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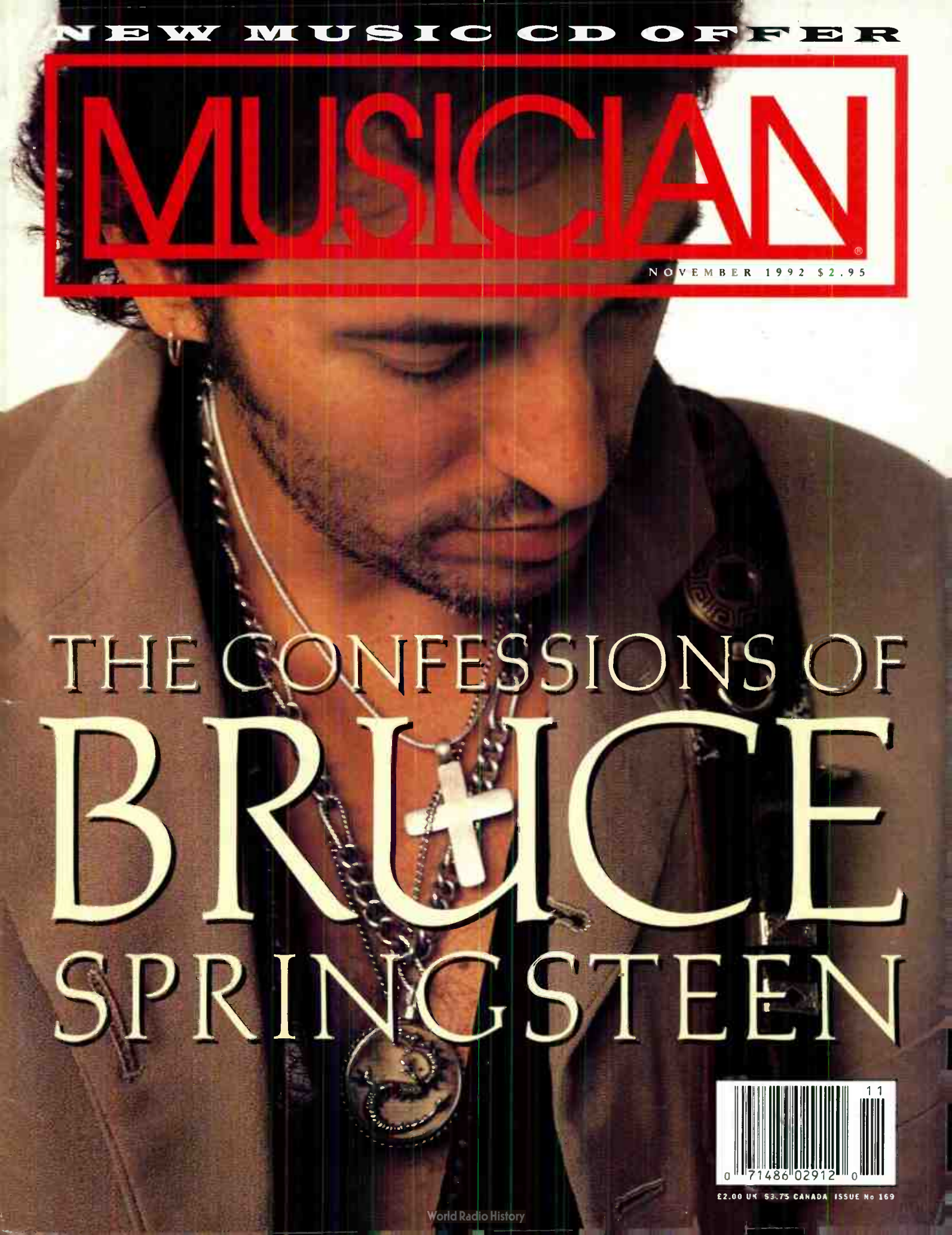

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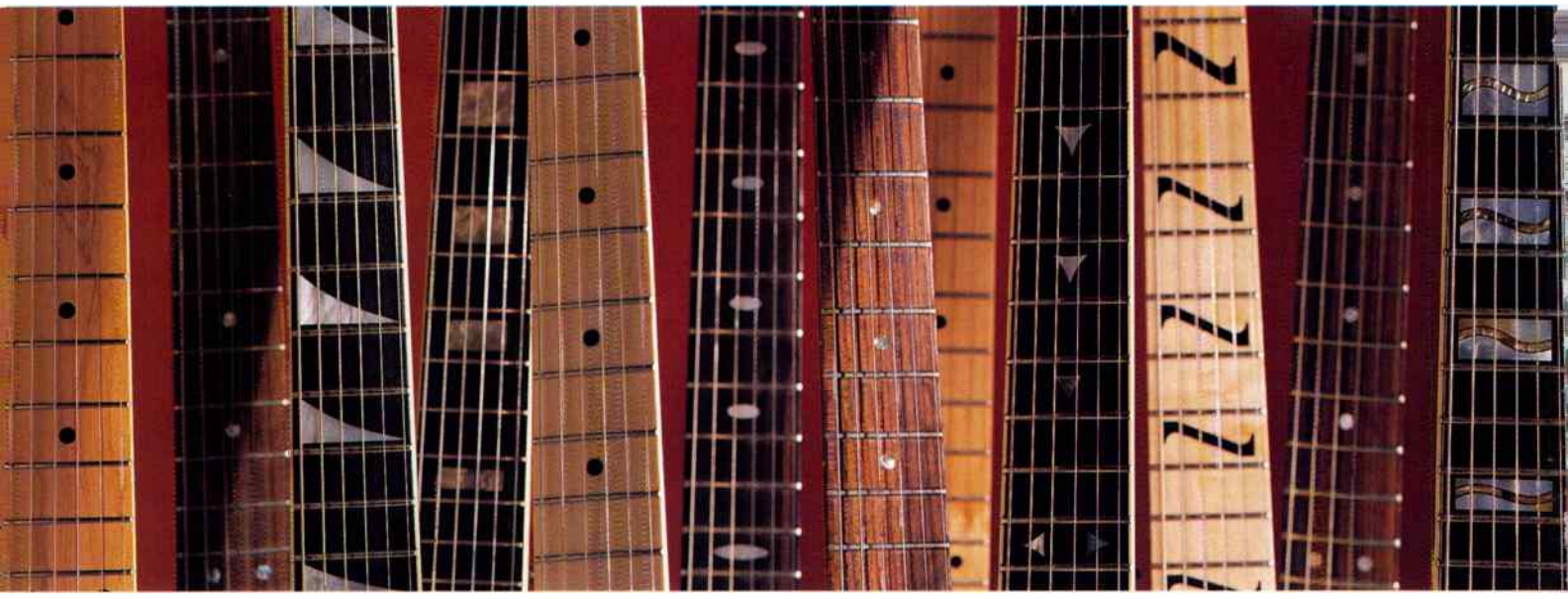

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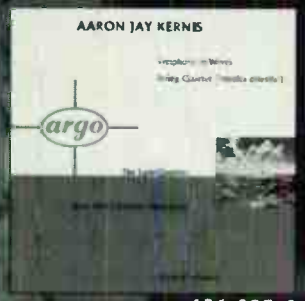

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Photograph by Annie Leibovitz

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What's The Weakest Link In Your Sound System?

Professional audio systems are only as good as the weakest link in the chain. Whether you rely on your system for sound reinforcement or recording, to earn a living or just for fun, each "link" has to be the finest it can be. You get the best performance from the best components and, more importantly, from components that are designed to work together. A matched system.

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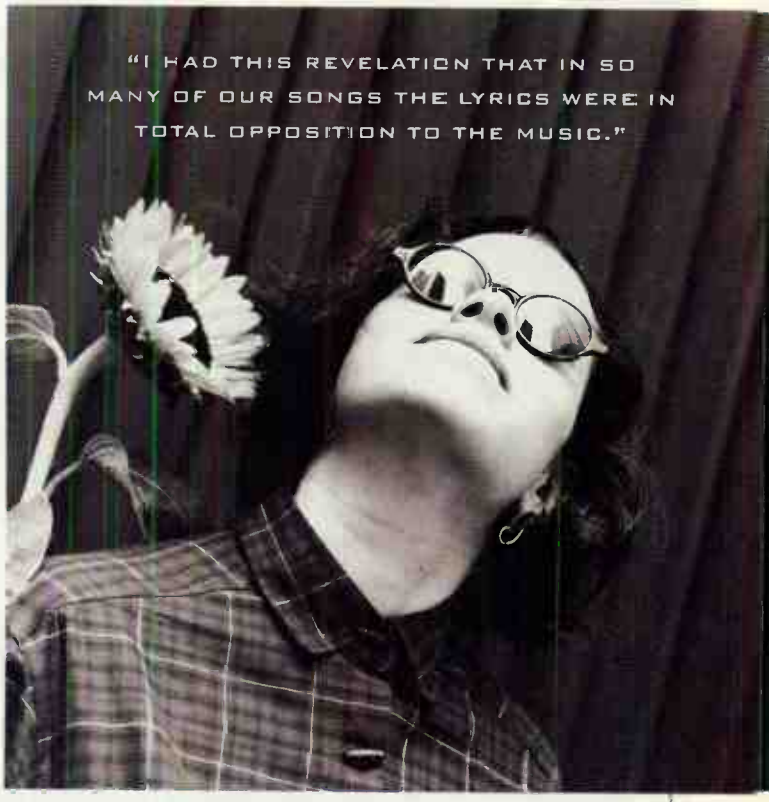

10,000 Maniacs has come a long way from Jamestown. What's been best, worst and most surprising about success?

The best thing is the fact that we've become professional, that I can do this for a living. I always wanted to be an artist—dreams come true. I can't think of anything bad. We're not really at the level where privacy is an issue, or we have to decide whether or not to play to 30,000 people in an arena. What was the third part? Most surprising? I think the fact that a lot of our fans seem to be people I'd like, people who could be friends.

The new album, Our Time in Eden, *has seven songs credited solely to you. Are you writing more these days?*

I'm writing the same amount, but I think I'm a little more bold in my presentations to the band. [*laughs*] I used to hoard songs away. I have this feeling that everything I do needs to be sheltered because I'm still in a period of growth and learning. I even play piano on, I think, eight of the songs on the record. I guess it's because I've been practicing a lot...in my isolation. [*laughs*]

It was reported a while back that you might do a solo album.

People have been saying that since I was 12 years old. I would *love* to record some different songs. I've written with other people and I'd like to do that some more, so that's a possibility. But I really don't know. I did just record a song that I wrote with R.E.M. It's going on a benefit record for the National Abortion Rights Action League.

Is there a 10,000 Maniacs tour in the works?

Our drummer [Jerry Augustyniak] was just hit by a car while riding his bicycle. It's hard to play a drum with a broken clavicle. So we're at this point sort of scrambling to play the first month or so with a different drummer. We're just all trying to deal with Jerry's injury. He's so disappointed and sad and in pain, and we've got the record coming out and we feel obligated to at least go out and play the major cities and let people know we're still alive.

Any song on Our Time in Eden *you're especially fond of?*

"Noah's Dove." It's very lush and beautiful, which was sort of my intention for most of the album. I just said it over and over, "lush and beautiful, lush and beautiful." [*laughs*] And I love the song "How You've Grown." People cry when they hear it. I definitely cry when I listen to music—and I laugh and I dance. I respond to music faster than to any other form. Cinema is too specific. That's why I hate videos so much.

Did you base "I'm Not the Man," in which they hang the wrong guy, on a specific incident?

Yes, I did, but I don't really want to mention it. Because it's happening in so many states in this country on such a regular basis that I don't really want to concentrate on one. When it does happen, I'm just reminded of what a barbaric practice it is. There was some discussion among band members that the songs "Tolerance" and "I'm Not the Man" were just too dark for the album. But I believe in balance. I just feel that beauty and tragedy exist everywhere, and that to make an album that is only concentrating on positive and beautiful subject matter—it's not honest. It's not the way that I see the world.

Many of your songs are imbued with a sense of time gone by. Where does "Gold Rush Brides" come from?

Diaries of frontier women. There were entries where they would just casually mention that they'd given birth that morning and a few months later mention that the baby had died. I wanted this album to be very visceral—with very visceral descriptions. A lot of references to sensation.

What about "Stockton Gala Days"?

I had this revelation years ago that in so many of our songs the lyrics were in total opposition to the music. So I've been making an attempt to try to come up with music and lyrics that are more in harmony: "What experience does this music seem to accompany?" And with "Stockton Gala Days," whenever we played that song, all I thought of was being a young girl and having the true friendships that we have when we're young. I had a rural upbringing and I feel very close to—I don't want to sound like a hippie girl, but I spent a lot of time in grape vineyards and cornfields and the forest, and that song just brought to mind how happy I was when I was younger, and that feeling of summer and this great expanse of time that summer was, and how I spent it, and who I spent it with. But then there was a haunting bridge that kept returning, this D-minor that I had to make sense of. [*laughs*] So I had to make it almost nostalgic. That's the thing about writing. I'll have a lyric in place and suddenly this minor chord will come from nowhere and change the entire tone and direction of the song. So, anyway, it was going to be a cheerful song set in the present, but then that D-minor spoiled everything.

GEORGE KALOGERAKIS

PHOTOGRAPH: KAREN KOHLBERG

LETTERS

PINK VS. FLOYD

If Roger Waters *was* an egotistical jerk (David Gilmour interview, Aug. '92), he was in good company. We've often heard David Gilmour criticize *The Final Cut* as being one of the worst albums Pink Floyd has ever done. Apparently he hasn't listened to *A Momentary Lapse of Reason*. And if Gilmour thinks *La Carrera Panamericana* is worth viewing, then he is a bigger megalomaniac than he claims Roger Waters is. Resnicoff was wrong when he said, "There's only one person on earth who doesn't love David Gilmour." Here's two more.

Pat Mrizek and Chris Dotson
Fayetteville, GA

In his latest interview, Matt Resnicoff proceeds to ask a series of inane and pointless questions. His belief that certain music can be deemed not "Floydian" leads him to conclude *A Momentary Lapse of Reason* should have been a solo album by Gilmour. The interview continues on the old and tired news of Roger's departure. Finally, Resnicoff has the audacity to imply Gilmour should have put an end to Floyd after Roger left. If this was to be the case, Floyd should have been done with as soon as Syd "left." My advice to Resnicoff is to read Nicholas Schaffner's *A Saucerful of Secrets*; a little homework could have kept out such statements as: "I had no idea session musicians played on *The Wall.*" The insulting interview leads one to believe the "...one person who doesn't love David Gilmour..." is Resnicoff himself.

Hooman Bahrani
Winston-Salem, NC

So, "there's only one person on earth who doesn't love Dave Gilmour"? Dave was the sound? He was the voice? He was the *conduit*? Hell, he was even the bass player!? This is the third time *Musician* readers have been subjected to the same boring Pink Floyd breakup/good Dave vs. bad Roger cliché.

Mike Malackowski
Bloomington, IN

After reading your recent interview with David Gilmour, I'm convinced that Mr. Resnicoff is a great fan of Roger Waters. I can easily understand why, since his interviewing style and Waters' voice have the same tone—abrasive and obnoxious.

I'll agree with Mr. Resnicoff on one thing. David Gilmour is no Roger Waters. Thank god!

Cindy Humm
Rosiclare, IL

Pink Floyd was founded by Syd Barrett so that it might go beyond what had commonly been done in popular music. Waters continued this effort through the '70s. If Gilmour wishes to rehabilitate Pink Floyd so that it might continue its quest, why not? It seems that Roger Waters does not want to see Pink Floyd succeed without him and it is obvious that they have.

Gabriel D. Karaffa
Trumbull, CT

In spite of his delusions, Roger Waters was only a part of the Pink Floyd phenomenon—an entity that has always been greater than the sum of its parts and, therefore, is perfectly justified in continuing without him.

Kristofer Layon
Northfield, MN

In answer to Mr. Resnicoff's wondering if Dave still has a "bead on his audience," I would have to say that as a Gilmour/Floyd fan I was happy for just 18 more minutes of new music. The video was very enjoyable. I consider this just an appetizer and am looking forward to the next album, be it Floyd or solo Gilmour.

Kay Zagrosky
Shenandoah, PA

If it was not for David Gilmour, Pink Floyd would be playing Holiday Inns across the world.

Eric Henderson
Fort Worth, TX

KO

How can you think David Duke is *amusing*? Cancel my subscription immediately.

Katie Burke
Mill Valley, CA

After reading "David Duke's Klassic Kuts" (Aug. '92), I thought of some more people who should share their musical insights:

Pol Pot's Picks
Hitler's Hits
Saddam's Selections
(The Kurds Say It's a Gas)
Jeffery Dahmer's Choice Cuts
Charlie Manson's Musical Musings: What Helter Skelter *Really* Means

Keep up the good work, guys, I always keep a copy of your magazine handy so I can read it during commercials when I watch Geraldo.

Thomas Steed
Claremont, CA

Regarding David Duke: pathetic.

Jonny Gillespie
Ft. Wayne, IN

There must be hundreds of struggling musicians who would kill for the opportunity to be published in your magazine. Surely you could have found someone more deserving of your valuable editorial space. You can cancel my subscription. I am disgusted!

Ronald S. Miller
Amherst, MA

Why don't you change your name to *Politician*? There's no excuse for two pages of *Musician* magazine being devoted to a puke like David Duke.

Jeff Burger
Brooklyn, NY

David Duke is a racist and a neo-Nazi. His opinions about music are of little interest to me. This is not an issue of free speech, but rather of your editorial judgment. *You chose* to print this drivel. I choose not to support it. Cancel my subscription.

Jeff Sussman
Santa Fe, NM

Who gives a shit what David Duke listens to?

Geraldine Wyckoff
New Orleans, LA

When a figure like David Duke tries to claim rock 'n' roll for fascism, tries to say that there's nothing incompatible between the Beatles and the Ku Klux Klan, it's something that should be faced by everyone who assumes rock 'n' roll is a progressive force. We referred to Duke as a former Nazi and Klansman who "wraps the ...cultural references of a baby boomer around the gutter politics of prejudice." Interviewer Henry Schipper challenged every loony assertion made, giving Duke only enough rope to hang himself. That any reader could take that piece as a Musician *endorsement of Duke astonishes us. Yes, the article was ugly, but there is evil in the world. Ignoring it does not make it go away.*

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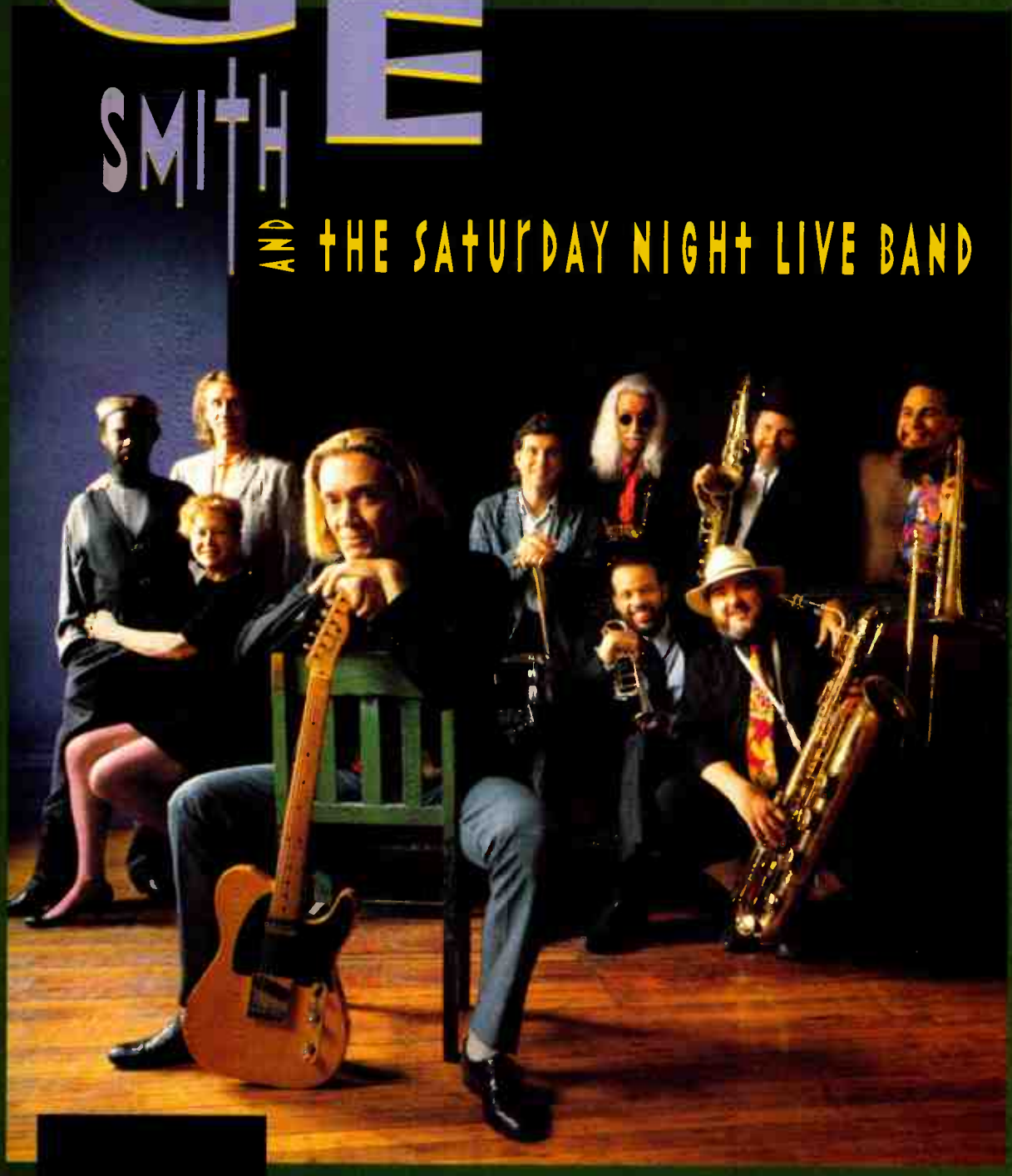

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THE GIN BLOSSOMS

The Beatles had Brian Epstein, U2 had Paul McGuinness, and the Gin Blossoms had a girl named Laura. In the late '80s, when the Blossoms formed and began playing gigs in their native Tempe, Arizona, a friend named Laura Leland—"the sixth Gin Blossom," as wry bassist Bill Leen refers to her—took it upon herself to prod and promote the band. In addition to helping negotiate a record contract and publishing deal, Leland put up the 20 grand it took to finance the group's first album—an effort that guitarist Jesse Valenzuela describes as "basically something we did in one night without any sort of guidance. It sounds like a record made by a very young band."

The Blossoms are much happier with *New Miserable Experience* (title notwithstanding), their first LP for a major label. Having produced both their debut and last year's EP *Up and Coming* by themselves, the fledgling musicians decided to enlist support from a seasoned veteran this time out: John Hampton, whose work with the Replacements, Marshall Crenshaw and Tommy Keene had earned him the self-described "guitar band"'s admiration. "Getting the opportunity to go out to Memphis to work with John was a big, big thrill," says singer Robin Wilson. "And we got to meet Tommy Keene," Valenzuela adds. "He's a cool guy."

For all their youthful zeal, the Gin Blossoms—who also include drummer Phillip Rhodes and new guitarist Scott Johnson (who recently replaced original member Douglas Hopkins)—now try to craft their buoyant, guitar-driven pop in a mature fashion. They even admit to being, in Wilson's words, "into melody." "We've been accused of losing our edge because we've started thinking about songs and grooves, as opposed to just playing as fast as we possibly can," admits Valenzuela. "But you can't play like you're 25 forever." ELYSA GARDNER

With *Grave Dancers Union*, Soul Asylum digs deep to unearth a hard-on-the-outside, soft-on-the-inside vein of rock that explores ambition, failure and hope against hope. Through all 12 cuts, singer/songwriter Dave Pirner struggles with Life's Big Questions, but ask him if there's a unifying philosophy to the record, and he'll say, "Naaah. You're born alone, you die alone and you better appreciate your friends, because they're not always gonna be around if you don't. If there's a theme, it's just ...'life goes on.'"

For all its pop philosophizing, *Grave Dancers Union*'s secret weapon is soul legend Booker T., who contributes organ work to several tracks. "He was incredible," gushes Pirner. "He charted everything out, so I asked him for all the sheet music. You feel like a little kid when someone like that says he likes your songs."

There's a lot to like, from the desperate rocker "Somebody to Shove" to the poignant ballad "Runaway Train" and the metallic "April Fool." Another high point is "New World," which affirms that indeed there are good reasons—spiritual, political and otherwise—for muddling through the hassles of day-to-day life. For Pirner, it's all about his continuing quest to live in the moment: "What did I just hear? Oh, yeah...'You can't change the past, but you can fuck up a perfectly good present by thinking about the future.'" A useful proverb—where'd it come from? "I think," Pirner confesses, "I read it in a comic book." JIM WALSH

PHOTOGRAPH (TOP) INKI LASS

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

CHRIS HARFORD

About 10 minutes after we start talking, Chris Harford, an exceptionally bright and promising 30-year-old rock 'n' roller whose *Be Headed* has just been released by Elektra, comes out with something both wonderfully personal and generational: "In all honesty, my first memory—and I would have been two years old and in a crib—was when the Beatles were on Ed Sullivan's TV show and my family came into the living room to watch. I remember clearly the reactions of my sisters and brother, just freaking out like you saw in the newsreels. And I remember thinking, Hmmm, something's going on here. Two years later, I was sitting on my father's shoulders when I saw Herman's Hermits somewhere on the Jersey Shore. After, as we worked our way toward the stage, we wound up in a strange room where they had wax figures of the Beatles. What an impression that made—a very surreal memory. Two years after that, I was collecting Beatles cards and always had my yellow submarine with me. I knew I was going to be a musician. In 1969, my brother came home and said, 'Forget the Beatles, Led Zeppelin is the answer.' He handed me a Zeppelin album, which I refused to accept until I was 16. At 17, I rejected Led Zeppelin, the Allman Brothers and Lynyrd Skynyrd for the Ramones and Elvis Costello and the Sex Pistols. And then, moving full circle, I came back to the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Van Morrison, Jimi Hendrix and Neil Young, and finally realized just how deeply ingrained their records are in me. The true greats just stand out as timeless."

One of Harford's many likable qualities is his unabashed joy in listening to music and "soaking up influences like a sponge."

Harford was born and reared in Princeton, New Jersey, and spent much of the '80s in Boston, where he painted, played in a band called Three Colors (two EPs) and met Lichi Ponce, the woman he recently married and the subject of many of *Be Headed*'s "supportive," humanistic songs.

Be Headed got its name from a suggestion by Harford's brother. The artist sees the title as three-pronged: a pun about losing one's head, "be headed for someplace—have a destination, a framework," and "be headed—be intelligent and use your head."

First-listen favorites: "Swinging Bridge," "You Know Me the Best" (recorded live with Richard Thompson) and "Sing, Breathe and Be Merry," which Harford, with a proud smile and genuine modesty, calls "my anthem." Let's hope he writes a few more of them.

PAUL NELSON

RHINO MINING ATLANTIC CATALOG

Rhino Records has entered into an agreement with Atlantic Records which calls for Rhino's systematic reissue of material from Atlantic's rich R&B, jazz and pop vaults. The deal went into effect in June, when Rhino switched distribution of its catalog from the Capitol/EMI group to WEA; initial releases under the new Rhino/Atlantic-Atco Remasters logo have included anthologies of Wilson Pickett, Solomon Burke, Percy Sledge, Clarence Carter and the Rascals, and 10 additional individual titles from the Stax/Volt group of labels by R&B stars Otis Redding, Carla Thomas, Sam & Dave, Booker T. & the MGs and the Bar-Kays. Thousands of heretofore untapped titles will provide the company with future releases. Upcoming titles include an 85-track Aretha Franklin boxed set, a double CD from Manhattan Transfer, a Coasters anthology, compilations on the Average White Band, Sister Sledge, Firefall, Betty Wright and Chic, and straight reissues on individual titles by Dusty Springfield, the Spinners and Franklin.

Rhino will be taking full advantage of a mailing list of over 100,000 record buyers to promote upcoming Rhino/Atlantic releases. VP of marketing Chris Tobey says that Atlantic product will contribute in a very major way to Rhino's growth, "although about 60 percent of our releases will continue to be from other sources. We've been growing by leaps and bounds. Our business has doubled in the last three years."

The label expects to release an average of three to five Atlantic titles per month, and is looking at anthologies on the J. Geils Band, Ben E. King, Dr. John and Professor Longhair and best-of albums on Joe Turner, Eddie Floyd, Albert King, Vanilla Fudge and Iron Butterfly. DAVID NATHAN

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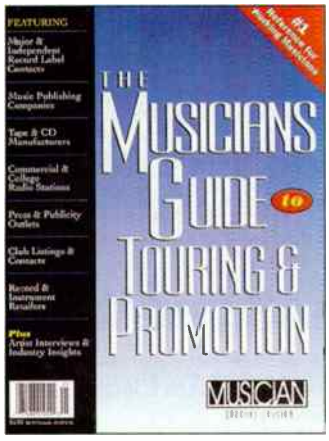

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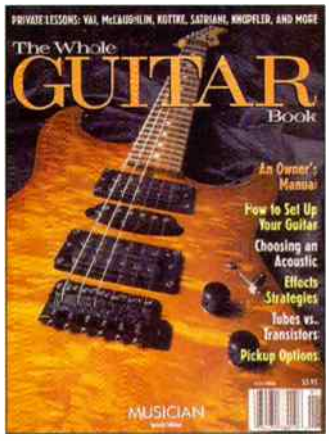

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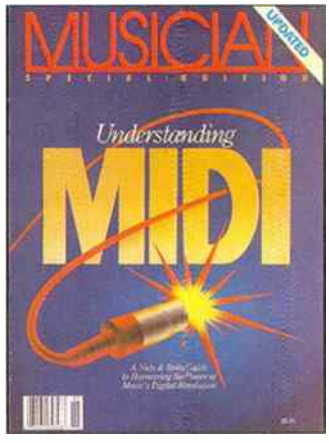

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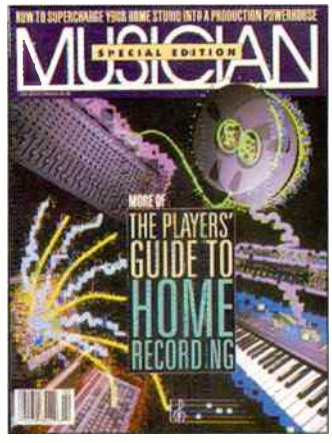

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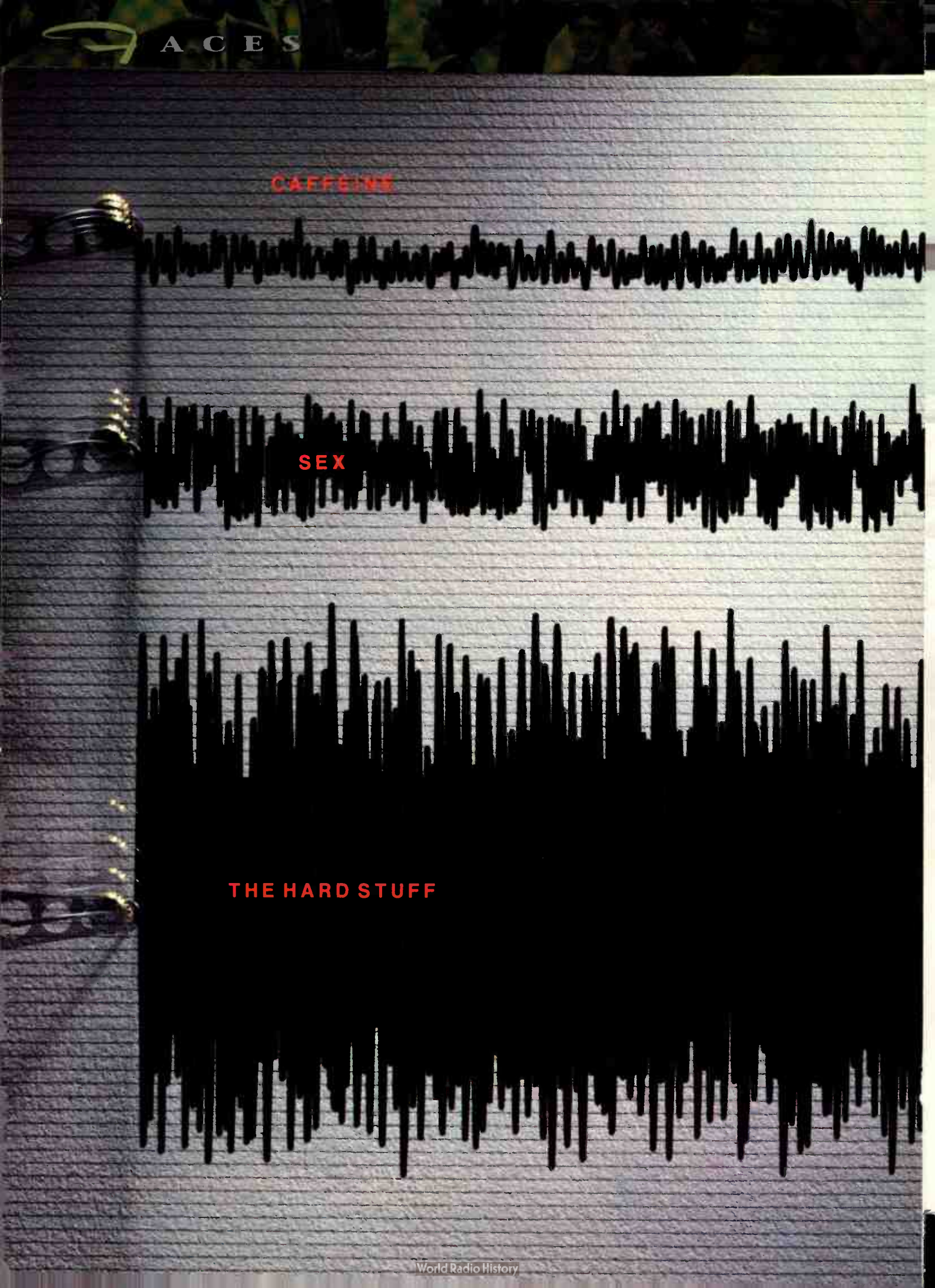

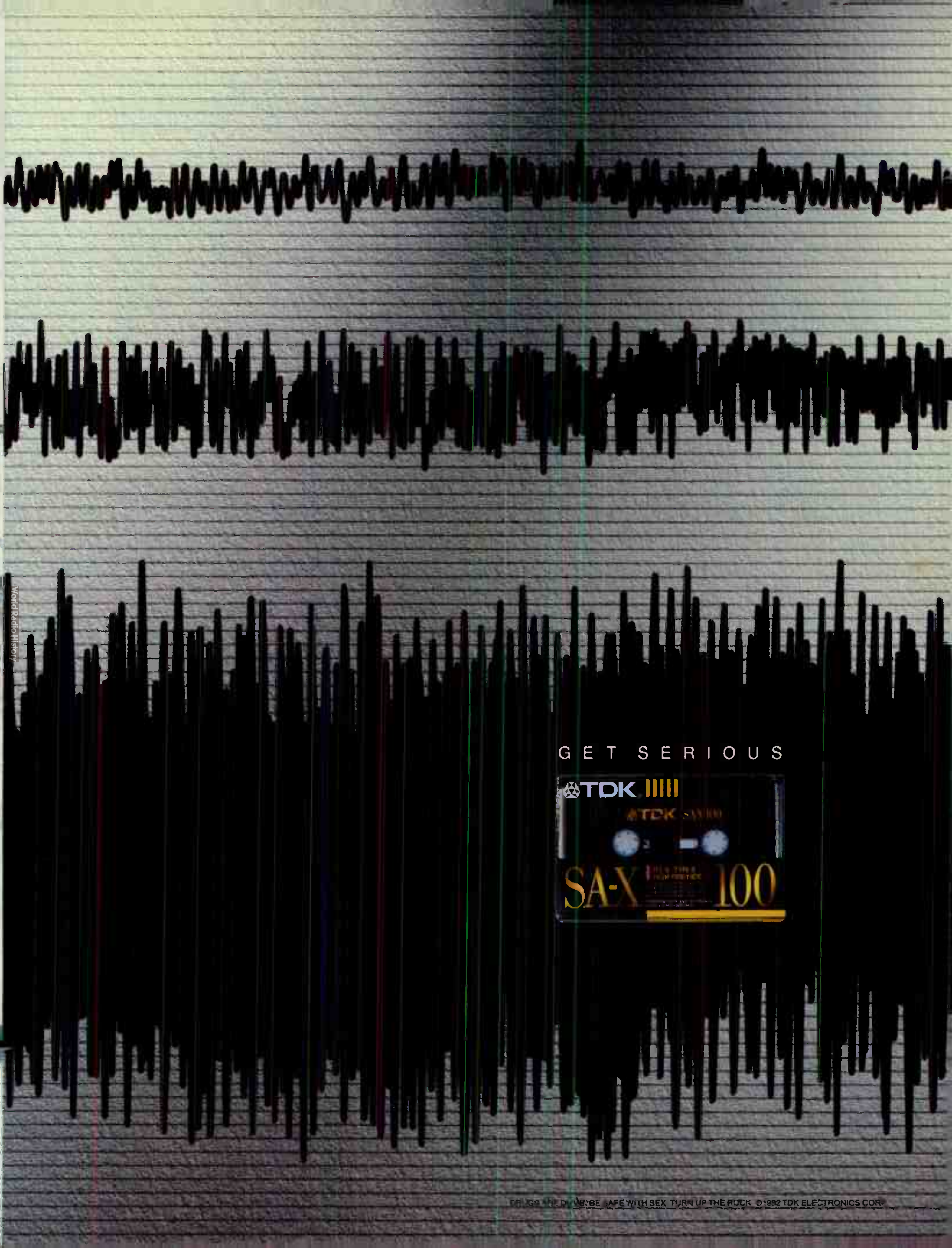

ON STAGE

MICHAEL JACKSON

MICHAEL JACKSON APpears at London's Wembley Stadium through a trapdoor in a swamp of dry ice like a stage villain and just stands there, stock-still. Then, snapping a knee, he kicks into an overdrive of stomping and clutching his codpiece. Soundtracking this frenzy of white socks and oil-slick hair, incidentally, is "Jam." Thunder flashes bang, and he is joined by a dance troupe who fill the stage with movement yet cannot distract you from the silver-jacketed star who at 34 remains a microsecond tighter than anyone else you'll ever see, freeze-framing into dramatic poses like an android overloading its circuitry. You just gape at such an electrifying, almost superhuman talent for spectacle. Minutes in, you're sure that Michael Jackson, rare with no trimmings, will do just fine, but suspect that he won't allow himself to stand naked for long. So it proves.

Much is familiar from his last tour, which not only reproduced the hits, but the videos, too. Thus the set-piece gangsterism of "Smooth Criminal," segueing into "I Just Can't Stop Loving You," in which Michael strokes duettist Siedah Garrett to a whoosh of titillated disbelief. In "Thriller" we are distracted from a miracle of stage-lowering hydraulics by darting lasers and the full grand- [*cont'd on next page*]

NIRVANA

TEEN SPIRIT? SMELLS MORE like burning polystyrene to me, vast acrid clouds of it wafting gently across the English field from the huge oildrums serving—somewhat superfluously, it must be said—as wastebins, whose contents have been thoughtfully immolated by the small knots of freezing, mud-spattered festival-goers gathered around them. If there is a purgatory, it's probably modeled on the Reading Festival.

The predominant aroma at pop festivals used to be marijuana, but by Sunday night, there seem to be few with any stash left to lift the gloom of the occasion. You used to be able to sit down at these affairs, but the entire field has been turned into a quagmire after a weekend of showers. So you stand there, choking, sober and unstoned, feet soaked and aching, straining to see whether that tiny figure a quarter of a mile away is really Kurt Cobain or just another roadie. Eventually, it is Kurt Cobain.

Nirvana open their set with one of several songs that seem to feature the refrain "I don't care"—possibly "Breed," though it's hard to tell, this most astoundingly popular of trios having notched up many million album sales with the least expansive of musical lexicons. They pride themselves on their punk roots, and in this respect they're correct; though the Marshall stacks looming impassively across the back of the stage are like some *2001* monolith signifying the [*cont'd on next page*]

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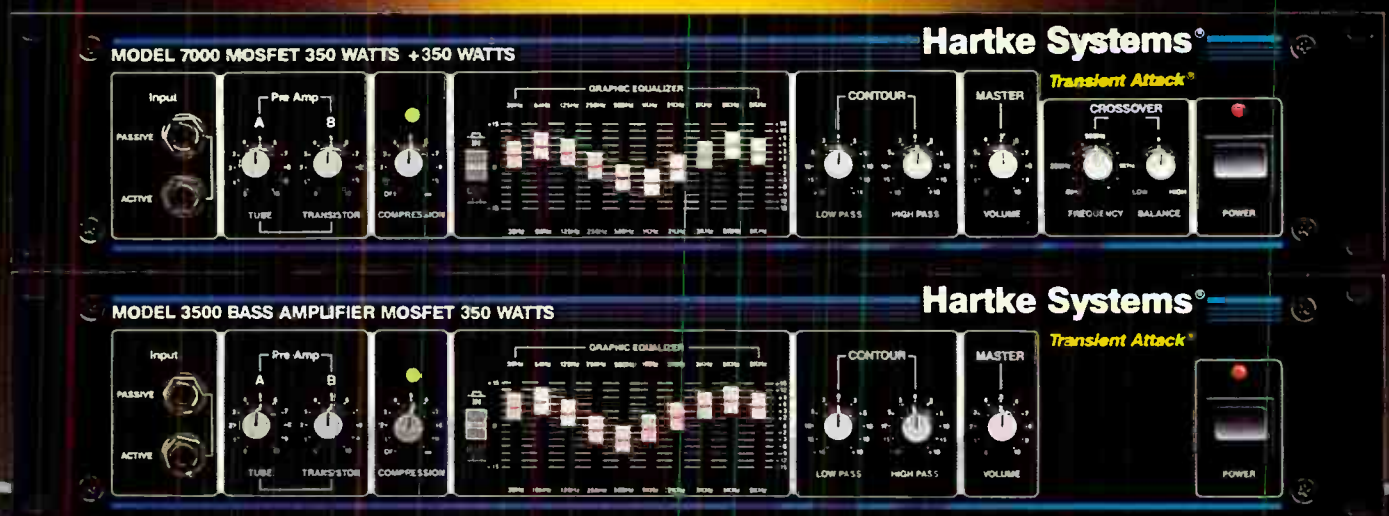

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NIRVANA

return of heavy metal to its natural home after several years in which the Reading Festival has featured middling indie/"alternative" bands. Later tonight, towards the end of the generous half-hour of encores that they tack onto the end of their set, we even get those few chords that music-lovers everywhere have come to know and fear as the intro to "Smoke on the Water." It may be intended as a joke, but it serves to underline the fact that the only thing separating the gray riffing of Nirvana from the likes of Deep Purple and Black Sabbath is their attitude—which appears to be that they can't be bothered. A few songs into their set, Cobain and bassist Chris Novoselic have a whimsical dispute about whether this is, in fact, their final gig, reaching the conclusion that they might tour again in November if, it seems, they can be bothered. A new song, "The Eagle Has Landed," is introduced as being "for all you bootleggers out there," the group apparently failing to be bothered enough to put it out. The intro to "Smells Like Teen Spirit" seems to be composed of so many bum notes it almost sounds right—but then, maybe Cobain just couldn't be bothered enough to get it exactly right.

Later, the guitarist introduces another new song, this one written for his new-born son, by telling us how his wife Courtney (who fronts Hole) thinks that everybody hates her and could we all shout out, "We love you, Courtney" to cheer her up? Personally, entering into the true spirit of the occasion, I couldn't be bothered.

The singles, as you'd expect, are the best-received songs. "Lithium," of course, has the benefit of the festival-friendly sing-along chorus "Yeah yeah yah-ay," which even the most memory-challenged old hippies can deal with comfortably, while "Come As You Are" serves as a neat capsule summation of the can't-be-bothered philosophy. There is something palpably absurd, however, in the spectacle of thousands of Brits singing along, "And I don't have a gun." Of course they don't! Guns are illegal in Britain. Besides, it's murder what some people can do with a guitar.

Cobain comes good right at the end, though, with the traditional festival closer "The Star-Spangled Banner," done to a Hendrix turn as Novoselic, Dave Grohl and their idiot-dancing chum Tony dismantle the equipment in time-honored Townshend style. Oddly, while the group's performance had been less than engrossing, it was virtually impossible to take your eyes off this bout of equipment-trashing. Here they are now, entertainers. Well, almost. —ANDY GILL

JACKSON

guignol presentation which includes Michael performing the song (though not, perhaps, actually singing it) with his head embedded in what looks like a border collie.

Though no expense has been spared, it's not a seamless show. Between-song pauses dissipate the excitement, nor does Jackson paper over the cracks with any chat; not even the death of Jeff Porcaro the previous week is remarked when he sings "Human Nature," which is odd for someone so steeped in sentimentality. (At the end of two sappy songs, he falls to his knees to wipe away a tear in a manner to shame the most broken-down nightclub ham.)

Music runs second to spectacle. Though on only a couple of tunes can one claim he mimes to tape, much of the backing is prerecorded, and that looks count for more than sounds is proved by the generic metal-bashing of peroxide guitar goddess Jennifer Batten. Michael throws away the Motown classics in a Jackson Five medley, but even truncated they pass the steroid test more convincingly than many songs on which his adult reputation rests. "Beat It" cantilevers our man over the crowd on a crane before returning him to the stage to do battle with the lamentable Batten. Uncluttered with gimmicks, "Billie Jean" encloses Jackson in a cone of light, just the man, his music and his Moonwalk. Breathtaking in every way, he sails his trilby into the crowd, a cheap but effective piece of theater.

As schmaltzy and madly messianic as one dreaded, "Will You Be There" has Michael fingering a small globe in a significant manner before being embraced by an angel (there's no knowing the color of Jackson's God, but his angels are definitely Caucasian), while the glutinous "Heal the World" lifts the stage 30 feet to reveal a very large globe indeed, around which he leads a crocodile of children clad in their national costumes according to Disney. A dove flutters onscreen and no cliché goes unlabored.

Completing this final leg of the show devoted to oneness and God, Jackson saves his best shot until last. "Man in the Mirror" is no classic but boasts a great outro, which here is extended into the farewell of Michael's entire two-hour visit to Planet Earth. Prerecorded, the Andrae Crouch Choir swoop, stab and overlap their magnificent gospel into an epiphany as funky as it is lovely, while Michael jives and hovers, lost in this celestial music. He (or rather a double) takes his leave via a Rocketeer-style backpack, and though you don't believe that Michael Jackson can fly, right then he's got 72,000 people airborne. The lows are low but the highs are even higher. —MAT SNOW

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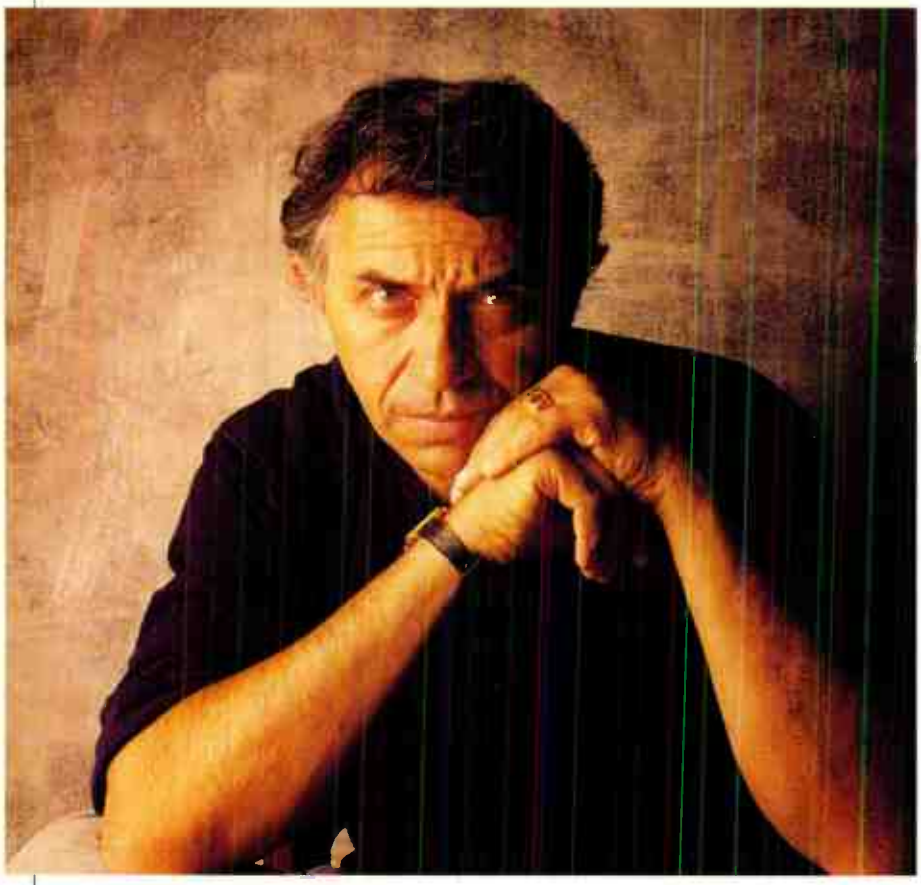

BY MARK ROWLAND

MORE THAN JIMI HENDRIX, JANIS JOPLIN OR JOHN LENNON, the death of Bill Graham in October 1991 signaled the end of a rock 'n' roll era. Not of the music, for Graham himself was not a musician. And certainly not of the concert business, where Graham, once rock's premier impresario, was increasingly outflanked toward the end by corporate rivals with deeper pockets. What perished was Graham's obstinate belief that in addition to enthralling audiences and generating some bucks rock 'n' roll could, should and would always channel some of its power to help make the world a better place. In his 25 years in the business, that code never wavered; only the times changed. Bill Graham entered as rock's first capitalist; he departed as rock's last hippie.

Graham was no saint—what he was was a character. With the wide brim of his hat shading dark, alert eyes, he looked less like a concert promoter than like a race tout, or a mobster—a resemblance noted by movie director Barry Levinson, who cast Graham in *Bugsy* as the gangster Lucky Luciano. Quick-witted and emotionally combative, Graham spoke in machine-gun bursts of intensity; even on the phone you could feel his finger poking your chest. In that regard, it's fitting that Doubleday Books has just released *Bill Graham Presents*, a 550-page autobiography of sorts by Graham with writer Robert Greenfield. You figure Graham wouldn't let a little thing like his death in a helicopter crash spoil his chance to grab the last word.

Make that words: Graham was a voluble guy, and unlike most celebrities he had a life worth talking about. His last 20 years hobnobbing with stars from Bob Dylan to Bruce Springsteen were the least interesting parts of it. "I don't mind hearing about what happened to me as a kid," his book begins. "But I've never been inquisitive." Soon enough you understand why.

He was born in 1931, the fifth child and only son of Jewish parents who lived in a border town between Germany and Poland. His father died the same year. Seven years later, in an effort to spare him from the encroaching Nazi Holocaust, Graham's mother, who would not survive it, sent Graham and his younger sister to live in a Paris "orphanage." When the Germans captured the city, those children embarked on a harrowing exodus by foot across southern France (where his sister died), Spain, Portugal and finally the Atlantic, where Graham was placed in a Jewish foster home not far from New York. He likens the weeks he spent there being looked over by prospective stepparents to being put up for sale, like an animal in a pet shop.

Along with the accounts of his surviving sisters (though Graham holds center stage, Greenfield has arranged his biography as a mosaic of oral history, with other voices adding their perspectives), this part of Graham's story recalls Jerzy Kosinski's equally harrowing *The Painted Bird*. But unlike Kosinski, whose literary works expressed his profound dislocation from humanity, Graham spent the rest of his life looking for counter-institutions he could call home. Adopted by a family in the Bronx, he found it for a while in the carnival of New York street life, in wildly competitive basketball games, in the sensual Latin dancefests he attended Wednesday nights at the Palladium. He gleefully recounts running enormous crap games while working as a waiter in the Catskills and as a private in the Army, and just as passionately expresses his outrage at a gov-

PHOTOGRAPH: WILLIAM COLPON

ernment that sent him to kill or be killed in Korea but wouldn't grant him citizenship. He flung himself into the life of an actor, then quit in horror when an agent suggested his face wasn't right for a part. For Graham, the point was too clear—he could never fit in. Each adventure would lead to a new exodus.

So it made sense that Graham's real career would begin with San Francisco's Mime Troupe, a gaggle of talented actors and political activists whose creative urges were a harbinger of late-'60s counterculture. For all their personality differences—a generation older and the antithesis of mellow, Graham was hardly a '60s kind of guy—he quickly grasped their common bond: "We were all misfits in a sense." Graham naturally veered toward the business end of things, which led him to promoting concerts by up-and-coming area bands the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead.

Unlike many of the fresh-faced '60s crowd, Graham's self-definition as a kind of moral outlaw was rooted in his personal experience. And when his code was at variance with everyone else's—crucially, when it became clear to Graham that he could make some money—he stuck by his ideals. At the time he was excoriated in certain quarters for "selling out" rock music, but in retrospect it seems clear that he was right: Rock 'n' roll was destined to become a big business; musicians liked a promoter who kept his word and paid on time; audiences appreciated a show that went smoothly and afforded maximum enjoyment for their dollar.

And ironically, by becoming an entrepreneur, Graham finally found his niche as an artist. He refurbished faded movie palaces in New York and San Francisco as the Fillmore East and West, creating a rock concert environment that has yet to be equaled, replete with Joshua White's legendary light show. He tried to expand the audience's musical awareness by booking blues, jazz and Latin support acts whose credentials were often more impressive than the headliners'. He helped stage elaborate events—most spectacularly, the Band's *Last Waltz* show—that transcended expectations of what a concert could provide. He pampered performers and wasn't above begging an extra encore on behalf of the fans. At the same time, as one jaw-dropping Led Zeppelin anecdote makes clear, he would not allow gross bullying to go unchallenged.

Graham's reputation as a promoter probably peaked in the years between his organization of triumphal tours by Bob Dylan with the Band in 1974 and by the Rolling Stones in 1981. But his unflagging work on behalf of political organizations and charities through [*cont'd on page 39*]

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Roney's individuality has become evident. On the Williams Quintet's latest record, *The Story of Neptune* (Blue Note), he juggles harmony and melody with a no-blink derring-do. A recent Bottom Line gig found the rest of the band shaking their heads at a solo that contained lightning-bolt blasts rising to almost blaring extensions. Like the scalding mid-range pronouncement that opens the first solo of his latest disc, *Seth Air* (Muse), you can sometimes feel the heat generated by Roney's rising confidence.

"I never want to sound overconfident," he said, "just professional and artistically honest. It's the professionalism that keeps me from worrying about taking chances—you've got to scratch that itch, right? Years ago I was in awe of the masters that I was playing with. Sonny Rollins came into a gig I was doing one night and I couldn't play nothing, felt like a fool. In the end it's cool though, because it makes you go home and practice harder."

Roney's ultimate jaw-dropper came at Montreux last year, when he played some of the lead horn lines on Gil Evans' arrangements of classic Miles Davis recordings. Miles himself gave Roney the nod during rehearsals. "That's when confidence is crucial," he said, shaking his head at the memory. "I just had to override my nervousness. He said, 'I know you can play, because Tony don't like no trumpet players 'cept me.' That made me laugh a bit. I was okay in front of him, but I think I could have been better."

All this Milesing around—Wallace also blows the air-conditioned lines on Gerry Mulligan's new *Re-Birth of the Cool* album—has brought some critical snipes: Isn't Miles' ultimate legacy a quest for individualism? "I know what you're saying," Roney countered politely, "but I don't know any young musician who had their own sound from the get-go, including Miles, Lee Morgan, Trane, whoever. When Trane was 30 he still sounded like Dexter Gordon.

"My favorite young artists are Geri Allen, Gary Thomas, my brother Antoine, Cindy Blackman, Steve Coleman. People who aren't afraid to go as far as they can go, but who also know their music. I want to stay with the on-top thing, look toward the forward edge. Now my definition of the edge might be a little bit different than that of the critics, but what can I do? I respect *players*."

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TOO OLD TO BE SIGNED?

Can a thirty-something musician get a record deal?

BY MARK SCHEERER

MICK JAGGER IS A GRANDDAD. That ought to give hope and encouragement to the middle-aged musician clinging to the dream of being "discovered" by a record company talent scout.

But it probably shouldn't.

It's one thing to sustain a career in rock or pop over a stretch of decades, quite another to launch one in one's 30s or 40s, according to a *Musician* sampling of A&R executives.

"What's really peculiar about age in the art of A&R," says Peter Lubin, VP of A&R at Elektra Records, "is that only in popular music is 'old' deemed to be not as good as 'young.' Whereas in every other art form and certainly in every other form of music, you're perceived to get better as you get older."

Although rock 'n' roll itself is pushing 40, and veterans like Jagger, Richards, McCartney, Clapton, Gabriel and others appear to have no retirement age in sight, undiscovered baby boomers harboring fantasies of fame better keep the day job (or the gigs in clubs and bars).

"What is being sold out there, what is being marketed out there are young people," Atco EastWest A&R exec John Mrvos says. "This industry, Natalie Cole notwithstanding, is youth-driven. The most successful acts out there, the acts that are selling big numbers, are geared toward a 12-to-18-year-old market. They are not going to be able to identify with a 35-year-old."

But it's not just the marketing challenge posed by rock or pop musicians with receding hairlines and advancing waistlines that makes A&R people wary of signing middle-aged artists. A sort of hardening of the creative arteries is what Lubin fears. "I think some of the bias against older people is that people say, 'Well, he's fully formed. Where is he going to go from here? It's not that exciting to me. Everything is revealed.' So, in terms of turning people on, the tastemakers and gatekeepers, the sort of people that you need to impress that this is a happening thing for years to come, say, 'Well, I think what you see is what you get; this guy's not that great,' and boom, the book is written."

Thorny, too, are the prospects of developing the newly signed artist with

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graying temples: finding a compatible producer, appropriate material and arrangements. "You absolutely do encounter more rigidity of thinking in older musicians than in young ones," says Lubin. "You find they are set in their ways. Things like, 'Hey—I cut my basic tracks this way.' Or 'I always do my guide vocals standing on my head' or whatever it is they've developed over the years. Some habits can be detrimental."

Mrvos, on the other hand, can see some advantages: "This is an adult, this is someone who's obviously come to terms with a lot of life's processes. There's an element of maturity here. Obviously, they've got a handle on the drugs and alcohol thing in their lives or whatever the downsides may be. They're responsible. And probably, from a creative standpoint, much more chops-oriented, much more disciplined, and I would say, from an A&R point of view, probably easier to work with."

Someone who has worked with Robbie Robertson and Rickie Lee Jones and whose latest projects were Nirvana and Sonic Youth is in a good position to weigh in on the subject of age and A&R. Geffen Records' Gary Gersh opines, "I think anybody is capable at any age of making their breakthrough. I don't think it's the age thing that matters. What I think matters is the quality of the work. If I walked into a club and saw a 40-year-old or a 50-year-old guy singing songs as good as Tom Waits or Rickie Lee Jones writes, I would have to consider [signing him]. If there is some bar band driving people crazy and they're willing to do what it takes to be a bar band that eventually reaches success, then they could have success and I would have to look at that."

But success also demands stamina. And energy. Play-all-night drive-all-day smells-like-teen-spirit energy. "If you're a bar band, what you need to do is play 300 bar shows a year. That's how you build your following. There's a reason why Primus, Widespread Panic, the Spin Doctors are out there playing, playing, playing in front of people. If you're going to be that kind of band, you've got to do it."

But hold on. That Stratocaster you got as a fortieth birthday present? Don't consign it to the garage sale yet. Says Mrvos: "It always comes down, first and foremost, to what the art is. If it's relevant and has artistic merit, the rest of it will take care of itself."

The scenario outlined by Lubin, however, is telling: "The first thing an A&R guy will say if he runs in with a fabulous demo is, 'Man, you gotta hear this, put this on!' You'll press play, you'll listen, and then when you shut it off, he'll say, 'And the best part is: He's only 22!'"

[*cont'd from page 30*] the '80s was arguably more impressive. Graham helped organize Live Aid as well as the logistically nightmarish world tour that brought together Bruce Springsteen, Sting and Peter Gabriel to benefit Amnesty International.

Of course, as one grows older it's easier to sympathize with Graham as he wished to be seen—as a harried, well-meaning father figure trying to cope with the whims of all his talented and irresponsible children. (Watching *The Graduate* over the years, I also find myself siding less with Ben and more with Mrs. Robinson.) What saves *Bill Graham Presents* from sounding like the memoirs of an insufferable nag is that he compulsively reveals his flaws as well. His last years were not particularly happy ones. A string of romances fell apart, the Rolling Stones chose to tour without him and Graham, a cranky workaholic prone to mood swings at the best of times, fell into a depression bordering on catatonia. After organizing a public protest against Ronald Reagan's decision to travel to Bitburg, Germany and kneel at Nazi graves, Graham's San Francisco office was destroyed by a bomb. The exodus had come full circle.

I have a theory about the kind of fascination the public holds for revered, deceased rock stars. Rumors abound that Elvis Presley and Jim Morrison are still alive, because of an understanding that their abilities had somehow been corrupted and that there were gifts bottled inside them that had yet to be tapped at the time of their demise. In that respect, therefore, their deaths were cosmically illogical. Whereas the interest in Jimi Hendrix, John Lennon and Janis Joplin has more of a spiritual dimension—though their lives were short, they gave themselves completely in that time, and as a consequence their spirits continue to inhabit the world and influence our own. In a cosmic sense, their physical deaths *were* logical.

I think Bill Graham fits the second category. Though he never played an instrument or made a record, he surely was a rock star. And no doubt he'd find plenty to do if he were around today, whether it was hurling anti-fascist thunderbolts at the Pat Buchanans of the world, or hailing the Bay Area's musical renaissance of bands like Digital Underground and the Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy. But at the same time, he did his work. He led a complete life. He made the world a better place. And if my theory's right, and Bill Graham's spirit is still floating about, then maybe his era hasn't died after all.

How Stradlin Loses his Illusion

BY CHARLES M. YOUNG

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL NATKIN/OUTLINE

IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME—saying hello to his father's dog chained there in the front yard. His affections enhanced by a goodly portion of brew, Izzy Stradlin leaned over and bared his teeth in a big smile. The dog in turn put his teeth through Izzy's face. It was a bad omen for Stradlin's flight to Phoenix later that day. Sitting in his airplane seat, with a hole through his nostril and another hole through his eyebrow, he couldn't figure it out. He was playing rhythm guitar for the world's biggest rock 'n' roll band, Guns N' Roses, who were about to play Los Angeles with the former world's biggest rock 'n' roll band, the Rolling Stones. No musician could hope for greater success.

And yet...his luck was growing inexplicably worse. He summoned the one proven method for dealing with such cruel irony: double Bacardi and Cokes, of which he downed several while smoking and enlightening the attendants with detailed critiques of their service. Days later, he would find himself wishing that someone had just hit him, adding a black eye to his mangled features, so he could have walked off the plane with simply a little more throb in his skull. As it was, he answered the call of nature. Finding the lavatories occupied, he drained his nature in a trash bin in full view of a stewardess. Nothing was said at the time, so Stradlin returned to his seat where he passed out until touchdown. Exiting the plane, he was suddenly surrounded by 12 cops and arrested. Thus another set of headlines for Guns N' Roses and another year of probation for Izzy Stradlin, who'd pretty much had his fill of probation from a drug bust in the mid-'80s.

A year later, in 1990, G N' R did another show with the Rolling Stones in Atlantic City. By this time, he had noticed a possible correlation between getting ripped and his luck going bad. It seemed a theory worthy of field investigation, and he had about a week of sobriety when Keith Richards and Ron Wood beckoned with a bottle of Rebel Yell. It was an invitation his rock 'n' roll heart could not turn down. That was his last drink—certainly one of history's coolest last drinks—and thereafter he took the road less traveled by, or at least the road untraveled by Keith and Ronnie. It was also a road that took him straight out of Guns N' Roses.

"Yeah, getting sober played a part in my leaving," says Stradlin, his eyes glancing alternately at the floor and out his hotel room window at the rain clouds over Chicago. His long, dark hair is gradually entangling itself into dreadlocks, and you have to search his glowing complexion for evidence of canine mastication. The overall impression is vibrant shyness. "I think you make more decisions when you're sober. And when you're fucked up, you're more likely to put up with things you wouldn't normally put up with. When I have something I wanna do, I gotta do it. I like *just doing it*. I didn't like the complications that became such a part of daily life in Guns N' Roses. Sometimes for the simplest things to happen would take days. Time was so slow, you sat around for days just to do a photo shoot. Schedule it, get a phone call, it's been delayed. Reschedule it, get a phone call, it's been delayed again. That pattern could stretch out for weeks. On *Illusion*, we did the basic tracks in about a month. Then there was a time lag of about a year before the vocals were finished. I went back to Indiana and painted the house. If you've got a group and people are focused, it just shouldn't take that long."

Why did Axl take so long?

"I never really knew, I guess. Just one of those things. On tour he had a real hard time finishing the sets. And he had a hard time getting onstage. So you're sitting there in the dressing room at a hockey rink and for, like, two hours the walls are vibrating while the audience is going, 'Bullshit! Bullshit!' That time goes *slow* when you're sober. And they have to send a helicopter to the hotel to get him. He would just 'get ready,' and sometimes he would 'get ready' for a long time. I don't know what goes on upstairs with him. To me it's pretty simple. Get an alarm clock, ya know? There's a modern invention that seems to work for people. You set it, and then you wake up when you're supposed to."

It's almost like Johnny Thunders with a big following.

"We opened for him once in Long Beach during the early days. This was back when Axl used to wear those chaps with his ass hanging out and no underwear. I remember it was backstage, and Johnny Thunders said, 'What are you, some kind of biker fag?' Axl goes, 'I'll fuckin' kill you.' Really wanted to kick his ass. And Johnny just sat there smoking his joints and drinking his Budweisers. Great first impression."

In the year since he left G N' R, Stradlin has assembled a new band and recorded a new album, both called Ju Ju Hounds. Ju Ju Hounds the band consists of Izzy on rhythm guitar, Rick Richards (ex–Georgia Satellites) on lead and slide, Jimmy Ashhurst (ex–Broken Homes) on bass and Charlie Quintana (has backed Bob Dylan) on drums. You might also have no-

RICK RICHARDS, IZZY, JIMMY ASHHURST AND CHARLES "CHALO" QUINTANA

"When I finally did hear Use Your Illusion, it was what I expected; the guitars were buried."

ticed Ashhurst and Quintana backing Charlie Sexton in the movie *Thelma and Louise*. *Ju Ju Hounds* the album could have been called *Rolling Ramones*. Izzy's a barre-chorder in the Johnny Ramone tradition, and Rick Richards plays rollicking slide guitar over a rhythm section that knows where to find the backbeat. Besides his physical resemblance to a younger, healthier Keith Richards, Stradlin sings a lot like him too. Ron Wood even makes a guest appearance on the cover of his song "Take a Look at the Guy." Ian McLagen and Nicky Hopkins contribute keyboards as well. It's a true rock 'n' roll band, they'll be touring, and you can bet they'll get onstage at the appointed hour. But how's it feel to be your own front man?

"Ah...it...it's okay. I've known other bands, and they always talk about, 'We looked at this singer but his hair was too short,' or his hair was too long, or he didn't dress right. Oh fuck it, ya know? After being in Guns N' Roses and Axl being the singer, who the fuck could I get that would even approach him? I can't, but I figured I can sing enough."

Born Jeff Isabelle, Stradlin grew up in Lafayette, Indiana. His father was an engraver, his mother worked for the phone company. They divorced when he was in third grade. Like a lot of artistic children, he didn't take well to school. Another artistic child who didn't take to it was his friend Bill Bailey, later to become Axl Rose. But where Axl protected himself by lashing out at every perceived threat, Izzy withdrew. He built a wall of fog around himself with marijuana and managed to graduate in 1979 with a D average. The gurgling sound at the beginning of "Train Track" on *Ju Ju Hounds* is a bong hit, and the lyric a reminiscence of the place kids hid out to smoke. His one dream then was to be in a band, and that clearly wasn't happening around Lafayette, so he packed up his drums and moved to Los Angeles.

Working a variety of odd jobs, he soon wangled his way into a band, mostly on the basis of his owning a PA system. They rehearsed for a week in the opulent, Orange County home of the bassist's parents and then played a gig in downtown L.A. "I was straight outta the Midwest and I didn't have a clue, but I noticed there was something strange about the audience. They didn't have any hair. And we all had long hair. We were sort of a punk drag band like the New York Dolls, and the singer was this really ugly guy wearing a pink Spandex jumpsuit, a tanktop and lots of makeup. And the rest of us were dressed the same way.

"So these guys with no hair turned out to be skinheads, and they hated us. They threw beer bottles and spit. They got onstage and broke the guitar player's finger, trashed the amps, beat the shit out of the singer. That was my first gig. We were called the Naughty Women. At the time I thought they must have it together because they had business cards."

Los Angeles offered a lot of interesting sights for an impressionable young Hoosier. The seed for the song "Pretty Tied Up," one of the few humorous moments on *Use Your Illusion II*, came one afternoon when Izzy was about 19. "My Mexican friend Tony took me to meet this woman named Margot at her house. She gave us some tequila or something and she goes in the bedroom and we walk in and there's this big fat naked guy with an onion in his mouth. He's wearing women's underwear and high heels and he's tied up with duct tape against the wall. Me and Tony were like, What the fuck is going on here? Cracking up laughing. She was this dominatrix chick. We sat around her living room for the rest of the afternoon, listening to records, and she'd go in the bedroom and do her thing. At the end of the day she turned him loose and he paid

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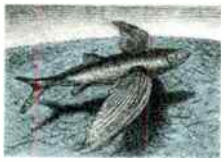

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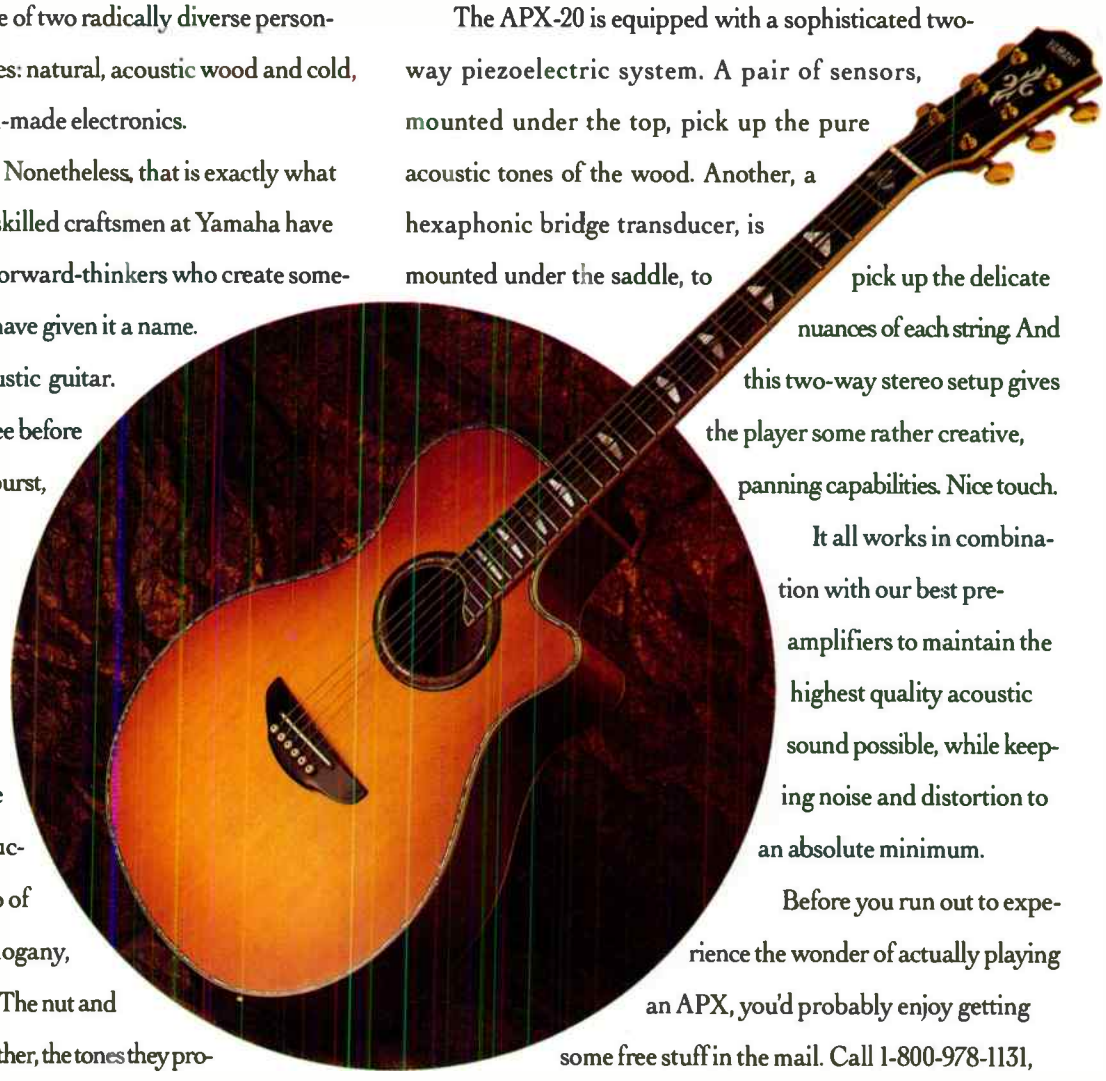

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her all this money. She took us out to eat. There was this whole scene of dominatrix chicks who worked in the S&M clubs. They'd beat on guys and after work, they'd take a musician out for dinner, let you stay at their place sometimes."

By 1984 or so, Izzy was living with a guy who was smoking powdered Persian heroin. Izzy would sit there practicing his guitar, the guy would take a hit off his pipe, and three hours later the guy hadn't moved. This piqued his curiosity. "I had a couple of hits and it felt great. But it was just like they say: You kinda dabble in something and the next thing you know you got a habit." Eventually he got busted, cheated by a lawyer and went cold turkey. When Guns N' Roses got signed to Geffen in 1986, he was using again but managed to confine himself to alcohol during the recording of *Appetite for Destruction*, which surprised everyone by selling 14 million copies. When he got off tour in 1988, he had the habit again and figured out he was going to die if he didn't quit. A doctor wrote him a prescription for Valium and codeine which he used to taper off during a harrowing drive back to Indiana with his brother.

"I kicked at my mom's place," he remembers. "I probably weighed about 115 pounds. I was obviously very sick and she let me stay there. That was a pretty traumatic experience, kicking in the house I grew up in. Lying there thinking, 'I fucked up somewhere. What was it? What brought me back here?'"

It's weird how you and Steven Adler, G N' R's original drummer, took opposite routes out of the band. You got straight and had to leave. He couldn't quit and got fired. And now he's suing on the grounds that he was encouraged to use heroin.

"I talked to him about a month ago. The lawyers said don't because of the lawsuit, but I'd heard he was in a bad way. He said he was having a hard time stretching it for more than a day or two. Really scared me. I know how I'd feel if he did himself in and I didn't make an effort to help him. I said if he cleaned up, I'd like to cut a couple of reggae tracks with him next summer. I know he's really bitter about the whole situation. He needs to start thinking forward."

Replacing him with Matt Sorum for the recording *Use Your Illusion I* and *II* changed Guns N' Roses from a rock 'n' roll band into a heavy metal band. Adler's drumming made the band swing. Sorum hits hard but he plods.

"Yeah, a big musical difference. The first time I realized what Steve did for the band was when he broke his hand in Michigan. Tried to punch through a wall and busted his hand. So we had Fred Coury come in from Cinderella for the Houston show. Fred played technically good and steady, but the songs sounded just awful. They were written with Steve playing the drums and his sense of swing was the push and pull that gave the songs their feel. When that was gone, it was just...unbelievable, weird. Nothing worked. I would have preferred to continue with Steve, but we'd had two years off and we couldn't wait any longer. It just didn't work for Slash to be telling Steve to straighten out. He wasn't ready to clean up."

What was your relationship to Slash?

"I don't think he really wanted another guitar player, but it was kind of a package deal, Axl and I. We had periods where we actually wrote some things together and worked out our parts. There was a little bit

Dick played piano. Dick's friends laughed. Dick didn't like that, so he bought a 45-note Roland AX-1 Remote Keyboard. Suddenly, Dick was cool. He could play standing up. He had an expression bar to create sounds he thought only guitar players could make. He even started speaking in longer sentences. Now, Dick could describe his keyboard's three preset velocity curves to accommodate different playing styles and the two separate transmit channels with programmable split point and transpose functions. He could even mention the Sustain Switch in the neck of the instrument, the ability to store entire system configurations as one of 32 user Patches and the fact that this keyboard could be battery powered. Jane liked to listen to Dick talk about his AX-1. It was a lot more interesting than hearing him drone on about Spot. The end.

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more interplay on *Appetite* than *Illusion*. He was like a brother, but a brother who really wanted to be out on his own.

"On *Illusion* I did the basic tracks, then he did his tracks, like a month or two by himself. Then came Axl's vocal parts. I went back to Indiana. I'd been around for rehearsals, learning the songs and all that stuff. I didn't really listen to the record until it was out. When I finally did hear it, it was what I expected: The guitars were basically buried."

Slash has accused you of turning in sloppily made demo tapes.

"That's not Slash talking. That's Axl talking and Slash repeating it. Axl did say the tapes weren't up to G N' R standards. Well, in the beginning nobody owned an eight-track. All our tapes were made on a cassette player. Whatever, I'm credited with just about everything I wrote. I will say that Slash was much better at keeping tapes in order. He always labeled stuff."

Does it bother you when Axl bad raps you from the stage?

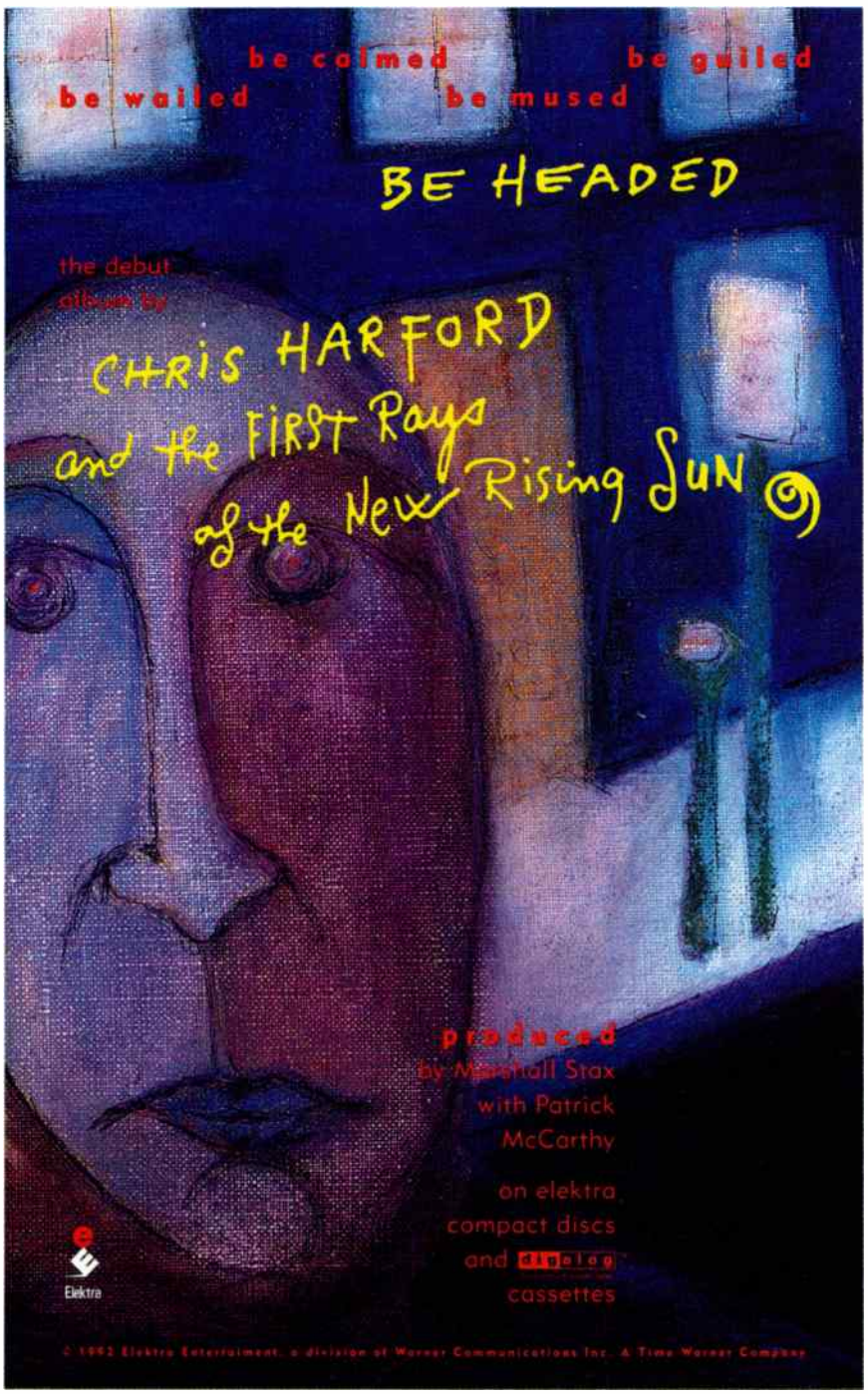
"I've heard he's still slinging mud. I can't take it personally, because if it wasn't me, it would just be somebody else. Somebody's gotta get it in every city. There's nothing I can do about it. When I left the band, he got real pissed off, told me to get off his property. When I talked to him a couple weeks later, he said he wasn't still mad, but who knows? I've left him all my phone numbers since December, and he still hasn't called. When he's ready, he'll call and we'll talk."

What about Duff McKagen? His face has gone the way of Jimmy Page in the sense that he used to be beautiful and now he's lost his chin to toxic bloat.

"The doctors talked to him two years ago," Izzy sighs. "They said your liver is supposed to be this big." He holds his hands in the shape of a hardball. "They said his liver was this big." He holds his hands in the shape of a softball. "And when his liver gets this big, it's all over." He holds his hands in the shape of a canteloupe.

Another complaint that the remaining Gunners have about you is that you left the band even before you left the band. You traveled to gigs by yourself and they never knew where you were.

"I did prefer to travel at my own pace. They had a jumbo jet and most of the gigs were 200 miles apart. When a gig was over, my girlfriend and my dog and I would just get on the tour bus. I didn't need to go out and get laid. I had to pass on the booze. There just wasn't much for me to do backstage. Toward the end of the tour we even dumped the bus and took a van or a motorcycle. My dog Treader loved being on tour. I got him when I got sober and he's helped me keep my perspective, see life through a dog's eyes. You're doing all right if you've got food, a place to sleep and someone to pet you."



JU JU SOUNDS

On *Ju Ju Hounds*, IZZY STRADLIN played a couple of vintage Telecasters, a Les Paul Special and an old Gibson Hummingbird acoustic. His primary amps were Fender Bassman and MESA/Boogie. His strings are Ernie Balls.

RICK RICHARDS favored Les Paul Juniors, also through MESA/Boogie amplification.

JIMMY ASHHURST played a '51 Fender Precision reissue with the shaved-down '57 neck through an SWR SM400.

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PHOTOS BY ANN STATES

• Speech Speaks Softly and Carries Big Ideas

WHOTION

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

Hey, Speech! Your first single went Top 10... Your album's headed for platinum... Spike Lee wants you to provide the theme song for his next movie... A tour with En Vogue starts in two weeks... What are you gonna do now?

"I'm gonna do a little running around today," he says. "This is the perfect time to put up some posters."

How's that again? The creative mastermind behind Arrested Development, Speech has enjoyed a breathtaking year, seeing the success of the single "Tennessee" and the album *3 Years, 5 Months and 2 Days in the Life of...* turn him and his group into a true sensation with fans, critics and peers. If you take at face value the spicy, down-home brew of funk and rap that makes AD so appealing, you might expect to encounter Speech out in the back pasture, shucking corn as he awaits new inspirations from the Lord. If you consider his sudden rise to prominence, you might expect to find him on a car phone in the back of his stretch limo, plotting the next move in the conquest of the world.

Instead, with deadlines closing in, with demands on his time multiplying by the hour, the diminutive, soft-spoken Speech intends to spend this sweltering late-August day imitating a lowly record-company promo man, hanging Arrested Development posters in downtown Atlanta shops.

Right now, it's mid-morning and I'm standing in Speech's small one-bedroom apartment in the northeast section of the city, pondering what seems to be an unstarlike environment. His place displays classic signs of a bachelor pad: barren refrigerator, with one half-filled ice tray, dirty dishes in the sink, magazines and books piled around, a few posters on the wall and so forth. The bedroom is another story entirely. Speech has turned it into a home studio and creates demos for his songs here.

Asked about the setup, he laughs, "I'm really a caveman. At least, that's what all my friends call me. I don't

by jon young

deal with anything MIDI-wise. I have an Ensoniq EPS sampler that I do all my sampling on. All the drum tracks on the last album were done on the sampler or on this Alesis. I used to be a DJ, so I still do a little scratching. I just got a rack-mounted E-mu Proteus keyboard, which gives me regular sounds that I don't need to sample. And I just bought an MPC 60, but I haven't really learned how to use it yet."

Today, the work in progress is "Revolution," the theme for Spike Lee's movie *Malcolm X*. Earlier in the week, Speech met with the director in New York, saw the rough cut and agreed to tackle the project. Opening a briefcase containing dozens of floppy disks, he takes the one containing the song's instrumental track—the words aren't finished—and begins dubbing the music onto cassette, to be played over and over during the day when he's driving around. The sounds that blast from the speakers may surprise those who think they already have Arrested Development pegged: A harsh, almost dissonant bassline sets the tempo, with scratches, jagged horn samples and a whomping drum track filling in the spaces. It's a harder, more street-oriented noise than anything on *3 Years...*, befitting the subject matter.

Along the wall opposite the bank of equipment is a long, disorganized row of vinyl albums and 12-inch singles, dominated by rap and funk ranging from the '70s to the present. "I'm not too much into CDs," says Speech, who's wearing granny shades, cutoffs and a bright peace-symbol T-shirt that Spike gave him. "You can't scratch 'em. Some of these records have gotten damaged over the years, so I have 'em on CD for preservation, but that's about it.

"We've started a movement called 'Power to the Vinyl.' A lot of different DJs are supporting us—DJ Red Alert, DJ Premier from Gang Starr, DJs overseas. We're gonna pressure record companies into continuing to press vinyl, because as artists we need to stand up for what keeps us alive.

"WE REALIZED IT WASN'T JUST ABOUT MAKING MONEY, IT WAS ABOUT EXPRESS-

ING INNER FEELING. WE HAD A LOT MORE TO SAY THAN 'BITCH' AND 'HO.'"

"We had to push Chrysalis to get our record on vinyl, to convince them that it's a necessary thing. It's not just our label, it's that way across the board, except for independents, where it's one of their only ways to compete." Asked about the hint of a trend away from turntables and toward live instruments in rap, he says, "Arrested Development loves live instruments, but I don't agree with that philosophy." (Indeed, on one of their 12-inchers, the group salutes DJs as "turntable instrumentalists.")

With the dub of "Revolution" completed, the windows stop rattling. Do the neighbors ever complain? "Sure," laughs Speech. "I've gotten three eviction notices. But I'm moving out in another month to a house I bought in Lithonia [a small town not far out of the city], so they've pretty much given up."

Gathering up a supply of Arrested Development posters and album flats, Speech heads for the parking lot and his Geo Tracker. Revving up the engine, he heads out of the sprawling apartment complex toward I-85, discussing recent history as he zips through traffic.

Although his family has roots in the South, Speech (a.k.a. Todd Thomas) grew up in Milwaukee. "I came down to Atlanta in '87," he notes. "There's not much happening for black people in Milwaukee and I felt like I had to leave. I wasn't too good a student in high school, so regular college wasn't really an option. But my mother wanted me to have some kind of higher education, and you have to respect your parents! I studied music at the Art Institute of Atlanta because it didn't have strict academic criteria and I became a great student—my average was never under 3.5. I learned theory, history, the music business, studio work. I met our DJ Headliner [Timothy Barnwell] there, as well as a lot of other folks I deal with now. It's a school of misfits, creative people who couldn't get into a real college."

Speech and Headliner initially tried their hand at gangster rap. "We knew we wanted to be in rap and that was the stuff that was really catching on," he recalls. "But after a while it didn't feel right. We realized it wasn't just about making money, it was about expressing inner feelings, and we had a lot more to say than 'bitch' and 'ho.'"

What Speech came up with instead was something he calls "Life Music," which isn't nearly as hippy-dippy as it sounds. Motivated by a strong Christian faith, and feeling a mandate to provide a positive direction, Speech began writing songs on issues of concern to the African-American community. You can hear the results on *3 Years...*, where he expresses support for single black mothers ("Mama's Always on Stage"), dreams of liberation ("Raining Revolution") and laments the complacency of most black churches ("Fishin' 4 Religion"), among other subjects. (Indeed, the name Arrested Development reflects Speech's belief that the African-American community needs a spiritual rebirth.) Rarely have morality and killer beats been paired more effectively.

Speech also writes pieces for a column entitled "20th Century African," featured in the *Milwaukee Community Journal*, a newspaper owned by his parents. Among the subjects he's discussed over the last 18 months are the crack epidemic, respect for women and the importance of literacy. But I digress.

"You feel like a place is home when you've been through some tough times there. Atlanta started to feel like home after a year because we went through some very bad times financially trying to get established," he says, switching lanes at the drop of a hat. Early on, Speech and Headliner pressed up 200 copies of a four-song disc, but recognition was slow in coming.

"If we'd been an R&B band that performed covers it would have been a lot easier. We had to create venues to expose ourselves and at first we ended up playing mostly for rural audiences south of Atlanta, because they were more receptive. They didn't get that much entertainment in the first place so they weren't so picky. They didn't say, 'This isn't Bobby Brown!'

"Finally, we started getting known in Atlanta and became the house band at a place called Celebs, a rundown club in the ghetto on the east side. We played there every weekend and before we knew it we had a little audience of our own, including record company people." After three years, five months and two days in existence, Arrested Development signed a contract with Chrysalis.

Speech pulls off the freeway and into a shopping mall for the first

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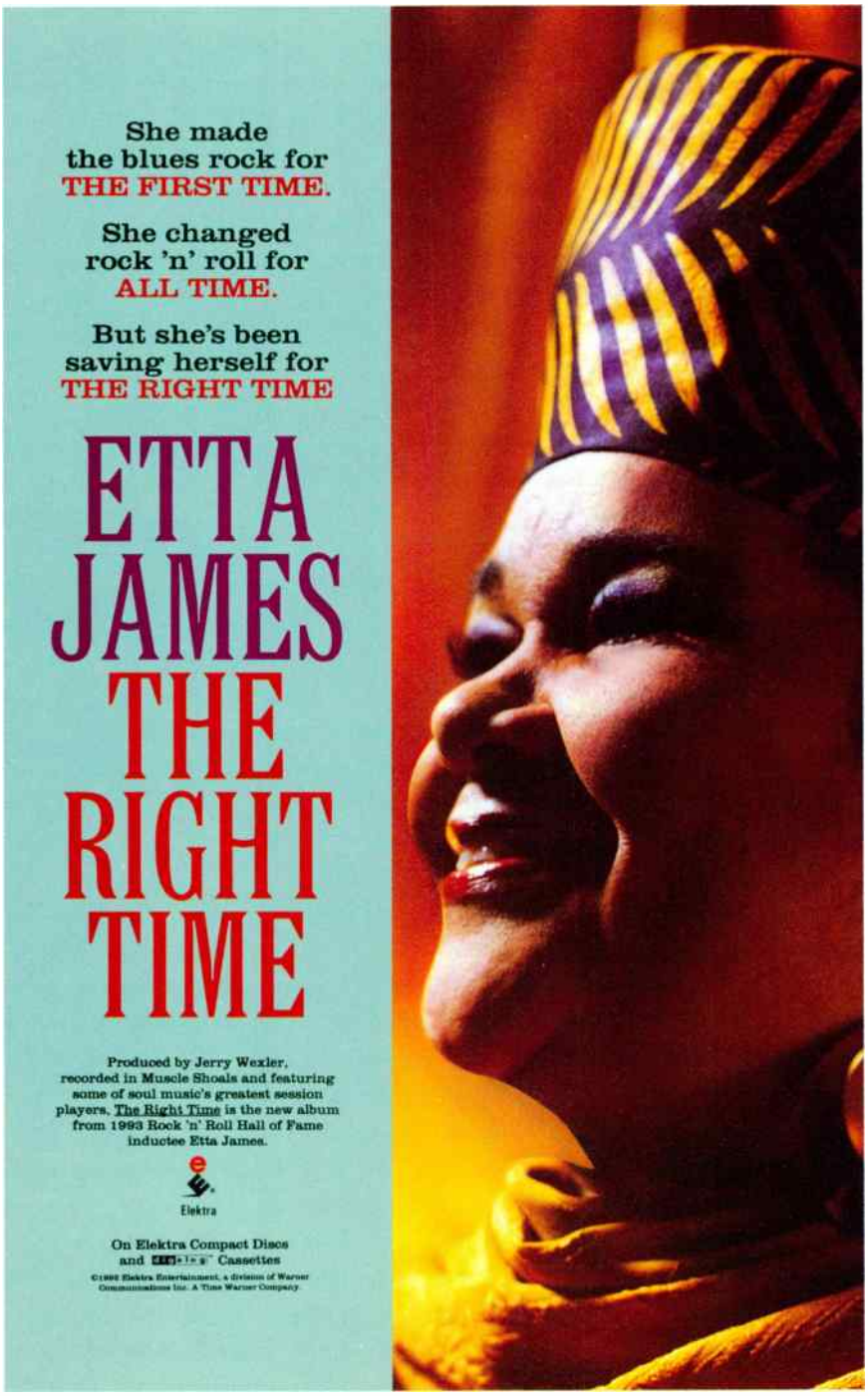
stop of the day: an office supply store. "I need some tape to hang up these posters," he explains. But isn't that the job of the label? "Record companies don't see black communities as worth the effort and they ignore them," he explains matter-of-factly, without apparent anger. "No one else would know where to go, so we go into these places ourselves and hang our posters up. We like to talk to people in soul food restaurants and other black-owned stores and check on record stores. The grass roots are where we come from. Although this album is a pop success, the next record may not be. We don't depend on that. We depend on the type of people you're gonna see today to support Arrested Development."

Tape purchased, Speech heads back to the vehicle. "Chrysalis originally signed us for 'Natural' and 'Mr. Wendal' [two tracks that ended up on the album]. We had a single deal, nothing more. Then my brother died and that threw me for a loop. I ended up writing 'Tennessee' to help get me over the hump and we insisted it be the single. That's when we got the album deal."



Back on the interstate, Speech laughs, "I probably listened to our album a million times when it first came out. It was a really good feeling, especially on CD, ironically. I never imagined anything I did would be on CD, and to see that brought a whole new kind of legitimacy for me."

Next, Speech picks up Monyea, an old pal who works with him on various projects, including "Revolution," and plays piano onstage with AD as part of the band's extended family. A producer who operates a small studio in his home, Monyea is loaning Speech his Tascam Portastudio 488 to help finish up Spike's track. Cruising in the fast lane, Speech runs through the lyrics as the unfinished track booms out of the Tracker's cassette deck. Although it's hard to make out the double-time rap over the combined roar of the engine and the bass, he seems to be taking a more aggressive stance, at one point saying, "You don't want us to go get a gun now, do you?"

The reception Speech gets at the Atlanta Discount Music, where he hangs his first poster of the day, provides an initial indication of the commotion he creates without trying. The staff of the instrument store greet him like a favorite son, and customers flash the "Aren't you famous?" stare that will be repeated over and over the next few hours. Two young white kids approach with amazed expressions and hands outstretched, saying, "Oh my god! You're the lead singer of Arrested Development! We're not much into the rap thing, but you guys write great music." Ever courteous, Speech politely declines a request to come see their band practice, but counters by inviting the guys to come see Arrested Development rehearse.

Monyea remembers, "I met Speech about four years ago when somebody brought him by my home studio. I just could not get rid of him. Every time I'd wake up he'd be there at the door. Now we're best friends—most of the time we don't even talk about music." Admitting that he's "still shocked" at Arrested Development's popularity, Monyea says, "I used to say they'd either have a big flop or a big hit. Now I can afford a hamburger."

Then it's back into the heart of the city to pick up Headliner and fellow bandmember Montsho Eshe (vocals and choreography). First target for the AD swat team: Little Five Points, a hip, racially mixed area of shops and restaurants. Splitting up the group into two crews, both armed with posters, flats and tape, Speech leads one contingent and sends the other in the opposite direction, the better to obtain maximum coverage.

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The drill is simple. As the leader of his squadron, Speech approaches the manager or cashier and says something like, "We've gotta group called Arrested Development and I was wondering if we could hang up a poster in your store. We're a nationwide group but we're from here." When asked what kind of music they play, he answers, "Cultural hip-hop." Some may be impressed by his gentle, rigorously polite manner. Some may realize they're looking at a big-deal recording star, although Speech never brags, only naming his hits when pressed. Nobody turns him down. Many autographs and handshakes later, Little Five Points is covered with Arrested Development paraphernalia. And Speech appears to be enjoying every minute.

When the AD army swings into all-black neighborhoods, the response is even more intense. Strangers on the street greet Speech like a hero, offering words of encouragement. Energized by the contact, he gets more enthusiastic as the day goes on. At a light, the car in the next lane is playing "Mama's Always on Stage," prompting Speech to shout "I like that track!" at the startled driver.

By mid-afternoon, supplies are low and everyone but fearless leader is flagging, so it's off to a west-side soul food restaurant for lunch. After Speech and company hang a poster by the register (of course), we chow down. Over a hefty spread of home-style cookin', the group discusses the upcoming six-week tour with En Vogue, debates the virtues of roasted corn and gossips about Atlanta's recent Jack the Rapper black music convention. Monyea recalls meeting his idol, Jimmy Jam, and kids Speech about his vegetarian diet, saying, "When you all aren't around, he eats pickled pig feet sandwiches!," prompting his target to respond, laughing, "Stop it! He'll [meaning me] think you're for real. That's a lie!"

Outside, rain starts to fall, courtesy of Hurricane Andrew's leftovers. While the others wonder if the weather will scuttle the photo session, just an hour away, Speech is undaunted. "The rain is beautiful. Let's do it in the rain. It'll be so dope! You all with me?"

As we head for a shopping mall and a rendezvous with the photographer and AD singer/clothing designer Aerle Taree (drummer Rasa Don is AWOL), Speech idly chants the words to Run-D.M.C.'s "Hollis Rap," underscoring how much has happened in black music since that 1984 song. At the mall, he keeps promoting Arrested Development, asking a record store manager if anyone from the label's come in to put up a display lately. The answer is no.

And on he goes, always moving forward, never resting. Questioned about his perpetual motion, Speech smiles, "You feel productive when you finish the day. I never was too much for sitting around and watching TV."

Obviously. Of course, it's easier to stay motivated when people enjoy what you do, and when you feel like there's a purpose behind it all. On *3 Years...* he wrote, "Lord—Through Arrested Development may your work be done." As the skies begin to clear in time for the photo session in Piedmont Park, he tries to put his whirlwind life into perspective, saying, "It all comes from God. I feel I'm just the middleman in all this. I know I am. I'm very thankful for what we have but I don't take it as the be-all and end-all."

Asked what lies ahead musically for Arrested Development, Speech says, "We've never had a set style, except that we're Afrocentric and a bit more organic, instead of urban and 'cementy.' We'll be expanding our horizons when we come with our next album, but there's no particular course planned. It'll come any way God wants it to. People will just have to keep up."

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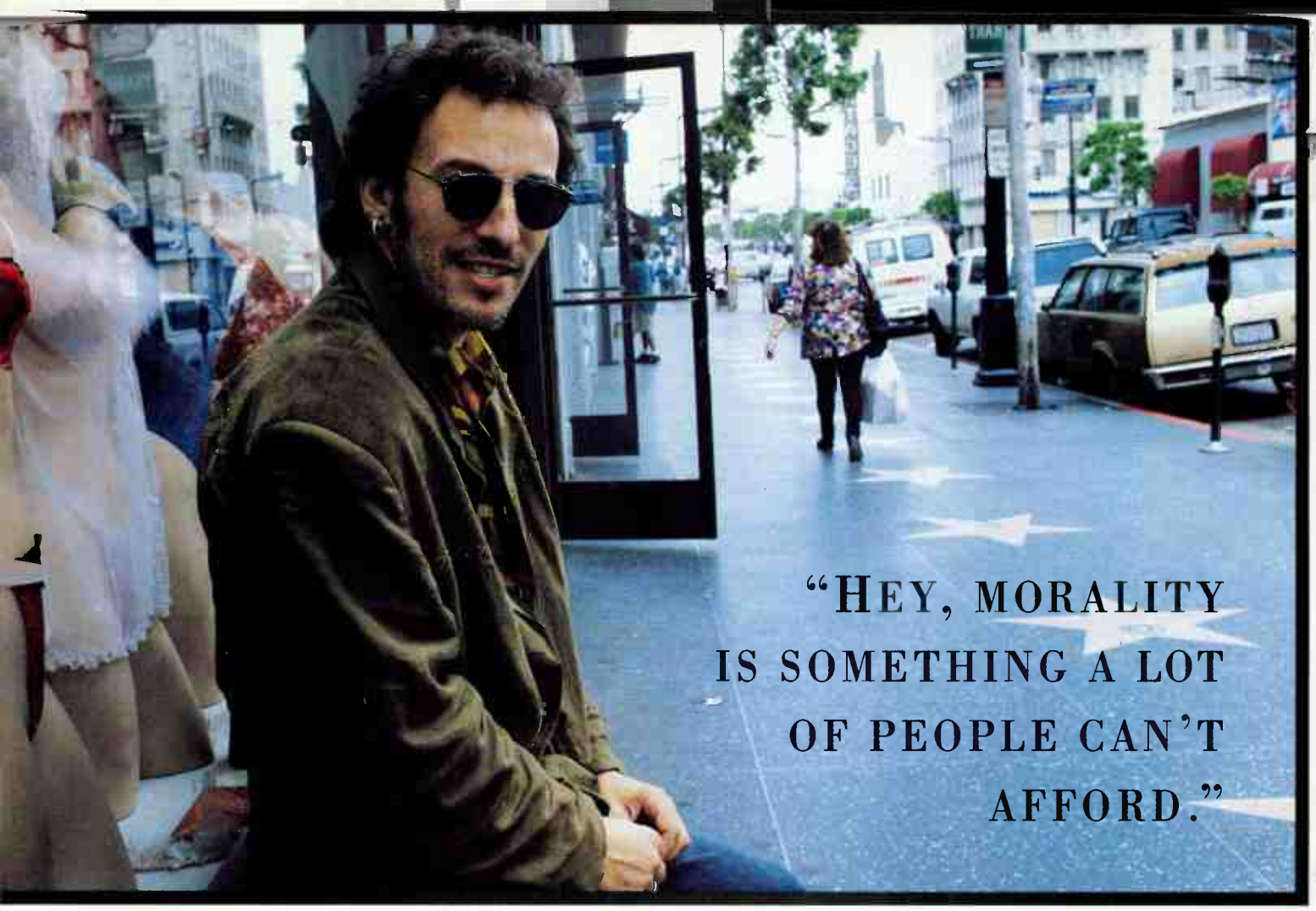
AMBITION, LIES, & THE BEAUTIFUL REWARD

INTERVIEW BY BILL FLANAGAN

Bruce Springsteen's Family Values

AT THE WORLD MUSIC THEATRE, a big new shed sitting out in a corn field an hour south of Chicago, Bruce Springsteen and his new band are playing "Better Days" to an empty room. It's afternoon soundcheck for the first of two nights at the World. When Springsteen finishes the song, distant cheering comes from somewhere beyond the grassy embankment that rises behind the last row of seats. "There's people out there!" Bruce calls into his mike and another distant roar answers. It's the sound of early-arriving fans, camped out beyond the gates. Bruce's wife, Patti Scialfa, approaches from the wings, slips on her guitar and she and Bruce practice their "Brilliant Disguise" harmonies three or four times. But Patti's got something on her mind more pressing than practice. She confers anxiously with her husband while the band stands in place. He listens, answers, listens again, then nods. Patti rushes offstage, a big smile on her face, saying, "Where's the E-man?" A minute later she comes back carrying Evan Springsteen, two years old and

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAT HARBRON



"HEY, MORALITY IS SOMETHING A LOT OF PEOPLE CAN'T AFFORD."

wearing protective plastic ear muffs. Evan is psyched. Patti puts him down next to his dad and Bruce takes Patti's vocal mike off its stand, says in an Elvis voice, "Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce a special guest," and puts the mike in Evan's hand.

Bruce starts playing "Johnny B. Goode," mouthing the words for the little boy like *come on, son, you know this one*. Evan's inherited his father's onstage stance—he plants his little feet far apart, puts the mike to his mouth and—when Dad gets to the "go go"s Evan sings, "wo wo!" Bruce is playing, the band is tapping along, Uncle Roy Bittan comes down from the keyboard riser to clap Evan on and Bruce is smiling at his kid and insisting, "Go! Go!" and Evan is insisting "Wo! Wo!" Go, Johnny, Wo, Johnny, Wo Wo Johnny B. Goode. Bruce shifts to a Bo Diddley beat and tries to get Evan to sing, "Papa gonna buy you a mockingbird" but Evan won't let go of the wo-wos.

The band, laughing (and not minding one bit that this means supper is on the table), slips away. Patti sits down on the stage chatting with bandmember Crystal Taliefero. Evan's little sister Jessica finds her way out and Bruce scoops up both his babies and walks around the drums with a kid in each arm. It could be the living room of any young family, except for all the musical equipment. These are Bruce Springsteen's better days.

"It's a big change," Bruce says when asked about traveling with this new family. "In the past I think one of the ideas of the road was the idea of escape. The other idea is the search for adventure or experience. For me, part of it was throwing off whatever your daily life is. Even when you're traveling in a van with six other guys, it's all-consuming. It's not that particular thing for me anymore. So the trick now was to make it all work together. It's been going good.

"If I have any knowledge about the way that relationships work—whether it's partners or kids—it's, you gotta *be* there. That's what kids want—to *see* you on a steady basis. That's the most fundamental thing that you communicate. Particularly when they're real young. The first five or six weeks everybody was adjusting to it. Particularly because at the time the schedule was tighter and the show felt so exhausting. That took a little reorienting. 'I can't play this many shows this close together 'cause then when I go home all I'm going to do is sleep.'" Springsteen laughs. "I'm not going to be any good to anybody. So we sorted it out, the spacing is slightly better, and it's been great. I've got plenty of energy, we all travel together. I really, really enjoy it. Part of what Patti does with me is say, 'Get out there and work! Get out there! Say what you've got to say.' And if you feel what you have to say has some value, that's what you want to do."

On "Local Hero," one of the cornerstones of his concerts and his *Lucky Town* album, Springsteen tells the story of a man who finds his way home from a debilitating life of fame and travel. He is rescued by a "gypsy girl," he settles down with her, but lying in bed he still hears the highway call. It's a funnier version of the story he told in "Cautious Man" on *Tunnel of Love*. No matter how happy domestic life gets, the character still hears temptation whispering.

"Oh yeah!" Springsteen says. "You got to! You don't ever *not* hear that. That never goes away. That's the point. That's what makes your choice *mean* something." Maybe what Springsteen's figured out that the Local Hero and the Cautious Man haven't is that it's a false choice: When the family man hears the road calling he can go to it—and take

 PHOTOGRAPH: NEAL PRESTON

the wife and kids along.

Springsteen is closing most of his shows with "My Beautiful Reward," a song of vague dislocation, in which the narrator surveys everything he has and wonders why he still has not found complete satisfaction. In the final verse, in an unusual flight of poetry, the singer turns into a black bird and soars over gray fields and rivers, still searching.

"I think I saw the image somewhere in a book," Springsteen says. "When I started I planned to write a nice song about my kids. It just took a funny turn. It was one of those songs like 'Highway Patrolman' in that there was a certain inconclusiveness to it that always made me feel like it wasn't finished. I kept trying to make it nice and neat, to tie up the ending and make it more concrete. After I recorded it I thought, 'I didn't quite get it on this one.' But then it started to come out and I realized it was right the way it was. It's one of those songs you don't consciously write—it comes up out of your unconscious or subconscious. That's why it's better than the stuff you slave over. I haven't tried to really interpret it. It was dealing with death in some fashion."

It suggests both the possibility of finally finding your beautiful reward, and also the chance that even when your soul is floating out of your body you'll still be looking for it in vain.

Springsteen answers, "I think it's that there is no concrete *it*, that idea that you reach a point where a) everything's okay, b) you're going to be happy now forever, c) you figure out everything. That's not the way life is lived, that's not the human experience. I think that when you begin to deal concretely with your own mortality and your family and your partner, death becomes a big part of that equation. You see your children. Well, your children are your afterlife, there they are. And your love with your partner is, too. That lives on through your kids. That's your afterlife.

"Forty-two is still really young, but it's old enough to see the whole picture, and it's old enough to stop living completely for yourself and to start seeing the lines that you're leaving, how things start to spread out in front of you. That was a good song to finish the record with because I wasn't trying to make an *Everything's Coming Up Roses* kind of record. I was trying to make a record that was really strongly positive and had a feeling of real love in it and real hope. Because I've felt and found those things in my own life. But I wasn't trying to present it as a blueprint. I was trying to stay away from all the fairy tale stuff. That song expresses a little bit of the part of everybody that's always alone.

"It's not like any of my early road songs, it's not about escape. It's about coming to terms with different realities. Sort of a confrontation with your own individual soul or spirit. But I think it was an important end for that record. I was trying to write about—like in 'Big Muddy'—moral ambivalence and moral ambiguousness. Hey, morality is something a lot of people can't afford."

One of the reasons "Beautiful Reward" comes as a surprise is that while his early songs contained great bursts of poetic language, Springsteen has for years pared his lyrics down to basics. On this tour, when he performs "Growin' Up" or even "Thunder Road," the change in his songwriting over the years is striking. He says that change was premeditated.

"There were two reasons. I altered the language of music. And I wanted to get away from the Dylan comparisons at the time. Which, really, I go back now and the songs had a lot of imagery in them but they weren't like Bob's songs at all. But at the time I was self-conscious about it and trying to find my own voice. I just felt like I wanted to speak more directly. I liked the way Robbie Robertson was writing at the time with the Band. Sort of colloquial. It sounded like people telling stories and talking about themselves, as if you were sitting on the couch. So I started to go in that direction. In the end I'm not sure what difference it makes in communicating, but at the time it was something I wanted to pursue and I've gone that way ever since. I tend to opt for simplicity and clarity. I like the images to be clear."

Singing songs like "Growin' Up" now, Springsteen says, "They all had funny imagery and a lot of humor in them. And I got some of that back on *Lucky Town*. That humor's sometimes the toughest thing for me to get into my music."

What's changed a lot on *Lucky Town*, though, is the degree to which Springsteen is writing in the first person—his new songs are sung by "me" to "you." There's no Magic Rat, no Highway Patrolman, standing in.

"You get more comfortable with who you are and you create less of a persona," Springsteen says. "I was concerned about the music being that. That's what I was looking for. That's what I waited for when I was off: to find something that felt like the music I should be singing now. Something I felt would be defining to my audience, that would help people get a fix on where I'm standing and who I am. I waited for quite a while for that stuff to come out and for me to be able to get to it. I initially tried to write more genre-like. Some of the better examples of that ended up on *Human Touch*. I always say, 'Oh, I'll make this album 10 rock songs or 10 this or 10 that, get away from *searching, searching* all the time.' If I put more records out maybe I'd have an opportunity to do that. I'd like to put more records out, but I always say that and never do.

"I wrote ambitiously. From the beginning I wrote wildly big with the idea of taking the whole thing in and being definitive. I think the show took on that approach also. I was ambitious."

"I had been through a lot of changes and a lot of experiences through the '80s. I think people listen to my music to find out about themselves. I've got to press to find out about myself before I can broaden it and present it. So it took a while. But it felt good."

I tell Springsteen that it's surprising to hear how much his writing is affected by his expectations of how it will be heard. In the '70s he worried about irrelevant Dylan comparisons, in the '90s he sweats over what his audience expects.

"I guess," he says softly. "Yeah, yeah. I believe everybody who writes has an audience in his head, whether it's an imaginary audience or your real audience. I had a feeling who my audience was most of the time and why people came to my music or bought my records or came to my shows. I felt I knew what I was delivering that drew people to

CRYSTAL TALIEFERO, SPRINGSTEEN'S MAIN FOIL ONSTAGE, JOINED THE BAND JUST FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE FIRST SHOW.

those things. At least a core of the people that have come. I always write with an audience in mind. Not in terms of if it'll be a big hit, but in terms of what the music's delivering. It's pretty simple—I try to write really well, I try to write emotionally. And if I feel that coming back at me then I feel like I'm doing my job. That's why people come to my music—for some emotional experience or a perspective, either on their own lives or on the world that they're living in, or on their relationships. For a perspective.

"Until *I* get some perspective on it, I can't find it. Once I find a point of view, that's where I'm standing and that's when the records are released. That's what gives me the motivation to come out and travel and tour and work and try to stay a part of the thread of people's lives, just by doing my job." Bruce lets out a laugh. "It feels like a big job a lot of the time. I'm historically ambivalent at this point; it's just always been a part of my personality that I say, 'Gee, maybe I should've been a truck driver.' It's baloney but everybody does it. Maybe it's a way of escaping whatever you feel the responsibility of your job is.

"I've tried to keep my eye on the ball, to keep a clear view of those things. And I try to be consistent with the characters. The guy on 'Beautiful Reward' is the guy on 'Born to Run.' Hey, that's where life has taken these people. I always try to make sure the stuff I'm writing is inclusive in that sense. That it's broad enough. It's partly about me but for it to work right it's got to also be partly about you. If it's just one or the other something's missing."

Springsteen moves around his dressing room. Outside the fans are coming in. "I'd like to do more experimental things," he says. "Things where I step out of that specific chronology. I feel like I need to find an outlet that will sort of allow me to take a side road here and a side road there. If I made more records I'd be able to do that, even if they were less consistent in some fashion."

Like Neil Young?

"Yeah! He goes over here and over there. I like the idea of that freedom. I don't tend to do it on my own. At some point I'd like to find some place to move like that."

OUT IN THE BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR is Roy Bittan, the happiest man in Illinois. I've never seen Roy this happy. He's been Springsteen's keyboard player for 18 years, he's been a top session pianist, he's the only member of the E Street Band still playing with Bruce, he co-produced the *Human Touch* album and even co-wrote two songs, he's got a beautiful wife, a wonderful son, a beach house in Malibu, but that's not why Roy is so happy. "I just got the *R&R* numbers!" he tells the other musicians, who may or may not know that *Radio & Records* is a broadcasting tipsheet. "We're the second most added record in the country! Only Bobby Brown is ahead of us!" Roy is bouncing off the walls. No, it's not a Bruce Springsteen record he's so excited about. It's "Sometimes Love Just Ain't Enough" by Patty Smyth with Don Henley, a single from a new Patty Smyth album produced by—*(drum roll)*—Roy Bittan. Roy has been trying to establish himself as a record producer for years (Springsteen says he is especially fond of an album Roy produced last year for singer/songwriter Will T. Massey). The fact that Bruce made Roy co-producer of his album was a huge boost—but as all Springsteen albums are produced by a team that includes Bruce, manager Jon Landau and engineer Chuck Plotkin, it did not necessarily establish Roy as a first-call record maker in the eyes of the industry. Getting a hit for Patty Smyth does.

I mention to Roy that I could call a friend at *Billboard* to find out next week's chart position. Roy's eyes light up. We go to a pay phone and Roy stands there saying (or praying), "Let it go to number nine. Nine, nine, nine, nine."

"It's number seven, Roy."

"SEVEN! IT'S NUMBER SEVEN!! I'M TOP TEN!" Roy goes off to share the good news with Landau, co-manager Barbara Carr, the crew, the cook, the security guard....

Roy is the link between the glory days of the E Street Band and the risky new course Springsteen's set out on. Chances are the E Street Band will play again (as he started this tour Springsteen surprised his old bandmates with a generous and unexpected gift—royalties on all the albums they made together), but Springsteen talks about wanting the freedom to make any kind of album with any different musicians. He talks about making a whole album with the sort of bass-driven, dense sound of the re-mixed "57 Channels," or an album that builds songs to accommodate his guitar playing, instead of the other way around. He has a lot of ideas and this band is only the first of them.

This band started with Bruce and Roy and a young trio—guitarist Shane Fontayne (ex-Mick Ronson, Mick Taylor, Lone Justice, with Jimmy Page hair, stagger and British accent), Tommy Sims (a session bassist for everyone from Divinyls to Garth Brooks who has never before gone on the road) and Zachary Alford, the young drummer of the New York band Bodybag. That was the band that did "Saturday Night Live" and played a private showcase at New York's Bottom Line. At that Bottom Line show Bruce brought up singer Bobby King to duet on a couple of the more soul-based songs from *Human Touch*. After the show, King was invited to do the whole tour.

Back in Los Angeles, with the first date of the tour breathing down their necks and a live nationwide radio broadcast even closer, Springsteen started auditioning background singers. To save time he had them come in and sing in groups, eliminating vocalists one by one until there was no one else he could bear to cut. That's how Bruce ended up with four backup vocalists beside King—Cleopatra Kennedy (ex–Diana Ross and James Cleveland), Gia Ciambotti (from the Graces), Carol Dennis (longtime Dylan backup) and Angel Rogers (Stevie Wonder, Paula Abdul). Five days before the radio broadcast they made one more addition—Crystal Taliefero, a singer/guitarist/percussionist/sax player who has become Bruce's main onstage foil.

All these musicians took a little time to become a band. Some of them weren't even all too sure who Bruce Springsteen *was* and were startled at the size and fervor of his audiences. During an 11-show stand at the Brendan Byrne Arena in New Jersey in July and August the band found itself. Initially Bruce was carrying the whole show without the safety net the E Street Band had always provided. Early concerts felt a little too careful, as if the players were more scared than enthused, which sometimes forced Bruce dangerously close to the line where great showmanship slips into shtick. Afternoon soundchecks were spent with Bruce teaching the band more and more songs from his catalog, which they'd perform in public that night. No wonder some of them looked a little shell-shocked. But over the course of those 11 Jersey concerts the musicians relaxed, got to know the songs and each other a lot better, and found their confidence as a unit. By the last night, when Bruce pulled out "Sandy" and "Rosalita," the new group seemed to have learned the lesson of the roller coaster—how to have fun with terror.

They rolled into Massachusetts with what some longtime fans dared to call the best Springsteen concerts ever. Band consensus is that they topped those in Philadelphia. Tonight in Illinois, they are sailing. The balance between new material and old, which tilted backward in New Jersey, is moving toward the new stuff again. "57 Channels" has grown from the Albert-Ayler-learns-guitar version of "Saturday Night Live" into a raging indictment of Republican policy with police sirens wailing and a throbbing chant of "No justice, no peace." "Souls of the Departed" has become one of several guitar blow-outs where Springsteen challenges his usual limits. Tonight he takes it into Hendrix's "Star-Spangled Banner." "Soul Driver" has lost its gospel lilt and become a slow, moody piece a little like something from Van Morrison's *Veedon Fleece*. Springsteen rewards the attention his fans pay to this new material with lots of his hits, as well as crowd-pleasing bonuses like "Working on the Highway" and "Darlington County."

Bruce explains, "I had a variety of theories before I started the tour about what I was going to do, but you don't know until you get out there. I thought I was gonna be playing a *shorter* show." He laughs. "That's almost always wrong. The minute you step in an *arena*... An arena is a funny thing. Just the word itself: the *stadium*, the *coliseum*, the *forum*. The scale of the places generally calls for some large heroic or anti-heroic action. I think the size of the show over the years expanded to meet that particular thing I felt in air. That's kinda what people come for. The arena is a bigger-than-life experience. I think once you step out of the theater it's a different ball game. So I'm probably playing longer than I thought I would be and playing more old things than I thought I would be as the result of playing longer. As the show expanded I followed the line of the way the thing moved and felt and what resonated best. About 60 per cent new stuff and 40 per cent old is what feels good on a nightly basis right now."

"In my earlier music people may have felt a greater degree of moral certainty... I was interested in taking a less heroic stance. Despite my protestations over the years in some of my lyrics, there was a heroic posture to a lot of the music I created."

Springsteen was always a cautious man about how to present his live shows. He played clubs until long after he was big enough to fill theaters, he stayed in theaters when arenas made more sense, he stuck to arenas when stadiums were beckoning, finally moved to stadiums with great success in 1985, and then—for the 1988 *Tunnel of Love* tour insisted on going back to arenas. "I was always paranoid of expansion," Bruce says. "What was I going to lose? That's how I approached life in general: I couldn't imagine what I'd gain, I could only see what I'd lose."

It's between sets and I settle into the

SPARE PARTS

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN's vocal mike is an Onyx capsule with a Sony transmitter. He plays Hohner Marine Band harmonicas. His main guitar is a 1953 Fender Esquire. Onstage he also uses Telecasters from '54, '58 and a new acquisition from '63 with a decal of a naked oriental woman on the back. That one was rented as a prop for a photo shoot in New York. Later on Bruce couldn't get it out of it his head, finally telling Kevin Buell, his guitar tech, "I don't know what it sounds like but it *felt* great." Unfortunately all Bruce knew about the guitar was that it was "a black Tele with a naked lady." It was tracked through the photographer to the shop where it was rented, but it was already sold. Bruce bought it back from the guy who bought it. Bruce uses a Samson wireless system which passes through a Rockman SP-100 sustaining preamp on its way to a single Marshall cabinet (with four 12s) which is miked with a Shure SM57 and a 341. Bruce is almost apologetic about how simple his effects are. "I have a very fundamental set-up on the guitar. There's a loud button and a louder one and a *louder one than that*—and that's it! The elaborate guitar set-ups are amazing! There's a wall! A rack of things that all do something. I'd like to know what all that stuff does but it's too late now. It allows you an enormous amount of control but I don't know if I have the patience to sit down and learn it." Bruce's three options are a Boogie Mark 2 for leads, a SansAmp, and a Boss digital delay. Sitting under the stage, activated by hand by a tech on special occasions, are a Boss Turbo-Overdrive pedal (OD-2), a Boss flanger (BF-2) and a Boss power supply and master switch (PSM-5). On his electric guitars Bruce uses Dean Markley strings (.010, .013, .016, .030, .038, .048).

All three guitarists—Bruce, SHANE FONTAYNE and CRYSTAL TALIEFERO—play Takamine acoustics with D'Addario strings. So does PATTI SCIALFA when she sits in on "Brilliant Disguise." Crystal also plays Latin Percussion congas and Rhythm Tech tambourines and on "Born to Run" whips out a Yamaha sax with a Meyer mouthpiece and blows the Big Man's solo. Asked how Bruce approached her about taking on that daunting job, Crystal laughs: "He just said, 'Learn it!'"

Shane Fontayne's main electrics are a '55 Telecaster, a '65 Gretsch Tennessean and a Fender six-string bass which he uses for "baritone guitar" effects on a lot of the *Lucky Town* material. Shane uses D'Addario strings across the board. He has two new Fender Bassman amps, a Bob Bradshaw switching system and uses Gibson picks.

In the rack he's got a t.c. 2290 ("my main concession to digital"). Shane still uses Echoplexes ("a combination of Hi and Low Fi"). He just switched to a Nady wireless.

TOMMY SIMS plays a Fender Jazz bass with Rotosound strings most of the time, but sometimes substitutes a Roger Sadowsky bass. ZACHARY ALFORD plays a six-piece Yamaha maple custom drum kit with Zildjian cymbals. Zack uses Dean Markley sticks, though he warns they're tough to find. He hits three Dauz pads to trigger an Akai sampler.

Sharing a stage with other acts during the 1988 Amnesty International tour forced ROY BITTAN to give up dragging around an acoustic piano. He found he liked the change. This tour he's playing a Korg Digital piano (SG-1 SD) along with a Korg M1 and a Yamaha DX7 (2FD). Roy's gone digital for the Hammond sound, too, using a Hammond XBR2. What's in the rack, Roy? "An Akai S-1000 sampler, another M1 and a Kurzweil String Module." After 15 years of splitting keyboard duties with E Street organist Danny Federici, Roy wondered what surprises lurked in playing both parts. "I had to learn to play the organ parts with my left hand. I thought 'Badlands' and 'Darkness' would be difficult, but there's a logic to how the songs work and I figured it out. There's a sacrifice in dropping the left hand on the piano, but you gain in consistency by having one person play both instruments."

Under the stage is one piece of equipment the band depends on during the three-to-four-hour concerts—a wooden outhouse with a little moon carved in the door. Sadly there's no toilet inside, just a garbage pail. "I don't know whose job it is to empty that bucket after the show," one of the background singers said with a shudder. "But I'm glad it's not me."

backstage hospitality room when a horde of people with guest passes pour through the door en masse and start stripping the buffet. It's like the stateroom scene in *Night at the Opera,* they fill the place and keep coming. Ah, I figure, radio contest winners! No, I'm corrected, Crystal Taliefero's guest list. Crystal—a fireball on and offstage—grew up in nearby Indiana and played in local hero John Mellencamp's band. Everyone she ever met called her for tickets to this. After the show, at a private party at a chic restaurant that's been opened just for the band, I'm introduced to Crystal's dad Charles, a real nice man. He asks what I do and I tell him I work at a music magazine, that I got a call yesterday at suppertime asking if I could be in Chicago the next morning to spend three days with Springsteen. It was a mad rush, I say, but you know, I gesture to the fancy surroundings, there are harder jobs. "Yeah," he says. "You could work in an oil refinery. Like me."

We get the word that soup's on and choose tables while waiters pile up our plates. Bruce and Patti arrive like the bride and groom at a wedding reception and go around the room saying hi. During some shows Bruce tells the crowd that since he's not selling records anymore, he's had to take on a sponsor this tour. The fans boo and he tells them, "But it's not a beer! It's not an athletic sneaker! This tour is sponsored by LOVE!" Now it's not my place to say this, but I think the company that might be able to overcome Springsteen's historic aversion to corporate sponsorship is Chef Boy-ar-Dee. Because, let me tell you, this tour is the pasta express. There's noodles cooking in the hospitality room, there's angel hair steaming in the catering room, before Bruce goes on stage he sits in his dressing room chowing down on spaghetti, and tonight—for a special treat—he's leading everybody through a fancy 2 a.m. multi-pasta dinner. In spite of his Dutch name, Springsteen is of Irish and Italian heritage. If his father's Irishness sometimes emerges in the black fatalism that underlines even his most joyous music, his mother's Italianness sure dominates Bruce's menu.

Bruce and Patti take a seat at a table with Zack, Shane and Gia and Bruce regales his new musicians with tall tales of the E Street Band's adventures. There was the Jersey club owner who thought an amp was too loud, so he pulled out a gun and shot it. There was the time when the band reached football stadiums that Roy Bittan and Nils Lofgren were so engrossed in a ping-pong game that they didn't know the rest of the band had gone on. The musicians who were onstage could not get the attention of an excited Springsteen, who looked out at the mass of humanity and screamed "ONE TWO THREE FOUR!" Instead of Roy's majestic synthesizer hook opening "Born in the U.S.A.," he heard the *dink dink dink* of Danny Federici playing the line on the high end of the piano. Bruce laughs and says, "I looked down and saw 80,000 people going *huh?*"

That story gets a big laugh from the new musicians, but it sends a chill through crew members who were there. They remember Bruce coming offstage at intermission and looking for the guy whose job was to collect the band before the show. Bruce held up his hand and asked, "How many fingers? Five? How many with this hand, too? Ten? Now how many people in the band? How high do you have to be able to count?"

There's a lot that's fun in hitching along on Springsteen's ride,

but there's a lot of responsibility, too. Jon Landau is Springsteen's manager, his record producing partner, probably his best friend. Landau is considered to be one of the shrewdest and toughest powers in the record business. But it would be a mistake to think of Springsteen as the friendly guy, Landau as the tough one; Bruce as the pal, Jon as the boss; Bruce as the music, Jon as the business. They're both both. They work together so well because they are a lot alike.

Over at his table, Landau talks quietly about Springsteen's relationship with Columbia Records, the subject of a lot of scrutiny and gossip. First, it was widely perceived that Landau's public expression of lack of faith in former Columbia boss Walter Yetnikoff helped bring Yetnikoff down. Second, other record labels have made little secret of their hunger to sign Springsteen, which would be an embarrassment to Columbia. Third, the two new albums Springsteen released last spring, *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, did not sell in the multi-platinum numbers that were expected. One might think that Landau would have doubts about the current Columbia regime led by Tommy Mottola and Don Ienner. But Landau says nothing is further from the truth. In fact, he brings up the subject in order to dispel it. Sure, he says, there was some tension *before* the albums were delivered. Mottola had been waiting for three years—who could blame him if he was impatient? And Ienner had come over from Arista; who could blame him if he said, hey, if a Bruce Springsteen album is a smash I won't get the credit, Yetnikoff will. But, Landau insists, since the albums have not done as well as expected, Mottola and Ienner have been incredible. They have refused to give up, they have kept working the records, they have been wonderful. Landau says he and the Columbia chiefs are closer now than they ever were before.

One place Springsteen and Landau do part company a bit is in how much each *cares* about commercial success. Virtually everyone who knows Bruce well—even those with hard feelings about other things—says he is motivated by devotion to his art; the marketplace does not much interest him. Now that Bruce is on the road, playing the music he loves to the audience who loves him, Jon has had to twist Bruce's arm to get him to agree to do any promotion at all. Tonight Jon is relieved that he just finished the exhausting task of convincing Bruce to

"I was always paranoid of expansion. What was I going to lose? That's how I approached life in general. I couldn't imagine what I'd gain, I could only see what I'd lose."

do an acoustic television concert for MTV's "Unplugged." He says that like every such decision, it was a huge tug of war. "And now that Bruce has agreed to do it he'll spend the next three weeks—two of which are his vacation—obsessing over it. It will occupy all his thoughts until it's done."

The next afternoon I ask Bruce about it. I find him in his dressing room two hours before show time, strumming an acoustic guitar.

"Yeah, I'm gonna take a stab at that," he says. "A lot of the new songs, particularly on *Lucky Town*, are pretty folk-based. It's all stuff I can sing by myself or with a band. They work a lot of different ways. I have some ideas for some small arrangements that'll push the songs themselves out front and give me a chance to present the material in a different way.

"At some point I want to do an acoustic tour by myself and play in theaters. It's something I've been wanting to do for a long time. When I did the Christic Institute benefit I said, 'Oh, I can do this.' I'd like to work more steadily now if I can get myself to do it. And Patti's got her record coming [in February] and she's going to be working in some fashion, so we're trying to figure a way to make it all work out. Theoretically I'd like to work more, whether I have a new record out or not. Just go out and play. There's so many things I could do that I haven't done yet, so many ways of presenting the music that I haven't done that I'm anxious to do. I'd like to do something out of this particular rhythm I've gotten into. I think that's in the cards. In the '90s I want to do a lot of different things. I feel freer to branch out."

Springsteen mentions that at the Christic Institute benefit concert in 1990 he got to sit down and do some songs at the piano, something else that vanished when his shows moved from theaters to arenas in the late '70s. Although Bruce had spent the '60s playing in local New Jersey rock bands, he only got discovered when he went up to Greenwich Village in the '70s and played folk clubs.

"It was a funny time, '72, '73," he says. "I used to come down to Max's Kansas City and play by myself. Paul Nelson would bring some people down. I used to open for Dave Van Ronk, Odetta, all those people were still around. David Blue came down one night and as I was walking offstage he said, 'Hey man, that was great! Come with me.' We got in a cab and went downtown to the Bitter End where I met Jackson Browne. He had his first album out. I auditioned for John Hammond at the old Gaslight. And then late at night the New York Dolls would play at Max's. They'd play at 2 a.m. Max's was still really thriving at the time, the whole downstairs scene was going on. It was the *cusp* of those two things. I was opening for, like, Biff Rose but there was that whole other scene starting to come in."

I ask Springsteen when he realized that he could compete with Dylan, with Robbie Robertson—*when did you know you could work at that level?*

Springsteen answers slowly. "I just thought I was gonna be a guy who was gonna have to...work *really* hard." We both crack up laughing. "I wanted to have my own vision and point of view and create a world of characters, which is what the writers I admired did. It was a world unto itself, a world you slipped into, and yet a world that felt connected to the real world in some very important ways. I knew when I was very young I wanted to do that. Dylan's writing—that's just what felt exciting. So I took off in that direction. Hey, everybody shoots for the top! You don't know where it's gonna lead you. I just took it a day at a time. I had a real serious dedication to it, but I always felt I'd have to really sweat it out, to work really hard at it.

"I think I wrote ambitiously. From the beginning I wrote wildly big with the idea of taking the whole thing in and being definitive in some fashion. I think the show took on that approach also. I was ambitious." He laughs. "I was ambitious. I was shooting for the moon."

He adds quietly, "And I guess somewhere inside I felt like I could hit it."

TONIGHT IS THE LAST NIGHT of the summer tour. Everyone has two weeks off before reconvening in L.A. to begin the autumn stretch. It's a beautiful September evening. During "The River" a bright half moon shines through an opening in the roof next to the stage. Springsteen pulls out all the stops. The show climaxes with an electrifying version of "Light of Day," the song Bruce wrote for Paul Schrader's movie about a rock band. Springsteen has played "Light of Day" on other tours, but it didn't lift off the way it was meant to—it seemed to try too hard to be joyous and came off as a sort of weaker "Out in the Street." This tour, though, he's brought out what he must have known was inside the song, 'cause it's the high point of the concert. Springsteen hurls the band through "Light of Day" in a wailing frenzy, drives the audience completely crazy, and then freezes in place as the music slams to a stop. This is not a new trick but Bruce really milks it, standing rigid as a statue while flowers, hats, and other objects fly past him (I ask later how he avoids flinching

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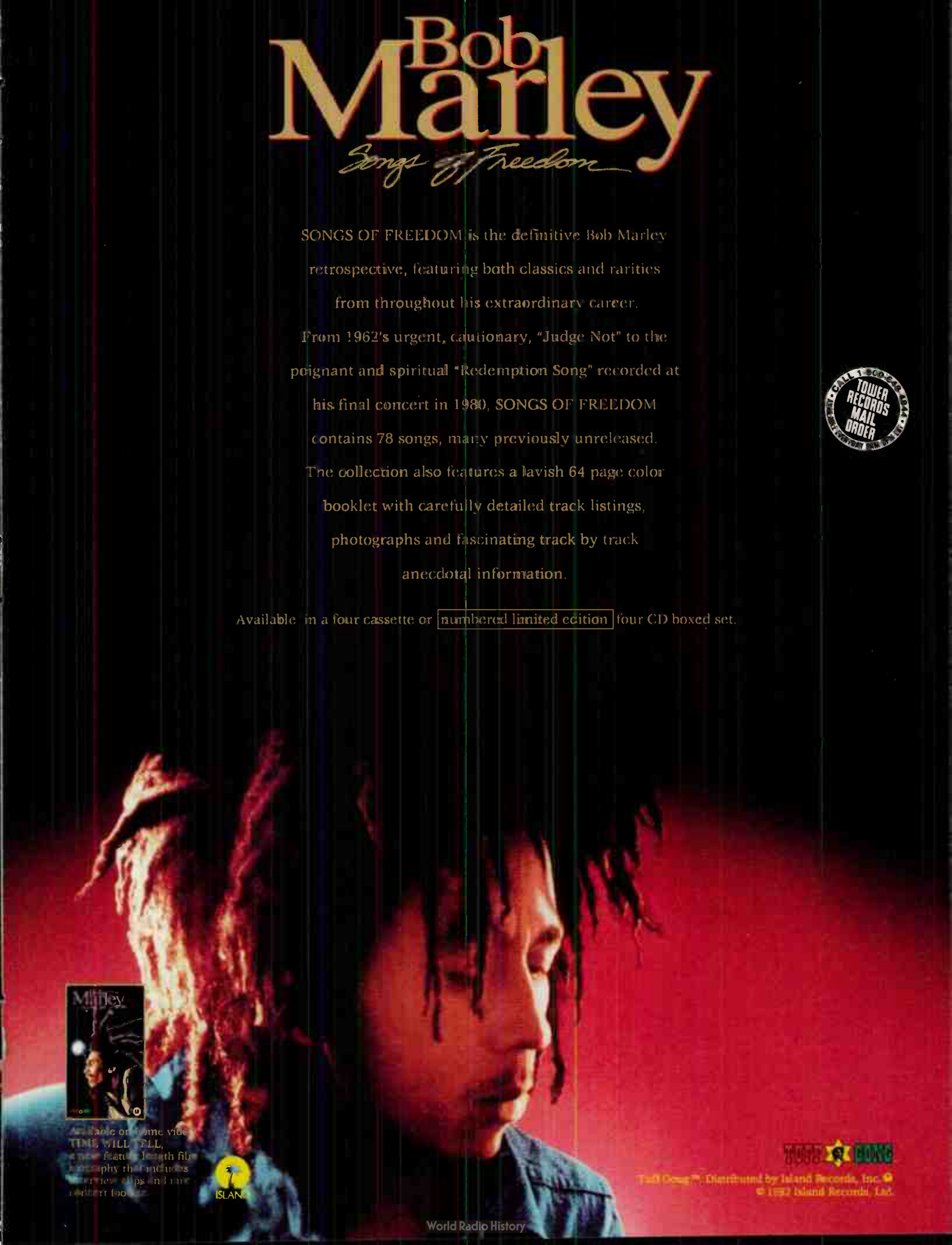

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when an object comes sailing out of the dark and just misses his eye. Bruce: "That would be bad form!"). Then he screams and the whole band slams back into action. This may be repeated once, twice, even three times during the song, the crowd getting wilder each time. Sometimes Bruce fills the silence between stops with Dirty Harry's "Are you feelin' lucky, punk?" speech. Usually he flicks his eyes from one side of the house to the other, creating eruptions of cheering wherever his glance falls. Tonight he falls over flat on his back. The singers rush to prop him up by the mike stand and after a dramatic, James Brown–like pause Bruce screams and kicks it in again. From that point on all bets are off. He doesn't even bother leaving the stage between finishing the usual hour of encore numbers and pulling out the bonus "Working on the Highway."

It's midnight as that song plays. Outside in the moonlight, Patti Scialfa is doing donuts in the parking lot in the promoter's 1960 El Dorado convertible, a beautiful machine with tail fins you could shave with. "Working on the Highway" ends, the crowd explodes, and out the back door comes the running, sweating, laughing, toweling band. Last show! Last show! Standing in the parking lot they hug and say goodbye to each other, to Patti, to Landau, to Barbara Carr. They break into small groups and climb into the waiting vans. Inside they give each other handslaps and...uh-oh...*Where's Bruce?* Roadies come running out the back door yelling, "He's back onstage!" The musicians whoop and pour out of the vans, race up the steps, in the back door, down the backstage corridor, through the stage doors, into the wings, across the ramps and back onstage as Bruce kicks into "Bobby Jean." By the time he starts "Hungry Heart" and climbs up on top of the speaker columns, it's clear nobody in this audience is going to work in the morning.

"I think people listen to my music to find out about themselves. I've got to press to find out about myself before I can present it."

As a police car leads the speeding vans through the crowds and traffic and back toward Chicago, Roy Bittan, the old vet, congratulates the young recruits on finishing their first campaign. "We made it, boys! Thirty-eight shows! Half the tour!" All are exhausted, elated, delighted. The cop leading the vans hits his siren and Bobby King says, "Oops, I thought it was the intro to '57 Channels'! I almost started chanting 'No justice, no peace!' " Tearing up the highway toward Chicago, Roy talks about how strange it was to be told the E Street Band was ending, live with that for three tough weeks, and then be invited by Bruce to get back together—to collaborate on songwriting and production as well as playing! When the E Street Band ended he took it as a sign that it was time to give himself fully to producing. He was in L.A., he got management—and then Bruce called back. Did he hesitate at all before reenlisting? "Are you *kidding*?" Bittan asks. "No! Artistically, Bruce is the best. I hope to always work with him. And the fact that we were writing together meant our relationship was progressing. That was important to me."

As we drive down Michigan Avenue, past the jutting castle tower of the Chicago Waterworks, Roy tries to explain to undomestic Shane why every building, every house, must have a small pipe coming through the roof to accommodate water pressure. Shane stares at Roy with polite incomprehension. Roy says, "Think of it as a parametric equalizer for your toilet." He is the man they call "professor."

Bruce lands in the hotel bar and raises a glass of champagne to his bandmates. I compliment him on the guitar solo he took on "Human Touch," a keening, almost whistling lead quite different from his usual playing. Bruce says he's been working on his guitar playing a lot lately, and often thinks that if he'd stuck with that—his first vocation—instead of switching his concentration to songwriting he might have become a really good guitarist.

"In my first band I was hired as the lead guitarist," Bruce says. "I couldn't play much lead but I could play a little more than everybody else. Like *any at all!* There was a time when the general playing ability in the local bands was really rudimentary. And it seems like everybody learned a lot *slower*. I think these days kids pick up a guitar and in a year or two they've got the Eddie Van Halen licks goin'!"

I tell Bruce we shouldn't have this discussion in the bar. Let's go up and get the tape recorder out. Bruce Springsteen is a cautious man. He wants to work this out. It's quarter to two. Bruce wants to go get a massage, which he reckons will take until quarter of three. Then he wants to get some dinner. He asks if it would be okay if he came by my room to tape some more interview at 4 a.m. Sure, I say, great, see you then. For the next two hours I discover the truth in "57 channels and nothing on." At 4:15 Bruce calls and says, let's wait till morning. Fine, I say. I close my eyes and it seems like about two seconds later I hear "shave and a haircut" knocking on my door. I open it and there's Bruce. He comes in, sits down and starts talking. An hour, two hours, three hours. The phone rings, he's going to miss his ride to the airport. Bruce doesn't stop.

"I didn't sing in the Castilles, my first band," he says. "I basically played the guitar. Everybody in the band felt that I couldn't sing at all. I think I got to sing one Dylan song. Over the years I started to sing a little bit more, eventually I think we ended up splitting a lot of the vocals. And after that I went off and had my own bands.

"I put together a real Hendrix/Cream three-piece group called Earth for quite a while. That was the Day of the Guitarist. Alvin Lee and Jeff Beck and Clapton and Hendrix. And locally I was the guitarist, I was the fast gun at the time.

"When I got my record deal I was in a place where I'd said, 'Gee, there's a lot of guys who play really well. There's not a lot of guys who

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write that well.' I think I'd decided that if I was going to create my own point of view, my own vision, it wasn't going to be instrumentally—it was going to be more through songwriting. So I put a lot of my energy into that. I had no band for a while, I just wrote a group of songs that felt unique to me, and that was when I went up and met [Columbia's] John Hammond—that was the stuff I played for him.

"Then I was typecast as an acoustic act for a while. Locally I took a tremendous amount of heat. When the first record came out people were *incensed* that there was no electric guitar on it! It was like I screwed up. All I heard everyplace I went was 'Where's the *guitar*, man? What happened?' I had such a big local reputation in the Jersey area—and a little bit down south, 'cause we'd play in Virginia and Carolina—as a hard-rockin' guitar band that when the first record came out people were sort of, 'What happened?'

"But I felt like I knew what I was doing, I stuck with it, I put the band together after that record. I became more arrangement-oriented, I got more interested in how the thing was going to function as an ensemble. If there needed to be a solo I tended to give it to Clarence. I'd like to play a little bit more now, but I still relegate it to the song. I always felt the song was my fundamental means of communication. It would be nice to do something that was out of that context, something that was less immediately song-oriented. More texture-oriented or abstract or something."

When you were playing in Earth, were you playing like Alvin Lee and Hendrix?

"Oh yeah."

Did you have better chops in 1969 than you had in, say, 1975?

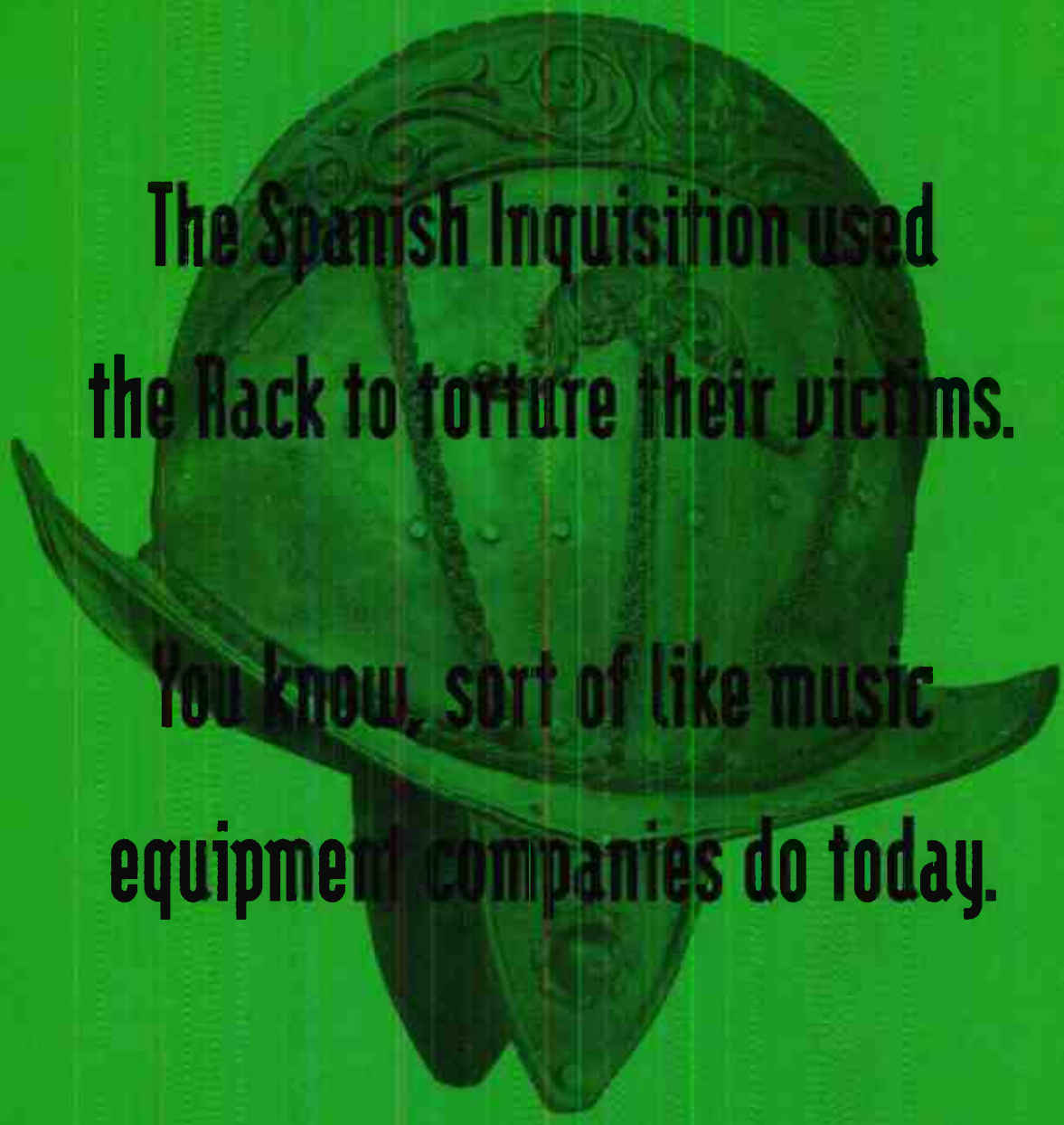
"Because I played so much more, I probably had a wider range of things that I played. Right now I'm playing pretty well in a sort of limited vein. It's the old story, you gotta play a lot. I have sort of an area that I'm playing in. There was a lot of fast guitar playing at the time because that's what was going on. Eventually I moved away from that idea. I got more into what B.B. King was doing, I liked the idea of less notes. Yeah, I probably had a little more flexibility or dexterity at the time. But it doesn't really leave you that much, it doesn't go that far away. Generally I haven't created a context where I allow myself the freedom to stretch out and play and investigate ideas more instrumentally. But maybe I'll get to it."

You do have a very distinct, emphatic guitar style which you use to convey strength, anxiety, joy—but you very rarely use guitar to convey tenderness or melancholy. You tend to go to harmonica for that.

"Yeah. I played a little bit on 'If I Should Fall Behind' and in the early days I had 'Sandy.' A little bit, not that much. I was probably more confident of my voice in my songs than I was in developing a distinct voice on the guitar. And when you're leading the band, singing, and writing the songs eventually you've got to make some choices. I choose to go away from a long, jamming sort of style, even though I did it for a long time when I was younger. As I got older I wanted to be more direct, clear, immediate and not waste a lot of time."

The talk turns to his new work. On "Real World," a central song on *Human Touch*, Springsteen sings, "I still got a little faith but what I need is some proof." On *Lucky Town* the birth of his son brings him "Living Proof."

"Yeah," Bruce smiles, "that's what people do for each other. My relationship with



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Patti—she just somehow managed to bring to me a lot of self-acceptance. Just the way she looked at me or the way she was with me. People can come in and help center you and pull out the best of you and tell you when you should cut yourself some slack and when you ought to be working a little harder. That's what we do for each other when it's working right. Kids do it too. Kids make you rise above yourself."

Some successful musicians discover that when they find the secure love of a family, they no longer need the love of an audience.

"There's people who feel the other way, too. There's people who feel, 'I get what I need when I go onstage and I don't need the rest.' I felt like that for a *long* time. I always got to a point in relationships where if it got too complicated or there was too much pressure, whether it was right or not I'd say, 'Hey, I don't need this!' That's the classic line. I don't need this. The only thing I've been able to figure is, that's never true. You *do* need it.

"But I figure it can work the other way, too. The connection with your audience is something you want and you need. I guess I feel that's how I impact upon the world. I didn't see any reason why both of those things couldn't nurture each other. That was the idea anyway. And the tour is when you experience it the most. Both things are happening: My family's here and the audience is out there. It's a balancing act. Some days you do it poorly and some days you do it really well.

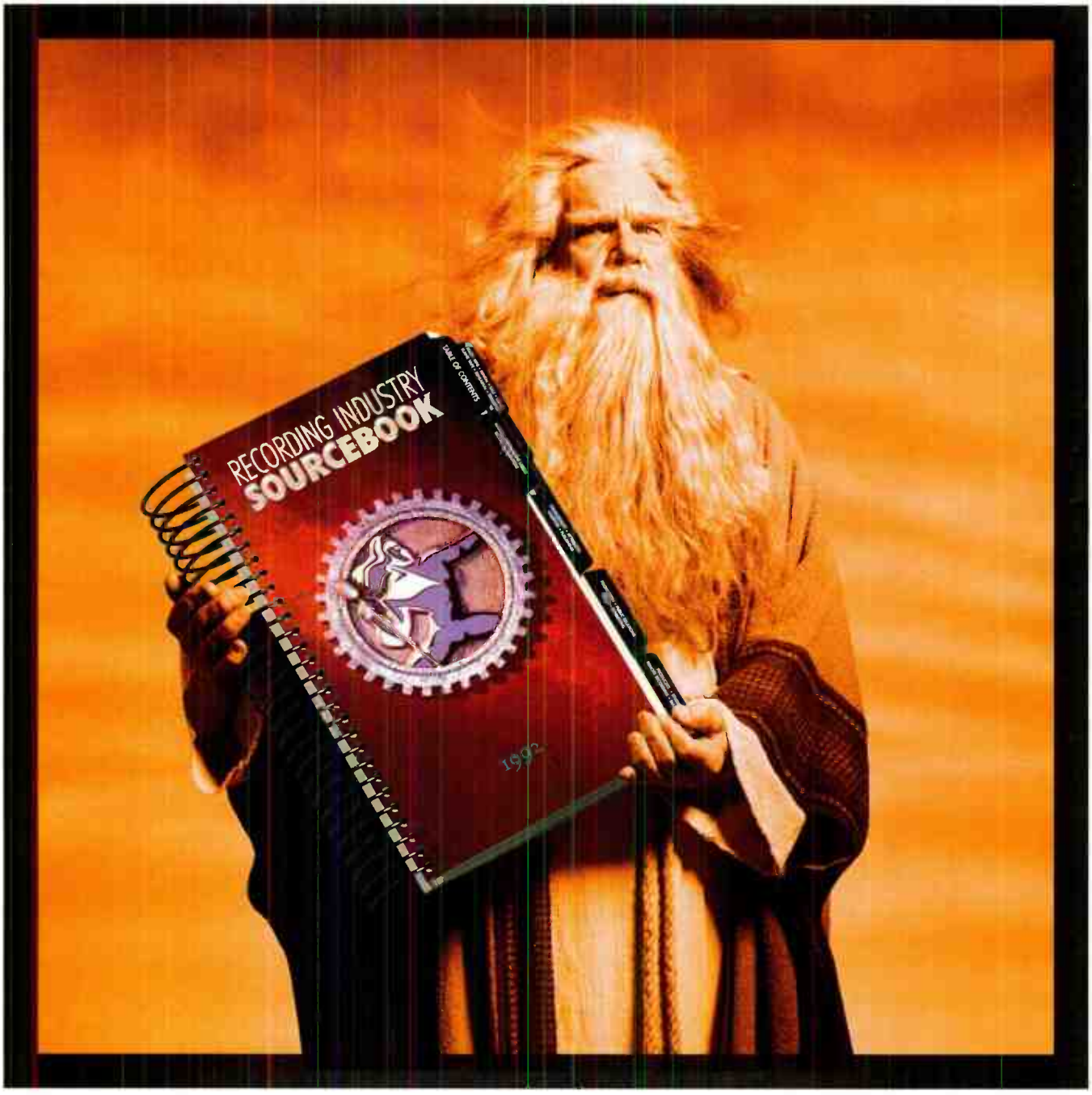
"But I can understand that feeling. Because I think if you develop a real happy family thing you're always tempted to take refuge in it. Which is part of why it's there. Just like you can take refuge in your work. That's partly why *it's* there. But if you hide in either one of those things, maybe you're cutting off a part of yourself.

"The idea is that you and the audience learn together. You ferret out your own illusions. That's what my work is about—people stumbling across their own illusions, letting them drop to the wayside, then trying to move on a little further, finding something that's real. And then you bump into your *deeper* illusions." Bruce laughs. "You try to let some of them slip. And through it all you try not to get lost in the distortion of fame or success, or the different things that the job brings along with it." Bruce looks up and smiles and says, "It's a trip."

It's hard for anyone who's not famous to talk about what being famous does to you, but it sure does seem that Springsteen's been working to dismantle his superstardom ever since the *Tunnel of Love* album and tour.

"I feel less famous at the moment!" Bruce says and he lets out a big laugh. "And it's *good*. The zeitgeist is...All I know is, I feel able to get on with my own life, it's just a little easier. Things are really good right now. I don't know what my intentions were. Your intentions are always complicated. On one hand, it's fun to have a big smash and you want your music to be powerful and to reach as many people as possible. But there's all sorts of different issues, and none of them are clear. A big audience may not be your *best* audience. I don't know. How you feel about it can vary any given night. The main thing I was concerned with was taking the whole thing down, making it feel more human-scaled, less iconic and more about everyday issues, which I thought the *Tunnel of Love* record and my new records dealt with. That's basically what I did.

"Outside of that, your control over the thing has a life and dynamic of its own. You



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have *some* control over it. But I don't try to exert *that* much. I thought *Born in the USA* would be a popular record; I didn't think it would be the thing it ended up being. That's just what happened. I thought *Tunnel of Love* or these records would be more popular, but that's what happened there. Hey, you ride along with it."

So fame's not so bad?

"While there's a lot of stress and tension involved, a good part of me enjoyed the whole thing. Except for '75—I was kinda young and pressed at the time. But hey, I could have not been on those covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* if I didn't want to! I didn't have to do those interviews. I remember sitting in a room saying, 'Gee, do I want to do this? It seems scary.' 'Yeah, but I don't want to to be sitting on my porch when I'm 60 saying, *Oh, I shoulda, I coulda, I woulda!*' Hey! You got one ride. So I said, *Let's go!*"

Like giving up your freedom to get married—every time you give up one thing you gain something else.

"Yeah. I think that I was real protective over my music. Probably too much so. The stuff isn't so fragile or precious. But that's how I felt. Maybe I was trying to protect myself at times. The world is threatening. You can feel that big breath on the back of your neck right before you step into those particular decisions. You go, 'Hmm, I think the heat's gonna get turned up here.' And it *does*. Part of it can make you miserable, but part of you also may just *ride* with it and go *Woooo!* You're flying by the seat of your pants. So it's sort of both those things. It's been a good ride, you know.

"Like you say, you tend to not have an idea what you're going to get, even in *painful* experience. Some of the best things I learned were learned from getting beat up, making mistakes. And if you're afraid to do that, to step out and fall, *that's* living in fear. If you can't take the pain you're not going to get to that higher place. My fear of failure always held me back in dealing with people and relationships. I always stopped right before I committed to the place where if it failed it would really hurt. 'I'm okay up to here but there, no.' It wasn't until I stepped out into that other place that I realized what the stakes were, what the rewards were, the pleasures. The past eight years have been a tremendous time of learning for me. One of the best times of my life. Really difficult but definitely..." Bruce stops and thinks about it. "To be sitting here with the kids, Patti, my music—it's a nice seat."

Bruce's new albums are full of songs about being set free by having your lies exposed—as opposed to *Tunnel of Love*, where songs like "Two Faces" and "Brilliant Disguise" talked about how hard it is to live with *getting away* with lies.

"Everybody lives with their illusions," Bruce says, drumming his fingers on a water glass. "Nobody's who they think they are. Not completely. There's a limit to how much you can know yourself. Or all the little things we do on a daily basis to live with ourselves. I guess what I've found satisfying is that if you try to strip away as much of this stuff as you can and find out what you're about—whether it's pretty or ugly or what—you do find some sort of freedom. But no matter how much you're doing it you feel you're still being cowardly with it. You can always push harder. But I think just singing the song is an act of self-awareness. Those people in the songs, they know. Whether they *do* something about it, the characters are copping to it. They're saying, 'This is how I see it, this is what I'm doing.' That's always the

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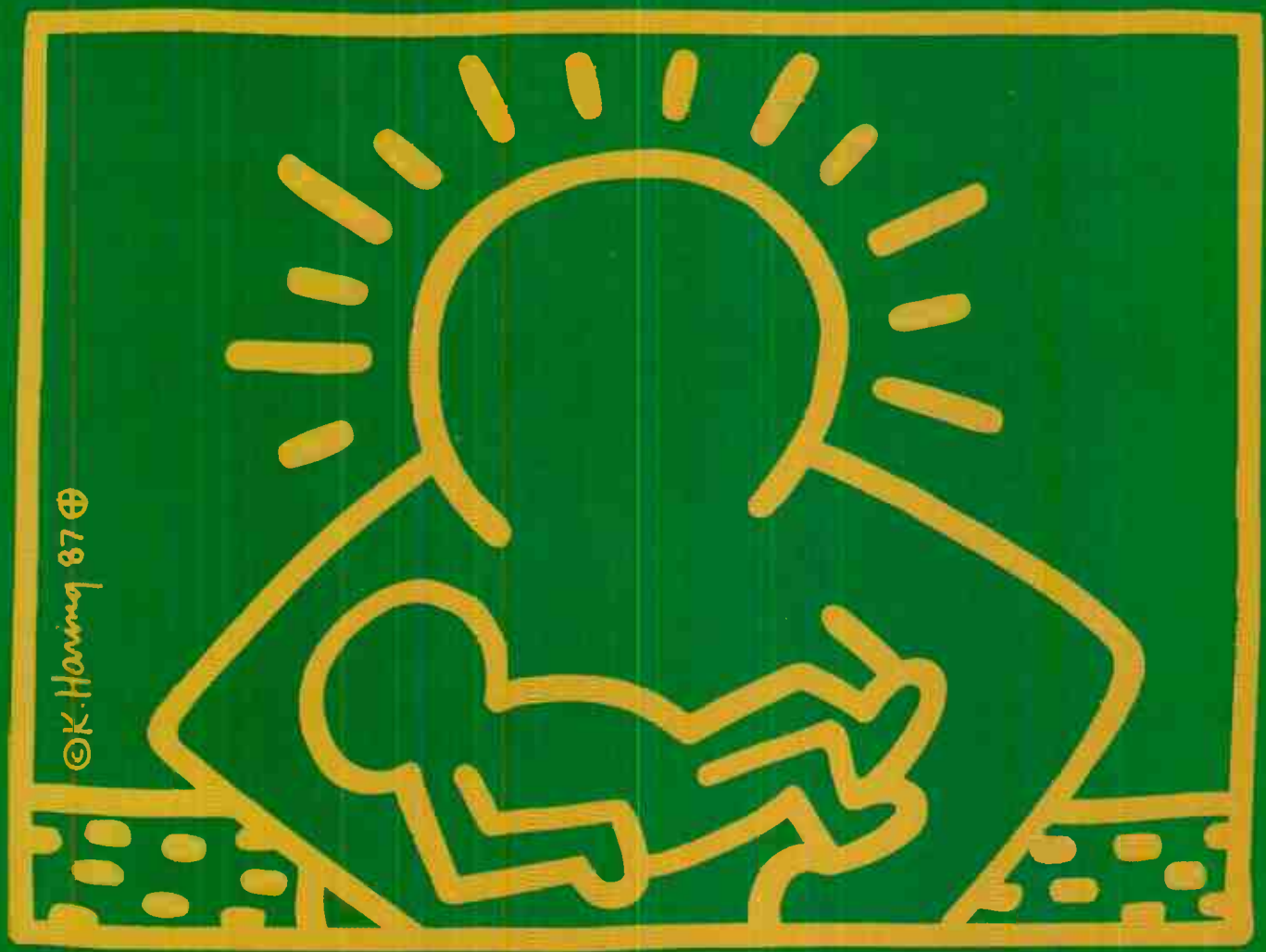

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first step. But it's tough."

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"Everybody lies in some fashion or another," Bruce says. "Big ones, little ones. Really, if I was trying to capture anything on those records, it was a sense of a less morally certain universe. Perhaps in some of my earlier music—though those ideas are in 'Prove It All Night'—people may have felt a greater degree of moral certainty. I think it might have been one of the things that attracted people to my music. That's obviously not the way the real world is. I guess on these records I was interested in trying to paint it as I saw it. With your own weaknesses and the places where you fail and get caught up in the Big Muddy. I was interested in taking a less heroic stance. I think that, despite my protestations over the years in some of my lyrics, there was a heroic posture to a lot of the music I created. You try to do the right thing, and as you get older you realize how hard it is to do the right thing.

"When you isolate yourself off in the world of music it allows you a flexibility and control that the real world just doesn't allow. If you step outside that and begin to engage with people, it's gonna get messy. Painting the mess was part of what I wanted to do on those records. Because that's the way it really is. But that can also be less appealing or less compelling for some people. That moral certainty is attractive in a world that's so fundamentally confusing. That's why fairy tales are popular. That's why so many action movies are big. The first thing people want to know when they hear about any conflict is, 'Who's the good guy? Who's the bad guy?' Tabloid entertainment, TV news all comes down to 'Who's the good guy? Who's the bad guy?' It's rarely as simple as that. Particularly in 'The Big Muddy,' that's what I was tryin' to get to: *Your moral certainty is a luxury.* What passes for 'family values' or gets twisted under the umbrella of 'family values' is a luxury for a lot of people. It's something that a lot of people can't afford. 'The Big Muddy' wrestles with that. It's not here, it's not there, it's somewhere in the middle and you're down in it."

As Bruce and I are talking, President Bush's latest surge in the polls has collapsed and Bill Clinton is pulling away. Maybe with so many Americans financially strapped, the Family Values crusade of the G.O.P. is ringing the national bullshit meter.

"And they *know* that's what it is!" Bruce nods. "First of all, Bush just isn't as good, he can't present it like Reagan presented it. Plus, hey—we heard that last time! And *that sounds like bullshit.* People are really saying, 'Hey—that's BULLSHIT. It's too real out here!' That's not gonna work. I really don't think it's gonna work."

Springsteen sighs. "Most of popular culture is based on childhood fairy tales. It just continues. That's what a lot of political discourse became. There's a real patronizing aspect to the whole thing. I just think people at this point have become fundamentally skeptical and cynical—in a good way. The answers are complex. Even though some part inside of us yearns for a morally certain world, that world doesn't exist. That's not the real world. And at some point you've got to make that realization, make your choices, and do the best that you can."

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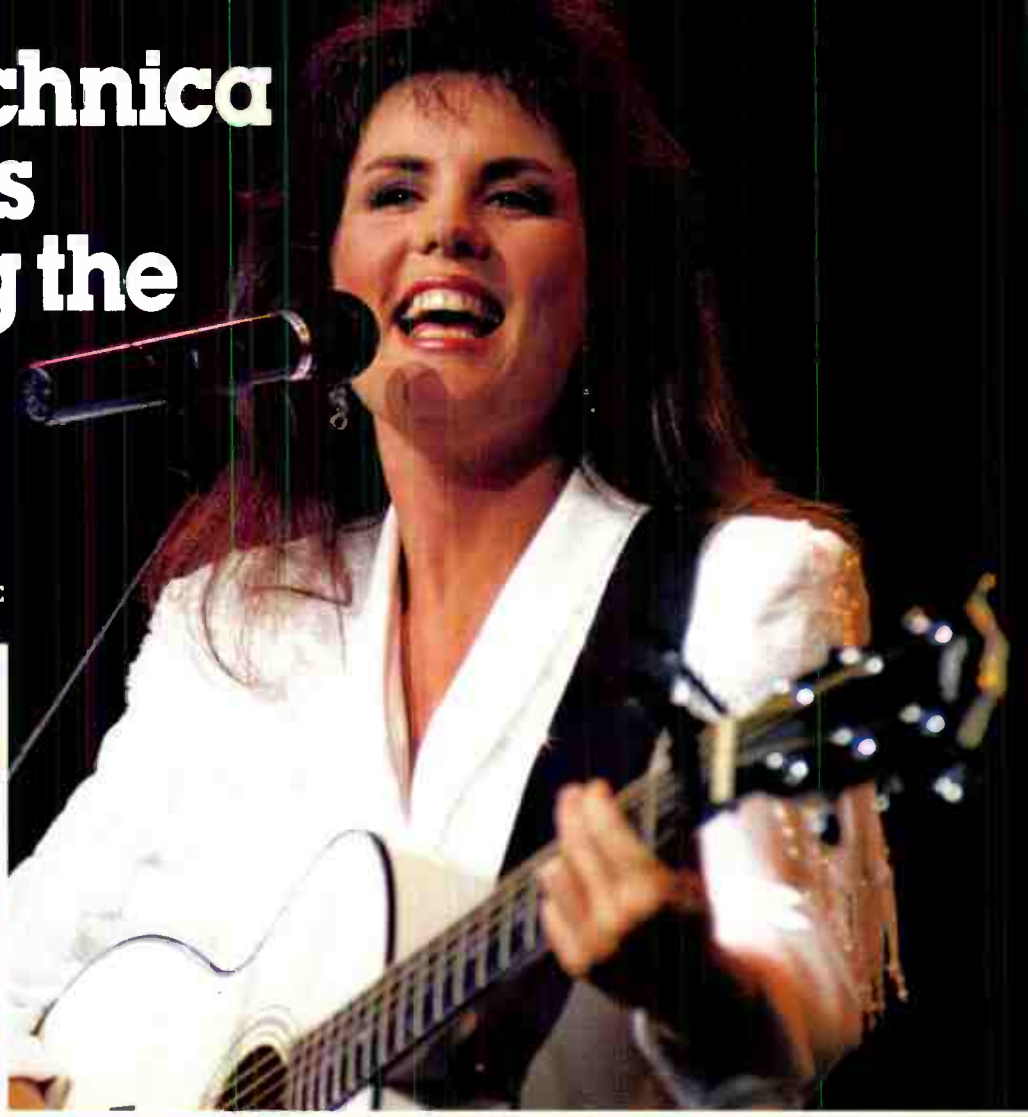

Holly Dunn uses her ATW-1032-HE in performance at Opryland

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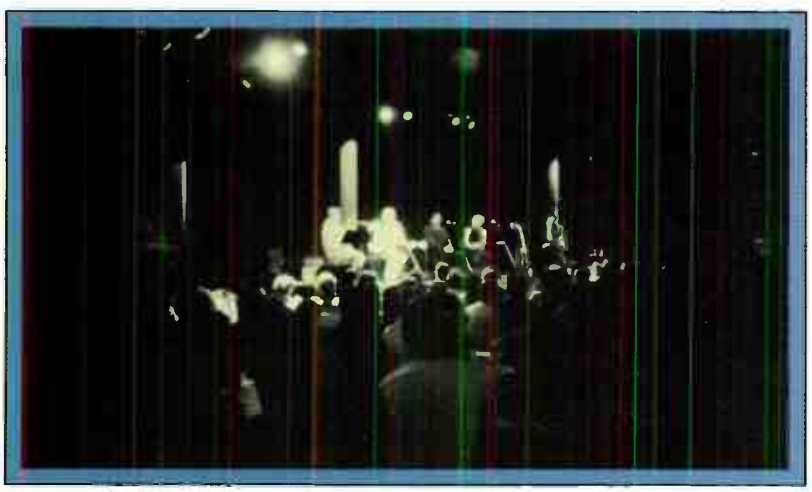
ROCK & POP COMPOSERS SWAP TALL TALES AT THE BOTTOM LINE

BY BILL FLANAGAN



PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN DOLAN

Since 1990 the Bottom Line, the famous New York nightclub, has been host to a series of songwriter symposiums that has turned into the most popular musical workshop since the heyday of the Newport Folk Festival. Under the title "In Their Own Words: A Bunch of Songwriters Sittin' Around Singing," the club has invited audiences to listen to groups of four or five pop composers talk about the creative process, the music business and all the weird adventures they've had—and then listen to the writers play their material on acoustic guitar or piano. The participating songwriters sit onstage together, throwing in comments about each other's stories and accompanying each other's performances.

The results are sometimes revelatory, occasionally embarrassing, almost always fascinating. Hearing all the parts of the Cars arrangements suggested by Ric Ocasek's acoustic guitar and voice changes one's notion of how that band worked. Hearing Allen Toussaint trade backup roles with Michelle Shocked, or Graham Parker with Jimmy Webb, one realizes that for all the barriers imposed by taste and genre, when their songs are stripped down to a single guitar and voice most good composers have a lot in common.

The evenings are hosted by WXRK disk jockey Vin Scelsa, who puts questions to the songwriters and nudges them to perform their most famous work. The questions—and songs—go around the panel in a circle (if there's one boring panelist everyone in the club waits till he's up to go to the

ILLUSTRATION BY NANCY STAHL

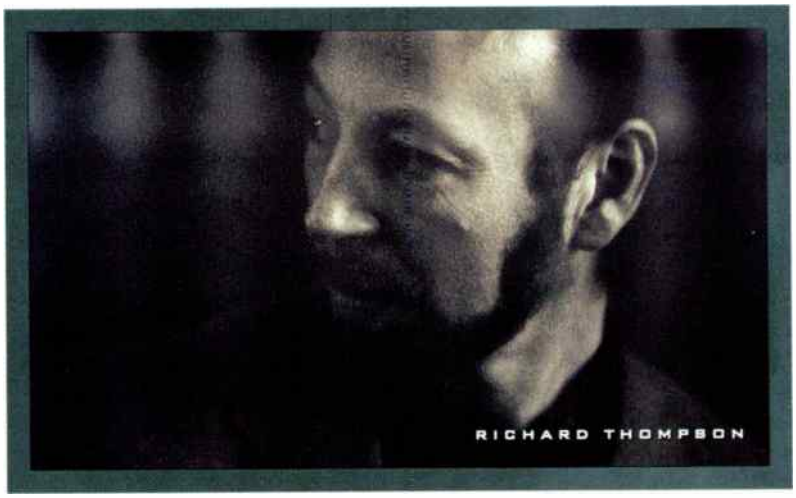
bathroom).

Perhaps the single best songwriter's night was last March, when Dave Alvin, Richard Thompson, Shawn Colvin and Barrett Strong shared the stage. Alvin said that he started writing songs only because none of the other Blasters would: "My brother and I started the band to do old blues and rockabilly covers. We went to this little independent record label out in Van Nuys, California and the owner said, 'I can't put this out, it doesn't have any original songs.' We didn't know at the time we had to give him 80 percent of the publishing. But we really wanted to make a record so we had a band meeting and said, 'Everybody go write three or four songs and a week from now we'll get together and learn 'em.' I was the only guy who came back with songs."

Scelsa asked if any of those first songs survived and Alvin said, "Oh hell yes, I started out good!" Then to prove it he sang one of that initial batch—"Marie Marie."

Colvin said that she, too, had only become a songwriter as an outgrowth of being a performer. "I was mostly intimidated by the good writers I listened to," she said. "So I didn't want to bother to write. Bad songs like 'Torn Between Two Lovers' made me say, well, maybe I can do better than that." As an example of her first attempts at writing Colvin played "Don't Know Why," a simple melody that she said Sony executives have insisted she include on her next album. They think it's a hit. She resisted the tune for a long time because, she said, she never thought of it as a real song. "I wrote it in my head and never played it for anybody until I was hard pressed to play a song for a high school friend of mine who came to visit me. She was always the writer in school. She asked me if I had written anything. So to save myself I played her this song. Then I worked up the courage to play it other places."

"In a popular song you've only got three minutes and two-and-a-half verses: You have to get to the point."



Richard Thompson credited his early start at songwriting to the birth of Fairport Convention while he was still a schoolboy. "I was in Fairport when I was 16. That was a nurturing environment. We had a good record collection and we had friends who were very keen on singer/songwriters. People like Dylan and Phil Ochs and Richard Farina. We used to desperately try to import singer/songwriter albums, we thought this was incredibly important. We got demos of Joni Mitchell when she was 18. It was very exciting. I suppose really that was a kind of school. I had taken one year of classical guitar lessons but then they put my teacher in prison. The writing came because we wanted to write a kind of music that didn't exist. We really wanted to play British music but we didn't want to be magpies. Most British musicians copied American music to a kind of slavish degree. And some people do it really well, like Eric Clapton. But coming from England, I really feel that you're never going to be as good as Muddy Waters, so why bother? It's better if you take whatever Muddy Waters' spirit is and mix it with your own culture and come up with something new. Which is what Fairport was trying to do. We were trying to mix rock 'n' roll with traditional music. I think the interesting times in music are when musics collide. When European classical music meets African music in New Orleans and gives birth to jazz. Or country music and R&B meet and you get rock 'n' roll."

Thompson admitted that some songs are written just to give him a chance to play hot guitar. "I might say, 'Gosh, the set's pretty dull these days. What I need is a vehicle to play guitar on. A minor, E minor, F would be a nice chord sequence.' I think a lot of songwriters do write that way. Especially metal bands, to whom I feel a close affinity. But whatever I do as a guitar player is in songs. I hate instrumental-for-its-own-sake stuff. I love showing off, but it's songs that really interest me."

Thompson said that one impediment to his songs becoming popular on the radio is that he often writes in the third person or in the voice of characters—and radio prefers songs that sound like someone singing about himself: "Randy Newman's a great example of a writer who uses the deadly weapon of satire and irony against people. And he treads the line in exactly the right place. He walks the tightrope so people don't really know if he's serious or not. He's the Jane Austen of songwriters. If you can hit that point it's a great weapon; you can stick the knife in a long way.

"In a popular song you've only got three minutes and two-and-a-half verses—you have to get to the point. [Thompson's song] '1952 Vincent Black Lightning' doesn't really survive on the radio because it's too long and there's a bit at the beginning and a bit at the end and the story's in the middle. In a popular song you haven't got time for that, you have to get straight in. It's almost cinematic technique, the way you use the first person—you are the eye of the camera in the song.

"The audience has to realize that it's basically theater and you're kind of role-playing. And at the end of the song it's over. So don't come to my house and tell me it's not over." Thompson waited for the laughter to subside and added, "I think if you've convinced the audience it is you, then on one level you've really succeeded."

Thompson, Colvin and Alvin were all impressive talkers and impressive performers—but that night's show was stolen right away by a man who cautioned the audience that he was not a public performer at all. Barrett Strong is best known for his 1960 hit "Money"—which is itself best remembered because the Beatles covered it. In the late '60s Strong, unable to score another hit as a singer, went back to Motown and got a job as a staff writer. Working with Norman Whitfield, he then turned out a string of songs that were the backbone of Motown's first attempt to get relevant—songs like "Psychedelic

Shack," "Ball of Confusion," "Run Away Child, Running Wild," "War" and "Cloud Nine." Taken by itself, that's an impressive list—Tina Turner and Bruce Springsteen both mined it for hits in the '80s—but if all Strong had done was write pop social commentary his work would be remembered as a slightly silly sidebar to the main Motown story.

That's not all Strong and Whitfield did. They also wrote heartbreaking soul songs such as "I Wish It Would Rain" and "Just My Imagination." When Strong pulled that material out at the Bottom Line, playing piano and singing in a beautiful, moody voice, the audience was rapt. And he kept going, a nearly anonymous man at a piano singing, "I can make the gray skies blue..." It sank in that this man wrote "I Can't Get Next to You," he wrote "Papa Was a Rollin' Stone," he wrote "I Heard It Through the Grapevine." That night at the Bottom Line there were more mouths hanging opened than in a dentist's dream.

Unaccustomed though he was to public performance, Strong knew how much he had accomplished and said he lived well off his royalties. Not every songwriter invited to appear at the symposiums was so lucky. Arthur Alexander, who had been living in quiet obscurity in the South, was obviously deeply moved by the warm reception he got from the Bottom Line audience. Alexander had several self-written hits in the '50s. His "Anna" was later recorded by the Beatles, and his "You Better Move On" by—among others—the Rolling Stones. Yet Alexander said that when he asked his publisher where the money was, the publisher would say, oh it was all going to the European collection agency—Alexander would see it eventually. More than a quarter century later, Alexander said, he's still waiting.

Probably the most eagerly anticipated appearance at a songwriter's night was when Steely Dan's Donald Fagen appeared in May of 1991. The usually tight-lipped Fagen talked about his family, his early influences, overcoming a decade-long writer's block, and how he and Walter Becker wrote together for Steely Dan. "Often I'd have a piece of music," Fagen said. "A verse, a piece of a chorus, even some words sometimes. And we'd kick it around, essentially, and work on music and lyrics at the same time. Many of them were written that way. As time went on I think I probably had more when Walter came in and he had less and less. I think a lot of the style musically derived from the way I play the piano, the harmonic sense, and a lot of the attitude was Walter's.

"I met Walter in college and we had very similar musical interests. He was also a weenie jazz fan. But at the time, 1965, '66, we were both into blues.... So we kind of combined the blues thing—which was much simpler but very direct and emotional—with the jazz stuff we knew into a big mess. I started playing piano when I was 10 or 11. I learned mostly off records. I had a few lessons but it was hopeless. I learned off records by Thelonious Monk and Red Garland. Out of ignorance I developed a style where I'd kind of play piano like a giant guitar with a few extra notes thrown in. I think that has a lot to do with how the music sounds. When it's arranged it's based on the piano style."

Fagen also defended Steely Dan's sometimes inscrutable lyrics, saying, "There's not that much time in a song to tell a whole story so you just have to pick out the most salient features. You tend to leave a lot out. It all makes sense. It's just you're missing a lot of it." Casting further light, Fagen introduced "Green Flower Street" by suggesting that it was "an oriental fantasy, like most of my songs." Thus could the Dan fetishist tie up "Aja," "Pearl of the Quarter," "Dr. Wu," "Bodhisattva" and a dozen more into one overarching theme.

"There's not much time in a song to tell a story—you pick out the most salient features."

If any common wisdom emerged from the different songwriters the Bottom Line has spotlighted, it was the notion of songwriting as work, a steady job that depends more on sweat and craft than inspiration. R&B masters Dann Penn and Spooner Oldham recounted how they came up with the hit "Sweet Inspiration" in 1967, when New York producers Tom Dowd and Arif Mardin brought the singing group the Sweet Inspirations to record at Penn and Oldham's home base, American Studios in Memphis. "We saw right quick they had no material," Penn drawled in the sly manner of a fox contemplating a hen. "They had a fabulous group, they had the best musicians in the world," Penn's voice dropped, "two guys out of New York who knew everything... Anyway, they had the lousiest songs you ever heard! It was awful. Spooner and I saw it. Our eyes flashed. I said, 'Hey, Spoon, what are we going to do?' He said, 'Let's go write one real fast!' On the way upstairs I said, 'I don't have an idea, what are we gonna call it?' He said, 'Well, they're called the Sweet Inspirations, so let's call it that.' We wrote the song in an hour, hour and a half. We know we got it, no doubt. We put it down on one of those little early Sonys. We come back down to the studio and they're still cutting some lousy song. We just said, 'Stop, we got your song.' With a little reluctance they stopped and we played it and the musicians just loved it. They were starving for a song, the girls were starving for a song. They just stopped what they were doing and the musicians began to play the song on the floor and the girls were dancing around and about that time somebody [one of the producers] said, 'Let's go to lunch.' The two guys from New York went and got lunch. Everybody else stayed and kept running the song down. I'm in the control room and I'm just sittin' there diggin' it. It kept getting better and better and finally it was just peaking out. I said, 'It ain't never gonna sound no better!' So I reached up on the mike and said, 'We're rolling,' reached over and started up the 16-track and we cut it while

PHOTOGRAPH: TRIA GIOVAN / RETNA

they were gone to lunch.

"They came in and I said, 'Tom, while you were gone we just happened to punch record.' He said, 'YOU DID WHAT?' I said, 'It just got too good, man, I couldn't stand it no more. I didn't mess with your mix, I didn't touch it. I just hit record. You ought to play it back before you say no.'" That's how rock 'n' roll history got made.

John Stewart told the audience that he wrote "Daydream Believer," a huge hit for the Monkees and, years later, Anne Murray, during a period when he was about to leave the Kingston Trio and was writing songs day and night. "All I did was write songs. I locked myself in this little room... I remember going to bed that night thinking, 'The only thing I did today was write "Daydream Believer," what a waste.' I took it to Spanky and Our Gang and We Five and some other groups and they all passed on it. It's very easy to hear a hit song after it's a hit, very hard to hear a hit song before it's a hit. When I first heard 'California Dreamin'' John and Michelle Phillips and Denny Doherty came in and John said, 'We've got to sing you this song' and I just fell off my chair. There was no doubt that was a hit song." Stewart turned to John Phillips, who was also on the panel, and asked him, "Did you feel it was a hit when you wrote it?"

"Yeah," Phillips answered, "but no one liked it."

"No, come on," Stewart said.

"No, it was, 'Why write a song about a state?' And 'Monday Monday'—'A song about a day of the week? Big deal!' 'Go Where You Wanna Go'—'Who cares where you go?' I got all these answers!"

When the laughter died down Stewart went on to talk about "Daydream Believer": "I think it's a very self-explanatory song about a couple that has just gotten married. The American dream, the homecoming queen, the daydream believer. The day after the rice has been thrown and the last Cuisinart has been opened, they wake up next to each other with the morning mouth and that's where the corn is cut, my friends. That's where it all comes down to just those two people. I read in the paper Anne Murray said, 'Sometimes you get a good meaningful song and sometimes you get a piece of crap. I defy anyone but the songwriter to tell me what "Daydream Believer" is all about.' So Anne missed it completely. A lot of times singers will sing a song and not have any idea what the song is about. Glen Campbell did 'Wichita Lineman' and thought it was about a railroad guy."

Or maybe not. Jimmy Webb, the songwriter who gave Campbell "Wichita Lineman," "By the Time I Get to Phoenix" and other '60s standards, told the Bottom Line crowd that Campbell was and remains a vastly underrated talent. Webb talked about how he wrote "Up Up and Away" after a DJ pal coerced him into climbing into a hot air balloon at the opening of a hot dog stand. He wrote "By the Time I Get to Phoenix" hoping to get it recorded by Paul Peterson—the kid on "The Donna Reed Show" who was, in the mid-'60s, a bit of a teen idol. Webb brought "Phoenix" to Peterson's representatives but "they turned it down because they said it needed a chorus after each verse. It's an AAA song." Webb said that his chorus-less tune was just listed by BMI as their third most-played song of the last 50 years (after "Yesterday" and "Never My Love").

Dion regaled one songwriter panel with stories of touring with Buddy Holly, being introduced to blues records by John Hammond Sr. (Dion demonstrated how he imitat-

ed John Lee Hooker's "Walking Boogie" to come up with "Ruby Baby") and how, through Hammond and producer Tom Wilson, he got to watch Bob Dylan make his early records. Dion claimed that he and his musicians convinced Wilson to let them overdub an electric band on "Maggie's Farm"—and when Dylan heard it he decided to go electric (tales do sometimes grow a little tall at the Bottom Line). "Dylan was a wild man," Dion said, "like somebody let him out of a cage! He'd walk into the session, they'd get all these jazz musicians up there, and he'd say, 'Follow me!'" Dion launched into an impression of Dylan wailing his lyrics and flailing an acoustic guitar. "They'd say, 'Wait a minute! You're doing too many!' He'd say, 'That's right.' They'd say, 'But one time you did it two bars too many and then you did it...' He'd say, 'That's right, follow me!' They'd have to follow him. They'd hold their ass and they were on a ride! It was wild watching him! It was crazy."

Having told his funny stories, Dion eventually came around to talking about the side of songwriting that many pop composers brush off with laughter and bluster about the work ethic—the side that deals with trying to find a way to communicate emotions that cannot otherwise be expressed.

"Songs are like a diary to me," Dion said. "Like 'The Wanderer.' I was 17, that's the way I hid my insecurities... Both of my grandfathers were alcoholics. My parents did not know how to talk to each other. They never drank or drugged, they just argued. Every time I'd feel something they'd say, 'You shouldn't feel that way. Don't feel that way. It's crazy to feel that way. It's stupid to feel that way. It's wrong to feel that way.' So you walk around saying, 'How the hell am I supposed to feel?' But when you get with a guitar and you sing, 'No one knows what I go through,' then they say, 'Oooh! Sing that again!' All of a sudden they accept it. It doesn't threaten them that you're full of fear, that you're joyful. My family would ask you to sing it five times! But if you say, 'Man, I'm afraid,' then 'You shouldn't feel that way!' So music was a great ticket out for me."

Dion shared the stage that night with another New Yorker who used songs to express teenage anguish. Janis Ian talked about writing "Society's Child," her 1967 hit about interracial dating, before she had turned 16. "Fourteen- and 15-year-olds are really intense," Ian said. "They write in journals and they think really deep thoughts and they spend a lot of time being real philosophers in a way I think we lose as we get older and worry about earning a living. And at that age you don't know there are any rules. At that age I didn't know that songs didn't slow down in the middle and I didn't know that chords didn't change the way that I wrote them."

Ian talked about the controversy set off by a hit song about a white girl in love with a black boy. "I was living in an all-black neighborhood. I was one of three white children in the schools. I saw it happen in the opposite way around a lot. The pressure's there no matter what race or gender preference you're talking about. I have real vivid memories of people spitting on me in the street and booing me offstage. It was a very unpleasant time in a lot of ways. It was a different time from now. Woody Guthrie had this sign on his guitar that said, 'This machine kills fascists.' The power of song is really astounding. People burned a radio station over that song. It's a song! It's just music! It's not like politics. But it changes people's thinking."

—Tommy Campbell—

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Charlie Watts: Bird Watcher

A rock legend swings to the left

by CHIP STERN

"I love it, it's a real cheek, you know," Charlie Watts enthuses with the boyish sincerity of a true fan, as he prepares for the first of many sold-out sets at New York's Blue Note. Watts' wide-lapelled suit is cut in the classic mold of another generation, as are altoist Peter King's finely crafted charts to *A Tribute to Charlie Parker*. "I don't actually play all that regularly. It's been ages since the last Stones tour. So it's a wonderful honor to be asked to play jazz in a jazz club in New York. I loved Charlie Parker's music from the first moment I heard it. It's incredible to be asked to do this, not far from where Kenny Clarke would have played."

So go on and tell Watts that *he's* made a significant contribution to music. He'll stare fixedly at his soft delicate hands. But speak to him of drumming, and a curtain seems to ascend from behind those mute eyes. Yet even here, he just naturally defers to others, be it the legendary British drummer Phil Seaman, his friend and contemporary Ginger Baker or boyhood heroes like Dannie Richmond, Max Roach and Kenny Clarke.

When Watts hits the bandstand, he fixes his audience with a Keatonish stare, and the deadpan expression of that lived-in face suggests something rather...well, bird-like. But once the music hits, Watts' ritual mask of detachment drops away. Grinning broadly, Watts punctuates his glowing ride beat with percussive bombs in the manner of Roy Porter, Joe Harris, Charlie Smith and the scores of other trap players who came to bebop more thoroughly steeped in the language of R&B.

You see, Charlie Watts plays time—he plays for the benefit of the band—and in an era of aerobic exertions, it's easy to lose sight of this most elemental attribute. And though he trades two sets of eights, there's nary a drum solo in sight. "I tend to shrink at the thought of it. I much prefer rhythm *section* playing, like when Jo Jones and Basie's All-American Rhythm Section were just floating along. What I mean is, I'm too worried about the time. If I actually had to count off a 32-bar solo, I'd die. I'd get to about 17 and lose count. I don't like the number game. It's necessary, and without it you have chaos. So you do need it, you know; but I don't

PHOTOGRAPH: DEBORAH FEINGOLD

like it.

"Having said all that, eighth- and quarter-notes are a load of crap, really. It's just a musical term for what is going *doing-doing*. Kenny Clarke just had a *sound* that I felt deeply—I've never heard anyone play a ride as good. When he came to England with the Francois Boland big band, if you sat on his side of the stage, there was a shimmer. Touch is what he had—it was velvet when he played."

And what British players like Charlie Watts clearly have is a jazzman's sensibility for the backbeat. Even today, drummers still play rock very missionary-position—right on top of the beat—whereas the Watts/Wyman/Richards rhythm section always seemed to lag behind the beat, yet never quite lost it. So things start to stretch, to breathe, to swing. "Well, that's very kind of you. I think you're right," Watts nods slowly. "That's what it is—a different *feel*. It's a very lonely thing, a backbeat. And if it isn't exactly right, it'll stick out more than a backbeat, say, that is going to push the brass along. If you're playing a backbeat constantly, they have to all be the same."

But Watts' never were; maybe it was an accident, and he was just trying to clean up. "There's some truth to that," he laughs. "Ronnie Wood says my mistakes are the best things. But I think they're perfect when I'm doing them. It's whatever is required of you. Because I'm not a very good reader, my points of reference are that I like certain stylists on certain things: either D.J. Fontana or Benny Benjamin or Earl Palmer or Freddie Below or Kenny Clarke, depending on the context. There's a sound and a feel to those records, and that's what you try and make it sound like. So I still imagine I'm *them*. I'll be Kenny Clarke tonight."

One thinks there would be something so fulfilling about being a Charlie Watts.

Short pause. Shrug. "Is there?

"No, I still do that," he concludes modestly. "I do. I walk about with those people on my mind."

Rhythms echo my footsteps as I walk back to my car. One-2-3-4. Two-2-3-4. Three-2-3-4...the groove's moving fourward, but I'm slipping back, letting it relax, before sneaking up on the One. Backstepping off that last bar, walking about with Charlie Watts on my mind, as the far calls of birds break the summer still of early morning.

BIG BASS DRUM

CHARLIE WATTS made his Blue Note gig on a four-piece set of rented Gretsch, with a metal snare, 12" and 14" toms and an 18" bass drum—"the drums I had when the orchestra was here a few years ago. If I'd air-freighted my drums in the flight cases I use with the Stones, the whole thing would cost more than we're earning, just to get here."

He brought his own cymbals across the pond, though, all lined up to his right, nothing on his left, except for an old set of 14" A hi-hats. "I have a very old, beautiful Avedis swish, a 20" with rivets, a big 22" K with rivets and a flat thing, an Italian cymbal, a beautiful ride. I've had them for 25 years. Haven't used calf heads for years. They're bloody hard things to keep together. I don't like changing my heads at all, but I had to recently with a few that got bashed out."

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Dave Mustaine's Rhythm Method

Megadeth's patron saint pedals muted metal

by MATT RESNICOFF

This afternoon the Los Angeles chapter of Hard Rock Cafe enshrined on its wall a guitar signed by each member of Megadeth. Dave Mustaine owned, played and smashed the instrument, but had a hard time grappling with the "honor." "I mean, it's flattering," he says, "but it's like...I don't know. It was just weird."

Weird because of so much ceremony surrounding an event that might seem trivial in light of world affairs? "Well, weird because there was a bunch of people that are typically there for pop-rock occasions, since the place is more or less geared toward that audience. And then *Megadeth*...'Gee, what's wrong with this picture?'"

So up alongside Elvis lamé, ZZ Top kitsch and artifacts of Van Halen poseurship hangs a broken black Jackson Flying V with ANARCHY stickers across its face, and it all falls into place as the safe symbolism of hard rock. *Countdown to Extinction* enters the Top 10 and Dave Mustaine eats hamburgers with the MTV crowd. Dare it be said, big-business heavy metal has endangered Megadeth's fringe appeal. But in the final appraisal, how heavy is heavy?

"Very, very heavy," maintains Mustaine, who founded the group after leaving Metallica in 1983. Even amid Marty Friedman's wicked soloing, the Megadeth crunch belongs as much to Mustaine's right hand as AC/DC's does to Malcolm Young's. The tunes incorporate extended pedaling—often low-E string reps peppered with two-fingered fifth chords—executed with superior tone, a touch of requisite harmonic-minor single-note riffing, and strict attention to time and clarity.

"When I was playing with James Hetfield in Metallica," Dave says, "we pretty much decided that rhythm guitar should be downpicking when it comes to pedaling, until it's so fast that you can't downpick anymore. If you have to pedal, each note is voiced exactly the same. Not *dah*-de *dah*-de *dah*-de—it's *de-de-de*, very staccato, each note with the same strength. And when you're doing this butterfly movement, you have to throttle the pick very closely and chop at the string. When I hit a string, the pick is parallel with it, so the attack is very, very short: It just touches the string, plucks it and then it's off, instead of touching it, riding down the peak and then releasing when it gets toward the tip. There's no time wasted."

Or sound. Mustaine's technique includes airtight, on-the-spot muting that begins at the bridge and is assisted where the left hand voices chords. First, the knife-edge of the palm lays across the bridge saddles and rolls forward to dampen unwanted strings from sounding when lower strings are hammered. Many players allow chords in a sequence to sustain into one another; Dave may hammer and lift a chord off quickly between pedaled notes. "It dictates more sonic clarity to the string you're pedaling on if you don't have a chord voicing out in the background," he explains. "Say I have the E string open and I'm positioning my hand to do another chord: I will pedal or downpick the E string, push down a chord on the A and D, and when I'm back to pedaling I remove the chord pressure but keep my fingers in position, deadening those strings. That's the key: Voice the chords just long enough to sustain between pedaling. The chords can be very, very short, depending on the impor- [*cont'd on page 94*]

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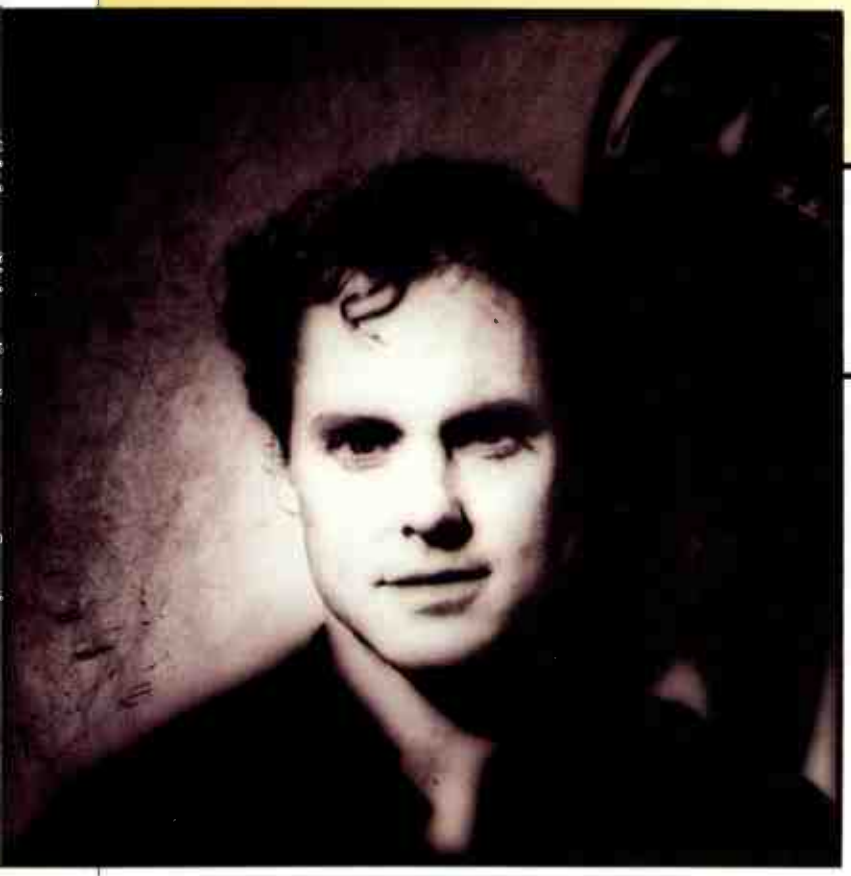

Grooveman for the shred-set reveals sub-secrets

by CHRIS JISI

Say "groove bassist" and what comes to mind? A shadowy, P-Bass-toting figure onstage in a smoke-filled club, pumping slow, steady eighth-notes from deep within the pocket. But four-to-the-bar rock, funk or blues aren't the only musics dependent on a great big groove. Complex as fusion may often be, someone has to hold down the fort; thanks to the influence of rap and dance music, its groove has come back to bass-ics. James Earl first gained notoriety several years back as Stanley Clarke's bassist (!), before laying it down for noted guitarists Frank Gambale, Larry Carlton and Allan Holdsworth. More to the point, he's replaced hexabass wizard John Patitucci in Chick Corea's Elektric Band—an enviable solo chair. Yet Los Angeles–based Earl remains faithful to the almighty groove. "More than anything else," he says, "I've always loved to feel time when I play."

A bold statement considering the rhythmic range he's had to cover on recent recordings, including *Truth in Shredding,* featuring Gambale and Holdsworth, and *Centrifugal Funk* (which the bassist co-produced with project organizer Mark Varney), starring Gambale, Nelson guitarist Brett Garsed and Memphis phenom Shawn Lane. Earl pulls off straight-ahead walks, slapped sambas, keyboard-bass-style ostinatos, hazardous unison melodies and odd-meter changes, often at terrifying tempos. Add to that his salsa, techno-funk and reggae grooves on drummer Dave Weckl's latest disc *Heads Up,* and Earl turns up as one "busy" bassist. Or is he? "People think it's all about chops, but it's not," he says. "Stanley always maintained if you keep your lines simple they'll groove harder. It's really a feel thing, a concept of how to play with a drummer and be a team. I like to zero in on where they put the beat and how they're subconsciously subdividing it, to make the whole bottom end as smooth as possible."

Fair enough, but how about harmonically, where fusioneers routinely stack triads like bookshelves? "I have a basic knowledge of jazz harmony," he says. "I know all my altered scales and chords. But mainly, I use my ear. I try to play melodically on the bottom, taking a more vertical, linear approach as opposed to thinking horizontally about each chord change. I studied with Charlie Banacos in Boston, who has a series of chromatic approach-note exercises that really help you learn the fingerboard and get up and down the neck. For example, he'll take a C7 arpeggio using chromatic approach-notes from above—D♭-C, F-E, A♭-G, B-B♭—and have you play it across the strings as well as up and down each string. That came in handy for a lot of Chick's chromatic lines. Overall, however, the majority of what I play in any situation is based on instinct and experience."

Born in Boston and raised in Minneapolis and Maryland, Earl's earliest groove explorations occurred after several years of classical guitar, when friends recruited him to play electric bass in a local rock/R&B band. Inspired by Paul McCartney, the Allman Brothers' Berry Oakley, Motown genius James Jamerson and Bootsy Collins, as well as Clarke and Jaco Pastorius, he later returned to Boston's Berklee College of Music. After a year, he began a dues-paying journey through touring Top 40 funk bands and local jazz-fusion outfits led by hornman Tiger Okoshi and drummer Bob Moses. [*cont'd on page 110*]

PHOTOGRAPH DEBORAH SAMUEL

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JUST SAY NO TO MIDI

Vince Clarke does techno the hard way

"No digital here, mate." Synth-pop perfectionist Vince Clarke recoils from the suggestion that there's even *one* digital synth sound or sample on *Abba-esque*, the latest EP from Clarke and singer Andy Bell, collectively known as Erasure. The record's crisp, effervescent arrangements of four '70s Abba pop hits were produced entirely on vintage analog synthesizers and sequencers. And Clarke is damned proud of it:

"When we did *Chorus* [Erasure's previous album], I set myself certain ground rules: First, no digital equipment. Second, no samples. Third, no drum machines. Fourth, no chords. And finally, no MIDI—which was quite an interesting challenge."

It's not that Mr. Clarke is a masochist, or some crotchety retro crank. Just a few years ago, he was up to his shaven cranium in MIDI gear and digital synths. But then he started asking the question many of his fans have pondered: What's the secret magic behind a classic Vince Clarke synth arrangement? What is it that's so compelling about those zipper-tight arpeggios, rubber-band basslines and android syncopations on Depeche Mode's *Speak and Spell* or the Yazoo albums?

"A friend of mine said he could hear a change in feel between early albums I'd done and the albums I'd recorded with Erasure," Clarke confesses. "And that got me thinking about analog sequencers versus MIDI sequencers." From thinking, Vince graduated to measuring with an oscilloscope. Plotted out in microseconds, MIDI ran a poor second to analog CV/Gate sequencing.

"I like strict, robotic timing," Clarke insists. "And from the scope, it was clear that I could never get MIDI *really* in time. You can't *hear* the discrepancy. But I felt that after building up a whole bunch of tracks, eventually the mistiming makes the whole piece sound mushy. I'm convinced there's a difference. There hasn't been a synthesizer album that's been truly in time for five years."

Vince still uses a MIDI sequencer—a UMI program running on a BBC Micro computer—to lay down his lines. But once he's entered the notes (via a little Casio CZ-101 keyboard) and edited velocity, aftertouch and other parameters in step-time on the UMI, he transfers the sequence to an old Roland MC-4 analog sequencer.

"The UMI gives out Sync 24, the old Roland sync code," he explains. "You use that to sync the MC-4 to MIDI. Then there are CV and Gate inputs in the MC-4, which you're supposed to use for live playing. But if you connect the UMI to a MIDI-to-CV converter, the UMI can play one line at a time into the MC-4."

by ALAN DI PERNA

Additional sequencing is provided by a truly primitive device: an old ARP 16-step sequencer. "It's a very free-wheeling thing," says Vince. "Each of the 16 notes is either on or off, and the pitch is either up or down. I just trigger various bits and pieces from that."

These two sequencers drive a good-sized analog museum, located in Clarke's home studio in Amsterdam. What sounds digital is often just obscure—like the glassy timbres on *Abba-esque*'s opener "Lay All Your Love on Me," which were produced by a little-known Dutch analog synth called a Syrnix. But Vince's real passion these days is for big old modular systems. A digital synth's computer operating system, no matter how good, tends to impose a programming order, whereas Clarke finds modular analog synthesis is absolutely free.

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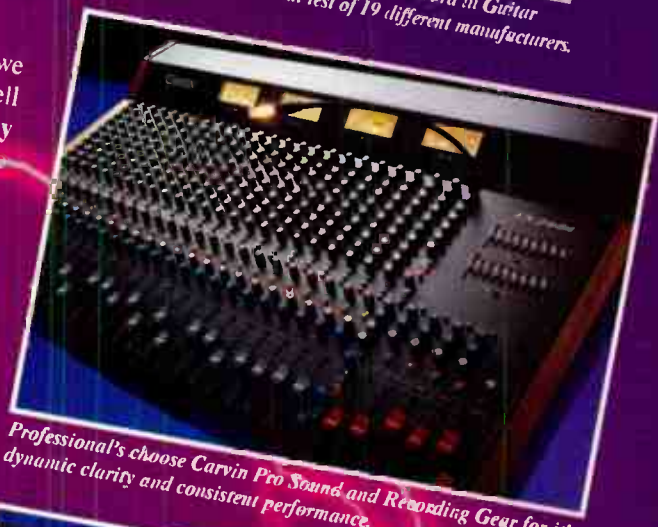

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"You can modulate everything with anything! There are no preassumptions as to what each module is, either. There's nothing to say, 'Because this is a filter, it must filter sounds.' You can do other things with it as well. And the great thing is that you can patch between different modular synths—for example, oscillate one filter with the VCO from another keyboard."

A casual listener might never guess that the snare drum on "Lay All Your Love on Me" is actually a Mini Moog. Or that the kick drum is a Roland System 100 modular machine. "It's basically just the sound of the filter with a really fast envelope," Vince helpfully adds. The System 100 also generates the little Kraftwerkian fillips that happen once a verse. "That sound is just modulating one filter with another," he says, "kind of a ring modulation effect."

The ultra-deep filter sweeps on the pre-chorus come from a venerable ARP 2600. They plummet and resurface as a Mini Moog chops out hi-res, minor-key arpeggios—reminding the listener of Mr. Clarke's fourth rule of production: No Chords.

"That's another rule that came from looking at my 'previous life,'" Vince laughs. "On the first Yazoo album, I didn't own any synths that could play more than one note at a time! And I've grown to have a real dislike for pads. It's much better to come up with individual lines and use each line to form one note of a chord. This way each note is coming from a different keyboard, which gives a much more interesting texture. A big pad on a single keyboard just mushes up a track."

And mushiness is an offense Vince Clarke has never been guilty of.

MUSTAINE

[*cont'd from page 88*] tance of the pedaling. For example, in the beginning of 'Holy Wars' I do a lot of rolling and chromatics, but when I go to voice the chords, I pull off immediately and pedal. I've got so much velocity going with my right hand that if I don't deaden those strings they carry over the pedaling and make it muddy. Deadening at the bridge and the nut, no sound comes from the string anywhere. There won't even be a muted sound; it'll just be killed."

Elsewhere, Mustaine's rhythms get more tangled. The riff he plays beneath Friedman's solo in "Ashes in Your Mouth" is a chromatic line beginning on open low E, then ascending to G♭, G, then A♭; next, he hits open A, B, C, then D♭, pulls those three notes off—including open A—and plays back through the same three notes on the low E, concluding with the open string. Played repeatedly, varying picking and hammering, it's a good chromatic exercise unto itself.

Megadeth tempos can be hectic, but Dave makes a point that there's more to this kind of hard rock than speed; it's a deceptively fast genre. "That line from 'Ashes' was like a golf swing," he says, "all the way back then all the way straight forward again, the same exact line. The beauty of Megadeth is its simplicity. A lot of great players have sucked up into their own asshole because they've become too complex, and their ego's writing checks that their music can't cash. I like to do solos that have a bit more feeling. And therefore I can't go 100 miles an hour like a lot of players nowadays. A lot of people take completely for granted that a guitar isn't meant to go that fast without sounding like a chainsaw. I mean, listen to some of the greatest players in the world—David Gilmour doesn't have to play a lot to get the job done, he really doesn't.

"It's harder to play slow than to play fast, it really is," Dave continues. "Especially in the studio, because you can hear all the discrepancies with the sound, and if you're critical, if you're using a click track, you can see how the sound wavers if you're not *really* on top of it. You need excellent meter to play slow; I see now that the slower that we play, the more important it is to really have a groove and soul. It's important to be able to play both sides. It's more satisfying."

SUSTAINE

Dave finally found a guitar tech to clean out his locker, rewire his rack and program his new Bradshaw switching system. He's got Bradshaw preamps, a VHT 2150 power amp, four Marshall cabs—two 300s and two 100s—two Yamaha SPX90s, and a Samson cordless and light module. He uses Jacksons, strung with D'Addario .010s. "I played B.C. Rich for a long time but because of the acidity in my body, the strings would break at the saddle. I was used to double-octave fretboards; Jackson said, 'We don't do that—have a Soloist.' I said, 'No, you don't understand—I'm gonna pay for this guitar,' and they go, 'You don't understand, you were gonna have to pay for it *anyway*, and we don't do that!' I whimpered and sniveled and ended up paying an arm and a leg. Believe me, I played just about everything, I've seen a lot of problems, and my Jackson is one of the best guitars I've ever had. They granted me the opportunity to have my own signature line, so I'm excited."

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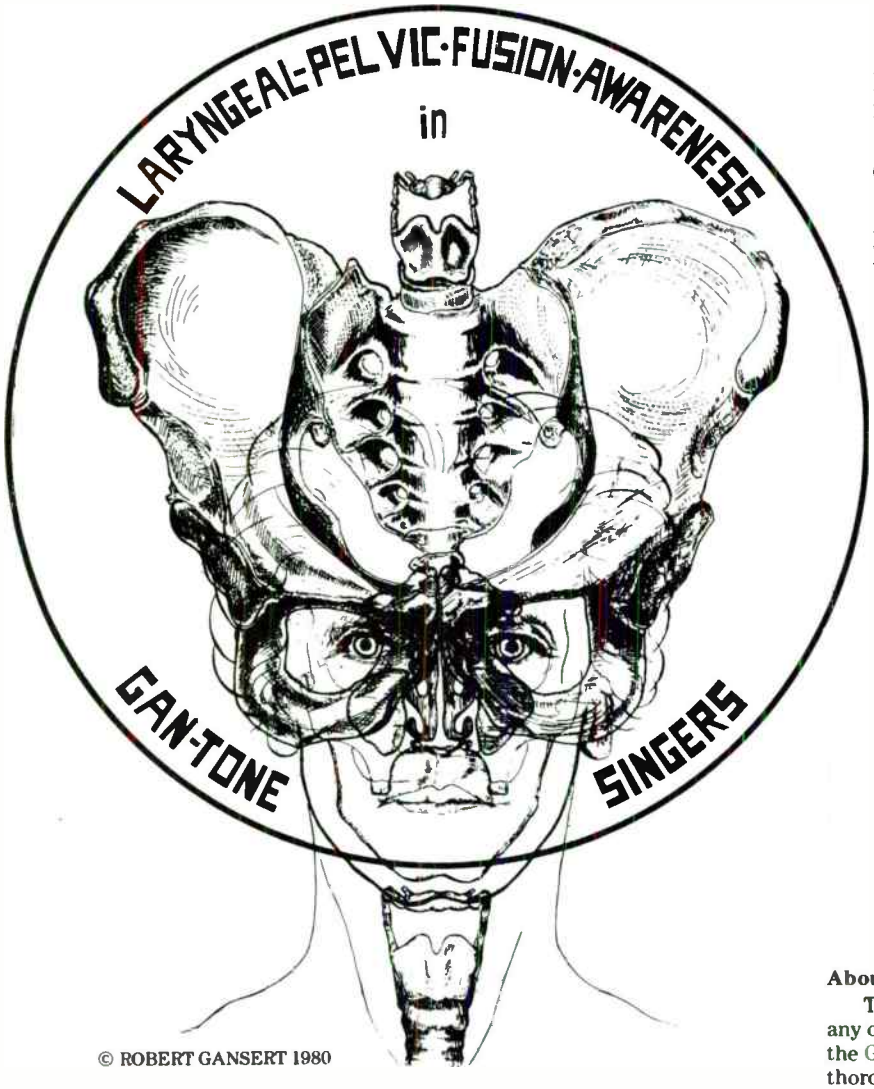

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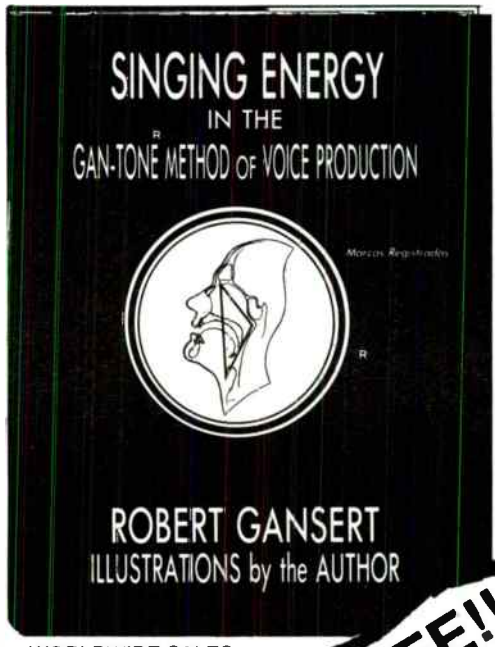

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IN THE EAR 2000

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Musicians have fantasized for years of owning a digital audio workstation like a Fairlight or a Synclavier, but the cost of that kind of technology has been way beyond the reach of all but a select few. Kurzweil has brought that dream one step closer to reality.

The K-2000 utilizes what Kurzweil calls Variable Architecture Synthesis Technology (VAST for short) to create what is one of the most powerful and flexible synthesizers currently available. By incorporating the latest in Digital Sound Processing technology, the K-2000 gives the player access to a wide variety of waveforms, filters and effects; it can be configured to handle most types of synthesis. The unit's eight megabytes of ROM contain most of the classic Kurzweil acoustic sample library (including some of the best string sounds ever released), along with an array of sampled waveforms. Up to 64 megabytes of RAM can be added to hold additional samples. A 3.5" floppy drive, which accepts Akai S-1000 as well as Kurzweil disks, is standard. Samples can also be transferred from any other device which supports MIDI sample dump standard. An optional SMP unit (list price $795) allows direct stereo sampling with analog, digital and optical inputs and outputs. The K-2000's built-in SCSI port can be interfaced with a hard drive or a CD-ROM drive. An internal hard drive can be added as well.

The synth-action keyboard is velocity- and pressure-sensitive and has a five-octave range. It is 24-note polyphonic and can handle 16 simultaneous timbres. Up to 61 samples can be mapped across the keyboard, and up to three keyboard maps can then be layered. A 15,000-note "scratchpad" sequencer is also included. While this is not the sequencer for most serious work, it will accept material from more complex sequencers, which can be stored in the unit and played back later (great for gigs). The K-2000 has six outputs which are configured as a master stereo pair and four separate outs. These outs can also be used as effect loops for additional outboard gear. There is an onboard digital effects processor where up to four effects can be accessed simultaneously.

One drawback of the K-2000 is that it takes a VAST amount of effort and energy to master. The voluminous manual is clearly written and a "how-to" video is included, but expect to put in some long hours to get the most out of this formidable machine. However, if you need the kind of power this instrument offers, it is well worth its $2995 list price. For more information call (310) 926-3200. BILL SEERY

PLAYERS CHOICE

WILD ABOUT HARRY

The story goes that when Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck were both in the Yardbirds they used to plug from the speaker output of one Fender Twin into the input of another. I've tried this, and it sounds great for about half an hour. Then the amp on the receiving end blows up.

Too bad those guys weren't able to plug into Harry Kolbe's new GP-1. With years of experience in custom amplifier modifications, the New York–based Kolbe has become the latest contender in the guitar preamp wars. The GP-1 is a single-rack-space, two-channel unit powered by three 12AX7s. The clean channel has so much headroom that I wasn't able, in a solid week of abuse, to make it distort. The preamp adds a nice sheen without coloring the original tone of the instrument. I had my doubts when Kolbe assured me that, thanks to what he calls a Character Generator, the GP-1's overdrive channel could produce both a Fender and Marshall tone, but my skepticism disappeared soon after I plugged in. Even with a solid-state amp, the Fender setting will make you swear you're playing through 6L6s into Jensen speakers. Kolbe's Marshall setting produces a convincingly warm, early-Clapton-esque overdrive. The third setting takes the GP-1 over the top, and would be perfect for shredding metal sparks off cement.

HARRY KOLBE'S GP-1

My only beef is with the footswitching system, which allows you to move between clean and distortion channels, but not between the three overdrive tones. To access these settings you have to go to three buttons on the front panel; not the best setup for quick onstage changes. At $1400 the GP-1 may be out of range for some players, but it's one hell of a piece of work. For more information call (212) 627-2740. RICHARD LLOYD

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TOO GOOD TUBEY TRUE

Unless they get into a high-ticket recording studio, most musicians sing and record through dynamic microphones. They're durable and usually available for under $200. Some step up to modern condensers, but few ever squeeze their music through the diaphragm of a tube microphone. No wonder, since all the great classic tube mikes are now hoarded, coveted and priced like Toyotas. The sound of tube mikes (Neumann's U-87, for instance) is legendary, and just about every great track from the 1950s and '60s is steeped in the two mystical elements of tubeness: warmth and presence.

Well, sooner or later someone had to come up with a tube mike in a price range that musicians could afford. Groove Tubes, the company famous among guitarists and vintage hi-fi buffs for its high-quality vacuum tubes, makes the MD-1 (a.k.a. the Model One), a tube mike with a list price of $500. That's right. Half a grand—the price range of some pretty good non-tube condensers. Like buying a car, you have to read the fine print: The MD-1 requires Groove Tubes' PS-1 power supply, so the cost of a mike, the power supply and the connecting cable is $1100. However, one power supply will drive as many as four mikes. Even if you only buy one MD-1 with the power supply, $1100 is extremely reasonable for what you get.

I screwed the MD-1 onto a mike stand and plugged it into the power supply, which has XLR outputs for running a cord to recording gear. Through the MD-1's dozen vent holes I could see the soft, orange glow of its tube. I did the standard "testing, one, two, three," sang a few notes, and shouted a couple of times—all within inches of the MD-1. I used it to record vocals, as well as acoustic and electric guitar. The MD-1 did an extraordinary job of capturing all of them, plus I was able to get an excellent sound without touching the EQ. This probably isn't a great choice for an onstage performance mike (unless you're made out of money). It's prone to handling noise, and like other tube mikes, it isn't designed to take the same kind of abuse as cheaper, dynamic mikes. However, this microphone is the real deal. It's *great* in the studio, plus it's priced in the "too good to be true" range. If you're looking for a tube mike, you have to check out the MD-1. For more information call (818) 361-4500.

TOM MULHERN

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Good news for former Yamaha keyboard owners with orphaned breath controllers. Anatek, the Canadian company that brought you that nifty line of pocket MIDI processors, has introduced the Wind Machine. This palm-sized unit adapts the Yamaha BC1 and BC2 breath controllers to any MIDI device. The Wind Machine has MIDI out and MIDI in jacks so it can plug directly into an instrument's MIDI in or between the MIDI out of a master keyboard and a sequencer's MIDI in. The Wind Machine uses 8 DIP switches to program the transmit channel, set the type of data transmitted and enable or disable controller data received at the MIDI in port.

After plugging in the external power supply, the Wind Machine must be calibrated by blowing into the breath controller. Using the event edit display on a sequencer, we found that this unit would only transmit controller values up to 124 and pitch bends to 8092, even after several re-calibrations. Despite this problem, the Wind Machine is still quite expressive, especially when using sampled brass and woodwind sounds. For more information call (800) 665-4175.

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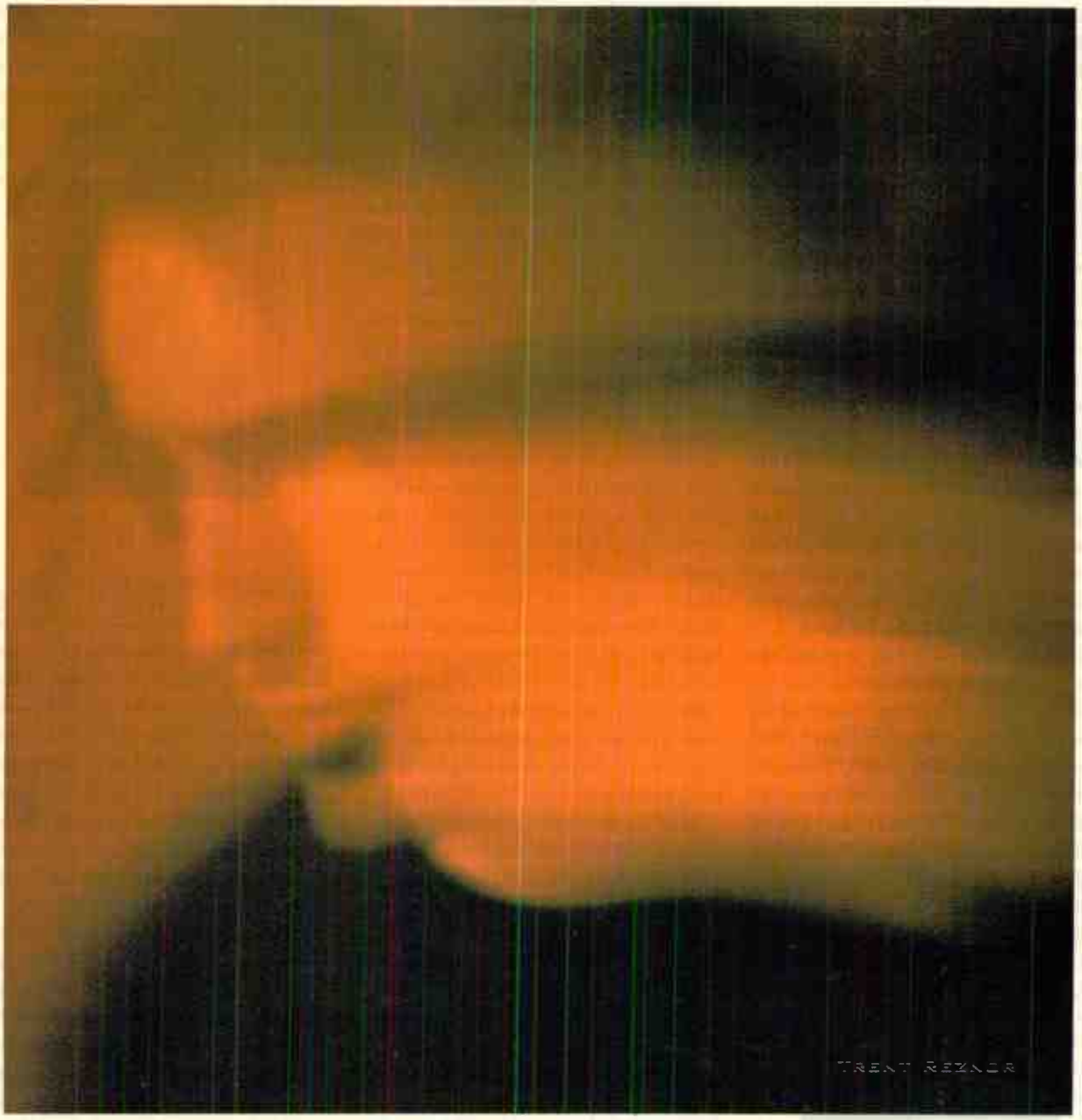

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PRETTY IN BLACK

NINE INCH NAILS
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(INTERSCOPE)

Our thought for the day comes from the "Calvin and Hobbes" comic strip. Calvin, open-mouthed: "Mainstream commercial nihilism can't be trusted?!" His mom, blasé: "'Fraid not, kiddo."

Of course, only a complete sucker would believe creepy Trent Reznor, doing business as Nine Inch Nails. On *Broken*, this raving martyr goes to absurd extremes to entertain us with his tales of inner torment. No mere loser, he's "human junk, just words and so much skin," or a "rotten carcass," depending on the track. What a kidder!

Ludicrous excess won't interfere with your enjoyment of his EP, though, because overstatement is the point. Consisting of four real tunes and a couple of instrumental doodads, this romp through hell was recorded during a bitter dispute with TVT, the label that issued Nine Inch Nails' *Pretty Hate Machine*, and puts that debut LP to shame. Louder and busier, *Broken* recasts techno-gloom as a grand symphony, making its predecessor seem wimpy and precious by comparison. Big noise rains

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KATHY

ON AUGUST 23, former *Musician* design assistant Kathy Dempsey was murdered in Lexington, Massachusetts. Kathy was 31 years old.

Kathy was a *Musician* staffer from July 1988 to September 1990, serving as associate designer with art directors David Carson, Hans Teensma and Patrick Mitchell. She had a graceful style with type, but it was with color harmony that Kathy truly excelled, and the art directors she worked with usually deferred to her color recommendations. She was demanding and precise with her work, even on the latest deadline evening, frequently trying the patience of typesetters and mechanical artists; her persistence always improved the final product. At the time of her death, Kathy was working as a design consultant and preparing to return to school. She had hoped to teach art to children.

Kathy was an artist not just by vocation: She enhanced every space she occupied with her eye for beauty. On camping trips she would hang string from tree to tree and decorate with bits of fabric and odd things; temporary workstations in the office would soon be cluttered with drawings, clip art and design ideas; she worked as a papermaker, weaver and maskmaker, and belonged to a small chorus of talented musicians called MotherTongue. She was also a member of the infamous Womanly Women, a group of friends that would camp, work, talk and share ideas.

K.D. to many of her friends, Kathleen Dempsey was a beautiful woman in all ways, stylish, intelligent, proud perhaps that she lived with great integrity, focused on her own principles of beauty, community and care. The *Musician* family is shocked and saddened by her loss. We extend sincerest sympathies to her parents and brothers.

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