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MUSICIAN

U2

FEAR AND EXORCISM BY GUITAR

STEVIE RAY & JIMMIE VAUGHAN

SMOKIN' SIBLINGS

RICK RUBIN

RAPS ON THE BEASTIES AND RUN-D.M.C.

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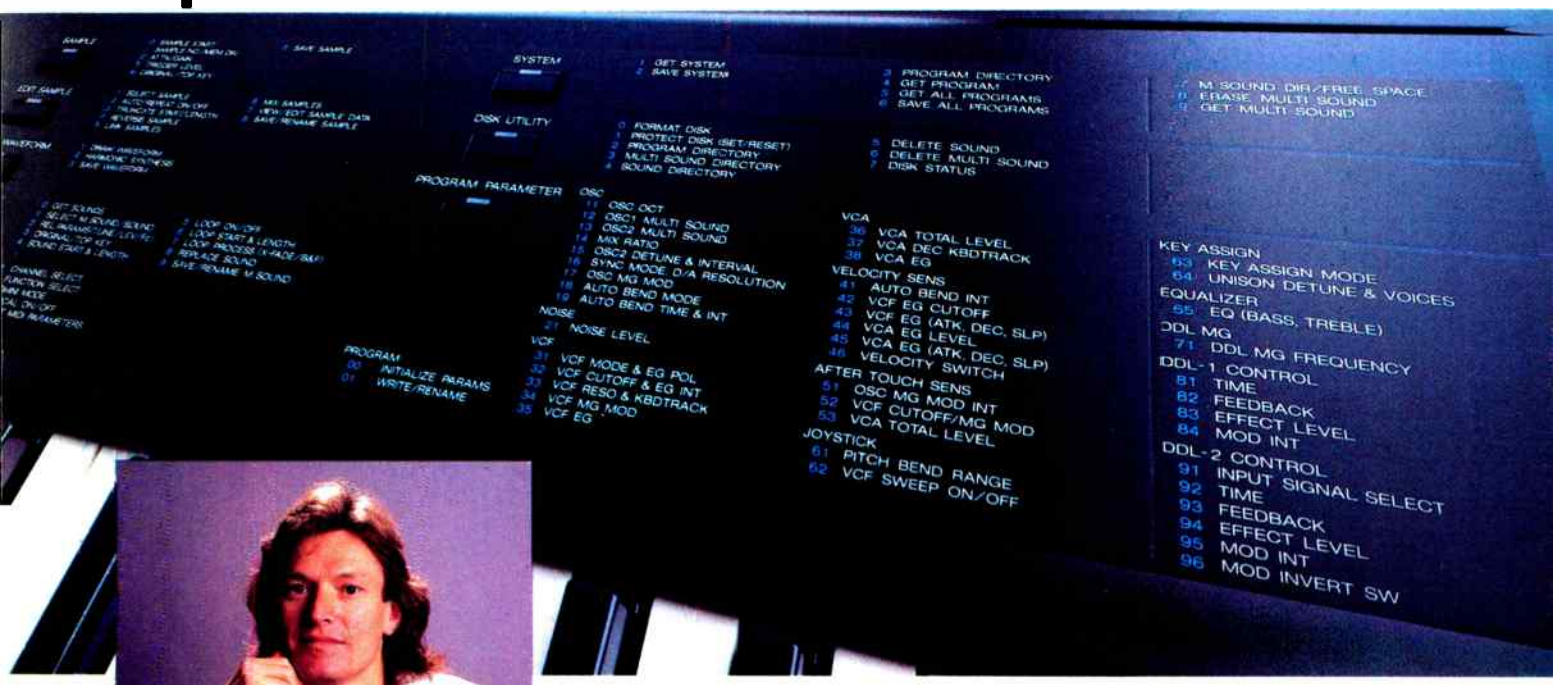

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Steve Winwood
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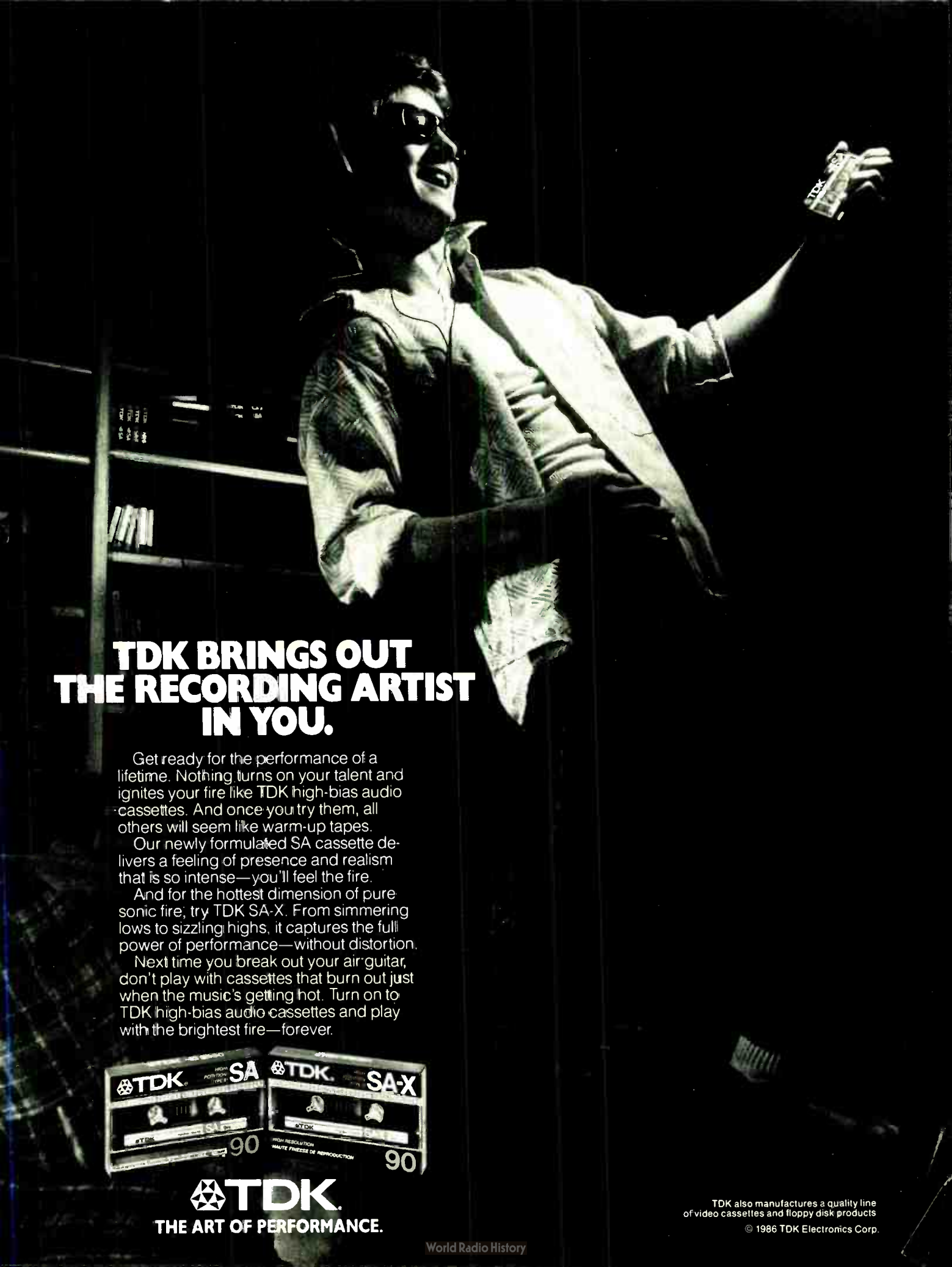

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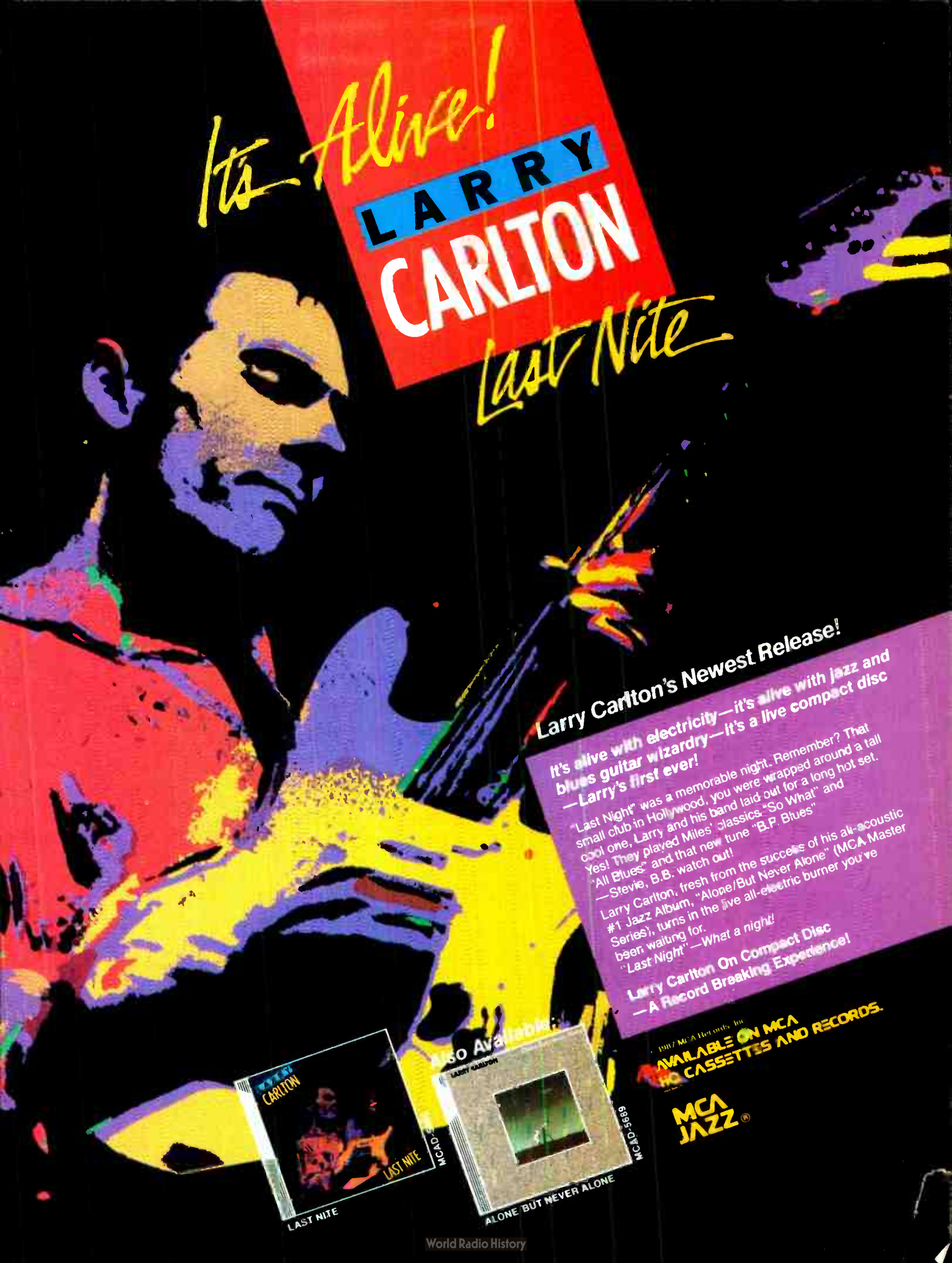


LETTERS

Musician Turns 100

Congratulations on the celebration of the 100th issue of your excellent publication (Feb. 1987). Being a loyal reader for only the last sixty issues or so, I had no idea you were primarily a jazz magazine in your early issues. Jazz is important, yet my interest lies in rock and pop so I doubt I would have stuck with that emphasis very long. I obviously think you made the right decision from a business and journalistic standpoint.

I read numerous magazines besides *Musician* so when a milestone like this comes along and passes by without so much as a whimper I take it as a personal affront. Your noticing proves you care and you certainly have much to be proud of over the years. You and *Spin* are the only magazines covering music today worth reading. Out of the dozens on the market you stand above the pack.

Keep up the fine work, people. Really, it's one magazine that never disappoints.

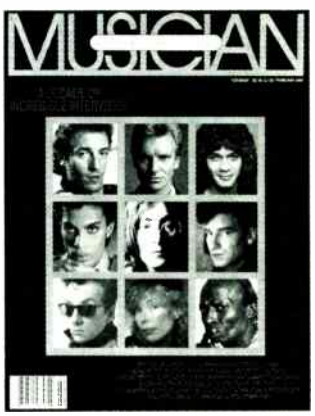
Gary Kimber
Toronto, Canada

Jock Baird's reflections on 100 issues of *Musician* prompted a few of my own. I can't claim to have read all 100 issues, but I have been reading *Musician* regularly since around issue #18.

Interviews are indeed one of the strong points of *Musician*, and it was a pleasure being reminded of some of the fine ones. You have consistently found or assigned interviewers sympathetic to the music and ideas of the subject. The wide range of musicians and styles of music they represent has also offered exceptional opportunities for readers (and listeners) with eclectic or catholic tastes. Breadth and sympathetic perspective used to be the case in record reviews as well.

But it seems that corporate interests, which Baird terms "too much a part of this place and time to be interesting," have influenced *Musician*, as they have all aspects of the music business. If putting the likes of Midnight Oil, Laurie Anderson and Thomas Dolby on your cover in 1984 was "daring" and considered a failure, it did not show "what *Musician* was not" as much as show what you had become: a pop-oriented trade mag with pretensions.

Articles of concern to working musicians—outside of descriptions of new equipment—have become rare. Record reviews have become increasingly sparse and brief. Jazz has long since ceased to hold an important place in the *Musician* universe. I don't mind reading about Van Halen or Sting when such pieces



are balanced by significant ones on new or obscure music, or musicians of whatever genre. It seems to me, however, that the balance in past years has tipped more and more to pop and the popular. *Musician* now prays to the twin idols of circulation and advertising.

Barry H. Bergen
Wilmington, NC

Who *Is* God: EC or VH?

Re: The letters from Michael Newman and Robyn Sherman regarding Eric Clapton (Feb. 1987). So ol' Eddie "graciously dedicated" an album to Clapton, yet Clapton doesn't particularly care for Eddie's style of playing. Well, excuse *him* if he has his own opinion about who he admires and who he doesn't. I always thought this *was* a free country! As far as "clichés," please don't make me laugh!! The fact that Van Halen can play 1/60th notes at 300 m.p.h. doesn't make him sound any more refreshing from one album to the next. You wanta hear ducks, cats, horses and elephants, go to the local zoo. You wanta hear about Eddie's "graciousness and great respect," ask Allan Holdsworth about the hassle he had getting *Road Games* recorded without it turning into the "Van Halen jam album." But yeah, I know, Van Halen is god, and if you don't believe me, just ask his wife.

Chris Criner
Tustin, CA

If letter-writers Jason Cary Sasso, Tom Doyle and Chris Stevenson had their way, we'd be living in a guitarists' wasteland. With one idiotic statement they've condemned an entire generation of guitarists. Do these musical mush-heads *believe* what they said about Eddie Van Halen and Brian May?

C'mon! Get out from behind the sun for a while, boys! Let's not write off a guitarist just because he's young and original. Do you guys even *play* guitar? I thought not. If you did, I'd sure like to see you sit down and cop some of Eddie's chops or Brian's chord changes.

On second thought, don't try that. Just stick to the three-chord intricacies of stuff like "Forever Man," and go lock yourself in a closet with your old Clapton records. That way all of us guitarists who were influenced by Van Halen, May *and* Clapton won't have to deal with your lousy attitudes.

John Frandsen
Columbus, OH

Don't you find letters about other letters totally boring? – Ed.

Next Time 'Round?

What does Elvis Costello have to do to get a Grammy nomination? Win the Super Bowl?

Peter Fey
Drexel Hill, PA

Mad About MIDI

You have the audacity to name your magazine *Musician*? The best approximation to a musician to appear in your pages over the last year is Frank Zappa—and he's probably there only because he's converted to the new MIDI religion/cult which you keep pushing on the public.

MIDI may be savior of the music *industry*, but MIDI is killing music and making talented artists useless. Of course the industry loves MIDI because what used to require fifty to 100 highly skilled artists three weeks to record can now be done by a mediocre keyboardist and computer programmer in a few days. By pushing MIDI in your pages, you are in effect selling musicians the idea that unemployment is the wave of the future.

Frank Zappa was a step in the right direction. Too bad you were so busy drooling over his synth that his incredible guitar work went totally unmentioned.

Mark McKinzie
San Jose, CA

Our Latest Goofs

In the Psychedelic Furs story (March 1987) drummer Paul Garisto's name was misspelled as (get this) "Bellisto." Sorry Paul. Sorry Mrs. Garisto.

And sorry, Michael Newman, whose name was misspelled in February's Letters.

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FACES

NEWS STORIES BY SCOTT ISLER

JULIAN COPE

Saint Beneath the Taint

"My career was based on people who were all very similar to me: hellbent on the most hedonistic attitude in the world," Julian Cope recalls about his days leading Liverpool psychedelic popsters the Teardrop Explodes.

Cope, after his first Los Angeles concert in five years—and between the release of his fine *World Shut Your Mouth* EP and even finer *Saint Julian* LP—is quite the charming, candid raconteur. A running theme: the heavy use of hallucinogens during the Teardrops' reign, and continuing as he made three solo records (unreleased stateside).

If Cope's "just say yes" attitude toward drugs doesn't exactly make him an ally of Nancy Reagan, it does make for some amusing anecdotes—like the time the group was tripping for an appearance on *Top Of The Pops* and Cope couldn't quite sort out which band he was in.

Another running theme: a no-punches-pulled self-awareness. "I regret becoming a *real* bastard," Cope admits. He's equally ruthless assessing his songwriting abilities: "I'm always ripping songs off... And I rip my own songs off all the time because I know only about eight chord sequences."

Despite these limitations, Cope's come up with a solid, sparkling album in *Saint Julian*. (The title's a goof on those who've always accused him of being pretentious.) The lyrics, he says, are "basically a celebration of everything that's wrong with white males." Musically, *Saint Julian* reflects a much grittier garage-rock ethic than his earlier work, while retaining the sharp melodic flair.

Another carryover, though less prominent, are traces of psychedelia. But these days Cope isn't very big on psychedelia in his life or music: "I don't want to be seen as some kind of Syd Barrett/Robyn Hitchcock wiggy character."

He's halfway there. Julian Cope will always be a "character"—but if he's really avoiding drugs now he can probably dodge the "wiggy" label.

– Duncan Strauss

LALA

Out on Her Own–Again

"I try to be an observer; I try to be a listener, and I try to really experience the things I go through. Regardless of where an idea comes to me—on the street, over the telephone, in my car—I reflect, then I write it down. Most times a melody comes first."

Lala (La Forest Cope), one of black pop's best ballad composers, is holding court, discussing her creative process. At twenty-seven she has penned hits for Kashif, Melba Moore, Glenn Jones and Whitney Houston. Now the challenge is to put one over for herself. She just launched her debut LP; sounding amazed and a little impressed with herself for getting this far on faith, she predicts "it's probably gonna sell a *laaat* of records!"

Such confidence wasn't present a few years ago when Jack Sass, the group Lala fronted and played keyboards in, broke up. "We played the entire Eastern club circuit, becoming in the process one of the best-known unknown bands in New York," she remembers. "We made up our own flyers, our own posters and our own bios. We thought we were gonna be discovered, but none of the record companies ever came to see us. It became very frustrating when we couldn't make a living playing music." Out of steam, Jack Sass broke up.

TERI BLOOM

Lala, a Juilliard graduate, experienced feelings of self-doubt, and even considered teaching English for a while. This was "not a positive option," she confides; "it was something I was gonna have to settle for." She didn't. Instead she directed her energies toward "writing and shopping my tunes." Kashif, whom she knew from a rival group, had just started producing. He gave Lala her break: She sang background vocals on a session. When he heard a sample of her writing, he started using her songs. Before long, she was working with Melba Moore. "Once that started, I realized I was onto the beginning of a whole new life."

Her album, an exploration of relationships co-produced by Full Force and Kashif, runs between cool soul and black rock 'n' roll. With the taste and appeal of Whitney Houston and the express-way-to-your-heart emotional spark of Patti Labelle, Lala falls over, surrenders and walks out. From behind the grooves and into the limelight, here she comes.

– Havelock Nelson

BLACK ROCK COALITION

Was One Hendrix Enough?

"Kashif's whole thing with me was, 'Listen, you'd better buckle down and start playing the funk. You're playing too loud, you got to tone it down,'" sighs guitarist Vernon Reid, founder of the Black Rock Coalition and leader of one of New York's cookingest rock combos, Living Color. "Then on the other side, people flat-out told me, 'You're not going to make it as a rock player. Hendrix was one, and that's enough.' I found out that this message was getting repeated over and over again to different people. Then I said, 'Why don't all the black musicians who feel the same way get together and see if we can help one another?'"

So Reid, along with *Village Voice* journalist Greg Tate, bassist Melvin Gibbs and others, formed the BRC in September of 1985, and began putting on wall-shaking shows. To climax their first round of finger-pointing and ear-opening, they presented *Stalking Heads '87/The Black Rock Nation-Time Fes'* in February of this year—a blow-out, SRO event held in New York's dark and deep CBGB. Featuring some eight or nine bands over two days, plus a coterie of original 70s black rockers—Michael Gregory Jackson, guitarists Dr. Know (from the Bad Brains) and Mike Hampton (P-Funk), and younger rock-funkers like Jean-Paul Bourelly, Gibbs and Living Color—the show nailed its point musically to the wall.

"It's one thing to talk about oppression," Reid says, "it's another to finally have the music be heard. Music is the one thing that black Americans have. We helped put rock on the map. It's important to realize that we have a stake in it; the story of rock 'n' roll hasn't been completely written yet." – *Peter Watrous*

ABE PERLSTEIN MONICA DEE RETNA DAVID CORRIGAN

They're not likely to be playing your local bar, but on February 19 Bob Dylan, George Harrison and John Fogerty could be found jamming with Jesse Ed Davis' Grafitti (*sic*) Band and Taj Mahal at the Palomino Club in North Hollywood. Dylan was content to sing backup; Harrison ran through the Beatles book of non-originals ("Honey Don't," "Matchbox," "Dizzy, Miss Lizzy"). Fogerty provided the biggest surprise when—egged on by Dylan—he sang "Proud Mary" for only the second time in his post-comeback career.

TRIP SHAKESPEARE

Making It by Degrees

At first glance, Minneapolis-based Trip Shakespeare seems to be one of those zany oddball art bands that pop up now and then; but on closer inspection these birds don't deserve such facile taxonomy. For instance, at a recent gig singer/guitarist Matt Wilson was costumed as a satyr and flanked by the black-robed, winged figures of his guitarist brother Dan and bassist John Munson, while drummer Elaine Harris pounded her standup kit wearing an elaborate beaded wig. However, they dress up only when the fancy strikes them. "We don't want to be forced to outdo ourselves every time," Dan Wilson explains.

Costuming is, in fact, a new development in the saga of these twisted-romantic electric minstrels. The band started at Harvard University, where English major Matt Wilson met biological anthropology grad Harris when she answered his poster ad for "wicked percussion hands."

The two performed for a year in an experimental combo, then relocated to Wilson's home town of Minneapolis in June 1985. There they met Munson, a Chinese-language major at the University of Minnesota. Trip Shakespeare (one of those go-figure names) released an indie LP, *Applehead Man*, in October, and shortly thereafter expanded to include Dan Wilson, a Harvard (where else?) grad painter and Matt's elder sibling.

Trip Shakespeare inevitably invites comparisons to R.E.M., due to songwriter Matt Wilson's admitted penchant for Byrdsy guitars. Their music has also been likened to early Jefferson Airplane and Talking Heads—but Wilson's loosely-wound melodies and fanciful yet disturbing poetic imagery have no obvious antecedents. Songs like the creepy folktale "Pearle" and the ravishing jazz-splashed hymn "Stop The Winter," he says, "tend to go for timeless things—not because I'm aiming for any medieval harking back, but because real life weighs down the flight of the images."

– *Moira McCormick*

MANITOBA'S WILD KINGDOM

Adolf and Eva Are Back

It's great that the Beastie Boys are funny and blasphemous about growing up absurd in America. It's even greater that they're selling records. This is a major sociological change—teenagers laughing at themselves in vast numbers after so many years of unrelieved Journey and Bon Jovi. But let us not forget those who lifted the muddied and bloodied banner of irreverence in the mid-70s when disco ruled. Let us not forget the Dictators, who were the first to combine metal and satire, whose lyrics ("My favorite part of growing up/ Is getting sick and throwing up") were so hip they make the Beasties seem about as "now" as hula hoops.

"We're back to reclaim the title," says Handsome Dick Manitoba, once of the Dictators and now of Manitoba's Wild Kingdom, which reunites his singing with the words of the Dictators' resident brooding genius Andy Shernoff. Speed-metal with a backbeat, halfway between the old Dictators and Metallica, the Wild Kingdom has begun gigging around New York and New Jersey and has a killer demo tape to play for discerning A&R people.

"The Dictators were never crowned champions," says H.D., "but maybe we were the people's champions. We were like Roberto Clemente: legends after we died. After doing day jobs for a few years after the breakup, I just looked at Andy one day and said, 'With your songs and my personality, we could do it right this time.' We got humor, we got style and we got class. We're the Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun of rock 'n' roll."

– *Charles M. Young*

SOUL ASYLUM

Sunny Side Down, But Not Out

With the Replacements and Hüsker Dü now residing on major labels, the next pick to click out of the Minneapolis area may well be Soul Asylum, yet another Minnesota band that fuses raw power and a keen sense of songcraft. But don't tell **Dave Pirner**, the quartet's chief singer and songwriter; he regards optimistic forecasts warily. "I've always had an 'expect the worst' attitude," he explains. "I don't want to be a star."

Just the sort of pronouncement you'd expect from a guy who describes composing as a "spitting-up process"—not to mention from a guy whose first group (in the early 80s) was called the Shits. Pirner subsequently helped launch Loud Fast Rules, which he calls "a stereotypical punk band, and one of the few garage bands that actually played in a garage."

Rechristened Soul Asylum (a name Pirner chose while in the throes of a hangover), they debuted on Twin/Tone in 1984 with an EP produced by Bob Mould of Hüsker Dü. Mould was again on hand for the raucous 1986 LP *Made To Be Broken*, inspiring comparisons between the two combos in the process. Pirner demurs, stating flatly, "I don't think our music sounds anything like theirs."

The recent *While You Were Out* may end the confusion. Produced by Chris Osgood (ex-Suicide Commandos), the LP mixes fiery tracks with more reflective ones, and finds Soul Asylum in firm possession of its identity. It's the kind of bold effort that might convince a daring major label (if that's not a contradiction) to give them a shot.

Pirner, however, finds prospects of a larger audience farfetched. He has no intention, he says, of giving up his summer job as a "lawn care specialist," i.e. mowing lawns. Likewise, he views the whole music business as somewhat absurd. "So much of what goes on is like Spinal Tap, you've gotta laugh it off. Of course, I might end up being the butt of somebody else's joke, but that's okay too." – *Jon Young*

LISA HALIN ANDREW LONG

Ronnie Lane's Recovery

In a near-miraculous turnabout, ex-Face Ronnie Lane is in remission from his multiple sclerosis. Lane—who inspired the star-studded ARMS benefit concert in late 1983—demonstrated his physical comeback by performing at the Austin (Texas) Music Awards concert March 13. Lane is also in a local recording studio producing the Fur Trappers.

"It's quite amazing," Lane says of his recovery. Equally amazing is the apparent fact that Lane's MS stemmed from mercury poisoning due to teeth fillings. A friend of Lane's, also suffering from MS, had his own fillings changed upon the advice of an allergy doctor. Lane decided to follow suit, and began the long process last summer.

"The morning after I had the first two fillings changed, it was extraordinary," he recalls. "It was like somebody cleaned the windows. I thought, 'God, I must be onto something.'"

Currently, Lane says, "The fatigue that comes with MS is gone. A lot of things are very slowly fading away! I am exercising like crazy. I'm still a cripple; I'll never be able to go raving like I used to. But I hope to get it totally under control and live somewhat of a normal life."

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ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

BY PETER WATROUS

TANGO'S MASTER TANGLES WITH THE TOUGH GUYS

Astor Piazzolla, internationally acknowledged as tango's premiere composer, doesn't really like tango. That fact didn't surprise me much when he arrived in New York last May for his first performances here in ten years; gee, I don't like tango much, either. Still I ambled over to the Public Theater, where Piazzolla and his Quinteto Tango Nuevo were doing the do and pretty soon here came this barrel-chested little guy wearing a striped shirt, grey hair slicked back, a small, tidy moustache stuck on his upper-lip, and an accordion (actually a bandoneon, the Argentinian version), leading a group that looked like it was suffering a collective hangover. "Modern Tango," buzzed the hipsters in the crowd. Modern tango, I figured, who needs it?

Then the music started, and it was brilliant, and I was wrong. Baroque in their detail, Piazzolla's compositions turned out to be enormously varied, full of everything from stop-time figures and bass vamps to pizzicatos, slurs, counterpoint, and fugues. Every tune meticulously milked an emotion, from lust to melancholy resignation, reworking both the musical and emotional terrain of more traditional tango. The ensemble execution was impeccable—they've been together ten years—and the textures, borrowed from Stravinsky, Basie, Berg, Ellington, and other modernists, allowed Piazzolla, pianist Pablo Zeigler, guitarist Horacio Malvinco Sr., violinist Fernando Suarez and bassist Hector Console plenty of room for improvisations. Rarely has music so controlled sounded so liberated.

For Piazzolla, now a very feisty seventy-seven, liberating tango has seemed less liberating than a necessity—as always, the mother of invention.

"The tango is a very boring music," he declares boldly. "It's so repetitive, that you play it like some kind of robot. If I wanted to write real tango, like in *Tango Argentina* [the Broadway play], I could write it in my sleep. I used to arrange all the orchestras in Argentina. But I got bored of listening to the same tangos played over and over, the same old cheap harmonies. I needed a change, it was in my blood."

Piazzolla loves his role as rule-breaking revolutionary, and if no one had given him a hard time about his music, he probably would have hired someone to do it. Argentina, however, provided many volunteers. "When I began writing this music in 1955, everybody threatened me," he recalls. "All the tango critics, they used to call me and threaten my family. One hour before I left to go to work at night, they'd call: 'We know you'll be leaving in an hour. We'll be waiting at the door of your house.' But I was crazy; it made me happy!

"See, I have New York very much inside of me. I was two years old when I came here, I lived in a very tough neighborhood in Little Italy until I was sixteen, and I'm sure that New York gave me courage. I learned to make myself tough in life, to take care of myself. A musician, or a painter, or an actor must be good at what they do, but if he doesn't have any courage, he's not worth a penny.

"In Argentina, the gangsters were everywhere. One came with a gun to where I was playing. He wanted to shoot me just because I was playing strange music. Even here in New York, I had an interview on the radio; many Argentinians listen to the program, and one man called up—he wasn't from Argentina, he was from Colombia—and he hated me. He said 'You have no right to do what you do, ruining all that beautiful tango music from the thirties and forties.' 'How old are you?' I asked him. 'I'm fifty-five,' he said. 'You sound like you're a hundred years old. That's why I'm against you,' I told him, 'I hate old people!'"

Piazzolla's musical eclecticism, like his nerve, seems traceable

"When I began writing this music, everybody threatened me."

to his upbringing in New York. As a kid, his father wanted him to be a tap dancer like Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, and Piazzolla would hang out in Harlem checking out the Duke, Cab Calloway and others. In 1937, when he left for Argentina, "I was a bandoneon player—the instrument most people played in Argentina—but I played Bach, I played Mozart, I played Schumann, 'Rhapsody In Blue,' 'Sophisticated Lady.'" There he studied with Bela Wilda, learning classical piano repertoire, and with composer Alberto Ginastero, while putting in time arranging for and playing with tango orchestras. In 1954, he wrote a symphony for the Buenos Aires Philharmonic which won him a scholarship to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, until her death in 1979 a magnet for such composers as Virgil Thompson, Aaron Copland and Phillip Glass.

"For five years I didn't play the bandoneon. I was saturated with the tango world. I was studying classical music and wanted to be a conductor. I studied the piano and wrote many symphonic concerts. I thought I was a genius. All of a sudden, Boulanger told me I wasn't a genius. Nadia made me understand that what I was writing as classical music wasn't Astor Piazzolla, it was somebody else. She heard me play one of my tangos on the piano one day, and she said '*That's* Piazzolla—don't ever leave it.'"

Tango was originally lower-class music for dancing and whoring. It's an entertainment music, and though Piazzolla has added more academic elements, he doesn't feel he's compromised either himself or the form.

"I've worked twenty-five years in cabarets and nightclubs. I've been in whorehouses playing my music and as much as I like the atmosphere, my music should reflect my knowledge.

"The whorehouses—the new ones—are very modern. I would have preferred to play in the old ones," Piazzolla says a little sadly, "the ones Borges described in his novels. Those were real whorehouses, where all the prostitutes were French. Imported prostitutes! Then *they* got to be the owners of the whorehouses," he continues, "and they married the musicians; which is why, when you say the word tango, it's a dirty word. It's gangsters, it's Mafia, it's the underworld, it's drugs, it's alcohol, it's horse-racing, gambling—that's tango. Which makes it very sensual. Tango is like an act of love. I feel that way when I'm onstage, which is why I play standing up. I look like an old lady knitting when I'm sitting. When I get up, I feel like I'm making love with my instrument. My music is very sensual, and sometimes sexual. Someone did an article in *Playboy*, about ten years ago—a record of mine had come out—and it said 'Girls, if you're fifteen or sixteen or seventeen, you'd better get a hold of a record by Astor Piazzolla because you'll feel strange things, you'll dream.'"

Like many musicians whose own music has been eclipsed by international pop and rock 'n' roll, Piazzolla can also seem bitter, not so much for economic reasons (he regularly tours all over the world) as for his understanding that cultural diversity is being lost faster than it's gained. "The young people [in Argentina] who listen to rock 'n' roll and pop music are leaving tango culture. It's already under the earth. There's no more tango dancing going on, there's nothing in tango they really love. Tango is dead music. It's not possible to resuscitate it, because the young people, who buy the records, they go dancing to discos. I'd like my people to play the music of our country. We're imitating the Americans badly, and we imitate the English badly, we don't have a national style."

Piazzolla no longer plays clubs, concentrating on the art music circuit in Europe, and writing for dancers and movies, at his discretion. There's a typi-

continued on page 106

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CROWDED HOUSE

BY CHARLES M. YOUNG

AFTER SPLIT ENZ NEIL FINN STRIKES GOLD

The benefits of tight living: Finn, Semour and Hester.

The last time I correctly predicted a hit record it was Boston's "More Than A Feeling" in 1976. Thus it was a real pleasant surprise that after I begged people to buy *Crowded House* in the November issue so that my career might again have meaning, people actually bought it. Even more surprising were some kind letters from people who bought it and—unprecedented in the history of *Musician*—were not threatening to have the teamsters give my fingers a lead-pipe manicure. But most surprising was a publicity packet from Capitol with all these articles by incompetent journalists laboring under the grotesque misapprehension that Crowded House was from New Zealand when I clearly stated in my review that they were from Tasmania.

"I'd love to be able to redeem you, Chuck, but I am from New Zealand," says Neil Finn, leader/songwriter/singer/guitarist of Crowded House. "But that's all right. Tasmania is regarded as a big joke in Australia. The band got a good laugh out of it."

But you've got some connection to Tasmania, right?

"None."

Well, how close is Tasmania to New Zealand?

"About eighteen hundred miles."

So I had the hemisphere right. And I was right about "Don't Dream It's Over," which I said was the best ballad of the year and, as Finn and I speak in the midst of a Capitol publicity push, is going from thirty-four to twenty-three on the charts with only bullets in the forseeable future if God remains in heaven. The entire eponymously titled album is almost equally lovely pop rock: melodies that stay in your head all day, harmonies that make you want to take singing lessons, words that make you think about love without feeling stupid, and hooks so solid you could catch fish.

Finn actually hails from Te Awamutu, New Zealand, a small town surrounded by idyllic dairy and sheep farms. "It was a fantastic place to grow up," he says. "I had a blissfully happy childhood. We were so far out of the way the rest of the world seemed exotic. Seeing it has been a disappointment in some respects."

Like what's been disappointing?

"The Marquee Club in London. So many great bands started out there that it's legendary, and it's just a dive. The trick is to sort out what's good and keep your small-town perspective, keep your sense of wonder."

Papa Finn was an accountant specializing in farmers and small businessmen, Mama Finn raised four children, two of whom (Neil and older brother Tim) led Split Enz, a band that enjoyed only middling success in America. A lot of interviewers have apparently been hoping for some Kinks-style brotherly hatred to write about, but Finn claims with a touch of exasperation to have no dirty family secrets to dig up.

"I came to my brother's rescue with a tennis racket once when he got into a fight with some toughs from the local primary school," says Finn. "Ever since he's told me quite a lot what a fantastic guy I am. We used to have scraps onstage just as a joke in Split Enz, and people must have thought there was some real bitterness between us. In any band there are musical differences, but we had none of the darker emotions. I like my brother's records."

You don't feel at all competitive with him?

"We had a spot of competition in the family. My father wanted to be a professional cricketer before the war interrupted, and he tried to instill in us a sense of ambition and competitiveness. But Tim and I have always been close."

Playing pop rock mixed with varying amounts of artsy eccentricity, Split Enz enjoyed (suffered?) a remarkably long career: 1972 to 1984. Playing their album *True Colors* back to back with *Crowded House*, Split Enz sounds more like a collection of clever musicians doing a give-and-take compromise with an excess of ideas—maybe not quite a case of too many cooks spoiling the broth, but the broth definitely lacks a unifying taste. One can also hear the beginnings of

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Crowded House, particularly in the wonderful chorus of their one American semi-hit "I Got You." After the Enz split, Neil's father-instilled ambition went to work and a desire emerged to get all his songs exactly his way on a record. So he stole the Enz' last drummer, Paul Hester, met bassist Nick Seymour at a party and moved into a small bungalow (it was a crowded house) in Los Angeles to write and rehearse. That Neil thought L.A. would offer less distraction than Te Awamutu is ultimate testimony to his unshakeable small-town perspective. Meanwhile Tim released one solo album, *Escapade*, that stiffed in the States. He is now working on a film score in Australia.

The best evidence of the extraordinary quality of the songs that came out of that L.A. bungalow is that for nearly seven months the album generated almost no radio play or chart action and Capitol didn't give up on it. Having watched so many great bands die the death of Ethiopian spaniels because the record company couldn't tell the difference between talent and Spandex, I fully expected to consign *Crowded House* to that vast pile of stuff I play for non-music biz friends when I'm in the mood to be asked, "Why haven't I heard that on the radio?"

"Success has kind of stunned me too," says Finn. "Capitol has been just amazingly committed to the record. In Split Enz I saw just how fast a record company can drop an album. If something doesn't go right in the first few weeks, they think something's odd and they stop working it. I'm still skeptical of the charts, and I'm worrying what dreadful resolution this will all have. But maybe it's worked out for the best. Six months ago we weren't as good live."

They used their six months of chart limbo to tour Australia and do showcases in the U.S., which is where I met them. They played this Indian restaurant about twenty stories over Times Square for an industry crowd and got a surprisingly full sound out of one guitar, one bass and one-fourth a drumkit, without seeming too reminiscent of Stray Cats. When you've got a great melody and a great lyric, you just don't need vast quantities of technology. I remember Paul Hester as being a funny guy who laid down an exuberant backbeat while singing excellent backup. I remember Nick Seymour as a personable guy who kept the pulse at the proper throb level with his bass. I remember Neil Finn as a quiet guy who knocked everyone out with his singing. Finn remembers me as the "drunken lout" who crawled onstage during their encore to harangue the audience to clap more. Not that the audience wasn't clapping. After a number of free beers, I was just in the mood to harangue somebody, and Hester kept egging me on. So it was his fault. And I did get them to play "Don't Dream It's Over" four or five times.

Now on full tour, Crowded House has added another Split Enz veteran—Eddie Rayner—on keyboards to re-create the nifty synthesizer flourishes added by producer Mitchell Froom to the album. They've also put Hester behind a full kit, but have found they enjoyed the earlier shows so much that they do an acoustic encore. So far the crowds have been ecstatic and old Split Enz fans are turning up in numbers never seen by Split Enz. A typical introvert, Finn has his doubts about it all.

"I feel like my life is out of control in a way," he says. "Certain people are making assumptions about what I'm willing to do for success, and I'm not. I wouldn't want to owe too many favors or I'll feel like a slut by the time we're number one. If things get too out of hand, maybe we'll just pull the plug. At the end of the day, I want to feel like the music got there on its own merit."

So what are they asking you to do?

"Well, a lot of interviews."

Talking to me is selling out?

"Right. You're a bloody leech, Chuck... But you're right. I can't go

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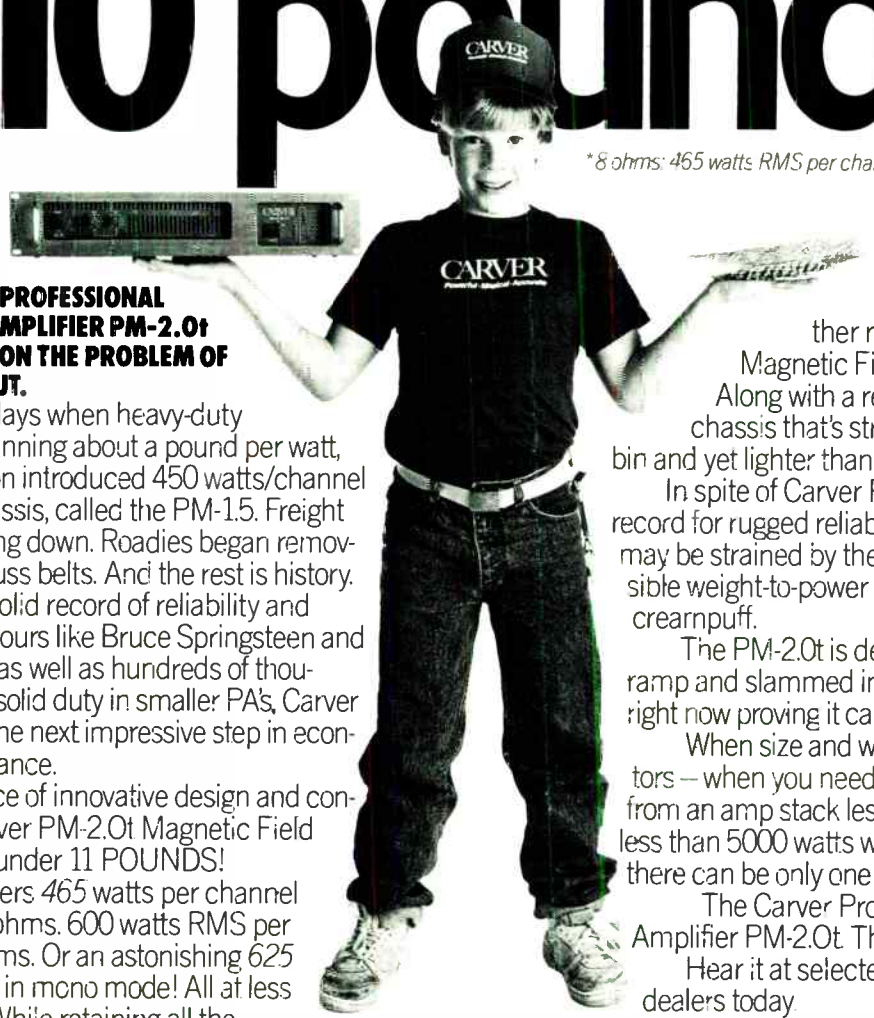

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around being precious and snubbing people. I can't spend my life like Sean Penn. This is okay."

One of the more memorable cuts on the album is "Mean To Me," a story song concerning a girl who came all the way to Te Awamutu from America to meet a member of Split Enz. Finn indeed met her and had a tortured conversation ("I was thinking of a padded cell/ With a black and white TV/ To stop us from getting lonely").

"She was at the show at the Roxy last night," says Finn, who is quite married and the father of a small child. "She wasn't a groupie, just a girl who'd become a little too obsessed with a band. She was in New Zealand on an AFS scholarship, and she wrote a letter to my parents, pouring out her heart and her fear that I would be mean to her. After my conversation with her at a bar, I found her talking to this poet, an unscrupulous womanizer infamous all over New Zealand. He did a line on her, told her I was his best friend, and I wrote down some of his lines."

What did she think of the song?

"It was the first time I'd written about someone and then had to meet the person. I was worried she'd come at me with a clenched fist, but she was pleased. She said that since she'd heard the song, her life had changed, so the experience must have been good for her. It's amazing the power a song can have."

Now you know how journalists feel facing people after an article.

"Yeah, you guys do it all the time."

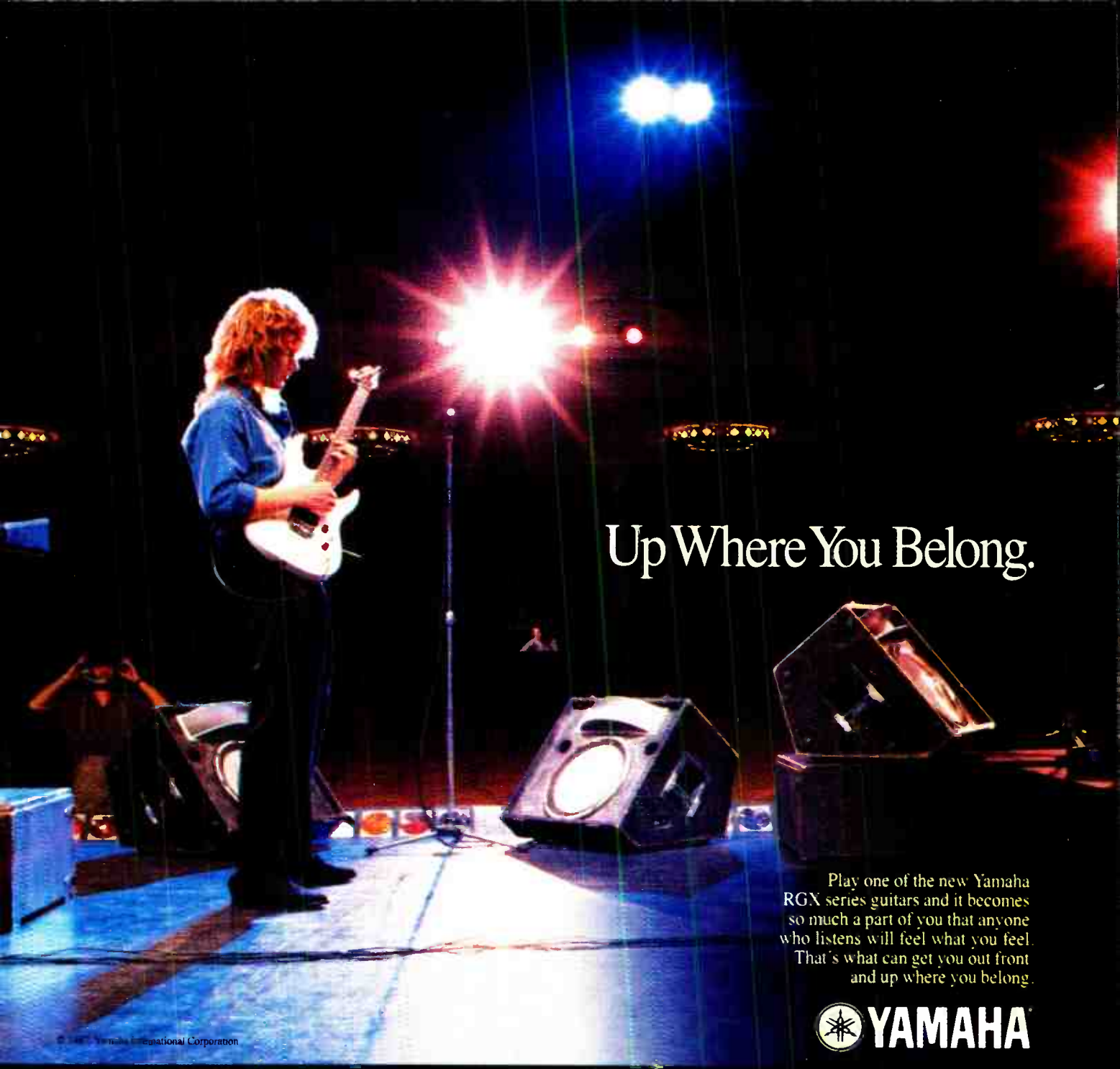
Except that you're rich and I'm not.

"Be assured we haven't made it yet."

Another song that stands out because of the subject matter is "Hole In The River," which concerns his aunt's suicide in 1985. Finn won't discuss it in much detail for fear of offending his relatives but is complimented when I tell him I'd heard that authorities as diverse as Sting and Jimmy Iovine loved the song. It's very

HOUSEROCKERS

Neil Finn claims to play a Les Paul gold top and a Fender Stratocaster, but any man who would lie about his Tasmanian origins would probably lie about his guitars as well. He also claims to run together a Vox 8030 and a Roland JC 160 because he likes the combined sound. **Nick Seymour** claims to play a Spector bass through a Yamaha amplifier, and **Paul Hester** claims to play a Yamaha drumkit. They also claim to be from Australia.



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eerie and understated without actually being depressing. Personally, I missed it for months because I was so enthralled with side one of the album that I just assumed side two would be mostly filler and I didn't want to be disappointed by listening to it too closely.

"I know what you mean," says Finn. "On an album you want at least one side where everything works, but then side two ends up not as strong. There are a couple of cuts on side two that I don't like as much. I'll leave you to guess which."

Upon further listening, I'll guess that one of them is "I Walk Away," which has all the production elements of a great song and is surrounded by great songs, so that the unwary might think it's a great song, but the melody never kicks in, so it isn't a great song. I'll also venture the opinion that "Something So Strong" comes dangerously close to a generic lyric. If Finn's talent ever blands out with success, he could easily cross the line from great pop to platinum schlock and end up as the next Lionel Richie. In the meantime, I'll just appreciate some of his religious imagery.

"There's nothing 'Christian' in the sense of going to church," he says. "But maybe my lapsed Catholicism is showing. If you're raised that way, the imagery stays with you. I suppose I'm attuned to spirituality in a general way, although I'm not consistent enough to convert to anything. I'd feel hypocritical, like a guy who's dying who says I repent to get into heaven."

The specific song I had in mind was "Tombstone," whose chorus goes: "Roll back the tombstone/ Let the saints appear/ Roll back the tombstone/ Till the Lone Ranger rides again." That and a couple of other lines remind me of Easter, and the image of the Lone Ranger riding again is one hot metaphor for the Resurrection.

"There he goes: The Masked Messiah," Finn laughs. "I thought the song was about the dead weight of bad experience and not succumbing to it. But I'm fascinated by your interpretation. I'm afraid to open my mouth."

One of the guys Finn is constantly compared to is Paul McCartney in his Beatle days, so I ask if he has taken advantage of his label and acquired freebie Beatle CDs.

"I haven't got a CD player yet," he says. "I have a real cruddy stereo, although I have to admit our record sounds better in CD and we recorded it in analog. I have heard the Beatle CDs and without scratches it's like hearing them for the first time. It's wonderful, but I can't listen so much because it makes me feel like giving up. I just crumple in a heap."

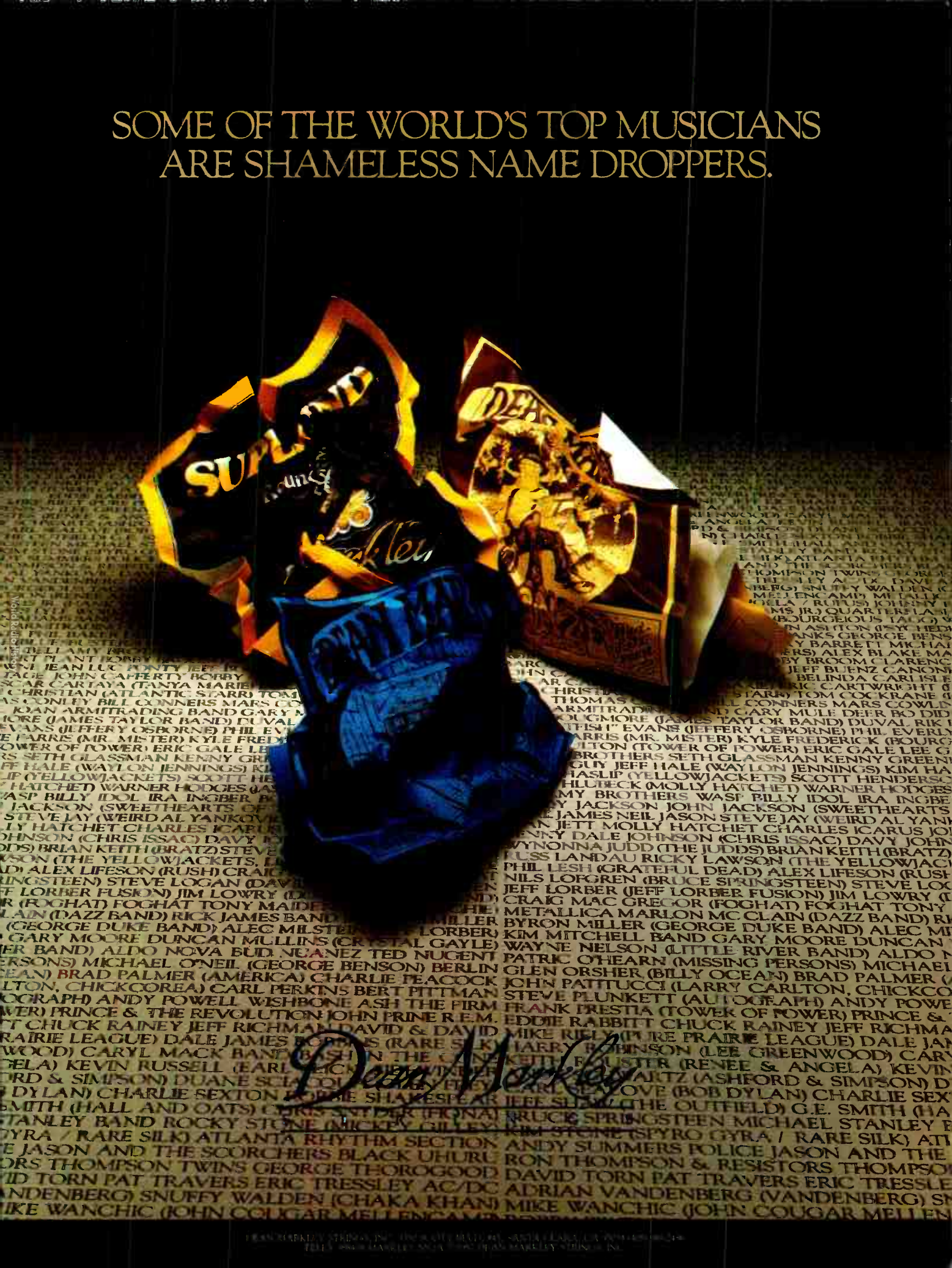
Who else you been listening to lately?

"B.A.D., XTC, Talking Heads, Woodentops, Smiths. And I've been rediscovering old stuff. Nick has a great tape of old R&B that I missed the first time around. Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, Ike & Tina—they were great. One of the problems with New Zealand is that we went for long periods without seeing anyone. I can't remember a single black group playing New Zealand when I was growing up. I thought the Beatles invented the blues. I'm also discovering country and western, which I used to hate. It has tremendous emotional impact. Hank Williams is songwriting in its purest form. I now subscribe to the theory that there are no bad forms of music, just bad musicians."

There's Keith Richard's dictum that ninety percent of every art form is shit.

"Yeah, I agree with that. Especially the charts now. Everyone is trying to figure out how to get on the radio, so everyone is playing it safe. There's no incentive to be adventurous anymore. Not that we're avant garde, but it is a mystery why anyone would like us now."

SOME OF THE WORLD'S TOP MUSICIANS ARE SHAMELESS NAME DROPPERS.



EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH JOE JACKSON

Q: Why an instrumental album?
A: Well, why not? It's something I've been doing on and off for years. I have more music ideas than lyric ideas, and by leaving out lyrics completely, I can develop the music ideas a lot further. I happen to believe maybe unfashionably, that music is valid just as an art form, for it's own sake--it doesn't have to have words, or be tied to a movie or a video. Anyway, I'm getting sick of my voice.

Q: What are the influences on your instrumental music?
A: I'm influenced by everything. but I don't have a particular guru, or whatever. The music scene now is so fragmented---what interests me is synthesis---making diverse things work together.

Q: Like an orchestra with electronic instruments?
A: Yes, although it's not exactly an orchestra. I used 34 string players, but the rest is a real mixture-saxophones along with orchestral winds, drum kit along with orchestral percussion, synths, guitars-it changes from piece to piece. "Symphony In One Movement" has 53 players on it, and "Nocturne" is just me on piano.

Q: What was it like working with so many musicians?
A: Bloody chaos! It wasn't easy, dealing with this weird conglomeration of instruments and players from different backgrounds. But it worked. It was frightening, but thrilling.

Q: Your knowlege of orchestration and so on is not something one would associate with a pop songwriter.
A: Well, I started off playing violin and oboe, and I was writing string quartets when I was 15. It didn't occur to me to write a song until much later, and then I did 3 years at the Royal Academy of Music in London, and I've never stopped studying. So, as far as being a pop songwriter, there's nothing wrong with that, but there are other things I can do, and I don't want to hold them back any longer.

Q: What kind of audience are you hoping to reach with this record?
A: The widest possible audience. I hate the snobbery of people that think only a certain special group of people can understand what they do. If something's good, it belongs in the mainstream.

Q: But this record is hardly mainstream.
A: Not in an obvious way, no. But I think a lot of people will like it if they just get a chance to hear it. The problem is getting through this "Give The People What They Want" attitude of the music biz and the radio programmers - -I think people are more open than they think. I think there's an audience for something that goes beyond the standard song format, but which is still exciting and enjoyable and relevant.

Q: Do you think "Will Power" is accessible to a pop or rock audience?
A: Yes! Well, if you're listening for pop-song formulas, you're going to get a bit lost the first time you hear it. All these pieces have twists and turns and deliberate surprises. Sometimes there are clues early in the piece as to what's going to happen at the end. You're not going to take it all in on first hearing. That's the whole point: You're not supposed to. I guarantee, though, I give you my personal guarantee, that it'll make more sense each time your hear it.

Q: What was the thinking behind the cover, an abstract cover with no lettering?
A: It's abstract because it's just music, there's no message or concept you could illustrate. Also, it's not a case of selling the artist's face, thank God. I just wanted it to be something that looks nice, that you keep the record in. Actually, since there's no lettering, you can keep other records in it if you want,too.

Q: Are you planning to continue along these lines in the future, or go back to writing songs, or what?
A: Well, I sort of thought I'd see what happens with this first...

Interview by Ted Fox

WILL POWER
ON CD, LP & CHROME TAPE

BRANFORD MARSALIS

BY NELSON GEORGE

GETTIN' DOWN TO IT AFTER THE STING FLING

Branford Marsalis is standing by an abandoned building in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn, trying to entice quarters from reluctant passersby with his horn. On the ground, a few nickels and dimes adorn the blue velvet of an open saxophone case. His son Reece, ten months old, sits bundled in a nearby stroller. Three teenaged B-Boys, glaring contemptuously at Branford, complete the scene.

The largest of the intruders has decided to blast a hip-hop anthem from his beat box in Branford's face. The saxophonist attempts to ignore this provocation, but Brooklyn's amplified rhythms are too powerful for that; next, he sharply instructs his tormentors to "step off." No one moves. Finally Marsalis lunges at them, and a chase ensues. Unfortunately for Branford, one B-Boy decides to double back to snatch his saxophone case before disappearing down Fulton Street. Upon his return, all Branford can do is lift his son in his arms and pace the sidewalk in frustration.

Branford Marsalis scraping for change on the streets of Brooklyn? Surely for someone whose facility as a jazz musician has been compared with Wayne Shorter's, and whose resume includes classical recordings and a tour with Sting, this gig seems a little rough. You'd think at least his brother could lend him some cash.

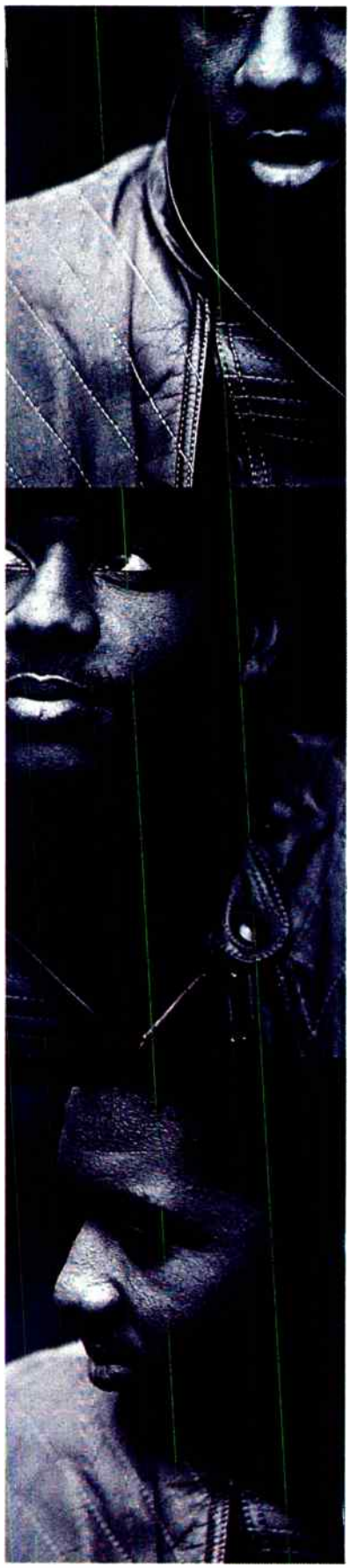
Actually, the scene makes sense once you step back far enough to see director Spike (*She's Gotta Have It*) Lee guiding the action. In addition to this short film for *Saturday Night Live*, Lee and Marsalis are collaborating on a video for Branford's recent jazz offering *Royal Garden Blues*. Plans for Branford to star in a Lee feature next year (tentatively titled *School Daze*) are also in the works.

"I really don't know what I'm doing," Branford half-jokes during one break in the shooting, and in truth, he's not about to make Oscar voters forget about Dexter Gordon. But anyone who watched Branford steal the spotlight in Sting's *Bring On The Night* tour and subsequent documentary won't deny Branford's cinematic presence, nor his engaging blend of physical elegance and musical eloquence. Offstage and offscreen Branford remains funny and down-to-earth, the yin to bro Wynton's considerably more contentious yang. He can be just as outspoken, but while Wynton's scattershot salvos border on recklessness, Branford's observations are more like his tenor solos, knowing and piquant. Compressing sophisticated musical ideas into melodious phrases or just giving good conversation, he does know exactly what he's doing.

A few days after the film shoot, Branford and Reece, the latter in various states of consciousness, are relaxing in their Fort Greene brownstone. The former is blowing hard on such themes as brothers, Sting, Tina Turner, yuppies, the business of art, Thad Jones and equally (un)related subjects. As much as the sum of their talent or the cut of their suits, that willingness to articulate their views is what gives the Marsalis brothers their special niche in contemporary black culture.

For the young, upwardly mobile black adult caught between white values of assimilation and the alternative style of black urban life, Branford's embrace of history, his championing of black standards and—unlike Wynton—his willingness to experiment within a wide range of pop music despite his jazz pedigree, suggest a role model for the kind of choices and improvisations others might make every day. Wynton tends to frame discussions in moral terms (good vs. evil, jazz vs. crap). Branford's outlook is more practical: He doesn't deny reality, nor deny his instrument the means to keep Reece in diapers.

A good example of this pragmatism is Branford's burgeoning career in classical music, which began last spring with *Romances On Saxophone* for CBS Masterworks. The LP, which features selections from Stravinsky, Debussy and Rachmaninoff, did well enough to land in *Billboard*'s classical top ten, but that doesn't deter Branford from declaring that "most of the repertoire for classical saxophone sucks. That music has no soul, man. Contrary to popular belief, the French approach to saxophone, with altissimo notes, fast vibrato and thin tone, is stiff and not at all romantic."



DAVID STEWART

Marsalis then reveals, without apology, his plans to record at least two more classical albums.

Another example: Branford's much-celebrated tour, movie, album, video (did I leave anything out?) with Sting. The two are still good friends; the day before, Sting had stopped by the apartment to share some Indian food. They plan to work together again in another year or two, according to Branford. But his comments about their collaborations suggest creative dissatisfaction. "It was very restricting," he says. "I couldn't play eighty to ninety percent of my repertoire. Every night we were repeating the same parts."

He notes that few Sting fans have turned up at his performances since the tour. "You get a few at first. They're cheering, 'Yeah, he played with Sting. How's Sting?' But now I'm playing jazz that has nothing to do with my man at all, and I think most people have the sense to see that."

It is of course Branford's jazz recordings, first with Wynton and more recently as a leader, which form the core of his reputation. Despite Wynton's anxieties about jazz musicians who lose their edge when they dabble in pop music, Branford has turned out to be an assured and innovative bandleader on his own. His concerts have a relaxed, playful quality—for an encore, Branford frequently solos with one hand while hoisting baby Reece with the other—but there's nothing sappy or compromised about the music. What irks Branford is the discovery that, unlike Sting's fans, a lot of "hip" jazz club patrons these days don't even bother to listen.

"When you're a young executive at IBM now you don't want to take the guys to the symphony," he explains. "You can't talk in there. Damn sure, don't want to hear AC/DC. So what do they do? They go to a jazz club. They put down big bucks, maybe twenty-five or thirty dollars, and suddenly jazz becomes entertainment. They talk through your whole performance. Basically you are background for them. These motherfuckers are obnoxious and rude! So instead of you trying to play your heart out for an hour and a half, even if the set contract says fifty minutes, you play forty-nine and get off the stage. They don't care so you don't.

"I'm in this for me. I don't have any fans... Well, if I have fans I appreciate them but not in the way of someone doing an interview saying, 'I'm doing this for my fans, the people who love me.' I don't need their love so I'm not gonna do something 'for them.' I do it for me and if they dig it, I'm glad they do. I have a commitment to this," he points to a still somnolent Reece, "and to my woman. Other than that I got a commitment to nobody else except God."

That's not entirely true: Branford's loyalty also extends to one controversial sibling. Despite their widely reported schism after Branford left Wynton's band (or was kicked out, depending who you talk to) to play with Sting, he won't take any cheap shots.

"It wasn't like the major rift everybody made it out to be," he says with care. "We still talk. We have differences of opinion on the aesthetics of music. It's really no major thing. People want to get at Wynton any way they can, because Wynton says stuff that hits home. I had a guy come up to me when I was in college and say, 'Your brother is doing so well. Aren't you angry?' Hate my brother? Damn, that's deep. I've had to straighten people out since I left Wynton's band and tell them not to come to me with that attitude. They want me to be on their side to make Wynton's statements invalid. But I know what he says is very valid."

Branford's affection extends to younger brother Delfeayo, his occasional roadie and an audio engineering major at Boston's Berklee College of

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Music. Delfeayo produced Branford's *Royal Garden Blues*. Why? "Because he's the most qualified cat I know," Branford asserts. "I don't know anybody who produces jazz who really knows how to engineer. And when you don't know you have to deal with the whims of an engineer, and engineers are like divas. You say, 'I hear the tune like this.' They go, 'In my 11,000 hours of recording I've noted that this is happening. Trust me.' Then your music comes out messed up.

"You get producers in the studio and all they can talk about is 'feeling.' That's the easiest thing in the world to do. They'll say, 'It doesn't really *feel* good to me.' Clicks in the microphone and hums; they don't hear any of that. Delfeayo used to run around the CBS archives looking for photos of Miles Davis and Duke Ellington sessions to see where the microphone was placed. He'd say, 'I want to find out how they got this or that sound.' Man, you never hear engineers in jazz talk like that. In pop music they do all the time. In classical music definitely. Those cats have to read scores. They are the most musical producers in any idiom, because they have to read music." Which is why, and at his suggestion, Branford claims, symphonic producer Stephen Epstein works on Wynton's recordings. With typical Marsalis assurance Branford feels that "there's no such thing as jazz production technique; we're developing it as we go along."

Despite his jazz chops Branford is very much a child of 70s R&B and he speaks with great enthusiasm about the giants of that period—Marvin Gaye, Earth, Wind & Fire, Donny Hathaway, Curtis Mayfield, Stevie Wonder. He even admits a fondness for one of Brooklyn's homegrown funk-disco favorites, Brass Construction. "On the R&B spectrum you had all these acts but they were all different and all bad!" he laughs. "Cats today don't know nothing about music and they all sound the same. It's great for record companies because it makes it easier to control them."

Branford's sax recently graced albums by pop's reigning Tina/Teenas, Turner and Marie: But he calls his experience with the more famous of these hazel-haired shouters a case of false advertising. "I don't want to bust Tina's thing," he says, about to bust Tina's thing. "But I saw in an interview how she was lying that she was always there with her musicians. Well, maybe she was there on everybody else's day but not on mine. I did it because I respect Mark Knopfler

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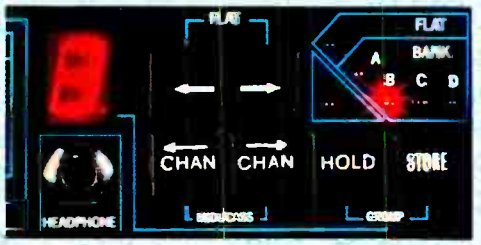

SPM 8:2

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The SPM 8:2 from Simmons is anything but a conventional audio mixer. There are, however, some similarities: Eight channels, each with bass, treble and parametric mid-range equalization, two effects sends, pan and level controls. Two effects returns. A headphone/monitor output and left and right master outputs.

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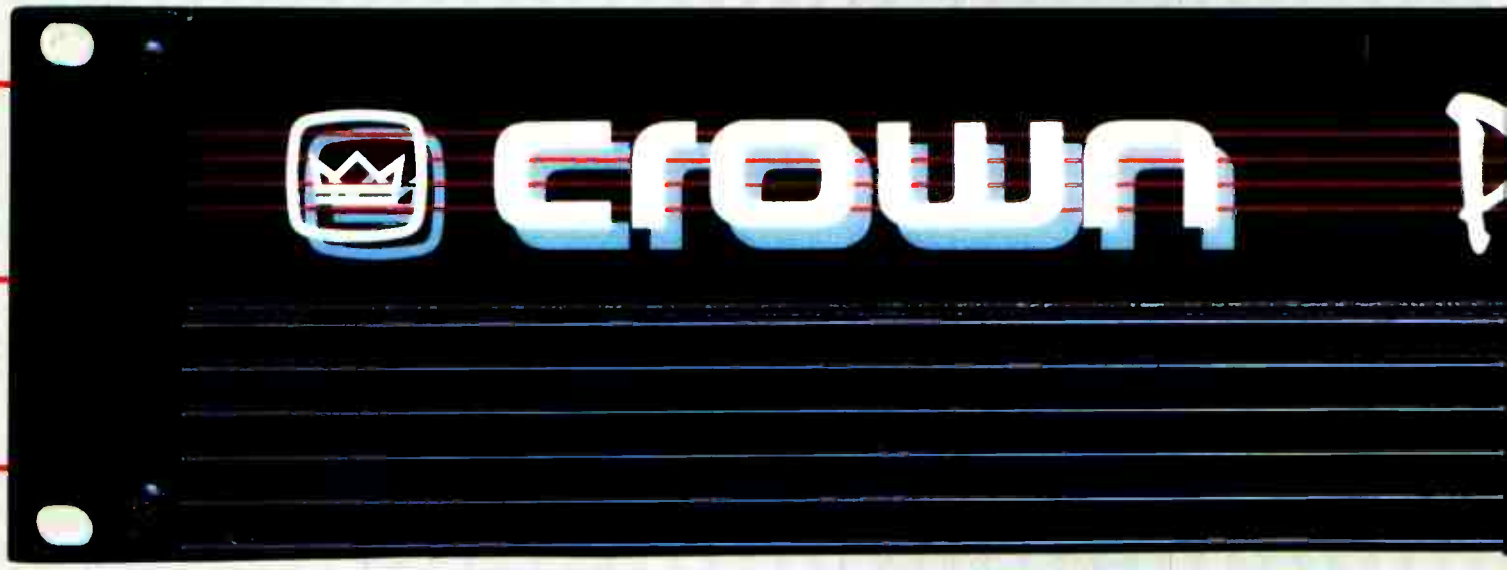

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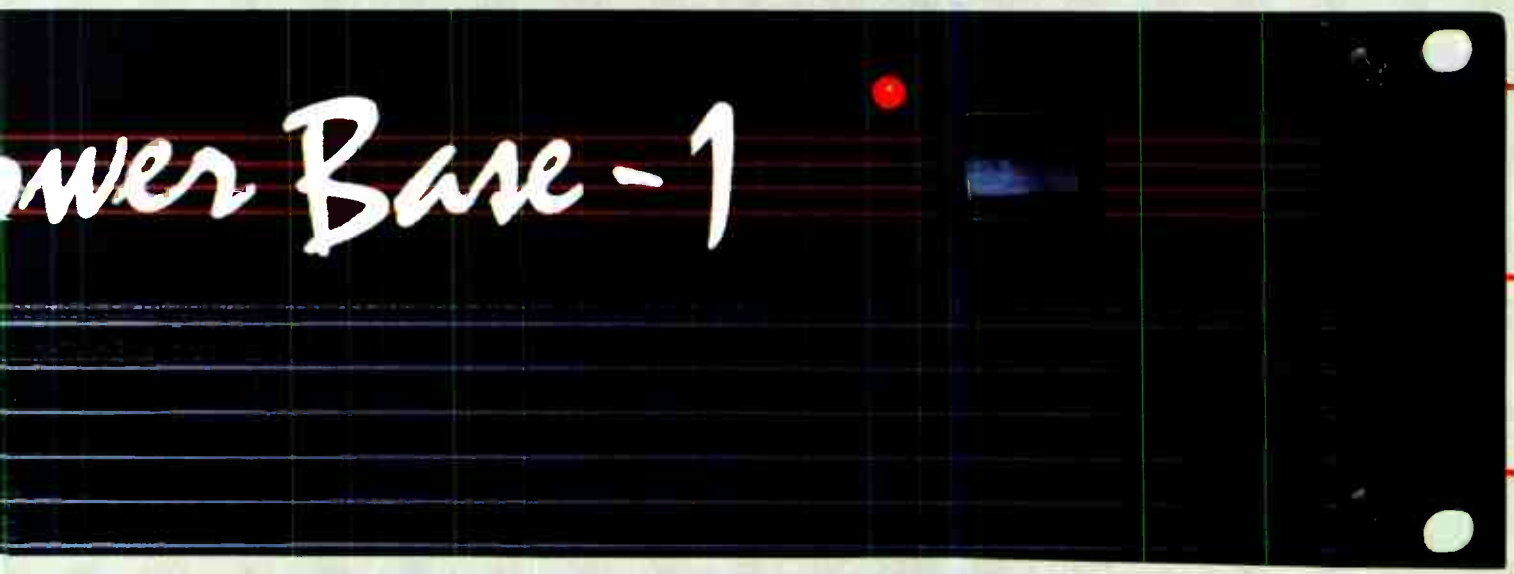

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RICK RUBIN

DEF JAM'S MAN WITH THE PLAN

THE PRODUCER AND INDIE LABEL KINGPIN WHO ENGINEERED THE MARRIAGE OF HIP-HOP AND HEAVY METAL AND HELPED MAKE SUPERSTARS OF THE BEASTIE BOYS, RUN-D.M.C. AND L.L. COOL J

BY HAVELOCK NELSON

Black pop owes a lot of its greatest hits to the Jewish American/independent record label phenomenon: Herman Lubinsky and Savoy. Hy Weiss and Old Town. Leiber & Stoller and Red Bird. Phil Spector and Philles. Leonard & Phil Chess. What characterized these early associations was the fact that the ownership was Jewish, and the talent was black. That tradition continues into the 80s, but things are a little different: Def Jam, one of the few refuges from scandal and disturbance in the world of pop labels, not only has black and Jewish co-ownership in Russell Simmons and Rick Rubin, but records both black and Jewish artists. The label isn't interested in making the ultimate white music or the ultimate black music, just the ultimate teen music—a medium where those who revolt against poverty can co-exist with those who revolt against affluence, where the crosstown traffic of hardcore and B-Boy music can meet and prosper: the new punk, the new funk, the new rock 'n' roll.

Highlights of the past Def Jam year include the Junkyard Band's go-go-crazy convulsion "The Word" and Oran "Juice" Jones' cruel-reality piece "The Rain." Then there's L.L. Cool J's eloquent gold LP, *Radio*, and the Beastie Boys' rowdy, raucous *License To Ill*, easily the year's most improbable number one album. Both records (brutal, bass-heavy, lean) were produced by Rick Rubin, a.k.a. DJ Double R, who also co-produced (with Simmons) Run-D.M.C.'s triple platinum *Raising Hell*. The most striking feature of Def Jam's amazing hit formula is the convergence of hip hop and metal—total metallic construction, that is, not just a few token guitar solos. That crunching together of seemingly disparate genres is perfectly embodied in Rubin's musical career, which began in Lido Beach on Long Island, New York: "It was almost impossible to grow up there and not be a heavy metal fan," shrugs Rubin. So how come the thing for hip-hop?

"The high school I attended was about seventy percent white and thirty percent black," he explains. "The white scene was into Led Zeppelin, Yes, Pink Floyd—all groups that were completely *over*—whereas the black kids were always waiting for the latest rap or scratch record to come out. I remember asking a black kid what his favorite rap group was, and he said, 'The Crash Crew because their record came out last week.' And the week before it was the Funky Four. It was so exciting that people could be so progressive musically that they'd want the newest thing, love it and forget everything else. Rap was like the hardcore punk movement, the only difference being the white teenagers rejected the new music and the black teenagers accepted the new music. And I did too.

"I had two bands—one fast punk band called the Pricks and one slow punk band called the Hose," recalls Rubin, who was inspired to play guitar after hearing Johnny Ramone. "As you grow up, you go through different phases of power. Speed is a very easy way to achieve power; then after that you get to a point where you try to achieve the same power by playing slow. It's a natural growing-up process."

Later, while attending New York Uni-

PHOTOGRAPH BY GLEN E. FRIEDMAN

versity, Rubin moved closer to the rap scene. At hangouts like Negril and the Roxy, he met all the right people in the rap movement, and he was first accepted into the mostly black crowd, he says, "on a musical level," meaning he had good ideas. It didn't take him long to negotiate his first record deal, parlaying those ideas into T. La Rock and Jazzy Jay's "It's Yours." That record, still popular in rap clubs, was a huge street hit, but Rubin claims he was never paid. He realized then "this isn't the best way to go about doing things." Soon afterwards, he met Simmons, and they immediately became enchanted with each other. Russell told Rubin, "'It's Yours' is my favorite rap record," and Rubin's response was: "the inspiration for it was all of the records you've ever made."

"What I liked about Russell's records before I met him," Rubin remembers, "was that he understood rock 'n' roll. I don't think he called it rock 'n' roll, but what he was into wasn't the same disco everyone else liked. His records were more aggressive and rock 'n' roll-y. He had made maybe twenty records that I thought were tremendous, but he wasn't wealthy. By then, I had dealt with a lot of people in rap music, none of whom understood it. Still to this day don't, except for Russell, [Run-D.M.C.'s D.J.] Jam Master Jay, and a few others." So Rubin suggested forming a label. "That way," he reasoned, "we could promote our groups the way we want to, and use the money we make to make them bigger—what most [independent, street-oriented] labels won't do."

Started in an N.Y.U. dorm room in 1984, Def Jam Recordings is, according to Rubin, "unique in that we're in the music business; other record companies are in the banking business. They loan money, you make a record, you pay it back with your sales, and they take a piece from then on. It's really disgusting. We're not into fast money; we're into developing artists."

Before starting Def Jam, Rubin had

Power play: Rubin with his "slow punk band" Hose

DJ DOUBLE R & THE BEASTIE BOYS

If you expect conscience, concern and responsibility from the Beastie Boys, forget it. This band just wants to disrespect everything that's proper and socially useful. Boredom is their enemy and the appearance of being forbidden their greatest weapon. "Our attitude," says twenty-three-year-old MCA (Adam Yauch), "is to be as obnoxious as possible."

They were banned from the entire Holiday Inn chain after boring holes in some floors. In another hotel, they turned their room furniture into kindling wood. They wanted to call their album *Don't Be A Faggot* but Columbia persuaded them not to. And when a reporter admitted to the group she hadn't listened to *License To Ill* before meeting them, they demanded, "What the hell are you doing here interviewing us?," and made her cry. The subjects they cover on *License To Ill* include sex "with a Whiffle Ball bat," getting high on crack, and shooting people in the face and back. But their cartoonish PMRC nightmare is a joke, a put-on. "They didn't grow up with people getting shot all the time," shrugs Rubin, "so to them it's cool to adopt a gangster posture. It's vicarious pleasure that vindicates kids who are always wild for kicks, thrills and disequilibrium—just like pro wrestling, just like boxing, just like being part of something that's cool."

Beastie Boy noise leakage started around 1979 when Yauch and Michael Diamond (or Mike D.) decided they couldn't sound any worse than any of the hardcore punk bands they had heard club-hopping illegally. The Young and the Useless were born. The quintet learned to play their instruments as they went along, and *Polly Wog Stew*, their first EP of raucous speed music, sold a surprising 5,000 copies.

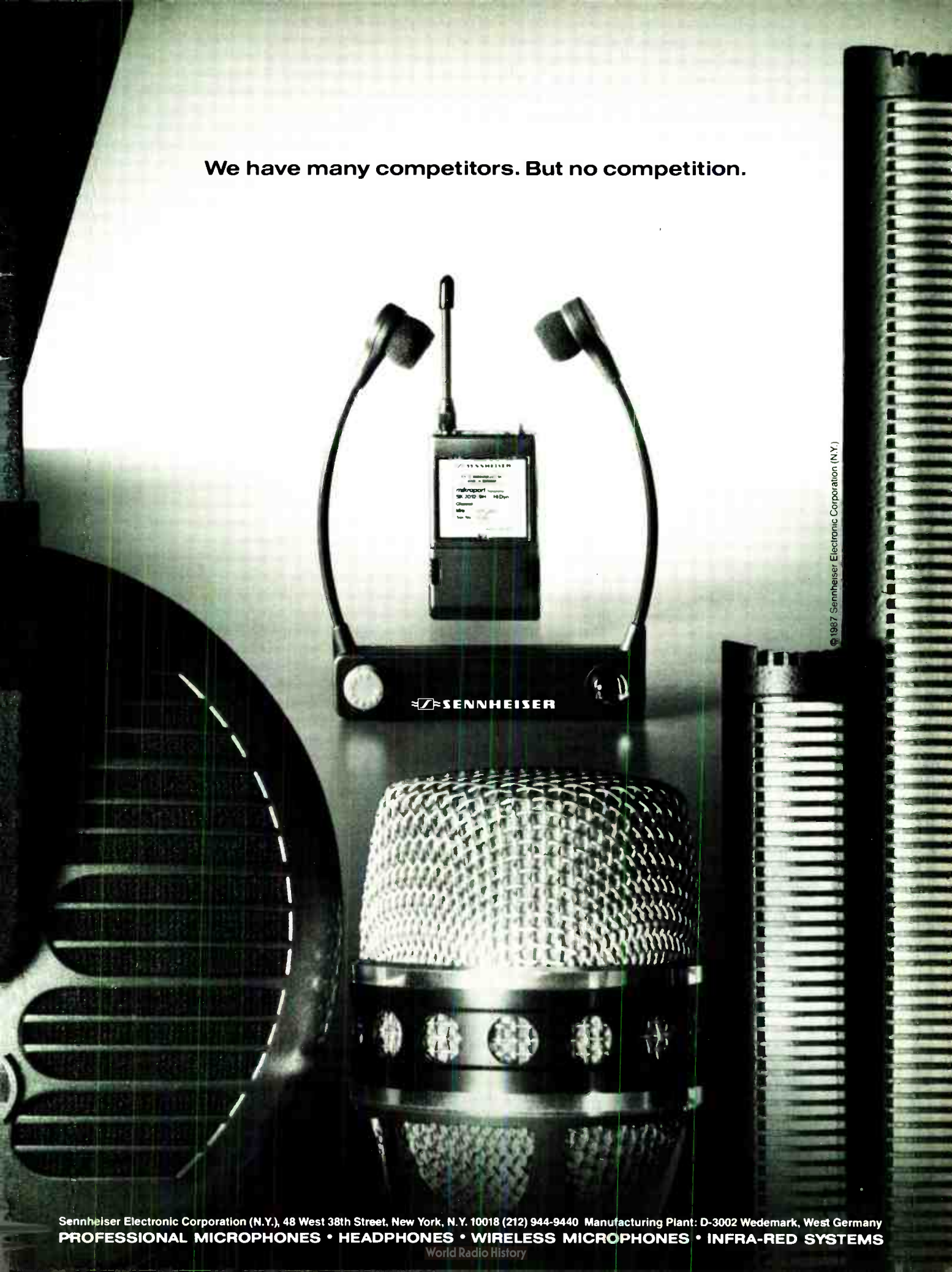
The Big Noise started to take shape in 1983 when Diamond and Yauch met up with another hardcore musician named Adam Horovitz (King Adrock, the twenty-two-year-old son of playwright Israel Horovitz). When the Young and the Useless disbanded, the three boys started playing together. They named themselves the Beastie Boys "because it was the stupidest thing we could think of at the time." "Cookie Puss," their debut as rappers, featured Adrock harassing a real-life Carvel ice cream telephone operator over a hyper-compressed and minimal track. Actually a parody of hip-hop made for the hardcore crowd, "Cookie Puss," according to Mike D., "started getting played on rap shows." Little by little the Beasties began taking rap more seriously, and eventually they stopped playing hardcore altogether. That's when they hooked up with Rubin.

"We needed a DJ," MCA says, "and since we were white we thought it would be cool to have a white DJ. Adam sort of knew Rick, and seeing he was in a punk band and into rap too, we felt he would be perfect." As DJ Double R, Rubin toured with the group for a year. Eventually he produced their riffing "Rock Hard," and when he played it for Simmons, the rap manager signed the Boys to his Rush Productions on the spot.

Simmons soon had put them on the Madonna [*Virgin*] tour, on the Raising Hell tour with Run-D.M.C., L.L. Cool J and Whodini, and took them around to black music conventions. Simmons: "I basically used the power of the [Rush] organization to legitimize them and build a base for them in advance of the release of the album."

Now, after the number one triumph of *License To Ill*, and the success of "Fight For Your Right (To Party)," the Beastie Boys are turning their attention to other fronts, including roles in Run-D.M.C.'s upcoming flick, *Tougher Than Leather*, and their own movie, tentatively titled *Scared Stupid*. With all this, you'd think the Beastie Boys were getting the celebrity treatment—lunch with Walter Yetnikoff, poolside meetings with Hollywood moguls—but you'd be wrong. In fact, they were barred from CBS for allegedly stealing a TV camera at a party. "We're still being treated like shit," Adrock remarks. "I can't imagine anyone treating us like rock stars."

GLENE FRIEDMAN MONICA DEE RETNA



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learned as much about contracts and other things business as he had about music. And the multi-album deal he and Simmons inked with Columbia in 1985 is rumored to be the largest arrangement of its kind—"in the millions," according to Rubin, who wouldn't elaborate. Proposed by A&R executive Steve Ralbovsky, it is an exclusive promotion, marketing and distribution arrangement that calls for at least five album artists and a dozen twelve-inch singles a year. However, with twenty acts now on its roster, Def Jam will probably surpass these minimum figures.

With every release he produces, Rubin calls on his earlier musical influences—Aerosmith and AC/DC, for example, recasting them to define what state-of-the-art rap is. "I use rock beats as opposed to disco beats," he says about his extraordinary rap releases. "What I do is different from electro and the whole 'Planet Rock' sound. That's pulse-oriented, that's disco. What makes a rock 'n' roll record is the beat, not the guitar, and what differentiates a rock record from a disco record is the kick drum which goes *boom ba cha boom boom ba cha* as opposed to a pulse record which goes *boom boom boom*. L.L. Cool J's album is a rock 'n' roll album even though there are no guitars on it. You can make disco records and put heavy metal guitars on them, but they're still disco.

"Old rap records sounded like they were made by the same people that made disco," Rubin notes, alluding to the fact that rap actually started as a reaction against disco's slickness. In the late 70s, disco was on most of the radio stations. Black kids couldn't hear any of their own music, so they started rapping over the breaks from records by the likes of Aerosmith, Queen and Billy Squier. Out of frustration with disco came an interest in rock. Thus, says Rubin, "the rap records I make are more B-Boy."

Their impact, though, has been felt far beyond that circle. Rubin attributes a large part of this to their structure. "I use beats to achieve the dynamics of melodies without melodies," he explains. "Drum parts are the parts of the song; one beat happens during the verse, different pauses bring you into the chorus, then the chorus gets filled out—something is added or taken away. I create a song structure. This is the thing I might have brought to rap music.

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BEASTLY TOYS

Rick Rubin says, "I'm really not a fan of equipment, so I don't care about specifics. I would never say 'run it through *this* machine or *that* machine.' I'd just say, 'I want it to do this.' I'm more concerned with being feel-oriented rather than equipment-oriented, and the engineers I work with are very helpful." So Steve Ettinger, who records and mixes most of Rubin's productions, was consulted.

Drum machines are the Oberheim DMX, the Roland TR-808 and the Linn 9000. To fatten their snare and kick sounds, Drawmer, Kepex and Gatex noise gates are used, along with either Lexicon PCM-41 or PCM-42 delays. Ettinger, who was once a drummer, sometimes augments the machines with cymbals and snatches of real kit. The preferred equalizers are Pultecs and the Neves that are right on the board (there are two extra sets in the outboard rack as well). Reverbs include the Lexicon 224, the Ibanez SDR-1000 and the Yamaha REV-7. For scratching, a standard Technics club DJs' turntable by Panasonic connected to a "mid-priced" Stanton cartridge is used. And all of Rubin's rappers use Sennheiser 421s. "They've got good presence," notes Ettinger. who has to "educate rappers to stay in one place and not to hold the studio mike like a stage mike." Everything gets to either a Studer A-80 multitrack, or A-80 or B-77 two-tracks via a Neve 8014 board that's not automated. "Automation," says Ettinger, "would ruin the whole feel the records have."

electric for me—I think it was one of the bottom-of-the-line Gretsches. But with that and a Fender amp, I was in heaven."

Martinez went on to join a junior high band as bassist, later switching to lead guitar, and got his first professional gig at sixteen with an oldies band. "The day after I graduated," he says, "I was on a plane to southern France. It was great—I mean, I'd never been away from home." Martinez's new group, a nine-piece funk-oriented horn band called Mother Night, toured French resorts before coming back to the U.S. to record an album on Epic Records. "I was this little prodigy in a band with guys all older than me," he recalls. "There were people around kicking me in the butt—and it made me so much stronger as a musician. It made me grow."

Mother Night disbanded in 1973, and Martinez hooked up with Oklahoman funk rocker Jay Mason. In 1975, Martinez auditioned for and won the guitarist's slot in the post-"Lady Marmalade" Labelle. He recorded with the space-age funk trio on their last group album, *Chameleon*, and toured extensively with them. "It was a good education, learning how to present yourself in front of people," Eddie says.

Labelle split up eighteen months later, and Martinez took a much-needed break from the road. Eddie spent hours listening to everything from the Mahavishnu Orchestra to Ravel, refining what he terms his "technical but lyrical" guitar style. "I approach my playing as a lyric," he describes. "I try to make it an additional voice to what's going on musically.... As big and ominous-sounding as the guitar is, I still try to make it melodic."

Eddie woodshedded for six months, then gave old pal Nona Hendryx a hand with her debut solo LP and tour. Through keyboardist and longtime associate Denzil Miller, he next joined forces with Return to Forever's Lenny White in 1978, staying on through three albums. One evening Stanley Clarke called to recruit his services, and Martinez enlisted with Stanley and George Duke in the Clarke-Duke Project.

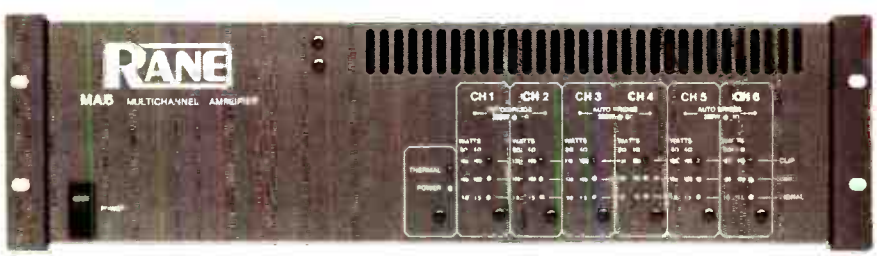
"Playing with Stanley and George was an education," he says. "The things we did were very demanding, ensemble-wise, but these guys looked at it from a real relaxed point of view, no matter how difficult it was. Instead of having to be tensed up and worrying about a part, we just relaxed and played it. It really built up my confidence."

From then on, Martinez's credits continued to build: Blondie's final tour, Bernard Edwards' (who unbeknownst to Eddie had grown up a block away from him in the Bronx) solo album *Glad To Be Here*, and finally Eddie's own solo project *No Lies*, produced by Edwards. The appealing pop/R&B platter, written and sung by Martinez and electrified by his trademark guitar, came out on Cotillion in 1984. For disc purposes, Martinez called himself and his super-session backing band E.P.M., after his initials.

"It was Bernard's first production effort outside of Chic," Eddie notes, "and he considers it the prototype for what he's done—Power Station, Duran Duran, all that stuff." *No Lies* went nowhere, however, the victim (in Martinez' opinion) of Cotillion's inability to market anything that wasn't straight R&B. Not one to wallow in disappointment, Eddie instead redoubled his session efforts, landing spots on Mick Jagger's *She's The Boss*, David Lee Roth's *Crazy From The Heat*, Billy Ocean's *Suddenly*, and many other noteworthy projects—including Run-D.M.C.

It was Martinez' monolithic guitar work on the rap duo's single "Rock Box" and its followup "King Of Rock" which garnered those landmark tunes their renown. The rap/heavy metal coupling was really the brainchild of producer Larry Smith, according to Martinez. "He wrote all that stuff, and he doesn't get enough

BRAIN CHILD



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RANE

credit," maintains Eddie. "I know that [Run-D.M.C.] is capitalizing on it now, but at first the band and the management were apprehensive about it."

Martinez rarely multitracks his guitar to get that "crunchy" effect, as he puts it, preferring "a real big sound in stereo. When you layer heavy chords, sometimes it gets too thick. With tape compression, weird things start happening, and it starts sounding smaller." Smith's production on "Rock Box," however, was an exception. "I'd say there are close to ten guitar tracks on there. There was a drum machine, and I played keyboard bass, and that's primarily it."

Robert Palmer's hit album *Riptide* owed much of its muscle tone to Martinez's pumping-iron axework. That monstro guitar on "Addicted To Love" was on a single live track, according to Eddie. "In most cases, working with [*Riptide* producer] Bernard Edwards, I do overdub my solos, but I really like to cut the crunchy stuff, the big sounding guitars, on the basic tracks if possible. The rhythm guitar you hear was one guitar on the basic track, and then [Duran Duran's] Andy Taylor came in and played some supplementary stuff around the second chorus."

"Addicted"'s brief but perfectly realized solo is Martinez's as well (mis-

continued on page 105

ROCK BOXES

Eddie Martinez primarily wields Hamer guitars, but owns a few Stratocasters as well. On tour with Robert Palmer he tried out a custom guitar designed by Hamer's Jol Dantzig, a snazzy pink number with red LED-light frets, ebony fingerboard and Strat-scale neck. "It's become my mainstay on the road," he noted near tour's end. Eddie has relied on his trusty red Hamer prototype for his work with Run-D.M.C., Mick Jagger, David Lee Roth and Robert Palmer, and he's also picked up a new Dantzig-designed Hamer called the Chaparral.

When it comes to Martinez's amplifiers, it's "Marshall. Always. Live, I'm using 100-watters, as well as 200-300-watters. In the studio I have a 50-watt Marshall amp I use a lot. Live with Palmer I was using a 100-watt head and two cabinets, and working on Bonnie Tyler's album I was using four heads and four cabinets—it was some really big-sounding stuff. 'Addicted To Love' is one Marshall cabinet, and that Hamer prototype."

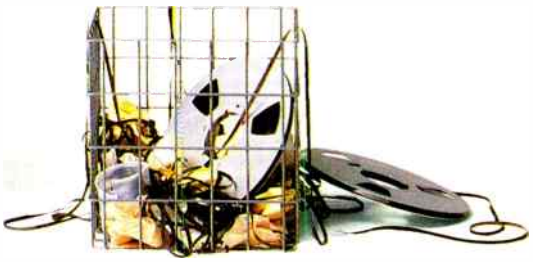
Eddie favors Dean Markley .009 to .042 regular gauge strings, Fender medium picks, and DiMarzio pickups. "Steve Blucher builds humbucking pickups specifically for me," he notes, "'cause he knows what I'm looking for. I have them in most of my guitars."

For outboard gear, Martinez uses Yamaha's REV 7 and SPX 90, Ibanez digital delay and reverb, and JHD pre-amp. Eddie will turn to a Pro-Co Rat for distortion, because he likes its exceptional control: "You put in just the amount you want."

While in Japan with the Palmer tour, Eddie picked up an Ibanez MIDI controller. He's a new endorser of that guitar synth (but not Ibanez guitars or basses, he's careful to point out). "It isn't a synthesizer itself," he details, "but it controls a synthesizer. So I can MIDI it up to a DX7 or Synclavier or Kurzweil, and control it from my six strings. It has a sensitivity control I can adjust to my picking technique."

As many guitarists have observed, playing style must be adjusted when using the Ibanez MIDI controller—or any guitar synthesizer for that matter, according to Eddie. "You do have to slow down a bit. And the way you shake the string and how you inflect the attack of the pick against the string, you sometimes have to compensate and make it a little more straight ahead to get the tracking right. You try and make the guitar as dead as possible, just getting the pure note and none of the fundamental harmonics that happen on top of the note. Otherwise you start getting these weird glitches.

"So it has its pros and cons, but in the sense of being able to strum a guitar and hear a full-fledged orchestra coming out, I'm willing to make those concessions."



TRUTH... OR CONSEQUENCES.

If you haven't heard JBL's new generation of Studio Monitors, you haven't heard the "truth" about your sound.

TRUTH: A lot of monitors "color" their sound. They don't deliver truly flat response. Their technology is full of compromises. Their components are from a variety of sources, and not designed to precisely integrate with each other.
CONSEQUENCES: Bad mixes. Re-mixes. Having to "trash" an entire session. Or worst of all, no mixes because clients simply don't come back.

TRUTH: JBL eliminates these consequences by achieving a new "truth" in sound: JBL's remarkable new 4400 Series. The design, size, and materials have been specifically tailored to each monitor's function. For example, the 2-way 4406 6" Monitor is ideally designed for console or close-in listening. While the 2-way 8" 4408 is ideal for broadcast applications. The 3-way 10" 4410 Monitor captures maximum spatial detail at greater listening distances. And the 3-way 12" 4412 Monitor is mounted with a tight-cluster arrangement for close-in monitoring.
CONSEQUENCES: "Universal" monitors, those not specifically designed for a precise application or environment, invariably compromise technology, with inferior sound the result.

TRUTH: JBL's 4400 Series Studio Monitors achieve a new "truth" in sound with an extended high frequency response that remains effortlessly smooth through the critical 3,000 to 20,000 Hz range. And even extends beyond audibility to 27 kHz, reducing phase shift within the audible band for a more open and natural sound. The 4400 Series' incomparable high end clarity is the result of JBL's use of pure titanium for its unique ribbed-dome tweeter and diamond surround, capable of withstanding forces surpassing a phenomenal 1000 G's.
CONSEQUENCES: When pushed hard, most tweeters simply fail. Transient detail blurs, and the material itself deforms and breaks down. Other materials can't take the stress, and crack under pressure.

TRUTH: The Frequency Dividing Network in each 4400 Series monitor allows optimum transitions between drivers in both amplitude and phase. The precisely calibrated reference controls let you adjust for personal preferences, room variations, and specific equalization.
CONSEQUENCES: When the interaction between drivers is not carefully orchestrated, the results can be edgy, indistinctive, or simply "false" sound.

TRUTH: All 4400 Studio Monitors feature JBL's exclusive Symmetrical Field Geometry magnetic structure, which dramatically reduces second harmonic distortion, and is key in producing the 4400's deep, powerful, clean bass.
CONSEQUENCES: Conventional magnetic structures utilize non-symmetrical magnetic fields, which add significantly to distortion due to a nonlinear pull on the voice coil.

TRUTH: 4400 Series monitors also feature special low diffraction grill frame designs, which reduce time delay distortion. Extra-large voice coils and ultra-rigid cast frames result in both mechanical and thermal stability under heavy professional use.
CONSEQUENCES: For reasons of economics, monitors will often use stamped rather than cast frames, resulting in both mechanical distortion and power compression.

TRUTH: The JBL 4400 Studio Monitor Series captures the full dynamic range, extended high frequency, and precise character of your sound as no other monitors in the business. Experience the 4400 Series Studio Monitors at your JBL dealer's today.
CONSEQUENCES: You'll never know the "truth" until you do.

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MIDI LAW & ORDER

A MICRO PARABLE

YOU'RE THE SUPREME DICTATOR OF MIDI—a rapidly developing banana republic in Latin America. You can remember a time when life was simple in your verdant, equatorial land. But now, technological progress has brought complex new ideas to the teeming MIDI metropolis. And the good citizens—collectively known as the MIDIbytes—are getting harder and harder to control. The main arteries of your embattled capital are congested with upwardly mobile MIDIbytes. Tempers flare in the tropical sun as they elbow one another en route to their jobs—jobs that have also grown frighteningly complex. In the past, the two strata of MIDI society—the Channel and System classes—each had a few simple roles to fulfill. But the social reform programs of the new Detailed Specification 1.0, with its labyrinth of addenda and revisions, have made it harder than ever to maintain law and order.

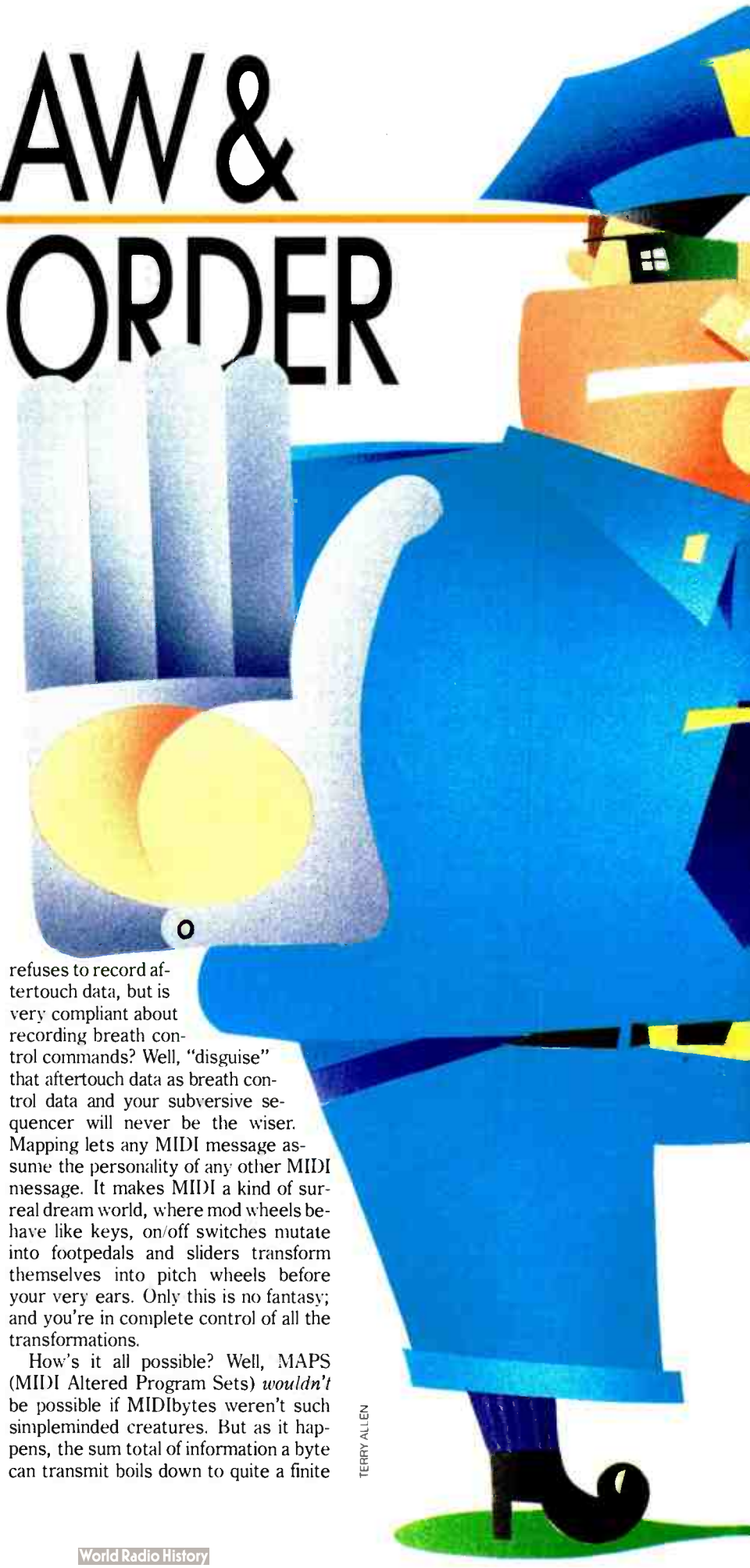
The situation is making inroads on your sanity. So today the Chief of your Secret Police Force is unveiling a bold new plan called MIDI Mapping. It will, he promises, not only reassert your Supreme Authority over MIDI, it will even let you carry out your ambitious plan to increase musical production by harnessing MIDIbyte labor more effectively.

As El Presidente Magnifico, you've of course heard claims like this before. The Generalissimo of your Army has already instituted an elaborate system of traffic control and curfews. Under the iron fist of his dreaded SCAM Program (Switch, Channelize and Merge), the movements of every single MIDIbyte are stringently regulated. But Mapping, the Chief of Police points out, goes beyond mere traffic control. Rather than just prodding the recalcitrant MIDIbytes along the appropriate routes, it actually gets inside their little heads and alters what goes on in there. Psychological warfare.

MIDIBYTE MIND-GAMES

In effect, mapping lets you "take advantage" of your MIDI equipment by systematically inducing certain delusions in it. You say your sequencer stubbornly refuses to record aftertouch data, but is very compliant about recording breath control commands? Well, "disguise" that aftertouch data as breath control data and your subversive sequencer will never be the wiser. Mapping lets any MIDI message assume the personality of any other MIDI message. It makes MIDI a kind of surreal dream world, where mod wheels behave like keys, on/off switches mutate into footpedals and sliders transform themselves into pitch wheels before your very ears. Only this is no fantasy; and you're in complete control of all the transformations.

How's it all possible? Well, MAPS (MIDI Altered Program Sets) *wouldn't* be possible if MIDIbytes weren't such simpleminded creatures. But as it happens, the sum total of information a byte can transmit boils down to quite a finite



TERRY ALLEN

USING MIDI MAPPING TO GET CONTROL OF YOUR SYSTEM

BY ALAN DI PERNA

number of messages. Each of the messages is nothing more than a simple hexidecimal number. In mapping devices, a microprocessor scans the incoming MIDI data stream for a given hexidecimal number and then changes it into another number—all according to instructions you've programmed into it.

As you may recall, MIDI bytes are divided into two basic personality types: status bytes and data bytes. Status bytes are philosophical little buggers who go around offering answers to that eternal question: "What am I?" Answers include things like "I'm a mod wheel" (01 hexidecimal), "I'm a sustain pedal" (40 hex), etc. Data bytes are the more quantitative personalities in the Democratic Republic of MIDI. They devote themselves to answering that other eternal question: "How much?" ("I'm currently at 33% of my maximum range," "I'm at full aftertouch velocity," etc.)

So as you can see, making one MIDI controller act like another controller (or transmit any other MIDI message) is a simple matter of substituting one status byte number for another. While you're at it you can also streamline the flow of MIDI data by *filtering* off any unnecessary bytes. If you're sending aftertouch data from your controller, for example, but your target synth isn't capable of receiving it, it's a simple matter to get a microprocessor to scan for aftertouch status bytes and just not pass the useless data down the line. No sense cluttering the line with vagrant bytes.

Mapping lets you perform a bizarre variety of manipulations on the quantitative side of MIDI as well. For example, you can *expand*, or *scale*, the range of a given controller, increasing the range for more sensitivity and decreasing it for less. You can *invert* the range, so that lowest-to-highest becomes highest-to-lowest and vice versa. (Here's where we get Zawinul-style perversions of the keyboard, wherein notes get progressively lower as you move "up" the keyboard, and vice versa.) Another thing you can do is program an *offset*, so that every time a given hex value comes into the processor, it will be "bumped" up or down by a set amount. Or you can take a particular range or type of data—such as all the notes on your keyboard—and *limit* things, so that only one part of the range will be recognized by a given channel or receiving instrument.

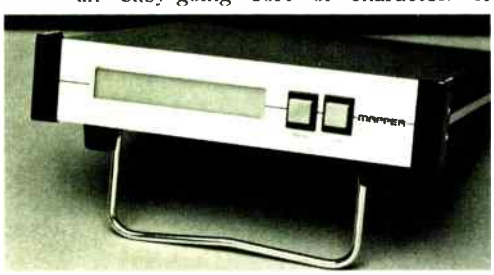
MNEMONIC DEVICES

Along with letting you corrupt the morals of your MIDI data like this, mapping devices also let you store the whole sordid tale in memory. Once you've lashed your MIDI instruments into a configuration you like, the entire succession of mapping operations you've programmed can be stored and recalled like a synth patch. One of these "map

patches" is generally called a *layer* or a *setup*. Like MIDI switching devices, MIDI mappers let you store a number of these setups and then chain through them in any order.

This makes mappers, like switchers, the live performer's best friend (although they're useful in the studio too). You can dramatically reconfigure your system several times during a single song, if need be. With a mapper, though, you're not just storing different "hookups" between instruments; you're also storing all of the "interpersonal relationships" you've established among your instruments. Think of each map setup as an elaborate set of bridge signals or a code book: "When he signals me to sustain a note, that *really* means I have to turn on my LFO...."

Like MIDI bytes themselves, the MIDI mapping devices now on the market also come in a variety of personalities. The Axxess Unlimited Mapper, for example, prides itself on being an easy-going sort of character. It



doesn't insist on the appropriate hexidecimal codes for the MIDI parameters you want to map. (Although you can use them, if you're so inclined.) For most operations, you just use your master keyboard to "show" the Mapper what you want to do. It can map any and all MIDI data and operates on all 16 channels.

The $900 Axxess Mapper is a generic mapper in the best sense of the word—it not only does everything described already, but much of the terminology of MIDI mapping originated from Axxess. The Mapper's functions are all software-based, so there are already new updates. In the latest version, two separate maps can be simultaneously run from two different keyboards, sequencers or other controllers. For instance, you could have two keyboards plugged into the MIDI In, with the full complement of splits, channel assignments, joystick modifications and whatnot on each. Or the second input could be from a sequencer, passing MIDI clock and song position pointer down the line.

The Voyce LX-4 and LX-9 (which command 4 and 9 MIDI channels respectively) also keep most of the byte-jock-

eying "underneath" the control panel. A number of the most-sought-after mapping functions—splitting the keyboard into multiple zones, scaling velocity and volume, bumping notes up or down an octave and filtering off unwanted data—are presented as options on the control panel. You just call up the one you want and select the appropriate amounts, split points, etc.

There's a local on/off feature, which lets you divorce any synth keyboard from its on-board electronics. This allows the keyboard to operate as a separate controller and the electronics as a separate expander. Voyce has also recently added a MIDI-merge function, which allows you to map real-time data being entered on one of the LX-9's two MIDI inputs while sequencer data on the second input plays back unaffected. They've also given the LX-4 and the LX-9 panic buttons, which send an all-notes-off command on all channels in the event of a hangup.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Yamaha MEP4 is a more cerebral character. It affords quite a bit of detailed mapping control, but be prepared to plumb the depths of MIDI's digital psyche. The letters "MEP," incidentally, stand for MIDI Event Processor, not the sound that Road Runner makes. The device actually has four separate processors (hence the "4" part of the name). Each one includes a Data Modifier section, which allows the user to program complex 4-part sequences that combine mapping functions like expansion, reversal, offset, limiting, etc. It doesn't map MIDI Exclusive messages, but with these options there's very little you *can't* do to MIDI channel messages.

Along with their mapping functions, these devices also perform more basic control operations such as MIDI switching, channelizing, etc. So any of them could easily stand alone as the sole central controller for a whole pile of MIDI gear. And reciprocally, several merging boxes out there, such as the 360 Systems MIDIMerge+ and J.L. Cooper MSB+, exhibit some "mappish" traits, such as the ability to bump channel numbers, transpose notes and filter data.

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

But enough about what mapping can do to MIDI data. Let's focus on what it can do to *music*. (Remember that curious byproduct of the math exercises we've all been doing lately?) Actually, it can do quite a bit. Mapping the keyboard is a good place to begin.

Basically, there are two types of personality disorder that mapping can induce in a MIDI keyboard: identity crisis and schizophrenia. Identity crisis is pretty straightforward. A key is mapped into believing it's a switch, a pedal, a trigger or some other non-note-related type of controller. Any function that you want to have close at hand can be mapped as a keyboard function.

Schizophrenia in note data, on the other hand, manifests itself in many different ways. It can afflict an entire keyboard, which splits itself up into multiple zones via data limiting. Theoretically, you can have your keyboard rival Christine (the Strawberry Girl) Sizemore and split it into virtually as many zones as there are keys. The zones can be assigned to different MIDI channels and used to drive different voices or synths and combinations thereof. At the same time, some keys can be zoned for other jobs, as we said above.

Mapping can also induce schizophrenic behavior at the individual key level. A single key can be made to act as many different keys and trigger multiple note on/off events. You can map one key to play a monster chord or even an arpeggio. And of course, the notes in the chord can be dealt out to several synths. By mapping velocity data on our single key, different notes within the chord could be emphasized, depending on how hard the key was struck. Speaking of key velocity data, remember that it too can be mapped to do anything...from a pitch bend to a patch change.

In its more advanced stages, single-key schizophrenia can be used to map harmonizations. By calculating the appropriate offsets, you can have your har-

continued on page 59

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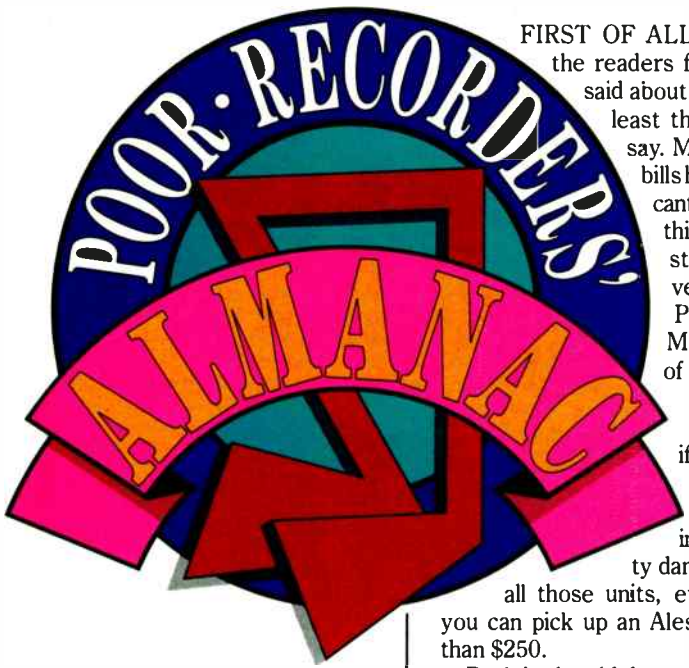

PRIVATE CHAMBERS

How to get that cool discrete reverb chamber sound with only one unit.

By Bob Buontempo

FIRST OF ALL, THANKS TO ALL the readers for the nice stuff they said about my last column—or at least the bad stuff they didn't say. My Valium prescription bills have gone down significantly since then. Anyway, this month I figured I'd stick to the general reverb area for a while. Part of the secret of the Modern Sound is the use of discrete chambers, or separate reverb and delay units for lots of, if not all, the tracks you lay down. If you do this during the mixing stage, it can be pretty damn expensive to afford all those units, even these days when you can pick up an Alesis Microverb for less than $250.

Back in the old days, the early 80s, say, one plate reverb was a blessing, two or more were sheer heaven, and most people would settle for a couple of decent spring reverbs. This would allow you to optimize the sound of one unit for vocals and use the other one for the instruments. It sort of made it appear that everyone was playing and singing all at once in one room—I know, I know, it's impossible, you say, but I have heard rumors that some bands actually *could* play and sing a song all the way through with a minimum amount of mistakes, and that some engineers and producers could even get it down on tape at the same time!!! Like I said, it's only a rumor....

Anyway, what you would hear if you soloed the reverb returns was a boomy/tinny/fuzzy mush (sorry to get technical here.) But the more discrete, or separate reverb chambers used, the cleaner each would sound. The high-end manufacturers of digital reverbs realized this too and companies like Lexicon offered their (then) top of the line model. the 224X, with a choice of split programs, offering two stereo programs at once. You now had individually coated chocolates instead of that gooey chocolate mess. Today, this trend has been taken to what might be considered extreme: literally one chamber per track.

"Yeah, great," you may say. "but no way can I afford all those units." You're probably absolutely right; however, "Ve haf our vayz."

Print with it.

I know I'm going to get a lot of flak about this, but if you're sure of the effect, don't wus out. Commit it to tape!! Then, of course, you'll be stuck with the sound, but hey, it builds character. It will also conveniently let you hear how things are working with each other, and even if you can't go back to fix something you did that doesn't agree with what you're trying to lay down, you can at least modify your current idea to fit. This holds true for compression, delays, eq and other things you might want to add.

Time for an example? Well let's suppose we're working 8-track, and we've got ourselves a drum machine with separate lines out for each voice. We also have a compressor, a digital delay, eq, noise gate, a mixer, and one of any number of very good price/performance digital reverbs. Okay, let's print sync on track 8. We'll leave 7 open as a "guard" track, though you probably don't need it. Find a reverb sound you like for the bass drum, and eq, compress and gate it to taste. Now using the sync, pick a track from 1-4 and print only the bass drum's direct output processed the way you chose. For convenience's sake, we'll suppose it's track 1, although I never saw the logic in printing something as important as the bass drum is today on an "edge" track that's usually the first to be damaged or degraded. I prefer to use the edge track for high hat, where there's so much leakage from the overheads that you could do without the track totally if need be.

Once your bass drum is recorded, go through the same thing with the snare, signal processing and printing to tape on the next track. Repeat this with cymbals left on the next track and cymbals right on the one after. A cooler way to do the last two is to record them at the same time through a stereo reverb unit. Now we bounce. Yeah, bounce. It's no big deal, you ain't gonna get that bad a generation loss, you can always compensate with a little eq, and besides, where's your compressor? If you could afford to do 24 tracks at 30 ips without noise reduction, you wouldn't be reading this in the first place, so quit complaining.

The trick is not to hit the compressors so hard—you have tons of headroom. If you use the compressor right, it sort of envelops the sound in silence, much like digital recording professes to do. It's sort of like all the sounds become crystals, and are then placed in a bowl, separate but together. (I am using no drugs at the present time, just for the record.)

Now you bounce tracks 1,2,3 and 4 to 5 and 6, or if adjacent track bouncing is a problem, 6 and 7—unless you hear that pesky sync track. Choose the lesser of the two evils. If the sync track is recorded as low as it possibly can and still run the drum machine, you done good. The sync might not want to see any noise reduction—as good as dbx is, it was never meant to keep clock pulses quiet. (If you're having trouble with adjacent track bounces, they're usually caused by excessive high frequencies.)

Anyway, back to the bounce: when you do it, have the sync tone run the drum machine once again, this time for the toms. I suggest a stereo out with the three toms panned left, right and center, all processed through a stereo reverb patch (if you didn't stereo reverb the cymbals, you could do that now instead—the point is to have a stereo reverb occurring during the bounce). Now bounce all these together and play them back. Remember, since you're pre-

continued on page 106

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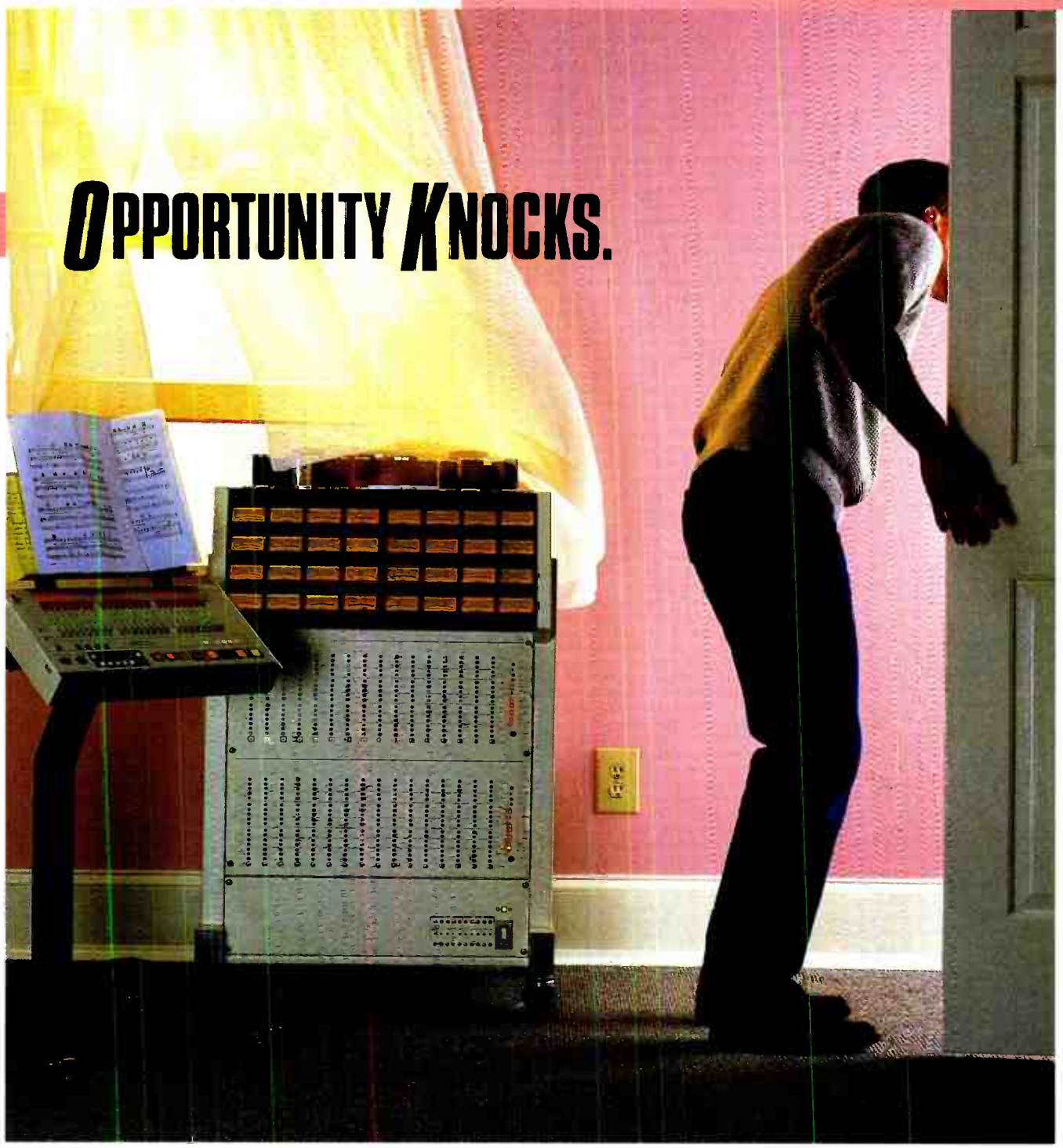

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OTARI

DEVELOPMENTS

Interesting new MIDI controllers for feet, hands and mouths, and MIDI effects galore.

By Jock Baird

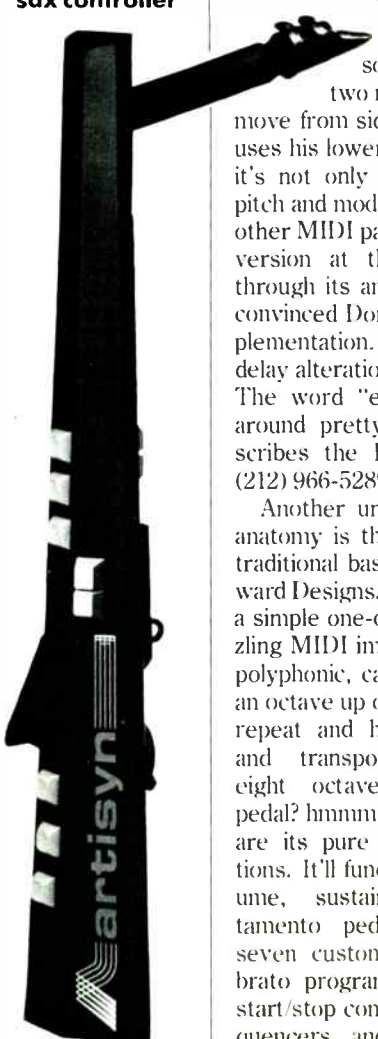
HERE WE ARE, BACK ON THE FLOOR OF this past Winter NAMM show in Anaheim, right where you left us last month. In light of the foregoing story on MIDI mapping, what could be a better way to continue our trek through Equipment Nirvana than to look at some new MIDI controllers that could make use of all that mapping muscle. The most potent—hands and wrists down—was the Dornes Performance Bar. Think about the fact that to use a mod wheel or joystick in 1987, the keyboardist still has to pull his left hand off the keyboard. Kind of makes you wonder how they ever put a man on the moon. New Yorker John Dornes thought about it too, and felt the time had come to do something about this deplorable situation. He solved the problem by building two roller-type bars that both roll and move from side to side. The keyboard player uses his lower palm or wrist to move the bar; it's not only mechanically connected to the pitch and mod wheels, but can also control five other MIDI parameters from a patch box. The version at the show accessed the synth through its analog inputs, but heavy interest convinced Dornes he should add full MIDI implementation. Crossfades, after-aftertouch, delay alterations...you name it, the bar'll do it. The word "ergonomic" used to be thrown around pretty casually, but it perfectly describes the Dornes Performance Bar. Call (212) 966-5289 to see what I mean.

Another unused part of the keyboardist's anatomy is the feet, and a new variation on traditional bass pedals comes from Fast Forward Designs. The MIDI Step looks at first like a simple one-octave pedal board, but has dazzling MIDI implementation. For instance, it's polyphonic, can be set to either double a note an octave up or at any other interval, has note repeat and hold functions and transposes through eight octaves (a string pedal? hmmm). Even better are its pure control functions. It'll function as a volume, sustain and portamento pedal, and has seven custom delayed vibrato programs. It'll send start/stop commands to sequencers and drum machines, and even trigger short percussive notes regardless of how long it's depressed. For its $400 ticket, this is a lot more than just another bass pedal.

There were other more conventional floor MIDI controllers as well. Photon's Footcontroller has quite a few tricks up its pant leg, including arpeggiation, hold, sequencer start/stop, and the ability to use the guitar neck as a switchboard. Roland also debuted its FC-100 foot controller, which takes its RRC in-connector. The FC-100 also accepts an optional EV-5 pedal that can be assigned all manner of MIDI functions. And if you yearn for a MIDI pedal in the stomp-box format, there's Digitech's MPS1. This is more than a stomp-box, though—between its 64 banks, each with 31 presets, and its 4-character LED, it'll do a lot, especially when hooked up to Digitech's FX-17 voltage control pedal.

Fast Forward's MIDI Step bass pedal

Not all the new MIDI controllers were pedals, though: consider the Artisyn SX-01, which is as close to MIDI saxophone as you'll find. It has breath and attack controls, aftertouch, and pitch and mod wheels, and even an LED display right at the mouthpiece, where you can really see it. The Artisyn includes a separate hardware interface/power supply unit, which



Artisyn MIDI sax controller


Dornes MIDI Performance Bar

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can be placed hundreds of feet from the instrument if you're Clarence Clemons and want to run around the Meadowlands during a show. Clarence, call (503) 295-1915 right now.

What do you run all these floor pedals into? Well, NAMM saw even more MIDI-controlled effects. Guitarists—even those who don't have a MIDI guitar—will drool over Roland's GP-8, a rack-mount multi-effects box that covers everything from eq, compression and distortion all the way to digital delay and chorus. Using the Roland pedals mentioned above, you can even turn it into a wah or volume pedal. With 128 user-programmable patches, plenty of patchbay potential and a humongous signal-to-noise ratio, do you really want to go back to chaining boxes together? Roland was also so pleased with the reaction to its acclaimed DEP-5 digital processor, it released a more affordable version, the DEP-3. And let's not leave out the VP-70 voice processor, which not only converts analog pitch to MIDI, but has four pitch-shifters for supercharging monophonic voices or wind instruments.

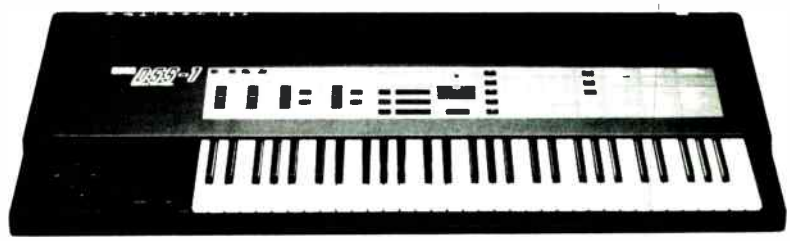
Digitech was also busy MIDIfying, starting with a $400 rack-mount called the DSP-128 digital effects processor, which does reverb, multi-tap delays, chorus, flanging and lets you use more than one effect at the same time. Digitech also showed a versatile non-MIDI 7.6-second sampling delay that's also under $400. Despite the boom in that price range of non-programmable effects, both Digitech units are completely programmable. And there's the Digitech PDS-8000, a $300 stomp box sampling delay that goes up to eight seconds.

For sheer weight of numbers, though, Korg had the most new MIDI effects, with four on the NAMM floor. The two most impressive were the DRV-3000 Dual Effects Processor, a $1200 unit that combines reverb, auto-pan, flange, chorus, pitch-shift and eq functions; it's dual because two functions can be stacked so you can have, for instance, echo with your chorus. The DRV-3000 has only 32 programs (16 of them preset), but stands on its sound quality: The specs say 20kHz of bandwidth and 95db signal-to-noise ratio, but my ears say even nicer things. I also liked the handy wireless remote control panel. Then there's the SDD-3300, a three-tap digital delay that combines three 500ms. DDLs into an extremely flexible system. An internal mixer lets you route those three into mind-boggling combinations. Input and output signals, filter settings and phase relationships of all three can be independently controlled. And how about

KORG'S DDD-1 & DSS-1 PRO WORKHORSES

Korg was always considered a second-tier synthesizer company, mainly for the home recording guy or the bar bands," notes Korg U.S.A. v.p. Michael Kovins. "That bothered us. In 1980, there were very few major artists using our products. Now we have a list of two or three hundred."

No, Korg *isn't* just for bar bands anymore. In part because of new business relationships, Korg has been quietly changing its image and market, assisted by a steady stream of product releases ranging from keyboard samplers and FM synths to digital effects and home pianos. Some of the inspiration for this comes from Korg's American distributor, once called Unicord, now Korg U.S.A., and until recently a cog in Gulf & Western's corporate machine. "It was all short-term under them," recalls Kovins. "They wanted the money and couldn't care less about music or about building for the next three to five years." In late 1985, though, when another corporate giant, Wickes, bought the G&W division Unicord was part of, Kovins and company urged Korg to exercise their option to break the contract and to purchase Unicord themselves. Thus was Korg U.S.A. born. Ironically, it took Japanese ownership to give the Americans a bigger voice; their recommendations for higher quality products and suggestions for features were taken more seriously. Programming of sounds for the U.S. and European markets was brought under Korg U.S.A.'s Westbury, New York roof.



A more recent development saw Yamaha purchase what a Yamaha source describes as "a controlling interest" in Korg (Japan). Although it's still not clear what advantages the acquisition gives Yamaha, the payoff to Korg lies in three Yamaha technologies. There's the DSP processing system that's the heart of the SPX90—this is incorporated into some of the digital effects described in this month's "Developments." There's FM synthesis, the heart of the new DS-8, which has some fabulous programming and MIDI implementation innovations. And there's the AWM system from the Clavinola keyboards that Korg is using in a brand-new home piano line. But the workhorses of Korg's new look are the DDD-1 drum machine and the DSS-1 sampler, both of which we took home for some heavy field testing.

The DDD-1 is a sample-based stereo drum sequencing unit with sixteen voices. Its sixteen instrument keys are velocity-sensitive, with a rubbery pad-like surface to enhance control. Complete touch sensitivity, tuning, decay and output level can all be separately set. A substantial patch bay in the rear has six separate instrument outs and lots of switches, sync, trigger and clock ins and outs. It'll do rolls and flams, can create patterns up to ninety-nine bars long, and holds ten songs of up to 255 "parts." MIDI implementation is state of the spec.

The DDD-1 has erroneously been called a sampling drum machine—it can hold two user samples if you buy a $250 accessory, but its primary function is as a sample *player.* The samples come in the form of ROM cards the size of a credit card (Korg is the first to use these) which plug into one of four slots in the front. A fifth slot takes a writable RAM card, but this saves only pattern data. The ROM card library is large and quite impressive, ranging from gated reverb snares and toms to orchestra blasts, from breaking glass and gunshots to Indian tablas. A varying number of sounds comes with each card, depending on how long each is.

A very flexible instrument assign system makes it a simple task to take a button off the onboard sound and give it to a RAM card voice. It'll save ten different setups. You can also put the same instrument on several keys with different note values, so you could, say, sequence a bass part—bass patches and other melodic sounds are included in the library. The price of the cards, $69 a pop, will be a bit daunting to some, but even the standard onboard library has two choices of kick, snare and high-hats so you won't be needing cards right away.

It's hard not to get attached to the DDD-1. The sounds are classy—I love the internal snare. Using it with a MIDI sequencer endeared me to its multi-faceted clock/sync implementation. MIDIing it up to a Simmons SDS9 made me appreciate its complete MIDI note assignment capability, either, incoming or outgoing. Separate voices on separate MIDI channels? No sweat. The sysex dump is all too easy. If there's something it doesn't do well, it's more complicated than I've thought of. Some will want complete user sampling, but they'll have to go to units three or four times the price. For the rest of us, the thousand dollars the DDD-1 sells for will be fine. A $500 baby brother dubbed the DDD-5 is now out, and includes a pattern library.

The DSS-1 is primarily a keyboard sampler, but has so much synthesis capability

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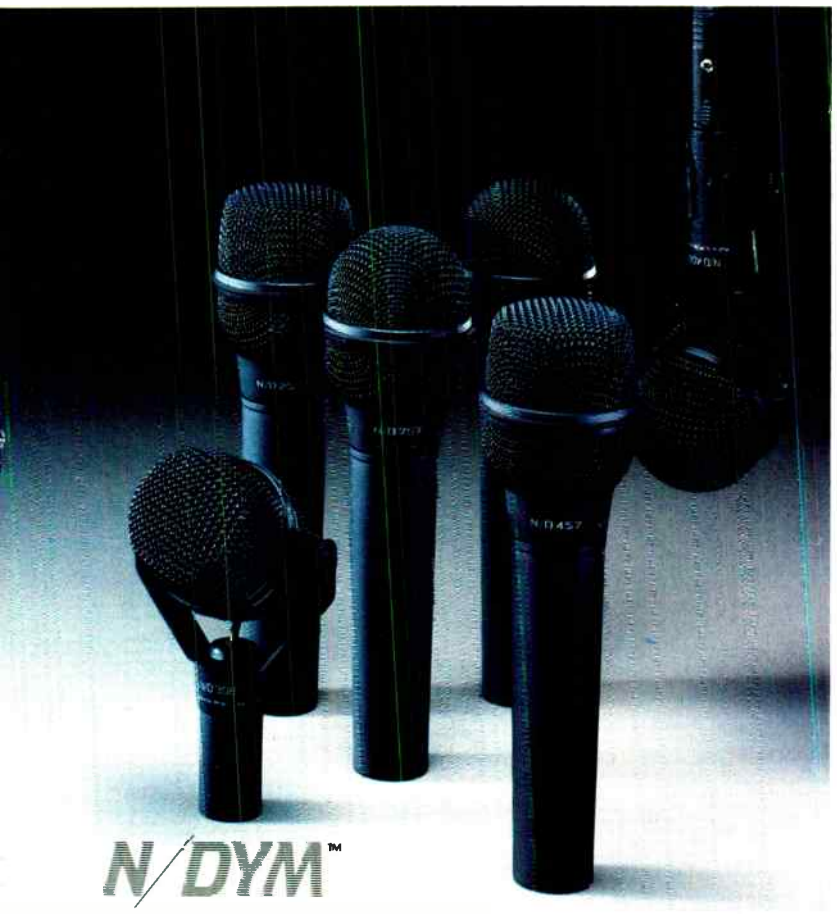

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the Korg DRV-2000, an effects processor that uses its MIDI implementation to allow accessing parameters from external MIDI controllers in real time. It even has a program to control reverb time from the analog volume level. This is truly the poor man's Lexicon PCM-70—how poor? About $650. And for those who simply want a decent non-MIDI under-$500 reverb with more control over its presets than most, there's the DRV-1000.

Speaking of the Lexicon PCM-70, there's a new software revision, Version 3.0, that brings even more parameters under real-time MIDI control. You can set your delay time or room size to MIDI clock, for example, stack up to six effects simultaneously or use the Inverse Room algorithms found on the high-rent Lexicon 224X and 200. The new software is also packed with pre-delay reflections, specially formulated kick and snare patches, and can allow ten parameters to be externally controlled in real time via MIDI. You don't get more control than that in the MIDI effects universe. If you do buy the new software, though, make sure you save your favorite old patches—once you change over, there's no going back.

When it comes to open-ended software-based units, one of the most intriguing NAMM exhibitors was TOA, who showed a computer-driven universal digital processor that could be an equalizer, automated mixdown system, digital effects, or whatever else desired. Using third-party software writers, the TOA system could be adapted to do anything and everything in the studio. This is a provocative concept, with a lot of unanswered questions. Would it be interactive, or would its functions be mutually exclusive? Is the audio world ready for a pure processor that has no predefined function? What computers will it be written for (an NEC was used at NAMM) and what kind of price range are we talking? No immediate answers were forthcoming, but keep an eye on this project.

What, time's up already? Boy, they keep your stage time down on these bus tours. Well, just enough time to apologize to Gibson/Phi Tech exec Gary Zebrowski, who was really the third Harvard B-school roommate in last month's NAMM report. He's probably thinking about Charvel's legal challenge to Gibson's new line of Wayne Charvel guitars. See ya in court, Gary. And the rest of you we'll see next month. M

it should really be called a practical sound lab. Non-sampling patch creation can be done either by waveform drawing or by selecting a simple saw, square or sine wave and mixing in the harmonic series (some call this "Fourier synthesis"). A whole analog-style synth parameter section is included, with two digital delays. This whole synthesis component is wrapped around a really lovely sounding 12-bit sampling system, and using the two oscillators per eight voices, you can mix and crossfade your created and sampled sounds to taste.

Basic sampling and putting the samples on the keyboard is pretty easy—hearing the sampled input through the audio outs when you're sampling helps immensely, as does an automatic key assignment feature. Looping is also a breeze, thanks to an auto zero cross locating function. The DSS-1 organizes its functions into modes, with the whole menu structure written on the front panel. Once you're in a mode, it's easy to flip from screen to screen, and this makes chores like dividing up and assigning the memory, setting input and trigger levels, and moving around the keyboard notes altogether painless. And let's hear it for sample naming capability.

Moving from mode to mode in order to edit, layer and actually assemble final

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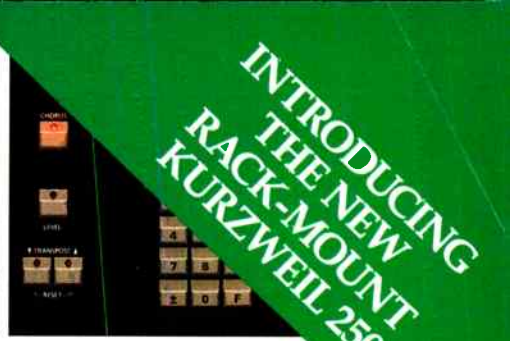

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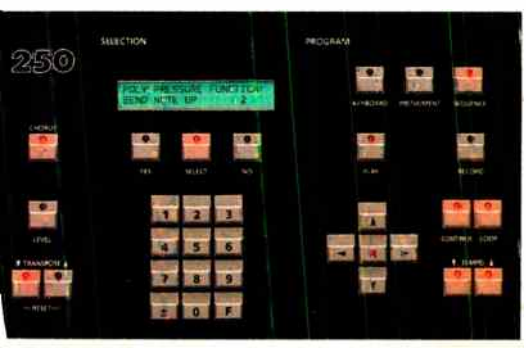
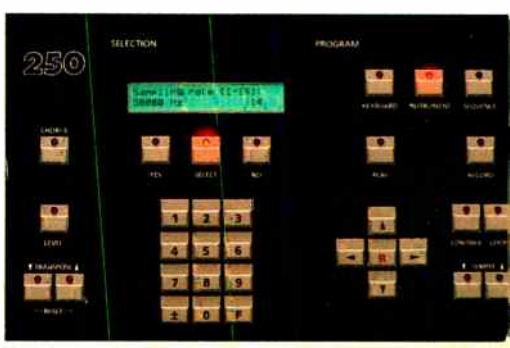




BLUES BROTHERS

Jimmie Vaughan & Stevie Ray Vaughan Make Hot Guitar a Family Affair

By Ed Ward

This is a story about two brothers who have two fathers. Their natural father was married to their mother until he died last summer. The other one is only a couple of years older than the older brother. He's a bar owner fresh out of prison. This is no ordinary family we're talking about. These are the Vaughan Brothers, Jimmie Lee and Stevie Ray, and the blues family that has grown up around them.

Improbably, blues continues to be played in dives and taverns across America. Not much of it is played by and for black people, though: If the generic band in the generic bar isn't playing country music, chances are it'll be playing things like "Stormy Monday," "Baby What You Want Me To Do" and "Born Under A Bad Sign." There's nothing special about much of it: one hot-shot guitar player, maybe a saxophonist, and a vocalist with a penchant for either vintage threads or an unending succession of black T-shirts and blue jeans can be counted on to be there, but neither the aspirations nor the execution of the music points towards show-biz. It's a way of filling the air with something to compete with the cigarette smoke, a means of getting that gal onto the floor for a slow dance, a soundtrack for beer.

Out of this whole scene—dozens upon dozens of bands—there are a handful who make a living doing it, a handful who tour and make more than gas-money to the next gig, a handful who record for blues specialty labels like Alligator or Varrick. They do it because they like it—hell, they *must*, because they're not getting rich. But I know that a lot of them also harbor dreams of bigger things while refusing to sell out. And one powerful reason they hang on is that they've seen, over the past few years, what Jimmie Lee and Stevie Ray Vaughan have accomplished. "Man," one grizzled white blues veteran said when Stevie's first album came out, "he's gonna kick the door open and the rest of us are gonna come slidin' through." I knew the man's music, but I was too kind to contradict him.

The thing is, neither Stevie Ray's Double Trouble nor Jimmie Lee's Fabulous Thunderbirds are your standard issue barroom white blues bands. The reason for this goes way beyond technical questions and matters of style into much deeper waters. It has to do with such powerfully twinned concepts as rock 'n' roll, rhythm and blues, fathers and sons, and love and dedication. In order to get a handle on this, I traveled to Midland, Texas, where both brothers' bands were finishing up mammoth tours by playing two gigs in one day: one at the Big Spring Federal Prison Camp and

Photograph by Zack Ryall

another at the Midland Holiday Inn Country Villa's convention center. Both were acts of filial duty toward club owner Clifford Antone, a soft-spoken, cherubic-looking man of Lebanese extraction who adopted the brothers over a decade ago and says quite unironically, "They're my sons."

But that's getting ahead of our story. In the wee hours of a Sunday morning, the Vaughans sat in a hotel room and went all the way back to Big Jim Vaughan and Martha Cook's courtship in an effort to find out where the magic started.

By the time Big Jim married Martha, the Oak Cliff section of Dallas had already begun a slide from its tony beginnings into a lower middle-class neighborhood that would soon polarize along racial lines. But, as Jim and Martha found out, it was a good place to start a family.

STEVIE: When they met, Daddy was workin' in a 7-11, doing curb service.

JIMMIE: They had curb service back after the war. My mother would pull in every day after she got off work somewhere close to downtown and he'd come out and she'd order an Eskimo Pie. Then he got transferred to a 7-11 near Sunset High in Oak Cliff, and one day he saw her pull in to get a loaf of bread for her mother and he walked out to the car with an Eskimo Pie and asked her for a date.

STEVIE: She fell in love with him because of his arms.

JIMMIE: She said he had pretty arms. I mean, he had everything else pretty, too, but that's just what she always told us.

I think Stevie and I were just normal kids. There's three and a half years between us, and we had our fights and stuff, but the one thing that wasn't normal was Daddy's job. He was an asbestos worker, and he was on call. If there wasn't a job in Dallas, he'd go to Louisiana or Little Rock, or wherever. I went to part of the first grade in Jackson, Mississippi, because we were moving around sort of like gypsies. We had a car with a little trailer on it, and we'd do a month here, a couple months here, two weeks there, and back to Dallas. That's where we first heard blues and country.

STEVIE: Our parents, man, they loved to dance. Danced their asses off.

JIMMIE: We used to go see Fats Domino and Jimmy Reed, plus my dad always liked Glenn Miller and T. Dorsey and that stuff. And Bob Wills.

STEVIE: They used to come over to the house a lot.

JIMMIE: Yeah, we can't figure out who they were, but we remember that there was a couple of times that guys from Bob Wills' band would come over after a gig. My parents would have "42" parties.

STEVIE: That's a domino game, "42," "84," "Nello," "Low-boy." We don't know how to play them.

JIMMIE: And all kinds of characters would come to these "42" parties. There was a lot of guys down to my dad's local who played, and always at these parties there'd be a couple of guys with a Telecaster just sitting in the living room playing with a little amp. Our uncles, Jerrel and Joe-Boy Cook played a little Hank Williams and all that kind of stuff.

STEVIE: We'd go to family reunions and the whole family'd be jammin'. Both sides.

JIMMIE: There was always somebody had a guitar, or something, singing.

MUSICIAN: *So you just fell into it naturally. When did you get your first guitar?*

JIMMIE: I guess I was twelve? The first one we got from a friend of my dad's, whose son was named Robert Louis Stevenson and had a rock 'n' roll band that was pretty popular around Dallas in the '50s. Anyway, it was this guitar with three strings on it. I had broken my collarbone trying to play football—I was *terrible* at sports—so I was at home for a month and I just started farting around with it. I'd been trying to play drums before that. We had a neighbor who was away in the Navy, and we'd go over to his house on weekends and I'd play his drums.

STEVIE: Yeah, every time he'd try to play something I'd try to pick it up afterwards. Then he'd go on to something else, and

JIMI STRATTON

Stevie Ray: former Epileptic Marshmallow.

when guitars came around, I was always trying to figure out what he was doing.

JIMMIE: So was I! [*laughter*]

STEVIE: We had some of it backwards. Jimmie got a guitar that played, with all the strings and everything. For my birthday I got me a masonite guitar with catgut strings, and I had to take three strings off of it so that it would tune. So I ended up with a three-string guitar just like he did. I started trying to play kind of bass riffs. It maybe didn't make any sense, but I tried it.

JIMMIE: We'd play together. Daddy bought us out of the Montgomery Ward's catalog this Airline record player, where the speakers'd come out with wires on either side, and we used to both stand in front of 'em with our guitars like this [*stands up and looks cool*] so it looked like we had amps. We were hooked.

STEVIE: I started out trying to learn that song about Thunderbird wine by the Nightcaps ("Wine Wine Wine," 1960). I'd get a clothes hanger and I'd use something for a fake mike, and I'd put the stereo speakers behind the flower boxes on the porch and my girlfriend would walk by and I'd act like I was doin' the song. She came up the driveway and told me to take the Nightcaps off the record player and stop acting like a fool. So I figured I ought to try to learn something.

JIMMIE: They were a real mean band. That song was a huge hit in Dallas. Every band, every kid, knew it for like ten years. *Every* band in Dallas knew that song. I learned how to play lead, rhythm, bass and drums, really, just trying to copy that record. It was just a blues, that's all it was. I mean, it was originally by Lil' Son Jackson, but we didn't know. I still play it. But rock 'n'

roll and blues...

STEVIE: ...seemed all the same.

JIMMIE: Yeah, one of the rock 'n' roll hits in Dallas was "Linda Lu," by Ray Sharpe. That's the blues, and rock 'n' roll, too. A blues lead and a rock 'n' roll bass line. I started listening to the Ventures, of course, and Lonnie Mack was hitting big. I had a Little Walter and Muddy Waters album, a Kenny Burrell album, and the first time I actually made some money I went and bought like twenty B.B. King albums right in downtown Oak Cliff. But you know, I didn't think of rock 'n' roll and blues and all of that. It has that sound, you know? They're the same thing. You hear that song "Bo Diddley" for the first time, and *what in the hell is that? I* understand the difference between blues and rock 'n' roll, but I don't play just one or the other. I mean, you wouldn't *have* either one of 'em without the other.

MUSICIAN: *So what were you doing during this time, Stevie? Playing catch-up?*

STEVIE: Yeah, and going to see Johnny G & the G-Men and the Glorytones, people who were...

JIMMIE: ...our heroes. We used to go down to the show on Friday nights at the Paris Theatre, and they used to have bands and dance contests after the movie. Our parents wanted to go out and play dominoes and go fartin' around, so they'd take us to this place, leave us off, and pick us up. We liked it because we didn't want to stay home. We'd go see a band—these guys were *cool*! They'd play songs like "You Can't Judge A Book By Looking At The Cover" and rock that sucker outa there. I mean, everybody says that British guys brought that back and that they turned America on to it, but there was guys listenin' to that shit. Lonnie Mack: He was wilder than a giraffe pussy.

STEVIE: He'd flop around on the floor and do all that.

JIMMIE: Pretty soon me and a few buddies of mine started trying to play parties and the morning pre-school dime dances. We'd play anywhere we could: talent shows, battles of the bands. And we were good right from the start, I think. The Swingin' Pendulums. We were thirteen the night of our first gig, and we played through the summer, six nights a week. We used to sing through the old Seeburg jukebox 'cause we didn't have a PA, and we had Silvertone amps. We made fifty dollars apiece. The Hob Nob Lounge in Dallas. Daddy was our manager. He'd put our shit in the back of the pickup and take us to the gig. Shoot, I was on top of the world. Now, Stevie was too young. They wouldn't let him out of the house.

STEVIE: First club gig I had, we had an eleven-piece band, and we played after hours for eight days and made $600. But my first band was the Shantones. We played a talent show and about halfway through the song, we went, "Wait a minute," because we discovered we didn't know the whole song. We were tryin' to play things like "Sleepwalk" although we didn't have a steel player. We was only eight or nine years old.

JIMMIE: He was eight or nine and I was like thirteen. I didn't hang out with him because he was only my little kid brother. I was off with old guys, guys a year older than me. So he was having trouble gettin' away with it. What can you do when you're nine years old? I remember once our parents took us to that...what was the name of that club, the fancy one with the Playboy bunny girls?

STEVIE: Oh! The In Crowd!

JIMMIE: Yeah, the In Crowd. We was gonna do the Sunday talent show, and when these beautiful women showed up...

STEVIE: Oh, man...

JIMMIE: ...Mother covered his eyes...

STEVIE: ...ever' time, or Daddy would take me to the bathroom, and then peep out the door himself.

JIMMIE: But you know, Daddy didn't stop me. He'd always tell me that he didn't want me doing what he does. Anything would be better than that.

STEVIE: Daddy's gig wasn't the happiest kind of thing in the world. Working with that asbestos and coughing all the time, crawling in-between the walls where it was like 300 degrees. He'd wear thermal underwear to stay cool. Work fifteen minutes and take thirty off.

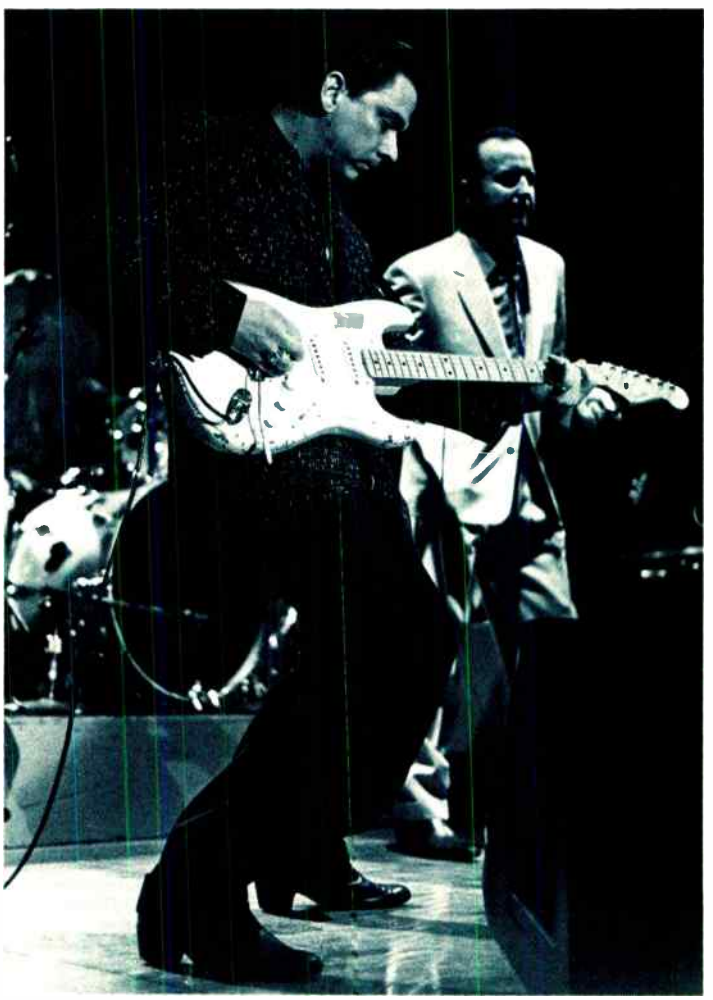
JIMMIE: But he loved music. He'd sit on the couch and get goosebumps when he heard something he liked. He really liked the walkin' bass. He was...[*long pause*]. And then when I was about fifteen, I ran off with a band, the Chessmen, and went and lived in an apartment with them, and me and my dad sorta had a fallin' out, and that's the end of that story. I didn't actually see Stevie for a couple of years. I wasn't comin' around a lot.

STEVIE: If there was ever any reason for me not to do it, from my parents, it was only during that period. They didn't want to lose me. I was twelve or thirteen, and obviously I was gonna play music, too.

JIMMIE: They didn't want him to run off, like me.

MUSICIAN: *Was there any sort of generation gap between the types*

Jimmie with singer Kim Wilson: "He was one of them guitar players everybody watched."



JIMI STRATTON

of music you were trying to play?

STEVIE: Maybe a little, but, see, I was always watchin' him lead. He was one of them guitar players everybody watched. And with me tryin' to pick it up and run around on my own, there was some sort of gap in musical styles because he was leadin' everybody.

JIMMIE: Everybody goes off on tangents, tryin' stuff. I don't think it's really all that different. Obviously it ain't. It was just guitar. Guitar and everything that goes with it. You know, when you're that age, all you want to do is grow up. Whatever that is. You don't want to go to school, all you want to do is play in your band. So you just run off. I don't recommend it, but that's what happened.

STEVIE: I did basically the same thing, a little bit later. I quit right at the beginning of the twelfth grade. I woulda graduated in '72. I'd already been playing the Cellar for a year or two, and the Ali Baba and the Funky Monkey and the Fog.

MUSICIAN: *Those were the after-hours clubs where they served imitation alcoholic drinks, if I remember correctly. You had a band with a really ridiculous name back then, didn't you?*

STEVIE: That was before then. The Epileptic Marshmallow.

JIMMIE: You had a band called *that?*

STEVIE: Mmm hmm.

JIMMIE: That's great! That'd probably work now! [*with awe in his voice*] Epileptic Marshmallow.

STEVIE: It was just the worst name we could think of.

But the times, you should pardon the expression, were a-changin', even if Dallas wasn't. Ever since the Kennedy assassination, Dallas had been striving to clean up its act, to expunge the bohemian element that was so prominent a piece of its underbelly. After all, had things worked out differently, some of the clubs the Vaughan boys played would have been Jack Ruby's. The psychedelic 60s had a very hard time of it all over Texas, but in Dallas particularly. About the only oasis was the traditionally loose capitol city of Austin, home of the University of Texas, and a thriving music scene that had its folkies (Janis Joplin, Powell St. John of Mother Earth) and its psychedelic bands (13th Floor Elevators, Shiva's Head Band) as well as sprawling old wooden houses that rented for $85-$100 each, cheap pot (even for the 60s), skinnydipping in the municipal spring-fed swimming pool, and an undemanding pace of life that was quite antithetical to Dallas' burgeoning respectability.

Some of this climate was due to the ascendancy of the LBJ mob in Washington, but much of it was a traditional adjunct to the university, a cultural beacon in the middle of straitlaced Texas. In the late 60s, the university had among its tens of thousands of students a chubby rich kid from Houston, Clifford Antone, who just loved psychedelic music. He could get high and put on the headphones and listen to those guitar solos for *hours*! Then one day he accidentally bought a copy of *Fleetwood Mac In Chicago*, an album that paired the British blues-rock band with some of the finer living Chicago blues musicians. Antone was shocked. So *this* was where that music was coming from! He resolved to get his hands on as much of it as he could, and with his money, it wasn't hard.

Antone's family owned a string of Texas gourmet deli shops, and upon graduation Clifford made a dutiful try at the family business, but his heart was clearly elsewhere. Part of it was over on Austin's black and brown east side, and part of it was only noticeable to the select few who gathered in the back room of the store after closing to listen to blues records and to jam with Clifford on his growing collection of electric guitars. No business slouch, Clifford had researched a dream of his and realized that the great blues club he burned to open couldn't become a reality until Austin legalized liquor by the drink. "The minute we got liquor by the drink, man," he says today, "I opened my club." Like any good blues club, it had a house band. And as you might expect from a man of Clifford's good taste, the house band featured Jimmie Lee Vaughan on guitar.

Jimmie had been to Austin with the Chessmen, who were staples of the frat-house circuit, but he dropped out of the band in 1967 to devote himself to blues.

Mother used to cover his eyes.

JIMMIE: I always loved Austin from the Chessmen days. Austin was where a guy gave me a joint one night: "Here, try this." Austin was psychedelic back then. Lots of little clubs, the Vulcan Gas Company, the Saracen, the Jade Room. That was really a different time. I'm glad it's over, too. Now when I think about it, it wasn't that great. But when I moved to Austin in 1969, I was off into blues bands. You know, we'd do Eddie Floyd songs, too; me and Doyle Bramhall, a drummer I'd worked with in Dallas. There was several bands, we didn't have a solid band at the time.

We used to play at the IL Club on East 12th Street (the Main Street of black Austin), playin' B.B. King songs. At first the old ladies loved it. They'd look at us like, huh? Then we'd hit the right note or something and they'd be all in a mess. There wasn't too many people doin' it any more, I guess. You could go into a small bar and hear Hosea Hargrove, and there was a guy named Wolfman, who lived in the IL Club, had a little cot in there, who looked like the Wolfman. He'd play drums and sing.

MUSICIAN: *When did you move down, Stevie?*

STEVIE: New Year's Eve of '72.

JIMMIE: You came down to see me.

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STEVIE: Yeah, I came down a few times before I moved. I played bass at the IL Club with you.

JIMMIE: You played bass on that Barney Kessel we had. We'd tune the strings down and we'd play bass on it. Play John Lee Hooker and all that stuff all night.

MUSICIAN: *So there was a time when the Vaughan brothers played together! Did anybody ever try to cast you into the role of the new Winter Brothers?*

STEVIE: Bill Ham [ZZ Top's manager] always wanted to.

JIMMIE: People always used to suggest it, but at the time, he was playing lead, I was playing lead, and there wasn't room for both of us. We always used to joke about it. It was like having two organ players.

In the early 70s, Austin's attention was firmly on the progressive country scene that was building in clubs like Soap Creek, Castle Creek and the Alliance Wagon Yard. Eventually, national attention was paid to it, and the cavernous former National Guard Armory known as Armadillo World Headquarters was touted as the center of that scene. But all along, blues bands were forming, breaking up, jamming together, with nary a shred of attention. Not that the players cared. "We had a great time," Jimmie says, "we was playin' the One Knight, free cigarettes, free beer, pass the hat, we was happy as larks. Had a guitar, an old amp, got to play every night."

The leading lights on the Austin scene were three: the Fabulous Thunderbirds featuring Jimmie Lee Vaughan; the Cobras, which Stevie had left in 1976; and, after that, the Triple Threat Revue, featuring, as threats, Stevie Ray, W.C. Clark (an underrated local black bluesman), and Lou Ann Barton. These three bands and their various jamming permutations and later incarnations are basically all you need to know about Austin blues. That and the fact that, as Jimmie notes, "we didn't care: We were making a little money here and living. Back then, I didn't think about career, or money, or what I was going to be doing later, or anything. I was just playing Lazy Lester songs and having a good time." The fact that this attitude permeated the scene makes some of its participants' cries of "sellout" highly suspect when aimed at one or another Vaughan, usually Stevie Ray.

It is simply because the Fabulous Thunderbirds weren't blues nerds on any level that they soon became known around the country, playing the San Francisco Blues Festival, holding down the house seat at Antone's, and, in 1979, signing a deal with Chrysalis Records. They weren't wedded to a fatalistic, backward-looking vision; they dressed sharp and weren't afraid to hang out with the likes of aging new-wavers like Nick Lowe and Dave Edmunds, either. Unlike several of their Austin peers, they deigned to leave town for months at a time, working hard on the road to keep visible, make money and sell records. In contrast the Cobras were offered a fine deal with Rounder during this period, but never bothered to sign the contract and return it, so confident were they that it had some hidden screw-job in it. Not long afterwards, they broke up.

As for Stevie, considering the volatile mix of egos in the Triple Threat Revue, it's something of a miracle that it lasted past a single gig. When it finally exploded nobody was too surprised, but Stevie resurfaced quickly with a trio called Double Trouble (after the Otis Rush song), supported by bassist Tommy Shannon and drummer "Whipper" Layton. Blues nerds complained about his alleged Hendrix fixation, and lots of people complained about his personality. Not to put too fine a point on it, where Jimmie was at worst taciturn and at best a gentleman, Stevie Ray Vaughan was almost always an asshole. Kinder souls were quick to point out that it wasn't his fault: He had a rampaging drug problem and drank a lot, too. Mostly, people just preferred to avoid him offstage. Then he, too, got a contract with Epic, and suddenly he was big news. David Bowie tapped him for his "Serious Moonlight" tour and at the last moment Stevie Ray Asshole refused to go, in what was either a colossal blunder or a carefully-thought-out bit of strategy. His just-released debut album soared even without David Bowie's help, a Grammy nomination followed, and it looked like he'd beaten the odds.

Double Trouble's record sales soon left the T-Birds' in the dirt. Each Fabulous Thunderbirds album was better than the last, and seemed to sell even less. Finally, after 1982's *T-Bird Rhythm*, Chrysalis dropped them. The band went into a huddle, fired bassist Keith Ferguson for mysterious reasons, hired a much younger bassist, Preston Hubbard (original drummer Mike Buck was bounced after the first album for ex-Asleep at the Wheel skinman Fran Christina), and recorded another album with Dave Edmunds producing. Manager Mark Proct took it around to everybody. Then he did it again. An A&R man commented after a showcase gig in L.A., "The band I love, but how do I sell a fat, balding, forty-year-old vocalist who wears a turban to kids who watch MTV?" Good point. And, good as they were, they were still basically a blues band, something unlikely to turn heads in the era of Boy George and Duran Duran.

Meanwhile, Clifford Antone was prospering. Antone's, "The Home of the Blues," had survived being run off 6th Street, which was becoming Austin's Bourbon Street, chock-a-block with bars filled with frat boys drinking to the strains of copy bands instead of the blues bars and Mexican *conjunto* bars that had been there for decades. Clifford moved to a very uncomfortable location in a former carpet warehouse and dabbled with country and soul bookings in addition to blues with varying success. Finally, he obtained a lease on a building near the university and it looked like the Home of the Blues had found its place. He assembled a new house band, the Antones, and started bringing in a panoply of blues acts: Otis Rush, Memphis Slim, Jimmy Rogers, Bobby "Blue" Bland, B.B. King, Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, Guitar Junior, Lonnie Mack, Pinetop Perkins, and probably the spirits of Robert Johnson, Little Walter

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and Muddy Waters graced its stage. The next step was to start a record company. He called Mark Proct and told him that if *Tuff Enuff* didn't find a home, it had one at Antone's Records. Clifford *always* remembers those who have been good to him.

Of course, a steady diet of blues can mean some financial hard times, too. God knows what got into Clifford on that day back in 1984, but early one morning a passel of Federal agents caught him and some of his co-workers transferring something like a half ton of pot from one truck to another in an all-night restaurant's parking lot. His sister Susan came in from California to run the club, and, after all of his appeals were exhausted, Clifford was sent to Big Spring Federal Prison Camp in the first days of 1986. A "country club" prison, perhaps, but a prison nonetheless.

Then something *very* weird happened. CBS Records announced that they'd take *Tuff Enuff*, and the first single off the album, the title track, started to sell. And sell and sell and sell. An MTV video (featuring local Austin strippers) went into heavy rotation. The same thing happened with the follow-up, "Wrap It Up," the old Sam & Dave song. The album went gold. The band toured Europe, Japan, did Letterman and Carson. They caught up to Double Trouble, and Stevie Ray wasn't doing too badly himself.

Or was he? The word around Antone's was that he was pretty far gone, that you couldn't talk to him, couldn't reason with him, that he was subject to hallucinations. Of course, that could have been talk. He was still packin' 'em in on the road.

Then, in August, Big Jim Vaughan died. Asbestosis, heart disease, a lifetime of hard work ganged up on him. Fortunately, he'd lived long enough to see his sons start to achieve their dreams, but both of them were devastated. Up in Waco, where she was hiding out from the chemical temptations of Austin, Lou Ann Barton heard the news and immediately started frying chicken for the funeral. Like any good Southern gal, she knew they'd need some comforting.

After they buried Big Jim, the grind went on. The T-Birds' schedule saw them on the road 350 days in the year. Stevie had commitments in Europe. It was there, after a show in Geneva, that Stevie imploded. His system collapsed—Stevie found himself unable to climb a flight of stairs. After he got back to the States, he checked into a drug-rehabilitation program. Cocaine and alcohol had taken their toll.

"I had to run it into the ground so I could get up," he says today. "You know that, if I'm gonna roll that way, I'm damn sure gonna be a good con with it, too. I conned myself into believing that I was controllin' it. I mean, doin' a quarter ounce a day, snortin' it, I'd put a half gram or a gram in a drink, down that, then make another drink. Finally, I just realized one day that you just can't do that forever! Somehow, I'd managed to keep myself from completely falling apart, but I'd been pretty much a space-case. I figure from playin' the kind of music that I liked, still havin' friends who were really friends, and tryin' to keep those things in mind was what kept me as sane as I was. There's a lot of people that can go party socially and not run it into the ground, and I wish I was one of 'em, but I'd gotten to the point where I'd done my share and part of somebody else's, that my brain was chemically changed. Just before I quit drinkin', I could drink a whole shitload and not get drunk, and the next day with no warning take half a drink and be fucked up. And it was gettin' to where it was interfering with my playing."

Sober, straight and more healthy-looking than I've ever seen him, Stevie is actually pleasant to be around these days. As for Jimmie, he isn't as surly as he once was, and seems to have the inner peace that comes from being justified in a long-held belief. And, as they showed in Midland, they're both playing better than ever.

Although they deny it, many witnesses, including Clifford Antone, who remembers them "goin' at it like tigers," say there was an awful lot of animosity between the brothers in earlier years. With a lot more filial affection being traded back and forth lately, some thought is going into a Vaughan Brothers album. I asked them what they thought of each other's styles.

STEVIE: I'll put it this way: He's still big brother to me. And he plays that way. I'm amazed every time I hear him. Tone, touch, ideas, maturity...

JIMMIE: I shouldn't be here for this.

STEVIE: ...his knowledge is incredible to me. I play different than him. I don't play any better than him. I play what I play better than him because he plays what he plays better than me.

JIMMIE: Here's what I think: If you listen to either one of us, I think you can tell that we come from the same place. But of course we're different because we're different people. He can do all that stuff I can't. I mean, if I see him play a couple of nights, I'll try and pull something off that I've heard him do, and nine times outa ten, I won't get it. I'll stop myself before I get into it too far, but...[*both brothers crack up*] It's something we don't really talk about. We play. We've had a few conversations about ideas we'd had, about things we've seen each other do, but it's never really spoken. We just did it and listened to it. It's just havin' ears. That's the most important thing, really. 'Cause I don't know what the name of the stuff is anyway, just what it sounds like.

With the Thunderbirds going back into the studio at the end of March and Double Trouble scheduled to make another album sometime after that, the Vaughan Brothers duet album is a ways off. Dave Edmunds will no doubt help the 'Birds hit the groove again, and Stevie's looking at a fairly radical change in direction that could wind up with him selling a lot of records. But they intend to get around to the Brothers project by the end of '87. They both look at it as a learning experience, a chance to try new stuff and have fun in the studio, with no preconceptions and few restrictions.

What's most important to them is that it'll be something they deeply want to do.

JIMMIE: I'm always trying to learn something. I listen to all kinds of music just to try to see what's in it. To me, all the music I like is kind of the same. It gives me the same feeling. That's all the advice I have: If you're going to play it, try to learn how to play it the way you want it to sound. You gotta figure out what you like first. If you can't figure out what you like...

STEVIE: Then I ain't gonna tell you.

JIMMIE: Most people know what they'd like to hear. And there's usually somebody doing it. The way you learn is by copying other people and then finally your own thing'll start comin' to you. The way I play now is completely different than it was ten years ago, as far as I can remember. Now I don't think about what anybody else has done too much. I've got my own thing that I'm trying to play.

MUSICIAN: *Plus, you've had reinforcement from people who come up and say, "Gee, you're different."*

JIMMIE: Well, they've always said that.

MUSICIAN: *Yes, but now they like it.*

JIMMIE: [*chuckles*] Yeah, that does help.

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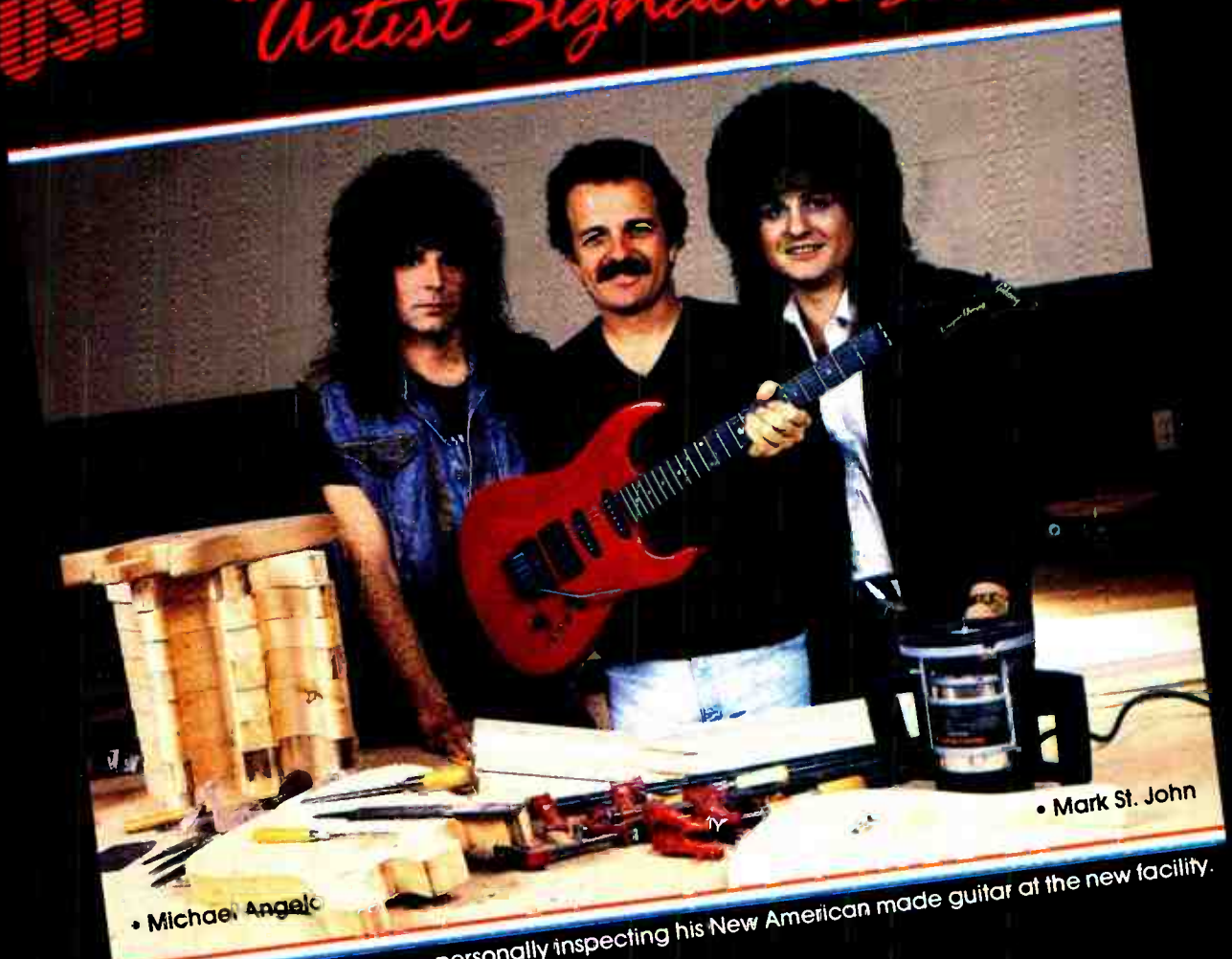

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Clifford Antone put his time in the joint to good use. One day he discovered a park, Comanche Trail Park, in Big Spring, that had been built by Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps in the 30s and destroyed by a flood in the 70s. It had a huge natural amphitheatre that would be great for concerts, but it had fallen into such ruin that it was unusable. Ever the entrepreneur, Clifford had already prevailed upon acts playing his club to do volunteer gigs at the prison camp, giving the entertainment-starved inmates a close look at some first-rate blues. This project looked like something that would benefit the city of Big Spring in general. Using convict labor paid through a fund administered by the city, it would be a snap to bring Comanche Trail Park back to life. An estimate showed that the cost of restoring the area would be somewhere around $200,000, but that didn't daunt Clifford. He got on the phone and started calling around to his contacts in the entertainment industry.

Then, as they say in prison, his time got short. In late January, Clifford was released to an Austin half-way house to serve the remainder of his time on probation, but he kept in touch with the Big Spring City Council and made certain the Comanche Trail project was proceeding along well. His negotiating paid off: Willie Nelson agreed to do a benefit for the project in late March. That done, he sweetened the deal by getting the Vaughan Brothers to finish up their tours in Midland, playing yet another benefit for the project at the end of February.

Oh, and while they were there, would they mind dropping by the camp and playing a show for the inmates?

No problem, and that's what I was doing, sitting in a funky dressing room backstage in the camp's auditorium, listening to Jimmie Lee soloing away on "Full Time Lover" while his little brother sat smoking a cigarette, letting the sound wash over him. Finally Jimmie let the solo go, to a torrent of approval.

"Whew," Stevie Ray said, exhaling smoke. "He's sure enough still my big brother."

Somewhere, Big Jim smiled.

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JIMMIE: I use two Fender Twin amplifiers with E-V speakers, and a TFX-4 echo unit, made by ADA. I use an old Fender Leslie, and Fender guitars, all different kinds, I carry around four or five Stratocasters and Telecasters, and I got one Robin double-neck made in Houston. I use D'Addario strings.

STEVIE: I've been using two Super Reverbs, two Vibroverbs and a Leslie. I use an old Vox wah-wah pedal and a Tube Screamer. Sometimes I use this thing called a Hot Tubes, but it's just a prehistoric version of the Tube Screamer. It's dirty and fucks up all the time, but when you get it working right, it *works*. Then Fender guitars. I have Fender Stratocasters, this one here's a '59, and not all of 'em are rosewood necks, but most of 'em are. A lot of 'em have left-handed necks on 'em. For some reason they seem to work better. They feel different to me and sometimes they stay in tune better. I use jumbo frets and GHS strings, .11 or .12 depending on what day of the week it is, up to a .60. Mainly all stock pickups except for Danelectro pickups on some of 'em. They're basically single-coil pickups, but we do something to them that's secret, and it makes for less noise. Rene Martinez does that for me. He's about to break from us to open a shop in Dallas.

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SO CHRIS ISAAK WANTS TO BE A ROCK 'N' ROLL STAR...

BY GINA ARNOLD
ILLUSTRATION BY ANITA KUNZ

Rock 'n' roll music has promised much to many, and Chris Isaak wants it all. He wants an album that the critics will love; a revisionist masterpiece of moods and mannerisms that will establish him as an *artiste*. But Isaak, a thirty-year-old Californian with the drop-dead good looks of Elvis or Fabian, makes no bones about the fact that he also wants a hit. He wants a triple-platinum hit. He wants to be a rock 'n' roll star.

In other words, he wants heaven *and* earth. And judging by his last LP, 1985's *Silvertone* (Warner Bros.), neither is exactly forthcoming. In fact, twenty months after *Silvertone*'s release and subsequent failure to achieve either of Isaak's goals, and one month before the release of the follow-up, *Chris Isaak*, the singer, his manager Mark Plummer, his producer Erik Jacobsen, and his band Silvertone are all feeling a mite nervous about the new album's chances of busting open the market.

Says Jacobsen, who discovered and produced the Lovin' Spoonful, "Right now we'd almost rather Warners dumped us. We're so far in the hole to Warners, that even if this album goes gold, we'll still owe them all the royalties. Unless it goes platinum we won't see a penny. If they dumped us, we could hook up with CBS or somewhere and start fresh."

A look at the charts shows what Isaak's up against: At least ninety percent of the hit singles, be they by Bon Jovi or by the Human League, use synthesizers or drum machines. But Isaak was intent on making an album with a Sun Sessions feel to it—it's part of his credo—and it's why he chose an obscure San Francisco recording studio, rather than spending three times the money down in L.A.

One of the main problems Isaak's album—in studio vitro for ten months—has been having has to do with the concept of "perfect time."

"Perfect time," explains studio owner/engineer Tom Mallon, who's been hosting Isaak in his digs since February, "is the idea that most dance records are based on—that steady beat that comes from using a click track to record over. Chris refuses to use that, so he has to try to simulate that accuracy with fallible musicians. That's what's taken so much time."

The problem, as Isaak understands it, was made all the more clear last year, when he woke up one morning and saw the second single from *Silvertone* rated on *American Bandstand*. "It got like, the *lowest* score ever seen on that show," Isaak says, laughing. "No one ever gets under a sixty on *American Bandstand*, ever. And this song got a fifty-three. Of course, it was up against Sheila E. or something, and you can't exactly dance to it."

Isaak's musical vision simply doesn't utilize the proverbial Good Beat. What he wants, he says, "is a record that uses natural sounds on it." Also, he adds, "I guarantee to all those people with crummy sound systems, my record's made for the bottom of the line!"

Despite this assertion, the result of Isaak's needs and wants has been double the studio time originally allotted for the album. "We were going a little nutsy in the

studio last spring," Jacobsen allows, "trying to get things down and wondering why it took so long to get it to sound like we wanted. We were jamming to make a summer release date, so when it became clear that we weren't going to make it, Warners put the LP off 'til February, which gave us time to breathe and meant it wouldn't get lost in the pre-Christmas shuffle."

Isaak and Co., with four months' work behind them, took the summer off, using the time as a sort of de facto pre-production, playing around San Francisco at their usual smoky haunts. In the fall, they began recording again, recutting a few songs and boosting the rhythm tracks to make the LP more competitive. Isaak used session drummer Prairie Prince, of the Tubes, in addition to his own Kenney Dale Johnson, in an attempt to steady up the beat for radio airplay.

But Jacobsen was still skeptical of the results: "I'm not sure that perfect time and rock 'n' roll can coexist. Rock charges ahead when it gets excited. *Chris Isaak* is not going to sound that good on the dance floor; there's too much ambient sound on it, too much 'aliveness.' I can't imagine it being played between Prince and Madonna."

The fall sessions went only marginally better than the spring. Tom Mallon's studio is a favorite of San Francisco's underground set. As more and more of Mallon's own projects had to defer to Isaak, rumors ran rampant through the S.F. scene. In November, people said guitarist Jimmy Wilsey had walked out, sick of the process (this was denied by Isaak management); and that Isaak and Jacobsen were frustrated with the results of their labor. Mallon, admittedly fed up with the band's presence in his studio, said that the song "Blue Hotel" (the oldest in Isaak's repertoire of originals) was "jinxed." However, none of these feelings made themselves known to either the press or the local populace, who continued to tout the upcoming LP, unheard, as the hottest thing since Huey Lewis—perhaps mistaking the veil of secrecy that manager Plummer dropped over the proceedings for confidence.

Chris says he is unconcerned about the danceability of his LP. "I think what I like, there's other people who like it too," he says. "I'm lucky in that I'm white, I'm middle class, I was brought up in a background that's similar to a lot of people in America. The things that I thought were great when I was growing up were the Beatles and Elvis. I don't think I'm real far out in that sense. It's not like I grew up in Jamaica listening to this special type of music and 'Dang! People'd just *love* this banjo-reggae if they'd only give it a chance!'

"My voice is one of the few voices I hear today that sounds *white*. My background isn't James Brown so much as Hank Snow and Hank Williams and Pat Boone."

Jacobsen tells the story of Warners A&R man Michael Ostin telling Isaak that "kids today want happy, up tunes with a drum machine behind it."

"Gosh, we're fresh out of those!" replied Isaak, whose repertoire is made up of sad, brooding love songs, with Chris cast in the role of the Lonesome Stranger.

"I'm aiming at the over-60s crowd," he cracks, one evening in the middle of a recording session, lying flat on the indoor-outdoor carpeted floor of Mallon's old warehouse. "I'm aiming at people who don't listen to the radio. There's a problem there, I know, but if we can just work around it...."

Although Isaak is something of a loner, the Lonesome Stranger persona of songs like "Blue Hotel" ("Blue hotel/ on a lonely highway/ blue hotel/ things don't work out my way/ I wait for love these lonely nights...") is no more real than Alice Cooper's penchant for drinking baby's blood. Born in Stockton, California thirty years ago, Isaak has a B.A. in English lit from the University of the Pacific, and a terrifyingly tongue-in-cheek, run-on way with words. His odd sense of humor obscures whatever he's really thinking.

Isaak used to be an amateur boxer, and currently spends off-hours teaching himself to surf in the cold Pacific currents off the coast of San Francisco. The competitive determination that characterizes his athletic endeavors channeled itself toward rock music roundabout 1978, when he was spending a semester studying in Japan. It was there that he first heard the Sun Sessions, and decided to become a rock 'n' roll star.

Upon returning to the States, Isaak singlemindedly moved to San Francisco, taught himself guitar, and recruited a band. "I used to go up to cats in clubs who were dressed cool," he once claimed, "and ask if they played an instrument. You'd be surprised how many did." Isaak denies this story now—perhaps sick of its implications. "Kenney could have been wearing a tie-dyed shirt and bellbottoms and he would have made it into this band," he says now. "Only I would have confiscated his clothes." The Silvertone band performs, to a man, dressed in slick navy blue suits.

The original Silvertone, the band Isaak formed in 1979-80, featured Jimmy Calvin Wilsey on guitar, and soon attracted the attention of Erik Jacobsen, whose last hit single had been Norman Greenbaum's 1970 "Spirit In The Sky." Jacobsen was still a man with strong ties to Warner Bros., and the demos he produced eventually won Isaak a contract and an advance that covered the costs of two years of recording as well as tour promotion, publicity and a video starring Denise Crosby, Bing's granddaughter, for the single "Dancin'." Warner Bros. even got Madonna to put in a quick appearance at Chris' twenty-ninth birthday party last year—a sure sign of good will.

But *Silvertone* sold less than 20,000 copies domestically (it allegedly did better in Europe, where Isaak's rockabilly clothes and hair "à la banane" were most admired). Warners still has faith in Isaak's eventual success, however, given time and money. Other than giving him a few minor suggestions, they've pretty much let him do as he pleases on *Chris Isaak*. "After all," says Warners publicity v.p. Bob Merlis, "they love him in France. How different is a Frenchman from an American?"

So artistic control has been left mostly to Isaak's own discretion, even in cases where the record company initially disagreed with his decisions. For example, in the spring, Merlis expressed his dislike of the title *Chris Isaak* for the follow-up to *Silvertone*, and his disapproval of the idea of using "another photo of him looking like Elvis" for the cover. By fall, however, those two Isaak-initiated requests were being implemented. The cover photo, in fact, was taken by Bruce Weber, who makes Calvin Klein commercials.

Warners' one request, which Isaak heeded, was simple: Sometime between the spring and fall sessions, when the Isaak operations were at their lowest ebb, Warners suggested that he record one cover song. The cover agreed upon by all parties was the Yardbirds' "Heart Full Of Soul." Jacobsen felt he wasn't getting the accuracy he wanted on the track in San Francisco, so he, Isaak and Wilsey flew to Los Angeles where they recorded the song in two days in October, using session drummer John (JR) Robinson.

"Yeah, they paid those guys [Robinson and the flashy L.A. studio] more for one track than they paid me for eight months' work," laughs Mallon. The LP's recording costs still came in under $100,000, according to Jacobsen, which is not particularly expensive for a major label LP. Jacobsen himself didn't take a producer's fee—instead, he, Plummer and Isaak will split the profits on royalties. "We used every dime of our ad-

vances just to keep the group together," Jacobsen explains.

"Heart Full Of Soul" was very nearly the title of the LP, and was slated to be released as a single. Jacobsen says he is indifferent to the single choice: "That's up to them [Warners]. They have their ear to the ground—that's their business, figuring out what would be a hit."

More importantly, Isaak's manager Plummer, a former journalist with *Melody Maker*, says, "If we get one hit single, I know we can have four or five. All we need is our foot in the door [of radio] and we'll have a triple platinum smash, I know it."

"Heart Full Of Soul" is Isaak's concession to market standards—and it is quite in keeping with his half-joking reference to the "over-60s" crowd. It is a direct ploy to win over the all-important 25-40 demographic—the same audience that bought *The Big Chill*. There is no doubt that Isaak makes "Heart Full Of Soul" his own—as much, at least, as the all-too-familiar guitar part, weaving in and out of the tailor-made Lonesome Stranger lyrics, will let him. But it remains to be seen whether the Adult Oriented Radio formats the song is intended for will buy Wilsey-as-Beck, or Isaak-as-revisionist hero.

If "Heart Full Of Soul" doesn't take, there's always the video. No one denies that the camera loves Chris. He turned down roles in both *Something Wild* and *Blue Velvet* because they conflicted with recording time. He admits that he fancies himself an actor: "I am a real ham," he says. "Although all the parts I get offered are for mean rednecks and child abusers."

Isaak doesn't think he'd make a good teen idol, though: "I'm too sarcastic." Nonetheless, his looks are partly what's helped to constitute his appeal in San Francisco. He's been playing week-long runs in the Bay Area on and off for a couple of years, packing tiny clubs night after night with (one suspects) the same breathless females and clubland habitués who admire his particular brand of cool.

Isaak performs under a set covered with tacky tiki lamps and totem poles, in neat suit and tie, his hair coiffed into a slick D.A. He croons his way through a set that includes slow burners like "You Owe Me Some Kind Of Love" and "Lie To Me," countryish ballads like "Gone Ridin'" and "Cryin'," and rave-ups like "Voodoo" and "Wild Love." Later on in the set, when the band starts to cook, they'll fall into covers like "Fortune Teller," Carl Perkins' "Dixie Fried," even "Pipeline."

It's hard to imagine Chris' Club Paradiso-circa 1962 schtick going over in a big arena. It is simply cut out for smoky nightclubs, for the chic-to-cheek atmosphere that prevails in San Francisco, where to a certain sector of Boho-yuppies, Chris Isaak is the cat's pajamas. But like the teeny-bopper fans, the 25-40 Woodstock demographic, and the over-60 crowd he also aims to please, there is something ironically illusory about those his music appeals to. It's easy to think that if Isaak fails to hit the top, few of these trendies will stick with him.

Isaak himself has very few illusions about his situation. "I think," he says, "that for anyone making strange music, or that's not selling records, or doesn't quite fit in, there's always this hope at the back of your mind: Well, Beethoven wasn't discovered till a hundred years later. Every great inventor must take great joy and sanctuary in the idea, 'Well, they laughed at Edison! And now they're laughing at *me*!'

"I'd love to have a hit. I mean, that's what I think about all the time...but not while I'm sitting around my apartment writing songs. There are people who do that, though, and they're all unemployed and living in L.A., saying, 'My stuff sounds *just* like everything on the radio, so why can't I get a job?"

Jacobsen concurs. "Chris is taking a chance with his music. The hope is that as times change, people might want something different. Because he's energetic and zany, and that's appealing to young people, but he's not cross-dressing or wearing lipstick...it all kind of depends on where music goes next. I think he has the potential of pretty broad demographics."

"I'M LUCKY THAT I'M WHITE, I'M MIDDLE CLASS, I WAS BROUGHT UP IN A BACKGROUND SIMILAR TO A LOT OF PEOPLE IN AMERICA."

It's statements like these—uttered completely ingenuously by Jacobsen, Isaak and the others around him—that point up the major chink in their logic. Isaak isn't doing anything new or innovative; he's harking back to a simpler past. In order to have a hit, an artist must try to remake rock in his own image—or else remake his image according to rock's current dictates.

Chris Isaak is trying to do both simultaneously. It may be endemic to the 80s that musicians today are wary enough of artistic interference to want to seize control of their own careers. The problem is, they "seize control" to the extent that *radio demographics*, *video images* and *canny cover songs* play a part in their own creative processes.

It's hard to imagine the young Bob Dylan, young Bruce

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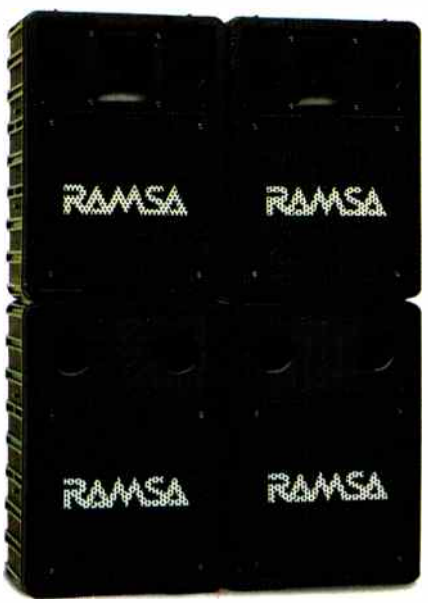

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Springsteen or young Elvis Costello behaving with as much industry savvy as Chris Isaak has done so far in his career. Isaak's is a self-conscious attempt to break free of what he calls "the beautiful-vegematic sound of popular music," while remaining true to its marketing strategies.

Part of the problem of Isaak's misconceptions regarding the strength of his act has to do with the incredible insularity of San Francisco. Isaak's Bay Area reputation is about on par with Los Lobos' in Los Angeles, or Lou Reed's in Manhattan—without any of the backlog of time or integrity that have established those artists at the top of their fields.

For the past twenty years, San Francisco's been stuck with a rock 'n' roll reputation that rests on ancient history, and the reputation's wearing thin. You don't have to be into Scratch Acid or Sonic Youth these days to be aware that it really isn't that hip to be Huey anymore. The city badly needed a replacement to boost its own massive musical ego, and Chris Isaak offered himself up eagerly—practically before *Silvertone* was even released. His name has been dropped and hyped and coddled and buzzed 'round the town 'til even the gas station attendants at the Texaco on Geary will tell you just how hot his new album is going to be. Week after week, the Sunday entertainment section of the San Francisco *Chronicle* tells readers of the pop column that Isaak is rock 'n' roll's great white hope—while in cities no farther south than Monterey, he's not even known.

But San Francisco doesn't care about Monterey, much less Peoria; while Chris Isaak, full of the city's fatuous praises, claims not to care about regional success: After all, he's the biggest thing in France.

It may work: After all, calculation and manipulation have been a major part of the rock 'n' roll hit-making machinery since time immemorial. The difference here is only that Isaak wishes to manipulate his audience himself, thus relieving his record company of the arduous task. It's a funny idea—one that would seem rational to anyone but a fan, a purist or a natural.

But Isaak is none of those things. From his point of view, calculation and manipulation aren't crimes, but necessities.

"I like my record," he insists. "I won't—I can't—feel bad about anything as long as I like my own stuff. Even if ten years from now, if I'm out of this business and sitting in a box car telling some kid, 'Yeah, I had a record out once! A great record! Gimme five bucks and I'll send you a copy! No, I'll sing it...."

Isaak may very well be a victim of his own industry-taught machinations: He wants it all, without having stopped to ask himself whether his artistic integrity has any legs. And that question isn't going to be answered, as he so fondly imagines, by the American populace, who may or may not buy his act this year, who may or may not give him the all-powerful hit he so desires. It can only be answered by eyes and ears that aren't blinded by a pretty face or deafened by the roar of a crowd. ■

SILVERTONES

Chris Isaak plays a Gretsch Chet Atkins guitar through a Fender Twin amp. **Jimmy Calvin Wilsey** uses two Fender Stratocasters (one black, one sunburst) and a Telecaster. He uses a Photon MIDI guitar controller to play an Ensoniq Mirage sampler. His digital delay is a Roland, his amp is a Fender Twin. **Rowland Salley** plays a Modulus graphite bass (S.F.-made!) through a Music Man bass amp with a DOD equalizer and a dbx compressor. **Kenney Dale Johnson** plays Pearl drums with Zildjian cymbals. Chris' Sears-Roebuck Silvertone guitars stay at home nights now—for fear of breakage.

D U B L I N E R S

U2 GIVE THEMSELVES AWAY

BY BILL GRAHAM AND NIALL STOKES

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTON CORBIJN

"It's one of my ambitions," Bono admits, "that if I'm around Dublin long enough, people won't even notice. I love this city. I love it and I hate it and I love it and I hate it. What I hate is how much they have destroyed Dublin, to see them pulling down the buildings. The closest I ever came to throwing a large brick through a window in the last two years was outside the Royal Hibernian Way. I had to be dragged away. I mean—the rage I feel inside me when I see the pillboxes they have planted outside Christchurch Cathedral!

"Well, Larry just says to me, 'Come on. When you're worried about the way a city looks, you know you're okay. There's a lot of people out there who can't afford to worry about what the city looks like.'"

U2 are home again...for a little while. Their fifth album, *The Joshua Tree*, is finished and they are laying plans for another international tour. Like every U2 tour, it will be bigger than the one before. At the band's new rehearsal studio, Larry Mullen patiently scans a tape of Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready," working out the lyrics to the song U2 might cover in their American concerts. The band—Bono, Larry, Adam Clayton and the Edge—toy with the tune at the end of an exhausting day of rehearsals. The song is demonstration of how U2 are excavating old roots for their latest music. In 1985 Bono and his wife Allie spent a month working as volunteers on an educational relief project in Ethiopia. Returning from Africa, he traveled to New York to add vocals to Steve Van Zandt's "Sun City." That led to a meeting with Peter Wolf and the Rolling Stones (detailed in *Musician* #91) and the beginning of Bono's exploration of the blues.

U2 finally recognized that there was musical life before 1976. Formed in the slipstream of punk, the band were typical teenagers of that era—fixated on Television, Patti Smith and the Ramones. Their first chaotic demo session in 1979 was literally out of time, out of tune and out of control. A fellow Dubliner looking at them now is filled with protective Irish pride and a desire to pinch himself hard. Have the fresh-faced makers of the beardless *Boy* really matured so quickly into such influential rock power-brokers?

They are still familiar figures on the Dublin landscape. Adam drinking in a cramped nightclub; Larry slipping into the shadows to watch some unknown local band; Edge on the street, shopping with his pregnant wife Aisling; Bono swapping Dublin stories with an elderly stevedore in his local bar. It doesn't seem very long ago that U2 weren't even old enough

to buy a drink.

But they have received the torch; they are the last remaining band of their generation to breathe new life into old rock ceremonies and revive abandoned dreams. And Ireland hasn't quite digested it yet. Unlike earlier generations of Irish artists—from James Joyce and Samuel Beckett to Van Morrison and Bob Geldof—U2 have stayed at home. They have not been forced to decamp to London, Paris or New York. They formed at a time when pop music was finally being allowed a place on Irish radio, when international tours were finally crossing the Irish Sea from Britain. Their rise reflects the ideals of a maddening country. Finally Ireland has a hometown team to cheer.

During his early trips to America Bono was pained about being a "Stranger in a Strange Land." Now he is a familiar figure in the Promised Land. *The Joshua Tree* crosses many different Americas in its ethical and emotional journey. The Irish don't view America as the English do. The continuous tides of immigration have created intimacies. U2's early and enthusiastic courtship of America had natural cultural roots. They could not understand or be bothered by the Anglo-American competition that had been an undercurrent in rock for twenty years.

But for all their affection for America, U2 are Irish, and the Irish have been shaken by the rise of Reaganism in the U.S. So long under the heel of Britain, the Irish instinctively side with the Nicaraguan government against Washington. Bono recently visited Nicaragua and was moved by what he saw as a noble people struggling against a powerful aggressor. Other Irish bands have been playing benefits for Nicaragua, and in Galway a Catholic bishop—the most accurate barometer of national opinion—refused to share a platform with Reagan.

The Joshua Tree reflects that Irish ambiguity toward the United States. U2's new songs draw on the American music they love to carry criticisms of American foreign policies. Bono jokingly casts himself as the American of the group and Edge as the European—a reference to Edge's initial reluctance to embrace older forms at the expense of the sonic dreamscapes producers Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois brought to *The Unforgettable Fire*. Finally *Joshua Tree* emerged as an amalgam, in which the individual song was the top priority, taking precedence over the old U2 virtues of theme, sustained mood and experimentation.

B O N O

"After *Boy* the next two albums were almost made in our spare time. We weren't even sure we wanted to be in a band."

"The music had to serve the songs," is how Edge explains the new strategy. Though the guitarist was the most hesitant of the four to step out from *Unforgettable Fire*'s aural web, he soon brought his own unprecedented aggressive contributions to "Bullet The Blue Sky" and "Exit," the latter worked up and recorded on the very last day of the album.

Concerned as it is with great matters, *The Joshua Tree* does not ignore the bleak or the personal. "Success had a hollow head," said Bono, and 1986 reminded U2 that every triumph has a dark side. The group's personal assistant, a young New Zealand Maori named Greg Carroll, was killed in an Irish motorcycle accident. The group dedicated the album to his memory, and wrote a song called "One Tree Hill" about him.

On a more mundane level, U2 were attacked for their part in Self-Aid, a program to raise money for the Irish unemployed that also featured Elvis Costello, Van Morrison and the Boomtown Rats. Self-Aid raised a million Irish pounds, but U2 were singled out for a front-page attack by *In Dublin*, the Irish equivalent of New York's *Village Voice*. To the leftists at the paper, U2 were just liberal hypocrites.

From there the band embarked on Amnesty International's Conspiracy of Hope tour, a summer extravaganza that brought awareness of human rights abuses to stadium audiences across the U.S. That tour also gave U2 a chance to travel, make music and spend time with older peers like Peter Gabriel, Lou Reed and the Police. It continued two parallel trends: U2 became more socially active and U2 moved into ever bigger venues.

The Irish can be possessive. If *The Joshua Tree* puts U2 into the pop stratosphere, how will Ireland react? Their history makes the Irish suspect of sweet dreams and happy endings. In a fatalistic country, the urge to celebrate becomes subversive.

The new album is both U2's most ambitious and their most troubled. With a new emphasis on the poetic power of language, they place less reliance on faith. This new celebration is less buoyant. With *The Joshua Tree* U2 are asking tough questions of themselves and their audience. They know there are no easy answers.

MUSICIAN: *Can you explain the motivations behind the album?*

EDGE: As with much U2 work, it's reactionary in a sense. Whereas *War* was a reaction to the weak, placid music we saw everywhere, I think this was, in a funny way, our reaction to *The Unforgettable Fire*, in that while it was our best record up to then, we had experimented a lot in its making and done things quite revolutionary for us—like "Elvis Presley In America" and "4th Of July." Well, we felt on this record that maybe options were not such a good thing. That limitation might be very positive and conducive. So we decided to work within the limitations of the *song* as a starting-point. Let's actually write songs. We wanted the record to be less vague, open-ended, atmospheric and impressionistic. Make it more straightforward, focused and concise.

ADAM: Also we were away from the big production number of doing tours and were off the road, hanging around town, going to local gigs. I think there was a need for clarity in what we were doing. It is just eight notes. It shouldn't be difficult or complicated. We wanted to simplify what we were thinking.

MUSICIAN: *Were Eno and Lanois the necessary referees?*

EDGE: The funny thing about Brian is, having been responsible for the European textural sense in music which came in through the back door with Bowie, his passion is folk and gospel music with a spiritual aspect. So he was much more radical than we were.

BONO: Brian's two favorite songs were "Red Hill Mining Town" and "I Still Haven't Found...." In a funny way, he's very unacademic. He's a real song man. Brian's one of those guys who gets up at six o'clock. He drove us mad in the morning, singing "Where Were You When They Crucified My Lord" at top volume when everyone had just gone to bed.

EDGE: A producer for U2 is very important because we are self-contained so, every so often, we arrive at decisions that are very contentious and split. With a producer, it's easy to cast him as the devil's advocate you rely on to help you out of it.

BONO: Brian always puts his cards straight down on the table. Dan's bias is towards songs. He thought what makes a rock 'n'

PAUL SLATTERY RETNA

U2 sings "My Generation": early Edge, Bono, Clayton and Mullen

roll group is the songs they play. He's also the finest musician I've ever met. I've kept myself ignorant in the studio. I was listening to the vocals of "Red Hill Mining Town" coming back in the mix and I was asking, "Why does the singer sound like a rich man with pound notes stuffed in his pockets when it's a song about unemployment?" And the engineer was scratching his head. Dan Lanois walks in and says, "God almighty, stereo plate echo! I keep telling these people. They've been using it since they invented it not because it's right but because it's available." So he said, "Turn it off. Put it in mono and edge it to the left," and there it was again.

He's often in the room when we're playing. He plays tambourine with Larry. I think the reason this record is more rhythmically adept has a lot to do with Dan Lanois.

MUSICIAN: *Bono, before you went to New York for the* Sun City *sessions, had you any prior notion of what the new record would be like?*

BONO: The album I had in the back of my head is the album we've yet to make. It has been put aside for this. You see, I was then writing songs U2 almost can't do. U2 can't do blues or gospel. So I thought, "Why can't U2 do these things?" I started to see U2 in some straitjacket we should break out from.

MUSICIAN: *How did the other three respond to these new angles?*

BONO: Adam has always been the roots man in the operation. On tour, it'll always be reggae, Aswad or Black Uhuru blasting out of his hotel room. Larry's more interested in songs and simple structures. It's speak up or shut up, write a song, three chords, say what you have to say. So he liked the directness of blues and something like "Trip Through Your Wires."

MUSICIAN: *And The Edge?*

BONO: [*pause*]... How can I put this?...[*further pause*]... Early on, Edge was less taken up with it but later, he really came through when he saw that the songs were good. Put it this way, Edge didn't own a copy of *Blood On The Tracks*. Edge's collection started in '76 at the New Beginning. His interest was in European groups like Can and music back to Eno. So this was opening a new world or [*laughs*] a new can of worms. And yet the spontaneity of this new kind of music really excited him.

MUSICIAN: *There's this idea of yourself as the American and Edge as the European.*

BONO: Yeah and Ireland's right in the middle. There's a tension between the two but it's the right kind of tension. And it's funny because at the end of the record, I was arguing for the more atmospheric songs and he was going for the rock 'n' roll. We'd swapped places along the way, much to our amusement.

EDGE: We approached arranging and producing each song like it was unique. We just hoped the album would have a sonic cohesiveness based on the idea that we were playing it. There was definitely a strong direction, but we were prepared to sacrifice some continuity to get the rewards of following each song to a conclusion. I hate comparisons, but, like the Beatles at their height of unusual production techniques, we wanted to do what was right for the song.

ADAM: I think we've come up with songs where there was a whole process of music inspiring lyrics and the lyrics then feeding back on the music and the whole thing becoming intense. We found that because Bono had time to produce lyrics that really did work, it was much more satisfying. We feel the songs are deeply personal even if they might not sound like U2.

BONO: I used to think writing words was old-fashioned, so I sketched. I wrote words on the microphone. The time had come to write words that meant something out of my experience.

MUSICIAN: *To what extent did writing a bleaker album reflect personal experiences?*

EDGE: Well, there's still hope. I think this record's bleak because that's what we're seeing, but there's a positive side.

E D G E

"You don't write a song to change somebody. You write a song 'cause that's the way you feel."

BONO: You could say this is forbidden ground for U2 because we're the optimistic group. But to be an optimist, you mustn't be blind or deaf to the world around you. "Running To Stand Still" is based on a real story. I don't even know what the act is in "Exit." Some see it as a murder, others a suicide, and I don't mind. The rhythm of the words is nearly as important in conveying the state of mind. The album's real strength is that though you travel through these deep tunnels and bleak landscapes, there's a joy at the heart of it, and I can't explain it.

We were afraid of it. Something special about U2 was that we were holding our heads up, when everybody else had their heads between their legs. I found this last year a time of reassessment in my own life. I think Dylan said: "When you reach the top, you're at the bottom."

MUSICIAN: *Greg Carroll's death confronted you with something completely outside the band's control. How did that affect you?*

ADAM: It showed me that there are more important things than rock 'n' roll, that rock 'n' roll is important in the picture of those things, that you don't know how much time you've got with your family, your friends and, indeed, the other members of the band. I'd rather go home early than stay up all night mixing a track.

BONO: I feel the same.

ADAM: For a long time, we did deny those simple things that give you pleasure—seeing your brothers, sisters, wives, children—to keep the band going.

BONO: The emphasis among family and friends when we had a number one record and were a big band was *how much you've got*—I'm not talking about money—not how much you've lost. The sense of loss came through losing Greg Carroll. But the sense of loss has continued. I feel it even now, having made a record and not seen friends and family for the last three months, and now not being able to see them again because of the tour and everything. Because U2 work on everything. Larry is working his butt off on the merchandising, making sure the T-shirts—and this might sound insignificant—are made out of cotton and at an affordable price. So we're sitting on all these things. For the first time, I begin to see the value of being irresponsible, of not giving a shit. Because giving a shit costs a lot. That's serious.

MUSICIAN: *How did Greg, somebody from New Zealand, get involved with an Irish band?*

BONO: We met Greg in Auckland. There are five volcanic islands which make up Auckland and the tallest is One Tree Hill. And my first night in New Zealand, Greg took me to One Tree Hill. He'd worked around the music and media scene and [manager] Paul McGuinness thought this guy's so smart, we can't leave him here, let's take him with us to Australia.

Greg Carroll's funeral was beyond belief. He was buried in his tribal homeland as a Maori by the chiefs and elders. There was a three day and three night wake, and your head could be completely turned around and ours were again and again.

MUSICIAN: *"With Or Without You" and "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" remind me there was a time when U2 wouldn't have been remotely considered a dance band.*

EDGE: We never thought about that side. They used to say about U2 that we had an anti-dance stance, music to fall over, which I thought was funny. I remember in an American club on an early tour, Bono, after a few bevvies, was persuaded to go on the floor and the DJ put on "Out Of Control." Not only did everybody leave the floor but he couldn't dance to it either.

MUSICIAN: *How do you think a heavy metal fan will take "Bullet The Blue Sky"?*

EDGE: It's in an idiom reminiscent of an earlier era of rock, but I don't think it's metal. Bono had this thing about fear and exorcism by guitar. I'm not ashamed of how it sounds. It's the spirit and creative motivation that counts.

MUSICIAN: *Recapturing the spirit guitar rock used to express?*

EDGE: I think the sonic reference points are there. When Jimi Hendrix was playing, it meant so much more than the post-blues yawn when guitar players rehashed something that once was potent and it became a total cliché. My background is much more Tom Verlaine and John McGeoch but, in this case, I thought there should be no limitations. I wasn't going to hem myself in because it might be controversial.

A D A M

"You write a song because something hurts."

MUSICIAN: *Bono, have your attitudes toward singing changed?*

BONO: For three years, I didn't really know if there was a place in rock for U2 or whether I wanted a place in U2. I think I was quite uptight. Sometimes people saw in the songs a self-righteousness—because I was like the scared rat in the corner who attacks. As I worked out where we wanted to be, I loosened up, and loosening up discovered other voices. I became interested in *singing*. Whereas before if it was in tune and the right time, that was enough. And this is the same guy who was thrown out of U2 in 1977 because he couldn't sing. I find it hard to listen to the first three records because of my singing.

MUSICIAN: *There's now a greater sensuality.*

BONO: Yeah, you just stretch it out and realize a whisper can be louder than a scream. You learn that there's a time for letting go and a time for holding back.

MUSICIAN: *To what extent does that come from being more at home with yourself?*

BONO: I suppose I'm happy to be unhappy. Anyone who really knows me knows that, as they say, I'm never going to be at peace with my pipe [*laughs*].

MUSICIAN: *How does this process of personal maturation relate to the artistic vision of U2?*

BONO: We grew up in an odd way as people. From eighteen or nineteen, we were pushing the van to Killarney and then on a bus in America and then it's a plane to Australia and Japan. And we were completely occupied with things spiritual. After *Boy*, the next two albums were almost made in our spare time. We weren't even sure we wanted to be in a band. So we were interested in growing on spiritual levels, but we were actually quite retarded on other levels. And even musically. Our musical life began again with *Unforgettable Fire*. It wasn't even a priority. I think we must own up to that. For two years, we were writing songs and going to the studio for *October* and *War*,

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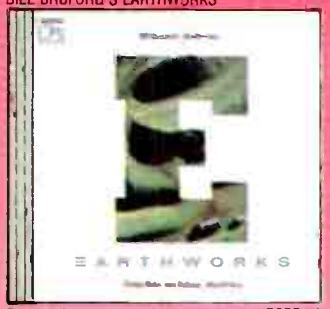

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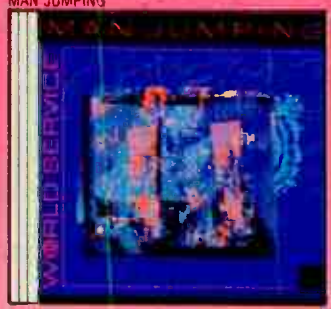

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B O N O

"People saw in the songs a self-righteousness– I was like the scared rat in the corner who attacks."

but that wasn't where we were at, it only *reflected* where we were at. We came through that and realized we *are* musicians and we want to be in this band, U2.

EDGE: And after this album, I'm more interested in playing guitar than I have been for the last three years. I'm having to learn again because I've forgotten how a bit, honestly.

MUSICIAN: *Both water images and the notion of surrender stand out very strongly in your lyrics.*

BONO: I used what I thought were very classical and therefore accessible images and symbols, almost biblical. Really simple things so that whatever culture you come from, they mean something. Like water.

"Surrender" is not what it used to be. Everybody else in the group knows what that song means when it says, "And you give yourself away." It's about how I feel in U2 at times: exposed. Lou Reed said to me, "What you've got is a real gift. Don't give it away because people might not place upon it the right value." I think if I do any damage to the group, it's that I'm too open. For instance in an interview, I don't hold the cards there and play the right one. I either have to do it or not do it. That's why I'm not going to do many interviews this year. And that means there's a cost to my personal life and a cost to the group as well.

Going back to the song "Surrender," I always believed in the biblical idea that unless the seed dies, is almost crushed into the ground, it won't bear fruit. Lou Reed was telling me about how he grew up in the 50s when machismo was a way of life and you did not give yourself away. In fact the opposite. He said he found the 50s idea of *cool* a real straitjacket in his life.

MUSICIAN: *Why is it that you've become more closely linked with figures from the previous rock era than other bands from your generation?*

BONO: Well, this boy from Ballymun was actually on tour with Lou Reed, and he used to stand every night on the side of the stage and watch U2. He seems to care so much about U2 and I learned so much from him. One night, I said to him [*whispers*], "*Berlin*'s my favorite album," and he said, "It's mine too." He thinks it's the only one he got right. He says so much and he has a perspective on rock 'n' roll. We find that also in our business life. We're attracted to people like Frank Barsalona who brought the Beatles and the Who to the States, and Chris Blackwell who was there with Bob Marley. Our record collection began in 1976. We weren't there when rock 'n' roll began. We are attracted to people who have the perspective we don't have. Like Pete Townshend is a guy you can ring up.

MUSICIAN: *On a personal level, do you get annoyed by newspaper gossip? The local Irish papers seem to be searching for you in every night-club in town.*

BONO: My father, who I love very much, is one of these guys who believes what he reads. He'll say to me, "I hear you were throwing your weight around in some record store when they hadn't what you wanted and you were telling them you were Bono and they'd better have it." And I was laughing, wondering where this one had come from. So I sort of told him off and said, "Da, you cannot believe what you read." Then one night he said, "Some fella's going around saying you own a hearse and you were driving around Donegal in it." Fact and fiction just get blurred in a city like this.

I live in Bray but the people in Bray are protective about myself and Allie. They don't bother us. The people we get hassled by are those from abroad calling the house. Some of it is okay but it's a place where, as Allie likes to put it, she lives also. She says, "I don't want you watching me put some washing on the line." I've got to back her up. I don't mind inviting people in the house but I've got to honor her. But we get some amazing things. I remember a whole party of French people who applauded me outside the door. I'd just got out of bed and I said, "No thank you. I'm the wrong guy."

I don't know how this will sound but there was this one girl in the bushes. She was Italian, eighteen, very beautiful, sitting there in the flowers. And she said, "I just wanted to come to Dublin and meet U2 before I died." And I thought, "They always come up with an angle but this is a good one." I didn't know whether to laugh, just in case. So I talked to her, didn't take it too seriously and went off. The next day, two BMWs came along and out came all these Italian men in designer suits with flowers and flowers, presenting them to me because we had looked after their sister and daughter.

That was almost shocking. How could I live up to that responsibility? God Almighty! I just can't come to terms with that. The bottom line is that music means a lot but they haven't separated the music from the musician. The musicians are only ordinary people. It's the music which is extraordinary.

ADAM: There's a weird process which I've just begun to understand. Particularly when you get the letters from fifteen-year-olds. They ask questions as if you're the second line of defense for their heads. They've become disillusioned with their parents and they think their teachers are assholes.

BONO: And they haven't yet found out we're assholes.

ADAM: They're trying to contact you to see if you can enlighten them or be responsible for them and, of course, you can't. But when you read a letter, you think, can I reply? Do I shatter this person's illusions? Do I say, I'm just a normal guy? That's what life's about. You've got to get on with it.

MUSICIAN: *At Live Aid, when Bono jumped off the stage, you must have thought, "Jaysus, what's he up to?"*

ADAM: If you don't like it, you put down your instrument and walk offstage, that's your choice [*laughter*].

BONO: Live Aid could have been a classic shooting in the head. I was as high as a kite after Live Aid because Linda McCartney kissed me. And later, I was sharing a microphone with Paul McCartney. But when I got home and watched a video of Live Aid, I was so desperate and depressed. I really believed I had made a big mistake. I couldn't sleep. And I drove down the Southeast and I met a sculptor who was making a bronze piece which was meant to be the spirit of Live Aid, a naked figure called "The Leap." He called it "The Leap" because I had left the stage and this image connected with him. The figure wasn't me. It was meant to be the whole spirit of it. I felt he understood what I was trying to do. And he was a man in his late fifties. But there's no question about it, I'm not doing that again. And I still don't understand why I did it.

JOHN BELLISSIMO RETNA

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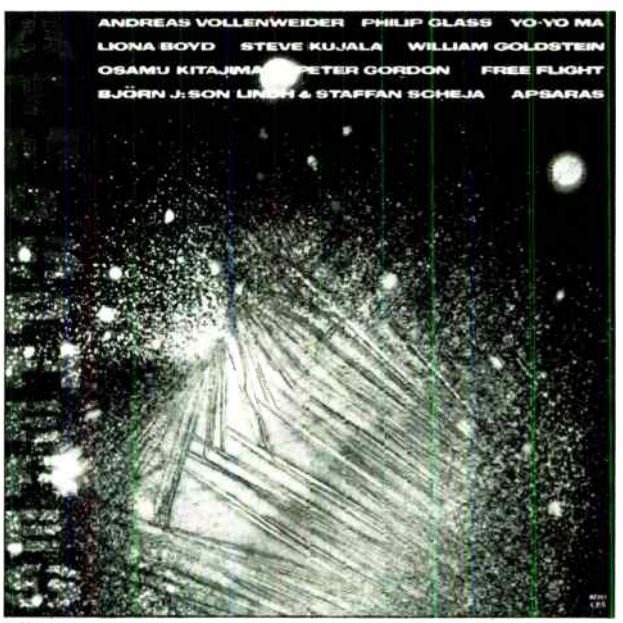

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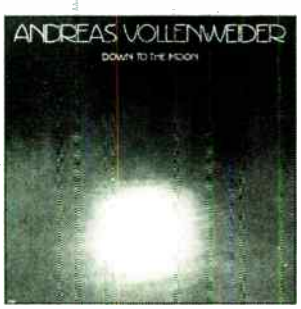

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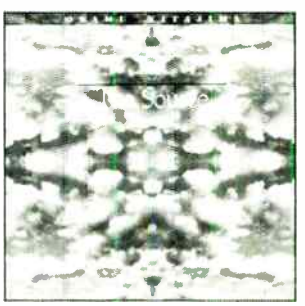

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ADAM: I think if those things were done in an *ego* way, the audience and the public would pick up on it.

MUSICIAN: *What did you feel onstage at Self Aid?*

ADAM: Humble, I guess.

BONO: The people who believe in U2 are very ordinary people, working-class people. The only flak we get for being in a privileged position is from the middle classes. I felt, "How can I write a song about being unemployed when in fact, I am fully employed? How can I stand onstage at an unemployment benefit when I know U2 are not short of cash?"

But one guy came up to me afterwards and said, "I'm really pissed off about what you said onstage. You said you don't know what it's like to be unemployed. We didn't need to hear that, because we know you know what it's like even if you don't." It was the last thing I expected to hear. And then I heard about people singing "Maggie's Farm" on the dole queue the next Monday morning, which I found funny. I don't know whether they were slagging us off or just enjoying the song.

MUSICIAN: *There was a blackness to that performance which set it apart from the rest of your live work.*

BONO: It didn't seem the right time. There's a side to U2 in Ireland where the Mammies and Daddies are proud that U2 are an Irish group doing well in America. And there was a sense, too, that maybe some politicians had pigeonholed us: "There's U2 now, a good example of young people playing their music and getting off their lazy backsides." I knew there'd be certain politicians watching the program and I didn't want to let them off the hook. Because the truth of it was that a lot of people were *on* the hook because of their policies. I allowed that anger to be a part of the performance. Plus I probably overreacted to *In Dublin* magazine's story. They said, "How can U2 be part of the solution when they're part of the problem?"

MUSICIAN: *What was the practical impact of the Amnesty International "Conspiracy of Hope" tour?*

BONO: Well, Amnesty doubled their membership in America. But the best news I had all year was a letter from one of the U2 fanzines telling me that all over America now, they're setting up these U2 clubs. They're not exclusive to U2. They're also an appreciation of Peter Gabriel, the Waterboys and groups for whatever reason. I was looking at this U2 fan club poster and it had an entrance fee of three dollars. At first I felt, "What's this about? Charging to hear U2 records?" But then I discovered this money was going to Third World concerns. And that all over America, they had set up these clubs where they listen to U2 records and actually write cards for Amnesty. If you can inspire something on that small scale, that's everything I could ever ask for. All, in fact, I would ask for.

MUSICIAN: *Is "Running To Stand Still" about heroin?*

BONO: I heard of a family, both of whom were addicted. And such was their addiction that they had no money, no rent. The guy risked it all on a run. All of it. He went and smuggled into Dublin a serious quantity of heroin strapped to his body so that there was on one hand life imprisonment, and on the other hand riches. Apart from the morality of that, what interested me was what put him in that place. "You know I took the poison from the poison stream/ Then I floated out of here." For a lot of people, there are no physical doors open anymore. So if you can't change the world you're living in, seeing through different eyes is the only alternative. Heroin gives you heroin eyes to see the world with. And the thing about heroin is that you think that's the way it really is. That the old you who worries about paying the rent is not the real you.

MUSICIAN: *Sexually, U2 has a very clean image. How have you reacted to gender-bending pop and glam rock games?*

BONO: I am interested in that aspect of sexuality. When I look at my lyrics, I'm obsessed with borders, be they political, sexual or spiritual. It's not a subject I've broached yet but I wouldn't rule it out. I'm interested in the new Victorian era because of AIDS. I know a lot of homosexual men and most of them I get on with. Some overtly camp men I don't get on with.

To be blatant, how can anyone attack love? That doesn't condemn or condone homosexuality or any kind of sexuality. I could never attack love.

MUSICIAN: *Sexuality is traditionally associated with rock and rebellion. But how does it relate to U2's ideas of subversion?*

BONO: I think there's nothing more radical or revolutionary than two people loving each other. Because it's so hard to do it and keep those feelings going. In a sense, U2 are owning up to those feelings and emotions that have been swept under the carpet of rock 'n' roll in favor of cartoon things.

EDGE: In America, gay rights and gay liberation have suddenly been put back ten years. AIDS has suddenly become an excuse for anti-gay feelings.

MUSICIAN: *Where would you be now if U2 weren't formed?*

BONO: Hmmm, that's an interesting one. God Almighty. Whoo, get me another beer..

ADAM: I think Dublin wouldn't have contained you. I think you would have been off somewhere.

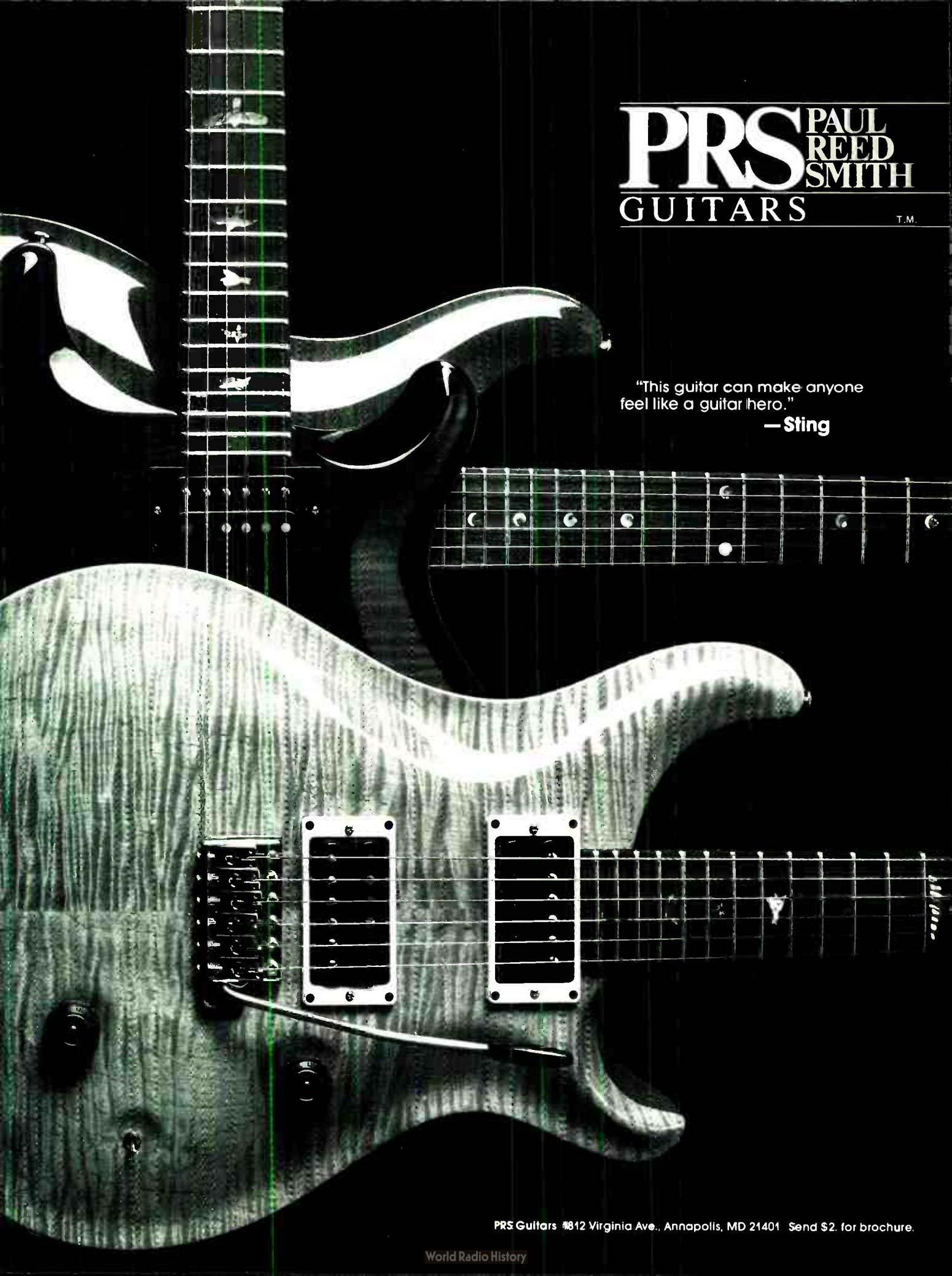
BONO: I don't know. To be honest, U2 saved my life because I am literally unemployable. There's nothing else I can do. I think I would have imploded, as distinct from exploding in my musical life. I mean, I worked as a petrol pump attendant. Can you imagine me as a petrol pump attendant?

MUSICIAN: *Are you worried about playing football stadiums in America?*

BONO: I admit I believe in U2 in up to 20,000-seat arenas. Our music is a big music. It can get through in a way a lot of other musics can't. I'm uptight about playing outdoors in football stadiums. The argument brought against me is that the concert we did in Dublin at Croke Park was one of our best. It was 55,000 people and it felt like a small club. The other argument is that the alternative is to be elitist and play in small places where the scalpers' ticket price goes through the roof. We attempted this at Radio City in New York and people were

U2 CAN PLAY

Bono sings and plays his Hohner and ProHarp harmonicas into a Shure SM 58 microphone. He plays his custom-made Fender Telecaster into a MESA/Boogie amp and also plays a Washburn acoustic. **Edge** also has a Washburn acoustic in addition to a Fender Stratocaster, a Gibson Les Paul Custom and a Fender Telecaster. His onstage keyboard is a Yamaha CP 70B. His offstage set-up includes a Yamaha QX1, a Yamaha QX7 sequencer, a Yamaha DX7 and an E-Max Sampling Keyboard. Amps include a Vox AC30 and a MESA/Boogie. Effects include a t.c. 2290 digital delay, Yamaha REV7, SPX 90 and Korg digital delay. All of this is controlled with a Boss Sound Center Control and a Photon MIDI converter. **Adam Clayton**'s basses include three Fenders: a Precision, a Jazz, and one that's custom-made with a graphite neck. Adam also has a Zon bass with Bartolini pickups. It's all driven with a BGW amp into four Harbinger speakers and a Yamaha crossover, and sweetened with Boss SCC 700, Ibanez V 4000 and Yamaha SPX 90 multi-effects units, and an Ibanez DM1000 digital delay. For mobility Adam and Edge use Nady wireless systems. **Larry Mullen**'s Yamaha drum kit includes a 24-inch bass drum, 14-inch rack tom, 2 floor toms and a 14-inch piccolo snare. Add two Latin Percussion timbales, Rude and Paiste cymbals, and Pro-mark 5A sticks, and you have it.



paying 100, 150 dollars. Also certain fans were sitting on the shoulders of somebody, blocking the view. It's very easy for frenzy, violence to break out.

So we have some responsibility to cater to the demand for tickets, yet I don't want to go all the way with that. This is a real question. The other thing is to play a small venue for two weeks. More than anything, that can kill off a good group. Ask the Clash about Bonds in New York. It can be a lot like going to work. There's a kinetic energy about being on the road. Part of the trance, the momentum, is going city to city.

MUSICIAN: *How's your stage presentation evolving?*

BONO: U2 will be much looser. We'll take a risk of falling on our face doing a new song. We want to be relaxed enough to make mistakes because sometimes making mistakes is the most interesting part live, discovering something new in a song.

MUSICIAN: *Is there some hope of denting American political apathy?*

BONO: Well, your first reason for being onstage is not to effect change in the political climate of a country. I like to think that U2 have already contributed to a turnaround in thinking.

EDGE: And if we have, it's not even the point, is it really? You don't write a song because you think it's going to change somebody. You write a song because that's the way you feel.

ADAM: You write a song because something hurts. Look at social change within America; that came from the Delta areas, the plantations. A lot of the change in America is rooted in just blues music. That was what people listened to and it was the protest music of the time.

BONO: You see, I don't think it's up to bands to have their politics and point of view worked out. I don't think it's up to me as a singer to have answers. I just think it's important to put questions. I don't know of a rock 'n' roll band that ever offered up answers and I think it's wrong for pop stars to be politicians. I like the idea of Jim Morrison calling the Doors "erotic politicians." I thought that was kind of funny because you're put in a position where because you have made music that means something to people, your politics or point of view is given far too much importance. What comes to mind is Elvis Presley who meets with Nixon and is made an anti-drug marshall and the man is loaded out of his brains with the badge on.

I'm more interested in the man as opposed to men, one man as opposed to a crowd of men. That mainly explains the spiritual side of my writing. I think in a funny way the country almost gets the political party it deserves, that it has choices. I had a row with Paul Weller about this at Band Aid, about the old argument that *it's the system*. I just don't go, "It's the system." I think men choose the system they live under in our age.

I'm more interested in what you might call—if you were that way inclined—a revolution of love. I believe that if you want to start a revolution you better start a revolution in your own home and your own way of thinking and of relating to the men and women around you. I'm trying to come to terms with global ideas like Live Aid, Artists Against Apartheid and Amnesty International. These ideas are great ideas. We believe and belong to them. Yet for me, the future lies in small-scale activity. For instance, commitment to a community, like U2 are committed to Dublin, commitment to the people in your place of work, commitment to relationships and the ones you love.

I told you in a night-club about a year ago I was sick of being reasonable. I learned to come out as an unreasonable man. "Red Hill Mining Town" is a song

continued on page 105

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THE RETURN OF ANNIE CHRISTIAN

JEFF KATZ

PRINCE

Sign Of The Times
(Paisley Park)

Hype and fond wishes aside, *Sign Of The Times* is not Prince's return to the pop mainstream he virtually abandoned two years ago. It contains nothing with the punch of "Delirious" or "Let's Go Crazy," the stark power of "When Doves Cry," the sterling craftsmanship of "Kiss," or the anthemic drama of "Purple Rain." Nor does it hold many surprises for anyone familiar with *Around The World In A Day* and *Parade*. But it does clarify the method behind the apparent madness of those two albums. Seems Prince has been working toward pop/funk/jazz fusions all along; maybe it took the recent Madhouse project to bring that purpose into focus.

Sign Of The Times is at least as hermetic as his recent records, and it's the first since *1999* on which he's played almost everything himself. It's less emotionally claustrophobic, though (no psychodramatic quests for "The Ladder," no "Under The Cherry Moon" death wishes) and that alone makes it his most accessible album since *Purple Rain*. Stylistically, the sixteen tracks fall into two major groups—intricate funk jams and baroque pop/balladry, both emphasizing improvisation over conventional arrangements and melodies. There's also a handful of standard uptempo pop tunes, but they're mostly unremarkable.

Times shows Prince's evolving funk sensibilities, like James Brown's before him, moving further from melody and deeper into rhythm. But while Brown's grooves never failed to hit you in the body, Prince's frequently sound cerebral and contrived. "Housequake," however inventive, collapses of its own weight before the funk reaches the listener's feet. Whether the fault lies with a profusion of ideas or a stinginess of spirit might be debatable, but one thing is certain: Most of this album sorely lacks the warmth and spontaneity of "It's Gonna Be A Wonderful Night," a tough funk groove recorded live with the Revolution in Paris.

Which is not to say Prince can't concoct a pretty hot jam by himself. In fact, the biggest problem with pop tunes like "I Could Never Take The Place Of Your Man" and pop/funk like "Play In The Sunshine" is that the perfunctory verses and choruses seem like lame set-ups for the jams at the end. That ploy may seem puckish if you're feeling charitable, but it's masturbatory if you're not. Either way, it points to a larger problem with recent Prince albums. In the past, even his most radical innovations were triumphs of craftsmanship as much as invention, but the more he's abandoned studio-wise discipline in favor of intuitive whimsy, the less compelling he's become. The scattershot lyrics of the title cut (which range in topic from crack and the space shuttle to hurricanes and gang violence) are a fitting metaphor for this album's musical clutter.

But if *Times* fails on the whole, it still has moments. While "If I Was Your Girlfriend" sounds at first like another satyrly come-on, it turns out to be the first Prince song to grasp the sense of distance and inadequacy beneath his sexual braggadocio. The best of the rest is all on side four, including "Wonderful Night" and a striking spiritual quest song titled "The Cross," which starts as a brooding ballad and builds into one of Prince's most satisfying rock arrangements since *Purple Rain*. "Adore," a lush midtempo soul number recalling both Al Green and Marvin Gaye, is gentle and gracious beyond anything he's done before—at least until the eerie final verse, when the mood shifts and the song ends abruptly with a jarring pipe organ line.

Like his other post-*Purple Rain* al-

bums, *Sign Of The Times* smacks of hoary psychedelic clichés and revolutionary aspirations. That's not a contradiction so much as a reflection of Prince's lack of moorings. He's the first major pop star since Dylan who's managed to make an expatriate of himself without leaving home. – **Steve Perry**

DAVID BOWIE

Never Let Me Down
(EMI America)

Warhol may be gone but we've still got Bowie. A neurasthenic soulman overamped with data to the point that his internal circuitry has burned away leaving nothing but a glittering shell, Bowie is a blank screen onto which we project our darkest fantasies. Like the late, great Andy, he has a talent for conjuring seductive, illusory images while simultaneously inoculating the public with an appetite for them. It's something Bowie's been doing for years and he does a reasonably good job of it with this, the follow-up to his commercial bomb of last year, *Tonight*. It's a good, not a great Bowie album, but hell, the man wrote the book on a certain school of pop and he's never less than professional.

Clever chap that he is, Bowie composes music wide open to interpretation and *Never Let Me Down* can be read on a number of levels. What's immediately apparent is that this stylistically varied record is a tribute to some of the musicians who've inspired him. The album's first single, "Day-In Day-Out," is built around the ratcheting dance rhythm that fueled the Motown sound, while "Never Let Me Down" salutes John Lennon. Bowie takes a stroll through the Who's teenage wasteland with "Zeroes," a dark anthem that echos "Sgt. Pepper's" as well as Bowie's own treatise on pop idolatry, "Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars." He dons Earth, Wind & Fire drag for "Shining Star" (which features a spoken/sung guest vocal by Mickey Rourke), and tips his hat to pal Iggy Pop by covering the brilliant Mr. Osterberg's fantastic "Bang Bang." Bowie turns in the most hilarious vocal of his career on this tune, delivering each lyric like the punch line of a dirty joke.

Knitting these various tangents are consistently rich production values and the recurring message that life in the twentieth century is wicked indeed. Essentially an apocalyptic manifesto masquerading as a collection of dance singles, *Never Let Me Down* is rooted in an unrelenting anxiety that threatens to explode into hysteria. This is a dark record pretending to be a fun record, and among the subjects it addresses are nuclear war, abandoned children, drug addiction, corporate crime, and greed. In the face of all this bad news, the only solace Bowie can suggest is the thrill of romantic infatuation, the redemptive power of love and the satisfaction that comes with making a good appearance regardless of circumstance. Looking swell is the best revenge sayeth the Thin White Duke, so take his advice of two years ago, put on your red shoes and dance the blues. – **Kristine McKenna**

THE BEATLES

Please Please Me
With The Beatles
A Hard Day's Night
Beatles For Sale
(Parlophone/Capitol)

My researchers tell me the last time a record company hyped a band this mercilessly was when Columbia released five singles simultaneously from the first Moby Grape album. Times change, but unfortunately not human greed. Now Capitol has inundated us with four albums—and fifty-five songs—by the Beatles. Further, Capitol has taken advantage of that Double Fianchetto Defense of the recording industry, the compact disc, in its marketing scheme.

But could this be more of a Boden-Kieseritzky Gambit on Capitol's part, a wide ball in the popping crease? Careful investigation reveals the following: Despite the seeming deluge of songs, the total running time of these four compact discs is a second over 131 minutes—short enough to fit comfortably on *two* CDs. That a consumer (even one out of college) should have to pay fifteen to twenty dollars for a thirty-minute compact disc speaks volumes about the sad state of corporate morality.

Given this high-tech, high-price approach, one should at least expect correspondingly high quality. These Beatles do indeed have a flair for songwriting, though their brief tunes are often undeveloped; one wishes they would write more and phase out the tired "oldies" that clutter up three of these albums. Their performances are enthusiastic but surprisingly amateurish. Guitarist John Lennon goes offkey holding a sung note on "Twist And Shout"; bassist Paul McCartney does the same on "Hold Me Tight." Shouldn't producers notice things like that? Drummer "Ringo" Starr is no Dave Brubeck, but his percussion technique far outshines his vocal ability.

For reasons best known to someone other than myself, all four of these albums are in monaural sound. (Don't expect Capitol to tell you *that* either.) Perhaps it's in keeping with the period approach of the Beatles' music. To me it seems like just another way to gouge the unwary CD buyer. There's certainly some enjoyable music here; more's the pity that in trying to make a fast buck, Capitol has done this band such a disservice. – **Jann Guccione**

BUD POWELL

The Complete Blue Note Bud Powell
(Mosaic)

Your name is Bud Powell, and they've been raking the leaves over your grave for twenty years, but hell, they buried you long before that. Perhaps you'd have stumbled anyhow, along the labyrinth hall of mirrors and black holes in your mind's eye, but then how many of you were there anyway? Shouting to come out, then receding into a ruminative, protective silence. Monk and Tatum,

pressure-cooked in the cauldron of your hopeless, forgiving romanticism. Police beat all the anger out of you that Philly night in '45, least that's what your bassist Curley Russell peeped, and he ought to know. Musicians and critics picked you clean, too, analyzing the letter, often missing the spirit, just as those electro-shock therapists did, for your own good. Look, Bud fudged that one, wonder what was on his mind, ain't like in 1948, no, no, going down slow...well, screw you.

There is no anger in the many phases and faces of *The Complete Blue Note Bud Powell* (Mosaic MR5-116), but there is a continuum of intensity, the sound of a man reaching clear about the new world he senses. Bud always brought some new love back to you from behind his wall, and I suspect that what endears Bud's remarkable Blue Note legacy to devotees is not simply a matter of control, but serenity. And what makes this extraordinary Mosaic limited-edition collector's box such a joy for you, dear readers, at $45.00, is not a matter of exclusivity (the original Blue Notes are around) but coherence. This box presents a unified vision of Bud Powell, stylist and composer, beautifully remastered and packaged, stretched out in chronological order to delineate Powell's artistic evolution (not dissolution). The recordings Powell did for Verve and Norman Granz are frequently more intense, but these six sessions (from 1949, 1951, 1953, 1957 and 1958) illustrate Bud's affinity for Blue Note impresario Alfred Lion, who passed away this winter. The structural calm of Bud's originals in the studio belie the turmoil of his life, as he explodes the song form structure of jazz piano like an American Chopin. The rhythmic fire in his eyes refracts the visionary harmonic warmth of his heart.

He reinvented and reinterpreted the jazz piano tradition as fully as Charlie Parker did for melody players: To this day Bud Powell *is jazz piano*. The Powell we see pictured in the Mosaic booklet—transported in the graceful orbit of invention or beaming at us in family pictures with his proud, purposeful mother—is the Bud Powell to remember. Genius is such a fragile thing, but unlike the man, the thought goes on forever. (Mosaic Records, 197 Strawberry Hill Avenue, Stamford, CT 06902-2510 203-327-7111) – **Chip Stern**

SIMPLY RED

Men And Women
(Elektra)

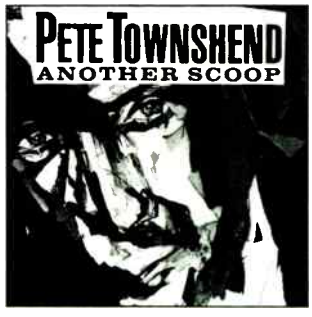
With its second LP, Simply Red has not only skirted the Sophomore Slump, but crafted a record exuding the kind of sophistication and assurance most like-minded bands don't reach 'til album four or five. Hell, we probably shouldn't be *too* surprised. The group's debut, *Picture Book*, introduced Simply Red as the rock 'n' soul equivalent of a remarkably precocious schoolkid, and Mick (Red) Hucknall's smoky soprano showed a world-weary edge at odds with his age—twenty-five going on forty-seven.

This eerie vocal and musical maturity is again applied to a freewheeling potpourri of styles, from reflective ballads ("Maybe Someday," "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye") to regal reggae ("Love Fire"), to a fistful of slithering romps, including a joyous not-guilty plea, "I Won't Feel Bad" that would do Hucknall's main man—*Mr.* James Brown—oh-so-proud. While some *Book* tunes—particularly a revised version of the Valentine Brothers' "Money'$ Too Tight (To Mention)"—incorporated political commentary, this time out Simply Red is more often concerned with sexual politics.

Those artistic scorekeepers who take off points for outside material may complain that to flesh out the *Men And Women* theme, Simply Red have simply dipped into the catalogs of such folks as Bunny Wailer, Cole Porter and Sly Stone, while Hucknall—the redheaded head Red—has collaborated with Lamont Dozier on a pair of tunes, "Infidelity" and "Suffer."

Okay, so maybe Hucknall and company aren't prolific songwriters. Big deal. Great pop wisdom and care have gone into each selection, avoiding missteps like *Book*'s over-the-(Windham)-hill reading of Talking Heads' "Heaven." The band brings such firm chops and personality to its material that the collection sounds seamless, making it tough to tell originals from covers.

Probably the niftiest thing about *Men And Women* is that Simply Red has already fulfilled much of its early potential, while revealing a great deal more. Maybe these guys really are soul survivors. – **Duncan Strauss**

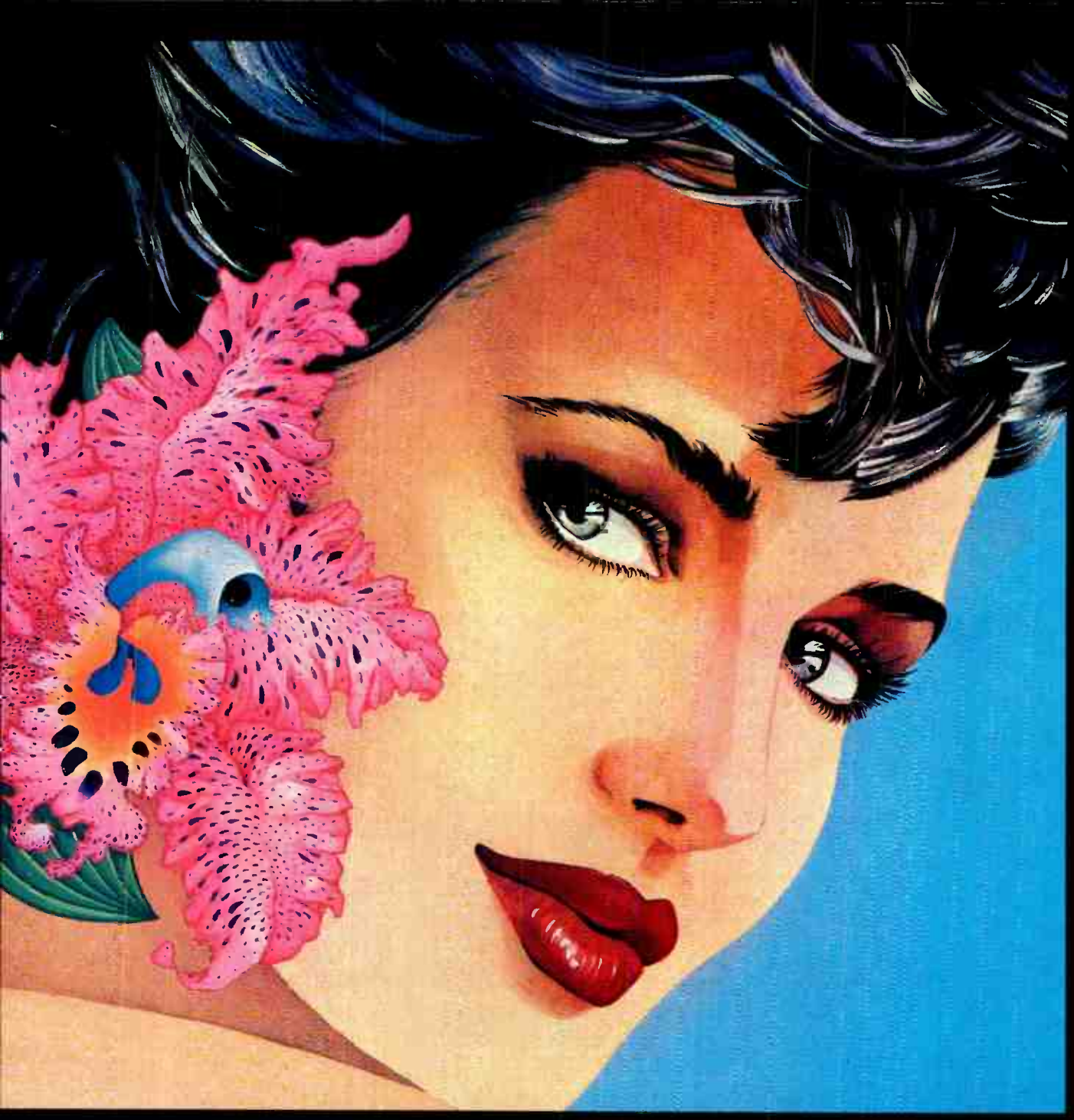


PETE TOWNSHEND

Another Scoop
(Atco)

Four sides of Pete Townshend's legendary demos and home studio excursions *should* be a windfall to anyone interested in his career in and out of the Who. The rudiments of such classic tunes as "Pinball Wizard," "Happy Jack," "Substitute," "Pictures Of Lily" and "The Kids Are Alright" hold archeological value, besides providing conceptual context. Those who take special pleasure in the plaintive sincerity of Townshend's singing will enjoy the sheer volume of PT vocals, especially on songs that have always been sung by Roger Daltrey.

But, like 1983's disappointing *Scoop*, many of the unfamiliar pieces here reflect cringeworthy musical directions that lead this brilliant artist down blind alleys. Does anyone really want to hear the man responsible for "My Generation" sing the praises of Siddhartha in a song that sounds like a Rodgers and Hammerstein castoff? (On the other hand, his reading of Cole Porter's "Begin



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The Beguine" is magnificent.) By not being his own archivist—an associate made the selections—more than twenty years of work have again been culled for an inconsistent mixture of memorabilia, fascinating sketches and self-indulgent grandiosity.

Whatever Townshend's relationship with his former band, that mystical collaboration largely kept him from tangential musical digressions. The mesmerizing drone of "Ask Yourself" works, but drifts close to doodling; the white-boy guitar work on "Driftin' Blues" proves a stylistic point and little more. Townshend has demonstrated that he doesn't need power chords to express himself effectively, yet some of these undynamic tracks take concerns once focused into 2:05 of claustrophobic precision and intellectualize them to the point of emotional dissipation.

Despite inclusions of dubious merit, *Another Scoop* is still invaluable for its gems. Few musicians of Townshend's stature would have the courage or self-awareness to release an album this naked, and no real fan should pass up the invitation to stroll through his back pages, warts and all. – **Ira Robbins**

ORNETTE COLEMAN & PRIME TIME

Opening The Caravan Of Dreams
(Caravan of Dreams Productions)

Here we go again: Is America ready for Ornette Coleman & Prime Time? For a swelter of tongues, the babble of chaos, the underside of consciousness, a new order amidst the smoldering ruins of outmoded designs? Sure, I can see it now... Bruuuuuuuuuuce! Orrrrnetttttte!

Mmmmph. Still, despite Prime Time's polytonal/polyrhythmic intensity, there is something very old, very simple, very beautiful about this music. It is not pop. It is not jazz. It is not R&B. Elements of them all are at work here, though, shifting hemispheres of sound suspended in space like a galactic mobile, wheeling outward in rings of heat and light from the center of an ancient Crab Nebula.

Sound like multi-platinum to you? Well, it sounds like life to me. Not some sentimental replication of the past, but a bold take on possible futures. It *is* harmolodic, because Ornette's sense of development is primarily rhythmic and melodic; his Noah's-ark orchestra (Bern Nix/Charlie Ellerbee–guitars; Jaamaladeen Tacuma/Albert MacDowell–bass guitars; Denardo Coleman/Sabir Kamal–drums) extends rhythms in tonal directions; the multiple key centers in which he orchestrates his accompaniment create an ever-modulating chordal fabric, the illusion of changes. And for all of the band's free-wheeling, Ornette's alto is still the line of demarcation between energy fields, the unifying force—and the only soloist.

And oh how that alto speaks, from the sing-song riffing bluesiness of "City Living" and the tragic balladic dignity of "See-Thru" to the declarative song-form-like speech of "Sex Spy." As these live sides illustrate, Ornette has evolved the disco-like 4/4 of *Of Human Feeling* into a more organic, free-flowing drive, epitomized by the ritual fury of "Harmolodic Bebop." On the escalating rhythm changes of "To Know What To Know," an R&B figure is superceded by a North African jig, which in turn acts as a springboard for group improvisation. All in all, it's a celebration of life, proving the shortest distance between two points (your heart and your hips) is a circle, and that, if you're set to fly, Ornette is ready when you are. (Caravan of Dreams Productions, 312 Houston St., Ft. Worth, TX 76102. Available through New Music Distribution, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012 (212) 925-2121)

– **Chip Stern**

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3. **The Judds** – *Heartland* (RCA)
4. **Tom Bright** – *Torture Land* (Blackberry Way)
5. **XTC** – *Skylarking* (Geffen)
6. **Johnny Cash** – *The Vintage Years: 1955-1963* (Rhino)
7. **Silos** – *Cuba* (Record Collect)
8. **The Mando Boys** (Red House)
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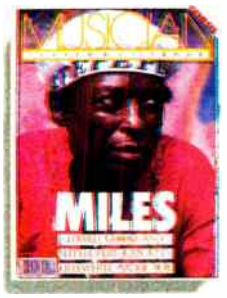

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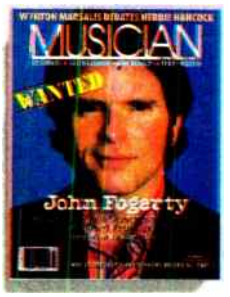

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SHORT Rock TAKES

Various Artists
Soweto Never Sleeps: Classic Female Zulu Jive (Shanachie)

Zulu Jive anthologies were engaging exoticisms even before Paul Simon made them fashionable; what makes this set special is how easily it shows that *Graceland*'s commerciality was no fluke. Of course, Malcolm McLaren saw enough potential in the Mahotella Queens' "Umculo Kawuphell" to give it to Bow Wow Wow a few years back as "Jungle Boy." But the Zulu jivers borrowed, too—the Mahotella's "Wozani Mahipi" bears a more than passing resemblance to James Brown's "Talking Loud And Saying Nothing." Consider this the *irresistible* Beat of Soweto. (Dalebrook Pk., Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423)

Music from the Motion Picture Soundtrack
Some Kind Of Wonderful (MCA/Hughes)

John Hughes' ability to tap the teen psyche is slipping if the box office reports are to be believed, but he's sure learned a lot about making soundtracks. Not only is this both more daring and more consistent than either *Pretty In Pink* or *The Breakfast Club*, it's more listenable. Part of that stems from the occasional unexpected gem, like Lick the Tins' wistful "Can't Help Falling In Love," but mostly, it's the way producer Stephen Hague sharpens the craft and focuses the pop content on tracks by such otherwise secondary talents as the March Violets or Flesh For Lulu.

Herb Alpert
Keep Your Eye On Me (A&M)

Admit it—if it were *your* record company, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis would have produced your solo album, too. Which is not to say that Alpert simply coasts: The title tune is funky, witty and in many ways the most ambitious track the former Tijuana Brass-man has ever cut, while "Making Love In The Rain" is as solid as anything on *Control*. Best of all, there's never anything condescending about the music here, suggesting that even after twenty-five years in the biz, Alpert somehow avoided coming down with a case of Record Exec's Ego.

Sheila E.
Sheila E. (Paisley Park)

When Prince sings about sex, it's with the single-minded fervor of a genuine maniac; when Sheila E. sings about sex, it's with the nudge-wink knowingness of a show-biz fake. That wasn't so bad when she still had some passion for her music, but here, she fakes even that. At least Apollonia had an excuse.

Microdisney
Crooked Mile (Virgin)

After the unabashed pop of *The Clock Comes Down The Stairs*, the subtler pleasures of these songs might seem almost disappointing. Cathal Coughlan and Sean O'Hagan can be catchy when they want to—"Town To Town" or "Rack" are proof enough of that—but producer Lenny Kaye downplays the ear candy for the sort of instrumental understatement which adds emotional resonance and meaning to the music. That makes *Crooked Mile* a more lasting pleasure.

Siouxsie & the Banshees
Through The Looking Glass (Geffen)

Simply as a statement of taste, this collection of covers is quite an achievement. Though some selections are so self-consciously obscure one wonders who they're trying to impress (really, what's the point of doing Roxy Music's "Sea Breezes," except to show you know it?), others are remarkably astute, like Iggy Pop's "The Passenger" and Sparks' "This Town Ain't Big Enough For The Both Of Us." The big surprise, though, is that Siouxsie handles "Strange Fruit" and Dylan's "This Wheel's On Fire" with a maturity her own songs only occasionally exhibit.

Colin Newman
Commercial Suicide (Enigma)

Like so many English intellectual art rockers, Colin Newman is possessed of a pretty dour sensibility. What makes him fascinating is the way his records mitigate his emotional aloofness with a developed melodic sense. The result is a sort of Bauhaus pop, pulling beauty out of pure form even as it utterly objectifies its content. Which, I guess, is pretty much what Newman means in calling this *Commercial Suicide*. (Box 2428, El Segundo, CA 90245-1528)

Bruce Willis
The Return Of Bruno (Motown)

Proof that all you need for a hit record is a good arranger, a hit TV show, and stubble. Take *that*, Don Johnson.

Volcano Suns
All-Night Lotus Party (Homestead)

The Suns sure know how to make noise, but what sets this album apart is that there's more to these songs than the usual thrash-masher abstract; for another, they have chops enough to make every note sound like it was meant to be there. Mostly, they have guts, and that's what makes every play of this album as exhilarating as the last. (Box 570, Rockville Centre, NY 11571-0570)

REO Speedwagon
Life As We Know It (Epic)

Give 'em points for perseverance—not only do Kevin Cronin and Gary Richrath keep hanging in there, they even manage to make continuous, if painfully slow, progress. They've finally dumped their old-style AOR sound for a slightly newer AOR sound modeled on Huey Lewis & the News. Now all they need are some songs to go with it.

Patty Smyth
Never Enough (Columbia)

In case you ever wondered what Eddie Money would have been like as a girl.

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

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SHORT JAZZ TAKES

This column is dedicated to the memory of tenorist Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and drummer D Sharpe. From Minton's to Basie and from the Modern Lovers to Carla Bley, each represented a disparate approach to the American tradition, but both were individuals in an age of clones who brought a remarkable sense of style and humour to the bandstand. They were characters. They were creators. They are missed.

Jimmy Raney & Sonny Clark
Together (Xanadu)
Tal Farlow
Fuerst Set (Xanadu)
Second Set (Xanadu)

Don Schlitten's fine indie label has long been an oasis for no-bullshit bebop mainstreamers, and these three fine sessions from the mid-50s serve to document the work of bebop's premier guitarists in the period between Charlie Christian's departure and Wes Montgomery's ascendancy. Raney and Farlow seem like two sides of the same coin; their loping, circuitous lines—vocal and horn-like—are quite similar, but Raney is a taciturn, orderly editor (listen to his wonderful closing cadenza on "Body And Soul"), while Farlow is more intuitive and incendiary (compare how both approach "Yesterdays"). Sonny Clark's sparkling lyricism and Eddie Costa's quizzical percussive understatement provide unique contrapuntal support, marking them as two more missing links in jazz piano history. (Xanadu Records, 3243 Irwin Ave., Kingsbridge, NY 10463)

Dave Liebman
The Loneliness Of A Long Distance Runner (CMP)

As "suite" a personal statement as this reed master's ever made. Narrowing his arsenal to soprano sax, Liebman's vivid, swami-like tonalities and multi-tracked open voicings form a tonal parallel to the discipline and effulgence of a marathoner's life. Virtuosic. (CMP Records, Box 640157, D-5000 Cologne 60, FR-Germany)

Tom Varner
Jazz French Horn (New Note)

I always imagined the reason French horn players rammed their fist down the bell of the instrument was less to control the sound than to throttle the son-of-a-bitch. In Tom Varner's hands it's more like a form of foreplay. Like fellow master John Clark, Varner tames this recalcitrant horn, producing a warm, fluid lyricism. His arrangements of jazz standards and originals are first-rate, and the interplay with reedman Jim Snidero and the rhythm team of Kenny Barron, Mike Richmond and Victor Lewis provides the kind of challenging "mainstream" music major labels have long since abandoned. (Available through N.M.D.S., 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012)

Clark Terry
Serenade To A Bus Seat (Riverside)
Eldridge
The Nifty Cat (New World Records)

Terry's 1957 maiden voyage for Riverside celebrated a major talent and a progenitor of such popular giants as Miles Davis and Wynton Marsalis; the bus seat in question celebrates long service with the big bands of Lionel Hampton, Count Basie and Duke Ellington (credentials enough, eh?). This quintet date is bebop deluxe, highlighting Terry's remarkable fluency and wit; his elastic control of bends, glisses, growls, half-valves and other vocal effects—not to mention his understated but intense sense of swing. (Johnny Griffin, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones keep the furnace well stoked.) As for Mr. Eldridge, Roy is synonymous with joy. Little Jazz's growling, burnished lyricism and scarifying emotional intensity mark him as one of the greatest trumpeters in jazz history. Also one of the most fiercely competitive, though *The Nifty Cat* highlights the bluesy warmth and melodic lilt of his line. The subtle blend of shadings and overtones he achieves with legendary front-liners Budd Johnson and Benny Morton is masterful, pointing to the timelessness of their innovations—even amidst the free jazz–electric aftershocks of 1970, when this was recorded.

Robert Dick
The Other Flute (GM Recordings)

Who was that masked flautist? Having heard this wonderful instrument debauched by countless reed players too lazy to even scratch the surface of its sonic possibilities, it's astonishing to hear the otherworldly sonorities Dick elicits through multiphonic, microtonal and percussive innovations of his own design. Works by Eric Dolphy, Varèse and Paganini included. Masterful. (N.M.D.S.)

Odean Pope & the Saxophone Choir
The Saxophone Shop (Soul Note)

Pope extends that wailing, R&Bish style you've heard ad infinitum on *Saturday Night Live*, sexy jeans commercials and at Springsteen concerts in ways that might give David Sanborn fans severe palpitations and nocturnal emissions. Pope's tenor voice is a wheeling rebus of circular breathing, torchy overtones and multiphonic amens, and he is well served by a choir of saxophonists (three additional tenors, three altos and a bari) who deck out his dazzling harmonies in balls of fire and veils of Philly soul.

Benny Goodman
The RCA Victor Years (RCA)

Attention: NOT JUST FOR WHITE PEOPLE. He was the Popularizer, the Russian Jew who made the beige boppers and bobbysoxers take notice...the King. Well, he was not *the* King, but he was nobility nevertheless, and people of all pigment may profit from the sturdy swing and relentless chamber-like intricacy of his trios and quartets with Krupa, Wilson and Hampton, collaborations with Chu Berry and Roy Eldridge, and every manner of small group and big band. Digitally remastered and handsomely boxed, as befits a sixteen-record flagship for RCA's re-entry into the jazz market. If only *all* the Ellington and Rollins receive like treatment.

BY CHIP STERN

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SHORT Indie TAKES

Johnny Thunders
Stations Of The Cross (ROIR cassette)

The Junkie That Refused To Die, guitarist Johnny Thunders is less a musical phenomenon than a medical one. This tape-only release documents a 1982 quasi-live show: With drummer Jerry Nolan providing most of the energy, Thunders and his fellow bad boys sleepwalk their way through two sets of rock 'n' roll from the Twilight Zone. If the playing doesn't offend you, Thunders' sexism ("Who Needs Girls?"), racism ("Just Because I'm White") or scatological between-songs raps probably will. Ghoulishly fascinating. (611 Broadway, Suite 725, NY, NY 10012) – *Scott Isler*

Jimmy Donley
Give Me My Freedom (Charly)

Swamp-pop is an obscure style, but not as obscure as Donley, a Gulf Coast singer/songwriter who had a few regional hits in the genre. Donley's an incredible singer and a good songwriter—Fats Domino recorded a bunch of his tunes. He sounds black—not like Michael McDonald, but like someone who grew up in a place where black and white cultures really mixed it up. Eerie stuff. (Street Level Trading Company, 5298 1 Valley Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90032 213-222-6665) – *Peter Watrous*

Nervous Eaters
Hot Steel And Acid
(Ace of Hearts/Important Records)

Steve Cataldo is a songwriter capable of subtlety, irony and stylistic diversity. But you'd never know it from this record. *Hot Steel And Acid* is a celebration of beer-drinking fast-driving 8-track-playing Yardbirds-inspired Aerosmith-riffing blues-derived post-Iggy pre-Sex Pistols American punk rock. In 1968 they called it acid, in 1981 they called it hard core. (They were wrong both times.) A seminal figure in late-70s Boston punk, Cataldo spent six years kicking himself for letting Elektra turn the Eaters' only other album into a pop record. Now he's made the rock 'n' roll record he should have made then. This is hard, funny, nasty stuff: what punk was like before Eno and the *Village Voice* got hold of it. (Ace Of Hearts Records, Box 579, Kenmore Station, Boston, MA 02215)
– *Bill Flanagan*

Pepe Habichuela
A Mandeli (Hannibal)

If flamenco has earned its rep as an overly emotional music, it isn't going to be Habichuela who turns it around: This stuff wears its heart on its sleeve. But speedy fretboard runs and precision trills let the term "visceral" come into play as well (somewhat rare in acoustic music these days). There's a dignity that parallels the romanticism. Whirling through fandangos, tangos and rhumbas, Habichuela lives up to the moniker of one-man orchestra the same way, say, that Cecil Taylor does. However, as devastating as his prowess may be, there's never any of the "watch me" syndrome. He puts melody, of which there's plenty, above flash. (Rounder, 1 Camp St., Cambridge, MA 02140) – *Jim Macnie*

Billy Strayhorn
Cue For Saxophone (Affinity)

Recorded in 1959, *Cue* is one of the finest Ellingtonian small group dates, and half of Strayhorn's output for Felsted, a label run by critic Stanley Dance. With Quentin Jackson on trombone, "Cue Porter" (a disguised Johnny Hodges) on alto, Shorty Baker on trumpet, and Russell Procope on clarinet, the album defines relaxed elegance. With simply arranged riff tunes and standards, it's also a showcase for the musicians' personalities—Hodges' buttery cry, the swoops of Procope's clarinet and Strayhorn's lingering, Dukish piano. (Street Level Trading Company)
– *Peter Watrous*

Paul Geremia
My Kinda Place (Flying Fish)

Play the folk blues too fastidiously and you wind up with a by-the-numbers glossary; don't pay enough attention to detail and it falls apart. Geremia's found the balance in a record that brings together a bunch of eleven old-timey blues tunes. It's also the first in a while to take the notion of historic revivalism and dash it against the wall. Chops is the way he makes pieces like Leadbelly's "Silver City Bound" and Lonnie Johnson's "Nuts About That Gal" transcend cliché. By throwing exquisitely placed hesitation into the rhythm, the guitarist confounds the beat, N'awlins style. That's slick enough, but it's the way he makes it sound so natural that secures his place on the top shelf of second-generation blues and rag-time pickers. (1304 W. Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614)
– *Jim Macnie*

Poncho Sanchez
Papa Gato (Concord/Picante)

As a percussionist he's L.A.'s answer to Mongo Santamaria; as a bandleader Poncho Sanchez's crisp arrangements, Cubop flair and informed jazz sensibility bear comparison with Machito's. Great arrangements of Dizzy's "Manteca" and Horace Silver's "Señor Blues," but the real surprise here is pianist Charlie Ottwell, whose own compositions, notably the title tune and "Serenidad" prove models of melodicism and fluid drive. A deceptively easeful set that's at once sophisticated and an endless groove. (Box 845, Concord, CA 94522)
– *Mark Rowland*

Kawande
Kinshasa (Planisphere)

If the recent African records I've picked up are any indication, people are either recording older styles of African pop, or the music is undergoing a reaction against Western pop influences. *Kinshasa*, from Zaire, has a rhythm section, but it also features acoustic guitars and rural-sounding female vocal choirs; the result is a light, non-international sound that feels like it's been made by people from a certain place, intent on enjoying a party. *Don't* send Paul Simon a tape. (N.M.D.S., 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012) – *Peter Watrous*

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MARTINEZ from page 44

leading album notes to the contrary, which indicate it could be Taylor's). "I don't like to solo," says Eddie, "unless I feel the song really calls for it, is dying for some kind of release. In 'Addicted To Love,' when the song stops and the solo comes out, it feels like part of the song, not something that's just thrown against it and clashes with it. Which you hear a lot nowadays."

Martinez took a similar approach on his contributions to Air Supply's last album, *Hearts In Motion*, in which he says the bantamweight Aussies took on a decidedly tougher edge. "We worked on a tune that Mr. Mister's Richard Page had written," he details, "and I decided to go at it from more of a dynamic point of view—playing minimally when the track starts out, start opening up around the first chorus, really open up the second chorus, and when the bridge comes in just kick in with some really good-sounding stuff. And you're building up a track this way. When you do things like that, the track mixes itself. You can leave the fader right there, and when the guitar is needed, it'll be there."

Martinez is probably best known for his signature heavy sound, but as he proved with Lenny White and Stanley Clarke, he's equally adept at non-rock, progressive work. "I'm happiest doing rock 'n' roll," he says, "but I get called for all sorts of things. The stuff I do with Russ Titelman, like Winwood's [*High Life*] album—I play clean-sounding funk stuff. And then Jim Steinman will call me up for some gigantic ominous-sounding guitar. I try to approach each style as if it's all I've ever played."

Eddie says he helped fuel the fire for his new band project with Bernard Edwards and friends by going on the road again, something he hadn't done since his stint with Blondie five years ago. Touring with Robert Palmer, as he did last spring and summer, "helped me out—I had to get back on a stage and play live."

Martinez, Edwards, Thompson and Bova decided to put their own band together, he says, "because we'd been playing on everybody else's albums and making them sound good. It was like, let's make ourselves sound good. We're willing to sacrifice to get this thing rolling." Eddie and the others are continuing their outside projects—he recently contributed to LPs by the Tom Tom Club, Lou Gramm and Platinum Blonde.

At press time, the Distance was labelless. "There are definitely offers," says Martinez, "but we're taking our time on this." In any case, Eddie says he expects the Distance's debut album will be out before summer's end.

If his new band takes off, chances are Eddie Martinez might have a crack at guitar-hero status himself, which he confesses wouldn't be at all distasteful. In any case, Eddie's gargantuan axe is bound to make more and more noise. "I like to sound larger than life," he says. "When you're really cranking up and playing a huge-sounding guitar, it's like trying to hold onto a motorcycle—when you're not sitting on it. That's what's so much fun, that's what takes a lot of time: to actually be able to control the guitar at high levels, to make it sing and do everything you want, without it going nuts." M

U2 from page 90

about the miners' strike and the only reference to Ian MacGregor [the coal board chairman] is "through hand of steel and heart of stone/ Our labour day is come and gone." People beat me with a stick for that, but while you see in the newspapers and on the television that another thousand people have lost their jobs, what you don't read about is that those people go home and they have families. They were trying to bring up children and those relationships broke up under the pressure of the miners' strike. Those men and women lost pride in themselves, and that affected their sex life; "The glass is cut, the bottle run dry, our love runs cold in the cabins in the night/ We're wounded by fear, injured in doubt/ I can lose myself but you I can't live without/ 'Cause you keep me holding on." I'm more interested in the relationship at this point because I feel other people are more qualified to comment on the miners' strike. It enraged me, but I feel more qualified to write about relationships. Because I understand relationships more than what it's like to work in a pit.

MUSICIAN: *Townshend said you take too much on your shoulders.*

BONO: Oh, "Leave the social work to older people like myself." Yeah, I don't think we make very good social workers. We're much better writing songs and singing them. We make mistakes but then I'm one of those fools who believes anything is possible. It's probably a real innocence or stupidity on my part. I think, "Make a movie. Yeah, I'll make a movie! Write a screenplay! Save the world. Oh good, I'll save the world." I wouldn't go that far. Hold on a second. But with U2, I suppose we're dreamers and so far, our dreams have come true. This can give you a false perspective that the impossible is always possible. I'm just understanding the value of being limited.

MUSICIAN: *When you get to U2's level, do you get isolated? Is that possible in Dublin?*

BONO: It was awkward coming down to earth in dirty old Dublin with the people we know and love looking at us with a look we hadn't seen in their eyes before. Like, "Have you grown two heads since you've been away?" And us realizing we had! [*laughs*] Of course we have changed and I want to change. The real question is, is it change for the better or the worse? It's taken us a year to come down from the high of the last tour. Probably this week. But now we're about to step on another up escalator. M

MARSALIS from page 30

[who produced the track]."

From Sting to Tina Turner to Teena Marie. How long before Branford throws down some serious funk? Probably a while. "It's down the road," he reports. "But it won't all be backbeats like some of the stuff that's out now. I'd do it on the side, because jazz is still the most satisfying, challenging music for me."

The current *Royal Garden Blues* is proof, a vital blowing session in the Wayne Shorter (Blue Note) tradition. The ballad "Shadows" recalls Shorter with a touch of Coltrane. The title song is an old New Orleans favorite Branford has heard and played since he was a child, a sentimental but classy tribute to his roots in the manner of Wynton's "Sleepy Time Down South." Ironically, it's the intended showcase for Jeff "Tain" Watts, "The Wrath Of Tain," that best exemplifies Branford's gifts as a soloist, and features a powerful duel with Watts' dynamic rolls and cymbal crashes.

As an awakened Reese sways in his ·r's arms, the talk shifts to the big ·ord Branford had planned to re- ·r. "Thad Jones was going to arrangements but he didn't make it past the first one," he says wistfully. (Jones died unexpectedly last fall.) "His death took a lot of the air out of my bag. It was committed and set and everything. Then I called him one day and his phone was dead... I've chilled on the idea ever since. Some of the idiots at the record company keep asking, 'Who can we get to replace him?' When cats think like that you can't even talk to them."

Reece and I agree. I nod my head. Reece dribbles on dad's T-shirt. For a Marsalis, it's the thought that counts.

PIAZZOLLA from page 16

cally bizarre reason for this: "The last time I played in a cabaret, in 1961, in Uruguay, people began insulting us because we played an introduction to which people couldn't dance. Then someone put gasoline all over the musicians and tried to set fire to them."

As you might gather by now, Astor Piazzolla doesn't easily fit the role of musical glad-hander. Drenched in romanticism, devoid of irony, his music is as resolutely intimate as it's resolutely experimental. Such emotional resonances, even as carefully constructed and mediated by technique as Piazzolla's are, don't come around too often. "Music is a personal problem. I write it up for the quintet, and if they like it I think the process is finished. But the third part is when I give it to the public."

Piazzolla's latest, titled *Tango: Zero Hour* (available from N.M.D.S., 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012) finds the composer as effective and as startling as ever, "Every time we played it," he notes, "the people were like little dogs, shaking their heads, like 'What the hell are they doing?'

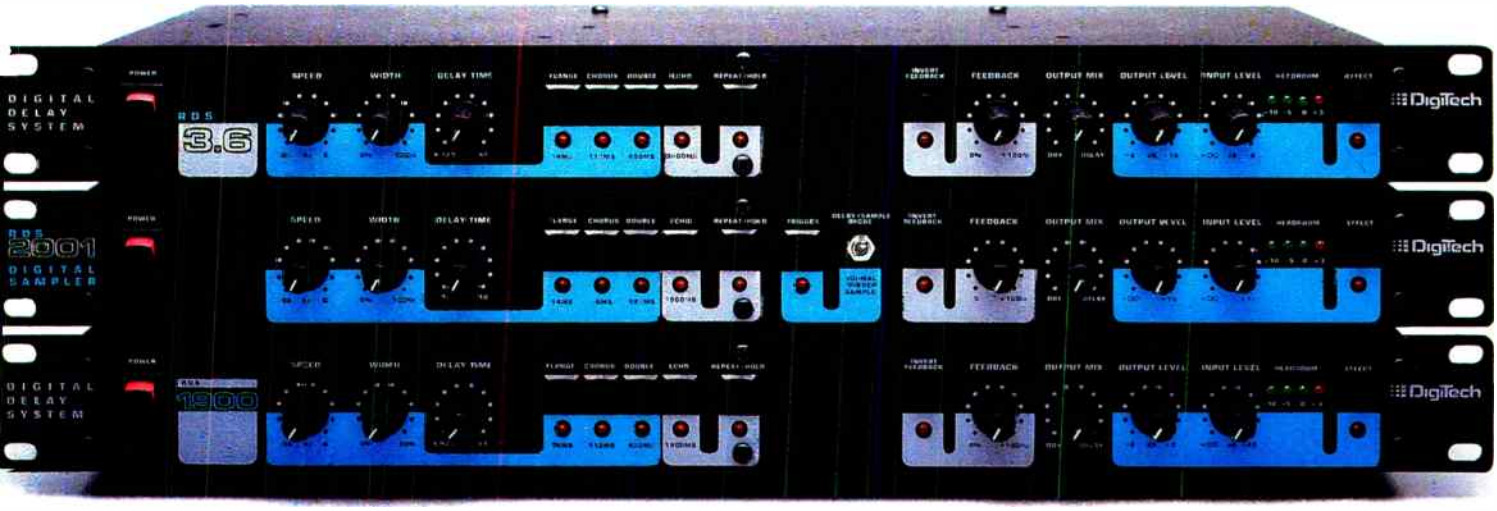
"You know, I visualize everything when I'm writing. If I write 'Buenos Aires: Zero Hour' (a piece on the new record), it's about an hour, twelve o'clock, when you hear the sirens of firemen or of the police, or screams or strange noises. That's how I see my city, through my music. And if a musician asks me 'How the hell could you write so many things?' I say, 'I don't know, I just write.' Picasso used to say, 'While everybody is looking, I find.' It's the same with me. I just write, and find things. The other ones are still looking. They have their minds in 1945."

RECORDERS' from page 50

mixing the drums, you better get it how you want it, 'cause there's no going back later. And once you're satisfied, how satisfied you will be!

And don't stop there. Do the same thing when you track the guitars, bass, synths, background vocals, etc. When you do the lead vocal, you may want to cut it dry and add the reverb in stereo to the final mix, to spread it out. If you have two reverb units, you may want to add a pinch of the second one to the other recorded tracks to get just a bit of "wash," so it sounds a *tad* like everyone was playing and singing together. Sort of adding a little colored water to that bowl of crystals. If you've only got one unit, you still might want to add a bit of the other tracks to the lead vocal's stereo reverb to achieve the same effect. Try doing the same song both ways and judge for yourself.

Then along comes "psychoacoustic" processing from Aphex, DOD/Digitech or Barcus Berry, increasing the sound quality by an order of magnitude. But enough for this time—you're probably out of effects sends by now anyway. So we'll pick up next time, to help you on the higher road to Clean Recording...unless, of course, the Cool Sound changes by then and we'll have to get into something silly like "Live Miking Techniques" or "The Band That Plays Together Stays Together."



We can't seem to leave well enough alone.

How did we improve something that didn't need improving?

Take it from us, it wasn't easy. In fact, improving our rack mount digital delays was a team effort involving a lot of very, *very* picky people. But the result is something to behold.

Introducing the new RDS series of rack mount digital delay systems, exclusively from DigiTech.

First, our design engineers stripped each product back to the chassis. Using sophisticated computer-aided design techniques, they added a more dependable modular circuit board along with a stronger transformer that delivers 15% more power. They included a unique –10dB/–30dB two-position input sensitivity switch on the rear panel that lets you match input level to the source.

They even managed to squeeze out more headroom, and incorporate an invert feedback function that gives you maximum phasing control at the push of a button. And just for fun, they included micro-touch switching for even cleaner, more reliable operation.

Then our graphic artists took over and turned one of the best sounding digital delay lines into one of the most beautiful looking.

Finally, we let the folks in accounting have their way. The result is an awesome display of technical achievement at a downright frivolous price.

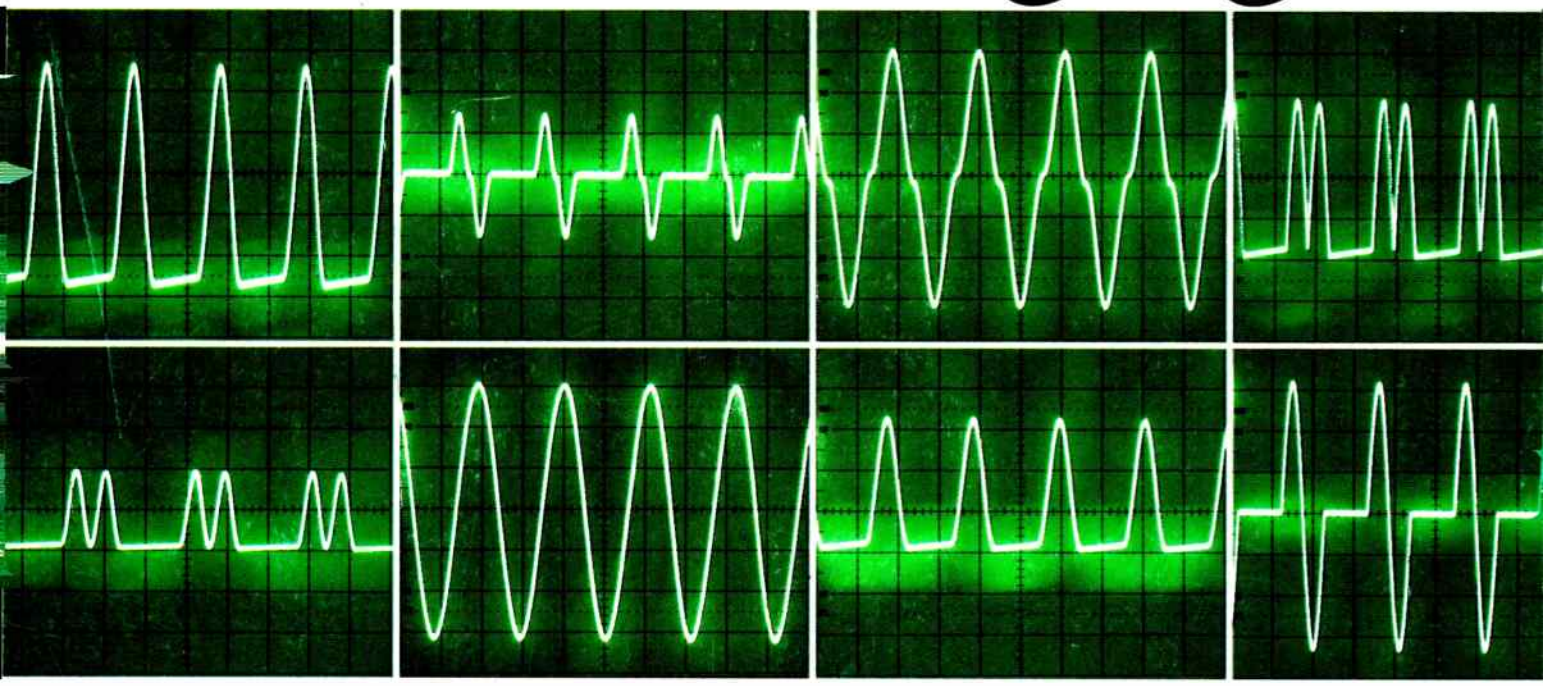
Try out all three of the new RDS rack mount digital delay systems at your authorized DigiTech dealer. By now it should be perfectly obvious: they're as close as audio technology ever gets to perfection.

For a full-color product sheet, write DigiTech, 5639 South Riley Lane, Salt Lake City, Utah 84107. Or call (801) 268-8400.

DigiTech

Start at the top.

It understands more than sine language.



The new TX81Z is the first FM tone generator from Yamaha that offers eight different waveforms for each operator. So besides sine waves, now there are seven other exciting waveforms you can play with.

This not only increases the almost limitless sound possibilities of FM, it also gives the four-operator TX81Z a "six-op" sound. Yet the TX81Z is still compatible with other Yamaha four-operator synths and tone generators.

The TX81Z's Play Single mode lets you play voices with 8-note polyphony. There are five banks of 32 voices to choose from, including 128 preset voices and 32 user voices, programmable from the front panel.

Twenty-four additional performance memories let you play up to eight voices at one time. Instrument 1, for instance, could be a piano voice with 5-note polyphony while instruments 2, 3 and 4 could be monophonic voices. Note limits, MIDI reception channel, voice numbers, detune and volume settings for each instrument can be instantly changed in this mode.

Eleven preset and two user-programmable micro-tunings let you play a harpsichord voice, for instance, in authentic mean-tone temperament, or gongs and bells in Balinese gamelan scales.

And three effects including Pan, Transposed Delay and Chord Set (which assigns up to four notes to be sounded by a single incoming note) let you add greater expressiveness to your music.

And you get all this at a price that translates into a great deal.

Hear the new TX81Z FM tone generator at your Yamaha Digital Musical Instrument dealer. For more information, write: Yamaha Music Corporation, USA, Digital Musical Instrument Division, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622. In Canada: Yamaha Canada Music Ltd., 135 Milner Avenue, Scarborough, Ont., M1S 3R1.

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