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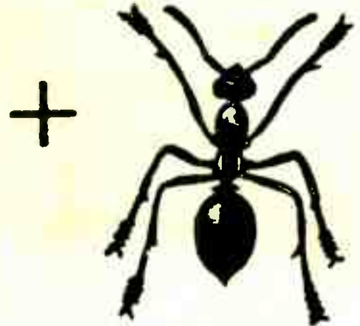
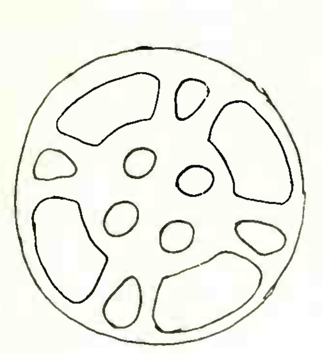
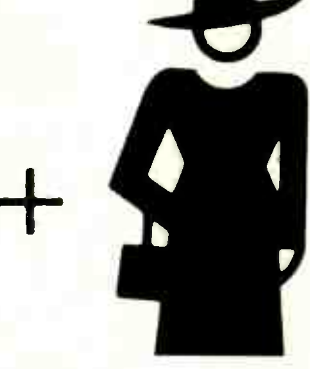
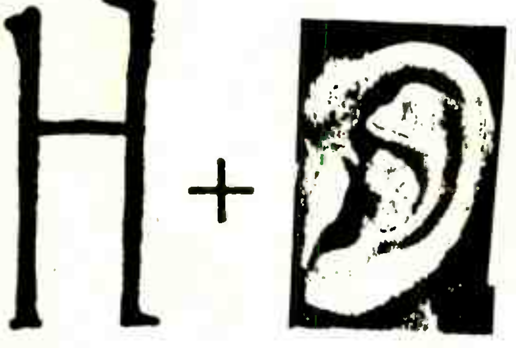
+ 

 + + 

 the ?

"The Woodentops are the freshest, most infectious band to come out of England in some time."
–*Philadelphia Inquirer*

"The 'Tops distill the essence of all that's smart and swell about pop..." –*Star Hits*

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The Woodentops are Rolo, Simon Mawby, Benny Staples, Frank De Freitas and Anne Stephenson.

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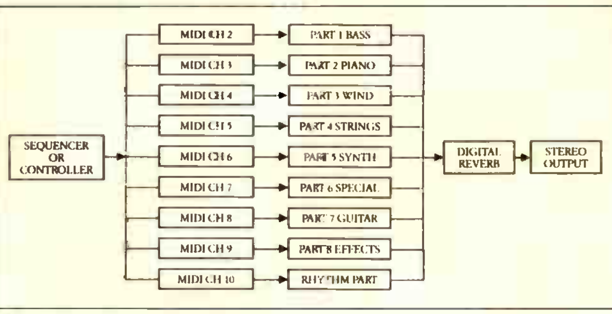

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JOSHUA CHEUSE

INVENTING ROBYN HITCHCOCK

The brilliant British artiste-in-embryo takes us on a tour of his eccentric musical physiognomy. Attending physician Peter Buck adds commentary.
by Jon Pareles **60**

NAMM SHOW REPORT

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by Jock Baird **34**

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JOHN LENNON'S CLEAN-UP TIME

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JAMES TAYLOR WON'T DIE YOUNG

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A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION
APRIL 1988 NO. 114

This concludes *Musician*'s Beatles winter.

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L·E·T·T·E·R·S

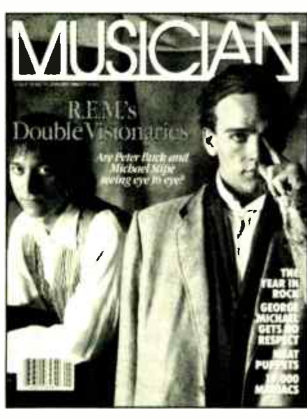
R.E.M.-MEDIA READING

THANKS TO BILL FLANAGAN for his excellent article on R.E.M. (Jan. '88). I disagree with him on one point, however. His assessment of Peter Buck's considering himself a "star" and R.E.M. fans "little people" seems quite out of context.

As a writer for what's got to be one of the smallest mags on the planet, I was fortunate enough to meet the band when they toured last fall and was treated like anything but a "little person."

Other writer pals of mine who have known Buck longer would tell you he's always been this way—genuinely amiable! If that's his "star act" it's a damn good one.

Lorraine McCrory
Grand Rapids, MI



THANK YOU FOR THE ARTICLE on R.E.M. It helped me realize what a jerk Michael Stipe is.

Don't get me wrong. I'm a great R.E.M. fan; it just bugs me how ungrateful Stipe is for their success. Most bands would give their right legs to be where R.E.M. is now. Too bad we can't take Stipe's voice and put it in someone else's body and personality. Well, on second thought, let's keep his body. It's kinda cute.

Tracey Rose
River Ridge, LA

YOUR ARTICLE PAINTED STIPE as a friendlier, more reachable character than any I have read, and it was an opportunity he deserved.

Amber Dorko
Parkland, PA

ALTHOUGH I LOVED SEEING R.E.M. as a cover story, the "showdown" attitude presented between Peter Buck and Michael Stipe was distracting.

This is a four-piece band. I would have liked a synopsis of the other two, as well as seeing them on the cover. At this point, R.E.M. needs to be supported, not made to choose up sides.

Kim LeGrand
Cape Girardeau, MO

IF BILL FLANAGAN WANTS Stipe to dump R.E.M. and form a duet with Natalie Merchant, why doesn't he just come right out and say it? He all but described Stipe as the musical Zeus of 1987 and Buck as a high-and-mighty, no-talent buffoon just "winging it" on the side, with delusions of grandeur. Stipe and Buck are different, but it isn't as if the group has polarized into two highly aggressive groups duking it out over supremacy of the next album.

Paul Lopez
New Orleans, LA

AS AN OPEN-MINDED LISTENER of all types of music, I give R.E.M. their due. The ethereal, atmospheric quality of their compositions is a perfect representation of today's aimless, desultory youth culture. And, like R.E.M., Bill Flanagan has given us style without substance.

Bob Lester
King of Prussia, PA

NOTHING LIKE THE SUMNER

THANK YOU FOR THE INSIGHTful article on George Michael (Jan. '88). It's nice to know that there's someone even more pompous, arrogant and egomaniacal than Sting. Keep up the good work.

Steve Olson
Novato, CA

BEASTIE EDITOR

SCOTT ISLER'S CHOICE OF THE Beastie Boys as artists of the year (Jan. '88) is both idiotic and sophomoric. Although he rightfully acknowledges that Rick Rubin is responsible for any "aesthetic credit" (*sic*) on the LP, he might have chosen an act that had any quality or integrity in their product. Next year, Mr. Isler, choose an artist for being an *artist.* The Beastie Boys aren't "dangerous," they're embarrassing. You write for *Musician*, Mr. Isler, not *Teen Beat.*

Mike Bisch
Farmington Hills, MI

Scott Isler replies: "Wowee, cats and kittens! If you dug our January number, check out this flippin' ish!"

KILL J.D., PART 81

I'VE BEEN A YES FAN LONG enough to know that rock critics' second-favorite activity is Yes-bashing. (Their favorite activity is reveling in the "clever" negative reviews they've written.) However, I found J.D. Considine's "review" of *Big Generator* (Jan. '88) an exceptionally cheap shot.

Linda Schultz
Eden Prairie, MN

HOW DOES A BIG-TIME REVIEWer get away with a three-word "review" of Yes' *Big Generator:* "Just say no"? It makes me wonder if he even bothered to listen to the album. Either give this guy more space or, better yet, just get rid of him. Honk if you hate J.D. Considine.

Mark Hefestay
Highlands Ranch, CO

J.D. Considine replies: "Sure, I could've dismissed Yes in more words, *taking the group to task for stuffing the album with instrumental inanities and backsliding from the pop progress evinced by* 90125. *But why waste words?"*

JACO R.I.P.-OFF?

ON PAGE 120 OF YOUR DECEMber '87 issue, there is an advertisement for a cassette which features Jaco Pastorius "talking, joking, philosophizing, playing piano, and of course, the bass." It goes on to state that a portion of the proceeds from this tape will go to setting up a trust fund for the education of Jaco's children. I am the mother of John (14) and Mary (17) Pastorius, two of Jaco's children, and I want it to be known to anyone who may be considering the purchase of this tape that in no way will my children accept one penny generated from the sale of this tape.

This tape is the blatant exploitation of a very tragic ending to what was once a wonderfully creative life. I am sickened by people who want to profit off this tragedy and even more disgusted by anyone who would do it in the name of the children.

Tracy Lee
Pompano Beach, FL

DON'T CALL US, WE'LL CALL YOU

Curious how your band placed in Musician's *Best Unsigned Band Contest? Well, we can't tell you. At least not yet. But we can say that we received 1,962 entries and finalists will be declared in our June issue. Then it's up to our all-star panel of judges. Stay tuned.*

PLEASE SEND LETTERS TO: *MUSICIAN*, 1515 BROADWAY, 39TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10036.

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F·A·C·E·S

NEWS STORIES BY SCOTT ISLER

Derek Bailey

Triumph of the Free Will

Derek Bailey's made a glorious mess of guitar playing. Since the early '60s, when this founding father of free-improvised guitar left the cabaret circuit to spelunk in the caverns of the avant-garde, he's broken the rules of melody, harmony, time and tonality, and made the world safer for a generation of dissonant six-string dissidents that includes such Bailey disciples as Henry Kaiser and Fred Frith.

Bailey's non-compositions can be snowflake delicacies or bruising noiseromps, depending on what is—or isn't—on his mind. "I'm not a great believer in thinking," the 58-year-old Londoner says. "What's best for me is to sleep before playing, so I come to the stage in a sort of blank situation. I never prepare for a performance, other than working on mike placement or a balance."

Sure enough, some of Bailey's albums take no longer to play than they did to record. But don't be deceived by his seemingly cavalier attitude. His skittering note clusters, clots of fragmented chords and ever-mutating constructions come from decades of experimenting with volume, picking technique and the sonic potential of an untreated amp and guitar. He's a shameless musical thrillseeker who's made 50-plus recordings, runs his own Incus label, literally wrote the book on improvisation (*Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice*) and has played thousands of gigs with musicians of every stripe.

"You could say I sort of stagger from one expediency to the next," he explains, "keeping myself open to any ad hoc activities that crop up." That's a modest accounting for events like the crossfire of ideas on the recent *Moment Précieux*, which finds Bailey locking horn with Anthony Braxton at the 1986 Victoriaville, Quebec international music fest. "That kind of playing only works when you've tied into each other and become super-confident," Bailey says. "It's like breaking a speed barrier, and suddenly you take off. It's nothing you can ever think about, but I'm sure it's something musicians have done as long as there have been musicians." – *Ted Drozdowski*

R&R Hall of Fame's Winter of Love

With its third annual induction dinner, held at New York's Waldorf-Astoria on January 20, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame decisively entered the '60s: Among those honored were the Supremes, the Beach Boys, Bob Dylan and the Beatles. (To be eligible, an artist must have been recording 25 years prior to the nominating committee's selection.)

Along with the '60s, the organization also seemed to enter a political morass appropriate for the period. Before the black-tie affair got under way, there was already a buzz about Paul McCartney's peppery explanation for not showing up. Citing "business differences," McCartney had issued a statement that he "would feel like a complete hypocrite waving and smiling" with his ex-bandmates "at a fake reunion."

Beach Boy Mike Love brought the issue into the open. His acceptance speech castigated McCartney and Diana Ross (another no-show), and went on to challenge Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen and Mick Jagger ("He's always been chickenshit") to play with the Beach Boys "for world peace, love and harmony." The speech drew a mixed response. Afterwards, Dylan and Elton John both expressed thanks that they escaped Love's hit list.

As in the past, the highlight of the affair was the post-induction jam. Dylan and George Harrison dueted on Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower." Springsteen helped Jagger with vocals on "Satisfaction." Jeff Beck accompanied the Beach Boys on "Barbara Ann." Jagger threw Love's shoes into the audience. A good time was had by all.

World Radio History

Reggie Calloway

This Year's Jam and Lewis

In 1986 Reggie Calloway and his brother Vincent left Midnight Star to concentrate on writing and production. It didn't seem like a very good move; Midnight Star was the most successful of the many Ohio Players-inspired R&B groups to spring up in the Players' home state.

But since then, Reggie, 33, and Vincent, 31, have developed into the hottest writing/production team since Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. Between August 1987 and January 1988, the Calloways were responsible for writing and producing three number one black singles: Natalie Cole's "Jump Start," LeVert's "Casanova" and Gladys Knight & the Pips' "Love Overboard." Reggie topped off that five-month streak with a Grammy nomination for R&B song of the year, a songwriter's category, for "Casanova."

Reggie handles the bulk of the production and writing, but the brothers are very much a team. "We're great sounding boards for each other," Reggie says. "Vincent is an extraordinary remixer. He has a great feeling for the dance floor." Their m.o. is to use a song title for a hook over their Midwest techno-funk, with multi-layered synth and a heavy groove. The artist, though, always stays up front.

Right now, the brothers are working on the next Teddy Pendergrass LP, cutting instrumental tracks in their Cincinnati studio to send to the wheelchair-ridden singer in Philadelphia. They've also been talking production deals with Sheena Easton, Lionel Richie, Al Jarreau and George Benson.

And they still enjoy working with young unknowns. One of the next Calloway productions on the streets will be the first LP by Sharp, a Cincinnati band that features some of the brothers' childhood friends.

Another priority in 1988 is to record the debut LP for Calloway, the brothers' new band. There, as on the other Calloway productions, Reggie promises the brothers' trademark blend of classic funk, modern tech and a healthy dose of soul.

"You have to give the people something they can really feel, not just give them a lot of gimmicks. You must be true to the feeling. You can't fake that."

– Larry Nager

Turtle Island String Quartet

Between Beethoven and Bluegrass

Although their name conjures images of Disney-like amphibians in formal attire, or perhaps a band of Beethoven-loving naturalists, the Turtle Island String Quartet is actually an innovative Bay Area ensemble that runs the musical gamut from bop to bluegrass, from classical to Cajun.

The band is counting on their self-titled debut LP, on Windham Hill Jazz, to gain them the kind of notoriety enjoyed by the pioneering Kronos Quartet.

Although both groups expand the boundaries of the traditional string quartet, Turtle Island leader and violinist **David Balakrishnan** takes great pains to distinguish his group from Kronos. "Kronos are classically trained musicians, while we're primarily jazz players. We improvise a lot more."

The group had its genesis in Balakrishnan's and violinist Darol Anger's impatience with traditional musical pigeon-holing. Dissatisfied with the orchestra-or-bluegrass choice offered most string players, they first joined an all-violin group called Saheeb. Then, along with violist Irene Sazer and cellist Mark Summer, they created Turtle Island—which, according to Gary Snyder's book of the same name, is the native American term for the continent of North America.

Balakrishnan hopes to dispel the conventional image of your generic chamber ensemble. "We don't sound like classical musicians trying to play jazz. We're a string quartet that swings. We're accessible. In our music, you hear elements of rock 'n' roll, jazz—good, down-home feeling."

– Jim Gerard

IRENE YOUNG

World Radio History

Small Rock in *Candy Mountain*

There's definitely a trend of feature films with musicians in cameo roles. One of the latest is Robert Frank and Rudy Wurlitzer's *Candy Mountain*, with bit parts by Joe Strummer, David Johansen, Tom Waits, Dr. John and Leon Redbone. However, despite their appearances—and a story line concerning the search for a legendary guitar maker—*Candy Mountain* is hardly a music film. It traces a metaphoric journey into self-knowledge, and with broader appeal than, say, *Rude Boy*. Not that you have to study beforehand for this seductive movie's subtext; but at least be on the lookout for Strummer, Johansen, Waits, John and Redbone.

DAVID ALLEN

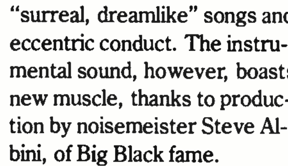
The Pixies

New Concepts in Entertainment

They call themselves Pixies, but there's nothing particularly cute about the Boston quartet's *Come On Pilgrim* EP. Prodded by hair-trigger rhythms, anxious singer **Charles "Black" Francis** renders a striking portrait of a dude at the brink, touching on subjects like incest and disfiguring diseases in his primal pop tunes. Devils would be a better name for 'em.

It's all in the spirit of old-fashioned fun, sort of. "I'm really big on the entertainment factor," laughs Francis, who cites the Violent Femmes and Iggy Pop as influences. "My lyrics start out as gibberish and sometimes I add meaning. For the most part, though, they're from the T. Rex school of poetry. You know, just baloney. I'm trying to come up with something that sounds good, rather than content."

Together for just two years, the Pixies are poised to make further mischief with their first full-length LP. *Suffer Rosa* again showcases what Francis calls his "surreal, dreamlike" songs and eccentric conduct. The instrumental sound, however, boasts new muscle, thanks to production by noisemeister Steve Albini, of Big Black fame.



"Steve kept telling us how he hates vocals all through the recording," Francis notes cheerfully, saying that he was happy to roll with the punches. "While the end result was a little guitar-heavy for our tastes, we were willing to go along with him. I must seem like a wimp, but right now I'm just trying to learn; the group doesn't have a specific agenda. Maybe by the third or fourth LP we'll be able to tell a producer what we want."

Francis does know that he wants his Pixies to remain a no-frills rock 'n' roll band. "Banging on drums, playing those incredibly loud guitars and screaming into mikes is a lot of fun, if it's done halfway decent. I respect real musicians, but I have no intention of becoming one myself."

Ever sensible, he adds, "Not at this point, anyway. I'm a young stupid kid and everything could change." *– Jon Young*

Carl & the Passion

The Work Ethic and a Rabbit's Foot

There's no free lunch on the escalator to the top. Not on New York's club circuit. But during the two years that Carl & the Passion have been honing their chops, rabbit's feet clenched in hands, they've somehow kept their stomachs full. Nominated this year for two New York Music Awards, they pray the big break is coming.

For their sonic approach, think Squeeze. Gruff vocal. Stripped-down arrangements. "A '60s poppish feel," guitarist/singer/songwriter **Carl Allocco** concedes. "Strong hooks, with emphasis on lyrics."

Allocco is no stranger to the waiting room. His old band, Dreamer, signed with Hall & Oates' manager and cut an album for RCA "that never left the shelf." A subsequent ad in a music paper teamed him with bassist Bob Muldowney. Drummer Phil Richford and keyboardist Paul Doherty signed on, and Carl & the Passion went public.

Playing to suburban crowds weaned on marathon tributes to the Doors, the band has to push harder to get their original tunes across. The main influence? "John Lennon. He said things in a way people could understand, came to no conclusions, but stated his observations, then let you think about it. It's what we're trying to do. The songs are about everyday feelings."

Carl & the Passion have released one single, "Everybody Walks Too Fast," through the British indie Neat Records. With 70 tunes ready, all they need is a U.S. deal. "It's a merry-go-round," Allocco admits, tired of "record company rhetoric. They come see you. They love you. We've had five major-label guys following us around for months. They won't say no—"

But won't say yes either.

"Yeah. You think you're getting somewhere, then the contacts you made two months ago are suddenly gone. We just keep plugging."

So much for the escalator to the top.

"It's a 24-hour job," Allocco says, "though it's not an earth-shattering tale. A million New York bands have the same story. But *this* is the year." He reaches for that phantom rabbit's foot. "This year, this band is finally going to make some money."

– Dan Hedges

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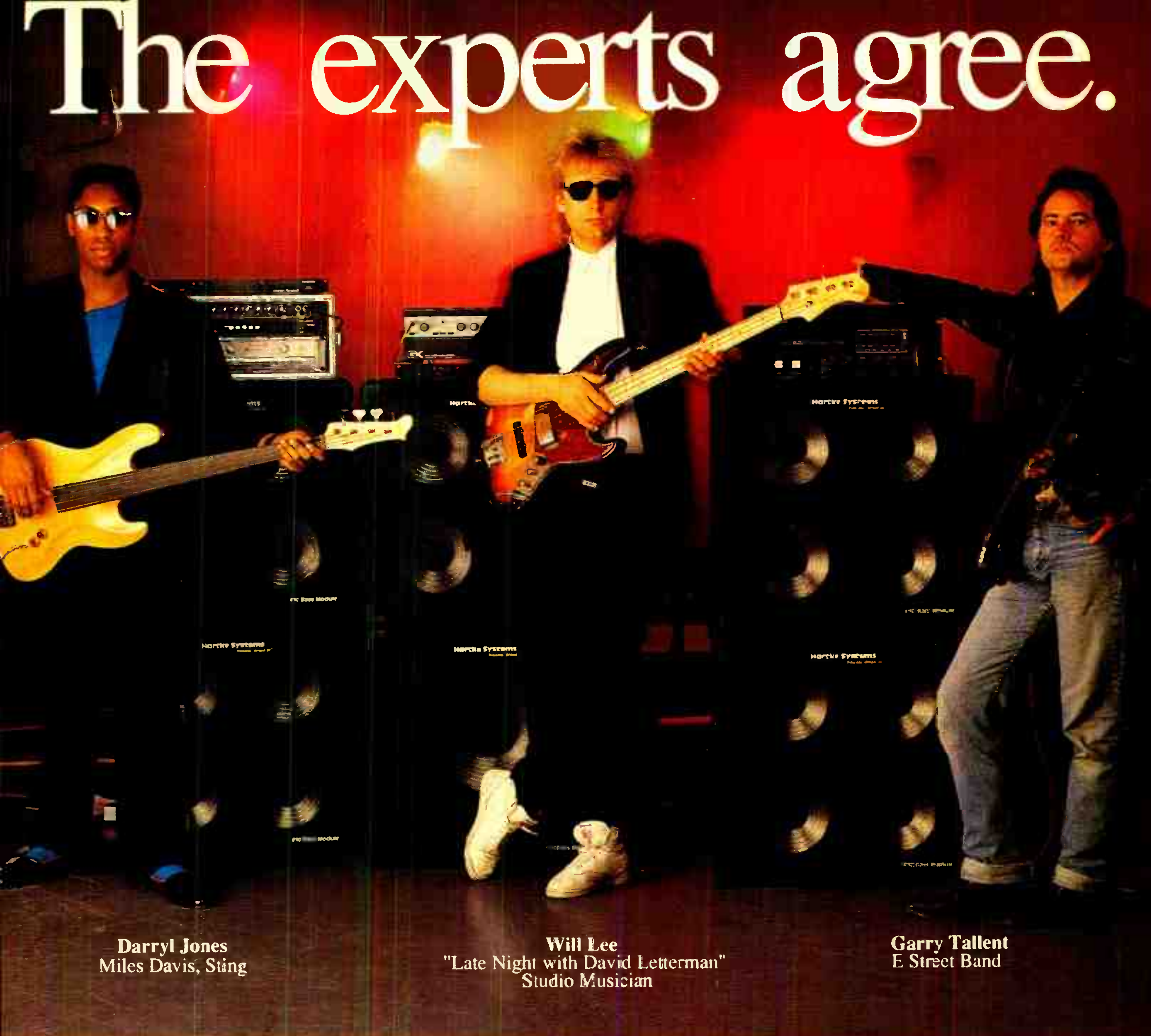

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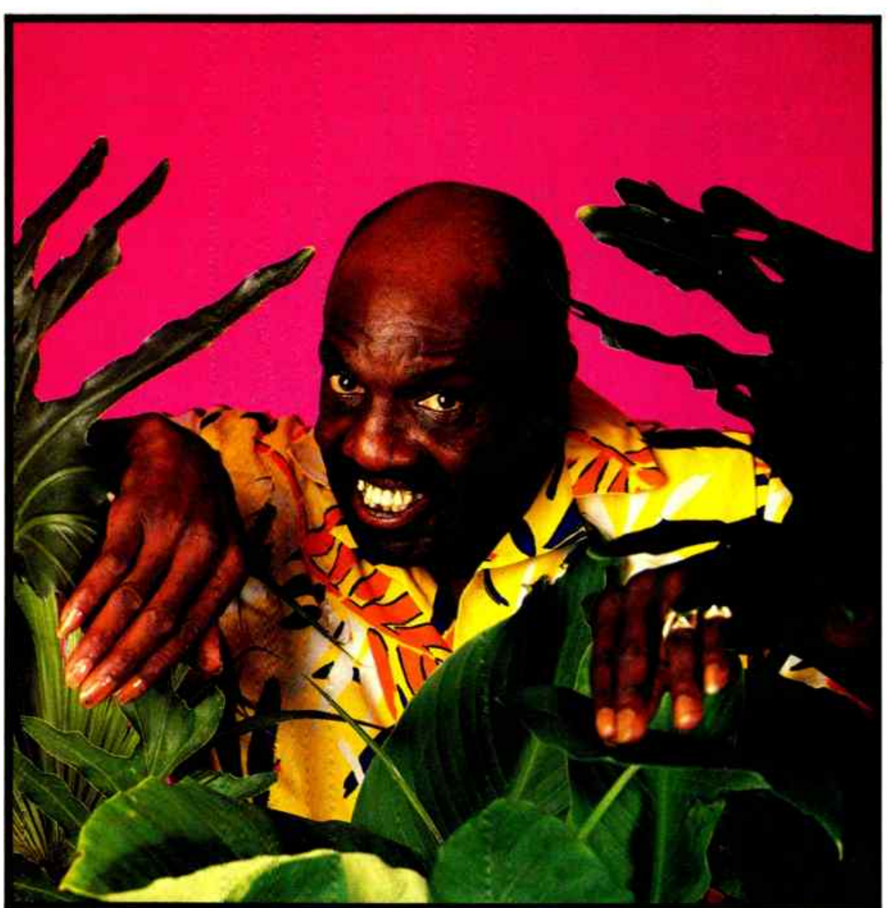
Presenting the Blues

by peter guralnick

Rarities Happen All the Time



Nappy Brown beats the bushes for the blues.

G. ANDREW BOYD

One of the most exciting blues reissues of this or any other season has just been released. It is called *Gospel, Blues and Street Songs* (Riverside/Fantasy) and consists of one side of recordings by the Reverend Gary Davis, who was still performing on the streets of Harlem when he cut these songs in 1956, with the other half given over to Pink Anderson, a medicine show entertainer from South Carolina who was 50 at this 1950 session.

What makes the record so extraordinary are two factors that can never be altogether calculated or anticipated. One is the enthusiasm of the performers, who sound as if they could barely be kept from charging out of the starting gate. There appears to be no self-consciousness, no holding back. Another is the surprise the performances hold for the listener. Although both Davis and Anderson perform in certifiable traditions, and both went on to make other albums (Anderson recorded several for Prestige/Bluesville in the '60s; Davis recorded literally dozens for any number of labels until his death in 1972), neither fully recaptured the excitement present in these grooves.

I'm not quite sure why. In Pink Anderson's case, perhaps it is just a matter of an additional decade of wear-and-tear. He was not in the best of health when he recorded for Prestige on the wave of what then appeared to be the last Great Blues Awakening. (I would say that there have been at least three since, and now we are in the midst of another.) On *Gospel, Blues and Street Songs*, Anderson runs the gamut of medicine show entertainment, from classic ballads like "The Ship Titanic" to a virtuoso slide performance of "John Henry" to blues, country and what can only be called a thoroughly "greasy" adaptation of the minstrel show-derived "Greasy Greens," all sung in a hoarse, cheerful voice, and performed with the utmost enthusiasm, verve and good humor. It is almost as if, in the best medicine show tradition, we have bought the pitch for some secret sort of nostrum, some all-purpose remedy which comes complete with a ticket to a lost world that cannot be found on any map and whose value could scarcely be calculated.

Gary Davis is another case altogether. Widely recognized today as a founder of the Piedmont school of blues playing, from which both Blind Boy Fuller and Brownie McGhee emerged, Davis was known as a virtuoso on guitar from his earliest 1935 blues and spiritual recordings (when he was billed simply as Blind Gary) on. After his move to New York City he concentrated entirely on gospel music and developed a dazzling repertoire of numbers to show off a flashy guitar style, an exhortatory and impassioned vocal delivery, and an astonishing array of jazz-inflected runs. He was taken up in the late '50s by the fledgling folk movement and then adopted in even more proprietary fashion by the succession of blues waves that followed. Of the many albums he made, a good number (*Say No to the Devil* and *Pure Religion* in particular on the Bluesville label, also reissued by Fantasy) were of unquestionably high order, but to my mind there is one indubitable masterpiece. Listen to Davis on *Gospel, Blues and Street Songs*. Every cut is impassioned, every song appears to be invested with the kind of spirit that cannot be summoned up at will by performer or producer. The repertoire is not particularly original, with several songs from the public domain ("Get Right, Church," "Twelve Gates to the City") and a couple from the repertoire of Blind Willie Johnson, the greatest of all the gruff solo street singers. Give yourself over to the vocal spontaneity of "Samson and Delilah," though —Davis' wholly improbable squeals and the guitar's scampering response; if you open yourself up to the heartfelt imprecations of "Oh Lord, Search My Heart," there cannot be any doubt of the authorship, or the authority, of this music. This is Reverend Gary Davis, whatever the provenance of the individual songs, however many times the singer may have performed them. Another act of

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mystification and prestidigitation.

I don't mean to make too much of any of this. While an album of this sort is certainly to be treasured, it is also the kind of rarity that happens all the time—or at least often enough, if you are receptive to the occasion. A couple of months ago I saw the Mississippi-based harp player, Frank Frost, at Nightstage, a showcase club in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Frost made his first records in 1962 for Sam Phillips, but had not really achieved any celebrity outside of Lula, Mississippi until his appearance in the movie *Crossroads* a couple of years ago. Playing harmonica and keyboards himself, and sometimes both at the same time, Frost and the band put on the kind of show that they might have at any little Mississippi juke joint. They started songs, then stopped and picked them up again when they were ready. They did Sonny Boy Williamson's "Mighty Long Time" two or three times in the course of a single set; Jack Johnson played startling, hell-bent-for-leather guitar lines in a style that wouldn't have been out of place in the Sun studio in 1950. Once Frost had abandoned the cheesy sound of the Farfisa, he stood swaying over the crowd, looking much as one imagines Sonny Boy must have looked: gaunt, gone, a giant bird of prey. Standing there in a cowboy hat, elbows flapping, harp wailing, he evoked a spirit that few in the room could have known first-hand, but that no one could possibly deny.

Not long afterwards I saw the classic R&B singer Nappy Brown at the same club. Nappy was the originator of "Night Time Is the Right Time" in 1957 and had several pop hits in the '50s. There's been a remarkable revival of interest in his music over the last five years. The albums that he has made since his rediscovery have all been more than creditable, with his latest, *Something Gonna Jump Out the Bushes!* on the Black Top label, providing perhaps the most convincing documentation of Nappy's continued contemporaneity and the astonishing breadth, power and flexibility his deep-pitched voice retains. If you had met Nappy before the show, you would have encountered a soft-spoken, unprepossessing, middle-aged man dressed in workman's pants and service station attendant's hat, glad to talk about old friendships and associations and reminisce with fans about the last time he had played Boston in an Alan Freed Revue. When he took the stage, he was transformed, not just in appearance (for he was wearing a white, western-styled tuxedo jacket), but in every aspect of his being. His voice boomed out with exuberant authority. He exuded self-assurance. He sang "Lemon Squeezin' Daddy," the song with which he had auditioned for Savoy Records in 1954 (and which Savoy refused to record because of its risqué nature), without any apparent thought of conceding anything to the room or the era. He ended his set on his back, kicking his legs up in the air and singing "Night Time Is the Right Time," trudging off the stage in time-honored gospel fashion, without benefit, or need, of the microphone. The audience was delighted, but he was just being himself. It was as if, said Doc Pomus, who saw him in New York, "it was 1953. Nappy was singing exactly the same way, and he sounds just as good."

This is not a phenomenon that happens with music exclusively, obviously, nor is it a matter of objective judgment. August Wilson's new play, *The Piano Lesson*, had the same kind of enfolding power for me, the same spontaneity and surprise. So does Jean-Jacques Beineix's film *Betty Blue*. You can supply your own examples, but it's the experience, it seems to me, the wrapped-up involvement one looks for in art. I saw the Reverend Gary Davis in 1962. He was playing in the Columbia student lounge,

continued on page 98

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Screaming Blue Messiahs

by ed ward

Big Bald Britons Stare Down America's Gun Sights

Carter, Harris and Thompson get no honor at home, and not a whole lot elsewhere.

Boy George's clothes budget for the first three months of the year could probably outfit all three Blue Messiahs for 1988-'89. Ask New Order what kind of gear they use and you'll have to pack a lunch. The Messiahs' Bill Carter only has to say, "Uh, Telecahstuh." Furthermore, they outnumber the Pet Shop Boys three to two.

After only 10 minutes with these guys, I think I'm beginning to understand why nobody in Britain has heard of them.

Not that Carter and his two bandmates, bassist Chris Thompson and drummer Kenny Harris, are going to lose any sleep over that. "I make a living at this," he growls, "and you can't make a living playing 'round here. We played Britain, what, twice in 1987?" "Coulda been three times," burrs Harris. "And not at all in '86." "But you see my point," Carter continues. "In Europe you can do at least well enough to break even, and America..."

Ah, yes, America. America inhabits a very interesting place in Messiahs mythology. This is the band that snarled out an amazing version of Hank Williams' "You're Gonna Change or I'm Gonna Leave" on *Gun Shy*, their first album, and on *Bikini Red*, the second, virtually every song has some American touchstone, from CB crosstalk on the title track to "55—the Law" to the assertion that "Jesus Chrysler Drives a Dodge," to the even more shocking declaration that "I Can Speak American."

"Well, yeah," says Carter, a citizen of a country where gas costs $3.50 a gallon who recently traded his mid-'70s Camaro for a Dodge Challenger. "I've always found the U.S. an interesting sort of place. I mean, it's very new for us. This is the old country here. With your films, your cars, it's sort of like an adult playground. Adults aren't really catered for in Europe. On the other hand, I don't think the U.S. is any sort of place to bring up children. I'll tell you what sums it up for me: In America, the old-age pensioners wear Bermuda shorts!"

Plus, of course, there's blues. Keep the band talking and there will soon be mention of blues. Although Carter seems to hate to discuss influences, a discerning listener can easily spot the more demented side of rockabilly (the kind the Cramps turned into a nightmare cartoon) side by side with a definite Beefheartian angularity, which itself is fed by the music of the master of angular flow, John Lee Hooker, the only name Carter will admit. Chris also admires ex-Fabulous Thunderbirds bassist Keith Ferguson quite a bit, while Kenny defensively mentions that the band consider his tastes too mainstream. Like? "Like AC/DC," he says, as the room dissolves in hoots.

"But I like what *we* do," Carter says, anchoring the conversation again. "I like anything when it's exciting. Like PIL's single 'Rise.' There's just a handful of things like that, things that actually touch

B.C. KAGAN

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a nerve. Things like Doctor Feelgood's early stuff, things that whip up a storm." This the Messiahs definitely do. I first encountered them on a San Francisco college radio station when *Gun Shy* came out and the station was going nuts playing "Smash the Market Place." Although the lyrics were hard to make out, it was an exciting radio song, and I decided that after years of turning into lazy, self-indulgent rock stars, the Clash had finally made another great record. When that turned out not to be the case, I was left to contemplate the idea of a British band that wanted to make that kind of impact in 1986.

"Well," Carter says grandly, "I think it's possible for this band to be a major force to be reckoned with. I certainly don't want to go down. It's go up or give up. No, this band has the potential to make music people will *listen* to. I haven't heard a band recently with that edge to get it across. There's room for that now. I truly think we should be a world-famous modern R&B band."

That's something Bill Carter's been trying to do for some time now. He was an art school student 12 years ago when punk exploded, and ran around looking for people to join his dream band, almost (at least to hear him tell it) snagging Joe Strummer, but getting there just a little too late. He kept on painting, listening to R&B and dreaming, and finally got a four-piece called Motor Boys Motor together. A record for Stiff went nowhere, and, predictably, the band fell apart. Carter and his bassist, Chris Thompson, weren't about to surrender, though. So they recruited Kenny Harris from Scotland, and the Messiahs were born. An indie EP did well enough for Warners U.K. to sign them, and Elektra picked them up for stateside distribution. So far, they've done okay, but they haven't blown apart any sales records. But Carter still has his dreams.

"The thing is," he declared, "I'd like to make a record you'd like to play all the time. Like 'Rise,' which I think you can put on any time at all and it sounds right. I'd like to make something great, but that's easier said than done."

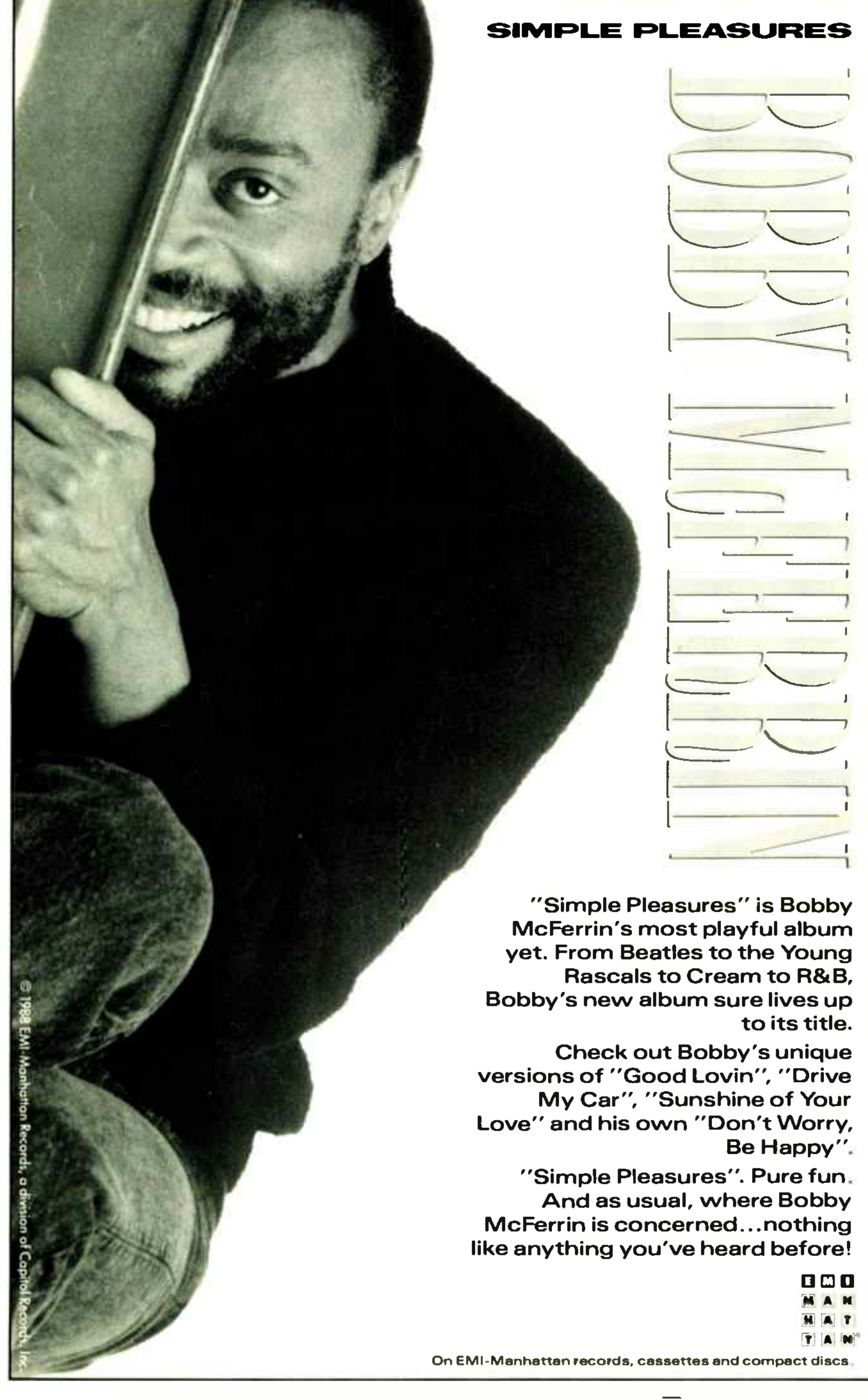
So what has to be done? He's dipped far into the depths of his obsession with America and come out with a doozie: "I Wanna Be a Flintstone." It's a record that in many ways encapsulates the Messiahs' sound, with a rhythmic thrust that sounds like Bo Diddley falling down several flights of stairs, enigmatic but comprehensible lyrics, and plenty of references to the Hanna-Barbera TV show. The song's video shows the band floating around space and has plenty of clips from the cartoon in it. It does look like the closest thing the Messiahs have had to a hit so far.

And that might not be a good thing, in the long run. When a band establishes itself with a song that is perceived as a novelty, it can become imprisoned by that track. If "Flintstone" becomes a huge record, America's teenagers might not buy its followup unless it's about the Jetsons. (Or, more likely, America's

SCREAMERS

Bill Carter uses Fender Telecasters exclusively, with the heaviest-gauge Rotosound strings, and plays through HH amps with Gauss speakers. He's also got a digital echo, but doesn't know what kind it is, and is trying to get a wah-wah built into the whammy bar on one of his guitars, although this project is still in the experimental stage.

Chris Thompson plays a '62 Fender Precision bass with Rotosound swing bass strings through a Boss compressor into a Gallien-Krueger 8000 amp with JBL speakers. **Kenny Harris** plays Pearl MX drums with maple shells, Zildjian cymbals, Tama cymbal stands, a Premiere pedal, and does it all with Vic Furth American Classic Rock sticks.



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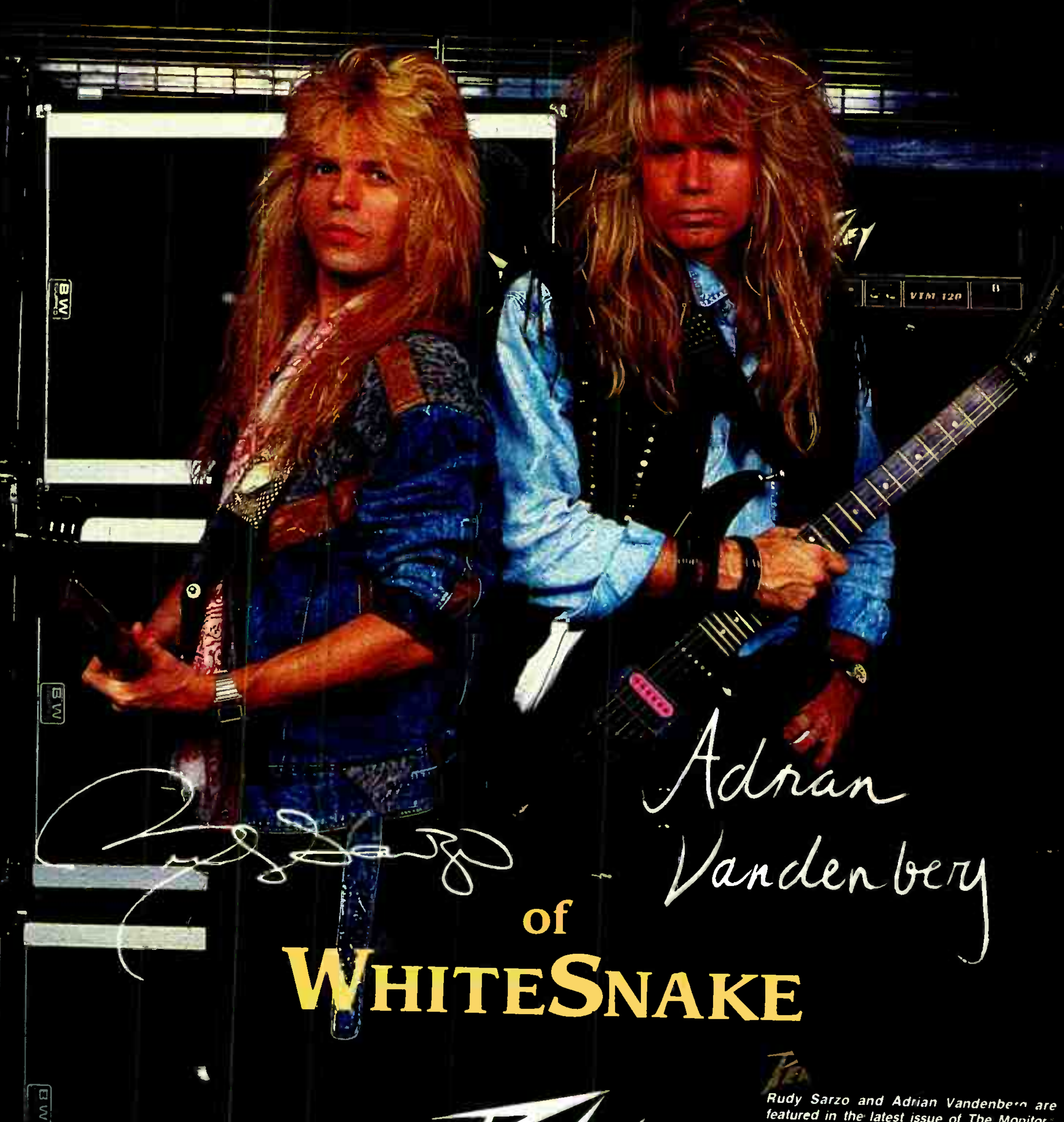

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program directors might not program it.) Bill Carter might spend the rest of his career yelling "Yabba-dabba-doo" to slowly diminishing crowds. This suggestion pisses him off.

"What 'Flintstone' is is the tip of the iceberg. We have to get in the door. It was not recorded as a novelty track. We play it live and it is a credible track. Look at the imagery in any track we've recorded—you'll find the same thing. This was just the most direct tune of the ones we've had." But after he's had a minute to cool off, he does relent a little bit. "I guess it is unfortunate in some ways that 'Flintstone' is the one getting the airplay, but we're not ashamed of any of the tracks we've recorded."

Nor would I suggest that they should be. I just hope that those in charge of such things see to it that the band isn't relegated to novelty status, that's all. After all, the Messiahs are a lot of fun, what with their solid backbeat and weird lyrics. "Our lyrics are *not* weird," Carter insists. "You can have a lot of fun with lyrics." Right. Lyrics like "I can speak A-meri-can/ Like Lois Lane and Charlie Chan/ And Superman" aren't weird. Of course, the lyrics are only weird (or not, as you choose) when you can hear them, and one of the hallmarks of the Messiahs' sound is a sort of grungy murkiness in which the guitar dominates.

While nervously awaiting the outcome of "Flintstone"'s run on the charts, Carter's not anticipating any major changes in the band except the size of the halls they play, but he does foresee some evolution. "Well, I hope so. I mean, I think it will be churned up a bit more. I don't really know what form it'll take, though. I'd like to hit a vibe. Like, ZZ Top hit a vibe with *Eliminator*, they clicked into a great feeling. I know one thing I'd like to do is to have the high point of our gigs recorded. I'd really love to do a good live album, but that's definitely not an easy thing to accomplish.

"I guess what I'd ultimately like to do is to find a rhythm that's a sort of signature. Things like Bo Diddley—that rhythm has lasted for years. Like hip-hop or reggae, something you hear and say, 'Ah!'" Another lofty ideal, you say, but I don't know. There is something about the tenacity of Bill Carter's vision and his drive for success that makes me think that if anybody can make something this idiosyncratic yet basically rocking popular, the Screaming Blue Messiahs can.

I mean, one thing's for sure; unlike a lot of other bands in Britain that I could name, they damn sure aren't gonna make it on their haircuts. M

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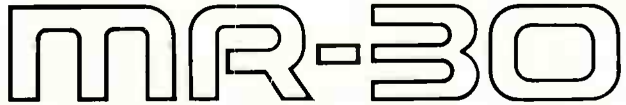

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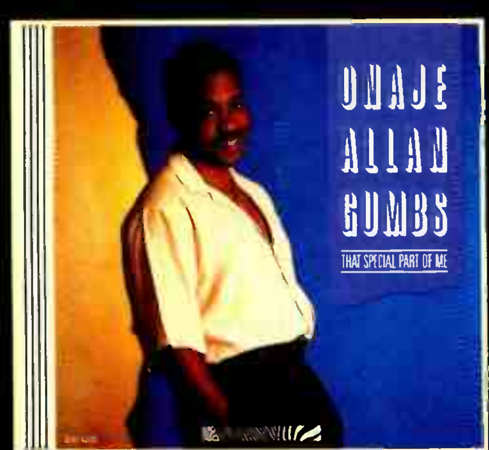

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Jimmy Rowles

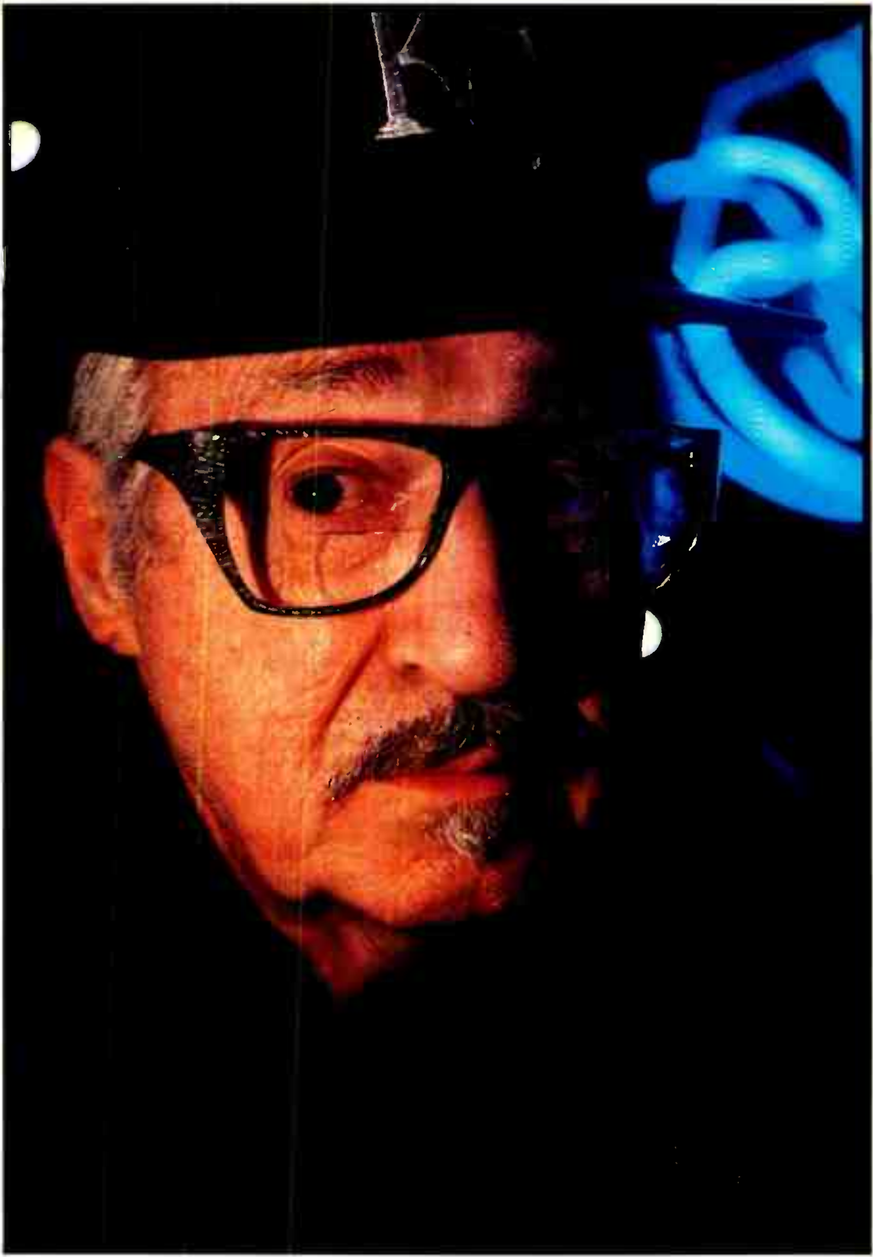
by joe goldberg

Beauty on a Borrowed Piano

One night last December the finest jazz, and maybe the finest music, to be heard in the Los Angeles area was played before an audience of about 40 people. For the first time in five years, and the second time in their lives, the pianist Jimmy Rowles and the bassist Charlie Haden were going to play together. When either man performs, it is an event, especially as Jimmy Rowles doesn't, to use Duke Ellington's phrase, get around much anymore. To use Rowles' phrase, he is semi-retired.

Rowles is approaching 70, and he has emphysema. This is an unfortunate illness for a jazz musician to have, for it means he can't perform in smoky rooms. But the Comeback Inn, where Haden has been playing on and off for about four years, is a health food restaurant that does not allow smoking. That, and the fact that the owner had just bought a new Yamaha baby grand, made it seem a perfect place for Rowles to perform.

Since there was no rehearsal, the evening had elements of a high-wire act, but the danger was mitigated by Jimmy Rowles' reputation of having the best head for tunes of any player in jazz. About the only person who doesn't think so is Rowles, who tends to self-deprecation. "I know guys who know a lot more tunes than I do," he says. "I don't know why they give me a reputation for knowing a lot of songs." A little later, though, when Louis Jordan's name comes up, Rowles shows why he has the reputation by saying, "Louis Jordan made a record of one of my favorite songs, 'Just Like a Butterfly Caught in the Rain.' Ever hear that one? I used to play it at Bradley's," Rowles says, and goes on to extoll other pianists: "Tommy Flanagan plays it. He knows a lot of songs, that Tommy Flanagan. I'll tell you another guy who knows a lot of songs is Dave McKenna. And Ellis Larkin, who loves to play a whole set of one composer, like Harold Arlen."



AARON CHANG

Charlie Haden on Rowles: "He has a very high level of beauty."

Bobby Short, whom Rowles thinks is the champion, once said of himself, "You become a kind of singing Smithsonian." Surely Rowles is a playing Smithsonian. (He once had a leather-bound book in which he had written down thousands of tunes, but he says he doesn't know where it is anymore.) For years, he was the only one who played "Blood Count," which is the last piece Billy Strayhorn wrote before he died. He has recorded it twice, on a lovely album made up of Ellington and Strayhorn pieces, and again with his daughter Stacy, who plays trumpet and flugelhorn.

These days Jimmy and Stacy can be found playing together at Linda's, a pleasant living-room-like restaurant on Melrose Avenue, just past the trendy, glitzy shops that have turned the street into Columbus Avenue West. A slight, smallish man with white hair, a moustache and goatee, Jimmy is usually wearing one of what seems to be a vast collection of baseball and truckers' caps. If Frank Sinatra is, as he likes to call himself, a saloon singer, then Jimmy Rowles is a saloon player. Like Sinatra, he has a gruff, blunt exterior that serves

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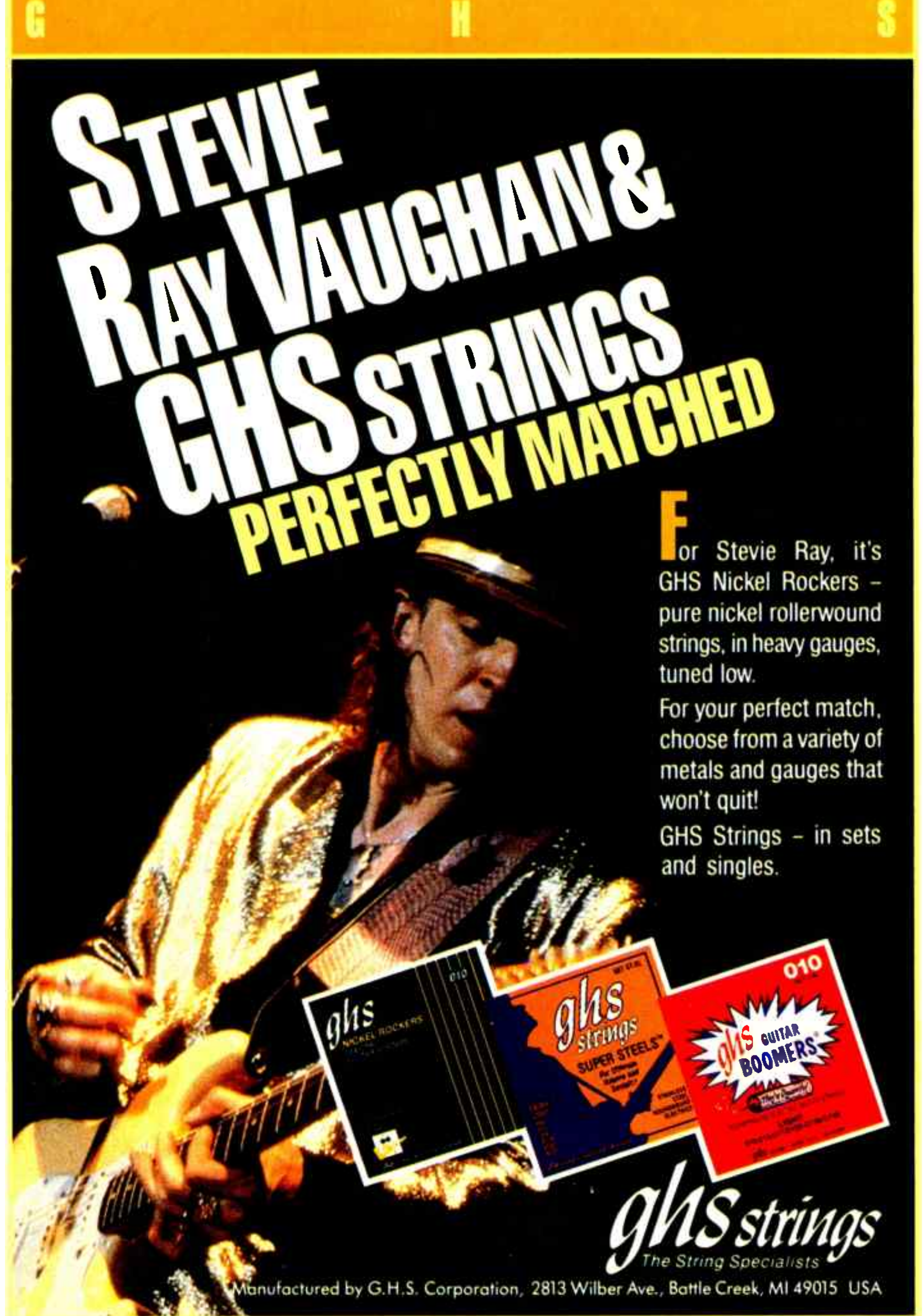
to hide a gentleness often revealed only in the music. That side of his nature becomes evident when Rowles talks about his daughter, of whom he's clearly proud, and when the music begins.

When Rowles plays, the presentation is absolutely no-nonsense. He usually brings sheet music with him, which forms the rough outline of his sets. The music is not flashy. It is, rather, intense. The job is to get inside a song, to see what it has to offer. And the key to that is voicing. Rowles talks about different ways to voice chords, and voicing is the first thing that comes to Charlie Haden's mind when he talks about Rowles ("He has a very high level of beauty"). You can hear wisps of Art Tatum and Teddy Wilson, and more than a wisp of Erroll Garner, of whom Rowles says, "He just had his own thing. Can't be duplicated. They can come close to imitating Erroll, but they can't get his feeling." As he plays one of the Wayne Shorter tunes he currently favors, you realize the same could be said about Rowles. He plays with a mocking wit and chooses the unexpected note, unusual but revelatory.

He has imbued his daughter Stacy with much of his feel for the music. "I found a trumpet in my dad's dresser drawer," she says. "He taught me the scale, and I started stealing it, until he finally gave it to me. He's written me about 300 tunes already, and he's thinking of new ones all the time. He's always trying to help."



Stacy's mother, a dancer who was very musical, began to lose her hearing when she started bearing children. The obscure disease that causes this is hereditary and Stacy, who has just gotten married, must wait to find out if her hearing will be similarly affected. When we met, she had just been to the funeral of the great tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh, who had collapsed on the stand at Donte's, a club where Stacy often plays: "What can you say? Somebody gives their life for something, and then they die, and a few people show up, and they're buried."

Of her father, she says, "There's nobody like him. The ones that really impress people are the ones that have their own style and their own feel and their own way of playing. That's the whole thing about being a musician, as far as I'm concerned."

Stacy, who has also played with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, showed up at the Comeback Inn with Rowles and Haden for a couple of tunes. She played "Good Bait," by one of Jimmy's favorite composers, Tadd Dameron. The nature of the evening can be indicated by listing the other pieces played: "Lullaby of the Leaves," Thelonious Monk's "Pannonica," Rowles' exquisite "The Peacocks," a blues, "Groovin' High," "Body and Soul" (which Haden loves to solo on), "These Foolish Things," "Confirmation," "Night in Tunisia," "Take the A Train" (after which Rowles, after perfectly reproducing the classic Ellington piano intro, played the entire first chorus using a sly countermelody that had the audience laughing in delight), and, to close, "'Round About Midnight." Each man was superb. You would have thought they had been playing together for years. It swung, needless to say, without benefit of drums. It was a little Smithsonian.

Bradley's, which he mentioned earlier, is where I first heard Jimmy Rowles play. It is the finest piano bar in New York, partly because of the magnificent instrument which Paul Desmond left the club in his will. (Rowles said that the owner, Bradley Cunningham, was disappointed when Desmond's will specified that the instrument be used in the club; he had hoped to have it for his home.) Rowles had come to New York in 1973 after years of playing in the Hollywood

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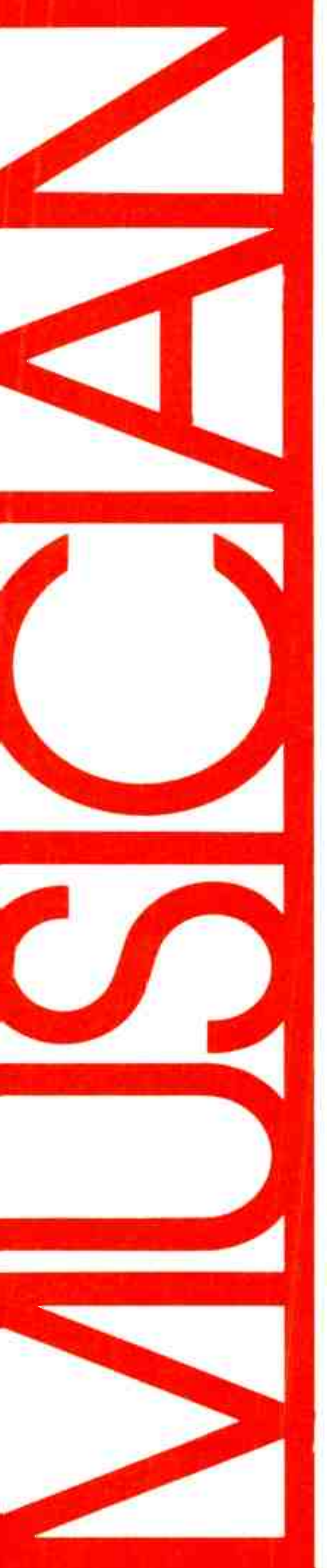

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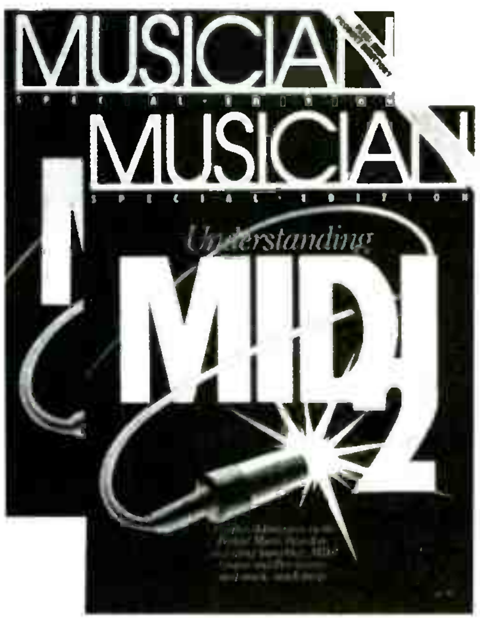

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studios, around the time Stan Getz recorded an album with him for CBS titled after Rowles' exquisite "The Peacocks," which was later used in the soundtrack to the film *'Round Midnight*. Characteristically, Rowles says, "Did you ever hear Bill Evans' record of that? He really made something out of it. About four times as good as I could have." Rowles also sings on the album, to finest and most touching effect on the World War I song, "My Buddy." He says he thinks of his friend Ben Webster when he sings it.

It was Ben Webster who got Rowles his first major job, with Benny Goodman. He had loved music since he was a boy in Spokane, Washington, where he was born in 1918, but had never pursued it formally: "I was almost a self-taught player. The first teacher I had in Spokane didn't even teach me the value of the notes. I had to stand behind her and watch her play. I got about a quarter of the way through the Czerny book, but I quit with her and decided I wanted to play popular songs. I found a guy who taught me all about chords, how to play your left hand with tenths and stuff, learning how to play a tune from sheet music, like 'Rhapsody in Blue,' which I got about three-quarters of the way through before I quit. That came in handy because I had a solo in it at a floor show for Lili St. Cyr. It was the part where she jumped in the tub, and I was playing this Gershwin thing so I couldn't look up."

Following the gig with Benny Goodman, Rowles found himself working at an L.A. club called the Trouville, where the show included a band featuring the Young brothers (Lester on tenor, Lee played drums), the duo of Slim Gaillard and Slam Stewart, dancers, and such singers as the great bluesman Joe Turner. (The Trouville must have been a little Apollo.) It was when Billie Holiday came to sing at the Trouville that Rowles met her. He became her accompanist for several years, and can be heard on some of the records she made for Norman Granz, often in the company of his friend Ben Webster and Harry "Sweets" Edison. He would not, however, travel with her, knowing there was too much possibility of trouble. He remembers one of Billie's husbands, who carried a knife and enjoyed terrorizing everyone. When the man finally died, keeling over on a golf course of a heart attack, Billie's bassist said on being informed of the tragedy, "The son of a bitch didn't even have the courtesy to let someone kill him."

Between Benny Goodman and Billie Holiday, Rowles played with Woody Herman, went into the army, and became friends with Gil Evans. They were in an army band together, with Rowles playing trumpet. On the day he was discharged, he was having a large celebratory drink when the phone rang. It was Woody Herman, offering him his job back in the first great Herd. He was part of the band that recorded Igor Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto* (he once told writer Ira Gitler of Stravinsky saying to him during rehearsal, "My darling, that is not what I wrote"), and was part of the Woodchoppers, the small band-within-a-band that included Sonny Berman, Shorty Rogers, Chubby Jackson and Herman. "Sonny Berman was a marvelous player," Rowles says of that legendary trumpeter. "Big sound, great ideas. A very funny guy, too. He did the wrong thing. He took Nembutal, and put it in his arm. What he did that for, I don't know."

Rowles played a great deal with Ben Webster, who became one of his closest friends before Webster, too, finally passed on. Later he toured with Ella Fitzgerald, but of that experience he says, "Working for anybody like that, no matter who it is, you wind up playing the same tunes every night, the same encores, for years."

So he settled down in Los Angeles and

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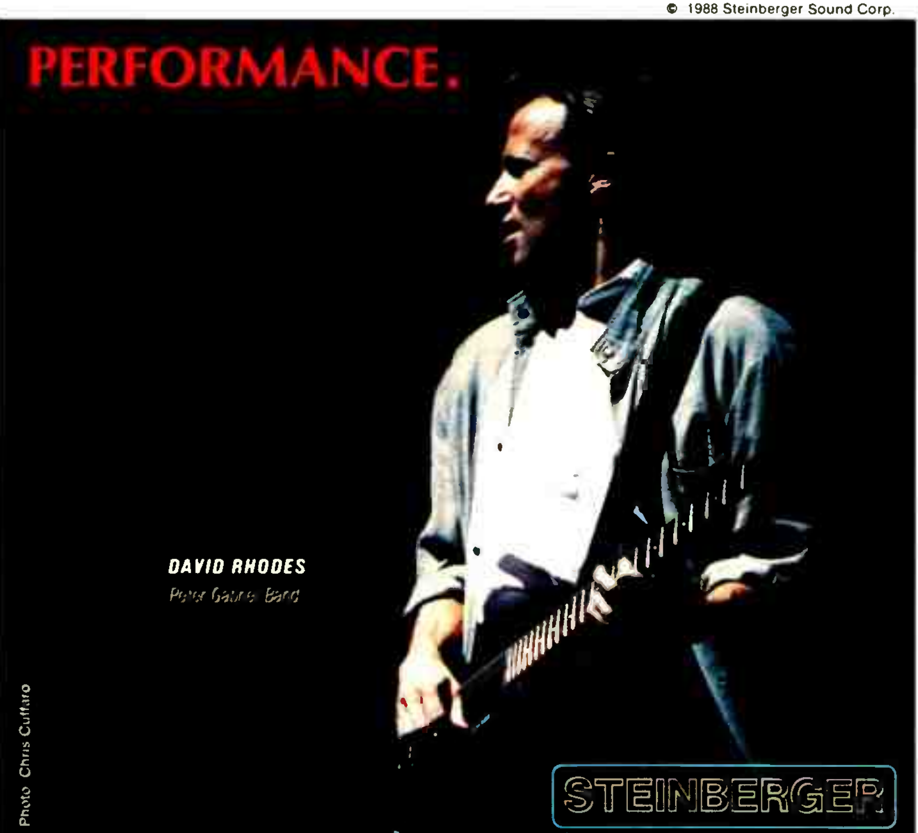

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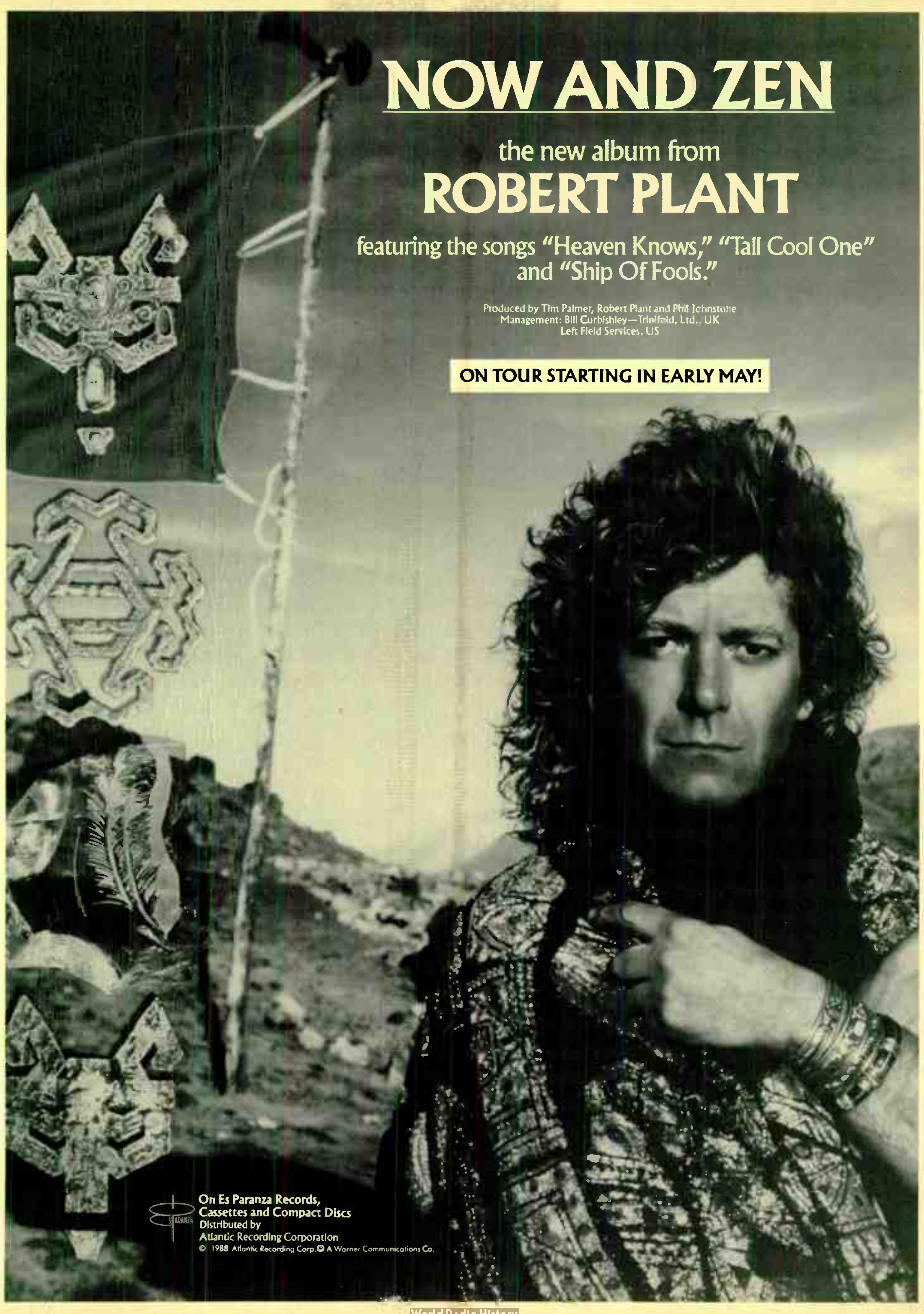

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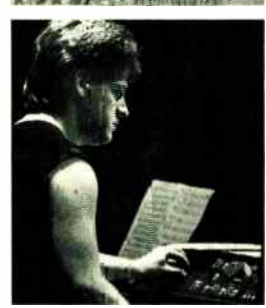

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went to work in the studios. He worked with the famous film composers Alfred and Lionel Newman, and he worked for Henry Mancini for 15 years. Julie London is backed by "the Jimmy Rowles Orchestra" on three LPs for which he wrote the arrangements. He was, in more than one sense, a musician's musician, unknown to the general public, but highly regarded within the profession.

Today he says, "The studios were very interesting, but I never did feel that I was a studio man." The thought of making a change first came when Johnny Mercer chose Rowles to accompany him at a Town Hall concert where the great lyricist performed an evening of his own songs (and a higher recommendation would be hard to think of). "I wrote five tunes with Johnny Mercer," Rowles says, "but nothing ever happened with them. One's called 'Baby Don't Quit Now.' He wrote three lyrics for that. Another's called 'Little Ingenue.' He recorded that himself. He was a friend. A wonderful man. Sarah Vaughan recorded one of them, 'Morning Star.' We did one about Frazier, the lion. And he also took one of my tunes and dedicated it to his mother. Called it 'My Mother's Love.' Very poignant."

Except that the seeds of going to New York had been planted. Not long afterward, "I had the opportunity to go to New York to play for George Wein at Carnegie Hall," Rowles says, "in an evening dedicated to Art Tatum. You played about 20 minutes, alone. And he had some heavy piano players there. Bill Evans, Shearing. I went out and played tunes that Art liked to play. And I was booked into Michael's Pub for a week."

It is fitting that Art Tatum should have been responsible in a way for Rowles' move to New York. When Rowles began playing, he recalls, "I was chasing Teddy Wilson's style and Fats Waller." But ever since Tatum heard Rowles play at a Los Angeles club called the Latin Quarter and became a mentor to the young pianist, Tatum has been a cornerstone of Rowles' distinctive style.

Now the difference in Rowles' approach and that of today is, as he sees it, that "the new piano players don't play like Art Tatum and Teddy Wilson; they play more from the middle of the piano. They avoid stride, mostly, and their voicings are wonderfully spaced and very deep to listen to." Or perhaps it's something more: Tatum, Lester Young, Ben Webster, Jimmy Blanton, Billy Strayhorn, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday—Rowles knew them, they were his friends, and he worked with them. What is history for many younger musicians is

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simply Rowles' life.

"When Art Tatum played, it was utter silence," Rowles remembers. "No drinks, not a word. It was like church when he played. The owner of the 331 Club, over on Sixth, was furious about that. The place would be loaded with people, and nobody ordering drinks."

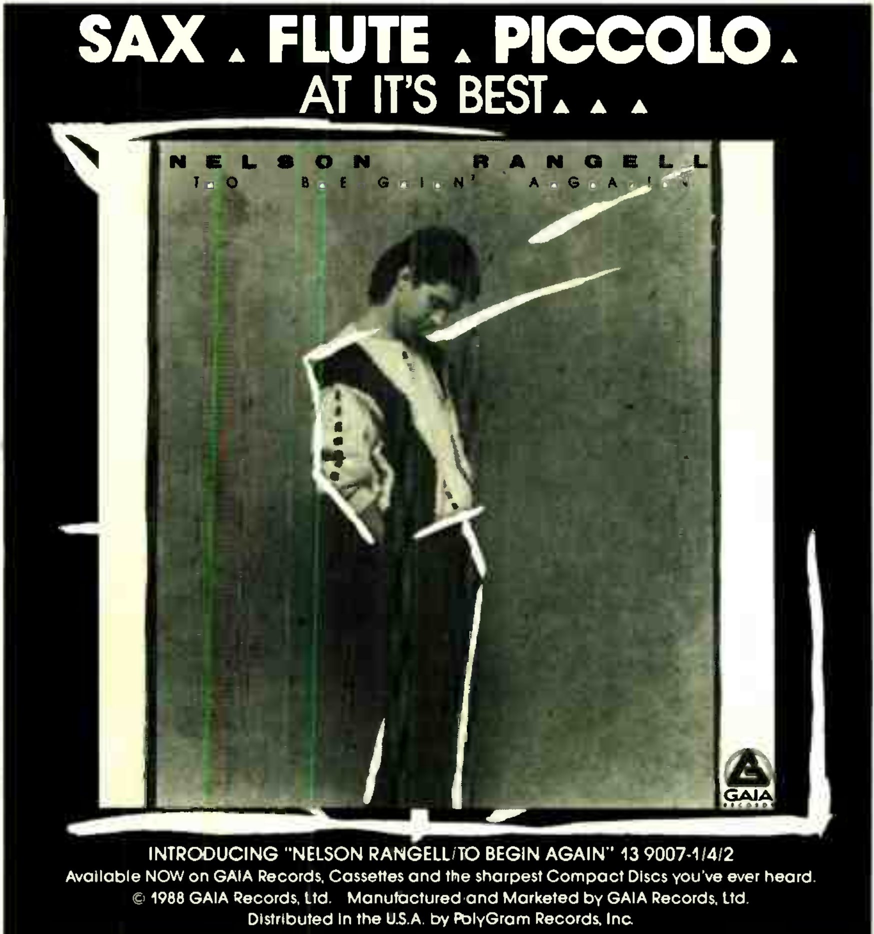
While Rowles was at the Cookery in Greenwich Village in 1974, he made an eponymous album under the auspices of the composer Alec Wilder; it was the first of several he would make in New York and France, accompanied sometimes only by a bassist, at other times with a drummer added. The album cover is a self-caricature. The program, a typical one for him, includes older songs he likes to sing, like "Sunday, Monday, or Always" and "Mah Lindy Lou," Jerome Kern's "Remind Me," which was a Mabel Mercer favorite, a lot of Ellingtonia, including "Cottontail"—on which he likes to reproduce Ben Webster's favorite solo—and his own "The Peacocks." Of this last, he says, "The title came afterwards. I was listening to the music of some African tribes, and it put me in a mood. It's a flute piece."

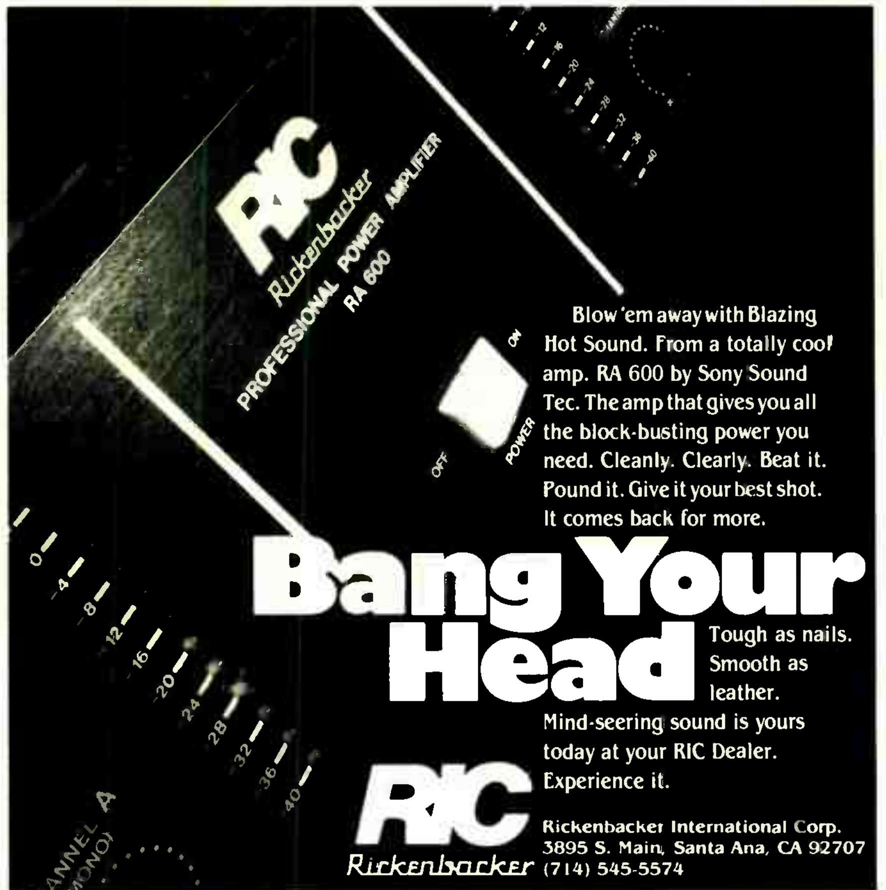
In 1985 he came back to Los Angeles. "I wound up working for Ella Fitzgerald, and the emphysema started in for me then, and I couldn't keep up with the travel, charging through all those airports. I wanted to come home. I wanted to be with my family."

Musically, too, Rowles is re-adjusting to Los Angeles. "It's a little more subdued here," he says. "There's so many people back in New York that make their living playing in clubs. There's so much change there, so much interest in jazz music. Such different musicians, and so good. It's a pleasure to be around them."

Rowles isn't contemplating going back to New York, but he is thinking of going to France. His friend Tommy Flanagan has told him about a club in Paris, a downstairs cave, with a no-smoking policy and an apartment upstairs, stocked with food. "I wouldn't want to go there in the winter, though, because I want to be able to get out and move around the city. And I worry about the stairs, with my chest thing."

Jimmy Rowles has done it just about the way he wanted to all his life. But there's one thing he'd like to change. "If I had it to do over again, I would have my own instrument, like a trumpet, so I would know that what I have would be there with me, because I'm gonna carry it in." Making do with those instruments he's found at hand, he is merely responsible for some of the finest piano jazz played by anyone, anywhere. M





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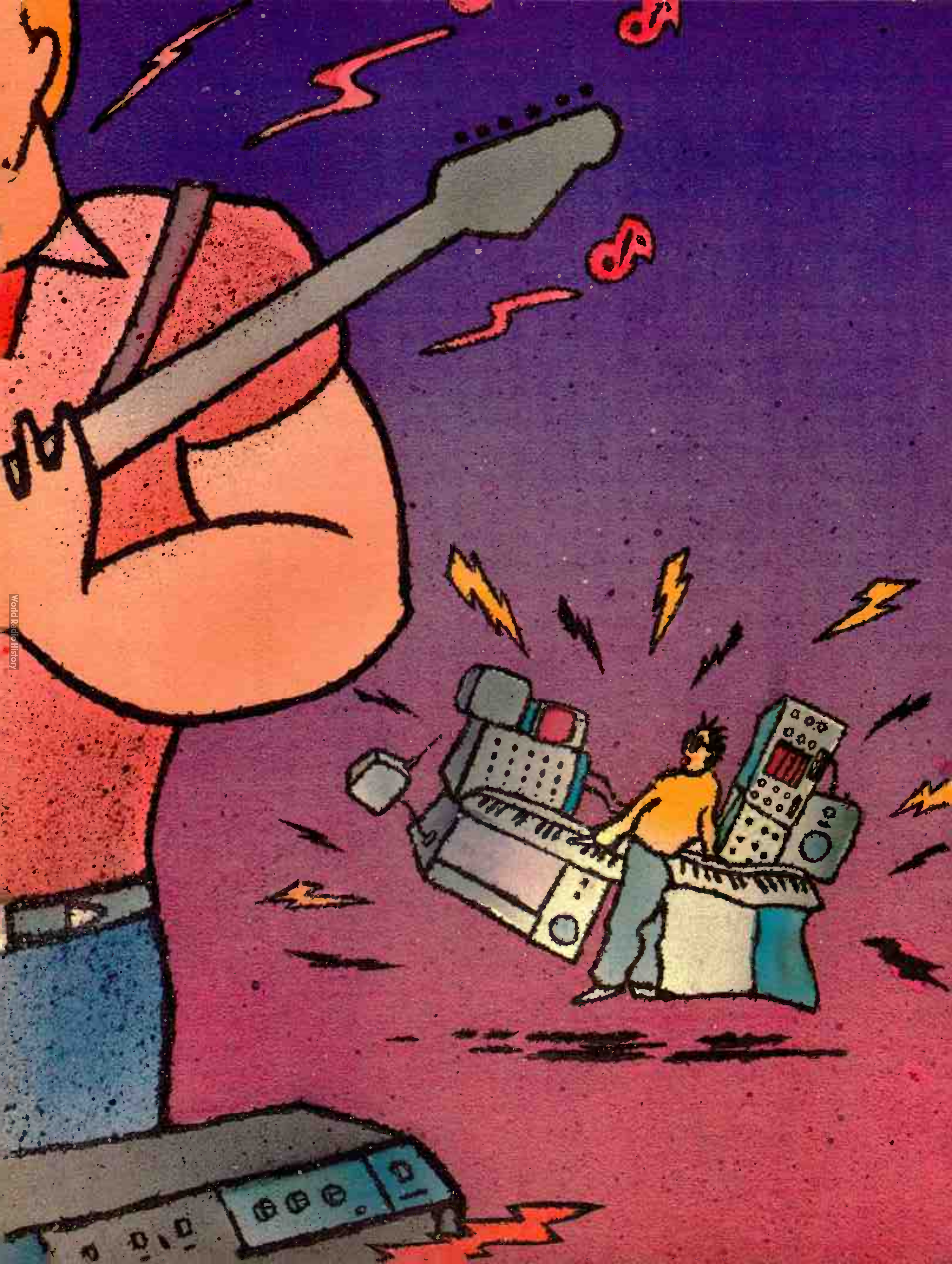

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The Neo-Analog Revival Hits NAMM

New Muscle from the Guitar–Analog Camp Surprises the Keyboard–Digital Contingent

Okay, I admit it. Sometimes I've gotten it wrong. In my search for The Big Pattern, I've been guilty of painting in bold, sweeping strokes—perhaps a bit too bold and sweeping. But whenever I get to a NAMM show, something makes me begin predicting, extrapolating, simplifying.... I can't help myself. It's probably a natural reaction to three days of being bombarded with music products of every description and price—faced with thousands of stars, we invent constellations. But sometimes the patterns we tech writers discern are more a product of our expectations and ongoing love for the leading edge than of any solid, statistical facts. This has occasionally led me to make provocative NAMM-show predictions and descriptions that were not always correct.

For example? In the summer of '85, in describing a slumping instrument industry split into rival analog and digital camps, I declared MIDI guitar to be the brightest hope for bridging that gap and reviving the MI market. MIDI guitar went on to become the most oversold,

by Jock Baird

BOELTS BROTHERS DESIGN

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Worth going out on a limb for:
Zeta's MIDI guitar and Mirror 6 controller

under-delivered product of 1986, but the market improved anyway. Last year I salivated about something called the Human Clock, which put out a MIDI clock pulse to slave sequencers to the elastic feel of a real live drummer. To me this was epochal; to all but a few drummers it was a yawner (there was also some scuttlebutt it didn't work as well as promised). Exit the Human Clock. I felt a bit better about last year's call that big changes in international currency exchange rates would give American firms a small but significant advantage, but that doesn't reveal too much about the direction all this U.S. success is going in. And I'll definitely reserve comment on Alan di Perna's most recent theory that has music technology developing along random patterns generated by a huge artificial intelligence composition program—at least until he tells us who's programmed it.

Why am I telling you all this? Because I'm back again with my Revised Big Pattern, and I want you to take it seriously. Seriously. This time I think I have it right. Or at least more right. Here goes. I'm going to keep my organization of the MI market into two irreconcilable wings, the guitar/human/analog vs. the keyboard/computer/digital universes. But I'm re-evaluating the relative strengths between the two. For the last few years, if it didn't have MIDI, it was obsolete, which helped turn the analog part of the MI business into also-rans and welfare recipients. But the MIDI revolution is beginning to run out of fizz and the balance of wealth is shifting again. In fact, my (adjusted) theory now contends that we are well into what I call the Neo-Analog Revival.

Some have called this the MIDI backlash, others might relate it to the long-standing analog vs. digital debates. Some MIDI-philes have disdainfully termed this the "Flight to Analog," since we who served a steady diet of nirvana-now stories about MIDI and its related advances tended to characterize non-believers as rednecks, technophobes and mental midgets. But today's Neo-Analog Revivalists have a solid basis for their beliefs and suspicions, especially with regard to cost, reliability, user-hostility and time-efficiency. MIDI is *not* mandatory for musicians, especially in the breadwinning realm of live gigs and full-scale studio recording. And you don't have to be a MIDI skeptic to wonder why so much of NAMM consists of straining to catch the difference in nuance between the floating-point Steinway and the 16-bit Bösendorfer. Isn't there more to the revolution than this?

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That's basically why I'm revising my two-worlds-of-MI theory to accommodate what I saw at NAMM. Under my old Big Pattern, the lead items at NAMM would be from the keyboard world: MIDI workstations, fret-switched guitar controllers, even more new MIDI synths and software. But back a little bit from the leading edge, traditional materials like tape, tubes and wood were thriving, with plenty of high-tech headlines of their own. Yes, the poor, undernourished analog contingent has come all the way back, but not the way I ever thought it would. Instead of stealing adherents back from the digital ranks in a bitter struggle over a finite set of customers, the great Neo-Analog Revival of the past year has created and nurtured a customer base all its own. And that's why the mood at NAMM was irrepressibly good in both camps, with most firms predicting the boom times of '87 would be repeated in '88.

Of course, a lot of what's fueling this analog resurgence isn't analog at all—which is why I tacked on the "Neo." (Did you think it was just to sound educated?) In fact, many new-product overachievers of this era are aided and abetted by digital technologies. Yes, connections and exchanges between the two parallel universes have been going on right under my nose, but more subtly and significantly than MIDI guitars or Human Clocks. Here now is a revisionist view of Winter NAMM, beginning with four trends crucial to this so-called Neo-Analog Revival and my new, improved Big Pattern.

• The Philips Cassette Fails to Die: Here's the cutting edge of analog. If you told me a month ago Tascam would be coming out with a deck that packs eight tracks onto a plain old Walkman-style Philips cassette, I'd have said, "Why?"

Chainable digital effects for the stomp-box crowd: Boss' ME-5

Who, at the dawn of DAT, at the height of the sequencer age, would bother to cram eight tracks into an eighth-inch of tape running at 3¾ ips? I mean, call me old-fashioned, but how could such a deck possibly sound as good as eight tracks on quarter-inch tape moving twice or four times the speed? Tascam's answer is a resounding, "In your face, bub. We can do it if people want it." And people clearly wanted it. How Tascam got so much out of a track 1/64th of an inch wide can only be marveled at, but they claim their 8-track 238 Syncaset (rack-mount deck with no mixer) has specs that are every bit as good as the 4-track 234. Oh sure, slam them around a little, they'll admit a microscopic sacrifice in the very low end, but who's sweating fractions of a db?

The real significance I see in the 238 is not the breakthough in head design, albeit impressive, but that there remains such an extraordinary demand for the Philips cassette. It ain't cutting-edge, but it works fine for thousands of recording musicians and they have no plans to trade it in for next year's format. But that doesn't mean they don't want more out of a cassette deck. Wedded to the analog charms of the 238 is a heady shot of digital transport smarts, including dual-position autolocator, looping capabilities, professional sync funtions like an RS232 port and fully slavable transport system, and little extras like defeat for the dbx on four tracks at a time. Now you know why it costs $2300.

All I can do is gracefully admit I've underestimated the continuing importance of the 4-track cassette phenomenon. Each show finds new variations on this theme, yet I haven't really mentioned one in several years, since they're not really "new." It's a bit like what Pete Townshend said about witnessing a knife fight between T-shirt vendors outside a Stones concert: "This was over selling bloody T-shirts! I wondered what the hell was going on, and now, after looking at the Stones receipts, I *know* what was going on: twenty million dollars!" With stakes like this, Fostex, AMR, Audio-Technica, Tascam, Ross, Yamaha and Vesta Fire just keep carving each other up. The latter is making a determined attempt to shed its low-price image with some fancier new units, the MR-10PRO and the MR1M. These add things like more VUs, an eight-input patchbay, variable speed control and even a light jack to the time-tested cassette format. The PRO version runs at 3¾ ips. And Vesta Fire is ready to up the cassette-deck ante by putting digital reverb in next show's units.

• Digital Amps for the Chronically Crunchy: Digital power amps are nothing new at NAMM, at least not since Peavey brought out its DECA system some time ago, but their principal selling point has always been cleanliness and accuracy. Not exactly exciting to the analog world. But this show saw two very different variations from Peavey and Gallien-Krueger: down and dirty digital power amps that only a screaming

The exterior may not show it, but the guts of this Gallien-Krueger 2100SEL guitar amp are digital.

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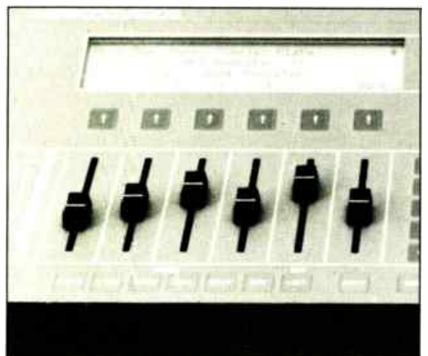
Getting graphic: This Roland R-880 display is worth a thousand words.



AKG's ADR 68K took MIDI implementation to new heights.

guitar hero could love. Now these are not digital in the sense that only the controls and preamp are digital; it's the power system itself. Just to prove the point, there are no wimpy preset memories or alpha-numeric displays on these babies, and forget about MIDI. The Gallien-Krueger 2100SEL is the most ambitious in that it includes channel-switching, four-band active EQ, compression, stereo reverb and chorus, noise reduction and a plethora of connection options. But the real message is the sound, which is vintage analog assault. All that accuracy and cleanliness is there only if you want it.

Peavey's DECA system came back in a number of new packages, most notably as a combo guitar amp that weds 450 watts to one lonely 10-inch speaker. There's not a lot of control features, but as far as raw crunch goes, we're talking serious disruptions in The Force. The DECA system has also shrunk to a one-rack-space power amp that puts out 450 watts on each stereo side; if there's another amp this small that kicks out as much, I'm not aware of it. Giving new meaning to the phrase "power broker," Peavey has also done a rethink on its solid-state amps, coming up with a technique they call SuperSat to make transistors mimic tube-type high-gain distortion. They've added this and some other updates to much of their line, including the best-selling Bandit, the Audition, the Backstage, the Stereo Chorus and the TKO and TNT bass combos, which have a very hip biamped chorus/effect circuit that keeps the low end clean. For more rigid tube disciples, Peavey also officially unveiled its Triumph series, a blatant attack on the MESA/Boogie stronghold.

This was only the most innovative manifestation of an across-the-board combo-amp comeback at Anaheim. New units from Sundown, Charvel, Jackson, Randall, Yamaha, Laney, Fender, Roland, Dean Markley and Kitty Hawk were everywhere. ADA added a power amp and cabinet system to its line of MIDI preamps and effects. Marshall got into mini-stacks and a new PA system. Marshall also unveiled the best new bass amp of NAMM, the Jubilee. This 600-watt brute has tremendous bi-amping flexibility, plenty of effects loops and onboard EQ, and a particularly good idea: a blank rack space at the top of the head enclosure to mount in your favorite multi-effects. And if you're weary of hauling around massive bass enclosures, SWR has a new 4x10 cabinet with bullet tweeter that's been reduced to a svelte 18x20x22 inches. They call it the Goliath, but perhaps David would be more appropriate.

• **Cheap & Simple MIDI-to-Tape Synchronization:** This is another one of those demographic teasers. For us techno-pundits, slaving sequencers to tape is an old story. But how many of you out there reading this have actually hooked up a tape deck—even a cassette four-track—with a sequencer and used the two interactively? Just what I thought—not very many. There was one demonstration repeated at a number of booths throughout the show, and I'll relive it for you. A simple cassette or reel-to-reel is shown playing in sync with a sequence. Somewhere in the middle of the sequence, you are asked to stop the tape machine, quickly fast forward or rewind a little bit to change position, and then restart the tape. The tape tracks, usually guitar or vocals, come right in; after a period of one to three seconds, the MIDI tracks come in around the tape tracks and everything's perfectly in sync. Maybe that doesn't sound all that revelatory to you, but when you get it happening in front of you, especially in your own studio, a light goes on about synchronization: It's really not as difficult as some make it out to be.

The latest effort to get the tape world and the MIDI world talking comes from Tascam. It's a $225 MIDI-to-FSK converter dubbed the MTS-30 that, unlike traditional FSK, can be started in the middle of the clock pulse instead of only at the beginning. Note that this converts to regular MIDI song position pointer rather than the sexy new MIDI Time Code format. This unit basically does what sync-boxes from Harmony Systems and J.L. Cooper do in the same price range, but the implementation on the MTS-30 is friendlier, especially the addition of a measure display on the front. Tascam has another product on the way in the same vein, a MIDI-to-SMPTE converter that'll be called the MIDIizer.

MIDI-to-SMPTE was also the fascination of one Michael Stewart, progenitor of the already discussed Human Clock. Stewart, obviously no slouch at naming products, was back with SMPTE City, a $425 syncro utility box. SMPTE City reads all four SMPTE formats, displays bars and beats, resolves tempos down to a 200th bpm, will do tempo changes, SMPTE offsets, set cues and, perhaps most impressive, can read a SMPTE track that's more than 20 dB below what it should be. SMPTE City is being distributed by Imagine, a small Santa Barbara distributor. And a new MIDI-SMPTE lock-box from Southworth called JamBox/2 is a $269 adaptation of their accomplished JamBox 4, but it'll work with all computers or hardware sequencers, not just Mac-driven ones. Whichever home-sync route you take (I personally like Hybrid Arts' SMPTE-Track package for the ST), it's a perfect time to take the plunge.

• **Digital Effects Go Insane:** Just when it seemed like the market couldn't take another reverb/multi-effects unit, eight more appear. Who is buying all these things? Well, certainly home recordists, MIDIed and otherwise, and for them even newer, bluer versions of Alesis' MicroVerb and ART's ProVerb —complete with price drop—vied at Anaheim. There are so many roman-numeraled MiniVerbs, UniVerbs, ProVerbs, MicroVerbs, and Addverbs I can barely conjugate them all anymore. But lately a whole new phalanx of effects has joined them, aimed more squarely at journeyman guitar or PA users. Oh sure, I hear you thinking, concoct some half-baked analog rebirth theory and then prove it by pointing to a boom in digitally sampled effects. How convenient. Okay, I admit these new miracle boxes are digital and their programs can be changed and mapped over MIDI, but since they plug in exactly like analog

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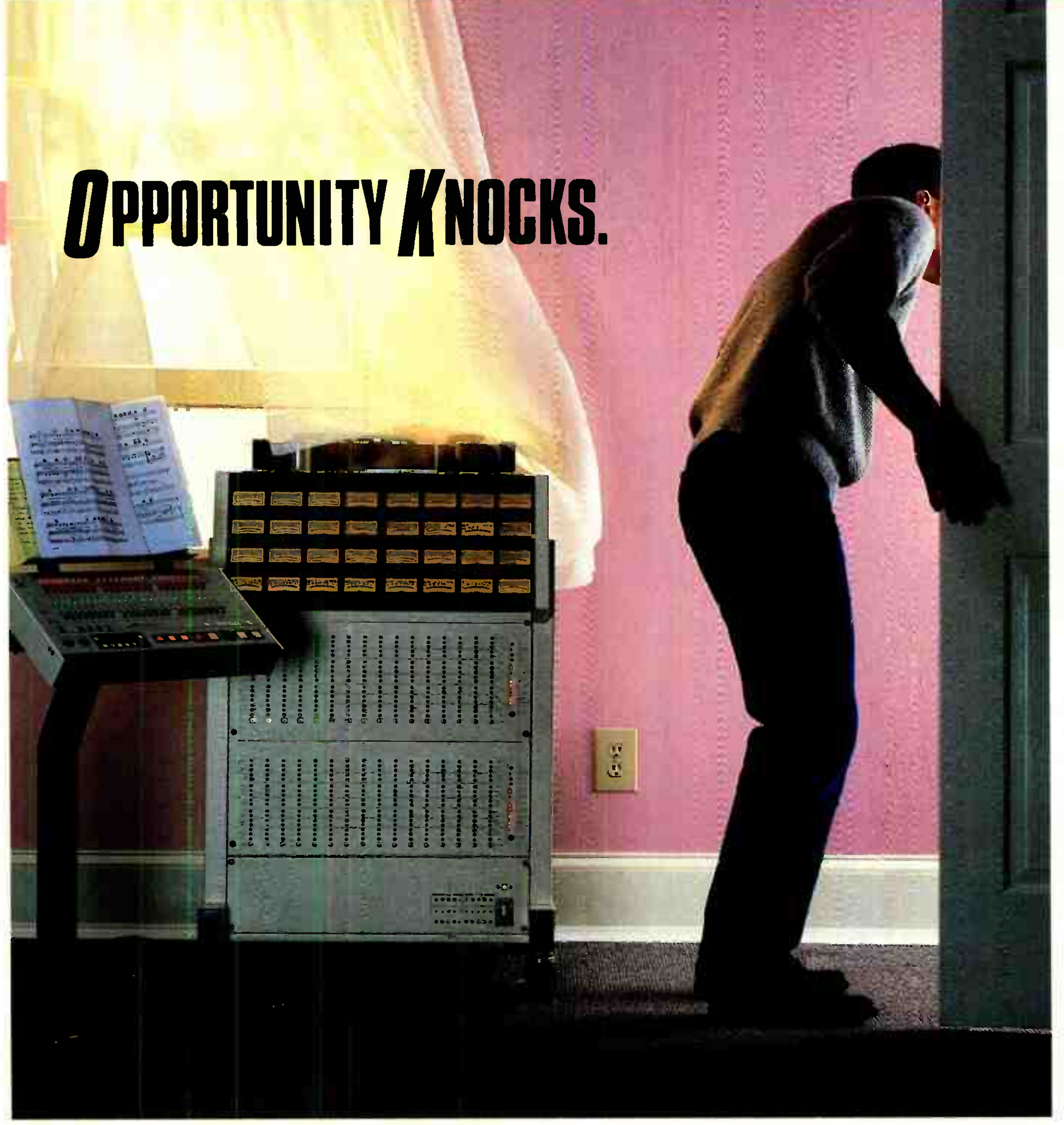

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stomp-boxes or spring reverbs, no one is intimidated by them. And boy are they getting better! While the advent of 16-bit technology has created waves of copy in the arena of MIDI sampling, it has far more quietly become the standard of the latest generation of effects boxes, both expensive and not so expensive.

A good example is the new DSP 128, a MIDI-fluent, 16-bit, $400 processor from Digitech. This thing sounds incredible. It not only has the usual six varieties of reverb (large, medium and small room, hall, gated and reverse reverb, if you wondered), but also delay, multi-tap

MIDI star: This Korg S1 workstation samples, sequences and syncs.

delay, chorus, flange and EQ. All well and good, but the DSP 128 also has the ability to chain three of these stages together simultaneously and still lets you control several important parameters of each effect. On a punch-per-dollar basis, this was a top contender for best new product at Anaheim.

More expensive at $825 but equally noteworthy is Boss' ME-5 guitar multiple effects processor. It's interesting that some players who might resist buying a Roland product, specifically the $1150 GP-8, would have no problems with a Boss unit that does much the same thing. This one has eight different effects that can be chained in groups of five, and, like George Bush, it kicks ass. It's full 16-bit stereo, has extra MIDI control capabilities (and even a headphone jack), but it's designed as a modified stomp box rather than a rack-mount. Ibanez evidently thought about the same packaging factors in their new DCP line, which has each individual effect in a separate stomp-box format with its own individual display, and then you cable together however many you want through the Ibanez DM14 switch box, which is fully MIDI-controllable. The strategy is to bring more capability and programmability to the conventional boxes-and-spaghetti rig, the Ibanez DCP series is a bet that many players aren't anally compulsive about specs like presets and bandwidth: the setup only recalls 20 programs and tops off at 16kHz, but it is full stereo and gives you access to more parameters than most floor pedals.

And that's certainly not all. ART is bringing out the $450 MultiVerb, which will chain two effects together. And don't count out the $500 Yamaha REX50, which debuted in Chicago without much fanfare but which has a lot of hidden power. Korg officially unveiled its excellent DRV-2000 multi-effects. And for those who still mistrust digital altogether, Scholz R&D has more little boxes in their Rockmodule series, the latest being a $140 Distortion Generator and a $250 Stereo Echo. Analog reverb? Wow, what a radical new concept!

But this was only part of the outboard gear action at NAMM. Korg showed an equalizer/dynamics processor called the KEC-42 that combines four EQ circuits and two compressor/limiter/noise gate sections. It even has patch points and external key-in capabilities. You could also do the same thing modularly by buying a couple of new $125 Alesis units, including a full-service noise gate, a compressor/limiter and a so-called Enhancer that listens for high-end response and only boosts it if some is there. Barcus Berry Electronics (or BBE) showed something similar, a unit that functions like a gate for EQ, meaning if your program is only running between 75 Hz and 12kHz that instant, it'll gate out the frequencies above and below that to eliminate noise or rumble. BBE also showed prototypes for a four-channel noise gate and—every small studio's salvation—a 60-cycle hum eliminator called the Humbucker.

Of course, not all the new signal processing action at NAMM fits comfortably into my revised Big Pattern, but I have no intention of leaving any out. One was a MIDI analyzer/equalizer from t.c., a 28-band, $2300 black box that'll do all kinds of tasks. Here are two that seemed especially useful: You can do a conventional room analysis using a pink noise generator, and then automatically mirror-image the settings so the sound will come up flat. And you can chain together two EQ programs, so if you have a bass sound you love, you can add it to the basic room setting you just worked out without having to compensate. And before we leave equalizers, isn't that ART TV monitor for their IEQ system swell? It actually has four switchable inputs so you can use it for a sequencer display or watch *Pee Wee's Playhouse* when it's not minding your midranges.

And let's not neglect readers with bigger budgets. The following pair of

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very classy digital reverbs won't strike everyone as bargains, but when you put them against $10,000 professional reverb systems they look awfully good. One is Roland's $4000 R-880 reverb. This has sound quality, MIDI capability and digital I/O capability, but its strongest suit is the GC-8 control panel, an open-ended piece of gear that can be adapted to a number of future Roland products. It's detailed display window actually draws pictures of envelopes, room shapes and diffusion patterns. And the AKG ADR 68K processor, which they picked up from Ursa Major a few years back, has a version 4.0 of its operating software that unquestionably makes it the most MIDI-fluent digital processor on the market today. It works as well as a 16-bit sampler (with 32 seconds to work with) as it does as an effect, including off-loading sounds in the MIDI sample-dump format. The 68K can do elaborate MIDI maps, can record countless parameter changes directly to MIDI sequencers, can chain effects in real time (and can run its own sampled sounds through effects) and, for the occasionally bewildered user like myself, it has a 10,000-word series of help screens. All for a mere seven grand.

• **Other, Purer Signs of Analog Achievement:** Gibson has emerged as NAMM's hottest deal-maker. Not only has the Nashville-based management brought Wayne Charvel aboard and deflected a legal challenge from the

The W.R.C. Bass, part of Wayne Charvel's bold new look for Gibson.

current Charvel owners, but they've also added famed pickup-meister Bill Lawrence and former Alembic honcho Rick Turner to their roster. Overall Gibson showed a number of striking new designs, including the Charvel-designed W.R.C. SR-71 guitar and W.R.C. Bass I and II, and Q-90 bass and US-1 and U2 guitars (talk about leading Edge...). Since Gibson has already acquired part of Steinberger, they've added Ned Steinberger's new KB-X tailpiece and 20/20

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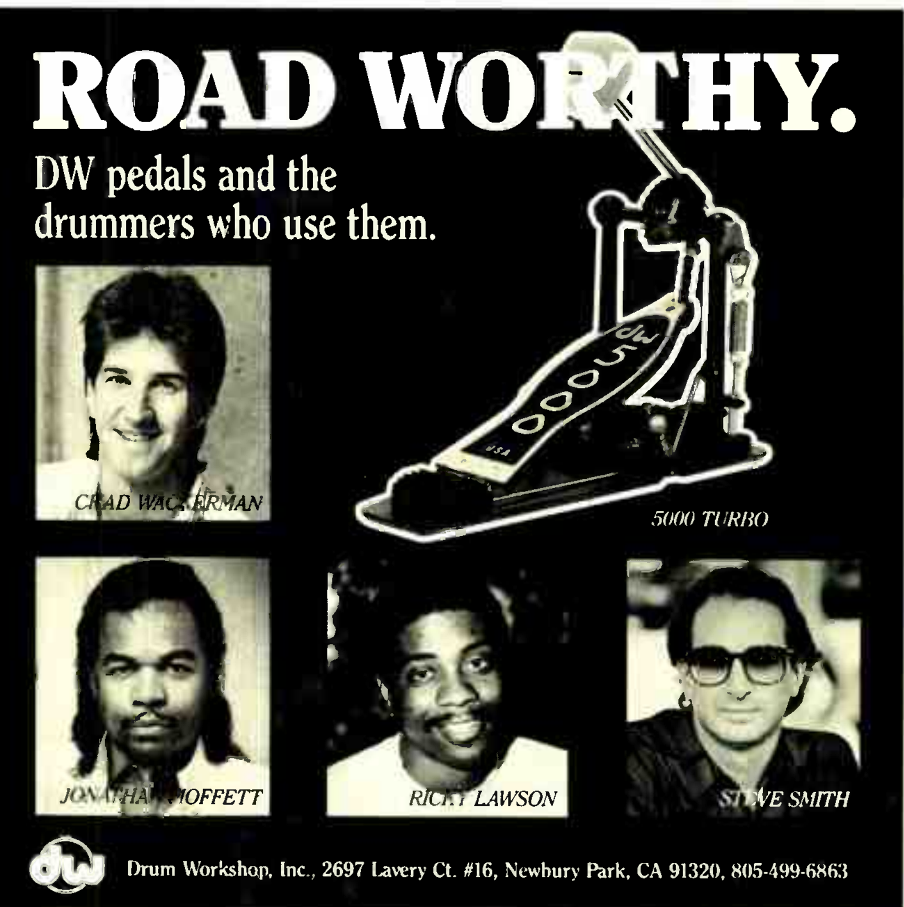

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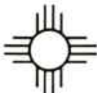

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bass pickups to Gibson models, and have even remade the FlyingV. There's also a major revitalization of the less expensive Epiphone line, including versions of the Firebird, S-310, X-1000, Howard Roberts models and even—sacre-bleu!—a Les Paul and a Chet Atkins Country Gentleman. Say, wasn't that originally a Gretsch? But Gibson's latest deal was a stunner: at Anaheim they announced they were picking up Guild, last year's comeback sensation. Sources say the new owners were particularly impressed with Guild's acoustic abilities. Interestingly, Guild will stay under its current management headed by prez Dave Magagna. Hey, if it ain't broke....

That isn't all the fretted horsetrading we saw. Fender, needing a boost in the low end, will now distribute the Kubicki bass, one of the best and most original bass designs of the decade. Fender may ultimately take over manufacturing the bass, but for now it's still being made in Phil Kubicki's small Santa Barbara plant. Other domestic guitar action has Robin Guitars bringing all their manufacturing and subcontracting home from overseas to Houston, Texas. Robin was the originator of the backwards headstock that is now seen everywhere at NAMM, and is following up with a split-headstock look. Their newest neck-through-body, carve-top guitars are not cheapies, but well worth getting your hands on. Yamaha's already successful RGX guitar line got a complete retooling this show, including a wider nut and fingerboard (definitely needed), a new ball-bearing whammy bar system and active electronics. These formerly nice axes are now World Series contenders. Yamaha also signed Billy Sheehan on with a flashy video commercial and a customized BB3000. And C.F. Martin seemed very much rejuvenated, with their Jumbo J series popping, new approaches to using maple (hands-down the best use of Birdseye maple at the show), and wider necks. Martin is also launching a line of Stinger strings to go with its solid-body budget guitars.

Other evidence of analog health? More wireless action, including Shure's very first pair of wireless mikes. Well, they'd already let every other wireless company use the SM58 cartridge, so they undoubtedly figured why can't we do it better ourselves? Also available is a version of the SM87 condenser. And Samson is calling Nady's low-price bet with a $269 VHF Wireless unit that still uses dbx noise reduction. When will it end? And PA business keeps on pumping, with a heat-shedding new power amp from Electro-Voice, the $950 E-V 7300. This one has an option for an adjustable biamp crossover point—24 different frequencies are available! E-V also has a 24-input version of their 32 series that breaks the $2000 price barrier.

I guess that's enough analog celebration for the moment, but I'll pass into the digital news with one final illustration of the changing fortunes of each segment. In the old days, Dean guitars used to use scantily-clad models to hype their otherwise less-than-exciting instruments. A while ago, they gave it up. This show the Mellotron people were pushing their Muart four-port interface and Spirit software, a unique and viable MIDI package. Why, then, did they feel the need to use Penthouse Pets as the main attraction at their demo room and booth? Sure, it's nice to see the sleaze back at NAMM, but notice that it's now the digital/MIDI camp that has to resort to stupid, sexist marketing devices just to get their story across. Could this be the shape of NAMMs to come?

•New Adventures in High Tech Handicapping: The MIDI/digital contingent at Anaheim was busy sorting out Yamaha's purchase of Sequential Circuits. Yes, Dave Smith will remain with the company as head of a separate U.S.-based R&D facility. Yes, the Prophet 3000 will be carried through to market. But that's about all that was clear. The Studio 440 may or may not go forth, and it's most likely curtains for the VS and Pro 2000. Perhaps not uncoincidentally, Yamaha's Digital Music Instrument division was uncharacteristically flat this show; other than a cool new $900 drum machine, the RX7, and another DX variation, the main focus was their 12-bit sampler. It was let drop that Yamaha is proceeding with a MIDI/synth guitar that will include internal FM voices, but sources tell us the guitar section of Yamaha will not be involved.

Okay, we've broached the subject. MIDI guitar. Having laid my mea culpas all through this story, I will now dig myself in all over again. I finally played two MIDI guitars I could recommend without a scintilla of reservation. One is the new MIDI version of the Stepp I mentioned last month. Critics will point to the two sets of strings, all of them one size (unwound), as reasons to skip the Stepp, but I still found it instantaneous and worth its $3000. Unfortunately, only one per day is coming out of the factory, so get in line.

More unexpected was the performance of the Zeta Guitar and Mirror 6 controller unit. This system has been in and out of my coverage through the

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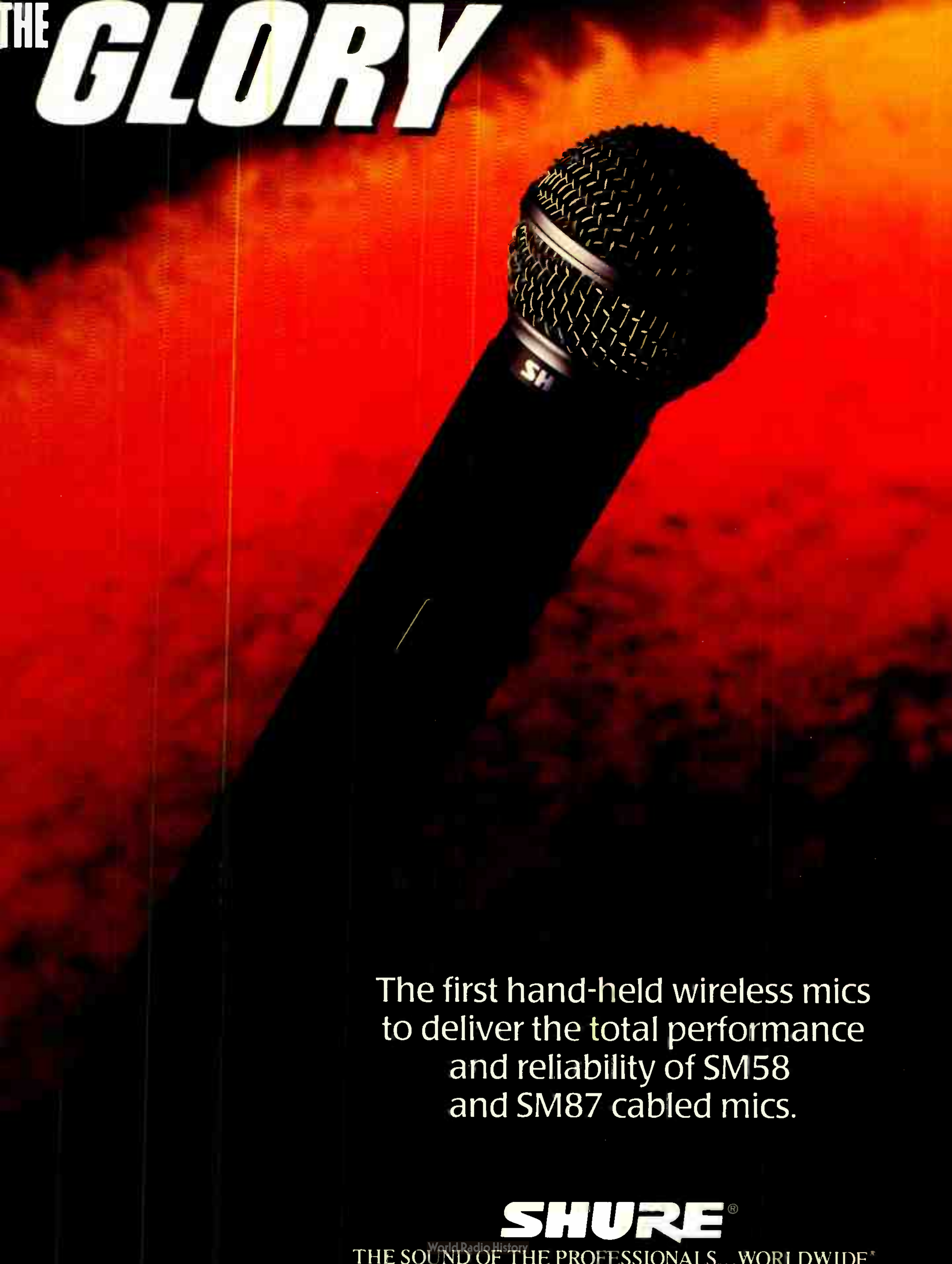

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years, but one big difference sets it apart: It was always just being privately demonstrated but never slated for market. No flashy ad campaign has promised the moon and delivered a meteorite, no big show buzz has elevated it to instant fame. Some years the thing didn't track well at all, but we were flattered to be asked for our comments. Now Zeta is telling us it's ready, and for my money they deserve a serious audition. Recall that this is a fret-switched system that uses the contact of the left hand to trigger a note and then the later-arriving information from the right hand to correct pitch or dynamics. One big advantage of the guitar is that it uses regular guitar strings. The principal disadvantage is that although the tracking is superb, open strings can confuse it. (The Stepp had this problem too.) And naturally as soon as I pointed this out, the Zeta people attempted to readjust it for me, making it steadily less and less playable. Hey, no problem, guys. I'll trade a few open-string notes for the rest of the fretboard. And especially the super-fast low-end tracking. Now the Zeta system is also around $3000, but the sting is taken off by the craftsmanship of the guitar. It's gorgeous, original and fully analog-capable. Okay, I'm out on a MIDI guitar limb again, but the Stepp and the Zeta make it a heck of a lot sturdier.

Now we come to the "plain black box" offensive from Korg. The basic idea is to combine several modular components into one box which serves as a new central control station for all your MIDI recording. Yes, this is partly the revival of the Linn 9000, which was already proceeding over at Akai with a new sequencer-only version of last show's MPC60. But both the latter and the now-uncertain Sequential 440 sell in the high four- to low five-thousand range. Korg is now combining a lot of its developed technologies to get the idea into the low two-thousand range without compromising it as a quality, "pro" product. Three variations of these Korg "workstations" were unveiled at NAMM. The first, dubbed the M1, is a 16-bit stereo multitimbral play-only sampler wedded to an eight-track sequencer and a set of percussion voices. A huge amount of memory gives the M1 a lot of impressive onboard sounds, and a ROM card library similar to the DDD-1's will offer you even more. The M1 will sell for almost the same as the 12-bit DSS-1, but Korg feels the user-sampling capability will keep the DSS-1 current. Maybe, but when the R1 (an M1 with user sampling) comes along in June, all bets are off.

Two other boxes encompass a very powerful sequencer/synchronizer called the Q1 (selling in the high teens) and the same unit with stereo sampling and drum sounds called the S1 (selling in the mid-2000s). The features of the Q1 and especially the S1 are a virtual litany of state-of-the-art MIDI specs: SMPTE smarts, individual audio outputs (16 on the S1), MIDI Time Code, digital I/O outputs, CRT monitor jack, scuzzi port, CD-quality user sampling.... If there's a sequence-editing function your current setup can do, it's probably here. Also among the black boxes was an eight-channel automated mixing console, the C2, and a high-$600s acoustic grand piano sound module called the P3 that'll knock your socks off. Most interesting about the Korg project is the multinational character of its design effort; since operating software becomes the make-or-break part of the equation, American input was crucial, and Korg USA execs report they spent many long hours in Tokyo hotels sweating over Japanese, English and Italian dictionaries. Look for the Korg workstations to hit the dealers in May.

• **Probing the Synth Surplus:** Forget sampling. How could there still be more new synthesizers? We've al-

continued on page 97

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"He got the musicians' respect by showing he could be very specific about each instrument."

BOB GRUEN/STAR FILE

and John Lennon's voice is as loud and clear as ever. A steady stream of books, plays, videotapes, TV specials and, of course, lawsuits has kept his name in our consciousness. By design or not, 1988 is shaping up as a big year in the Lennon industry. This fall Andrew Solt's feature-length documentary film, *Imagine: John Lennon*, will be hitting theaters at the same time as *Strawberry Fields*, Albert Goldman's Lennon biography, enters the bookstores (and presumably the best-seller charts). Another book, *The Lennon Companion*, is published this month.

But the magnum opus has to be Westwood One's intriguingly titled *Lost Lennon Tapes* series, which debuted the week of January 18 with a three-hour special and continues at the rate of an hour a week for the rest of the year. The tapes—some 300 hours of material—were never literally lost, but rather in storage underneath the Dakota, the landmark New York apartment building where Lennon lived with Yoko Ono.

Acknowledging "all the stuff I was left with," Ono admits that "in the first couple of years it was very difficult for me to do anything. The only thing I was thinking about at the time was *Milk and Honey*"—the album Lennon and Ono were working on at the time of his death. Ono felt she had to "definitely release it because I'm responsible for that, and John would not have liked the fact that I would shelve it. So I kept thinking *Milk and Honey, Milk and Honey*. Then I realized that there's so much more material than just *Milk and Honey*. What to do about that material?"

One solution was *Menlove Ave.*, a 1986 compilation Ono assembled from virtually the last remaining produced Lennon tracks. But that only scratched the surface; underneath were those hundreds of hours of tape. Many of them are cassettes recorded on a portable machine in his Dakota music room. Lennon had no home studio.

Elliot Mintz, a longtime friend of Lennon and Ono, notes that "inventorying material has been an ongoing thing at the Dakota since I've known them. There's just so much stuff." The man who wrote "imagine no possessions" appears to have been a compulsive accumulator. "When I inventoried all of his possessions after his death," Mintz recalls, "I came across crate after crate of unopened stereo equipment.

"He liked to buy three copies of every book that interested him: one that he would read, one that he would keep on the shelf unopened, and one to send to a friend. With phono-

World Radio History

graph records I found the same thing. There'd be a copy that he would like to play, then there'd be a whole set that had the plastic wrap still on."

Mintz says Lennon also liked to hide things—a dangerous trait to add to an acquisitive passion. With his work tapes, for example, "he might scribble something on it—not the name of the song, maybe a little cartoon character. Then he would hide the tape—in the back of a linen closet, under a bed. If he liked a particular thing he did, he would transfer the tape to another tape, but begin the blank tape with classical music" from a radio station. "Then, 10 minutes into the tape, would be the song. That was his way of hiding the content of a tape inside a cassette he had hidden inside a linen closet." One Christmas Mintz gave Lennon a set of false

Lennon liked to hide things. If he liked a song he wrote he would hide it on a cassette that began with 10 minutes of classical music taped off the radio, then hide the cassette in the linen closet.

books hollowed out for concealing objects. "He hid them."

In 1985 Ono employed recording engineer Jon Smith to sort through Lennon's tape collection. Smith "literally spent a year and a half" in a room at the Dakota where he listened to and kept a log of everything he found. Afterward he "went back through the haul and transferred everything that was unreleased or in some way historically important onto three media: regular reel-to-reel, Beta hi-fi and digital. No one really knew at the time what was going to happen to them Yoko was saying it was for publishing."

Smith can verify Lennon's pack-rat ways. He found an early Beatles demo in the kitchen, "buried in a pile of stuff. At the end, John completely forgot the lyrics to the song and the whole thing just broke down in hysterics."

Smith's labors yielded a thick, detailed logbook that broke down the recordings into categories and assigned them appropriate prefixes. By 1987 Ono had a good idea of the

Present at the creation: Lennon composes as the ubiquitous cassette deck listens.

BOB GRUEN/STAR FILE FRED W.McDARRAH

extent of her husband's musical legacy.

Sean Ono Lennon, John and Yoko's son, spent last summer in California, where he filmed a video with Michael Jackson. Sean lived partly with Jackson, partly with his "Uncle Elliot" Mintz, now a media consultant. Among Mintz's clients is Norm Pattiz, founder and chairman of Westwood One. Pattiz holds private movie screenings at his house, and Mintz started taking Sean. When Yoko Ono came to Los Angeles she wanted to thank Pattiz and his wife for their hospitality. That led to a dinner, which led to a discussion of the unreleased tapes.

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"How in the world are you gonna see, laughing at fools like me."

"I knew I wanted to put them out," Ono says. "I wanted to share them with people." She was reluctant to issue them commercially, because of the sheer bulk of material and its raw performance quality. "John was very interested in radio, and so I thought it was a good idea to put it through the radio medium." Pattiz was interested, and cut what he calls a "simple deal." Preparation for the shows, with Mintz as host, began in late October.

"I'm sorry," *Lost Lennon Tapes* writer/producer Stephen Peeples apologizes with no apparent meekness. "I get chills listening to some of this stuff." He's holding an Ampex 370 60-minute cassette. "Whatever Gets You Thru the Night" is written on the label in John Lennon's spidery scrawl. But what's on the tape is a far cry from the perky full-band workout of that title on Lennon's *Walls and Bridges* album. Instead, the cassette begins with Lennon crooning the title phrase at a dreamy tempo while playing delicate acoustic guitar. In the background is the sound of traffic through an open window. He stops, then ups the pace to a jumpy, syncopated strum. The only progression is three descending chords. At one point Lennon stops repeating "it's alright" and just doodles on guitar. Suddenly he's shifted, as if by accident, into a new key—one fans will recognize as the finished song's bridge. After a little of this he stops playing and lets out a startled "oh!"

"They're work tapes," says Peeples, who writes songs himself. "This is no big deal. Musicians have hundreds of these lying around." Except that this musician is John Lennon. Peeples refers to this tape as one of "my two biggest woodies." The other reveals Lennon solo with electric guitar in a studio in December 1966; he's painstakingly crafting a demo of "Strawberry Fields Forever" for his bandmates.

Peeples found Lennon's work tapes to be a revelation. "Like a lot of other people who are John Lennon fans, I wondered how the hell he did some of this stuff, what it took to realize these concepts and ideas." What he discovered was a tedious process: Lennon "would sit down to compose with an acoustic guitar or at the piano, a portable cassette player and mike, and his lyric sheets, if he had any. He'd just start putting to tape whatever ideas he had. If he stumbled on anything that sounded good he'd stop the tape at the end of the take and make notes on his lead sheets; just before you hear the tape clicking off you can hear him start to rustle the paper. Then the tape clicks back on and you hear him resting the paper back. The next take will sound similar but it will be the next evolution. In some cases, by the time he gets to the eighth or ninth take it's a completely different song."

A two-note electric guitar ostinato over a rippling bass tone creates a musical ebb-and-flow. This is not a solo tape. "I can hardly raise my head/ I'm lying in my lazy bed/ I haven't got a care." The ethereal, high-pitched voice—over wordless falsetto backing—comes from the land of tangerine trees and marmalade skies. The tempo is that of molasses. "Everybody's rushing 'round but me/ I'm dreaming." These are the Beatles performing "Lullabye for a Lazy Day," a song you've never heard. And you won't hear it on *The Lost Lennon Tapes* either. Official co-writer Paul McYou-Know-Who is unlikely to give clearance to allow the finished (but not incredible) song to be broadcast. This one truly is lost.

Another bit of Lennon esoterica is called "Too Many Cooks." It's a track Lennon produced in 1974, with Mick Jagger singing. Again, lack of songwriting clearance will prevent airing of this funky one-chord stomp, but it's nice to know it exists.

Andy Newmark: "John Lennon was clearly the leader of the Beatles. I've met and worked with all of them. He puts them all in his back pocket."

And the list goes on: The Beatles' "Revolution" with four minutes of extended jamming at the end. Lennon and Ono co-composing (a rare occurrence) "Luck of the Irish," from their 1972 *Some Time in New York City* album. Lennon performing "Yer Blues" from the unaired 1968 British TV special, "Rock and Roll Circus." Lennon at a 1971 Ann Arbor, Michigan rally—with Bob Seger, among others—for political activist John Sinclair. Obscure song titles like "Free as a Bird," "He's Got the Blues" and "She's a Friend of Dorothy's."

One curious tape, marked "Happy Birthday to John" (not Lennon's handwriting), is part of an Ono project to solicit musical greetings for Lennon's thirtieth birthday in 1970. On the tape is an original tune by Donovan called "Here Come the Threes." The next selection begins with a woman's voice: "Hello, John, this is Janis. We'd just like to wish you a happy birthday and..." As the Full Tilt Boogie Band lurches into semi-consciousness behind her, Janis Joplin wails the last four bars of "Happy Trails." She does not sound well; Joplin was very much into heroin in 1970. By the time Lennon received her message, she was dead.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOB GRUEN/STAR FILE

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A large part of the Lennon tapes date from the last year of his life, when he resumed recording after a six-year sabbatical. In the holy filing cabinet at Westwood One are the original Bermuda tapes: songs Lennon recorded on vacation that ended up on *Double Fantasy* and the posthumous *Milk and Honey*—and many that didn't. Among the latter is "Serve Yourself," a scathing answer to Bob Dylan's "Serve Somebody" quite out of keeping with *Double Fantasy*'s sweetness and light. One version of "Serve Yourself" has been bootlegged; Peeples estimates the Bermuda tapes include about 30 different versions of the song.

So far the biggest complaint anyone's made about *The Lost Lennon Tapes* is that the series hasn't played enough of them. The three-hour kick-off included 23 released tracks by Lennon and the Beatles; the first one-hour show had five minutes of "lost" music. Peeples notes that "a lot of people listening to radio in 1988 may not have even been alive in 1964, and they need a little more background." But he adds that the format's evolving as it goes.

"There's never gonna be a show that's 100 percent lost tapes. It's a function of creating a radio program that's gonna be of interest to the largest number of people while still trying to maintain credibility for the hardcore fan/collector. It's a real tightrope to have to walk. Your basic listener may not be able to hear in version one of 'God' where Lennon says, 'I don't believe in Dylan'—and then between takes he's decided, 'Well, Dylan's not his real name; his real name is Zimmerman'—and in the next take you hear him sing, 'I don't believe in Zimmerman.' These are real fan minutiae a lot of listeners may not be interested in. Would you like a half-hour of the same song over and over again, listening for minute changes?"

Regardless of what percentage of the show consists of actual "lost tape"—and Peeples places unaired interviews as well as music in that category—a lot of listeners are certainly going to have their tape recorders hooked up. "There are some tape manufacturers who should send us a thank-you note," Pattiz smiles. Mintz's attitude is, "Let's just play it on the radio and let everybody enjoy it. And let those who want to tape it off the air, tape it off the air. One of the things this series should do is put an end to the John and Yoko bootleg market."

Extending almost the entire length of the Westwood One storage room is a shelf filled with 10½-inch reels of tape in plain white boxes. They are the running two-tracks from the *Double Fantasy* sessions—about 100 hours' worth. According to assistant engineer Jon Smith, co-producer Jack Douglas decided to feed Lennon and Ono's microphones through a constantly recording two-track machine—without their knowledge.

On the keyboard: A guitar player's conception.

"Someday, son, all this will be yours."

"He said it was too important a thing not to have on tape," Smith says, "and did not tell anyone about it until midway through mixing. John walked into the control room one day, turned to me and said, 'How come there's always this one machine rolling in "record"? How come I see the meter moving as I talk?!' I'd been told not to let on. He started getting really upset and going, 'I want to know what's going on here!' Jack jumped up, told him the whole story, and John thought it was great. In fact, before his death he and I were discussing going through those and doing some kind of a Beatles-Christmas-album-type deal with the stuff there."

Smith, like many of the people who worked on *Double Fantasy*, was deeply affected by the experience. At the time he was the main assistant engineer at the Hit Factory in New York. When Lennon and Ono walked into the studio, "it was probably the most exciting moment of my life. The two of them seemed eight feet tall for the first few days."

As if Lennon's mere presence weren't enough for the assembled musicians, he brought out two distinctive guitars. One was a custom-built Sardonyx, a body-less Steinberger type with a passive equalizer and metal struts on the side. ("It looked like the starship Enterprise," Smith says.) The other was an old Rickenbacker with a Beatles set list still taped to it.

Smith remembers the sessions as "very magical" and also very smooth. Lennon's m.o. was to play his Bermuda demos for the band, and also play the songs on acoustic guitar. Tony Davilio, credited as "musical associate" on the album, transcribed the songs for the musicians to read. The band members would then work out their parts; "usually it took an hour or two," Smith says. "Then we'd be ready to start running it down on tape."

Drummer Andy Newmark was in Europe with Roxy Music when he got a message to call Jack Douglas' office about some sessions in August. When he found out whose it was, "I was totally mindblown. I am completely a product of the Beatles." The sessions lived up to his expectations. Lennon "was one of the coolest people I've ever met. He was clearly the leader of the Beatles. I've met and worked with all of them. He puts them all in his back pocket."

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Elliot Mintz and Lennon during the *Double Fantasy* sessions, 1980

Although Newmark describes the sessions as "incredibly up," he also admits that "everyone was a little edgy the first day. We weren't sure what to expect. We started off with 'I'm Stepping Out' [the lead-off cut on *Milk and Honey*]. It wasn't really coming together; everyone was nervous. So he put his guitar down and said, 'Okay guys, I'm gonna go inside the control room and walk you through this thing.' And he took the helm completely within the first couple of hours—went in the control room and proceeded to work on each instrument with each guy. I'd play my part and he'd go, 'Okay, I don't like what you're doing on the bass drum. Give me this and this, on the snare drum just do that, and forget all the fancy shit. Play like Ringo. You got it? Next!' He got our respect by showing he could be very specific about what he wanted on each instrument. And that track came together within an hour."

Lennon definitely knew what he wanted in the recording studio. But he was capable of other traits besides leadership. Producer Jimmy Iovine was a 19-year-old runner at New York's Record Plant when Lennon was cutting his *Rock 'n' Roll* album there. Iovine will never forget the day he was preparing a mix for engineer and Record Plant owner Roy Cicala.

"I was setting up 'Sweet Little Sixteen,'" Iovine says, "and accidentally it sounded fantastic. John walked in—and a friend of John's, or someone involved with John, said, 'Jimmy, can you get me a coffee with two sugars in it?' I started to get up, but John heard the music and said, 'Get the fuckin' coffee yourself!' And he sat down next to me and we did the mix. It was a moment that gave me so much confidence. That was the first mix I ever did."

Cicala remembers another side of Lennon. "We had just finished mixing *Mind Games*. He was up in our cutting-room, where we transfer tape to disc; I was still preparing the B-side. He called me to come up, and there's a pile of tape all off the reel, all over the tape machine. When I walked in he looked at me and said, 'The machine went bananas.' I got crazy and went home; I didn't know how to get out of this one! Then he calls me up. He was bullshittin'. But he didn't tell me until I got home. He was that kind of a person."

For keyboard player George Small, working with Lennon on *Double Fantasy* "was like a fairy tale. A lot of what happened happened really fast. We would cool out for a minute and then come back and focus on getting the track. '(Just Like) Starting Over' was either a first or second take. It was that kind of intensity. We 'shedded on them a bit ahead of time, but there seemed to be more of a feeling of immediacy. That was definitely a part of his creative process."

Yoko Ono shares a producer's credit on *Double Fantasy* and *Milk and Honey*, but Newmark says she did nothing but sing her own songs; "John was the whole show, period." Smith remembers that Ono "just sat in front of the console and listened. Every now and then we'd see a hand waving. We'd stop and she'd go, 'Wait, you have to do it this way,' and that was it." When Lennon and Ono conferred over any musical disagreements, "she was usually right."

One unusual aspect of these sessions—during which the musicians were sworn to secrecy—was the brief involvement of Cheap Trick's guitarist Rick Nielsen and drummer Bun E. Carlos. The two played with Small and bassist Tony Levin on unreleased versions of "I'm Losing You" and "I'm Moving On." "That was very uninhibited," Small laughs. Stan Vincent, Jack Douglas' business manager who contracted all the musicians for the sessions, says Douglas (who had produced Cheap Trick) thought Neilsen and Carlos could "get a little more of an edge." In Smith's opinion, the Cheap Tricked songs sound "totally different and quite beautiful."

So what happened? Vincent says Ono "got paranoid...She thought that because Cheap Trick played on a cut it would belong to CBS Records." (Cheap Trick records for CBS' Epic label.) Smith, however, claims Lennon nixed the tracks "mainly because he felt they sounded too much like 'Cold Turkey.' He felt they were too hard-edged; he wanted them prettier." Meanwhile, Smith adds, "the guys in the band, who were playing up till then, felt like, 'Why weren't we even given a chance?'" They were, and that's what you hear on *Double Fantasy*. The Cheap Trick versions may or may not be played on *The Lost Lennon Tapes*.

Jon Smith snapped this Polaroid of John and Yoko the first time they heard "Starting Over" on the radio.

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"What in the world are you thinking of, laughing in the face of love."

Small recollects a couple of incidents from his time with Lennon. One was that Lennon expressed a desire to remake "Strawberry Fields Forever." A Prophet 5 in the studio had a sound "that was exactly like that mutant sound on the beginning of 'Strawberry Fields.' He got into it, and was playing the beginning of 'Strawberry Fields' and bemoaning the fact that he never felt it was given its true realization."

As a keyboard player, Small also noticed Lennon's "unique" approach to that family of instruments. "I guess it was a guitar player's conception. He had this way of putting a fifth in the bass; he would voice chords like an open-barred guitar chord. If he played a C chord there would be a G on the bottom, almost like strumming. But it worked, on his tunes."

These sessions "never officially ended," Newmark says. "We did three straight weeks, every day from noon to midnight. In the fourth week it dribbled down. Just as it appeared that we had wrapped everything up, he said, 'Guys, I'm gonna get to work on a second album right away. I've got almost enough tracks for a second record, so everybody stay close.' That's when he told us there would be shows in the new year. He was excited about performing."

Lennon and Ono were planning a March 1981 eight-city tour, with satellite broadcasts, to coincide with the release of *Milk and Honey* as a very fast follow-up to *Double Fantasy.* The band would be the same musicians used in the studio: guitarists Hugh McCracken and Earl Slick, Small, Levin and Newmark. But it was not to be.

"I got a call from one of the maintenance people at the Hit Factory moments after it happened," Smith says. "He wasn't sure if it was true or not. I'd just worked with Lennon three days earlier when I'd recorded Andy Peebles' BBC interview." Small had just finished listening to a tape of *Double Fantasy*—"*just* finished it—this is very freaky but it's true—took the 'phones off and the phone rang. Of course I was up for the rest of the night. We were all with him for a month and a half, pretty concentratedly. He was such a striking, strong person—really intelligent, really fast, always charged with energy. And of course being there, hearing him count off and hearing that voice in the headphones, was a mind-boggling experience," he laughs. "I'm not sure whether I ever got used to that."

Newmark had turned down a November invitation to tour again with Roxy Music. "I'm glad I didn't go. Because had I not been in New York at the time, I would have felt worse somehow. I was shattered...I was totally fucked up when he was killed. I didn't work hardly for a good year or two. I was not even interested in playing music. Everything that came along and everything I heard just seemed like an imitation. I felt I had been next to one of the originators. Everything felt lukewarm after that."

"I was in shock for at least a year," Smith says. It didn't help that for the next three months he spent night after night transcribing the *Double Fantasy* running two-tracks at Ono's request.

In 1983 Smith got a call from Ono about mixing the leftover tracks from the sessions—what would become the *Milk and Honey* album. "She had decided, and I was very pleased, not to do any overdubbing on it." At the mixing sessions, though, "Yoko was having a really hard time listening. She would stay upstairs in the lounge we set up for

SKR/L.F.I. BOB GRUEN/STAR FILE

"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."

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her while I did the mixing. When I was ready to go to tape, she would come in. You could see she was having a lot of trouble. One day she told me she just had to take a little time off, she couldn't deal with it. A couple of days later it turned out she had hired a production team because, as far as I could see, it meant less involvement for her. She just wasn't ready to deal with it."

In its final form, *Milk and Honey* consists of two sessions. Small doesn't believe any of Ono's material comes from the *Double Fantasy* dates, but from 1983 recordings with a different set of musicians. As for the Lennon tunes, "I wouldn't call them scratch vocals; they're reference vocals. They're kind of primitive, but there was always a performance when he was involved. It wasn't like he was gonna slough it off."

Andrew Solt earned his rock-documentary credentials with *Heroes of Rock and Roll* and *This Is Elvis*. With those projects, the problem was finding footage. With *Imagine: John Lennon*, the problem was quite the opposite. Just as Ono provided *The Lost Lennon Tapes*, she was equally generous with the film crew, sending over two airline pods' worth of material. "It was beyond my wildest dreams," Solt says. "I just never knew there was this much material. I don't think there's as much footage on any other person of our century."

Even Mintz, Lennon's friend, upon undertaking his inventory, "just couldn't believe that he documented so much stuff." Besides the expected reel and cassette tapes, Mintz found videotapes, film, Polaroid pictures, family scrapbooks, letters, files—"things that were just...collected."

Ono expects *The Lost Lennon Tapes* "to almost lay out the red carpet" for *Imagine: John Lennon*, but denies she consciously planned it that way. "I did vaguely want the radio show to come out before the documentary so it would prepare people for the documentary." As for Goldman's book—his first since his notorious *Elvis* biography over six years ago—"I can assure you I didn't plan that!" Ono laughs.

John Lennon lived by the media sword and, arguably, died by it. Solt observes that there's less film footage on John F. Kennedy than there is on Lennon. He sounds surprised; he shouldn't be. Kennedy was only President.

"I gotta tell ya," Mintz says, "being in the Dakota basement late at night after hearing his voice all the time, touching his things—it started to do it to me a couple of times. There are moments when it is all sadness—moments when I just have to walk away from the whole thing—moments when I hear the music and just feel awful.

"A week ago I was over at Andrew Solt's office looking at the first rough cut of the documentary. I left there and I went directly to a bar and had two double vodka martinis, dry with two olives in each. My hands were shaking. There's an aspect of all this that is still terrifying."

But Ono would have us look—and listen—to a brighter side. "I think we always have to try to do something positive," she says, "because there is always negative out there. If we keep on doing something positive, we can turn it around." In her case, it's perpetuating Lennon's art: "John was promoting my work all the time when he was alive. Now it's my turn." M

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Robyn Hitchcock

ON THE TRAIL OF THE GELATINOUS BLINDFISH

"Nothing but mammals here," Robyn Hitchcock grumbles, making his way past a posse of primates stuffed in their prime. Meeting one of the few songwriters anywhere whose catalog can live up to titles like "Sounds Great When You're Dead" or "The Cars She Used to Drive" or "Point It at Gran"—in fact, whose lyrics and music regularly outdo those titles—in London, SW 7, I asked him to pick a place to talk, and he considered for a moment. "This is rather an upmarket neighborhood for me," he said, pondering.

I took in his jokey, houndstooth-checked suit, his lanky frame, his haircut (which made him look a bit like a young George Harrison) and his utter lack of rock-star posture or posturing. Then he led me to London's Museum of Natural History, a self-contained spinoff of the British Museum complete with dinosaurs, dioramas and cases full of neatly arranged evolutionary marvels.

We're headed, in a rambling kind of way, for the cold-blooded and amphibious critters who figure rather prominently in the Hitchcock *oeuvre*. But it's hard not to stop and gawk. Looking up at a stegosaurus skeleton, with its short arms, we note it could never hold a guitar; Professor Hitchcock, with a scholarly air, suggests that, "Fossilized Stratocasters, recently discovered, may hold the key to the mystery of their extinction." And here, skulls of Peking Man and (without irony) modern man sit side by side, hooked up to a mechanism

BY JON PARELES

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Photograph by Laura Levine

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that rotates them for inspection; immediately Hitchcock recasts them as Monty Python girlwatchers, heads swiveling in unison. "Aaow, Dennis, there's a pri'y one." "Arrr, look at that one thar...."

This open-casket, all-species mausoleum is just the spot for someone who has Hitchcock's sense of where mankind fits into the universe. He is, after all, the guy who sat with a sunglasses-decked skull on the cover of his second solo album, *Groovy Decay.* Since the late 1970s, when he started the Soft Boys, Hitchcock has been writing and singing about the parahuman realm as well as more typical pop precincts. Set to tunes that are often ridiculously catchy, Hitchcock's neatly rhymed couplets sprout images that recognize no rules of rationality or propriety; death and transfiguration, violence and metamorphoses and Kafka-esque wisecracks are all just a line away. "I see the sand I see the stones/ I see right through into your bones," he sings in "Devil Mask" on his new album, *Globe of Frogs*—his first record for A&M.

His songwriting has changed in the last decade. "The songs were much more like frantic, jerky metal insects, and they're a

"I've got a very thin line between my conscious and my subconscious. It's why I'm not a particularly good driver, but I'm quite a good storyteller."

bit more serene now," he says. "They used to be like clockwork spiders and now they're like, ah, dragonflies, he sighed." For emphasis, he sighs.

Listening to Hitchcock's albums from the last decade, you realize that most songwriters write exclusively about living humans, whether it's private obsessions—love, hate, revenge, weenie-waggling—or public, political concerns. Some small subchapters of ASCAP and BMI may congratulate themselves on their love of photogenic wildlife like whales and coyotes and last lonely eagles, and once a decade or so a group like the Incredible String Band will consider the amoeba. (Hitchcock has recorded a song for a String Band tribute album assembled by the band's original producer, Joe Boyd.)

In Hitchcock songs, meanwhile, the world is a teeming, pullulating, organic stew, where decay and fecundity ooze along, sometimes involving us humans, more often oblivious to our petty timetables. Back in 1980, in the Soft Boys' "Kingdom of Love," Hitchcock sang to his sweetheart, "You've been laying eggs under my skin"; in "Human Music," he observes, "A girl can smile sweetly though her mouth is stuffed with flies." *Globe of Frogs*, he says, "has got, I note, five songs with fish in them. On *Element of Light*"—released in 1986—"all the fish went into one song, but on this one they've gone into lots of different holes." Like these, in the hymnlike "Luminous Rose": "Oh the bodies of drowned sailors and dead Emma/ Flounder upside-down beneath the roaring waves/ And the fishes eat the flesh from off their fingers/ And the sea is so much deeper than the grave."

The Grammy Awards committee isn't going to put this in a literary class with "Just the Way You Are." So Hitchcock, naturally, has made his reputation on the alternative circuit: packing club dates, turning into a college-radio demigod and occasionally sneaking onto some adventurous commercial FM playlists. He's got a slow-building, dedicated following and, with the release of *Globe of Frogs*, he could turn a widespread rumor into a full-fledged cult.

JOSHUA CHEUSE FROG/P. SPACEK

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"Maybe I'm forever doomed to play to heads and students and yuppies," he says. "It wouldn't surprise me at all. My songs are not designed to please people—although they're not designed to alienate people—and I'm not intentionally obscure. But popularity depends on repetition, and I probably don't repeat myself enough. Commercially there's an enormous pressure to just keep doing the same thing over and over again. If people have a collective intelligence, big business is there to insult and belittle it. Then again, people just might say, 'Oh God, I can't face this nasal-voiced whining about insects anymore—I think I'll listen to Michael Jackson.'

"I just hope this thing survives A&M with a certain amount of integrity," he says with a shrug. "We're not costing them much, so it shouldn't be too bad."

While his songs have little respect for the laws of physics, Hitchcock himself is firmly reality-based. He lives quietly with his longtime girlfriend, a painter, and their two children; preliminary band rehearsals are likely to take place around the kitchen table. "I live like a hermit crab," he says. "I scuttle out and kill the milkman every so often, and roast his bones."

As for business, Hitchcock has bought the rights to the early Soft Boys albums and is reissuing them here—altered slightly to "rewrite history," he says—through the Relativity label. He has also gotten his hands on his *Groovy Decay* album, reissuing it with takes he prefers as *Groovy Decoy.* He has vowed to burn all his demos and cassettes of discarded songs, lest they be issued after his demise. "All I've ever done is write songs," he says. "I'm slowly becoming an industry that, hopefully, I can control." But even in conversation, Hitchcock can't help revealing his gift: a mind's eye barraged with images. When I ask him about his origins, he thinks for a second or two, half-smiles and delivers the following:

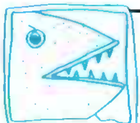
A great oak tree fell into a river and split open, and a roll of transparent cling film came out, in a long oval shape. Inside that there was a woman made of glass, and inside that woman made of glass there was a whole little network of tiny wires. Gradually, the cling film melted away and the woman made of glass swam out of the river. She began to fly and she developed beautiful topaz wings which lifted her high above the orange wood, and she flew all the way to the long white tower and then she hovered just above the long white tower.

"She was wearing dancing shoes and as she had learned to fly, she had learned to dance, and she rotated round and round. She had very elegant legs and she was an elegant dancer, and the foot of her ballet pump came down onto the top of the white tower and suddenly she froze, she became a statue and she was glass no more, she was alabaster. The tower underneath kind of glowed gratefully, as you would expect, and the woman with a beautiful expression on her face turned to stone, and then the wires inside her fell right the way down to the bottom of the tower.

"It's not interesting to say what was in the tower, but at the bottom of the tower was a very very English sort of man with a couple of bow ties on and a walking stick and a dog named Colonel. He just held his hand out, down came a long copper coil, and he reached out his hand and he squeezed it and a look of quiet pleasure came over his muted English features and his toes began to vibrate. Colonel the dog rushed outside and barked, something was in the air, and sure enough, floating down the river from the opposite direction came an iron submarine which for some reason floated.

"It was full of Chinese boys who were all growling and gnashing and rubbing their saliva on the back of each other's palms. Suddenly their overlord, who was called the Pumpkin, came through. He was three times their size and he just wore a pumpkin head like on Halloween, with a grin. He lashed the Chinese boys and spat on them all and then he pointed his whip to the sky and the Chinese boys all looked up.

"They saw this bird that looked terribly nervous and suddenly exploded into a storm cloud, and the storm cloud drifted toward the white tower where the woman in the statue was, and it got bigger and bigger. And this guy the Pumpkin was egging his Chinese boys on down the river—'Owee, ooh,' like that—and they were getting closer and closer to the tower,



Peter Buck: "Robyn called me up and said, 'Now that you're a rich famous pop star you can afford to fly to England and work on my record for free.'"

and the Englishman downstairs did absolutely nothing, just stood there holding the coil, and then the storm cloud got bigger and bigger.

"It was a raging storm by now. Little filaments of lightning were zooming out, and eventually the dog ran back inside and a few drops of rain fell and the Englishman held out his hand, went 'Hmmm,' had a glass of sherry and went back indoors and shut the door discreetly. The tower was now surrounded by yammering Chinese boys, and the Pumpkin was standing there overlording them, trying to get his whip round the tower, but it was quite greasy—no, it wasn't greasy, it was whip-resistant—so, anyway, predictably a bolt of lightning struck that statue at the top and went all the way down to the man at the bottom. And the tower disappeared and the Chinese people disappeared and everyone disappeared and there was just me, sitting in a pool of placenta on a table in Paddington. And that's the true story, and you're the first person to hear it."

I put my eyes back in my head, close my dropped jaw, and ask him if he could simply do that on cue. "I've got a very thin line between my conscious and my subconscious," he says. "It's why I'm not a particularly good driver, but I'm quite a good storyteller. There's always got to be an element of truth in it, though, or it doesn't work. My mind works very fast or not at all—I fragment very quickly. These days, I'm trying to be as reasonable as possible and as concise as possible, but sometimes you can't help yourself. Things are baroque, they are exotic, they're made of unpleasant little metals that you cut your foot on."

"He came bursting out of nowhere
Like a spear into the sky
And he cast his light on everything
It was like he'd never died."

Robyn Hitchcock, "The Man Who Invented Himself"

The Soft Boys were pretty much discovered after the band dissolved circa 1981. Their fans included the future members of R.E.M., but as far as the general pop public is concerned, the band's main contribution was to let loose guitarist Kimberly Rew, who founded Katrina & the Waves.

"The Soft Boys didn't get anywhere," Hitchcock recalls. "We were playing the same pubs for four years, and made it to the States once, but it finally petered out." In hindsight, though, the Soft Boys (especially with their album *Underwater Moonlight*) weren't just the advance guard of the 1960s revival that's turned so much college radio into one big, black-lit

FISHHEAD/L. LAARMAN

World Radio History

"My songs are not designed to please people—although they're not designed to alienate people—and I'm not intentionally obscure. But popularity depends on repetition, and I probably don't repeat myself enough."

garage—they tapped into the late 1960s, reclaimed the music's concision and the lyrics' nonlinear logic, and outdid most bands that lumbered toward the same conclusions a few years later.

Then as now, Hitchcock was writing snappy, image-filled, buoyantly odd songs that were unabashed kin to the music of Pink Floyd founder (and acid casualty) Syd Barrett, John Lennon, Ray Davies and, inevitably, Bob Dylan. Still, he refuses to see himself as part of some 1960s revival. "When people say, 'Ah, yeah, the '60s,' I say, 'Which year of the '60s?'" he says. "Even *Underwater Moonlight* couldn't have come out in '66 or '67, but it couldn't have come out in '69, either, or any of those years. It didn't draw on much that happened since, but it's like an artesian well going right down through those layers."

At 34, Hitchcock himself just caught the tail end of the 1960s while in his teens. His father, Raymond Hitchcock, writes thrillers and has dabbled in painting and artistic pursuits. "I was part of the artistic middle class," Hitchcock says. "People like me weren't brought up to write songs; we were brought up to be lawyers or academics. I don't belong anywhere, because I've left my origins but I'm not a man of the people.

"I'm surprised there aren't more of us about," he says. "There seem to be very few people in music who come from this same era attitude-wise. I feel like I'm the last to hatch out; the next generation were supposed to like Led Zeppelin or Deep Purple and glam-rock and that muso stuff, Little Feat. But just as the musicals had a Gershwin and were best in the '20s, '30s and '40s, the '60s were *the* pop era. For better or worse, I am a pop musician of that era, regardless of my own personal preoccupations, regardless of whether I came from the planet Eizenthal or whether I'm actually a Talmudic cipher—be I real or not.

"I think the great innovators of the 1960s destroyed it," he adds. "Every movement contains the seeds of its own destruction. This is why I'm permanently hovering in a kind of stasis, because if you push it too far it'll disintegrate. Dylan, the enfant terrible with curly hair—I used to wish I had curly hair—was responsible for bringing intelligence to pop music and also destroying pop. Hendrix taught a new language on the guitar, which then everybody else abused—he brought heavy metal. Barrett mixed pop music and mythology, and with 'Interstellar Overdrive' he triggered off Judas Priest and Black Sabbath and all that crap. At least I've never influenced anybody, so I haven't done any damage.

"Musically, 1967 was the year that it went over the top, and the best thing about it was watching it go over the top. It was doomed, it was brilliant—'Eight Miles High' and the rest of it was a sure sign that a load of rubbish was to come, but it was great because they still had to put it on little four-minute singles and have them sent out by reps in short haircuts. It was just the rot setting in and I loved that, that bacillus, like some cheddar cheese started to mold over. I suppose I'm irretrievably influenced by that, and I should go and listen to some heavy reggae, maaan."

As for the other great 1960s talisman, drugs, Hitchcock is uninterested. "My tolerance level's pretty low," he says. "I smoked pot, but I was too young to join the others and actually get wrecked on acid. By the time acid got into my hands, I knew it was dangerous, and I was very wary; I took at most about six acid trips in the early 1970s. Quite entertaining going up, but they give you a bit of a hangover. I took that kind of thing very seriously, thinking, 'What am I going to know about life from this?'" His intoxicant of choice, he says, is red wine.

Even before the Soft Boys had fragmented, Hitchcock decided to make albums on his own. "I thought, 'I can't do worse under my own name with a solo album'"—it was the bomping *Black Snake Diamond Role*—"and I did worse. I decided that as Robyn Hitchcock I wasn't going to go out and play the pubs anymore, but while I took the bulk of the Soft Boys fans, there weren't many."

His second solo album, *Groovy Decay*, met with equal public indifference. "I did a sort of dead-end tour of Norway," he recalls, "and dropped out of the biz for a while. I wrote lyrics for Captain Sensible and articles for magazines under pseudonyms, and at the same time I wrote what turned out to be *I Often Dream of Trains*."

That album, virtually a solo effort, is bare-bones Hitchcock, with the most melancholy of his free-associations. Luckily, it was followed by a reunion with drummer Morris Windsor and bassist Andy Metcalfe of the Soft Boys for a 1984 concert to benefit the famous pub-rock pub, the Hope & Anchor, then on its last legs. "The power had been shut off, and they were using a petrol generator for the bands and candles on the tables," Hitchcock says. "All the punks were burning their haircuts." Instead of calling the group the Soft Boys, Hitchcock dubbed them the Egyptians—and this time, the public was nearly ready for them.

The reconvened band is casually brilliant, at home in anything from Beatles-pop à la *Revolver* to the quasi-Indian meditation of "Globe of Frogs" to chiming folk-rock to garage-band ravers. As individuals, Windsor and Metcalfe are fond of what Hitchcock calls "muso stuff"—Steely Dan, the Beach Boys *Pet Sounds*, et al.—but the songs channel musical cleverness into pop that never wastes a note. Since 1984, Hitchcock & the Egyptians have been knocking out superb albums one after the other: *Fegmania!*, the live *Gotta Let This Hen Out!*, *Element of Light*, a compilation of stray sides called *Invisible Hitchcock* and now *Globe of Frogs*—which even has something like a single, "Balloon Man," a New York parable that Hitchcock describes as a song about the perils of "over-consumption."

Perhaps the Soft Boys' obscurity allowed Hitchcock to carry

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out an apprenticeship. "I've learned not to try and finish a song too fast," he says. "I start masses, but I get rid of them—I'll have a cassette with eight songs on it and one will see the light. Basically, something pops out, and I have to wait until they present themselves. Otherwise, I write a bogus song, a pretend song. The idea has to encapsulate itself. You might say, 'I want to write a song about a fireplace and two Vikings and a malevolent pumpkin, but it won't pop into your head just right. You might try it [*singing*]—'There was a fireplace, and two Vikings'—and you think, no. Then, you might be running up a hill and *bang!* the idea will come into your head and, yes, right, 'Chinese Bones,' and then you're off."

More than song ideas pop into his head. "I wanted to do a film of the birth of Jesus, the holy story, the Nativity—with fruit," he says. "These two tomatoes come nestle beside an aubergine, and they have another one of them. And the three wise men come and they're mushrooms, and the shooting star is a carrot on a piece of string and they all move around...

"You don't make it necessarily blasphemous or religious, you just simply describe it in terms of fruit, and people will all get it wrong. The religious people will say, 'This is an insult,' the Moral Majority will finally discover I'm there and I'll be hounded out of Detroit, and the hardcore people will say, 'Oh this guy's so soft, what's he on about fruit.' The British will just say this fabulous, well-spoken, middle-class man is just pottering about with his fruit, how cute. No one will take it right, just seeing what the effect of it is, comic but in a way quite touching."

Although I think he underestimates them, Hitchcock is hard on his early songs. "The records we did went from being feisty to being negative," he insists. "It was lively and then it went down into *Groovy Decay*. After a while, I just thought, are you capable of writing anything besides a load of misery? It's okay being an angry young man, but you don't want to be a kind of petulant middle-aged one or a depressed 30-year-old. A lot of early Soft Boys stuff I don't think is particularly good."

He's pleased, though, with *Globe of Frogs*. "I won't know for five years if the songs are good or bad," he says. "It's my most self-contained album, the least involved with the outside world. The whole thing was written staring into a courtyard. There were no troubadours strolling past, or a racing driver, or a guy leaning against a wall mopping his brow, no anguished lovers, no concealed fishermen, no monks, no janitors and no terrorists. Maybe I was staring mantrically at the flagstones. In fact, the songs might as well have been written by a dwarf and handed to me on a piece of paper.

"To me, the album is just a lot of English people getting lost in a psychological jungle. They're all quite polite people, not wild, all very urbane and British and frumpy. I suppose it will never be heard by the people that it's actually about."

Although *Globe of Frogs* is a long way from *Sgt. Pepper*, Hitchcock says the songs involved more studio tinkering than usual. "On the other albums, we've basically just done a performance and recorded it, which is good in principle if you perform well. But for this record, we tried to get the music to accompany the lyrics rather than simply playing the songs. We've taken more trouble, not necessarily having extra things, but taking things out if they aren't necessary.

"The song that changed the most is 'Luminous Rose,'" he says. "It had a great soup of about 12 guitars, very very liquid,

ANATOMY LESSON: ROBYN'S HITCH-UPS

I use a Telecaster, about 10 years old, that I bought off a friend. And I've got a copy Telecaster, a Squire or something, which isn't quite so loud but it's all right. I've got a few amps, I can't remember their names and they don't work anymore; I'm going to try to buy a Vox AC-30 because that's what I used to have. That's no advance on what they had in the '60s.

"I didn't use any effects on the guitar on this record at all. People have lacked confidence in the natural sound of the electric guitar in the last few years; the guitar's been very chorused for a long time, since the late '70s and the Police records, and then it was pushed into the back of the mix.

"There's nothing wrong with experimenting—God didn't hand Adam an electric guitar and say, 'Make sure you only use two pickups and never add a harmonizer'—but it's been so long since anybody's been interested in an ordinary guitar sound that it seemed to be a good idea.

"I just wish I'd played it through an AC-30 as well. Guitar sounds are so lousy these days, I actually went through two amps in different rooms, which I very seldom do, just to get a good sound."

Hitchcock also has no phonograph or video equipment; his television was stolen. He does have "an old radio."

with the guitars lacerating each other. It was a bit boring, so we thought, 'Right! Let's remove everything!' What was left was drums and a few bits of keyboards. You can still hear the guitars a bit, spilling over from the vocal track."

Peter Buck, R.E.M.'s guitarist, sat in on *Globe of Frogs*. "I'd known Robyn since around 1983, and we've been playing together on and off since 1985," Buck says. "He called me up and said, 'Now that you're a rich, famous pop star you can afford to fly to England and work on my record for free.' Not knowing any material and flying to England for two days' work was a little scary, but I had a great time. We sat around the kitchen table singing Dylan and Van Morrison songs—he does a great Dylan imitation—and now and then a song or two of his. Then we went in the studio and did about eight tracks in four hours, including four or five that aren't on the album.

"Sometimes, working together, Robyn will do something that's so out there you think he'll never get it right again—but he goes back and repeats it exactly. One song was all guitars, two drum kits and no bass, with tons of key changes and melody lines, that he just ran through. He knows what he's doing; he matches inspiration with methodical work. To me, the madness in his songs has more to do with Edward Lear than with Syd Barrett. It's not acid-casualty stuff; it's a certain brand of English humor—more like *Alice in Wonderland.*" Buck may sit in on some Egyptians tour dates.

Hitchcock prefers to record fast; he finished *Globe of Frogs* on half its allotted budget, spending about $12,000 in recording time. *Element of Light* cost only 4000 pounds, or less than $7000 in pre-slump dollars. "Both Morris and Andy are very quick," Hitchcock says. "For instance, I'll bring in seven songs that Andy had never heard before, give him one run-through each and he'll play brilliantly because he's on edge. Then he'll go back and tidy it up, but he's got that spontaneous thing." Metcalfe is so quick, in fact, that he plays in two bands at once—he's bassist with the Egyptians and keyboard player with Squeeze. Metcalfe recruited Squeeze's Glenn Tilbrook for a guest vocal on *Globe of Frogs*' "Flesh Number One."

continued on page 98

"We learned quite an expensive lesson by not having Crown amplifiers from the beginning."

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Play and load kits simultaneously from memory or disk.

The Kit Mixer
On screen, 96 function, 16 into 2 mixer.
Individual channel controls for length, tune, pan l/r, volume, mute and solo.
All functions operated by grabbing knobs or sliders and rolling tracker ball.
Special functions:-
Set all mutes/solos off.
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Single keystroke to initialise mixer to 'normal settings' for length, tune, pan, level, mute and solo.
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The Kit Configuration
8 pad types (icons) bass, snare, rim, tom, cymbal, hi hat, pitched.
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16 voice outputs. Voices assigned as required on a kit by kit basis.
Special functions:-
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Zero crossing loop points.
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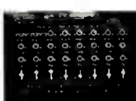

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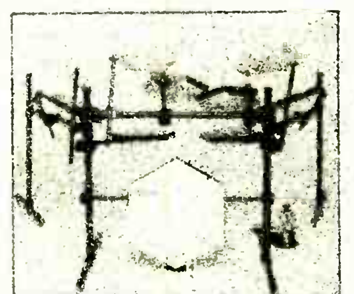

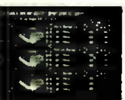

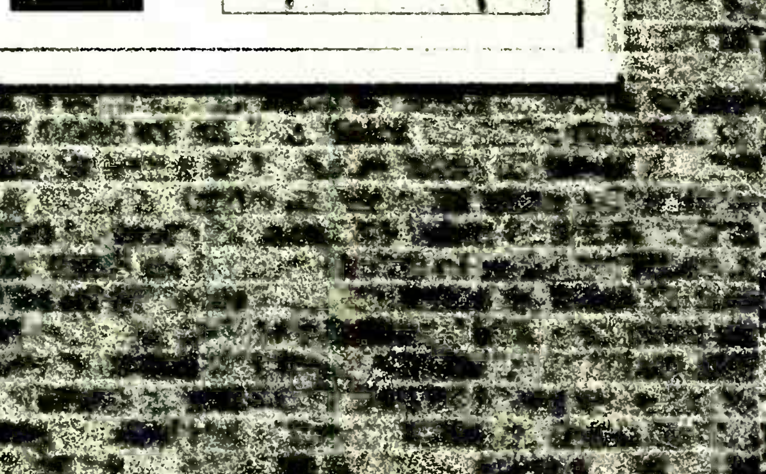

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Old Wounds, New Bandages

James Taylor on the Mend

"I DO BELIEVE, I MUST BELIEVE, I THINK I can begin again," he recites softly, his thinning hair teased by the California breeze. "Become the man I was back when."

The words are James Taylor's, and they come from his past as well as from his heart. Sitting on the veranda of a sedate Beverly Hills hotel, he is recalling a couplet from "London Town," a song on his 1981 *Dad Loves His Work* album. The lyrics commemorated an ocean voyage he'd made the previous year with his then-wife and their children, during a strained impasse in his relationship with his family as well as with his career. The brood visited the Taylors' ancestral country, Scotland, and then made their way down to London, the site of James' recording debut in 1968.

In the end, James *could* renew his relationship with his children, but not with his first wife, and so he and Carly Simon parted in 1983. She has recently remarried, and James himself was wed again on a snow-swept December 17, 1986 in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. His new bride was Kathryn Walker, his companion since the summer following his breakup with Carly, and a distinguished actress whose numerous credits spanned stage (*Private Lives*, with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton), screen (*Neighbors*) and television ("The Adams Chronicles").

by timothy white

Photography by Lynn Goldsmith

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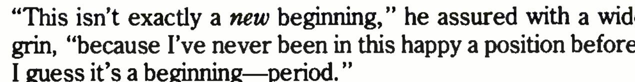

There was wedding cake and wild waltzing in the pillared Synod Hall adjoining the cathedral, but sparkling cider flowed as freely as the champagne because the beaming husband has turned over a number of new leaves, among them a protracted abstinence from any of the stimulants that characterized his early stardom. Now he jogged and bicycled in Central Park, skied in the Southwest and sculled on Martha's Vineyard. He was as sinewy as an oak.

He settled into a modest apartment with Kathryn in Manhattan, within walking distance of his old residence and his children. The newlyweds also built an unpretentious bungalow in the secluded interior pondlands of Martha's Vineyard to serve as a convenient annex for James' kids during their ritual New England summers. The happiness of that difficult transition has held and blossomed, with the Taylors since putting down roots in rural Connecticut. On the sunny afternoon of James' L.A. soliloquy, Kathryn is laughing with her girlfriends and their children in a tea party in the adjoining room, while James' children, Sally and Ben, prepare to rendezvous with them in Santa Fe for a vacation on the slopes.

But first James has promises to keep, among them a long-awaited talk on the eve of his new album, *Never Die Young*. For the last several seasons, James Taylor has been touring worldwide and forging a flinty new sound that retains his trademark intimacy, while adding touches of modern rock, jazz, samba and Afro-Caribbean shadings in a full band context. The dramatic musical expansion revealed in his 1985 *That's Why I'm Here* has grown richer and more distinctive on *Never Die Young*. And unlike previous albums, *Never* contains no non-original material. The supposedly unprolific singer/songwriter even had songs to spare!

While James Taylor has never slowed as a major concert attraction, continually able to sell out leading venues without *any* new product to promote, he is now experiencing a revival of critical interest and radio airplay. Proponents as diverse as Steve Winwood, Sting and Don Henley have lately gone out of their way to praise his singular contributions to American popular music. He was cheered in '87 during a special concert in the Soviet Union, and when sharing a Manhattan stage recently with Paul Simon, Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen during a benefit for homeless children, it was James who drew the evening's loudest applause.

The consent to do a rare, in-depth, career-spanning interview came on a morning in James' Vineyard refuge last summer as he readied his new material for release—and prepared blueberry pancakes for his kids. The actual discussion was sandwiched into a day of aerobics and video shootings, the man showing no hint of fatigue or flagging humor.

"I wish I weren't so self-centered or self-referred with the stuff I write, but for some reason that's the window I utilize."

"This isn't exactly a *new* beginning," he assured with a wide grin, "because I've never been in this happy a position before. I guess it's a beginning—period."

MUSICIAN: *Do you feel that as a songwriter you're also an instinctive reporter of yourself?*

TAYLOR: Yes, I am, and I'm not entirely happy about that. I wish that I weren't so self-centered or self-referred all the time with the stuff I write, but for some reason that's the window I utilize, hopefully in an open-ended way. Yet I also know I'd like to get more concise, more specific, and write less vaguely.

Recently I've found myself in a period of my life where I'm plying and exercising my *craft* in a reflective sense. It's not as explosive a process, and it requires different skills and techniques. I really got off on singing "Only a Dream in Rio" and "Song for You Far Away" on *That's Why I'm Here*, and I treasure the spark of insight and vitality I got from the Latin music I was exposed to in Brazil just prior to making that album. I appeared at the Rock in Rio Festival there just as democracy was flowering again in that country. Recording "Rio" with Airto Moreira and several other native artists was a deep thrill. I like putting those ethnic qualities into the mix.

I'm 40, and this is a time when most of the blanks in your life are filled up: You know what your job is, who your wife is, what your mortgage is. The challenges are there, but they are more personal and tied to involvement rather than survival and mere decision-making.

MUSICIAN: *The strength of the new record is in its cohesiveness. The songs are vividly conceived and sound like the product of a veteran band. How long did it take to develop?*

TAYLOR: Some of the material, like "T-Bone," dates back to piano-and-guitar writing sessions I had with Bill Payne in March of 1983. Other material is much more recent and done expressly for the record but tested on the road. The song "Never Die Young" still brings out strong new emotions in me. It's meant to be a bittersweet statement about ideal love and its impossibility. It's like "That's Why I'm Here" in how crowded it is with lyrics, but the shifts and movements in the track work. "Valentine's Day" takes you somewhere, too. It's a song about warring relationships, love almost as a prize fight, that begins sounding bitter and ends up on a reconciled and nearly whimsical note.

MUSICIAN: *I see that one of your oldest buddies, Zac Wiesner, co-wrote a song with you on* Never Die Young.

TAYLOR: Yep, Zac was the bass player in one of my key bands, the Flying Machine, and he and I composed "Baby Boom Baby" together. He's an artist and sculptor. I've known him since we were teenagers spending summers together on Martha's Vineyard.

MUSICIAN: *Your youth in the South is a hazy era historically.*

TAYLOR: My father's ancestors came from a place called Marykirk, Scotland, on the North Sea, to America under some duress—I don't know if it was political or legal—in a boat in the 1600s, settling in New Bern, North Carolina. My grandfather was a doctor like my dad. I was born in 1948, 40 years ago. I came from what at that time was a very comfortably middle-class liberal family. My father was a doctor who was dean of the Medical School at the University of North Carolina—and he is similarly involved today at Boston University Medical Center.

Down in North Carolina my mother was absolutely consumed with the cause of racial integration in the South. She stood on picket lines at restaurants and movie theaters. My father was for socialized medicine, itself a rather pure-minded initiative in the 1950s.

Leadbelly, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie and the Weavers were the records we most listened to, but there were also

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various cast albums of Broadway shows around the house. I remember listening to Aaron Copland a lot, too. My brother Alex played James Brown, and Ike and Tina Turner. The radio played Hank Williams, white gospel, Grand Ol' Opry, and jingles for Valleydale Smoked Ham, Penrose Pickled Pork Sausage, Toddy Time Jerusalem Artichokes and Tuberose Snuff—[*sings*] "If your snuff's too strong/ It's wrong/ Get Tuberose." At night WLAC from Nashville brought you black music like Slim Harpo and Howlin' Wolf, which my older brother Alex thrived on. There wasn't much TV before '56, and after that the viewing was still pretty slim, although Porter Wagoner had a show out of Nashville, and Flatt and Scruggs.

Consequently our parents kept us kids busy with our family "kitchen concerts," in which we played and sang with—and for—each other. Keep in mind that we didn't have a lot of neighbors, living as we did in the country in this big, porched house my parents built in the center of acres of woods, so we aimed to keep ourselves amused before and after dinner. Alex had been started on the violin at grade school, and I took four years of lessons on this big cello; that got me thinking in the bass clef. But Elvis was the coolest, so we moved quickly on to banjos and guitars.

I got my first guitar when I was 12 years old. My mother would take one or two of us to New York every once in a while. I got to go with them by myself once, attending a Broadway musical, *Green Willow*, starring Anthony Perkins, and it definitely had a powerful effect on me. Then they asked me what I wanted for Christmas and I said, "A guitar!" So they took me past Schirmer's music store in Manhattan and bought me a little nylon-string guitar. But when I was in the shop I noticed the Fenders they also had, and I tingled at the sight of 'em.

I bought my first electric guitar at 14, from money earned washing dishes in the Home Port Restaurant on Martha's Vineyard. It was a used Silvertone that I bought from a guy for 40 bucks. Around this juncture, I wrote my first legitimate song, a wistful little thing called "Roll River Roll." "Roll, river roll—long as you can be/ Longest river I've ever seen/ Rolling to the sea."

Sometime later I bought a Fender Duo-Sonic and started playing back in Chapel Hill with my brother Alex's band, the Fabulous Corsairs. The Corsairs played largely R&B at high school dances and at recreation facilities, occasional fraternity parties. Alex, who's a year and one week older than me, sang lead in the band, and suddenly I was making some cash. There wasn't much money in folk music, but playing packed dances at Chapel Hill was like being in rock 'n' roll for true. Also girls showed more than a passing interest in the practice, and it was something to hang your rap on.

The band usually wore turtleneck shirts and some kind of tweed coat—an outfit that was hot as hell in North Carolina, but we thought we looked pretty collegiate. We played the Top 40, but Alex had a tune called "You're Gonna Have to Change Your Ways," and we recorded that, with "Cha Cha Blues," which our guitarist wrote, on the B-side. The single was done at Jimmy Katz's two-track studio in Raleigh, a tiny establishment with the traditional egg cartons stapled on the walls as baffles. Katz's did mostly jingles and small-time singles, but, hell, that's what country music and rock 'n' roll used to consist of before the record business became corporate.

MUSICIAN: *How'd you meet guitarist Danny Kortchmar?*

TAYLOR: Kootch's parents used to spend the summer on the Vineyard, too, just as Carly used to with her family. She performed in the local Mooncusser club, with her sister Lucy, as the Simon Sisters. Other Vineyard regulars were Jim Kweskin's Jug Band, the Reverend Gary Davis, Mississippi John Hurt, Sonny Terry and the Charles River Valley Boys. Joan Baez also made it to the island to perform, and Ian and Sylvia too.

Just as the Rolling Stones and the Beatles came along, I met Kootch, and he also introduced me to a heavy dose of blues. Danny and I worked together on Martha's Vineyard as a duo, James & Kootch. We were able to win a modest folk contest, but he was already involved in the music scene in New York City—he was with the King Bees down there with Joel Bishop O'Brien, and some other guys. After the King Bees folded, Kootch came up to the Vineyard and I was there and so was

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Zac. He said we oughta come down to New York, hook up with a few fellas left over from the King Bees, and go at it some more. So we did. I was 17, 18 at the time.

I don't know who thought up the name the Flying Machine, it wasn't a great name, but it was better than many of the ones young bands in New York City were sporting at the time, so we found gigs. We played the Night Owl off Washington Square Park for about eight months. We got to work at 6:30 p.m. and played three sets, alternating with a coupla other bands, and usually finishing at two a.m. On weekends we sometimes did five shows an evening. Joe, the owner, paid us with burgers, salad, french fries and 72 bucks per night for each band. It was steady work, however, and it was exciting because it all seemed to have so much promise!

MUSICIAN: *Would you have called yourselves folk-rock?*

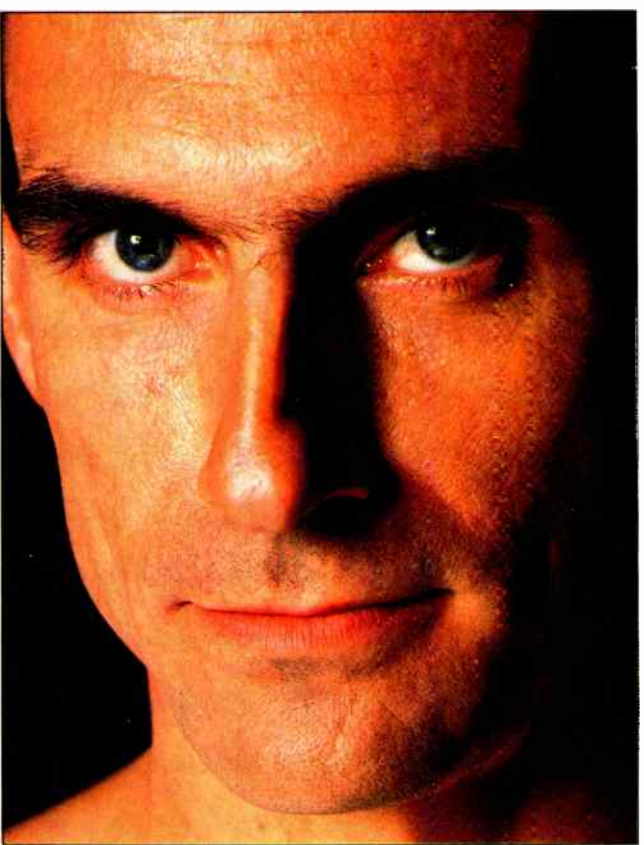
TAYLOR: Not really, because at first we played mostly blues and what we called jazz arrangements of Hoagie Carmichael tunes. I wrote a lot of our stuff, too, which I guess is folk-rock, or whatever it is I was writing then: "Night Owl," "Knocking 'Round the Zoo," "Brighten Your Night with My Day."

The Flying Machine disintegrated in 1967. Zac felt spent and went up to Boston for a while, and he was replaced by another bassist, who also soon left. We never managed to get back on our feet following these changes, and the band left the Night Owl, taking a long winter's job down in Freeport, Grand Bahamas. Afterward, we were sent to this terrible booking agent who, in order to get rid of us, got us these ego-crushing jobs. We played a United Jewish Appeal Fashion Show, a Grand Union supermarket opening in Union, New Jersey, and other sorrow dates. We broke up at mid-year and I was feeling really bad, so I called my dad up and said I had some problems and I needed to get out of New York. My main problem, of course, was my mounting drug habit.

What my father did next remains a very moving memory for me. He said, "STAY RIGHT THERE," and he rented a station wagon and drove all night from Chapel Hill to New York. In one swoop he loaded my equipment and belongings into the car and took me to North Carolina to recuperate. I also had to have a throat operation because I'd screamed my vocal cords into a bad state. After six months back in the South, during which I continued to play music and write a few more songs, I saw that North Carolina was no longer an anchor for me. Somehow, I had to create a future for myself. I decided I'd like to travel around a bit. And I don't know *why*, under the circumstances, but my folks thought that was a good idea! They staked me from some money my grandmother had left me, which was enough to get me to England and to buy a car. So I hit London and stayed with a friend from the Vineyard named Alby Scott.

I met some other people in London, and Alby and them decided I should make an album. I went into this Soho demo studio and made a 30-minute demo of these songs of mine, and they helped me get it around. No one responded encouragingly, so eventually I called Kootch. He reminded me that the King Bees had once backed Peter and Gordon on a U.S. tour, and told me to get in touch with Peter Asher, giving me a number. I called, Peter answered, and he said, "I've just signed with the Beatles' Apple Records as an A&R man and I'm listening to everything!" And true to his word, he was.

He played my demo for McCartney, who gave him the go-ahead on an album. Next, we ran some ads in the *New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker* for band members needed. The Beatles had a building on 94 Baker Street, where the Apple Boutique was located, and at the top of it were some rooms where we held auditions for a keyboard player and bassist and then did some rehearsals. Bishop O'Brien came over and played drums on the record.



"I'm used to thinking of life in terms of addiction."

We recorded at Trident Studios between July and October of '68 and sort of worked around the Beatles, who were in there doing the white album. I would usually be coming into the studio as they were beginning or finishing a session, and so I'd hang around and get to hear a playback of the material, listening to early versions of "Hey Jude" and "Rocky Raccoon." I also heard them recutting "Revolution" in the Abbey Road studio.

MUSICIAN: *McCartney had some hands-on involvement with the debut* James Taylor *album, didn't he?*

TAYLOR: Yes, he played the bass on "Carolina in My Mind," and though he's not listed George Harrison sang harmony on "Carolina" too. I must say that all this instant proximity to the Beatles was pretty amazing. When I'd wandered over to England, I fully thought I was just going to be playing in the streets, busking, and then to be picked up by the Beatles as the first artist on their new label was some piece of remarkable good fortune! [*laughter*] At the time, it made me think back to a girl I'd once tried to make it with when I was in boarding school at Milton Academy in Massachusetts. She and I were in her bedroom engaged in this light-hearted adolescent wrestling match, and I wanted it so bad, and she wouldn't because, as she said, "I don't feel strong enough about you."

I said, "Well, who would I have to be? Suppose I got to meet the Beatles, suppose I *knew* them—and introduced you to a Beatle?" She smiled and said, "You bet!"

As I was completing the album, I recalled that girl in Massachusetts and thought, *"Damn."* Meantime, my life remained in disarray, and I was racing around changing houses every two weeks—usually because of high rent or having made too much noise—while I tried to keep to the recording schedule and fulfill Peter and Paul's faith in me. I lived in a basement in Beaufort Gardens, and with a girl on Pont Street Mews near Knightsbridge. But from that point on things

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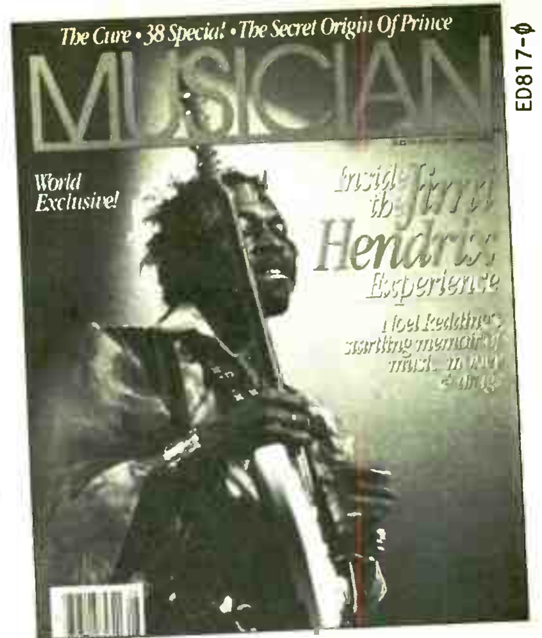

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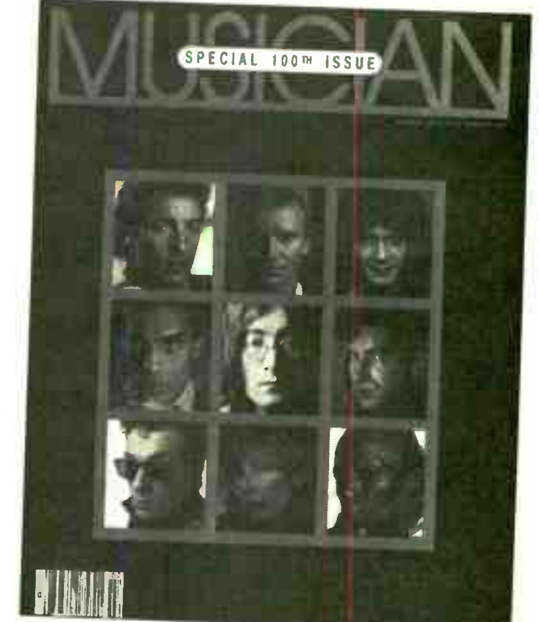

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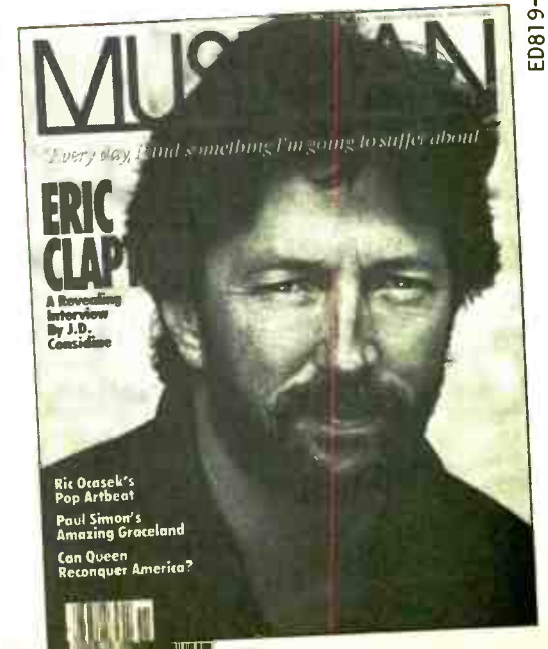

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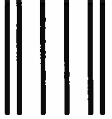

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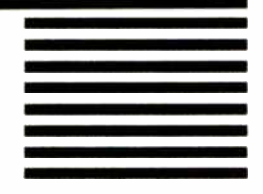

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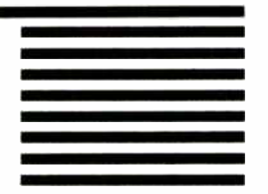

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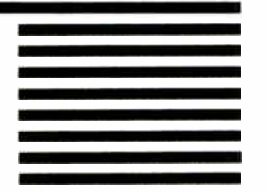

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The Fabulous Corsairs: Alex (at mike) and James Taylor (far right) rock a Chapel Hill, N.C. hop in 1964.

seemed pretty incredible, and the Beatles magic had profoundly stimulated me.

Years later, Paul and Linda McCartney sang backup on "Let It All Fall Down" and "Rock 'n Roll Is Music Now" on *Walking Man*, which was extremely enjoyable. The last time I saw Paul was two or three years ago in London, when Kathryn and I went to visit him and Linda. It was the Beatles, by the way, that I was referring to on "Carolina in My Mind," when I sang about the "holy host of others standing 'round me."

MUSICIAN: *How'd you part ways with Apple?*

TAYLOR: A couple of things went on. I guess I talk too much about this, since it's not really a point or facet of my work or life anymore, but at that time I was doing a lot of drugs and I got pretty strung out. I was tired and in pretty bad shape, so after we finished making the album I needed to go home.

Also, Allen Klein at that time had just made his inroads into Apple and had taken over a lot of the label's dealings. Klein's takeover broke up the Beatles—or at least that's *my* enduring image of what happened. It seemed mainly a disagreement over Allen Klein's handling of things. In fact, Peter didn't like the looks of him either.

So I went home and my parents came to my rescue, putting me in a detox program in a place in Stockbridge, Massachusetts called Austin Riggs. The album came out while I was there and Peter called me up there. He said, "This place is going to pieces and I'm thinking of coming over. I wanted to ask whether or not we should go into business and if you'd like me to manage you." I said it was a good idea, and he came.

Because everything was so screwed up and legally baffling at Apple Records, with no payments, audits or statements, they just breached their contract because everything was so gummed up, and we walked on it and went to Warner Bros. Joe Smith signed me, and I made *Sweet Baby James*.

MUSICIAN: *It sounds like the Apple era was the sort of too-brief idyll for which the '60s have become famous.*

TAYLOR: [*nodding*] I remember the '60s as a time of wide-open possibilities, when everyone was sort of unstuck. You felt nothing about just walking away from school, saying, "This is no good. I don't want it." Now, I'm amazed at how our generation is open to exploitation of itself. It used to be an odd, somewhat rare—and to me—alarming occurrence when you would see either a major artist or a major song given over to an advertising campaign. And then somehow, somewhere in the middle of the '80s, it became semi-acceptable for people to sell Pepsi-Cola's dumb potion of caffeine, sugar, food coloring and water through the use of this music. I don't understand it.

ME & MY GUITAR

"When people think of my guitar-playing," James Taylor suspects, "they probably think first of the suspended chords I used on so many of my early songs. I still appreciate most of those chordings, and I think I worked the changes real well on 'Carolina,' to where both lyrically and musically it feels to me to be the finest song I've ever written. The combination of the chords and the theme still get to me emotionally—literally make me shiver.

"As for that plucked style of picking, I guess I was influenced by a lot of people, including Joseph Spence, Brownie McGhee, and particularly Doc Watson. But mostly it was meant to be a piano tack, as if my thumb were the left hand and my second, third and fourth fingers were the right hand. Then, when electric guitar seized my brain as a teenager, a model I especially liked that might have shaped my approach a bit was a certain Fender Mustang I used for occasional leads with the Corsairs. On the Warners LPs of the mid-'70s, like *Gorilla* and *In the Pocket*, I enjoyed the electric parts I sometimes played off Kootch's leads.

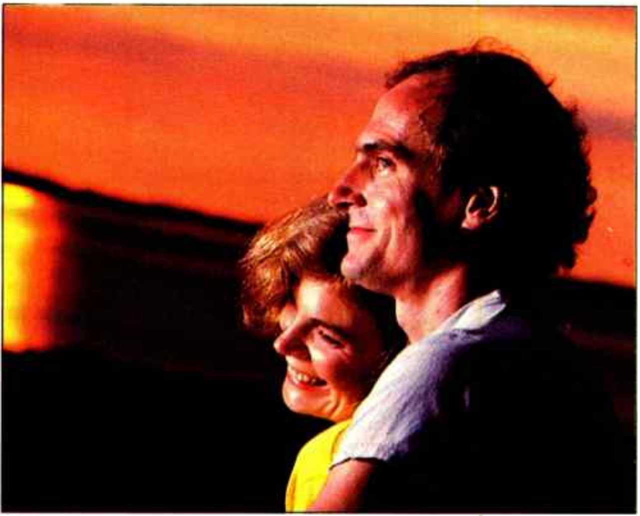
"I treat the voice of the guitar with as much regard as I do my own voice, and that's the kind of dialogue tone I want the listener to get. I also make a lot of use of my capo, doing crazy inversions for chords. And I use tricky tunings, too. On 'Country Road,' 'Lighthouse' and 'Millworker,' I'll drop my low E down to D, replacing the normal E string with a .056 gauge so it won't rattle."

In the studio, J.T. often records with a series of acoustics custom-made by Orange County guitar craftsman Mark Whitebook in a variety of sizes and woods. Most of them carry Lloyd Baggs pickups, which James believes deliver a strong, rich brightness. Onstage the man relies on a one-of-a-kind Yamaha acoustic tailored for him (right down to a mother-of-pearl name inlaid on the back) about two years ago by company specialist Terry Nakimoto.

As for the inimitable singing woven around the ringing strings, James depends on a Beyer M88—"a great road mike" for "a fella who's sown his share of road songs."

I don't mind when Mac Rebbenack or Richie Havens or others who could arguably use the dough will take a job doing self-contained jingles, particularly original jingles. It helps them finance their art, and my brothers Alex and Livingston have both done jingle work, too. What I *don't* understand is Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie doing Pepsi commercials when they're making $25-million a year anyway!

Most of commercial advertisement to me seems to be about referring to anything that's of real value and then *transferring* that value onto worthless things. It's a deeply cynical



**"I lost my teeth, I lost my hair
I lost my mind, you don't care"
– "Valentine's Day"**

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World Radio History

sublimation: replacing values with trash.

MUSICIAN: *The point of rock 'n' roll, for me, is that it's a public expression of a shared personal truth. That's the soul of its intent and impact. To later sell that song to pitch sportswear is to say, in effect, that you're now done with the truth. That's a dangerous, amoral stance. The truth can't serve two masters.*

TAYLOR: Right! You're saying forget about the truth! It was the truth—but now it refers to a *running shoe.* Once the message was, "You say you want a Revolution..." Now, it's about—buying *what*?! For me and my generation that song I watched John Lennon creating at the Abbey Road studios was an honest statement about social change, really coming out and revealing how *he* felt. Now Lennon's dead, and Paul McCartney and company have lost that catalogue to Michael Jackson, whose business people are the same ones who convinced Michael to take three million dollars to tell little kids to think of him as God whenever *they*—not him—drink Pepsi-Cola. It's appalling.

MUSICIAN: *So anyhow, the '70s began with your bond with Peter Asher being fused under stressful circumstances.*

TAYLOR: I'll say. Peter just picked up and moved everything here on a phone call. He initially took a job with an established talent agency and just managed me. As soon as he got over here I left the country club nuthouse I was staying in—I don't mean to disparage it; Austin Riggs has done a lot for a lot of people. I just don't want people to get the impression that it was like "The Snake Pit" or anything. It was a very accommodating place, and I wrote a lot of the songs there that would be on *Sweet Baby James*: "Fire and Rain," "Sunny Skies," and I started "Country Road."

But when Peter got over here, I pulled out of Austin Riggs and immediately went to work. I stayed on the road until the summer of 1969, when I had a motorcycle accident on the Vineyard. Both my hands and feet were in plaster for a long time. I think it built up a lot of energy because as soon as I got out of the casts I went into Sunset Sound in L.A. and it was explosive, the album came so fast.

I also got back together with Kootch, and he introduced me to Carole King. He'd been working with her *Carole King: Writer* album. Basically, Carole, Kootch and I were the core personnel on that album, with Peter producing. The record cost $8000 to make, we made it in two weeks on eight-track.

MUSICIAN: *What's the biggest misconception people might have about that record or its biggest hit, "Fire and Rain"?*

TAYLOR: For a while I used to get a lot of response from fundamentalist Christians about the second verse of "Fire and Rain" ["Won't you look down upon me Jesus/ You gotta help me make a stand..."], thinking that I was a kindred spirit. I would never play those songs at home, but I like doing them in the context of a live performance. But I think I'm pretty much fed up with them musically. I do "Country Road" and "Fire and Rain" for almost every concert I work. I've left "Fire and Rain" out and people don't complain, but audiences won't let me skip "Steamroller."

MUSICIAN: *How does 1971's* Mud Slide Slim and the Blue Horizon *sit with you now?*

TAYLOR: That album documents a time before I met Carly or became a father. I was building my own house on the Vineyard—and my career as well. Perhaps there's symbolism in that coincidence. I was playing with Lee Sklar by then; he's the best, and our music is very tied together. But that second album, after *Sweet Baby James* being such an overwhelming success, I guess with the strength from that previous record but still being the people we had been before, we just barely managed to get through *Mud Slide Slim.*

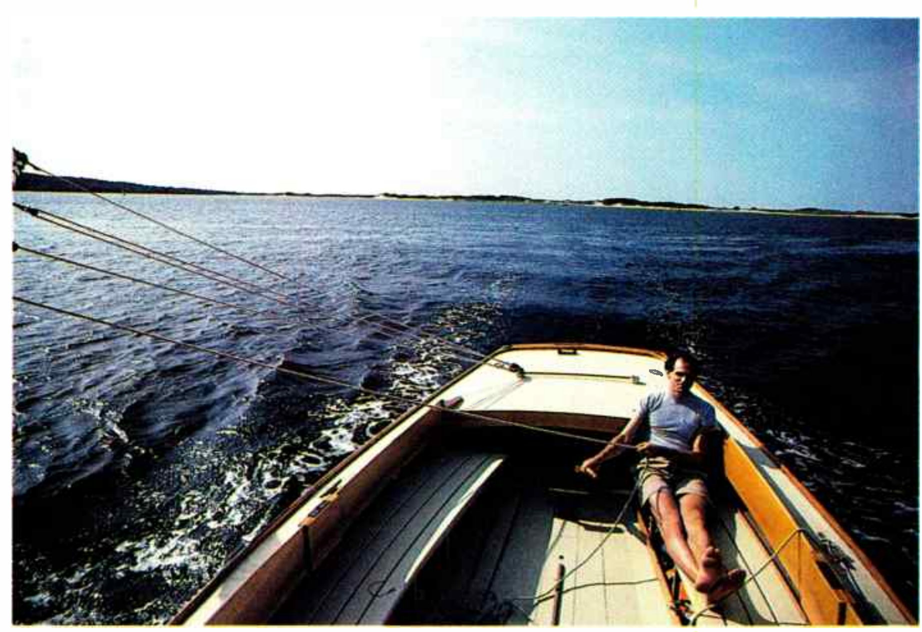
But after that it was time to adjust to what the new agenda had become, which was that I now had a *career* that received a lot more attention and was taken much more seriously. To me, I'd been very sheltered by the fact that my music had once been very rogue and maverick to make. It was an alienated thing to do to run off and make music! When suddenly that became, from my family's point of view, so central and a point of *pride*, it achieved for me the very opposite of what I had gone into it for. I was threatened by the degree of success I'd gotten and was really confused about it.

That was the beginning of a long adjustment to a different sort of phase. Once music had been a part of my *flux.* Now it was part of a band, a contract, a manager, a growing concern, and the alienated music soul you'd always been was now simultaneously the most responsible figure in this new realm! It's an *odd* turnaround. You're also more aware of how the songs are going to be heard than what they express. They're not being pressed out of you anymore—they're being pulled out of you.

MUSICIAN: *Creating is not organic anymore.*

TAYLOR: Well, it still can be. It just means taking on a whole different context for your art. I'm not complaining, mind you. Let's face it: I mean, I could have been Pinky Lee, stranded doing daytime kiddie TV until I have a heart attack on the air. [*laughter*] But I have this reputation of being this person who's always having a terrible time coping with everything. It's not the case, you know, when you examine the entire scheme. I've actually had a lot to cope with these many years and have done damned well. But I went from a position of simply darting in and out of the forest, striking and then heading back into the underbrush again, to where I was out there in the open trying to keep the castle!

MUSICIAN: *How do you feel about the choice to go with so many cover songs as singles, rather than originals, during the late '70s? They were often big hits, but they created a distance between*



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your audience and your own *output.*

TAYLOR: It bothered me a little bit. I felt as though they were valid treatments; they weren't just retraced arrangements of the same tunes. "Handy Man" was almost unrecognizable from the 1960 Jimmy Jones original. "Everyday" is very changed from the Buddy Holly version. "How Sweet It Is" is a major seventh version of the Marvin Gaye rendition. "Up on the Roof" had, for me, an unusually fresh arrangement, and also "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance."

I feel alright about them as covers—but they're *on* the albums because I couldn't come up with enough original material. I think what happened is that they were much more commercial-sounding things than my own stuff. Choosing a single continues to be a mysterious process to me.

I remain grateful to Kootch for bringing a number of these songs, like "Handy Man" on *JT*, to my attention. He's a great authority on the best vintage R&B and his taste is wonderful. He and I have been talking about doing a special album of blues gems and obscure favorites for years now, just to make that statement in a more comprehensive and unique way, and we'll be getting together about it in the late spring.

On *Never Die Young* I consciously avoided having any covers because I wanted full awareness of the kind of sound I've been evolving on record since *Dad Loves His Work* in 1981. "Her Town Too," which I wrote with J.D. Souther for that album, showed a maturity in song structure that had been growing since I wrote "Your Smiling Face" for *JT*. "Her Town" had a relentless bolero quality.

MUSICIAN: *It also showed a willingness to pool two distinctive styles. While you've done duets with people like Joni Mitchell on "Long Ago and Far Away," you seldom do total collaborations.*

TAYLOR: I know, and I should follow up on some of the offers I get. Michael McDonald at one point wanted to work together. Smokey Robinson made an overture through some other people. Phil Collins has expressed an interest, and Sting reached out to say he was open to doing something. I admire all these people, and I should follow up on this kind of gesture.

MUSICIAN: *Sting has been outspoken in his admiration of your work. He told me that as a singer you were "a complete natural and a complete original" who was "immune to mere fashion." Has your singing grown in recent years?*

TAYLOR: I'm a little bit more aware of how I'm yelling or screaming onstage. I don't think people identify me with my hollering side, but actually there are quite a few songs in my set that require a lot of stress on the old instrument, and I've been thinking about backing off on some of those.

I've had vocal coaching in the last few years from a woman in New York. In traveling with [backup singers] Arnold [McCuller] and Rosemary [Butler] I've seen how serious they are about their instruments and how they train them. They eventually brought it home to me that if I was going to be doing six shows in a row routinely for a three-hour set, my voice *wasn't* going to hold up. I'd fall to pieces tonally and be suffering and sacrificing to compensate.

MUSICIAN: *I notice in your writing in the '80s, notably on songs like "I Will Follow" on* Dad Loves His Work *and "Only One" on* That's Why I'm Here, *that you pay more attention to pitch, technique and close harmonies than ever before.*

TAYLOR: I think that's true. I'm more aware of how in tune

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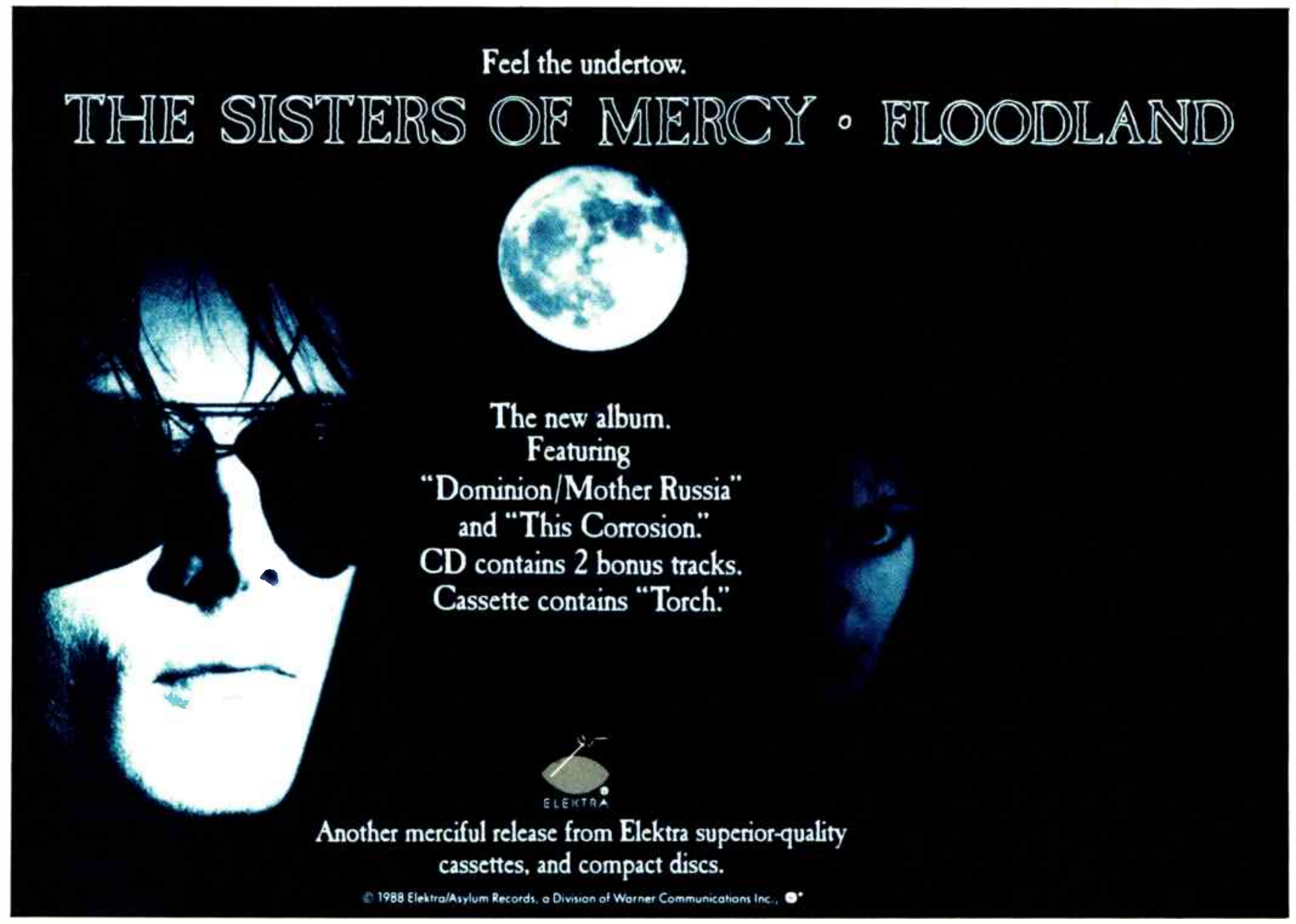

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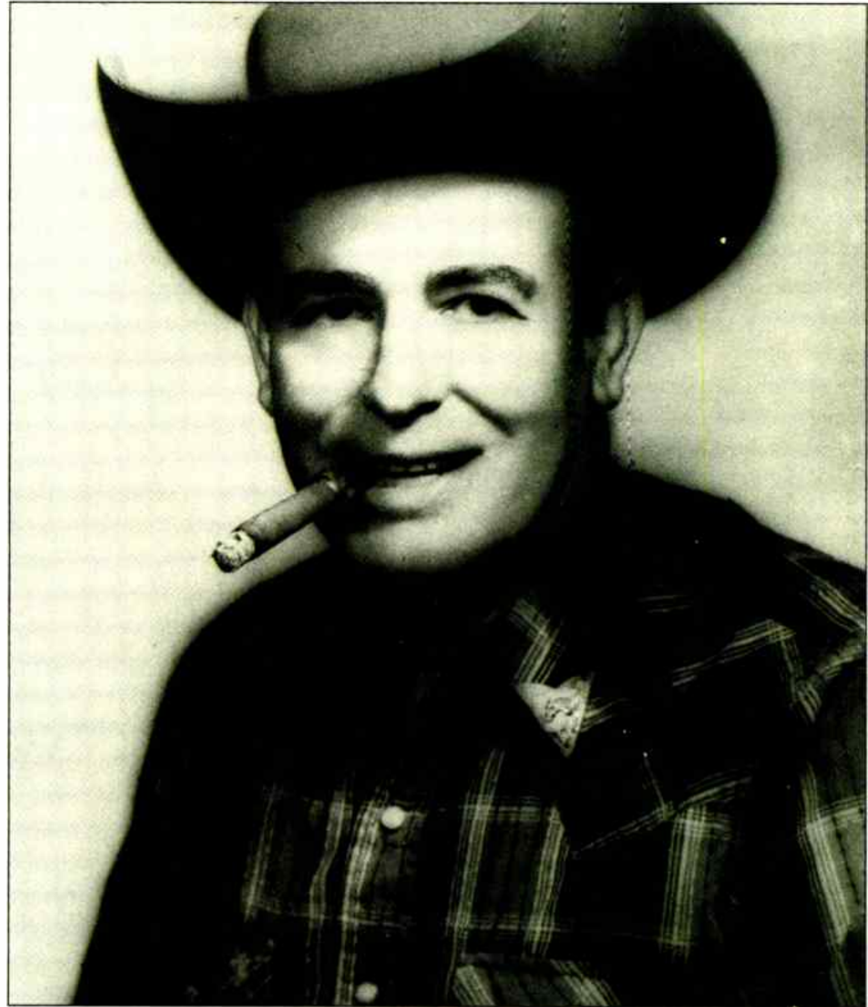

BOB WILLS & THE TEXAS PLAYBOYS

The Tiffany Transcriptions, Vol. 1-6
(Kaleidoscope)
The Golden Era
(Columbia)
Fiddle
(Country Music Foundation)

"I can't really say why everyone loves Bob Wills' music," Merle Haggard observes in his liner notes to one volume of *The Tiffany Transcriptions*, "but I have yet to meet a person who didn't like it." While few have demonstrated that affection as acutely as Merle, who titled an album *A Tribute to the Best Damn Fiddle Player in the World (Or My Salute to Bob Wills)*, his remark is telling for what it suggests about the scope of Wills' remarkable career.

Best known as the "King of Western Swing," Wills virtually invented the form. He'd grown up in a family of renowned Texas fiddlers, and picked up a deep love for the blues with the cotton he helped harvest alongside black field workers. As a bandleader, he revolutionized the traditions of west Texas ranch music without ever losing their essence, gradually blending in New Orleans horn lines, Mexican two-steps, glossy swing arrangements, hot jazz improvisations and pre-rockabilly guitar burners. By 1938 his band's repertoire was estimated at about 3600 tunes, every one of which made you want to dance. As much as any man who lived, Bob Wills encapsulated not merely the eclecticism but the quality and sheer native joy of popular American music.

From 1935 until his death 40 years later, Wills recorded frequently—around 550 tunes in all—which would seem ample documentation for any musical career. A recently issued cache of radio recordings Wills made for the Tiffany Company in the mid-1940s suggests otherwise. The six albums released so far on Kaleidoscope Records (P.O. Box 0, El Cerrito, CA 94530) naturally include renditions of the folk fiddle tunes Wills alchemized into his most memorable hits—"Faded Love," "Take Me Back to Tulsa," the classic "San Antonio Rose"—most of which are grouped on one record. But the other five discs, stocked with every genre from delta blues to steel guitar rags to Irving Berlin songs, supply evidence that the Texas Playboys of those years were as dynamic and innovative as any band Wills ever had, and that Wills' own musical horizons stretched as wide as Texas itself.

Yet range isn't even the main attraction here, for what made Wills special—and helps account for his restless spirit—were his ebullient style, unerring sense of rhythm and, most of all, his feeling. Bob Wills music is happy music—his deliberate intent, particularly during the band's formative years in the great depression, was to take people's minds off their troubles—but it's happy in the sense that a great blues is happy: as a personal release and an emotional bond between audience and performer. Unlike the other Playboys, Wills rarely improvised on his instrument, yet his long-bowed Texas fiddle style spoke volumes. His vocals were generally confined to satiric asides or happy hollers when the music hit a groove he liked; but when Wills did sing, he invested numbers like "Corrina Corrina" and "St. Louis Blues" with soulful phrasing more typically associated with Wills' favorite singer, Bessie Smith.

Perhaps most importantly—and this is where the Tiffany series really shines—Wills had a knack for finding players who responded to such overflowing emotions. As a result, the seven-to-10-piece

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band assembled here crackles with the sound of surprise; in particular, guitarist Junior Barnard and electric mandolinist Tiny Moore reinvest standards and novelty tunes alike with biting, staccato solos that not only prefigure but stand up to the best of '50s and '60s rock 'n' roll.

The Texas Playboys' rollicking style was first established in Tulsa during the late '30s, when Wills put together what remains for many fans his finest band. Their approach is well documented on the double-set reissue *The Golden Era,* which features ditzy, irresistible versions of everything from old folk reels like "Beaumont Rag" to an astonishingly danceable "William Tell Overture." Wills had a great sense of humor, obviously, which suggests how a band could sound this loose without falling apart. Like Duke Ellington, he was also a natural patriarch who encouraged original expression from his sidemen. As a consequence, players like pianist Al Stricklin, drummer Smokey Dacus, guitarists Eldon Shamlin and Leon McAuliffe, and singer Tommy Duncan all developed signature styles which defined the Western Swing sound for decades to come.

Ironically, the one facet of Wills' music which remained relatively underrecorded during these years were his folk fiddle tunes, which makes the collection on *Fiddle* (Country Music Foundation, 4 Music Square East, Nashville, TN 37203) such a valuable addition to his canon. Most of the cuts here were gleaned from a few sessions—two selections from the Playboys' first recording date have never previously been released—and their compilation evokes a romantic, sentimental mood. The rambunctious Playboys are more muted than usual, letting Wills accent melodies like "Maiden's Prayer" and "Tulsa Waltz" with heartbreaking resonance.

Bob Wills was a man of deep insecurities and little formal education, prone to depression and bouts of alcoholism throughout his life. He was also a genuinely beloved figure of great spirit and heart—"the most unselfish man I've ever known," in the words of one bandmate—and in his way a musical genius on the order of Count Basie. For anyone with an ear as yet unacquainted with his music, these albums offer a very cheap ticket to a very rich world. Listening to them over again (and again), I'm reminded of that question "what record would you take to a desert island?" An odd way to measure one's pleasure, perhaps, but if forced to choose the music of only one artist, Bob Wills would be the guy. – **Mark Rowland**

DAVID LEE ROTH

Skyscraper
(Warner Bros.)

David Lee Roth's third solo LP is a sort of *Man of La Mancha* for the partyin' van crowd. A power-of-positive-thinking song cycle that employs rock-climbing as its central metaphor, *Skyscraper* finds Diamond Dave encouraging us to "hit the road, pump thunder and get the show on the road!" Yeah!! Dave's always been a climb-every-mountain kind of guy and this time he spells his philosophy out in no uncertain terms; lest we miss the point, the photo on the LP cover finds everybody's favorite rock 'n' roll animal halfway up the face of a sheer stone cliff.

Like most middle-of-the-road metal music, *Skyscraper* is built around the notion of male bonding and is exhaustingly, laughably macho. "Damn Good" is a wistful eulogy to that old gang of mine (Roth apparently assumes everybody's got one), while "The Bottom Line" is the album's requisite anthem to excess ("A little taste I can't stop/ Got to have it" ad infinitum). And chicks? Well, as Dave explains in "Just Like Paradise": "I got the itch and a restless soul." The dog.

This devil-may-care bit can be charming in controlled doses, but there's something desperate and painful about the shit-eating grin that's been plastered on Dave's face for the past decade. Refusing to acknowledge that, like Don Johnson and Bruce Willis, his moment has passed, Roth does the same song and dance that made him a star 10 years ago. Now pushing 40, he persists in prancing around like a hormone-addled adolescent on his first beer bender.

One can only conclude that, alas, yet another rock god has fallen victim to the dreaded Peter Pan Syndrome. Lavishly rewarded for indulging the carnal appetites of youth, praised for their taut, generously displayed muscle tone, emotionally unequipped to pick up their own dry-cleaning, these hothouse flowers collide with middle age like custom-built Porsches speeding into a brick wall. A cure can be found for this debilitating ailment, but only if you care enough to detach with love. Let Dave know that it's okay not to be a teenager. Don't buy this album. – **Kristine McKenna**

TIM BERNE

Sanctified Dreams
(Columbia)

A strong, self-assured alto saxophonist, Tim Berne differs from most jazz players in that his primary focus is on the sound and color of his compositions, rather than solo improvisation. His first album for Columbia, *Fulton Street Maul,* mixed eclectic avant-garde sensibilities from Stravinsky to Jimi Hendrix. *Sanctified Dreams* continues those aural explorations, this time in an all-acoustic setting.

As a player, Berne favors angular, twisting melodic lines reminiscent of early Ornette Coleman. But his melodic themes are just one element within an intricate compositional matrix. "Terre Haute," for instance, moves from a down-and-dirty funk line to a Latin-steeped conga solo, then a bass and cello duet, and concludes with haunting percussion and chanted vocals. Elsewhere, free-form drum and sax interplay is rooted by the rising and falling chords from Hank Roberts' cello; Berne solos wildly over a funk bassline riffed in unison by the rest of his ensemble. Arco bass, cello, trumpet and alto interweave harmonies and unison passages. This is not your standard jazz album.

Actually, Berne's quintet mirrors his conceptions so well it's often hard to tell where compositions end and improvisations begin. At times, *Sanctified Dreams* suggests a ride in a taxi through midtown Manhattan: You're bumped and jolted, rocked and reeled. Stuck at a light, you can catch your breath and pay attention to details; then the signal changes, traffic breaks and you rush

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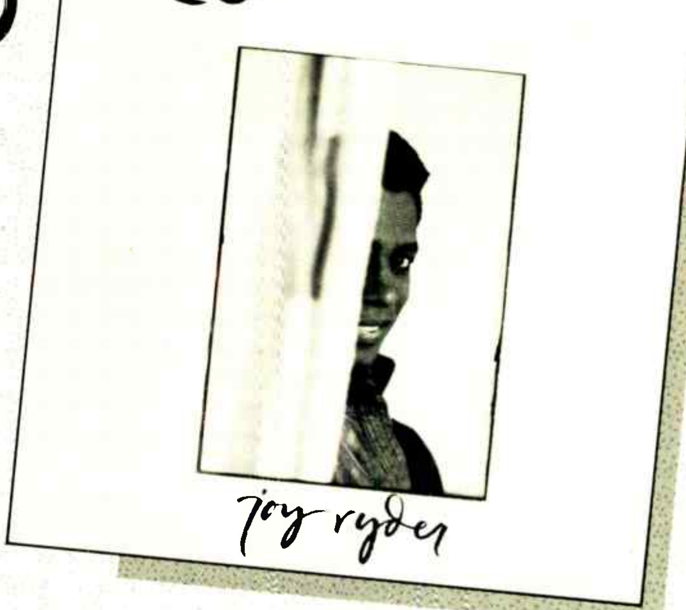
THE FIRE STILL BURNS....

Wayne Shorter



WAYNE SHORTER. "JOY RYDER."
Wayne Shorter continues to demonstrate why he has earned a reputation for originality and innovation. As he leads a band featuring appearances by Herbie Hancock, Patrice Rushen, Dianne Reeves†, Geri Allen*†, Nathan East, Terri Lyne Carrington and Darryl Jones.

*Appears courtesy of Arista Records.
†Appears courtesy of Blue Note Records.
*†Appears courtesy of Nonesuch Records.

Producer: Wayne Shorter.

PAQUITO

PAQUITO D'RIVERA. "CELEBRATION."
On Paquito's new album, you can expect to hear the fiery sax and hot Latin rhythms that have become his trademark. But Paquito is also celebrating a new sound—with orchestral arrangements that showcase his superior skills on clarinet. As always, new music from Paquito D'Rivera is a cause for "Celebration."

Produced by Helen Keane and Paquito D'Rivera with Ron Saint Germain.

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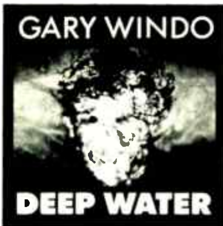
NEW DIRECTIONS IN MUSIC

New Directions In Rock



GARY WINDO

"The Clash meet John Coltrane"

New Directions In Jazz

DAVID MANN

"Soaring flights of saxophone improvisation rooted in gutsy grooves"

POWER TOOLS

"Bill Frisell, Ronald Shannon Jackson, Melvin Gibbs... the power jazz trio"

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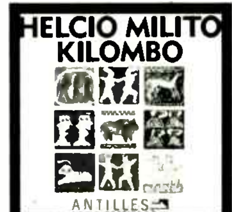

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through another deafening swirl.

It would be interesting to hear Berne in a more formal and melodic jazz setting, but clearly that's not what *Sanctified Dreams* is all about. The result is an intelligent, ambitious effort from a powerful new voice in jazz. – **Jeff Rosen**

ROBERT PLANT

Now and Zen
(Es Paranza)

Tucked away at the end of "Tall Cool One," Robert Plant slips in a sly joke on his past that says a lot about his present. As the rhythm section pulses along in perfect MIDI-sync, Plant's sampling synth quotes a good half-dozen Led Zeppelin classics, from "Black Dog" to "Whole Lotta Love." Just when you figure it's some sort of tribute, the band stops and a robotic voice intones, "Lighten up!" Which rather neatly sums up the aesthetic Plant's post-Zep career.

Like *Shaken 'n' Stirred* before it, *Now and Zen* offers a radical departure from the over-amplified, gothic blues that were Led Zeppelin's stock-in-trade. But where its predecessor merely flirted with such possibilities, pushing at the envelope without ever achieving escape velocity, the new album finds Plant confidently subverting past expectations. Whereas *In Through the Out Door*, the last real Led Zep album, led off with a keening wail that cut through a mist of synthesizers to set up a bluesy stomp, "Heaven Knows," the first track from *Now and Zen*, finds the singer sauntering casually into the verse, his voice rarely rising above a murmur. Curiously, the shift to softer dynamics ultimately intensifies the song; for instance, when Plant sings, "You were pumping iron, as I was pumping irony," his off-handedness turns the quip into a devastating put-down. Had it been delivered as a Led Zep scream, that deft jab would have sounded like mere bluster.

Now and Zen is rife with such subtle twists. "White, Clean and Neat" sets its pace with an ominously clicking rhythm guitar, but then offsets it with jazzy double-bass fills that slink around the robotic pulse; "Tall Cool One," for all its high-tech precision, at times slips into cadences that leave Plant sounding like a rockabilly singer with his spring wound too tight.

Plant hasn't entirely deflated the Zeppelin-isms—"Helen of Troy" is escorted by guitar riffs that wouldn't have sounded out of place on *The Principle of Moments* (or even *Houses of the Holy*), while Jimmy Page makes an appearance in both "Heaven Knows" and "Tall Cool One." The big difference is that Plant has chosen not to define himself by that sound anymore. And yet, by pulling his punches, Plant hits home far more frequently. I can't vouch for how "zen" that might be, but it sounds pretty damned "now." – **J.D. Considine**

LYLE LOVETT

Pontiac
(MCA)

Lyle Lovett represents a new voice in Nashville: the quirky country songwriter who believes that even cowboys get the blues. Consequently, this Texan's viewpoint can pique listeners whose affection for country music is nonexistent, along with ardent fans.

With his self-titled debut LP in 1986, Lovett picked up significant critical notice; *Pontiac*, a follow-up album that deliberately avoids those footsteps, is something of a mixed bag. Side one seems an obvious attempt to court country fans, from the high-octane finger-picking of "Give Me Back My Heart" to an acoustic guitar-driven tale of love scorned, "L.A. County," featuring Emmylou Harris' high, lonesome harmonies. Bob Wills' influence is subtle,

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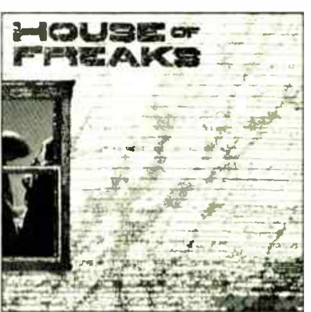
but significant, giving these cuts room to swing in a way most straightahead country doesn't allow.

The real story here, though, is a second side filled with songs you'll never hear on country radio. Opening with the sultry, jazzy "She's No Lady," Lovett's humor begins unwinding with a cynical, sarcastic version of marriage destined to anger feminists everywhere. The moaning, gospel-like "M-O-N-E-Y" and bubbling "Hot to Go"—the latter detailing love at the 7-Eleven—expand on that view with a wink and a chuckle. On one fairly nasty song about (lack of) sexual fulfillment called "Black and Blue," a horn section stabs at Lovett's lazy jazz arrangement while the singer semi-groans, semi-intones his sentiment.

Lyle Lovett is a hard one to gauge. Falling into country without really trying, his songs show a far-reaching appreciation of enough tangential musical genres to indicate a future in another arena. For the moment, though, he's produced an anything-but-your-standard-Nashville release; for songs this wonderfully idiosyncratic, it's well worth the stretch. – **Holly Gleason**



HOUSE OF FREAKS

Monkey on a Chain Gang
(Rhino)

It may seem bizarre to claim that a guitar-drum duo from Virginia is the most complete band currently playing in Los Angeles, but that is precisely the case with House of Freaks. For one thing, the musical empathy of guitarist/vocalist Bryan Harvey and drummer Johnny Hott is so thorough that the average listener swears a full band *is* at work. For another, co-producer (and veteran heavy-metal engineer) Randy Burns resists the temptation to gussy up the pair's lean, pungent attack. The result, *Monkey on a Chain Gang,* is an honest and exciting replication of their live performance.

Purity of their style isn't all House of Freaks have going for them here—Harvey and Hott are also formidable songwriters who incorporate a wealth of blues, country and vintage rock 'n' roll elements into elegantly constructed songs. These tunes have a dark emotional cast which encompasses traditional themes of romantic loss (as in the stark lament "Lonesome Graveyard") along with the tragic sweep of history (as in "Bottom of the Ocean," the horrific tale of a slaver who tosses his dying cargo overboard, and "Dark and Light in New Mexico," a woeful retelling of nuclear physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer's story). Even the album's loveliest melody, "40 Years," is hung with lyrical crape—the four decades in question are the ones that have passed since the dropping of the first A-bomb.

No matter what the subject, House of Freaks attack it with jolting energy. One listen to a high-watt assault like "Crack in the Sidewalk" or "Yellow Dog" confirms the undiluted potency of this action-packed group. And House of Freaks is unmistakably a *group*, not a gimmick. There's more than one quartet or quintet that could learn valuable lessons from Harvey and Hott's extraordinary debut. – **Chris Morris**

PLATTERS THAT MATTER

1. **Tom Russell Band** – *Road to Bayamon* (Philo)
2. **Etta James** – *R&B Dynamite* (Ace)
3. **Nanci Griffith** – *Little Love Affairs* (MCA)
4. **Wayne Horvitz** – *This New Generation* (Elektra)
5. **Loretta Lynn** – *Higher Ground* (Epic)

– **Peter Cronin**

TAYLOR from page 80

every vocal is, and I work more carefully on performance aspects—but you can go too far with that too. If you allow a singer who's at all compulsive in the studio to run away with himself, you end up removing all the soul and personality to where it gets streamlined. Singing is not meant to sound "finished." It's meant to live. In mid-air. A good producer will tell you when to stop listening to yourself.

MUSICIAN: *Being truly productive artistically is often predicated on the ability to get out of your own way. On a very personal level, you've made dramatic strides. You haven't, for example, had a drink or a drug of any sort in more than five years. Meeting and marrying Kathryn Walker ran parallel to this renewal.*

TAYLOR: There are a lot of significant things happening in my music and myself since I cleaned up and tried to take responsibility for my life. Perhaps I accept myself and my circumstances a little bit. I know I'm trying to. I'm not being so evasive or demurring so much anymore. Kathryn has been a big part of this new sense of freedom and well-being.

Professionally, people have been telling me in recent years that my music is fresher, more complete-sounding and in a good place. But at the start of this decade I also had a dark reaction to my music—that I'd perhaps stayed too long in one place, being a horse in a familiar harness. The only answer to such a "crisis" was that I had to avoid taking it so seriously.

Tin Pan Alley is a good, solid, respectable and yet humble category for something to refer to yourself as. Songwriting is an honorable profession. Look at Gershwin and Irving Berlin. And singing for your supper is no crime. But making progress in your life is simply a matter of not getting caught in a *tiny* trap. If you stay relatively conscious and sober eventually you do learn and integrate things.

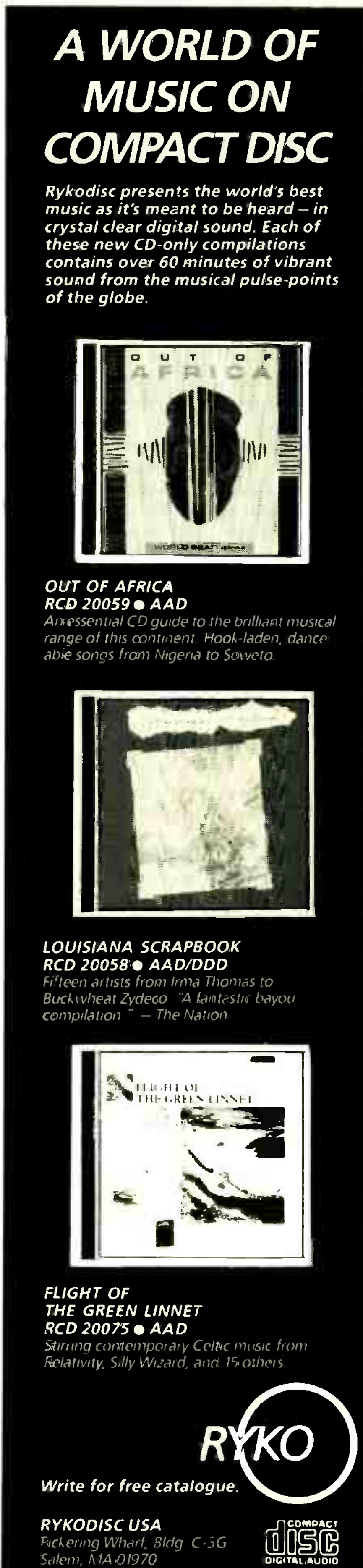
MUSICIAN: *Life is not a toy clock you can pry the back off in order to count the pieces. It's a process that you can never understand too quickly, because it also involves the participation and appreciation of those who surround and acknowledge you.*

TAYLOR: I'm used to thinking of life in terms of addiction. One of the things at the heart of addiction is that the thing you're compulsive about becomes everything. The object is the obsession. Literature is everything. Sex is everything. Jesus is everything. Cocaine is everything. Music is everything. None of that is so, of course. Life is not an object. And only *everything* is everything—and each thing contributes, for better or worse.

One of the things that I do notice with this album is that it's a little less painful to sit with material and work with it, and *then* watch it go out into the world. I now have the patience to send it out there in its fully-imagined state. Sometimes I think of those early sessions as removing a massive bandage. The more quickly I pulled it off, the less painful I presumed the violent action was. I'd give it a nice, quick *riiippp!* and pray the wounds underneath were healed. Sometimes they were. But sometimes they weren't—*yeowww!*

MUSICIAN: *And now?*

TAYLOR: They're basically healed. And I'm proud of, and fairly content with, the scars. I think there's not just healthy skin and bones there—there's some muscle too. ■



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SHORT TAKES

WALLACE RONEY
Verses (Muse)

GARY THOMAS
Seventh Quadrant (Enja)

THE ATTACK OF THE KILLER DEBUTS CONtinues with two more thriller youngsters. Roney, who's worked with Art Blakey and Tony Williams, is a trumpeter influenced in his thinking by the Miles/Shorter axis, which stunts him as a conceptualist. As a player, he burns. He likes long, sharply articulated lines that carve their way through space. His tone has a touch of Miles' sizzle, but it's harder, less emotional. Gary Thomas, who's worked with DeJohnette and Miles Davis, plays alongside Roney, and he's a boss tenor, but with a reedy, almost nasal tone. He's all muscle, and, on his own debut, every time he plays the swing quota goes up, as does the intensity. He works with a limited set of rhythms and breaks up his lines with short, staccato phrases. They snake around, creating dark, complex webs of sound. Thomas, like Roney and most other young musicians, still sounds scared either to relax or show vulnerability, and they both have contracted, to various degrees, Miles/Shorter diseases. But when it comes to articulate hard-blowing, they know exactly what to do, and how to do it. Once they figure out personal context, they'll strike fear into the hearts of their contemporaries.

BILL FRISELL
Lookout for Hope (ECM)

IT'S BECOMING CLEARER THAT FRISELL IS A great player, but only in contexts set up by someone else—from John Zorn to Marianne Faithfull. *Lookout for Hope* (and I might be overcompensating here for my high expectations) is too much arrangement and too little Frisell as improviser. It's a busy record, and with typical echoey ECM production, a lot of music gets lost in the waves. Not that this doesn't supply a momentary Frisell fix—but cherish those live memories.

BIRELI LAGRENE
Inferno (Blue Note)

NOBODY CAN BE FAULTED FOR LUSTING after cash, or wanting one's music to reflect as much of its time as possible. Whatever corrupted Lagrene's talent (momentarily, I'll hope), it's pushed his music into the realm of deracinated, aimless international fusion. We all have a claim to this airplay monster—we can't accuse him of totally selling out his gypsy tradition. But listen to the control and expressivity he gets out of the acoustic guitar on "Rue de Pierre, Part Two" compared to the dated, rhythmically clumsy attempts at funk on the rest of this record. Also: Remember when Django took up the electric guitar...

SPEEDY WEST
Steel Guitar (Stetson/Down Home)

SPEEDY SUPPOSEDLY PLAYED ON NEARLY 6,000 sides. It's easy to figure why: The guy has the sort of on-the-moon imagination that incorporates noise and special effects into his more traditional steel playing. Wild stuff, and when he and Jimmy Bryant, a guitarist with whom he recorded regularly, go at it, it sounds like a Mack truck, all glittery and chromed-out, and with a great customized paint job, whamming through a zoo of squawking animals. This stuff defines '50s white, western life like nothing else.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Still Groove Jumping (Detour/Down Home)

THIS COMPILATION, ROUND TWO, IS TAKEN from RCA's Groove label, an early black rock 'n' roll set-up that lasted from '54 to '56. Listen to the average studio band: Mickey Baker on guitar, King Curtis and Sam Taylor on saxophones, and Sticks Evans, who, along with the rest of the crew, was an original black rocker. Roy Gaines, Larry Dale, Tiny Kennedy, Mr. Bear and a bunch of others do the yelping—ah, the era of singles.

PHILIP TABANE
Malumbo (N.M.D.S.)

TABANE'S A CULT-TYPE GUY IN SOUTH AFrica. He plays guitar, sort of a mixture of Joseph Spence and George Benson. If rural sounds are already incorporated in South African pop as details and decoration, then Tabane, with his fluid band of bass and a couple of percussionists (check how rigid mbaqanga is rhythmically for comparison), sounds like a jam session at a local gas station. Tabane sounds unmediated by a studio or producer—unlike mbaqanga—and he has only himself to credit for his eccentricities. We all benefit. (500 Broadway, New York, NY 10003)

TOMMY FLANAGAN
Nights at the Vanguard (Uptown)

JAZZ IS ABOUT OPTIONS. GIVEN THE RULES—i.e. chord progressions—the person who manipulates them the best wins. It's about options, like I said, and Tommy Flanagan has them all. Each chorus is a new approach to the harmony, each phrase—and this is too often overlooked—builds its own tension with its rhythmic make-up. To listen to *Nights* is to hear someone freed from rhythmic constraints; with his long-time bassist George Mraz and drummer Al Foster, the trio swings like one person. The tunes are by jazz musicians—Monk, Lucky Thompson, Thad Jones, Benny Golson, Phil Woods—as if Flanagan were reminding us of jazz's underused compositional legacy. Recorded over two nights at the Village Vanguard, the record's a document of Flanagan's greatness as a pianist and, since it's no different from any set you'll hear him play, how consistent he is in his greatness.

BY PETER WATROUS

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ROCK

SHORT TAKES

MIDNIGHT OIL
Diesel and Dust (Columbia)

ADAMANT AS THEIR LYRICS ARE, ARGUING passionately for aborigine land rights and against nuclear weaponry, the Oils have strengths beyond their convictions. As Peter Garrett's vocal builds from anger to fear to final anthemic insistence in "Beds Are Burning," it becomes wonderfully obvious that Midnight Oil's melodies are as powerful and convincing as the group's anti-colonial rhetoric. As strongly as the Oils make a case for their views, *Diesel and Dust* makes an even better case for the band itself, emphasizing its pop appeal while underscoring the band's status as righteous thunder from Down Under. Prepare to be converted.

CHRIS JASPER
Superbad (CBS Assoc./Gold City)

THOUGH THE ISLEY EMPIRE CONTINUES TO splinter, there's been no drop in the quality of Isley-related music; *Superbad*, the solo debut of cousin/keyboardist Chris Jasper, is every bit as solid as the three Isley-Jasper-Isley albums, from the philosophic funk of the title tune to the good-time groove of "My Soul Train." When Jasper hits his stride, as he does on "One Time Love," you may forget the other Isleys altogether.

JERRY HARRISON
Casual Gods (Sire)

HARRISON HAS A TERRIFIC TITLE FOR HIS second solo album, and a great set of sounds. But all told, this album seems a little *too* casual. Sure, "Rev It Up" is a good gloss on *Remain in Light*-era Heads, while the instrumentals on "Man with a Gun" could easily pass for downsized Cars, but so what? Aside from a few good hooks and a memorable catchphrase or two, the songs offer little more than boilerplate and mannerisms, and that's nobody's idea of heaven.

JAN HAMMER
Escape from Television (MCA)

BECAUSE HAMMER'S "MIAMI VICE" SOUNDscapes are so subtle, they often go unheard beneath the show's wheel-squealing, gun-toting glitz. Hence *Escape from Television*, inciting us to marvel at how much one man can do with a few synths and a drum kit. Top 40 fans will be disappointed that the LP's "Miami Vice Theme" doesn't much resemble the TV version. Otherwise, the writing is so much better than the TV show that even casual fans will wish Hammer would escape more often.

MIRIAM MAKEBA
Sangona (Warner Bros.)

CYNICS MAY CREDIT *GRACELAND* CHIC FOR Makeba's current shot at the U.S. pop market, but to hell with 'em. The real heroes here are the singer and producer Russ Titelman, who passed up Afro-pop in favor of 19 traditional songs that will break the heart of anyone who has one.

FLESH FOR LULU
Long Live the New Flesh (Capitol)

FUNNY HOW MUCH *THE NEW FLESH* sounds like the old Iggy Pop.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
The Hit Factory: The Best of Stock-Aitken-Waterman (Stylus/PWL import)

SO STOCK-AITKEN-WATERMAN COMES across like a brokerage; Holland-Dozier-Holland sounded like a law firm, but that didn't stop *them* from writing hits. And hits are what this dance-crazed compilation delivers, from Rick Astley's "Never Gonna Give You Up" to Bananarama's "I Heard a Rumour." Still, what ultimately impresses about this disc is how easily these guys have made sow's ears into silk purses, from page-three girl Samantha Fox to jailbait superstar Mandy Smith. Talk about quality control. (Unit 21, Abbey Rd. Industrial Pk., Abbey Rd., London NW 10 7XF)

JAMES TAYLOR
Never Die Young (Columbia)

EVER NOTICE HOW PEOPLE, AS THEY GET older, begin to repeat themselves?

ZODIAC MINDWARP & THE LOVE REACTION
Tattooed Beat Messiah (Mercury)

THERE'S SOMETHING GENUINELY ENDEARing about Zodiac Mindwarp's presumption to badness, from his heroic self-absorption to his (hopefully ironic) attempts at poetry. But what really makes this a kick is that it does—kick ass, that is, with a turbo-charged AC/DC-style stomp that makes the Cult sound like garage band dropouts. Love Reaction does play "Born to Be Wild" with an earnestness bordering on reverence. But hey, how can you beat titles like "Let's Break the Law," "Space City" and (my favorite) "Messianic Reprise"?

MICHAEL COOPER
Love Is Such a Funny Game (Warner Bros.)

FORGET COOPER'S TENURE WITH CON-Funk-Shun; those records were about an approach to rhythm that's altogether different from what he and Jay "Club Nouveau" King whip up here. Besides, what this record is about is singing, particularly the sort of nasal soul inflection Ohio Player Sugar Bonner introduced and Steve Arrington perfected. Though Cooper may not be quite the artiste Arrington is, he's easily as much fun as Bonner—which is why his goof on "You've Got a Friend" sounds as serious as "To Prove My Love," the obvious single.

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

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SHORT TAKES

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Guitarra Armada, Music of the Sandinista Guerrillas (Rounder)

UNDER SOMOZA, THE PERCENTAGE OF illiteracy in Nicaragua was so high the Sandinistas had to be creative while disseminating information. One effective way: song. This collection of guerrilla info isn't exactly a call to arms, more a description of their use. No editorials, just instructions: Instead of chronicling the incidents of inequality, these tunes teach protection from their deadlier ramifications. Trad string instruments and "pretty" Spanish folk music forms as vehicles for point-blank descriptions of .22 bullets, M-1 carbines and military reports may seem downright macabre; but when it comes to situations of extreme emotion, pragmatism can be manna. *– Jim Macnie*

THE LOUVIN BROTHERS

Radio Favorites '51-'57 (Country Music Foundation)

BETWEEN IRA'S MANDOLIN AND CHARLIE'S guitar and sky-high tenor, the Louvin Brothers harmonized a worldview straight from the rural 1940s and before. Yet they prefigured enough of the more complex decades to come so that their songs retain a sense of moment, even terror. This collection of on-air performances done in Danville, Virginia and at the Grand Ole Opry sequences 14 songs grouped as "gospel" and "secular" sides. The Louvins are backed by bass, fiddle and guitars—rhythmic acoustics, as well as more progressive electric leads by Chet Atkins. The fresh detail and unwavering feel for consequence that connect songs such as "If We Forget God" and "You're Running Wild" remain the stuff of revelations. (4 Music Square East, Nashville, TN 37203) *– James Hunter*

LEE MORGAN

Take Twelve (Fantasy/OJC)

THE TRUMPETER WHO MORE THAN ANY other defined the blue in Blue Note percolates over a low flame here, leading a quintet of such similarly underrated players as pianist Barry Harris and tenor saxophonist Clifford Jordan. Maybe that's why this recent reissue, recorded in 1962, seems to have fallen between the cracks of time. At 24, Morgan was in the prime of an all-too-brief career, and his compositions for this date—notably the Latinish blues "Raggedy Ann" and the tender "Waltz for Fran"—reveal a thoughtful melodist who could pull heartstrings through the sheer musicality of his expression. An album to watch the moon set by. *– Mark Rowland*

ANGEL "CACHETE" MALDONADO

Batacumpele (Montuno)

MODERN CUBAN AND PUERTO RICAN salseros are digging around, like everyone else, in their traditions, and herein lies the result. A traditional, disturbed-ocean rhythm section floats graceful jazz soloists, and commercial intent has been pushed away in favor of musicians' heat—and thus the heat of the community. It is improvisatory, and if you believe reports that Buddy Bolden's band was set up like a Cuban Son band (beating "Cubano Be," etc., by nearly 40 years), then this jazz/Latin hybrid isn't just wonderful, it's incestuous as well.

– Peter Watrous

HALF JAPANESE

Music to Strip By (50 Skidillion Watts)

IN THE PAST, JAD FAIR AND COMPANY HAVE been accused of being utterly unlistenable: preschool utterances over first-guitar-lesson accidents. But even as it alienates, Jad's idiot-savant trip endears while serving pop its head. And on *Music to Strip By* it doesn't even alienate that much: The band is now trying its hand at songs. These operations go down in rudiment land, mainly because the base language—blues—is "easy" to play. None last long (22 tunes here); hit-and-run is a tactic that makes lines like "her sister gave me heaven...and her father gave me hell" (a consolidation that tells me Jad's been breaking out his copy of *The Great Twenty-Eight*) seem like a conversational aside. *– Jim Macnie*

PLAYHOUSE

Gazebo Princess (Twin/Tone)

THE VOCALS ARE AN INDECIPHERABLE wail, the guitars a scraggly racket—and that's not all that makes this eight-track EP such a blast. Fronted by Eric Haugesag, the three-man Playhouse grinds out the soundtrack to a major-league anxiety attack, constantly rushing the beat in true neurotic fashion. As a bonus, real tunes lurk underneath the cacophony: The uneasy atmospherics of "Hola" aim to induce bad dreams, while "My Eyes" stakes out twangy turf familiar to the Meat Puppets. Only these guys haven't quite figured out how to keep the sound together, generating a weird, thrilling sort of tension. Co-produced by Soul Asylum's Dave Pirner, who's no slouch at making a big noise himself.

– Jon Young

TONY ELLIS

Dixie Banner (Flying Fish)

ELLIS IS A BLUEGRASS FIDDLER AND BANJOist with a gift for writing reels and blues as deceptively simple as the Appalachian traditions from which this music evolves. His equally effacing sidemen flesh out the beauty of these songs like true country gentlemen, giving the melody lots of room and rarely calling attention to their own substantial chops. Yet the songs ultimately evoke the constant, warm-hearted character of (one assumes) their composer. The result is a record which is true to its roots without sounding like a revival. (1304 W. Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614)

– Mark Rowland

MUD BOY & THE NEUTRONS

Known Felons in Drag (Peabody)

"MUD BOY" IS FOUR GUYS, INCLUDING PROducer Jim Dickinson (profiled in last November's *Musician*). The Neutrons are seven other folks. Together they tear through a brace of rock 'n' roll and blues staples, toss in a couple of folkier items as a change of pace, and aren't afraid to take liberties with a Bob Dylan lyric ("Memphis Blues Again," no less). If you aren't offended by walloping versions of Chuck Berry tunes, this record may contain the "Little Queenie" you always wanted to hear. (P.O. Box 41302, Memphis, TN 38104) *– Scott Isler*

BY ALL HANDS

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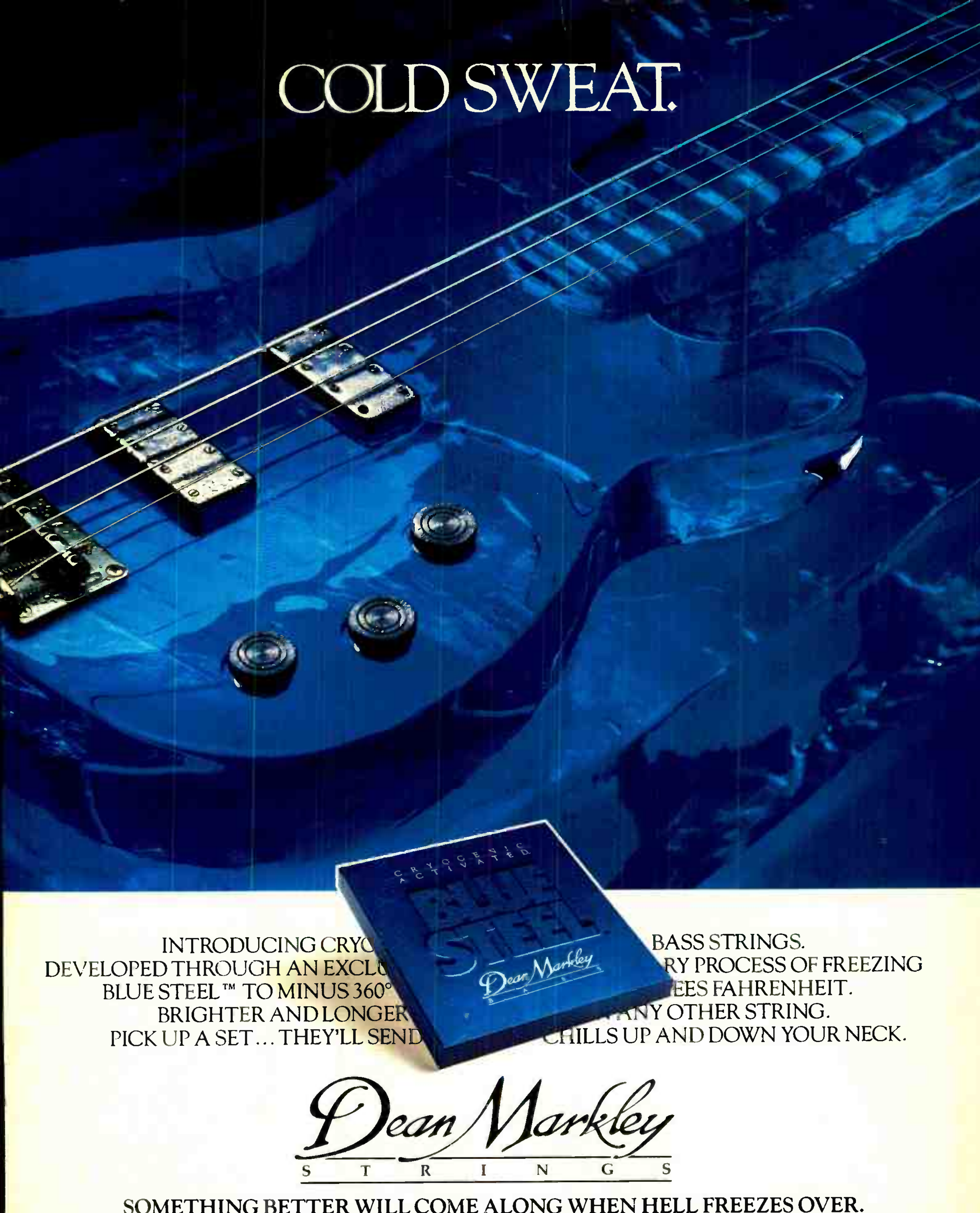

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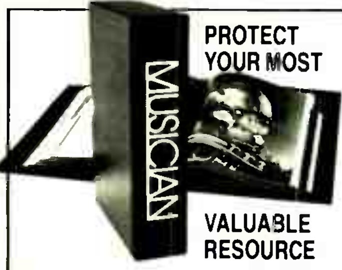

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SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

NAMM from page 44

ready looked at Ensoniq's twin strike with the SQ80 and EPS; both drew large crowds. But no one expected a brand-new synth from Casio, called the VZ-1 iPD, that is not at all like the sampled-waveforms-in-ROM setup from the the SQ80 and D-50, but heads straight into less charted digital territory. The building block of the VZ-1 is similar to phase distortion in the CZ series, but instead of modifying sine waves, the new version modifies more complex waveforms (much as Yamaha's FM system was modified with the TX81Z). There are other inexact parallels to FM, since there are eight modules which can be combined, put out-of-phase or ring-modulated, and modules can be used to modify each other. In fact, there are 649 ways to combine the blocks. Skip the science talk and tell you how it sounds? The VZ-1 definitely has a digital character, but sounded very full and complex, especially because I happened to be there when hit keysman Michael Boddicker dropped by to give the VZ-1 a vigorous workout and to rave about his new FZ-1 (I can only assume Boddicker was hired by Casio to "spontaneously" appear in front of every tech writer in the field, but who knows....) The VZ-1 also has other high-performance capabilities, including 16 voices, the ability to arrange four different sounds in layers, positional cross-fades, velocity splits and eight-way multi-timbral assignments. There's also aftertouch, a big graphic LCD display similar to the FZ-1's, RAM card storage and the usual Casio envelope overkill. Got all that? Now here's the last spec—$1400 list. Nuff said.

There was also a new eight-voice synth from Kawai called the K1 that includes PCM drum samples, multi-timbral abilities and fairly rich, analog-type sounds for a scant $800. Also near that price is the Korg 707, a flashier remake of their DS-8 FM synth. And Oberheim unveiled a six-voice rack called the Matrix-1000 which has, yes, a thousand sounds, 200 of which are user-programmable. It's fully Matrix-6 compatible, which means warm, rich "classic" synth tones. And seekers of the experimental will welcome Ralph Buchla's return to the MI world with the Buchla 700, a self-contained MIDI voice lab with anything the committed sonic sculptor could ever ask for.

But in a way the biggest new synth story is an old story, which involves the Roland D-50. Not since the wildfire spread of the Yamaha DX7 four years ago has one synth so dominated the crowded MIDI market. The problem for Roland since has been how best to exploit that total victory. I have a theory about this that involves the location of the next NAMM show, Atlanta, Georgia. While RolandCorp U.S. chief Tom Beckmen was researching local tourist sites in Atlanta for press parties, he became aware of some important aspects of Civil War fighting there in 1864. After General William T. Sherman captured the city, thereby ensuring the re-election of Lincoln, he was faced with the same problem Roland now has with the D-50: how to avoid going on the defensive and having the Confederates chip away at his new holdings. Sherman's brilliant answer was to divide his army, leaving half of it with the redoubtable George Thomas to face the rebels under John B. Hood, and taking the rest and striking out for the Carolina coast on his fabled March to the Sea. My theory says that Beckmen has now divided his D-50 army into two wings, one to face the pro market, the other to march into the hinterland and begin world domination of the home/hobby market. It's just a theory, mind you, but let's look at the evidence.

Last show Roland came up with the MT-32, a kind of "trickle-down" technology bonanza from the D-50. This little $700 box is completely multi-timbral and velocity-sensitive, has 32 voices, 32 additional separate drum samples, runs in stereo and even comes with a nice-sounding reverb. I've been trying for eight months to find the catch, and have even brought one into my home studio for special torture tests. Here are my shocking revelations: the MT-32 doesn't read aftertouch, there are no individual audio outs for separate signal processing and the multitimbral setups aren't saved when you turn it off so you have to put the MIDI program change commands in with your sequencer tracks. If that doesn't seem like a devastating weakness in a box that sounds this good, especially in the brass, wind and string departments, I'd have to agree. Especially because it's completely programmable and has plenty of hip MIDI implementation. In fact, anyone putting a MIDI system together from scratch would be an idiot not to pick one up. But most "pro" buyers need more, or at least they think they do, so Roland adapted the MT-32/D-50 VLSI chips into several new offerings at Anaheim NAMM. These include the D-110, the D-10 and the D-20, the last of which includes a sequencer. I won't get into all the variations from the D-50—some have reverb, some don't, some have fewer

World Radio History

"partials" and "timbres"—but the basic thrust is to hold the pro front. Whether they'll be enough remains to be seen.

But the D-50's March to the Sea has already begun, under the banner of Piano-ISM (ISM standing for intelligent system of music). Roland has mated the MT-32 with a new open-ended sequencer/computer called the PR-100 and developed extremely friendly custom software for it. These not only do MIDI multi-track recording, but keyboard instruction, pre-recorded accompaniment and more. Piano-ISM is an ambitious program, and not the first attempt by a MI power to get the vast untapped American piano and organ market turned on to MIDI. But basing it on the MT-32 is a shrewd move, and if the Roland gamble even partly pays off, the rewards could be tremendous. And look at an even brighter side: Billy Sherman, the hero of the North, had the good taste not to run for president, even if nominated. Tom Beckmen will undoubtedly emulate that example, although probably with a sampler from Roland and not E-mu.

There were other NAMM hitmakers from the digital side of the tracks. Simmons showed a sensational MIDI percussion unit called the Portakit that puts 12 separate trigger pads on one moderate-sized module. This thing not only has a small onboard sequencer, but sends out its own MIDI clock pulse so you can set slave tempos right from the drum kit. It has trigger inputs for kick and high-hat pedals and uses the same force-sensing technology as on the SDX and Silicon Mallet. I still find it hard to believe it will cost only a grand. Simmons also showed a box that will convert digitally encoded I/O data to the MIDI sample dump format, primarily to streamline sampling from digital tape or CD. And Apple finally came to NAMM as an exhibitor, showing a new $100 MIDI interface for the Mac and IIGS and generally beating the drum for a number of existing third-party music software programs. One nice improvement, though: MIDI plugs with a flat side so you know which way the pins are going. But the biggest surprise was the reappearance of the Commodore Amiga, with new software from Magnetic Music, Dr. T, Mimetics, Toronto's Sound Quest and others. I'd have never thought a sixth major computer could catch fire, but maybe this'll force me to issue another, ahem, revised Big Pattern. It'll have to wait until Summer NAMM in Atlanta, though.

Meanwhile, perhaps other tech writers should come forward and discuss their own beliefs and failed theories. How many MIDI guitars and Human Clocks are in their closets? Perhaps we should all release our tax returns as well. We all are in important positions of responsibility here and all relevant information should be fully disclosed. And while we're at it, let's find out who's been writing whose manuals on the side, huh? Then we'll see a few more Revised Big Patterns. Or maybe not. Hmmm. Let me check that Amiga data again. M

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and somehow in the course of the performance he got turned around, so that his back was to the audience. Because he was not only blind but also cantankerous, it was hard to tell if he was fully aware of the situation, but when a student timidly approached the stage and touched his sleeve in the most hesitant fashion, Davis shook him off brusquely and turned in his seat so he was facing nothing but the wall. The Reverend Gary Davis wasn't going to let anyone, or anything, turn him around. M

HITCHCOCK from page 67

By now, our peregrinations have brought us to the nether regions of the museum, a long way from the cuddly felines and anthropomorphic apes. Here are wall upon wall of peculiar creatures: iridescent giant lizards, salamanders with punky stripes and blotches, deep-sea fish. Hitchcock is especially struck by the Gelatinous Blindfish: a translucent, amorphous life form that looks like King Kong's condom. Used.

"If the world is polluted by atomic war, the last thing that's gonna go is the deep sea bed," he muses. "Something could probably survive there under conditions where everything else had gone. There could be things down there that might just sleep through our whole civilization, that slept through Atlantis; they don't give a toss. There might be things imbedded below the surface of Mars, deep-cold Cetaceans, long flatfish that gradually orbit under the earth's crust that just don't know anything—or know everything. And we can't communicate with them because we're too clever.

"Real songs are like that," he adds. "They come out as surely and intuitively as powerful blindfish coming up from the depths which cannot be resisted. And they will survive." M

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