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U2

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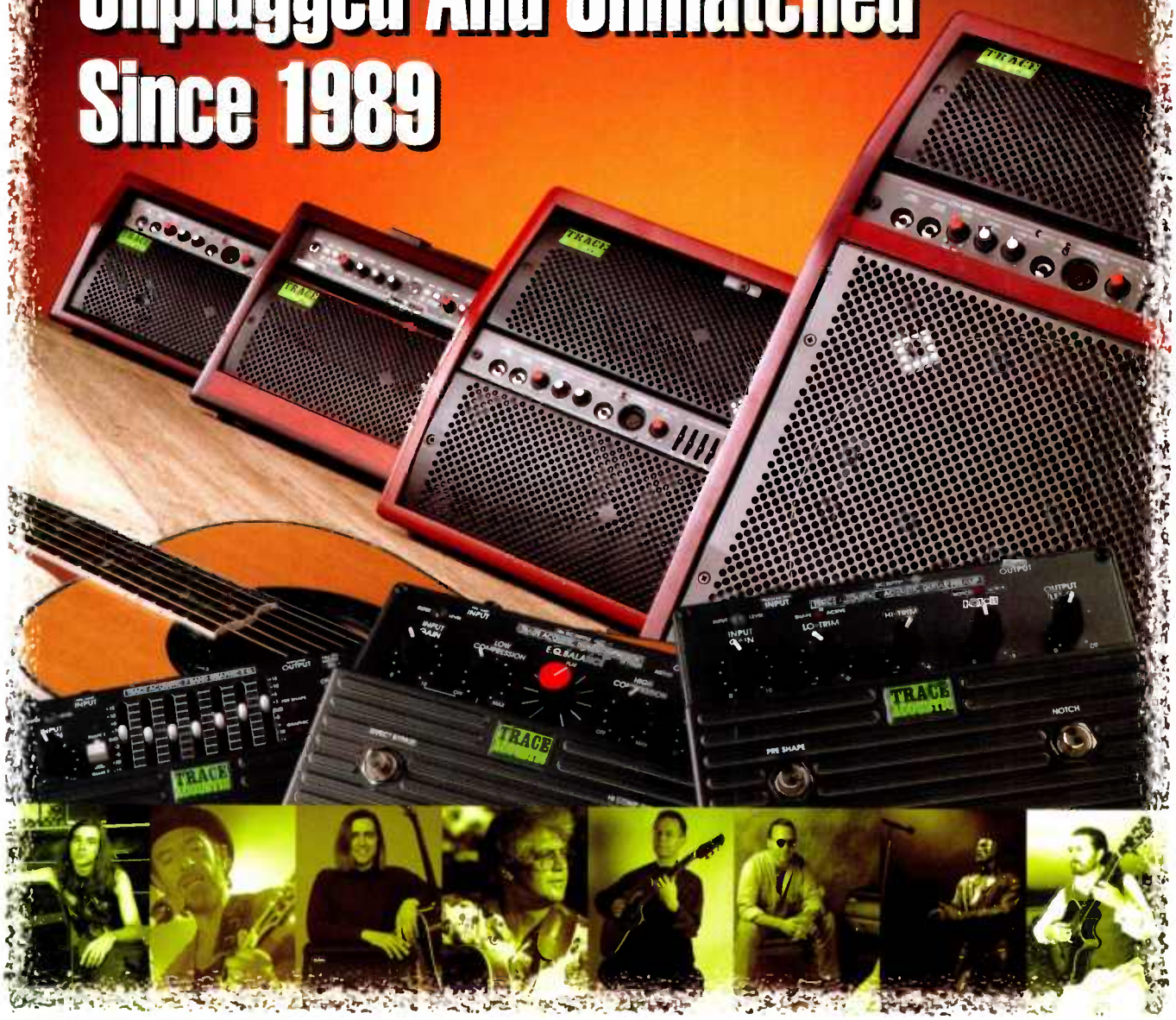

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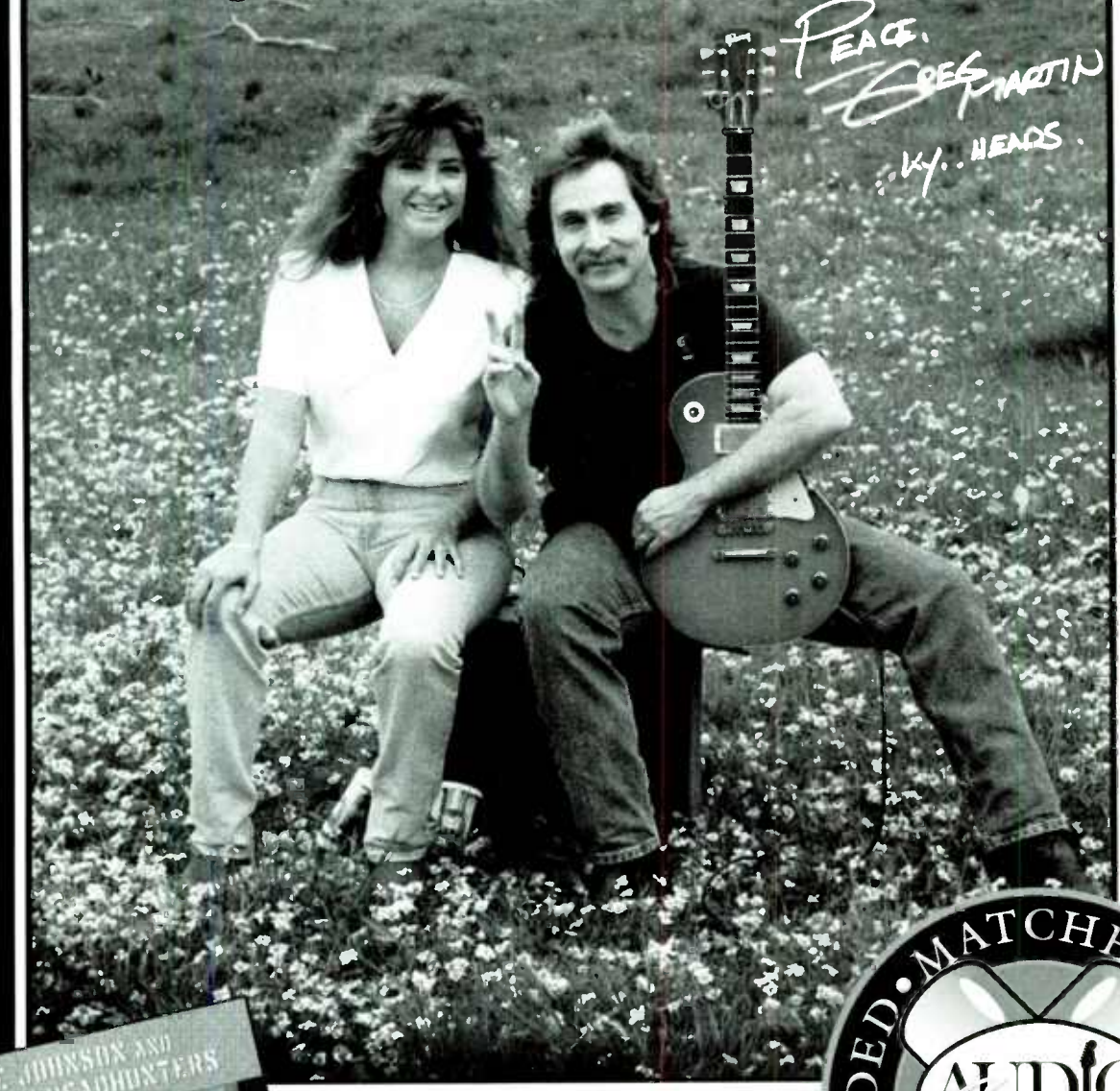

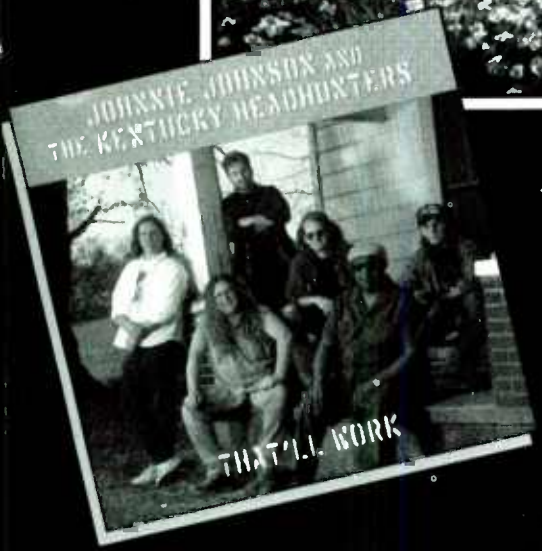

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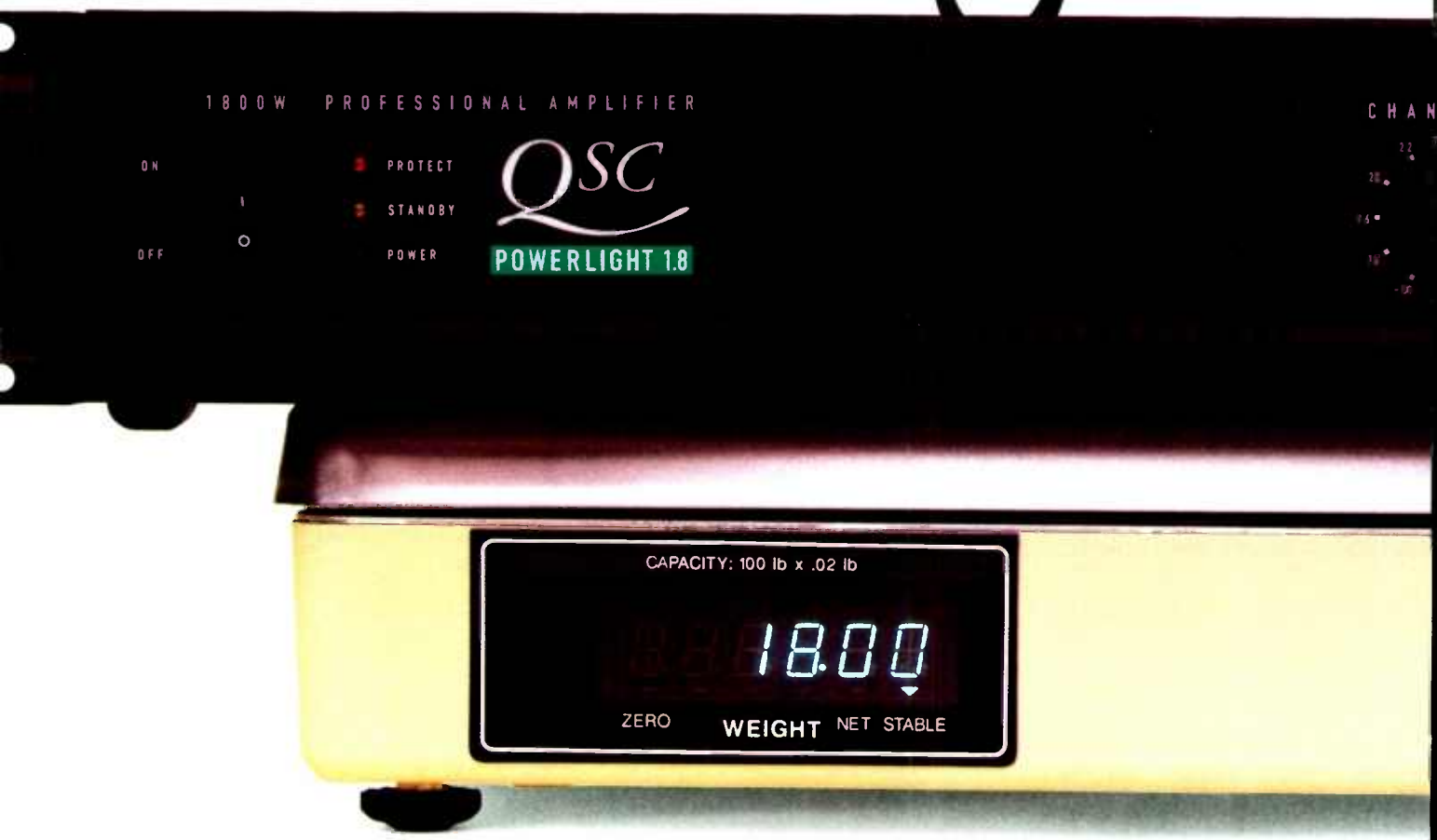

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THEY SHOWED US THEIR MACKIE MIXER

This is a tiny fraction of the mailbags of photos we've received from Mackie mixer owner's lately. All we did was place an eeny weeny ad that read "Show Us Your Mackie" in the back of a few magazines. The response was incredible. 1000's of snap shots of Mackie owners from around the world. Call us toll-free for a complete information packet on our compact mixers and 8•Bus consoles. You'll learn why no other mixer manufacturer could ever get the kind of enthusiastic response that we did.


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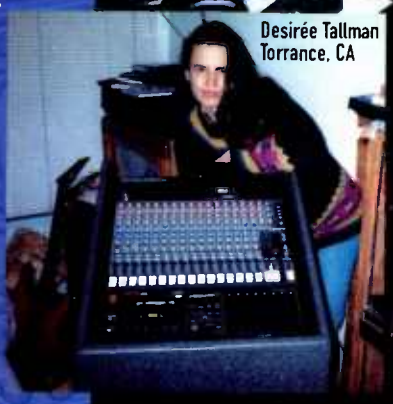
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BUDDY GUY

Eric Clapton and others who should know have long said you're the world's premier blues guitarist. Yet you went without a recording contract for nearly a decade. Now, at age 58, you're finally being recognized by the music industry. You've won two Grammys, and your new live album's eagerly awaited. That's got to be a sweet turnaround.

I still have to slap myself about it. It just makes me feel good that somebody wants another record from me, because I was starting to think I wouldn't get another chance. A lot of record companies, especially in the U.S., had given up on me. The way life is in this world, you work until they say you don't have it anymore, and they all said I didn't have it. Thank God I've got friends like Bonnie Raitt and Eric and Stevie Ray Vaughan, who kept mentioning my name until finally I got the chance to make something that would sell enough for a company to keep recording me. Like I say to Eric, "Everything you touch turns to gold, and please keep touching me."

"I play guitar for love of the instrument, not for love of money."

Did you ever feel like giving up?

I didn't have that much sense. [*laughs*] And if I had to do it over again, I'd be the same, because I play guitar for love of the instrument, not love of money. When I was learning, I didn't think, "I can make a lot of money if I get good at this." That idea didn't exist back then. It was only in the '60s that they started paying you if you could play, and you could actually make a decent living.

So what I went through didn't get me down. I just had to go back to work and play nights. Many a night I left my day job at the Ford company at 6:30, 'cause the guy at the club was calling me and saying, "You better get here 'cause we gotta start on time, there's six, seven people waiting to hear you play." So I'd wash the grease off my hands, take my guitar in the trunk of the car and go play. If the joint was open till two, then my family would see me that night. If it stayed open till four, I wouldn't go home. I'd just sleep in my car for an hour and a half and go to work the next day. A lot of guys I'd started out playing with had wives needling them in the back, saying, "I don't see you and you ain't got no money, so you're gonna have to do something else." I stayed away to keep from hearing that [*chuckles*], and I got the day job so I could keep the lights and gas on. The only bad thing was having children who didn't see that much of me. They couldn't come see me in the clubs until they were 21.

You don't need the day job anymore, but you're still putting in long nights on the road. What keeps you going?

Someone's got to get this music out to people. The legends who I learned from have all passed on, and there are only a few of us left. The kind of music I play doesn't get the exposure that other music gets. Eric Clapton can play songs by Eddie Boyd and Muddy Waters, and you'll hear it on radio stations all over the country, but you won't hear the original Eddie Boyd or Muddy Waters records. That's nothing against Eric, because without Eric, I don't know where I'd be. But if you can play his six times a day, at least play mine once a week, so people know where it all came from.

Why aren't we hearing you on radio more often? Is it a format problem?

I've been asking that question for years and I never get an answer. I know this is a business; the record company says, "Buddy, if you don't make no money, you gone," and I understand that. What I don't understand is that I've finally made something the record company's satisfied with, and radio's still refusing to play it. A couple years ago I did an in-store appearance in Baton Rouge, my hometown, and a DJ from one of the radio stations there asked for my autograph. He said, "I love your record, but I can't play it on my show." I was stunned that he'd just come out and tell me that. This separation of music doesn't make sense to me. When I was a kid, I'd turn on the radio and I'd hear Lightnin' Hopkins, Frank Sinatra, Mahalia Jackson, all together. How great it would be to have a station do that now.

You've had a club of your own in Chicago for several years now. What prompted you to get in on that side of the business?

Back when I was playing in big bands for two or three dollars a night, there were a lot of clubs in Chicago, and people were actually making a living from running them. But between taxes on whiskey and the troubles with drinking and driving, being sued because people were getting into accidents after leaving, it got to the point where places had to close down. Please believe me, though: If it weren't for those clubs, I wouldn't be talking to you now. So I felt I owed this to the young people today, to give them a place where they can be seen and heard like I was. Just about every night that I'm in Chicago, you'll find me at my club with the people playing and the people who just want to talk to me. I'm not looking for a profit. I'm looking for the next Buddy Guy.

MAC RANDALL

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LETTERS

PUNK HISTORY

Enjoyed Bill Flanagan's "History of Punk" (June '95). Personally, I think the Shadows of Knight, the Seeds, the Stooges, and even the NY Dolls were just doing bad Stones imitations. The Stones may not have been "punk" stylistically, but they certainly invented the attitude.

M. Fitzgerald
Jacksonville Beach, FL

I am glad to see that you have not adopted the holier-than-thou attitude of other publications in regard to this influential genre of music. I am a 15-year-old trumpeter, bassist, and guitarist whose interests include Wynton Marsalis, Phish, Nirvana, Bach, Peter, Paul and Mary, and Muddy Waters, and even though punk is not personally my favorite style, I'm impressed that you guys accept punk as actual music. However, *Musician* should mean anyone who plays music. A few more articles about Dizzy Gillespie, Jaco Pastorius, and the numerous other people out there who don't fit the label of the pathetic, misunderstood Generation X-er and yet still influence those of us who know what a plagal cadence is.

Tom Pepinsky
Camp Hill, PA

Nirvana co-founder Krist Novoselic makes the assumption that rock 'n' roll and Christianity are diametrically opposed. I'm a Christian and have been in the music business since 1964. Even today, I enjoy all rock styles and play keyboards in a rockin blues band. I resent the portrayal of all rockers as pro-abortion liberal left wingers. There are Christians who love rock 'n' roll and left wingers who hate it. Let's not be so narrowminded. Can't we just get along. Let it be.

Gabriel Forzano
Coral Springs, FL

Hip, hip hooray for the punk issue! I'm 31; I came into punk when I was eighteen. Minutemen, Gang of Four, Killing Joke, Hüsker Dü, Fang, Sex Pistols, PiL and Flipper helped me to remain a human being in the midst of the evil, right-wing Reagan years. I have always implicitly believed in the ideals of punk: consensus, non-heirarchy, political awareness, emotional immediacy and the DIY philosophy of action. That these ideals also come with music that makes me want to scream and explode with joy is also a cool thing.

Theo Cedar
theoswayb@aol.com

STEVE ALBINI

I really liked hearing Steve Albini's ideas on recording (June, '95). I had some bad experiences with engineers and producers.

We were a club band from Massachusetts with a very dirty sound. This was back in 1966; I was the lead singer; I knew how we should sound more than anyone. In the studio they recorded us their way and we came out sounding like a teeny bopper band. We will never know how things would have gone for us if we had started out by being able to reproduce our live sound in the studio. I have since purchased a Tascam Porta One, and if I get serious about recording, I settle for a Tascam 8-track tape recorder and make tapes for my friends. As far as I can see, it's best to build your own studio. There are probably a million horror stories from musicians who never got what they wanted.

C. Wayne Beckner
New Lisbon, WI

Those homogeneous groups mentioned by Steve Albini have been a real problem for me in a social sense. Get-togethers with friends were always plagued by shouted conversations over soundtracks by Styx, Def Leppard, AC-DC and Guns N' Roses.

I've always thought that some of those records would have been far more interesting if their producers had done the band's hair and the band's hair dressers had been behind the producer's console.

Thanks to Steve Albini for some integrity.

David Hawker
Ripley, NY

I really enjoyed reading your interviews with Mick Jones and Joe Strummer in the June issue. Both pieces brought back memories of those days in the late '70s when I first saw the Clash live. They changed my musical tastes that night The Clash were so different than many other bands of the time—they actually had something to say other than "everything sucks." The Clash made me think while I moved my ass—both their lyrics and the music demanded attention. I left England and in a sense lost my way for a while (booze, etc.), then I saw the Clash in Pittsburgh (with Gang of Four opening) and I was reminded of a positive direction. I cleaned up my act and started moving forward again.

I just had the pleasure to see Big Audio and found that Mick Jones & Co were also kicking ass in a positive direction. I, for one, hope that we get to feel that Clash energy once again. Thanks MUSICIAN for stimulating some great memories.

Mike Lyons
MiketheDJ@aol.com

RECORD EXEC ROCKERS

I read with interest Roy Trakin's "Sleeping with the Enemy" (Mar. '95), on former musicians turned record executives. But what prompted this letter was Hugo Burnham's remark that if Gang of Four had had business sense they could have been bigger than U2. Not to slight Gang of Four, but that's preposterous and that type of reasoning is exactly what's wrong with the business side of rock music today. That there is a formula to this phenomenon of music—"Throw in equal parts of blah, blah, blah." A word of caution to the bands coming up. Be wary of the many former musicians turned record business folk. A lot of them were screwed by managers, production companies and record labels and they now know how to screw you. Be careful what you sign and get your own counsel!

Maria Braden
Rockford, IL

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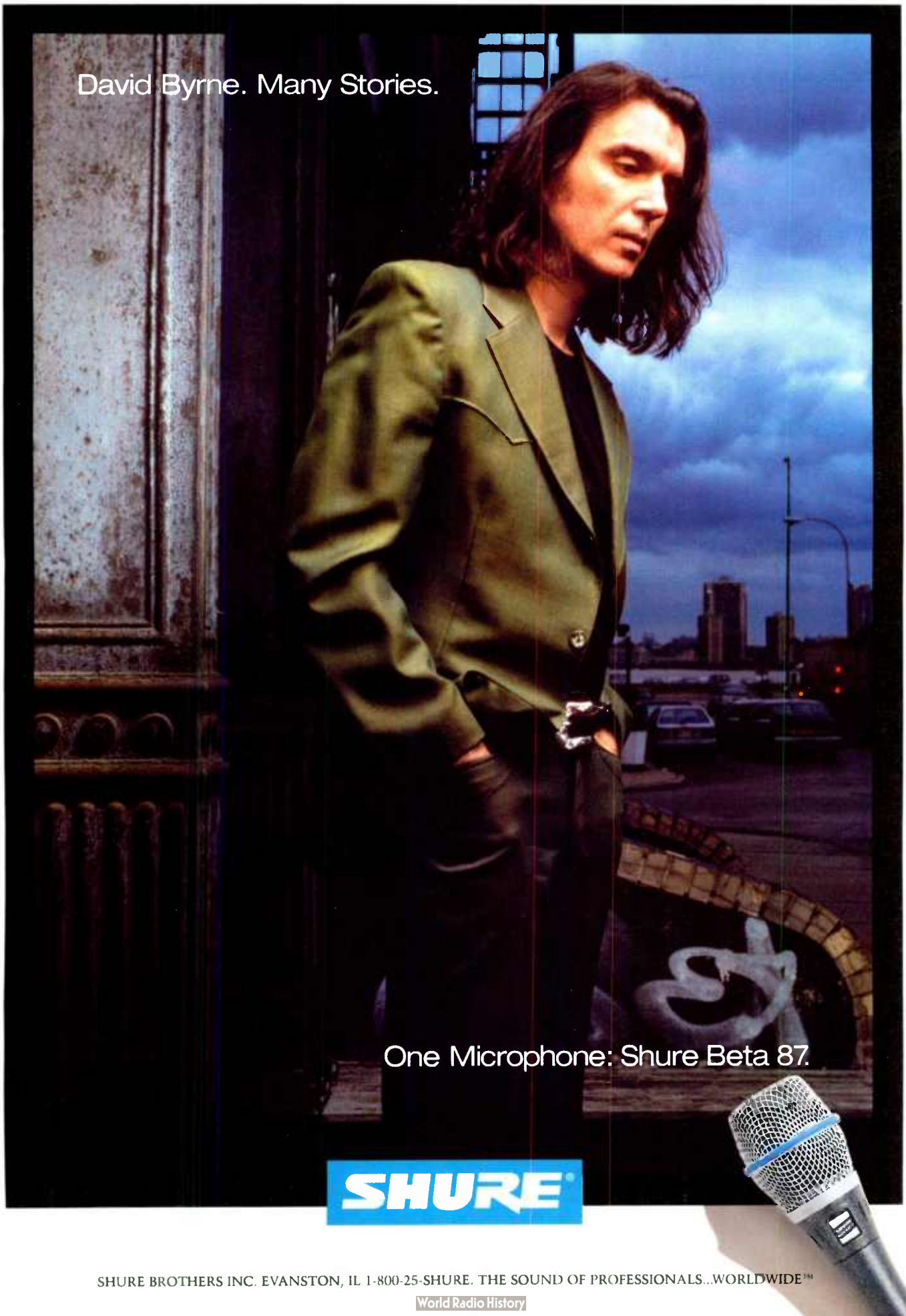

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Beating World Music Into Submission

by Joe Boyd, Rykodisc/Hannibal Records

THERE IS NO SUCH thing as "pure" ethnic music. The greatest forms in popular music are miscegnated in nature. Jazz was born from the rich cultural melting pot of New Orleans. Tango and samba are products of cultural collisions between Africa and European cultures. Even that most *un*fused of musical forms, the English Morris Dance, derives from sailors' *Moorish* dance in imitation of what they had seen in Africa.

So I have no doctrinaire objection to the world music fusions that have proliferated in recent years. But when I hear Youssou N'Dour or Salif Keita's latest hi-tech effort using top American or European session players, my heart sinks. Likewise when I hear the sampling of exotic melodies over a relentless dance beat that comes straight from Euro-American drum machines.

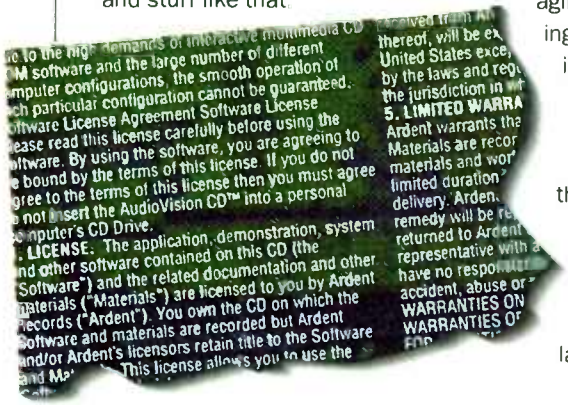
Musicians from all cultures, particularly those from the "third world" trying to crack the Western market, revere Bob Marley, the first and still the greatest "world beat" musician. What puzzles me is that this reverence seems to ignore the fundamental lessons of Marley's approach to his music.

His melodies and lyrics are not particularly typical of reggae. Some call to mind Dylan and Lennon, some American gospel or folk, some hark back to early Jamaican mento or calypso. But beneath them is an undiluted rhythmic foundation of powerful, pure reggae. The key to his music was the marriage of his lyrical and melodic genius with a rhythm section which could not have come from anywhere but the heart of Jamaica.

Compare this with N'Dour. He superimposes the Wolof melodies and lyrics of his culture on a kind of mid-Atlantic "modern" rhythm section. At one point in his Virgin Records days, I was approached by an A&R man about producing him. I was sent rehearsl tapes of the new material and much of it was backing tracks without the vocal. I could play that to any number of experts and no one would identify it as

LICENSE TO ILL

Ardent Records recently released what they call an "Audiovision CD" by a group called Techno Squid Eats Parliament, that's playable both as a CD and a CD-ROM that also includes interviews, videos and stuff like that.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Sounds like fun, but there's a catch—some CD players may accidentally try to "read" the computer data as music, potentially wrecking your stereo in the process. To cover themselves, Ardent encloses a contract that's part of the record packaging, lots of small print regarding licensing and restrictions, including a disclaimer regarding hardware damage and the declaration that "by using the software, you are agreeing to the terms of the license."

There is no truth to the rumor that future products of this sort will also come with a computer-generated lawyer.—*T.G.*

ROU

SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY JAZZ CRITICS CLUB

"Steady and swinging is Grant's playing on 'A Day in the Life.' His solo work is a tribute to the late Wes Montgomery, whose guitar made the song famous."

—From the liner notes to Grant Green's *Green is Beautiful* CD, recently reissued on Blue Note

even African, much less Senegalese. It was mid-Atlantic "world beat" rhythm with plenty of electronic effects diluting the energy of the Mbalax rhythms which propelled Youssou to his place in the galaxy of African stars. Needless to say my views did not endear me to Youssou and I did not get the gig.

When the great artists (and their A&R men) from both the "First" and the "Third" Worlds start to listen to their Bob Marley records more closely and learn the lessons to be found there, we may find some true stars of World Music.

So far, the only concrete result is a trail of unrecouped royalty advances from the immensely costly efforts of the likes of N'Dour, Keita and Kidjo to make hi-tech records which deny their rhythmic roots.

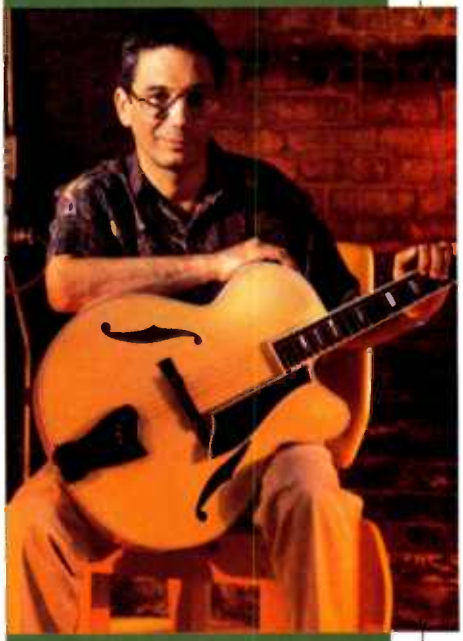
I have more respect for what Paul Simon has done with African and Brazilian music than I do for the depressing fusions of Peter Gabriel, Angelique Kidjo or Deep Forest. Simon starts with the rhythm and from that, everything else grows. The same usually applies to David Byrne. Our Ali Farka Toure/Ry Cooder record has outsold all the Youssou N'Dour or Salif Keita records in the U.S. market by the proverbial mile. It was made in a few days and Cooder never imposes an American rhythmic sense on Ali's pure Malian music. The result is a gem and it has had the success such an effort deserves. Maybe now the lesson will begin to sink in.

ILLUSTRATION BY AD MCCAULEY

JIMMY D'AQUISTO FAREWELL

Jimmy D'Aquisto, the zen master of the modern arch-top acoustic guitar and one of the world's pre-eminent luthiers, passed away in his sleep around midnight April 17, 1995, at the age of 58—the same age as his mentor John D'Angelico. He was on a business trip out west, visiting a facility Fender had tooled up specifically for him—to build a line of D'Aquisto-designed guitars: a laminated electric and a carved arch-top acoustic.

"I finally found someone who respected me enough to build a line of guitars right," Jimmy enthused when I last spoke to him in February. "What really hurts," reflects long-time friend Dan Smith of Fender Musical Instruments, "is that we'd set it up for him to come out to California, where he'd only have to work a few hours a week; he could make maybe a half-dozen guitars a year, and oversee the guitars we were making. We're going to do the best we can to carry on his legacy with the guitars he showed us how to build."



D'Aquisto's instruments were in a constant state of evolution. Jimmy was particularly proud of his advanced new *Solo* and *Centura* designs, and many top luthiers now routinely employ the over-sized bridge and adjust- [*con't on page 95*]

GH MIX


Bill Stewart

RECENT SIGNINGS

Bill Stewart John Scofield's tub-thumper goes solo (Blue Note)

Thirty Ought Six Cocked and ready aggro trio from Portland, Oregon (Mute)

Lifter Slooow, melodic LA-based oufit (Interscope)

Van Gogh's Daughter All-female Frisco alterna-pop crew (Hollywood)

PRIVATE LESSON

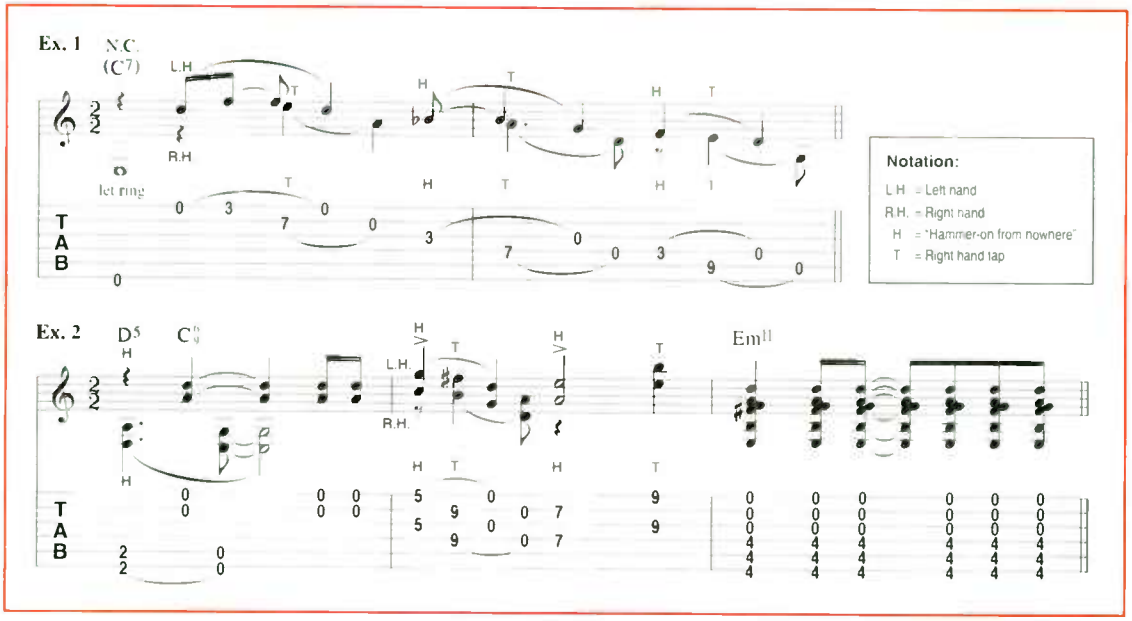
Two Hands, One Neck

Fretting with two hands on an acoustic guitar is a chore for most players. But Preston Reed makes it sound as easy as breathing. Reed, who has recorded nine acclaimed solo albums and has worked with artists ranging from Linda Ronstadt to NRBQ, began his experiments in 1988. "Up to then I had been fingerpicking," he says. "I've always liked dividing up voices, as on a piano. But then I realized that you don't have to play in a traditional way to establish a separate rhythm and melody." Reed went on to devise a new style, with ten fingers tapping pianistically on the fretboard.

Examples 1 and 2, from the title track of the 1993 album *Border Towns* (Liberty), feature harp-like lines produced by a combination of fretted and open strings. In both cases left and right hands alternate hammering on and pulling off. Example 2 includes more difficult two-string tapping, plus a move that Reed calls the "left bar hammer" in which the left hand hammers on several strings at a time. No note is picked in either example; both hands are over the neck.

"Don't be discouraged if you can't get it clean right away," Reed advises. "Getting comfortable with this takes a while."—*M.R.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY E. BRYANT. TABLATURE BY CHARYLU ROBERTS



TRUST BUSTING

A big new front has opened in the ticket wars. Blockbuster video stores in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware will be selling tickets for the new Blockbuster Sony Music Entertainment Center, a 25,000-seat venue opening this spring in Camden, New Jersey. Tickets will also be sold through Telecharge, the Broadway ticket phone service. This could be really bad news for Ticketmaster, whose war with Pearl Jam has earned them a reputation as a price-fixing monopoly. Although the new Sony Blockbuster venture (which includes Pace, a company that owns many concert venues across America) has no official plans to expand their ticket service beyond the three states mentioned *they'd be nuts not to consider it*. The thought of every Blockbuster store turning into a ticket outlet must give Ticketmaster the heebie jeebies. The new service has announced that it will base its service charges on the face value of the ticket. (Pearl Jam's fight with Ticketmaster erupted when Ticketmaster refused to reduce their service charges to accommodate a ticket price.) A spokesman for Ticketmaster responded to the challenge by referring in the New York Times to the Sony/Blockbuster/Pace alliance as "the Japanese conglomerate and its biggest recording act, Pearl Jam." Four points worth making: (1) Sony is indeed a Japanese company. (2) Pace, Blockbuster and Pearl Jam are not. (3) Xenophobia knows no boundaries. (4) Competition is the American way.

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HELIUM

"We had a lot of time in the studio to, um, *experiment*," smiles Mary Timony of the Boston indie-rock trio Helium and their full-length debut *The Dirt of Luck*. "Most of the songs have almost everything distorted except for, say, a vocal or keyboard. The songs are written a certain way, then during recording they get shoved into a hole by all the weird noises."

Don't be deceived, however. Hidden just beneath the dirty production are intimate vocals—the result of Timony's breathy delivery and personal lyrics—and the sort of enticing melodies and sneaky pop hooks that slowly reveal themselves with each successive listen. The end result is alternately spooky and charming, music occupying a fuzzy space somewhere between Pavement, Nirvana and Cocteau Twins.

But why all the distortion? "That's what sounds sound like to me," Timony confides. "It sounds weird to me when we play clean, with no effects. It sounds *boring*."—*D.S.*

T.J. KIRK

What's in a name? T.J. Kirk, the Bay Area's three-guitar and trap set quartet, crams three prodigious influences into their moniker—Thelonious Monk, James Brown and Rahsaan Roland Kirk. More impressively, Will Bernhard, Charlie Hunter, John Schott (guitars) and Scott Amendola, one of the Bay Area's busiest drummers, draw on all three pioneers to create a thumping jazz/funk hybrid that escapes categorization.

"We were interested in telling a different kind of story than just head, solo, head," said bluesmeister John Schott. "We wanted the music to have a different narrative focus."


JAY BLAKESBERG

The band's eponymous CD on Warner Brothers, slated for July release, features some of the most daring interpretations of the Monk canon since the liquefaction of Paul Motian and Bill Frisell. Imagine Monk's gorgeous ballad "Ruby My Dear" interpolated with Sir James' "It's A Man's World" or "I Got to Move" loping into "In Walked Bud." With Hunter supplying bass lines on his trademark eight-string guitar and Amendola's forceful

drum work front and center, T.J. Kirk isn't about guitar heroics, though they offer fretophiles plenty of moves to drool over.

"A lot of people focus on the guitar solos," said Schott, "but what we're really dealing with is an approach to rhythm and groove playing as a vehicle for expressiveness."—*A.G.*

SUPERGRASS

Brandishing a distinctive collection of catchy singles and the rollicking energy of a trio barely past their teens, Supergrass owes its spirit to the pop-cocksure New Wave movement of the 70s. The Oxford, England trio extracts their addictive songs from hours of instrumental exploration, creating a twisting maelstrom of daring harmonies, Attractions-styled arrangements and boundless enthusiasm.


T.J. KIRK

"A lot of what we do just comes out of jamming," says bassist Mickey Quinn, explaining the group's mature-beyond-their-years compositions. "We like jamming cause it makes the songs rather eccentric, not the standard verse-chorus stuff. And we're less formulaic than all these British invasion bands."


SUPERGRASS

I Should Coco (Capitol) begins in straggly punk-glam fashion with "Mansize Rooster" and "Caught By The Fuzz," then expands with the Supertrampish "She's So Loose" (with its "dark country harmonies" and haunting strings) and the Badfinger refrains of "Time." Quinn, drummer Danny Goffee and singer/guitarist Gaz Coombes know no stylistic boundaries. "It's whatever lights our candle that particular afternoon."

Hailing from the scene that produced Radiohead and Ride, Supergrass see Oxford as "a place where good people don't follow the trends. We draw on music from different ages," Quinn observes, "it's like reading just one book. You should read gobs of books; it's loads more interesting."—*K.M.*

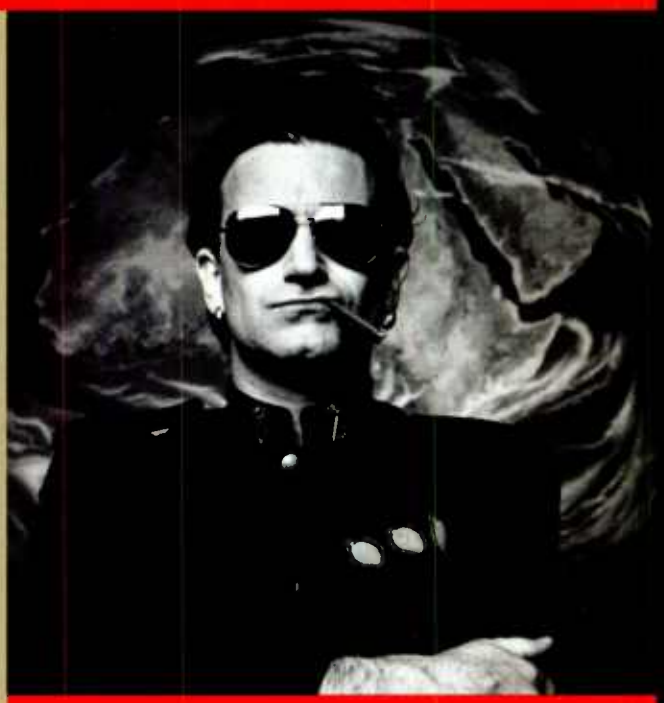
Contributors to this month's Rough Mix include Nathan Brackett, Bill Flanagan, Andy Gilbert, Ted Greenwald, Ken Micallef, Mac Randall and Dev Sherlock.

U2

DO NOT ENTER WHEN RED LIG

U2 never allowed an outsider to watch them record or song-write until MUSICIAN's Bill Flanagan sat in on the sessions that turned into ZOOROPA. Here for the first time is a fly-on-the-wall view of how U2 create their music, from Flanagan's new book U2 AT THE END OF THE WORLD, published this month by Delacorte.

T IS FLASHING



Top right: Edge, Eno, and engineers Willie Mannion and Robbie Adams at the Factory, Dublin. Bottom right: Flood mixes while Bono, on the couch behind him, types lyrics on his Powerbook. Both photos by Andrew MacPherson. All other photos by Anton Corbijn.

AT THE FACTORY IN DUBLIN THERE IS a little alcove with a couch, a desk, and a refrigerator in the corridor between the big room, where U2 rehearse, and the sitting room where U2 relax, hold meetings, and go through their mail. Today that alcove is shuddering to the deep vibrations coming from Adam Clayton's bass amp, which due to some trick of acoustics rumbles in here far louder than it does in the rehearsal room where Adam is actually playing it.

The walls stop shaking and a minute later Adam comes through the door. He heads to the refrigerator and pulls out a squat little bottle of a health food drink called Purdey's Elixir Vitae. Adam claims it tastes likes roots and bark, but is better than drinking Coke all day. Edge comes in and says they should call U2's next album *Elixir Vitae*.

Bono arrives in the alcove and U2 are ready to get to work. They send someone to round up Larry Mullen, who has wandered off. A few minutes later Larry strolls in in a cocky mood, asking, "What's so important you had to interrupt a perfectly good crap?"

"We need you to do some drumming," Bono answers.

Larry says, "Call my manager."

"We sent a letter to Mr. Paul McGuinness," Edge says, "requesting your services this week to play some drums."

"It's the song we were playing last night," Bono says. "Apparently you did a tremendous job but the rest of us..."

Adam says, "Amazingly enough, *you* were fine."

"We face a problem we have faced in the past," Bono explains. "The song has no chorus."

"Aha!" Larry says.

"So," Bono continues, "we have to go in now and come up with one."

The four members of U2 go into the big room, pick up their instruments, and start playing. Producer Brian Eno stands near them swigging Elixir Vitae. The song they are working on is called (at least for today) "Big City, Bright Lights." As they jam on it, Bono makes up lyrics about coffee stains, ghosts, and streets.

"MAKING RECORDS IS LIKE MAKING SAUSAGES," BONO SAYS. "YOU'LL ENJOY THEM MORE IF YOU DON'T SEE HOW IT'S DONE."

At the mixing console in the control room a little red light goes off in the head of the man called Flood, another producer of this project. "Streets" is one of the words on Flood's list of forbidden rock song clichés, along with, for example, "night," "magic," and "secret." Flood figures fresh thinking starts with the little things. While Eno, Bono, and Edge will debate musical and lyrical ideas endlessly, Flood scores his points by attrition. He sits quietly while the others talk themselves out and then does what he had planned to do all along and waits to see if they notice.

Bono stops the song and suggests a chord change to Edge. U2 begin playing again. Bono tries pushing his voice two octaves higher, which makes the performance edgier. He improvises lyrics: "Think about forever...think about the rain...desperate sea. Jacob's ladder rescue me."

The band are back to their original method of songwriting—the four of them getting into a room and jamming until a song emerges. Eno or Edge then go through the tapes, finding sections they like and editing them together into proper song form. Then the band listens, suggests alterations, and tries coming up with words and melodies to go on top of the edited tracks. Bono or Edge will then sing these lyrical and melodic ideas into a Walkman while the track plays. When a song has taken shape that way, U2 listen to the tape, go back into the studio, and try to play it.

Eno has, with professorial organization, set up an eraseable poster board on a tripod in the studio. On it is written:

CYCLE
HOLD
STOP
CHANGE
CHANGE BACK
A B C D E F G

Along the bottom are the musical symbols for sharps and flats. Sometimes Eno likes to stand at this board with a pointer while U2 play, directing when he wants them to go to the next section or change to a different chord. It's actually a workable system, but watching the thin, bald Eno use his board and pointer to direct a rock band is hilarious, like Ichabod Crane conducting the Rolling Stones. I am reminded of the old Three Stooges episode in which Curly is mistaken for a professor at a woman's college. He puts on a mortarboard and black robe, grabs a pointer, and teaches the coeds to sing "B-I-bee, B-O-Bo" while he dances around the classroom. I keep expecting Eno to drop his pedagogical demeanor and yell, "Swing it!"

U2 start another song. Sam O'Sullivan, Larry's drum tech, runs into the control room to ask Flood what this one's called. "If God Will Send His Angels," Flood says. Sam rapidly flips through a stack of papers and says, "We don't have a tempo for this!"

"It used to be called 'Wake Up, Dead Man,'" Flood says calmly. "128 will do fine. 128 or 127." Each song U2 plays has its tempo set by a click track that not only holds the rhythm steady but allows the group to go back later and edit together sections from different parts of the song, or even from different takes. Larry decided years ago that he hated having a *tick tick tick* coming through his headphones onstage, so he instead had the sound of a metronomic shaker or maraca fed softly through his monitor. It sounds more musical, it's unobtrusive, and if a bit of it gets picked up by the microphones it actually adds a subtle color to the sound. In the studio, though, he has to use the headphones and click track—which after eight or nine hours leaves him with a blinding headache.

The band are unsure if the tempo Flood called for is the best speed for "If God Will Send His Angels." They try playing it slowly, they try it faster, they try it too fast. "If God Will Send His Angels" goes from the stately pace of U2's "Walk to the Water" to the energetic plod of Iron Butterfly's "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" to the stumble-footed stampede of the Doors' "Break On Through." This is not progress.

Edge adapts his guitar playing to every different tempo, finding some inspired alternatives along the way, from low, funky wah-wah to high Ernie Isley phase-shifting to something that sounds like a mosquito pumped up to the volume of a buzz saw. Finally he lands back on the ringing dream tones that a generation of young guitarists calls "The Edge."

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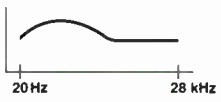

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Eno is hitting buttons on a synthesizer, searching through the files.

Bono addresses the booth through his vocal mike: "We're looking for Brian's 'Dead Man' sounds on the keyboard."

While they're looking, Larry begins playing another song. Bono picks up on it and joins in. This whole jam/tape/edit method encourages the musicians to keep their creative juices flowing—as quick as they get bored with one song they move on to another. The sorting will be done later. Edge comes in with a psychedelic guitar. Bono starts singing about climbing the highest hill, then he repeats a phrase from one of his literary inspirations, Charles Bukowski: "These days run away like horses over a hill."

"Dirty Day" emerges as the title of the song, though Bono also tries out some of the words he's using on another track, "Some Days Are Better Than Others." The lyrics to these two songs might sound abstract (a cynic would say nonsensical) outside this room, but given Bono's current state of mind they make perfect sense: "Some days you wake up with her complaining," "Some days you wake up in the army," "Some days you feel like a bit of a baby," "Some days you can't stand the sight of a puppy." It's a pretty fair peek into Bono's current state-of-mind as he prowls around his house, trying not to trip over his children, his brain still filled with the smoke and mirrors of the Zoo TV tour. He is in that strange mental neighborhood where life on the road seems vibrant and natural and home life, real life, feels claustrophobic and flat.

Bono was talking earlier about trying in these recordings to capture the feeling you get when you're lying in bed in the morning trying to sleep and the music from your kids' cartoons is coming through the wall. Without the pictures, Bono said, the soundtracks are amazing. They are disjointed, cut up to follow the action in a way that defies the rules of music, and you never know when the violins and trumpets are going to be augmented with a sudden scream, freight train, or shotgun blast.

U2 return to working on "If God Will Send His Angels." This song, too, needs a chorus, and Bono has a plan for how to get one. He wants the band to break down at a certain point and beat out one phrase over and over while he chants the title line on top of it. Bono asks Larry to just ride his cowbell to affect this big dynamic shift. Edge and Adam are puzzling over what they should play to make the dramatic gesture Bono wants while still providing the energy lift necessary for the chorus to pick the listener up—not drop him through a sudden sonic trapdoor.

"ON ACHTUNG BABY WE HAD TIME AND THAT WAS A TWO-EDGED SWORD. IT ENABLED US TO NOT FACE THE PROBLEM, TO CONTINUE TO BE FRUSTRATED."—ADAM

"It doesn't have to be a big deal," Eno says. "You could just hold the E for another two hours."

"Larry," Bono says, "try one of your rolls at the end of this sequence." Bono mimicks the beat he wants *rat-ta-tat-ta-tat* and then sings, "OO-OOH, GO-OOOOOH."

They try it a couple of times. Flood says it works. They play it again. Flood says they're losing it—the chorus is now a drop-off, "Not the uplift I imagine you want."

Bono suggests they come into the control room and listen to the different versions. Sitting on the couch during the playback, the band agrees that the song isn't working. Bono says that a circular progression such as this needs a great guitar part to raise it up as the chords go round and round. (In other words, let Edge solve the problem.)

Eno says that the problem may be Bono. He's pushing against the top of his range. He has to climb too high for the chorus, "Squeaking." The song is in E, a tough key for Bono.

"Yeah," Bono says, "E's tough, but guitar and bass players love it and unfortunately U2 starts with the music. It's a discussion we often have." Bono says he's good in G, A, and B but Edge and Adam don't like playing in those keys. Edge is impassive. He's not going to let Bono snake out of dealing with the vocal problem by changing the subject.

After listening to several versions of the song, Eno and Bono agree that a ragged early take is better than the later ones where everyone knew exactly where they were going and the shifts between verses and chorus were sharply defined. As the early version plays again, Eno praises it saying, "See, that's tense without being *thuggish*. The way you're doing it now is lowbrow."

I'm impressed with Eno's use of semantics to sway musical judgment. A different producer might listen to the same version and say, "See, that's nervous without being *ballsy*. The way you're doing it now has guts."

With the backing track thus selected, Eno begins pushing Bono to figure out how he's going to get over his problem with the key and register and find "a real vocal character" for the song. Bono ducks the issue, which gives Eno an opening for his own agenda.

While experimenting in the studio earlier today Eno ganged together several effects and came up with "a great new vocal sound—thin and hard." He thinks it's just what Bono needs for "If God Will Send His Angels." The cynic in me suspects that excited as he is by today's discovery, Eno would find it the perfect sound for "What's New, Pussycat," "Nights in White Satin," or any other song that Bono happened to be singing tonight.

Bono asks suspiciously if this new sound of Eno's has anything to do with the Vocoder. Eno assures him it does not. Bono tries to slip away from the subject by suggesting that he belt out the refrain, "God will send his angels" like an American TV evangelist, "instead of how I'm doing it now, like a bad rock singer." Bono tries it, sounding like Foghorn Leghorn. It is a slippery attempt to use a caricature to avoid his responsibility to actually hit the notes.

Eno, sensing his opponent's weakness, comes back with a semantic uppercut: "This new vocal sound I've found is like a....a..." he pretends to search for an exact description but he knows damn well what he's going to say, "a psychotic evangelist!"

Bono's eyes light up. "That's what I want!" First round to Eno.

As Eno's setting up his sound, Bono tells Edge that he thinks the guitar should stop altogether during this new cowbell breakdown chorus. "It doesn't matter if you're playing different chords," Bono says, "if you're just playing them the same way."

"The chords are just the canvas," Edge says, Zen-like. "What shape canvas do you want?"

While Larry wanders off to shoot pool and Adam to go home, I sit on the couch between Edge and Bono marveling at the compex higher reasoning function of U2, the bisected hemispheres of the band brain—Edge on the left, Bono on the right—seated high and proud

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atop the long backbone of bass and drums. Eno washes over both sides like a super-ego (Tim Booth of the British group James, who Eno also produces, has pointed out that Brian Eno's name is an anagram for "One Brain.") It's great to watch each of these three smart, articulate men try to get his own way by bringing different forms of rhetoric to what are, finally, just matters of taste.

Eno comes on like a philosophy professor, using apparent logic to win his case. Under close scrutiny, though, Eno's syllogisms are a little shaky. He does not proceed from fact to fact to conclusion. Rather he hits on a conclusion first (based on taste or instinct or expediency) and then bends a few facts to make them fit that conclusion. So when

"I LISTENED TO A BLANK 24-TRACK TODAY," ENO SAYS. "IT WAS BLISS. TURN UP THAT HISS!"

Bono mentions that he wants to sing like a TV preacher Eno tells him that his new vocal sound is like "a psychotic evangelist." I'll bet if Bono had said he wanted to sing like King Kong Eno would have described his new vocal sound as "evocative of gigantic monkeys."

Bono, equally clever, tries to win arguments by couching them in moral terms. Even with Eno's new effect Bono does a bad job on his Crazed Evangelist vocal. He wants to leave it and go on to something else. Eno keeps after him to re-do it, until Bono, pushed into a corner, declares, "I am actually ashamed of that vocal. It embarrasses me." He pauses for effect before coming around with the left hook: "And maybe it is *right* that I should be ashamed at that moment. Maybe shame is what that lyric demands!"

Here is a bit of rhetoric any schoolboy late with his term paper could appreciate! Bono makes a *moral imperative* out of his desire to avoid re-singing the song, and suggests that as he is being brave enough to charge into the machine gun nest of public humiliation for his art, the least Eno could do is provide cover.

Edge tends to listen quietly, scrutinizing these arguments between Eno's professor and Bono's martyr, and then punctures their balloons with his own Talmudic logic. Edge analyzes the conflicting propositions like a rabbi and bides his time before zeroing in on the weak spot in Eno's circumlocution or Bono's manifesto.

Flood listens to it all and says nothing. When everyone else is talked out, exhausted, and home in bed he will still be here, making it sound the way he wants.

"A lot of the time I'm like the junior partner," Flood says when the others are gone. "It's almost like you go around with the broom afterwards."

The next day Bono and Edge are standing at the drawing board, studying their long list of song titles and making possible album sequences. There are dots of different color next to each title, denoting how far along each track is. A red dot means the music is there, a green dot means the melody is finished, a blue dot means the lyric is ready. An "x" means "mix the bastard." They are discussing with Larry a track they have been listening to which is titled "Sinatra." The music was written by Edge in an attempt to emulate the classic structures of Tin Pan Alley pop songs. At one point Bono was even singing words about "the wee small hours" over it. Bono has been trying to come up with new lyrics and Larry is throwing in his two cents. Larry says there are too many passing words, lines stuffed with useless *ands* and *thes*. Bono should make those lines shorter. Larry also thinks there's something off in the rhythm.

"Percussion?" Edge asks.

"No," Larry says, "the bass." Larry says he loves Adam's bass part but hates a ghostly effects-altered bass track that the producers have echoing it.

"So basically," Edge says, "your criticism is, *too much bass, too many words, not enough drums.*" Everyone cracks up at the typical drummers' review. Bono says that Larry really wishes he were the singer, Bono wants to be the guitarist, and Edge is a frustrated drummer. "Adam only wants to play the bass."

They listen to another track. Eno says it's a great jam but the guitar going *cha-chaaang* on the third beat makes it too reggae. He wants to move the bass and kick drum over one beat to compensate—have the bass land on the one instead of the two. Adam smiles and says, "And I worked so hard to not play on the one." Everybody remembers that the last reggae song they decided to try playing straight turned into "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For," one of their biggest hits. Eno says that the band should plan on jamming some more tonight from 7 till 9.

Engineer Robbie Adams protests that at this late date more jamming seems like a waste of time. Eno says, "It's actually time efficient." Edge, Adam and Larry can keep jamming, coming up with new stuff— while Eno and Flood mix the best jams and Bono goes off and finishes the lyrics and melodies.

Bono calls it "songwriting by accident," and tells Robbie that what they have to decide now is if this is going to be a song record (see *The Joshua Tree*) or a vibe record (see *The Unforgettable Fire*). And how are U2 to address this decision? Roll out the blackboard!

Soon the band and their producers are studying a catalog of their options that looks like a Chinese menu:

SONGS:	VIBES:	SOUNDTRACK:
Babyface	Numb	Piano: Poem
Wandering	If God Will	Landscape
Sinatra	Crashed Car	Lemon
Zooropa	Jesus Drove Me	Sinatra
Wake Up Dead Man	Cry Baby	
First Time	Indian Jam	
Kiss Me Kill Me	Sponge	
Velvet Dress	Lose Control	
Wandering I.	Nose Job	

Bono wonders aloud of they should edit short bits of many of the different tracks together, creating a montage. He raves about the latest Beastie Boys album. He hated their raps but loved the way their songs jumped in and out of each other. Flood says that's because they couldn't play their instruments well enough to keep a groove going for a whole song, but Bono says that doesn't matter. "It's applying a deejay mentality to rock 'n' roll. And about time." He says that rappers make records at superspeed: "De La Soul made an album in a week! Everybody's on the floor doing everything, including writing the lyrics. These guys don't have degrees in electronics but they know how much studio time costs. We need some of that."

As the band goes in to start jamming again Bono apologizes for the tedium: "Making records is like making sausages," he says. "You'll probably enjoy them more if you don't see how it's done."

U2 fall into a jam around a bass figure similar to that of "This is Radio Clash." Edge stays on one chord, hitting his pedals to try out different tones while Eno, at the synth, drops in little electronic

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"RECORDING THE JOSHUA TREE WAS RELAXED, GREAT FUN. THEN IT ALL EXPLODED."—ADAM

accents that float around the groove like musical satellites. When they finish playing Eno says he really likes that one.

"Yeah," Edge says, "you like it cause nobody ever changes their part!"

"Nothing changes," Eno says. "My dream! I listened to a blank 24 track today. It was bliss. Turn up that hiss!"

U2 keep jamming, coming up with enough songs to insure boxed sets for years after their plane crashes. Watching them work this way it is really striking how much of the U2 sound frequently credited to Edge alone depends on Adam and Larry. Adam often plays with the swollen, vibrating bottom sound of a dub bassist, covering the most sonic space with the smallest number of notes. Larry, who taught himself to drum and consequently got some things technically *wrong*, plays with a martial rigidity but uses his kit in a way a properly trained drummer would not. He has two tom toms on either side of him, and has a habit of coming off the snare onto them that is contrary to how most percussionists use those drums. We're not talking about huge technical innovations here; we're talking about personal idiosyncrasies that have over 15 years solidified into a big part of what makes U2 always sound like U2, no matter what style of music they are playing.

The great joke is that Adam and Larry's playing so perfectly reflects their personalities. Larry is right on top of the beat, a bit ahead —as you'd expect from a man who's so ordered and punctual in his life. Adam plays a little behind the beat, waiting till the last moment to slip in, which fits Adam's casual, don't-sweat-it personality. Charles Mingus once said that musicians should not think of the beat as a dot that has to be landed on precisely, but as a circle in which one has to land *somewhere*. Adam and Larry, who have learned their instruments together since they were schoolboys, are working illustrations of Mingus' point. They've played together so long that they seem to spread the beat out between them. And they create a blanket on which Edge's chord layers rest.

The band finish playing a slippery jam and then parley with the producers in the control room to listen to it. Edge grabs a felt-tipped marker so he can add it to the list on the drawing board. "What shall we call it?" Edge asks.

"Slidey," Bono suggests.

Edge starts to write it and Eno, smiling, says, "Squidgy."

Everyone laughs at that. "Yes!" Bono says, "Squidgy!" Edge writes it. Squidgy is the pet name that Princess Diana is called by her alleged lover in an alleged tape of one of their alleged phone conversations that the British tabloids (and in fact, newspapers all over the alleged world) got hold of and printed. Bono wants to know, "Can we get the tapes?"

The idea is quickly hatched to have the dialogue between Di and her boyfriend be the vocal over this track. U2 and their sidekicks are turning somersaults in ecstacy at the malevolent brilliance of the idea. "Our *je t'aime* to the royal family!" Bono says. Edge

says he agreed with Prince Charles for the first time when he told *his* mistress, in another taped phone call, that he wished he could be reincarnated as a pair of women's trousers. Bono announces that this "Squidgy" track should be seen as a statement of support for Charles. People roll their eyes and cough loudly at that one.

Finally U2's genetic Englishman speaks up. "You realize," Adam says, "that if we go through with this my mother will never forgive me. 'Pop star or no pop star you're not coming in this house!'"

"She's a royalist?" Edge asks.

"Yes. She's beyond logic."

"Who does she like?"

"Charles. She thinks Diana's lost it. 'Of course, she'll lose the children...'"

"Anne has become the popular one now," Edge says. "She's the Bruce Springsteen of the royals. 'Got to give her credit, she's hung in!' Whereas Charles is now Sting."

"I guess," Larry says, "that makes Fergie Madonna."

It's time to try playing the track again. Eno summons Larry and Adam back to their instruments by calling, "Send for the plumbers!"

Adam—making a horrible mistake wonders aloud where the word *plumber* comes from. This sends Eno into an hour-long tutorial on the root of the word plumber deriving from the same Latin root as the word for lead, which leads him to the entwined histories of plumbing and lead poisoning, back to ancient Rome. Eno theorizes that the fall of the Roman Empire may be attributable to lead poisoning (Larry and Adam put down their instruments and pick up the phone to order Indian food) from bad plumbing adversely affecting ancient Italian sanity.

Pretty soon we're opening bags of tandoori as Eno continues his exegesis and Edge throws in the occasional question. Over the take-out Eno explains that a modern historian recreated a meal served to Nero from an excavated recipe and found the resulting supper to be so full of salt as to be literally inedible. "Now," Eno says, his index finger rising as triumphant as a battle flag, "what disease has as one of its symptoms the loss of the ability to taste salt?" A hush falls over the table. "Lead poisoning!"

There is little salt shaken at U2's table tonight.

Bono is distracted. He has promised to spend time at home with his wife Ali before she departs with a Greenpeace group for Chernobyl and so far this week he's been a big liar. Soon he is gone. Eno decamps with Robbie Adams to Windmill Lane studio, around the corner, where they have set up a second shop in order to keep the assembly line humming.

While Edge plays with more of the tapes, Adam and I head into the sitting room to talk about the internal battles U2 went through during the making of *Achtung Baby*. The haphazard, anything-goes attitude of these sessions is in part an attempt to avoid the sort of pressure cooker recording situation that threatened to break up the band last time.

"The problems came because the vision wasn't clear," Adam says. "Dan Lanois as a producer was rooted in the old way of what we did, adding atmospheres and textures to what we played. That was very frustrating for Bono because it wasn't giving him the inspiration he needed. So he was kind of fighting on all fronts. Bono was trying to invade Leningrad and secure Europe at the same time.

"There was a general problem with com-

munication between everyone. There was a misunderstanding about the amount of effort and cohesion needed to see the project through. Whereas with this project there are probably less songs than there had been starting *Achtung Baby*, but the communication is very clear and we don't have much time. On *Achtung Baby* we had time and that was a two-edged sword. It enabled us to not face the problem, to just continue to be frustrated. When in doubt, Edge would do another guitar overdub. He'll do anything to keep the *feeling* of momentum going. Doing guitar overdubs for a week will do that.

"When Edge gets on a roll he gets on a roll. He's always been happy to keep going. I think his process of *keeping going*, although damaging on a personal front, has allowed him to make great strides, has been the right thing for his career. He's made tremendous progress, he's a great guitar player."

Edge comes in with a cassette of a U2 jam on a boom box, sits it on the standup piano, and starts playing piano chords over it. Adam gets up and wanders back to the control room. It's after 11 and Flood's the last crewman on deck. Adam and Flood trade faces about the state of the sessions. One of the strangest aspects of this method of working is that when the four members of U2 jam together they naturally come up with songs that sound like every era of the band—from *Boy* to *The Joshua Tree*. But the rules of the new U2 demand that any such familiar sounds be scrapped or subverted. For Adam, it is sometimes an exercise in intellectualization that does not neccessarily produce the best possible music.

Adam says he remembers the "black hole" U2 went into after *The Joshua Tree*. "Recording *The Joshua Tree* was relaxed, great fun," Adam says. "Then it all exploded. That tour was a piece of shit. *Rattle and Hum* was a piece of shit. Making *Achtung Baby* was a piece of shit." Adam is talking about the working atmosphere, by the way, not the work.

Flood commiserates, "I remember one meeting about scheduling a meeting to decide about making a decision."

"It was only on the Zoo TV tour that it really came together again," Adam says sadly. "And now here we are, back in the studio doing it to ourselves again."

"But you accomplished what you set out to," Flood says. "When a band's reinventing itself as U2 has there has to be a lot of theorizing. From now on you're going to have to carry that extra burden."

It's not hard to understand Adam's frustration with the Socratic approach to record-making. When there's a disagreement about which way to go with a song the argument is as likely to be won by who scores the most debating points as which music sounds the best. Of course, if everyone agreed on which one sounded the best, there'd be no debate.

Adam says that making the first three U2 albums was joyful. They were done in weeks. "*October* was a bit of a slog, waiting for the lyrics. For *War* we had all the songs and it was easy. *Unforgettable Fire* was tough. Same black holes, waiting for the lyrics on that one. We had six songs, then Brian came up with 'Elvis Presley and America' and '4th of July' and gave us something to tie it together."

He sits sadly, blue about the amount of baggage that has been tied to a band that used to just get in a room and play.

Edge sticks his head in the door. "Phone for you, Adam. I think it's Naomi."

Adam goes off to the alcove to pick up his call and Edge comes in to play Flood the

piano part he's just recorded on the boom box. Flood loves it. "Let's find a backing track with no chords," Edge says, "and put it down. We'll play Bono something he's never heard and just hand him a microphone."

Adam comes back in with a canary-scaring smile across his face. "Guess who I've got as house guests for the weekend," he announces. "Naomi Campbell and Christy Turlington! They just decided! They're going straight to the airport."

Flood looks at Adam, whose black mood has been transformed, and says, "Tough life." Adam takes off to prepare his bachelor pad for visitors. This is the time of night when Edge and Flood go to work like shoemaking elves, cranking through the small hours so that when the others return tomorrow they will be amazed at the creations laid out before them.

Edge's guitar tech Dallas Schoo points to his boss and smiles, "That guy never goes home." He says they often come into the studio without a song, jam away and you think nothing's going on, and all of a sudden—wham—a song will appear. And they'll change anything. Most bands get locked into playing a song a certain way. U2 will work and work at something, get it almost finished, and then one of the guys will suddenly change the part he's playing and they'll all follow him off in a whole different direction. You'll think, "What are they doing? It was almost done! Wrap it up!" But often, Dallas, says, that new part will lead them into something better than what they had.

Edge puts up his new demo and listens to it. He asks if Larry is still in the building. No, Flood says, Larry went home. Edge gets up and goes out to the big room, takes a seat at Larry's drums and starts whacking out a raggedy beat while his demo plays. He spots a roadie packing a flight case and asks him to come over and just keep doing this on the drums. The roadie does, and Edge moves over to a keyboard, adding another part.

Flood records the whole thing and then Edge listens back to it. He thinks there's a song there but would really like to hear it with a different structure—use this part as an intro, repeat the verse twice the second time through, reprise the intro going into the final chorus. He thinks about it for a while and then asks Flood if it would be possible to sample each section of the song onto a keyboard, so that hitting one key would play just the chorus, another key just the intro, another key the verse. Flood says sure. He digs out a sampler and sets about doing it.

"EDGE WILL DO ANYTHING TO KEEP MOMENTUM GOING. A WEEK OF GUITAR OVERDUBS WILL DO THAT."—ADAM

Forty-five minutes later Edge is in Edge heaven, sitting on the studio couch with a keyboard in front of him, masking tape on the keys labeling the different parts of his song. He can play a dozen variations of the track with one finger. Flood rolls tape to capture the different versions as Edge tries a chorus at the top, using the intro as a coda, and every other structural rearrangement he can think of. He's not thinking about deadlines or record releases or tour rehearsals or family problems now. Edge is lost in his music, and he will happily stay here all night.

STEVE EARLE A

RAGGED COM

HERE'S A STORY TOLD BY A Nashville insider who knows Townes Van Zandt and Steve Earle. You can decide for yourself if you want to believe it.

Earle was over at Townes' house shooting his mouth off and playing with Townes' guns. Townes, who speaks less often than a wooden Indian, got a little tired of the chatter and said, "See, Steve, you don't really understand guns. Let me explain." Townes picked up a pistol, put a bullet in the chamber, spun it around, put it to his head and pulled the trigger. Click. Earle jumped up yelling. "Townes! Cut it out!" Townes said, "See, you *still* don't understand guns." Put in a second bullet, spun the chamber, put it to his head again and CLICK. "That's it," Earle said, "I'm not gonna sit here and watch you shoot yourself," and got on his motorcycle and split. Townes got his peace and quiet. If he'd killed himself? He'd have got some peace and quiet either way.

Townes Van Zandt and Steve Earle are both great singer/songwriters who have, against absurd odds, gotten better and better as they have gone along. Van Zandt's latest album, *No Deeper Blue*, is a masterpiece, as good a record as you'll hear for a long time. Earle's new *Train A Comin'* is also superb, all the more remarkable because it followed a long dark period during which the songwriter was dropped by his label, hooked on hard drugs, and sentenced to prison. That these two shady characters could cap already brilliant careers with such work is a credit to their talents and a credit to the muse.

When Steve was told that *Musician* wanted to get him to sit down with Townes for an extensive double interview he said, "They must be gluttons for punishment." Earle and Van Zandt are both well-known handfuls, legendary troublemakers who might steal your car and run off with your girlfriend while you were setting up the tape recorder. Getting them to agree to be in the same place at the same time took months, and might not have ever happened at all but that (1) we picked a date the morning after Townes had a gig in Nashville, so he had to be home and (2) Steve has to stick close to town as a condition of his parole. He just got out of jail after a drug bust, which was the last straw after avoiding prison on such previous charges as beating up a cop.

As for Townes, well, don't even ask about Townes. He is one of the greatest songwriters alive, but in nearly

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM HERRINGTON

ND TOWNES VAN ZANDT

PANY

A MUSICIAN FORUM BY BILL FLANAGAN

thirty years of making superb records he has never been on a major label and is almost as notorious for his brushes with death and self-destruction as he is for having inspired Earle, Lyle Lovett, Rodney Crowell, a whole school of Texas songwriters. Earle has been widely quoted for his line, "Townes Van Zandt is the best songwriter in the whole world and I'll stand on Bob Dylan's coffee table in my cowboy boots and say that." When you hear the perfect blend of poetry, melody, and melancholy in Townes' best work, "To Live is to Fly," "Pancho and Lefty," "At My Window," "Katie Belle Blue," and "Tecumseh Valley" you could almost believe it, too.

According to legend—almost everything about these guys is legend and it's useless trying to get them to help sort out the truth—Townes was once brought to a hospital and pronounced dead. After he woke up he went out and titled his next record *The Late Great Townes Van Zandt*. He has been in and out of rehab and hospitals like a gurney. Now 52, he can't get served at many bars in Nashville.

> "I can't say that everything I've done has been worth it. I sure wish I hadn't hurt people."

Earle, 40, who grew up following Townes and his poetry and his wicked ways from Austin to Nashville to hell, has banged up against every wall the music business tried to build around him. In the mid-80s albums like *Guitar Town* and songs like "The Devil's Right Hand" made him country music's Next Big Thing. But his records got louder, his behavior more outrageous, and before too long Earle would walk into a Music City restaurant and see all the faces turn away from him. He mouthed off about it, too, picked fights, made enemies. It would be wrong—and Earle would not accept it—to romanticize him as a pure talent spurned by the hypocrites in power. Earle gave those suits plenty of good reason to hate him. But what never gets mentioned in the discussion of Earle's public transformation from rising star to fallen man is that his records kept getting better. *Guitar Town* was terrific, but the rock 'n' roll *Copperhead Road* was mightier and the maligned *The Hard Way* was one of the best, truest, rawest hard rock albums of the 80s. "There are those that break and bend," Earle hollered. "I'm the other kind."

When it was obvious that his time was up and MCA was going to drop him, Earle delivered an unrelenting live record called *Shut Up and Die Like an Aviator* that ended with a defiant cover of a song Townes Van Zandt also sings in concert, the Rolling Stones' "Dead Flowers": "When you're sitting there in your silk upholstered chair, talking to some rich folks that you know, I hope you won't see me in my ragged company. You know I could never be alone." It was the perfect middle finger salute to the music industry.

After many false starts we met up in Nashville at the home of Townes ex-wife and children. Jeanene Van Zandt had explained that if we let Townes get us out to his place, "He'll break out the roulette wheel and take all your money." The night before Townes had been in great spirits and great voice, playing a set at the Nashville club 12th and Porter. When he crawled into Jeanene's house the next day he could hardly walk, hardly talk, and was looking for a bottle. Jeanene gave him coffee instead. Earle, who has been avoiding Nashville for family life on a spread outside of town, roared in five minutes after we turned on the tape recorder, talking a mile a minute and trying to coax Townes into a fishing trip. As often happens to people who suddenly quit drink and drugs, Earle has put on weight. He looks like *Sailin' Shoes*–era Lowell George. But that's a small price for staying alive. These two misplaced Texans may cause a lot of trouble, but they're worth it. We're lucky to have them around.

MUSICIAN: *For a young man who has the gift there's something very romantic about the notion of a life on the road...*

TOWNES: If you have the gift the romance comes later. You have to realize you have the gift. If your gift's to be a plumber or a carpenter or a truckdriver or a preacher you realize you've got the gift and all the rest comes with it. Once you dedicate yourself to that, the rest comes.

MUSICIAN: *Have you ever tried to walk away from it?*

TOWNES: Well, sometimes I get a little tired. I come back off the road and I say, "Boy, I'm not goin' back out again." Then my booking agent calls and says, "Somebody canceled in Minneapolis day after tomorrow. You want to go?" "You bet!" So it doesn't work like that. [*Earle enters like a thunderstorm.*]

EARLE: It never occurred to me anybody would try to resequence one of my records! Irving Azoff never tried to resequence one of my records! To me that's the antithesis of what that kind of label should be. They had a contractual right to do it, I totally overlooked it in the contract. I'd just gotten out of jail. It was the perfect record for me to make. I made this record more for me than anybody else. When I met Townes he told me I wasn't a folksinger because I didn't know "The Wabash Cannonball." I still don't know "The Wabash Cannonball"! Some of those songs are about as close as I get.

MUSICIAN: *Think how good you'll be once you learn it. Your new album must be good, Steve—the maid stole it out of my hotel room this morning.*

EARLE: I shot up my copy with a .50 calibre muzzle load cause I was so pissed off about the sequence. It was a pretty good shot, Townes! It was from here to there in the dark.

MUSICIAN: *Elvis Presley needed a whole television.*

EARLE: I've had a little bit more practice. But it was about doing an acoustic record. Some of these are songs I wrote when I was 19 years old. When I first got here to town. I threw away everything I had written in Texas when I got up to Nashville. About three of these were written the first year I was in town. Story songs come pretty

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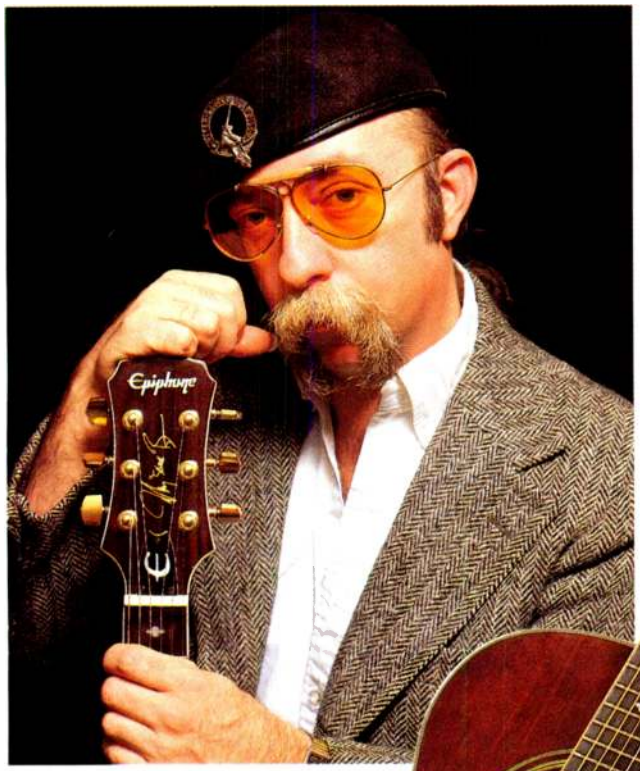

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easy to me. I played bass for Guy Clark when I first got to town. I knew Townes in Texas. First time I saw Townes was at Jerry Jeff Walker's birthday party in Austin and I crashed it. Townes showed up and Jerry Jeff had given him a jacket for his birthday which is shortly before Jerry Jeff's and he lost it in a crap game in about ten minutes. Two weeks later I was playing the Old Quarter in Houston and Townes was sitting there. I got to Houston just in time to finish off a dying folk music scene. There was nobody left!

I left for Nashville in November of '74 when everybody told me it was going to be happening in Austin. "Stay here it's going to be a big music scene." I knew it wasn't true. It's too close to the border, the girls are too pretty and the dope's too cheap, weather's too good. You can't get nothin' done! I knew it was bullshit and I was too serious in those days. I came straight up here.

TOWNES: We were a whole group and then we all moved to Nashville. Guy Clark and Richard Dobson and myself and Skinny Dennis and a few other guys who were a bit older than Steve. Steve was the kid of that group. Like Ramblin' Jack was the kid of Woody Guthrie's group. It was curiously close to that situation. We all germinated here. We'd have a bottle of red wine, Skinny'd have his bass, Steve and myself, and Guy would have his guitar and a song he'd written last night.

EARLE: It was like going to school for me. Every night there was a party like that going on somewhere.

TOWNES: And you could hitchhike to Oklahoma City or Dallas and audition on a Wednesday and play on Friday for 20 bucks. That'd last you two weeks and you'd go to Denver.

MUSICIAN: *Is there anyplace like that now?*

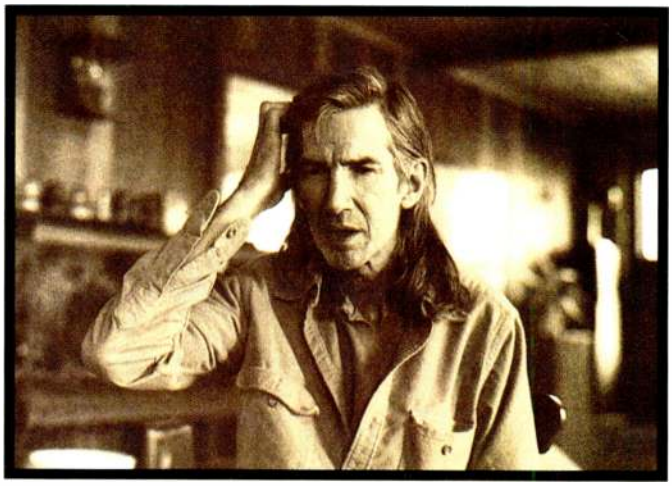
TOWNES: No. You have to have an album. You have to have some sort of a name. I know where I'm gonna be playing for the next five months.

EARLE: I met Mickey Newbury at Guy's house. I was making my very first tape. Mickey won my goddamn jacket from me in a poker game one time in the middle of winter and I almost froze to death.

TOWNES: What happened?

EARLE: I kept drawing to a fuckin' inside straight! What do ya think happened? I learned how to play poker the hard way. Jackets and hats...

TOWNES: We don't care about material stuff. We want to hear the guitar ring one note correctly and your voice ring the same note correctly with the proper meaning correctly for that instant. Travel 5000 miles all over and lose jackets and end up looking like him or looking like me, but if you hit that note, it goes around the world and maybe—this is not bragging but it's hopeful, kind of prayerful—maybe somehow connect up with a baby in England or Ireland or Ethiopia and somehow make a shade of difference. Plus, it keeps us off the streets.



"Drama drops down on us like teardrops. Boy, if I had any more drama in my life I'd drown."

MUSICIAN: *Both of you will put a line into a song that will be like a light going on saying, "This is about me personally." A step into autobiography.*

TOWNES: Into *your* autobiography. Steve and I are songwriters. And that just *comes* to us. We don't put anything in. He would like nothing better than to forget his whole life! Me too! Whew! Let's start over fresh. We wrote those songs because they come down, some come inside, some come outside. We write 'em for the people that don't write songs. So if you find something autobiographical, that's coming from you! He wrote it and it struck a note in you. That's your biography comin' out. Steve ain't got no biography, I don't have no biography. We just travel around and act like idiots and try to write songs.

EARLE: You're not entirely wrong. The older I get the more things I have to write about, but when I was younger I made shit up left and right and I still do now because I can. There's things that are autobiographical in my songs that you probably would never associate with me in a million years. I've had a lot of people sit around and speculate about the bad things that have happened to me over the last few years, but the truth of the matter is that no matter how bad they think it was, the reality's *worse* and nobody knows it but me. I'm not gonna write about that now. All I can write about is how it looks to me from this end. I'm still here.

My influences started to be people I *knew* at a pretty early age. I was still real young, at the point where you flat emulate people. Back then I wanted to be Townes. The way I play guitar came from Townes more than probably anybody else. The way I wrote for years came from Guy more than anybody else, cause story songs are Guy's strong suit. I can write story songs standing on my head. All you've got to do to be able to write story songs is to talk as much as I do and play guitar and have a halfway decent memory. The stuff I'm prouder of is songs like "My Old Friend the Blues," and that's the stuff of mine that is more influenced lyrically by what Townes does. Most of the time I try to write lyrics that are conversational. It's like writing dialogue in a book. I say, "He wouldn't say that," either because of lack of education or the part of the country he's from. But most of the time I'll stick pretty close to people who talk like me, 'cause it's a lot less work. But I've never intentionally stuck an autobiographical phrase into a song. I don't really know what you're talking about.

MUSICIAN: *Let me give you examples from other songwriters. In "Dancing In the Dark" Springsteen deliberately chose to say, "I get up in the evening" rather than "I get up in the morning" as a flag telling the listener than he was writing about himself, not a character. I've talked to Dylan about this sort of stuff and, like you, he started off say-*

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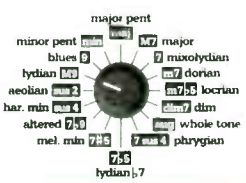

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ing that his songs were not autobiographical. So I mentioned "Ballad in Plain D" and he said, "Oh yeah–that one. I must have been a real schmuck to write that." Songwriters hate to admit it, but they all do it.

TOWNES: I see what you mean. That's a beautiful song.

EARLE: When you talk about everybody we're talking about, you're talking about songwriting at a certain level. At such a high level, number one, it doesn't make any difference what's autobiographical. It's all autobiographical and none of it is.

TOWNES: Number one, it's killing us. It's killing us. He loves it, that's what he was born to do. That's what I was born to do. We're sending it out there and going through whatever we have to do. I've been fifteen thousand miles in the last three months. Steve's been wherever he's been. It's killing us. We can make 'em up. It's always going to have to come from the heart and the brain but sometimes it's going to come from the ceiling or the walls. They go out there and hopefully if the radio stations and the record people get 'em on the airwaves and in the stores people will hear them. If we can help one kid this big or one adult feel a shade lighter on this trail, this veil of tears, if they can hear a song of Steve's or one of mine and it makes them feel better.

MUSICIAN: *Even a sad song gives people comfort, cause they feel they're not alone.*

EARLE: One of the worst things wrong with country radio now is that they've forgotten what hillbilly music was all about. You can't go to a jukebox anymore when you're bummed out! You don't want to hear somebody singing a bunch of happy shit. Sometimes you're bummed out and you're *into* it. They've gotten away from that. They want songs that are uptempo and positive. Life ain't always uptempo and positive. Mine hasn't been. Well, it's always been uptempo but it hasn't always been positive [*laughter*].

MUSICIAN: *Townes, you make it sound like the songwriter is the sin-eater, taking others' burdens on himself so they can be free of them.*

TOWNES: We're not sin-eaters. We don't have to eat it, we just do it on the natch. But there's blues-eaters. Some people suck up the blues so that others won't have 'em. Lightnin' Hopkins told me that. I think I'm a bit of one. And it's not painful. Steve's one of 'em for sure. Eric Clapton's one of 'em for sure. It's not painful or noticeable but I believe truck drivers and dentists and garbage guys and mandolin players can all write songs and all do. But a songwriter has a certain ability to know when a song comes and catch a song and write it down. It takes a certain amount of craftsmanship, you got to have your instrument and you have to realize when one is happening. But songs are all through the air like a rainbow. Man, I've seen little eskimo children dancing around in a circle making up a song, or old folks. There're songs everywhere. We just happen to have chosen that as a profession.

EARLE: The craftsmanship part you can learn, but there's a part that you're born with. I was in Mexico one time living in a town with a lot

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Steve Earle is as expansive as Townes is tight-lipped: "My main guitar right now is a Gibson J160E, one of the new ones. When I play electric I play Les Pauls, or a Tokai Telecaster copy I just got. It's a one-piece body—real rare in a Tokai. I've got a couple of Rickenbackers, a 3/4 size Rick like Lennon used. I just bought a 1910 A model Gibson, I've got a couple of Gibson double necks, a six- and twelve-string. I use Gibson strings.

"I got some Epiphones, too, high strung. I bought my daughter an Epiphone Bluesmaster for Christmas, a parlor-size guitar like Washburn made, and ordered one for myself. I just bought a Supro fiberglass resonator guitar—found one in perfect shape.

"I use Peavey amps onstage always, cause they never blow up. Lately I've been playing through a Fender Pro Junior—it sounds like a Vox. It's got two knobs, one volume control and one tone control. I like that in an amp.

"I've used Shure mikes for stage always. Wireless for big shows, hard wires in clubs. I use Neumann U49s in the studio. I'm making analog records for the first time in my career now. I made my first record for MCA digital cause that's what they did and I was committed to that format for years, but the engineers I'm working with now use analog. Analog's a more musical process in that the harmonics and distortions of the format are musical."

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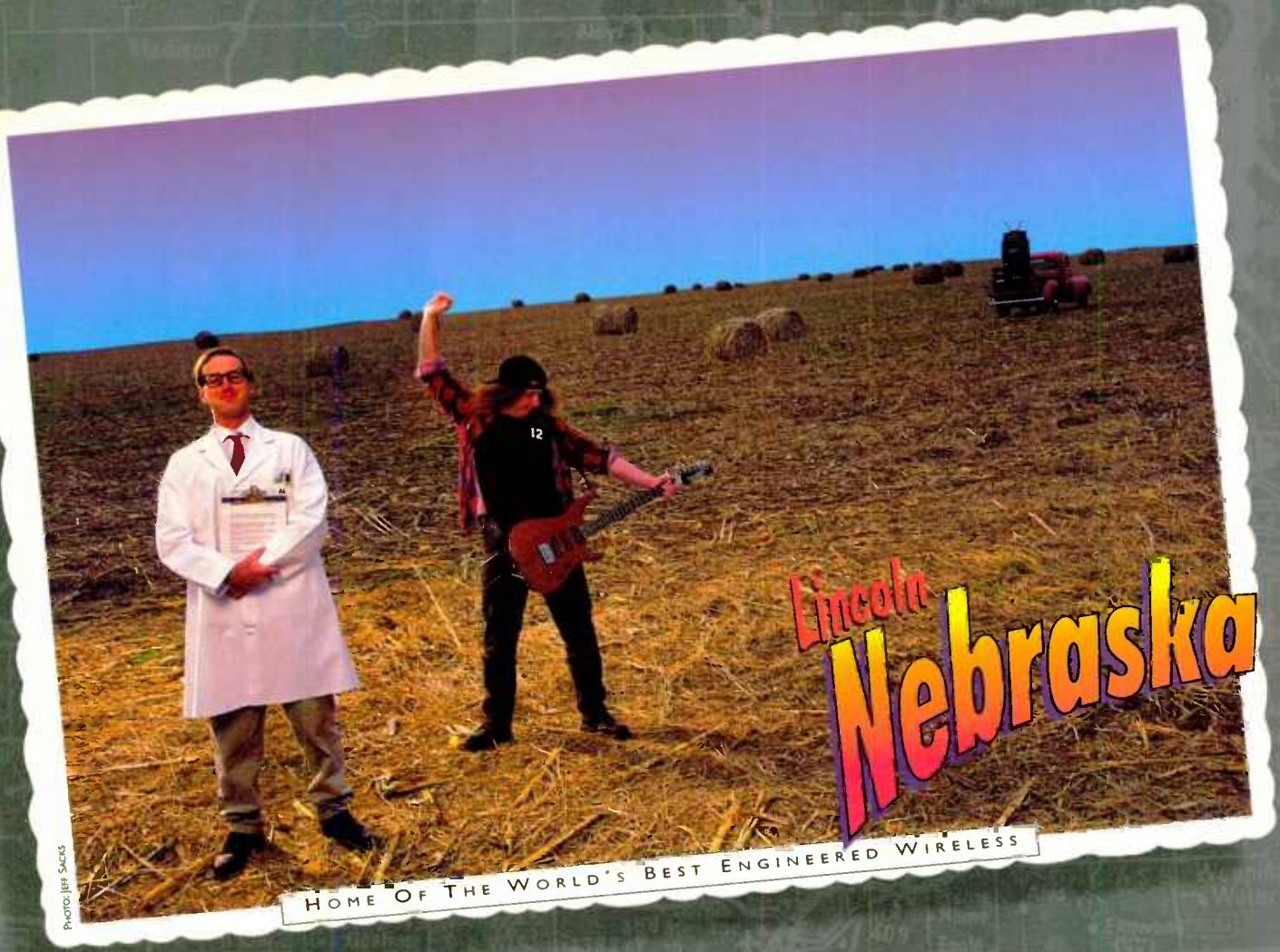

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of painters and novelists. I was feeling sorry for myself one day talking to a buddy of mine and I said, "If I'd finished school I could write books," and he said that what I was doing was possibly a more viable form of literature in this day and age than books are. This really had a big effect, it kept me doing this when I was the closest I ever came to quitting. If I didn't read I couldn't write, I know that much. Townes made me read "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" and "War and Peace" cause he found out I hadn't read 'em. So I know he reads. But this is the kind of literature you can consume while you're driving your car. That's one advantage.

MUSICIAN: *"Goodbye" is a fantastic song on your new record, Steve.*

EARLE: I wrote it when I was locked up. I hadn't written anything in a long long time, a couple of years. The guitar thing in that, that whole fingerpicking style, is from Townes. I don't do it right, I use my thumb and finger.

TOWNES: I'll sue.

EARLE: Good luck! You and I could sue each other and create a black hole.

MUSICIAN: *When you sing, "Was I off somewhere, was I just too high," you've made a choice to make that song seem very personal.*

EARLE: It's not a choice, it's the way we write. There was one period when I went in every day to an office and wrote songs eight hours a day, cause I had a kid and I panicked. I wrote differently. I don't regret it. I threw more songs away but some of the stuff on this album is from that period. But the writers that I met when I tried to co-write with people, we're not coming from the same place. Some of 'em are the real deal but they made a choice somewhere along the line to do A, B and C to get their songs played. That's great for them. For me, the writers I was exposed to at an early age did it no matter what and did it the best they could do it. That's where lines like that probably come from. You don't edit those things. And it's not free. You pay for it. I've written songs that pissed my wife off. There are times when I catch myself saying, "Oh, I don't want to say this," not because it shouldn't be said but because I don't want to hurt anybody. And I probably do edit myself, but not enough to keep me out of trouble.

MUSICIAN: *What do you owe the audience, what do you owe the song, and what do you owe to the people you might hurt?*

EARLE: What do I owe the audience? I owe them something, they feed my kids. They

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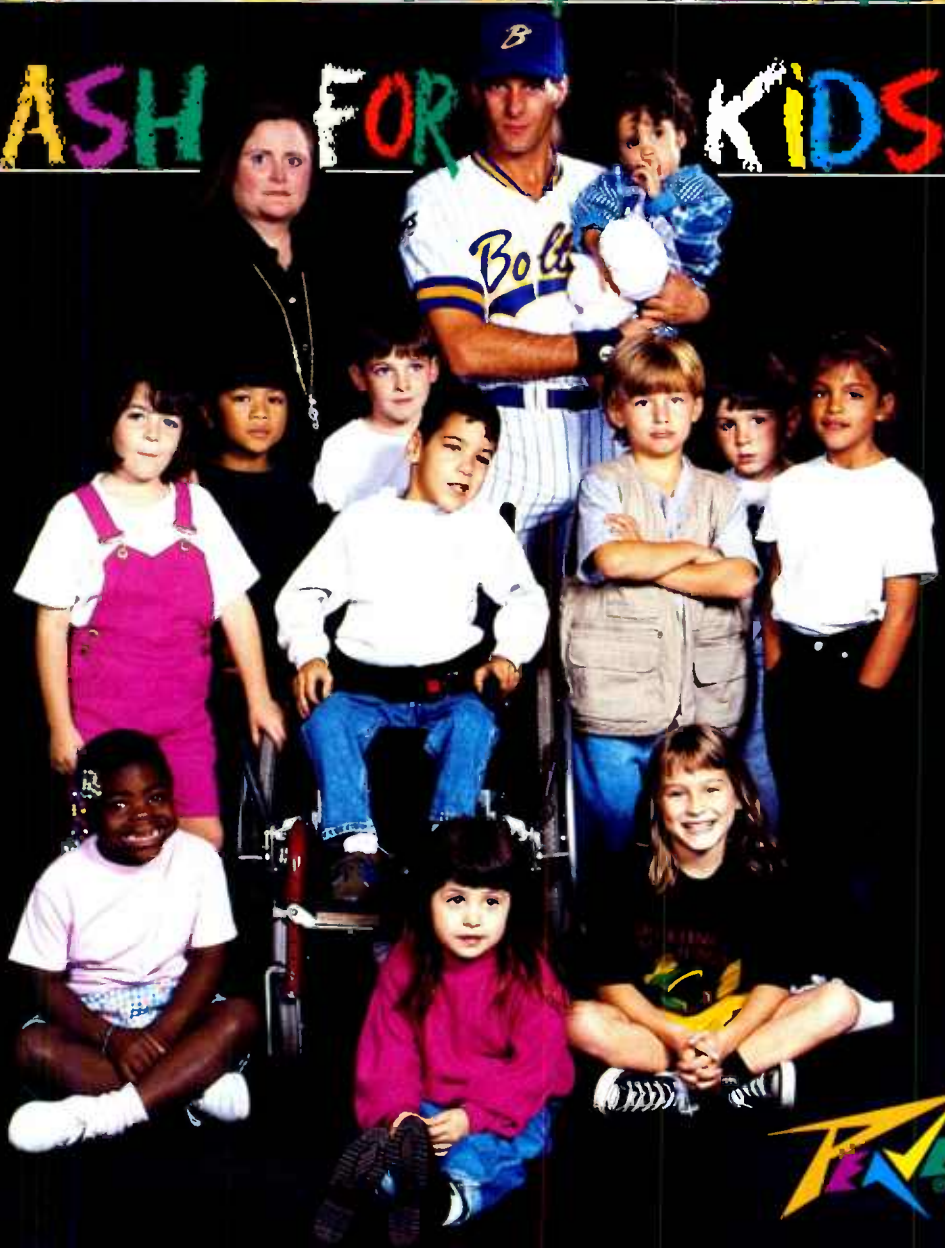

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legitimize me to myself every night, so I owe them something. I don't owe them everything. But I can sit here and say that and that doesn't have anything to do with what actually happens when I write or I go out and play in front of an audience. I can't help thinking that if I'm doing it right, I'm not thinking about it much when it's going on. I can sit here and analyze it as much as you can, but when I'm doing it, I'm just doing it.

MUSICIAN: *Townes, let me ask you about a line in "A Song For."*

TOWNES: I already know the line: "There's no place left in this world for me to go/My arms, my legs are a trembling/Thoughts both clouded and blue as the sky/Not even worth the remembering/Now as I stumble and reel to my bed/ All that I've done and all that I've said/Means nothing to me, I'd as soon as be dead and all this world be forgotten." Is that it?

MUSICIAN: *Yeah.* [Earle laughs hard] *At what point do you say, Okay, I've done my best.*

TOWNES: I don't think you can ever do your best. Doing your best is a process of *trying* to do your best. We're all critters, that's for sure. Steve and Jeanene and Will and Katie Belle. All you can do is try to do your best. If you ever do your best you'll explode.

EARLE: I hate when that happens.

TOWNES: If you start searching for songs, if you realize that's what you want to do—and there's a certain level of intelligence to it, your level of vibrations to it—once you decide to pursue that you start digging deeper into certain realms and you start traveling, you start throwing away your families and your money and everything else except your guitar and other people's feelings. You keep those in mind and cover as many miles as you can. You zero in on your playing. It's not like [*fey voice*] "Oh my! My heart shall never beat again!" It ain't like that, man, it's stone cold truth.

EARLE: Somebody asked me if I felt I had to create drama in my life to be able to write. No!

TOWNES: Hey, drama drops on us like teardrops. Boy, if I had any more drama in my life I'd drown!

EARLE: It just finds you. There is probably something you can do to avoid it but I didn't do it. My life didn't work out that way. "Doctor, it hurts when I do this!" "Don't do that."

TOWNES: I told the doctor about a week ago, "Doctor, nobody will talk to me!" He said, "Next!"

EARLE: My favorite joke of Townes' was when he played the coffee house at Texas A&M and the first thing out of his mouth he said, "I hear you guys want to be called Agro-Americans now," and *nobody* laughed. I'll betcha Lyle Lovett and Robert Keen were both in the audience.

MUSICIAN: *You know, Townes, if somebody didn't know your "Buckskin Stallion" they wouldn't really be able to appreciate Lyle's "If I Had a Boat."*

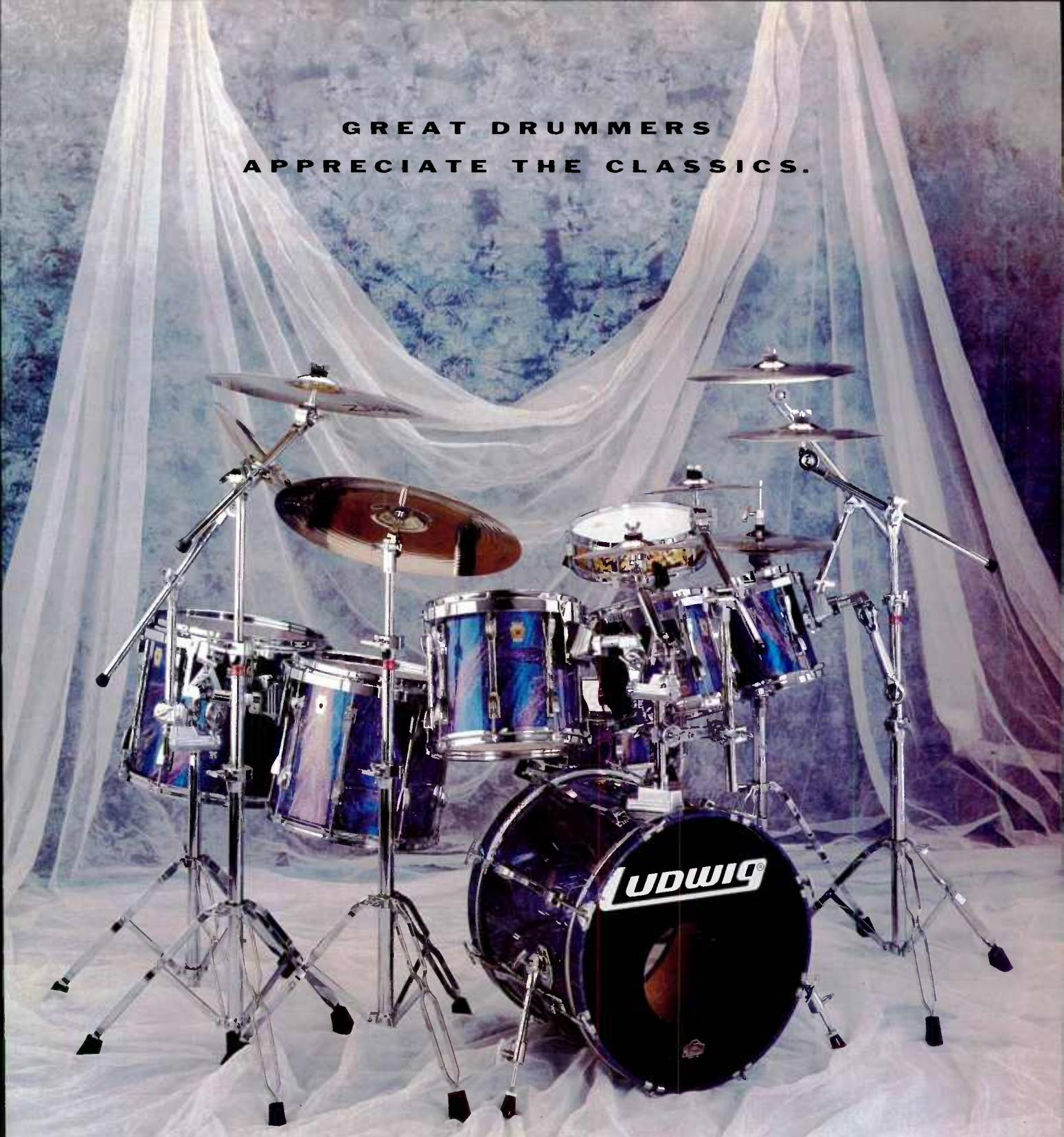
TOWNES & EARLE: Oh sure they would!

EARLE: I know Lyle is aware of "Buckskin Stallion" and it may very well have had a huge influence on his song, but that doesn't mean that if "Buckskin Stallion" had never existed you wouldn't get that song.

TOWNES: It all intermingles. Steve's and mine intermingle with Guy's and Muddy Waters and Chuck Berry and Peter LaFarge.

MUSICIAN: *Steve, your album* The Hard Way *didn't get the attention it deserved.*

EARLE: *The Hard Way* is the one I feel the worst about. That record wasn't released, it escaped. But I'm real proud of it. It's a kind of



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a dark scary record. It's a little self-centered, that's the only thing I have trouble with. It's embarrassing how much I like to listen to my own records.

MUSICIAN: *Well, the chorus of "The Other Kind" is so egotistical that it takes balls just to sing it—but the verses are unrelentingly self-critical: "You got two of everything but you hang your head just as if you were down and out."*

EARLE: See, that's why the chorus is the way it is. You do two things if you don't feel right about yourself: you either tell yourself how cool you are to build yourself up or you run yourself into the ground further. The choruses do one and the verses do the other. I'm guilty of it sometimes but I do try to go by a rule that people don't want to hear you feeling sorry for yourself 'cause you're riding around in a bus that cost more than their house. I went through a period when I tried to stick to that rule and write songs about other people and less about me. The songs I'm writing now are more inward again. I guess that's just the way I see things. I used to see a lot of people when I was touring. In the last three or four years I've seen me and my wife and kids and the cops and that's about it. One good thing about not playing for a few years is that my voice got a rest. We were the world's loudest hillbilly band. You lose the high end in your voice, even on nights when I wasn't actually hoarse.

TOWNES: You hear about the horse that walked into the bar? Asked for a drink and the bartender said, "Why the long face?"

MUSICIAN: *Townes, I've got to ask about your demon songs—"The Hole," "The Snake Song," "The Spider." Some spooky stuff.*

TOWNES: Well if you don't take 'em too serious they're okay. If you take 'em serious you may need professional help.

MUSICIAN: *Some of us may need professional help.*

TOWNES: Indeed.

MUSICIAN: *You have an amazing line in one of the new songs: "My self going crazy the way that it does." Not "the way that I do."*

TOWNES: Well, its not amazing. It's a nice line and it makes sense. It's the correlation of the guitar and the feelings and the voice all together at once. And the message is carried to whoever needs to hear it. A lot of people don't need to hear it, some people do and might not even know. I believe there is one. I believe there is one universe. Yourself, myself, this house, the plants, the tape machine, the chips, the dip, the grapes, the kids, the dogs—it's all part of one. You can not believe in it, you can believe in it, you can not acknowledge it, you can acknowledge it. It doesn't make any difference, there's still one. And you're part of it and I'm part of it. It doesn't make much difference how you react to it. There's just one, that's obvious. And when people start chopping it up into individual... You can't go around hurting other people, that's obvious. If you're a Muslim worshipping Allah or if you're a Christian worshipping Christ, it makes no difference, man. It's one. There ain't two Gods. If that's what men have chosen to call the one: God. Ain't no way there can be two! That's silly!

MUSICIAN: *And in "The Hole" all the false gods of men fail. Do you know* The Last Temptation of Christ?

TOWNES: I read the book twice, saw the movie once. I read that book, put it down, and wrote my song "Nothing" right after the last page of that book, in upstate New York. I'm not carried away or perplexed by all that. It's not a thing I think about real hard or anything.

MUSICIAN: *In that book Kazantzakis says*

that each man's life is a journey of carrying his own cross up his own Calvary, and the work he leaves behind is "the blood on the tracks."

TOWNES: The Indians say every animal you ever shoot, if you don't use every bone, every feather, every marrow and every flesh you have to carry it on your back to get into heaven.

MUSICIAN: *"The Hole" says that when you've passed forgiveness, when you've passed the last point at which you could be saved, there might still be salvation, as a gift.*

TOWNES: "Then I whisper deep within, embrace the God of love/ I lifted my face and through the tears I saw light fall from above/ I hurled my self into the wall, I ripped and clawed my way/ Through the stinking clinging loam back to the light of day/I crawled out into the wind again the sky upon my face/ I heard the earth sigh patiently as she slid back into place/ Now I'm back among the ones I love and I'm loved by them in turn/ And it's only on the darkest night that that green-eyed memory burns/ So walk my friends in the light of day, don't go sneakin' around no hole/ There might be somethin' down there wants to gobble up your soul."

MUSICIAN: *How can I ask you which strings you use after that? I saw Jerzy Kosinski skulking around one of your shows once. Did you know him?*

TOWNES: I met him the night before he committed suicide.

MUSICIAN: *You had nothing to do with it, did you?*

TOWNES: I've read a bunch of his stuff. Yeah, I met him a night or two before he smoked himself. [*Townes goes into the kitchen, gets a plate of potato salad and goes off to eat it.*]

MUSICIAN: *How do you reconcile the selfishness demanded by your art with your responsibilities to your family?*

EARLE: You don't reconcile it. One of the reasons that I write is partially to try to reconcile it, to try to understand it, try to explain it. When you really do turn inward as a writer, that's what you're doin'. But reconcile it? I can't say that everything that I've done has been worth it, in the sense that I sure wish I hadn't hurt people that I hurt. I scared a few perfectly good women to death. Y'know I been married a few times. I got my wife and kids back now—Lou's my fourth wife and my sixth wife. Our divorce didn't work out.

MUSICIAN: *When you write a song do you ever think, "This is something of me that my kids will have after I'm gone"?*

EARLE: I think that when I get a royalty check. I think about it in terms of the part of my publishing that I own. I can't help but think about it that way, that's how I've made my living all my adult life. Then again I've seen a lot of trust fund babies that were fucked up. But it means my kids can go to college if they want to. I think my stepdaughter likes my songs a lot. My oldest son who's thirteen is starting to play a lot now. I just gave him a chord book and turned him loose. It just knocks me out that he's starting to listen to Bob Dylan's early albums. He didn't listen to nothin' but hip-hop for three years, which is cool. I listened to nothin' but hip-hop for a couple of years because it was the only thing I could listen to that didn't make me feel like I should be making a record or writing songs.

MUSICIAN: *Townes, I was just talking to Steve about what you leave for your kids in your work. "Katie Belle Blue" is something your daughter's going to have after you're gone.*

TOWNES: She also has all the publishing and the Buick and this house and an acre of land. I signed all that over.

EARLE: I'm gonna bury myself in the backyard of my house and that way the kids can't sell it. [*laughter*]

TOWNES: I have a pickup truck, an '89 GMC with a new motor and a good undercarriage and a J200 Gibson. Everything else has been signed over. I keep the gig money and the family keeps the ASCAP, the publishing, and the recording money. It's all set up. We live lives that are not safe. There's danger everywhere. If you're in motion, if you're on the road there are all manners of danger. Steadily. Between taxes and liability insurance and this and that, we ain't out there playing for the money, man. Like I was saying earlier, we're out there for one guitar chord, one note, one beam of light in somebody's mind. We travel 600 miles a day to do it. It's not the money. I don't wear any jewelry or anything like that. I'm not exactly a slave to fashion.

MUSICIAN: *I once asked Rodney Crowell what you two were really like. He praised you both greatly and he also said, "I'll tell you the difference. Steve likes the romance of danger but Steve doesn't actually want to die. He'd pull back. Townes might not care."*

TOWNES: [*quietly*] I'd say Steve and I are probably neck and neck.

MUSICIAN: *You both sing "Dead Flowers."*

TOWNES: I love that song.

EARLE: I learned the song [*con't on page 68*]

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RIFFS FOR SALE

Now you can sound like Herbie Hancock, Bill Bruford or Keith Emerson. Even if you don't know how to play.

SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST respected players—drummers Bill Bruford, Steve Gadd and Jim Keltner; bassists John Patitucci, Will Lee and Marcus Miller; Moody Blues keyboardists Mike Pinder and Patrick Moraz, Erasure's Vince Clarke and Greg Hawkes of the Cars; guitarists Steve Stevens of Billy Idol's band and David Torn—are finding new friends in the marketplace thanks to digital sampling. They're selling their trademark sounds and licks, in the form of either standard audio CDs or CD-ROM data readable by sampling instruments, to other musicians for use in their own productions.

Take, for instance, my sincere but inspiration-impaired pal Rock Stone. For years, Rock has had a real jones for analog synthesizer sounds. Particularly *that sound*—you know, the one in Emerson Lake and Palmer's "Lucky Man." He scoured the want ads and the used-instrument stores, amassing a pile of sick gear—but nothing quite did the trick. But now that searing vintage Moog tone is available to anyone with a couple of hundred bucks in his pocket. Rock picked up a copy of Keith Emerson's InVision release *World's Most Dangerous Synth and Organ*, slapped it into his CD-ROM drive, loaded the "Lucky Man" patch into his sampler, switched on his MIDI keyboard—and now he makes ecstatic *weeooo-weeooo* noises 'til dawn.

As sampling continues to infiltrate the mainstream, "signature" sample libraries are emerging as an intriguing opportunity for name performers and a unique resource for their lesser-known colleagues. For the most part they feature the sounds of instruments and/or effects. Some go further to include grooves, riffs, phrases and stylistic gestures such as slides, bends, and the like. With a few of these discs on hand, you might assemble the world's greatest session band while working alone in your bedroom.

A ROM Of One's Own

One well-known player, at least, isn't quite ready to lend his signature to this kind of production. Herbie Hancock was approached recently to put together his own library. High-tech enthusiast that he is, he's considering it. But he sees a few hitches.

"The main question is what to put on it," Hancock muses. "Something that's too much of a signature wouldn't be worth it for me. To do parts from, say, 'Rockit' would be like taking money out of my own pocket. And then what about the price? It's hard for me to judge how much my stuff is worth, but people

BY MAC RANDALL/ILLUSTRATION WARREN LINN

Several of the current batch of signature CD-ROMs were intended for the artists themselves. Their commercial potential was realized only later.

would have free use of it if it were on a CD-ROM, and I have to consider my position in the industry. So I'd probably have to charge a lot for it and arrange it so that if anyone wanted to use it for recording, they'd have to get my permission. The possibilities are interesting, but I don't know how it would work."

Hancock's internal debate raises some tricky legal and ethical points. But before tackling those, it's worth asking who actually uses sample libraries. Eric Persing, who produced Spectrasonics' *Bass Legends* CD-ROM featuring John Patitucci, Marcus Miller and Abe Laboriel, divides the users into two main camps. "There are professionals who want multisampled instrument sounds," he says, "and then there are the hip-hop people who want phrase samples. We structured the *Bass Legends* CD-ROM to satisfy both groups, with 50 percent instrument sounds and 50 percent chromatically sampled phrases."

Hans Zimmer Guitars, Vol. 1 (Spectrasonics)

These two groups may be the biggest sample library users, but as the technology becomes more affordable, that's likely to change. The advantages that libraries offer the gigging player or home-brew producer are clear. Many feature samples from exotic, hard-to-find, or cumbersome instruments. *Mike Pinder's Mellotron* on InVision, for example, is an invaluable aid to those who can't find, afford, or tolerate working with a real Mellotron. (It's amusing to note that the world's first sampling instrument is now being sampled itself.)

As it happens, several of the current batch of signature CD-ROMs actually were intended for use by the artists themselves. Their commercial potential was realized only later. For example:

▶ Engineer Will Alexander originally sampled Keith Emerson's Moog with one simple purpose in mind. "The thing weighs 500 pounds," he chuckles. "Not having to lug it around anymore sounded like a great idea."

License to Steal?

Why are so many players willing to make some of their most valuable assets available on CD-ROM? One reason is that a lot of them have been sampled already, with no credit or compensation. "People are going to use the technology one way or another," Marcus Miller says. "This way I get something back from it."

But what, exactly? When you use a signature sample library, what does the player get in return?

Generally, musicians who are sampled for a library get a royalty on each copy sold, just as they would for a regular album. That royalty is, of course, factored into the product's list price, which is usually between $100 and $300. Some players also get an advance or a session fee for the initial recording, but many settle for a piece of the action.

Royalty rates vary depending on the company, the player and the product. Understandably soundware companies are unwilling to supply precise figures. But it appears that this kind of project can generate considerable amounts of income for the musicians involved. For Spectrasonics' *Bass Legends* collection, the participating artists (Miller, John Patitucci and Abe Laboriel) will get 50 percent of net earnings. Greytsounds' deal with Patrick Moraz reportedly involves similar numbers plus a modest advance: "Some of his older equipment needed fixing," Bob Grey explains, "so we went ahead and had it all repaired for him."

In most cases, once you've bought a library, you're free to use it as you like. Some companies ask for additional licensing fees and/or credit if samples are used in a high-profile project that stands to make money. Spectrasonics is the only soundware company so far to guarantee users that all samples are "copyright clean"—many early sampling CDs included material blatantly appropriated from records already in commercial circulation—and to offer artists copyright claim guarantees. If you use Spectrasonics sounds in an album, soundtrack or other such commercial project, credit is mandatory. Other companies' policies vary.

For the moment, most soundware companies are operating under the honor system, requesting that anyone who stands to gain financially from their products contact them. "We've stated that if you're going to feature something from my disc as-is and up-front in a recording," David Torn says, "you should call Q Up Arts and ask about a licensing fee.

"It's a fair policy," he adds, "but no one's ever gonna call." If no one does, then the company will decide whether or not to track down violations that come to their attention.

Yet some decent souls may just surprise the justifiably cynical musician. Bass ace Will Lee tells of running into a producer at a New York jingle house: "He said, 'I just picked up Peter Erskine's CD-ROM, and it's great. I'm using it for a session, and I'm going to put him under contract for it.' So Erskine is going to get the union rate for a session he didn't have to show up for. That's nice work."

Keyfax's Julian Colbeck is considering charging an extra licensing fee for the Bill Bruford library he's working on. "We're still deliberating on a proper fee. It'll probably be three figures. But if you say, 'You can't use this fill unless you pay me an extra $1000,' the disc is going to get thrown in the trash. But if someone is doing a major soundtrack using your playing, something has got to come back to you from it."

Obviously, there are kinks still to be worked out in the administrative process. "We're in a transitional period now," Marcus Miller points out. "But if it's handled right, this could be a viable way for musicians to make money."

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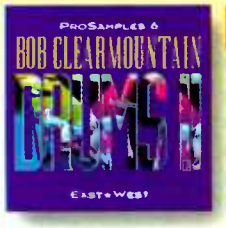

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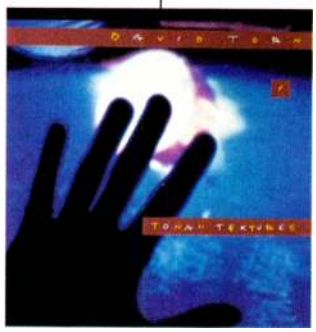
No doubt these products are useful; but do they

musician who has had his or her instrument sampl

▶ Top film composer Hans Zimmer has a large guitar collection that he wanted to have at his fingertips at any time or place. The eventual result was Spectrasonics' *Hans Zimmer Guitars*, which features complex layers of samples played on the composer's favorite axes.

▶ Steve Stevens' collection of guitar samples came in so handy during rehearsals with Billy Idol that Stevens may end up using a few on Idol's next album. "I couldn't really have the Marshall up to 10 at Billy's house," he explains. "This was the next best thing." Those samples are now available to all on East-West's *Steve Stevens Guitar Sample Collection.*



Tonal Textures by David Torn (Q Up Arts)

No doubt these products are useful. But do they put musicians with real chops out of work? The players themselves insist that they don't. Some even claim the opposite, that sampling yourself for a signature library can get you gigs. That's what happened to top session percussionist Bashiri Johnson, featured on a multi-disc set from Spectrasonics called *Supreme Beats*. According to several reports, a big-name producer heard the CDs and immediately hired the real thing.

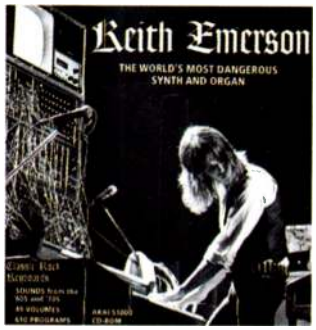
Publishers of sample libraries will tell you that these things happen all the time. According to Doug Morton of Q Up Arts, "the people who use the samples instead of the real player are the people who aren't able to get the real player, for either financial or logistical reasons. But the people who hear the samples, like them, and can get the real guy still get the real guy."

The notion of hiring a musician after you've already shelled out a couple hundred for his CD-ROM may seem a little extravagant. Yet some players are betting that prospective clients will do just that, and they're looking at sample libraries as a new way to promote themselves.

Michael Bland, drummer for the artist formerly known as Prince, admits that he regards *Funky Ass Loops*, the CD-ROM he put together for East-West with fellow New Power Generation member Sonny Thompson, as an advertisement for services. "You never know how long this gig is going to last," he observes. "And since we're sidemen and don't get a chance to show everything we can do, we decided to use this as a way to let people hear what we sound like on our own."

But if showing the other sides of your musical personality is the concern, why not record a solo album? "My solo album's going to feature a lime-green piano and a big band," Bland says with a grin, "and I'm not going to do it 'til I'm at least in my 30s. I don't have any interest in doing an instrumental solo album like Stanley Clarke or Dave Weckl would do. The CD-ROM is more interesting than a solo album because it's more useful, and it also gives you the sense of three guys in a room just playing around."

One notable sample library offers the sense of a whole band in a room making an album. For Ensoniq's debut CD-ROM release *The Chicago Signature Series*, hit-making group Chicago sampled master tapes of an album they were working on, then added a pile of extra vocal and instrumental ideas. It's the first library compiled by a band working together as a unit, and it may also be a collector's item. Bassist Jason Scheff explains: "The album we sampled was our last for Warner Bros., and they declined to release it. We've since made a new record for a new label, and it's unclear what's going to happen to the other one. We'd like to put it out eventually, but right now the only way you can hear any of it is on the CD-ROM."

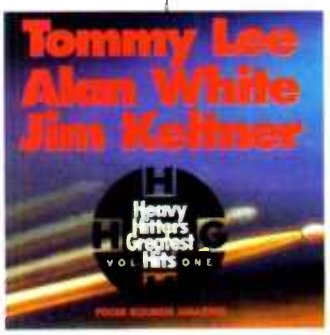


The World's Most Dangerous Synth and Organ by Keith Emerson (InVision)

Sampling a band working together, as

real musicians with real chops out of work? Any will tell you that it's far from a thrilling experience.

Chicago did, solves one major problem of the medium: the sound that results from sampling an instrument by itself, outside of a performing context. Just about any musician who has had his or her instrument sampled will tell you that it's far from a thrilling experience. According to Steve Stevens, "the recording process is absolute tedium. It's a challenge, because for something like a CD-ROM, you want every note to sound distinctive, to sound like you. And that's hard when you're doing something you'd never do, like picking one note at a time with nothing else going on."



Heavy Hitters Greatest Hits, Vol. 1 (Q Up Arts)

Some players believe that sampling note by note minimizes the likelihood that the resulting sounds will convey a distinct personality. "If you're just sitting in the studio banging repeatedly on one tom," session ace Jim Keltner suggests, "that tom is going to sound pretty much the same no matter who is playing it. The only difference is that it's *my* tom tuned by me. The personal sound of a player doesn't tend to come out unless there's a piece of music to play."

Jeremy Roberts of SampleHeads, producer of *The Will Lee Bass Library* and Peter Erskine's *Living Drums*, disagrees. "When a great player produces the sounds, the sounds are better. Before sample libraries featuring players started coming out, the most popular ones were put out by engineers or producers. Now Bob Clearmountain [who has released two volumes of drum sounds on East-West] gets terrific sounds, but what kind of a drummer is he? You've got to know the instrument to do it right."

Then again, maybe an engineer or a producer is just what the doctor ordered. "A sample *is* a recording," Doug Rogers of East-West argues. "Who better to make it than one of the top engineers?"

Expression In A Can

Maybe raw samples do lack the personality that comes from interaction among players in a musical context. But that shouldn't matter so much if you're able to put your own personality into the notes. How expressive do CD-ROM sounds allow you to be?

The answer depends on which disc you buy and what equipment you have. Any sample can be run through a filter to alter its tone; samples can also be sped up and slowed down, though you need advanced software to change pitch without changing tempo as well. Some CD-ROMs include both sampled drum loops and the component sounds that went into them as well as MIDI files representing the looped performance itself. This enables you to manipulate both the components and performance at the most basic level, in which case the pos-

SIGNATURE SAMPLE SOURCES

▶ **East-West,** 345 N. Maple Dr., Suite 277, Beverly Hills, CA 90210; voice (310) 858-8797, fax (310) 858-8795, e-mail *eastwest@aol.com* ▶ **Ensoniq,** 155 Great Valley Pkwy., P.O. Box 3035, Malvern, PA 19355-0735; voice (800) 553-5151, fax (610) 647-8908. ▶ **Greytsounds,** 501 Fourth St. SE, Bandon by the Sea, OR 97411; voice (800) 266-3475, fax (503) 347-4163, e-mail *d4410@applelink.apple.com* ▶ **InVision,** 2445 Faber Pl., Suite 102, Palo Alto, CA 94303-3316; voice (800) 468-5530; fax (415) 812-7386. ▶ **Keyfax,** P.O. Box 958, Aptos, CA 95001-0958; voice (408) 688-4505, fax (408) 689-1012, e-mail *10245.3065@compuserve.com* ▶ **Q Up Arts,** P.O. Box 1078, Aptos, CA 95001-1078; voice (408) 688-9524, fax (408) 662-8172, e-mail *qup@picosof.com* ▶ **SampleHeads,** 276 Riverside Dr., Suite 3B, New York, NY 10025-5206; voice (212) 866-1533, fax (212) 678-2577. ▶ **Spectrasonics,** P.O. Box 7336, Burbank, CA 91510; voice (800) 764-9379, fax (818) 955-8613.

Using Sample Libraries

If you want to dig into the vast market of sample CD-ROMs, be prepared to pack your sampler with at least 16 megs of RAM (some libraries recommend 32 megs). One of the most rewarding ways of using these libraries is to commingle snippets from different collections: setting a *Bass Legends* groove over *Funky Ass Loops* drums with a couple of Steve Stevens licks over the top can get you creating new music very quickly. For storage, you'll need a large-capacity hard drive, preferably of the removeable variety.

CD-ROM drives are slower than hard disks. Invest in the fastest unit your budget allows. The triple-speed Apple CD 300I Plus we used for testing worked beautifully. Your sampler may be capable of loading non-native file formats (most units can "convert-load" Akai format, for instance). File format conversion is processor-intensive and requires much more time than loading native-format files.

One of the CD's advantages is its vast storage capacity (650 megabytes), a trait that sample companies use to the hilt. And for good reason: larger files can help preserve the distinctive character of musical sounds. Capturing the intricacies of an individual player's style also eats up a lot of data. Some libraries provide a selection of key centers or pitches for each performance, helping to sidestep the Alvin and Darth Vader effects that occur when you transpose a sample up or down in pitch.

You can use an audio CD with any sampler, but you'll need to record, trim, loop, envelope, key-map and otherwise massage each sample into useful form, which can take a lot of time. CD-ROMs put both the audio and program data into the proper format for a specific sampler: just load and play. If you have the cash, the time saved is worth the cost of a CD-ROM drive.

One more thing about memory management. Many libraries provide two somewhat redundant sets of sound files: large and small. The large files tend to be more natural-sounding because they include a longer portion of the sound event; also, they may be grouped into a complex array of multisamples and velocity-controlled layers, which requires more memory as well. The smaller files are generally shorter, extended in time by looping a portion of the sound after the attack.

The "signature" libraries discussed here fall into two categories: collections that deliver variations of instrument, tone, attack, vibrato and so forth one note at a time, and those that include licks, phrases, looping patterns and the like. All these libraries are well documented with information about pitch, tempo and even recording methodology for each sound.

▶ **Bass Legends Vol. 1 (Spectrasonics): audio CD (grooves only) $99, CD-ROM (Akai, E-mu, Ensoniq, Kurzweil, Roland, SampleCell) $249:** The CD-ROM library comprises two discs of single notes, gestures and grooves by session monsters Marcus Miller, Abraham Laboriel and John Patitucci. The grooves cover a range of tempi, timbres and styles. The largest programs utilize velocity switches and crossfades for expressive control that is well worth the cost in memory. Programs are organized to provide a primary groove with transposed variants, making it possible to build an entire bass line with a single load.

▶ **Heavy Hitters Greatest Hits (Q Up Arts) audio CD $99, CD-ROM (Akai, E-mu, Kurzweil, Roland, SampleCell) $199:** Recording each kit as a drum set played in real time would be, including stray resonances and rattles from the surrounding drums, enhances this production's realism. You can load each kit as a whole or individual drums, so you can mix and match if you wish. Alan White, Tommy Lee and Jim Keltner play the single hits and a few rolls—no grooves.

▶ **Funky Ass Loops (East-West), audio CD $99, CD-ROM (Akai, Roland, Sample Cell) $199:** Instant dance gratification: 95 complete and dissected loops of drum, bass, guitar and percussion performances by the New Power Generation's Michael Bland (drums) and Sonny Thompson (bass, guitar). The recording quality is appropriately gnarly, the grooves spicy and fat. Each program includes a full mix, drums alone, bass alone, guitar alone, and so on, laid out across the keys. A real workhorse.

▶ **Steve Stevens Guitar Sample Collection (East-West), audio CD $99, CD-ROM (Akai, Ensoniq, Kurzweil, Roland, SampleCell) $199:** Stevens is famous for high-testosterone tone and non-standard guitar noises, and this raucous disc is full of both (in both high- and low-memory configurations). Nice acoustic textures and delicate clean electric sounds are here as well. This collection is highly stylized —Stevens is not trying to take the place of a journeyman guitarist—but in the process he delivers an aggressive mix.

▶ **Will Lee Bass Library (SampleHeads, dist. by East-West), audio CD $99, CD-ROM (Akai, Roland, SampleCell) $299:** Lee delivers a comprehensive collection of non-looped bass articulations. Breaking down the elements of bass performance into slides, slaps, plucks, harmonics and so forth, he performs on acoustic and electric bass guitars. If you have a head for bass lines, the Lee collection gives you a manly-man-sized set of tools.

▶ **Tonal Textures (Q Up Arts), audio CD (with longer loops) $99, mixed-mode CD-ROM (audio/Akai) $299:** Inventive avant-jazzer David Torn paints evocative aural landscapes with his heavily processed guitar. The mixed-mode version makes it possible to listen to the loops using a standard audio CD player before loading them into your sampler. The loops of ambient sounds, bearing names such as "Pillow on Wheels" and "The Chromatic Beehive," make excellent pads in their own right, and can be layered together or with synths for dramatic, film score-ready textures.

▶ **Hans Zimmer Guitars, Vol. 1 (Spectrasonics), audio CD (highlights) $99, CD-ROM (Roland, Akai, E-mu, Kurzweil, Ensoniq) $249.** Created to help Zimmer compose scores for such blockbuster movies as *The Lion King* and *Rain Man*, this is less a signature library than a cover-the-bases collection of chords, rhythms, lead articulations, harmonics and other performance elements sampled chromatically and at various tempi. Acoustic and electric tones are applied to funk, metal, blues, country and pop stylings. Some of the performances are tepid and the sounds somewhat lackluster, but many programs make good use of velocity switching and the library is nicely tailored to be useful in many keys, tempi and styles.

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sibilities are endless. Canned grooves can be run backwards, riffs can be chopped up, beats can be added or taken away, sounds can be mixed and matched.

The manner in which samples are mapped to a keyboard (that is, which keys or MIDI note numbers trigger which sounds) varies. Some discs offer "key maps" that layer several samples, each of which is programmed to play back only within a certain range of MIDI velocity. Playing a key softly yields a different sound from playing it hard. Bob Daspit, who helped Hans Zimmer compile his guitar library, sampled 12 such layers for each note. "When you touch a key," he explains, "you seldom hear the same exact sound. The subtle variations within one note match those of an acoustic instrument."

Not everyone is so concerned with subtlety. Steve Stevens' CD-ROM doesn't mess with velocity layers. There's only one: full-on. "We tried to do some samples with me picking softly, or with the amp turned down to five," he reports. "But it didn't sound right because I don't play that way."

For those who crave something more bracing, the first wave of highly idiosyncratic libraries is on the way. David Torn's Q Up release *Tonal Textures* is a collection of heavily effected ambient guitar loops that could have been produced by no one else. He hopes that those who buy the CD-ROM will be just as creative in manipulating them as he was in creating them. "They're not supposed to be left as they are," he says. "They're designed to be messed up."

Steve Stevens Guitar Sample Collection (East-West)

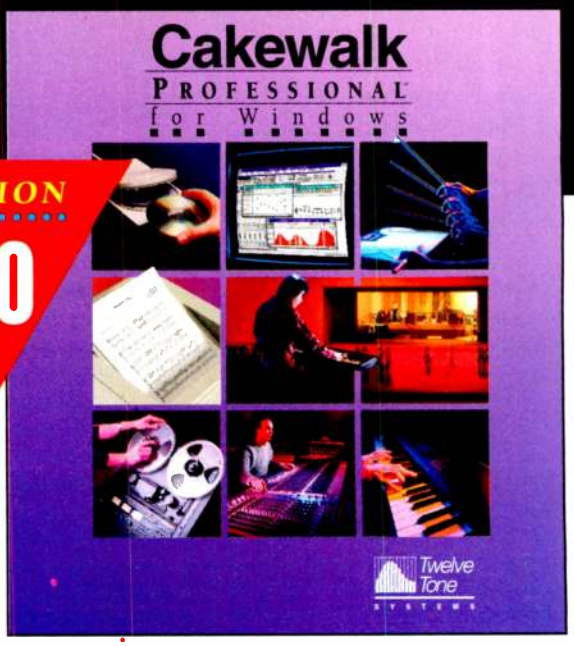
An upcoming CD-ROM from King Crimson drummer Bill Bruford entitled *With An Edge*, produced by Julian Colbeck for Keyfax, features intricate grooves in a variety of odd time signatures. "It obviously isn't a meat-and-potatoes disc," Colbeck says. "Bill kept coming up with these parts that he didn't think anyone would have any use for. He seemed bemused by the idea that people might actually want this stuff."

Be that as it may, every player who agrees to be sampled for a library must draw the line between making a useful product and giving away precious ideas. Steve Stevens' library steers clear of licks in favor of raw sounds, and he wanted it that way. "The people at East-West wanted me to play some riffs," he says, "but I had to say no. If I play stuff I've already done, what's the point? And if I play new stuff, I could have used it on the next Billy Idol record. My riffs are everything."

Bob Grey of Greytsounds, who has been working on the *Patrick Moraz Signature Series* CD-ROM with the former Yes and Moody Blues keyboardist, questions whether Moraz's riffs would be useful to anyone. "I don't think most people would buy that," he states, explaining that the disc will consist of raw sounds from the keyboardist's collection of vintage instruments. "Patrick does sing through his Roland Vocoder, so that's certainly his signature. But if people wanted his performances, they'd probably just buy his CDs."

Stevens and Moraz are content to sell "only" sounds. But isn't sound one of the central elements that distinguishes one player from another? Should a great player's sounds simply be handed out to anyone? Yes drummer Alan White, who is featured along with

PLAY HARD.



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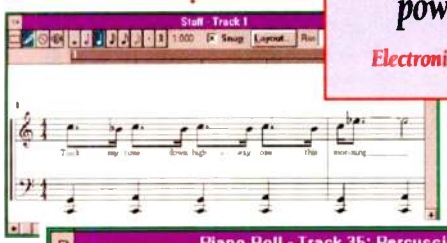

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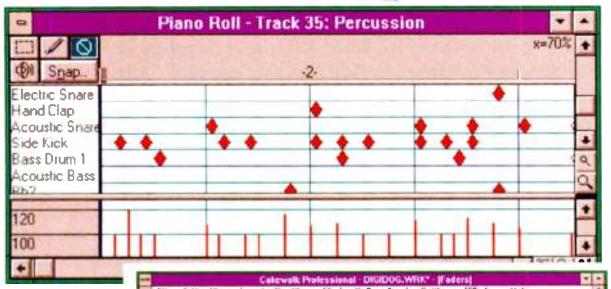

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GENERAL MIDI

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Jim Keltner and Tommy Lee on Q Up's *Heavy Hitters* collection, puts the question in perspective: "Everyone's always looking for better sounds. The sounds we've got today will be altered or improved on tomorrow, so there's no point in trying to be protective of them."

Whose Riff Is It Anyway?

While players may not feel the need to protect their sounds, they may be more concerned when it comes to credit. Say my friend Rock releases a CD using bass lines taken from John Patitucci, drum patterns from Steve Gadd, keyboard parts from Vince Clarke. Can he claim in his liner notes and press releases that those performers played on his song? Marcus Miller: "If someone uses a sample of me, that's still me playing. I hope they give me credit." Jim Keltner: "They shouldn't be able to say it's me unless I give them permission. After all, it could be something I wouldn't have wanted to be involved in." David Torn: "No one has the right to use your name without consent. And if the sample is changed in any way, it isn't you anymore."

Jason Miles, formerly of Miles Davis' group and recently producer of his own *Psychic Horns* library and Steve Gadd's *DrumScores* for Q Up Arts, takes a hard-line view. "When you buy the CD-ROM, you're buying the player's services," he insists. "That's why the price of CD-ROMs has to stay high, and that's why copying them is criminal. Players have to be compensated as though they were actually playing on a session." Marcus Miller agrees that buying the CD-ROM means buying the player, but makes this distinction: "The ideas on the disc are just the ideas that I came up with one day. The next day I'll have other ideas. It doesn't define me as a player."

If concerns remain about sample libraries, they're the same ones attending the birth of synthesizers, drum machines and earlier forms of sampling. But as this new technology infiltrates the music industry, those concerns are fading fast. Just as many drummers who learned to work with machines in the '80s found themselves in the best position to be hired to operate them, so will musicians who find creative ways to use sample libraries have an edge in the years to come.

"It's the age-old thing, people being replaced by robots," Herbie Hancock concludes. "I don't have the statistics to say whether the jobs created by new technologies make up for jobs lost to them. But you can't force people to stand still. Musicians have to be ready for anything. If you're not paying attention to what's going on, you'll get an eviction notice and you won't know why."

"As time goes on," David Torn adds, "players will begin to treat the sampler as an instrument in itself. It's already happening, and people's ears are changing along with the technology. A few years back, the general public couldn't tell the difference between a real 70-piece orchestra and a sampled one, but now some people can. And they can tell whether someone is making creative use of samples. More and more we're going to hear sampled sounds that are *iterative*, not reiterative."

Torn's view may be overly optimistic—let's hope not. But one thing is certain: sample libraries are already making for some strange bedfellows. Marcus Miller recently heard one of his bass samples on an album of contemporary arrangements of music by 12th-century German abbess Hildegard von Bingen. "Yeah," he laughs, "you've got a bunch of nuns singing, and then you've got me. And somehow it works. What a concept."

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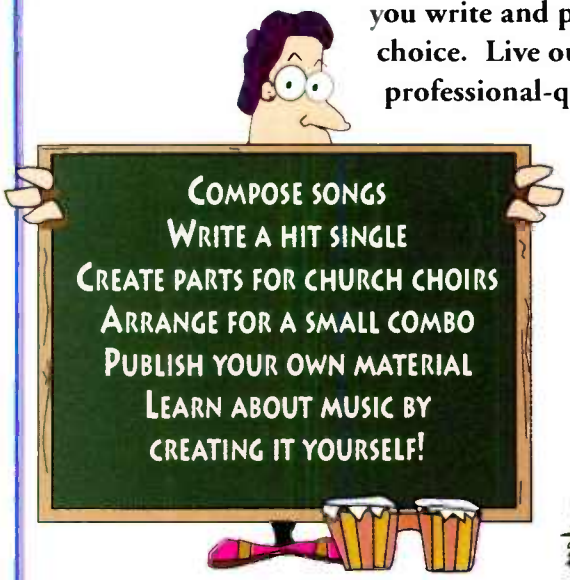

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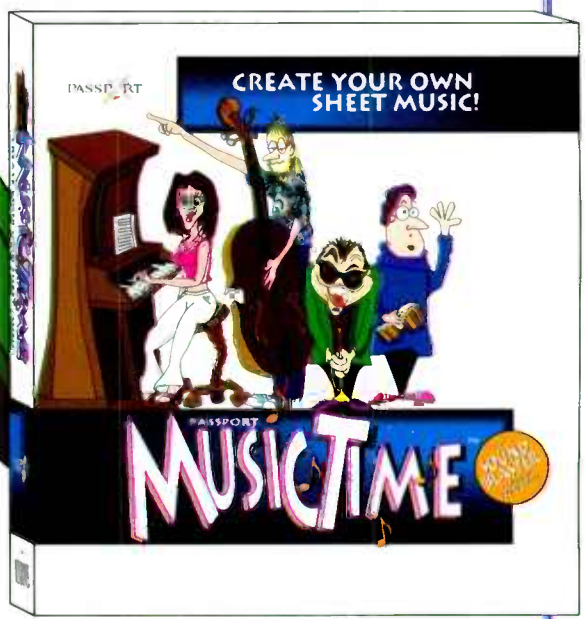

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ROYALTY

PAUL McCARTNEY, ELVIS COSTELLO, AND ALL THE OTHER PRINCES

AT ST. JAMES' PALACE WHERE HE LIVES, JUST OVER THE road from Buckingham Palace where his mother lives, Prince Charles stands up in the middle of his guests and says, "Paul McCartney put so much into this evening." The honored friends all clap their hands and Charles adds, "As somebody who was born a little bit later than he was..." McCartney holds up his forefinger and thumb a fraction of an inch apart to denote *a real little* as the Prince goes on, "I remember when I was at school and he was at the height of his fame. I was getting out of an aeroplane and a strong gust of wind blew my hair down into my eyes. In the papers the next day it said, 'Prince has Beatles Hairstyle.'" Ho ho ho, the gentry get a big kick out of that one! One Lord laughs so hard that his cummerbund snaps like a slingshot, almost taking out the eye of the bejeweled woman sitting next to him.

To be sitting in the palace patting palms with the aristocracy while the Prince makes jokes and the bourgeoisie cackle is a stretch even for *Musician*. But this is where McCartney has led, so this is where we follow. Charles seems like a good fellow, even if he does add a few inches to his height by standing on the neck of Ireland. It's unfair to make fun of him for that, though—it's an inherited characteristic. McCartney warned me yesterday that the palace security would peg me as IRA the minute I stepped through the royal door. "You've got a semtex face," McCartney said.

As it turned out, the palace could not have been nicer. Elvis Costello (who is now desperately avoiding eye contact with his future monarch as Charles tries to introduce him to the room) and I

BY BILL FLANAGAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD HOUGHTON

THE TWO MAC[illegible] A REHEARSA[illegible]M AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC. "MOVE OVER, HONEY, I'M TRAVELING ON THAT LINE."

even took advantage of our royal guesthood to go exploring the palace's kitchens and pantries, the real *Remains of the Day* rooms on the wrong side of the velvet ropes. We found a lot of anxious maids running around with spoons and bowls and some paintings that must have been taken out of the parlour after colonialism became gauche. My favorite was a big canvas titled "The Defense of Zululand" that showed a squad of heroic British soldiers slaying wave after wave of wild Africans. Oh man. "Better move that one back to the servant's quarters, Jeeves—don't want company to see it."

We're here because McCartney agreed to put together a benefit concert for the Royal College of Music, of which Prince Charles is titular president. (It may be a small perk next to, say, Wales, but it's better than a key to the washroom.) McCartney recruited several friends, including his sometime songwriting partner Costello and Costello's occasional classical collaborators the Brodsky Quartet, to do a performance at the Palace to which the Prince would invite a couple of hundred of the British gentry, who would kick in a minimum of $400 each. The expenses would be picked up by Classic FM, Britain's independent classical radio station, in exchange for the rights to broadcast a recording of the performance. The Royal College would get $112,000, British radio would get a great show, and Paul McCartney would do his first-ever public performance with Costello, play his smallest show since the Beatles left the Cavern Club, and get a very unsual opportunity to demontrate the range of his musical gifts, from Beatles songs to selections from his own classical work, *The Liverpool Oratorio*, to the debut of a new instrumental piece, "A Leaf."

It was a once-in-a-lifetime performance. If you had the chance to go and you didn't you'd be a sap.

"What a place," Costello says. "Nicest palace I ever played at." Costello seems to feel a bit misfit at the Palace. For one thing, he is the only gentleman wearing a red and black checked zoot suit at this black tie affair. A man whose Irish ancestry and anti-authority disposition have never bred love for the English establishment, Costello quit the U.K. for Ireland during the Thatcher era. It says a lot for his respect and affection for McCartney that he is here in the belly of the British lion.

"Really, it's because Paul asked me," Costello says. "To be honest, when George Martin asked me late last year to play at the Prince's Trust I said, 'Maybe when it's a republic here I would.' But I don't mind. If Prince Charles is there it makes no difference to me. He's the patron of the college. Just cause you don't neccesarily agree with that, you can't let that stand in the way. It's more important that the college keeps going, and if this is a little bit that helps..." Costello pauses, his sense of mischief wrestling with his diplomacy, then he adds, "It's sort of ironic that half-trained or untrained musicians end up coming to help. But that's where we've got to in this country."

That they have come through for the RCM is even more generous when you know that McCartney has his own music academy going. The Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts, the "Fame" school opening in the old building where McCartney and George Harrison went to high school—begins its first term in September. McCartney's devoted a lot of time to LIPA, fundraising, lending his name and image to promotions, and doing all he can to proselytize the idea of a school where kids can learn music, performing, and backstage and management skills.

PRINCE CHARLES MAKES PAUL MCCARTNEY, MBE, A FELLOW OF THE RCM AS ELVIS COSTELLO INCHES TO THE DOOR.

"The government doesn't even keep to their promises when they say, 'Go and get the money from the private sector and then we'll give you some help,'" Costello says. "LIPA's raised a fortune from private investors, and then the government welshes on the deal." He sighs and gets back to the event at hand: "So if it takes picking the pocket of a few court people, so be it. If the Prince turns up and brings his pals along and they dig into their deep pockets then they all go up in my estimation."

It's interesting to watch Costello play Nixon to McCartney's Eisenhower. Elvis's willingness to snarl out loud what Paul might hesitate to say has lately been put to good use. It is a coincidence that since they began writing songs together seven years ago both Costello and McCartney have gone off and worked on classical pieces—Paul's

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Liverpool Oratorio, Elvis's collaboration with the Brodsky Quartet, *The Juliet Letters*. As Costello has continued to work in the classical world, he has run into the sort of snooty critic who attempts to praise Elvis by dissing Paul. Recently one such poop suggested to Costello that McCartney was attempting classical music in order to achieve immortality. Costello shut the windbag up by demanding to know if he really thought that Paul McCartney of the BEATLES, the composer of the *most famous song of the century*, needed to worry about his immortality.

I can answer that: spend a day in a little room with McCartney while he sits with his acoustic guitar and sings "For No One," "Eleanor Rigby," and that most famous song of the century "Yesterday," and you won't have any doubts about his immortality at all.

The afternoon before the Palace performance, McCartney surveyed a small, nearly empty rehearsal room at the Royal College of Music looking for his musicians. First on deck was Anya Alexeyev, a Russian born pianist and recent RCM graduate chosen to debut McCartney's "A Leaf." "Miss Anya," McCartney called. "Por favor." The young musician climbed up on the small stage and began moving through McCartney's piece with a prodigy's dexterity. An immediately compelling melody, "A Leaf" at first made you wonder why McCartney had chosen to steer the instrumental toward a classical designation—it would have made a great pop song. Then what would in pop have been the middle eight turned abruptly left into a sort of hopped-up Duke Ellington section and McCartney's motive became clear: serious music offers him a chance to take an idea in more than one direction, it allows a (love him or hate him you must give him this) brilliant melodist a shot at showing what he can do without one hand tied behind his back.

COSTELLO WAS CONCERNED THAT SINGING LENNON'S PARTS WAS "LIKE PAINTING A BIG TARGET ON MY FOREHEAD."

Yoko Ono once said that during John Lennon's long bread-baking sabbatical he was wrestling with the fact that he no longer felt comfortable cutting his thoughts to fit the pop lyric's cadence and rhyme scheme. While McCartney's work ethic would probably prevent him from letting a similar impediment slow down his songwriting, it must be a relief for him to be able to follow a musical idea where ever it leads. Anya played the piece with a lot of soul, with little pauses and then bursts of momentum that suggested she was confident enough to mess with it a bit. McCartney sat straight-backed, tapping his foot very slowly, paying strict attention.

A booming bass voice came from the back of the room. "Well, at least I know ONE person here!" McCartney looked up and saw two of his *Oratorio* vets, the opera singers Willard White and Sally Burgess, entering the room as divas do, with a flourish. After the usual How-ya-doin's the two highbrows ran through their part of the show—a few songs from the *Liverpool Oratorio* and a smattering of American popular songs.

Taken out of the *Liverpool Oratorio*, the McCartney songs Burgess and White performed stood up amazingly well. "The Drinking Song," as delivered by White, could have sprung from the darker end of Jerome Kern or the lighter side of Bertolt Brecht. But the revelation was Burgess' reading of "Do You Know Who You Are." In the oratorio that piece seemed justified less by its music—which is somewhat disorganized and dreamlike—than by its advancing of the plot. It is sung by a nurse in a hospital to the oratorio's housewife heroine who has been struck by a car and is hovering between life and death, as is the unborn baby she is carrying. In the libretto, "Do You Know Who You Are" sets up the moment when her estranged husband realizes he has been wrong to go off on a drunken binge and returns to his family.

You would expect such a song to be lost outside of the bigger context for which it was conceived, but "Do You Know Who You Are" actually became stronger when set off by itself. The title came from the words a policeman said to the dying John Lennon as he was being rushed to Roosevelt Hospital. They were presumably the last words Lennon ever heard. When you know that, the entire song becomes vivid. It might or might not have been intentional on McCartney's part that the series of crises flowing in and out of the fading consciousness of the character in the song—a mother being struck down by a car, an unborn baby struggling to hang onto life, a husband who goes off on a drunken weekend only to return and ask forgiveness of his wife—are probably the same as the emotional flashpoints of John Lennon's life. That this impressionistic life-flashing-before-your-eyes lyric is interupted with a repetition of the last words Lennon heard as he was dying makes "Do You Know Who You Are" vivid, poignant, and a bit shocking at the same time.

McCartney sat down on a folding chair and talked about it. "When I read the story of John's shooting," he said, "there was a bit in it when he's in the ambulance going to hospital, and apparently it's standard

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procedure to say to whoever it is who's been shot or injured, 'Do you know who you are?' Which I thought was very ironic to ask John. I could almost imagine him laughing. 'Oh God, the final irony!' 'Do you know who you are?' 'Yeah, I'm John Lennon.' It just seemed very trippy to me. So I always remembered that phrase and I worked it into the oratorio."

Lately McCartney, Harrison, and Starr have for the second time gone into the studio to overdub and finish demos that Lennon left behind. The first new Beatles recordings in 25 years, they will probably be released next autumn. "We've got two new ones of John's that we've made into Beatles records, and they're cool," McCartney said. I asked if the three surviving Beatles felt inhibited about recording new songs as a trio, without any Lennon.

"At the moment we haven't tried that," McCartney said. "It just seems more natural if John's there. It seems like a better idea. Even though we talked about it, when we actually got hold of the two John songs...then it was the Beatles. Then people can't say, 'You should get Julian in,' or 'You should get Sean in.'

"This way we can say, 'Look, it is the Beatles. Whether you like it or not, even if it is technically done, it actually is the Beatles on record. There are four guys on that record. Through the wonders of technology.' We haven't actually taken it beyond that yet. We did the first track last February, we did the second track this February. As we were saying goodbye to everybody we said, 'See you next February!' Our engineer, Eddie Klein who runs my studio, said, 'If we keep going for twelve years we'll have an album.'"

Costello entered the rehearsal room in the company of drop-in guest George Martin, who produced the Beatles' records. "You know this young man?" Martin called to McCartney, who eyed Costello and answered "I've known him forever!" The Brodsky Quartet appeared and unpacked their fiddles. A few minutes later another unexpected kibbitzer wandered in—Geoff Emerick, who produced Costello's *Imperial Bedroom* and engineered those Beatles recordings Martin produced. Martin, Emerick, and McCartney fell into the sort of old-mates chatter that might have derailed the rehearsals were McCartney not well-motivated. As Paul went back to listen to the assembled Brodskys rip through one of their own pieces, "Harold in Islington," Emerick said as if everyone didn't know, "The three of us have known each other for more than thirty years." Costello had been interviewing producers for his next album, which he will start in August: seeing Emerick, a lightbulb went on over his head.

The high point of the rehearsals, and the reason such big shots as Martin and Emerick dropped in, was the chance to hear McCartney play some of his greatest songs with the Brodskys. Paul picked up his acoustic and led the Brodskys through a version of "For No One" that made me wish I could travel back in time and trade places with myself in ninth grade.' During the bridge in "Yesterday" Brodsky's, Paul Cassidy hit a bum note on the viola and McCartney came back in singing, "Yesterday, viola was an easy instrument to play," cracking everyone up and turning Cassidy's face red. Emerick looked on approvingly as McCartney ran through his repertoire, cracking, "This is a man who failed his O-levels in music!"

It occurred to me listening that one reason for the Beatles appeal is never mentioned. We think of the Beatles as great melodists, but

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while Paul's melodies were quite sophisticated, John's were often very narrow and plain, almost folkie. Now there are advantages and disadvantages to both plain and elaborate vocal melodies. The good thing about a plain melody is that it tends to suggest that the lyrics are true, that the singer is speaking directly to you without ornamentation. That's why polemicists, leftists, and country singers like conversational melodies. Such tunes can, however, get boring. The good thing about ornate melodies is that they excite the ear and keep the listener's attention, but they can also erect a distance from the lyric and make the listener suspect that the blatant craft of the musical construction means that the singer is not speaking his heart, is putting on affectations. Bruce Springsteen and Johnny Cash, who favor plain melodies, sound very sincere but risk being repetitious. The Beach Boys are musically compelling, but the words and sentiments often come off as artificial or banal—disconnected from the voice singing them. What was remarkable about the Lennon/McCartney team was that the main melody, often sung by John, had that simple, plain-speaking directness that suggests *this is true*, while the harmonies, often sung by Paul, were innovative and aurally exciting. The combination (and each was capable of taking on the other's role) produced songs that felt both musically compelling and lyrically sincere, innovative craftsmanship married to heartfelt delivery.

I spun this whole theory out for Costello who listened patiently and then said, "Which is why they were the best."

On the rehearsal room stage McCartney was at the piano, leading the Brodsky's through a rip-roaring "Lady Madonna," after which he called a break. "It's wild," McCartney laughed. "Anything with a string quartet—it completely turns the stuff on its head. And I've never done it before outside of a movie or recording session. Actually doing it live is interesting."

"This is the first time you've played in public with a quartet?" I asked.

"Yeah. And it's the first time Elvis and I have played live. We've written together, we've made demos together, we've done a bit of recording together and we've always enjoyed it. But we've not actually played live together. It's a bit of a first."

McCartney requested that Costello and the Brodskys do a couple of songs and they played "I Almost Had a Weakness" and "The Birds Will Still be Singing," the former the funniest song from *The Juliet Letters* and the latter the most beautiful. Next they did a showstopping version of Brian Wilson's "God Only Knows," the best encore number from their tours.

"I suggested the Brods do something of their own choice," McCartney explained. "Which was 'Harold.' Then I asked Elvis if he would do a couple of things off *Juliet Letters* because I really like that. I think I expressed that those two were my favorites, so I kind of chose them. Then he said, 'Well, I'll tell you what. We should do 'God Only Knows' cause it's a good showstopper."

With that McCartney went up and joined Costello onstage for some two acoustic guitar Everly Brothers action. They played and sang the Beatles' "One After 909" and the McCartney/MacManus song "Mistress and Maid." It was interesting that of the dozen or so songs they've co-written they chose to perform that one for their duet debut, rather than the better known "My Brave Face" or "Veronica."

"Mistress and Maid" is a hard dark song, a lament for a marriage as cold as "For No One" and considerably more acerbic. The refrain is the wife saying to her oafish husband, "Look what you've done to me, I'm just your mistress and maid." On the recorded version, on McCartney's *Off the Ground*, the song was overproduced and Paul sang it like a lip-smacking movie villain, as if worried that people might miss the point. Singing it stripped down with Costello, McCartney held back and in doing so made the lyric much more powerful. Scarier, too.

"It's lesser known than some of the others but it's one that we enjoyed writing," he said. "It's tempting on a short show to just pack it with your hits that everyone knows. But we decided it would be nice to stick that one in. One of the reasons we wanted to do it is because I did record it *up*. I sort of made more of a *record* of it when we did it. Afterward I remembered how it was when we demo'd it. For one thing it was a completely different key. We're singing it really low here and I think I put it up from D to G, I whapped it right up. So it is a more intimate version, which is what the original song was. It got lighter when we recorded it."

Hearing "Mistress and Maid" next to "Eleanor Rigby," "For No One" and "Yesterday," I realized that McCartney's public image as an eternal optimist is not supported by his work. It was something I'd been cir-

cling around since I heard Steve Earle's new version of "I'm Looking Through You," as bitter a put-down song as ever got softened in the studio. McCartney has certainly written lots of positive songs, but from "Hey Jude" and "Let It Be" to "That Day is Done" and "Put It There," his optimism is always in the face of a shadow. There is always some awful thing that has to be overcome. If there's a defining subtext in McCartney's music it's probably "Take these broken wings and learn to fly."

"Yeah, well," McCartney said quietly, "that's me I suppose. I think that the danger is if you just get into the happy songs then it can be a little bit music hall. It can get a little bit light. So I like to always have a little bit of edge, or else a little bit of tongue-in-cheek. You know, 'When I'm 64' isn't really a song about growing old, although on the surface it is. It's a joke song, but it has serious concerns in it, a little melancholy. 'Yesterday'—she went away and all that shit. 'Suddenly I'm not half the man I used to be.' But if you think about it, I was writing those in my early 20s! Talking about not half the man I used to be when I was barely a man!"

I said, if you'd been half that man you'd have been eleven.

"They have more poignancy now," McCartney said, "just because of the water that's been under all our bridges. So we all now relate to those lyrics a little bit more seriously. Perhaps." He changed gears and said, "But you know, my composing has always been made up, it's a fantasy. I remember George Harrison saying to me when I did 'Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da,' 'How'd you do that? You don't know anyone named Desmond or Molly, you don't know any of these people!'

"I said, 'I just like making up a story.' A short story writer doesn't necessarily know the pit and the pendulum, he hasn't necessarily been to Dracula's castle. But he makes it up as an *escape* in a way. I think a lot of my songwriting always was, and still is, an escape."

From?

"From the harsh realities of the world. If I'm in a bad mood, I always find that a good time to write a song. Go off on your own and put the feelings in a song rather than in someone's face. The fact that it's a musical vehicle seems to defuse it a bit. Rather than just shouting at someone or wagging a finger, you can get those emotions out.

"I think 'For No One' was probably an argument with a girlfriend. I think that was a little bit of a tough time. But 'Eleanor Rigby' was completely fictitious. When I grew up I remember hearing from various people that people like sad songs. It had not really occurred to me. So as I became a songwriter I always remembered, 'People liked sad songs. I don't know why, but they just like 'em. They *work* in music.' I now know why. It's because it's a powerful medium to put those emotions in. But 'Eleanor' was completely fictitious. There is a grave up in Liverpool..."

Oh yes, the famous story of the grave of an Eleanor Rigby in the churchyard where McCartney met Lennon. "I think I made the name up!" McCartney said. "But right there in Woolton in the church John and I used to hang out near...It's all pretty spooky but as far as I'm concerned it was just a matter of chance."

It was about 11 PM when the rehearsal broke up. A while later I was walking back toward Hyde Park, toward my hotel, when a car pulled up alongside me and McCartney stuck his head out the window. "Hey, want a ride?" I climbed in and he said, "Just push that junk over." A lyric book and an acoustic guitar.

The next evening at the Palace Prince Charles' guests stood around drinking champagne and waiting for the royal gig to begin. As everyone filed into a drawing room where a makeshift stage had been erected under a particularly porcine portrait of Henry VIII, Paul Cassidy— the Irish Brodsky—spotted the Prince's butler's telling four crestfallen teenage girls who had played violin music while the guests arrived that in spite of what they had been promised they would not be allowed to go in and watch McCartney play after all. The only chairs not taken by guests were close to the Prince and Charles could not be seated within eyesight of the help. Cassidy's Irish ears turned red at this insult to the only other musicians in the place. Pretty soon the kids found themselves seated behind the curtain with the McCartneys, while Elvis went and found programs for them. They got the best seats in the house.

McCartney says he doesn't think young Prince Charles was at the famous Royal Variety Performance in 1963 when the Beatles played for the Queen and her court. That was the night that John Lennon told the people in the cheap seats to clap "and the rest of you just rattle your jewelry." But you know who was there, also on the bill? The Joe Loss Orchestra with singer Ross MacManus —who got John, Paul, George, and Ringo to sign autographs for his his eight-year-old son

Declan, a very big Beatles fan. The other day Declan, who now calls himself Costello, told his dad he was playing the palace with McCartney. Ross replied, "Stealing my gig!"

Watching from behind the curtain as McCartney sings a heartbreaking "Yesterday" Costello says quietly, "*Listen* to that. That's why this guy is the business."

The morning after the palace show, I follow Costello down to Paris where he has agreed to play his first-ever opening act slot, for Bob Dylan. Elvis has his new album of cover songs, *Kojak Variety*, to promote, but with his perverse ambition he instead treats the French crowd to a set full of new material, what will presumably make up his next album which he will begin recording in August.

When he finishes Costello stands behind the curtain watching Dylan weave through inspired versions of "I Want You," "It's All Over Now Baby Blue," and a fair chunk of *Blood on the Tracks*. Studying Dylan this close makes you conscious of what a commanding performer he can be when he chooses and how this endless tour has resulted in his developing, at this late date, unexpected if eccentric skill as a lead guitarist. He plays in blue lights, backlit with a white spot to disguise the lines on his face and emphasize the thin frame and halo of hair. He looks just like the cover of *Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits*.

As he comes off stage Dylan confers with Costello, the two of them laughing. I look around and see an unlikely handful of guests gathering behind the stage, including expatriate Americans Elliot Murphy and Ernie Brooks, incoming Attractions Pete Thomas and Steve Nieve, and guitarists Marc Ribot and James Burton.

Those last four are here for rehearsals for Costello's *Kojak Variety* shows in London next week. The next day the Attractions, Ribot, and Burton set up in a Paris rehearsal studio and blast through hours of oldies. It's a gas to watch Burton—who played guitar with Ricky Nelson and Elvis Presley—and avant-gardist Ribot trade licks, work out arrangements, and find common ground. "Better be careful here," Ribot cracks after they practice some harmony lines on the guitar, "We don't want to be mistaken for the Allman Brothers!" Burton is a pure pleasure to watch. He maintains eye contract with all the other musicians like a secret service agent and as hard as he works, he rarely stops smiling.

And here's what it leaves me thinking: if you love rock 'n' roll and all the music that has grown out of rock 'n' roll, you are very lucky to be around in 1995. There will never again be a moment when so many of the giants are alive and operating at the same time. You might not realize this if you get your ideas of what's happening from radio or MTV or even the rock press, but somewhere tonight Jerry Lee Lewis is playing, and somewhere else P.J. Harvey. The Neville Brothers, too. Right now U2 are in the studio, Paul Westerberg's writing a song and James Brown is walking out on a stage. You could get in your car and go see Little Richard, R.E.M., Gregory Isaacs, Throwing Muses, Bruce Springsteen, Joan Osborne, Neil Young, Bob Mould, Aretha Franklin, Joni Mitchell, Björk, Frank Sinatra, Toshi Reagon, Chuck Berry, Levon Helm, Sonny Rollins, Pearl Jam, Paul Kelly, B.B. King, Me'Shell Ndegéocello, Van Morrison, Taj Mahal, the Jayhawks, Merle Haggard, Herbie Hancock, Robyn Hitchcock, the Rolling Stones, NRBQ, Stevie Wonder, Lou Reed, Lucinda Williams, Spearhead or Prince. What a great time to be a music lover!

At least that's what I was thinking when I went from watching Paul McCartney singing "For No One" on Thursday to Bob Dylan singing "All Along the Watchtower" on Friday to Elvis Costello jamming with James Burton in a little room on Saturday. How lucky we all are. Leave the complaints to the kids who'll come next, the ones who'll miss what we take for granted.

We cats here in the 1990s, we've got it made.

EARLE & VAN ZANDT

[*con't from page 43*] from him really. I've always been a Stones fan but their record sort of blew by me until I heard Townes sing it. You just started playing "Dead Flowers" when I started hanging out with you all. It was right around the time that *The Late Great* came out that I met you. It's a great song.

TOWNES: Some songs seem to be related. I've been thinking about this lately, Steve. I've been singing "Dead Flowers" at the end of "Tecumseh Valley" and it rolls right in. It's kind of like, "Hold it." I think if you had enough energy and enough vitamins and could force yourself to eat enough and didn't have to sleep, you could keep singing related songs until you dropped dead. Of course, you wouldn't have time to get paid.

EARLE: And it's all the stuff that happens in between the songs...

TOWNES: [*laughs*] Yeah, you'd miss all of that.

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Stereo Review

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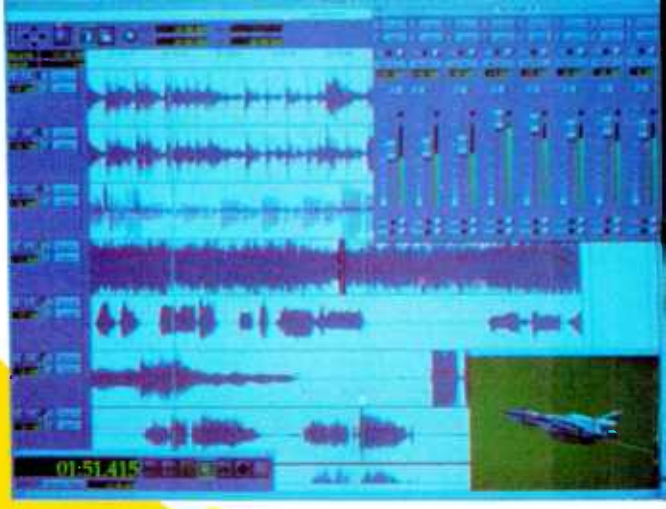

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◆ The pickups and bridge of the LG solid-body from **Godin** are recessed for playing comfort, while the strings are pulled through the mahogany body to increase resonance. Four Godin passive twin-blade pickups are augmented by a mid filter system and five-way switch. *Godin, 4240 Sére St., St-Laurent, Québec, Canada H4T 1A6; voice (514) 343-5560, fax (514) 343-5098.* ◆ **Zion's** Maple Top T is now being offered with a "bent top"—a comfortable contour where the forearm of the picking hand touches the body—and is available in a left-handed model as well. Also, the Ty Tabor signature model now includes glowing position markers for playing in dark venues. *Zion, 2606-404 Phoenix Dr., Greensboro, NC 27406; voice (910) 852-7603, fax (910) 852-1889.* ◆ The APTL-3JD Jerry Donahue bridge pickup from **Seymour Duncan** is designed to duplicate the tone of the '52 Tele played by the Hellecasters' prime picker. The pole pieces are symmetrically staggered for balanced response across the strings, and the wind is configured to enhance sustain. *Seymour Duncan, 5427 Hollister Ave., Santa Barbara, CA 93111-2345; voice (800) SDU-NCAN, fax (805) 964-9749.*

KEYBOARDS & MIDI

◆ **E-mu** introduces the e 64, a midpriced 64-voice sampler that accommodates up to 64 megs of RAM. The unit includes eight outputs, ASCII keyboard interface, load-while-play, resample-while-play, digital I/O and graphic waveform editing. The Emulator IV has a new operating system, version 1.1, which upgrades the control surface, enhances the voice architecture and adds individual-sample export capability. A new operating system also is available for the ESi-32, version 2.0, which adds SMIDI, scrub wheel function, the ability to load presets and samples from floppy disk and improved support of mass storage devices. *E-mu, 1600 Green Hills Rd., Box 660015, Scotts Valley, CA 95067; voice (408) 438-1921, fax (408) 438-8612.* ◆ **Aquila** offers the MRX1 wireless MIDI system, which incorporates the MRX1 receiver and MT2 transmitter. Eight selectable RF frequencies are available, allowing up to four systems to be used in the same area. Suggested operating range is 75 feet, up to 300 feet line-of-sight. *Aquila c/o ASI West, 230 Madison Ave., San Bruno, CA 94066; voice (800) 386-4554, fax (415) 588-2851.* ◆ The PC MIDI Kit from **MIDIman** is an introductory bundle that includes the WinMan 1x1 MIDI interface and Big Noise SeqMax Lite software for IBM/Windows. SeqMax enables sequencing and notation including individual staff printing, and features automatic harmonization and drum editor mode. *MIDIman, 236 W. Mountain St., Suite 108, Pasadena, CA 91103; voice (818) 449-8838, fax (818) 449-9480.*

AMPS & SPEAKERS

◆ **Ampeg** has reissued two Sixties-era guitar combos. The Jet, available with and without tremolo, pairs a 12" speaker with a reverb-equipped 15-watt tube amp, covered in blue Tolex. The two-channel Reverberocket boasts 40 watts of all-tube power and a 12" speaker. Reverb, tremolo and channel switching are included, plus line-in and -out jacks. *Ampeg, 1400 Ferguson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63133; voice (314) 727-4512 x293, fax (314) 727-4512 x332.* ◆ The Black Tweed is the latest in **Deja Vu's** line of solid-state amps incorporating patented tube-emulation circuitry. Based on the Fender Bandmaster and Deluxe, it incorporates both Tweed and Black Face features and includes spring reverb, vibrato, effect loop and equalized direct out. *Deja Vu, Rt. 1, Box 536, Berkeley Springs, WV 25411; voice (304) 258-9113, fax (304) 258-4673.*

RECORDING

◆ "Buckeye" is the code name for a new eight-track hard-disk recorder from **E-mu**. The unit requires no external computer and includes a graphic user interface and conventional tape-style transport controls. *E-mu, 1600 Green Hills Rd., Box 660015, Scotts Valley, CA 95067; voice (408) 438-1921, fax (408) 438-8612.*

PROCESSORS & EFFECTS

◆ The DP/4+ updates **Ensoniq's** DP/4 four-effect processor. The new model adds balanced tip-ring-sleeve inputs and outputs, a front-panel input that accommodates XLR and 1/4" plugs, output level switch, headphone jack and seamless switching between effects. Two responsive tube-emulation algorithms have been added (for a total of 54) plus four amp/speaker emulations, vocal eliminator and onboard guitar tuner. *Ensoniq, 155 Great Valley Pkwy., P.O. Box 3035. Malvern PA 19355; voice (610) 647-3930, fax (610) 647-8908.* ◆ The **Lexicon** Reflex is a MIDI-controlled stereo digital reverb. Algorithms include halls, plates, inverse reverbs, gates, flangers, choruses and multi-tap delays. "Advanced programming mode" allows programs to be edited. Also, a PCMCIA card for the PCM 80, the Dual FX Algorithm Card, enhances the unit with 25 additional algorithms and 250 new presets. New algorithms include five types of stereo reverb and five types of stereo multieffects. Furthermore, Lexicon offers a series of PCM 80 "signature" effect libraries on PCMCIA cards. The first three releases present effects by Hollywood sound designers Frank Seraphine and Scott Martin Gershin and keyboardist David Rosenthal. *Lexicon, 100 Beaver St., Waltham, MA 02154; voice (617) 736-0300, fax (617) 891-0340.* ◆ **Morley's** Matchbox line of compact direct box/preamp/speaker simulators now includes the MB-11 for amplified acoustic guitars and MB-12 for bass. The MB-11 includes HornSaver circuitry, which protects speaker components by attenuating frequencies above 6kHz. *Morley, 185 Detroit St., Cary, IL; voice (708) 639-4646, fax (708) 639-4723.* ◆ The 422 Stereo AGC/Leveler from **Symetrix** boosts stereo signals that fall below a user-selectable threshold level and pulls back those that rise above it. Features include response time control, peak limiter and input/output meters. *Symetrix, 14926 35th Ave. W., Lynnwood, WA 98037; voice (206) 787-3222, fax (206) 787-3211.*

SOUNDWARE

◆ **Roland** introduces the L-CDP Project Series of CD-ROMs for S-series samplers, each disc of which is devoted to a particular sampled instrument or category. Current volumes include *Solo Strings, Brass Sections, Super Sax, Symphony Orchestra, Keyboards of the '60s and '70s* and *African*. The L-CDC Composer Series of CD-ROMs is organized by musical style, offering a full set of ensemble instruments in each style including *Jazz*

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and *Dance*. In addition, three new JD9D Data Cards are available for the JD-990 synth, providing new drums, pads and lead sounds. *Roland, 7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA 90040; voice (213) 685-5141, fax (213) 726-8865.* ◆ There are six additions to the E-mu CD-ROM library. Titles include *Psychic Horns, Elements of Sound Vols. 1* and *2, ESi-32, General MIDI*, and *Mr. DJ: Dance Groove Construction Kits. E-mu, 1600 Green Hills Rd., Box 660015, Scotts Valley, CA 95067; voice (408) 438-1921, fax (408) 438-8612.* ◆ *Brotherhood* from **Big Fish** is an audio CD filled with hip-hop grooves and break beats. *Loopzilla*, on two audio CDs, provides hip-hop beats plus bass lines, guitar loops and scratches. *Megaton Bomb* is another two-disc set that includes drums, bass, synth and vocals for house, ambient and trance tracks. *Big Fish, 11003 Penrose St., Suite C, Sun Valley, CA 91352; voice (800) 717-FISH, fax (818) 768-4117.* ◆ **Northstar** offers *Phase 5*, a CD-ROM library for E-mu samplers including pop and jazz sounds. Virtually every jazz and pop guitar chord is included (1680 chords) performed with a number of strumming techniques. *Son of Drumscapes*, an audio CD, includes street, grunge and hip-hop drum sounds, grooves and fills performed by Mark Schulman of Simple Minds. *Northstar, 13716 S.E. Ramona, Portland, OR 97236; voice (503) 760-7777, fax (503) 760-4342.* ◆ Multi-MIDI is a series of GM-compatible MIDI file collections from **Tran Tracks**, each including five hit songs. Files come on 3.5" disks formatted for DOS, Windows or any sequencer that reads standard MIDI files. *Tran Tracks, 350 Fifth Ave. #3304, New York, NY 10118; voice (201) 383-6691, fax (201) 383-0797.* ◆ The updated Version 2 of **DrumTrax**'s Original Library of MIDI files includes 12,000 measures of drum patterns in 14 styles, mapped according to the GM spec. Also, the World Trax library includes 2400 measures of drum and percussion patterns from around the world, including Native American, Calypso, Reggae, Zydeco and African patterns. *DrumTrax, 51 Pleasant St., Suite 218, Malden, MA 02148; voice (508) 977-0570, fax (508) 977-0809.*

DRUMS & PERCUSSION

◆The 5500TH Delta hi-hat stand from **Drum Workshop** incorporates a number of refinements, including ball-bearing hinge and linkage for smooth, precise operation. Also, the Suspension Tom Mounts system is newly redesigned, and the Custom Snare Drum Collection now includes Rhythm Tech's iT tuners as standard equipment. *Drum Workshop, 101 Bernoulli Cir., Oxnard, CA 93030; voice (805) 485-6999, fax (805) 485-1334.* ◆ **Ludwig** reintroduces their piccolo snare drum (3½" x 14") with a ⅜" shell of five-ply maple and poplar to create the LS-558-XX Super Classic Piccolo Snare. The new model comes with a P-80 strainer system, low-mass lugs and 2.3mm steel stamped hoops. *Ludwig, P.O. Box 310, Elkhart, IN 46515-0301; voice (219) 522-1675, fax (219) 522-0334.* ◆ Commemorating Earth Day 1995, **Latin Percussion**'s Wow-Earth Bell is made of recycled aluminum and tuned to D-flat, "the fundamental tone of the Earth." ◆ Salida is a new line of student percussion instruments from **Pearl**. Eight-inch and 10" congas come in wood or fiberglass; 13" and 14" timbales in steel and brass. *Pearl, 549 Metroplex Dr., Nashville, TN 37211; voice (615) 833-4477, fax (615) 833-6242.*

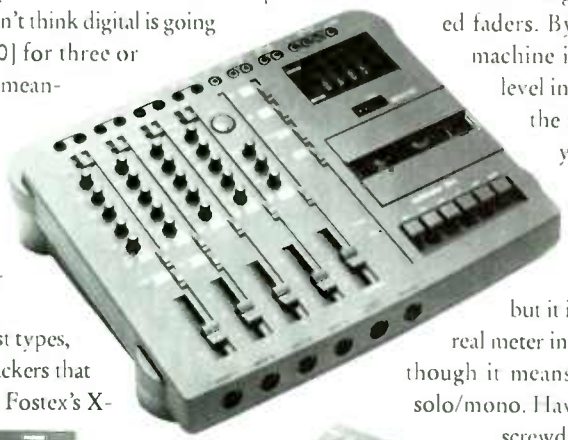
BUDGET MULTITRACKS

Four-track cassette decks still cost less than the cheapest digital deck. How do they stack up?

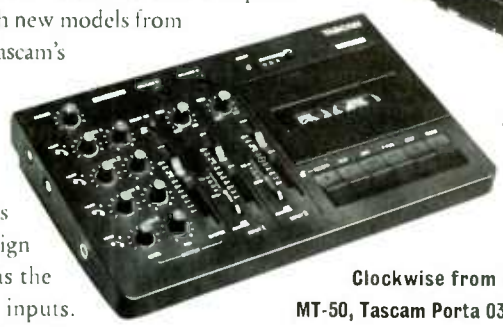
BY STEVEN WISHNIA

ARE FOUR-TRACK cassette recorders doomed to imminent obsolescence by some digital medium, be it digital eight-track tape, hard-disk recording, MiniDiscs, or Digital Compact Cassettes? Some industry figures suggest they are. A few low-cost hard-disk recorders are already on the shelves, notably Akai's four-track DR-4d ($2595), which doesn't include an integrated mixer, and Vestax's six-track HDR-6 ($2300), which does.

But four-figure prices are as accessible as Neptune to the average player with a lousy day job. They will fall—Vestax executive Matt Shiomi predicts they'll drop below $1000 within a couple years—but not that far. "I don't think digital is going to come down [below $500] for three or four years," he says. In the meantime, the analog cassette is the most cost-effective medium for multitrack recording, a reasonable option for budget home studios and an unbeatable musical sketch pad.



So for all you starving artist types, here are five cassette multitrackers that list for under $500. (A sixth, Fostex's X-18, which lists for $419, was unavailable for review.) They all offer improvements over my decade-old Tascam Porta One (which cost over $600 at the time). Even the cheapest of these machines has idiot-proof channel separation, and with new models from Yamaha and Fostex joining Tascam's time-tested Porta 07, the better-sounding 3 3/4 ips tape speed is now standard in the $450–$500 range.



Clockwise from top: Fostex XR-5, Yamaha MT-50, Tascam Porta 03, Vestax MR 300

Tascam's Porta 03 ($299) is a bare-bones unit with a design philosophy as minimalist as the first Ramones album. Two inputs. Dolby. Four tracks with level and pan controls. Master volume. No EQ.

The input trim controls have a very narrow range. With a miked acoustic guitar and a bass running direct, the signal was inaudible at 8 and overloaded at 9. But in the end I was able to satisfy my discerning ear. Sure, EQ would have been helpful for making the bass rounder and the guitar clearer, but I got a good tape without using any signal-processing gear more expensive than a used Alesis Microverb. For $299, that sounds good to me.

Vestax's MR 300 ($399) is aimed at beginners—it even comes with an instructional video, a decent pair of headphones and a mike. It has a pleasantly ergonomic interface: graphic EQ, push-button track selectors and finger-hugging rounded faders. By running a drum machine into the two line-level inputs and bass into the instrument input, you can record basic tracks in stereo.

However, some features work against the MR 300's apparent ease of use. You can only hear tracks 1 and 2 while overdubbing; when you record track 4, you can't hear track 3. This isn't fatal, but it is inhibiting. Providing one instrument input with a real meter instead of two with overload lights seems reasonable, though it means you can only record instrument-level signals solo/mono. Having pan controls that can only be adjusted with a screwdriver—"set it and forget it"—may be easier for some but really interfered with my creative instincts.

Starting around $450, you get features like individual track EQ, effect inserts and various input/output options, such as the ability to use all four inputs to record live to two tracks. Yamaha's MT-50 ($449) and Tascam's Porta 07 ($499) provide dbx noise reduction; Fostex's XR-5 ($499) has Dolby B.

These three units all share sonic strengths. The advantages of higher tape speed are obvious: I got a clear, delicate acoustic guitar sound with just a Shure SM57 mike on the MT-50, a rich slow blues on the XR-5 and impressive percussion sounds on the Porta 07. On the other hand, more functions make the units more cumbersome to operate. I found myself missing the ease and flexibility of my Porta One, with which you record to whatever track you plug into.

Recording on the Yamaha MT-50 is simplest if you put basics on tracks 1 and 2, overdubs on 3 and 4. If you decide to redo track 1 or 2, you can't hear what's on 3 or 4 while you're doing it. I found this out—the manual doesn't mention it—when I [cont'd on page 81]

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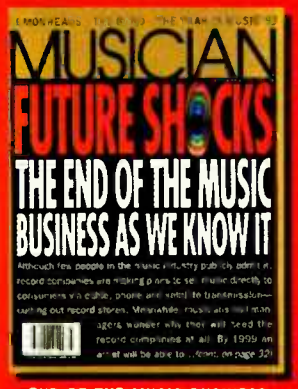

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FORWARD

ALL BUT EFFECTIVE

Affordable, easy to carry and convenient to use, these low-powered tube amps deliver the goods.

BY E.D. MENASCHÉ

LE COMBOS—at least those with tubes—carry a certain mystique. Like good art and successful people, a small tube amp must excel within a given set of limitations. While large amps tend to cover enough timbral territory to appeal to a broad audience, small ones compete on the basis of low price, necessarily focusing on a distinct tonal character.

Light weight and limited bulk are, of course, also big selling points. But more to the point, you can push a small tube amp to its screaming limit without blowing out your ears. There is a visceral, tactile difference in a guitar's response when it's driving a tube amp to the limit. Colors are richer, bass notes snappier. Dynamic nuance comes through with greater dimension, making your fingers and pick effective tone controls.

Take Mesa/Boogie's beautifully integrated Subway Blues ($449). Driven by a quartet of 12AX7 tubes and two EL84s, the Subway pushes 20 watts into a single 10" Mesa Vintage Black Shadow speaker. Its simple controls—volume, three-band EQ, reverb and bright/fat switch—belie its versatility.

Modest volume settings produce shimmering clean tones with a tight, snappy low end. Toggling the bright/fat switch changes the Subway's tone without affecting its responsiveness. The bright setting has little of the stick-in-your-ear high end commonly associated with bright switches—actually, it's a reservoir of jangle and punch. The midrange control is equally sweet. Below half-way, it functions as a tone control. Beyond 12 o'clock, it becomes a frequency-dependent gain knob, coloring the tone a dusky shade of blue. Pushing both mid and volume to the limit sends the little Boogie into singing, soulful overdrive.

Clockwise from top: Fender Pro Junior, Mesa/Boogie Subway Blues, Marshall JTM 312, Peavey Delta Blues

The Subway is plenty loud enough for practice and low-volume stage use. The interfacing is handy: recording output with speaker mute switch, 4- and 8-ohm extension speaker outputs, parallel effect loop with mix control (parallel loops being both quieter and better-sounding than their serial counterparts). The onboard reverb is excellent. But it's the combination of rich tone and precise, tight response that makes the Subway a special, highly musical ride.

A 15" speaker is something of a rarity in guitar circles, and that's a shame. As Peavey's Delta Blues ($569) demonstrates, the wide frequency response of a 15" combined with a smooth, tube-driven amplifier yields lively tone with good presence, ample low end and well articulated highs. The 15" is especially welcome at low volumes, where the Delta provides a full lower midrange usually absent from the tone of little amps.

At 45 lbs, the Delta is just light enough to be easily portable. It seems well constructed, though rear-panel tube protection is absent. It also lacks a standby switch, which would minimize wear on the tubes and make it easier to change instruments onstage.

While the 30-watt Delta bears a vintage-tweed look and a super-hip tremolo circuit, some decidedly modern features are included, such as channel switching, serial effect loop and boost control.

The overdrive channel provides serious gain. Its thick midrange character is useful but less impressive than the amp's cleaner settings. In either channel, a very satisfying overdrive from the power section kicks in at moderate volumes. The boost switch adds depth and volume to both channels, making four distinct tonal variations readily accessible.

Thanks to the 15" speaker, the unit's three-band EQ is all the more effective: You can pump up the low end of a distorted tone without sending the speaker into crackling protest. I also found the Delta effective for smooth jazz sounds, and it was even passable with a bass. Add a touch of spring reverb and dial in the tremolo, and the Delta Blues produces swampy, low-down tones worthy of its name.

By contrast, Marshall's 40-lb JTM 312 ($799) is decidedly modern and brutally British, applying 30 watts and a 12" speaker toward razor-sharp tone and singing sustain. Two foot-switchable channels (normal and boost) are available, plus serviceable spring reverb, a serial effect loop, three-band EQ (common to both channels) and master volume.

Three ECC83 and two 5881 tubes are protected by a heavy rear-panel grille. There's an extension speaker jack and a "speaker-emulated" XLR out for connecting to a mixing console. Unfortunately there's no speaker mute, but combining a mike with the XLR output is a quick

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M

way to get a very large, intense sound.

At its cleanest—even with the treble rolled way back—the Marshall might sound harsh to roots-oriented players. Turning up the master volume adds a healthy crunch with solid bottom and slashing highs, perfect for cutting through a heavy rhythm section. The boost channel covers both edgy vintage and modern textures. It sounds best near its maximum settings, where the tone is rich and the sustain virtually endless. If you want the muscular tone of a large British amp but your playing situation doesn't allow you to turn a big amp up that high, the JTM 312 will do the trick.

What can you do with only 15 watts, a 10" speaker and a grand total of two knobs? Make very pleasant noise, it turns out. Billed as a "professional" practice amp, Fender's 20-lb Pro Junior ($339) is a throwback to the bantamweight Fenders of yore, especially the beloved Champ.

Operation couldn't be simpler. Turn the volume and tone controls beyond halfway up and the amp stops getting louder—but its tone begins to morph from clean and snappy to meaty and distorted. With both controls maxed out, the Junior delivers a shockingly belligerent overdrive. If you play with a heavy attack you'll appreciate its low-end growl, ideal for "fat Strat" style blues.

The vintage-look tweed cabinet houses top-mounted controls, input jack and power switch. A rear panel protects the tubes, one pair each of 12AX7s and EL84s. The same panel also encloses much of cabinet's back, which accounts for the solid low end. Another nice design touch: the internal speaker isn't hard-wired, so you can drive any 8-ohm speaker system—especially useful in the studio.

Pushed relentlessly, the test unit we played through was prone to rattle and feedback—perhaps changing tubes would solve that problem. But its simplicity and responsiveness makes this small Fender difficult to resist.

Today's small amps would have been considered power monsters 35 years ago, when many of the "vintage" sounds now in vogue came into being. A small amp's main weakness—lack of high-volume headroom—is less problematic with modern sound reinforcement. It's worth noting that you can assemble a cool collection of mini-combos for roughly the same price you'd pay for one premium high-wattage head.

Small amps also are a welcome alternative to direct recording. While DI units are great for duplicating the sound of a close-miked cabinet, there's still nothing like the sound of an amp in a room, even at low volume. As home recording attracts increasing numbers of guitarists, these little powerhouses are fast becoming priority gear.

◆ **Fender**, 7975 N. Hayden Rd., Suite C-100, Scottsdale, AZ 85258; voice (602) 596-9690, fax (602) 596-1386. ◆ **Marshall**, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590; voice (516) 333-9100, fax (516) 333-9108. ◆ **Mesa/Boogie**, 1317 Ross St., Petaluma, CA 94954; voice (707) 778-6565, fax (707) 765-1503. ◆ **Peavey**, 711 A St., Meridian, MS 39301; voice (601) 483-5365, fax (601) 486-1172.

[*cont'd from page 76*] finally completed a bass part on track 3 after 40 frustrating minutes of getting it almost right on track 2. When I went back to replace track 2 with rhythm guitar, I couldn't play along with the final bass line. It took some self-control to avoid bisecting the unit with my Telecaster.

The Fostex XR-5 and Tascam Porta 07 share a recording scheme that I found confusing at first. Odd-numbered tracks are fed by the left side of the stereo bus, even-numbered tracks from the right side; so to overdub on tracks 2, 3 or 4, you plug into the input for track 1 and set the pan control all the way to the left or right side, depending on the track you're trying to record. You have to keep your wits about you as you move between tracking, rough mixing, overdubbing, and mixing again—definitely a challenge to multitrack neophytes.

While the other decks provide a mono headphone mix during recording and overdubbing, the XR-5 automatically pans tape tracks in the center and input(s) to either side. This adds a level of complication, since you have to adjust the input/tape monitor controls to balance between tape and inputs. Moreover, I found that a mono headphone mix made it a lot easier to hear how my overdubs were blending with already-recorded tracks. The MT-50, with cue sliders located next to the main recording-level faders, is the easiest for getting a good headphone mix—a big plus.

For miscellaneous goodies, the Porta 07 comes out ahead. The MT-50 lacks a master volume control, and the XR-5 has no return-to-zero function—both present in Tascam's unit. (When you have to rewind 25 or 30 times a song, having it stop automatically at the beginning is a crucial convenience.) But if you use a lot of outboard gear, the XR-5 offers the most flexibility: two effect loops rather than one, both with stereo returns.

All of these machines sound better than my old Porta One. The MT-50 may be the best-sounding of the three, but it's not without its quirks. If you're willing to deal with extra complexity, you might be better off with the XR-5 or the Porta 07. On a lower budget, I'd pick the Porta 03.

CD-quality sound is still the province of digital decks, but the analog cassette is more serviceable than ever for musicians on a budget. With good recording techniques and a little outboard gear, these units deliver very solid home recordings—at a price that still beats digital by a mile.

◆ **Akai**, 1316 E. Lancaster, P.O. Box 2344, Fort Worth, TX 76113-2344; voice (817) 336-5114, fax (817) 870-1271. ◆ **Fostex**, 15431 Blackburn Ave., Norwalk, CA 90650; voice (800) 7FOSTEX, fax (310) 802-1964. ◆ **Tascam**, 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA 90640; voice (213) 726-0303. ◆ **Vestax**, 2870 Cordelia Rd., Suite 100, Fairfield, CA 94585; voice (707) 427-1920, fax (707) 427-2023. ◆ **Yamaha**, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622-6600; voice (714) 522-9011, fax (714) 522-9832.

MOBY'S HOME

FAST FORWARD

MOBY, TECHNO'S most visible stylist, recorded his latest release *Everything is Wrong* almost entirely in a loft just a few blocks from his Manhattan apartment. "I like working by myself," he notes. "Engineers make me too self-conscious."

He runs **Steinberg**'s **Cubase Audio** sequencer and **Digidesign**'s **Sound Tools** hard-disk recorder on an **Apple Mac IIci** 1 with a Syquest removable hard drive. An **Opcode Studio IV** MIDI interface 2 distributes MIDI from his master controller, a **Yamaha SY35** 3, to a multitude of synths, samplers and processors made available via two **Furman** 4 and two **Tascam** 5 patch bays. From there everything is routed via a **Soundcraft Spirit** 24x8x2 mixer 6 to three **Alesis ADATs** 7.

His drum machines include an **Alesis HR-16** 8 plus **Roland TR-909** 9 and **TR 303**, with a **Korg KMS-30** sync converter 10 to help with synchronization. A **Roland Bassline TB 303** 11 cranks out the bottom while various sounds are supplied by an **E-mu Proteus 3/World** module 12 and **Proformance 1** sampled piano 13, **Yamaha SY22** 14 and **SY85** synths and **TX16W** sampler 15, **Akai S1000** 16 and **S950** 17 samplers, **Oberheim Matrix-1000** synth 18, **Casio CZ-101** synth 19, and **Roland Juno 106** 20 and **Jupiter 6** 21 synths. A pair of **Technics 1200** turntables 22 and a **Numark DM-1650** mixer are on hand for DJing and sampling. Vocals are picked up by an **Electro-Voice PL88I** 23. "It's amazing the sound you can get out of an $80 microphone," he comments. He also plays a **Fender Precision** bass 24, **Ibanez Roadstar II** guitar (with a **Boss** Super Feedback/Distortion stompbox) and **Worldbeat** congas 25.

Moby pumps his beats through **Yamaha NS40** 26 and **NS10** 27 monitors. A pair of **Auratones** 28—"as bad as any little AM radio can make your music sound," he comments—help keep his mixes in perspective. He also employs **dbx 163X** 29 and **160XT** 30 compressors plus a **dbx 463X** noise gate 31, **Yamaha SPX900** 32 and **Boss SE50** 33 multieffects, **Alesis Quadraverb** 34, **Eventide DSP 4000 UltraHarmonizer** 35, **Digitech 7.6 Time Machine** delay 36, and a **Klark-Teknik DN-60 Real-Time Spectrum Analyzer** 37. When a mix is good enough to keep, he captures it using two **Panasonic SV3700** DATs 38, **Sony** portable DAT 39, and **JVC** cassette 40. Moby likes his **JVC** MiniDisc recorder 41, "which I think is the best piece of equipment I own." He also has a **Mitsubishi** VCR 42 and **Sony** 12" video monitor 43 "for doing film work—and watching 'The Simpsons,'" he adds. "I've never sampled from video, though."

The colorful contraption on the right is a custom-made **Serge** modular analog synth 44. "It's cool thing to have," Moby says, "but ungainly. It cost me almost as much as people spend on a used car," he smiles. "But it was Time-Warner's money. I had to spend it on something."

BY DEV SHERLOCK

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSEPH CULTICE

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VOLUME 18

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Björk Uncörked

BJÖRK

Post

(ELEKTRA)

HERE'S A PLEASANT SURPRISE: BJÖRK, THE EX-frontwoman of Iceland's Sugarcubes, is fashioning a viable solo career. Once amusing, her former band already seems painfully dated—a monument to self-conscious eccentricity. Björk, on the other hand, has incorporated their zany energy into a more sophisticated, more satisfying strategy. It's enough to give growing up a good name.

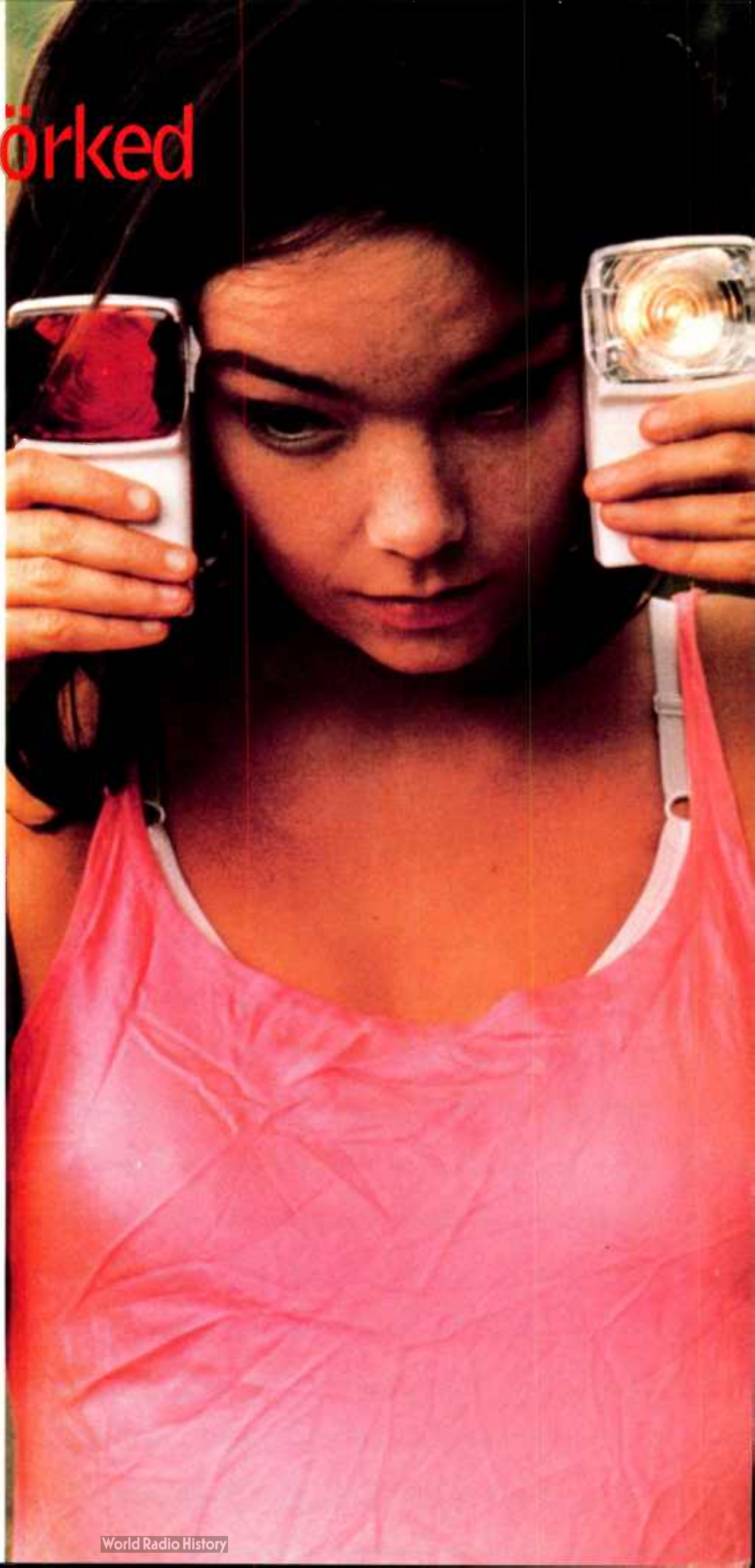
From a distance, she can still come off unbearably precious. Her relentless vocal effects, from whoops and growls to noises not usually associated with humans, sometimes suggest a cloying collection of mannerisms rather than a bona fide singer. "Army of Me," the riveting opener of Ms. Gudmundsdottir's fine second album, demolishes that illusion. Over sullen synth licks, a cool Björk sternly warns, "If you complain once more/You'll meet an army of me." So much for cuteness.

Wackiness remains in the repertoire, but *Post* ranges far and wide. The shimmering "Possibly Maybe" begins with her murmuring, "I wouldn't mind perhaps spending a little time with you;" by the end, though, it's a breakup song and she's hurting, "How can you offer me love like that?/I'm exhausted!" The difficulty of connecting resurfaces on the fragmented funk of "I Miss You," and as ambivalent passion in the funereal, sublimely creepy "Enjoy."

Downplaying those amusing-yet-distracting tics, Björk emphasizes her old-fashioned ability to sing like the dickens. Framed by insistent percussion and cinematic strings, she embodies lonely desire in "Isobel," then does an about-face to celebrate nutty romance with a swaggering big-band cover of Betty Hutton's "Blow a Fuse." The fluid textures fashioned by our heroine and an array of co-producers, including trusty Nellee Hooper, have a subliminal resonance that might undermine a less assured performer, although it's hard to imagine anything upstaging her.

"I'm going hunting for mystery," Björk coos to the dreamy strains of "Cover Me," promising more than she ultimately delivers. However intriguing, these mutant dance tracks and spacey reveries avoid scary or strange extremes—apart from the suicidal musings of "Hyperballad"—keeping the mainstream in sight. But the possibilities of Björk's vibrant art, like her voice itself, remain enormous, so don't be surprised if she goes off the deep end next time.

—Jon Young



PHOTOGRAPH BY RANKIN

BILL LASWELL ON HOW TO PRODUCE A HOLY TERROR

USUALLY, the relationship between words and music on a recording puts the music first and the words second. But when Bill Laswell began work on the Last Poets' album *Holy Terror*, he not only started with the words, he let them dictate the sound of the music.

Laswell wasn't working with words on paper; he took his cues from the way the Poets read their poetry. "They'd come in and read, and we'd just try to find rhythms and create pieces that go along with the flow of that performance. The performance deals with phrasing, and it's easy to see how the rhythm could be determined from the phrasing of the voice."

Sometimes, that process was pretty simple, as with "If Only We Knew," which accompanies Abiodun Oyewole's verse with hand percussion and vocal chants. "It's just rhythmic accompaniment to a vocal," says Laswell. "All that happens pretty naturally."

Other tracks were more involved. Umar Bin Hassan's "Funk" is fueled by a muscular, Parliament/Fundadelic–style arrangement which Laswell says derived from "the feel that Umar projected when he performed it. It became obvious that was a good tempo, then Bootsy [Collins] added some riffs that fit. It was very spontaneous."

Laswell adds that part of the ease in making this album was his understanding of the personalities involved. "Abiodun is conscious of other influences like jazz or African or Brazilian music," he says. "Umar is more across the beat and raw, more Midwestern and R&B oriented. They have very different backgrounds to their sound."

Considering how people have described the Last Poets as precursors to rap, was Laswell tempted to produce the album as a rap record?

"We weren't conscious that it was a record that has rhythms and repetitive phrases on it. If we did it 25 years ago, it wouldn't have been called rap—we wouldn't have had the word—but it would have been the same music. And if we did it 15 or 20 years from now, maybe that's what rap would sound like. But it would still be the same music."

—J.D. Considine

HERBIE HANCOCK

Dis Is Da Drum

(MERCURY)

WHEN I FIRST LISTENED TO HERBIE Hancock's Mercury debut *Dis Is Da Drum*, a certain pang of...*uncertainty* accompanied my initial explorations. After all, Hancock is a brilliant all-around musician, but he has on occasion evidenced a tendency towards glibness. But with the "Funky Drummer" beat, big-band flourishes, sampled percussive lore, idiomatic piano flourishes (and lyric trumpet break) of "Call It '94," Hancock has put his personal stamp on a jazz-hop style that draws on *Mwandishi*, the Headhunters and the Rockit band. The canny Hancock has carved a niche for himself where he can remain contemporary, while reclaiming the so-called acid jazz turf from the new jack crowd.

The title tune begins with a verbal invocation: "This is the drum that creates a hypnotic influence over its listeners—or so it's said," and Hancock's range of samples and percussive colors suggests the pop sheen of some contemporary African sources (or secondhand stylists like Peter Gabriel). "The Melody" is a rap tune that essays Hancock's place in the firmament. "Mojuba" has a more pronounced African head, but its release is a mix of anthemic P-Funk bass, catchy harmonica samples and the kind of block chord flourishes Hancock perfected with "Watermelon Man."

My only misgiving about *Dis Is Da Drum* is that Herbie has bought so wholeheartedly into the sampling ethos. Of course, the idea is to do that and retain a swinging, human feel. However, Herbie is one of the cats who invented *the groove*, and when live musicians start hitting on the one, modulating through the keys—instead of laying on the vamp—and syncopating in and around the main theme in a polyrhythmic celebration of group interplay and the community, then I believe we will have arrived at a real hip-hop/black rock/modern jazz accord. **—Chip Stern**

SOUL ASYLUM

Let Your Dim Light Shine

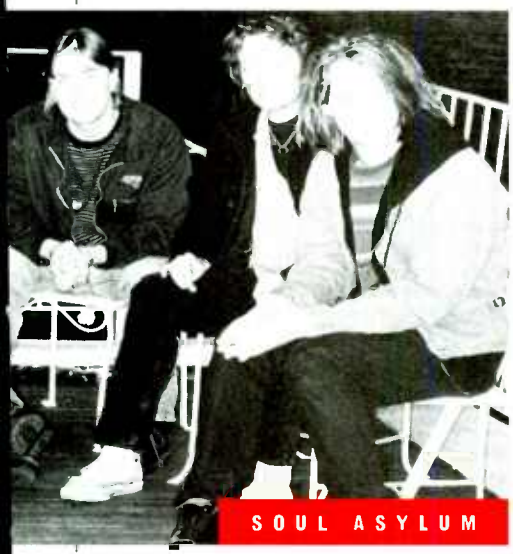
(COLUMBIA)

LET US FIRST OF ALL NOT REVIEW DAVE Pirner's hair or girlfriend.

Let us instead review the album *Let Your Dim Light Shine* by Dave Pirner's band Soul

Asylum. We have some loudness balanced by softness; we have some power chords balanced by sampled weirdness; we have some wordy verses balanced by chanty choruses; we have some Nirvana-style alienation balanced by daytime talk show–style sentiment; we have some Don Henley–style wordplay with cliches balanced by cliches with no wordplay at all, and we have some lame exercises in surrealism balanced by competent rock 'n' roll. We have an average album.

So you might like it and you might not. With the right video, it might sell a lot. I myself would not buy it. Despite the occasional catchy guitar riff and generous number of musical ideas per song, I find Pirner's voice annoying. His phrasing has evolved in the direction of Axl Rose—too much whine and too little genuine catharsis. Squeezing off your vocal cords like you're about to weep should be confined, as a general rule, to rare occasions such as funerals. Over angry power chords, this sort of emoting creates cognitive dissonance in the listener. Sentiment, even when genuine, doesn't amount to meaning. —Charles M. Young



SOUL ASYLUM

HOUSE PARTY

What Are You Listening to Lately?

DAVID TORN

1. Antonio Carlos Jobim e Convidados
2. Joni Mitchell—Turbulent Indigo
3. Helmet—Meantime
4. Gazel: Classical Sufi Music of the Ottoman Empire
5. Talk Talk—Spirit of Eden

STEVIE NICKS

1. Tom Petty—Wildflowers
2. Eric Clapton—Motherless Child
3. Paul Simon—Graceland
4. Joni Mitchell—Joni Mitchell
5. Bonnie Raitt—Longing In Their Hearts

SUPER CAT

1. Green Day—"She"
2. Madonna—"Take A Bow"
3. Beenie Man—"Slam"
4. Adina Howard—"Freak Like Me"
5. Seal—Seal

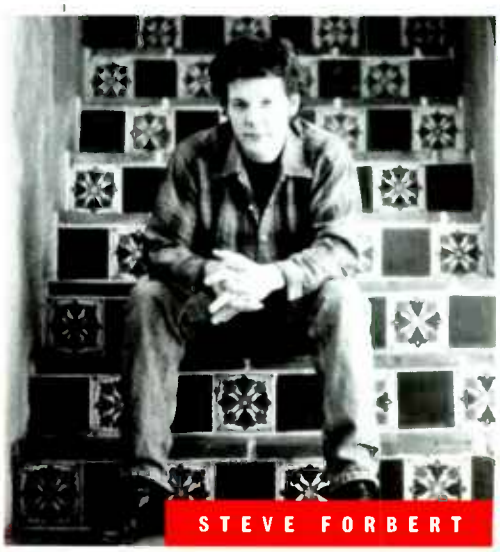
STEVE FORBERT

Mission of the Crossroad Palms
(GIANT/PALADIN)
Be Here Now: Solo Live
(ROLLING TIDE RECORDS)

HERE'S A TREAT: TWO NEW STEVE FORBERT albums (he must have picked up some marketing hints from Guns N' Roses during his tenure on Geffen) as good as anything the Mississippi-bred singer/songwriter has done. And while the reasons for their excellence may be many and varied one thing stands out—Forbert's performances here have a new subtlety that suits his leather voice well. Since he burst out of New York at the end of the 70s, Forbert has been a rocking cat in folkie clothes. With or without a band he got up in your face and forced you to either join in with his enthusiasm or bail out. On these records Forbert sings more softly, and both his delicate melodies and insightful lyrics prosper for it. Maybe after nearly 20 years of getting people's attention by shouting, Forbert has grown into the confidence that he can hold their interest as well with a whisper from across the room.

Be Here Now is a solo live album of unusual consistency and sense. Stripping down songs such as "Responsibility" and "I Blinked Once," Forbert improves on the studio versions by zeroing in on the emotional core of the tunes. A haunted, barren "Mexico" steals the show. The set-up is pretty simple, an exhausted American working man sits in front of the TV seeing images of foreign earthquakes and domestic homelessness and feels ashamed for feeling sorry for himself—but feels sorry for himself anyway. "I must be insane," he sings, "ship me down to Mexico and show me about some pain." The performance brings to mind Neil Young's great line: "Though my problems are meaningless that don't make them go away."

Forbert often, like the rest of us, sees the world through a vocabulary of half-recalled rock 'n' roll songs. The references are a little more subtle on his new studio album, *Mission of the Crossroad Palms*, but Forbert expects his listeners, his peers, to get the joke when he rhymes the line "Jane went off to work" with the Lou Reed quote, "Jane she is a clerk," and he probably figures the little Van Morrison riff that drifts up in "Oh, To Be Back With You" will put you in the right emotional spot, even if you can't put your finger on the reference (it's from "In the Garden"). "Don't Talk to Me" has the movie camera detail of a Chuck Berry lyric, and the wit, as a halfdrunk husband begs a flirtatious woman to go away before he strays. He explains he's having "a midlife crisis on a bad luck streak." Certainly you've got to admire a man who can deliver, in a sad song, the line, "A man is but a monkey with a crown" and not disrupt the melancholy.



STEVE FORBERT

These records suggest a new strength from

an artist who was pretty strong to begin with. Forbert has the rare gift of coming across as a guy you might meet in a bar who tells you exactly what he thinks, thinks a lot of interesting things, and sometimes thinks in poetry. (Paladin Records, 1014 16th Ave South, Nashville TN 37212. Rolling Tide Records c/o Squirrelmad, PO Box 28, Abington PA 19001) —Bill Flanagan

PRIMUS

Tales From the Punch Bowl

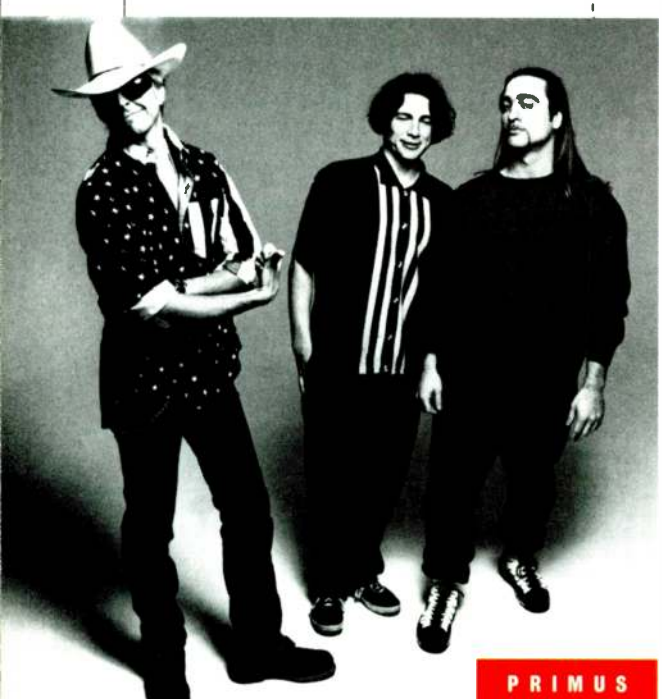
(INTERSCOPE)

PRIMUS' FIFTH OUTING FINDS THE BAND once again at their most nonsensical and darkly twisted. Fans will tell you that the Bay Area trio is best enjoyed in either a live setting or with the aid of headphones and mind-altering chemicals. If those conditions aren't practical, *Tales From the Punch Bowl* still makes for a compelling odyssey, despite the group's forays into self-indulgent if impressive jams.

The album follows an old-fashioned LP format, with a real difference between what would have been sides one and two. The first half-dozen songs are more structured and accessible, while the final seven cuts—with the exception of the twangy, countrified "De Anza Jig"—feature more esoteric noodlings. That's not to say "Space Farm," with its animal and ambient noises, or the ultra-heavy seven-minute-plus "Professor Nuttbutter's House of Treats" will have radio program directors doing backflips. But compared to the rambling "Hellbound 17 1/2 (theme from)" and the record's capper, the instrumental seafaring ditty "Captain Shiner," (replete with gulls, foghorns and boat noises) they're practically Top 40 fare. Highlights include the wondrous and whimsical "Southbound Pachyderm," which smacks of psychedelic Bauhaus meets Ted Nugent, and "Year of the Parrot," with its biting indictment of pop music circa '94.

Throughout, the boisterous, rhythm-driven clamor of Primus' mental metal is offset by the instantly recognizable jazzy/funky/chunky stylings of bassist/singer Les Claypool—while Claypool's actual voice is third in the mix of Primus' onslaught of tight-as-a-drum musicality and idiosyncratic vignette-style lyrics, his vocal take on each song is original and amusing.

Despite the jokey vibe that has always surrounded Primus, this collection is multi-leveled, poignant at times ("Mrs. Blaileen") and just plain weird at others ("Wynona's Big Brown Beaver"). In any case, *Tales* cannot be relegated to background music—it's simply too demanding on the ear. Once again, this twisted trio of tunesmiths have come through with a mystifying, generally rewarding, surreal circus of an album. —Katherine Turman



PRIMUS

T.S. MONK

The Charm

(BLUE NOTE)

WE HEAR SO MUCH ABOUT JAZZ'S creme de la creme—during this era the list of media darlings would include Wynton, Jacky, Cyrus, Wynton, Josh, Nicholas, Wynton, et al.—that sometimes valuable also-rans don't get the scrutiny their music warrants. Take Monk. No, not the long-gone dancer and composer who played the hell out of the piano. His son, Thelonious Sphere Jr., who has made two solid-but-not-killer discs for Blue Note, and whose latest is a comparatively-inspired-but-still-no-landmark date. He steadily reminds that garden-variety hard bop, juiced by a bit of splashy ebullience, is not without its, uh, charms.

A resolute vibe of toughness that has previously eluded Monk and company is threaded throughout. Willie Williams is one of the more vital tenor players of the day, and his romp through old man Monk's "Bolivar Blues" stresses and stretches that classic form. Trumpeter Don Sickler helped Joe Henderson shape the brilliant *Lush Life*, but he also comes across as a capable blaster on Clifford Jordan's "The Highest Mountain." Buddy Montgomery's "Budini" (named to remind us of Blakey's slight of hand?), ripples with an alto excursion by Bobby Porticelli. The leader's a dapper timekeeper throughout.

At any given time there are loads of records floating around that aren't slated for destiny, yet contain intermittent moments of delight. Right now the list includes Ernie Watts' *Destiny*, Vincent Herring's *Don't Let It Go*, Carl Allen's *Testimonial*, James Spaulding's *Blues Nexus* and Claudio Roditi's *Free Wheeling*. *The Charm* is kin to those cousins, yet proffers plenty pizzazz. To extend that Jordan metaphor, not every jazz disc can provide a Matterhorn vista, but the view from lesser peaks ain't half bad. —Jim Macnie

BAD BRAINS

God of Love

(MAVERICK)

OF ALL THE BLOATED, BOTCHED AND BEwildering Big Rock Comeback Acts recently making the rounds, the bonafide Bad Brains reunion held more promise and reeked less of cynicism than just about any other nostalgia hump this side of Steely Dan. Okay, so it smelled a bit fishy (Madonna finally wooed enigmatic lead singer H.R. with a "sizable" advance), but compared to Miller Beer Presents Page & Plant, Pink Floyd and the Eagles, it was real news and not some pseudo event, especially since Bad Brains never "made it" in any sense of the word first time around.

They are also perhaps *the* seminal influence on Generation Grunge. Everyone from straight-edgers to art-metalheads to earnest eclecticists (i.e., Beastie Boys to Living Colour to Red Hot Pearl Jam) have bit ol' chunks of punk 'n' funk from this jazz fusion-turned-hardcore quartet, who originally surfaced on a venerable 1982 ROIR cassette LP and one year later made their formal debut with the Ric Ocasek–produced *Rock Against Light*. Both of these early gems tried to demonstrate that Bob Marley's vision of a "Punky Reggae Party" was an attainable ideal, as does their new effort, *God of Love*, which once again sees Ocasek at the helm.

The results aren't what many diehards might have expected: Many of Dr. Know's heavy metal guitar parts (especially on "Cool Mountaineer," "Tongue Tee Tie," and "Thank Jah") suffer from imitating-their-imitatoritis.

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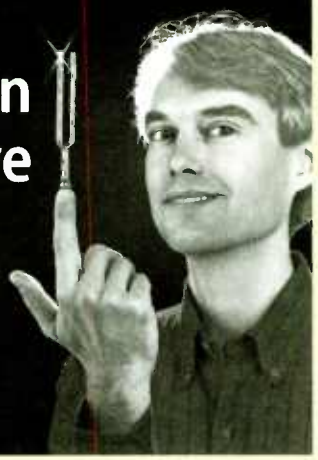
"They LAUGHED when I said they could have Perfect Pitch ...until I showed them the secret!"



The TRUE STORY
by David L. Burge

IT ALL STARTED in ninth grade as a sort of teenage rivalry.

I would slave at the piano for five hours daily. Linda didn't practice anywhere near that amount. But somehow she always seemed to have an edge which made *her* the star performer of our school. It was frustrating.

What does she have that I don't? I would wonder.

Linda's best friend, Sheryl, sensed my growing competition. One day she bragged on and on about Linda, adding more fuel to my fire. "You could *never* be as good as *Linda*," she taunted me. "*Linda's* got *Perfect Pitch*."

"What's Perfect Pitch?" I asked.

Sheryl gloated over a few of Linda's uncanny musical abilities: how she could name any tone or chord—*just by ear*; how she could sing any pitch she wanted—*from mere memory*; and how she could even play songs after only *listening* to them on the radio!

My heart sank. *Her fantastic EAR is the key to her success* I thought. How could I ever hope to compete with her?

But later I doubted Sheryl's story. How could anyone *possibly* know F♯ or B♭ just by *listening*? An ear like that would give someone a mastery of the entire musical language!

It bothered me. Did Linda *really* have Perfect Pitch? I finally got up the nerve and point-blank asked Linda if the rumors were true.

"Yes," she nodded to me aloofly.

But Perfect Pitch was too good to believe. I rudely pressed, "*Can I test you sometime?*"

"OK," she replied cheerfully.

I couldn't wait to call her bluff...

My plan was ingeniously simple:

I picked a moment when Linda least suspected it. Then I boldly challenged her to name tones for me—*by ear*.

I made sure she had not been playing any music. I made her stand so she could not see the piano keyboard. I made certain other classmates could not help her. I set everything up so I could expose Linda's Perfect Pitch claims as a ridiculous joke.

Nervously I plotted my testing strategy. Linda appeared serene.

With silent apprehension I selected a tone to play. (She'll *never* guess F♯!)

I had barely touched the key.

"F♯," she said.

I was astonished.

I quickly played another tone. She didn't even stop to think. *Instantly* she announced the correct pitch.

Frantically, I played more and more tones, here and there on the keyboard, but each time she would somehow know the pitch—without effort. She was SO amazing—she could identify tones as easily as *colors!*

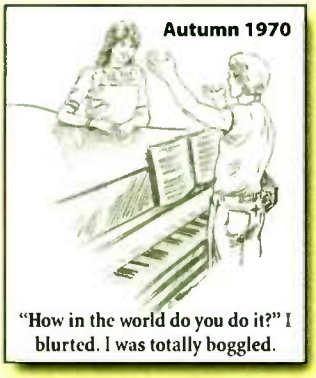
"Sing an E♭," I demanded, determined to mess her up.

With barely a pause she sang the proper pitch. I had her sing tone after tone. But as I checked her on the keyboard, I found that she sang each note perfectly on pitch.

I was totally boggled. "*How in the world do you do it?*" I blurted.

"I don't know," she sighed. And to my dismay, that was all I could get out of her!

The dazzle of Perfect Pitch hit me hard. My head was dizzy with disbelief, yet from that moment on I knew *Perfect Pitch is real.*



"How in the world do you do it?" I blurted. I was totally boggled.

I couldn't figure it out...

"*How does she DO it?*" I kept asking myself. On the other hand, why doesn't *everyone* know musical tones by ear?

Then it dawned on me that *most musicians* can't tell C from C♯, or A major from F major—like artists who brush painting after painting without ever knowing green from turquoise. It all seemed so odd and contradictory. I found myself even more mystified than before.

Humiliated and puzzled, I went home to work on this problem. At age 14, this was a hard nut to crack.

You can be sure I tried it myself. I would sweet-talk my three brothers and two sisters into playing tones for me, then guess each pitch by ear. My many attempts were dismal failures.

So I tried playing the tones *over* and *over* in order to memorize them. I tried to feel the "highness" or "lowness" of each pitch. I tried day after day to learn and absorb those elusive tones. But nothing worked. I simply could *not* recognize the pitches by ear.

After weeks in vain, I finally gave up. Linda's gift was indeed extraordinary. But for me, it was out of reach.

Then it happened...

It was like a miracle. A twist of fate. Like finding the lost Holy Grail.

Once I had stopped *straining* my ear, I started to listen NATURALLY. Then the incredible secret to Perfect Pitch jumped right into my lap.

I began to notice faint "colors" within the tones. Not *visual* colors, but colors of *pitch*, colors of *sound*. They had always been there. But this was the first time I had ever "let go"—and *listened*—to discover these subtle differences within the musical tones.

Soon I too could recognize the tones by ear! It was simple. I could hear how F♯ sounds one way, while B♭ has a different pitch color sound—sort of like "listening" to red and blue!

The realization hit me: THIS IS PERFECT PITCH! This is how Bach, Beethoven and Mozart could mentally envision their masterpieces—and name tones, chords and keys all by ear—*by tuning in to these subtle "pitch colors" within the tones.*

It was almost childish—I felt sure that *anyone* could unlock their own Perfect Pitch by learning this simple secret of "color hearing."

Excitedly I told my best friend Ann (a flutist) that *she* could have Perfect Pitch too. She *laughed* at me.

"You have to be *born* with Perfect Pitch," she asserted.

"You just don't understand how *easy* Perfect Pitch is," I explained.

I showed her how to listen. Timidly, she confessed that she too could hear the pitch colors. From this discovery, it wasn't long before Ann had *also* acquired Perfect Pitch! We became instant school celebrities. Classmates loved to test our abilities, leaving everyone awed and amazed by the power of our virtuoso ears.

Way back then I did not know the impact I would have when years later I explained my discovery to college music professors. I was surprised that many of them *laughed* at me at first. You may have guessed it—they told me, "One must be *born* with Perfect Pitch." Yet once I revealed the simple *secret* to Perfect Pitch—*and they heard for themselves*—you'd be surprised at how fast they would change their tune!

As I continued my own music studies, my Perfect Pitch ear allowed me to progress far faster than I ever thought possible. I even *skipped over* two required college courses. Perfect Pitch made *everything* much easier—performing, composing, arranging, sight-reading, transposing, improvising—and it enhanced my *enjoyment* of music as well! I learned that music is definitely a HEARING art.

And as for Linda?

Oh yes—time eventually found me at the end of my senior year of high school, with my *final chance* to outdo Linda. Our local university sponsored a music festival each spring. I went all out for it. Guess what? I scored an A+ in the most advanced performance category. Linda only got an A.

Sweet victory was music to my ears—mine at last!

THESE DAYS, thousands of musicians and two university studies have already proven my Perfect Pitch method. *Now I'd like to show YOU how to experience your own Perfect Pitch!*

I hope *you* won't laugh as you picture *yourself* with various Perfect Pitch skills—like naming tones and chords by ear with laser-like accuracy! I think you will be surprised at just how simple Perfect Pitch really is—*and how very valuable.*

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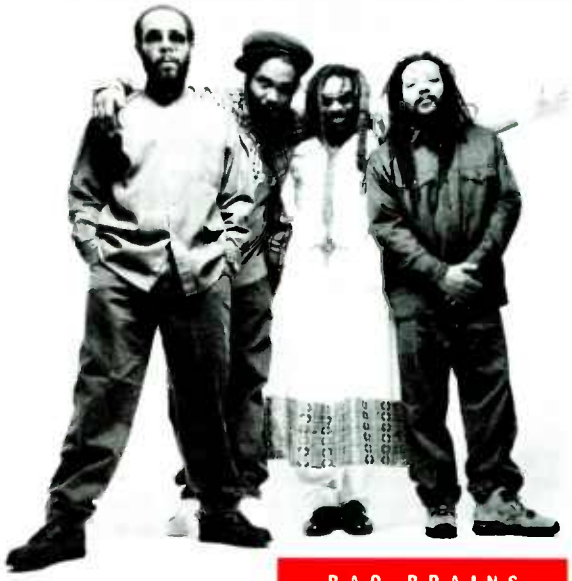
Fortunately, his mellower embellishments more than make up for it. Cuts like the title track and "Justice Keepers," while not as breakneck as vintage volts like "Pay to Cum" are certainly as brilliant. The Jamaican jams are also downright refreshing, particularly "Long Time," a suave assimilation of the modern ragga pace into a loping rootsy pulse, and "To The Heavens," one of the few tracks where the production dares to be quirky.

Ironically, the ho-hum hard rock that leaves snobs like us wanting more is precisely what'll win over the new jack knuckleheads and give the band enough rope to cut a follow-up.

One piece of unsolicited advice: when they do, they should reenter the studio not with Ocasek—always an odd bedfellow, better suited for cheesier, Cars-ier vocal groups like Weezer—but some brother from another planet who can dig where H.R. is coming from. Someone like Lee "Scratch" Perry, who Madonna shoulda put on her payroll long ago. Tell him Jah sent you.

—Bob Mack



BAO BRAINS

DAVID TRONZO/ REEVES GABRELS

A Night in Amnesia

(UPSTART)

IT'S AN EXPERIENCE YOU DON'T HAVE EVERY day, but when it happens, it's magic. You're jamming with friends, no definite ideas in mind, just letting spontaneity rule. And then it clicks—someone comes up with an ear-catching phrase, the players start to respond to each other in a new way, and suddenly a real composition appears from out of the void. If you were far-sighted enough to record the moment,

VIDEO

THE BARRY HARRIS WORKSHOP

Bop City Productions

BARRY HARRIS, A.K.A. "THE Coach," is one of the most articulate pianists and teachers in the jazz world. These two two-hour tapes and the accompanying 100-page workbook (with notation in treble clef only) systematically unveil the language of bebop. Be forewarned: This is not for beginners. Harris presupposes a knowledge of basic scales and chords in all keys.

Harris has a remarkably clear way of conceptualizing chords, and illustrates how to derive eight chords directly from any one diminished chord. He also introduces four phrases, intended to keep the aspiring soloist "out of trouble," that can be used to begin or end lead lines. Using the tunes "Back Home in Indiana," "I Got Rhythm," "Cherokee," "Anthropology" and "How High The Moon," he explains how to generate scales that suit groups of chords in a song, how to invent phrases based on those scales, and how to practice them.

Harris offers remarkably effective principles of fluid voice leading: how, by changing one or two notes, you can expand your harmonic palette. He puts the student rhythm section through exercises for rhythm and listening, emphasizing the need for each player to focus on his or her particular role and to challenge the creativity of other members of the ensemble. Finally, he covers the role of the vocalist as both storyteller and ensemble player.

Harris lays bebop bare, making it understandable and accessible to players of any instrument. His lessons are bound to light a creative fire in the heart of anyone interested in jazz.—*David C. Gross*

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you've got permanent proof of the way music can create itself.

Slide guitar virtuoso David Tronzo (Lounge Lizards, John Hiatt, Spanish Fly) and six-string wizard Reeves Gabrels (Tin Machine, Modern Farmer) have been working this way for the last couple of years, and they've made sure to keep the tape rolling. *A Night in Amnesia*, the first document of their improvised duets (with occasional help from bassist Matt Gruenberg and drummer Mike Levesque), runs the gamut from free-form noise collages to tasteful ballads that at times nearly sound pre-composed. But no matter what the context, the effortless rapport between Tronzo and Gabrels and their shared affection for zany sounds mark them as the Chester and Lester of the lunatic fringe.

With the exception of "Bubba," a meandering vehicle for Tronzo's angular arpeggios and Gabrels' notorious vibrator technique that never reaches a destination, this is absorbing stuff. "Ballad of a Man Long Gone" and "Not Gonna Happen" are beautiful acoustic excursions, the latter featuring a fleet, McLaughlin-esque solo by Gabrels. "Fitting End" is reminiscent of a *Meddle*-era Pink Floyd space-out, with Tronzo providing the oxygen-free atmosphere and Gabrels voicing the alien's cry for help. "Dixie Cup" pits Tronzo's gutbucket slide against Gabrels' mountain of processing gear, while "Two Memories of the Same Event" moves into ambient territory, with soulful playing from both guitarists. And the album's centerpiece, a fractured reading of "A Night in Tunisia," is a pinnacle of absurdist humor. Further proof that sometimes spontaneity rules.

—Mac Randall

THE APARTMENTS

A Life Full of Farewells

(HOT/RESTLESS)

THE VERY BEST ALBUM I'VE HEARD IN TOO many years, *A Life Full of Farewells* is remarkably rich and resonant work that probably won't sell diddly. Major handicaps: 1) It's the American debut of an Australian group that's been making records for 16 years. 2) No one's ever heard of them. 3) Restless Records isn't a multinational corporation that spend millions to *make* you hear of them.

The general fate of records this good, sad to say, is the terminal cultdom awarded records like *Big Star Third* and even *Astral Weeks*–two albums underappreciated in their time, and two albums with which this set shares compelling thematic similarities. Less joyful than *Astral Weeks*, and less psychologically fragmented than *Third*, *Farewells* is a reflective song cycle that could've been subtitled *Life Sucks And Then You Die* (but thankfully wasn't).

The tunes of Peter Walsh are mostly minor-key; his reedy voice sounds like the Waterboys' Mike Scott or Pearls Before Swine's Tom Rapp. The arrangements feature prominent acoustic guitars, piano, occasional pedal steel, and, most notably, trumpet; think Van Morrison circa *Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart* and you've got it. The songs themselves, distinctly tinged with regret, are mostly backward glances at loss. And though the titles themselves generally convey the sentiment (i.e. "You Became My Big Excuse," "Thank You For Making Me Beg," "The Failure Of Love Is A Brick Wall [You

SHORT TAKES

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

SILVERCHAIR

Frogstomp

(EPIC)

IMAGINE A BAND blessed with Pearl Jam's melodic uplift and Helmet's amp-taxing intensity, and you'll have a sense of why Silverchair is making such a big noise Down Under. A power trio with the emphasis on "power," these young Aussies are masters of sonic sculpture, deftly using feedback and distortion to build vast cathedrals of sound out of their barre-chord riffs and lean, catchy choruses. Yet that towering roar rarely overshadows the music's emotional content; what sticks with you isn't so much the growling bass and roundhouse guitar of "Israel's Son" or the whisper-to-a-scream dynamics of "Suicidal Dream," but the way those sounds embody the hopes and fears singer Daniel Johns wants to convey. Definitely a band to watch.

BOB DYLAN

MTV Unplugged

(COLUMBIA)

AFTER TWO ALBUMS of just voice, guitar and harmonica, Dylan hires a five-piece band —including Hammond—to go "Unplugged." The times, they *are* a-changin."

FRANKIE KNUCKLES

Welcome to the Real World

(VIRGIN)

FORGET THAT KNUCKLES helped invent the deep beats and breathless pulse of house music; the most important thing on his records has always been the singing. Even so, it's hard not to be impressed at the performance he pulls from Adeva. It's one thing to generate the sort of rhythmic energy that fuels "Too Many Fish" or Whadda U Want (From Me)," something else again to offer a credibly understated cover of Gladys Knight's "You're Number One (In My Book)." Knuckles and Adeva do both, and cap their efforts with a gloriously devotional romp through "Walkin'."

WARREN ZEVON

Mutineer

(GIANT)

BECAUSE THE PRODUCTION is so low key, these tracks often have the immediacy of demos, an effect that adds venom to the chorus of "Poisonous Lookalike" and puts bit to the wit of "Rottweiler Blues." But that doesn't mean Zevon has scaled back his imagination. What gives "Something Bad Happened to a Clown" an edge isn't the unsettling refrain, but the way Zevon's sense of tragedy echoes in the defeated fanfares and weary calliope flourishes. Sometimes, less really is more.

TEENAGE FANCLUB

Grand Prix

(DGC)

ANY BAND WITTY enough to come up with a title like "Neil Jung" ought to be smart enough to deliver a clever tune. But that's the trouble with Teenage Fanclub: The music never delivers the promise of the concept. It isn't that these songs lack pop potential—the buoyant chorus to "Don't Look Back" and the Beatlesque bridge to "I'll Make It Clear" show that much—but the group rarely tries to capitalize on it. As a result, *Grand Prix* comes across as the music of pop fans too cool to want to be catchy. What's the point of that?

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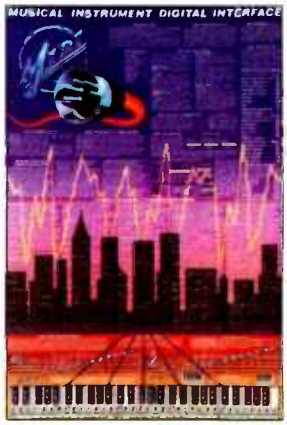

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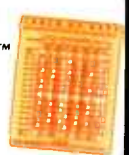

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REVIEWS

Prayed For Me To Hit It]"), Walsh's fine-tuned lyrics provide gripping imagery throughout each of the verses.

The majority of the songs here, sung in second person, are addressed to an ex-lover; thus the title, I suppose, and thus the occasional *Astral Weeks* feel. Yet where Morrison ended his finest work addressing his mythical Slim Slow Slider, Walsh sings instead to the aged, workaholic father he barely saw. It's equally as haunting an album closer, and, given the album title, even more chilling.

I use these comparisons only to illustrate one major point. This is classic, fully mature work by a singer-songwriter you've probably never heard of. You should go out of your way to hear it.

—Dave DiMartino

D'AQUISTO

[*con't from page 13*] able ebony tailpiece he invented to fine tune the arch-top's set-up and intonation. D'Aquisto didn't simply extend on the work of John D'Angelico, he exceeded his master—and the torch passed on with him. "I've only built 250 carved arch-top acoustics in 30 years," Jimmy told me last year for a *Musician* feature. "So what does that tell you? The instrument itself was made for a particular time and a particular type of music being made back then. *They were not designed to be played the way you're playing today*—people are actually overplaying those instruments. And that's what I'm always striving to overcome. The arch-top is the ultimate instrument. You should be able to play as mellow and as soft or as hard as you want on the same instrument—and it should respond. You should be able to play with a high action yet still play with a certain sense of ease and relaxation—no tension. That's what I'm talking about. That's what I'm trying to build. That's what I've always built.

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[cont'd on page 95]

THE PROMISED LAND CALLING

Here's a tale we heard around the campfire many years ago. You can take it with a grain of salt if you like. We were eating some ribs and chili with Carl "Blue Suede Shoes" Perkins when he told us how close he once came to killing Chuck "Johnny B. Goode" Berry.

Back in the 50s, Carl Perkins said, Chuck Berry was the nicest fellow you'd ever want to meet, an easy-going picker with a smile for everyone. Then he went to prison and prison turned him mean. When Chuck got out of the big house in 1964 he was booked straight into a British tour. Carl was over in London at the time, hanging around with his new pals the Beatles as they cut five of his songs. He heard that Berry was flying in and thought, "My friend Chuck Berry needs to see a friendly face, I will drive out to the airport and greet him." Chuck Berry got off the plane, Carl Perkins stood there with a smile and an extended hand—and Chuck Berry ignored him, snubbed the handshake, and scowling got into the car.

That began years of nastiness and abuse whenever the two old troupers crossed paths. Finally Chuck Berry went too far. It was a triple bill: Chuck Berry/Carl Perkins/Tony Joe White. Carl Perkins did not and never has had a problem going on before Chuck Berry—he'll take 'em fresh any time. But that particular evening, while Tony Joe White was playing his set (chomp chomp chomp) Chuck Berry was doing his usual number on the promoter—abruptly announcing that he would not play unless the poor fellow coughed up another—*what was the amount? let's say*—thousand dollars. Well it was Sunday night and the banks were closed. The desperate promoter had to run all over town borrowing a hundred here and a hundred there in order to sate the avarice of the Brown Eyed Handsome Man.

Carl Perkins had seen it all before and wanted no part of it. Tony Joe White finished and Carl Perkins' backup band—including his two sons—took the stage and began playing "Blue Suede Shoes" while Carl Perkins stood in the wings preparing to make his entrance. Meanwhile the perspiring promoter rushed into Chuck Berry's dressing room with a bag full of waddled cash. Chuck Berry counted it, said, "Alright, let's get this shit over with," grabbed his guitar and headed toward the stage. He shoved the startled Carl Perkins aside and stepped into the spotlight—where the crowd cheered and leaped. He plugged into Carl Perkins' guitarist's amp ("You black bastard!" muttered the furious musician) and told Carl Perkins' sons to get lost. The audience was ecstatic as Chuck Berry hit the riff to "Roll Over, Beethoven," but Carl Perkins, a peaceful man, felt the bile rising in his throat. This time Chuck Berry had publicly humiliated not only him, but his family. Chuck Berry would have to die.

There was a step coming down off the stage, a point at which Chuck Berry would be off-balance when he came out of the spotlight. Carl Perkins took note of that, put his own left foot up on that stair and drew back his guitar like a baseball bat, calculating the physics of manslaughter. *If I swing this guitar and hit Chuck Berry in the solar plexus, he'll double over, Carl Perkins reckoned. Then I can bring down a second blow on the back of his head. At that point he'll be at my feet, and I can kick him with these handcrafted leather boots until he stops moving.*

Satisfied with his strategy, Carl Perkins practiced swinging his guitar in the darkness while Chuck Berry played what would be, God willing, his final concert. Having settled on a trajectory, Carl drew back the instrument and rested it on his shoulder, as patient as Ty Cobb and of similar disposition.

Now Carl Perkins' wife is a loyal woman. She has sacrified much in her years of marriage to the rockabilly cat and has never complained or spoken of her burdens. Rarely has she even ventured to see him perform, being ill at ease in bars and honky tonks, but that night Providence had seen fit to induce in her an exception. Seeing her husband in the darkness preparing to bid bye bye Johnny, she came forward and took his cocked arm in her own small hands. *Carl Perkins,* she implored, *I have borne much and asked for little in our long life together, for you are a man who needs a wife's support and comfort more than admonition or advice. But I implore you now, for the sake of all we have shared together and all we might still have, to please not throw away our future for the sake of killing that evil Chuck Berry.*

Carl Perkins felt in his heart the struggle between his love for this noble woman and his hatred for that terrible man. After a long silence he looked down at his wife and said, *Darling, for your sake and the sake of our children I will do as you ask, I will come home with you now and forego killing Chuck Berry.* With that he lowered his fretted bludgeon, and the patient woman led her man away.

At least that's how we heard the story years ago. As Carl Perkins stood up to leave he fixed us with a hard stare and said, "But if ever I am walking on a line and I see Chuck Berry coming toward me, he had best step aside. For I will step aside no more!"

One thing about Carl Perkins. You can knock him down, step on his face, slander his name all over the place—but if you step on that old coot's "Blue Suede Shoes" you will surely be sorry.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHANNA GOODMAN

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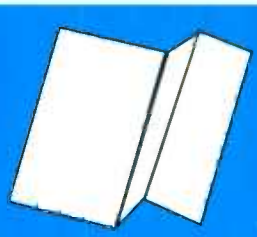

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