea. In Bahia we had the little running seashores, the beach, very warm and sunny. But Minas is in the mountains. Everything is hidden in a sense, the next mile is already hidden away...."

Two hours out of Rio on the way to Minas, there is a change in the air. Noise, "barulho," the barrage of city life, is sucked up into silence; time, like a tired elastic band, stretches and dies inside these verdant rolling hills filled with gold and silver. Nothing urgent on the agenda here; you might fall asleep for a million years, except that the eye can never rest in Minas. Its highways, carved crazily out of these mountains, veer and dip with a queasy persistence that you must give up believing in straight lines.

Unlike the outrageous exhibitionism of the Rio *cariocas*, the Minas soul is not easy to grasp. Everything rich *is* underground here, and one fears that no amount of mining could ever exhaust its truths. Down the highway, ancient faces hang from shuttered windows. An old man chasing an errant rooster scatters feathers around his porch; a horsedrawn cart delivers cheese to a roadside cafe. One can nearly see Amado's Gabriela running wildly through these century-old villages, tossing her long black hair behind her and laughing a wet witch cackle that makes the earth tremble in response. Yes, something in the soil sings in Minas—a shocking rust red melody that seems to moan its fertilities. And behind all this sensuality, looming like judgmental grand dames at the end of every main street, are the great baroque bastions of faith (thirteen churches in one small village alone). They smell of old wood and dried flowers, and drip shamelessly with treasures of the land.

"Minas is my *alimentaçao*, my nourishment," Milton explains one hell-hot day in Rio. Four years ago, strung out on Rio nightlife, he had packed up his city apartment and returned to Minas; today he's forty pounds thinner and beaming health. "Everything I am, mentally, physically, spiritually resides in Minas. People tend to think Minas is closed because of the mountains. But with the coming together of the Portuguese, Spanish and African cultures, it is the birthplace of spirituality in Brazil."

The true miracle of Brazil is that so many musics do exist. In this country as big as the continental U.S., each Brazilian state boasts not only its own culture but its own specific heartsound. Samba was born in the *favelas*, or slums, of Rio, as a cross-breed between the European *maxixe* (a salon dance) and fiery African percussion. In the late 50s, Antonio Carlos Jobim and João Gilberto (and later, Chico Buarque) cooled the *batucada* drums and made bossa nova—literally translated "new method"—a soft samba chromatically pinched and lyrically informed with existential concerns. Spurred by the 60s populist fervor, the Tropicalia movement took root in Bahia; Caetano Veloso, Maria Bethania and Gal Costa wielded electric guitars with more traditional *berimbaus* in an attempt to invigorate more traditional Brazilian folk with urban rock 'n' roll. The ravaged Northeast was resurrected in the late 70s by the flashy Elba Ramalho, who favored native beats like *maracatú, frevo, baião* and *coco.* The South is gaucho country, a type of Latin cowboy music best represented by the duo Kleiton and Kledir. And from the sons of the military in Brasilia—that modernistic city fabricated in the middle of nowhere—has sprung a new rock generation, slightly schizzy and often short-lived. The most enduring group, Paralamas do Sucesso, mixes reggae and African ju-ju with international rock.

Then there is Milton Nascimento's Minas: birthplace of classical composers, a kind of Copland country full of wide-open melodies, lush, unexpected turns of harmony, and a stylishness that is chic without pretense. Endemic to Minas are work songs, religious hymns, *moda de violao* (folk dances), African laments, *musica serteneja* (a type of "country" music). All figure in Milton's repertoire, fueled by a singular sensibility that reaches through jazz and beyond classical. Surely it's no accident that Milton's own songs display a winding melodic topography like that of Minas. Or as Milton's guitarist Ricardo Silveira says, "Milton hears simple things in a very complicated way."

"Minas is a very big universe, but when I compose I don't worry about style," Milton says. "I listen to my heart, and I make good use of what's in my mind. The truth is, I am more related to a human being than a piece of land. I am more bound to the whole world than a plot of earth."

Nascimento's presence in Brazil over a twenty-year career, as well as on the international scene, has itself become a very fertile plot of earth. From the beginning his art has been forged through collaboration, his message a hymn to friendship and communion. Co-creations with Mineiro composers Beto Guedes, Wagner Tiso, Lo and Marcio Borges, and with lyricists Fernando Brandt and Ronaldo Bastos, delineate a kind of family history. Most were childhood cronies from the street corners of Tres Pontas (the famed "Clube da Esquina"), where, during the 60s, the Mineiro sound was formulated. After struggling several years as an anonymous bass player in Sao Paulo, Milton gained commercial attention when his "Travessia" won the International Song Festival in 1967. Since then his effect on popular music has become enormous. In duets with Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa, and Simone (though strangely never Gil), he effortlessly magnetized stars of similar stature into his own gravitational field. He discovered and introduced new

CAFI

World Radio History

OMAR HAKIM

CHOOSING A MULTI-SOUND CYMBAL SET-UP

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

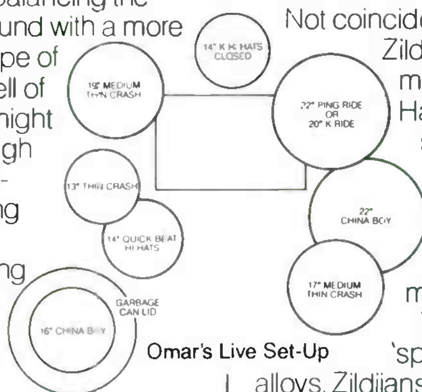
Omar's *multi-purpose* drum and cymbal set-up has been chosen with meticulous care to produce the extraordinary variety of sounds he needs for Weather Report and sessions with David Bowie, Dave Sanborn and others. How the cymbals are used and where they are positioned around his kit has more to do with enhancing his musical possibilities than following the "rules."

"I've been changing *roles* with different cymbals. Since Weather Report is mostly electric, I've been balancing the 'wash' type sound with a more defined ride type of thing on the bell of the cymbal. I might be riding through Joe's solo passages or setting up a groove with the 22" Ping Ride on my right. So I'll keep the right hand going and do accents and other stuff with my left hand on the 19" Medium Thin Crash on the left. It's an excellent crash/ride cymbal and it gives me enough different sounds to free me up for this *ambidextrous* approach."

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

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

"First, I listen for the primary tone. You have to get close to the cymbal to hear it. I also listen to whether the harmonic overtones are coming out evenly. I like the bells to be clear without too many harmonic overtones."



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Omar Hakim is the drummer for Weather Report and is currently recording and touring with Sting.

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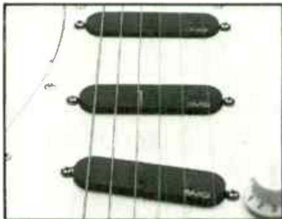
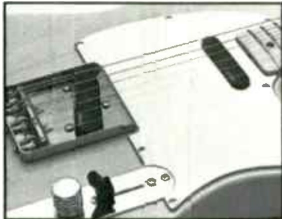

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groups to Brazil, such as Uakti, which performs on handmade, avant-garde instruments. And his international influence has extended to stylists as disparate as George Duke, Weather Report, Pat Metheny and Herbie Hancock.

While Milton's nineteen albums suggest a gradual sophistication of form, his early records, considered classics in Brazil, are far from simple-minded. The 1975 *Minas* surveys a stark interior landscape of contrapuntal voices (notably chanting children) that intersect Milton's at odd angles. *Geraes* charts a regional folktrail, while songs like "Girou, Girou," with its sudden wordless vocal flight, suggest a bruised sensuality struggling for release. The joy of Wayne Shorter's *Native Dancer* came from the American's ability to lock horns with Nascimento's voice, a marriage of timbres beyond mere acoustics. With the album *Paixão e Fe*, Milton consolidated his craft of writing art songs; the orchestral vision behind the 1982 *Anima* finally set the intimate grandeur of his voice into fabulous relief. This year's *Encontras e Despedidas* presents the fruit of Milton's art fully fermented. In gorgeous ballads like "Caso de Amor" and "Quem Perguntou Por Mim," old friends like Brant and Tiso help him revitalize his roots; but it is with the help of new friends Pat Metheny and Hubert Laws that Nascimento discovers that natural "green card" called range.

"There's something very beautiful that happens with music," Milton says. "It's as if you are walking down the street looking at many different faces, and suddenly you feel strongly they have something in common with you. Only in music the feeling is more concrete: When I hear Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, Pat Metheny, Hubert Laws, it feels as if I'm playing. I want to work with them, exchange energies, techniques.

"It's as if the essential cry I hear in another is the same I feel inside myself."

Baurú, one of the more nondescript towns in the state of São Paulo, hosts the opening show of Milton's tour. Though tickets are not expensive, I meet two young working girls in the afternoon who tell me they cannot afford to go (a common dilemma in Brazil). Still the stadium is full, and the night, following a clearing rain, has taken on the feel of a rally. Although many of Milton's songs have been criticized as too sophisticated for the masses, everyone seems to know the words. His band (including Silveira, bassist Nico Assumpcão, long time drummer Robertinho Silva, and keyboardist Luiz Avellar) seem to be having atypical ensemble problems, however,

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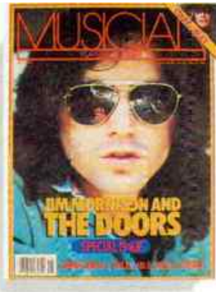

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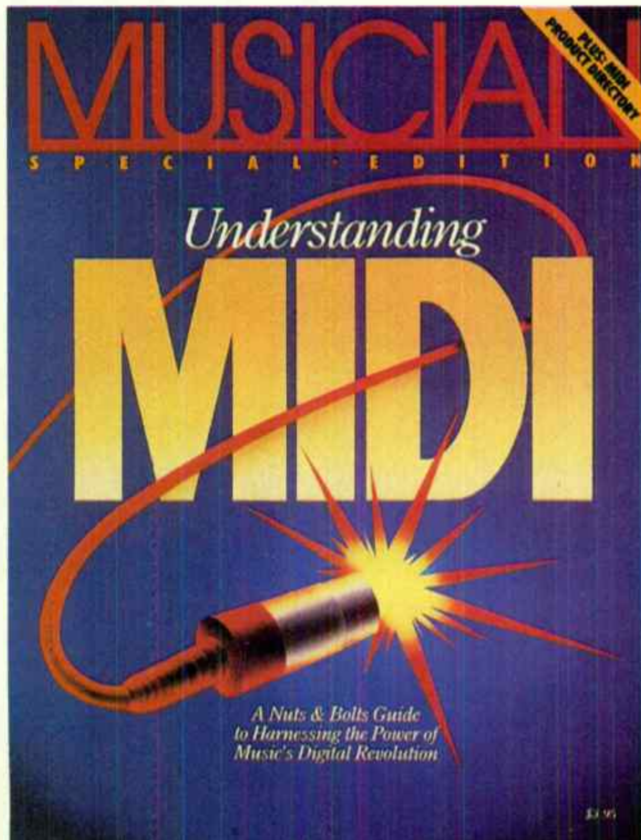

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GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

KOOL & THE GANG

Life After Crossover

What a difference a decade makes. A little over ten years ago Kool & the Gang were riding high on hits like "Hollywood Swingin'" and "Jungle Boogie." The songs were swaggering, impolite pieces of ebony funk; Kool & the Gang were the kind of black folks that white folks warned their kids about. But here in the decade of Reagan and Cosby, black folks, white folks and a lot of other folks are into the Gang, which is better known now for the seamless, sweatless pop of hits like "Ladies Night," "Celebration" and "Cherish."

For **Ronald "Kool" Bell**, that says less about crossover music than it does about evolution. "In the 70s we didn't have a lead vocalist. So what we had to do was depend on our basic grooves—our horn sound. The other guys in the group were writing songs that had storylines and so on, but we hadn't had anyone to sing 'em."

That changed when the band recruited a smooth tenor named James Taylor. "We started to become 'crossover' because now there was something for a so-called popular market to identify with."

Bell probably wouldn't trade that success for anything, but still he admits to missing the old sound—to say nothing of the band's old sense of adventure. He's particularly anticipating the reaction to "Chase" on the new album, an instrumental that he says sounds something like the old Gang style—"funk fusion, heavy grooves, improvisations on the horn and keyboards.

"It comes with us in cycles. In 1975-76 were hits like 'Jungle Boogie' and 'Funky Stuff.' We were doing quite well, doing *Johnny Carson* and *Mike Douglas*." Then the band reversed direction dramatically with the surprise *jazz* hit, "Summer Madness." "We are at that period again," Bell says. "We feel that yearning to do something slightly different, to stretch out." – *Leonard Pitts, Jr.*

MIKEL ROUSE

Dr. Classical and Mr. Pop

Mikel Rouse is a classically trained musician with a penchant for pop. Like a lot of people before him, he tried merging the two. Unlike a lot of the others, Rouse admits it's a combination that rarely works. "I felt dissatisfied with the results," he remembers. "It wasn't very good pop music, and it wasn't very good concert music. They were just watered-down versions of each other."

Frustrated, Rouse was left with one option: form two different bands that would each play a pure style of music. Voila! Rouse's Tirez Tirez plays Talking Heads-like rock 'n' roll with suitably cerebral lyrics; Broken Consort specializes in his modern classical music. "Basically, I wanted to have my cake and eat it too," Rouse says with a grin of satisfaction.

While the two groups operate independently of one another, Rouse is quick to point out that certain elements can't help but cross over. "The Broken Consort stuff is infused with a lot of harmonic and rhythmic ideas," he explains. "Naturally, those things enter into Tirez Tirez. It's not that you can't be influenced by something, but it's that urge to incorporate it directly into the music that makes for bland-sounding bands."

Rouse on record is anything but bland. The complex, uplifting melodies on Tirez Tirez's *Social Responsibility* challenge preconceptions about pop music without being inaccessible. The band will even be playing live, though Rouse is convinced that electric music is a studio medium. "Unless you have a visually-oriented stage show, it's usually pretty poorly performed," he says. "Onstage, you just can't reproduce what's on the record, whereas with classical music there's an added intensity of the live performance and a reason for doing it. But if you're going to put out a pop record and are as anti-video as I am, you have to support it with live dates."

Rouse has no problem differentiating between his two musical personas. Others—particularly those record company executives who were turned on by one band, turned off by the other, and subsequently hedged away from signing either outfit—don't find it quite so easy. "It's a lot more difficult to keep from being pigeonholed than I would have expected," Rouse admits. "People want to associate the two kinds of music. The way I see it, it's almost as if I'm a short-order cook and a pop musician, or a store clerk and a classical musician." – *Michael Kaplan*

KAREN PETERSEN

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FACES

OUT OF THE BLUE

They Still Make 'Em That Way Anymore

Out of the Blue's first album, recorded and released last year, has been called one of the best jazz records of the 60s. And the young cooperative sextet has been called the Monkees of jazz.

Neither of these descriptions is entirely fair, although they're both pretty funny. But both contain an element of truth.

It's certainly true that the members of Out of the Blue (OTB for short), like numerous other young jazz musicians these tradition-conscious days, spend a lot of time in a hard-driving post-bop/modal groove. The style was developed a couple of decades or so ago by musicians who recorded for the Blue Note label—which is, not coincidentally, OTB's home.

As for the Monkees analogy, the fact is that OTB didn't exactly take shape organically. The folks at the born-again Blue Note decided they wanted a brand new group consisting of hotshot youngsters. A series of auditions yielded the six players who ended up getting packaged as OTB.

Trumpeter **Michael Philip Mossman** acknowledges that OTB owes a heavy stylistic debt to an earlier generation of jazz musicians. That's inevitable, he says, given that all the members are still finding their own voices. He also acknowledges the way the band came together was a bit unusual. But he notes that all of the members of OTB, except Canadian-born tenor saxophonist Ralph Bowen, had previously worked together in various combinations in other bands—and they quickly discovered they were very comfortable being one. (At this writing, though, there are likely to be some personnel changes. Two of the original OTB members have offers of steadier work elsewhere.)

The group recorded its debut album quickly, Mossman says. A brand-new second effort "will represent a higher level of unity.

"And by the third album, things should get *really* wild."

– Peter Keepnews

ED WILKERSON

Big Bands Are Back ... With a Difference

Twenty years ago Chicago's jazz critics alerted the rest of the world to Mitchell, Bowie, Abrams, Jarman *et al.* Now they're sounding the alarm on behalf of Edward Wilkerson, a graduate of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians.

The first release by Shadow Vignettes, Wilkerson's twenty-five-member orchestra, justifies all the shouting. *Birth Of A Notion* is an impressive album by any standard, but especially so in light of its underdog origins: a $6,000 do-it-yourself project by an untested performer. Wilkerson raised the odds even higher by laying down his horns—he plays half a dozen—in favor of a composer's scoresheet and conductor's baton.

"My music is very theatrical," he explains. "There's so much activity to direct with Shadow Vignettes that I don't have *time* to play. My original intention was to offer the finished product to an established label, but having financed it myself I decided why not go all the way and distribute it, too."

The album's showpiece, replete with ten-minute video, is "Honky Tonk Bud," a jailhouse toast about an apocryphal South Side smack dealer who becomes an FBI sting victim. Behind actor John Toles-Bey's flamboyant narrative, Wilkerson wheels in orchestral motifs like stage props. His recontextualizing eclecticism is more apparent on "The Names Have Been Changed," a back-to-the-future flagwaver.

"The music of the 20s and 30s had such spark," Wilker-

World Radio History

Wilkerson from previous page
son says. "I wanted to reproduce that spark using the contemporary vocabulary." Besides Shadow Vignettes, he also leads (and plays with) Eight Bold Souls, a smaller Chicago group. The enterprising Wilkerson hopes to take the big band on the road. "I hear it doesn't cost all that much to rent a bus," he muses. – *Francis Davis*

Up-to-the-Minute Men

Surviving Minutemen bassist Mike Watt and drummer George Hurley are back in action after the death of guitarist/singer D. Boon in a car accident last December. With guitarist Ed Crawford they've formed firehose (yes, with a small f). The group will record imminently.

THELONIOUS MONSTER

Four Guitarists, Four Managers

Bob Forrest, who fronts Los Angeles' Thelonious Monster, resembles a bespectacled cartoon character who stepped out of a Looney Tunes to grab a beer. It's tough to take him too seriously, and nearly as tough not to like him—attributes that also hold for Thelonious Monster, whose debut LP and wild, boozy live shows have created quite a buzz locally.

In the two years since the Monster was created, the band has "accomplished" a lot. For instance, it has experienced so many personnel changes that it's hard for current members to keep track of former ones, though everyone agrees there are now *four* guitarists. The septet recorded *Baby... You're Bummin' My Life Out In A Supreme Fashion*, a nifty album that immerses funny, pointed essays—on unraveled romance, drink and drug abuse, and infidelity—in a bitchin' brew of punk pop, free jazz and funky psycho-blues. And the group's beer-soaked, anything-goes concerts have caused the Monster to be banned from a few L.A. clubs.

"We have four managers," Forrest explains with a grin, "and they don't do anything except tell club managers, 'I'm sorry for the way they acted.'"

Forrest makes it clear *he's* not particularly sorry. Besides, it's not like the band is hurting for friends or fans. Guest musicians on the record range from James Chance to Peter Case, as well as members of Red Hot Chili Peppers, the Circle Jerks and Fishbone. And enough video makers expressed interest in shooting the Monster that at least four videos (of four different songs) are in the works.

Most Monster tunes, Forrest says, come from band jams. "To write out a song, then try to teach it to everybody is just too, uh, *professional.*" At the current jamming rate, he figures the group will be ready to record the next album by the end of summer.

Given the Monster's personality, one suspects some thought has already gone into an LP title. "Yeah," Forrest replies. "We're thinking of calling it *Too Many Hats And Not Enough Talent.*"

– *Duncan Strauss*

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on my use of drone strings, which was something I started to do quite instinctively, before I could afford a bank of expensive effects. In the early years I used quite clean sounds, generally playing higher strings, and plucking them with a pick, but playing the melody against a drone.

MUSICIAN: *How do you do that?*

EDGE: It sounds very complex, but really it's just a rhythmic device. The idea of playing over a drone is very Irish, and as far as I know has no roots at all in rock 'n' roll. Another of my traits, which is similar, is the use of echo in a rhythmic way.

MUSICIAN: *So that guitar echo on* Boy *wasn't Steve Lillywhite's contribution?*

EDGE: No, that was me. In fact, I became the timekeeper with the band for a while, and Larry would play to me, because everything had to sync with my echo—you can hear that in "Pride," for example. Eventually we made a decision to leave out the echo on *War*, and the guitar became much more dry and forceful. That sound reappeared, in a sense, on *Unforgettable Fire*, because of the Hawaiian guitar, but in any case, the guitar treatments almost always came out of things that I was doing.

MUSICIAN: *On* Unforgettable Fire, *what did Eno do to your treatments?*

EDGE: He treated them again! I always treat my guitars at source: I don't use outboard equipment, because I like to react to, and play against, my own treatments. On *Unforgettable Fire* I played with the echo, which really pissed people off, because if it was too much, you couldn't take it off. I fine-tuned it very precisely when I was playing, and it would have been totally unsatisfactory to have split it into a "dry" and "wet" signal. Brian sometimes added other treatments, but more on the keyboards than on the guitar. On "Fourth Of July," for instance, the treatment was a combination of what I was doing while playing, and something Brian added in the studio, and the fact that it sounds as if there are more than two instruments is due solely to the treatments. That track is only a little vignette, not to be taken too seriously, but I think it is quite beautiful.

MUSICIAN: Unforgettable Fire *was a radical change in many ways. Was that the band's decision?*

EDGE: Yes. All the material was written by the time Eno arrived, with the exception of "Bad," "Fourth Of July," and "Elvis Presley In America." "Unforgettable Fire," to give you an example, wasn't written with guitars in mind. I'd actually written it for a soundtrack—at least, I'd decided that it wasn't suitable for U2, so I'd put it on one side. Then Bono and I messed around with it, Bono on bass, and myself on keyboards, and we worked it out without any guitars. Subsequently I put on a few "ambient" guitars on top, but it was always a keyboard song. And if you think about it, there is very little traditional guitar on that record.

MUSICIAN: *Do you remember when you first picked up guitar?*

EDGE: I was given a Spanish guitar when I was about twelve, which I learned to tune, and that was as far as I got. Then, when I was about fourteen, I took up piano, worked on that for about two years, by which time I could play a lot of rudimentary classical pieces. But I gave it up when I realized that I'd never be able to handle the sight-reading, and that I didn't much like the pieces I was given to learn.

"Piercing through like lightning."

Some time later my brother, who is two years older than me, also got a guitar, and we plonked around together, playing Beatles songs. When I was just sixteen, we formed the first group that contained the present members of U2, with my brother and another guitar player. At that stage Bono wanted to play guitar, so we had four guitar players, and no one who was prepared to sing. Adam had a bass, which I think he bought because it had four strings rather than six, and because it guaranteed him a place in the band!

We played cover versions for a while—mainly songs that were easy for us to play without keyboards. My brother then left the group because it just didn't seem to be working with five members, the other guitar player left after a week, and suddenly there was a new simplicity that came with the change to a four-piece band. This led to a creative period which resulted in our first demos, which we sent out to record companies. That would have been in 1977.

We played a lot, rehearsed a lot, and became totally immersed in the music that was happening around us. Suddenly we became aware of people like Patti Smith, Richard Hell & the Voidoids, and Television. And in England there were the Banshees, the Skids, Magazine, the Pistols, the Clash and all of them. It was a great period. The American groups really caught our interest, because even at that stage we sensed an English overemphasis on image, at the expense of the music and lyrical content.

MUSICIAN: *And what were the influences on you as a guitarist?*

EDGE: I was very influenced by Tom Verlaine—not stylistically, but in terms of general approach and tearing up the rule-book. I also loved Patti Smith: her guitar-playing was competent and not particularly exceptional, but it was perfect for her band. These influences never became very evident; they were always more of an inspiration, catalysts in the formation of my own style.

MUSICIAN: *How much of U2's success do you attribute to the band's idealism?*

EDGE: That's a difficult question to answer—I suppose it's part of everything we do to some extent. In terms of personal achievement, it's what I most value. We've never been a band of exceptional musicians, so it may be another quality that has brought about our success, and it may have something to do with our ideals. But what is fascinating I feel about a lot of modern art is that it draws no conclusions, provides no solutions, and doesn't point you in any new directions, and I think that the reason why Western culture is so bankrupt is because it lacks spiritual values. I think that art can be a light at the end of the tunnel, not just a mirror of society.

MUSICIAN: *U2 has become so involved with good works of one sort or another—Live Aid, Sun City, the Amnesty concerts—that there could be a risk of the band appearing a bit self-righteous.*

EDGE: We've always been aware of that, and we've always taken pains to make it clear that we're not *preaching*. A lot of our lyrics are about "us" collectively, not "you." I think that apathy and cynicism are hard to shake off—I see that in myself—and I do believe that it's very corrupting when you start giving in to them.

MUSICIAN: *But don't you think there's a danger in identifying the band so closely with a set of moral values?*

EDGE: Whether or not art should raise itself above social or political values is an open question, but as far as I'm concerned, art can't raise itself above

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rhythm section was Holger Czukay and Jaki Liebezeit from Can. I was asked in, to add a new flavor on guitar: It happened that I had a couple of weeks to spare—it literally was a couple of weeks—so I went over to London, rehearsed for about three days, and recorded for about the same time.

Jaki and Holger were a bit like rock 'n' roll philosophers. Brian Eno is too, but he's more easygoing about it. His arguments can be complex, but when you actually get down to what he does, it's quite straightforward. I think Holger and Jaki are more ideas-oriented, like Talking Heads. They have a conceptual basis for what they do, whereas Brian, on the other hand, develops axioms for what he's just done. Brian makes shifts in a more fundamental way—when he makes a change, it's a change in everything, and he goes along that path for a considerable time, until another shift takes place. For instance, during *Unforgettable Fire* he'd just come out of his African period, and he'd developed a huge interest in gospel music and in traditional Irish music—he was fascinated by Seamus Ennis, the uillean pipes player.

MUSICIAN: *Did all this whet your appetite for independence? There was a rumor a while ago that you were going to leave U2.*

EDGE: No! You see, the band is the reason why I'm a musician. I find music amazing, but I don't see anything as rewarding as being in a group that functions *as a group*. If U2 ever became a kind of convenience for us, then I probably would leave, but at the moment the four members of the band are working *with* each other all the time, and I don't think that will ever get boring. It really boils down to whether the relationships are robust enough to stand the test of time. I'm convinced they are.

MUSICIAN: *Your answer to that question reminds me of the reasons why Brian Eno agreed to produce the last album. He told me that he was impressed by the band's attitude to the group as a unit, and by your commitment to each other as individuals.*

EDGE: Actually, Brian was one of the people we had shortlisted for the first album. I remember him being discussed, but I don't think we ever tried to get in touch with him because we decided that he was probably very busy with Talking Heads, and that he was unlikely to want to come to Dublin, which is where we wanted to record.

And at that point we had developed a rapport with Martin Hannett; unfortunately when Ian Curtis died, Martin left for the States, and became involved with New Order. He felt that was where his duty lay, and he didn't want to get into anything new. Steve Lillywhite then

continued on page 76

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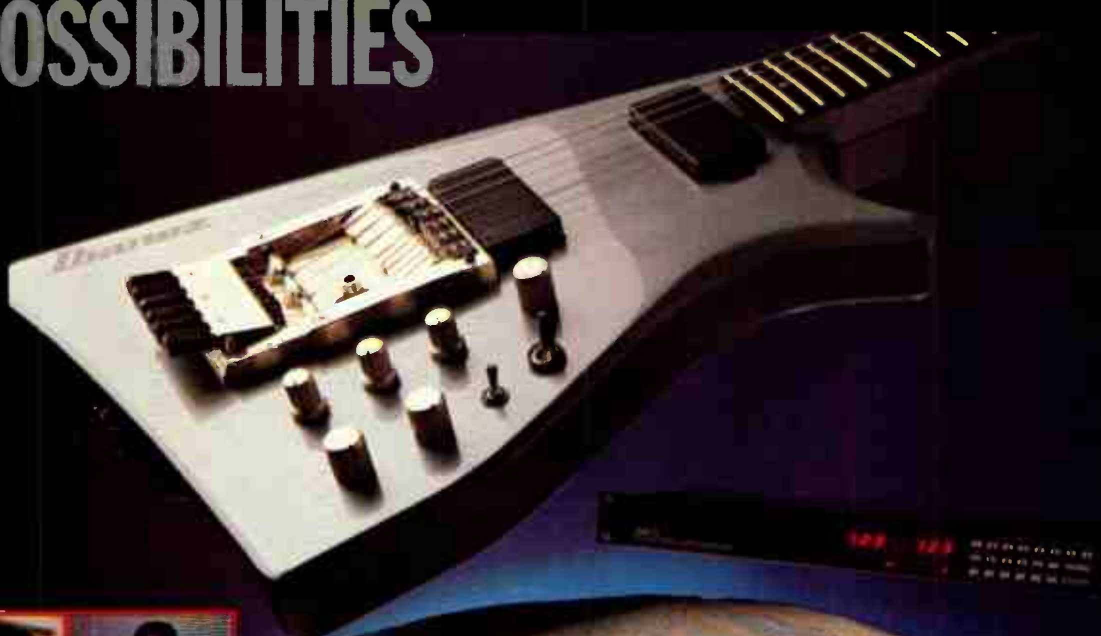

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FRESH SCREAM: A VISIT WITH WELL-TEMPERED GUITAR HERO

ERIC JOHNSON'S BIG TEXAS HONK

Dallas, Texas is a clement, lyrical spot in the late spring. The breeze is up. The wide, flat, light green spaces seem to bask in the impassive glare of a big sky. You can see the trees and the forest, too. There's music lurking in the air. It is Eric Johnson country.

Right now, Johnson is also *on* the air. Influential local DJ Red Beard is conducting a reverent in-studio interview on the eve of Johnson's club dates in town, and can hardly contain his affection and pride. After all, Johnson has returned a genuine Guitar Hero, bearing a new album from the brothers Warner and his face in every supermarket as the cover boy of *Guitar Player.* Johnson will even host a dinner for area record retailers, quietly signing autographs and talking shop.

Red Beard, the local symbol of Lone Star pride with his Billy Gibbons-brand fistful of facial hair, is still reverent the following evening as he emcees Johnson's gig at the swank Redux showcase down on gentrified Greenville Street. The long set is chock full of sizzling pyrotechnics, lustrous tonal collages from Johnson's Strat set-up and nicely tailored vocal tunes sung in a sort of gentle Eric Clapton-meets-Sting tenor. Johnson also respectfully peels off uncanny tributes to Jerry Reed's chicken pickin' fury, Les Paul's suave moves and—all hail the master—an encore of "Spanish Castle Magic," replete with a patented, Hendrix-like machine gun, *blah blah woof woof* stage patter. The crowd is beside itself, on its feet and spilling over the balcony with pride and glee.

Deep in the heart of Texas, you see, they've known about this Eric Johnson cat for years. The lanky thirty-one-year-old boy wonder out of Austin has been known to tear up the frets and manhandle a panstylistic panhandle of music since 1975. His fusion marauders, the Electromagnets, released a regional LP and carved out a reputation across the South for aggravated chops. Johnson took a detour in studio work in 1980, after Austin popstar Christopher Cross used him on his golden debut album. Meanwhile, Johnson's reputation was snowballing on the musician circuit; players the likes of Steve Morse and Larry Carlton helped fuel the great myth of the amiable Texan who was breathing new life into a tired instrument.

A highly dexterous flyboy of the frets, a sensitive melodist and a self-effacing student of guitar history all rolled up in one, Johnson has all the makings of becoming a new contender in the guitar hall of fame, the well-tempered guitar hero we've been waiting for. The question his Gulf Coast fans asked was not *if*, but *when* this humble virtuoso would make his presence known in the musical major leagues, *when* his just desserts would be forthcoming. This spring in Dallas, the answer seemed to be now.

"You have to test yourself, stumble and blow it."

BY JOSEF WOODARD

But the genuinely long-awaited release of *Tones* may or may not introduce Johnson's considerable gifts to the listening body politic. Half instrumental and half devoted to Johnson's progressive pop vocal tunes, the record isn't everything to everybody. With great expectations come misleading preconceptions; neither the excessive guitar gymnast vehicle or an overtly commercial enterprise, *Tones* is, instead, a subtle pastiche and an uncommonly mature debut. Johnson comes up swinging, but not in the usual one-two fashion. But the rather retiring guitarist (he only reluctantly agreed to have his picture on the album cover) has had enough time and near-misses to fine tune his priorities.

"If the record does well, I just hope to use that in a good, medicinal way toward creativity and an outlet of music," he explains with typical circumspection. "It's important to maintain the vigilance to do that. There seems to be a weak spot in the pop industry to create golden calves. Just as an observer you can see that kind of attitude. I think it's great to want to play pop music with the same kind of integrity classical musicians have, but to do that, you've got to watch out for those pits. I have mixed feelings about the whole business."

He also has mixed feelings about doing interviews. In fact, the best way to win Johnson's confidence is to keep a guitar within arm's reach. He is one of those humans who feels somehow incomplete in the absence of an axe. On the drive back to the Holiday Inn, Johnson's long-standing manager, Joe Priesnitz, explains his artist's reluctance: "Eric asks, 'Why talk when I could be practicing?'"

MARY BETH GREENWOOD

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So I tell him to bring along his guitar to the hotel room. A Martin acoustic at the ready, Johnson is a contented individual, a man in his element, discoursing freely on his artistic jones.

"Always loving guitar, I approach it from an instrumental guitar music standpoint. But I love the Beatles too; it always turned me on to hear a great vocal pop tune. I thought it'd be neat, in whatever way I could, to also have that. But it happens that I'll write songs and say, 'Oh, the lyrics, I almost forgot.' It's a backwards way to do it, but I have a guitaristic approach to everything.

"I wouldn't want to humor myself that I write Beatles songs. There are few people who write incredible pop songs. I have to balance on my strong points. That's why I concentrate on my guitar." He glances longingly at his acoustic.

Strangely, though, Johnson began his brilliant musical career at the ivories. The son of an Austin doctor, young Eric switched over from the piano to the wiles of the six-string in his impressionable pre-teen years, when he came within earshot of the Beatles, the Ventures and the Rolling Stones. "That was it," he concedes with a gaping grin. "Sign me up. I'm ready. Turn up the amp. That's when rock music was flowering into a new stage from its original concept. It was a real special time. I was only eleven or twelve years old, but you'd go see a band playing down the street or on TV, there'd be two guitars, bass and drums and that was an amazing deal. I'd never heard that sound before. It was so new. After twenty years and millions of bands, it's a little bit harder to have that special esoteric effect that will make people's heads turn."

Before long, Johnson discovered deeper uses for a guitar: the blues. "My initial acquaintance with the blues was actually through Eric Clapton & the Bluesbreakers, then I went back and studied the blues *he* listened to. There was so much feeling on, like, *Fresh Cream*—a certain inflection in the way they played, that edge, that sassy tone. As far as my attitude towards tone, that's when I became interested in what the guitar could do as a solo voice instrument.

"Then I started listening to Hendrix and Beck and Wes Montgomery. Hearing John McLaughlin was a real turning point. McLaughlin appealed to me because he knows so much about music and he voiced it through a Marshall amp, played loud and honked, stretched the strings. He would embrace all the stuff that I grew up on—*Fresh Cream, Axis: Bold As Love*—all this stuff that reached beyond just a pop statement and became a soaring, spatial thing. He would take all his technique and turn it up. So he had fire although he was a jazz player. That initially got me into technique and learning more."

And so, after the power trio rock format of his first group Mariani dissipated, Johnson was ready for his next chapter. The fusion movement, with its premium on advanced tenets of technical prowess—the faster the better, etc.—had a magnetic pull on a young, fleet player. The Electromagnets, true to the name, were born of the desire to play with electric and unchecked fury, or, in Johnson's parlance, to *honk*. They had a rabid core of fans almost immediately, an unofficial network dotting the fast-lane jazz-rock chitlin' circuit.

"We were always on the road, basically in the southern United States. We had this box truck. It was during the gas crunch and it said 'Join me at 55 mph' on the bumper. Unfortunately, we never drove at fifty-five; we were always honkin' to our next gig. All four of us would just pile into the truck like sardines. Routing? No problem. Anywhere. Chicago, Florida and back to Chicago the next night? Fine. No problem. If it was a gig, we'd go anywhere. We'd save every buck we could. We'd get into a town at three in the morning, but we could save $14.50 if we slept in the motel driveway and waited until 7 a.m. to check in."

Johnson learned basic hard-knocks training from the band, but also nurtured his technique and musical outlook during the Electromagnets tenure. But, as with many fusioneers, there came a time to move forward for both artistic and commercial good stead. Along the way, Johnson's magnificent obsession with tone was also galvanized. "Back when Mini-Moogs came out, [Electromagnet keyboardist] Steve Barber would get a very sensitive, velvety tone out of it. I started breeding a taste for that kind of thing—a thick tone with all the eq of a guitar as one unit, rather than getting a lot of bass, this weird high end and this glitch here."

Johnson's maturing tone and taste finally caught the ear of producer David Tickle [Split Enz], who first heard Johnson on a now-legendary segment of the PBS series *Austin City Limits* and was mightily impressed. So impressed he talked Warners into signing Johnson in the summer of '85, and became his producer. Tickle soon pressed his Fairlight into the service of Johnson's expanding sense of sonic coloration.

"We used a bunch of different amps, old fuzztones, octavers and weird things," Johnson says, "just to have different textures. Although live, there are just three basic tones that I use, in the studio we branched out. People say, 'Don't do a lot of stuff if you can't do it live.' I never felt that way. You have two different voices of opportunity. Live you can do a certain thing and the studio can be different. I don't think there's anything wrong with doing *Sergeant Pepper's* in the studio and just go wild with overdubs, or maybe a song only needs to have one guitar. There shouldn't be any concrete mottoes that you go by."

In taking this studio-as-a-tool tack, Johnson was less disposed towards guitaristic overstatement. Except for a few spouting solo excursions, the album is the work of a guitarist on his good, restrained behavior. "I guess three of the songs have the blowing spontaneity of 'Zap,'" Johnson admits. "I kind of wish I'd done more of that in retrospect. If I could think of criticisms of the record, that would come to mind immediately. It would be neat to just—no-holds-barred—just honk, just play, turn it up."

"If you get real fired up and in a crazy mood, you're above that," Johnson replies. "Nothing is going to stop you from playing. But if you're in a subjective mood, it can. I have to watch that, be-

TONAL ARTILLERY

Eric Johnson's equipmental ideal is that of a skeptical adventurer; he dabbles in the goods of the digital age, but gravitates towards diehard analog technologies. Of his failure to join in the digital effects parade, he jests: "I've got an effects rack that you could blow sagebrush through. You could film *Gunsmoke* in it. All the effects I have are so prehistoric, I might as well carry them around in a Safeway shopping cart—the low-tech look. Of course, I'd probably get carried away and start wearing hopsack clothes and thongs, quit shaving...."

And play thrift shop guitars? Not likely. Once a Les Paul and 335 man, he now plays his '58 Strats with stock whammy bars almost exclusively. GHS strings—.010 to .046—are his preference.

Johnson's three-pronged, double A/B box, triple-amp system is of the old Reliable School. For a clean sound, he runs through an Echoplex, a T.C. Electronics Stereo Chorus and two Fender Twin reverb amps with a Marshall 4 x 12 cabinet. His distorted rhythm routing involves an Ibanez Tube Screamer, an MXR Digital Delay and a Howard Dumble String Singer Head with another Marshall cabinet.

For that maximum crunchola, Johnson sends his guitar through a Cry Baby Wah Wah, a T.C. Electronic Sustainer, a Fender tube reverb unit, another Echoplex, and Paul C's Tube Driver. Depending on the volume and acoustical demands, he uses either a Marshall 50- or 100-watt head or a Dumble Overdrive Special and a Marshall 4 x 12 cabinet.

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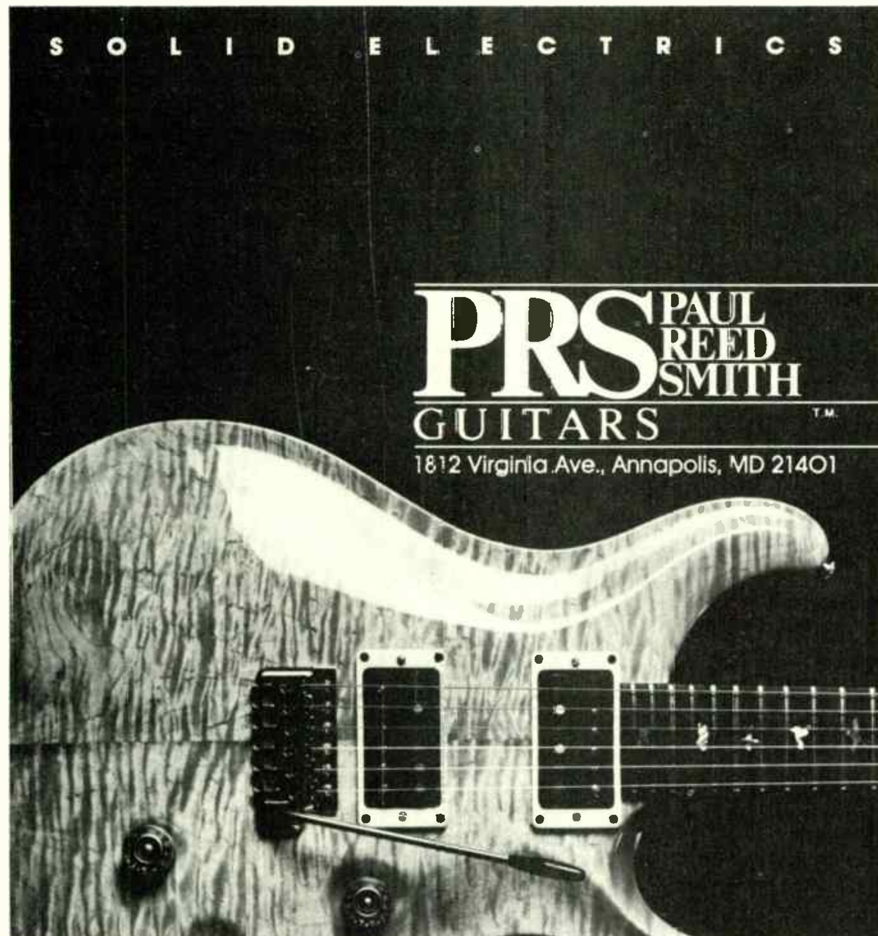

cause sometimes I'll see the red light go on on the machine and I'll start playing folk chords immediately," he snickers, "and as soon as the light goes off, I'll wail into 'Flight Of The Bumblebee' or something. I don't know why that is. That gets back to the idea that we are our own limitation. If we can raise our consciousness, it can automatically affect everything we do."

On *Tones*, Johnson also repays many of his stylistic debts. His flair for sculpting solos with keen attention to variance of tone nods to Jeff Beck. "I learned so much from him," Johnson admits, "because of his inflections, the character of his playing and his tone. He's a real mood creator." More central to Johnson's palette is Hendrix; the Texan as much as admits the imitation (as a pure form of flattery) at the end of the instrumental "Victory." Its sliding fourths and dreamy double-stop nuances have Jimi written all over. "That ending was all spontaneous," he recalls. "But I might as well have taken a Hendrix record and said, 'Okay, we'll run that tape at the end here.'"

Despite Johnson's tonal fixation, he's not the excessive gadget freak one might expect. The high-tech hustle going on in the musical equipment scene has left Johnson, to some extent, a bit cold. Thus, he mostly resorts to standard, pre-chip tools of the trade: Strats, Twins, Marshalls, an Echoplex, a Cry Baby, etc. Much of the digital developments have a cleanliness that's close to sterility for Johnson's tastes. He likens the situation to the perennial technology vs. beauty argument.

"Let's say you live in a huge skyscraper without any beautiful human art on the wall—everything high tech but nothing that reminded you of the hills of Scotland or some beautiful stream or hugging somebody, something on a more human level."

Johnson has a similar distrust of mere guitar technique: "It's important to be a good technician and be able to play real fast and clean and have a lot of knowledge, especially if those are the building blocks of what your message is. But that *message* is of such paramount importance that the other part is not necessarily important. If you transcend the technicality of 'Here's the guitar break, the lead break lasts this long, now it's going to end,' or with any kind of music, then it becomes more of a human emotion to another person."

Johnson has also evolved a more conceptual attitude regarding practicing. It's not so much a matter of mastering given scales or unwieldy arpeggios, but working on the internal exercises. "If you get

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THE CARS' GUITAR SPARKPLUG ON BEING APPROPRIATE

ELLIOT EASTON, CLOSET TRADITIONALIST

The Cars have been called a lot of things, but "traditionalists" isn't one of them. Like many of the musical modernists who washed ashore with the new wave, the Cars espoused a sort of anti-traditionalism—their music didn't refer back to rock's past, but looked ahead to its future. Or so it seemed on the surface. Which is why it comes as something of an eye-opener to hear Elliot Easton talk about the Beatle lick he copped for "My Best Friend's Girl."

Remember that crisp, countrified guitar figure that framed the verses and set up the guitar solo in the song? "Well," says Easton, "I didn't realize until after the record was made that the lick was subconsciously 'I Will' from the 'white album.' It's not an obvious thing to play to those chords, and I don't know why I did it at the time, but at one time or another I must have loved that little passage. But I never figured out how to play it or anything like that, never said, 'Oh, this part's gonna work great here.' I didn't do it consciously. It's just testament to how embedded those things are in my psyche."

His psyche and ours, really. Not because the average rock fan recognized the allusion at first hearing, or even the hundredth, but because the part worked in the same way despite its radically different context. Which, on the one hand, explains why the Cars have never been called traditionalists, and on the other, how Easton has ended up a traditionalist in spite of himself.

"I've always strived not to wear it on my sleeve, as it were, and I've never been one to sit down and memorize people's solos note-for-note," he says. "It's more absorbing their feeling and spirit, and then forgetting about it completely and letting it come through you naturally, when you wouldn't expect it. That's when you come up with things that work. But it's definitely there. I don't see how you could really come up with something that was utterly and totally original, unless it was atonal and discordant. I mean, if you're going to work in 4/4 time and have it still be called rock 'n' roll, you're going to work within a certain set of limitations."

Of course, it helps if you have some knowledge of the past to build from. For instance, Easton has been doing a fair amount of session work while the Cars are between albums, and is often amused at the way producers will ask for a specific guitar sound. "I was using that in-between Strat sound long before Dire Straits ever came around, but now people say, 'Can you do that Mark Knopfler tone?' I say, 'Oh, you mean that Amos Garrett tone. OK.'

"And they don't even know who the hell Amos Garrett is," he laughs. "But I'm sure Mark Knopfler does." [Garrett's best-known solo was on the Maria Muldaur hit, "Midnight At The Oasis."]

The funniest thing of all is that, at thirty-two, Easton is younger than Knopfler or those producers. Despite his youth, though, his musical attitude owes a lot to the music and discipline of the 60s. He picked up the guitar at an early age, and first became aware of rock during what he calls "the 'Bobby' period," when B. Rydell and B. Darin and B. Vee were all the rage. "It was really the nadir of rock 'n' roll," he says. "The only thing going on that was exciting for guitar players was stuff like the Ventures and the surf instrumentals, 'Apache' and stuff like that. That was the first stuff I was good enough to play.

"Then came the Beatles, and of course, forget it. None of our lives will ever be the same." But while some kids heard the British Invasion as neat new sounds, Easton understood that there were roots to the music, and "got into digging back. Basically, the British bands showed us what we had all along, and I took that cue. To me, it was fascinating to hear the original version of a song I only knew by the Beatles or the Stones, to hear that it really wasn't so different. And in some cases, quite a bit better.

"Like Otis Rush's version of 'I Can't Quit You Baby,' which is note-for-note exactly what Led Zeppelin did. The arrangement's the same, the solo's the same, the fills are the same, the vocal inflections are the same—the only difference is that it's done by a young, white English band and amplified to a much higher degree.

"I don't feel it's necessary to be aware of all these things to be a good musician," he adds. "I just found it more enriching to know why you're doing what you're doing than just to go blindly about it and follow someone else's influences. You're taking the opinion of a musician who's really just a couple years older than you,

"I used to worry I was too eclectic, I was spread too thin."

TERI BLOOM

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

World Radio History

taking it as the gospel when all he did was pick up a record, flip out over it and plug it into a Marshall."

That's one reason Easton is less-than-enamored of the "American music" movement in rock today. "Y'know, this isn't the first generation of youngsters to discover American roots in music," he says, shaking his head, "and I think it's been done as well or better before. I don't want to pass judgment on anybody, but are any of those guitarists as good as Clarence White? Are any of those songwriters as good as Gram Parsons? People are so starved for some sort of a feeling of the American heritage that they'll settle for something less than great, just because they're glad someone is doing it.

"I would just as soon see people taking that heritage and doing something to it that's relevant to the time we live in, rather than taking music that was the popular music of another era, and having it be of cult interest in this era. I think if these anachronistic bands were really that clever, they would go somewhere with it."

That goes a long way toward explaining how Easton's influences work in his own music. For instance, Easton's solo album, *Change No Change*, is full of tasty tidbits from the guitarist's youth, but not played so you'd notice. "Change," for example, is driven by a densely layered electronic plulse that is, in many ways, a state-of-the-art industrial groove. But the guitar hook Easton plugs into the basic beat is the same one Bo Diddley used in "Who Do You Love," while the vocal and verse structure are mostly Mid-60s Dylan. True, part of it involves theft, but you can't say he has copied anyone.

"There are touchstones that people go back to. People say that the middle of 'The Hard Way' sounds like the bridge in 'Badge,' because it's got the Leslie rotating guitar sound in it, while the verse sounds to me like it's probably inspired by *Beggar's Banquet*-era Stones—it's got open-G slide guitar, lots of acoustic guitar and stuff like that. And then it goes into that little 'Dear Prudence' pattern.

"If someone asked me, 'Were you inspired by that music?' or 'Is it possible that there's a little of that feeling behind it?', I would say, 'Yes.' Those are influences. Of course they're influences!"

Ultimately, though, the key to Easton's approach is his sense of appropriateness. What guitar and amp combination does he prefer when recording? "The perfect one for the song I'm playing," he says. And that's not just a snappy comeback, either, for Easton is genuinely obsessed with finding exactly the right part for the music he plays.

Consider the Cars. A lot of listeners assume that, because all the material is written by Ric Ocasek, that Ocasek essentially dictates how each song will sound. Which, says Easton, isn't quite the case. "There seem to be two basic ways that the arrangements come into being, and that's really largely dictated by the fact that there are two ways that the rest of the band members hear Ric's songs. And those are: a) with a drum box, a guitar and a voice, just a bare skeleton; and b) in a more fleshed-out demo with keyboard parts and a few guitar parts that Ric will consider fundamental to the songs, that really are part of the song.

"'Tonight She Comes' was rhythm guitar, LinnDrum and Ric singing it, and it was completely open to interpretation. And what basically happens is that...it's a band, y'know? Everyone's around while we work on our parts. I could be working on something, and come into the studio with an idea for a guitar part, and someone will go, 'Well, I really liked that first thing you did, but what if after that you went up a little higher?' So I'll say, 'Okay, what do you think of this?' And we'll knock it around until everybody's happy.

"It seems that on those parts, the initial germ comes from whatever cue or inspiration you took off hearing the song. You say to yourself, I can hear something like this happening. You'll try it, and

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you'll get closer and closer, and it'll refine itself, and become a part. And once it's on there, you can't remember hearing the song without it.

"Now the other way is when the song is more clearly defined on the demo. You want to retain some of that. Which, incidentally, is one of the hardest things to do, trying to capture something that was magical about a demo that might have been accidental, or you don't remember how you got that sound, and you bust your brains in the studio, with all that equipment, trying to get something that was done with an eight-track.

"But with the songs that are more defined, more arranged before we even get to hear 'em, I'll try and determine what is absolutely essential to the song in terms of what Ric put there in his demo, and either play it, or suggest it, or put it through my own refining process."

A good example of that approach was "Touch And Go," Easton says. "Ric came in, and the song already had the 5/4 rhythm pitted against the 4/4 vocal, and had the *cheng! cheng!*" But the Duane Eddy-style hook? "I just heard it in my head. No more or less, you know?"

Because he bends his playing to fit the song, Easton has never developed any sort of signature style, the way Van Halen has his two-handed hammer-ons and pull-offs, or Adrian Belew his twang bar bestiary—which is fine by him. "It seems my calling is to just try to do whatever thing is necessary to make the song come alive," he says, "and that's as much of a trademark or signature as dog whistles, or whatever else someone does on every one of their solos.

"People who know my playing and who have been following the Cars over the years will know my playing whether it's 'Tonight She Comes' or 'Since You're Gone' or 'Best Friend's Girl.' They're all so different, but they all sound like me to me, and they all came out of the same person, so...."

He shrugs, and grins. "I used to worry

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SPARE PARTS

I won't give you the collector's choice," says Easton of his multitudinous guitars, "I'll give you the working man's tools." Although he says he'll "always play my Telecasters and Strats and Gibson ES models and Les Pauls," he's been working a lot with a few new guitars. One of his favorites is the Guild Nightbird, an update of the old Guild Bluesbird that he used on several parts in "Tonight She Comes." It was designed by George Gruhn of Nashville, and, says Easton, "it has a carved spruce top, à la an arched-top guitar, with a mahogany body that has acoustical pockets built into it at strategic points. So basically, it's got the sustain and bite of a solid body, and the warmth and singing tone of an acoustic, a 335 or something like that."

He also plays a "mother of bowling ball" Guild S-281 Flyer, with EMG pickups and a Floyd Rose tremolo, as well as a customized Kramer built by Tom Anderson, which Easton describes as looking like "an old MG, the white ones with wire wheels and red leather seats." The pickups are Seymour Duncans, the tremolo by Floyd Rose, and you can hear it on the solo to "Tonight She Comes." His acoustics include two Gruhn-designed Guilds, special left-handed Gibson Hummingbird and J-200s, and an Ovation Super Shallow Bowl with a built-in three-band graphic eq.

For strings, he uses Kaman Performers, except with the Floyd Rose, where he applies Guild Pumping Iron strings; the weights are generally .009, .011, .016, .024, .032, .042. His picks are either custom mandolin-style picks emblazoned with his initials and lucky number (33), or Dunlop M-3s.

His effects are "basically all delays, whether you've got chorus, echo or flanging," and mostly by Boss. He recently added a Roland Dimension D stereo chorus, and stands by his Pro-Co Rat distortion unit. His amps are Marshalls, two 100-watt half stacks split with a harmonizer set to 99, "so I have a dry signal coming out of one amp, and kind of a tubular, rich doubled sound coming out of the other amp." He also has a pair of Fender Concert amps, "and the trusty Scholz Rockman X-100, which I use a lot."

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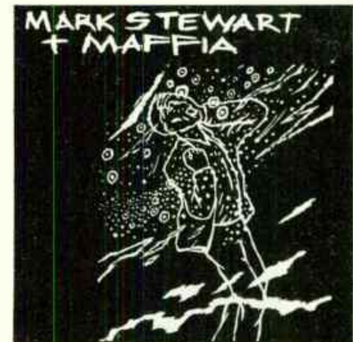

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WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY BLEEPS

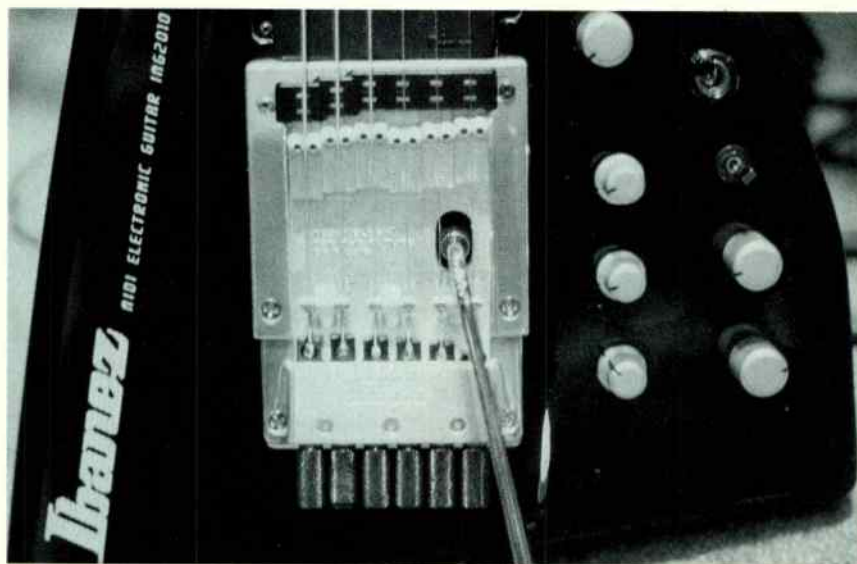
AT LAST—MIDI GUITAR CONTROLLERS FOR THE MASSES

Quick...what makes the electric guitar such a great rock 'n' roll instrument? Well, for one, it's an awfully visceral affair, isn't it? A bunch of metal strings vibrating against two hunks of wood. It's an instrument, moreover, that seems to reward nonconformist playing techniques. Sling it behind your neck and play it upside down, tune it weird, bring your fretting hand up over the neck (instead of under), fret with *two* hands for extra speed, scrape a mike stand across the strings, smack the body against a drum riser.... The great guitar icons have always brought their own personal quirks to the instrument. And these idiosyncrasies have been dutifully amplified via handwound, beeswax-dipped pickups—themselves masterpieces of quirky inventiveness.

Now tell me, what has always made the guitar such a *lousy* synth controller? Right: the very qualities that make it a great rock instrument. To a synthesizer, all those wonderfully physical string vibrations and wild playing techniques are nothing more than a lot of ambiguous control signals. And, like a thick Modern Lit. student, synthesizers simply can't twig ambiguity. There's no denying it: the primal, unfettered, Dionysiac qualities we all love in the electric guitar have made it an awkward gate-crasher in the ordered, Apollonian world of synthesis. The ongoing attempt to reconcile the two has been a great comic subject for countless tech journalists (this one included). For a long time, a sort of stalemate prevailed and one guitar synth, Roland's, pretty much reigned supreme as the only viable one on the market.

Then along came MIDI. And guitar controllers are once again springing up like porcini mushrooms on a rural Italian hillside. Where earlier guitar synth setups were dedicated systems—i.e., a guitar controller tied to a synthesizer specially designed for it—the new emphasis is on developing a good generic controller for the same MIDI synths keyboardists have been using. Who knows? Maybe the present generation of guitar controllers will be the ones to end the snide laughter and ARP Avatar jokes. Interestingly enough, many of these devices use the same basic design elements that the old ones did—things like magnetic hex pickups and specially wired fretboards—albeit in updated form. Once upon a time, these sensing devices generated control voltages which were used to trigger the target synth (as the receiving synthesizer is often called in guitar controller circles). Now, they're used to generate computer data we call MIDI.

What's the difference? For one, translating control signals into computer data lets you combine several different sensing devices on a single guitar controller. This, as we'll see, is extremely useful. Also, data in this form is highly manipulable. You can set a different transpose value for each string to get a variety of different tunings, you can use a vibrato arm to control a synth parameter like resonance—all by jockeying a few digits around. And most of the new controllers let you store a hoard of these setups to memory, along with the patch numbers for the external synth sounds that go with each setup. As compared with voltage, MIDI is a more precise control medium, and a more universal one. And oh yeah, I almost forgot. It even makes some of these new systems play better and track more accurately than the old ones did.



The all-purpose bridge assembly on this Ibanez includes an assignable mod bar.

BY ALAN DI PERNA

HEX EDUCATION

For those who like the electric guitar just fine the way it is thank you, and who figure that a synth controller had damned well better resemble a *real* guitar as much as possible, a system based on a hexaphonic, or hex, pickup may be the surest path to MIDI enlightenment. You can put one right on your favorite axe and turn it into a synth controller—provided, of course, that your favorite has accurate intonation, is reasonably unwarped and doesn't have frets that look like used denture parts.

A hex pickup reads the frequency and amplitude of actual guitar string vibrations. It's a magnetic sensing device—or, more accurately, six separate magnetic sensing devices: one for each string. (Hex means six, you see. Guitars have hex pickups; basses have quad pickups. Unless, of course, they're five, six or eight-string basses.)

World Radio History

So even though the pitch-to-voltage approach to guitar synthesis has evolved into pitch-to-MIDI, the good old hex pickups can still act as the first step in the conversion process. In the newer hex-based systems, the output of the hex pickup is sent to a MIDI conversion device—generally a rack mount box with one or two MIDI Out jacks on the back and a variety of programming and memory functions on the front.

But the idea of deriving MIDI control commands from the vibrations of a guitar string is not without its drawbacks. The problem isn't MIDI either. It's the way guitar strings vibrate. Think of what happens when you stretch a rubber band tight and pluck it with your finger. You pull it back as far as you can and let go. What you get first is a big initial snap: then the rubber band settles down into a regular pattern of vibration.

As you're probably well aware, the very same thing happens when you pick a note on a guitar string. The problem the hex system has is this: before it can read the pitch accurately, it has to wait until that initial snap is over and there's at least one cycle of vibration at the "true" frequency. But if it has to wait *too* long, there's an audible time delay between the instant the pick hits the string and the instant the sounds start coming out of the synth. The lower the note, and the thicker the string, the longer it takes for that one cycle to occur. (And all of this, obviously, is compounded by the time it takes various microprocessors to convert the signal to MIDI, transmit it and make the synth respond to it.) Hence you have the much-vaunted "sluggishness" of many guitar synth controllers.

If the hex system is set up to make a "snap judgment" and read the frequency before the string settles down, a miscue can take place and you get a wrong note. So here we have that other great bugbear guitar synth skeptics are always grousing about: inaccuracy. Look at it this way. A hex system reading a guitar string faces the same problem as a beleaguered manufacturer trying to read the high-tech marketplace. If he puts out his product too quickly, it will be full of embarrassing clinkers. If he waits to get it right, the market will have progressed to the point where the poor guy's gadget no longer fits in—just like a MIDI guitar note that gets spit out half-a-bar too late.

But one company that has had a long history of success with hex-based guitar systems is Roland. At this year's summer N.A.M.M. show, the company entered the MIDI guitar sweepstakes with a new MIDI converter called the GM-70. It features something called a harmonics control, which Roland says speeds up processing time by trimming the harmonic content of guitar and bass signals to more readable proportions.

The Roland GM-70 gives a new lease on life to this "classic" G-707.

The GM-70 will work with any of Roland's G-Series guitars or any guitar fitted with a Roland Hex pickup. And the company has also just introduced a user-installable hex pickup (the GK-1) and quad bass system (the BK-1). These will drive the GM-70 or any of Roland's older dedicated synthesizers, such as the stalwart GR-700 (which the company plans to continue marketing).

When Ibanez designed their controller/electric guitar—the IMG 2010—they made *their* hex pickup part of an overall custom bridge assembly, which also incorporates all string tuning functions for the guitar. This bridge, combined with the Allen-key string lock mechanism mounted on the guitar's abbreviated headstock, is designed to keep strings in tune and minimize any ambiguities of intonation.

The vibrato arm on the IMG 2010 provides a good indication of the sort of thing that can be done now that guitar controllers have entered the MIDI era. In form and function, the thing behaves like an ordinary guitar whammy bar. The difference is this: there's no physical movement of the bridge or the strings. The bending is all done via MIDI data, which is sent out to the target synth. The synth note gets bent; the strings stay in place and in tune. And since we're just manipulating data here, the bar can be programmed to do any of the things you can do with a MIDI wheel, pedal, breath device or any controller. The relevant parameters for this and many other control functions are all assigned via the 2010's companion piece, Ibanez's MC-1 MIDI Controller.

But for all you traditionalists (and paupers) who would rather just "put a hex" on the guitar you've already got, there's yet another option: the IVL/Kramer Pitchrider 7000 system. Here, you get a user-installable hex pickup and a converter that sends out MIDI data. Kramer recently introduced a software update for the Pitchrider, designed to provide smoother and cleaner pitch bend, a broader range of sensitivity settings and just plain better performance than the system delivered in the past. But one drawback remains: unlike the other units we're discussing here, the Pitchrider doesn't have the ability to store transpositions, sensitivity, MIDI channel assignments and other such parameters in memory. You can *do* all this stuff. You just can't save it for the next time you turn the unit on.

One of the attractive possibilities held out by the hex pickup/pitch-to-MIDI approach is the prospect of being able to mix and match different systems; the ability to use one company's pickup or guitar with another's converter unit. (Isn't that the whole point of MIDI anyway?) Precisely what sort of technical legerdemain this will involve remains to be seen. But both Roland and Ibanez, for example, use a similar 24-pin connector format to get the signal from the guitar to the converter unit. Maybe this is the beginning of a standard. And elsewhere, Kramer design engineer Eric Ambrosino has privately developed a buffer system that takes relevant data coming off Roland's 24-pin guitar cable and adapts it for use with the Pitchrider, which has an 8-pin input. You see? It can be done.

So—despite some nasty pitch reading problems—the hex pickup seems well on its way to becoming a classic. Maybe one day, a band of MIDI guitarists will put out a single called "Hex And Drugs And Rock And Roll." Then again, maybe the taste for bad puns will wane in the future.

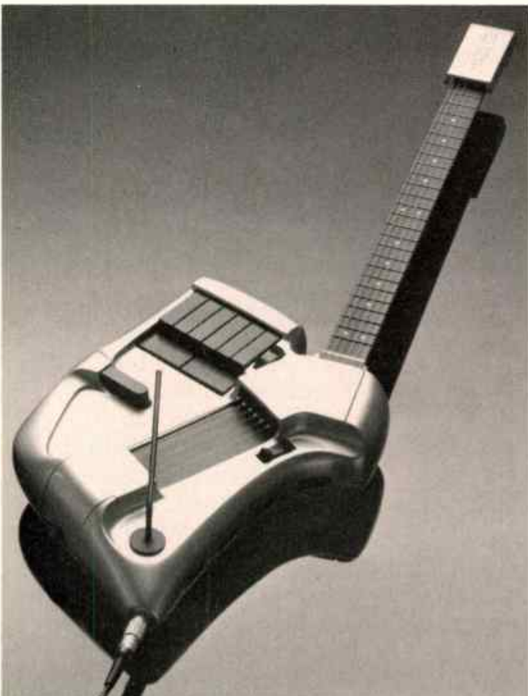
World Radio History

T...T...T...TOTALLY WIRED

If, on the other hand, you don't give a damn whether your MIDI pitch commands come from a vibrating guitar string or from the cosine of the sum of all the digits in your girlfriend's phone number, there *are* alternatives. Fingerboards with wired frets, for example. Fret wiring is a native custom that actually predates hex systems. It was first discovered in such late-60s psychedelic-era artifacts as the Condor and Guitorgan (two mainstays of those aforementioned comedic guitar synthesis histories).

In theory and practice, nothing could be simpler. Stop a given string at a given fret and you make an electrical contact which can be used to indicate precisely the note you're fretting. It's unambiguous *and* it's faster than the hex system, because there's no waiting for the string to "settle down" before you start measuring pitch.

Fret wiring lets the guitarist retain the pleasurable sensation of real strings beneath his sweaty, calloused fingertips while giving his literal-minded synth equipment the unambiguous control signals that *it* craves. But some players may still get the feeling that they're dealing with a keyboard masquerading as a fretboard. You can't play harmonics, for example, on a fret wired system. (It's an old artistic tradeoff: get rid of the ambiguity and you lose some of the nuances.)



Would Keith Richards play a Synthaxe?

As we'll see, though, fret wiring lets you do a whole lot of things that a "normal" guitar could never do. And—as we'll also see—the new breed of fret-wired controllers often include additional pick-sensing technology, which permits quite a bit of expressiveness. But still, it's hard to avoid the notion that the fret wired systems out there will appeal most to those guitarists who are least interested in the Dionysiac personality the instrument has come to assume in rock 'n' roll mythology.

The Synthaxe provides a perfect case in point. No matter how hard I try, I can't imagine Keith Richards playing one. The Synthaxe, you see, isn't a guitar. It's a computer thinly disguised as a guitar. And from the look of it, the disguising must have been done by a pan-dimensional being from a distant galaxy.

All of which isn't meant as a slag. The Synthaxe's designers never intended it to be a guitar. It produces no tone of its own, which means that you don't have to tune any of the strings. And speaking of strings, there's two different sets of them—one for fretting notes and a second set of short, stubby strings you use to pick notes. No, the Synthaxe isn't a guitar. Its sole function is to be the ideal synthesizer controller, and it performs that function very well. (With a price tag that reads $11,480, it had damned well better!)

Calling the Synthaxe a computer in fancy dress was no exaggeration. It's got two 6809 microprocessors inside. One keeps track of events on the wired fretboard. The other takes that data and integrates it with data coming in from a variety of triggering devices: the aforementioned stubby strings plus some plastic keys, a whammy bar and a separate set of string-bend sensors. These devices employ magnetic sensors, known as Hall Effect ICs, which convert motion into data. This data combines with the fretboard note data and is sent out to a pedal board. There, it's converted to MIDI, which can be output directly from the pedal board or sent to an optional console. This provides additional programming functions and splits the signal into eight MIDI Outs.

The Synthaxe has been around a while, but the company recently improved the picking string sensors, making them more responsive than they were before (you really had to wang them on the old model), and giving the user the ability to adjust the sensitivity to taste. There have also been several software updates, including a "General Purpose" option which lets you use the Synthaxe with a wider variety of synths than before. Formerly, it was only compatible with a handful of multitimbral synths that could support MIDI Mode 4 (more on this later).

For those of you who like the idea of fret wiring, but find the Synthaxe just a little too "out there" (in design or price), there's good news: You don't have to be weird to be wired. Up in the San Francisco Bay Area, Zeta Systems is readying a fret-wired guitar controller, called the GC-660, which is also a *normal* electric guitar. (Maybe we should start calling them "analog guitars.") There will also be a bass guitar controller: the BC-440. The Zeta System, which goes by the name "Supertrack," combines fret-wired pitch detection with a hex pickup for sensing picking-hand action. Because the hex pickup isn't concerned with pitch in this system, there's no waiting for the string to settle down, so there's no problem with time lags. The product won't be out for a few months yet, but it sounds like a good combination of two popular guitar controller technologies. Maybe you *can* have your Dove Bar and eat it too.

BENDING THE RULES

I said earlier that fret-wired systems like the Synthaxe and Zeta offered some recompense for the fact that they won't let you use harmonics the way you can on a traditional electric guitar. Well, a lot of that recompense comes in the form of string bending. Remember: with this kind of system, you create your basic pitch by bringing a string into contact with a fret. String bends, however, are sensed separately via devices like the Hall Effect ICs on the Synthaxe. What that means, in effect, is that string bending can be divorced from its usual pitch-related role and used as an autonomous controller—like that multi-purpose vibrato arm on the Ibanez IMG 2010. And *that* means string bends can be programmed to act very much like a pair of pitch/mod wheels on a keyboard synth. Bend the string one way and you get a conventional pitch bend; bend it the other way and you can change the filter resonance on your target synth! Or introduce some LFO modulation. Or change to another patch entirely.

Bi-directional pitch bending will come standard on the Zeta controllers. Bend the string upwards and the pitch get higher; bend the string downward and the pitch gets lower. (Makes a lot of sense, doesn't it?) And another one of those new software updates for the Synthaxe will let you use the *rate* of your bend—how quickly or slowly you move the string laterally across the fretboard—to control the way in which the target synth responds.

So it looks as though string bending

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will become even more of a stylistic calling card for guitar synthesists than it is for traditional electric guitarists. Even on pitch-to-MIDI systems, the *range* of a string bend can be programmed, just as the range of a pitch wheel can. This means that the amount of string bend you're used to using to get a half step of pitch variation can now give you giddy leaps of an octave or more. Sound like fun?

MORE AXES TO GRIND

By now, it should be clear that there are *all kinds* of techniques you can use to translate the physical movements of a guitarist's hands into a stream of MIDI control data. Take the Shadow System, for example, which has been licensed to IMC for installation on Jackson and Charvel electric guitars and to Kaman Music Distributors for use on Ovation and Takamine acoustics. Both companies are marketing it under the model number GTM-6. Here we have a system that uses a series of bridge-mounted piezoelectric transducers to gather pitch and picking data for conversion into MIDI. Along with the usual complement of guitar controller features, the GTM-6 also boasts a 1,000-note sequencer.

Optical pickups for guitar controllers represent another area of technology that seems to be coming into its own. Like our old friend the hex pickup, optical pickups read pitch and other information directly from string vibration. But manufacturers who have opted for optical point out several advantages that these pickups have over hex pickups. Because there are no magnetic fields to gum things up, they say, the chance for unwanted crosstalk between strings is greatly reduced.

The K-Muse Photon guitar uses an optical system that positions an infrared light-emitting-diode and an infrared receiver around each string. These detectors sense string vibrations and output data that is converted to MIDI. According to K-Muse, the system will allow the user to decide for himself how many cycles will be used to read string pitch. So, in effect, we're back to that trade-off between fast-and-risky or slow-and-reliable. Only now, the player—rather than some design engineer somewhere—is in control and can find the right balance for each individual situation.

K-Muse will begin marketing their system in the form of an add-on infrared pickup and a rack-mount conversion unit. Later on, they plan to release a bass pickup, a dedicated guitar controller of their own and something they call the Hyperspeed version of the Photon guitar. Aware that lower notes and thicker strings take longer to track, the Photon designers came up with the idea of using all high E strings on a controller. The strings will all be tuned to the same note; the system software will make the necessary transpositions. Naturally the instrument will not be able to double as a normal electric guitar. In all, the Hyperspeed version of the Photon guitar is a little like Quantum Physics or SPK records: it's an interesting idea, but perhaps not the kind of thing that everyone will enjoy.

Also on the way is a guitar controller from Octave Plateau Electronics: the OP MIDI guitar. This will be another of those hybrid systems, combining wired-fret pitch detection with an optical pickup for sensing picking-hand action. There are separate bend sensors as well, which are located in the nut of the instrument. So once again, we're looking at a system that combines the best aspects of several different technological approaches.

And while we're on the subject of existing technologies, is there any reason why extra controllers on a guitar synth device should be patterned after a) electric guitar whammy bars, or b) keyboard synth mod wheels? For Octave Plateau, the answer is a resounding "No." So, in addition to a MIDI-assignable vibrato arm controller, the OP MIDI guitar will also have something new: a pressure-sensitive plate located in the pick-guard position. Like the whammy bar, it too can act as a fully-assignable, mod-wheel-style MIDI controller.

As you can see, there's no shortage of ideas out there. But right now, many of them have yet to get beyond the Beta test stage and into the hands of real users. Betting on high-tech horse races like this is a bracing sport that keyboardists have long been enjoying. Now guitarists can get in on the fun too. Before long you'll be going to auditions and hearing intelligent questions like, "Hey, you got a Info Red on that guitar?" I'll bet you just can't wait.

MIDI: MODAL THEORY FOR GUITARISTS

It all comes down to one very simple thing: a guitar is *not* a keyboard. But since we're talking about using guitars to control what has traditionally been keyboard equipment, let's revert to a little kindergarten guessing game for a moment and try to imagine what kind of keyboard synth a guitar would be if it *were* a keyboard synth.

Worked it out yet? Actually, the guitar behaves a lot like six monophonic synths (one for each string), all acting in concert. In other words, each string only plays one note at a time. How does that differ from one six-voice polyphonic machine? Well, consider the following scenarios.

You play an E at the 5th fret on your B string. Then, a fraction of a second later, you play a G at the 3rd fret on your high E string. They ring out together. A beautiful minor third.

Compare that to this: You play an E on your B string at the fifth fret just like before. But then you hammer on to a G on the same string (8th fret). The two notes ring out together. A beautiful minor third. Huh? How come you got the same result when you played two different things? Well, you were probably running your guitar system in one of MIDI's polyphonic modes. When you do that, each new note command that the synth receives is assigned to a new voice. So even though you're used to having each individual string behave monphonically (i.e., the old note stops and the new one begins every time you move to a new fret position), now you've got each string acting polyphonically. It just ain't natural.

Fortunately—even though MIDI was originally designed with keyboards in mind—there *is* a MIDI mode that allows the guitar to act like six independent monophonic synth controllers, which is what you want. It's called Mode 4: Omni Off/Mono. The Mono part of that is self-explanatory: this is a monophonic mode. The Omni Off part means that the receiving synth will respond to only the MIDI channels that the user designates. All of the MIDI guitar systems mentioned above allow you to take advantage of Mode 4 and put each of your strings on a different MIDI channel. So you get one monophonic synth voice for each of your guitar strings.

But here's the catch: you have to have a synthesizer that supports MIDI Mode 4. Not all of them do. Luckily, though, multitimbral/Mode 4 capability is a fairly sought-after feature for sequencer applications (it lets you play a lot of different parts on one synth), so there are quite a few options out there. Among the most popular multitimbral/Mode 4 machines are the Casio CZ line, the Oberheim Matrix and Xpander, Sequential's Six Trak and 2000/2002 samplers and the Rhodes Chroma. Several of these are keyboardless propositions, so if you're building a guitar-only system you can save space and extra dollars by not buying an unwanted keyboard.

Beyond providing the ability to do proper hammer-ons and pull-offs on a

continued on page 98

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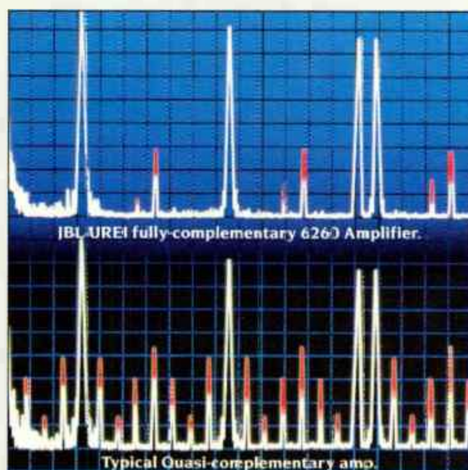
WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN YOU LISTEN TO A POWER AMPLIFIER.



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HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF A CONVENTIONAL GUITAR SETUP

MIDI FOR THE REST OF US

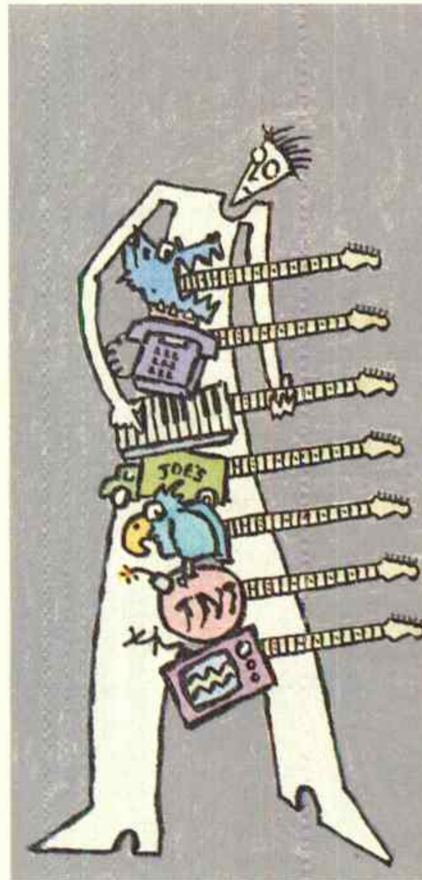
I just got a brand new guitar. When people ask if I've played with any new gear lately and I mention that I bought a guitar, the usual assumption is that it must be some newfangled MIDI guitar controller that cost an arm and a leg and plugs into Emulators and DX7s and all that stuff.

But nothing could be further from the truth. The object of my affections is a 1986 Paul Reed Smith guitar that's about as traditional as you can get—wood body, passive electronics, standard quarter-inch phone jack output, the sleekest neck I've ever had the pleasure of playing and a vibrato tailpiece that actually works. It's a wonderful guitar; like most guitarists, I want my axe to feel like it grew out of my arms one night, and to make sounds that tickle my eardrums in the most sensual way possible. *Anything else, like MIDI, is secondary.* In fact, there's a reason why synth players have tried to sound like lead guitarists all these years; the timbre of a vibrating guitar string is infinitely more interesting than the static drone of a VCO, and besides, the level of expressiveness you can reach with a single guitar, amp and chord makes a synth's pitch bend and mod wheels seem primitive.

After this tirade, the usual response is "So you're not going to get into MIDI, huh?" And my response is "But you don't need a guitar controller to get into MIDI"...which is what this article is all about. Specifically, MIDI can streamline a special effects system to a degree undreamed of just a few short years ago. Do you like the idea of pushing a single button and having an arsenal of effects all select the right sound and patch for the next tune of your set? I thought you might, so let's investigate the world of MIDI-controlled special effects.

SPECIAL EFFECTS SETUPS

Most guitarists think that MIDI is only for the affluent or highly adventurous; fortunately, that ain't so. You can benefit from MIDI even if you have zero interest in controlling synthesizers from a guitar. Sure, you don't want to give up your Tele or Strat or Les Paul or whatever—I understand. Luckily, you don't have to. Before we get into MIDI and signal processors, though, let's consider the pre-MIDI way of doing things so that we can see why MIDI represents such an improvement on the old way of doing things.



If you think a bit about the multiple effects systems of yore, you'll recall that the first systems strung together a bunch of (hopefully) compatible effects, each of which had its own little bypass switch. Switching one effect in or out was no problem, but as soon as you wanted to punch in fuzz, compression and flanging all at the same time, *trouble* (unless, of course, you had three feet).

The next step up in the evolutionary chain was pre-packaged multiple effects systems, where you could pre-program which effects would be in or out when you hit some kind of master bypass footswitch. While this was somewhat of an improvement, most effects systems were designed for a particular manufacturer's gear and tended to be expensive. General-purpose effects switchers were usually either custom jobs that cost a thousand dollars and up, or commercially available one-size-fits-all devices that cost a bit less but were typically not as well suited to your individual needs.

Most guitarists didn't even consider the option of fooling around with different settings for different songs or portions of a song; you couldn't change a whole bunch of knobs in between the first verse and chorus anyway, so most effects ended up as set-and-forget devices to be brought in and out when appropriate.

The concept of *MIDI program change commands* solves all this; to understand why, let's consider what makes up a typical MIDI effect.

MIDI-CONTROLLED SIGNAL PROCESSORS

The typical MIDI-controlled signal processor bears little resemblance to the stomp boxes of yesteryear: It's a sturdy, rackmount unit capable of providing many different functions and storing several sets of different control settings in computer memory. What this means is that you can twiddle the knobs until you find a sound you like, press "STORE" or some similarly-named button, and bingo—that wonderful sound is stored forever (well, almost) in a memory location and assigned a number, such as "Program 1." The number of storable programs varies from device to device; you'll typically find anywhere from eight

BY CRAIG ANDERTON

BRUCE CROCKER

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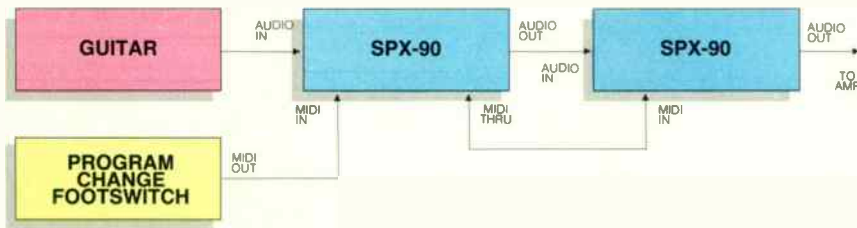
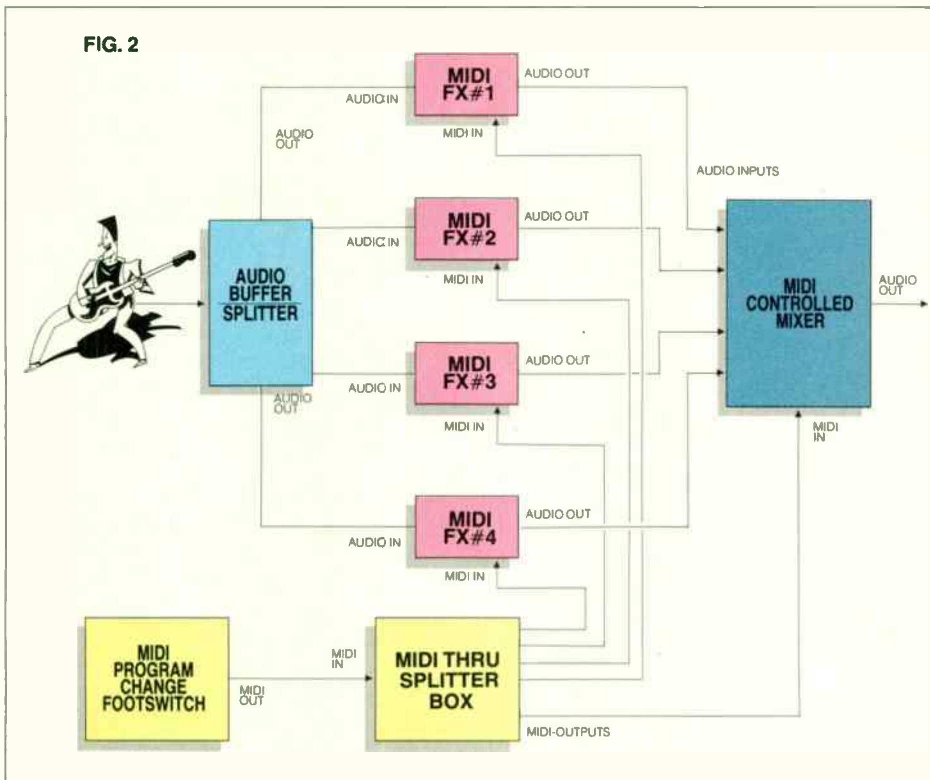


to 128 different memory "slots" into which you can store programs. Some signal processors include non-alterable "factory" programs in addition to memory locations where you can store your own custom sounds. I prefer signal processors where all program slots are available for custom sounds; I don't mind having factory sounds available, though, as long as they can be edited into something more to my liking.

What makes a signal processor MIDI-controlled is if these different programs can be called up via MIDI program change commands. Most people think of MIDI as something that involves notes and rhythms, but that overlooks MIDI's ability to tie together the elements of an electronic music *system*. The cornerstone of this system control is the MIDI *program change* command. This command was originally included in MIDI so that changing sounds on a master keyboard would automatically change sounds on the slave. For example, if you wanted strings on the master and piano on the slave, followed by a choir patch on the master and piano on the slave, thanks to program change as you switched from strings to choir on the master the slave would automatically switch from brass to piano.

The way this relates back to signal processors is that as mentioned above, modern signal processors store their different programs in a manner similar to the way that synthesizers store their sound programs...and it didn't take long for manufacturers to make MIDI-controlled processors where different programs were assigned different MIDI program change numbers. So, as you switched sounds on your synth (say, from program 1 to program 2), the signal processor would likewise switch from program 1 to program 2. Thus, you might add echo to a string program, chorusing to a choir sound, and so on. The maximum number of program changes specified by MIDI is 128, so you'll rarely see signal processors with more than 128 memory locations.



BUT HOW DOES A GUITAR ISSUE A PROGRAM CHANGE COMMAND?

It doesn't. Well, not unless it's a spiffy guitar controller that may have a couple of on-board switches for issuing program change commands. But there's no law that says program change commands have to come from a synthesizer or controller, and that's good news for guitarists.

For starters, Peavey (as well as a few other companies, such as Xerbitron) makes a MIDI program change footswitch with which guitarists can call up different programs on MIDI signal processors. The big advantage to this is that if you're using several MIDI-controlled effects, sending one MIDI program change will change *all* of the effect presets instantly. There have been several attempts at multiple-effect systems for guitarists, but these have tended to use one specific line of equipment and offered limited flexibility. Using MIDI lowers costs and, more importantly, the common standard lets you mix and match equipment from different manufacturers to create the kind of custom setup you want. And for those who still love their antediluvian Astrofuzz or Vox wah-wah, Ibanez even offers an effects switching system that can switch various traditional effects in and out of a series effects chain under MIDI control.

An even more intriguing possibility is that an offstage engineer or sound mixer can change programs for you, or program a certain sequence of effects changes into a computer. And if you're playing in a synth-based band (as I do), you may even be able to embed program change commands into a sequencer or drum machine track (sequencers can often record program change commands as well as note and timing data). This means you wouldn't even have to change patches with a footswitch; the sequencer would change patches automatically.

AVAILABLE EFFECTS

But, you say, a MIDI-controller digital delay line can cost hundreds of dollars...which you might think of as overkill if all you want is a chorus effect. But is it really? Many MIDI-controlled digital reverbs can also create digital delay, flanging and chorusing effects. The Yamaha SPX-90, in fact, generates all those sounds as well as tremolo, auto-

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LANDING FEET-FIRST WITH BECK, FACES AND THE STONES

THE NINE LIVES OF RON WOOD

He's about the nicest guy in show biz and he loves being a Rolling Stone so much that you've got to share his enthusiasm. Of all the kids who ever dreamed of joining the Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band in the World, he's the only one who made it.

After eleven years as a Stone, though, Ron Wood's image has been flattened a little. He is often seen as Robin to Keith Richards' Batman (Speedy to his Green Arrow? Kid Flash?), the perennial younger sidekick. But Woody's career was illustrious long before 1975. His older brother Art was a singer in the thick of the London R&B explosion of the early 60s, the scene that revolved around Alexis Korner, Long John Baldry and the fledgling Stones. Charlie Watts and Jon Lord were members of the Artwoods. Because he was Art's little brother, Ron had entrée into the circle of young turks who were about five years older. From 1962-66 Ron had British success with a group called the Birds—an ensemble whose fans booed those California Byrds when McGuinn and the boys landed in the U.K. in '65.

When the Birds fell to earth, Woody talked himself into a job as second guitarist in the new Jeff Beck group, switching to bass when Beck decided he needed no second guitar. Woody had his first taste of international success with Beck, but by 1969 the bloom was fading from that rose. Never one to waste energy on sentimental goodbyes, Wood took a look around and saw that singer/guitarist Steve Marriott was at odds with his group, the Small Faces. Woody zipped right over and took his place. With Ronnie Lane on bass, vocals and songwriting, Kenney Jones on drums and Ian McLagan on keyboards, Small Faces was a talented band—but neither Wood nor Lane could sing like Marriott. Woody thought it would be great to bring along Rod Stewart.

Stewart was all for it, but the Small Faces weren't. So Rod made a solo record deal, with Woody along to co-write the songs and play guitar. Then, just as the ink on Rod's contract was drying, the Faces relented at the insistence of Kenney Jones and let Rod into their ranks. They even changed the name to Faces to draw a line between the Marriott band and the Stewart / Wood group.

Thus began a golden—if schizophrenic—era. Stewart and Wood would alternate making albums for Mercury as Rod Stewart, and albums for Warners as Faces. The loose game plan was for Rod to do ballads on his own records and rockers with Faces, but it never seemed to split very evenly. But however confused the arrangement was, the collaboration between Wood, Stewart and Ronnie Lane provided the context for the strongest work any of those three would ever do. The Faces cooked up great top forty singles like "Stay With Me," as well as heartbreakers like "Cindy Incidently" and "Richmond." The Stewart/Wood team churned out inspired tunes to drive limos into swimming pools—"Los Paraguayos," "Every Picture Tells A Story," "True Blue."

Things got rocky only when some of Stewart's solo tracks became monster hits. "Maggie May," "I'm Losing You" (a Faces track on a Stewart LP) and "Mandolin Wind" made Stewart a bigger name than his band. There were always rumors that Rod would leave the band, and when Ronnie Lane—sick of the whole situation—quit instead, the Faces were finished. Still, Rod and Woody forged on—until Mick Jagger asked Wood to use the vacation between two 1975 Faces tours to go on the road with the Rolling Stones. Even though all sides maintained that Woody was not quitting the Faces, the writing was on the wall. After one more Faces trip, Stewart announced he was leaving, and Ron Wood was free to pursue his destiny.

While playing with the Stones, Woody recorded four solo albums (and one collaboration with Lane) that perhaps suffered from a little too much joie de vivre, but which all had great moments. He's also managed to co-write a number of Stones tracks, an accomplishment that eluded Bill Wyman, Brian Jones and Mick Taylor. If the recent *Dirty Work* is any indication, that trend is on the increase. There's also a Faces reunion to benefit M.S. in the works, with Lane's bass chair reportedly to be filled by Duran Duran's John Taylor.

The living room in Wood's Manhattan

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

"It's not the people that matter, it's the sound."

BY BILL FLANAGAN

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townhouse is just what you'd expect from a Rolling Stone. Everywhere are guitars, elegant furniture, whiskey bottles, and statues and sketches of Hootchie Kootchie girls. The carpet is littered with Wood's pastel drawings, some carefully rendered, some surreal, all evidence of a real talent for design. Woody bounds across the room, scoops up a sketch of a dinosaur and adds to it a big staring eye. "Whew," he snorts, "I've been wanting to do that all day."

MUSICIAN: *Although Beck was king of the Jeff Beck Group, you and Rod Stewart wrote most of the original material.*
WOOD: Oh yeah! Jeff liked to have that input. He knew who he liked and who his influences were but he couldn't utilize—steal from—them to make another song. You know what I mean?
MUSICIAN: *He couldn't write.*
WOOD: Yeah. Whereas Rod and I would say, "Oh well, take the bit where the Temptations do this and Booker T. does that...the Meters, Gladys Knight, James Brown. Rod always idolized Sam Cooke.
MUSICIAN: *Were you happy playing bass?*
WOOD: Yeah! I was real comfortable as a bass player. I started off playing guitar with Jeff. We had Dave Ambrose on bass. I had reached saturation point on the guitar. I welcomed the idea when Jeff said to me, "Woody, do you think—like—you know—would you go over to bass?" In those days it was an insult. People would say, "What do you *mean*, play bass?" It was like, "You can't lower yourself!" Well, I said I can because it's *not* "lowering myself" at all.
MUSICIAN: *Were you and Stewart and Mickey Waller on salary?*
WOOD: Oh yeah. He who could hustle best got the best deal. Rod was very shrewd. Mickey Waller was shrewd but weak so I overtook him. He had a clever brain but didn't know how to use it.
MUSICIAN: *You started playing with Ronnie Lane, Kenney Jones and Ian McLagan—three-quarters of Small Faces—while you were still in the Beck Group?*
WOOD: Yeah, 'cause Beck threw me out once. Me and Mickey Waller. They got rid of the rhythm section. I think management—Mickey Most—said, "Try out a new lot, Jeff. *You're* the star." Mickey Waller rang me up on my birthday and said, "Woody, do you know we're fired?" I said, "Oh, that's all right. What's new?" They went out on an American tour and after one or two gigs they rang up: "Please come over, Woody!" I went back on my own terms. It was great.

I've always relied on fate. I've followed my nose through all my groups. After the Birds, when the Yardbirds split

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up, I rang Jeff, who I knew from the road, and he said, "Hey! Come over!" I knew that was my next step. And when that was wearing thin I thought, "The only other group that I'd really love to join is Small Faces." So when Steve Marriott left I rang Ronnie Lane up. We had a little rehearsal where we were all so nervous we played facing opposite directions.

Rod used to sit upstairs while the four of us rehearsed. Until Kenney Jones brought him downstairs.

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GIMME SOME NECKS

Ask Ron Wood to list his guitars and he'll laugh, "I can't do them all! This one I really like." He reaches for a white Gretsch Falcon. "It's good when you're playing in a small controlled area. It's about a '53. My favorite is my '55 Strat. It's been proven over and over again. It feels good and it's easy to handle." As he continues talking Woody plays "The Ballad Of Jed Clampett." "My Zemaitis acoustic 12-string with the heart-shaped hole is real good. He also made me a 6-string and a wonderful fretless acoustic bass. I've got an original Fender Jazz bass with the thin neck. It's beautiful. I stole it from a music store on Shaftsbury Avenue in London when I was rehearsing with the Beck Group. Years later when I had the money I went back in there and said, 'I'm the guy who stole that bass!'

"I have a lovely old Gibson J-200 from '56 or '58. It's blond, just like the one Elvis played in the movie where he sang 'Let Me Be Your Teddy Bear.' I also have a 1952 catalog Gibson. People used to send in twenty-nine bucks to get one. It's the L-00 model. My boy Jesse James in England has my favorite guitar, a J185, a small blond guitar, the prototype for the Everly.

"I've got some lovely old Telecasters. Never been much for Les Pauls. But that ESP copy behind you is very good. They make incredible simulations of the real thing. They have a bit of taste while they're copying. The man who heads the company [Steve Kaufman] is really into funky 50s guitars, old Strats and things, so he took all the best things from those. I have a lovely ESP bass upstairs, too." The astute reader may realize Woody does ESP product endorsements.

"In amps I like MESA Boogies, the ones with the woven front piece and graphic eq (Simulclass). And I'm still using the same Gretsch drum kit."

What about the stories that the Stones record their screaming rockers at low volume? All true, says Wood. "Occasionally we *really* go soft. But it takes a lot of handling. It's like holding back a team of horses. We use small amps to their fullest. Keith and I use small Boogies. Bill uses the one with the double stack."

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IN SEARCH OF A BROADER PALETTE, A JAZZMAN TURNS TO SYNTHESIS

THE UNGUITARIST: JOHN ABERCROMBIE

No one will ever accuse guitarist John Abercrombie of being easily satisfied. Abercrombie's musical quest is more paradox than riddle. As an instrumentalist, he is fervent about not being "guitar oriented"; yet he has usually spurned other solo instruments in his own groups. In search of sounds and opportunities that would move him beyond the voicings and timbres associated with his instrument, he has turned to guitar synthesizers—and the result is a reaffirmation of his love for acoustic and electric guitars. In an era where others puzzle over the stylistic confines suggested by all who have come before, John Abercrombie is wondering what to do with all the freedom.

Ah, technology!

"There are a whole lot of aesthetic questions to ask about synthesizers," says Abercrombie. "Like what do you really want them to do for you? I still deal with the meat of the music, working with the single-note line. I've found the problem with synthesizers is getting lost in the world of sound and not creating music."

Yet while he avows that synthesizers "will never replace the acoustic-oriented instruments," Abercrombie has been able to rein in some of the possibilities created by his recently acquired arsenal of Roland Guitar Synthesizers long enough to lay down results on his most recent ECM album, *Current Events*.

On that LP, the instrument is used on three compositions: "Hippityville," "Clint" and "Killing Time." The trio date, which features Abercrombie's steady band with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Peter Erskine, demonstrates that the synths haven't changed the group's—or the guitarist's—basic direction.

Formed in 1985, the trio is very much a working band, despite the members' commitments to their own groups. Johnson, who was the bassist in pianist Bill Evans' final working band, currently leads the group Bass Desires, featuring John Scofield, Bill Frisell and Erskine, while the drummer also works with saxophonist Michael Brecker and vibraphonist Mike Mainieri in Steps Ahead. The Abercrombie trio still managed to log three months on the road last year, with even more time slated for this year. In the fall, saxophonist Brecker will join the group for a European tour and recording session.

The addition of Brecker is a bit out of character for Abercrombie's groups. Throughout his career as a leader, the guitarist has shied away from using other single note solo instrumentalists. Brecker appeared on last year's "Night," and pianist Richie Beirach performed on another three of Abercrombie's ten ECM dates, but mostly his albums have focused on his guitar in a variety of settings including solo, duet and trio.

"I decided I wanted to be the focal point of my work," Abercrombie explains. "In my early days I worked quite a bit with others, and when I was in Jack DeJohnette's band, there was always a horn player. Forming my own band was a chance to be a leader and not just part of an ensemble. I think that's something that's in every musician. Everyone I know has a strong sense of what they want to play and strong egos in the good sense of the word. Even though I can still be a team player, taking control of my own groups has made me a stronger player."

Abercrombie's abilities as a "team player" were honed in a wide array of settings. In the late 60s, he worked primarily in soul/jazz combos with organist Johnny Hammond Smith and saxophonist Houston Person. "That was my first love," he says. "I heard George Benson for the first time when he was with Jack McDuff, and I thought 'My God, I'll never be able to play like that.'"

With the advent of fusion, John became a member of the group Dreams with the Breckers, Billy Cobham and trombonist Barry Rogers. "A lot of it was that those were the gigs that were available," he says. "And the guitarists had to deal with the revelation of Hendrix. If you listen to jazz guitarists from Charlie Christian on, you don't hear a lot of different sounds. Then rock 'n' roll and fusion came on the scene and it was a very different awareness of sound."

But Abercrombie also sees a downside to the fusion movement, and has less than fond memories of the music he made then. "Fusion had a tendency to make me overplay," he says, "to the point where I began to wonder who I was and what I was playing."

"Synthesis made me slow up and listen to myself."

McMILLEN PHOTOS/ ARTIST PUBLICATION

BY FRED GOODMAN

World Radio History

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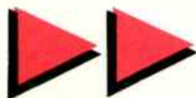

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The turning point was meeting drummer DeJohnette. "I went with his band instead of Billy Cobham's, and that brought me back to jazz-related music," he says. Playing with DeJohnette—and later Ralph Towner—also planted the seeds of the guitarist's long association with ECM. Aside from his string of leader dates, he has continued to work with DeJohnette's bands, and recorded with numerous label artists including trumpeter Enrico Rava and percussionist Collin Walcott. Which led to the next phase in his playing. "Folk and ethnic musics became important to me," says Abercrombie. "I acquired a couple of other instruments like electric mandolin—really a soprano guitar—and got into using pedals to make it expressive and colorful and imitative of reeds."

"You name the box and I've probably had it," he says. "I've always been attracted by sounds, trying to express myself with different timbres." Any guitarist with an attitude like that was an easy mark for guitar synthesizers. Cue the Roland system, first introduced to Abercrombie by Pat Metheny. He managed to resist temptation until he got a GR-700.

"First it was more for experimenting in the house," he recalls. "It's an easy system to use. I stayed locked in my music room, and once I got the hang of it I began programming it by ear. I've reprogrammed forty of the sixty-four voices and I use maybe fifteen of them. There's no way you're going to remember what each one does, even if you

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CROMBIE'S CRUMBIES

John Abercrombie uses Ibanez "pretty exclusively. My main electric is an Ibanez Artist solid body. I also have an old Les Paul Deluxe that I'm very fond of, but I don't play it as much. For acoustic, I use Ovations with a shallow bowl and a Guild F50—plus a couple of small electric mandolins made by Fender and Kevin Schwab."

His guitar synth setup is a Roland GR-700 and GR-303, but lately he's added an Ibanez controller. He MIDI's to a Casio CZ-101. His toys and devices include a Lexicon PCM60 digital reverb, an Ibanez delay and a 6-channel model SN26 Rane mixer, but "the synthesizers have supplanted a lot of the effects."

His strings are D'Addarios, with .010 on top. His choice of amps vacillates between a Roland Cube 60, a Walter Woods Power Amp with different ElectroVoice 12- and 15-inch bottoms, and a Dean Markley. He usually doesn't take his own amps out on the road; instead, he requests Rolands and Polytones. "I'm not too crazy about Fenders."

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THE POWER BEHIND THE PLANTATION IS FINALLY GETTING HIS DUE

MIKE CAMPBELL, PETTY'S SECRET WEAPON

For years Michael Campbell has been recognized as a fine guitar player, the foundation of Tom Petty's Heartbreakers. But lately the soft-spoken Floridian has been winning wider attention. He deserves it. Because while flashier soloists pose for posters with their Strats between their legs, Campbell has kept his head down and piled up a catalog of great playing and songwriting that will be remembered when today's heavy metal fuseblowers are forgotten.

"Mike's terrific," Tom Petty declares. "He's really terrific. But I don't think he really gets his due. I guess he's getting it now, but he's been terrific for years! He's not just a guitar player. When a lot of them write songs it's just guitar stuff. Michael has a broader vision."

Campbell's broad vision has given the Heartbreakers hits like "Refugee," "You Got Lucky," "A Woman In Love," "Here Comes My Girl"—the backbone of their repertoire. On these songs—as well as farmed-out hits like "Ways To Be Wicked" and "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around"—Campbell came up with the chords, the rhythm, most of what constitutes the *track*, and then gave tapes to Petty. Petty found vocal melodies and wrote words for Campbell's riffs. Last year Don Henley borrowed the Heartbreakers' greatest natural resource and came up with "Boys Of Summer." And recently Campbell's collaborative talents have been enlisted by Brian Setzer ("Aztec") and Stevie Nicks ("Imperial Hotel").

Not bad for a self-deprecating guy who could, if he never composed another note, still find work from now till doomsday as an exceptionally tasteful, exceptionally melodic, exceptionally clever lead guitarist.

Asked if he'll ever make a solo album, Campbell smiles slightly and says in a soft Southern accent, "I doubt it. Not unless I learn to sing."

On *Southern Accents*, the Heartbreakers' most recent studio album, Petty listed Campbell as co-producer. The guitar player is self-effacing about that promotion, too. "It just got to the point where I was there a lot, and a lot of the decisions became mutual decisions," Campbell shrugs. "It was Tom's decision to call it a co-production. It made me real happy. It's nice to get credit."

"Mike's always walking around with twenty things on cassette in his pocket," Petty says. I wouldn't be surprised if he co-writes most of the next LP. Since he built his studio he's really been prolific."

"I'll start with an idea at home," Campbell explains. "Just music, I'm not too good with words. Sometimes I'll have in mind that one part is the verse and another part the chorus. Then I'll give it to Tom and he'll say, 'No, no! This verse part would make a much better chorus!' 'Finding Out' was like that. Sometimes he'll just throw out a section. In 'Refugee' he sang the chorus over what had been part of the verse. We just edit it down till we get it. Sometimes the song will come back completely different from how I thought it would be. Sometimes there'll be a melody suggested by a guitar or keyboard part. Other times he'll sing something completely different."

"We just edit it down until we get it."

BY BILL FLANAGAN

New songwriting possibilities have opened for Campbell as he's expanded from four-track to a full home studio "Boys Of Summer" grew out of experimenting with a new toy. "I had just gotten a drum machine," he recalls. "I was learning how to use it, stringing beats together. Then I overdubbed keyboards and guitar. It just fell together. Drum machines are useful on certain songs and on other songs are a big waste of time. On that song it just seemed to fit.

"It was just a four-track demo I did at my house. It didn't fit the Heartbreakers album we were working on at the time. I got a call from my friend Jimmy Iovine saying Don Henley was looking for some music. Don liked the track a lot and wrote some words. He called me up two days after he heard it and said, 'I've got a great song, let's record it.' So we pieced it together in the studio."

The Setzer collaboration was no more sweated over: "Brian's a great guitar player. He was here finishing his record and I had a track I wrote a few years ago. He liked the chord changes and wrote the words. It came out pretty good."

Campbell admits he's taken some teasing from his band-mates about giving away "Boys Of Summer," a continuing Heartbreaker tradition that includes the rejected "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" and "Ways To Be Wicked."

"There's always songs to go around,"

EBET ROBERTS

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Campbell figures. "It would be nice to have all the hits on our records, but at least they came out. They could have ended up on the shelf. We record about ten extra songs for every album."

Certainly the Campbell/Petty team has given the Heartbreakers a fair number of hits of their own. "'You Got Lucky' was written before I had a drum machine," the guitarist explains. "I had drums at my house. I can't really play—I can start a beat but it falls apart immediately. So I recorded a tape and then cut together the two seconds that were good. That song started off from a drum loop, went through the usual channels of a four-track demo, and then Tom came up with the words. We didn't want to change that arrangement. It was Tom's idea to do a Clint Eastwood movie wang bar guitar solo on that."

And Campbell knows how to massage a wang bar. He grabs, chokes and tickles his whammy ("It's something to break up the monotony") with all the gusto of a true son of the 60s. In fact, there are few traditional guitar contraptions Campbell can't turn to fresh advantage: He played a wild slide solo on "Make It Better (Forget About Me)" and revived the once-proud wah-wah pedal for the climax of "Don't Come Around Here No More."

"It wasn't my idea to do that," Campbell demurs. "For the last couple of albums Jimmy Iovine's been saying, 'You gotta use a wah-wah! Nobody's done that in years and years!' We'd just go, 'Nah.' But either he or Tom decided to stick it on the end of that song, because by that point we'd broken all the rules of song structure anyway. Might as well put a wah-wah on the end of it!"

Asked about his choice of instruments the guitarist sighs, "There's too many guitars. I think I've narrowed it down to about four that I like. My favorite is a 1948 Broadcaster. That's the one I can always count on. I've got a couple of Les Pauls and Teles, but the Broadcaster's the only one I couldn't replace. We've got a lot of Vox amps. The one I used on the last tour was a Vox AC30. In the studio we use all different kinds, from Marshalls to little Champs to just plugging straight into the console. Whatever it takes. You have to find the right sound for the song."

If the right sound can't be gotten from any guitar, Campbell's been known to switch to dobro or even, on "Mary's New Car," piano. He's quick to dismiss that, too: "Benmont was out of town."

Campbell's latest guitar partner—and the reason for much of the attention now being lavished on him—is Bob Dylan. Prior to the Heartbreakers becoming Dylan's touring band, Campbell recorded with Dylan, and appeared with him in the great man's video "Emotionally Yours." On Dylan's new LP, *Knocked Out Loaded*, Campbell contributes lightning acoustic and cutting bottleneck fills to "Got My Mind Made Up," and uses chunky Stones chording to tug "Maybe Someday" out of the gospel style Dylan starts it in and toward a rock 'n' roll climax.

"He's playing a lot," Campbell says of Dylan. "It works out real good. We're good at listening. We just sort of follow where he goes. He's got a real good sense of rhythm and chord structure. His guitar is very much out front. We sort of go in between where there's room. It's heads-up ball—you've got to watch the fingers and really listen, 'cause you don't know what's coming next. That's what's neat about it.

"It's not the usual routine of command. It's a learning experience. We're going to college. We're watching the master and hoping to pick up a few ideas."

But for all the delight he takes in playing guitar with his childhood inspiration, one senses that Campbell would just as soon keep his face out of the spotlight. On the Heartbreakers' 1985 "Pack Up The Plantation" tour they made broad (for them) gestures to the far balconies, adding horns, backing singers and an

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SHOWDOWN IN CHI-TOWN

A MIDI GUITAR ARGUMENT IN ONE ACT

The countdown is over. It's showtime on the N.A.M.M. floor, where the great MIDI guitar marathon is well underway. We're at the K-Muse booth, watching a demonstration of the much ballyhooed Photon MIDI guitar (actually a basic black pickup mounted to a Guild Strat copy). In between peeling off piano and synth phrases, a young guitarist is explaining the Photon's optical tracking system:

"The infrared light is scanning across the string at 10,000 times a second, which is obviously a lot faster than what the string is vibrating at. That means it can pick up the vibration within one wavecycle, which nobody else can do. That's the first vibration from picking, too, not from the time it settles down. That means the high E-string tracks in 3 milliseconds and the low E in 12."

Wrapping up, the demonstrator executes some hammer-ons and pull-offs, invites some after-demo questions, and then closes with a final plug for "the MIDI guitar that will play as fast as the speed of light!" As the small crowd drifts away, a short, black-bearded man asks in an unmistakably New York accent, "Can you explain what converting at the speed of light means?"

"Well, each pickup has its own separate emitter and receiver," says the demonstrator helpfully, "so the light is going across each string. Also...."

The bearded questioner, however, seems to know all this, and is not impressed: "But does it convert at the *speed of light*?"

The demonstrator is starting to get the feeling something unusual is afoot: "Well, it reads at 10,000 cycles a second! That's pretty fast...."

"That's not the speed of light."

"No. It doesn't exactly read at the speed of light...."

"Well your ads claim it does."

The demonstrator is clearly getting out of his depth, and calls across the booth to K-Muse head honcho, Kevin Kent. In fact, he is being grilled by Carmine Bonanno, president of Octave Plateau and manufacturer of an equally high-tech fret-switching MIDI guitar system. This afternoon in Chicago, Carmine Bonanno is pissed off and doesn't care who else knows it.

Kent, a stocky, effusive, bear-like Californian, is quick to meet the challenge. Stepping into the aisle, he is friendly but firm: "Hi Carmine. I hear you have some questions."

"Yeah, it bugged me at the last show, and again when I saw the ads. Your claim that it converts at the speed of light...."

Kent stands fast: "We convert the string vibration at the speed of light. There's no question about that!"

The pugnacious Bonanno keeps coming: "You *don't* convert the vibration at the speed of light. He just said 10,000 cycles per second."

"That's the rate of the infrared."

"Is that the speed of light?" Kent is checkmated. Both he and Bonanno know that the speed of light is 186,000 per second, not 10,000 cycles a second, and a bruised silence ensues.

"What are you getting at, Carmine?"

"You're telling the consumer that your system is *faster* than a pitch-to-voltage system, and it's not."

"It *is*. It's faster than any other pitch-to-voltage system. It takes only one wave cycle to convert...."

Bonanno senses willful obtuseness: "*But it's still a pitch to voltage system*! It takes the vibration of a string sends a MIDI note after the vibration is over, as opposed to a fret-scan system which doesn't have to wait until the wavecycle is complete—I'm not saying that one is better than the other, don't get me wrong. All I'm saying is if you're doing X, you should say you're doing X."

Kent pauses, then suddenly asks, "Say, is your system at the show?" Bonanno shakes his head. Kent throws up his hands. "End of line."

"Okay, that's the reason I'm pissed off," says Bonanno sarcastically, "because my system's not at the show."

"I don't know what to say Carmine. I was pissed off at the *last* show. Someone ripped off my fuckin' ROM card."

"That's debatable," Bonanno retorts.

Whoa, get down, guys. It has been muttered in some MI quarters that Kent's stolen-ROM-card story at Anaheim was invented to disguise the fact that the Photon was unready, but not to Kent's face. He remains unruffled, though, and stands by his version of events. Then he tries a more philosophical approach: "Carmine, do you think the Pepsi generation is *really* a generation? The 'speed of light' is an advertising slogan, like the Pepsi generation is an advertising slogan."

"The ads that I saw didn't imply that. And all the *press* that I saw didn't imply that either. The press that I saw implied that you've got some miraculous new thing that works at 186,000 miles a second, when in fact it's a pitch-to-voltage system. You're implying in your advertising that it's not, and that in some way it's better, and it's not. The only thing you're doing differently is that you've got an optical pickup, which has been around for over fifteen years. I'm not saying it doesn't work, but I don't think what you're doing is fair.

"See the MIDI guitar market right now is very confused," Bonanno continues. "You've got these guys who don't even know what a knob on a synthesizer is and they're scared to death of MIDI guitars. So if you start advertising things that aren't true, you're gonna get 'em even more confused and in general you're gonna hurt everybody. What you should do is state the facts, and the facts are that you've got a pitch-to-voltage system that *may* be better than someone else's. But you're advertising doesn't claim that—it claims that you're doing something esoteric at the *speed of light*,

BY JOCK BAIRD

World Radio History

which is a lie! It's false advertising that capitalizes on people that are insecure in the first place."

"Maybe you should read some of the Roland copy," offers Kent, "or some of the Yamaha copy about the DX7, or any of the other successful products that have existed in our market. 'The last synthesizer you'll ever need to buy.'"

"To me that is an advertising ploy. This is a technical falsity."

"We are converting the string with light, and it's a wonderful marketing niche. I'm sorry that you're jealous of that marketing niche. It separates us from all the rest of the crowd. Hey, you're an engineering person and I'm a marketing person. You know where I got the speed of light concept from? From a car ad I saw in Paris."

"Did they claim that the car drives faster than the speed of light?" Bonanno inquires pointedly.

"They said it *feels* like the speed of light."

"That's different. You said it *tracks* at the speed of light."

"Let me tell you something about truth in advertising," says Kent. "Did you read the back of the IVL spec sheet? It says one-and-a-half waveform analysis. If you put it up on an oscilloscope like I did, you know what it really is? *Six* wavecycles—that's the fastest it tracks. When someone reads my spec sheet and it says you can select one or two or three wavecycles depending on how hard you're hitting the guitar, and puts it up on the scope, they'll say, 'SHIT, how did they do that? With the IVL it's 'SHIT, how could they *write* that?'"*

"I don't want to get into a pissing contest," says Bonanno, now calming down. These two men are directing the fortunes of the two most potent MIDI guitar systems, and Kent's last statement has unearthed some common ground between them. Kent then asks why Octave Plateau chose not to exhibit.

"The reason is, it doesn't make any sense," Bonanno replies. "We're backordered too many pieces as it is. And we finally realized that if we released it at the point that it was, all you'd have to do is open the thing up and see exactly what we did, and we can't do that. So we took all the circuitry and we're putting it on LSI chips, which takes three to six months. If we showed it again, we'd get more people pissed off and say, 'This thing's *never* gonna come out.' But hey, don't get me wrong—I didn't mean to bust your balls here...."

"Hey, I love this kind of stuff," Kent smiles, flushed with competitive spirit.

THE SCHOLZ ROCKMODULES

Even though most of the glamor guitar gear at N.A.M.M. was digital, MIDI-fied and micro-packed, this summer's most influential item may be something cooked up by that last great Champion of Analog, Tom Scholz. Purists will note the Scholz Rockmodules are not really "new," having been around in one prototype or another for a year, but now you can actually *buy* 'em. This dynamic duo consists of the Sustainor, which is an all-purpose distortion laboratory, and the Stereo Chorus/Delay, which is just what it sounds like.

Okay, time to pare this pair down: the latter unit's only striking attribute is a fantastic stereo simulation in both chorus and delay. Otherwise it's real charm is price—two studio-quality effects for $270. But with just 200 milliseconds of delay, the Stereo Chorus/Delay will not make the pro player give up his full-service DDL. The Sustainor, on the other hand, is going to knock that pro player off his stool.

Integration is the key concept. The Sustainor is really a compressor/equalizer/fuzz/noise gate/limiter, which Scholz has bussed and tweaked into four general setups (electronically duplicating sounds he did for the second side of the MIA third Boston LP). Familiar to any Rockman owner, the modes are Distortion, Edge, Clean (somewhat midrangey) and Clean 2. But rather than just the four take-em-or-leave-em presets which limited the Rockman, the Sustainor allows extensive fine-tuning. For example, there's a separate 4-position sustain/compressor control at the input stage, an eq trim for the two rough modes, and (nice touch) a phase notch section that reproduces the phase cancellation effects of miked speaker cabinets—you can even pick two frequencies to notch.

Another completely original feature is something called Auto Clean, which is a modifier circuit for Edge mode that keeps your volume constant but removes some bite when you turn down the volume knob on your guitar (well, it goes down in volume a *little*...). Two other modifier circuits available are Gain Boost for extra high-string octane, and Semi Clean, a subtle bite added to the Clean mode. And how about a hand for the automatic noise gate section, which allows you to control how long the note will decay before the gate kicks in?

There's complete channel-switching capability—the distortion/filter section is divided into two channels, each with its own output slider, and interchangeable with a conventional foot switch. There's also a separate footswitch for just volume changes, with a separate slider for the softer level. And a third pedal circuit lets you bypass the whole unit if need be (Scholz sells a $125 3-pedal footswitch unit as an accessory.)

Can I say anything bad about the Rockman Sustainor? Sure, the controls are pretty tiny, so you have to put your face right up to it to change things around. The unit favors the distorted side of things—the volume drop as you get into the two Clean modes is pretty steep, for instance. And it has so many subtle variations, the ability to save programs (especially MIDI-accessible ones) would help a lot. But that would have probably doubled its $350 price tag, and Tom Scholz is no fool. A bit slow in releasing albums, maybe, but no fool.

Ignore the Sustainor at your own risk.

N.A.M.M. MIDI GUITAR NOTES: Rookies of the year were **Andras Szalay** and **Joe Marinić**, two East Europeans responsible for the **Shadow** MIDI guitar (the former invented it). Cocky, irreverent, full of disdain for all competitors, the pair had managed by showtime to get three separate corporate logos on the same unit (**Charvel, Ovation, Takamine**) and were still selling it as a pickup and brain add-on under their own Shadow name. The acoustic versions, by the way, were extremely playable. Two strong cards in the Shadow system: a pedal which holds a note or chord while you play over it, and a natty little 1,000-note sequencer.

Ibanez did what no other company would: put out four MIDI guitars and let anybody play 'em as long as they wanted. Since its sensitivity is controlled by a simple pot, the Ibanez guitar was the easiest to adjust to—many systems require Allen wrench sensititvity adjustments, allowing their defenders to blame glitches on the setup and not the guitar. Ibanez also used a sensational New Orleans one-man-band named **Randy Hebert** to drive home the system's versatility. Hebert had customized his own silver-dollar-sized chord-holding button, mounted below the pickguard.

Zeta Systems may only be a small Berkeley-based company specializing in electronic violins, but their hybrid fret-switched/plucked string MIDI guitar is a total wild card. Zeta designed the MIDI-controlled 8-channel mixer that **Akai** is now selling, and this guitar or bass sys-

**IVL designed its system to vary the number of wavecycles it takes to read pitch so that all notes take the same time, 12 milliseconds. Thus, a high note could take six or more wavecycles, while the low E takes one and a half. – Ed.*

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tem would also be a major manufacturer's wet dream. Since no one's made them an offer, though, they plan to bring it out on their own by the late fall, using a small cadre of dealers. This is a happening little company, folks.

One demonstrator, in an attempt to show how fast his MIDI guitar played, demonstrated a sequenced, very rapid McCoy Tyner-type piano piece. When questioned, he readily admitted recording the parts at reduced tempo and then speeding it up. It was a fine piece of music, but it established absolutely nothing about the real-time playing speed of his MIDI guitar—the damn sequencer did all the fast tracking. Don't be fooled by this one when shopping, kids.

Did I get to play **Photon** guitar? I did. Is it fast? *Pretty* fast—there's still some delay in the low notes. And by the time I got to it, the A-string gave no output, a victim of too many civilian tryouts. This may indicate the Photon is more delicate than conventional systems, susceptible to the light emitters and receivers getting out of alignment. This situation continued for two days, so it may also be tricky to realign. Still, they did let almost everyone who asked play it—extra points for accessibility.

Next month, more hot product from N.A.M.M., including an electronic percussion blowout, sampling insanity, exciting software programs, and better ideas in recording. And no arguments. M

EDGE from page 36

came in, recorded a single with us, and that turned out very well, so he produced *Boy*—very successfully. We weren't going to do *October* with Steve, but we did eventually, because of scheduling problems. That turned out well, too. When *War* came along, we had a couple of people in mind, but again they couldn't fit into our schedule, and Steve kindly agreed to do it at the last minute. In short, *Unforgettable Fire* was the first time we really felt that Brian might be able to take on the album, and that he would definitely be the right choice.

MUSICIAN: *To what extent is he involved in the forthcoming album?*

EDGE: Daniel Lanois will be the overall producer, and Brian will be the executive, "flying" producer. Danny is a very solid character, probably better suited temperamentally to a long stint in the studio. He did a great job on Peter Gabriel's record, so we've no real worries about Brian not being there all the time. I hope we'll get the best of them both.

MUSICIAN: *Will there be any significant changes? Does the band's recent interest in Bob Dylan songs like "Maggie's Farm" and "Knocking On Heaven's Door" indicate a shift in direction?*

EDGE: We did "Knocking On Heaven's Door" at the end of the show during the last tour, taking a member of the audience onstage, showing him how the song is played, getting him to play it, and then leaving the stage while he played it. It was a symbolic action, and that song, I think, is a typical three-chord trick that shows just how simple and rich a basic song can be. It coincides with a growing interest in rootsy music, but it's not significant in itself.

MUSICIAN: *What about Bono's collaboration with the Stones on the* Sun City *LP?*

EDGE: That's an amazing song. It's one of my favorite pieces of Bono's singing—he sounds just like a Delta bluesman!

MUSICIAN: *Will U2 keep on going until it disintegrates, or might you decide to call it a day while you're still on top?*

EDGE: Let me think...I imagine the latter. But there's so much energy in the group at the moment that I can't see it coming to an end for some time to come. The new record will be very different from the last, and although all the U2 hallmarks will be in there, I'm sure that it will expand the boundaries of what people expect from us. M

MIDI EFX from page 57

make lighting systems that respond to MIDI program change commands, so when you punch in that fuzz/chorus combination for your stinging lead, you can also turn on the red spotlight pointed at you. The list could go on, and at the next N.A.M.M. show, it probably will. MIDI-controlled fog machines, anyone?

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

You can pursue the subject of MIDI-controlled signal processing as far as your bank account will take you. For example, so far when we've talked about program change commands, we've assumed a one-to-one relationship between the program you select and the program called up on the signal processor—call up program 1, and your DDL goes to program 1; call up program 56 and (assuming your DDL holds 56 programs), the DDL goes to program 56. However, suppose there's one sound that is your "bread-and-butter"—you use it on almost every song. This means that you would have to load this one sound in many different memory locations of the effect, so that upon calling up the various program change commands, this favorite sound would appear. Unfortunately, this uses up precious memory space on a redundant task. However, there are devices that let you "map" a signal processor's program to more than one MIDI program change command. J.L. Cooper's MIDI Link is one such device, as is the Axxess "Mapper" (although the latter provides many other functions as well). So, you could map, say, program 1 on your effects device to be called up by any one of a number of program change commands (for example, sending out program change command 1 would of course call up program 1, but so could program change commands 12, 34, 17, 86 or whatever). For signal processors with limited memory capacity, being able to map program changes is a welcome addition. Many signal processors, such as the Yamaha REV-7, have a mapping function built-in so that you can specify a program number and what program change will call up that program—and they *don't* have to be the same number.

We should also note that some devices respond to more than MIDI program change commands. Lexicon's PCM-70 and ART's DR-1 both allow you to access specific parameters over MIDI. For example, when driven by a synthesizer keyboard, you might want to program a reverb sound so that playing louder increases reverb time, or changes the reverb/dry mix, or alters the reverb predelay. While this capability is not all that useful if you have a limited MIDI setup, if you eventually move on to a MIDI guitar controller, then you'll be able to make full use of these devices. One neat effect is to have echo time respond to dynamics, so that as you gently strum chords you have a languid echo effect, which turns to a tight slapback as you pluck a mean lead.

SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

If you're in the market for a new signal processor, make sure it's MIDI-controllable. Get a MIDI program change footswitch, or build your own (as detailed in the June 1986 issue of *Electronic Musician* magazine) if you're on a tight budget, and go! You'll find that MIDI will in fact make your life simpler. I can't tell you how wonderful it is to walk onstage and merely press one button to make a transition from one group of effects to another. The end result is that you can concentrate on your playing instead of button-pushing—and that's what MIDI-controlled signal processing is all about. M

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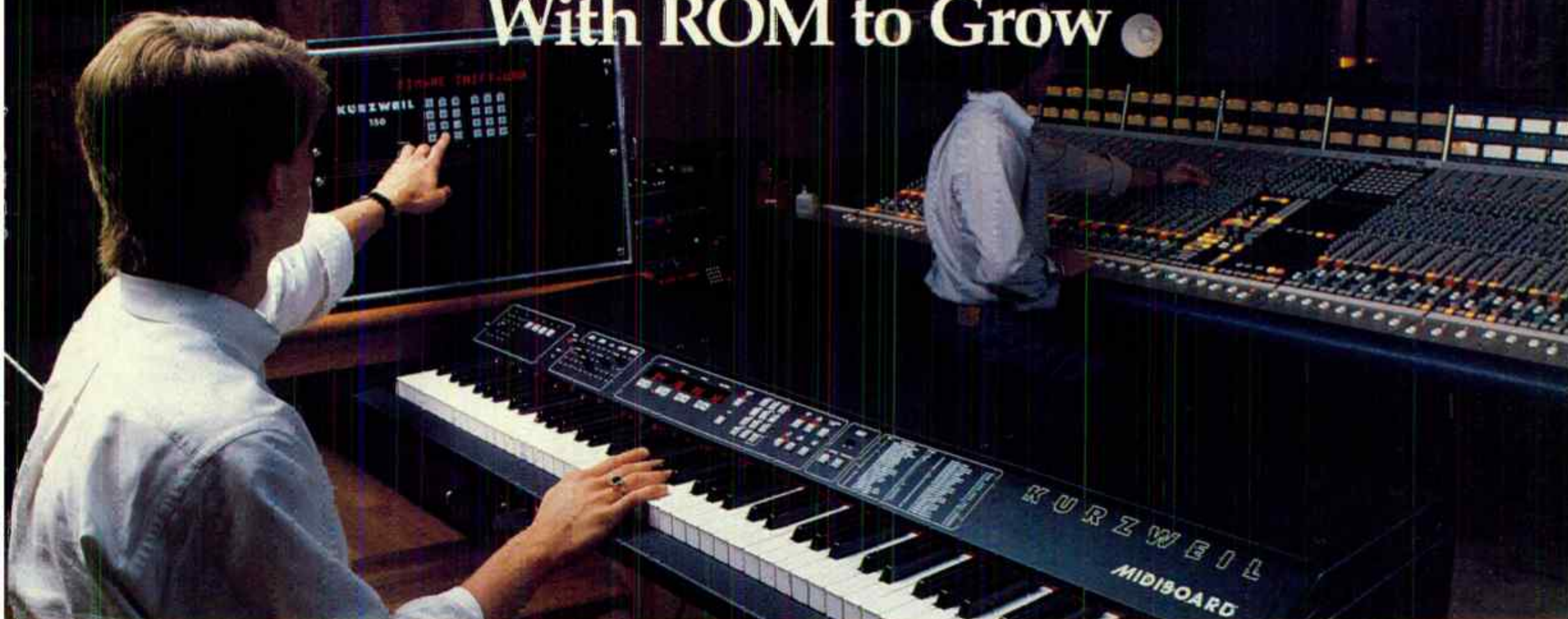

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Introducing the Kurzweil 150, a great performance instrument that lets you bring the Kurzweil Piano and 21 other Kurzweil-quality sounds on the road or in the studio. It's a rack-mountable, multi-timbral sound source, designed to work with *any* MIDI controller.

The Sounds

The Kurzweil 150 employs Contoured Sound Modeling™ to offer sounds such as the Concert Grand Piano, Electric Piano, Harpsichord, Jazz and Rock Organs, Electric and Acoustic Basses, Nylon and Steel-String Guitars. The 22 resident sounds are arranged into 60 preset programs, all available at the *touch of a button* with 16-voice polyphony. And with more ROM expansion sockets, there's room to grow!

Programmability

The extensive programmability of the Kurzweil 150 allows you virtually limitless customization of each of the preset sounds. You can also program effects, controllers and global parameters. For example, you can split your keyboard into three regions, with up to seven layers of sound in each. And you can timbre shift,™ tune, transpose or balance each sound layer.

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MIDI

Of course the Kurzweil 150 offers full MIDI implementation. With OMNI, POLY and MULTI modes, the Kurzweil 150 will be a leading component in your MIDI setup . . . And for only $2,995.*

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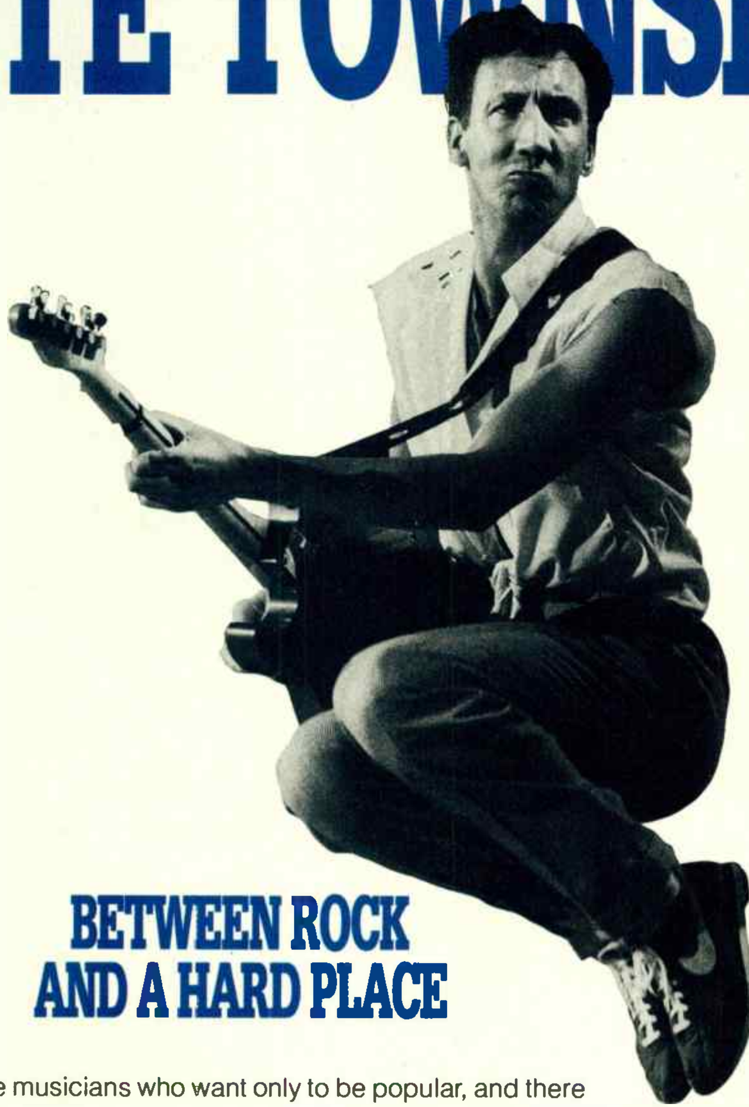
PETE TOWNSHEND



BETWEEN ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

There are musicians who want only to be popular, and there are musicians who want only to be artists. But these two groups are tiny compared to the vast number of musicians who want both. That's human nature, you say, and central to the pop impulse—who among us doesn't want money and respect? But the rock musician often has an especially tough time with the tug of war between craving artistic credibility and wanting to sell out arenas. In rock 'n' roll, the most honored of highbrow cult heroes may be found at home scrutinizing the *Billboard* "Hot 100" and studying ways to update their image for MTV. In rock 'n' roll the teen idol who just went double platinum may campaign for the respectability of (forgive the vanity) a *Musician* feature. There are very very few rock artists who, given a shot, will turn away from either goal. Yes, Paul McCartney seems to have had so much artistic success with the Beatles that he really doesn't care about it any more. And yes, Van Morrison seems to have had

BY BILL FLANAGAN

CHRISTOPHER HARTING DAVIES & STARR

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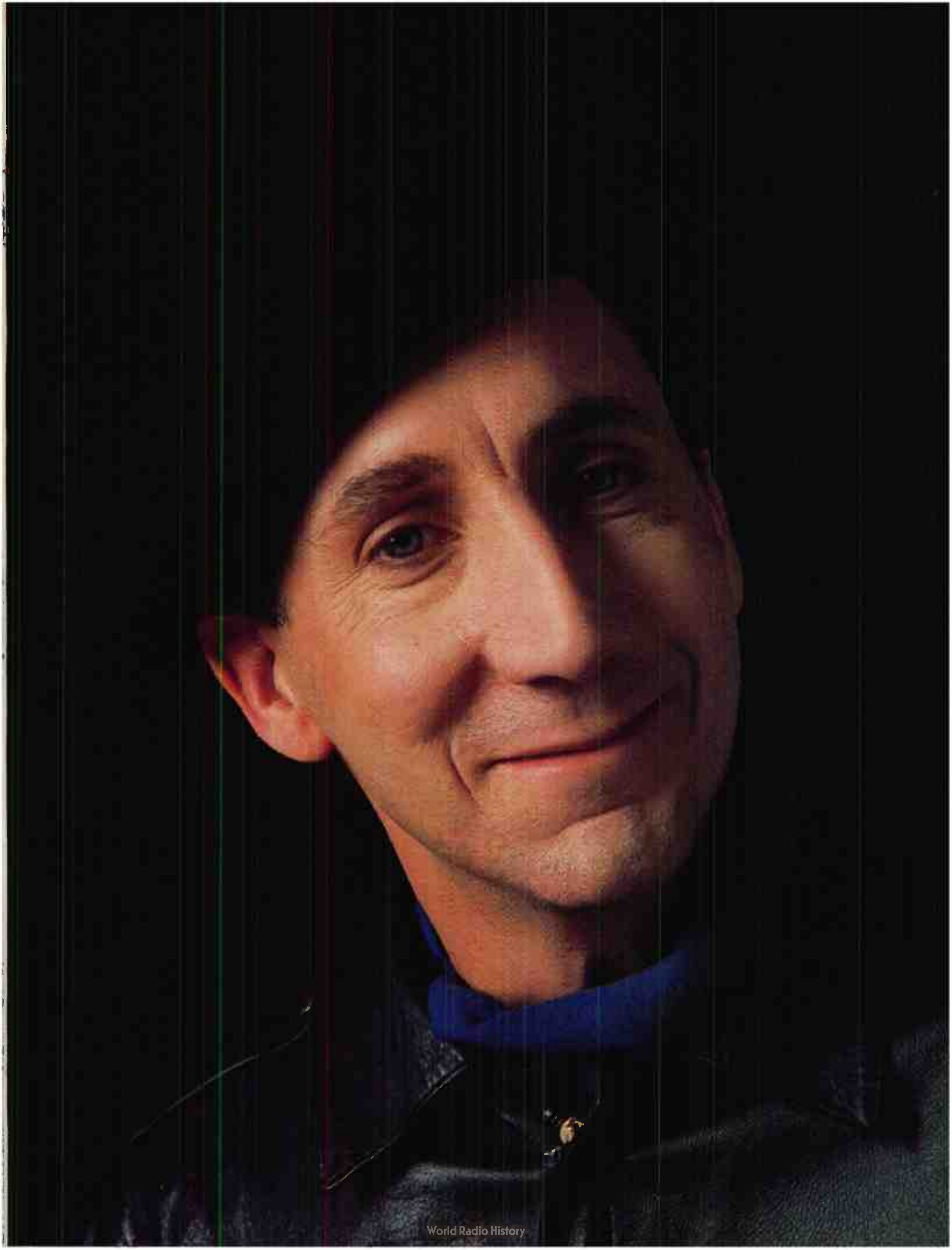
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enough of pop stardom at an early age and now cares only about his art. That's two. Two out of about a thousand.

No one has walked the line between playing for the bleachers and playing for himself like Pete Townshend. The Who were a teenage band dealing with teenage frustrations that quickly grew up into a generational icon. Adolescent Townshend smashed his guitar and his teenage fans cheered. Young adult Townshend dabbled in drugs and Eastern religion and his college-age fans grooved along. But as he approached his thirties Townshend became publicly torn between wanting to create songs about the difficulties of adulthood—marriage, being a parent, shaky health, fear of growing old and the silence of God—and the demands of a youthful rock audience for loud, raunchy celebration.

For a while he tried to be both Clark Kent and Superman, making introspective solo albums and anthemic Who LPs. But with the solo albums revealing his secret identity, the Who began to sound a bit hollow, and Townshend finally went back to being just Pete.

Last year *Musician* ran a story comparing Townshend (now an editor at the London publishing house Faber and Faber) to T.S. Eliot. Some Who fans thought that a pretentious conceit, but Townshend had no trouble with the idea. Recently we spoke to Pete again, the conversations finally coming to focus on how the pop artist balances between his obligation to the big crowd and his duty to himself.

MUSICIAN: *The other night I heard* "You Better You Bet," *and a line struck me in a new way. I always took the "who's next" in "I've drunk myself blind to the sound of old T. Rex and who's next" to be a reference to the Who album. Suddenly it occurred to me that you could mean you were listening to a dead singer—Marc Bolan—and wondering who's next...to die.*

TOWNSHEND: That *was* how it was meant. And it was a play on words as *Who's Next* itself was a play on words. The temptation to word-play titles with a band called the Who was sadly difficult to resist. It just went on and on. I'm still surprised that Roger didn't use a Who pun for his last album, because there are many still unused. *Who's Missing* is a great title, and there are a lot more.

MUSICIAN: *The Who and the Jimi Hendrix Experience both had their real American debut at the Monterey Pop Festival. What do you recall about that night?*

TOWNSHEND: I've tried to work out what was really going on, because I recently read a Jimi Hendrix biography where it talked about how Hendrix felt about who should go on first. It was quite a surprise to me that he noticed! 'Cause I saw him as almost superhuman. I couldn't imagine that he would even have cared. The main thing was that I wasn't going to follow him! We went on before Jimi Hendrix.

MUSICIAN: *Let's talk about the notion of* vengeance *in your songs.*

TOWNSHEND: I think there's a lot of vengeance involved in the insecurities which writers have. I used the word vengeance in "Behind Blue Eyes," and the vengeance, in a sense, is saying, "Listen, why don't you understand me without me saying all this stuff, why don't you love me without me performing, why don't you commit to me without me making any commitment?" It's a "Why don't you love me as I really am without me demonstrating who I really am?" It doesn't matter if you are loved if you've already said that you want to be loved. You've already made it plain that you're looking for approval, so when you get it, it's tainted, and that makes you very, very angry and you want to hurt the people who have responded. That's a very confused situation because, in fact, you should be very pleased that people have listened to your writing and care about you as a human being and have bought tickets to your show. But you end up wreaking vengeance on the only people that you can reach or that are willing to stand still while you thrash them, and that's your own audience.

And I think that applies not just to writers. It probably applies to very intense, collusive family relationships, too. I think vengeance is very different than anger. I think people who can actually let their anger go are probably much healthier. I think the healthiest period of the Who was probably the equipment smashing period, even though a lot of people now look back at it and say "What a pointless waste of energy, what a foolish thing to have done!" But in a way it got rid of some of the anger, the vengeance, and allowed us to concentrate on what really mattered, which at the time was probably strictly entertainment.

MUSICIAN: *What the audience loves in an artist is never going to be exactly what the person is. It's an exaggeration of one aspect of your personality, it's a projection of your personality, but it's not exactly who you are. That must be a little disconcerting.*

TOWNSHEND: I don't know, there's always a sort of illusionist thing attached to theater of any sort, performing of any sort. You know that you're contriving, but you also know that you can't really control those contrivances. In my case a lot of the contrivances have been, "How do I most effectively tell the truth, in order that my audience sees who I really am, so *I* know that they really love me *as* I am, and not just because they think I'm a guitar hero, or because we wore Union Jack jackets or for some weird reason I don't understand?" And yet, the harder that I've tried to get what I think is the truth across, the more I realize that people have often taken my truth and read it in their own way. Well, that's perfectly okay, but what that does is cause a *second* reaction in the writer. He then thinks, "Ah, next time, I'll deal a double hand—I'll try to make them angry because what I really want is their affection!" Sometimes that works. In the end, when it doesn't work in quite the way that you wanted, you can end up with a very, very complicated, unravelable situation.

The healthiest period of the Who was probably the equipment-smashing period. It got rid of the anger, and allowed us to concentrate on what mattered – probably strictly entertainment."

MUSICIAN: *A line that I thought was, in a very nice way, self-deflating, was in "Slit Skirts" when you said "Let me tell you some more about myself."*

TOWNSHEND: A critic wrote something about that song which I felt was very hurtful. In fact he misunderstood the song. He said how wrong it was for somebody like me who had had everything, and thrown it away to go on a stage and expect people to listen to him singing about himself. And yet it's a song which a lot of people my age have come up to me in bars and said, "I was really touched by that song. It's the way I feel. There's

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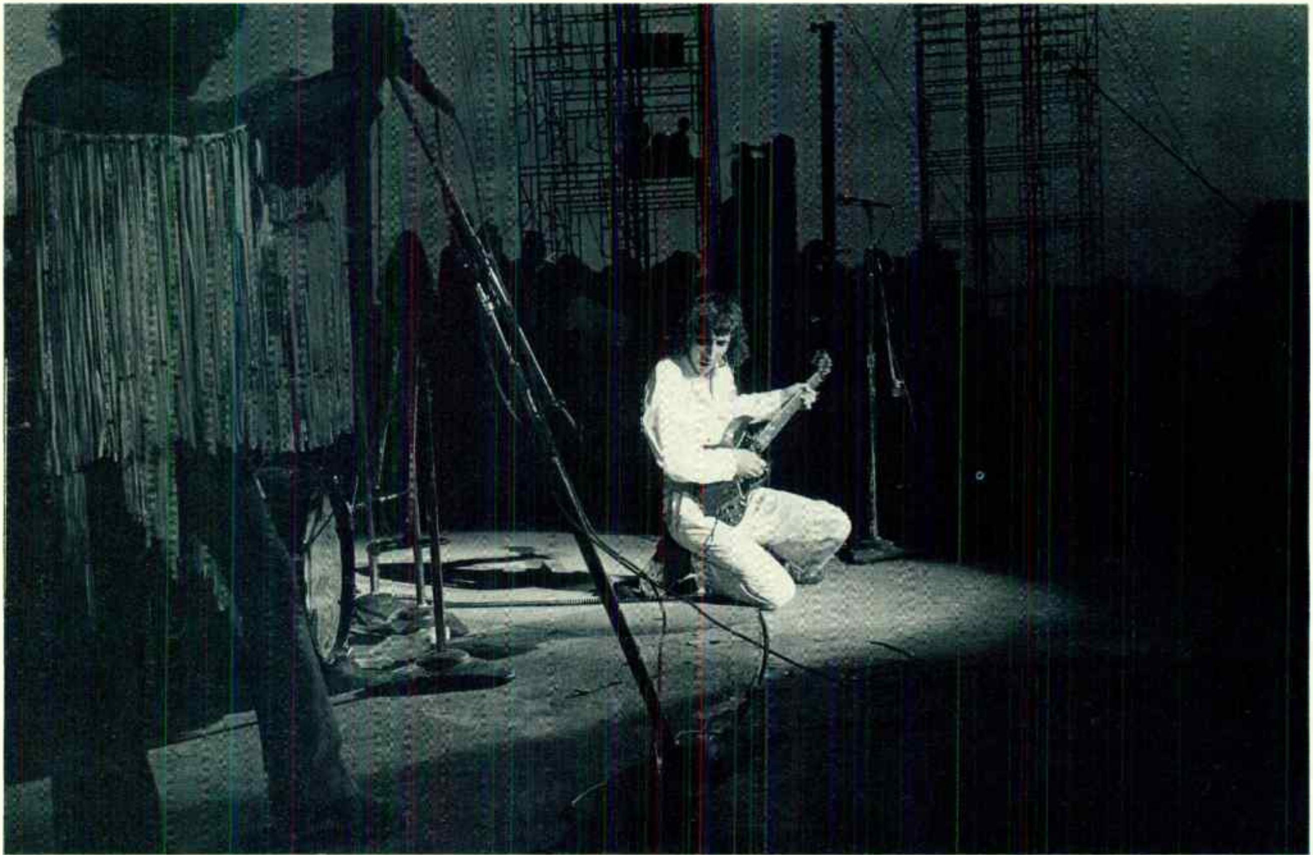

By the dawn's early light: The Who at Woodstock, 1969. Townshend in the spotlight, Roger Daltrey on the fringe.

something about my relationship with my wife." Because basically it's a song about growing old, and as such it's about something that people really don't want to talk about. And I think the master of that kind of writing was T.S. Eliot, with "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

MUSICIAN: *Yeah, "Shall I part my hair behind?" is pretty close to "I can't ever wear no ripped shirt."*

TOWNSHEND: He's a great poet obviously, but he manages to do it in a way which *does* keep us on his side somehow, and I think what I was doing with that line was just saying, "Okay, listen, I know that you're not gonna be on my side by now, I've lost you, and I'm just letting you know that I'm prepared to keep going even if there's nobody listening."

I don't think that's necessarily compassionate. It doesn't help, for example, when somebody's had a car crash to sit and worry about how they're feeling. It's best to just go coolly call the ambulance. Sometimes when people have bought an album, or go to a show, what they really want is to forget their worries and be entertained, to be uplifted perhaps. They do feel it as a betrayal when the artist makes that process conditional: In other words, "I will entertain you *if* you will identify with this, or listen to this." And I've *always* done that. It's always been the deal, and I've managed to get away with it for so long that I continue to do it. I think it's just that some of the things I write about in middle age (and will probably continue to write about in *late* middle age) are not quite so palatable as some of the slightly more raunchy, more distasteful problems of being adolescent.

A lot of [British critic] Julie Burchill's anger about the older guard in rock music is not that they've grown old, but the fact that in growing old they've become ugly. Old age very rarely makes anybody beautiful. There are exceptions, but it's rare. And the substitute for that beauty is often dignity, and dignity, and maturity, and wisdom, and all these words we use in association with old age are really to do with the kind of grace which people have to move aside and remove the possibility that any of their ugliness might show. I think in a way what she's demanding is "Listen, I want my entertainment, I want my MTV, but I want it to be *young*, I want it to be *beautiful*, I want it to be *colorful*!" I think there you have somebody that is obviously very, very afraid of ugliness.

There's a point at which, when you're writing, you just have to admit to the fact that, sometimes you really don't care if nobody listens. I mean it makes the process even more peculiar and more masturbatory and more strange, but I think that when I wrote "Slit Skirts" I really didn't care if nobody ever heard it. I wrote it in *such* sadness and such resignation to a fate which I had never even thought I would have to face, which was a life growing old away from my wife and family. And I thereby was able to put quite a high value on what I could have had: a life where we grow old together and we squabble and we fight and we collude. That's better than a life living in two different apartments on opposite sides of the planet, thinking about the past, which is what I was doing at the time. "Slit skirts, slit skirts, she isn't wearing no..." I was actually trying to celebrate that "We *are* a couple of old farts, fair enough, but at least we're together." And when I wrote it, of course, we *weren't* together. So I really was able to see that it was important.

My mother and father have had a very, very rocky marriage, and my mother was on the phone the other day talking about how my father's been very ill, and how what a strain it's been. And in the end I found myself saying, "Listen, you know, it's just so great that you've stuck together. And what makes it even greater is that you obviously really don't belong together.

JIM MARSHALL

World Radio History

That's helped me to value sticking with people who you don't necessarily fit with. It's like the fucking apartheid problem—it's easy enough to put people together if they live in separate encampments. What makes life exciting, and vigorous is when you can make things that shouldn't work *work*.

A kind of thread running through my work currently is this idea—not so much that you can rock 'n' roll in a wheelchair, but that you can still work miracles of discovery and make things that appear to be impossible work, simply by reducing your expectations and putting a value on what you already have.

There's something like that running through Springsteen's current work. I've been thinking a lot about his writing. He's trying to grapple with an impossible problem and demonstrate that it is possible to work it out.

MUSICIAN: *He's doing it by not drawing a line between the happy and the sad. He used to put sad lyrics to slow, gloomy music—and lighthearted lyrics to upbeat tunes. Now he's found a way to mix the different energies together; you get a sense of triumph because you're dancing without closing your eyes to what's important.*

TOWNSHEND: It's a much more open and a much more dangerous approach, which I think his audience has recognized and rallied to. It's a greater risk, he could fall from a much greater height because he's not keeping his private thoughts private. He's dropped the conditions, that idea I was talking about earlier that if you listen to one of these doomy songs I'll play you something to dance to. I think the more conditions that you can drop the better. I don't think it always leads to bigger audiences. I think Joni Mitchell has *really* hit a tough spot. As her work becomes more and more on her own terms you realize

Townshend still running in place, Daltrey weightlifting.

that Joni Mitchell *is* a bit of a Pollyanna, a romantic, and she's less afraid of allowing that to surface. She's not disguising her naïveté and simplicity and need for affection in artifice.

MUSICIAN: *She used to address the listener as if he were a first date she was trying to charm. Now she seems willing to come across as someone you've known for years who is not hesitant to tell you exactly what she needs. That's a tougher thing to put across to an audience.*

TOWNSHEND: I think every writer tends to oscillate tremendously between those two states. I felt after *Chinese Eyes* I had leaned very heavily on the audience, and I now had to *give* something. But I found it very difficult to just start to give unconditionally. Basically because I'd forgotten how to do it; it's not something you can just switch on and off. The terrible thing is you can get into habit patterns, and for some reason a great segment of the public is quite happy with that.

MUSICIAN: *A great segment of the record companies, too.*

TOWNSHEND: Stevie Nicks is an example of that. She doesn't mind staying the same. It's the most undemanding thing for the listeners (they've seen the movie before, they know how to respond, it's like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*) but it's *unbelievably* demanding for the writer; however you feel about Stevie Nicks there's no question that she is one of the most *tortured* songwriters ever. She gets into a mental state for about two or three months for a record. All she does is write! I mean, that's *all* she does!

MUSICIAN: *Maybe the degree to which a songwriter has to torture himself is a function of intellect. Maybe a very bright musician simply doesn't have to suffer as much to come up with the goods.*

TOWNSHEND: T.S. Eliot certainly managed to go through all the processes of creative self-stimulation without doing what Mishima [*the great Japanese writer who committed hari kiri*] did. Whether or not that has to do with intellect I...I suppose it *has* ultimately. It certainly leads to less oscillation, less of that repetitive cycling. What started to worry me in the declining Who years was how difficult it was to deal with the audience's need for us to cycle. The band's response to the audience was so wrapped up in the audience's needs that there was no way we could do our job *without* to some extent cycling. So we had to start off from base one, and in three minutes, or even in two hours, you can't get very far from that spot. It's not just a question of intellect on the part of the writer; I think it's also a question of the capacity to *give*. I don't want to pass judgment on Stevie Nicks, but I think she's successful because when it comes to the crunch she certainly works at it. And I think if you can demonstrate that you have worked, the audience will respond. It's the idea of, "Well, you haven't quite delivered, but you tried." That certainly worked for a long time for the Who. When we weren't cutting it creatively and certainly not intellectually, we would go out and "give blood," and people said, "Well, at least you're still on the case. We appreciate that."

MUSICIAN: *Let's go back to* Chinese Eyes, *to that other extreme. Tell me about the writing of "Somebody Saved Me."*

TOWNSHEND: I wrote it after I had made a complete fool of myself. All of a sudden, out of the blue, without actually realizing it, I fell in love with somebody that I'd never met. *Really* falling in love, to the extent that I was feeling tremendous physical pain at the separation from this person. It happened in America and suddenly, when I got back to London, I realized I'd been very, very lucky that I hadn't been able to reach this person. It reminded me of something that happened to me when I was at art school, when I fell in love with a girl. This was a couple of girlfriends before I met my wife. I realized that this girl who I'd really put on a pedestal was interested in me. I had told her an enormous amount of lies, created a lot of fantasy. I'd said that the group was very successful. This was long before the group was successful, when we were playing in pubs and stuff. And I'd said that we played jazz because she was a jazz fan, and really we were a copying rock 'n' roll band, doing a few R&B songs on the side. I said that I had several band jackets. It was really quite pathetic. Anyway, one day it became quite clear that she was very, very interested in me. The penny dropped one afternoon when we were sitting in some park. And I was faced with the truth, that this girl was interested in me, and I didn't really know how to take it. Obviously I couldn't at that point tell her the truth. I don't know whether it would have made any difference, she probably knew anyway. Anyway, I lucked out of it, and she went off with somebody else. In fact I think this story is in the song somewhere.

MUSICIAN: *The "geezer from the Ealing scene."*

TOWNSHEND: That's right. She went off with another guy and

CHRISTOPHER HARTING

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a couple of weeks later she dropped him and went back with her boyfriend, who *was* a jazz player. And I remember thinking how lucky I was I hadn't gotten into a sort of adolescent, brief affair, on the rebound, with this girl. Because if she'd dropped me the way she dropped him, I would have killed myself. There's *absolutely* no question about it, I would not have been able to stand it. Because a couple of incidents later in my life showed me that I wasn't strong in that way, my ego was so fragile. And this was somebody that I *really* cared about. I mean, I used to get suicidal about broken relationships with people that I didn't even *like*. I always kind of thought, well, "This is God's grace." He fixed it up so I told this girl so many lies that I couldn't get close to her, a kind of ironic justice. That kind of thing continued to happen to me for a long time. I often used to survive things simply by virtue of the fact that I badly mishandled them.

MUSICIAN: *That is God's grace! A lot of your songs could be summed up with the line, "No easy way to be free." You've written a lot about faith and spiritual matters, but you've never held up religion as an easy answer.*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, it's quite interesting. One of my kids was just talking about some clairvoyant predicting the world was going to end on Thursday. And I was saying how often members of the Baha'i faith and Jehovah's Witnesses are humiliated by their belief in prophecy. One of the most humiliating things about being a follower of Meher Baba was that he predicted that before he died he would break his silence (he didn't speak for a long time) in a way that the whole world would recognize. That became very important to his followers as a symbol. And they became very confused when he quite clearly didn't break his silence in the way they imagined he would. The thing that I continue to find very difficult is that if I *do* reach what I feel is an understanding of a spiritual enigma, if I settle on something to my satisfaction, the result is that people often look at me and say, "You're very confused, aren't you?" And that might be at a point when I felt that I'd reached a real understanding! So I think it probably is quite easy to be free. It's demonstrating it that's difficult.

MUSICIAN: *Do you still follow Meher Baba's religion?*

TOWNSHEND: I'm not really sure it matters, because I don't think it changes the philosophy. I think at the end of the day all religions are based on finding a reason why people should act in a caring and compassionate and humanitarian way. But most of all that they should *act*.

MUSICIAN: *When* Empty Glass *came out I heard a gay disc jockey play "And I Moved" and "Rough Boys" and say, "This is wonderful, Pete's come out of the closet."*

TOWNSHEND: A lot of gays and a lot of bisexuals wrote to me congratulating me on this so-called coming out. I think in both cases the images are very angry, aren't they? In "Rough Boys" the line, "Come over here, I want to bite and kiss you" is about, "I can scare you! I can frighten you! I can hurt all you macho individuals simply by coming up and pretending to be gay!" And that's what I really meant in that song, I *think*. "And I Moved" was simply written for a woman.

MUSICIAN: *For Bette Midler, wasn't it?*

TOWNSHEND: That's right, and I decided to keep it, but I decided that it would be crazy if I tried to change the gender. But it felt *good* to sing it. It did actually feel good to say, "He laid me back like an empty dress." Because I think that it wasn't entirely sexual. It was just the idea of "Yes, this man I will trust, this man has power over me, I will surrender to this man." To a great extent a lot of "And I Moved" is the idea of surrender.

I did feel quite comfortable with that, and I think maybe I was dealing with the fact that what is at the root of a lot of male difficulties with any gay desires that they may or may not have, is that it implies a giving up and a trust in another man. And in some ways that is a denial of their own macho image of themselves, and of men in general. I must admit, I was quite pleased when gay guys wrote to me and said, "It really helped me to know that somebody like you had these feelings." I felt, what the fuck, I'm not gonna write back and say that's not what I meant. Because it *could* have been what I meant, I don't know.

MUSICIAN: *Well, even beyond the sexual and spiritual, there's a psychological basis for that kind of feeling: when we're little children we all love to be held by our father—he's the symbol of strength and security. Then at the age of eleven or so, you're told you have to be a man now.*

TOWNSHEND: I just wrote a song recently which I think could be even touchier, a song I wrote for my father. He had this operation for cancer and I went round to see him just before Christmas. He'd been having chemotherapy, and was very, very depressed. My father in the last fifteen years suddenly decided he was going to go the Italian way; after years and years of being very English in his mannerisms, he suddenly said, "We are going to be an Italian family—when my sons come into the house, they must kiss their father, and that's it." We immediately accepted it, so now my brothers and I kiss one another, we don't think anything about it. And I've always thought, "This is a nice story to tell, aren't we cool, our father doesn't mind kissing." But it's a macho thing in a way.

Suddenly, he was lying in bed and I had to kiss him goodbye. And the thing was, at the time, he wasn't my father anymore; he was this person who needed me to be strong. It wasn't a father/son relationship anymore. If anything the roles sometimes reversed, where I was the caring one and he was the helpless one. But this particular time, it just felt like we were completely equal. So suddenly it was a man kissing a man. It wasn't a slobbery wet sexual kiss, but it was definitely a *kiss*. And I went back and I sat down at the piano and I wrote this song called, "We Kissed For The First Time." And it really did feel like that. It felt like the first time I'd ever really kissed a man. If you didn't know the story behind it, you could come up with all kinds of ideas about it. And there's quite possibly a lot of Freudian bullshit sexuality behind it as well, but the point is that it was an amazingly pure moment, and unbelievably important to me. That moment still really resonates for me and I think it completely changed the way that I feel about my father. I'm finding it very difficult to finish the song 'cause I can't get it *high* enough. I can't get it close to what it was I really felt.

MUSICIAN: *As the fathers get older, the roles of who's taking care and who's dependent do tend to reverse, but I think you're lucky to have noticed the moment at which you were equal. It's a rare moment, 'cause one's going up the escalator and one's going down.*

TOWNSHEND: Yeah, you're probably right, it probably is *just* a moment. I never thought of it that way. I'll *use* that.

MUSICIAN: *Why did you take the job editing at Faber and Faber? Why start another career? I assume you don't need the money.*

TOWNSHEND: Well, I don't really get any money to speak of. I don't really regard it as another career—maybe I should—partly because it feels like something I've been doing for such a long time anyway. It focuses a lot of my need to work with other creative people as a patron, as an enthusiast. Also I've never been very good at record production; I don't find it very easy. Recording for me has always been very solitary. When I record with other people I always want to get it over with as quickly as possible. I've been very spoiled, I suppose. If I didn't like the way my own recording was going I would just walk out, go home. When I work with other recording artists I can't just walk out if it's not going well. It's their record. They're paying the recording costs. I have to stick with it.

Publishing allows me to work with other creative people, and yet it's not an area where I have all these familiar habits

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BAD TRIPS

THE END OF THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

BY NOEL REDDING AND CAROL APPLEBY

Armed with a British bassist and drummer, Jimi Hendrix returned to his native United States in 1967 as a conquering hero. The Jimi Hendrix Experience's first album reached the top five, introducing both a dazzlingly creative guitarist and an uproarious live act. Over the next year and a half the band's subsequent recordings and appearances proved it was no novelty.

Success, though, has its own dangers. Hendrix, bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell were simply unprepared for the savage business world their popularity forced them to enter. "The whole 'hippie revolution' had taken place with its freedom and disregard for money and its established machinery," Redding says with hindsight. "Funny that groups like the Experience, who were symbols of the movement, were in reality just fronts for large corporations and small people who were using us and the audience in the madness of generating profits."

The Experience was originally managed by Michael Jeffery and ex-Animals bassist Chas Chandler. Chandler supposedly quit in mid-1968, leaving Jeffery—a shadowy figure to the group—in control. "Jimi and Mike had a very strange relationship," Redding says. "Jimi was always trying to get rid of Mike. But Mike always retained control. Somehow. Perhaps this was one thing that made Jimi so depressed. Once he tried to slash his wrists. This was kept very *quiet*."

Hendrix was further plagued by a breach-of-contract suit. In late 1965 he signed a three-year recording agreement with Ed Chalpin. Now Chalpin had proceedings going against Hendrix, Jeffery and Reprise Records (Hendrix's label, a division of Warners). Hendrix's record royalties were in escrow while the suit was in progress.

Relationships within the band were none too great either. Constant touring and a

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WE HAD NO "NORMAL" LIFE. PERHAPS THIS DESTROYED US MORE THAN ANYTHING; OUR PERSONAL VOIDS ATE US UP.

his good life and now expected him to stay the same forever. I was sure he felt heartsick at the turn of things.

Coming into Toronto for a May 3 show, Jimi got busted at customs for possession of heroin. The grapevine warned us to make sure we were clean going into Canada. And there it was lying right on top of Jimi's packed clothes for all to see: smack and hash. Surely Jimi wasn't so blasé—or stupid—as to think that they wouldn't search him. I knew he didn't keep track of what he had, and he was always accepting "gifts." Jimi said that was what happened on this occasion. But you don't put dope in your flight bag on top if you know you're going to be searched. Which brings us to the question of a possible plant. Was the Toronto bust a blatant attempt by Jeffery to keep Jimi dependent on him? We couldn't contact Jeffery at all. Finally Jimi was released on $10,000 bail. After all, we had a show to do that night. The gig surprisingly went well, but the bust obviously upset Jimi for weeks.

In June we were staying at the Beverly Rodeo Hotel in Los Angeles. Jimi was in the penthouse suite with a private elevator in an attempt to keep him away from disturbing influences as much as possible. I'd been on to Jimi for years now about trying to narrow down his crowd; it was the only way to keep his head clear. Sometimes I would refuse to go out and jam and Jimi would call me a stick-in-the-mud. I couldn't stand the strain of being out, surrounded by strangers. But even with a private suite it was impossible for him.

I could tell he was under terrible strain just by looking at his face. He was just this side of screaming, but he didn't have the nerve to tell off the dozen or so hangers-on who were cluttering up the only living space he had and charging fortunes to his room bill. Mitch and I would occasionally have to go into his room and clear it for him before he went completely crazy. In a way, Jimi's ego fed off of it; but in the end the necessity and constant pressure to be Jimi Hendrix took much more out of him. Everyone took, took, took from Jimi. The only things they gave were drugs. Even Buddy Miles and Velvet Turner would arrive at accountant Michael Hecht's office with a scrappy note with Jimi's signature saying, "Give me $5,000."

Jimi spent so much besides what he gave away. Once in Los Angeles he gave two girls $3,000 and told them to go shopping just to get rid of them. Of course, his family was high on the list. He bought guitars all the time. He'd buy a car and then go out and smash it up. And with all that was being paid out in settlements, lawyers and managers—and all that wasn't being paid in—well, it was no wonder funds from Mitch's and my accounts were used to keep Jimi in cash. And then there was the costly studio time and our lessened output. If Jimi had only joined forces more with Mitch and me to meet the Experience's obligations, life would have been much easier for him. He could have had more time to devote to his new ventures and experiments. We could have kept the Experience going as

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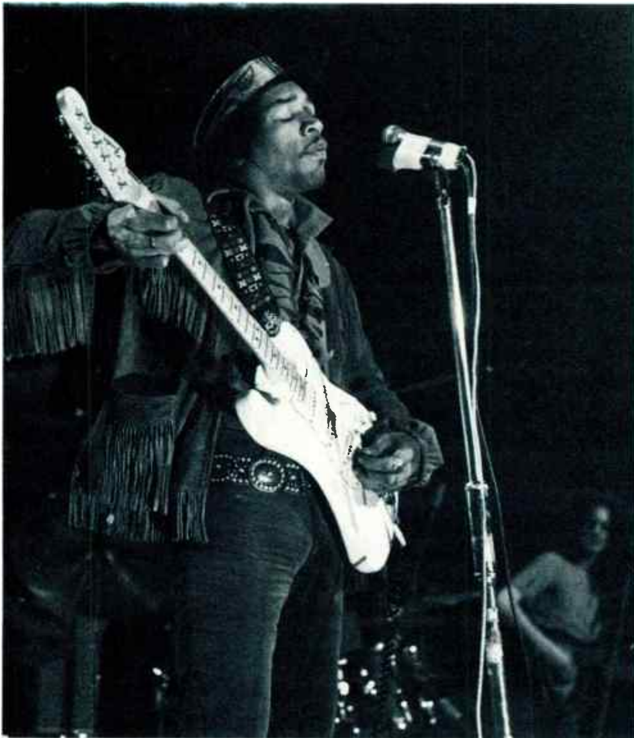
it was earning well and it would have financed anything anyone tried to do.

Jimi obviously felt trapped. We all had a great feeling of impatience (some of that may have been leapers) to get on with it. But by now we could hardly say those things to each other. Our selves came between us as members of a group. The sessions certainly showed it. I would say to Jimi, "We *must* get it together." He would say, "Don't worry. It'll be okay. We'll get rid of Jeffery." Everything to Jimi seemed to center around getting rid of Jeffery. His absence would somehow set us free. Jimi would say, "I still want to play with you guys, too; and we'll still do our own things." But strangely, after each discussion with Jimi, Jeffery would phone me the next day and get heavy with me. I can only assume Jimi had said something to him. Or Jeffery's spies had overheard us.

Jeffery had really been gearing up for our June 20 appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival in San Fernando Valley. It was the biggest financial return for the least effort. All he had to do was get us onstage for one short set and it was $100,000 in his hand. There were miles and miles of people in the audience; the backstage area was like a circus, with rows of caravans for the sideshow/groups. A nonstop parade of people passed the wire-mesh walls looking at us in the cage. A helicopter dropped us off backstage; it was the only way in.



JIM MARSHALL

EVERYONE TOOK, TOOK FROM JIMI. THE ONLY THINGS THEY GAVE WERE DRUGS.

But the interior of our caravan was another world altogether. There were no hippie/peace/love vibes there. It was packed with about eight black heavies surrounding Jimi. He was petrified. I don't know what they were on to him about but he looked so relieved when he saw me come in. I took charge instantly and told them all to get out of our fucking dressing room immediately. What a thing to do to someone before a show—*if* they wanted him to do a good show. I really hated all these guys who were trying to get at Jimi and turn him into something he wasn't. The black militants would have loved to have him back their favorite schemes with cash. They didn't give a fuck about him. They cared only that someone else besides them was sucking his blood.

Jimi wasn't political. He had an open mind. He'd ask questions, but only so he could understand and then progress beyond those walls. Black power movements wanted to use his name to push their popularity. Band of Gypsys was the closest Jimi got to submitting to the pressure to work with all "soul brothers." Buddy Miles was trying to be a star, too, and Jimi liked it when he was the only star in the group. Nothing racial, just conflicting personality types. Jimi was pulled so many ways it's a wonder he stayed together as long as he did.

With the caravan cleared, we got stoned (on the grass I'd scored), drunk and had a snort of coke. Then we had to wait two and a half hours to go on. That was the worst part of the festivals: You always went on long after you were scheduled. And of course you had been planning your high all day to correspond to your scheduled onstage time. When we did go on, Jimi just couldn't get it together. I don't know whether the pressure was internal or external; I suspect the latter. He played with his back to the audience for twenty minutes and walked off. Maybe it was just his way of saying to Jeffery, to the heavies and perhaps even to the fans, "Look! I'm terrible. You don't want me. Leave me alone." There's nothing like one-third of your group walking offstage suddenly in mid-set. Mitch and I could only creep off too. I went back to the hotel immediately and passed out straight away.

The next day wasn't much better. Mitch, road manager John Downing and I sat around getting stoned. They wanted us to show up again, but I couldn't. I felt sick of the whole thing. Jimi decided to go along with Buddy Miles on Sunday; he did a good jam with Eric Burdon and the fans were happy. But it was a bit late, in my mind.

The last concert scheduled for this tour was June 29, at the Denver Pop Festival. This was an outside two-day affair, with the stage in the middle of a field. The first day we were spectators, seeing Joe Cocker and Creedence Clearwater Revival before crashing early (1:30 a.m.). Everything was fine until somebody came up to me and said, "Are *you* still with the band? I heard Hendrix replaced you." Supposedly, some eager press person reported that I had left because I hadn't been consulted about the "expansion" of the band. This did my head in. I was uneasy enough already about our future, but this rumor just blew me away. For some reason I took it as fact that Jimi had done an interview saying I'd been replaced; and I was incredibly hurt. I suddenly just wanted to get away. To be alone. To recover. We'd already agreed to do a revival tour in 1970. That was okay as it was months away and in between there was time.

If the rumors weren't enough the concert nearly killed us anyway. These big shows were just too grueling. We went down fantastically that day—too well. The crowd went absolutely berserk! All of a sudden 30,000 people got the urge to get onstage with us. The police panicked when the fans started to move en masse toward the stage. We didn't feel too good about it either, but kept playing. The police had tear gas and they used it. They forgot, though, to check the wind direction and it blew our way. It started to get us and there was no way off the stage, which was circled by a solid mass of surging bodies. If we had jumped into the crowd we would have been mauled. Our personal road manager Jerry Stickells rescued us by backing a huge panel van up to the stage. We dashed inside, half strangled from the gas, and he locked us in. The crowd immediately swarmed over the van; the roof began to buckle

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under the weight of the bodies.

Inside we were silent, lost in our own thoughts—fighting in our private ways the windowless van, the roof closing on us, the locked door, the worst claustrophobic nightmare born out of good feelings and music. As calmly as I could, I concentrated on rolling a joint; thank heavens I had my stash. I smoked it while studying my knees (which were in front of my face) as if they were the most fascinating things in the world and nothing else mattered. Jerry somehow made it back to the driver's seat. He couldn't wait for the way to clear, he just had to get going and hope people moved. It was a good half-mile back to the hotel. There were still people hanging on to the top and sides of the van when we arrived, and we had to run for our lives to get through the hotel door. I still get a horrible feeling in the pit of my stomach when I think about it. That was the last show the Jimi Hendrix Experience ever played.

Jimi was still a big money earner, but how much longer could/would he live off his past image? The biggest question was would he be able to go on at all? He was pretty smashed, not writing much and something was eating him up inside. Was it the knowledge of the greed around him? His own lack of a private life? He was not a person making music but an image expected to churn out the same hits year after year to larger and more impersonal crowds. He had reached a turning point: either fade away, expand or try a completely different scene.

On New Year's Eve 1969/70, the Band of Gypsys played at the Fillmore East in New York. This group featured Billy Cox on bass and Buddy Miles on drums; Jimi had opted to play with old friends. He admitted in interviews that he was going through changes and very, very tired. The band never got off the ground. The shows were recorded for the *Band Of Gypsys* LP, which went to Ed Chalpin as part of a settlement of his breach-of-contract suit. But Jimi was still Jeffery's. Periodically Jimi would still try to break away and ask someone else, like Chas, to take him on. But it never happened. During one of these periods Jimi was kidnapped, put in a sack and driven off. Funnily enough, Jeffery rescued him. Was the event staged to frighten Jimi? To let him know what could happen if...?

Acid is a strange drug. You have to be feeling happy and healthy to have a successful trip. As we got more and more run down, the "bummers" became more frequent. Jimi got caught out badly when the Band of Gypsys played at a peace rally at New York's Madison Square Garden on January 28. Mitch and I were there; we were going to jump up onstage and do a couple of numbers later in the set. Jeffery was there, too, and just before Jimi went on I saw him give Jimi a tab of acid. Perhaps he thought it would pep him up and liven up the show. But Jimi freaked instead, saying to a girl in the audience, "Are you having your period? I can see it through your yellow knickers." I suppose the shock of having said that brought him around. He added, "We're not getting it together," and walked offstage in the middle of the second song.

Poor Jimi was obviously having some serious problems. He gave very strange interviews at the time, saying things like "I figure that Madison Square Garden is like the end of a fairy tale, and that's great—the best ending I could possibly come up with." More and more he was inclined towards heroin, as was Mitch.

In Europe, Polydor Records had given Fat Mattress an advance. The rest of the group went berserk. Instead of stashing money away for the rainy day, they spent. The worst thing you can do is let yourself become a "star." Four gigs into a U.S. promotional tour, the Mattress became unstuffed. Without saying a word, the other members split back to England after we had a disagreement. They had invited a sax player to jam onstage with us during a gig in New Jersey. I said okay, but not until we finish our act; then they brought him on early in the set. For an unknown and still unsuccessful group to chance it with a stranger was like playing Russian roulette. I suspect they totally resented my attempt to control the group. The rest of the tour was cancelled and I flew back to England. A press release stated I had suffered a nervous breakdown—probably much closer to the truth than I imagined. For New Year's, Fat Mattress informed me that I was out of the group.

The only thing I had left was the big plan of a reunion tour for the Experience. It was a lifeline to me even if Jeffery was involved. But Jimi couldn't make up his mind. Jeffery probably got on his back, because suddenly the on-off project was on again. By the end of January we'd met, talked it out, been interviewed by *Rolling Stone* and signed a document authorizing Jeffery to contract three major tours: a minimum of one U.S. tour to gross between $750,000 and $1,000,000; one major tour of western Europe and the U.K.; and a tour of Japan. Net profits to be divided 50/25/25.

I suppose Jimi decided to tour to raise funds. Jeffery had been saying, "How about a studio of your own to record in, Jimi?" In 1969 a lease was taken on a building on 8th Street in New York. It was a good idea; Jimi used to spend so many hours in the studio that it should pay for itself in no time. He went into a fifty-fifty partnership with Jeffery, a man he didn't trust. Suddenly money poured into this venture; $369,126 disappeared and hardly anything was done. Jimi realized he'd have to tour and take a loan from Warner Bros. Records.

On February 11, 1970, Jimi and Warners made a deal. Jeffery, as administrator of the funds, received $300,000 against future Experience and other royalties to complete building Electric Lady Studios. They figured they could recoup the loan with the proceeds of what was now *Wave* and soon to be *Rainbow Bridge*, produced by Jeffery under the name Antah Kar Ana, Inc. (later Karana Productions, the sole collector of worldwide Polydor royalties). Jimi had to guarantee the loan to Electric Lady, Inc. by promising to write enough original material of a quality the same as the Experience to cover it.

I was informed that tour rehearsals would start in New York in late March. I flew over on the nineteenth and was met by Bob Levine from the office. He kept saying, "I know this drummer. You should have a play with him." Days went by. I phoned Jimi regularly but his woman friend Devon Wilson always answered and said he wasn't in. Finally, I phoned Mitch's flat; his chick answered, "They're rehearsing. Don't you know?" Nobody had had the decency to tell me they were rehearsing with Billy Cox. Then it clicked into place why Bob had been pushing this drummer. Now he started to say, "Don't let it bother you. Why don't you nip into the studio and do a quick LP, try out some of your new songs? I know a place where I can get cheap time...And then Mike and I will get you a deal with Polydor."

Jimi stopped by one night, sort of to say he was sorry. He had the grace to look embarrassed. He also offered to play guitar, and gave me a snort of coke. It was highly laced with smack, and made me violently ill. Jimi played, but it was no good. (I think I may have erased it.) The tapes for the unreleased LP, *Nervous Breakdown*, went through a lot of hands and ended up at Electric Lady Studios whose current owner refuses to release them to me unless I pay thousands in storage fees.

I ran into Jimi again at the official opening party of Electric Lady Studios. Jimi now had what every songwriter/musician dreams about. He could record there and present half the cost to Warners—up to $10,000—to be recouped from future royalties, if any.

It was the last time I ever saw Jimi. We didn't say much in the hubbub of what was essentially a press party: "How are

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ya!" "We're just going to Europe; I'll probably see you there." I didn't stay long. Press parties didn't excite me anymore.

Jimi should have saved his energy for his Isle of Wight gig the next day, August 30. Instead he stayed up all night, flew over, and didn't even go on till two a.m. English time. I didn't go, but my mum was there. She was shocked at how tired and rundown Jimi looked. She had such a soft spot for him, and he for her. He made sure she was taken care of and brought her up onstage for the show. For most of the concert Jimi turned away from the audience and pumped his guitar at Cox, trying to drive the bass and generate excitement. Billy had become so paranoid that he wouldn't eat for fear his food was poisoned. Maybe he had just picked up on all the vibes directed at Jimi.

Jimi's European tour with Mitch and Billy went very badly. You have to see the film made in Stockholm to believe it. I'd never seen Jimi drunk onstage like that before. It was horrible and sad. (We always drank a lot in Sweden because it was hard to get drugs.) Next was a festival on Fehmarn, a German island. It was like Jimi didn't care. A riot started because the set was so bad.

The rest of the tour was abandoned and Jimi decided to take a break in London. He saw Chas and asked him once more to produce him, perhaps even manage him. Jimi had been complaining a lot to Buddy Miles about his management. He knew money had been "lost" that he would never even know about. Towards the end, Jimi didn't trust anyone. He phoned his lawyer, Henry Steingarten, to say he wanted to leave Jeffery no matter what it cost. People were at him from all sides.

Back in London, he jammed with War—staying in the background but enjoying a relaxed play. It was well received. He was pleased to be appreciated. He thought it was all over for him in Europe.

He spent time with Monika Danneman. Jimi had lots of girlfriends, some steadier than others. He hated to be alone—an extrovert's symptom of depression. When he was alone he'd get weird. Mitch and I sometimes visited his hotel room to find him just sitting with all the blinds drawn and the lights off. We called him "the bat."

On the night of September 17, Jimi asked Monika to drive him to "some people's apartment" in Marble Arch. He told her not to come in because they weren't friends and he didn't like them. It was business. She picked him up an hour later. Back at her hotel room, Jimi sat down and wrote a poem, later titled "The Story Of Life." They ate, they took sleeping pills, they went to bed.

Monika woke three hours later and went out for cigarettes. When she returned she felt something was wrong. She rang Eric Burdon and he said to ring for an ambulance. Eventually she did. Not much later, on September 18, 1970, Jimi Hendrix was dead.

I was in New York when a friend called: "A friend of yours is dead." "Who's that?" "Hendrix." I hung up. I was speechless. Numb. I believed it and I didn't believe it. He was too young to be dead—only twenty-seven. I went out determined to get drunk.

There are millions of questions surrounding Jimi's death. He was still alive when the ambulance picked him up from Monika's room. She said she had seen vomit on his mouth when she returned with her cigarettes. Jimi had taken sleepers—a German brand called Vesparax with a normal dose of half a tablet. Professor Robert Donald Teare, the pathologist connected with St. George's Hospital, Westminster, also found Durophet d and one amphetamine 20mg. (known as a "black bomber"). His liver contained Seconal and "a substance with properties consistent with those of brallobarbitone. The quantity calculated as Quinalbarbitone was 3.9 mgs%. A search for toxic drugs failed to reveal the presence of Hydroxyethyl hydroxyzine, however a compound was isolated which might well be a metabolite.... A quantity of amphetamine was detected in the urine. A search for basic drugs from a hydrolysed sample revealed the same compound that was isolated from the liver but its identity could not be established. No other bases, including morphine, could be detected, with the exception of nicotine."

The ambulance crew for some reason thought it would be a good idea to sit him up on the way to the hospital. During the trip, he vomited and choked. There was no attempt to use resuscitation equipment. The post-mortem showed 400 ml. of free fluid in the left chest with the left lung partially collapsed. Both lungs were congested. He was still alive when he reached the hospital. There is much speculation over the missing twenty to forty minutes after he reached the hospital. To my knowledge there are no files available, and neither the ambulance nor hospital personnel were available for questioning. I also believe that the pathologist was moved.

Theories: 1) Another part-time girlfriend, Devon, was in London and could have been the person Jimi saw after Monika dropped him off. Devon was a junkie and may have supplied Jimi with drugs that night. She later died under mysterious circumstances by falling off a building or out of a window. 2) Monika's casual attitude may have allowed Jimi to die. She saw him with the tablets but didn't stop him from taking them. She also waited to phone an ambulance until after speaking twice to Eric Burdon about what to do. She said she was afraid Jimi would be upset. 3) Was someone paid to kill Jimi? Were the ambulance men really ambulance men? Or did someone want to scare him? Was it a plot like the kidnapping? 4) Suicide? 5) An accident? Each theory treads on a lot of toes.

Monika says Jimi visited Devon the night before. Upon his return she says they stayed up talking. This is logical judging from the amount of speed in his system. About six a.m., she says, he complained that there was something wrong and wondered whether Devon had slipped him an OD.

She goes on to say that Jimi popped his mouth full of sleeping pills and urged her not to commit suicide. He then talked until he fell asleep. When she woke up, he was out cold. She couldn't wake him but she wasn't worried. Finally, she decided to call Burdon for advice. He told her to get an ambulance. In all fairness, Monika is not a heavy drug taker. Since his death her life has centered around Jimi.

What about: 6) Murder? At times, I am myself inclined to believe this. Jimi was in a mess. I don't think anyone will ever know everything he was involved in. Cox was not the only one to feel threatening vibes when Jimi was around. Jazz musician

BARON WOLMAN

World Radio History

Sam Rivers, in an interview with Dutch journalist Frits Lagerwerff, once discussed the possibility that Jimi was murdered by organized crime because he was determined to set up a musicians' union to organize concerts, produce and distribute their own records. I can't see Jimi organizing this himself, but he could have been used as a focal point to rally people to the cause.

Monika said she left Jimi sleeping for only ten minutes. However, a lot can happen in ten minutes. Jimi may have been under surveillance. Just how angry was Jeffery after Jimi phoned Steingarten to say he wanted out at all costs? Was this the cost? How many people benefited from his death? As far as Mitch and I were concerned, Jimi was our only honest link with the rat's nest that was the Experience. His demise cut our last connection with our earnings and strengthened the lawyers' grip by making fewer questions answerable. Then there might have been a personal vendetta: a pregnant woman, a rejected lover or business associate.

The coroner's verdict took more than a week and was never made public. Warner's had Jimi insured for a million. So did Jeffery. Generally, insurance companies won't pay if it's a suicide. The coroner gave an open verdict—the easiest way out without really checking. The whole thing was surrounded in secrecy.

Suicide doesn't compute. Jimi was talking of new beginnings, of taking a year off to study music properly. He wanted to get into writing again, and expand into films. He was definitely interested in exploring different types of music, especially jazz. Eric Burdon felt it was suicide, and Jimi had spoken of suicide to Monika. He could have been tired and fed up enough to want to give up. But it seemed like he was planning for the future.

Before going to Hawaii to do *Rainbow Bridge* he phoned his father to say he had put some money away and would tell him about it when he returned from Europe. Jimi had also begun to look at drugs more objectively. But the cumulative effects of bad health and complete fatigue could definitely have led to an accident. I doubt anyone will ever know for sure—unless there *is* a murderer.

Jimi's family had control over the funeral, but very little else. Jimi went home to Seattle, even though he once told me he wanted to be buried in England, where he first "made it." The funeral was a nightmare for me. I had met Jimi's father a few times and found him to be a nice person, gentle and sincere—too nice to be confronted with this scene. It was bad enough having your son dead without an accompanying circus. Jimi had been away for such a long time. Suddenly he was a star, suddenly he was dead, and all these vultures were hanging around. Jimi's dad became a "star." The coffin lid was open, but I couldn't look. Mitch and I were crying and holding hands for strength.

I looked around and was horrified: black vs. white vying for attention. Everyone had been his "best friend." A lot of people came to the funeral because it was *the* place to be seen. There were about twenty-five limousines. And the preacher went on and on. People ran around acting in charge who had never been connected with him. I despised them for being there.

Probably the only part Jimi would have enjoyed was that we rented a hall and got a few instruments together for a jam. Jimi always said he wanted a party when he died. We gave him a good send-off: Buddy Miles, Johnny Winter, Mitch and myself were the nucleus of a session that lasted hours.

He died as he lived. M

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MIDI Guitar from page 57

synth guitar, Mode 4 has many other uses. Helping cover mistakes for examples. In normal guitar playing, if you reach for a chord shape and miss one note in your chord, you can generally slide that errant finger into the right position before anyone's the wiser. But if you're driving a synth that's *not* in MIDI Mode 4, you'll have that bum note ringing out all over the place. As many of you already know, the duration of a synthesizer note is governed by an amplitude envelope which lets the user set Attack, Decay, Sustain and Release times. In most cases on a guitar synth controller, the physical sustain of the string corresponds to the Sustain part of that envelope. But even if you cut a note off abruptly, you've still got to deal with the Release time of the note—which can be pretty long, depending on how the envelope has been programmed. Unless you're operating in Mode 4; then the attack of any new note played on a string will cancel the previous envelope.

But so far we've just been talking about making your guitar "act normal." Beyond that, the ability to assign each string to a separate MIDI channel means you can get a completely different synth sound on each string. Actually, though, that's a little like the prospect of eating your entire 5th birthday cake all by yourself in one sitting. It sounds great. But if you actually do get to do it, you find out it's a bit too much after all. You generally use two or three strings to play most melody lines. And unless you're playing something by Anton Webern, you really don't want to be jumping to new voices in the middle of a melody line. All you'll probably want to do is divide your six strings into a "bass section" and a "chord section," or three sections at the most.

MAKING MIDI GUITARWORTHY

Up till now, we've been discussing ways in which guitarists will have to come to terms with MIDI if they're going to get the most out of this synth controller stuff. But MIDI itself will have to add a few tricks to *its* repertoire in order to really make the world safe for guitar synthesis. As we said before, MIDI *was* initially developed with keyboards in mind, and the guitar *does* do things that a keyboard could never do even if it wanted to—like bending one note of a chord.

And people are already beginning to spruce MIDI up with a few special guitar implementations. Octave Plateau has proposed a new global controller implementation. According to Octave's Bruce Frazer, it has already been approved by the MMA (MIDI Manufacturers Assn.) and KMC (Japanese MIDI Committee), the powers that be.

The global controller implementation addresses the fact that, on a guitar, you want string bends to affect only the string you're bending; but when you do a bend on the vibrato arm (or a similar controller), you want all strings to be affected (or, as they say in MIDIese, you want to affect all strings globally). The implementation itself is very simple. In essence it says this: Any command that's sent on a channel number which is one digit lower than the basic channel number is a global command.

While we're talking about MIDI controllers, we should also mention the phenomenon of remapping. In MIDI, all the different types of controller devices you can get on a keyboard synth have been assigned a number. Mod wheel is #1, Foot pedal is #4, etc. Understandably enough, though, the keyboard technicians who designed MIDI didn't specify any numbers for vibrato arms, string bends, etc. So guitar controllers just use existing numbers. Here's the problem, then. If your guitar system sends out vibrato arm data as controller #4, but your synth only receives controller #1, you can forget about wanging the bar...unless your system lets you remap controllers. Then you can just assign a new controller number to the vibrato arm. Quite a few of the systems we've mentioned let you remap controllers. It's a handy thing to look for.

One thing is certain. The equipment for doing MIDI guitar synthesis is out there—in no small quantity. And there's every indication that more is on the way. What remains to be seen is what guitarists will *do* with all the stuff. What kind of impact (if any) will it make on modern music? It's doubtful whether the MMA and JMC will ever get together on a standard code format for, "I'm being doused with lighter fluid. Now I'm being set on fire." But MIDI does seem to be getting better at responding to that demented brand of inspired equipment mishandling we call modern guitar playing. M

JOHNSON from page 42

a good dialogue going with that input/output effect, the more you open up to that, the more it flows naturally. Miles Davis has proved that if you really create enough with an open channel, you can actually write complex songs spontaneously.

"Right now, if I were together, I could pick up that guitar and play a song. I try to practice that and, at the same time, project technical things that I can play, to maintain the agility of the technique, but also to sustain that close rapport with your instrument. Sometimes, I can play my best after I've just spent twelve hours playing a simple part. It's not so much that I've been wailing over some wild scale that I've got this intimacy, which is actually just an intimacy with myself—opening the channel.

"We all have an insecurity about art," Johnson continues, "because we're concerned about furthering ourselves, so we're constantly checking and balancing. Are we sufficient or not? You've reached a certain milestone and then you set your horizon down the road, so you're a little insecure about what it's going to take to get there. So you might test yourself with these licks. You have to have faith in yourself and swallow your pride when you make a mess of all your licks and stumble and blow it, and somebody in the audience goes, 'Oh, he can't play.' That's part of the process, I guess."

After midnight, Johnson is getting talked out. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he again takes up his trusty Martin and wends through several chapters in the annals of his diverse guitar vocabulary. He is putting the finishing touches on a grinsome finger-picking instrumental called "Texas," which he'll debut the next night for music hounds and yuppie yahoos down on Greenville Street. Next stop, some bittersweet jazz inversions and broken chords sketching a melody.

Looking up from his guitar as if just returning from another dimension, Johnson asks, "Do you listen to Wes Montgomery much? He's got some great chords, and he'd always play with his thumb. If I hear one note of Wes Montgomery, that's it—he's the king." Johnson thumbs an augmented flat ninth broken chord with a muted delicacy, chuckling decisively. "I guess I'm hung up on tone.

"I'm still a real beginner at trying to get together the ethereal building blocks. It's funny, because the ethereal building blocks are so much more real than the concrete ones. It's just our perspective that makes us think 'Oh, that's just the air we pass through,' but it's so real, so magic and so important. You can practice forever, but that doesn't mean that you're eligible for it. It takes practice, but even more importantly, it takes a certain balance mentally and maybe spiritually. It takes a certain frame of mind, working on your own inner technique as well as your outer musical technique. And that's so with-the-wind: one day great, the next day not. It's like trying to balance on a tightrope." M

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Neil Young. Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere. After The Gold Rush. Harvest. Time Fades Away. On The Beach. Journey Through The Past. Tonight's The Night. Zuma. Decade. American Stars 'N Bars. Comes A Time. Rust Never Sleeps. Live Rust. Hawks & Doves. Re-Act-Or. Everybody's Rockin'. Trans. Old Ways.

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spiritual devotion. It seems incredible in retrospect that *A Love Supreme*, like so much of Coltrane's later work inspired by his creator, could have been misconstrued as the sound of anger, even hate; Coltrane's tenor, as recognizable as any saxophone you'll hear, is steeped in nobility. 'Tis true later Coltrane projects veered toward the glossolalian (e.g. *Live At The Village Vanguard Again*) but never, I think, without summoning the requisite emotional commitment and timbral majesty. In any case, *A Love Supreme*, whose second movement has since become a modern jazz standard, remains a reliable, even comforting guide to one's musical outer limits.

The eponymous *John Coltrane And Johnny Hartman* LP, long prized by knowing collectors, can be pretty much recommended to anyone. Hartman's baritone has a rich, horn-like quality comparable to Coltrane's own, and he invests standards familiar ("You Are Too Beautiful") and obscure with nuances of feeling to jar the complacency of a cad. Their duet on "Lush Life" is close to the definitive version of that rueful ballad.

To briefly summarize other highlights: Art Blakey's *A Jazz Message* pits the ebullient drummer with peers (Tyner, Sonny Stitt, Art Davis) instead of progeny, a "relaxed and swinging" date that's actually quite deep while effortlessly listenable. Gil Evans' *Out Of The Cool* follows his more famous collaborations with Miles Davis with arrangements every bit as inventive; from the billowy orchestral clouds of "Where Flamingos Fly" to the muted trombones announcing "La Nevada"'s theme, his imprint here is as identifiable as a bank check's. *Duke Ellington Meets Coleman Hawkins* is one title that can serve as a review, and to paraphrase Will Rogers viz. *Count Basie And The Kansas City 7*, I never met a Basie record I didn't like.

Purists will carp that these Impulse! discs ought to have retained the gorgeous gatefolds of the original album covers, and I agree, but then purists will buy the CDs anyway. They already own these records. In a better world, so would we all. – **Mark Rowland**

VAN MORRISON

No Guru, No Method, No Teacher
(PolyGram)

Courage might seem a strange quality to demand of rock 'n' roll, but rock 'n' roll would have long ago deteriorated into bathos and show biz without the courage of its greatest talents. As Bruce Spring-

steen once said, you can never be a hero if you aren't willing to risk looking like a fool. Van Morrison's music was the blueprint for much of what is popular on the radio today. But while Van fans like Bob Seger and John Mellencamp keep revisiting *Moondance* and "Wild Night," Morrison plows new territory. The price he pays is that he no longer has the commercial appeal of his imitators. The joy is that he makes vital music without repeating past glories.

This new album is Morrison's best in a few years, a more unified effort than either 1984's *Sense Of Wonder* or 1982's *Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart*. It does have more than a couple of self-referential moments ("Town Called Paradise" is musically a reworked "Astral Weeks") which provide a way in for the fan, who can then follow him down new paths.

There is so much music in the man, and his voice is so powerful, that he can dispense with rhyme and melodic meter without losing his sense of song. Here he described his conflict between longing for heaven and an earthly nature: "How can we not be attached? After all, we're only human. The only way there is to never come back. And I wouldn't want that, would you?" His gift isn't just to form the idea, but to make it sing.

Morrison's dry sense of humor is also in evidence. He writes an ode to ancient nobility and titles it "Here Comes The Knight." On "Thanks For The Information" he interrupts a hard assessment of the current state of popular culture to intone, "I like mine over easy / You can have yours sunny side up." The singer can mix the serious with the comic and the spiritual with the sensuous with an ease that makes most songwriters seem stiff. Here's Van whispering to a woman, begging her to join him "In the Garden" for a moment of bliss: "Just you and I...and nature...and the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." Well, you hear that and you laugh at how outrageous it is at the same time that you are moved by the purity of his vision. Most of all you are stunned by his originality and his balls.

Hemingway said that there are no failures of talent, only failures of character. Van Morrison never fails.
– **Bill Flanagan**

R.E.M.

Lifes Rich Pageant
(IRS)

In film criticism the auteur theory posits the director as a movie's creative force. Record companies must believe producers to be similarly Svengalian. After R.E.M.'s previous album failed to break the group out of Cult Prison, *Lifes Rich Pageant* finds them allied with Don Gehman, long associated with John Cougar Mellencamp. That may explain why Bill Berry's drums now sport an arena-sized echo. Whatever Gehman's input, however, *Lifes Rich Pageant* also finds R.E.M. as stubbornly idiosyncratic as ever. ("Curses! Foiled again!" an IRS Records executive leers, skulking into the sunset.)

Indeed, after some novel touches last time around—including an overall pastoral feel—this effort comes as almost a retrenchment. Occasional organ and piano fill in the textures, but otherwise this is an aggressively guitar-dominated album. If he's not keeping time with pulsing rhythm playing or contributing a feedback smear, Peter Buck is bound to be indulging in folky arpeggiation. The stompier tracks here are as hard-rocking as anything the band has laid down in the past. "R.O.C.K. In The R.E.M."?

On the other hand, we have singer/lyricist Michael Stipe, whose blurred vocals add a distinct obtuseness to the forthright chord changes. The slower, quieter tunes reveal a masterful pitting of lyric themes (cultural imperialism on "Cuyahoga," post-war anomie on "Swan Swan H"), motifs or even scraps of thought against "mere" pop. This is why you love R.E.M., and the public doesn't.

Lifes Rich Pageant refines R.E.M.'s MO; at this point the band isn't likely to surprise its followers with radical shifts of style. It looks like we'll just have to love 'em or leave 'em, regardless of who's behind the recording console. Thank god. – **Scott Isler**

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CAETANO VELOSO

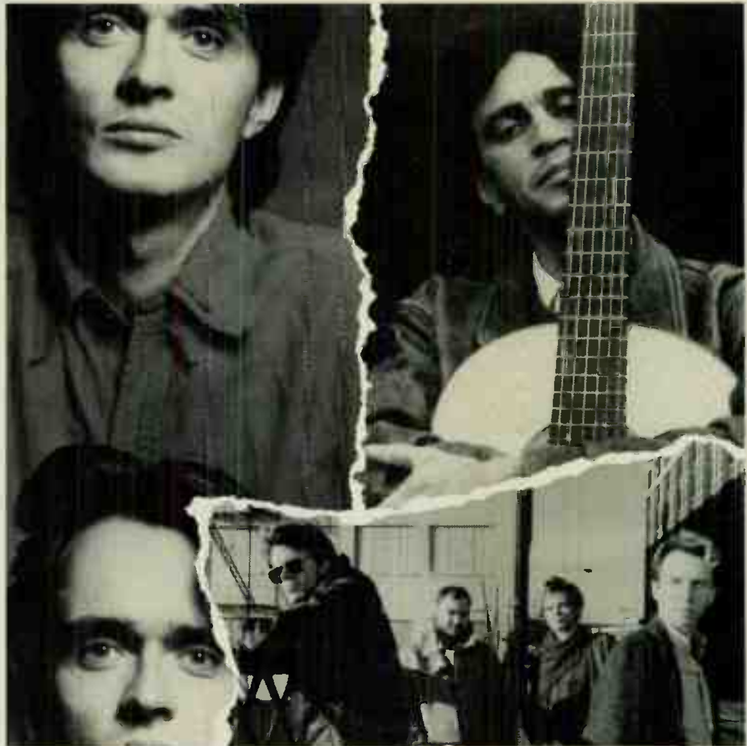
"To the Brazilian people, he is a simple country boy from Bahia, the personification of *alegria*—of letting the good times roll. But his music is anything but simple. The best songs have the harmonic sophistication and the introspective dreaminess of the work of Erik Satie or Bill Evans, and their lyrics are poetry." —*The New Yorker*

Nonesuch (79127)

SCOTT JOHNSON

["John Somebody"] mirrors the subterranean rumble, the welter of voices and other overlaid sounds of the city, with the cries of superamplified guitars hovering like angels above the fray. It's a compelling marriage of rock elements and classical formalism that doesn't shortchange either." —Robert Palmer, *N.Y. Times*

Nonesuch/Icon (79133)



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KRONOS QUARTET

"A supercharged group of musical pioneers" (*L.A. Times*) performing works by Philip Glass, Conlon Nancarrow, Aulis Sallinen and Peter Sculthorpe—plus their most requested encore, Jimi Hendrix' "Purple Haze."

Nonesuch (79111)

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MADONNA

True Blue
(Sire)

True Blue is the Madonna-in-love album. Scowling like a punk majorette on the cover of *Madonna*, her debut LP, she sang about holidays and lucky stars, and dedicated it to "my father." A multi-platinum performer the next year, she dedicated *Like A Virgin* to "all the virgins of the world," a nod to the young girls who'd watched her dance on MTV and copied her jewelry. *Virgin* played 80s obsessions of money and sex off Nile Rodgers' big-league productions, and with an irony so uncompromised that Madonna's smash critiques of 60s politics and religious imagery could seem cold-blooded, even if the singer, for all her career calculations, wasn't. Now Madonna dedicates *True Blue* to "my husband, the coolest guy in the universe." The irony seems like a past fling.

With its stirring strings, teenage pregnancy story, and Madonna's increasingly well-balanced breathiness, "Papa Don't Preach" is a masterly little drama for the kids. The achievement isn't surprising: From pop-dance girlgroupdom like "Borderline" through the undeniable *Virgin* classics to the triumphant return-to-the-primitive of "Into The Groove," Madonna's singles have always been more lasting than her headlines. After all, she invented the Madonna Record—the considered pop of a punk who liked urban contemporary—and it's served both her and the radio well. Her best records do what all great pop records do: they transcend.

True Blue isn't as raw as "Into The Groove" or as high-tech as Rodgers, and none of the other eight tracks is a stroke on the order of "Papa Don't Preach." The title cut and "Jimmy Jimmy" (Madonna imagines she grew up with James Dean) recreate girlgroupdom as straightforwardly as Madonna ever has. But their deft retroism isn't as interesting as "Open Your Heart" ("Don't try to resist me") or "White Heat," both first-rate 80s chart rhythms. On "Where's The Party," Madonna shows how the pop-dance style works for her as both escape and meaning—just like rock 'n' roll should. And on "Love Makes The World Go Round" the same Madonna who invokes Jimmy Cagney and taunts "C'mon baby, make my day" on "White Heat" sings that good-natured slogans don't mean much without also putting up good fights. In love, Madonna has abandoned the ironist without silencing the punk. – **James Hunter**

DREAM SYNDICATE

Out Of The Grey
(Big Time)

Nightmare Syndicate is more like it: Despite lingering psychedelic trappings, Steve Wynn's tales of banal lives and sordid situations owe more to L.A.'s hardboiled literary traditions than to the paisley revivalism of their hometown music scene. *Out Of The Grey* combines the wounded innocence of Chandler's Phillip Marlowe ("Slide Away," "Boston"), the irreconcilable pasts that haunt Ross Macdonald's victims ("You Can't Forget"), and Jim Thompson's psychotic edge ("Now I Ride Alone"). In that sense, they have more in common with Warren Zevon than, say, the Bangles.

Ambitious as it sounds, though, the writing doesn't measure up to the menacing humor of Dream Syndicate's 1984 *Medicine Show* LP, which may be one reason Wynn's vocals are farther back in the mix this time. Perhaps as a result, Wynn's Jaggeresque yowl nailed down the stylized fatalism of *Medicine Show* with more authority than he exhibits here.

Otherwise, *Out Of The Grey* is of a piece with the band's earlier work, and that means wall-of-guitars from front to back. Newcomer Paul Cutler produces the LP *and* replaces Karl Precoda on guitar, which ought to make quite a difference in the sound of a band that lives and dies by the axe; for some reason, it doesn't. Like Precoda, Cutler sounds like he grew up on a steady diet of *Electric Ladyland*. His playing is heavy on feedback and distortion, and generally less idiosyncratic than Precoda's, if no less competent. Driven by Cutler's tense, energetic lead guitar, "Now I Ride Alone" comes closest to the dispassionate, gritty rock Wynn has in mind. Like the album's other strong tracks, ("50 In A 25 Zone," "Boston," "Dancing Blind,") it's hard, fast, and dense. When the group slows down on "You Can't Forget," results are less impressive. Poignancy isn't Wynn's long suit.

Still, Dream Syndicate is riding a wave that's redefining album-oriented rock for the late 80s. No matter how often critics and programmers sound the death knell, the tenacity and vitality of records like *Out Of The Grey* offer proof that AOR, like the characters in Wynn's songs, won't die easy. – **Steve Perry**

BOB DYLAN

Knocked Out Loaded
(Columbia)

Despite a high-visibility tour with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, his best band since the Band, Bob Dylan's new studio album is being released with surprisingly little fanfare—which isn't such a bad idea. *Knocked Out Loaded* continues to mine the vein of musical and spiritual eclecticism which began with *Infidels* and has since found Dylan with such diverse cohorts collaborating as Sly & Robbie, Arthur Baker and Dave Stewart. His most off-handed record since the underrated *Shot Of Love*, it features an even more unpredictable cast of characters, including Sam Shepard and Carole Bayer Sager (?!).

The tracks come from different times and places, performed by a variety of line-ups, and pulled together by the po'-faced Jokerman himself. This is one of the funniest Dylan albums yet from a guy who's written both "Rainy Day Woman #12 and 35" and "Lenny Bruce," (each hilarious, though for different reasons). Bob's in a casual mode here, playing the

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woodshedding minstrel in a world tighter than a synthdrum. There's an appealing playfulness about *Loaded* that's reminiscent of *The Basement Tapes*, especially in its allegiance to rock 'n' roll's verities. Both "You Wanna Ramble" and "Precious Memories" are steeped in the respective traditions of dirty urban blues (cf. Junior Parker) and the reverent gospel of the Bible Belt, the latter replete with steel drums and soulful call-and-response. "Driftin' Too Far From Shore" is another churning rave-up that finds Dylan scolding yet one more treacherous female, but this time with a tongue-in-cheek vulnerability that lets you know he's kidding.

The LP's highlight though, has to be "Brownsville Girl," the eleven-minute mock western scenario he co-wrote with Sam Shepard. It's in the over-the-top vein of such storysongs as "Isis" and "Joey," and shows Dylan laughing at his own outlaw image, like Lou Reed on horseback instead of a Honda.

"Under Your Spell," the closing love ballad Dylan co-wrote with Burt Bacharach's better half, was recorded in the rundown church Dave Stewart uses as a studio. The song's charming 60s production is punctuated by the ironic twist of the album's last line: "Pray that I don't die of thirst, baby," croaks Bob with patented plaintiveness, "...two feet from the well." Guess the last laugh is His. – **Roy Trakin**

PLATTERS THAT MATTER

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4. **Rage To Live** (Bar None)
5. **Camper Van Beethoven** – *II & III* (Rough Trade)

Peter Cronin

WOOD from page 63

MUSICIAN: *When you brought Rod to those rehearsals did you figure, "I'll get my mate in the band"?*

WOOD: Oh yeah, but the three of them had their minds made up. "We don't want another Steve Marriott!" And I'm saying, "But this guy's all right! Really!" They said, "You'll have to prove that to us! We couldn't handle it again!" They were very wary of Rod, thinking he was going to be a tyrant.

MUSICIAN: *It's odd the way the Stewart solo albums developed. It's no disrespect to him to say that they were really Stewart/Wood albums.*

WOOD: But Rod would say that too. It being his album, Rod always had that bit of extra leeway, but it was always "Stewart and Wood." He always loved the chance for us to put our heads together. And he used to look after me, too. Make sure I got well-paid.

MUSICIAN: *It was tough on Faces when Rod's career got bigger than the band's.*

WOOD: Oh yeah, but I never felt bad about that. I always thought, "Good on you, Rod." He was that much older than me and I thought, "Good, he's doing great." Whereas Mac was older and he felt some animosity. Kenney didn't.

Mac wasn't jealous. It was just that we'd arrive at some Faces gig and the billboard would say, "Rod Stewart." We'd sort of swallow and say, "Okay." Sometimes they'd introduce us, "Ladies and gentlemen—Rod Stewart!" It got a bit weird, but Rod didn't like that either. Whereas Beck used to *ride* all that! He was JEFF BECK. In the early days the Ohio Epic representative would come in the dressing room and say to Rod, "Great show, Jeff!" Rod would go, "Aw hell."

MUSICIAN: *Did you refuse the Stones when they first asked you to join?*

WOOD: In 1969 Ian Stewart called up a Faces rehearsal. They wanted me to replace Brian Jones! Stu said, "Would Woody be interested?" And Ronnie Lane said, "Oh no, he's perfectly happy." *I didn't find out about this for years!*

In 1975 I did a Faces tour, a Stones tour, and another Faces tour. I was at a party at Robert Stigwood's the night Mick Taylor announced he was leaving. After the first Faces tour I was in L.A. Mick Jagger rang me up and said, "I want you to join the Stones tour, but I don't want to mess anything up with the Faces." I said, "Nor do I. Look, Mick, only ask me if you're desperate." Then later he rang me up and said, "Woody, we're desperate!"

MUSICIAN: *Your first Stones song was "Everything's Turning To Gold."*

WOOD: That came about with the birth of my first child Jesse James in L.A. in 1976. Mick was with me throughout all the ordeal. It was a long time coming, a long time in the hospital. And afterwards we wrote that song.

MUSICIAN: *"No Use In Crying."*

WOOD: Los Angeles. Mick was living at Linda Ronstadt's house, I remember. He said, "I've got this song, Woody." I had "No Use In Crying" and I said, "No, you haven't! I've got *this* song!" So we worked on that and it turned out great.

MUSICIAN: *All the Stones songs you co-write are credited "Jagger/Richards/Wood." Is that just because Mick and Keith split their publishing, if one's name is on something the other's name must be on it, too?*

WOOD: Yeah, right. Whether I write a song with Mick or with Keith, they have to split songwriting. Like Lennon and McCartney. They both get credit. And it doesn't really matter. The Faces used to have friction about songs; the Stones keep it all above board. We keep who wrote what well aired, in a very joking way. You know where you stand. The Faces had some battles.

MUSICIAN: *Did you play—uncredited—on Dylan's* Infidels?

WOOD: I did one night's work with him. Two songs: "Neighborhood Bully" and "I And I." I've always respected what he's done. I've suffered a few little deviations here and there, but I know he's always got one basic thing in mind and that's music. The main thing. Whether he's got religion or whatever, good luck to him. I just hope it doesn't get in the way or burden his musical direction.

I love sittin' in with him. I'd say, "Is what I'm playin' all right?" and he'd say [*quietly*], "Yeah." He's never like, "IT'S GREAT!" He'd pick up the guitar and say, "Is this F minor?" One time he said, "Is this 'Brown Sugar'?" And he was playing "Bitch."

MUSICIAN: *You made a great record of "Seven Days," a song he never recorded.*

WOOD: I was doing Eric Clapton's *No Reason To Cry* album, and Bob and the Band were hanging out at the studio. We spent a day and a half playing all kinds of songs. Bob would say, "Here's one for you, Eric." And Eric was getting drunk going, "Haw haw haw! That's not really for me! I've got one for *you*! Go on, Zimmy!" And Bob was going, "No, man, it's for you if you want it." He played him some lovely songs. He had a load of them. But I always remembered "Seven Days." I thought, "If Eric's not going to do that, I'll have a go."

MUSICIAN: *You haven't done a solo album in quite a while. Will we see more?*

WOOD: In my own time. I'll do one when I've got enough songs that don't fit in with the Stones. But I won't do one just for the sake of it. 'Cause it's painful, really. The Stones don't like the pressure. I mean, they never complain. But if something came up where the Stones could do something and I'm in another part of the world they'd go, "Well, we don't want to disturb Woody." So Mick would go do a film thing and Bill would go do a book.

MUSICIAN: *Your albums have been full of famous guest stars, including the other Stones. Keith had a big hand in* I've Got My Own Album To Do.

WOOD: It doesn't really matter about the people. What matters is the sound that

continued on page 113

World Radio History

SHORT ROCK TAKES

Sting
Bring On The Night (A&M)

Forget the title; all but two of these tunes were recorded seven months after the film was shot. More to the point, these performances positively shame the movie music, and a lot of *Blue Turtles* as well. It isn't simply that Sting and band have finally figured out how to jazz up their pop without seeming pedantic, though that helps. Mostly, it's the way the interplay between band members makes Sting seem a sideman of Branford Marsalis and Kenny Kirkland, instead of the other way around. Now, if only A&M would do the decent thing and release this domestically....

The Velvet Underground
Another View (Verve)

This latest dip into the vaults is even more valuable than *VU* to understanding what made the Velvets tick. Some of the highlights are obvious enough, like the first-draft versions of "We're Gonna Have A Goodtime Together" and "Rock And Roll," but what really recommends the album are the instrumental oddities. "I'm Gonna Move Right In" suggests that the Velvets avoided blues not to make their music "whiter," but because they couldn't keep their time together. Add in some new insights to Lou Reed's writing style, and this becomes a history lesson few rock fans should miss.

The Unforgiven
The Unforgiven (Elektra)

In case you ever thought the Alarm too subtle.

Cactus World News
Urban Beaches (MCA)

Call 'em U-Too if you want, but there's more here than imitation. For one thing, this band has a symphonic sweep that depends less on the singer than the overall instrumental approach. And by building these songs from the bottom up, they command a rhythmic authority Bono and the boys rarely manage. A solid start.

David Lee Roth
Eat 'em And Smile (Warner Bros.)

The funniest thing about Roth's attempt to out-Van-Halen his old band is that he ends up with a private chapter of the Eddie Van Halen fan club. Steve Vai and Billy Sheehan are the sharpest EVH imitators in the business, guys who not only cop Ed's greatest licks, but clean 'em up as well. Too bad the flash can't cover for the meager melodies posing as songs here. Dave's lines are quotable as ever, but you damn sure won't be humming them.

Kronos Quartet
Music By Sculthorpe, Sallinen, Glass, Nancarrow And Hendrix
(Nonesuch Digital)

The gimmick is that the Kronos Quartet offers "Purple Haze" as if it were a bit of Bartók, which is a pretty good gag for an album of chamber music. More amazing is the ease with which these four unfurl the neo-romantic warmth folded into the architecture of Philip Glass' "Company." The other highlights—a rare work by Conlon Nancarrow and an exquisite quartet by Aulis Sallinen—are a little less accessible, but the quartet makes it entirely worth the effort.

Wham!
Music From The Edge Of Heaven
(Columbia)

It would be more accurate to call this *Andrew Ridgeley's Golden Handshake*, but who's expecting honesty at a time like this? The filler gets a little silly—really now, an *extended* version of "Last Christmas"?—but "I'm Your Man" comes surprisingly close to giving George Michael a song as strong as his voice. Now, will somebody tell him that real rappers don't go around saying things like "I've got street credibility"?

Teena Marie
Emerald City (Epic)

Teena Marie comes closer to living up to Prince's promise than the mighty Minneapolitan himself. True, some of her lyrical ideas are as goofy as anything on *Parade*, and she does suffer from a similar streak of self-indulgence. But she's smart enough to let the music do the talking, downplaying the words in favor of such musical passions as bebop and *bata* drumming. Which, in the end, makes *Emerald City* smoother, sexier and more commandingly eclectic than anything in Paisley Park.

Steeleye Span
Back In Line (Shanachie)

As expected from archivists, their formula remains the same, English ballads with rock arrangements. What amazes is just how contemporary this band gets; "Blackleg Miner," for instance, boasts the funkiest bassline in folk music. Who says progress is the enemy of tradition? (Dalebrook Pk., Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423)

Cocteau Twins
Victorialand (Important)

There's an idyllic calm to the music here that goes well beyond the cool quiet of its carefully cultivated soundscapes. Part of that has to do with the way Robin Guthrie's guitar strums as gently as the rain, part with the waifish cadences of Elizabeth Fraser's lightly skipping vocal lines. Mostly, though, it's the ease with which the Cocteaus evoke the wonderful innocence of the childhood most of us wished for but never got. (149-03 Guy R. Brewer Blvd., Jamaica, NY 11434)

Classic Ruins
Lassie Eats Chickens
(Throbbing Lobster)

It seems inappropriate to hype a band this unpretentious, even if they deserve it. Sure, "Room Starts Spinning" is better than almost anything the Who cut after 1970, while "Roman Fingers" is, pun and all, one of the few recent rock instrumentals that doesn't owe the farm to either surf or fusion. As for "Labatt's," any song as simple and satisfying as this shouldn't be pushed, but played—as loudly as possible. (Box 205, Brookline, MA 02146)

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

World Radio History

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World Radio History

SHORT TAKES

Abdullah Ibrahim
Water From An Ancient Well
(Ekapa/Black Hawk)

Ibrahim's church and township harmonies imply community; the music, incantatory and respectful, is meant for you and the person next to you, too. It doesn't hurt that Ibrahim holds on to his personnel, giving the record a precision and blend that suggests not only a big band, but, well, a community. And their collective sound, a creamy, near-Strayhorn, slightly sanctified blend, is unique.

John Collins
The Incredible John Collins
(Nilva/N.M.D.S.)

An early bebop inductee up at Minton's, Collins gave me a guitar thrill like I haven't felt since discovering Wes Montgomery's organ trio records. This is mastery: stacks of intricate rhythms, visceral lines, and an illusive harmonic imagination. The record floats gracefully by on the deep-earth profundity of the rhythm section—rarely-heard bassists Jimmy Woods and John Heard taking turns, with Alvin Queen on drums. Sweets Edison guests on two songs. (500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012)

Ned Rothenberg
Trespass (Lumina/N.M.D.S.)

I don't know a saxophonist more adept at non-traditional techniques—circular breathing, overtones, split tones, multiphonics—than Rothenberg, nor one as committed to turning them into the basis for an aesthetic vocabulary. The power of the record, and there's lots of it, comes from Rothenberg's conception—ethereal, pared-down compositions supported by such grace and logic it'll take your breath away. The liner notes claim no overdubbing was used; hard to believe, since Rothenberg can sound like a saxophone choir.

The Black Swan Quartet
Black Swan Quartet (Minor Music/PSI)

Expecting either prissy pseudo-European music or expressionist noodling, I was floored by the hard-edged swing and exhortatory string shouts of this quartet—Akbar Ali on violin, Abdul Wadud and Eileen Folson on cellos, and the ever-great Reggie Workman on bass. They slam around masses of sound, making the quintessentially white institution of the string quartet sound dark black, and reinventing it as a jazz genre. That's no small achievement.

The Walter Thompson Ensemble
520 Out (Dane Records/N.M.D.S.)

Thompson, a laconic alto saxophonist who's been getting good press as a leader of an intelligent big band, writes compositions that are angular, complexly structured compositions for a quartet. The result is lots of group improvisation over vamps, a restrained mix of A.A.C.M. aesthetics and solid swinging that never stays in one groove long enough for your attention to drift off to what you had for dinner last night.

29th Street Saxophone Quartet
Watch Your Step (New Note/N.M.D.S.)

There are moments here that make you wonder how a record can contain so much energy, especially since there isn't a rhythm section in sight. Deep grooves, a hard-boppish sheen, and driving riffs all make their way into the compositions, which then get torn up by the soloists. Ex-Messenger Bobby Watson, who has Cannonball Adderley's ability to sound slick and gutbucket at the same time, reduces the changes to rubble. And no, they don't sound anything like the World Saxophone Quartet.

Henry Kaiser
Marrying For Money (Minor Music/PSI)

Kaiser's put together a slightly Beefheartian, funky power trio, and asked other guitarists (John Abercrombie, Amos Garrett, etc.) to join in the fun and noise. The result isn't as techno-degenerate as it sounds. Kaiser can get his guitar to sound like a dog barking or a building falling down if he wants to, and his backgrounds help give the guitar blowouts structure and texture.

Margaret Leng Tan
Margaret Leng Tan Plays Somei Satoh
(New Albion/N.M.D.S.)

New age music with substance: Somei Satoh is a Japanese composer who writes meditative, austere pieces that, oddly enough, sound Japanese, particularly in their reliance on subtle gesture. There's a lot of space in the music, long romantic pauses. If I lived in Big Sur, had some money and a Volvo, I'd play it all the time.

Alvin Queen
Jammin' Uptown (Nilva/N.M.D.S.)

Queen's got a clean, cymbal-tapping sound that belies his off-the-cliff swing. He's been living in Geneva for the last eleven years, which explains his relative obscurity. He's one of our great drummers, and when the rhythm section locks in, prodding the soloists—John Hicks, Terence Blanchard, Manny Boyd and Robin Eubanks—his sextet makes you fall in love with tough, hard-bop mainstream all over again.

Makoto Ozone
After (Columbia)

With awe-inspiring young musicians under every rock nowadays (any companies out there interested in a list?), it's hard to understand why a major label would record this sort of insipidity. Nothing here is especially incompetent, but it's entirely missing that vital element called personality. It's also the type of record that'll make a novice listener wonder why people fuss about jazz, and that's a crime.

John Cage
Freeman Etudes I-XVI
(Lovely Music/N.M.D.S.)

The dynamic jumps, slurs and beeps and bops Cage puts the solo violin through in these études, written between 1977 and 1980, sound completely standard today. The contrast in effects and the logic of the pieces' willful illogic have the power to calm: by reproducing randomness, Cage controls it, and strips it of terror.

BY PETER WATROUS

World Radio History

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said to me, "Just keep singing, I'll keep taping, and we'll put one together. Just keep singing." And I suddenly realized he was saying that if I just kept singing I would forget that I was *trying* to sing and I would find my voice. And what was strange was that when I found my voice it was a little bit like Andy Williams!

Over the course of my early rock 'n' roll years I'd been appalled that I sounded pretty straight when I sang. I didn't sound like Chuck Berry or Mick Jagger or Jimmy Reed or John Lee Hooker. I sounded like fucking Andy Williams! But I accepted that and I lived with that.

Years ago Gene Pitney was a very close friend of the Rolling Stones. That seemed completely incongruous to me. "Gene Pitney and the Stones?" But it turned out he was a hell of a guy and this was why Keith Richards and Mick Jagger really liked him. I read an interview where Pitney said, "I can't stand my voice." And I thought, "On that we concur 'cause I can't stand your voice either." But he lived with it! He was a *fucking* singer and he was popular; there were a lot of people out there who realized that his voice was a doorway to something else. It wasn't his voice that they liked, but they liked *him*. I don't know. That was very significant to me. M

JAM/LEWIS from page 16

couple of funk tunes if there's time.'

"Well, time was running out," Harris recalls, "and we were getting ready to cut the last track, 'You Could Be Mine.' Terry had turned on his drum machine and I was playing a totally different song, and when I played the bass part, Terry said, 'Hey! Hold it—play that part again to my drum machine.' That's how the idea for 'Lately' actually came to be. It was kinda by mistake."

Jimmy Harris isn't certain why black pop production teams, from Gamble & Huff to Holland-Dozier-Holland have forged such a successful tradition. "But I do know what works for us," he says. "Neither of us have any desire to do it alone; we'd rather have the other around to bounce ideas off, or," he laughs, "at least to give interviews while the other one is working. We have our strong and weak points; I think Terry does lyrics well, while I can come up with a melody; he's strong on bass lines obviously, and maybe I'm better with chords and textures. The responsibility usually rests with whoever started writing the song—we don't literally work together very often and sometimes the roles get reversed. But by the time a song is finished, each of us has had our say." M

NASCIMENTO from page 24

artists and Brazil's political leaders have rarely been this inspiring. One of Milton's greatest albums, *Milagre Dos Peixes*, was produced in 1973 under the most severe military restrictions. At the time, Gil and Veloso had been forced into exile in London; for those who remained in Brazil, "it was a very difficult time," Milton remembers. "We'd write something, the censors would send it back, stamped *No Way*. We'd have to write the same thing in a way that the censors wouldn't notice but the people would understand." Milton's solution was "to transform my voice into an instrument" that could register all his defiance, anger and sadness that lay behind his censored lyrics. The result was a tour de force vocalese that sounds as if he journeyed into the jungle and cried. "Without knowing, the censors opened a whole new way for me," Milton observes. "But I cannot say that I feel grateful."

The tenuous democracy which exists in Brazil today has allowed Milton more freedom to explore his ideas—and it shows. Other composers now seek him out as a lyricist. On his new album, based on travels of the last two years, its meetings and farewells, Nascimento's sentiments point to a leveling of contradictions, where comings and going are two sides of the same voyage, "where reality and illusion dance together in the same space." I tell him that sounds very much like a Buddhist teaching.

"Really?" he says, genuinely shocked. "I didn't know that. I've never studied philosophies or religions of the world, though several *mestres* (gurus) from different sects have come to talk to me about things I have written, thinking it has been based on this or that. I was brought up in a Catholic family, but I'm not Catholic in the sense of going to church. I think that religion is inside the man, in his acts, in his words."

In that regard, Milton's "Quilombo Mass," written in collaboration with white missionaries from Pernambuco, is more a social than a religious service, celebrating the lives of black Brazilians from slavery to the present. And "Lágrima Do Sul" ("Tears of the South"), his recent hymn to South Africa, finds an echo in Nascimento's own experience at home. Contrary to *turismo* propaganda, Brazil is not a paradise of interracial bliss.

"I think we've got to keep our eyes open to the rest of the world, not just worry about what happens around us. South Africa is an example for us, to make people aware that a certain kind of barbarism is taking place. But even in Brazil, I've had problems with racism ever since I was a little kid," he reveals. "Many people didn't want their children to be friends with me, because of my color. There were places I couldn't go to socially, clubs or other social events, because I was black. I overcame it because I didn't have such problems within myself. But it certainly left some scars. It made me cry. I was lucky, though, to transform all this suffering into something positive, and to be able to sing."

What with the beach, the truly beautiful women, the bars, and the irrepressible Carnaval, it is difficult to believe that Brazil is still a repressed society. But a heavy religious pall hangs over the whole country, not just Minas. Divorce (one-time only) was not legalized until 1978. Sexual mores are still dominated by a deep machismo. Brazilians have always been able to fling off their clothes at a moment's notice; more telling culturally, a large proportion of music stars are bisexual or gay.

"Brazil is a very repressive society," Milton declares. "And all artists, myself included, fight against this. There's an expression I used to say, that among millions of sperms we are the winners. We have the gift of life, so we should live our lives in the best way, according to our *vontade*. Because if we are making our own lives beautiful, we are making other people's lives beautiful, too."

Brazilians will never make it to World War III. First: despite their inbred sense of rhythm, they are incapable of arriving anywhere on time. Second: if the sun is out, nuclear fall-out couldn't drag them from the beach. And third: when push comes to shove, a Brazilian will always choose to shuffle. It's a unique spirit among Latins—you can tell by the way they talk, the way they walk, the way they love. They would rather celebrate life than destroy it. And it's why two seemingly opposing energies—like samba and Milton Nascimento—can coexist in the same space, even balance each other. If, as at least a *sambista* believes, samba is the happiness of feeling sad, then Milton personifies the sadness of feeling happy, a reminder that the flip side of joy is always pain. But while the symptoms are different, the fever is the same. Because more than anything, Brazilians love to manifest.

"My voice is my world," says Milton Nascimento. "I can't separate it from my life. I will never sing the same song in the same way. It depends on the heat of my body, what I'm feeling at the moment. It just isn't going on stage.

"The only time I'm not singing is when I take a shower." M

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