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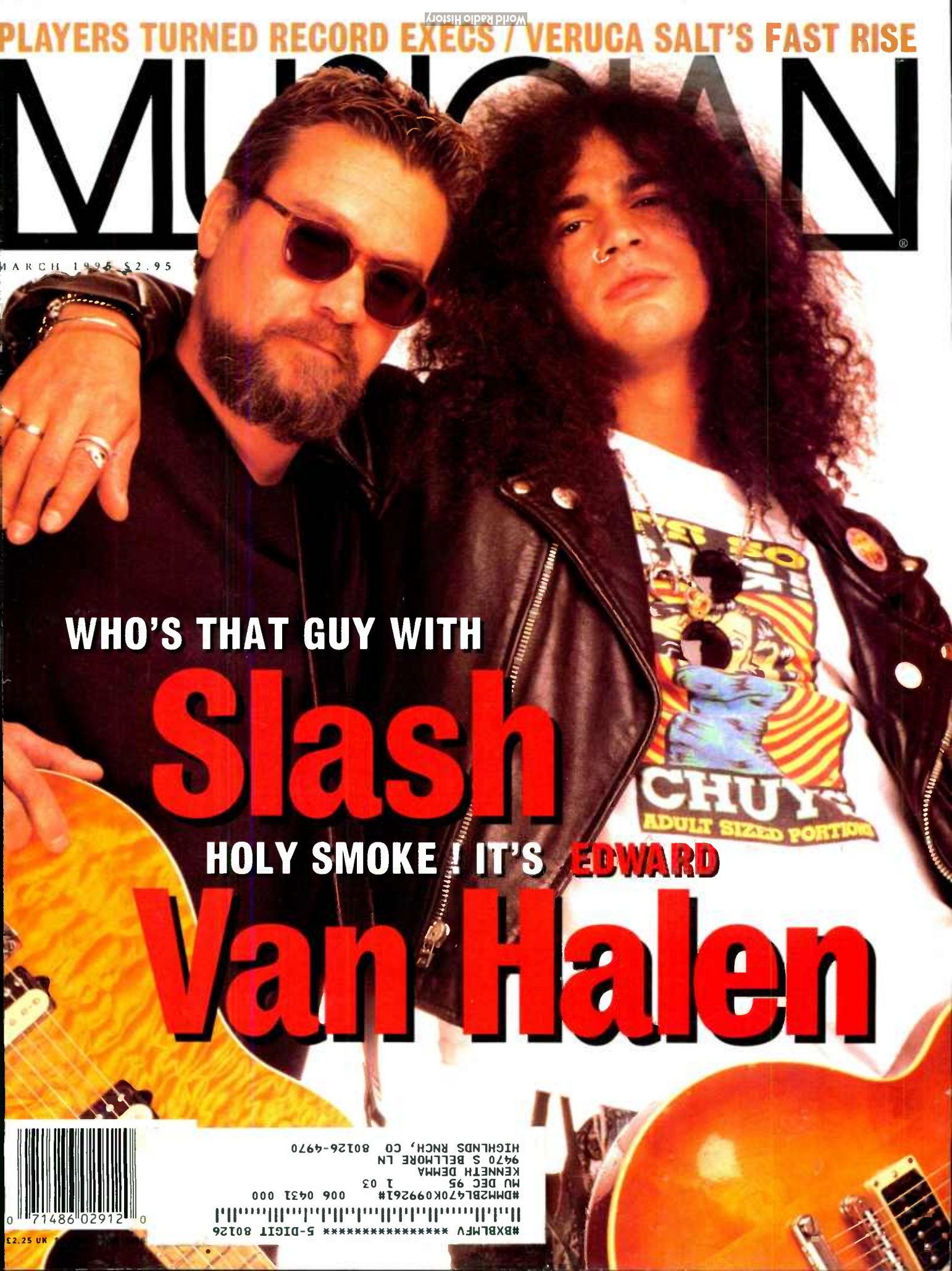

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MUSICIAN MAGAZINE
MARCH 1995 • ISSUE 196

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK HANAUER; CONTENTS PHOTOGRAPH BY JILL GREENBERG

FRONTWOMAN

KRISTIN HERSH

Last year you released your first solo album, Hips and Makers. *Now you have a new Throwing Muses album,* University. *Did you think about not returning to the band?*

No. I didn't mean to do *Hips* in the first place. I put those songs down just to get them out of my head and off the band's back in the couple of weeks between rehearsal for *University* and going down to New Orleans where we made it. And I just forgot about it until my husband Billy, Ivo from 4AD, and Michael Stipe—who are all members of the music business who are also musical, which could be kind of rare—convinced me to put it out. I had wondered if it was too literally personal, just from my dorky little life. It seemed like something that wasn't particularly publishable—more like a photo album. It seemed presumptuous. Until I realized that everybody has a dorky little life, too. I'm not the only one, it's a pretty universal thing.

"I was pissed off at all my friends in trios for not telling me how great it was!"

I really fell in love with the acoustic guitar itself. I love the idea of playing a piece of wood and using muscles and air to make sounds just like the way your vocal cords work. It was like playing a tree. There's a lot of power in that. I had thought playing an acoustic guitar was a wimpy thing to do, but it's a real muscular instrument.

You did not replace Tanya Donelly when she left the Muses. How did you like playing all the guitar?

I just loved it! The first time I played in a trio I couldn't believe it! After years of trying to hold all these pieces together. I loved all the counter melody that was going on [in the four-piece] but it made it not as solid as it could have been and kind of confusing to people who didn't want to work so hard. Without being lofty about it, most people are used to music you can turn on and off, music that's literally inoffensive—it doesn't go in anywhere. That's not what we were. I think now it's a nice combination of solidity and detail which I thought was impossible. I was so pissed off at all my friends in trios for not telling me how great it was! I called Bob Mould immediately and said, "Fuck you!" He said, "Yeah, isn't it great?"

I feel very free and I appreciate the amount of space we've got now. I also have a very melodic and tight bass player so I don't feel that I'm overburdened in my rhythm or lead guitar.

Did you play a wah-wah to get that effect on "No Way in Hell" or is that something more complicated?

It's a weird German wah pedal. It was like a hundred years old [*laughs*] and there are only about ten of them in the world.

You don't see many hundred-year-old wah-wahs these days.

Maybe somebody made it by mistake in some war. It's not much like a wah-wah; it distorts and compresses according to the wave of the wah against the EQ. It screws with the sound so bad that it sounds great. That took over two songs, "No Way in Hell" and "Bright Yellow Gun."

There's an awful lot of stupid rock songs about sex, but it seems on University *you've found a new way to write about sex. Did you start out this album saying, "Step aside, Prince, let me show you how it's done"?*

There's a lot of sex all over it. There always has been, I think. It's the same kind of hard living, just *the most you can do all the time.* Sex is a really good picture of that. So is music. It's a good picture of loving hard.

When you sing, "I start at his knees and I end in his dreams" it seems at first pretty straightforward and sexy—but the way that song, "Start," spins out it becomes more a portrait of how sex or infatuation can be used to get possession of someone, to get inside someone's head.

Yeah, exactly. But that's pretty much what everybody does. You can't love hard without breaking yourself and them in half. At the same time there's a lot of goofiness in that. You can't help but end up dorky in that situation. You'll say these ridiculous things and yet *they're true.* It saddens me to think that there's a lot of bad sex out there. As hard as it is to think about all the bad music out there, think of all the people who are getting it wrong [*laughs*] and lying with it. That's really harsh. We don't have long to live and to not know how to keep your skin alive and give with that is really sad. You have kids—you know how sensual and giving that is, too. Yet it's a foreign concept to a lot of people.

In "Bright Yellow Gun"—in many of your songs—you write and sing from a disordered perspective. Do you ever say to yourself, "Gee, maybe I better lay off the madwoman stuff this time"?

I never hear it that way. I'm very aware that the mental illness thing has been overplayed in all of my press, so it's frustrating on a personal level. But I never heard it in the *songs.* When I'm at my most healthy I'm always bouncing off of and being torn up by the people I love the most. And it feels *great*! It's a hash kind of a high, it's never calm to be that in love. It's a very sensual kind of craziness. I don't like my disorder. I don't like the fact that I've had to fight any kind of mental illness, obviously. And I would never write a song if I were depressed or screwed up in any way. I think songs are even better at seeing the human condition than most people are.

The songs seem to have as much a life of their own as my kids do. Almost exactly as much a life of their own. [*laughs*] Even if they look like me and sound like me, I know enough not to guess what they're going to do next.

BILL FLANAGAN

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEN IRISH/OUTLINE

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LETTERS

E-MAIL

Thanks for Michael Lipton's review of Paul Kelly's *Wanted Man* (Dec. '94). I couldn't have said it better myself. I've been a fan since 1987's *Gossip* and have all ten of his records. But all I can tell you is that he's Australian and sadly unnoticed: How about an article on "one of music's most consistent and accurate songwriters"?

Chip Saam
Ypsilanti, MI

I would like to commend you on printing Danzig's picture on your cover (Aug. '94) even though you did stand to lose advertising. From a Marxist point of view, you stood up against the money/establishment class. I am always glad to see a publication that is not afraid to lose some dollars for free speech. It is not the government in this country that stifles free speech much anymore, it's the businesses that control the advertising. It seems that nowadays, they can say what goes, and what gets canned.

Sean Maguire

Thanks for the extraordinarily interesting book excerpt titled "From Surfing to Psychedelia," by Timothy White (Dec. '94). It was remarkably well-written, carrying a sense of cultural inertia as the roots of rock 'n' roll began to spread through the country.

Also, now that Robert Fripp and King Crimson are back to making music, howzabout getting him to write for *Musician* again, like he did when I first started subscribing?

Dan Sonnier

Thanks to Vic Garbarini for the guitar lesson with Peter Buck (Dec. '94). As someone who does most of his guitar-playing these days in the living room with his kids, I can tell you this sidebar was fun for the whole famn damily. Features like "Guided by Voicings" are what keep us subscribers.

P.S. The kids and I think Hope Sandoval should piss off.

Craig Hankin

HEY GREEN DAY

I think I've figured it out. *Alternative* is an alternative to: 1) learning how to play; 2) tucking in your shirt; 3) tuning; 4) long pants; 5) all of the above. Uh, dude, could I have a little more ability in my headphones?

Brett Wakefield
Sherman Oaks, CA

It was obvious in Matt Scharfglass' pompous, weepy letter (Nov. '94) that he knows nothing about punk rock music and does not care to. None of these bedroom virtuosos can speak a word about the "paying of dues" until they quit their job, jump in a van and drive from dive-bar to dive-bar to prove to whomever that your music is your life. Green Day did exactly that for nearly five straight years, along with countless other so-called "three-chord hacks." Any type of music is an artform in its own right.

Mitchell Townsend
Orange County, CA

I always thought Robert Plant and Jimmy Page should reunite and create more musical magic instead of involving themselves in moderately successful solo projects (Dec. '94). Unfortunately, when I saw "Unledded" on MTV, I was disappointed. I reckon Page and Plant assumed their fans would buy anything they'd do. Are they afraid that if they did "Unplugged" the way it was meant to be, they'd be exposed as unable to perform without the elaborate musical arabesques, filigrees and special-effects microphones that have been provided?

It's fortunate that they've neglected to tell John Paul Jones about this project. Only he has had the sense to lend his talent to younger musicians, rather than perpetuate a myth long gone.

Kim Andrews
Jersey City, NJ

RE-VIEWED

I cannot let Robbie Robertson (*Frontman*, Nov. '94) get away with using your pages to slag off a book which, by his own admission, he hasn't even read. He says "the first 30 pages" of my *Across the Great Divide: The Band and America* are "full of inaccuracies," to which I must point out a) that an account of the childhoods of five men growing up in Canada and America in the early 1940s is necessarily going to contain a few "inaccuracies," and b) that Robbie himself had every chance to assist in making that account less inaccurate; he failed to respond to literally dozens of phone calls and faxes I sent to his management. Perhaps the real truth is that Robbie Robertson knows the remaining 370 pages of *Across the Great Divide* fail to depict him as the godlike genius he so obviously thinks he is.

Barney Hoskyns
MOJO *magazine*
London, England

PAT MARTINO

Pat Martino's struggle back to life and to his musical chops is truly inspirational (Nov. '94). These days there are too many people throwing their lives away far too easily.

I also wanted to call your attention to a great recording that wasn't mentioned in the article: *We'll Be Together Again* is a set of beautiful duets between Pat and keyboardist Gil Goldstein on Muse. I really enjoy your magazine: Where else could I have found R.E.M., Bootsy Collins and Pat Martino in the same place?

Kevin McLeod
New York, NY

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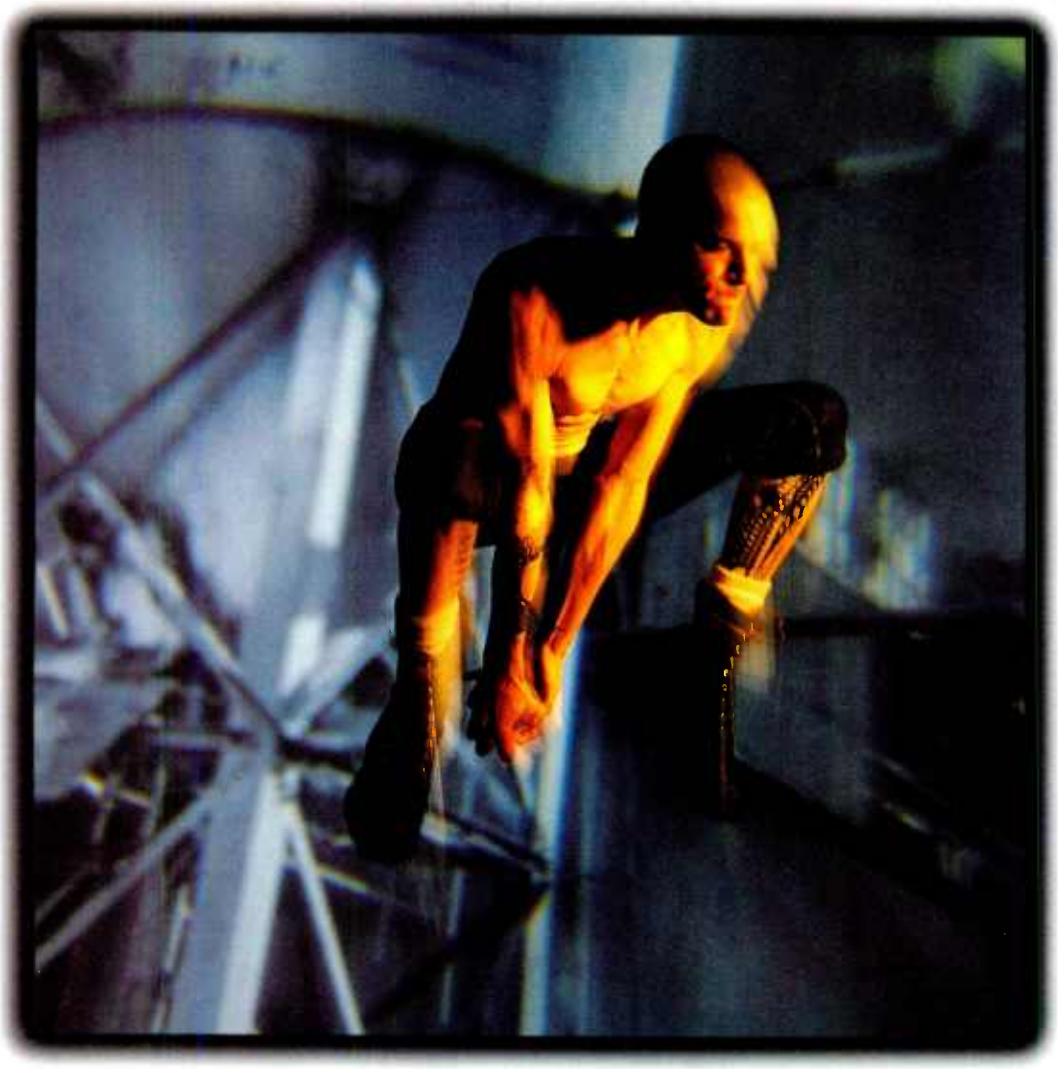

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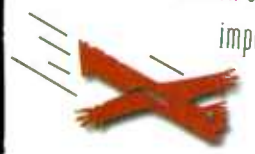

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FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT TO PREVIEW

Life isn't getting any easier for hip-hop journalists. On top of recent incidents of writers being threatened or even pummeled by artists (in the case of writer Cheo Coker, by a member of the Wu-Tang Clan), record labels have been depriving reviewers of advance copies of the latest rap albums. Critics hoping to review the most recent records by Snoop Doggy Dogg, Gang Starr and Pete Rock & CL Smooth were forced to wait until the albums were available in stores, or confronted with the option of listening to an advance tape in a record company conference room with eager publicists waiting outside.

The reason for the stinginess is, of course, that bootlegging has become a problem in hip-hop. Counterfeit tapes, as well as some yet-to-be-released rap records, are available on innumerable street corners. But *Billboard* rap columnist Havelock Nelson doesn't believe that writers should be suffering the consequences. "I don't think that any writer has ever been charged with bootlegging," he says. "I've got problems making deadlines. I don't have time to be making tapes."

–N.B.

ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC DARLING

EXPERT WITNESS

Growing with the Greats

by Daryl Jones

I GUESS I'VE always been a bass player. I grew up in Chicago, and when I was nine, I saw a guy who lived a couple of doors down from us play bass guitar in a talent show, and it dawned on me: I could be doing that! So I asked him, will you teach me to play the guitar? He said what do you want to learn, bass or lead? I didn't know there was even such a thing as a bass guitar; I thought they all had six strings. I asked him, well, what do you play—that's what I want to play, too.

When I was a kid, I was taught to play different kinds of music. There were rock 'n' roll tunes, Led Zeppelin, Hendrix stuff, a little bit of blues, and I've carried that sensibility with me. My mom loves different things, and maybe I got that from her. My dad was a drummer, though not professionally. I used to watch him go to work, and he was real consistent; he hardly ever missed a day. This is a little abstract, but when I think about it, the way he did his thing is the way I play bass. I don't do tricks. It's almost like I want to give people that feeling that I had as a kid—this is one part you won't have to worry about.

When I first played with Miles Davis, he said, "Listen, if I don't dig the way you play, that doesn't mean *you* can't play. It just means I'm looking for something else." So he made it easy for me. I definitely do better with positives or soft criticism, and I think maybe Miles knew that I might crumble under more pressure. But he taught me to pay attention and to really listen.

He said to me once, "Daryl, you don't always have to answer yourself." Which was brilliant, you know: Leave some space, you don't have to be churning on and on. From the first night with him, I was playing the bass the best that I could, and every night was like that until it became a like a permanent part of what I do. I think that's why I've done as well as I have.

PAUL NATKIN; ALBERT FERREIRA, DMI

ROUGH

RECENT SIGNINGS

Flying Saucer West Country Brits big on acoustic ballads with heavy feedback (Drag City)

Rebecca Moore Avant-gardish NYC singer/songwriter (Knitting Factory Works)

Engine East Bay rockers with a buzz and a drummer who manages Green Day (Caroline)

Mother Champaign, IL trio who fall "between Ziggy Stardust and the Smashing Pumpkins" (Capitol)

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROSALIE HONIG

The decision to leave Miles to play with Sting was probably the toughest thing I ever had to do in my life. We were on tour and I had gone to Miles' room and was looking at some recent photographs and I told him, 'Man, you look like you're getting younger.' And he said, 'That's 'cause all you motherfuckers are leaving my band!'" So later I said to him, I have you to thank for everything I'm doing. I just think this is a good move for me. And then, actually, he kissed me on the cheek and gave me his blessing.

With Sting I'd already done the film *Bring On the Night*, and I could see this could make a difference in my career. And the bottom line is, that's what musicians do: You see a chance to play in front of more people and to widen your audience. I don't consider it selling out because I don't think I've ever sacrificed my integrity, musically or humanly. And Sting was great. He's a talented guy and he was trying to find something at the time, so it was exciting. The people coming to see us, the average age was 15 and a lot of them would be wearing their Police T-shirts and looking at me funny. But I remember taking a bass solo one night, and at the end this young girl was looking at me like okay, I got that! I could see it in her face.

With the Rolling Stones, I just followed my intuition about things. I never microscoped the band or Bill Wyman's playing. Even the audition felt really comfortable. Mick said, we're gonna do a bunch of tunes and if you don't know them, we'll learn them, and *then* do the audition. So it was very informal. After we started, I realized how Charlie was really easy to play with, he's got a swing. So I got hired to do the record; later I found out I was gonna do the tour and now I'm trying to live one day at a time.

But I really haven't had a bad tour experience. The last big tour was Madonna's *Blonde Ambition* and that was a gas. Everyone asks, is she a musician? The bottom line is she's got ears. She knows how to come in and say, I don't want you to play that, play something else. She may not be a musician but she's damn sure a listener. It was different because the spotlight wasn't on the musicians, it was on the dancers, which bugged me at first. But some of those basslines really rule! I auditioned for Janet Jackson because I liked the music and the basslines—it's funky. I could have fun playing the stuff.

I guess I've gotten a charge being around people like that. Not because they're famous; I get a charge talking to old men, too. Because they've seen things, and I'm inquisitive about people who have seen things, like Miles and the Stones, or people who have set out on their own way and made themselves, like Madonna and Sting. That's what I aspire to.

I really didn't think, "I want to *be* Michael Jackson." I did think, "I want to be the bass player for all the best people." Now those dreams have been realized. So I'm at a point where I think, this is a beginning for me, again.

MIX

WHAT'S THAT SCRATCHY SOUND?

Pearl Jam's *Vitalogy* debuts at number 55 with a bullet—what's the big deal? In fact, why only number 55? Are they on a downward trend?

In fact the Seattle primo-rockers' latest did debut at number 55 in the second week of December —on the strength of their *vinyl sales alone*. Although marketing the disc before the CD or cassette goes on sale is not unusual—their own *Vs.* and Nirvana's *In Utero* also had vinyl prereleases—such sales rarely make a ripple on the charts. Soundscan tracked the first week sales at 33,500 copies, according to *Billboard*, out of approximately 75,000 copies shipped.–*K.P.*

SOUND OFF

Slowly Turning Green

by Eckart Rahn, president, Celestial Harmonies

COMPANIES IN the recording industry have traditionally been far behind others in demonstrating real commitment to protecting the environment. As a record company president, I find the lack of genuine, impactful action in this area embarrassing.

The record industry produces billions of compact discs. Phasing out the 12-inch throw-away long-box format in 1992 had some impact on reducing packaging waste, but much remains. Too much plastic is used for most CD jewel box packages. Liner notes and booklets are traditionally printed on nonrecyclable paper. Toxic inks remain the standard tool for printing music information.

In November 1994, Celestial Harmonies became the first company in the industry to publicly issue a corporate environmental policy. All of the plastic used in our packaging is recyclable. We were the first label to introduce the CD duobox to the American market, a product which dramatically reduces the volume and weight of plastic packaging for all two-CD packages. In 1993, we began using the CD slim-line box, the first company to use this plastic-reducing package for full-length CDs. Also, we began using recycled paper for all our printed materials, and earlier this year began using nontoxic vegetable inks in our printing.

Celestial Harmonies will no longer record artists who do not demonstrate environmentally responsible practices. In fact, some of our artists, such as the Australian group Coolangubra, are leaders of the environmental movement in their countries.

What prevents most record companies from stepping to the forefront of this issue? Likely, the expense. Certainly it costs our company more to package the way we now do, and the retail industry is somewhat frustrated with accommodating packaging changes. Nevertheless, it is no secret that the environment has suffered tremendously during the last few decades. As an industry that otherwise contributes so much to the world, it is time for our business to institute and follow responsible environmental policies. We all have a stake in that.

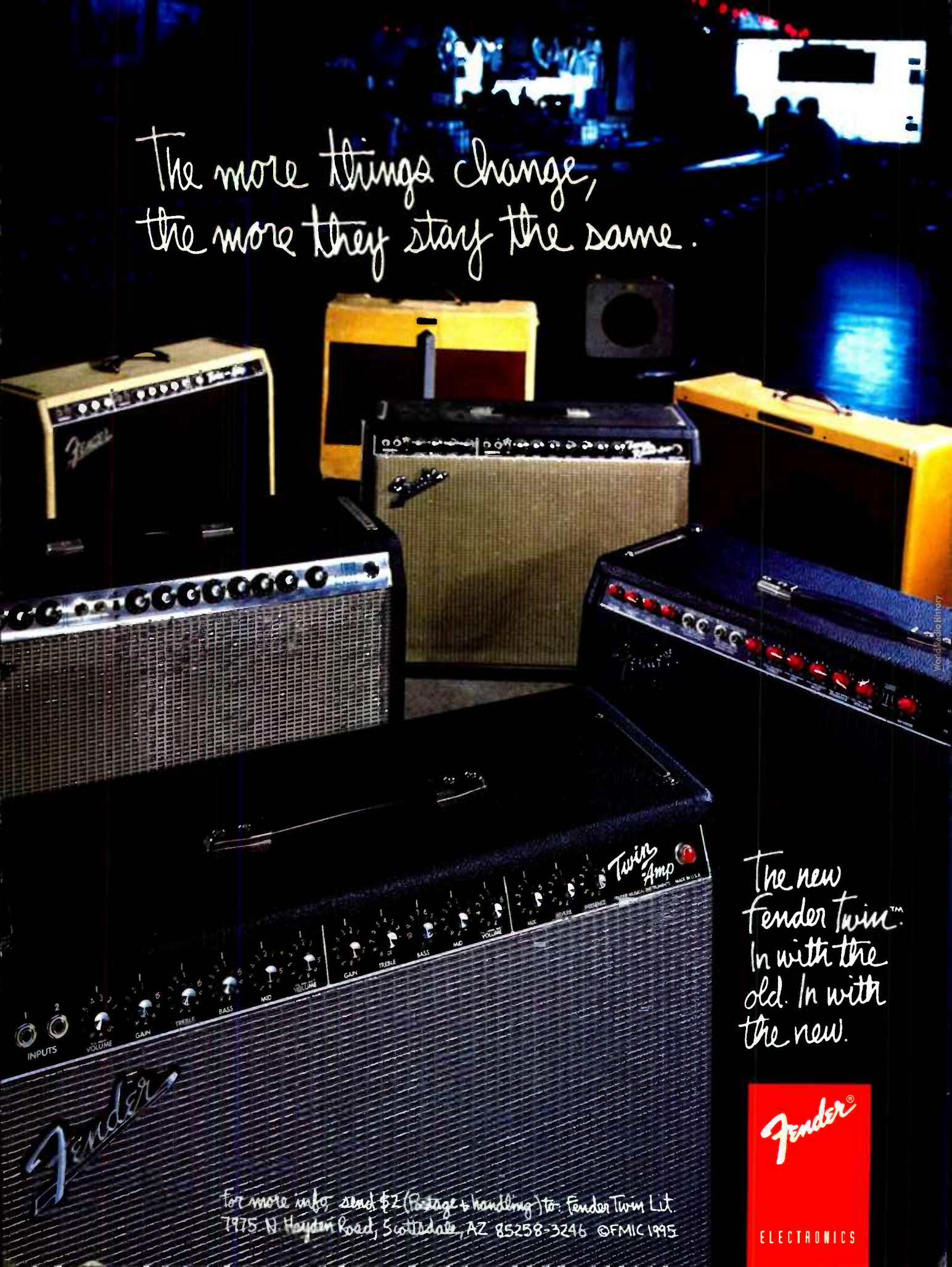
ILLUSTRATION BY PHILLY BECKER

LIFE SAVERS

While Sweet Relief has received deserved attention for helping musicians with standard health problems who lack insurance, the Musician's Assistance Program, or MAP, has quietly become the first organization of its kind to effectively address the problem of drug and alcohol addiction. Founded on a shoestring in 1992 by veteran jazz saxophonist Buddy Arnold, MAP has helped over 100 musicians, and its high success rate, coupled with the drug-related suicide of Kurt Cobain and Arnold's own indefatigable personality, has recently inspired a stronger financial commitment from the music industry. Two benefit albums are also in the works, one featuring Eric Clapton, Dr. John and others, the second with younger artists.

Buddy Collette, Arnold, and Branford Marsalis at MAP benefit

For Arnold, himself an ex-junkie, the key to MAP is a post-clinical therapy program which encourages a kind of buddy system, in which recovering addicts are paired with musicians who've shared their experiences. "Instead of one drunk talking to another, it's one musician talking to another," cracks Arnold, who runs the entire program out of an office at the Musician's Union in Los Angeles. Musicians in need are encouraged to call 1 (800) 707-4MAP, or to fax (213) 993-3198.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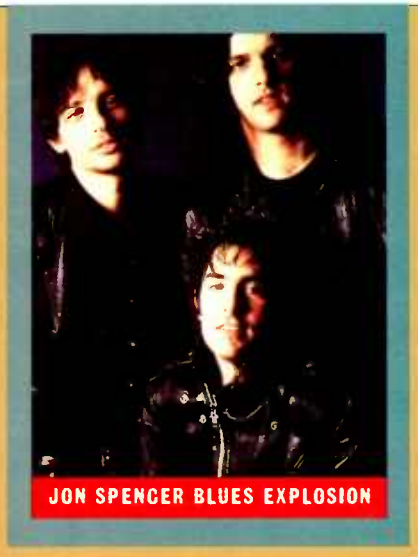

JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION

JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION When Jon Spencer yowls, "Play the blues—*punk!*" at guitarist Judah Bauer on the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's new album, *Orange*, he might as well be laying down his group's manifesto. The Blues Explosion's raw, fractured and often funky forays into the music from the Mississippi Delta could be the kick in the rear the venerable genre has needed for some time. Their two guitars, drums and no-bass set-up is modeled after Hound Dog Taylor's band; still, Spencer won't cop to being an aspiring bluesman.

"We're not a blues band in the formal sense," he protests. True enough, JSBX are less than constrained by the 12-bar format, and quote hardcore punk riffs, '70s soul and Dr. Dre keyboard licks as much as they evoke crossroads and hellhounds. And Charlie Patton never used a Theramin, the nearly impossible-to-play, howling proto-synthesizer Spencer pulls out for live shows. "It pushes the set to another level," he explains.–*N.B.*

SPONGE "People think of a deep-sea creature," muses Vinnie of his band, Sponge. "I look at it as deep-space. It picks up deep-space frequencies, man. We write songs based on those transmissions." Dressed like a hip hybrid of Richard Butler and Willy DeVille, Vinnie laughs. He's kidding—maybe.


SPONGE

Formerly signed to Virgin with the band Loudhouse, Vinnie—no last name, please—learned not to be overwhelmed by major-label machinations; hence the confidence and diversity displayed by the Detroit-bred quintet on its first Columbia release, *Rotting Piñata.* From the dirge-like opener to the raucous title track, Sponge's roots are hard to pin. "I've had the chance to work with musicians that have been around Detroit," Vinnie relates. "Guys from the MC5, Asheton, Iggy Pop's boys."

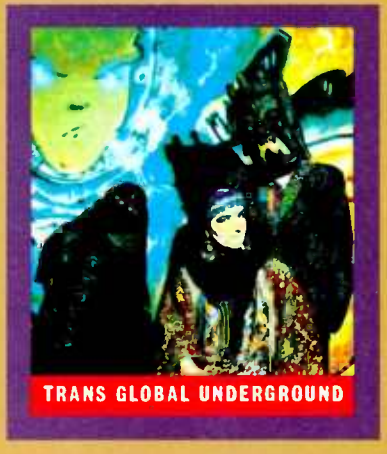
"'Rotting Piñata' was kinda inspired by Jack Kevorkian," he continues. "The right to die. The image came from G.G. Allin. When he died we had a gig that night, and we were thinking about what if we took his body and put it out on tour; people would go to clubs to see it."

On a less morbid level, *Rotting Piñata* is getting good reviews, but Vinnie isn't content. "There's gotta be a *Sponge Plays with the Boston Symphony* record, the *Double-Live Gonzo Sponge.* I'm incredibly ambitious," he decides. "But not very realistic."–*K.T.*

TRANS-GLOBAL UNDERGROUND While you may have heard Natacha Atlas's exotic Arabic and Spanish vocals on records by Jah Wobble, Love & Rockets or in the movie *Stargate*, Atlas is most notable for her contribution to the pan-global sound of London band Trans-Global Underground.

"When I was younger I tried to get into rock 'n' roll," explains Atlas, who also speaks English and French. "But something didn't fit. I'd pretend to like the Sex Pistols or whomever, but I'm through pretending now."

On their second album (and U.S. debut) *International Times*, TGU travels where no Deep Forest has gone, and their club-friendly beats, bass grooves and ultra-cool remixes garner cheers from the U.K.'s fickle dance community.


TRANS GLOBAL UNDERGROUND

"It's not some earnest, purist, *'right-on'* attempt at assimilation," says bassist/guitarist Count Dubulah. "We just do it because we like this music and we believe in it."–*D.S.*

DES'REE "I suppose the reason I emphasize my writing is that I want people to know that *I* write the songs," says Des'ree, whose single "You Gotta Be" from her Sony 550 album *I Ain't Movin'* is heading toward's *Billboard*'s Top Ten. The 25-year-old Londoner certainly doesn't need to call attention to her voice, which can move from sultry to defiant in a beat. Born to West Indian parents, raised in Barbados, Des'ree seasons her earnest singer/songwriter sensibility with sly Afro-Caribbean grooves. "I've always wanted to encompass who I am and where I come from in my music."

A tour with Simply Red and a U.K. hit with Terence Trent D'Arby ("Delicate") helped build momentum for *I Ain't Movin'*. Her first album, *Mind Adventures*, slipped through the cracks: Part of the problem stemmed from the British music scene's difficulty comprehending a black woman whose tunes owe more to 1970s Stevie Wonder than '90s dance music.


DES'REE

"I find it very hard when people say, 'You're not black enough for black radio.' I found it quite insulting, really. The fact that I'm not like everyone else, don't you see that as a challenge?"–*A.G.*

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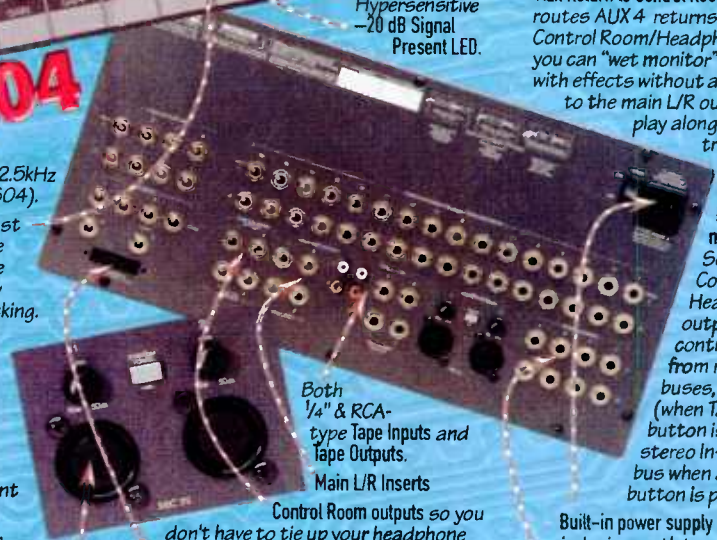

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ROUGH MIX

SOMETHING FISHY AT THE MUSEUM OF SYNTHESIZER TECHNOLOGY

A bunker stuffed with hybrid telephone switchboard/soft drink dispenser/pinball machines probably excites or appalls depending on whether you regarded Rick Wakeman as God or just some posturing Batman impersonator during the '70s.

Inclined toward the former point of view, affable Brit Martin Newcomb not only had the cash to assemble the world's biggest collection of analog synthesizers, he also had enough to fly inventor Bob Moog to London for the opening of his Museum of Synthesizer Technology. It was a sunny, sweaty, squeaky, thweepy "happening" endowed with celebs like the Underworld's Rick Smith and Karl Hyde, Carrie Booth of Shakespeare's Sister, Steve Hackett and producer Flood.

The Museum is open to the public and can even be rented, allowing you to record wondrous beasts like the AKS Synthi 100, Buchla 700 and EML Polyfusion in situ. Analog may smell funny, but it's certainly not dead in the U.K.–*J.C.*

IMKE LASS

PRIVATE LESSON

GEORG WADENIUS

Swedish-born Georg Wadenius, a 16-year veteran of the New York studio scene whose resume includes stints with the Saturday Night Live Band, Luther Vandross and, most recently, touring with Steely Dan, has built a career on his keen ability to come up with tasty guitar parts under the gun. "First I assess the song structure," he says. "Then I decide what kind of attitude the guitar will impart. Does it call for muffled single-note lines, contrapuntal lines or arpeggios with glassy, ringing sounds? I may change and develop these lines, but they will retain the same attitude throughout.

"When I come to the chorus," he continues, "I want to create some sort of contrast to the verse. I aim for something that supports the tune. For example, the tendency may be to play fuller chords in the chorus if I've been playing single notes in the verse."

It's critical never to lose sight of what the other players are doing. "Listening helps me rhythmically and melodically," Wadenius says. "If the keyboard is playing some really busy lines in the first bar of a repeating phrase, I may do more in the second bar where there's more room."

But even when things get busy, he is careful not to overplay. "Less is more. It's not imperative to play a lot of technical stuff because, more often than not, it gets in the way of the other instruments. You don't want to play your most heroic guitar line just when the vocalist is singing something subtle."–*R.L.*

R.E.M. BUSTS OPEN KBG/STING CONNECTION

Kenneth, who knew the frequency, has been found! You all remember when CBS newsman Dan Rather made headlines—and standup comedy routines—by claiming he'd been mugged in New York by two men who kept demanding, "Kenneth, what's the frequency?" Lately R.E.M. have taken that mysterious question and made a hit song of it. Now *New York* magazine has revealed that Rather was probably mistaken for Kenneth Schaffer—and electronics whiz who had built a system for pulling down and monitoring Soviet satellite transmissions. Kenneth told *New York* that in 1986, when the assault took place, he and Rather were both hanging with Jonathan Sanders, then with Columbia University's Harriman Institute for Advanced Study of the Soviet Union, now CBS News Moscow correspondent. Kenneth reckons that spies mistook Rather for him. Kenneth, by the way, also says he made guitars for John Lennon and inspired Sting's song "Russians."

This month's Rough Mix was written by Nathan Brackett, Julian Colbeck, Andrew Gilbert, Roberta Lawrence, Keith Powers, Dev Sherlock and Katherine Turman.

(AND WHY ARE PEOPLE SAYING SUCH STRANGE THINGS ABOUT THEM)

VERUCA SALT?

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JILL GREENBERG

IN THE COMFY CORNER booth of Chicago's Daily Bar and Grill on a fall afternoon, the principal members of Veruca Salt, Nina Gordon and Louise Post, are aggressively lounging. Aside from signing with Geffen Records and with Q Prime (home of Def Leppard and Metallica) as management and playing their celebratory record-release party for *American Thighs* and both getting sick and enduring an if-this-is-Thursday-it-must-be-Amsterdam European press tour, it has been an uneventful past couple of weeks.

The animated and hyperaware Gordon has a slightness that won her a description as a "bag of bones" in a British music mag, for which she is not grateful; Post, not quite as thin, has darker features and a more insular mien. They're wearing the same shirt because they're best friends and best friends will do that. In conversation, they vary between listening intently to what the other has to say and rushing to finish each other's sentences. They order the same meals. "If you get something that I think I want," Post explains to her partner, more than half-seriously, "but I'm not sure, I get nervous that when it comes, I'm going to want it. So I just order the same thing."

Adds Gordon, cheerfully, "We're trying to manipulate our media image."

Some observers charge they've already done

that, all too well. In the wake of Veruca Salt's rapid launch from tentative bar band to Talk of the Industry, there's been no shortage of theories to explain their quick success, some far from flattering. There *is* a certain mystery here: How did a relatively untested local quartet with one single on a tiny local label crack the major playlists of powerful rock stations like Chicago's Q-101 and Los Angeles' KROQ? What accounted for the concurrent surge of media publicity, including MTV play and interview offers from the *New York Times*? Did Geffen Records really sign them to a multimillion-dollar contract after their indie success on Minty Fresh, or has the company been secretly greasing the wheels all along as a clever marketing strategy?

These are serious questions, or at least questions that are taken seriously, on the indie side of town. And right now, there is no town more indie than Chicago. It's the home of Touch and Go Records, bastion of uncompromising Midwest underground rock; of Drag City Records, ultrahip purveyors of ultrahip rock from Pavement and Royal Trux; and of Steve Albini, seminal post punkster (Big Black, Rapeman) and producer (Nirvana's *In Utero*), the philosophical chief of a school of thought that says the indier the better.

Such thinking has earned its adherents an enormous amount of credibility in certain circles (Kurt Cobain, it's said, really wanted to be on Touch and Go). But until recently few others noticed. This changed in 1993, when Smashing Pumpkins' *Siamese Dream* went triple platinum, Liz Phair's *Exile in Guyville* won the *Village Voice*'s critic's poll, and *Billboard*, while touting those acts along with Urge Overkill, Material Issue and Ministry, devoted a front-page report to "Rock's New Cutting Edge Capital."

"MAYBE WE ARE A MARKETING DREAM, BUT THAT WASN'T OUR PLAN."

All of which helped promote a climate for a) major-label signings, b) indie angst. When Touch and Go favorite sons the Jesus Lizard were given $100,000 from a division of Warner Bros. for rights to a single recording of a single appearance (the basis of the Lizard's *Show*, on Collusion Arts Records), no strings attached, the issue caused a rift between Albini and the Lizard. And in what became the most talked-about broadside of the year, Albini lambasted the town's new rock royalty as "pandering sluts" in a letter to the *Chicago Reader*, pointedly including in his derision his former friends and labelmates in Urge Overkill.

Now it's Veruca Salt's turn. "Veruca Salt are a seamless paradigm for marketable 'alternative' rock," sniffed one local writer, Peter Margasak, reviewing a recent performance. "Lost in all the hoopla is the fact that Veruca Salt aren't a particularly exciting or compelling rock band."

With a mix of amusement and resignation Post and Gordon are coming to terms with their new positions as media targets. "I keep hearing that we're a marketing dream," says Post. "Maybe that's true, maybe we are a marketing dream. But that wasn't our *plan*. There wasn't a board meeting where someone said, okay, these two girls are going to front this band."

"It was our parents," Gordon says dryly. "My mom and your mom got together and said—"

"'We're going to have girls now,'" Post says, picking up the thread, "'and our girls are gonna have tits and ass and—'"

"'Cause in the '90s this grunge thing is going to be really big—'"

"'And it's going to be really trendy to have girls fronting bands...'"

With a sort of futile idealism, Veruca Salt has labored over the course of their short career to be judged on their music. This has sometimes backfired, as when Gordon and Post turned down an interview request with the *New York Times* last winter, on the reasonable grounds that they hadn't done anything yet, and were promptly dubbed prima donnas. But it's still a good idea. *American Thighs*—the title is an acid tip o' the hat to an AC/DC cock-rock anthem—*is* an audacious debut, an album that uses a set of well-constructed pop and rock songs as the setting for a distaff coming-of-age story—a girldungsroman of twentysomething pop. "I'm speeding up/I can't control my car" are the prescient words that open the record; in the songs that follow we watch our heroines on a deeply felt quest for self in a world of slippery surfaces, unstable relationships and shattered families. Along the way they address elegantly primal subjects like murder ("All Hail Me"), anger ("Seether") and suicide ("Wolf"), and also rather more complicated things, like the price of female self-denial in the face of the male sense of entitlement ("Celebrate You"). As the record progresses, the listener is unnervingly dragged along on their quest, a journey nicely resolved in the concluding song "25," which begins with a metal roar and settles into a silky confessional.

The record also bristles with salutes to pop flotsam and jetsam—"25" references "Bend Me, Shape Me" by Chicago forbears American Breed; the concussive beginning of "Seether" is an homage to Cheap Trick's "He's a Whore." (And wait till you hear the band's volatile cover of the Sex Pistols' "Bodies," due out as a B-side.) Veruca Salt's secret weapon is that Gordon and Post write separately, and both write well. Attempts to pigeonhole either one collapse: The band's indie hit "Seether" is Gordon's handiwork; one notes her pop facility and contrasts it with Post's more rococo and emotional approach in a song like "Wolf." Except that the even more epically scaled "25" turns out to be Gordon's, while "Victrola," as irresistible as "Seether," is a Post song. That's Gordon howling on "All Hail Me," ripping through the puns of "Number One Blind" a few tracks later; that's Post blazing away on guitar on "Wolf," proffering a delicate falsetto on "Fly."

The Verucas embrace a classical, romantic notion of rock: The emotional divides and haggard longings that mark their music have roots in the familial wreckage they experienced or witnessed while coming of

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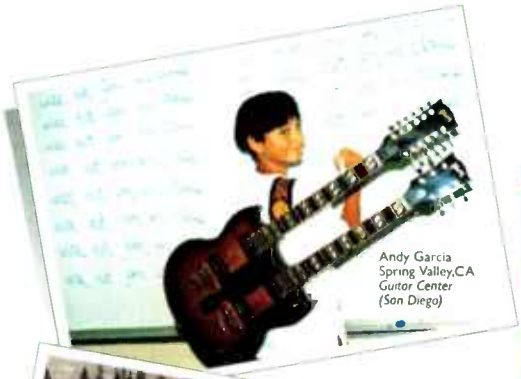
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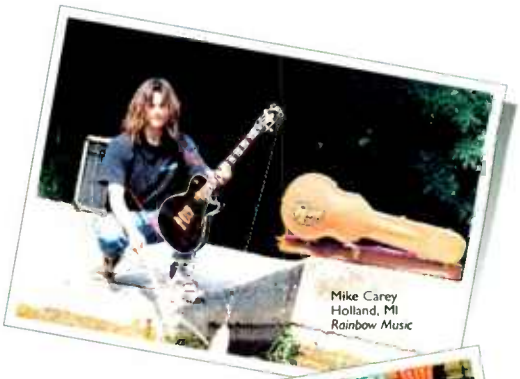
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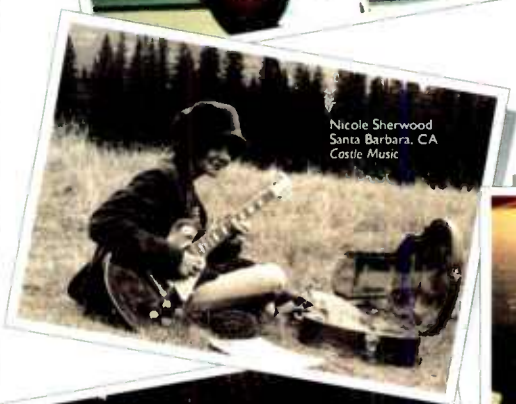
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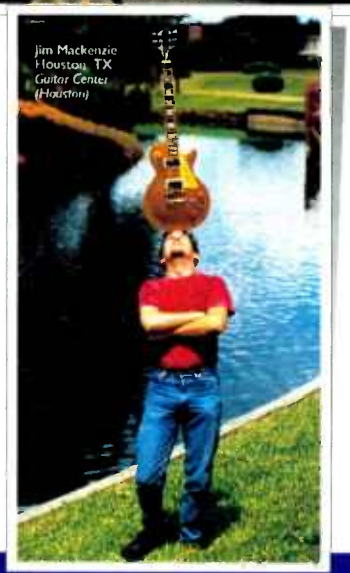
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age in the 1980s. "I spent my life believing that I had this perfect family and making my friends believe we had this perfect family," Gordon says. "My mother and I worked hard to keep this rosy facade up, that everyone was so close and happy." A "huge and miserable" divorce ensued: "That rewrote my entire life."

"I've seen all those kids having a hard time deciding what to do with their lives, or having problems with drugs, feeling worthless," Post adds. "I don't feel confident or competent in this world." That's what "Celebrate You" is about: "It started with my father and extended to the other men in my life," she says. "I spent so much time celebrating them that I sort of neglected to celebrate myself or even acknowledge myself in that way."

"WE WEREN'T READY FOR A MAJOR BECAUSE WE WEREN'T A GOOD ENOUGH BAND."

It is this powerful sense of discovery, at once sobering and intoxicating, which permeates *American Thighs* from first song to last. "If I were the only songwriter in the band it would be obnoxious to analyze the songs," says Gordon. "I do think there is a thread through the record; it's about trying to find our identity. I think about the line in 'Celebrate You'—I can talk about it 'cause it isn't my song—when Louise says, 'I lost my innocence today/When I learned how to write this.' When we made this record it was a turning point in our lives. Maybe not even making the record: maybe just writing the songs, or making the decision to be in a band together."

THEY ARE friends who met over the phone. Gordon is a child of the tony Chicago Gold Coast who'd gone to Tufts and was back home precociously coordinating a Monet retrospective at the Art Institute of Chicago. (How many rock stars have translated Monet's correspondence on the side?) Post, from St. Louis, went to Barnard; back in Chicago, she hooked up with actor John Cusack's theater group New Crime, which specializes in raucous pieces of commedia dell'arte. Both wrote songs at home.

At a New Year's party, a friend of a friend played Gordon a tape of Post's music over the phone. They made a date, and "I felt like I met my mirror," says Post. "We both immediately felt we wanted to take this really seriously." They advertised for a female rhythm section, but ended up with bassist Steve Lack, who saw the ad and applied anyway, and with Gordon's brother, Jim Shapiro, on drums. When they ventured into the Chicago club scene some 18 months later, it was into one with its senses heightened by the Pumpkins' success and the *Billboard* pronouncement; Veruca Salt, playing most of the songs that would make up *American Thighs*, drew local attention almost immediately.

Enter Jim Powers, a onetime A&R man for BMG International (he'd signed the Cowboy Junkies) and Zoo (the Pooh Sticks), who'd come back to Chicago to start his Minty Fresh label; one of his early releases was Liz Phair's first single, another was by Love Jones, which later signed with Zoo. Powers put Veruca in an art-fest music program he was curating, then convinced the band to record his label's first full album. Brad Wood, already acclaimed for helping Liz Phair craft the luminous song-settings on *Exile*, agreed to produce.

By the end of the year Veruca Salt were getting looks by some majors. By the time the band played an arresting set at the South by Southwest music conference the following March, the buzz was overwhelming. "Every label president you can imagine was there," marvels Powers. Post and Gordon claim they'd resolved by then to stick with Minty Fresh; the majors could have a crack at their second release. "We went on Minty Fresh because we weren't ready for a major, because we weren't a good enough band," says Post. "We were scared," concurs Gordon. "We just wanted to make a record with songs we loved and no pressure." Powers put out a single of a power-pop Gordon tune, pressed 2000 copies and started preparing for the fall release of the album.

It didn't quite turn out that way, of course. In overheated Chicago, rumors fly that the fix was in with Geffen from the start. It's true that Uni, Geffen's manufacturer, handled Minty Fresh product; true also that Powers now has his own A&R deal with the label. ("'Minty-Gef,' we call him," tweaks Gordon.) But what put the band on a major label ultimately had less to do with that (at that point, the pair nearly went with Virgin) and more to do with a song called "Seether."

Gordon thought that the tune, despite a fairly intense lyric limning a woman's fight with her own anger, was a bit light. "When I walked into the practice room I said, 'Forgive me, you guys.'" What transformed the song into a hit was a strange and unusual disease that began infecting certain radio programmers in 1993 and 1994. Everyone knows that radio has shifted massively leftward over the course of what critics are fond of calling the post-*Nevermind* era, to the point where one of the fastest-growing radio formats is "alternative rock." While some and perhaps a lot of these stations play too few songs too often, they display a crucial conceptual difference from the rock stations that ruled the airwaves just a few years ago. Based in grunge and fed by MTV, modern rock radio has gotten into the business of providing listeners with what's *new*—something mainstream classic-rock and AOR outlets had avoided as a matter of principle for years.

Some stations—here's the symptoms of that strange disease—have even gotten aggressive about it. Soundtrack cuts, odd covers, live tracks, B-sides, *import* B-sides—many of them unavailable in stores, much to the dismay of record companies—are often put in rotation at some very large outlets. Hence the phenomenon of Beck, whose

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"Loser," against all odds, was a number-one song on L.A.'s muscular KROQ as an independently released 12-inch, and the Offspring's *Smash*, at nearly three million sold, is the biggest indie record of all time.

Powers sent a radio friend in Albany an early copy of "Seether" and was happy when the station played it. But when Chicago's Q-101—the most powerful rock station in the market and a format bellwether—slammed the song into heavy rotation, he blanched. The 2000 Minty Fresh singles were long gone; Powers had been in the business enough to fear that fickle stations would forget the band once the album came out. So he asked Q-101's programmer Bill Gamble to stop playing the song. "I told him that this was a first," Gamble recalls. "I said that I was going to mark this day down in my calendar." But he shrugged and agreeably scaled airplay back to evenings.

By this time, one of the spotters for KROQ had brought the single in to program director Kevin Weatherly. The radio's staff spun it at a weekly listening meeting, and put it on the air that day. Soon it was being played heavily on modern-rock stations across the country. Q-101 put the song back into days.

Billboard, meanwhile, was continuing to buzz the Chicago scene in general and Veruca in particular. Gordon and Post found themselves in an enviable but difficult position. They had a hit single on a record that effectively didn't exist. Did they want the same thing to happen to the album? Powers had decent distribution lines up, but... "At some point we realized that 'Seether' was going to be on the radio whether we liked it or not," Post says. "We'd guessed we'd better enjoy it and figure out what it meant. What does it mean for the rest of the record, what does it mean for the rest of our careers? In a certain way, it was liberating. Once it was out, we wanted to make sure that we were protected and that we were dealt with well. And whatever one can say about a major—we're very wary of major labels—I don't have the incentive or the drive or the finances to release [*cont'd on page 92*]

SALT BOX

I know what they're going to call it," says drummer JIM SHAPIRO, excited about appearing in the *Musician* equipment sidebar: "'Salt Licks'!" Well, close. Shapiro plays a Slingerland kit with a teakwood oil finish—"a dead branch on the evolutionary tree of drum finishes," he notes. He's got an 18-inch floor tom and a 24 kick drum: On it is the disturbing drawing of an imp (official title: "Evil Sailor 9") that graced the cover of the band's original single. Also: Ludwig snare and lots of Paiste cymbals.

NINA GORDON plays a Gibson Melody Maker with a Gibson humbucker put in, and a 1974 SG. Either can go through a Mesa/Boogie dual rectifier to an orange cabinet—just one, four 12s. She's got no pedals and "some hi-tech microphone." LOUISE POST plays a 1972 Gibson Les Paul Custom, a '74 Junior through an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff to a Rivera 100-watt head cabinet. Bassist STEVE LACK generally pounds away at a '77 Fender Precision, but also owns a '75 Rickenbacker 4001: "I'm oscillating between the two at this point." He also oscillates through a Hughes & Kettner Blue Tube pedal ("I'm using it as a boost for now") and an Ampeg SVT II, which he says he uses only because he has a road case for it. He'd rather use his Ampeg V-9, but too many of the speakers are blown. "If anybody knows someone who can recone speakers cheaply, I'd be much obliged."

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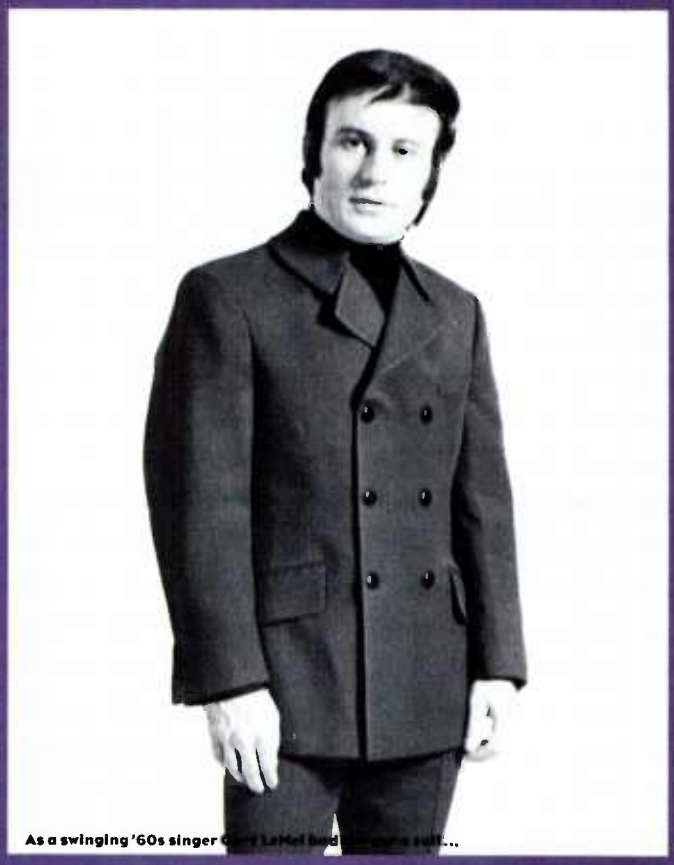


As a swinging '60s singer [illegible] ...

SLEEPING WITH T

...but as a senior VP [illegible]

...but as a Warner Bros. exec LeMel can dress as he pleases.

BY ROY TRAKIN

When Musicians Become THE ENEMY Record Executives

YOU WOULD THINK GARY LEMEL IS one of the luckiest guys around. As President of Music for Warner Bros. films, he gets to pal around with the likes of Warren Beatty and Frank Sinatra, working with directors and producers to create best-selling soundtracks to movies like *Sleepless in Seattle* and *The Bodyguard*.

"It looked like I had it made, admits LeMel. "But there was a hole in my soul. Something important was missing from my life."

That something was singing, his first love and something he hadn't done professionally for almost 30 years—ever since his first album, whose liner notes described him as having "the heart of a Tony Bennett, the rhythm of a Bobby Darin, the phrasing of a Frank Sinatra and the youthful appeal of a Jack Jones," had the misfortune of coming out on Vee-Jay Records a month before the same label released an album by another new act called the Beatles.

"Like other jazz musicians, I thought rock 'n' roll was a fad which would go away quickly," he recalled. "It took me about four more years to realize maybe my singing career wasn't going to happen. I was about to get married, I had adopted my wife-to-be's two children and it was time to get serious."

Ironically, the very rock 'n' roll which steamrollered LeMel's performing career became his meal ticket to success in the soundtrack business. He segued from working with music publishers to assembling the soundtrack for Barbra Streisand's *A Star Is Born*, and went on to head the music departments of Columbia Pictures and, most recently, Warner Bros. Films.

But the bug didn't die. And LeMel got to "live out my dream" when Blue Note label head Bruce Lundvall urged him to cut a record of songs from the movies, *Romancing the Dream*, for his label. LeMel topped it off by performing at the Hollywood Cinegrill before an audience which included both Beatty, who introduced him, and the chairman of the board himself, Sinatra.

"What I wanted to accomplish with this album was to inspire people my age to live out their fantasies," claimed LeMel. "Whatever it was you gave up, do it. Don't hesitate. It'll make you whole."

The music industry is filled with former and current performers who have made the switch to the other side of the desk. Recently incarnated Warner Music Group head Doug Morris, Warner Bros. president/CEO Lenny Waronker, EMI Records president Davitt Sigerson, Interscope's Jimmy Iovine, Qwest's Quincy Jones, Maverick head Madonna, Epitaph's Bret Gurewitz and Herb Alpert —the A in A&M—are just a few. But what motivates an artist to cross over into the business end?

PAUL ATKINSON

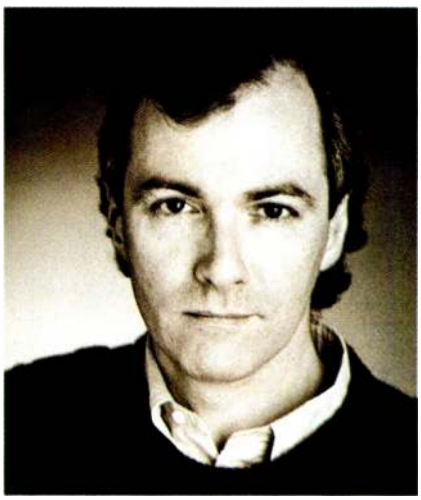
JOINED THE ZOMBIES AT THE AGE OF 15, HIS FIRST *and only professional band. Went on to work at U.K. publisher Dick James Music, then at the original Charisma Records U.K. and as an A&R rep at CBS U.K., RCA and MCA.*

How he gravitated towards business side: "I became more and more interested in the studio. I would stay there long after we finished recording, watching the engineers work. My goal was to be a producer, and I did a few records, none of them very successful. I discovered it wasn't something I was very good at, but it put me in touch with more record labels. And frankly, I found I enjoyed hanging around the offices of Decca and EMI Records back then. I just became more fascinated with the whole process of making records, and less interested in touring. So I started managing a couple of bands, doing a little producing and shopping their records to various record companies."

The turning point: "Being onstage was fun, but playing the same ten songs night after night going around the world in a van was not exactly glamorous. I found being an A&R man much more fulfilling. I liked the fact you could involve yourself in several projects simultaneously, and then jump off to something completely different. The frustration came for me, ironically, when I got to be more successful and took on more responsibilities as an administrator, which removes you further from the actual creativity."

How his musical background helps in his current job: "I wouldn't be doing this if I hadn't been a musician. At every stage of the A&R process, I look at a band as musicians and watch how they play. When you're meeting a group, having been a working musician gives you an advantage. Musicians talk to record company executives in a certain guarded fashion because they're suspicious. But if they know you've been in their shoes, their attitude is different. I remember meeting Tom Petty years ago when I was with MCA, and there was no secret he'd had his differences with that label over the years. I was introduced to him by his manager as an ex-Zombie and his face immediately brightened. We could talk about something that had nothing to do with business. It gives you a common ground."

"GOING AROUND THE WORLD IN A VAN WAS NOT EXACTLY GLAMOROUS."



Paul Atkinson as a young mod Zombie (above) and on the other side of the desk, today.

DAVITT SIGERSON

MANHATTAN-BORN SIGERSON BEGAN WRITing *for England's* Melody Maker *and* Black Music *before releasing two solo albums in the late '70s. That led to a stint as a staff songwriter at Alma Music, then to producing David + David, Tori Amos and the Bangles. He became president of Polydor Records, senior VP A&R at EMI Records Group and is now president and CEO of EMI Records.*

How he gravitated towards business side: "I never really had the artist's mind-set. I liked to write songs, talk to people and help them with their music. That's why journalism was always fun for me. It was my life support, my way of getting free records and talking to people just to educate myself about their work. The things which made me poorly qualified to be an artist made me quite well-qualified to be a journalist, an A&R executive or a producer—people who have opinions about music they are willing to stand by. What I did as a critic was not dissimilar to what I did as a producer, which was to figure out whose work I felt was worthwhile and then try to ascertain what I loved about it... If only they could do this or that differently. The great thing about becoming a producer was, instead of bitching about a record after the fact, you could say, 'Have you ever thought about doing it this way?' Sometimes, the artist would say, 'That's a terrible idea,' and that meant we shouldn't work together. But sometimes they'd say, 'That's cool. How can we do that?' It was all about getting into people's heads to try to make their music better."

The turning point: "The death of my performing career was the Portastudio. What was important to me was writing a song and hearing it back. I didn't need the world to hear what I was doing. And I realized a big part of being an artist is not just having the talent, but having a real desire to grab the world by its lapels and say, 'Would you please pay attention to this because it's great and I'm great.' Which I didn't have. What was important to me was my opinion, which is the arrogance of the critic and the record producer. The most important thing for a producer or an A&R executive is not necessarily any set of skills, but an ability to sit in the chair and say, 'No, it's better, but it's not there yet,' and not let go until it's right."

How his musical background helps in his current job: "My profession is helping people achieve their artistic dreams, so it very much helps to have someone who has had the experience of being an artist and been through the pain. I don't think it makes it any less painful, but it does make it more efficient. When I got to Polydor, there were 23 names on the domestic roster and, after a couple of months, two were left."

DEREK SHULMAN

SCOTTISH LEADER OF PROGRESsive *art-rock group Gentle Giant joined PolyGram doing promotion and artist development before moving on to do A&R at Mercury, where he worked with Bon Jovi, Cinderella and Kingdom Come. Later headed Atco Records and most recently has worked as an A&R consultant for Giant Records.*

How he gravitated towards business side: "My theory is, careers in the music business have ten-year spans and after that you should move on. When we first started, the bottom line was we wanted to make music. I decided to manage the band myself because we kept getting ripped off. Which, in retrospect, is the worst thing an artist can do, you're not taken seriously as either. With Gentle Giant, we did everything ourselves, just like an indie band does today."

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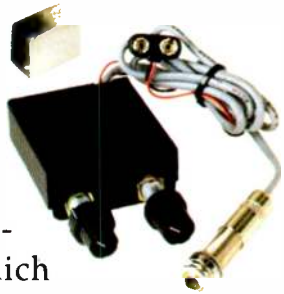

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The turning point: "We were on a headlining tour with Gentle Giant and the kids were going crazy. But we just weren't playing that well. I realized it had become like a day job and I had always vowed, since I was in high school, if the music business ever became like a job, I'd quit. At the end of that U.S. tour, we had a meeting, looked at one another and decided to break the band up.

"I had a couple of production deals with labels, but I wasn't sure I wanted to sequester myself behind four dark walls for the rest of my life, either. And then a couple of people from PolyGram I was friendly with called and said, 'Why don't you work for a label?' They suggested I do promotion and artist development and why not? People like Jeff Pollack and Lee Abrams were both radio DJs who were big fans of Gentle Giant. And I got to know these people from the ground up."

How his musical background helps in his current job: "Underneath this music business executive is a revolutionary musician who doesn't want a day job, and who wants to do something a little bit more creatively. I feel I can relate to young bands because I can relate to being on a crappy tour bus as well as doing the big mega-tours. And I can relate to the musical part. Rather than say, 'I don't like this song because I don't like it,' I can say, 'Why don't you try this?,' pick up a guitar and give them a chord change. Whether they laugh at me behind my back, I don't know, but I'm still a musician at heart."

HOWARD WUELFING

THIS JERSEY CITY NATIVE FRONT*ed a variety of D.C. punk outfits and was a rock critic for both the* Washington Post *and* New York Rocker, *among others, but his main claim to fame is having played bass for renowned cult band Half Japanese. He went on to work publicity at the one-time leading record importer, Jem, and is now a director of publicity at Columbia Records, where his acts include Gumball, Firehose, Jeff Buckley, London Suede and Soul Asylum.*

Turning point: "The decision to give up trying to play music for a living came when I broke up with my first wife and I had to take over full-time care of my son. At that time, I was juggling three jobs simultaneously—working in a record retail store, playing in bands and writing for the *Washington Post*. I decided it was necessary, in order to actually be a good parent, to make the same amount of money doing one day job. I started out looking for something in sales and was told there was, instead, an opening for a publicist. At that point, I was totally ignorant of the ways of the record industry, so when they asked me what kind of salary I wanted, I gave them a figure which equaled the total of all those other jobs. I guess it was so ridiculously low, even though I had no background at all as a publicist, they gave me the job. The decision to set aside music, though, wasn't purely a business one. As my second wife pointed out to me, in pursuing music as a full-time career, I was shortchanging my son as a father."

How his musical background helps: "It allows me to understand what's going through the heads of the bands as creative people and keeps it clear in my mind that what we're talking about is something that someone felt in their hearts and meant a great deal to them while they were making it. Which is something you can forget in the midst of trying to market music successfully. Then there are those artists who are familiar with some of what I've done, which I suppose makes them feel a little bit more at ease. Perhaps having someone at a company perceived as a major corporation who once played in a band as determinedly obscure and idiosyncratic as Half Japanese makes them think, if there's space for this guy, maybe we can feel comfortable as well."

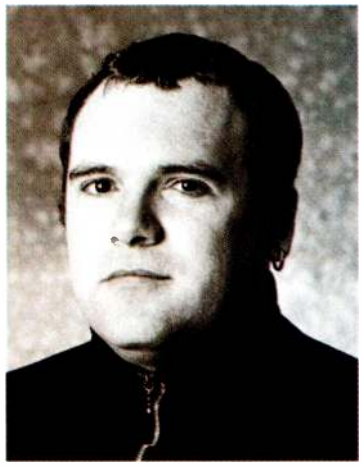
HUGO BURNHAM

THE EX-DRUMMER FOR POLITI*cal U.K. punk-rockers Gang of Four launched his own management company, Huge & Jolly, with his brother, after being forced to take the business reins of his own band. Went on to become an A&R executive at Island, Imago and is currently at Quincy Jones' Qwest Records.*

How he gravitated towards business side: "We'd fired the manager we'd had in Gang of Four and we couldn't find anyone else we trusted, so I basically took over management with my brother. It was the days of 'do it yourself,' and that's what we did."

The turning point: "After I left the Gang of Four, I started to do some session work. Then both ABC and Shriekback asked me to manage them. I'd gotten to the point where I wasn't enjoying drumming or trying to find something with the intensity I could give myself up for like I did in Gang of Four. So I gave up playing. I don't regret it because I wouldn't be where I am now, rather than a miserable old punk-rock drummer. It's just a lot easier to maintain a musical career as a singer or a guitarist than a drummer. I can give back much more doing what I'm doing now than I could if I was still playing. And I'll still play on occasion. I'm very grateful to anyone who wants me to—whether it's Michael Been or John Lydon."

"IF GANG OF FOUR HAD THE KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE NOW WE'D BE BIGGER THAN U2."



Hugo Burnham beat against the establishment as part of Gang of Four, but found his true calling doing A&R.

How his musical background helps: "I believe in the old-fashioned style of A&R, which goes beyond just making the record to doing everything, much the way the product or label managers do now. For a young band that is concerned about getting involved with a big record company, if they can connect in some realistic way with somebody at the label who's been there, perhaps it can help. If the Gang of Four had the knowledge we have now, we'd have been bigger than U2. We were arrogant and intelligent, but very naive about the business.

"One of the things which caused the Gang of Four to fall apart was learning that the one who wrote the melody and lyric of a song got paid for the *publishing*. That's been the beginning of the end for more bands than any single reason. Which is why I tell rock bands, before

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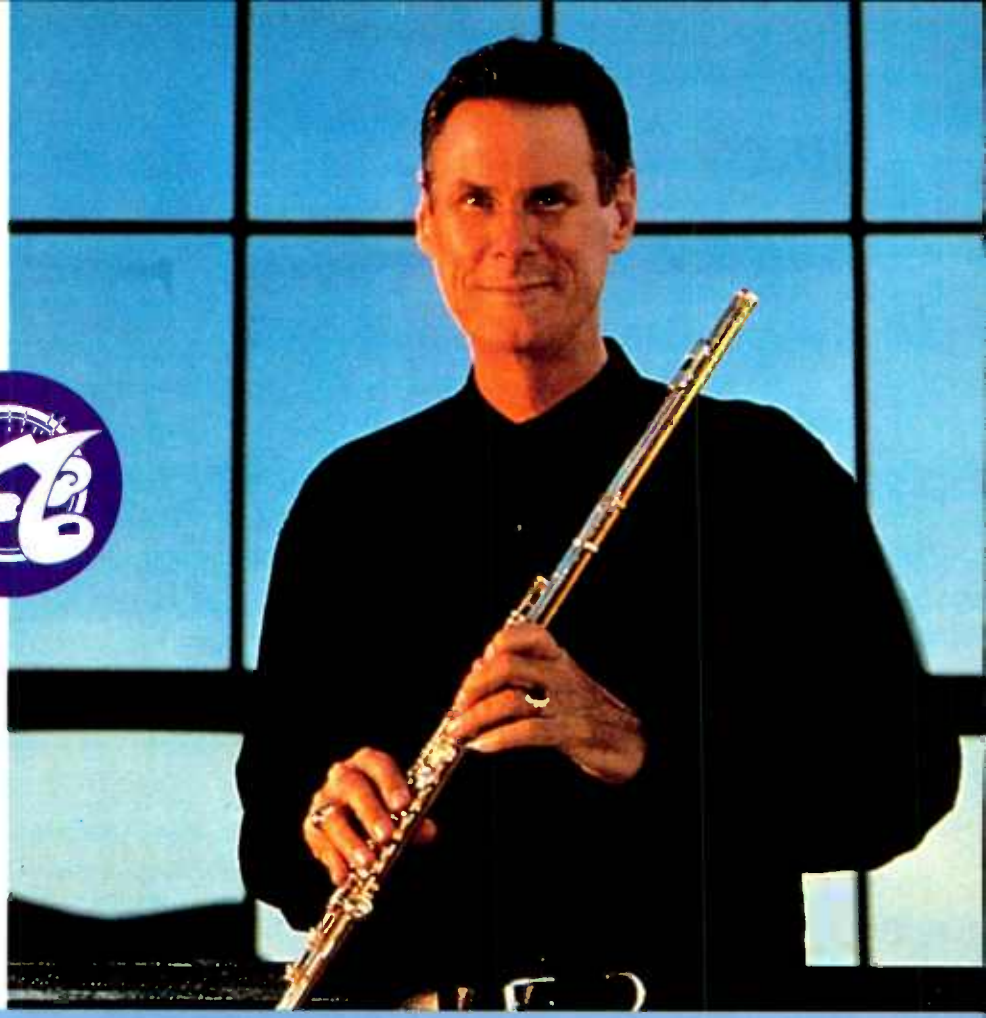

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you earn a single penny, get your agreements together as to where the money goes when it comes in. As a drummer I may be prejudiced, but I feel every member of the group should get something out of every penny earned by the band. This isn't Tin Pan Alley. Mick and Keith might've written the songs, but it's not the Stones without Charlie."

NIGEL HARRISON

THIS U.K. NATIVE PLAYED BASS IN SILVERhead *before recording with the Runaways, joining Ray Manzarek's Night City and then his most successful outfit, Blondie. After that, he did music supervision on "Repo Man" and "Light of Day," segueing to A&R gigs at Capitol and, currently, Interscope, where he's just signed Tom Jones.*

How he gravitated towards business side: "I've been earning money at music since I was 13. This is my whole life. Growing up in the music business, I was always fascinated by this thing of us vs. them, the record company guys and these godlike A&R figures on the one hand, and the musicians on the other. I was interested in the behind-the-scenes bidding wars. I saw what are now some of the biggest bands in the world before they had record deals. The way I looked at it was I played the game and I hit the jackpot with Blondie. I still play on people's records occasionally, but I did want to move on."

The turning point: "One day, I just woke up and decided I wanted to do music for films. Then it dawned on me that you work on a movie for three months and then it's over and on to the next one. So I decided to focus on trying to get a record company job—which wasn't easy at all."

How his musical background helps: "I'm truly a hands-on music guy. I was always worried about becoming a suit, except they don't make them in my size. At Interscope, I get to deal with the music. That's all I do. Bands relate to me because of my background. When I was at Capitol and Duran Duran got off the elevator, they'd come and hang with Nigel. I've found that musicians who'd be self-conscious about an unfinished track would play it for me because they knew I could understand what they were trying to do."

BOB PFEIFER

THE CLEVELAND-BORN PHILOSOPHY STUDENT *put off a teaching career to launch his own Velvets-inspired new wave garage band Human Switchboard, doing all the band's press, promotion and distribution out of his Ohio basement. After a well-received solo album, Pfeifer put that "DIY" experience to good use as an A&R executive at Epic, where he signed Ornette Coleman and helped launch Alice Cooper's comeback as not only his label rep, but his co-songwriter. The one-time scuffling punk-rocker recently took over the helm of Hollywood Records as executive VP.*

How he gravitated towards business side: "I called up all the critics, retail record stores and radio PDs myself. That's one of the reasons I always look for someone who's done it on their own. That's where the passion comes from. I took to A&R right away because it wasn't about the business, it was about the music. And I knew enough about the other functions of the label from having done everything on my own. I had an overview of what it took to break a record, so I was able to relate

that to the different departments at the label."

The turning point: "I had just turned 32, was living in Hoboken with a stove as my heater and starving. I had to figure out what to do with my life. So I started talking with friends in the business and they suggested I look into A&R because it was the only place I could continue to be creative and also make a living. Don Grierson of Epic was the first one to offer me a job."

How his musical background helps him: "I've been able to be an outside listener, adviser and the ears for some of the greatest artists in the world. We talk about the same stuff I'd talk about to a member of my own band. I still feel like a musician; I'm just not a member of the band."

NANCY JEFFRIES

THE BROOKLYN-BORN ELEKtra senior VP A&R was a guitar-strumming, Joan Baez–styled folk-rocker who moved to Memphis, where she became active in researching the roots of the blues, then to Hoboken, joining journalist/clarinet/sax/recorder player Robert Palmer in the art-rock-progressive outfit Insect Trust, which released a pair of albums in the late '60s on Capitol and Atco. She joined the RCA A&R department as a secretary, rising to become one of the industry's first female talent executives, with subsequent jobs at A&M, Virgin and Elektra. Some of the acts she's been associated with include Evelyn "Champagne" King, Suzanne Vega, Iggy Pop, Lenny Kravitz, Keith Richards, Ziggy Marley, Deee-Lite and Freedy Johnston.

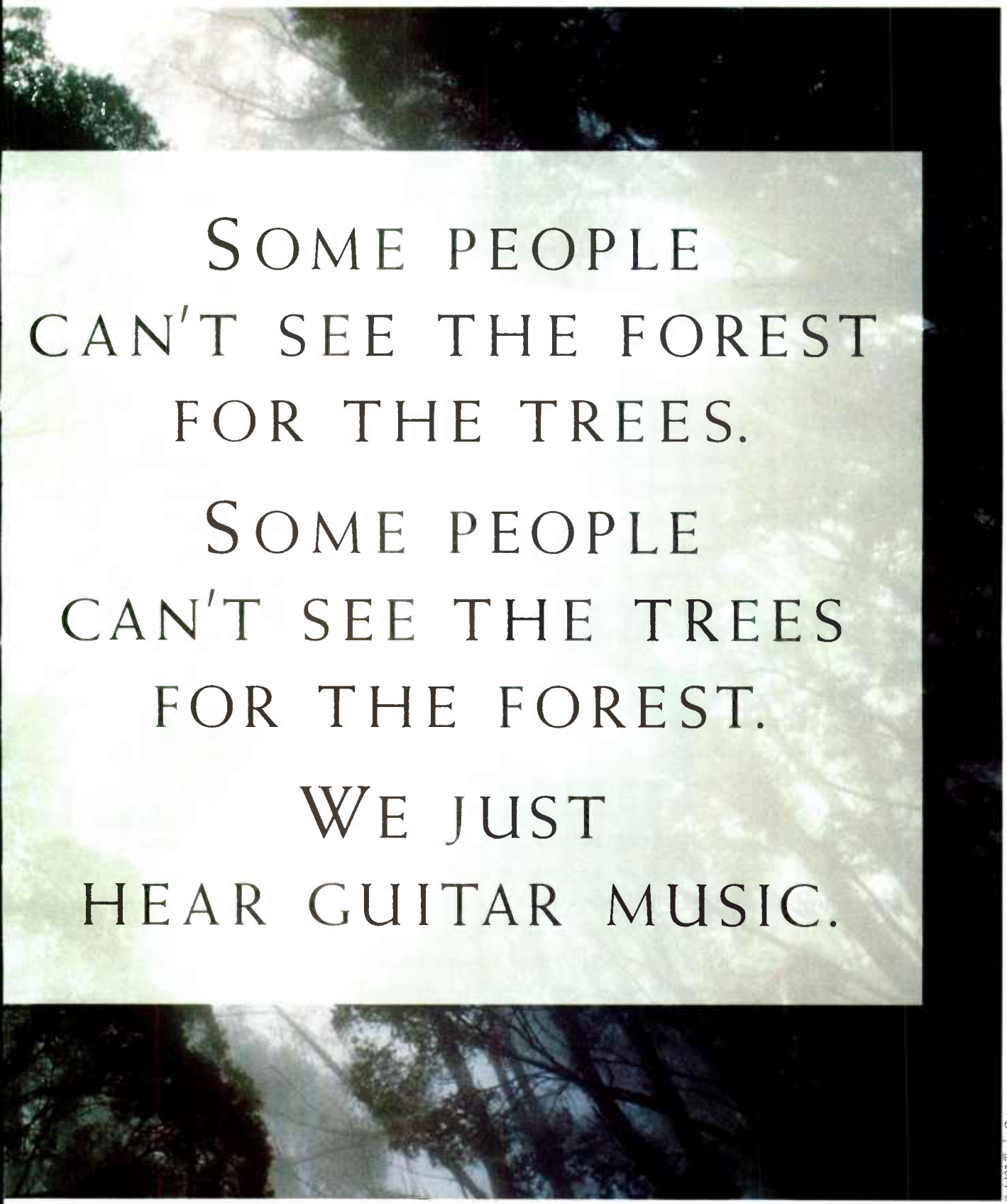
What drew her towards the business end: "I found that with the band the time spent in the studio was the most fun. I tried to pursue producing but—not to push the pedal too hard on this—the studio was and still is a very macho, locker-room environment.

"Being in a record company A&R department was fun because it was very close to being in the studio—you were working with music and had a creative say. I remember, when I was a singer in the Insect Trust, it was my job to talk to the lawyer and come to the record company because everyone was too high or too uncomfortable to do it."

The turning point: "I didn't love touring or performing live, and I realized, to have this life, I would have to. But I was too self-conscious to feel comfortable onstage. I realized I wasn't the best there was at it, which drove me crazy. I attempted to become a producer, and took a temporary secretarial job for Tom Draper, who was head of black A&R for RCA Records, to make ends meet while I tried to pursue this goal. I think he needed someone who could talk on the phone intelligently about making records more than he needed someone who could type, and when Tom left to go to Warner Bros., I began to take over the administration of the department, keeping track of the budgets. I began to help them sign artists, while they'd pat me on the back and say, 'Okay, now go back to paying the bills.' And I said, 'No, I want to do *this*.'"

How her background as a performer helps in her current position: "It's better than a college degree. Because you can understand why the artists need to do what they do. You can understand the pressures and the motivation. I still remember how much fear I had going into the label because artists feel the record company has such a degree of control over their life. Once I started working at a record company, I realized it was just a bunch of people doing the best they can. But it's a monolith to the artist. Sometimes, it feels like their worst fears come true. Other times, I wish they could see it because they would really get an insight into what goes on."

SShhh. Listen real closely and you can hear the sound of handcrafted guitars being shaped from special woods. Oddly enough, th



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TWILIGHT OF THE GODS?

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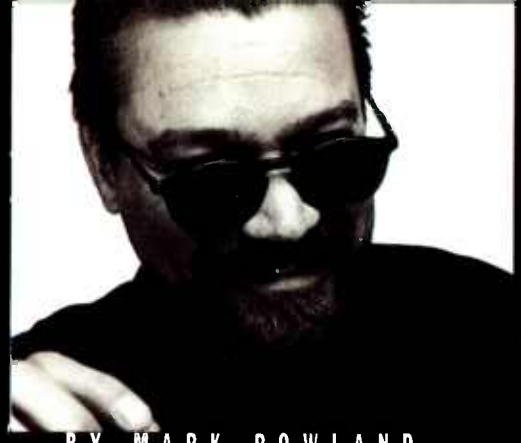
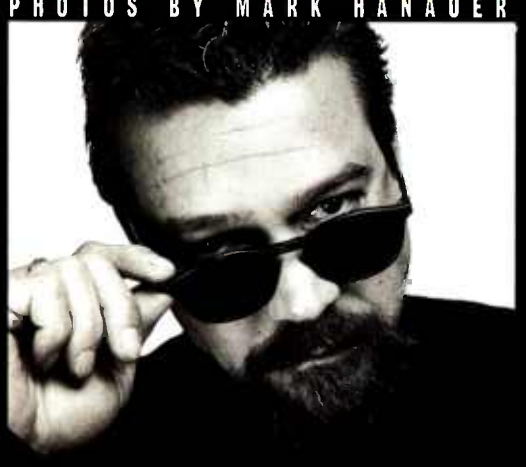
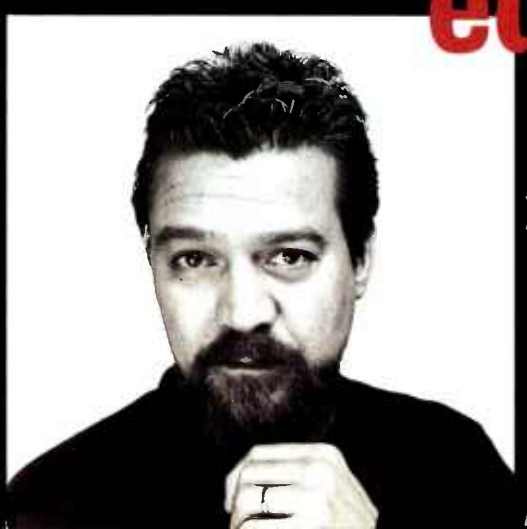


BY MARK ROWLAND

PHOTOS BY MARK HANAUER





edward van

show

halen & slash

there's life after the '80s

It was an idea so obvious it had to be done. Bring together Edward Van Halen and Slash, guitarists and guiding musical spirits of the top two world-class rock 'n' roll bands to emerge from Los Angeles in the past two decades. Timing was excellent. Both have just completed new albums (Van Halen's *Balance* features the familiar quartet of Eddie and Alex Van Halen, Michael Anthony and Sammy Hagar; *It's Five O'Clock Somewhere*, courtesy of Slash's Snakepit, is a solo debut of sorts, with a crew comprising Jellyfish's Eric Dover, Alice in Chains bassist Mike Inez, and past and present Guns N' Rosers Gilby Clarke and Matt Sorum), which will arrive in early '95. Logistics seemed feasible: Both reside in the L.A. hills, just a few ridges apart as the crow flies across Mulholland. And both players were agreeable, albeit with the wary enthusiasm of musicians who've liked each other from a distance. There was really only one concern, Slash suggested, a few days before the interview was to take place: "We really don't have anything in common."

Well, yes and no. Different personalities for sure. Dressed casually in shirt and jeans, alert eyes sparkling behind a pair of black-framed glasses, Edward Van Halen has the look and manner of a scientist who naturally attracts electrons. His speech is quick and to the point, sometimes thoughtful, sometimes gruff, with a surprisingly quick wit and an infectious laugh that charms you into thinking you're having a wonderful time, even as

he's telling you how much he hates interviews. Slash, who looks like, well, Slash, is more laid-back and reflective, and his humor tends to be more droll. They complement each other nicely, which makes you wonder what they'd be like together onstage. That's not likely to occur any time soon, though; Ed gets up at 6:30 these days, around the time Slash falls into bed.

They met at high noon in the comforting confines of Ed's 5150 recording studio, a short drive up the pavement from the sprawling Tudor house he shares with his wife and young son. Choice of setting was no accident, for while Slash travels in ever-widening social and musical circles, Edward has long trained his own sights literally close to home. Van Halen is his band—"only as long as I live," he explains—offering the space and secure foundation for his increasingly assured pop songcraft and ever-amazing solo flights. Van Halen has endured precisely one personnel change in 20 years, while Guns N' Roses seems to go through six or seven each month. (Just who *is* in that band now, anyway?) Yet within and without that world of controlled chaos, Slash continues to surprise as a songwriter probing the frontiers of riff-based rock, and a bluesy stylist whose solos are at once soaring and soulful. What they share, most obviously, is a commitment to their bands, to their instruments, and to the notion of music as a field of experience and journey into the unknowable.

Pop styles wax and wane, and while both Van Halen and Guns N' Roses remain enormously popular, it's become fashionable in the climate of the alternative '90s to dismiss them as old hat. Well, it's a free country as far as that goes, but rejecting their claims on rock star celebrity misses the point. For all the mythic baggage that comes with their territory, both players remain willing to take musical chances, which means they're willing to fail—which helps explain why they've made it this far, and why they're likely to endure.

And, maybe, why they hit it off so well. "It's strange to be sitting with a guy whose band was one of the ones that really kicked in when I was first getting started, and now I'm sitting here as one of his peers," Slash observed with some awe. "I feel more like an understudy."

"You probably saw us at Gazzarris," Ed surmised.

"Actually it was the Starwood," Slash replied. "I was like 14, and I'd hang out front and sell quaaludes."

Ed chortled. "You probably sold me some."

So began a freewheeling repartee that covered the waterfront from '60s rock to the dearth of '90s guitar heroes to the mysteries of the muse to the strangeness of lead singers. "I have to call him up tonight," Slash enthused, after it was over. "That was the most personable hang we've ever had. Actually," he admitted, "It was the first time we ever had a conversation when we were sober."

MUSICIAN: *Do you worry about your new albums' reception by the public?*

SLASH: It's not supposed to matter. But because it's got my name on it, there's a little pressure. When I'm in the car and just listen to it for what it is and strip the pressures away, I like it. But I've got so many people coming at me from so many directions that sometimes I'll listen to it and stress out. At least in Guns I've got five or six guys on the line as much as I am.

VAN HALEN: I don't really think about it. I guess I'm very selfish in that respect. If I'm happy with it, that to me is at least half of it, and if someone else likes it too, that's like a home run. But if they don't like it, that's okay—I still do.

That's actually the whole reason why I built this studio. Because, I think it was our fifth album, *Diver Down*, was half cover tunes and I hated it. Certain people in the band and around us had the philosophy of "Hey, if you redo a proven hit, you're halfway there." I don't like that "halfway there" shit. I'd rather bomb with my own stuff than make it doing someone else's. Because if you do music that you really don't enjoy playing, you're not satisfying yourself, and if nobody else likes it, you're double-fucked. You got zilch. Pleasing yourself has got to be number one.

MUSICIAN: *So you built the studio because of that conflict or because you weren't getting enough time to make your own music?*

VAN HALEN: No, I had plenty of stuff, that's never a problem. I write like crazy. Say like that song "Dancing in the Street"—I was writing a song with a synthesizer riff, my own piece of music, and someone took it and said, "Hey, we can use it for this!" Well, fuck you! So I built my own studio and the first song I wrote was "Jump." And that was a struggle to get on a record but I just said, *we're doing it*. And now we please ourselves, which is maybe a selfish-prick attitude. But it's the old premise of how can you love someone else if you don't love yourself?

MUSICIAN: *Is that why you made a solo album, Slash?*

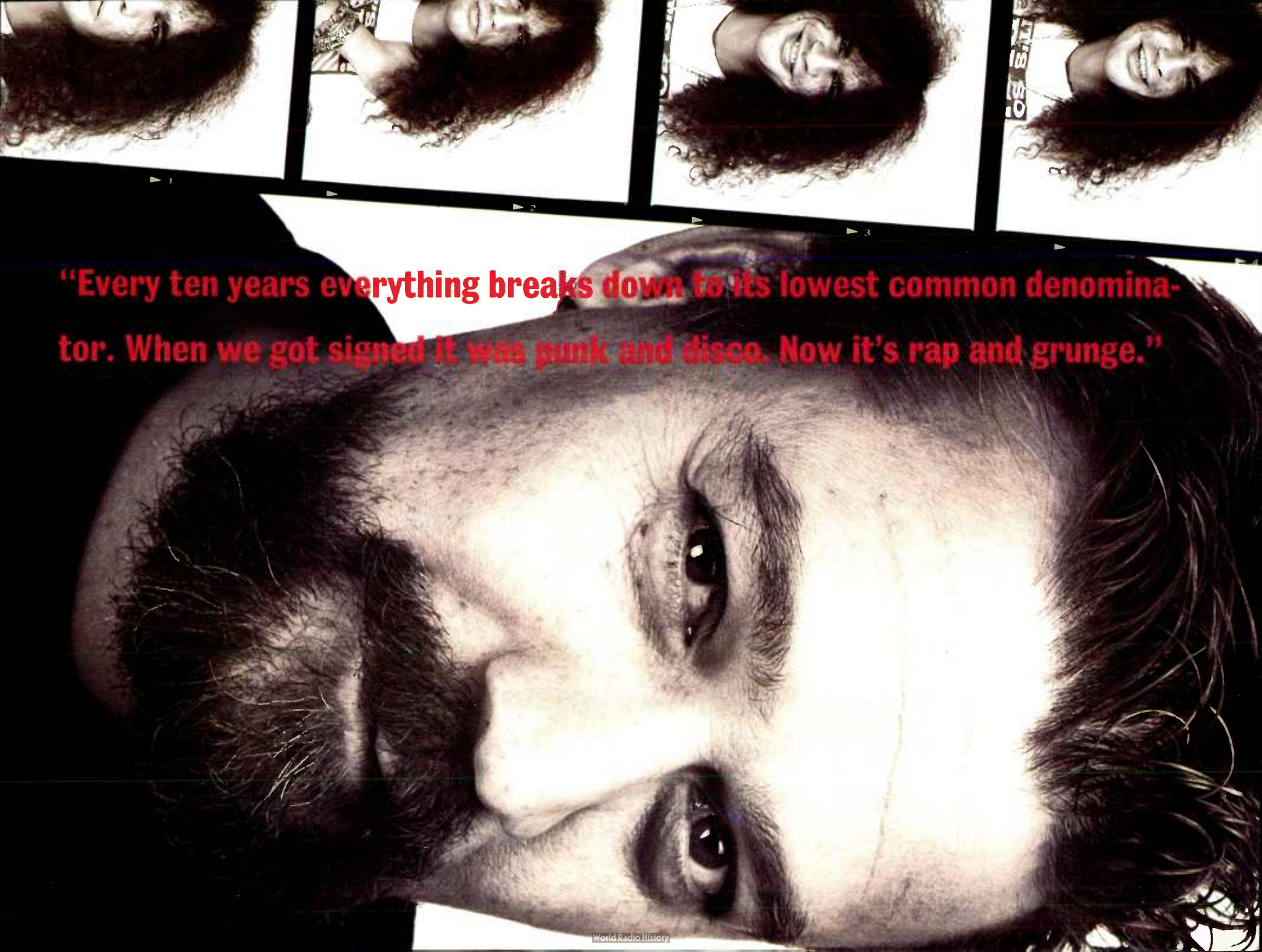
SLASH: I just needed an outlet. With Guns we had toured for so long, and when the tour ended, I built a studio in my house and I wrote all these songs and they didn't turn out to be Guns material. Axl was dealing with his lawsuits, and Matt [Sorum] and I were jamming these songs up so I thought, well, a solo record. We wrote 17 songs in 17 days or so and then went in the studio and did it under budget.

It was a bunch of musicians just having a good time without the pressure of Guns N' Roses. I think that was the real reason for pursuing it, realizing that you could break it back down to where you're just a band again, albeit your lives have changed from being on the street and having to pawn stuff back and forth. Now you have your own amp—but the feel is the same.

VAN HALEN: I think the only reason people do solo records is because they can't express themselves fully within their unit. I mean, there's stuff that didn't make our record because it was too "out," but I have the freedom within the band to not warrant a solo record. I generally look at music as a form of expression, but it's also therapeutic. So a lot of times, depending on what mood I'm in, I'll do something for myself that is just weird, like say, the intro to the ballad "Strung Out." I have hours and hours of weird piano noises. [Producer] Bruce Fairborn happened to hear it and goes, "What is *that?*" That's been laying around for ten years. I had never thought of putting it on a record; for me it was more therapeutic. I have a lot of weird stuff that maybe, at some point, people will hear—but I don't see the point. 'Cause it's really not a song.

MUSICIAN: *Edward, you've always been the sole guitarist in your band, while Slash has always played off another guitarist with Guns N' Roses. Are either of you tempted to go the other way?*

VAN HALEN: No, I don't like playing with another guitarist. I like the freedom to do whatever I want to when I want to. I like to space off and do my own thing. If I had to conform to a set thing with somebody else, I'd have to start counting, and that would fuck with my ability to be spontaneous. How can you expect some



SLASH: "The music business won't let you be a musician.

other guy to be plugged into your head and think the same way?

SLASH: I like jamming with other people—when it's their band. I like getting up with people that are way above par and trying to see if I can stand up on my own and pull it off. If you have a good night, it means the world to you. I had Les Paul wipe the stage with me the first time I jammed with him. I never wanted to be off a stage so badly. And Les will fuck with you, because in his own mind, as well as the public's mind, he is the king. He looked over at me like "Well, you'll learn how to play one day, kid." But I did jam with him recently, and I've gotten better—we managed to play four songs together without any altercations or any serious faux pas, and that was nice. It gives you a little more confidence.

But the only reason Guns had two guitars was because Izzy and Axl came as a package deal. [*Eddie cackles.*] I had a band called Road Crew and I couldn't find a singer. Singers are the hardest thing to find.

VAN HALEN: They are.

SLASH: And Izzy and I never had a great relationship. I played what I played on my side of the stage, he played on his. Izzy couldn't really play guitar anyway—he's a great songwriter. So I could do whatever I wanted, as long as we had a basic arrangement. Then when Izzy quit, Gilby [Clarke] was like a godsend, 'cause we had to put somebody in that spot. But now Gilby's gone...

VAN HALEN: Hey, do it yourself! I think it'll be interesting.

SLASH: Guns is a two-guitar band. But when we go into the studio I end up doing all the guitars by myself. We do the basic scratch tracks with maybe two rhythm guitars, and then I go back and fix all the guitars. So it's a weird kind of thing.

VAN HALEN: So you just need a guy to do it live.

SLASH: Yeah, but the whole thing about a rock 'n' roll band, it's supposed to be a cohesive unit?

VAN HALEN: [*laughs*] Not necessarily!

SLASH: Don't say that—that's the way Axl thinks too.

MUSICIAN: *Ed, any advice for Slash regarding lead singers?*

SLASH: I don't want to think about lead singers.

VAN HALEN: Lead singers are hell. It's true! You gotta be a prick to be a lead singer, that's half the deal.

MUSICIAN: *As guys who write songs but not lyrics, do you have a theme in mind when you write, and do you try to convey that to the singer or lyricist?*

VAN HALEN: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. I will definitely argue with the person who's writing the lyrics if I don't think they fit. Usually the music speaks so loud for itself that if the guy misses it, there's really something wrong with him.

SLASH: In Guns I would make suggestions for lyrics, but the general vibe of the riff would pretty much provide it. The Snakepit thing is the first time I've ever had to write entire songs lyrically. Me and Eric Dover wrote the lyrics about 50/50, and that was a whole new trip for me. I found I could express myself verbally a lot better than I ever thought I could.

MUSICIAN: *Often the creative tension between the guitarist and the singer/lyricist ultimately pulls them apart.*

VAN HALEN: Well, I really don't think friction is what makes something happen. What makes it work is the differences of opinion and ideas. That's part of collaborating with another human being. But music is not a competitive thing, and that tears up a lot of bands. That's why Roth quit. He thought he was King Cheese—go ahead! I don't want to deal with someone who's in competition with me, I want to work together and make music, you know?

Alex and I are completely different in musical taste. But we don't say, "I want it all my way"—we bring different elements to the table, stir it up and make a stew out of it. As opposed to: "We got too much of *you* in the stew!" [*laughs*] Everybody in this band plays a role and if you remove any one of them, it won't work. I guess it's a band situation at its best; we each have a role and we try to do the right thing.

MUSICIAN: *Which is unusual.*

VAN HALEN: Well, take Jimmy Page and Plant—they still don't like each other! Or at least that's what's apparent. I read the interviews and

THE ROTH OF GOD

EDWARD VAN HALEN plays a Music Man guitar—the Edward Van Halen signature model, of course—with pickups by Dimarzio, a type "you can only get in my guitar. You can't interchange the front and rear ones like a Les Paul, they're different." SLASH plays a copy of a '59 Gibson Les Paul "made by a guy in Long Beach who passed away," fitted with a matched pair of Seymour Duncan Alnico II Pro humbuckers. "When we were doing 'Appetite for Destruction' I hadn't really settled into my sound. Our manager brought this around and it's been my main guitar ever since."

Both players prefer Ernie Ball strings of a fairly light gauge (.009 to .040 for Van Halen, .010 to .046 for Slash). "I used to use heavier strings—we had to tune down 'cause Roth didn't have much of a range," Edward remarks. "It's funny, 'cause all the grunge bands tune down now thinking it's cool. I had to do it and I hated it. There's a reason why the A rings at 440 Hertz. The guitar sounds best at that tuning."

Edward's amps include a Peavey 5150 and an old Marshall Super Lead 100 Watt amp (circa 1968) for recording. "Live, I just use the Peavey with an Eventide H3000 Harmonizer and two Roland SDE-3000 delays. In the studio I use one cabinet with one head, either the Marshall or the 5150 head. I pan the main guitar dry signal to the left, put it through a Harmonizer on the other side and add a little delay—the same sound on everything."

Slash plays through Marshall amps. His effects are limited to a talk box, a Cry Baby wah and a custom rackmount wah that uses wireless remote controller pedals.

That's the worst obstacle."

it seems like they're obviously doing it just for the bucks. I don't know if it's true or not. But you figure, guys who have been doing it that long would get over the ego bullshit by now.

MUSICIAN: *How are you and Alex different?*

VAN HALEN: He listens to everything and I don't listen to anything. I guess I'm more driven or inspired by the way I feel, or by life in general. Even though I'm not a lyricist, emotionally things move me and they come out in my music. That sounds so funny to me: My Music. It sounds so pompous, because I really can't claim to have ever written anything. I get into a state of mind playing after about an hour, where things just come out. I'm not like Barry Manilow, who can sit and write a jingle on the spot. I'm not a professional in that sense. I can't force it like: [*snaps his fingers and imitates a hypnotist's voice*] "Come to me..."

The sound I'm hearing in my head, I haven't heard it yet either. So it's very difficult to explain. I've tried, I called it the "brown sound"—now everywhere I look, it's "Eddie Van Halen's Brown Sound"—well, that's not what I meant. Really, I'm just searching. And one of these days, I'll capture what I want. It's all a learning process and just winging it and having fun. The process is the fun. But I don't think I'll ever get what I want. 'Cause when I do, I'll quit.

MUSICIAN: *You've credited Eric Clapton as your one strong influence, which has probably caused some fans to scratch their heads.*

VAN HALEN: Well, c'mon, that guy is still around—he's doing great. I prefer the way he played back in the Cream days. A lot of people liked me better in the early days than now. And I can understand. You change—your outlook, your inspiration, your moods...it's not a conscious thing. I'm sure Clapton didn't say, "I'm gonna play a Strat now." He just evolved.

MUSICIAN: *Slash has credited Mick Taylor of the Stones as an influence. Taylor and Clapton both liked to swing around the beat, and you guys do that too. You're not bound by meter, and you're always playing off the drummer.*

VAN HALEN: 'Cause that's what Alex and I grew up on! Our rhythm section is the guitar and the drums, not the bass and drums. Alex and I interact while Mike holds it all down, which is very Cream-like. Except that Jack Bruce wasn't holding it down, he was soloing between the other two.

SLASH: There's a lot of stuff I still listen to that's prehistoric now; that's still the only stuff that does it for me. I always wondered why Mick Taylor was so underrated; people would say, "Who's that, the guy from Foreigner?" No one seems to know him, but he was a great guitarist in the Stones. I grew up on Clapton too, and all these guitarists who were around in more or less the same time frame. They were really good "tone" guys who could use one note, as opposed to three, and make it do its trip.

I kind of stopped listening to the Stones after *Some Girls* but I have the new record [*Voodoo Lounge*] in my car, and I think it's a great record. I've known Ronnie [Wood] since I was a kid and I spent a couple of weeks in his house when the only thing he had was the working roughs of that album. Some of the songs got very close to me. And I was at Don Was's house during the overdubs, and it was great to watch what goes on there, 'cause it brought this multimillion-dollar establishment down to all these people—just hanging out and the candles going and the drinks going around. It's nice to see the older guys who have been there since the beginning; all of a sudden you feel like, "Okay, calm down, it's not that big a deal—just do what you do." Because the business won't let you be a musician—it's the worst obstacle. And it's the time you spend onstage that makes any of it worth getting up to deal with the next day.

VAN HALEN: "I don't think I'll ever get what I want. When I do I'll quit."

MUSICIAN: *Both of you grew up in families that were either very musical [Edward's] or very connected to the world of pop culture [Slash's]. To what extent was that a help and to what extent a hindrance to finding your own way?*

VAN HALEN: I don't think it hindered me at all. I grew up around music and it was great. Granted, it was a different style of music. My mom hated it because my dad was always on the road. Growing up in Holland when me and Alex were seven years old, we used to go across the border to Germany to clubs where he played. That was just normal to me: eight years old, staying up to two, three in the morning, hanging in the club.

SLASH: I didn't know that.

VAN HALEN: Oh yeah, my dad was a jazz musician. Clarinet and saxophone. But my mom wanted us to grow up and be something respectable. The only way she'd let me play guitar was if I also did piano.

SLASH: Well, that's good—now you can play piano. I can't. I think the benefit I got from being around the music business as a little kid was it keeps me sane now. I dealt with so many neurotic "name" people for so long and saw so many things go on, that dealing with all the things that have happened through Guns N' Roses' career, it's like "eh, whatever." I can see the bad habits I picked up too—some of them obvious. But at the same time, I'm a little more rational than some unnamed musicians who wig out really quick.

MUSICIAN: *How about the effects of growing up in Los Angeles?*

VAN HALEN: I don't think it matters where you grow up. It's what you're exposed to. We were weaned on English rock, and it's funny, 'cause they grew up on American blues guys. Now they say "the Seattle sound"—I don't think if you're from Seattle you're gonna *sound* that way. If some cat grew up listening to Black Sabbath and another guy in Seattle grew up listening to Joni Mitchell, he ain't gonna sound like Black Sabbath.

Yeah, but I think that's partly record companies and partly people not having their own style. The companies go, "We've got to find another band like these guys that are happening," and don't sign anybody else. And the musicians go, "We're gonna play that kind of music so we can get a record deal." It's such an incestuous, twisted thing.

Look at cars nowadays—they all look alike. It's like, that one's selling, so let's copy it. A Lexus looks like a Mercedes. And in the '50s and '60s, look at the cars—and look at the music. You had the Who, Led Zeppelin, Sabbath, Cream...different styles and no one was copying each other. I don't think there's really a hell of a lot happening musically right now. I mean, whatever you hear is pretty good. But there's no Led Zeppelin, no Who—and that was all in a very short amount of time. How long was the Beatles' career? Not very long. Look what they did.

MUSICIAN: *When you were coming up in the club scene, did you ever feel that your background affected your vision?*

VAN HALEN: I never had a vision. [*laughter*] See, you almost make it sound like "Did you feel like you knew more than them because you were raised...?" No.

SLASH: I thought [the scene] was just absolute stupidity. I liked to play, but all the other complications that went around it didn't make sense to me.

VAN HALEN: People ask now, what have you learned after 11 albums? I've learned that I don't know shit. 'Cause every time you start a new record it's the same old anxiety. You don't learn.

SLASH: Ever since the beginning, it's been a constant test. There's always some sort of obstacle and you deal with it and survive it and then it repeats itself. And if you're bored with one obstacle, a new, bigger obstacle comes up.

VAN HALEN: Same as it ever was.

MUSICIAN: *Max Roach once said that after a while his big fear became, what if I run out of ideas?*

VAN HALEN: That happened to me after our first record! Here we are, 11 later.

SLASH: Writing ruts have to be the most depressing. It's a brick wall. You're home with your acoustic and you're trying to come up with something. Sometimes it lasts for a month, for three months, and it's the most depressing, anxiety-ridden feeling. You think your life's over, your career's over...

VAN HALEN: Now, that's very alien to me. 'Cause I'm always coming out with shit.

SLASH: You never have periods of down time?

VAN HALEN: I have periods where I've written stuff I look back on now and I don't necessarily like it at all. But like I say, after an hour or two playing, shit just comes out, whether I like it or not. I'll always come up with something, some days better than others. I play and play and play. I guess it's a form of meditation. But it doesn't happen when I'm sitting watching TV and plinking. I'm generally here; mainly Alex and I. I get off on rhythm a lot; Alex starts a groove and I start jammin' and things come out. It's a hit-or-miss thing, very simple and at the same time unexplainable.

SLASH: I don't tape anything, either.

VAN HALEN: I generally do. Just a little ghetto-blaster. But not until I have something to report. After an hour of warming up, if I have some seed of something then I'll turn the tape on, just so I won't forget it. I hate to listen back to all the tape. I've got a box of cassettes in the house that have a bunch of stuff on it, but I'm too lazy to go through it. There's probably some great tunes in there somewhere...

SLASH: If you press "play," you better have something to record. 'Cause the worst thing is to sit through three hours of you fucking around.

VAN HALEN: And then you start titling them, but you forget what the title meant. That's what happens to me.

SLASH: Yeah—"Riff in A." Our whole album was work tapes, and we did all the demos before there were lyrics or vocals; it was "Song in F#," "Jam in this..." When we finally had names for the songs we couldn't get used to them. We'd go back to "Riff in A."

VAN HALEN: I generally put "Good Shit" or "Bad Shit."

MUSICIAN: *Ed, you described your music-making as "therapeutic." But when your first record comes out and it's a huge hit, it must be weird to discover that your personal therapy is this enormous success.*

SLASH: It doesn't seem like such an enormous success when it's hap-

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Amativeness	Appetite for Food and Drink.
Alternativeness	Sexual and Social Impulses.
Approbativeness	Regard for Popular Sentiment.
Benevolence	Sympathy for Humanity.
Bibativeness	Capable of Combining.
Calculation	Ability to Calculate correctly.
Casuality	Ability to Reason a Proposition.
Cautiousness	Indisposition to Take Risks.
Color	Ability to Determine Color correctly.
Combativeness	Love for Encounter, Debate or Dispute.
Comparison	Ability to Analyze and Illustrate.
Conjugality	Love of Companionship.
Conscientiousness	Recognition of Duty and Principle.
Constructiveness	Inventive Skill.
Continuity	Love for Society.
Destructiveness	Attitude towards Punishment or Revenge.
Eventuality	Love for Information and Experiment.
Firmness	Tenacity and Perseverance.
Friendship	An Attachment to an Intimate Acquaintance.
Hope	Disposition to Minimize Trouble.
Human Nature	Ability to Read Character by Conversation with persons.
Ideality	Imagination, Love of Poetry.
Immortality	Ability to Live by Dying.
Individuality	Whether Close Observer or not.
Inhabitiveness	Love of Home.
Language	Ability to Acquire Language.
Locality	Memory of Places and Circumstances.
Mirthfulness	Regard for Wit, Ridicule and Repartee.
Order	Disposition to have Everything in Its Place.
Parental Love	Attachment for Children.
Secretiveness	Disposition towards Cunning, Secrecy, etc.
Self Esteem	Regard for Individual Character.
Size	Accuracy in Guessing Proportions.
Spirituality	Faith in the Supernatural.
Sublimity	Love of Travel, Vivid Emotions.
Time	Ability to Remember Occurrences.
Tune	Ability to Acquire Music.
Veneration	Religious Fervor.
Vitalogy	Pearl Jam
Vitativeness	Love of Life.
Weight	Ability to Judge Weight.

EPIC

pening. I remember when Guns first started, the motivation was just getting together and going gig to gig, and partying and playing and partying and playing...you don't realize what's going on. Then the record company calls you up and says, "We've sold this and this and this," and when you get home at the end of the tour, life around you is different. But the motivation behind it is just playing.

VAN HALEN: It's like the Joe Walsh song: "Everybody's so different, I haven't changed." It's still the same to me when I'm in *here*; it's like when I used to sit on the edge of my bed and play. I listen back to the first records sometimes and say, "I haven't changed at all!"

SLASH: It gets the most sterile when you try to analyze what you're doing it for. 'Cause when you're playing, it has nothing to do with the music business. You could be sitting in a hut in Iceland somewhere.

VAN HALEN: It's just very very lucky! To have found something in this life that I enjoy doing *and* that I can make a living at.

SLASH: 'Cause I don't think you'd want either one of us loose on the streets. [*laughter*]

MUSICIAN: *But is the flip side that it makes the rest of your life harder, or casts it in a grayer shadow?*

SLASH: I would say yes. It's so much a part of you that it comes first. And it makes the rest of what you call daily life difficult.

VAN HALEN: In the beginning when I met my wife, it was difficult. She didn't understand this thing that I had. It was huge, it was my life.

SLASH: I'm still going through that.

VAN HALEN: You reach a balance. I got a kid, too. Now you've got another element that takes away from me doing this—to a certain extent. But you deal with it and you find time to do it all. 'Cause at the same time, he inspires me. There's good in anything if you look for it.

SLASH: If the person you're having a relationship with actually lets you have time where you don't have to "clock out."

MUSICIAN: *If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, you've both been sincerely flattered a lot. How do you feel about that?*

SLASH: Man, you spawned a whole satanic cult!

VAN HALEN: Yeah, and I hated it. I'm going, I'm not that goofy, am I? These guys start doing the finger-tapping thing and it's like "Wow, watch me do this trick." To me, it's just been part of my playing for the last 20 years. I don't even think about it. I cringe when I see people do it, but at the same time, I guess they like it, so what the fuck.

SLASH: It was actually the whole scene that you guys started that spawned Guns N' Roses in a way, because we were completely trying to *not* do that. It was like "That's cool, just leave it alone."

VAN HALEN: Yeah, let me do *my* thing. But the funny thing is the bands that were copying us weren't like us. They missed the point—

SLASH: That it's an individual thing. You'd have guitars coming out with all different shapes and grooved necks—you couldn't go to Guitar Center and buy a real guitar anymore. Now it's sort of died off a little bit, because no one's really talented enough to rip him off.

MUSICIAN: *At the beginning there was a resistance to both bands: Van Halen wasn't the Eagles, and Guns N' Roses weren't Van Halen.*

VAN HALEN: To me, it's all just good rock 'n' roll. They weren't acting and neither are we. All these other bands that are copying are acting—

SLASH: You can see 'em from a mile away. It's a sad state of events

when you see a band just going through the motions.

MUSICIAN: *You both grew up in the '60s–'70s eras of great guitar solos, and you've carried that tradition forward. But that approach has waned considerably. How do you feel about that?*

VAN HALEN: I think guitarists right now in happening bands like Pearl Jam, that group of bands...I don't mean this in a negative way but they don't quite have their chops down yet to the point where they can play that well. It's like every ten years or so everything breaks down to its lowest common denominator. When we got signed, it was punk and disco. Now it's rap and grunge. It's just starting all over again, and these cats just can't play that well yet. But when they do, then it'll break down for *them* again, you know? They haven't really mastered their instrument to the point where they can play like a Clapton.

SLASH: The business goes through these phases where there's a scene with three million of the same band, then one band breaks out of the mold. That changes the scene for a while and then there's three million of that band. But there's some amazing musicians out there that don't even have a shot. Because the door opens and closes so quickly.

VAN HALEN: But I still believe that if you're true to your art—I don't mean to sound that deep or heavy about it, but rock 'n' roll *is* an art form. We stuck with what we wanted to do. We didn't change or conform to anything. You guys didn't either.

SLASH: But we're just as fucked up as bands now.

VAN HALEN: So are we! I wasn't comparing them to *me*. I'm far from having mastered my instrument. I can't even read a note. But I realized I was a pretty good player when whatever idea came into my head, I could play it: Wow, this is great. That's when I realized I know how to play.

SLASH: Even though we play completely differently, I think there's a similar influence, a blues sense. And the whole thing is to execute it from your head to your fingertips so fast that you do it spontaneously—then it has your own feel. And that's the thing that they missed on this guy. 'Cause if you listen to Eddie—this is just a compliment—any Eddie Van Halen solo, it has a blues root to it. So there might be weird notes, but it all comes down to a soulful little thing. But then everybody else is going like "brrrrrrr"—it doesn't go anywhere.

VAN HALEN: It's gotta come from in here. Really, you've only got 12 notes; you can mix them up however you want, but it's how you express yourself with those 12 notes. And they just looked at it like scales. I don't even know what scales I'm playing.

SLASH: What's myxolydian?

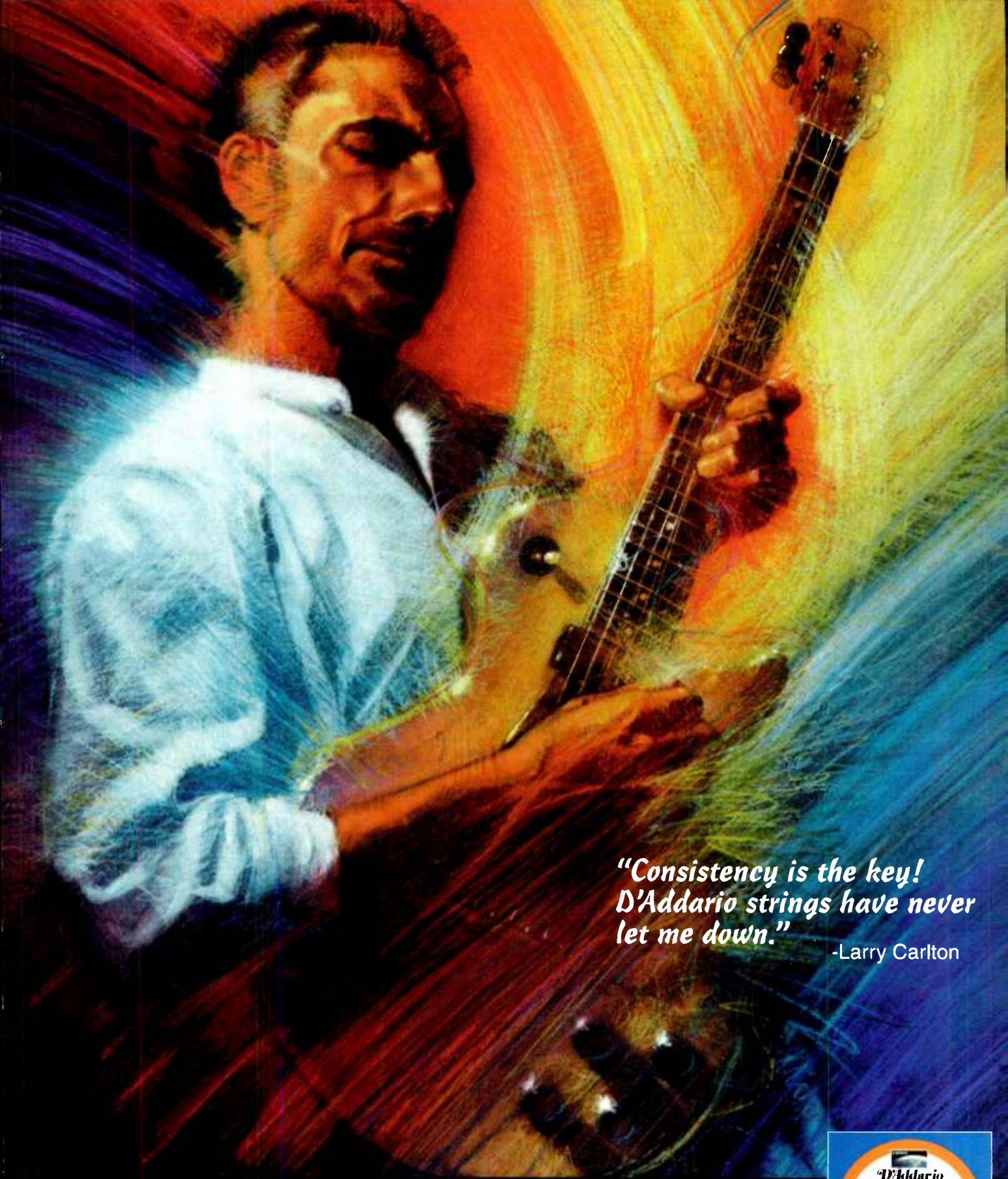
VAN HALEN: I don't have a clue. There are certain notes that sound more pleasing to the ear than others. And if you hit a couple that don't quite fit, hey, they're passing notes.

SLASH: Sometimes your emotion gets ahead of you and you end up hitting notes you weren't really planning on. You just go with the flow, so to speak. And *that's* when you really wail. All of a sudden you and the guitar become one—

VAN HALEN: And you're in a state of mind when you're not thinking anymore. That's when it's great.

SLASH: Ted Nugent once had a great quote. He said, "As soon as you start thinking about rock 'n' roll, you've lost it."

VAN HALEN: You know something? That means he was thinking.



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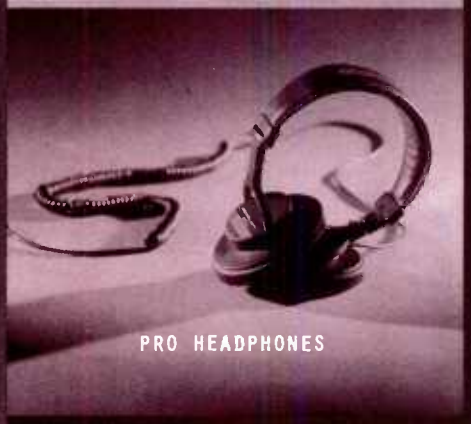

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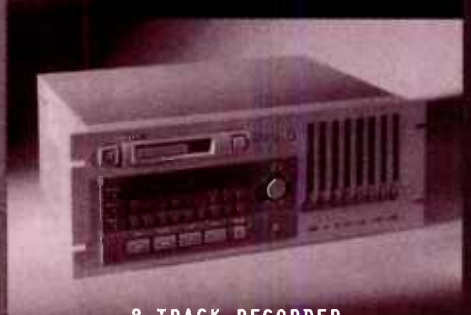

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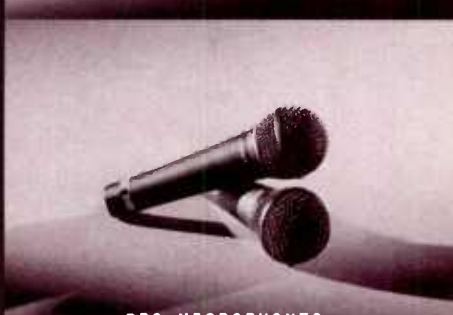

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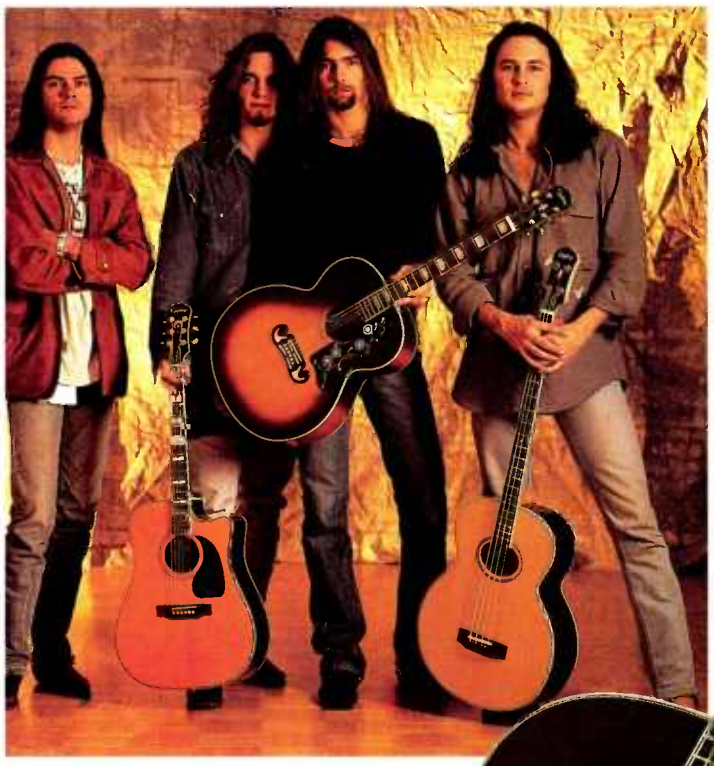
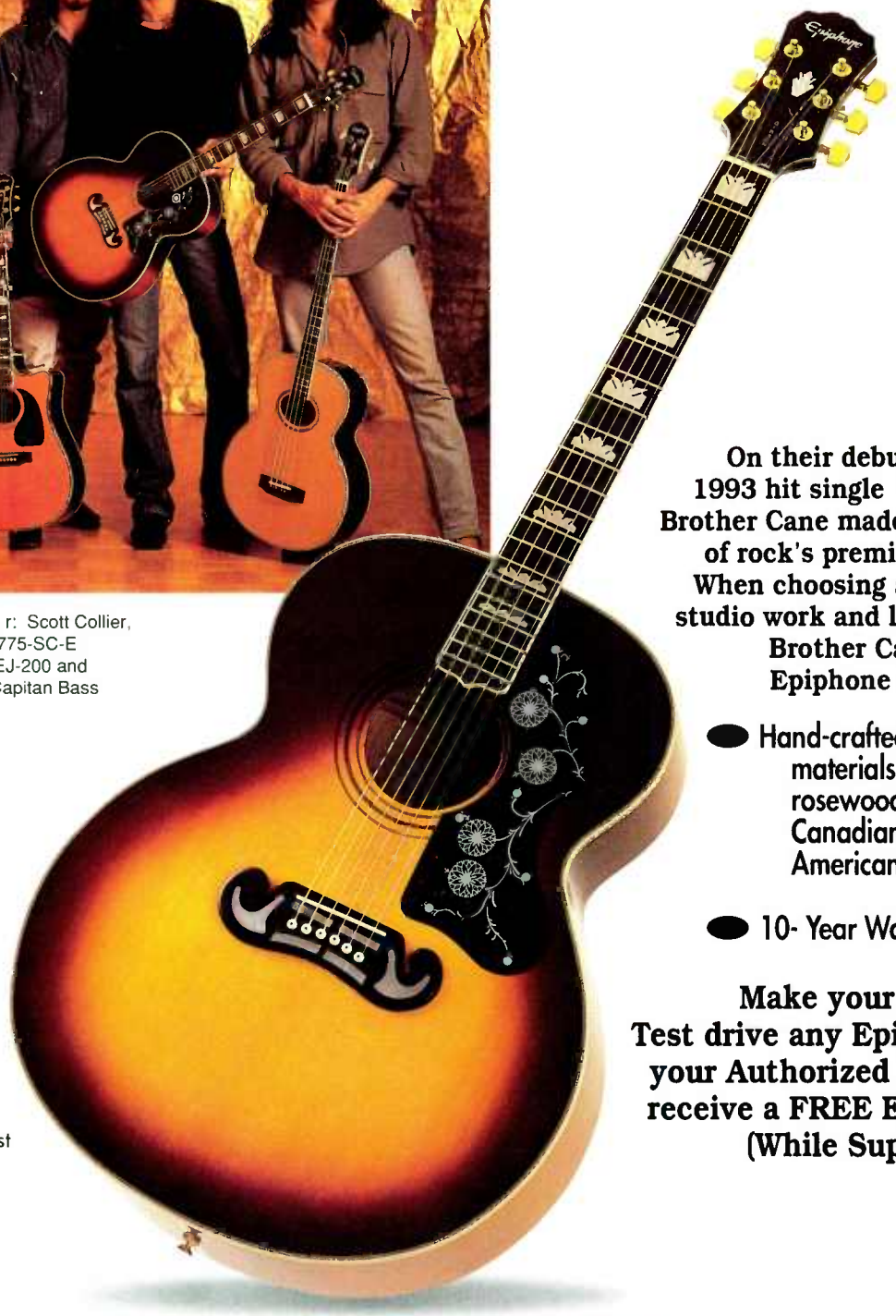


Brother Cane, l to r: Scott Collier, Roman Glick / PR-775-SC-E Damon Johnson / EJ-200 and Glenn Maxey / El Capitan Bass



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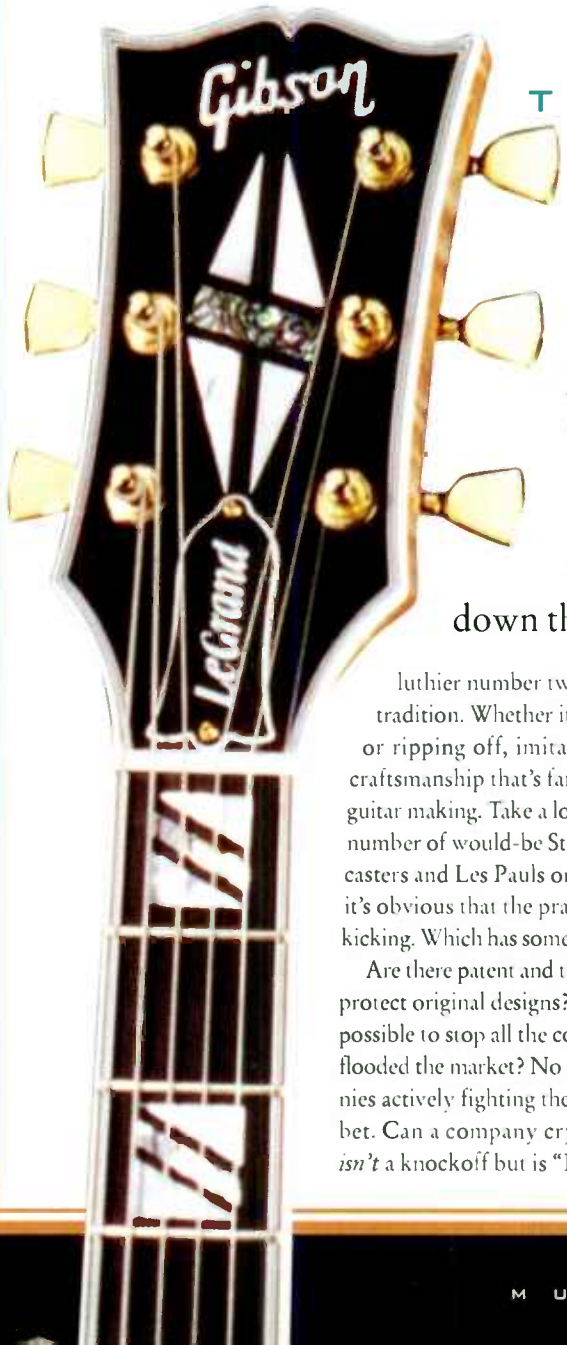

ARE TRADEMARK LAWS PRESERVING GUITAR TRADITION OR DESTROYING IT?

WHEN THE VERY FIRST luthier built the very first guitar hundreds of years ago, chances are the second guitar ever built was a carbon copy by some guy just down the road. Luthier number one was innovating, luthier number two was following tradition. Whether it's paying tribute or ripping off, imitation is a part of craftsmanship that's far from limited to guitar making. Take a look around at the number of would-be Stratocasters, Telecasters and Les Pauls on the market and it's obvious that the practice is alive and kicking. Which has some folks screaming.

Are there patent and trademark laws to protect original designs? Yes and no. Is it possible to stop all the copycats that have flooded the market? No way. Are companies actively fighting them anyway? You bet. Can a company cry foul if a guitar *isn't* a knockoff but is "Fenderesque" or has some "Gibsonish" component? Good question.

The lawsuit waters have been stirred up recently regarding trademark protection. Fender, Gibson, Kaman and Rickenbacker have formed a coalition of American guitar makers to fight Korean knockoffs distributed in Europe. Gibson (who owns the Steinberger line of headless instruments) filed suit against Brian Moore Custom Guitars stating, in part, that BMCG is infringing on an original idea of Ned Steinberger's; BMCG issued a press release (and $20-million counterclaim) asserting, among other things, that Gibson has *no* legally enforceable trademarks. Gibson is also suing Rich & Taylor Guitars over infringement issues; Mark Taylor asks if it's a coincidence that he made Gibson copies for decades but was never confronted until he teamed with Greg Rich, a former Gibson employee.

The waters aren't just stirred up, they're boiling.

As usual, a little history sheds light on current events. From the dawn of rock 'n' roll (shortly after the introduction of the solidbody electric) up through the heady '60s, most manufacturers went out of their way to make sure their instruments did *not* look like a competitor's. Knockoffs didn't become a major threat until the Japanese had finetuned their skills to the point where a Japanese copy of a Strat or Les Paul was not only near-indistinguishable cosmetically but was also extremely close in terms of sound, feel and workmanship. As the vintage market for discontinued models increased in the early '70s, it was the copies of those designs that were most sought after; players were paying higher and higher prices for pre-CBS (pre-1965) Stratocasters because brand-new '70s Strats just weren't filling their bills. By the time the folks at Fender realized they should reissue their classics, the reputation and sales of Fender and other American manufacturers had eroded. Ironically, they were fighting an uphill battle against not only low-priced, high-quality Japanese copies but their own past as well—competing against the vintage instruments they'd designed and built decades before.

THIS REPLACEMENT NECK IS A VIRTUAL TRACING OF GIBSON'S TRADEMARKED LES PAUL SHAPE, BUT ARE OTHER SO-CALLED "DOVE-WING" DESIGNS INFRINGEMENTS?

One famous case of an American company policing Japanese copies has all the elements of international intrigue. The Fernandes company had been making Fender copies in Japan and began shipping them stateside in the early '80s. These were exact reproductions of Teles and Strats, from headstock to strap button, the only difference being the name "Fernandes" on the peghead written in spaghetti-logo script to look as close to "Fender" as possible. There's a popular legend that around 1983 Fender convinced U.S. customs to seize a shipment of Fernandes guitars arriving in California and saw the headstocks off before they were allowed to reach their destination. For years people have referred to the incident, some even claiming to own one of the "sawed-off headstock" Fernandeses. Trouble is, according to Michael Wright, "that's all fantasy." Wright, who writes for *Vintage Guitar* magazine and has done extensive research into Japanese imports, explains, "What they made them do was unbolt the necks and send them back to Japan. So Fernandes retooled, came up with a different headstock, shipped the new necks back, reassembled and marketed the guitars here. The rumor of the headstocks being sawed off got around shortly after the incident, and Fernandes didn't stop it because it increased their sales. People were more interested in them."

A similar event (with a similar end result) involved Ibanez and Gibson several years earlier. From the Fujigengaki factory came exact repros of Gibson Explorers and Flying Vs—some with the Ibanez name, some with Greco. Jeff Hasselberger, director of marketing at Ibanez from 1973 to '81 and also head of R&D and artist relations, states, "Part of the appeal was that Gibson *didn't* make them anymore. I followed what was fashionable more than what the big companies were doing. If people were paying $5000 for old Explorers, 'We better make a fucking Explorer'—even though Gibson didn't make one." Ibanez's blueprint V copies were so good that they go for big bucks on today's collector's market. But in 1977 Gibson sued Ibanez over its Les Paul knockoffs, specifically objecting to the carbon-copy headstock design. "They thought they were going to shut us down at the Atlanta NAMM show," recalls Hasselberger. "Unbeknownst to them, we had already changed our headstock design. Out of all the Gibson-copy guitars Ibanez had on the floor, there wasn't a Gibson headstock in sight. We were always more successful knocking off Gibsons because we could make them so much cheaper, whereas it's very difficult to make a guitar much cheaper than Fender. That was part of Leo Fender's genius."

Wright adds, "By that time Ibanez had pretty much decided to move away from copies and have their own designs. The total irony of that situation was that when they started making original designs, they *really* ate Gibson's lunch. That was what really propelled them to international dominance."

A KIT GUITAR MADE FROM CHANDLER PARTS, THIS LES PAUL WANNA-BE DUPES EVERY DETAIL OF GIBSON'S MOST FAMOUS MODEL, FROM THE FAMILIAR BODY SHAPE TO THE "DOVE-WING" HEADSTOCK.

DRESSED TO KILL

But why, one might ask, are the companies only willing or able to fight over the design of the headstock? Why is it wrong to copy the headstock shape of a Stratocaster but okay to dupe its body down to the last screw? Now we get into the rat's nest known as patent and trademark law, which is itself undergoing changes in interpretation and application. To generalize, a *utility patent* must have some-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTINE GALIDA

thing to do with function—how this pickup cancels hum, how that whammy bar works. A *design patent*, to quote Gibson patent and trademark counsel Wayne Beavers, "covers the appearance of a product—the way it looks, not the way it functions or is constructed." Both types expire: a utility patent in 17 years, a design patent in 14. You can later patent an improvement, but that's all the second patent covers, not the underlying device.

A trademark, on the other hand, lasts as long as it's used, which could mean forever. Again quoting Mr. Beavers, "A trademark is a designation of source, a name or a logo—a word or symbol that the public recognizes as indicating that this product comes from some particular source." An example often cited is Coca-Cola, whose traditional bottle shape is trademarked, just like the name.

But is the headstock shape of a particular model of guitar (since companies often use different headstock designs on different models) universally recognized in the same way as Coca-Cola's bottle shape, the Chevrolet logo or the NBC peacock? And if so, then what about the body shape? Even though its design patent may have long since expired, is the shape of the Les Paul body so widely recognized as to constitute a trademark—or has it, along with that of the Strat and other popular models, passed into the public domain?

A guitar's headstock has a function, but its shape is considered "decorative and frivolous" enough to fall under the trademark category. It has come to represent a company's signature because, going back hundreds of years, the design of a classical guitar's headstock denoted its builder. According to Fender's Dan Smith (vice president of marketing, electric guitars), "It wasn't until 1969 or '70 that shapes were allowed to be trademarked." Attorney Richard Gausewitz, who patented some of Leo Fender's inventions going back to 1957, explains, "There were Supreme Court cases that were widely misinterpreted to mean that product shapes couldn't be trademarked, but subsequent court decisions liberalized the law." With that ammunition Fender succeeded, usually with a threatening letter, in getting companies to steer clear of direct copies of their headstock designs.

It is important to note that, unlike patents, it's not who came first, it's who is recognized for a particular trademarked item. So when Gibson president Henry Juszkiewicz says, "Somebody may have done something in 1640—although I'm not aware of anybody who's done a dove-wing peghead prior to Gibson—but that really doesn't matter," he may be correct in terms of the law but misinformed regarding guitar tradition, depending on how one defines a "dove-wing" peghead. The so-called dove-wing peghead (or headstock) is sometimes called "open-book" or "center-dip," and a quick glance through the book *American Guitars* by Tom Wheeler reveals Guilds, Epiphones (predating Gibson purchasing the brand in '57), Gretsches, Strombergs and D'Angelicos featuring the center-dip scroll at the top of the headstock, although no two were identical. The tradition actually does go back to the 1600s with Spanish classical guitars.

Gibson is claiming the headstock motif as a trademark. Mark Taylor of Rich & Taylor Guitars, who are being sued by Gibson over that and other alleged infringements, says, "Agreed, only if it is in fact copied. Just because somebody curves the top and puts a dip in it does not classify as a dove-wing peghead. The dove-wing peghead that Gibson has copyrighted and protected is that entire peghead [on Les Pauls and other models], not just the little curlicue at the very top. If ours is a copy, I'll show you that I have been copying it for 26 years from Stromberg. Where mine tapers and gets narrower toward the top, like a snake head, Gibson's is just the opposite and flares out at the top. And copying is not really the right word. I've used those principles to come up with our designs." Paying tribute to previous luthiers is a guitar tradition in itself. Every time Fender forces a copier to alter its six-on-a-side headstock, it gives that tradition a little extra push.

Juszkiewicz, who bought Gibson in 1986, cites decades of continuous usage to back his position. "If you showed a hundred people the headstock and asked what it was," he insists, "they would say a Gibson headstock." The question is, who are the hundred people? Show a Les Paul headstock to a hundred "Headbanger's Ball" viewers and a hundred are likely to say Gibson. A committee of guitar experts might even say the same. But show a jury of experts just the open-book top, or several open-book variations, and they will almost certainly say, "There's no way to tell; it could be one of several makers." In fact, that was the reaction to such a hypothetical question posed to: Matt Umanov, whose Greenwich Village shop is one of the biggest Gibson dealers in the country; Tom Wheeler, former *Guitar Player* editor; and Marc Silber, one of the first dealers in vintage guitars.

Two years ago Gibson also registered the Les Paul *body* shape, introduced 40 years earlier, as a trademark. Traditionally, body shapes have laid claim only to design patents, which expire after 14 years. But recently the law has been construed to protect them under a concept known as "trade dress." Rickenbacker president John Hall details, "That's some-

AN AMAZINGLY CONVINCING COUNTERFEIT OF A FENDER STRATOCASTER MADE FROM A CHANDLER BODY, SEYMOUR DUNCAN PICKUPS AND A NECK MADE BY YASUHIKO IWANADE, WHO WAS SO GOOD AT COPYING FENDERS THE COMPANY HIRED HIM TO WORK IN ITS CUSTOM SHOP. THE BOGUS FENDER DECAL WAS AFFIXED BY A PREVIOUS OWNER.

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thing that in the last five years or so has really been strengthened by court precedents. And that's probably the best issue that a manufacturer can protect himself on. Trade dress is the general appearance of an item that gives it its unique character. In some other countries, including the U.K. where it's called 'passing off,' it's actually a criminal offense, rather than a civil-type suit. In one of our cases it mainly came down to just the blackened silhouette—whether musicians could name what the instrument was."

While it's true that for a trademark to be strong it must be actively protected, Juszkiewicz estimates that in 90 percent of cases "it really gets down to working something out." If threatening letters don't do the trick, cases are usually settled before they go to court, although some have been tried, such as *Fender Musical Instrument Co. vs. ESP* (in 1985) and *Fender vs. Schecter Guitar Research* (in 1990). In both cases Fender won. But Dan Smith views the overall problem very seriously. "We're going to go beyond just writing letters," he predicts. "It's got to come to the point where people are going to have to go to jail for this. Since 1980 it has cost us in the millions to police our trademarks, with money that could have gone for research and development. In the end it isn't in the best interest of consumers, because these costs get passed along."

Attorney Ron Bienstock, who is representing both Rich & Taylor and Brian Moore Custom Guitars in cases against Gibson, represented Heritage Guitars when the company was sued by Gibson a few years ago. As in most sealed, out-of-court settlements, details aren't available. But Bienstock did say, "I think Henry spent a lot of money to get essentially what I offered in the first letter. You've seen a Heritage before and one after that period; they look extremely similar."

The portion of the two counterclaims (quoted in press releases issued by both Rich & Taylor and BMCG) that could conceivably have the strongest repercussions is the assertion that "Gibson actually has no legally enforceable trademarks on items they claim." Quoting Bienstock: "Certain companies will often use the threat of a common law trademark, which is not registered, as an anvil—almost as a business practice—to prevent somebody from competing with them. The question is what Gibson really owns in terms of intellectual property versus what they *claim* they own. That's often the crux of the matter in these cases."

LICENSED TO KILL

If it sounds as though only large manufacturers get copied, it can happen to anyone who innovates. In 1970, then Byrds drummer Gene Parsons and country guitar legend Clarence White patented the Parsons-White String Bender, but long before the patent expired there were several infringements. Parsons stopped short of court action because, as he puts it, "What it costs to fight something like that is not worth it. Instead of being in court all the time, we put that energy into very high quality and innovation."

The avenue of recourse taken by another small manufacturer, Ned Steinberger, is the ultimate if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em scenario. Around 1980, with no interest from the majors in his headless bass, Steinberger hooked up with Hap Kuffner, who had cofounded the Mandolin Brothers vintage instrument dealership in '71. "By 1982 we began to be flooded with copies from Asia," Hap recounts. "Ned and I arranged a license with Jack Westheimer of Cort." In addition to the Cort line, Westheimer had been importing guitars from Asia all the way back to Teisco Del Reys in the early '60s.

"Rather than sue every Tom, Dick and Harry who was going to rip us off," Kuffner explains, "we decided to license to a big Korean manufacturer. We made one license for the name and another for the exact body shape [licensing royalties are typically between three and eight percent], and we started collecting between $80,000 and $150,000 a year a year in royalties."

The fact is, Steinberger had no patent on the concept of a headless guitar or bass because previous patents existed. He was only able to patent such things as the double-ball string system and the leg-rest pivot, and he trademarked the specific body shape. But it was in the best interest of a company like Cort to give a small royalty percentage for the advantage of having the Steinberger "designer label," if you will. Ned Steinberger offers, "They were selling at prices that were in a completely different market than we were in. So it didn't really affect what we were doing, and we were able to profit from what they were doing. Being in the right is only remotely related to intelligent business decisions."

Kuffner's analogy comes from his own experience and that of others. "If you make a bridge that everyone wants to go over, you can't stop them and make them take boats. Put up a toll booth and let 'em come through! Licensing is a way for a small manufacturer to

see his ideas come to fruition and channel money back into things like R&D rather than bleed it with litigation. In Asia and Third World countries, if you close down a guy, he'll just move down the street. I told Gary Kahler [who battled Asian copies of his dive-bomb tremolo units until legal fees essentially put him out of business], 'If it's not worth stealing, it's not worth anything.'"

In 1986 Steinberger was purchased by Gibson, who sued Brian Moore Custom Guitars last spring over a design that it says Moore, who had worked as Ned's assistant, stole from Steinberger. Says Steinberger, "As far as I'm concerned, Brian Moore has taken ideas from me without permission. That's the first time anything like that has happened to me. I've had things stolen from me by people across the ocean, but never by someone who I considered to be a friend, who I trusted. It was very upsetting for me."

BMCG president Patrick Cummings, who worked for Gibson from 1990 to '91 (as general manager of the Steinberger, Tobias, Oberheim and Gibson Labs divisions), says, "According to Brian Moore, Ned had designs of curving-top guitars way back in the early '80s, but there was a complex radius, not a simple radius. Ours [the MC/1] is a simple radius, mathematically. Ned's was more like a cross-section of a bar of soap, rounded at the edge." Ned's reply: "Not true."

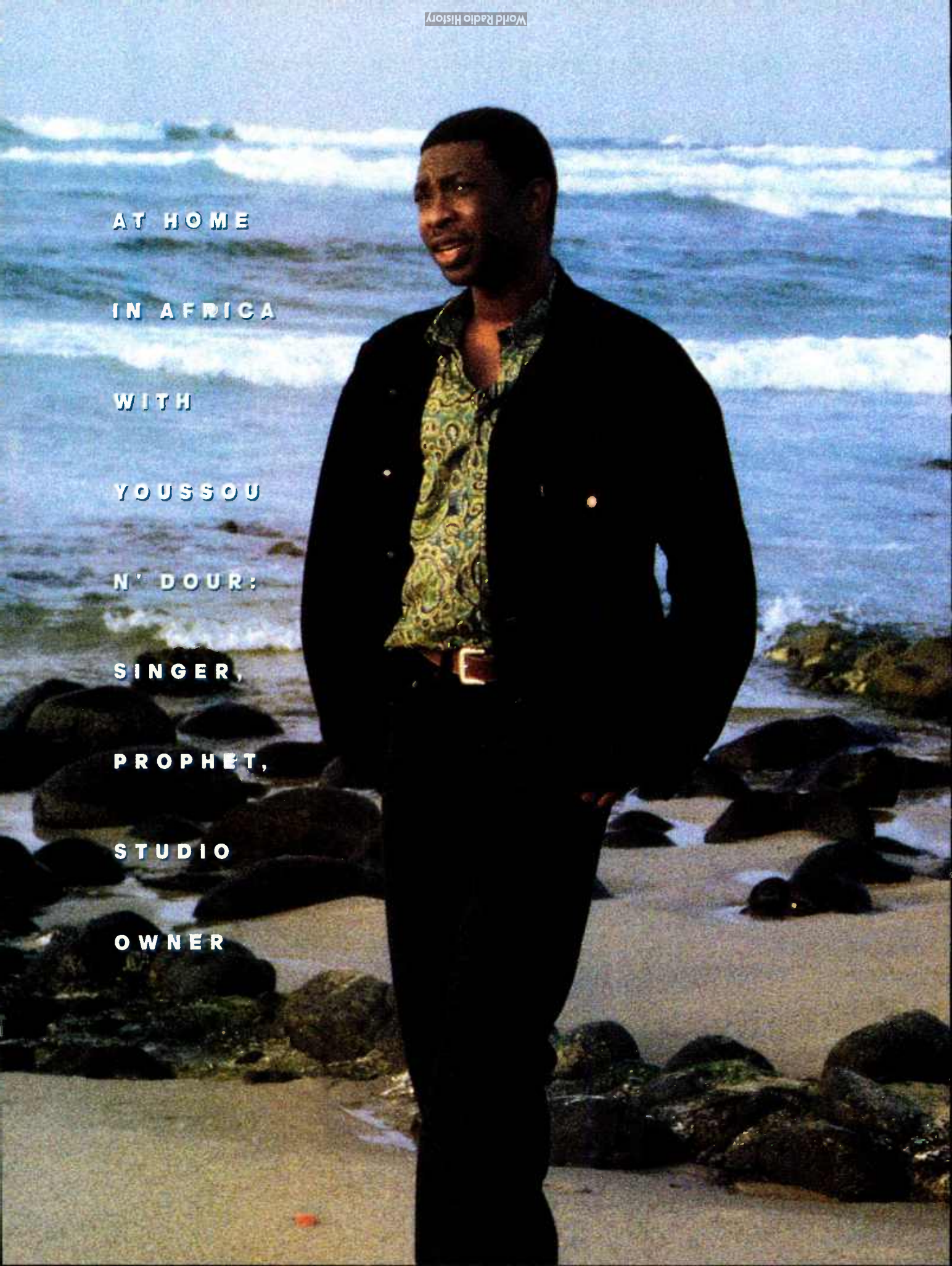
Another part of Gibson's suit, according to attorney Bienstock, is: "The theory behind Brian Moore Custom Guitars is that you can actually get a custom guitar from the factory. Gibson is somehow saying that they have proprietary rights on the concept of a custom shop. I don't think that holds a lot of water in the musical instrument business." Haven't there been companies (such as Fender's Custom Shop) and private luthiers building made-to-order guitars for eons? Cummings states, "When I first went to work for Gibson I certainly knew of custom guitars. Our position is that they are attacking ex-employees. To allege that I stole the idea of building custom guitars is absolutely a harassing thing to do." The Moore and Rich & Taylor press releases detailing their counterclaims against Gibson include charges such as "intimidation," "defamatory and scandalous statements" and "deceptive trade practices."

Part of the suit Gibson has filed against Rich & Taylor involves, in Bienstock's wording, "the customization of an instrument that came from another source [like a customer]. The theory being applied is 'You can't change or modify an instrument that came from us as a source and claim it as your own.' Of course, that's not being done by Rich & Taylor. But custom cars, custom guitars—the theory is not wildly different."

Mark Taylor adds, "If you've got a Gibson Les Paul and you bring it to me and want it painted pink, Gibson is saying I can't do that. They're saying that people can misconstrue that Gibson had done that customization, which could hurt their reputation. The point is, when Gibson sells that guitar, who owns that instrument?"

People have been painting and modifying guitars for decades. There are many famous examples, including Eric Clapton's psychedelicized Les Paul/SG during Cream and Eddie Van Halen's striped Stratocaster. For that matter, the most famous player in Gibson's artist line is likely to be playing a namesake with different knobs and pickups, a goose-neck microphone sticking out the top and an onboard delay unit called a "Les Paulverizer."

The case of *Gibson vs. Les Paul* will now come to order.



AT HOME IN AFRICA WITH YOUSSOU N' DOUR: SINGER, PROPHET, STUDIO OWNER

YOUSSOU'S WAY

DAKAR, 1990. "I'VE KILLED YOUSSOU N'DOUR! I'VE KILLED YOUSSOU N'DOUR!" Waving a bloody knife, a man runs out of Youssou's office, heads to the police station and turns himself in.

Dakar, 1994. "Yeah," Youssou shakes his head sadly, "the man was crazy. He stabbed the night watchman, thinking it was me. I was in Germany on tour at the time. It shocked me, but it didn't make me change my habits. I still take the bus by myself. I will always fight to have my freedom. I need the contact with people."

For several days Youssou N'Dour has been a most gracious guide, showing us the city, taking us to his old haunts, proudly showing us his two nightclubs, his restaurant, his recording studio, Xippi. Everywhere we go people sing out happily, "You! You! Youssou!" He is treated deferentially; children flock to shake his hand. We even take the bus. There is nothing dour about the youthful-looking

BY JEROME REESE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELIZABETH HILL; ILLUSTRATIONS BY JANE SIMON

Senegalese citizens yell, "You! You! Youssou!" as he passes.

Youssou, who at the age of 34 wears the mantle of West Africa's leading superstar (and important businessman) gracefully and serenely. He is a charismatic man, with the bearing of one who was born to lead. A member of the griot caste, he always knew he would be a singer. His voice, a high-pitched soulful Arabic wail that evokes the sound of the muezzins' call to prayer from the minaret of a mosque, is one of the most glorious instruments in contemporary music. An achingly beautiful voice charged with centuries of ancestral tradition, soaring effortlessly toward the upper registers.

Youssou's surprisingly modest villa is located in a comfortable residential neighborhood mischievously called "Cité des Mammelles," in homage to the two curvaceous hills nearby jutting out towards America, a provocative invitation from mother Africa. The only visible signs of Youssou's wealth are his gray BMW and a huge parabolic antenna on his roof. A paradox that sums up his life: He is connected to the entire planet in this city located at the far ends of the earth. With Fela Kuti, he is that rare African star who refuses to move from his native land for the mirage of a gilded exile. One of his best and earliest albums (cassette, to be more precise; Youssou had recorded a dozen of them before his first western album, *Nelson Mandela*, recorded in Paris in 1984), *Immigrés*, evokes all the brothers and sisters who end up returning home with the bitter taste of deception.

Youssou has become a model for Africans who want to avoid having to uproot themselves and yet evolve with the times. Griots, he reminds us, have always played a very important social role in Africa. For kings, they served as messengers, poets, even court jesters. Since the populace couldn't read or write, griots were the memory of a people. In Wolof, the language of Senegal's major ethnic group, to which Youssou belongs, griot, or "gawlo," means "he who sings praises all the time."

There is little furniture in Youssou's living room. A comfortable couch, a table and chairs. An awesomely kitsch John Wayne clock hangs from the wall, there are a few photos of Youssou in his 20s, and a striking watercolor. Asked about it, he says, "That was painted by a local artist, Mor Faye. He's the African Van Gogh. He died penniless some years ago, in an insane asylum. Very few people bought his paintings while he was alive. When I invited Spike Lee to Dakar two years ago, he fell in love with his work and bought 300 of them."

Wearing an embroidered boubou, Youssou is watching soccer on TV and waiting for the phone to ring. Will the moon come out tonight? The entire city is waiting for the marabouts, the sorcerers, to decide whether the Ramadan, the annual month-long Muslim fast, will end tonight or tomorrow. Youssou awaits their verdict more expectantly than most. He hasn't sung for a month (you don't party during Ramadan), which was much more of an ordeal than fasting, and he intends to make up for it by singing better than ever to celebrate the "Korité," the return of earthly delights after a month's abstinence.

"I WAS FAMOUS AT THE AGE OF THIRTEEN. WHEN I WALKED DOWN THE STREET I COULD HEAR MY VOICE ON THE RADIO."

For the moment, he sips some bissap, the delicious sweet leaf tea which is the national drink, pursuing our interview in French and watching the game. For Africans, soccer is inseparable from music. When Youssou goes out, kids kick soccerballs at him to play with everywhere he goes. One of his songs, "Gaindé" (The Lion), is the national team's anthem. His U.S. summer tour to promote the excellent new album, *Wommat* (The Guide), his eighteenth, which features the hit "7 Seconds" with Neneh Cherry, was chosen to coincide with the World Cup.

Tomorrow, if the clouds clear, he'll take us to his mother's and grandmother's homes in the Medina, the labyrinthine neighborhood where he grew up, for at the end of the Ramadan one pays a visit to one's family. Like all Senegalese, Youssou, though profoundly religious, makes the Muslim faith a perpetual celebration. Firebrand fundamentalists making their pilgrimage to Mecca might consider a detour via Dakar. The women here do not wear veils. They are some of the most beautiful women in Africa, they know it, and the men do too. Asked jokingly why he has only one wife, N'Dour answers with a smile: "Though I'm Muslim, I don't think I'll ever be polygamous, because it's incompatible with my career. I already have a second wife, which is all I need: music."

One assassination attempt won't keep Youssou from taking the bus.

Yet without women Youssou would be nothing and he knows it! He is a member of the griot caste on his mother's side, and it was the ecstatic rapture of young women at the clubs where he sang that catapulted him to stardom. He was popular so quickly that jealous men suggested that his mother

was writing his hit songs for him. Even today at some of his African concerts 80 percent of the audience is female. When he married it was a national cause célèbre. His falsetto, which calls to mind Al Green, Marvin Gaye and Prince, has the type of timbre that has always struck a sensuous chord. His mother, grandmother and grandfather were famous local singers who encouraged him from the start. "My father wasn't a griot, he's a mechanic, and he was firmly against me becoming a musician. I had to do everything behind his back. He had forbidden my mother from singing, so she and my grandmother couldn't help me openly and had to do so in secret. I finally got his permission to be a singer after years of battles."

His first gigs were at baptisms and "kassaks," the celebrations following circumcision rites, where he could pick up a few coins singing. "During school vacations, I would sometimes do ten 'kassaks' a night, singing all over the Medina until eight in the morning. During these feasts everyone can sing in turn, either a song or a 'tassou,' which is our traditional rap—the words are really erotic, nothing like the violence of American rap. I was really good at it and was famous at the age of 13. When I walked down the street I could hear my voice on the radio, it really had an effect on me, really moved me. It also showed that a young boy who really wants to do something can succeed. When I was 15 I was already singing secretly in clubs until five in the morning, with the best group in the country at the time, the Star Band. One day, fed up with constantly fighting with my father, I ran away to Gambia, where the music scene was much more open and interesting. After a week, a cop stopped me and sent me home. My father finally gave in. He said: 'Okay, you can sing, but you can't leave Dakar!' I was then hired to sing in a theater troupe at the Youth Center. There, I met a very great musician, the saxophonist Sallo Djé, called Pacheco, who asked me if I'd like to sing with an orchestra. He took me to the Kolobane, a popular nightclub at the time, where I found myself singing with guitars and horns. I had no idea what was going on, since up to then I'd only sung with percussion, but they all liked my voice. That's how it all started."

What was the music scene like in Senegal when he was growing up in the '60s? "The music scene evolved more slowly here than in countries like Nigeria and Ghana, which had developed their own styles, 'highlife,'

'juju' etc. Here, in the '60s, people still listened to Cuban music like Orchestre Aragon and Johnny Pacheco. When I started playing with the Star Band, I was singing some songs in Spanish even though I didn't understand a word. Some Senegalese bands, like Orchestre Baobab, had started to develop a purely Senegalese music, based on Cuban rhythms but mixed with our traditional rhythms, jazz, electric guitars, and sung in Wolof. But when I was with the Star Band we went even further, and created a music which I called 'mbalax.'"

Youssou's "mbalax" revolutionized Senegalese music, and had a profound impact on musicians in other West African countries, not to mention Peter Gabriel, who first heard Youssou in concert in London in 1984, flew to Paris for another concert, then to Dakar to meet him and learn more about his music. Gabriel also invited Youssou to sing a duo with him on his album *So* in 1985, and offered him the opening slot on his world tour. Paul Simon, busy recording *Graceland* in 1986, invited Youssou to play percussion on the album. When Youssou recorded his first album for Virgin, *The Lion*, in Paris in 1988, Gabriel returned the favor, singing on "Shaking the Tree."

Xippi, Youssou's studio, is one of the top rooms in Africa.

"I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER BE POLYGAMOUS. I ALREADY HAVE A SECOND WIFE: MUSIC."

What exactly is mbalax? "In Dakar, when you say something's 'very mbalax,' it means it has a strong, distinct rhythm. The rhythm of a drum called the mbeung mbeung creates the rhythm, with other types of percussion such as the ndende, the djembé, the nder, the tunge, the gorong and the tama. In a traditional group you have eight to ten drums. In my group, I gave some of the percussion parts to the guitars and synthesizer. In Senegal, there are so many tribal rhythms to choose from: Wolof, Peul, Bambara, Djola, etc. When I left the Star Band in order to play my own music, in 1977, I took six of the members with me, including the best tama player in Senegal, Assane Thiam, who's still with me, and one of the best percussionists, Babacar Faye, who's still with me too, adding six more. I called the band 'Etoile de Dakar.' What developed into mbalax happened progressively, very naturally. Mbalax is very complex, because it's a rhythm played not to be heard, but heard in the head, to make the music less rigid. When the percussionist starts playing the mbeung mbeung, all the other instruments adapt in order to fit its groove. Our music has elements of jazz, calypso and soul too. Mbalax for me is the incarnation of life in Dakar, it's both modern and traditional, majestic and vibrant. Young people can dance to it by doubling the tempo, while older people stay more calm."

One of the spectacular aspects of Youssou's music is the tama, the small talking drum tucked under the armpit and played with such virtuosity by Assane Thiam. Many Senegalese musicians feel that Thiam is one of the key reasons for Youssou's success. He nods, "The tama is an instrument that answers my voice. It plays and 'talks' at the same time. In a traditional setting tama players play rhythms, but in my music it plays a role of call and response, imitating the intonations of Wolof. And women go crazy when the tama player takes a solo. I wrote a very rhythmic song in 1982 which had an irresistible tama rhythm, 'Naru ya etako'—Naru means 'darling'—and it incited them to move their backsides in a very sexy manner, and which became famous as the ventilator dance. But mbalax really took off in 1983, when I sang in front of 30,000 people at the Dakar soccer stadium, opening for Toure Kunda. Up to then, people considered mbalax to be vulgar music. That concert really changed things here."

How does he feel about his experience playing with jazz musicians such as David Sanborn, George Duke, Kenny Kirkland and others? "I have to say that American musicians are less open than European musicians. Even black American musicians. They're in too much of a hurry. For a real exchange they would have to come here and take the time, adopt a more relaxed rhythm. Branford Marsalis is the American musician I most enjoy playing with. He really wants to exchange ideas, he takes just as much as he brings to our music, he even sends faxes to Dakar asking our bassist Habib Faye [co-producer with Rykiel on *Wommat*] how he got this or that sound."

What music does he listen to? "Mostly stuff from the '60s. Otis Redding, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye. That will always remain the best music. Rap is a great technical invention, but it doesn't move me. Though I do like Arrested Development. They'd be right at home here. The contemporary musician I respect most is Prince. I asked Spike Lee to contact Prince to do something with me. He said: 'Prince is crazy.' I answered: 'Maybe to you.'"

"When you sing you give everything."

As for Lee himself, executive producer of 1992's *Eyes Open*, N'Dour says, "We've had a lot of talks about merchandizing and about how to market African music to the American public. We'll work together in that direction in the future. The American public is very influenced by videoclips, what they see on TV, and if African music is presented to them visually in an exciting, original manner, it could change things. Singing in English is an interesting challenge for me, but it's hard work. In fact, the language barrier is a big problem in

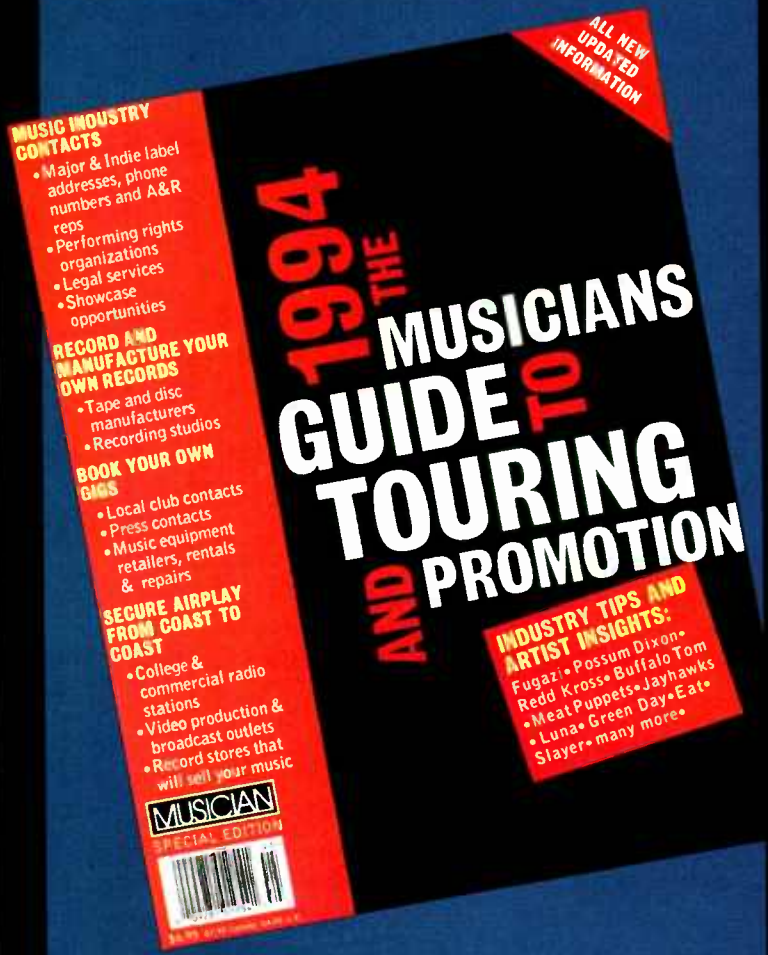
Africa as well. I'm a big star in French-speaking countries. Anywhere else in Africa, I'll draw maybe 800 people to the French cultural center and that's it."

Youssou's wife and young daughter, his third child, make their entrance, greeting us for lunch. Youssou is very much the happy father, as well as a tireless builder. His famous nightclub, the Thiossane, is being remodeled into the most luxurious nightclub in West Africa. His 24-track studio, Xippi, is the country's best. *Wommat* was recorded there, with the complicity of his friend and co-producer, the pianist Jean-Philippe Rykiel, the blind son of famed French fashion designer Sonia Rykiel. Youssou records other great Senegalese singers there, refusing to see them as rivals. His company, Saprom, which distributes and promotes his cassettes on the African market, has succeeded in eradicating piracy, which everywhere else on the continent is the gangrene of music production. In the space of a few years he has made a name for himself all over the world, yet continues to live according to the rhythm of the ancestral traditions which guide the griot's existence.

The phone rings. The moon, stars and clouds have had their say. Youssou is informed that the marabouts have decreed tonight the end of the Ramadan. Arrangements are made to give a concert at midnight at the huge mess hall of the Army barracks—one of Dakar's major concert spaces! Youssou says with a huge smile on his face that night-long local dances like the one the group will be playing are the kind of gigs he enjoys most.

What seems like all of Dakar has turned out for the occasion, the women resplendent in traditional costumes (tradition forbids sexy attire until after the Ramadan), the men elegantly attired. The drab mess hall has transformed as if by magic into an orgy of bright fabrics. Youssou, dressed informally in black jeans, black jean jacket, white shirt and baseball hat, stands in the back, deep in discussion with his manager, left alone by the respectful audience. Super Etoile de Dakar warms the audience with rusty renditions of Ellington tunes, a mercifully short "Girl from Ipanema" and some lukewarm salsa. Slowly but surely the group gets into the groove, the battery of talking drums starting to churn out that inimitable mbalax beat, the horns, synthesizer and guitars interlocking more and more effortlessly, the rhythms and harmonies taking ever more complex turns.

THE MUSICIANS GUIDE



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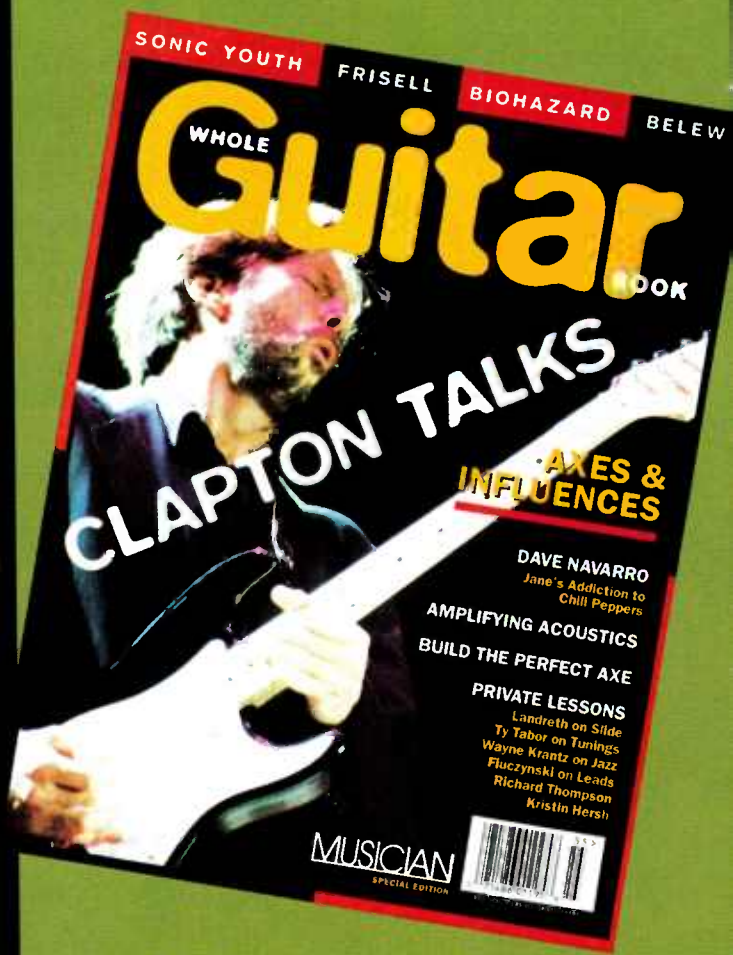

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Then Youssou hops up onstage, and the change that comes over him as he strides to the mike is immediate and uncanny. Smiling at the adoring women flocking to the front of the stage, he looks at least 15 years younger, a proud, jubilant man. It is a startling sight, especially after three days in his presence. A much better dancer than he lets on, his mastery of the art of performing betrays over 20 years of hard work, much of it long hours in cramped nightclubs. As if possessed, he sings almost constantly for over four hours, stopping only once for a half-hour break. The women, in a trance as each song rises relentlessly, hypnotically, Youssou improvising chorus after majestic chorus like the greatest jazz artists, await the catharsis of the tama solos, churn into overdrive in time to the explosions of Assane Thiam's mighty percussion work. After each song the women return to their seats, quietly sipping Cokes and waiting for the next tune, the men milling about and talking.

There is no applause between numbers. The music Youssou and his Super Etoile de Dakar play tonight, with the percussionists upfront and the synthesizer parts relegated to the background, sounds more timeless and satisfying than the overly produced "world music" gloss of his recent work. And it evokes his best music, the period in the mid-'80s when he was recording masterpieces such as *Jaam* and *Kocc Barma* every six months, but with ten years of touring now added to the heady brew. The contrast of Youssou's angelic, ever-youthful yet profound voice cresting over wave after wave of thunderous polyrhythms, the melodies swooping in unexpected directions, gives the music an almost unbearable tension.

At five in the morning Youssou brings the proceedings to a halt, a dazzling smile on his face. He'll be giving another night-long concert here at the barracks tomorrow night, yet the man is barely sweating. Asked how he does it, he laughs: "Sleep. That's my only secret. No matter what, I have to have eight hours' sleep a day. And I quit smoking. You see, for griots, our caste in particular, when you sing you always give everything you've got. It comes from the gut, in order to express what's inside you. My mother and her ancestors learned to sing that way, and taught it to me. It's our tradition."

In some African legends, it's said that a man who sings falsetto is closer to the gods. Youssou laughs again. "Yeah, I think that's true!"

FAST FORWA

GENERALMUSIC SX WORKSTATIONS

Keyboard workstations have come to encompass computer-assisted song-writing/arranging as well as sample playback, sequencing, mixdown and performance capabilities. General-music's SX series—the 61-key SX2 ($2495) and 76-key SX3 ($2795)—adds built-in notation display and video output. The GM-compatible SXs include 96 built-in styles, six megs of ROM sounds, 32-voice polyphony, 16-track sequencing, 16 keyboard splits and layers, two effects processors and a floppy drive that reads standard MIDI files. ◆ Generalmusic, 1164 Tower Ln., Bensenville, IL 60106; voice (708) 766-8230, fax (708) 766-8281.

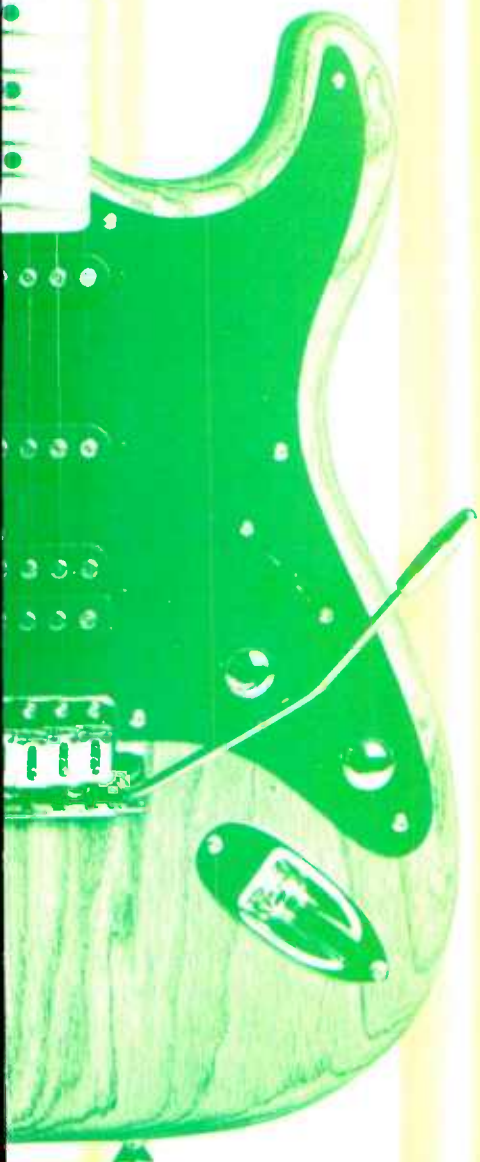
FISHMAN DUAL PARAMETRIC D.I.

The Dual Parametric D.I. ($239) from Fishman is a Swiss army knife for live performers, particularly acoustic guitarists. Two input channels, each with its own switchable one-band parametric equalizer, are equipped to accept outputs from magnetic and piezo pickups. Channel volume and phase can be adjusted as well. Balanced and unbalanced outputs are provided along with a ground-lift switch, and the unit runs on either batteries or AC. ◆ Fishman, 340-D Fordham Rd., Wilmington, MA 01887; voice (508) 988-9199, fax (508) 988-0770.

SCHECTER STANDARD

Schecter's Standard series ($1295) maintains the company's handcrafted approach. Bodies are made of slip-matched swamp ash and equipped with either three single-coil pickups or two single-coils plus a humbucker in the bridge position. The master tone knob doubles

RD



as a push-pull switch that activates pick-up coil taps for enhanced tone. Necks are either rock maple or maple with rosewood fingerboard, fitted with hand-ground and -polished medium jumbo frets. ◆ Schecter, 6920 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038; voice (213) 851-5230, fax (213) 851-9409.

MACKIE LM-3204 MIXER

How many mixer inputs is enough? In a MIDI studio there's no such thing, which is why Mackie offers the 32-input LM-3204 ($995). But it's the features that make this mixer: 16 stereo channels, each with two stereo aux sends, two mono sends, three-band EQ, solo (with metering), mute, balance and overload LED. In addition, two phantom-powered mike preamps are provided, patchable to any channel. ◆ Mackie, 20205 144th Ave. N.E., Woodinville, WA 98072; voice (800) 898-3211, fax (206) 487-4337.

PEAVEY SPECTRUM FILTER

The key to classic analog synthesizer sounds is a four-pole, low-pass filter. Bringing that technology into the MIDI age, Peavey offers the rack-mount Spectrum Analog Filter ($449), a programmable envelope-controlled filter and amplifier that complements their CyberBass system. Fed a sampled square wave and triggered via MIDI (or an audio input), the Spectrum simulates a monophonic analog synth. However, any three sounds can be mixed at the input for unusual effects. ◆ Peavey, 711 A St., Meridian, MS 39301; voice (601) 483-5365, fax (601) 486-1172.

NEW TOYS & NEW TOOLS

GUITARS & BASSES

◆ The chambers and multi-string pickup built into **Godin**'s Multiac acoustic/electric are designed to deliver exceptional tone while resisting feedback. The instrument is optimized for accurate MIDI tracking in conjunction with a **Roland** GR-1 guitar synth, for which a multipin jack is built in. ◆ **Burns** of London affixes their resonant Rez-O-Tube tailpiece to their Shadows bass. It features three Rez-O-Matic pickups, five-way selector, two rotary tone controls and master volume. ◆ **Leduc**'s U-Bass is designed to produce an upright bass tone via a "free-floating soundboard" and asymmetrical bridge. Leduc instruments are handmade in France and bear a lifetime guarantee. ◆ **Trace Elliot**'s new line of bass strings is designed for a strong, articulate fundamental note as well as precise intonation and maximum sustain. ◆ The Guitar Tune-Up Kit from **D'Addario**, in acoustic and electric versions, includes two sets of strings, guitar polish, polishing cloth, peg winder and six picks.

KEYBOARDS

◆ For amplifying acoustic pianos without feedback or dead spots, **Barcus-Berry** introduces the 4000N Planar Wave Pickup System. The sensor attaches to the piano's soundboard while the control unit, with 2000 hours of battery life, provides high- and low-impedance outputs. ◆ Several new stands are available from **Quik Lok**. The QL-609 Next Generation "X" opens and closes without requiring the adjustment of bolts, knobs or pins, while the BX-619 Universal "X" features adjustable width and height. The BX-716 and BX-718 are keyboard benches featuring a spring-loaded locking system for easy height adjustments. The Z-10 is designed for consumer keyboards.

DRUMS & PERCUSSION

◆ The bass drum pedals on all 5000-series kits from **Drum Workshop** have been upgraded to Delta models, featuring ball bearings in the hinge, rocker and hex shaft for a smoother, more responsive action. Also, over 20 new color/finish options have been added to DW's drum line. ◆ The eight-sided AA Roctagon crash cymbal from **Sabian** now comes in 6", 8" and 10" models made of pure bronze. The tone is said to be "dirtier" than that of round splash cymbals. The Pro series now includes 8" and 10" extremely high-pitched cymbals as well. ◆ **Evans** offers the Patch, a bass drumhead pad designed to enhance attack and decrease wear on the head without affecting tone, pitch or decay. ◆ **Rhythm Tech**'s Alpha series of conga drums, made of oak, are designed for a fuller, rounder low end. Other new releases include timbales, bongos and a new color (purple) for their Solo tambourine.

PROCESSORS & EFFECTS

◆ The Quadraverb 2 is the latest multiprocessor from **Alesis**. In addition to reverb, the device creates up to eight simultaneous effects routed in any order, and the stereo channels can operate independently. An ADAT-compatible digital output is included. ◆ Debut products from **Desert Island** include the Hurricane, a mike preamp with gain and limiting; the Cyclone transformerless solid-state mike preamp; the Typhoon Jensen transformer-based mike preamp; the Light Speed photo-optic compressor/limiter; and the Nor'easter magnetic compressor/limiter.

AMPS & SPEAKERS

◆ **Trace Elliot** unveils their Guitar Works line of "modern vintage" amps and cabinets with several models. The all-tube, 100-Watt Trident H-100 head boasts three independent channels and unusual features such as EQ style and voicing, pentode/triode switching and variable damping. The Bonneville head is a stripped-down single-channel version. Both are complemented by SC-412 cabinets (4×12) in either flat- or angled-front styles. The line also includes Trainp combos in four dual-channel configurations: 40 Watts/1×12, 80 Watts/1×12 and 80 Watts/2×12 with or without stereo chorus. Trace also offers new bass amps and speakers in the all-tube V-Type range. V-Type models include a rackmount tube preamp, head, 4×12 speaker cabinets and combo. ◆ Debuting their first power amps, **Alesis** introduces Matica 500 and Matica 900, stereo units boasting 250 and 450 W/channel into 4 Ohms with low distortion and noise specs. An input-responsive cooling system and ALink interface are included. ◆ **Deja Vu** uses proprietary tube emulation circuitry in their Amp 11 amplifier "mainframe" and "plug-in" modules. Plug-ins, up to three of which fit in the Amp 11, simulate the tonal response of various classic tube guitar amps. ◆ **BGW**'s Performance Series 3 power amp delivers 450 W/channel into 4 Ohms in a rackmount package featuring selectable clip elimination, dual-speed forced-air cooling and both XLR and ¼" inputs. ◆ The E03 from **Nady** is a wireless in-ear monitor system intended as a cost-effective—less than $500—alternative to traditional stage monitors. Benefits include more focused sound and the ability to move without affecting monitor audio. ◆ The PowerMax 3 is a full-range stage monitor from **ARX** that provides three angles of operation for near, far and fill applications. It is designed for use with the PowerPro Loudspeaker Processor, which supplies EQ, crossover, phase correction and speaker protection. ◆ **Elliott** introduces the Amplidyne line of speaker enclosures in various sizes, all loaded with Electro-Voice drivers. Protection circuitry warns of overload conditions while keeping power at the maximum safe level.

SOFTWARE

◆ **Opcode** introduces Overture, a music notation program for the Apple Macintosh. The program provides MIDI playback of dynamics, repeats and endings. Also, version 4.2.3 of OMS (Open MIDI System) solves MIDI problems associated with the modem port on PowerMac computers. ◆ *The Drum Doctor Does Drums* from **Big Fish Audio**, a collection of 1000 stereo drum and percussion sounds produced by drum tech Ross Garfield, is now available on CD-ROM configured for Digidesign, Roland, Akai, E-mu and NED samplers.

RECORDING & PLAYBACK

◆ Operating software version 3.01 for the **Tascam** DA-88 digital tape deck, offered free to registered owners ($15 shipping and handling), improves lock-up time and autolocator functions, speeds tape formatting and makes several advanced features more accessible. The SY-88 also has new software, version 3.06, providing full implementation of Sony's P2 9-pin protocol for VTR emulation, faster lock-up and enhanced MIDI capabilities. ◆ **Kao** offers a DAT cleaning cartridge, KD4-CL5.

ACCESSORIES

◆ **Re-An** introduces the MA-96 patch bay, featuring 96 nylon-isolated Tiny Telephone-sized jacks in a single rack space. ◆ The Prolink line of cables from **Monster** encompasses a range of applications, including instrument, mike, speaker, MIDI, digital and patch cords as well as connectors and adapters. ◆ The Clamp from **Middle Atlantic Products** is a rackmount shelf for mounting nonrack gear. It comes in two-, three- and four-space heights. ◆ **Twice Shy** offers unique CD caddies built from post-consumer materials including 45 r.p.m. records.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ZILDJIAN

SR SERIES II, THINK OF IT AS FREEDOM OF CHOICE.

There's a little something for everyone in SR Series II™. From small combo vocal reinforcement to large club systems, from mobile DJ and recorded music reproduction to stage monitoring, front fills and main PA stacks in concert applications. SR Series II has evolved to be the first choice of musicians and sound engineers world wide. Here's what this evolution has produced.

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You have a greater number of configurations from which to choose. With more systems containing large format compression drivers plus a dual 18-inch subwoofer system, SR Series II is sure to have the loudspeaker systems to fit your needs.

OPTIMIZED APERTURE™ TECHNOLOGY

Our newest horn technology, available in five models, yields outstanding pattern control (90° X 50°) and exhibits the lowest midband distortion we have ever achieved in large format systems. Equally important, the 2447J compression driver extends high frequency response well above 18 kHz, virtually eliminating the need for a separate tweeter.

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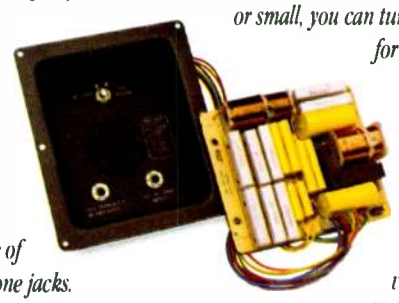
Many of the models incorporate recent breakthroughs in component design. The 2119H has been engineered for extra output power capability in dedicated midrange applications. Our 2417H small format compression driver incorporates the lightest diaphragm we have ever made, resulting in exceptional transient response, enhanced high frequency clarity and crisp, clear vocals.

ROADWORTHY CONNECTORS & CROSSOVER NETWORKS

You now have the choice of Speak-On® connectors or phone jacks. Speak-On's permit the use of multi-conductor cable for quick and reliable set-ups. Or you can choose the simplicity and convenience of 1/4-inch phone jacks. The input terminal cup is made of heavy gauge steel to endure years of road use and abuse. A heavy-duty rotary switch makes selecting Passive or Bi-amp operational modes quick, easy and reliable. Crossover networks have been re-engineered to survive years of road work and offer outstanding acoustic performance. Highest quality close tolerance capacitors, high power resistors and low insertion-loss inductors assure the smoothest possible acoustic response. Regardless of your application, large or small, you can turn to SR Series II for the most reliable sound reinforcement solutions. For complete technical information via fax, call the FlashFax number below. Better yet, stop by your local JBL Professional dealer for a personal demonstration.



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TOMORROW'S AUDIO TODAY

Digital audio plugs into the rest of the world at the Audio Engineering Society show in San Francisco.

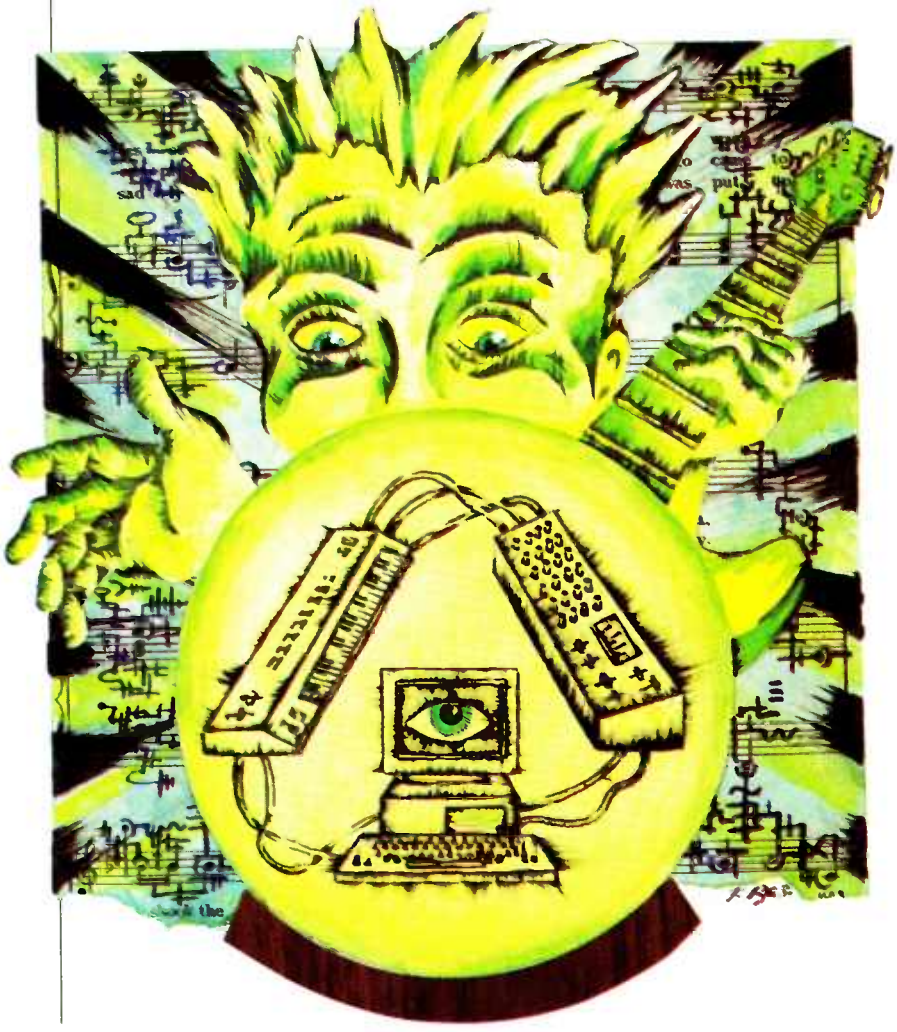
BY CRAIG ANDERTON

IF YOU want to see into the future, you might visit a psychic—or take a trip to the annual convention of the Audio Engineering Society (AES). Amid the tech talk, exhibits, demos and after-hours "dining for deals," the undercurrents that shape the flow of the future are laid bare for all to see. At the 1994 show, held next door to Silicon Valley at San Francisco's Moscone Center, two streams surfaced with undeniable force: project studios and interconnectivity.

Two modular digital multitracks (or MDMs), the Alesis ADAT and Tascam DA-88, have transformed recording virtually overnight. While major studios continue to use analog tape—they can afford to do analog right—project studios and smaller commercial facilities have embraced inexpensive but effective MDMs. At the show, Sony vowed to adopt Tascam's DTRS format for their PCM-800 digital eight-track, and Panasonic announced a partnership with Alesis. It's a safe bet that more MDM action lies ahead.

Digital gear lends itself to inter-equipment communication. Picture this: You plug your tube mike (maybe the AKG C12VR, a remake of their vintage C12) into the new Symetrix 620 ($1000), a 20-bit analog-to-digital converter. Coming out of the 620 your audio is digital, and high-quality digital at that (20 bits rather than the usual 16). Rather than degrade the signal, you feed it through Rane's RC-24 PaqRat adapter ($1000), which converts the data format for an ADAT's or DA-88's eight 16-bit tracks into two sets of 24-bit stereo tracks.

Now for a little editing. Send the 24-bit MDM data through an appropriate interface to a hard-disk recorder such as the newly updated Pro Tools III from Digidesign (more features, lower price) or Otari's 24-track RADAR ($21,300). Scoring a film? Use OSC's Transport Macintosh software ($700) to blast your digital audio files into an Avid video editing system.



Of course, SMPTE synchronization ties everything together. For improved sync and lockup capabilities, you've already updated the operating system of your Tascam DA-88 and SY-88 to versions 3.01 and 3.06 respectively, your ADAT to System 4 and its companion BRC sync box/remote to System 2. Syncing up a MIDI sequencer is a breeze, and now you can integrate a mixer automation system, such as Mackie's Ultramix Pro/OTTO-34 or JL Cooper's V/Deck, so your Mac can record mixdown moves.

You won't get very far without an instrument. The new Kurzweil 2500 is a good choice; the optional Digital MultiTrack interface transfers samples directly to an ADAT or DA-88. And for voice-intensive projects, E-mu's Emulator IV sampler ($5995) has 128 of them to go around. (The first Moog synthesizer, introduced 30 years ago at the 1964 AES in New York, provided only one voice.)

After you've mixed to DAT (check out Tascam's DA-30 Mk II—only $1500 and it has a jog/shuttle wheel), you can record your own audio CD, CD-ROM or even CD-I on Apex's $7000 CD recorder. Hey, why not go all the way and get ISDN phone service, offered by a number of companies exhibiting at the show, so you can play decent-quality audio to your satellite offices located in major music capitals around the world—or at least to the ad agency that wants to hear your jingle *now*.

We're not done yet. When it's time to play onstage, check out the rear panels of the sound reinforcement amps and processors for ports [*cont'd on page 75*]

ILLUSTRATION BY KEVIN C. PYLE

What do you like best about your DA-88?

"Built-in headroom. It makes a big difference when you're trying to track quickly."

"MIDI synching is so easy and clean. It's hard to know where the virtual recording ends and the taped recording begins."

"It sounds great. Especially in the upper frequencies."

"Bouncing. I can bounce forever, it seems. The DA-88 just doesn't distort like other digital decks."

"We really like the convenience of the Hi8 format. You don't get tape stretch, you get much more time per tape, and it's really cost-effective."

"The Hi8 format is a superior recording medium, and it's a TASCAM."

"I can't help but notice the difference in the sound. Unbelievable."

"The TASCAM unit is clearly more dependable."

"I've had a lot of experience with TASCAM... the dependability and the value. It was a no risk investment for us."

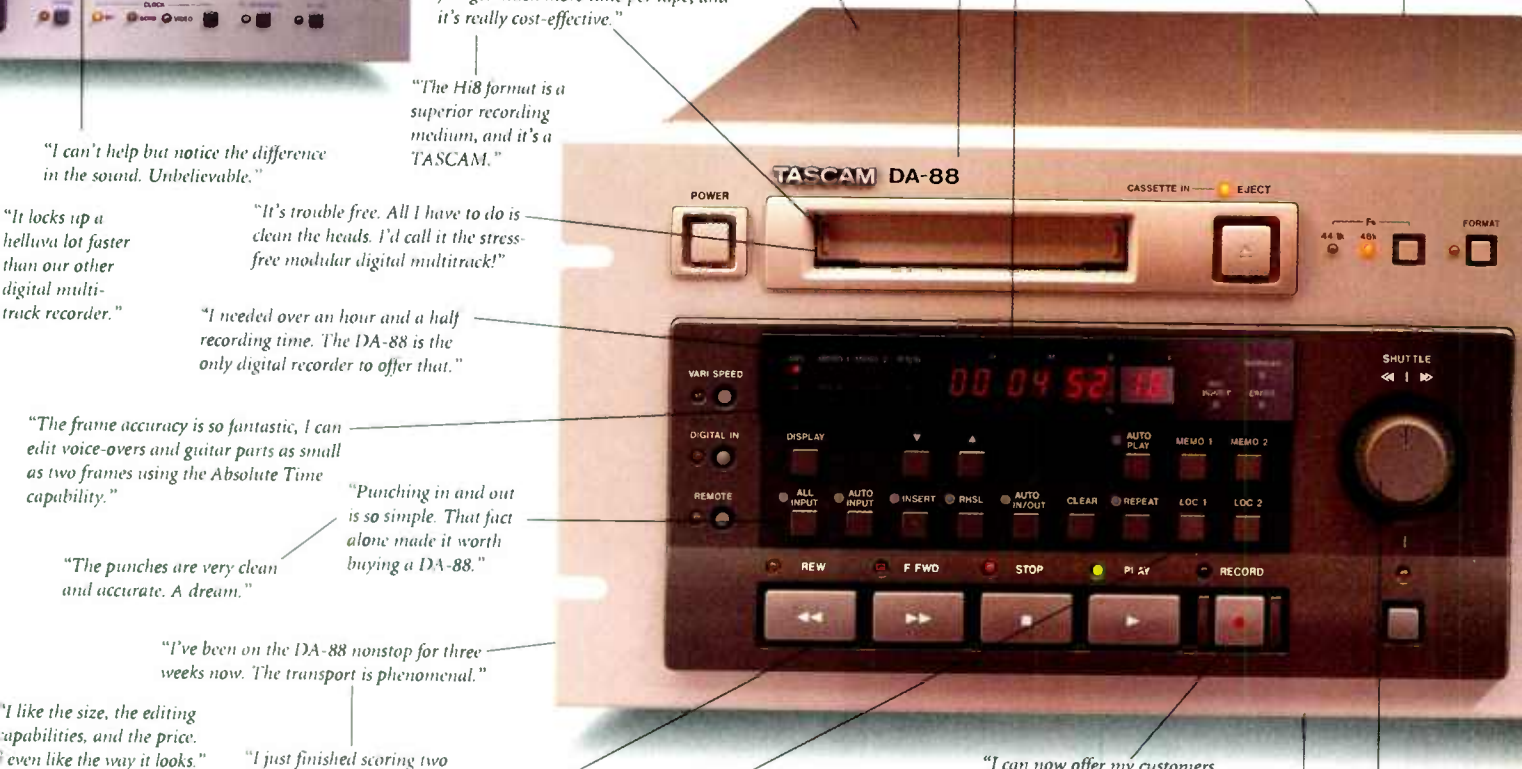
"The sync card has built-in SMPTE, video sync and Sony 9-pin. Perfect for our video house."

"I like having the A/D and D/A converters on an interface card because you can drop in a new card without having to disassemble the whole machine."

"With the sync card it's so easy to synchronize our audio both to video and other audio reels, including our DAT reels."

"The 108 minutes of recording time means we can do something we never could before — get an entire performance on a single piece of tape."

"Our DA-88 ended up in a pile on the floor after the earthquake. I put it back together, turned it on, and it worked fine. It's earthquake proof."



"It locks up a helluva lot faster than our other digital multitrack recorder."

"It's trouble free. All I have to do is clean the heads. I'd call it the stress-free modular digital multitrack!"

"I needed over an hour and a half recording time. The DA-88 is the only digital recorder to offer that."

"The frame accuracy is so fantastic, I can edit voice-overs and guitar parts as small as two frames using the Absolute Time capability."

"Punching in and out is so simple. That fact alone made it worth buying a DA-88."

"The punches are very clean and accurate. A dream."

"I've been on the DA-88 nonstop for three weeks now. The transport is phenomenal."

"I like the size, the editing capabilities, and the price. I even like the way it looks."

"I just finished scoring two movies on it. Unbelievable machine."

"Two things. First, the DA-88 gives me a full one-hour and fifty minutes of record time. Second, the wind times are so wonderfully tight and quick... it takes my other digital recorder a day and a half to rewind."

"I like the auto-locator and rehearsal modes, and of course we're doing our next album on it."

"I can now offer my customers digital recording at analog prices."

"It's just faster. Speed counts. Time is money."

"It just feels better than any other recorder in its price range."

"We love the jog/shuttle wheel. It's working out great."

No wonder the DA-88 is the preferred digital multitrack.

It features the latest generation in digital multitrack recording technology. According to users, it's the best sounding, best built, most functional and affordable digital multitrack on the market. You're going to love the DA-88. Get to your dealer now and see why!

"It's the name. They make the best recording equipment, period."

"I wanted the serious machine for music production. That's TASCAM."

TASCAM®

Take advantage of our experience.

"I can lock it to video and my analog machines with no hassle. Life is so easy now that I have my DA-88."

"I'm focused on the TASCAM. It will become the standard. And I don't want to be left out."

TEC 1994 WINNER

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A TANGLE OF STRINGS

Thirty brands but only a handful of manufacturers. Are guitar strings really all the same?

◆

BY MAC RANDALL

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE between different brands of guitar strings? Can anyone even tell? Steve Kimock, lead guitarist with San Francisco jam meisters Zero, describes shopping for strings in an Aspen, Colorado music store.

"I wanted a plain steel .018, and the guy gave me an Ernie Ball. I said, 'Get me a D'Addario.' He said, 'You can't tell the difference.' I said, 'I'm going to turn my back and shut my eyes. Hand me a string, and I'll pinch it between my fingers and tell you which kind it is.' You really can do that, because each string has its own way of moving when you hold it in the middle and feel how it flexes. He handed me an Ernie Ball and I said, 'You jerk, it's an Ernie Ball!' But he still didn't believe I was for real."

Many guitarists would agree with the clerk. David Fiuczynski (Me'Shell NdegéOcello, Screaming Headless Torsos) takes the cynic's position: "When anyone asks me what strings I use, I think, 'Well, which company is most likely to give me the big endorsement deal?' Because otherwise it doesn't make much difference. I'll take what I can get."

Are different brands really different? In between the positions taken by Kimock and Fiuczynski lies a world full of closely guarded secrets—a world that insiders are reluctant to discuss. "It's a paranoid industry," relates Les O'Connor, production manager at DR Strings. "Lots of skeletons in the closet."

One skeleton in particular leaps out, all eye sockets and toothy grin, at anyone who opens the door. According to several sources, nearly all the 30 or so major brands on the market are manufactured by the same handful of companies. Although nearly everyone admits to the phenomenon, most of the actual manufacturers won't identify themselves or name the brands they make. On the other hand, the only source to speak on record, Dave Holcolm of GHS, denies that any of this is true. "It's been a long time since the days of four companies controlling the market," he asserts. "The last time I checked, every major manufacturer in the U.S. made their own products."

In some ways, the farming-out approach makes good sense. Once you've established a string plant, it's capable of tremendous production. (The largest, D'Addario's, churns out 220,000 strings a day.) If you own one, you have an incentive to maximize your productivity by selling to other companies. If not, you need only buy from a manufacturer and print up your own labels. Keep in mind that all strings are not designed alike. Different brands, even if they're made by a single manufacturer, often are made to different specifications.

But not always. Reportedly, one prominent "gourmet" brand of acoustic guitar strings is the same as that put out by its manufacturer under the manufacturer's own name. The only differences are an acid wash (for cosmetic purposes), packaging and a higher price.

News like this is kept quiet because, in the $90-million string market, brand loyalty rules. "People often pick strings for no discernible reason," Terry Dennis, marketing director at Maxima, says. "But then they stick with them for years."

String making begins with high-carbon tinned steel wire (one exception: plain classical strings, generally made of nylon). The wire comes from a foundry in bales, pre-cut to particular gauges of thickness. Two varieties, round and hexagonal, are used most often. Round wire is used as is, and less often as a core wire for wound strings; hex wire is the usual core wire. "The six corners of the hex enable the cover wire to cling more tightly to the core," explains Dan O'Connor, product manager at Kaman. "A round core can give you more sustain, but also makes it easier for the cover to loosen." Whether round or hex, the wire is cut to correspond to various scale lengths. Plain strings need only to be fitted with a ball end, which is attached by twisting the wire around itself at the bottom.

In addition to a ball end, wound strings receive a wrap—the wire that covers the core. The composition of the wrap depends on the tone desired and the instrument for which the string is intended. Nickel-plated steel is the usual wrap for electric

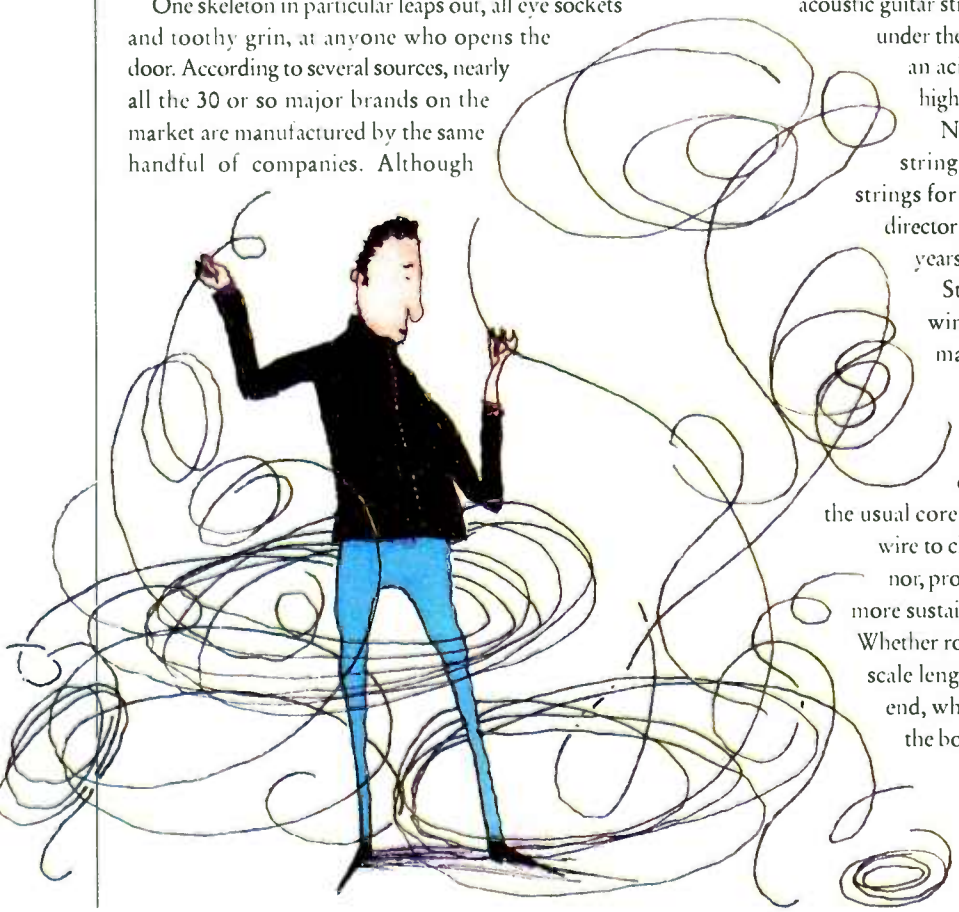

ILLUSTRATION BY BLAIR THORNLEY

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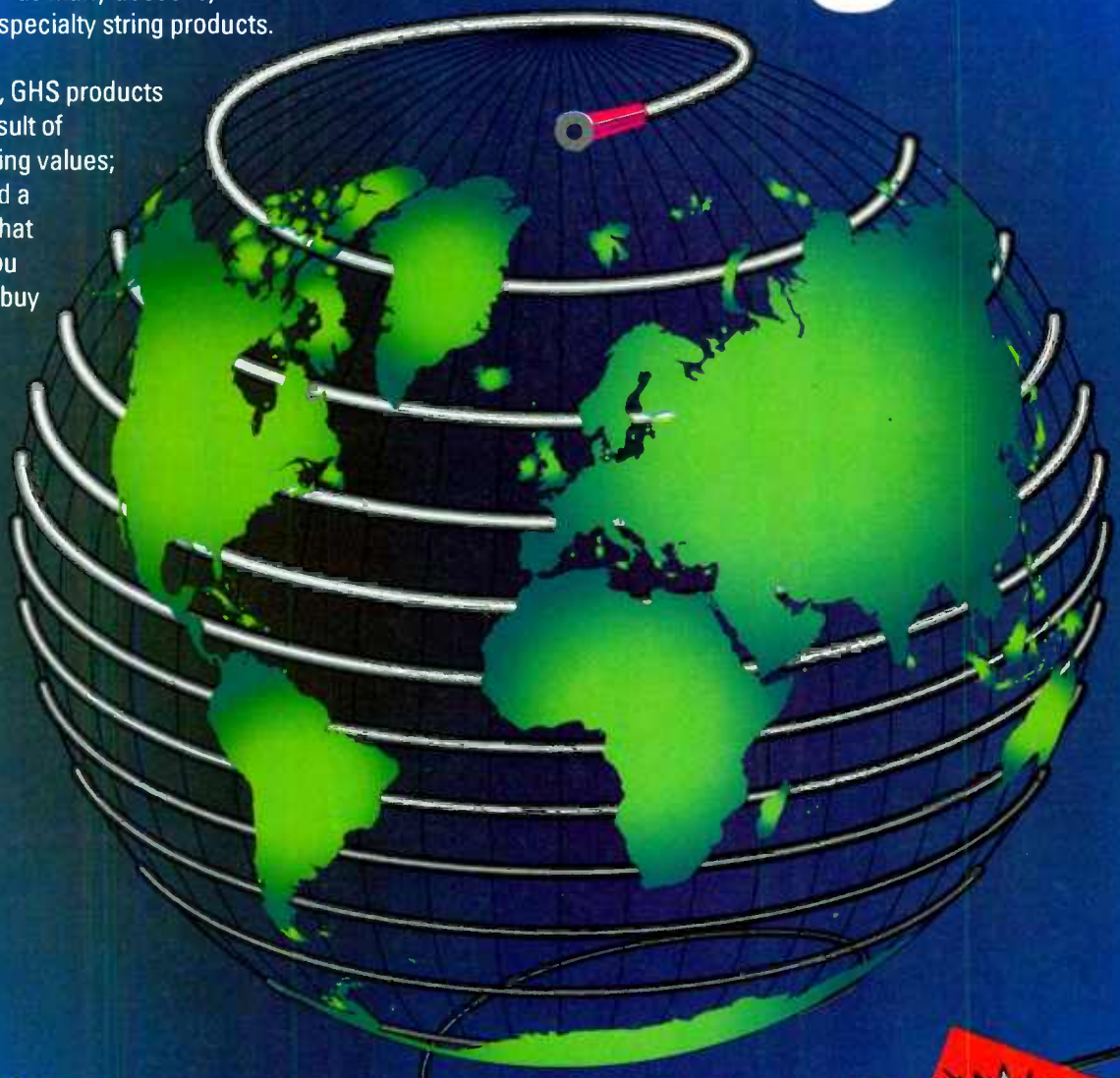

ghs strings
The String Specialists

Mfg. by G.H.S. Corp., 2813 Wilber Ave.,
Battle Creek, MI 49015 USA

guitars; pure nickel sounds darker, stainless steel brighter. Bronze alloys are standard for acoustic, phosphor bronze being the most popular.

Wraps also vary in texture. To make roundwounds, the wrap is left as originally applied for a string with easily defined grooves and a slightly rough surface. For flatwounds, the wrap is filed down so grooves are less detectable and the string feels smoother and slinkier.

Among wound brands, the most important difference is core-to-wrap ratio. This simply describes how much of the wound string is core and how much is wrap. A light core with a heavy wrap yields more flexibility, but also a more breakable string. Each company has its own core-to-wrap ratio, but none will reveal it. "The difference between too much and too little is less than a human hair," says Don Dawson of D'Addario.

The number of twists above the string's ball end, which affects tone and stability, is another important distinguishing mark. Three twists are found most often, but numbers vary widely.

Curt Mangan of Ernie Ball believes that brand loyalty can't be explained by such variations alone. "It's all nuance. I can't honestly say that anyone is putting out an inferior product, and I sure can't tell brands apart."

Mangan's statement is largely borne out by my own examination of eight brands of electric strings, all gauged .010 to .046: D'Addario XL, Ernie Ball Regular Slinky, Ernie Ball Stainless Steel, GHS Boomers, Vinci, DR, Dean Markley and Dean Markley Blue Steel. Of the eight, almost all sounded and felt exactly alike. Only the two Dean Markleys bore any quirks. The standard nickel-plated steel set was slightly inferior in its workmanship; the wrap on the .026 unraveled in a couple of spots, leaving odd gaps and bulges. On the other hand, the Blue Steels were outstanding, with a deep, resonant tone, easy playability and no initial stiffness.

According to Dean Markley, Blue Steels are "cryogenically activated," pre-frozen in a way that changes their molecular structure and makes them last longer. Whether or not

◆ **Ernie Ball,** 151 Suburban Rd., Box 4177, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401; voice (805) 544-7726, fax (805) 544-7275. ◆ **D'Addario,** 210 Rte. 109, E. Farmingdale, NY 11735; voice (516) 391-5400, fax (516) 391-5410. ◆ **DR,** 7 Palisade Ave., Emerson, NJ 07630; voice (800) 782-1901, fax (201) 599-0404. ◆ **GHS,** 2813 Wilber Ave., Battle Creek, MI 49015; voice (800) 399-4447, fax (800) 860-6913. ◆ **Kaman,** P.O. Box 507, Bloomfield, CT 06002; voice (203) 243-7941, fax (203) 243-7102. ◆ **Dean Markley,** 3350 Scott Blvd. #45, Santa Clara, CA 95054; voice (800) 800-1008, fax (408) 988-0441. ◆ **Maxima,** 57 Crooks Ave., Clifton, NJ 07011; voice (800) 888-1899, fax (201) 772-5410. ◆ **Vinci,** 2885 S. James Dr., New Berlin, WI 53151, voice (414) 784-8388, fax (414) 784-9258.

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Exactly what you'd expect from a sound company like Telex.

that's straight talk, to these ears (and fingers) the process makes a difference. But no less an authority than British acoustic wizard Adrian Legg calls it "a load of bollocks"—adding yet another twist to the tangle of fact and opinion that surrounds guitar strings.

AES REPORT

[*cont'd from page 70*] that transmit and receive Lone Wolf's MediaLink protocol. MediaLink is a communications protocol for audio control devices. For instance, a system controller such as a computer might monitor the temperatures of all of the amps in the system, adjusting settings in response. Even if you're not wired for MediaLink, you may need the feedback elimination provided by Roland's AFP-700 Anti-Feedback Processor, or the self-adjusting room EQ of Sabine's RealQ Real-Time Adaptive Equalizer.

MDM users will benefit from two new eight-channel compressor/limiters, the ART MDM-8L ($499) and Symetrix 488 ($575). Patch one of these babies between the source and deck and reclaim the lower end of the dynamic range, and maybe even impart an analog-type tape saturation effect as well.

Other fun signal processors: Lexicon's PCM 80 ($2500), the successor to the ever-popular PCM 70, and Digitech's Studio Vocalist ($1050), a further refinement of their excellent vocal harmonization technology. Roland downsized its expensive RSS surround-sound system into the single rack space RSS-10 (c. $3000). Keep in mind that signal processors needn't be rack-mount boxes; software-only signal processors that "plug in" to Digidesign's Pro Tools (and ride on generic DSP hardware that plugs into the Mac's expansion slots) are on the rise.

Tape-based MDMs are hot, but stand-alone hard-disk recorders are right on their heels. Yamaha's four-track CBX-D5, having been neglected with the success of their ProMix 01 budget digital mixer, returned at a lower price ($1995) and with crucial support from makers of sequencing software. Roland's DM-800, a more powerful, less expensive version of their DM-80 hard disk recorder, has a remarkably easy-to-grasp user interface. Akai's DD1500 allows up to 16 tracks and accommodates both magneto-optical and conventional hard disks.

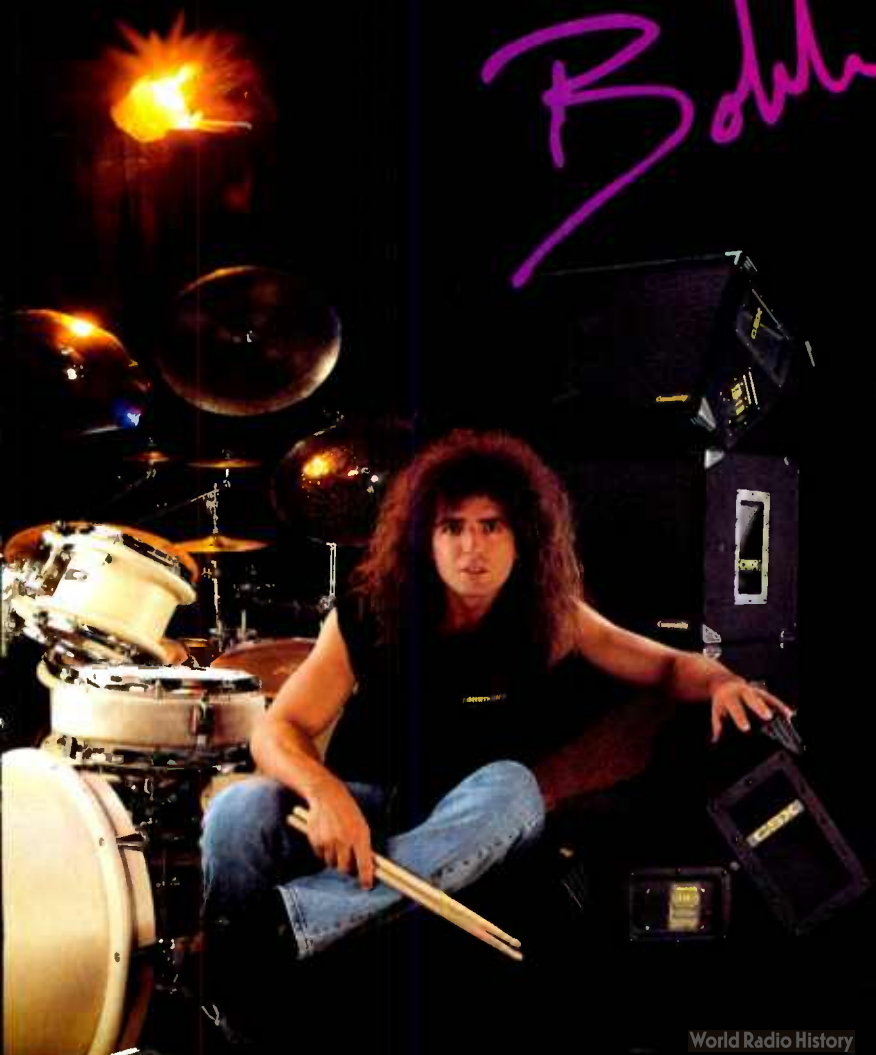
The current generation of digital recorders has left the world reeling, but the next step is nearly here. In a secluded hotel suite away from the show, Oberheim demonstrated the F.A.R. system, based on a process called re-synthesis. Conventional digital recording lends itself only to very limited forms of manipulation. Resynthesis analyzes a recording to determine its basic components (partials) and rebuilds it from the ground up, making it possible to manipulate each partial individually. Applied to recording, this makes for unparalleled flexibility. Applied to making music, it means greater expressive power.

The AES show is a technologist's dream, as it should be. Still, I couldn't help but notice one missing element: music for music's sake. The emphasis was on audio as only one part in a larger production—broadcast, video, games, multimedia, movies. While cool new toys are always welcome, it's fitting to bear in mind the words with which producer George Martin, who delivered the convention's keynote address, closed his speech. "Don't," he cautioned, "forget the music."

Sounding Off For Community!

"My Community CSX-S2 monitors are a critical part of my touring setup. They've got unbelievable power. They're rugged, punchy and crystal clear. The subs and 58's handle everything I give them and fire it right back at me–night after night."

Bobby Rock



Explosive, no-holds-barred drummer Bobby Rock is known among musicians as the most powerful, punishing performer on the road today. Bobby plays non-stop in countless clubs, arenas, recording sessions and drum clinics around the world. And despite the pounding and the pace, Bobby's Community monitors haven't failed him once. If you need a system that sounds great and works as hard as you do, go see your Community dealer!

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CRAIG CHAQUICO'S HO

FAST FORWARD

ME STUDIO

DESPITE HIS success throughout the '70s and '80s as lead guitarist for the Jefferson Starship, Craig Chaquico never expected his first solo album, *Acoustic Highway*, to be a hit. Nor did he imagine that its follow-up, *Acoustic Planet* on Higher Octave, would reach number one on *Billboard*'s New Age chart. More surprising to the listener, though, may be the simplicity of his studio, nestled among the redwoods of northern California.

Chaquico's partner Ozzie Ahlers starts by sequencing keyboard, bass and rhythm with **MOTU**'s Performer software running on an **Apple Mac Plus** ❶. A **Sonus Macface** interface sends MIDI data to an **Alesis HR16** drum machine ❷ and a variety of modules. An **Akai S900** sampler ❸ delivers the bass through a **dbx 163** ❹ or **161** ❺ compressor/limiter.

With MIDI tracks in place, Chaquico plugs one of several **Washburn EA-20** guitars ❻ directly into a **Scholz Rockman XPR** ❼ or **Soldano Series II** tube preamp ❽ (**Korg DT-1** ❾ and stick-on **Sabine AX-800** ❿ tuners keep them in proper pitch). A **Rocktron Hush IICX** ⓫ reduces noise before the guitar is patched to a **Fostex B-16** 16-track deck ⓬. Why not a digital multitrack? "I'm comfortable with the **Fostex 4050** autolocator," Chaquico replies, "plus, tape has a warm compression—though I may go digital next time."

Chaquico uses "an elaborate chain of effects, which I don't print until mixdown." Gizmos include a **t.c. electronic TC 1210** ⓭, **Yamaha SPX90II** ⓮ and two **SPX90s** ⓯, **Lexicon PCM 70** ⓰ and **Roland SRV-2000** ⓱ routed through two **Rane SM26** mixers ⓲. "I also just got an **Alesis QuadraVerb 2**," he reports. "It gives me almost every effect I need!"

For mixdown, Chaquico hauls his racks to new age artist William Aura's studio in Ojai, California. Consequently, he uses his **Mackie MS1202** ⓳ and two **Carvin MX1688** consoles ⓴ for monitoring rather than finished mixes. Their stereo output gets hushed by a **Rocktron Hush IIC** ㉑, brightened with a **BBE 402 Sonic Maximizer**, juiced by a **Carvin FET 900** amp and **Tascam MH-40** headphone amp, and finally heard through **Yamaha NS10** ㉒ and **Auratone 4C** ㉓ speakers, or **Fostex T20** phones ㉔. Chaquico often tracks while listening to speakers, so two **Sabine FBX900s** ㉕ seek and destroy feedback.

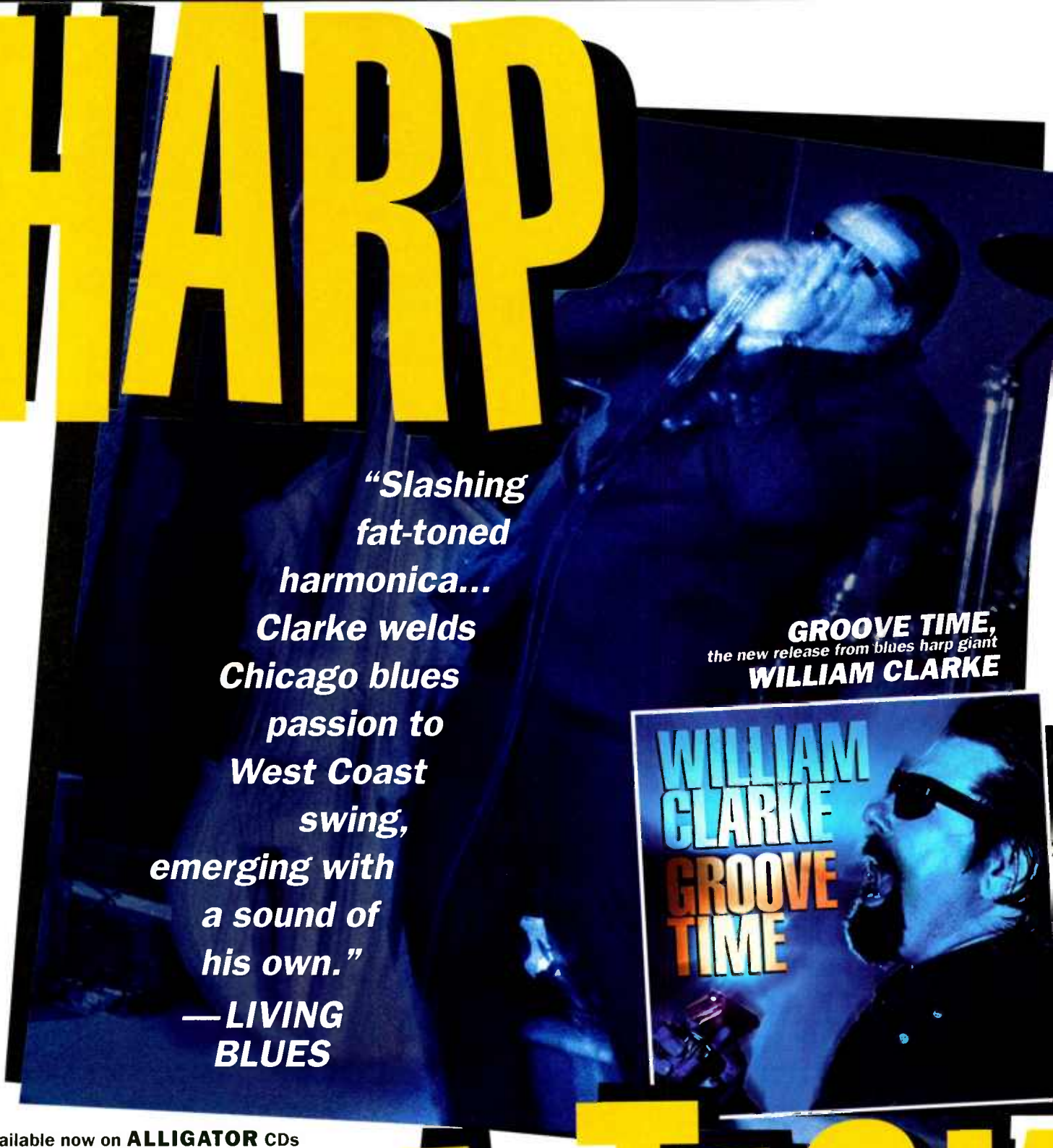
Sony Discman ESP ㉖ and **CDP-302** CD players are on hand, and for rough mixes **Sony TCD-07** and **TDCD-D3** DAT decks plus **Aiwa AD-S37**, **AD-R40** and **Onkyo R1** cassette decks. **Fostex 3010** ㉗ and **Tascam P864** ㉘ patch bays handle the ins and outs, and a **Furman PL-8** ㉙ keeps the power immaculate.

"Even in a million-dollar studio," Chaquico muses, "you'll never see an 'emotion' knob—so once you have the technology, it's up to you to add your feelings to the music."

BY BRENT HURTIG

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAY BLAKESBERG

HARP ATTACK



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Where Are They Now?

THE STONE ROSES

Second Coming
(GEFFEN)

IN FIVE YEARS' TIME—BEGINNING WITH *MEET THE BEATLES* and ending with *Abbey Road*—a once-popular British rock combo released a total of 12 very substantial albums. With *Second Coming*, the Stone Roses—themselves a highly regarded band—have managed two. The similarities, of course, are stunning.

Or maybe not.

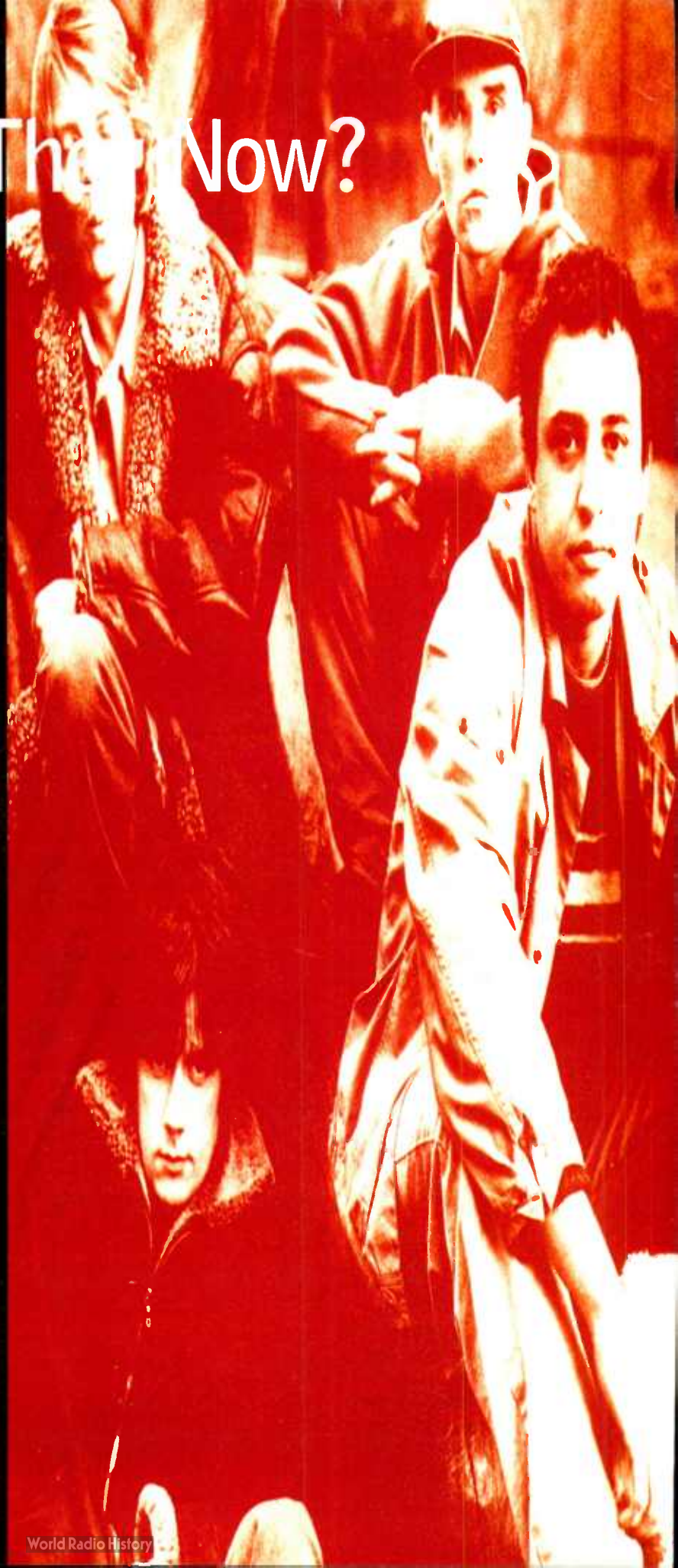
That the long-awaited new Stone Roses album *isn't* stunning, isn't the deliberate, go-for-the-throat sonic knockout some expected, is actually part of its understated charm. *Second Coming* is a groove album, filled with both the subtleties and loose musical interaction only natural to a band that, due to a painful legal struggle with their former record label, has spent the past five years playing with itself.

Before hearing this, I'd thought those five years could only work in favor of the band. The surging melodic pop that made their debut so alluring went out of fashion in the '90s—replaced by the crappy Manchester dance music they themselves helped launch—only to return half a decade later, via fashionable fellow limesuckers like Oasis. But no, there's little of the concise pop that was "She Bangs the Drum," "Elephant Stone" or "Waterfall" here; instead there's an 11-minute opening track, prominent, noodling guitar in spots recalling Led Zeppelin ("Love Spreads") and even Deep Purplish organ ("Ten Storey Love Song"), provided by producer Simon Dawson. The snaking, insinuating riffs of guitarist John Squire dominate nearly all the songs on *Second Coming*; he and singer Ian Brown cowrote everything on the last album, here he wrote almost everything on his own.

As for prettyboy Brown, never Joe Cocker Jr. in the first place, his vocal presence is likewise lessened, his singing throughout strangely wispy, almost half-spoken, and often remarkably similar to that of—and I drop the name advisedly, for I do not intend to be obscure—one Mike Hugg, who sang with the jazzy Chapter Three version of Manfred Mann in 1969 and did not change the future of music as we know it, but was damn good.

So here sit the Stone Roses—signed to Geffen Records, boasting A&R direction by Tom Zutaut (Motley Crue, Guns N' Roses) and an album mixed by Bill Price (Sex Pistols, Clash, Guns N' Roses). And here sits a world that has passed them by. Geffen reportedly picked up the mammoth legal tab racked up from the band's struggles to depart their former label; it's therefore likely they—and maybe the band itself—are expecting something massive to happen here. Whether it will, on these currently anti-Anglo shores, is anybody's guess; I suspect America may not even care. Still, five years on, *Second Coming* is unexpectedly tasteful, a damn fine listen, and not even the slightest bit self-conscious in its late arrival. Let's *all* get our day in court real soon.

—Dave DiMartino



MAKING THE BEATLES' LIVE AT THE BBC

"IT WAS quite a bit of detective work." That's how BBC producer/archivist Kevin Howlett described assembling the tapes for the "new" Beatles album, *Live at the BBC*. Many of these recordings present a side of the Beatles few American fans ever heard—the tough, tight cover band whose cleanly harmonized versions of American R&B and rockabilly hits had earned them a big following even before "Love Me Do."

Though Howlett wasn't there for the original sessions—"I was listening, as a very young boy, to the radio"—he was more than happy to have been asked, in 1982, to comb the BBC archives in search of Beatles recordings. "It turned out there were 52 radio programs from March '62 to June '69. But some of the material was not easy to find."

For one thing, there was no central archive; another problem was finding the best source for remastering. Fortunately, he said, "these recordings have survived very well. On some of them, we are actually using the transcription discs that were made for the BBC transcription service. In fact, a very good, clean vinyl copy of a transcription disc is a very good source to master something."

Executive producer George Martin sorted through the tapes to decide which performances warranted inclusion. From there, the recordings were cleaned up using the Sonic Solutions System at EMI's Abbey Road studios. "All you can do is make them sound as good as they sounded in the studio," he said. "So you remove anything in the way of distortion. But that's the limit."

The BBC's equipment back then wasn't quite state of the art. "The recording was a little bit behind what was happening in America," Howlett admitted. "It's interesting to note that Atlantic had eight-track recording machines in the late '50s, but EMI didn't get one until '68."

Moreover, the BBC engineers had a hard time dealing with the volume of Ringo Starr's drumming. "The sound engineers would experiment with Ringo behind partitions, or behind curtains even," said Howlett. "But that didn't really work, because they were such a tight live band, they needed to be near each other. And Ringo didn't like being set apart."

—J.D. Considine

NICK LOWE

The Impossible Bird

(UPSTART)

WHATEVER THE MERITS OF THE *LITTLE Village* experiment two years back, it's had a distinct loosening effect on that band's members. After it was over, John Hiatt put together a raucous rock 'n' roll band and enjoyed the best-selling record of his career. Ry Cooder's sweet-sounding duet album with Ali Farka Toure struck a popular chord with world music fans as well. Nick Lowe isn't as likely to enjoy that kind of success; dropped by Warner Bros., his new solo album has been released on the tiny Upstart label. So *The Impossible Bird* won't be Lowe's big hit, which is too bad; it might be his masterpiece.

Always a composer of unimpeachable craft, singalong hooks and pub-thumping rhythms, Lowe's put something extra into the mix this time: his soul. The songs frequently address tender matters of the heart, sometimes with gospel affirmations (a cover of "True Love Travels on a Gravel Road"), sometimes with rue. Backed by a funereal organ, "Lover Don't Go" equates the end of a romance with death, while "Withered on the Vine" expresses a fool's regret in classic country cadences. Even Lowe's humor is darker than usual; his "12-Step Program" to ditch a bad relationship rocks with energy, but the steps are so obviously lame ("step nine/Pick out a place to dine") that you know he'll never get through it.

Nor does Lowe confine his sentiments to broken hearts. "The Beast in Me" was recently covered by a rumbling Johnny Cash, but Lowe's gentle version somehow seems scarier; he's the killer who sounds like a nice guy. On "Where's My Everything?" he employs a chiming Buddy Holly arrangement to wonder why money, fame and the joys of family haven't materialized on a silver platter; it's the sort of irony Randy Newman could admire. By the time "I'll Be There" drives the album to an upbeat conclusion, the song sounds less like vintage Rockpile than a warm welcome home from a storm-tossed journey.

Of course, we always knew Nick Lowe had a heart. But after 20 years of going steady, it's nice to discover he's serious about it.

—Mark Rowland

THROWING MUSES

University

(SIRE/REPRISE)

KRISTIN HERSH MAY ENVY THE COMMERcial inroads made by Belly and the Breeders, but she'd never let it show. Having helped pave the way for her more mainstream sisters,

the head Throwing Muse has no intention of making a cheesy bid for mass acceptance. Although *University* lacks the overt eccentricities of the band's early efforts, this alluring, elusive opus resists reduction to easy formulas. It's easy to admire Hersh's evocative textures and tantalizing implications. Hearing them as a convincing whole is harder.

The ingredients are familiar enough: Hersh can rock stomping a wah-wah pedal with freewheeling abandon ("Bright Yellow Gun"), fashion a glittering bauble ("That's All You Wanted") or wail like a wounded, grungy beast ("Start"). What she can't do is deliver a straightforward punchline. In grand Muses tradition, she avoids clichés like the plague, crafting appealing hooks that melt away upon close inspection, while obliquely outlining common phenomena like desire, anger and, especially, uncertainty. Fumbling to connect, Hersh confesses, "I can't think under pressure," and admits (or perhaps brags), "There's nothing on my brain." Her pleasantly noncommittal singing rarely reveals more. However intriguing, especially for those sympathetic to the shy guy/gal mindset now prevalent on the "alternative" scene, Hersh's reluctance to fill in the blanks ultimately suggests simple evasiveness rather than serious strategy. We're talking pop music here, not conceptual art.

Amid the haze, vivid details offer immediate pleasures. Nobody would ever mistake Hersh for J Mascis, but she seems most comfortable talking with her axe. Twangy and wistful, "Surf Cowboy" features lonely guitar Tom Verlaine would admire, and the dramatic bridge of "Flood" could be reconstituted Zeppelin. Despite the fuzzy surroundings, David Narcizo's ardent drumming guarantees a firm pulse; his exhilarating fills, in tandem with Hersh's bracing power chords, turn "Hazing" into an old-fashioned display of brawn. Otherwise, *University* needs more cheap thrills. Kristin Hersh has too much integrity for her own good. —**Jon Young**

HOUSE PARTY

What Are You Listening to Lately?

ALAN JACKSON

1. Rhonda Vincent—Written in the Stars
2. David Ball—Thinkin' Problem
3. Vern Gosdin—Chiseled in Stone
4. Bellamy Brothers—20 Years of Hits
5. Mama's Hungry Eyes (tribute to Merle Haggard)

MOE TUCKER

1. anything by Bo Diddley or Leadbelly
2. Little Richard—Greatest Hits
3. Ike & Tina Turner—River Deep—Mountain High
4. Babatunde Olatunji—Drums of Passion
5. Half Japanese—The Band That Would Be King

JOHN HIATT

1. Liz Phair—Whip Smart
2. Bobby Womack—Resurrection
3. Neil Young—Sleeps with Angels
4. Bob Dylan—John Wesley Harding
5. Freedy Johnston—This Perfect World

LEON PARKER
Above and Below
(EPICURE)

VINNIE COLAIUTA
Vinnie Colaiuta
(STRETCH)

BE IT A BUCK 'N' WING OR A funkadelic fling, melodic, groove-oriented drumming is the source of jazz's enduring power, and a major impetus in its evolution. Leon Parker is an exceptionally musical thinker who has transformed the American trap kit by approaching it from the point of view of a Latin percussionist. Employing a miniature version of kits drummers such as Baby Dodds played in the early days of jazz—before the invention of the sock cymbal—Parker made his reputation on the New York jazz scene by showing up with nothing but a Sabian HH Flat Ride and the determination to elicit maximum melody and color from minimum instrumentation.

Here the left foot is still the *timekeeper*, friends, but Parker pedals away at a ghost beat—his clave—forcing himself to play orchestrally on nothing but a flat ride and small crash, 16-inch kick, snare and a shallow single-headed floor tom. Parker has a truly distinctive cymbal pulse, puffy and melodious. On "Celebration," "Caravan" and the title tune he chants away on his flat ride as if it were a timbale or a choked hi-hat cymbal. By editing out the left-foot click, there's less emphasis on modulations and fills; the beat is more pronounced than the variations, allowing the colors of individual voices to shine through. Parker's elemental hamboning (with kick drum accompaniment) is a funky metaphor for *Above and Below*'s spare canvas of voices, flutes and reeds, signaling his return to a more elemental, tribal collective. On Monk's "Bemsha Swing" and "Epistrophy" his concoction of dance beats and swing beats brings a fresh Afro-Cuban perspective to these themes.

Vinnie Colaiuta could have stepped off a cliff after his collaborations with Frank Zappa, and drummers would still be talking about his epic, free-form approach to polyrhythms, his overwhelming technique. Vinnie did the next best thing, disappearing into the one-two-chachacha of the L.A. studios, where his berserko subdivisions of time were not in great demand. Meanwhile, players the likes of Dave Weckl, Dennis Chambers and Terry Bozzio were mesmerizing jock drummers from Singapore to Sing Sing, and while Vinnie's collaboration with Sting granted him greater visibility, Sting's tightly crafted charts offer Colaiuta little opportunity to advance his personal approach to texture and time.

Vinnie Colaiuta remedies that situation, and then some. While bits and pieces border on stock fusion, the music never descends to sappy happy jazz...and some of it's quite visionary. As a com-

poser and home recordist, Colaiuta employed modern MIDI technology to cultivate an electronic canvas on slaved ADATs, and layer by layer, replaced the original sequences and samples with live players—adding the drums last.

Colaiuta has an ear for jarring ascerbic textures and tricky convolutions of the groove that put me in mind of Ives, McLaughlin, Pastorius, Varèse, Zappa and Zawinul. Some of his intuitive textures and beats sound like futurist hip-hop, although he employs more radical tempo and key changes. His manner of superimposing meters and rhythms proceeds freely from the hallowed altar of Tony Williams, and something else...his own hyper species of Afro-Cuban funk. It's funny, but both Colaiuta's and Parker's differing approaches suggest that to really free up your blues and swing, gringo, you gotta go south of the border. —Chip Stern

BETTIE SERVEERT

Lamprey

(MATADOR/ATLANTIC)

BETTIE SERVEERT IS EASY TO LOVE. While American bands such as Dinosaur Jr. and Buffalo Tom have made careers out of imitating Neil Young's grand guitar noise, this Dutch quartet adds the yearning sweetness of the grunge godfather's earlier works to their rambling garage-folk. From delicate moments of reflection to big moody guitar brawls, Bettie Serveert play their instruments in an almost amateurish fashion, making their comfy songs all the more friendly. Carol van Dijk's introverted lyrics and bristling vocals (she calls herself a "bedroom singer") are the perfect foil for a band that would still probably play in their basements if no one cared to buy their records.


BETTIE SERVEERT

Last year's *Palomine* had the charming appeal of a homemade demo; *Lamprey* is melancholy and more ambitious. The production is still retro (at times, shrill), though the group deftly adds touches of orchestral strings, flute, tympani and organ to acoustic strumming and finger-picking. "Cybor D" and "Ray Ray Rain" provide a swinging Beatlesesque diversion to the sadness of "21 Days," "Silent Spring," "Tell Me Sad" and *Lamprey*'s centerpiece, "D. Feathers," sung by van Dijk in her pretty, forlorn voice as the band creates a warm womb around it. That song's chorus—"I can't trust the things I see/I can only trust in me"—preludes a brief guitar solo, until the band crashes over van Dijk with pure, funereal pathos. It's an unusually sad moment that frames the rest of the record and hints at Bettie Serveert's potential. *Lamprey* assures there's more to come. —**Ken Micallef**

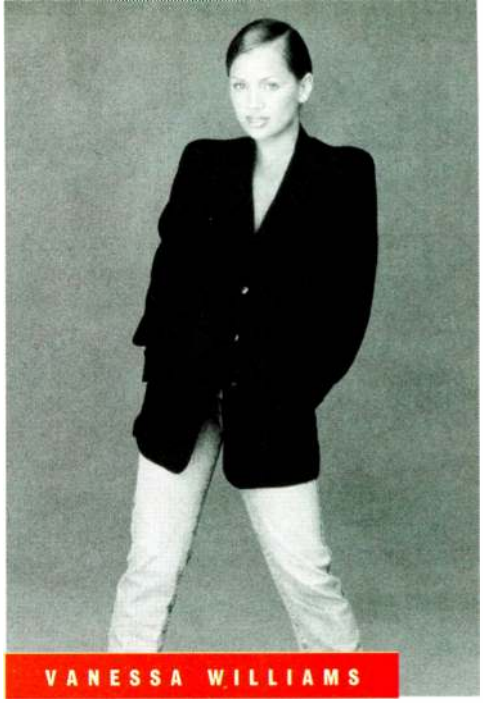
VANESSA WILLIAMS

The Sweetest Days

(WING/MERCURY)

VANESSA WILLIAMS' CAREER HAS BEEN marked by a series of noteworthy precedents—as the first black woman to be named Miss America, as the first Miss America to be dethroned after a nude photos scandal, and finally and most remarkably, as the first Miss America to have a career which has overshadowed her original claim to fame. That her first album went gold could partly be chalked up to notoriety, but the platinum follow-up (*The Comfort Zone*) made it on its own. The logical next step would be *Zone II*, and while *The Sweetest Days* does have a bit of that previous album's billowy contempo pop/soul sound, it's far less predictable and more expansive in its musical choices. Williams is in her early 30s now, the mother of three and currently a critical smash in a serious Broadway musical (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*), so damn it if she wants to stretch she's gonna stretch.

Which means making only an occasional nod to *Zone*'s wall-to-wall ear candy and filling out this album with essentially low-keyed and more sparsely arranged numbers. This is a bit of a risk since Williams is not one of your more emotive divas. But *Days*' relatively stripped-down approach reveals her restraint as a virtue. Her style is devoid of excess mannerism; she knows how to squeeze a note without milking it, displaying a natural actor's instinct *not* to chew the scenery. Dueting with herself on "Constantly" she effectively undersells the song's content; on "Higher Ground" she makes vaporous spirituality sound like soulful common sense.


VANESSA WILLIAMS

It's significant that one song is a tribute to Ella Fitzgerald ("Ellamental"), a singer who, when she wasn't improvising scat, was less interested in taking interpretive liberties than revealing the beauties that were already there (hear her various Songbooks). The recurring phrase in "Ellamental" is "she spoke her mind"—an acknowledgment that a singer needn't have written the song she sings in order for it to be a personal statement. Williams is no Ella—who is? But she knows how to speak her mind with a minimum of fuss and a great deal of unforced charm. —**Richard C. Walls**

DAN HICKS

Shootin' Straight

(ON THE SPOT/PRIVATE)

WITH "SINGER/SONGWRITER" BECOMING synonymous with a genre rather than a role, Dan Hicks reminds us that Hoagy Carmichael wrote and sang songs, as did Louis Jordan and Bob Wills. Combining a sly, dry wit with innate swing and serious musicianship, Hicks could be the last of the breed, excepting longtime devotee Tom Waits.

Having ushered in San Francisco's psychedelic scene as a Charlatan and predating "Unplugged" by 25 years with his innovative Hot Licks, Hicks may hold the all-time record for staving off A&R types. This, folks, is his first release since *1978*. While substance abuse accounted for much of the hiatus, the 14 "new" originals on this live set are up to the standard of his early-'70s output. The moods swing from a stark monologue by a female barfly ("Bottoms Up") [*cont'd on page 90*]

Song Spree Competition Rules

1) Songs must be original, no longer than 4.5 minutes. *One song per cassette. *Lyrics must be typed or legibly printed. *Entrant may send any number of songs but a **separate, signed entry form (or copy) is required for each.** *Cassettes and lyrics will not be not returned.

2) Each cassette/lyric sheet must contain a legible name, address, phone #, song title and category.

3) A non-refundable, per-song check or money order **payable to Spree Productions** must accompany each submission. For multiple submissions, a check or money order for the total is acceptable.

Judging

Songs scored on Originality/Melody/Lyrics/Rhythm/and Composition (not production or performance). *First-Round judging by Spree Productions. *Second-Round judging by Nashville music industry personnel. *Finalists chosen by Los Angeles and Nashville industry professionals.

Details

This Competition is open to anyone who has earned less than $3500/year (average) from royalties or music industry-related contests since 1992. *Category winners will be notified by mail and are required to sign and return an affidavit of eligibility within ten business days or be disqualified. In such cases an alternate Category Winner will be chosen. *In the event co-writers win, division of prizes is the responsibility of the first name on entry. Winners under age 18 must have parent or guardian approval on affidavit. *False, inaccurate, or misleading statements are grounds for disqualification. *Affidavits release Spree productions from product and all other liability and allow use of winners' songs, lyrics, names and/or likenesses and voices for promotional and advertising purposes without additional compensation. *Relatives, employees and affiliates of Spree Productions, Bastwick & Pase Accountants, or County Q Productions not eligible. *Spree Productions not responsible for late, damaged, lost, misdirected or stolen mail. *Entries with insufficient postage or received after deadline will be refused. *Number of albums produced depends on number of songs received: *10,000 entries (total for 4 categories) = one (compilation) CD; 12,000 = 2 CDs (Rock/Soft & Country/Blues/R&B), 20,000 = 4 CDs (one each category). *5,000 minimum issue of each CD.) *Standard Statutory Licensing paid. *Winners announced Summer, 1995.

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1) At least the top three songs in each category will be produced and recorded at County Q Studio in Nashville—and presented on Spree's 1995 Songwriter Series CD(s). All Category Winners will earn standard publishing royalties based on the number of albums produced (5000 minimum guaranteed), but retain their publishing rights. Writer(s) may elect to sign a publishing contract, if desired.

2) Twelve Category winners will receive two round-trip tickets to Nashville. While in Music City, winners and their guests will stay for 3 days and 2 nights at the magnificent Opryland Hotel, with spending money provided by Spree Productions. (Or $1000 in cash, if preferred.)*

*CDs, prizes awarded for 2,500/category minimum entries, nationwide. In the event that fewer songs are received in any category, entries will be added to/judged with those received in the following year. Once entries exceed 5,000/category, a separate 10-song CD will be produced for that category—including at least 5 category winners.

3) Honorable Mention winners (top 5% per category) get an extra free CD.

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Gospel
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(Uptempo, including Alternative)

2 Country
(Traditional to Crossover)

3 Blues, Rhythm & Blues
(Including Pop R&B)

4 Soft Alternatives
(Soft Rock/Pop, Semi-Classical, New Age & Folk)

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All entries must include a labeled cassette, lyric sheet, and check/money order made payable to Spree Productions for the total number of songs entered.

1 song	$20
2 songs	$30
3 songs	$40
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5 songs	$60

Entries must have a final entry postmark no later than March 15th, 1995.

Song Spree Entry Blank (OK to photocopy)

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Category (circle one) 1 (Rock) 2 (Country) 3 (Blues, Rhythm & Blues) 4 (Soft Alternatives)

Names _____

Address _____

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Phone Number _____

I certify that I have read/understood/accept all Song Spree Competition official rules.

Signature(s)* _____

*(Parent or Guardian must sign if entrant is under age 18)

My Free CD: Up to four Category CDs will be produced. Send me (use Category #):

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ET CETERA

THE EVERLY BROTHERS
Heartaches & Harmonies

With the growing number of companies branching into the reissue market, Rhino demonstrates here precisely why they're the leader. First, they've tackled one of the most profoundly influential acts in pop music in the Everlys. Second, they've cut no corners in production. Both the sound and the famous harmonies are achingly crystal-clear throughout. Finally—and here's where Rhino's true power lies—they've licensed material from every label the duo ever recorded for, including Columbia, Cadence, RCA, Passport and Mercury. That that remarkable 30-year span even exists is a tribute to the Everlys' talent; that it's all on display here is a testament to Rhino. Hey Warners, get them Everly albums in the reissue pipeline, too.—*Dave DiMartino*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Tulare Dust: A Songwriters' Tribute to Merle Haggard

The rule size of that other Merle tribute album, which celebrated the Nashville hit-smith, this disc posits Haggard as a populist rebel, and inspired covers like "Daddy Frank" by Robert Earl Keen and "Kern River" by Dave Alvin evoke Haggard's trademark Bakersfield sound, with its roots in western swing. But presenting Merle as a modern Woody Guthrie by stacking the deck with p.c. tunes like "Irma Jackson" and "They're Tearin' the Labor Camps Down" ultimately feels less like a tribute than a reeducation program. A worthy collection overall, though, and Iris Dement's version of "Big City" is a classic.—*Mark Rowland*

GEORGE JONES
The Essential George Jones

Excepting Hank Williams and possibly Johnny Cash, there is no more revered and imitated figure in country music than George Jones. Not only did his tunes set standards rarely equaled by the current crop of Nashville writers, but at 63 his voice can still rattle a speaker with ease. This two-disc set is a valuable if somewhat cursory overview of more than three decades of recordings. From honkytonk spins like "Love Bug" to "The Ceremony"—his corny matrimonial duet with Tammy Wynette—and more recent gems like "I'm a One Woman Man," his music, like his life, reads like a B movie. And if you're into early Jones, check out Mercury/PolyGram's *Cup of Loneliness*, a 51-song compilation culled expressly from his 1954–62 recordings.—*Michael Lipton*

OUT ON THE ROLLING SEA
A Tribute to Joseph Spence & the Pinder Family

Finally, a tribute that doesn't embarrass the artist it's eulogizing. Bahamian guitarist Spence is probably best known via his influence on Ry Cooder, who is surprisingly absent here. But Spence's uplifting spirit permeates Ralph McTell's honey baritone, Wavy Gravy's croak and a typically amazing David Lindley bouzouki solo. Other inspired turns—Jim Dickinson, Victoria Williams, Madagascar's Rossy—and the fact that all profits go to disabled children are icing on the coconut.—*Dan Forte*

DR. ISIAH ROSS
Call the Doctor

Bluesman Ross, who died in 1993, was a one-man band known by the sobriquet "The Harmonica Boss." This 1965 album, his first full-length release after singles for Sun, Chess and Fortune, offers ample evidence that the nickname was quite apt. Ross, who played both harp and guitar left-handed (accompanied by a kick drum), nodded deeply to the influence of Sonny Boy Williamson I, but his takes on such medicine show-era showpieces as "Freight Train" and "Fox Chase" betray a debt to such primitives as George "Buster" Williams and Jaybird Coleman. He could also be a dizzyingly eclectic performer. One wonders what Harold Arlen made of Ross's solo version of "Blues in the Night." This energetic, superlatively entertaining set is part of Hightone's reissue of the Testament catalog, which includes five '60s sets by Otis Spann, Johnny Shines, Johnny Young and other blues stars.—*Chris Morris*

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REVIEWS

to a goofball take on space travel ("Hell, I'd Go!"). As ever, Hicks treats all his subjects with equal respect and no apologies. The title song, addressing the leader's years of sobriety, is one of the few overtly autobiographical lyrics he has ever performed.

The Acoustic Warriors' backing may lack the blowing strength of the Hot Licks and eschew the Lambert, Hendricks and Ross vocal interplay that was the Lickettes' hallmark, but as a result the songs and Hicks' vastly underrated singing take center stage, driven by a tight, turn-on-a-dime rhythm section. And while a studio setting might have allowed for more ambitious arrangements or instrumentation, the trade-off is Hicks' priceless between-song patter. —Dan Forte

ZUMPANO

Look What the Rookie Did

(SUB POP)

WITH OBLIQUE '60S CHORD CHANGES, daisy-tripping guitar breezes and "Boy, am *I* in love" lyrics, Zumpano is as simple as a sockhop, as boffo as a beach party. In the deep department, these guys are right around "wading pool," but that's what gives *Look What the*

SHORT TAKES

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

MAIRE BRENNAN

Misty Eyed Adventures

(ATLANTIC)

WHERE BRENNAN'S work in Clannad stresses the lush, melodic side of her Irish roots, this album showcases the music's rhythmic undercurrents—whether in the Afro-Celtic fusion of "Heroes," the eddying percussion of "The Watchman" or the sly, Moorish cast of "Days of the Dancing." The arrangements play off the rhythmic possibilities, but it's Brennan's warm, expressive voice that ultimately brings these songs into focus.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

It's Now or Never: The Elvis Tribute

(MERCURY)

LESS ABOUT paying respect to Elvis than in restaking country music's claim to his legacy, this CD ignores Iggy Pop and David Bowie in favor of Travis Tritt and Billy Ray Cyrus. But to tell the truth, the country singers "get" these songs on a level the rockers rarely do. While Wet Wet Wet treats "It's Now or Never" more as Dean Martin than Elvis, and Chris Isaak gives "Blue Moon" the partial-eclipse treatment, Dwight Yoakam steams through "Mystery Train" and Faith Hill brings just enough honky-tonk twang into "Trying to Get to You."

SIOUXSIE & THE BANSHEES

The Rapture

(GEFFEN)

PRESUMABLY, the actual end of the world won't be as bad as this.

MARY J. BLIGE

My Life

(UPTOWN)

AS THE ALBUM'S intro makes plain, even Blige's own camp worried whether she could "do it again," and to be honest, she doesn't —she does it better. It isn't just that the material is better than it was on *What's the 411*, though she certainly takes advantage of the extra melodic element in tunes like "My Life" and "No One Else"; there's also enough confidence in her singing that she easily meets the demands of something as classic as "I'm Goin' Down" and even pulls off a rewrite of the Mary Jane Girls' "All Night Long" (here called "Mary Jane"). Plus, she still knows how to work a groove, as "Be Happy" makes abundantly clear.

THE BEATLES

Live at the BBC

(APPLE)

HERE'S PROOF that the range and clarity of the Beatles' sound was the result of years spent covering the great R&B and rockabilly hits of the '50s. Not only do the Fabs handle Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley tunes with Liverpudlian aplomb in these mid-'60s radio broadcasts, they do a mean Coasters as well (check their appropriately cosmic "Youngblood"). But not even the Everly-esque harmonies on "So How Come (Nobody Loves Me)" are enough to explain the incandescent vocal work that illuminates live versions of "I'm a Loser" and "I Feel Fine."

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Rookie Did (another adventurous signing for Sub Pop) its playful, lovably eccentric edge.

The brainchild of drummer Jason Zumpano, this combo takes the Beach Boys/Merseybeat ethos and twists it to its own alternative-minded designs. "Evil Black Magic" (one of those fabled black magic women) has a chorus punched up by trumpet; "Oh That Atkinson Girl" (another filly these wranglers failed to rope) has fitful stops and starts and a flute-played bridge; "(She's a) Full-Blooded Sicilian" (need more be said?) meshes thumping tom-toms, wah-ooh backing vocals, a jangly Byrds riff and a melody line plucked out on, of all things, a banjo. And when's the last time you heard a blatant ode to feminine pulchritude like "I Dig You," framed by a goofy Vince Guaraldi–style piano arpeggio and Peter Noone–ish self-deprecations ("Almost anyone can take you from me/So what does that make me now?").

There are a few moments where the pop percolator isn't completely plugged in here—"Temptation Summary" and "Platinum Is Best Served Cold" simmer instead of boil. But then you hear Zumpano's clavinet-tinkled take on Jimmy Webb's "Rosecrans Boulevard," and the agenda returns to sharp focus. This is a record custom-made for the sick-of-dogma-and-diatribe rock fan who's grousing about MTV and how they just don't make songs like they used to. Now they do, so shut up and get this disc already.

—Tom Lanham

ZUMPANO

THE CRAMPS
Flamejob
(MEDICINE)

FOR 15 YEARS, THIS NEW YORK-BRED, L.A.–based combo has specialized in a highly peculiar blend of horror movie–rockabilly–gutter camp–swamp noise swill, a musical style that makes up in sheer hedonistic abandon what it lacks in intellectual or moral content. I love the Cramps—I'm tempted to ask "who wouldn't?" but I know better—and, given that theirs is a sonic sideshow that I can revisit endlessly without guilt, the only yardstick available is the current album's comparative stature in the group's now-sizable canon. *Flamejob* comes up slightly stumpy, but it still contains just enough dimestore thrills to slake the bloodthirst of the average Crampsgeek.

Yea, there are sordid delights to behold here: "Let's Get Fucked Up," a bestial revel worthy of its title; "Ultra Twist," which, Chubby Checker (and Hank Ballard, for that matter) might be appalled to learn, is about sex; "Naked Girl Falling Down the Stairs," whose title may be more than enough; and "Swing the Big Eyed Rabbit," which is probably the only song ever penned as an endorsement of the murder of terrified bunnies. All these are roared with tuneless abandon by frontman Lux Interior and drilled home instrumentally by guitar dominatrix Poison Ivy Rorschach, as ever.

However, the rest of the album, heavy on covers both pointlessly obscure and just plain pointless ("Route 66"?!) and filled out with tamer originals, never ascends (descends?) to the heavy-crude level of hydrophobic classics like the band's Alex Chilton–produced curtain-raiser *Songs the Lord Taught Us* or even such latter-day epics as *Stay Sick!* As nutted-out as its most primo moments are, *Flamejob* just isn't fucked-up enough. Fans can only hope that Lux and Ivy, Satan's answer to Ozzie and Harriet, can make a deeper connection with their muse on their next trip up the Styx.

—Chris Morris

ED KUEPPER
The Butterfly Net
Character Assassination
(RESTLESS)

AUSTRALIAN SONGWRITER and guitarist Ed Kuepper has, for two decades, been adventurous, consistent and prolific: Since his three now-legendary LPs with the influential punk band the Saints (which he founded with Chris Bailey), Kuepper has so far issued nine solo records, three with the Aints, and four with the wildly exploratory Laughing Clowns. Still, these two discs—a post-Saints retrospective and his most recently recorded LP—are the only recordings by Kuepper available in the U.S.

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VIDEO

ANTON FIG

In the Groove

(DCI MUSIC VIDEO)

AS THE DRUMMER on the "Late Show with David Letterman," Anton Fig has to play covers of old rock songs with the gusto of a kid in a garage band, back up a variety of guest artists with the finesse of a studio musician, and supply rimshots for Letterman's jokes and gestures with the timing of a Catskills show drummer. Such versatility depends more on the ability to bend and blend than on having a recognizable style, and while Fig's playing might not have as much personality as that of his predecessor, Steve Jordan, Fig gets a lot more work by being adaptable.

That point is driven home on this video during a segment in which Fig uses the same simple beat throughout a medley of songs (played by Paul Shaffer, Will Lee and Sid McGinnis) that evolve through a variety of styles. In segments featuring the Ace Frehley Band, Blondie Chaplin, the Andy Laverne Trio and Ojoyo, Fig displays various sides of his musical personality while effectively demonstrating that the key to his success is based more on feel and groove than on hot licks and pyrotechnics. The bulk of this 75-minute video features Fig playing live with different bands, which is ultimately more educational than anything he could have talked about. A couple of cameos from Letterman, including the top ten reasons Anton Fig made a drum video, add entertainment value.—*Rick Mattingly*

The Butterfly Net compilation is solid from top to bottom, providing a taste of the full range of Kuepper's creative restlessness. It opens with tracks from his aggressive, horn-drenched, folk/rock solo period, proceeds through the earlier more experimental Laughing Clowns material, and reverts to some more pastoral solo material. The remarkable thing is how seamless it all sounds. As an album, it's a delight; as an introduction, it's indispensable.

Character Assassination showcases Kuepper at his darkest and most reflective; hints of Nick Drake, Chris Bell and Neil Young flit through the spare, airy mix. "By the Way," a tawdry ballad of sin and regret, features Kuepper's dryer-than-dust voice speaking to an absent other. The guitars weave in and around Kuepper's words, while keyboards and strings prop him up, allowing him to continue before he chokes on his lyrics and the track falters to an end. From here, the tone is set and Kuepper goes deeper into the luscious depths, sometimes with a wry devastating humor, sometimes with dead-on harrowing observation ("I always wondered how long before you turned to god or smack"). After the third song, "The Cockfighter," you lose track: You're in the dark and feeling the instruments as they push you down further into this disturbing, gorgeous little nightmare.

Ed Kuepper may be a well-kept cult secret here in America, but this pair of gems should go a long way toward rectifying that problem.

—Thom Jurek

BRYAN FERRY

Mamouna

(VIRGIN)

LISTENING TO THIS PREDOMINANTLY gloomy album, it's easy to forget that, at his best—in "Over You," say, or "More Than This," Bryan Ferry heretofore has actually been fairly sunny. He's chipper here only briefly—most notably "Chain Reaction," in which he learns at last to enjoy his romantic desperation. But so vivid is his despair in the elegiac likes of "The Only Face" and "Your Painted Smile" that only the sort of person who goes around telling total strangers, "Hey, *smile*" is apt to be disappointed. The instrumental interplay at the end of the hugely depressing "Which Way to Turn," with seemingly the whole cast alternately joining and playing counterpoint to the hypnotic little guitar motif, will take your breath away.

The album even offers a couple of surprises. On "The 39 Steps," the great man deviates from his familiar vocal evocation of melting butter with a guttural little moan. What sounds like a theremin (think "Good Vibrations") but is here identified as a "witch" shimmers in the background of "N.Y.C." and "Gemini Moon"—and turns "Wildcat Days" into the sort of thing we older types used to believe was best appreciated while in a state of chemically induced temporary psychosis. Indeed, thanks to the participation of one Eno, who's given credit for "atmospherics" and "sonic awareness," the whole album has a gently hallucinatory quality, as unintelligible bits of conversation chase the familiar synth swirls and terse little guitar pronouncements that are forever ducking in and out of the fog.

I've saved the best for last. After the old groaner shuts up at the end of the title track, heretofore notable mostly for how brazenly it recycles the wah-wah guitar part from Isaac Hayes' "Theme from *Shaft*," the most gorgeous sax solo you're apt to hear during the Clinton presidency wafts past, duplicating the singer's inflection so perfectly that you'd swear he played it himself—as indeed he did, on "synsax"! He also played the piano bit that follows, and it's his most exquisite since the coda of "Over You" 14 years ago, positively swoon-inducing, a marvel of musical cogency.

After last year's appalling stop-gap *Taxi*, whereon he demonstrated that he could squeeze the jubilation and melodic interest out of even "Just One Look," no one would have blamed you for being wary of Ferry. But don't be without this. —**John Mendelssohn**

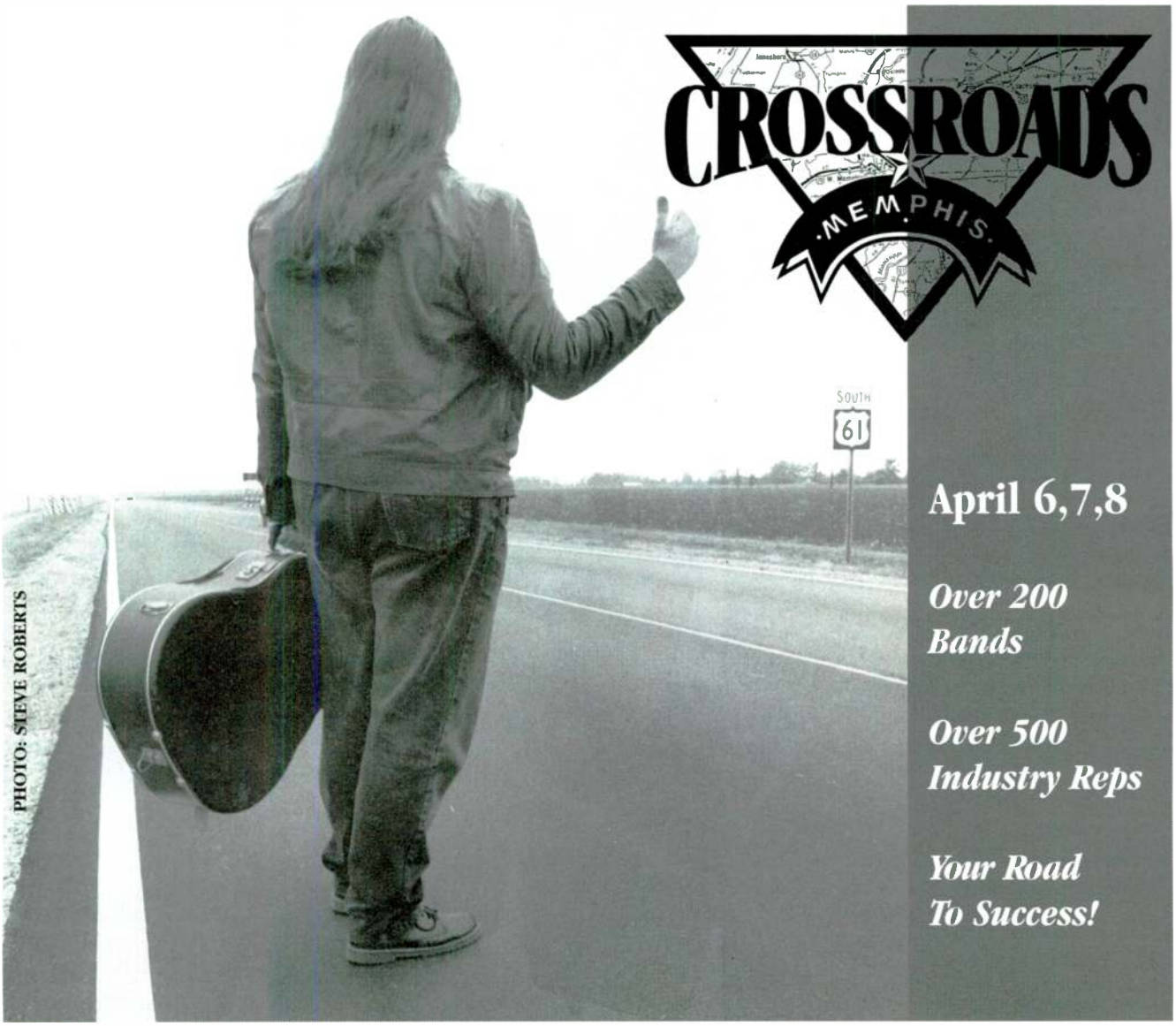
VERUCA SALT

[*cont'd from page 28*] my own material and distribute it. So you have to make the decision to break down the shop and not make music anymore or go to a label, and at that point a major is no worse than an indie, depending on the major."

Of course, one's leverage with the major labels is considerably increased when you've already recorded an album with a hot producer that boasts a surprise hit single. In the end, Geffen won out over Virgin—and over another label with a male rep who apparently thought he was trying to sign Lita Ford. "There was one guy who refused to kiss me on the cheek," Gordon explains. "He always turned his head to kiss me on the lips and always told me how hot and sexy we looked instead of telling us how good our shows were. I was offended by him."

Asked about the dollar amount, Post says, "It was a good deal as far as deals go, I understand." Around town the figure being bandied about is $1.8 million, the pair are told. "Eek!" says Gordon.

CAN VERUCA SALT survive the stardom they didn't court? Approaching their third year of friendship, the pair remain close. "We can talk for seven hours about our personal life and talk for another seven hours about business," avers Post. So far, the big controversies in the band tend to be over photographs. "The worst," says Gordon, "is when there's a photo where you think you think you look good, and you say, 'I want this one, I want this one,' and



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116	6/88	Sinead O'Connor, Neil Young, Tracy Chapman
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143	9/90	Steve Vai, Michael Stipe, Malmsteen/McLaughlin
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146	12/90	Slash, Replacements, Waterboys, Pixies
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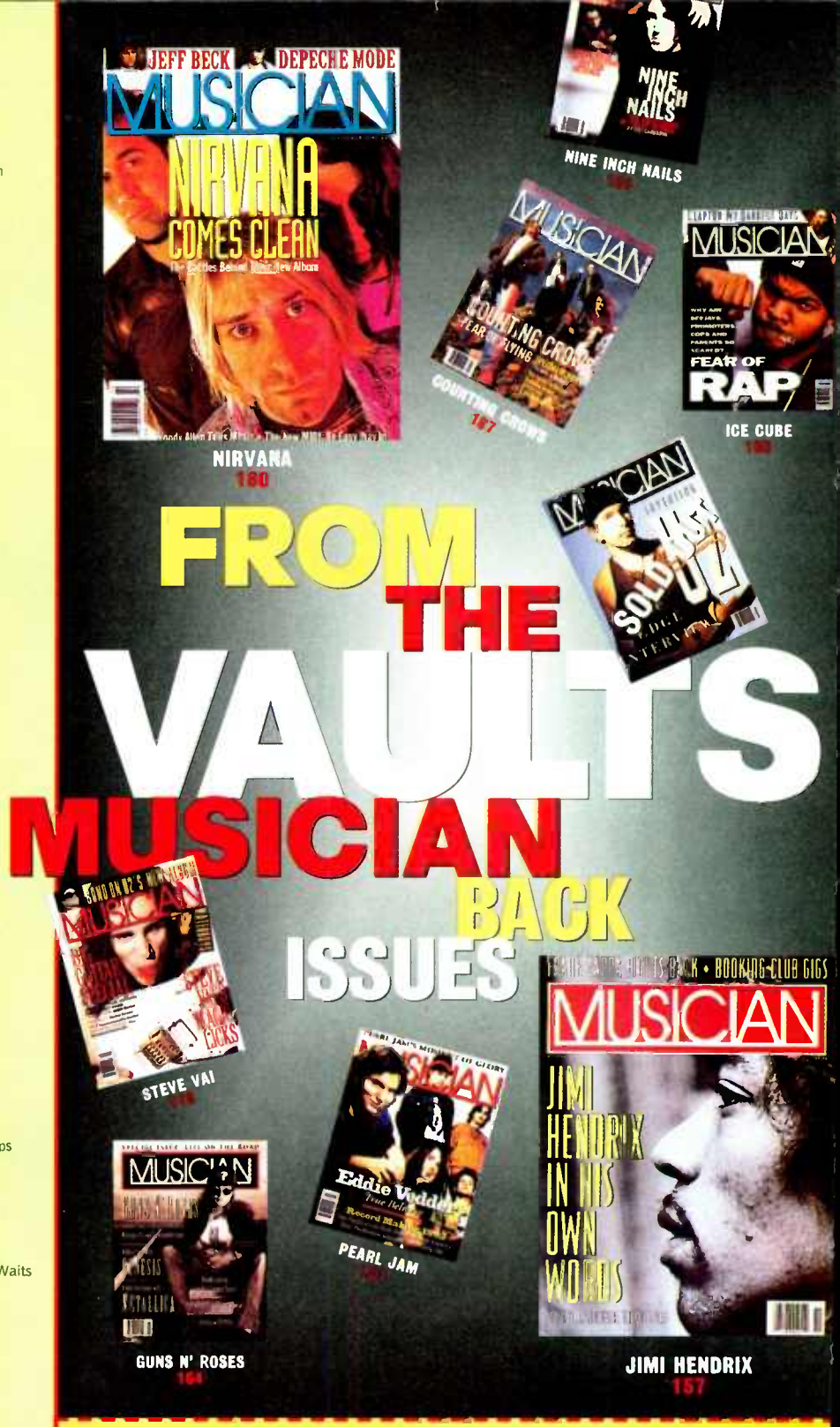

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someone else hates themselves." "The worst," says Post, "is when I think Nina looks great, and I think I look great, and she says, no, you look great and I look terrible."

Both musicians worry if they're making the right decisions; they admit to being hurt by criticism, too. ("I've never been the sort of person who said, 'Oh, I don't give a fuck what other people say about me,'" says Gordon.) But ultimately the indie-underground analysis misses the mark. While Veruca Salt certainly has the opportunity—and the right—to screw up their careers and their art if they want to, bringing all the indiecentric clichés home, it's not clear that they or their music were ever a part of that world.

"It's a mindset I can't relate to. I've listened to pop music my whole life," says Gordon. "I've also listened to heavy metal and hard rock, and now I'm responding to it in my own way."

No matter. What cynics will call hype unparalleled and fans will call talent rewarded has conspired to shake the pair's plans up a bit. "Things have just grown beyond our expectations these last few months," says Post.

"I don't totally love the record," Gordon agrees. "But I do think there's some good things about it. I do think we're going to be a great rock band. We just got put in the spotlight a little too quickly."

AD INDEX

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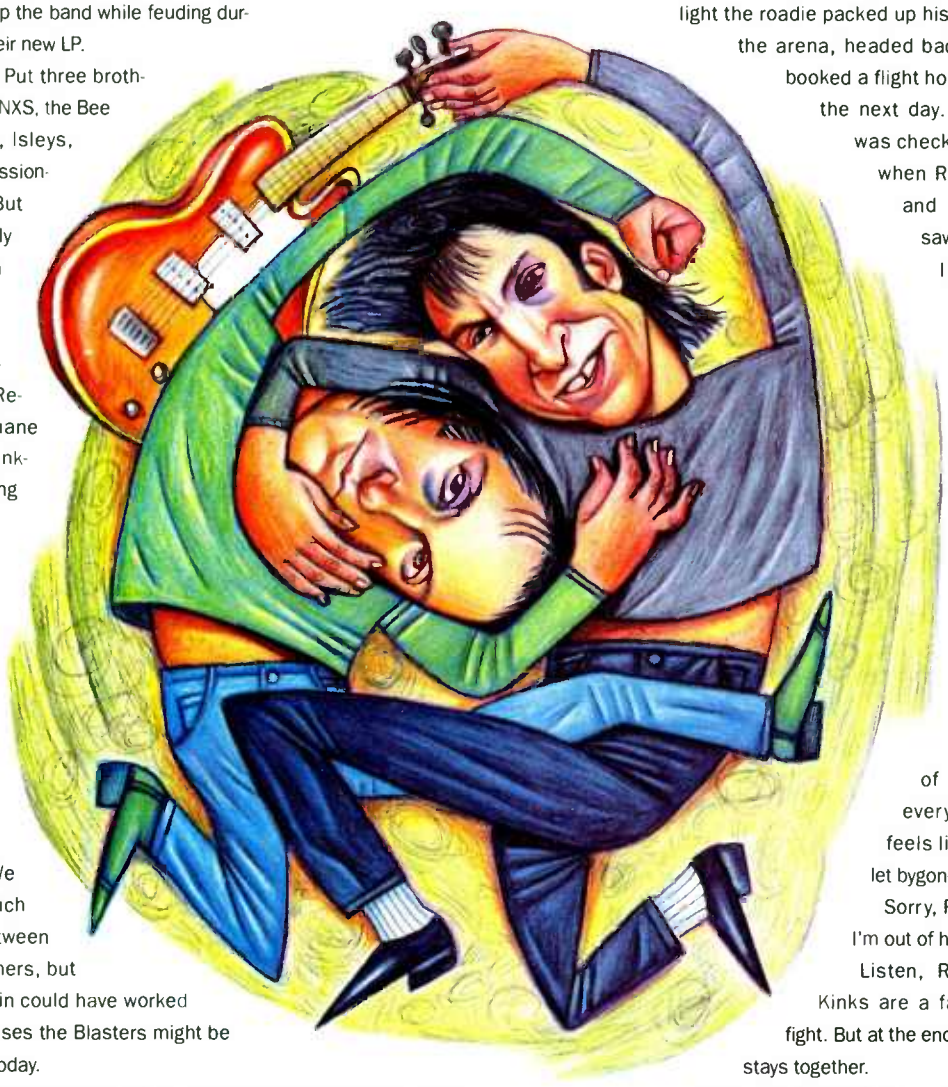
MUSICIAN CLASSIFIED

To advertise in *Musician* magazine's classified section, call Jeff Serrette at (800) 223-7524 or fax him at (212) 536-5055.

THE GOLDEN GLOVES OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Lately the British rock band Oasis has been getting lots of press over the fights between singer Liam Gallagher and his songwriter/guitarist brother Noel. Every other week *NME* or *Melody Maker* report that the band is on the verge of breaking up over the latest brouhaha between those fightin' Gallagher boys. The Black Crowes, too, have made it a point of their recent publicity that singer Chris Robinson and guitarist/sibling Rich almost broke up the band while feuding during the making of their new LP.

It's an old story! Put three brothers in a rock group (INXS, the Bee Gees, Beach Boys, Isleys, Jacksons) and professionalism is possible. But ever since Don Everly first beat up Phil, a pair of brothers in the same band has meant an endless blood feud. Remember when Duane Allman talked a drunken Gregg into shooting himself through the foot? How about when Mark and Dave Knopfler got into such a battle in a New York recording studio that Dave stormed off back to England and Mark erased all Dave's tracks? We may not hear much about struggles between the Van Halen brothers, but if Dave and Phil Alvin could have worked out a few compromises the Blasters might be bigger than ZZ Top today.



Still, no brothers in rock 'n' roll will ever come close to the carnage left behind by those loony Kinks over their 30 years of fraternal fistfights. Ray and Dave Davies set a standard for sibling rivalry that makes Cain and Abel look like Romulus and Remus.

Here's a story too good to fact check: It comes from another musician who says he got it from the horse's mouth. Seems that this musician knows a guitar tech who got a job roadying for Dave Davies. It was torture! Every time Dave made a mistake onstage he turned around and yelled at the roadie. One night in Europe, the story goes, Dave played especially badly, got mad with his guitar, stormed over to the side of the stage where the tech was waiting with another, and punched the roadie in the face in full view of the audience.

That was over the line! While Dave went back into the spotlight the roadie packed up his gear, walked out of the arena, headed back to the hotel and booked a flight home to the States for the next day. In the morning he was checking out of the hotel when Ray Davies came up and said, Hey, man—I saw what happened and I just want to personally promise you it will never happen again. Now, come on. Put down that suitcase.

Sorry, Ray, the roadie said. Nothing personal, I like you, but I will not stand for being struck. See you later.

Ray said that's absolutely right. Dave was way out of line. He knows it, everyone's told him, he feels like a jerk. Now let's let bygones be bygones.

Sorry, Ray, the roadie said. I'm out of here.

Listen, Ray explained. The Kinks are a family. And families fight. But at the end of the day the family stays together.

Sorry, Ray, the roadie said. I quit.

Oh, said Ray. Okay. And then Ray hauled back and punched the roadie!

Oasis are a fine band. And we really admire the Black Crowes' fightin' spirit. But will those brothers still be beating up each other *and* employees in 2025? There is a golden gloves of rock 'n' roll brother fights, and as long as the Kinks are still on the road somewhere, the Davies boys hold the title.

ILLUSTRATION BY GLYNIS SWEENY

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