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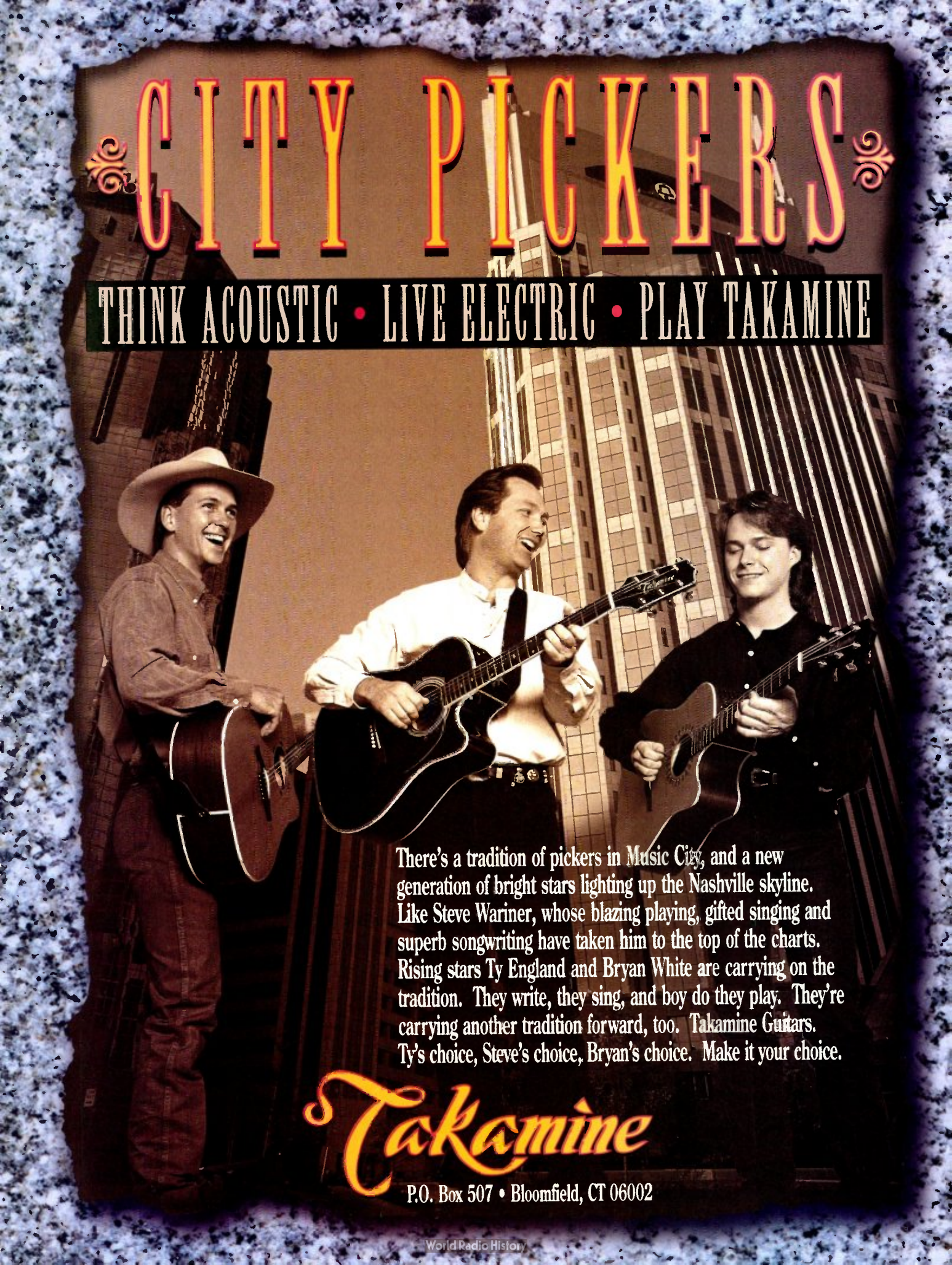

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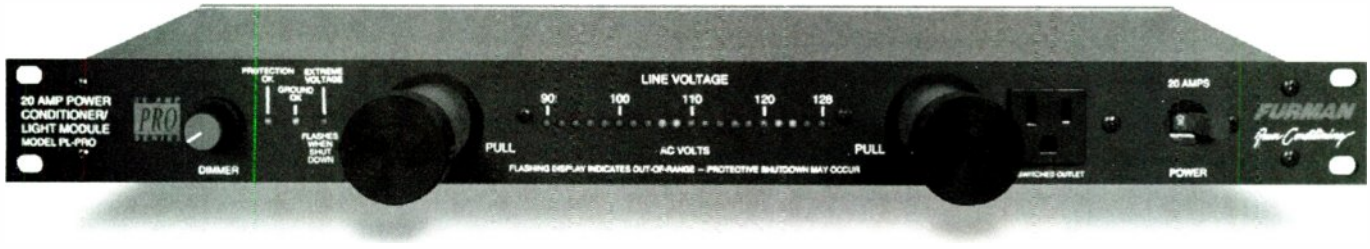

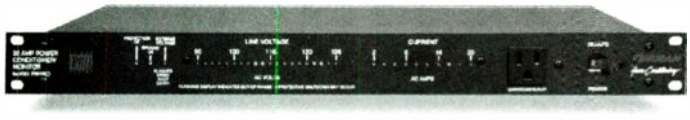

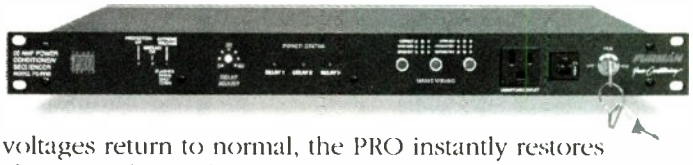

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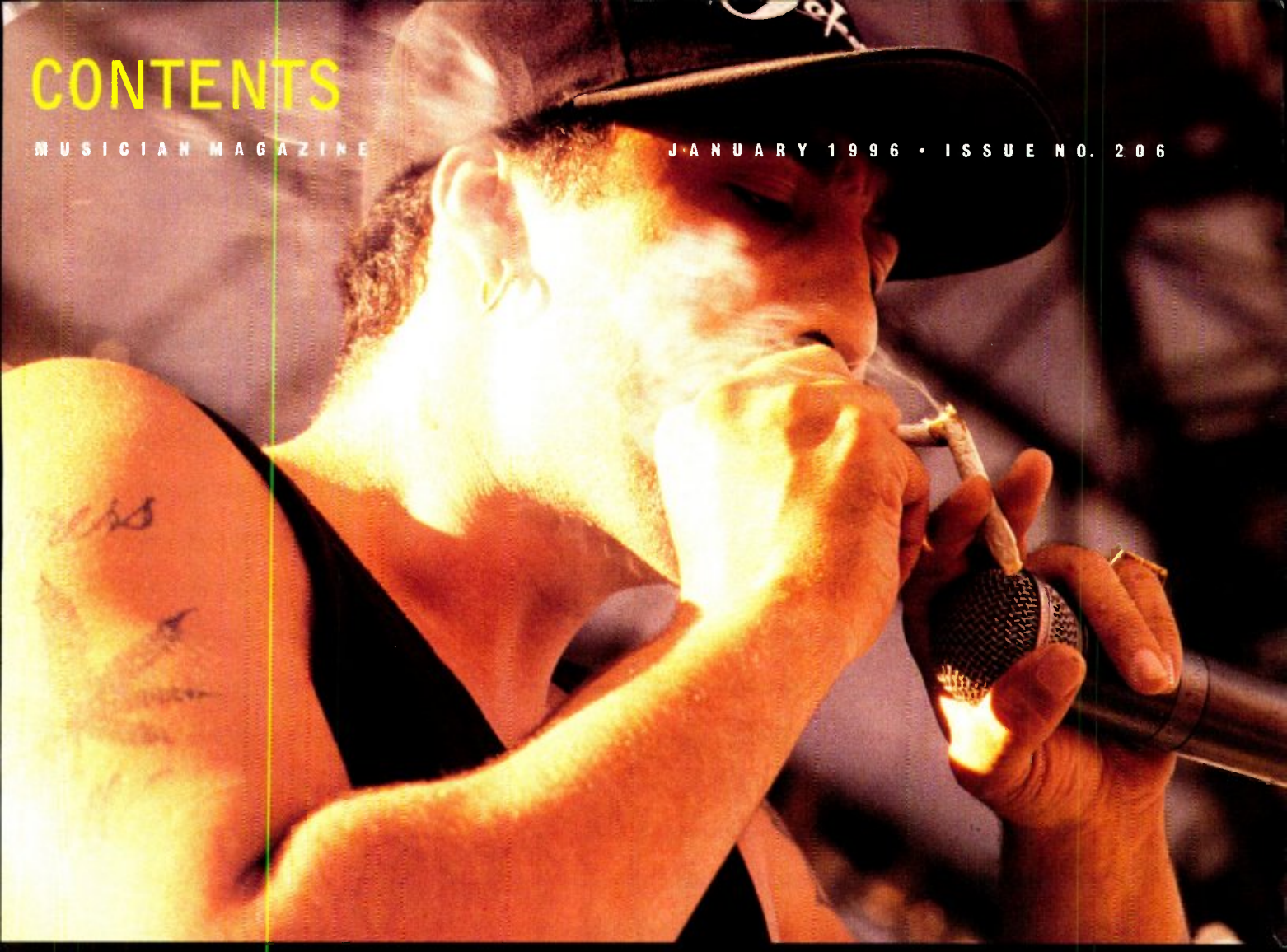
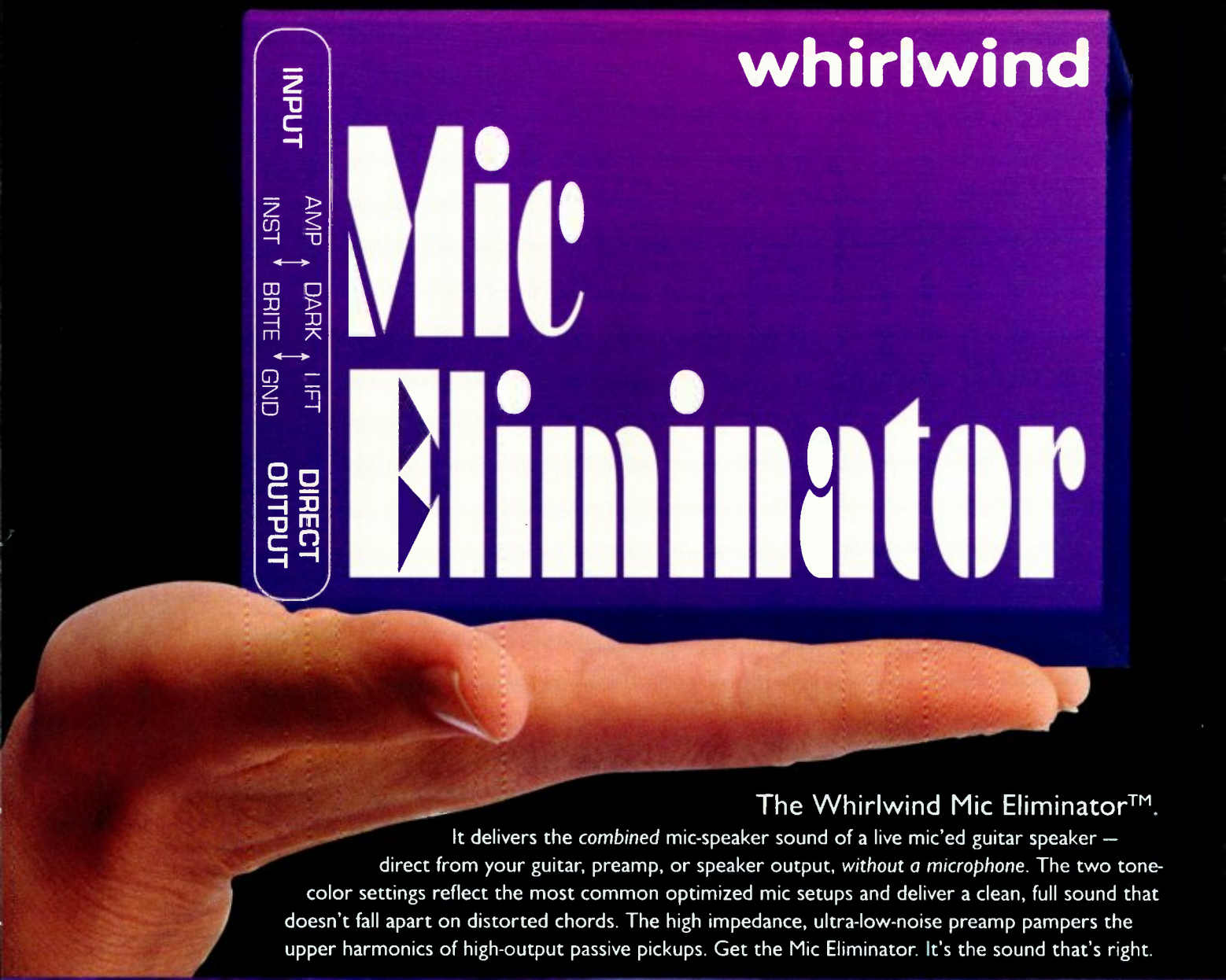


COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY PAMELA SPRINGSTEEN; COVER INSET AND CONTENTS PHOTOGRAPH BY JAY BLAKESBERG

Classic Sound.



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Emmylou Harris

Your latest album,* Wrecking Ball, *represents a meeting of two distinctive musical personalities: you and Daniel Lanois. Given his unmistakable touch as a producer, did you have to compromise your sound?

Actually, I didn't. A lot of that had to do with his playing on the record. He played on all the tracks, so that became the sonic thread that ties it all together. It was real organic, because I was out there singing and playing with him. That made it a performance-driven album.

It must have been difficult to find common ground on some tracks, especially your somewhat outside rendition of Jimi Hendrix's "May This Be Love."

Not really, because we worked so improvisationally. In pre-production, Daniel was talking about the presence of country melodies in pop music, and he said this song was a good example. He started singing it, and I did a harmony with him. We actually cut the song while we were working out the arrangement. It was the second pass; the bass player wasn't even in the studio. And we got it, with just one electric guitar, drums, and our vocals.

"To me, a harmony is just another melody. It's like two people dancing."

Did the juxtaposition of Hendrix's songwriting style and your more traditional approach to the vocals feel natural to you?

It did, because I'm sort of unschooled. Whenever there's a melody, I'll just jump in. To me, a harmony is just another melody; it's like two people dancing.

What drew you to Lanois in the first place?

He was the person whose work intrigued me the most. It seemed like everything he did was interesting and moving. He's drawn to rhythms that don't overpower the music, mainly because he's driven by the melody. He leaves a lot of space in what he does, and he gets a lot from a little. There's a certain mystery to it. I love that unknown element in music.

Did you see this album as a way of breaking free from being categorized as a country artist?

No, not in a conscious way. Early on, I guess I was responsible for being associated with the country category, because I thought if people wanted to know where I was coming from, it was important to say how Gram [Parsons]'s influence had given me my sense of style, my point of departure as a vocalist and an artist. I really *wanted* to do a country album with *Blue Kentucky Girl*, and it gave me more success than I ever dreamed I would have. But it's like, country music is where I was born, it's where I come from. That doesn't mean you live there all your life.

Lanois brought in a diverse collection of musicians for* Wrecking Ball. *Did you miss working with more traditional instruments, such as steel guitar?

No, because everything seemed to be working. I really loved Kate and Anna McGarrigle's demo of "Goin' Back to Harlan." It had fiddle and banjo, and this wonderful rolling electric guitar part that Anna played. But we ended up taking it in a different direction and coming up with a totally non-traditional version. The interesting thing about it is that even though I use words like "traditional" to describe the McGarrigles' version because there's a banjo on it, their use of the banjo is non-traditional in the sense that they've incorporated the instrument into their unique vision. That's the way traditional music has to progress, with artists who absorb the past but take it a step further. It's not like, "Oh, this is how music was done forty or fifty years ago, so we're gonna do it exactly like that." I've never understood that approach. In fact, I don't think you can even take that approach, because we're not of that time. That's not our culture. We need to create our own music in our own culture.

—ROBERT L. DOERSCHUK

MUSICIAN

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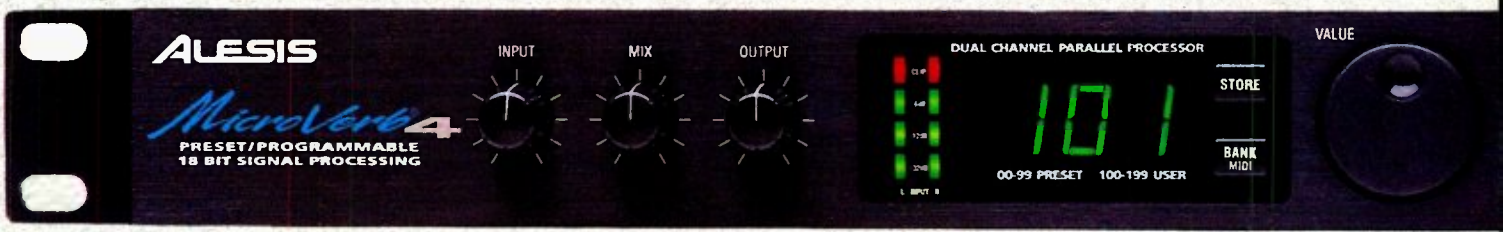
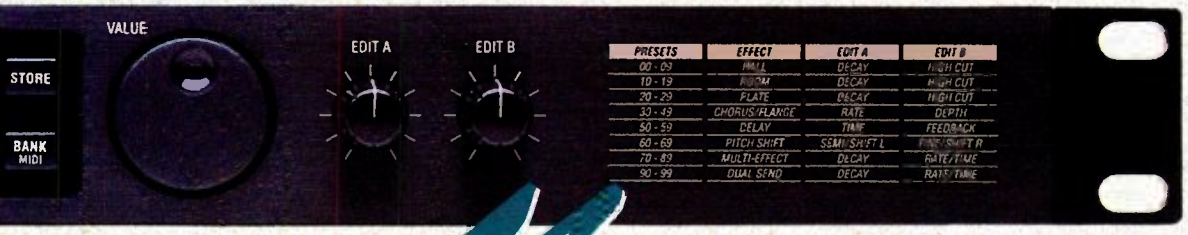
Simply Logical





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ALESIS

LETTERS

ARE CDs TOO LONG?

I was somewhat surprised that your article "Why Are Records Too Long?" (Nov. '95) totally ignored the obvious answer to the question. Record companies require artists to produce albums 50 minutes or longer because the predominant length of a blank cassette tape is 45 minutes per side. Major labels have slyly made home taping on 90-minute cassettes (or even the newer 100-minute cassettes) uneconomical by ensuring that most albums won't fit on one side of the tape. Consumers must either make due with recording a single CD on each tape or buy less cost-effective 50- or 60-minute tapes.

Sorry, but the standard industry explanation that they want to give consumers more value for their money doesn't hold water. When was the last time you heard anyone gripe because the songs on *Rubber Soul* or *In Utero* didn't run for more than 50 minutes?

Brad Bass
bbass@fcw.com

Please let me make sure I have this straight: Roy Trakin takes the position that I somehow benefit when I spend $15 for a 10-track, 40-minute-long recording instead of spending $15 for a 15-track, 74-minute-long recording that contains the same 10 tracks as the shorter recording plus 5 additional tracks that may be of lesser quality. Amazingly, I have a CD player that allows me to program just those 10 tracks if the other 5 blow so much they hurt my ears. As best as I can tell, this addition of songs somehow depreciates the value of the other songs. I would agree that *Sandinista!* could be a more listenable album by paring it down, but I'm the one that should make the editing decision for my own listening experience. Trakin seems to be missing the point—choice is a major attribute of any consumer product. If I have access to 20 songs by an artist, I am better off than if I only have access to the 10 "best" songs that artist believes are available.

Cary Crisp
Neshanic Station, NJ

I recently got the best bang for my buck ever when I purchased what I consider to be a "legitimate" CD (72 minutes, 99 cuts) for just 99 cents. This ingenious CD, *Idiots Guide to Classical Music* (RCA), contains 99 renowned classical morsels averaging 50 seconds in length, whose sole purpose is to get you to buy the complete recordings contained in RCA's extensive collection. Bottom line: For someone who's simply looking for a "best of" classical CD, albeit brief, it's hard to pass up such a value. A penny a tune.

Bill Glavin
Philadelphia, PA

The debate over the length of CDs seems pointless. It's not the length of the format that is at fault, but how the format is utilized. I also feel that it's not justified to complain about the artwork in CDs. A lot more could be done than producing little tiny booklets—you can fit an entire poster in that space (folded)! I think most people agree—if I'm going to spend $12 to $15 on a music collection, I want that disc full!

Gribbly@ix.netcom.com

I am tired of hearing the overwrought criticism about records being inordinately lengthy (particularly from music writers who typically do not buy many of their records). Ultimately it is an economic issue (isn't everything?). If the artists (and critics) insist on shorter works for whatever reason, just price the CD accordingly. Until record companies are ready to tier their pricing to reflect the product, I want the chance to hear it all.

William R. Struby
Oklahoma City, OK

BOOTLEGGERS ON INTERNET

"Bootleggers on the Internet" (Oct. '95) is the realization of what was predicted in your cover story "Future Shocks" (Dec. '93). At this point, the sound quality of the music on the Internet does not make it a pressing issue, because no one is losing money. But when the Internet's quality is good enough to compete with the current retail market, what will be the response? It's not too early to discuss our choice of a laissez-faire, free market economy or a government-regulated, command economy. To put it another way, is music a form of art or a form of business?

Mark Brown
Skaneateles, NY

For a second while reading the article "Pirates on the Internet," it struck me that it might be another *Time*-style cyberscare. While it avoided that for the most part, it's just the same old same old as the home-taping issue. I'm a music fan, and a computer user. Because of the limitations in downloading time and sound quality, I have yet to seriously snoop around the 'Net looking for music, and were I to find something that I actually wanted to listen to, I certainly wouldn't be satisfied with a grainy mono copy. In my experience there's no disputing that if someone likes something on one of those tapes, they're going to buy it. If they don't like it, they wouldn't have bought it anyway. The music industry has probably made more sales from home taping than it has lost, and I bet the soundbytes on the Internet serve a similar function. If I found someone sampling my music on the 'Net, I'd probably send them some money from my advertising budget.

Sean Carruthers
oneiros@prime.common.net

To *Musician* readers:

As the new year nears, I'd like to welcome you to a new era at *Musician*. Beginning with the Nov. '95 issue, I've been on board here as editor, and it's a thrill to be working with the best music mag in the business. The staff here is savvy and sharp; from editorial to art to advertising to production, they are passionate and knowledgeable about music. I couldn't ask for a better team.

Can something this good be improved? You bet. The standards set over the past 20 years at *Musician* are high, but we're pushing ourselves to deliver even more to our readers. You've already seen a few changes: Our New Signing feature focuses on one recently signed act each month, not just to tell you about how they sound but to let you know how they landed a record deal. If you're a player looking for a career break, this is an ideal place to start your learning curve.

There's more to come: regular profiles of those unsung hired guns who work behind the scenes onstage and in the studios, expanded coverage of new music products, a focus in artist interviews designed to enlighten both the fan and the player in you. . . . All this, built on the foundations laid over decades of journalistic excellence, adds up to making *Musician* your first choice in magazines.

Tune in next month. You may be surprised; you won't be disappointed.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

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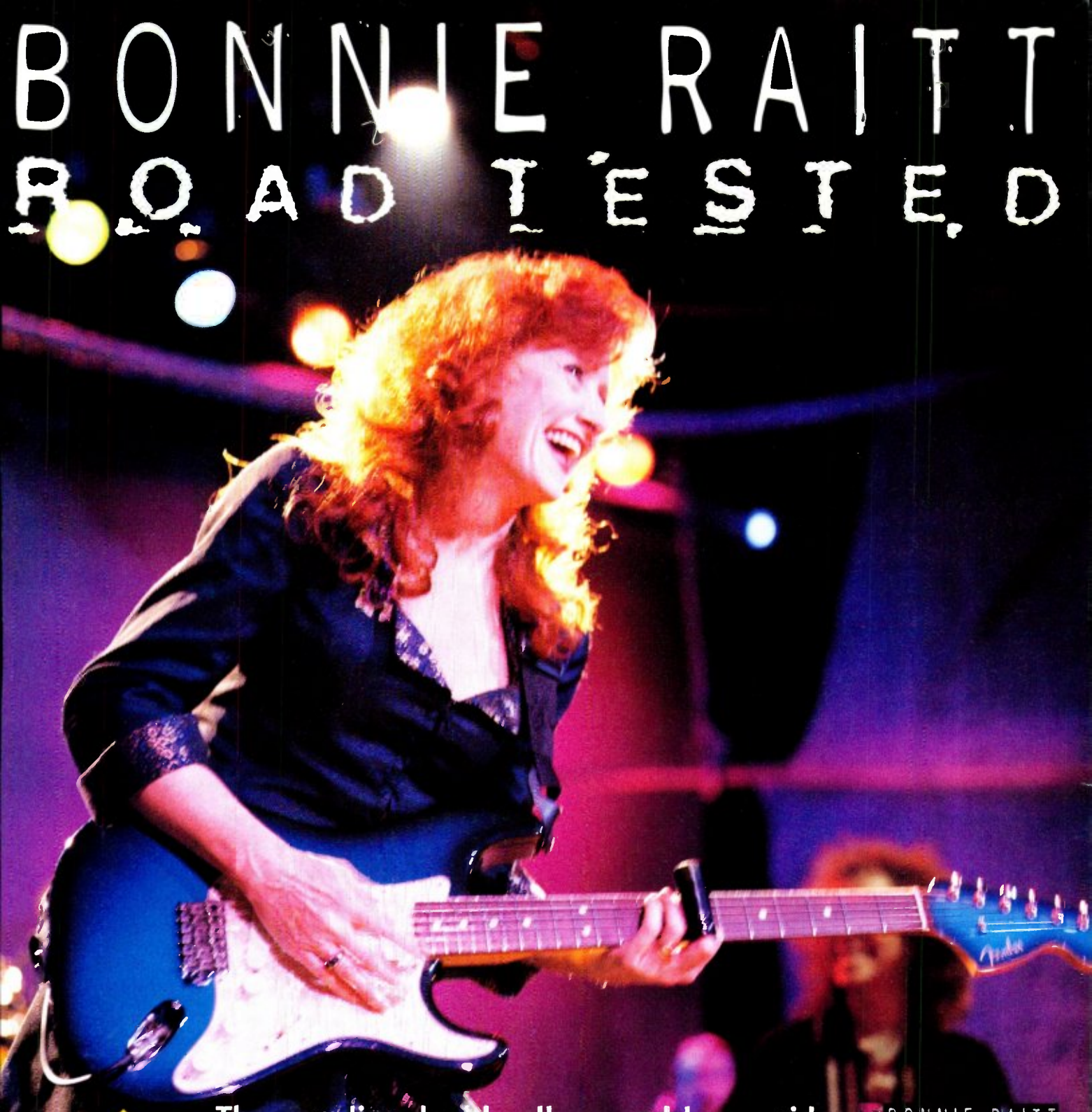
BONNIE RAITT
ROAD TESTED



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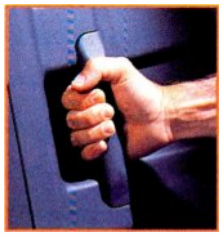

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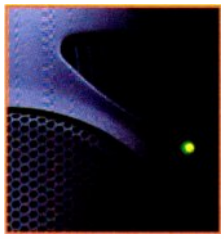

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JOHN CHIASSON

How I Wrote That Hit Song

Percy Sledge's "When a Man Loves a Woman"
By Stephan Talty

PERCY SLEDGE was an unknown when Atlantic released "When a Man Loves a Woman" in the spring of '66. By the first week of June, Sledge had a hit on his hands that would feed and clothe him for the rest of his life. That much is public knowledge. More compelling is the story behind the song and the role it played in a now distant love affair.

The song came directly from Sledge's personal history. From his high school years into his early twenties, he was involved in a steady relationship. This came to an abrupt end when a friend named Bird told Sledge that his lover had taken off with another man. That night, with a few Scotches under his belt, Sledge interrupted his own performance in the middle of a gig and fell into a catharsis onstage, screaming "Why did you leave me, baby?" over and over. As fate would have it, Quin Ivy, a record producer, happened to be in the audience. Impressed with Sledge's intensity, he asked the singer to work up a song based on his heartbreaking experience.

"So I just thought about what happens when a man loves a woman, what all he'll do—sleep out in the rain, give her his last dime—and all them words just came out of me like that," Sledge recalls, snapping his fingers. "That's probably why people like it so much, because it was such a true feeling out of my life."

Musically, the song began from a two-note figure that bassist Calvin Lewis, saxophonist J. R. Reynolds, and Andrew "Pop" Wright on his Hammond B-3 organ had improvised that night at the gig. The melody, Sledge says, "just came into my head." Eventually, he hummed the tune to Muscle Shoals session stalwarts Spooner Oldham and Marlin Greene, who charted it. (Somewhat controversially, Lewis and Wright would share songwriting credit with Sledge.) The finished song emerged from the kind of head session for which Southern soul studios were famous, with Sledge, Oldham on Farfisa organ, Greene on guitar, Junior Lowe on bass, and Roger Hawkins on drums creating and laying down the tracks on two mono machines in Quin Ivy's studio.

There's an ironic postscript to this story: Sledge's friend was kidding. His woman had not run away with a rival at all. "She had moved up to Newark," Sledge says. "I drove up with a brand new '67 Caprice, and I found her. I said, 'Bird told me that you left with another man.' And she said, 'No, I came up here to get me a job.'"

And though he was newly rich and world-famous, Sledge didn't win her back. She had embraced Jesus and left her old life behind.

RO

EXPERT WITNESS

Doctoring Chili Peppers' Drums

by Ross Garfield, aka The Drum Doctor

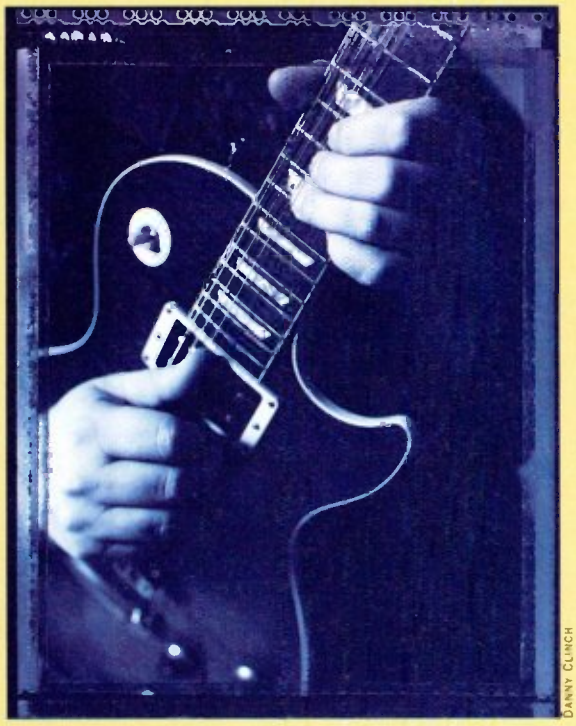
I was sitting in my office in December of 1990 when I got a call from the Red Hot Chili Peppers' drummer Chad Smith. In his most serious tone of voice he said, "I'd like to order three of your finest drumsets, a rack of samplers and your loudest PA system," like he was ordering a pizza with everything on it. When he told me to deliver the drums to a house in Hollywood Hills and send the bill to Warner Bros., I was sure he was joking.

CHRIS CUFFARO

PRIVATE LESSON

WARREN HAYNES: SOLOING IN STEREO

Warren Haynes may still be best known for his slide guitar playing in the Allman Brothers Band, but he's no slouch on regular lead either. For proof, check out the ripsnorting self-titled debut album by Gov't Mule (Relativity), on which Haynes is joined by bassist Allen Woody and drummer Matt Abts. Not only does Warren tear the roof off the joint with his single-string work, but he also (thanks to the wonders of overdubbing) occasionally indulges in tasty twin lead parts such as the one rendered below, from the solo section of "Rocking Horse." Note that the two guitar tracks aren't in perfect harmony or rhythmic lockstep—they're simply two great parts that work great together.



DANNY CLINCH

As Dickey Betts' cohort in the Allmans, Haynes has had plenty of practice when it comes to twin leads, and the way he sees it, improvisation is key. "There's something more magical about playing a part that isn't completely worked out. When I play with Dickey, I might do something that's part unison, part harmony, part counterpoint, and maybe part chordal. Sure, we could figure out 16 bars where every note is perfectly gauged. But it's a lot cooler musically when there are parts that are together and parts that aren't together but still work in their own way."

Coming up with a twin-guitar arrangement like the one on "Rocking Horse" helps develop listening skills, the importance of which Haynes can't say enough about. "Don't listen to a part like a musician," he advises. "Listen to it the way a listener in the audience or at home would. Musicians don't do that—they pick stuff apart and say, 'Oh, I should have played an F# [*cont'd on page 16*]

UGH MIX

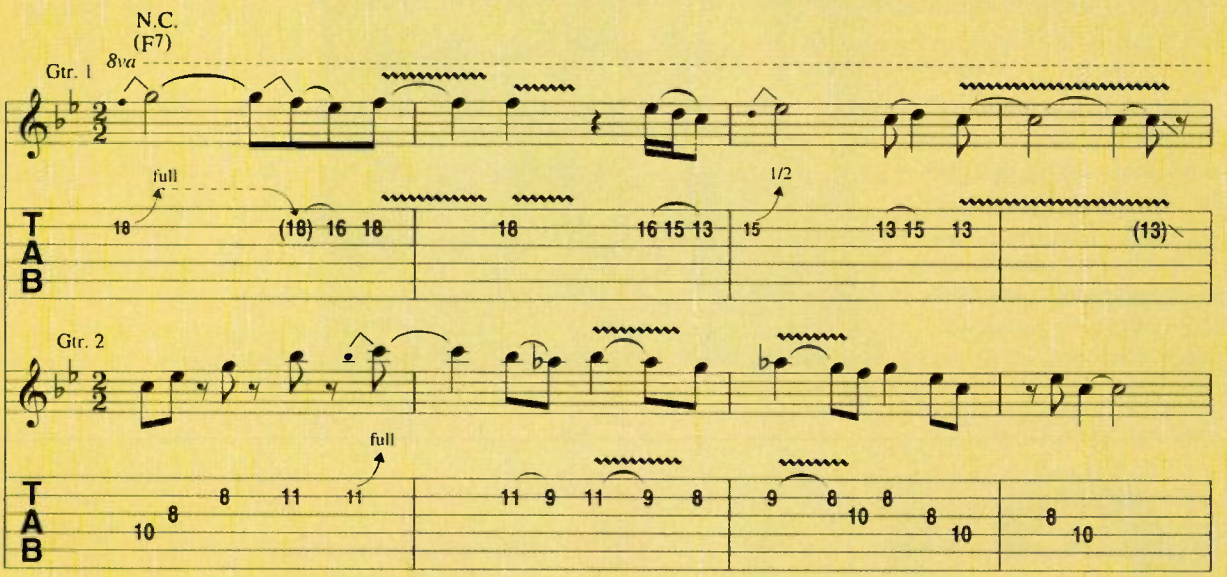
But when I showed up with the drums I realized Chad was serious. The Peppers had leased a 32-room mansion in the Laurel Canyon area of L.A. and turned the entire place into a recording studio. The library had been converted into a control room, the large ballroom was the main live room and the dining room, with its marble floors and glass on three walls, had become a drum booth. The album about to be recorded in this grand space, *BloodSugarSexMagik*, would go on to sell over 5 million copies.

I'd put together a custom kit according to Chad's specs (18x22 bass, 8x10, 8x12, 9x13, and 14x16 toms) to be used as the main kit for the record. (Chad endorses Pearl drums and Sabian cymbals.) This kit was set up in the big room, with the kick and snare triggering samples, which were then pumped through a PA system and recorded by room mikes. The mix of natural and sampled sounds accomplished two goals. First, it beefed up the acoustic drums in a more natural way than if we'd run the samples into the board. Second, it allowed us to control the levels of the drums versus the cymbals in the room mikes. The second kit (18x24 bass, 8x12, and 14x14 toms) was placed in the dining room and close-miked but tuned very "Bonham-esque"—the toms high and the bass drum low with no muffling and a full front head.

One day everyone was ready to carve but producer Rick Rubin hadn't arrived yet. The guys decided to record anyway, and Chad played the dining room kit. When Rick showed up [*cont'd on page 35*]

[*cont'd from page 14*] and I played an F.' You've got to free yourself from that. When the Allmans recorded 'True Gravity' in 1990, Dickey and I had worked out a harmony part, but on the take we ended up using, Dickey played something different in the middle and for a few seconds the guitars weren't in harmony. To me, it sounded wrong. [Producer] Tom Dowd said, 'We can go back and fix it if you want, but first listen to it openly, as if you'd never heard it before.' Once I was able to do that, it didn't sound wrong anymore. In fact, it sounded better than when we'd played it the right way. Since then, I've gotten to like that approach, where you're not sure what the other person's going to do. It's the beauty of the unknown."

— Mac Randall



Reelin' in the Beatles

Before his death in 1980, John Lennon wrote a song called "Free As A Bird" and recorded it on a home demo tape. Now, through the magic of modern technology, Lennon's former Beatle mates have added their own voices and instruments to the song. The result is the keystone track of a just-released double CD featuring the first "new" Beatles music in 25 years.

The album, titled *The Beatles Anthology Volume One*, is the first of three two-CD sets to be released by Capitol Records, containing historic Beatles recordings previously available only on bootleg. Another Lennon demo, "Real Love," will be given similar treatment by the Fab Three on *Volume Two*, slated for release in January.

"Free As A Bird" was produced by the Beatles with Jeff Lynne, and engineered by

BRIAN RASZKA

Geoff Emerick, who was at the controls during many of the group's legendary Abbey Road '60s sessions. By manipulating the tape's speed to adjust the key, editing in repeats of some sections, and adding extra lyrics by Paul McCartney, a chilling guitar solo by George Harrison and a rock-steady Ringo Starr drum track, the team was able to produce an honest-to-goodness new Beatles record.

"If it was only the three of them, it wouldn't be the Beatles, so it had to be a John song," says Emerick. "We sculpted the thing around John's cassette. Since we couldn't get him to re-sing a line, we extended gaps in between the words to make it fit."

There is no fear in the Beatles camp that the track will be seen as technical fakery. Emerick recalls, "Paul said when we started the session that if John had a song, and he was going on holiday, he would leave us the song and this is what we would have done. So it wasn't a morbid atmosphere. It was 'John gave us this to finish and he's on holiday,' which was quite possible."

—Allen J. Wiener

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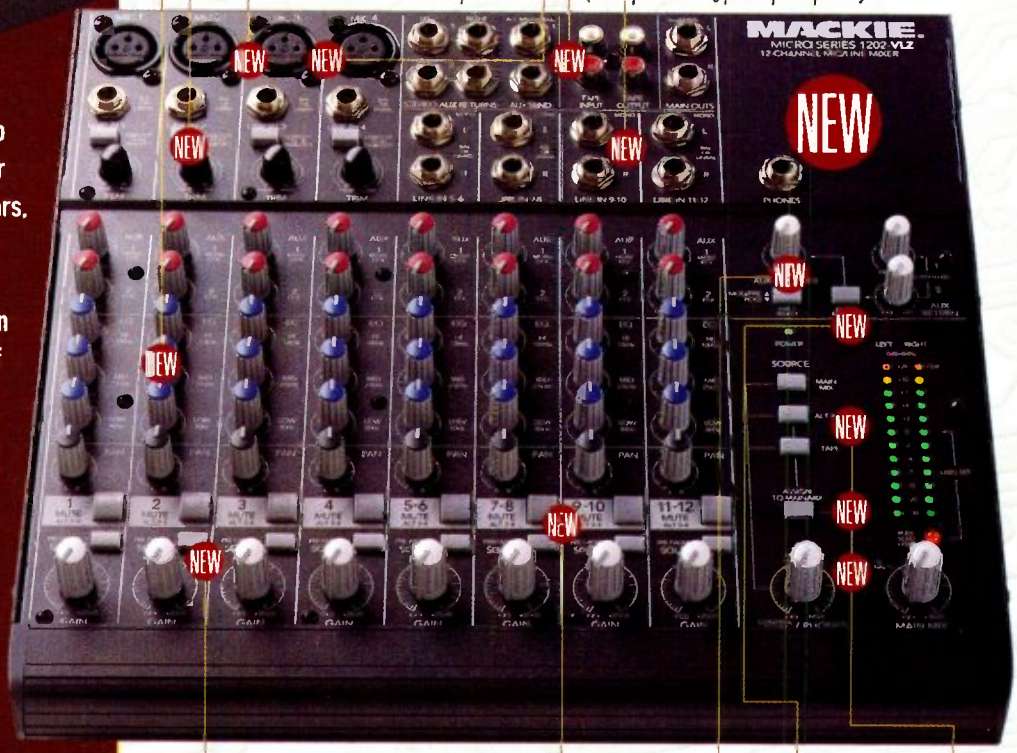

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BLACK GRAPE

That flat, cocky, northern English bark could only belong to Shaun Ryder, last heard singing with the infamous Happy Mondays. On *It's Great When You're Straight. . .Yeah*, Ryder and ex-Monday Bez, a new writing partner named Kermit and hot American producer/remixer Danny Saber (Cypress Hill, Madonna) have put together a new band and fresh, funky sound.

"We're not people who say, 'Oh, I'm an *aaartist*, I'm dyin', I'm bleedin' for me art.' We just write freestyle," says Ryder of Black Grape's cut-and-paste approach. "We get the music done, play it back and sing over it, just off the top of our heads. Then we go back and pick out the best parts."

The music gets a similar treatment. "Luckily, our guitar player doesn't have an ego problem," says Ryder. "We'll have a guitarist come in, jam for half an hour, then tell him to get lost. Then we go through, placing some of him at the beginning of the song, some in the middle, some at the end, just split it all up. Most guitarists would say, 'I don't want you doing that!' but our guitarist loves it." —*Dev Sherlock*

PENNIE SMITH

BLACK GRAPE

PAPAS FRITAS

If the children's album/puberty manual *Free To Be You And Me* had featured a combination of Jonathan Richman, Brian Wilson and Lindsey Buckingham playing Harry Belafonte's character, and a petite Eastern Indian woman named Shivika singing Marlo Thomas' parts, then you would already know the sound of *Papas Fritas* (Spanish for french fries), this Boston trio's eponymous full-length debut. "We get lumped in with a lot of these dweeb rock bands and feel-good pop bands," says band prime mover Tony Goddess. "But that's just not my personality."

The new record *Papas Fritas* and last summer's *Passion Play* EP overflow with arrangements featuring wide dynamics, varied instrumentation (piano, xylophone, timpani, and a *shower*) and intricate harmonies. The production on songs like "Passion Play," with its *Sgt. Pepper*-esque string epiphany, is all the more impressive considering it was recorded on an 8-track. Explains Goddess, "I just want to be Fleetwood Mac in the studio and the Replacements live." Who doesn't? —*Andy Gensler*

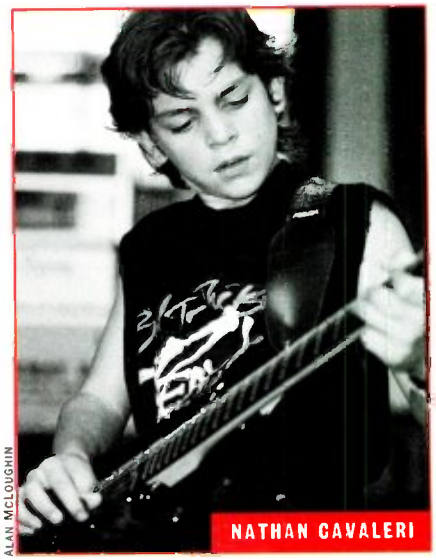
NATHAN CAVALERI

Nathan Cavaleri remembers the first time he picked up a guitar at the age of three. "I just started strumming, and I broke all the strings." When he was six years old, his father shaved a guitar neck so the budding virtuoso could practice. Now thirteen, Cavaleri has just come off the road with B.B. King, and put the finishing touches on his second release for Michael Jackson's MJJ Records, a smooth collection of blues-rock songs, with guest appearances by Robben Ford and Aaron Neville.

PAPAS FRITAS

TIM LEANSE

Meanwhile, Cavaleri's dad has gone from Nathan's guitar teacher to his guitar tech—and as one of the youngest musicians with an equipment sponsor, Nathan has more than a few guitars to call his own. "He started me off," Nathan says of his father. "I had been asking for a guitar ever since I saw him play. When he'd leave to go to work, I'd pick up his guitar and play it." But Cavaleri has developed into more than another guitar whiz with supple fingers. He composes, arranges and leads his band. Despite impressive technique, he eschews histrionics in favor of smoldering emotion.



NATHAN CAVALERI

ALAN MCLOUGHIN

Mostly on the road these days, Cavaleri travels with his family and a tutor to meet his schooling requirements. "It's a hectic life," he admits. "But I'm used to it. I miss playing with friends— but I get to be on stage."

—Chris Rubin

ISA BRITO

Do connections help? Not necessarily. In fact, if signing with a major label is your goal, they can actually make it harder.

So it was with Miho Hatori and Yuka Honda, the Japanese-born duo known as Cibo Matto. Transplanted to New York, they got to know everybody who was anybody in the downtown jungle. They didn't gig much, but the jobs they played were at high-profile places: the Knitting Factory, CB's Gallery. They hung with the boho aristocracy, befriended artists as diverse as Bernie Worrell and John Zorn, and soon created a buzz through their combination of hip innocence and musical originality.

Tim Carr, now based in L.A. as vice-president of A&R for Warner Bros., was also a familiar face on the Lower East Side. He had been there since the mid-'80s, managing acts like the Ambitious Lovers and the Golden Palominos and keeping an eye on the city's breaking bands. He met Yuka through a mutual acquaintance in the Lounge Lizards; they became friends, though time would pass before Carr learned that she played music. He was able to do a couple of favors for her and Miho—booking them to open several shows for Lush in '94, for instance. But for the longest time, he wouldn't give them the break he always felt they deserved.

NEW SIGNING

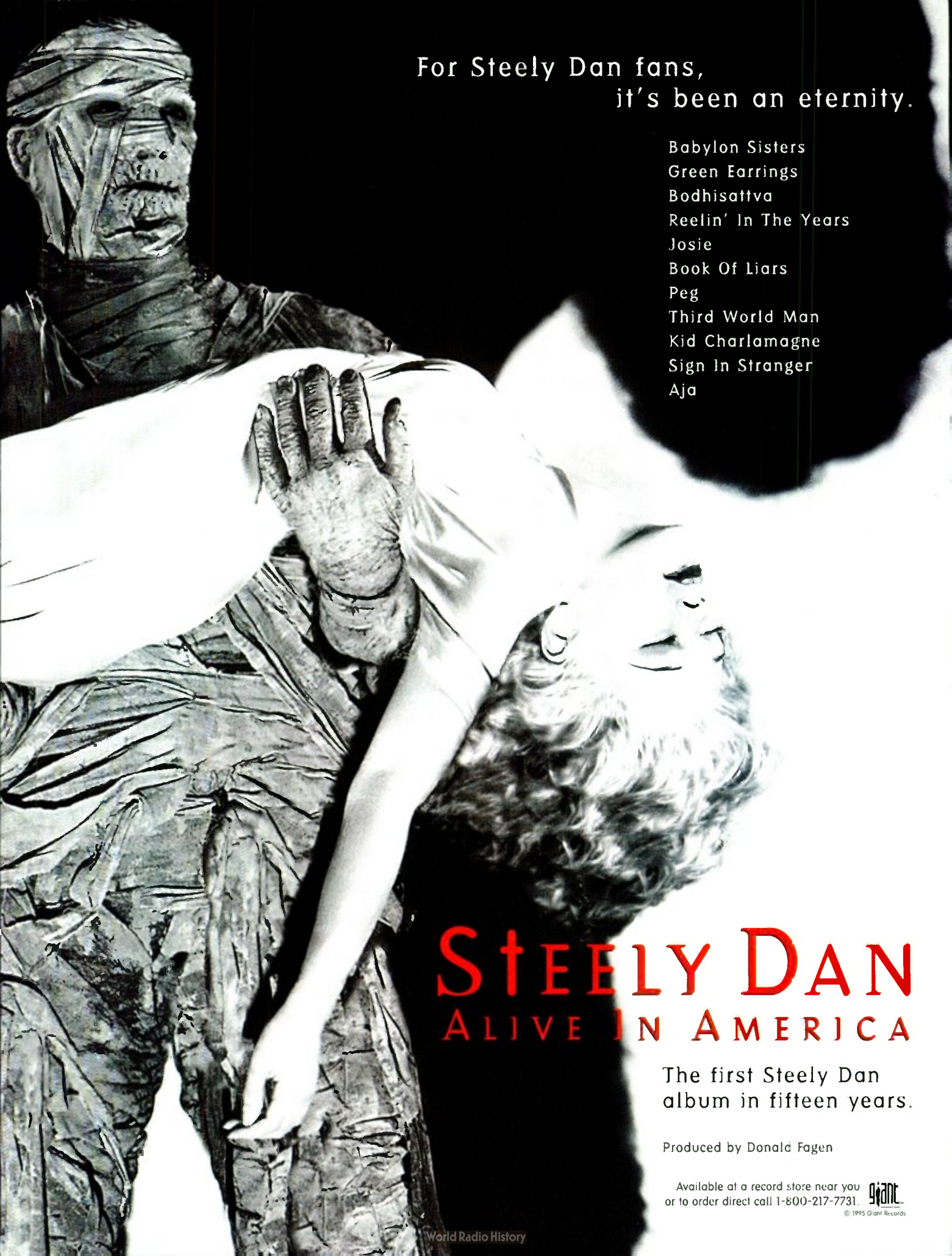
ARTIST: CIBO MATTO
DEBUT ALBUM: VIVA LA WOMAN
LABEL: WARNER BROS.
RELEASE DATE: JAN. '96

"Yuka and Miho fit into that aesthetic of David Van Tieghem and Laurie Anderson, where performance art and rock were very close to each other," Carr recalls. "The first time I saw them, I realized that Yuka was an amazing producer/musician with an incredible understanding of deep grooves. She did it all by mixing and matching on her Roland DJ-70, which is just a programmable beat box with a turntable, keyboard, and memory for samples. *Nobody* plays this machine; it's been discontinued. But she spent a year at home mastering it and using it to take the one-man-band notion someplace new. Plus they have this wonderful connection to English as their second language. I mean, 'Jerky' is really this long loving lullabye to a horse's ass: 'Oh, my baby horse is Jennifer/What a beefy hip/She has a fine coat of fur, black shiny hair . . . A horse's ass is better than yours/Let's eat carrots together until . . .' This is so great, you know what I mean?

"But because they were friends of mine, I hated to risk our relationship by getting involved professionally. When you sign someone, you risk having to drop them someday, and that could irreparably hurt your friendship." Or, as Yuka put it, "I knew that Tim was the one person I couldn't give a tape to."

So, despite his appreciation for Miho's ironic vocals and Yuka's quirky, sample-driven backup tracks, Carr kept his A&R hat off around Cibo Matto, although he did help spread the word around the industry. He even steered colleagues from competing labels, including David Byrne, to the duo's performances. Thanks in part to his discreet assistance, scouts from Geffen, Matador, London, and other labels began swarming around Yuka and Miho, who up to that point had given approximately no thought to landing a deal, much less recording at all.

"We never recorded our music. In fact," Yuka laughs, "I used to discard all my sequences. In a way, that was very liberating because it made us do what we wanted at the time and then get over it. Really, we were purely a live band. I thrived on that idea. So many people start bands thinking, 'Let's get a record deal.' Cibo Matto was exciting because not having that thought in our minds enabled us to do whatever we wanted." [*cont'd on page 95*]



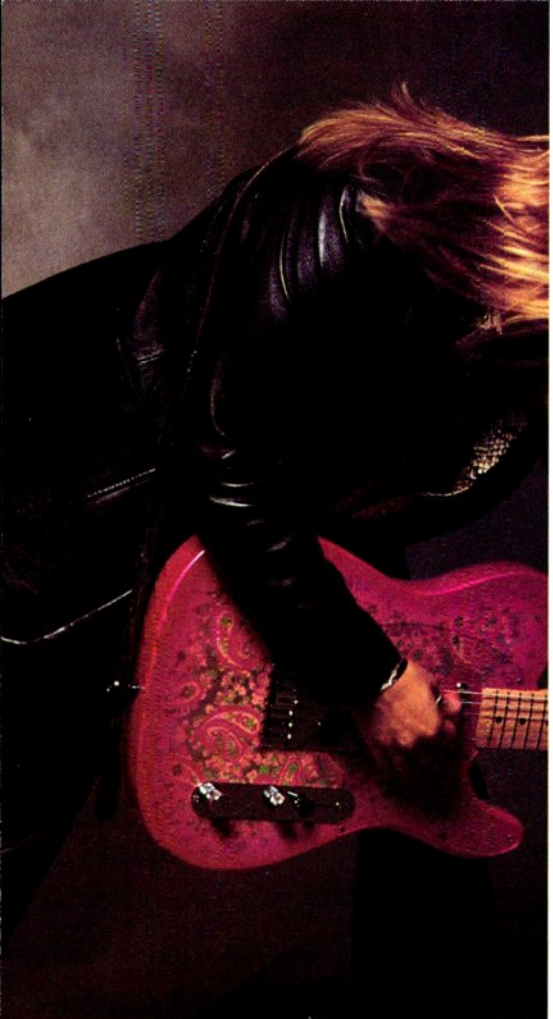
Melissa Etheridge's Little Secret

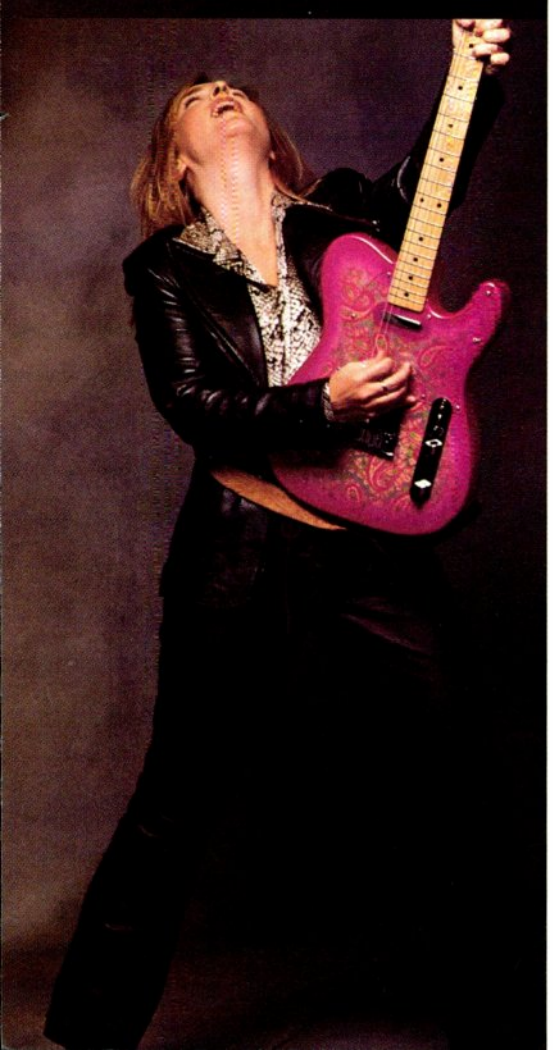
(be honest. be happy.)

BY PAUL ZOLLO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAMELA SPRINGSTEEN

MELISSA ETHERIDGE, WEARing slick leather pants and an old Telecaster, is standing dead center in the Gothic rotunda of the oldest mansion in Los Angeles, playing her new single "Your Little Secret" at full volume with her band. It's a dress rehearsal for the taping of a new VH1 series called *Duets*, and this turn-of-the-century estate has been chosen to lend some visual character to the proceedings. The former domicile of the Dohenys, one of L.A.'s first families of wealth, the home is now situated on the campus of the College of Mt. St. Mary's, where startled students stop in their tracks, cradling





books, to listen to the immense walls of sound reverberating from within.

The rotunda—originally a formal ballroom known as the Pompeian Room—is solid marble from floor to column to ceiling, and has the acoustics of a subway tunnel, making it an exceedingly live space in which to attempt to contain a rock band. And Etheridge's band—guitarist John Shanks, Mark Browne on bass and Dave Beyer on drums—seriously rocks. They launch into the raw, elemental groove of "Little Secret" with such ferocity that soundmen rip earphones from their heads. Attempts to elevate Etheridge's vocals above the band prove a considerable challenge. Shanks, playing a gold Les Paul, is oblivious to the sonic snags, and rips off a soaring solo, as Melissa lays down a chain of blazing power chords. Afterwards, wearing a backwards baseball cap and a sly grin, Shanks says, "Well, it's loud. But it's honest."

Honest. It's the one word everyone who knows Melissa Etheridge— manager, publicists, musicians, friends—uses when talking about her. It's the quality her fans point out when you ask about their devotion. Her singing is raw, passionate, straight from the soul. She doesn't lie.

The future of rock 'n' roll has a female face.

So a few years back, when journalists started asking about her sexuality with barbed questions such as "Your music is gender-free, and you have a huge lesbian following—what do you think that means?" she got tired of hemming and hawing and told the truth. It was something she had avoided for years, adhering to conventional wisdom about appearing straight to sell records to the mainstream. Instead, she came out of the closet and watched her career explode: three hits in a row ("I'm the Only One," "Come to My Window," "If I Wanted To"), a Grammy award (Best Rock Female Performance), magazine covers, arenas packed around the world. Her solo rendering of Janis Joplin's "Piece of My Heart," at Woodstock and other venues, was so impassioned that even critics were converted. She discovered that by being real, by keeping nothing hidden, she could have it all. "That was a big lesson for me," she says with wide-open eyes. "A *big* lesson."

It's one of many she's learned in a gradual ascent to superstardom. Her 1988 debut linked her with the "New Wave of Women" emerging at that time, such as Edie Brickell, Tracy Chapman, Michelle Shocked and Toni Childs, all of whom rocketed up the charts long before she did, and all of whom have since rocketed back down. At the time, getting lumped into a genre-that-really-wasn't drove her nuts. "It was unfortunate that we all got grouped together because we are all so different. I was the only one to get played on male-oriented rock stations—I couldn't get on the pop stations. And I was just kicking and screaming and wondering why I wasn't selling a million records: 'What's the matter with me? What's wrong with me?'" Small wonder she titled her second album *Brave and Crazy*.

"Looking back, I'm glad it happened like this. I'm so glad I'm coming into my own now. I'm a multi-million seller and I have this respect and this repertoire. And those who went boom are already over."

It's a lesson she's eager to share with the new new wave of women artists, four of whom have journeyed to this old mansion to join her on *Duets*. The original concept of the show was to pair two artists, but Etheridge bent the rules. She wanted to perform with women she'd been listening to, such as Joan Osborne and Paula Cole, both of whom had opened her summer tour. VH1 suggested Sophie B. Hawkins and Jewel, and though she was unfamiliar with Jewel's music, she trusted the judgment of VH1, a station that's always been extremely supportive of her career.

Joan Osborne is first up to rehearse, joining Etheridge on a fiery version of "Bring Me Some Water," Melissa's first hit. Of all the women here, Osborne comes closest to matching Melissa's intensity, and their duets on this song and on Osborne's "St. Theresa" are electric. Osborne has been diligently observing Etheridge rehearse all afternoon and now sways gently beside her, engrossed in the rhythm. Their combined on-screen star power is radiant, and even a little surprising.

Etheridge feels protective of Osborne, perhaps recognizing a younger, kindred spirit. "A big quick success could wreck her," she says, speaking from the thoroughly unwrecked perspective of one whose success owes to a slow steady build. "Joan is going to

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be around. I want people to know her work. But I don't want her to have a hit off this first record. I want her to get through a second album and create a body of work. So I'm trying to give her some advice: I sat her down and said, 'Now Joan, listen to your Aunt Melissa here.'"

Osborne was listening, while also trying to absorb some of Etheridge's savvy confidence: "It's real odd to see someone in her position that hasn't erected barriers around herself to stay sane," she says, while Etheridge's band rehearses at top volume inches away.

"I first saw her on the Grammys, and I was blown away by it. I went out and bought the record. I used to crank it up and dance around my apartment to 'Bring Me Some Water.' Seeing her become so successful made me feel like I could do what I wanted to do the way I wanted to do it, and reach some kind of larger audience with it, instead of being in clubs all the time."

A little later that day, Jewel, the 21-year-old newcomer from Homer, Alaska, is sitting outside on the steps of the mansion,

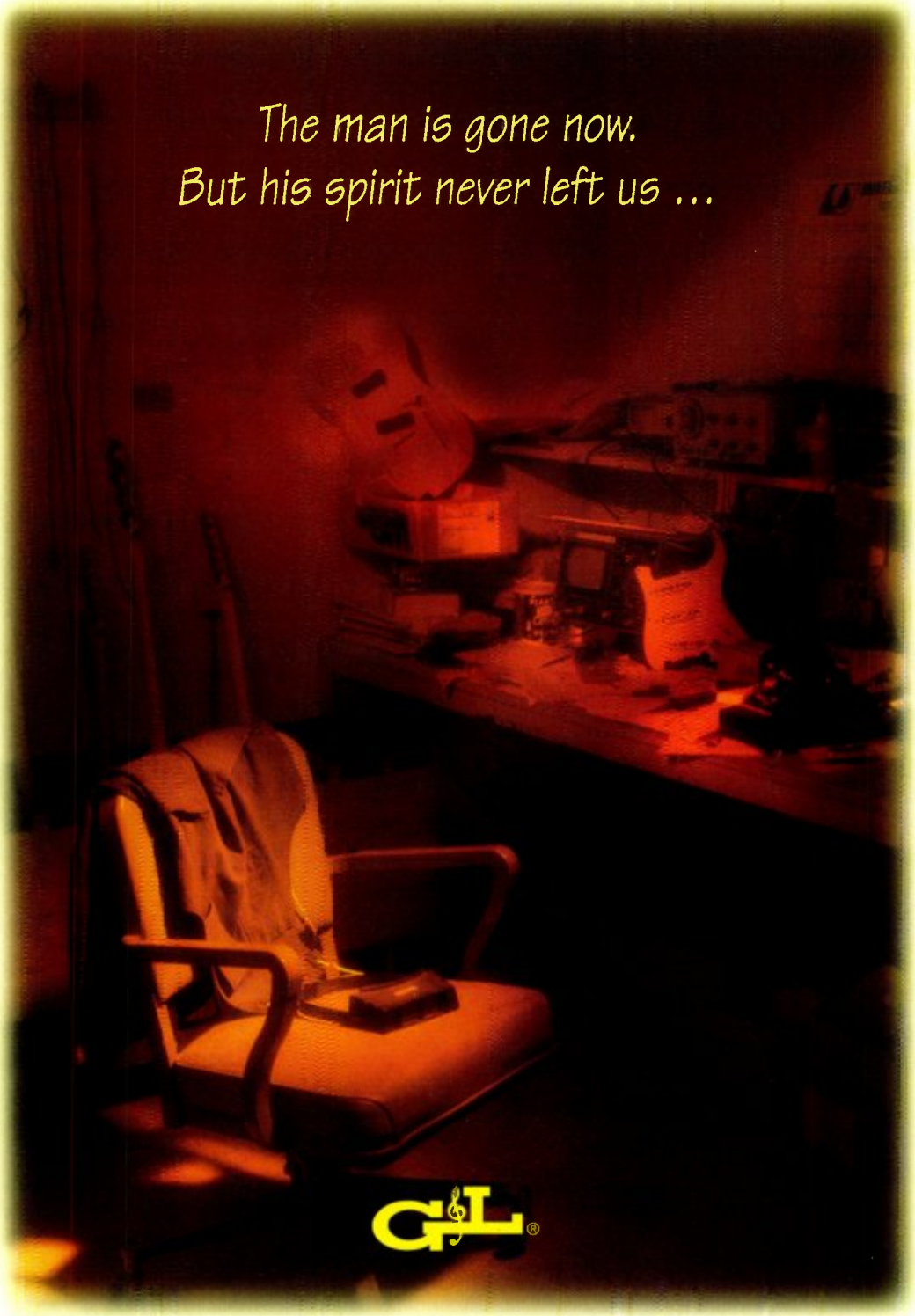
Etheridge Onstage

MELISSA ETHERIDGE's main guitar is a custom-made Ovation Adamas acoustic 12-string with a 3-way active EQ. She owns about 15 of these, but only takes five on tour. She uses Adamas strings, gauged .010–.047. For electrics she uses a custom Anderson 6-string, and a paisley Fender Telecaster. At home she mostly uses one of two old Silvertones and two Rickenbacker 12-strings. All are run through a pair of Nady 950 Series wireless. Mikes of choice are Shure SM58s with a touch of compression from a JBL/Urei 7110.

Bassist MARK BROWNE's favorite bass with which to record is a Jim Tyler custom 5-string. He also uses a Zon Sonus 5-string fretless, a 1962 Fender Jazz, a Sadowsky, a 1962 P-Bass with flatwound LaBella strings, a 1958 reissue P-Bass with roundwound strings, a Pedulla 5-string Pentabuz, and a Cruthers 35" longscale 5-string. He uses QSC power amps, an SWR Grand Prix preamp, SWR 410 bottom and two 15 JBL bottoms along with a Roland SE-70 multi-effects unit. In the studio he uses an SWR Interstellar Overdrive preamp.

Drummer DAVE BEYERS plays a custom set of GMS drums. He uses Paiste cymbals, Remo heads, Rhythmtech tambourines, and his own invention: Dave Beyer's Rattlestix by Remo, a combo drum stick and shaker.

JOHN SHANKS, a self-declared "guitar and amp freak," owns many guitars, including a 1964 Harvest Gold Strat, an early '70s Les Paul (used on "Little Secret"), a custom Black Beauty Les Paul with Seymour Duncan pickups, Rickenbacker 6- and 12-strings, a 1952 reissue Telecaster, a Fernandes P-project electric-acoustic classical guitar, a Fernandes Strat, and Lake Placid blue custom reissue Strat with a custom neck. He also has a Vox mandoguitar, and a 1962 Martin D-18. He uses strings by Dean Markley and Fender. He has two Trace Elliot 4x12 cabinets, an old Cordavox Leslie made for an accordion, modified with a 10" speaker, and an Egnater head with a 4-channel tube MIDI preamp in which the first two channels are like Fenders, and the second two are like Marshalls.



The G&L factory in Fullerton, California seems like a throwback to a simpler and romantic past. The people at G&L – his people – still do things the way he taught them. These Californians with love, dedication and great skill slowly and painstakingly give shape, form and voice to the G&L instruments. There are no computer-driven robots popping out guitars with uniformity but no soul. At G&L, people make instruments just like the founder wanted them made. Guitars made this way have a life – a vitality in them that responds to the player like no other.

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expounding on the reasons Etheridge inspires such advance loyalty. "People nowadays are ready to be touched and moved, and they have real sniffers for what is contrived," she says. "Clever is a disease that writers fall into: It tickles people's brains, it's very temporary and it can inspire a very fickle audience. Melissa's songs are from her soul. So often people are impressed by the other, but that's just the shadow of the tree."

It's a tree that was planted 34 years ago, in the penitentiary town of Leavenworth, Kansas. Raised on country and folk music, by the age of eight Etheridge was belting out "Stand By Your Man" and other country standards like a miniature Tammy Wynette, astounding audiences with the unfledged intensity of her vocal strength.

"I think I learned song form from that," she says. "Verse-chorus-bridge-chorus out." The first songs she wrote were imitations of the folk and country songs she knew, but also inspired by the pop music she heard on the radio and on cartoons. An avid fan of the Archies, she liked Reggie the best: "He was definitely the coolest. I wanted to be Reggie. He was dark, he was bad. Someday I would like to do a cover of 'Sugar Sugar'—it's a great song."

Her first composition, "Don't Let It Fly Away," so delighted her that months passed before the need arose to write another. When she did, she faced a dilemma she's confronted many times since: having to follow her own success. She eventually succeeded, in a way—her next song was based on the grief she felt after her grandmother's death. It was a revelation: When life got hard, you could channel the pain into music.

"It seemed normal at the time, but looking back, I realize most kids don't do that. But it wasn't until I really hit adolescence that I had feelings and experience, and that I started writing really from myself. And then having the tool, the craft of it, I started putting myself into it."

The songs poured out. Her dad bought her records that she cherished, like Carole King's *Tapestry* and the Who's *Tommy*. But when her older sister played her the Rolling Stones, things really started to shift: "I discovered rock 'n' roll. It had been there for awhile, of course, I just didn't know about it. I remember listening to *Exile On Main Street* and thinking, 'What the hell is this?' Then I started borrowing other records from my sister: Jethro Tull, Humble Pie. When I got to *Sgt. Pepper*, it totally blew my mind. One summer I listened to it every single day. It totally changed my life. I started realizing, words are important. Melodies are nice but words can make you think. You can get to people's bodies with music, and if you can make somebody think, then you've got their whole attention."

As college began looming on the horizon, Melissa's parents suggested traditional music schools like Juilliard and Eastman. "But I would have had to major in voice there, because they didn't offer a guitar major," she explains. "And can you hear me singing opera?" Instead she opted for Boston's Berklee College of Music, where guitar is not only included in the curriculum but worshiped as godhead. Still, after a year she was impatient to get back to the clubs.

"Part of me wishes I had stayed longer so that I would be a more accomplished musician—I would certainly play guitar better. But I didn't have the patience."

She moved back to Kansas and got a job at the Lavaranda Lounge of the Granada Royale Hotel in Kansas City, performing Fleetwood Mac and Barry Manilow tunes

for businessmen, surreptitiously slipping originals into the sets. She saved enough money to buy her first car, a 1964 Impala (the blue Chevrolet mentioned in "Nowhere To Go"), and on her 21st birthday she left for Los Angeles.

After months of playing Fleetwood Mac she figured L.A. would be an easygoing, inviting sort of place for her own music. But . . . "I got here in '82 and it was right at the beginning of Guns 'N Roses. There was no place for a woman with an acoustic guitar, though I was playing and writing rock 'n' roll. Even the Troubadour was heavy metal. I was very disappointed and very scared. You can't make any money because everybody here plays once a month—for free. It's ridiculous."

She failed repeatedly to get an audition at a tiny health food restaurant in Hollywood called the Natural Fudge Company. Eventually she gave up on L.A. and took gigs at the lesbian bars in Long Beach, where she rapidly began to attract a following. She'd combine originals with songs by Joan Armatrading (her favorite singer), Fleetwood Mac, and a deceased artist she'd only discovered upon coming to California—Janis Joplin.

"I listened only to Janis for three months. When I started catching her old stuff, like 'Piece of My Heart,' that was it for me. I started singing it in the bars and people just went nuts," she remembers. "I did it before I realized the danger—that people are going to judge you if you do that song."

Though she emulated Joplin's capacity for injecting pure human soul into a song, she doesn't subscribe to the theory that hard living makes good singing. "I take a much healthier approach to music and to life than Janis did. I would go into these bars and sing 'Piece of My Heart' and drink my cranberry and grapefruit juice. I want to protect my voice. I have not smoked. I do not drink myself to oblivion every night. People say, 'Where did you get it?' I don't know. Just singing constantly since I was eight, I guess.

"Sure, I went through some wild periods. I'd say my early twenties were pretty crazy. But I was always conscious in the craziness. I mean, I got messed up, absolutely. But was always conscious and aware of putting on a good show. I started playing in bars when I was 13. I had the opportunity to stand there as a child and watch people get blotto, and I didn't like it."

What interested her was making a living at music. "I started making real money, working

five nights a week. I was writing, and doing my original music for the first time. People who were interested started requesting my own stuff. It was really the breeding ground for the confidence in my music."

When word of the crowds she was attracting in Long Beach got around, record execs came calling, including Island Records founder Chris Blackwell. "I did not know who he was. He just seemed like this really serious, beach-dressing English guy. He came in when I was singing. I sang three originals and a Joan Armatrading song. He said, 'I like what you do. I like your soul.' Well, he didn't actually say it that well," she smiled. "Later he said, 'I think the future of rock 'n'roll has a female face.' I said I would love to be there, to do that. He said, 'I would like you on my label.'" By then enough offers had already been dangled before her and then withdrawn to mute her excitement. But Blackwell was sincere, and by that weekend she was signed.

> Sure, I was wild then. My early twenties were pretty crazy.

"After being signed, I got musicians and a producer, and this pop thing came out. Chris hated it, I hated it. We had to throw that away and I didn't know how I ever was going to do it." Her saving grace came in the form of Niko Bolas, who preserved her rock 'n' roll essence by recording her live with just drums and bass. It was easy, fast and effective. "We did my first record in four days that way. Niko knew Waddy Wachtel, and—god that he is—Waddy laid down some lines, and the record was done."

Her self-titled album, released in 1988, garnered some attention with "Bring Me Some Water," followed in 1990 by *Brave and Crazy* and in 1992 by *Never Enough*, which contained the Grammy-winning "Ain't It Heavy." Her 1993 international blockbuster *Yes I Am* propelled Etheridge into the realm of superstardom. She appreciates her fans' allegiance but tries not to let it warp her perspective. "That level of success affects me in a fear way, and I try hard not to be motivated by fear," she says. "And I trust my work—that's what got me here. I also know that people change, radio changes, it's

not going to be like this all the time. So you just keep doing it because you love it."

Watching her perform during these afternoon rehearsals, it's clear that she does love it. Unfazed by interruptions, she jokes with her band until she's allowed to play, then unleashes her voice with volcanic force. "Melissa doesn't do anything halfway," says guitarist Shanks. "In all the time I've known her—and I've been with her since we were in vans—she has never 'walked' through a show. She's a consummate professional, and what you see onstage is exactly what you see when she's off."

Onstage that evening, with a small crowd of VIPs and a few lucky fans settled around her in the rotunda, she sails effortlessly through the show. Although monstrous racks of lights behind the windows are beaming in with a *Close Encounters*–like intensity, and though cameramen with handhelds and Steadicams revolve around her in a weirdly graceful dance, their lenses poling within inches of her face, Melissa remains intensely focused on the music. Indeed it's that confidence, amid the commotion, that glues the whole thing together.

Early the next morning Melissa meets me at the Source, a so-healthy Hollywood eatery on Sunset immortalized by Woody Allen in *Annie Hall*. We look for Fabio, who eats here daily, but he's yet to arrive. Her hair's still wet from a morning shower, and her face free of make-up. We sit in the back and she orders up a hearty breakfast of eggs, toast, coffeecake, fruit, and hibiscus tea. She doesn't drink coffee, she says, because she doesn't need the caffeine. "That would just make me too happy," she says. "I'm already way happy enough."

Much of her happiness surrounds the pending release of *Your Little Secret*, an album she rightly feels to be her best work. It's a feeling that is very much present on the autobiographical songs which comprise the album. "I enjoyed making this record more than any record I've ever made," she says. "It came smoothly, it was fun, the guys I work with are a blast. I had a certain confidence. I think what you hear is that confidence. You hear me feeling, 'This is okay, I like playing this.'"

John Shanks, an accomplished writer on his own who has written songs for Bonnie Raitt, Joe Cocker and others, wrote two songs with Melissa for this album: "I Could Have Been You," which made the final cut, and "She Wants You," which will be released in the future as a bonus track. "I give her

tracks all the time," he says. "It's the Mike Campbell–Tom Petty theory. And if it's something that excites her, she'll run off. She heard my track for 'I Could Have Been You' on the bus to Biloxi and said, 'That one's mine.' The next day she sang me the song, and I got chills.

"The thing about Melissa that's special is her generosity. Which was great on this record, because she let me experiment. She also takes my advice about guitars. On 'Little Secret,' we played totally live. And it was great, because I said, 'I'm playing a Les Paul through a Marshall, you should play a Telecaster through an AC-30.' And she tried it. And we put them left and right in the mix so you really hear the Class-A tubes humming; they complement each other really well.

"Melissa is so much fun to hang out with and to make music with that it's easy, because you feel that you can be yourself and take chances and not feel stifled or feel like you're walking on eggshells. I've worked with people that give you those looks that say don't overstep your bounds. It's not like that at all with her. She trusts you enough to allow you to do your best work."

Etheridge's best work came when she wrote the songs for *Yes I Am*, because she intuited that it would be her breakthrough album. With that boulder lifted, the new songs came easily.

"There were times I wished I could write a hit," she says. "But you can't just sit down and write one. I can't. All I can do is write what's in me, and try to craft it as well as I can. There's not a song on any of my albums that was contrived to be a hit. I would have never thought 'Come to My Window' was a hit song.

"Now I can't think, 'I have to write another "Come to My Window."' I have to do what I did when I wrote those songs, which is being on this journey and writing about it and doing it. That's what people want. You just have to stay focused and not get caught up in it. I'm sure even Bruce gets, 'Why don't you do another "Born In The U.S.A."?' But he's not in that place anymore."

The Bruce she's referring to is Springsteen, of course. It's another secret she's let out of the closet: Bruce is her hero. The Springsteen influence, always an underground river flowing through her work, comes to the surface in the textures and hometown imagery of several new songs. It's an evolution triggered by her own dream-come-true duet with the Boss on MTV *Unplugged*. Their mix of intensity and restraint on his early masterpiece "Thunder Road" stands among that show's more stirring moments.

"After working with him, and after being compared to him, I felt like, 'Well, you know what? He is an influence, so why not just admit it?' 'Nowhere to Go' and 'Shriner's Park' are both very influenced by Springsteen, but whereas in the past I would have steered away from those songs because of that, now I felt it was okay. Besides," she adds with a smile, "who says a woman can't write about cars once in a while?"

Singing with Springsteen, she appeared to be having the time of her life. And she was, sort of. "It was weird, frightening and the best thing I've ever done. I'll never forget rehearsing with him because he was kind of nervous, I was nervous, and we really didn't know which song to do. So I asked him to do 'Thunder Road' with me and he said, 'Sure.' And he had to kind of learn it over—he fumbled with it a little bit, which was a big relief to me. I felt, 'Ahhh, great. He's human too.'

"I had learned it in E and A. I sing it in A when I sing it. On the record it's in E. But these days he sings it in F because he puts a capo on and plays it a half-step up. And I *never* use a capo. I never learned. I never even understood why—just play it in F if you want to, just play it in the other key. So I had to learn it in F, and in rehearsal I kept going to D minor when I should have gone to A minor, because there's no normal pattern to the song. So doing that, and remembering where I was supposed to sing, and looking at him singing and being totally blown away by being with him, made it a hard time. But it was the best."

I mention that the guys in her band were amazed by her ability to write songs on the road. They said that when she was asked to write a song for the movie *Boys on the Side*, they all patched a rough cut of it together on the bus, and then Melissa disappeared into the back of the bus, emerging a few hours later with the finished song. The next day she taught it to them at soundcheck, and they recorded it the day after that.

"Well, I've written songs for so long that I've learned to store up things. I'm really lucky that way. Go into the back of the bus, all by myself, nobody can hear me. The world goes by and you just open up your mind and

there it is. Or in a hotel, on a day off. Hours. You just call for food and you don't need to do anything but just to be there."

And nothing gets in the way? "The thing you have to be careful about is not to let your inner critic come out and destroy it while you're working. I almost gave up on 'Shriner's Park.' It just took forever to write. I was feeling that nobody's gonna want to hear about some old park that I used to go to when I was a kid.

"I stopped taping my songs while writing a few years ago, because I'd listen back and I wouldn't like them. And then they would just die. I would never give them a chance. Now I write them down in my notebook. I notate any notes I have to, or any chords. And then," she says, her voice growing more intense, "I trust that if it's good, I will remember it. And if I don't, I'll write something better."

I wondered why she didn't like hearing her work tapes. "I don't know. Probably because it reminds me of being ten and sitting there and trying to come up with something." She laughs. "But that is what it comes from. Absolutely."

Eggs and toast out of the way, she starts in on the coffeecake. I mention that many songwriters are so neurotic about their writing, they get in their own way. "If I have no ideas, I'll just jam on the guitar, just play," she says. "Usually something comes out, and I start with that, and that inspires more. Sometimes you get something. Sometimes it opens up. It's always different. I don't have set rules. It's a total mystery to me."

So how does a songwriter get to the point where they can control the process? "They don't," she answers emphatically. "It's not something you can control. The greatest songs are given to you, from the collective consciousness. Songwriters and artists are mirrors of our society and it's our job to reflect it so we are constantly feeding on the collective consciousness of everybody. And if you stay sharp, it comes through."

But how does one stay sharp? "I don't know. Nothing makes it happen. Substances certainly don't help—I get way too caught up in the world for that. I know that I need to be alone to write. Not alone for weeks, just for those hours when I'm writing. Because I've done it since I was 10 years old. I used to go down to the basement and write, silly stuff. But you learn at an early age. You use those muscles, and those channels get opened."

She's managed to keep those channels

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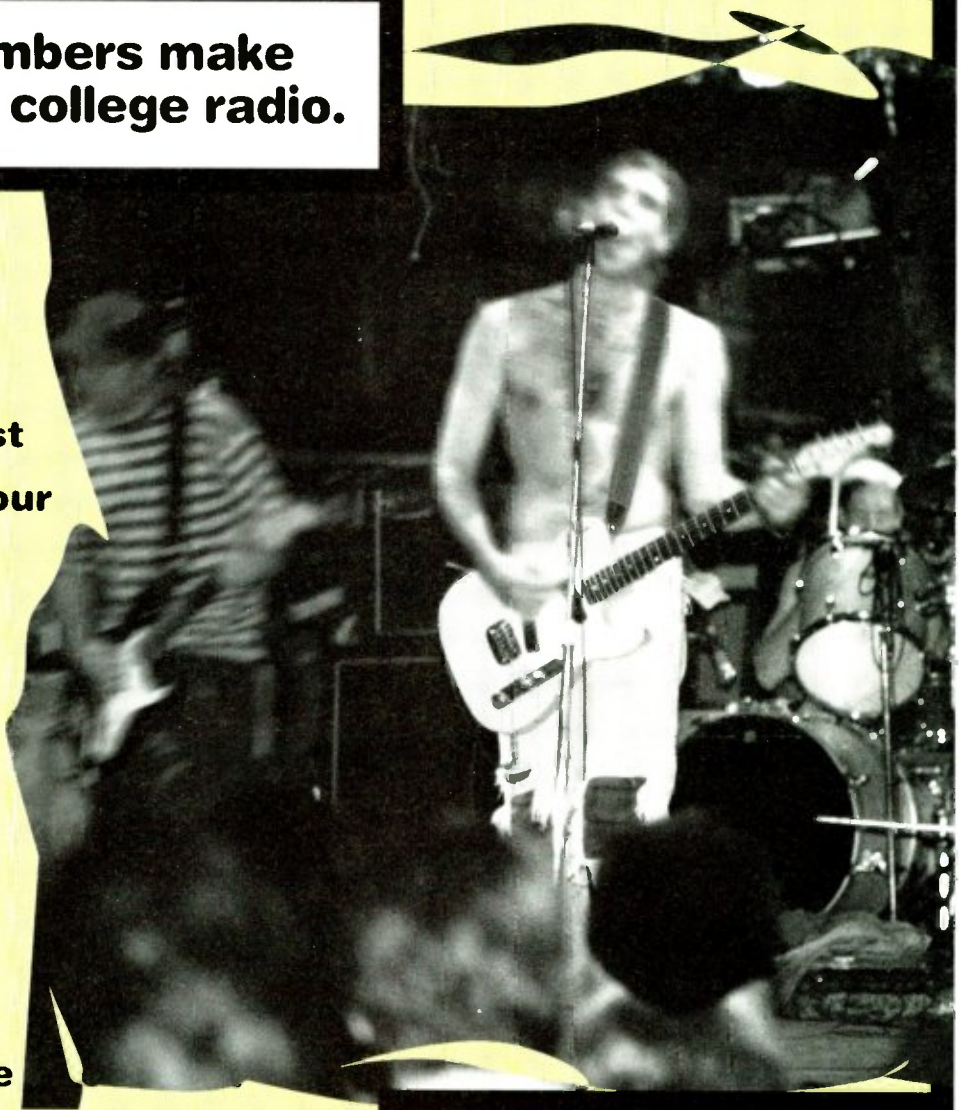

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open, even after she came out and things threatened to become too personal, too political. Getting derailed would have been understandable, but characteristically, she stayed on track. "In fact, things just got better for me. Nothing bad happened. You should see my audience! I played in the deep south—Biloxi, Mississippi. Rowdiest audience in the world. There were queers, straights, everything there. And they were losing their minds altogether.

"The only thing that ever happened was when I was in Tampa opening for Sting. I was playing and this guy walked down the aisle and put this book onstage at my feet. And it was a 'God Will Save Your Life' kind of book. But I realized later," she laughs, "that he might have put that up there anyway just for my being a rock star.

"I really feel blessed that things have worked out this way. It's a big lesson for me. A big lesson. I truly believe, in the karmic spiritual sense, that if you can clear out yourself, then that's when the good things can come in."

Great, I say, noticing the coffeecake is gone and that we're coming to a close. This is going to be an upbeat story.

"Yeah," she says, getting up to go. "So far so good."

CHILI PEPPERS

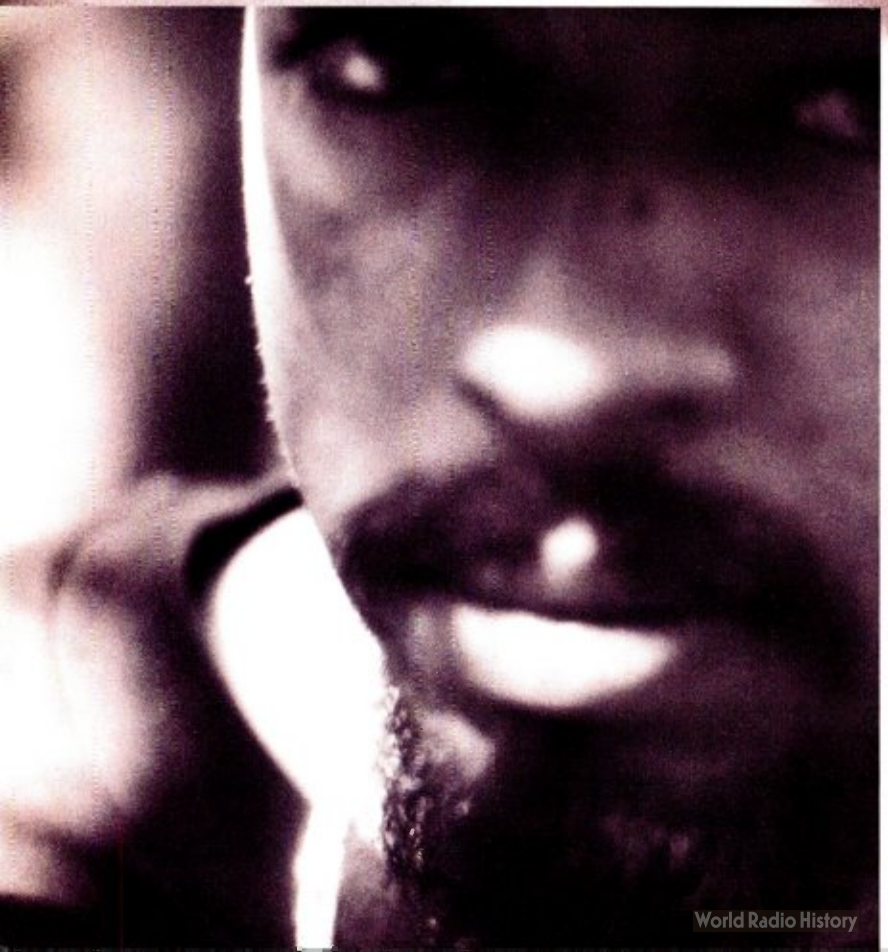
[*cont'd from page 15*] he wanted to do the track over again with the other drums. The band felt the earlier take had the magic, but, to keep Rick happy, Chad redid his part on the big kit by playing along with the first track. He duplicated the original feel so well that Rick ended up using both tracks on the final mix of the song ("The Power of Equality").

In the middle of 1994 I got a call for the latest Peppers record, *One Hot Minute*. This time I was ready for any request. Chad didn't use the triggering/PA setup, relying mainly on two kits and only three snare drums—a 5x14 aluminum shell, a 5x14 brass shell and a 4x14 maple shell. His increased self-sufficiency meant that my involvement wasn't needed as much. My main job was simply to do whatever it took to make him feel comfortable about his drums so he could concentrate on playing, which in the end is what drum teching is all about. I'd like to think that my contribution to *One Hot Minute* was in keeping with a fundamental rule of drumming: what you don't play is just as important as what you do.

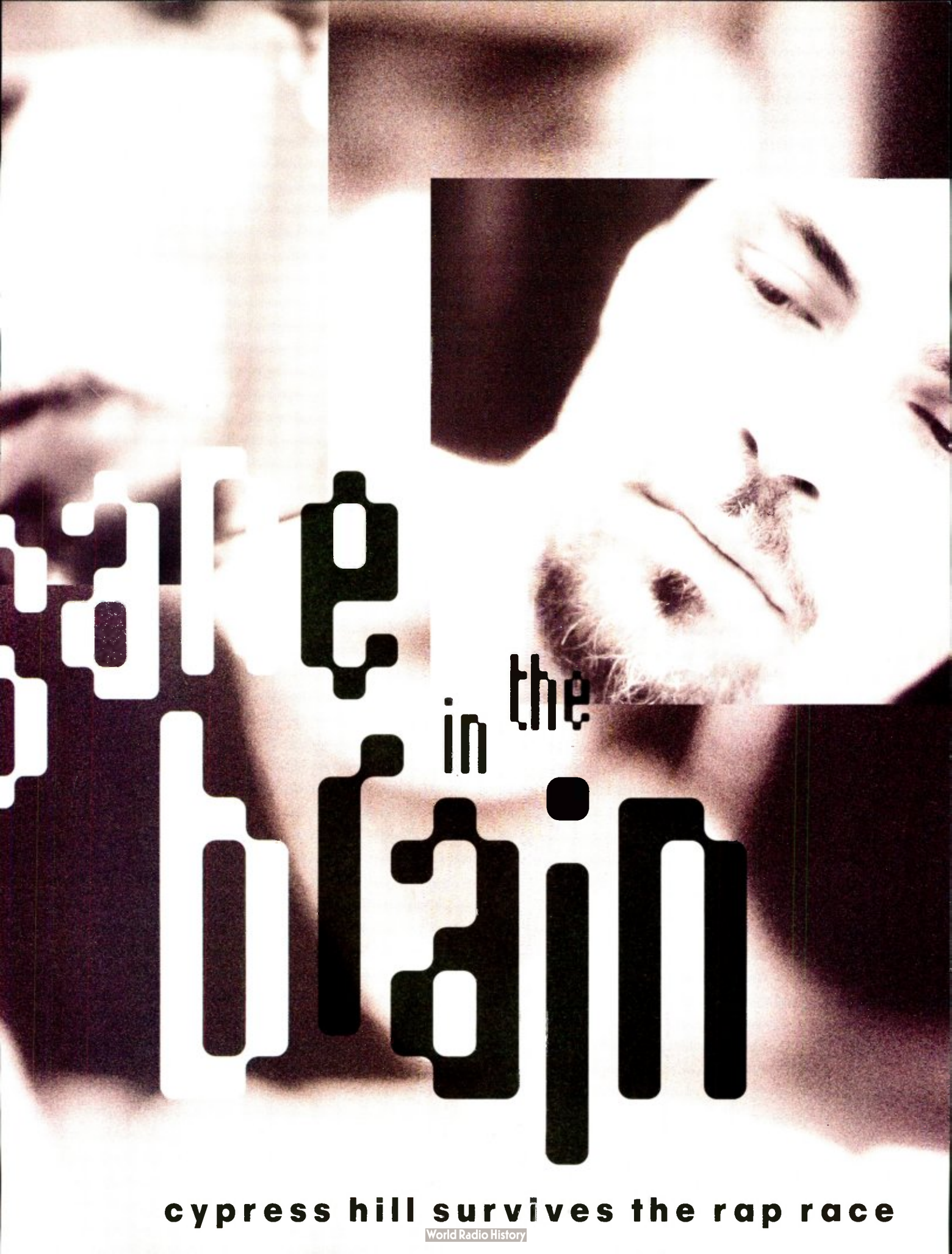
by mark rowland

photographs by cynthia levine

Very



So we were sitting in B-Real's living room in the Hollywood Hills on a hot, hazy October afternoon, the members of Cypress Hill and a few of their close friends and me the reporter, talking while paying half-attention to a baseball game on a very large TV, when the program was interrupted for this important message: "Judge Lance Ito has announced that the jurors in the O.J. Simpson trial have reached a verdict. They will announce that verdict officially tomorrow morning at ten o'clock." ▪ "Not guilty," Sen Dog immediately predicted. "That's crazy man," B-



bake in the brain

cypress hill survives the rap race

We created a sound, we used it and I guess we sucked the life out of it. It was time to reinvent ourselves.

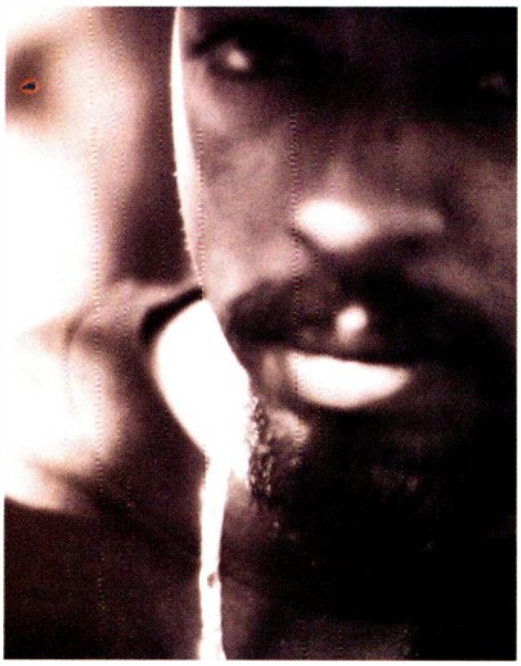
Real said, drawing out the word 'craaaazy' in his familiar nasal drawl. "Those jurors, they must want to go home."

"Did he do it?" asked a friend, as if we were all on *The McLaughlin Report*.

"I think he didn't do it physically," reasoned B-Real. "He might have paid somebody."

"He might have known about it," Sen Dog agreed. "But he didn't do it."

The usual jambalaya of O.J. facts and opinions followed. Also the revelation that this particular drama was about to pass into history.



"Cochran was good up there," said B-Real, shaking his head. He mimicked a solemn news anchor: "'With Clark and Darden the jury was stonefaced, but when Cochran spoke they were riveted.' Riveted! Man, he had my attention."

So what would you be thinking if you were O.J. right now? someone asked B-Real.

"I wouldn't be *thinking*," he said. "I'd be up all night *praying* to God."

As the writer Milan Kundera once observed, the events in any man's life can be just as easily arranged into the biography of a beloved hero as into that of a criminal. The O.J. story displays that much and so, somewhat less sensationally, does the story of Cypress Hill. The band members—rappers B-Real and Sen Dog, beat/mixmaster DJ Muggs, and percussionist Eric Bobo—are undeniably good guys. But they're also pop stars who stand up for what they believe. And when you do that, even in the court of public opinion, sooner or later you wind up on trial.

Depending on one's vantage, Cypress Hill are partying potheads or determined crusaders for justice. They are sonically adventurous hip-hoppers or an "alternative" pop act in hip-hop garb. They glorify gangsta lifestyles or they provide much-needed parables of street-level reality.

One aspect beyond dispute, however, is that Cypress Hill already ranks among the more enduring and innovative bands in hip-hop history and that among such bands they easily command the widest range of fans. They don't need Johnnie Cochran to defend their reputations, either. In their music and in conversation, they convey the passion, humor and steadfast conviction of regular guys who've learned, better than most, how to cope with extraordinary success.

"I know this guy," DJ Muggs was saying, pointing to B-Real, "and he's the coolest, humblest guy. Soft-spoken, kind—just don't fuck with him. Cause he's got a dark side that will get on yo' ass if you want to play around, you know what I mean?"

"See, we ain't actors," said B-Real, whose relaxed, laconic manner complements Muggs' restive energy. "We try to be ourselves, and what we put in our music is what we're feeling. We're a hardcore group, but we're not trying to stick that in people's faces. There's a way to do it without making people sick of you."

To that end, the band has just put the finishing touches on its third album, *Temples of Boom*. More than a year in the making, it's a record they're clearly proud of, and one designed to at once reaffirm their hip-hop heritage while exploring new ways to expand that genre's sonic possibilities.

Rather than follow the latest trend of sugaring hard raps with '70s R&B–inflected melodies, Cypress Hill twine their new tales through more cinematic soundscapes—a mood underlined by the inclusion of dialogue snatches from *Pulp Fiction*. While their earlier records leaned on blues and rock guitar hooks, for this one Muggs has woven Erik Satie–like piano figures, jazzy vibes, and operatic soprano voicings with murky bass and percussion. The result sounds at once dreamy and sinister—call it ambient horror-core. The beats are still strong, and you can dance to it, but a few narratives here might stop partiers in their tracks.

"I like 'Boom Biddy Bye Bye,'" says Sen Dog, an easy-going guy who deftly ad-libs against B-Real's more crafted lyrics, and who tends to favor Cypress Hill's dance-floor side over their spacier concoctions. "That one has a nice vocal melody all the way through it, a nice rhythm—it's really controlled as far as the song structure. It never goes hypey, just stays cool and funky, so you get into it, and as you're listening you realize the song's about a murder." He chuckles. "So that works out."

Sen, who is Cuban, got to show off his Spanish on "Killa Hill," a track produced not by the band but by RZA of Wu-Tang Clan. "I'd never worked with any of those guys from New York before," he explained. "He looks at me and goes, 'You, you're the one coming up with those phat hooks, right kid?' I was like, 'What? Chorus part, chorus part, that's you, right?' I'm like, alright. He started to tell me what he wanted—a Puerto Rican dude talking some shit. But I turned it into a dictator of some country talking shit about revolution and

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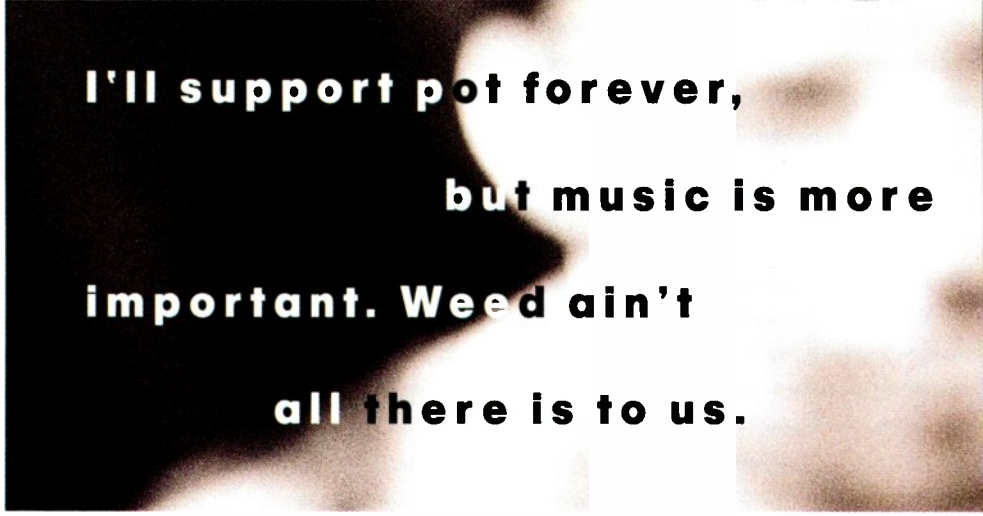
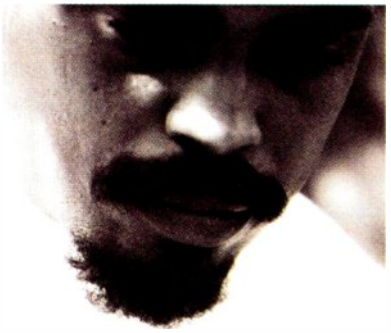
*"EQ, August 1994." **"Greg Rule, Keyboard Magazine, April 1995."



war—you know, sort of like the asshole where I come from."

No, *Temples of Boom* isn't short on point of view—the record includes a new marijuana anthem, a vignette about a gang initiation, and a personal attack on Ice Cube for stealing one of Cypress Hill's songs, among other things. "It's a series of stories," observed Bobo, who had been performing with the band live for years but hadn't recorded with them until now. "The way it flows together is the closest thing to a concept, but it's not like one thing tying everything together."

Still, Muggs insisted, the goal was to make a cohesive album; too many hip-hop artists, with major label encouragement, churn out records with a few good singles and a bunch of filler. For the labels, that's good business; for the artist, it's often an express ticket to oblivion.



And Cypress knows that tune. After their 1991 self-titled debut album rather unexpectedly sold a million-and-a-half copies, they toured for over a year. But in the fall of 1992, their label put the arm on them. "It was like, we need an album in two months 'cause we can get it out by the fourth quarter and make our money," Muggs recalled. The band complied and rushed out *Black Sunday,* with a happy result: The record exploded, selling three million copies and launching a hit single, the catchy pot singalong, "Insane In the Brain."

But there was negative fallout, too. As often happens when a cult band "crosses over" to the mainstream, many of Cypress' hardcore fans felt let down, if not betrayed. The problem was inflamed by one hipper-than-thou rap publication which made dubious references to the band's own ethnic makeup, which includes Italian, Cuban, Mexican and Puerto Rican ancestry.

But the biggest problem was that Cypress Hill weren't too crazy about the record themselves. "I loved a lot of the songs on it, but that's the thing—I don't love the album as a whole," B-Real explained. "The imagery was good, but conceptually the first one was better: There was more variety and we knew what we were thinking. On *Black Sunday* we didn't have time to think, we just had time to do. So that was a lesson learned, 'cause you have to rely on the album, not the singles."

"See, the labels have a formula," Muggs jumped in. "It's, 'We want three slammin' singles and we don't care what the rest of your album sounds like, 'cause as long as we got three things, we can put it out to the market and blow it up.'

"This time we weren't gonna do that. They wanted this record for *last* fall, you know. And we said, 'We ain't doin' this again, 'cause once our career is over you're all just gonna sign some next "new" group and you won't even take our calls no more.' Sure, this album is gonna go platinum regardless—but if it's shit the next album won't. So we gotta set up our fourth and fifth albums with this one.

"And you know, I like to walk into clubs and have respect. I don't want to hear, 'Oh, Cypress Hill, they're wack.'"

BY NOW, MOST fans know the Cypress Hill backstory. How New York exile Larry Muggerand (DJ Muggs) got together with high school football star Senen Reyes (Sen Dog) and Louis Freeze (B-Real) on the

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streets of South Gate, a working-class town south of Los Angeles that's sleepy by day and ominous by night. How B-Real first resisted Muggs' and Sen's efforts to recruit him into a rap group, while living the life of gang-banging and dope dealing he would later detail on record. How a bullet in the back suggested a change of heart. If there's a key to Cypress Hill's endurance, it might be this: years before they landed a record deal, they'd bonded as brothers.

If there's a key to their broad-based popularity, it might be their eclectic tangle of musical roots. Muggs' mom remains a strong country music fan—"she knows all the words," noted Muggs, adding that he rarely pays much attention to lyrics himself. Relatives included a hippie uncle deep into psychedelia. The '60s loom large on his consciousness, from Otis Redding to the Supremes.

Sen Dog grew up on his father's salsa collection, along with funk, disco and '70s rock from Kiss back to Hendrix and Zeppelin. One day his father brought home a Latin jazz record by the great jazz percussionist Willie Bobo, and the memory stuck in his mind.

Eric Bobo is Willie Bobo's son, and after he'd joined Cypress Hill, Sen brought his father out to see a show. "He'd never seen us play before, and that blew his mind, you know? I think that was the first time that my dad ever saw what he'd done that influenced me."

"When we're on the bus now, you don't hear just one kind of music," Bobo said. "You got the oldies, Motown, funk, blues, Zeppelin, hip-hop. We even have a little techno goin' on now. It's all a good influence, cause everyone's mind is open. I think you have to make music to be worldwide, not just for the East Coast or West Coast, or even the U.S."

"Hip-hop is only 20 years old, so you know there's been music before then," Sen Dog observed. "I don't feel bad about getting into it. I think more people should."

Bobo's entry into the group exemplified that philosophy. He'd met the other members of Cypress while playing with the Beastie Boys on tour. When the tour ended he was invited to sit in on a few Cypress dates, which gradually evolved into a permanent gig.

"I use congas and bongos, timbales, shakers and bells," explained Bobo, whose Latin jazz pedigree was tempered early on by doses of Cameo, the Bar-Kays and Funkadelic. "I'm not much of a ting-a-ling player—you won't be hearing any triangles," he noted drily. "I don't try to water down how I play. It won't work with every group, but Cypress seems to leave room for the Latin flavor, especially the live shows."

Indeed, Cypress Hill seems to thrive on live performance. They've toured much of the world between albums; new tours to support this one are lining up. "When we're onstage all our stuff falls into place naturally," Sen Dog said. "We run our shit very neatly. One comment I get from people at shows is like, 'Yeah man, the tradeoffs were on—you guys were tight.' That's what I'm listening to."

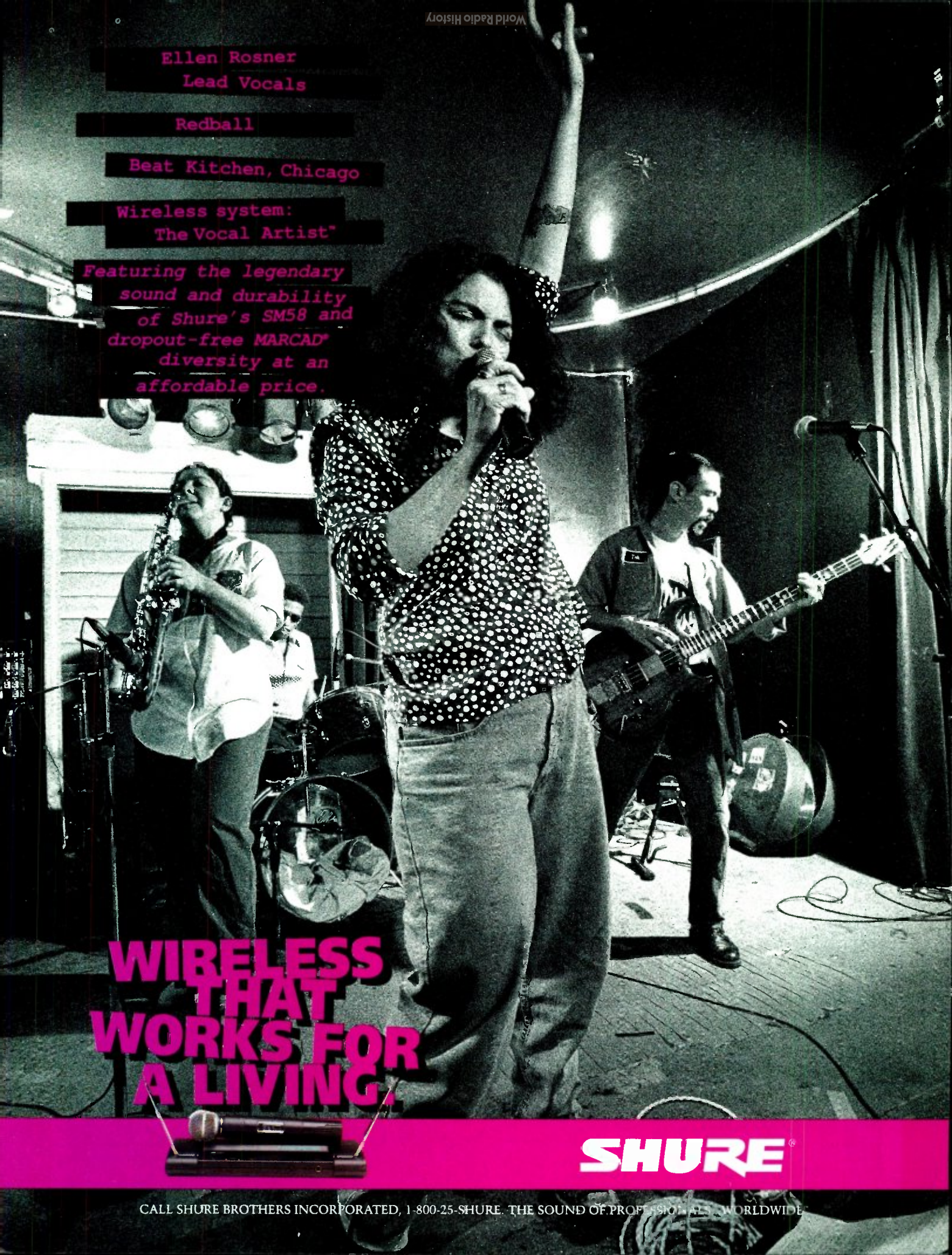
"We did tours for free," said Muggs. "That Beastie Boys tour we did for like $2000 a night? We were the only platinum group on that one. We just knew we had to do it, and we'd get the money back later in royalties."

way of the talk

A LOT OF PEOPLE have ruined sampling—they just take hit songs and put them out without clearing them," opines DJ Muggs. "And some of these [publishers] have a thing against rap music anyway, so now they want everything—publishing, mechanical royalties, and a fee, too. But you'll give up publishing on a single, because you can make it back on the album." Cypress Hill should know—on their previous album, *Black Sunday*, a three-word excerpt on "Insane in the Brain" cost the group $50,000 plus royalties (see "Sampling Your Wallet" sidebar). Still, Muggs leans more on recordings than live taping for his effects—the band just takes extra care with clearances.

Muggs spins his platters on a Technics MK-2 quartz direct drive turntable. His samplers of choice are his Ensoniq ASR-10 keyboard and two E-mu SP-1200s. He praises the latter's "gritty tone," but wishes the looping capacity—about five seconds—was longer. "They should update it to 35 or 40 seconds—it would be the biggest-selling machine out there. Just make sure they leave the tone."

Muggs' is still a home studio in progress, though he's currently recording a solo project there with rappers like Redman and MCA. Equipment includes a Mackie 32•8 mixing console, Alesis ADAT digital recorders, Alesis Quadraverb multi-effects processor and BRC master remote controller, and a Panasonic SV-3700 DAT. Playback is through monster JBL SR Series speakers and, inevitably, a pair of Yamaha NS-10s.



Sampling Your Wallet

BENSONHURST RAPPERS the Lordz of Brooklyn open their debut album *All in the Family* with an inspired bit of genre-blending: a tour of the neighborhood called "Saturday Nite Fever" that's powered along by a hefty hip-hop beat working in tandem with a loop of guitarist Randy Bachman's trademark riff from the Guess Who's "American Woman." It's an engaging combination of sounds, and it only took Lordz member/producer AdMoney a day to knock it together on an E-mu SP-1200 sampler and a Mackie board.

"FIRST I PUT THAT TRACK together using my own loop," he says, "but when we sat down and listened to it, we realized 'American Woman' would fit, so we dropped it in. A track's got to work on its own, but the right sample can really kick it up that extra notch."

THAT NOTCH MAY BE achieved in a creative flash, but it can also require an almost endlessly complicated set of business decisions and legal negotiations. A decade ago, the licensing deals that made sampling possible were generally straightforward—for a flat fee, an artist could purchase the publishing and master licenses necessary for clearance to use a piece of someone else's recording in their own work. But cut-and-dried deals and a codified fee structure are a thing of the past. Today, everything's negotiable.

IT S DEFINITELY BECOME more complicated and more expensive," says Pat Shanahan, whose four-year-old L.A.–based company, My Forte, has cleared samples for the Beastie Boys, DJ Hurricane, and Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, among others.

ONCE RECORDS USING samples started going gold and platinum, flat fees felt like bad deals to the people holding the licenses. Publishers started wanting a percentage of the copyright of the new song, and within the last year many publishers have started asking for advances against those royalties. It's not uncommon to be asked for 50 percent of a copyright just for a couple bars of bass loop, and some publishers and labels won't consider

taking less than 25 percent. I've had albums where it cost $20,000 just to get samples cleared."

ASIDE FROM CARRYING a steep price tag, samples can put the brakes on a recording project while the negotiations are worked out. "Most labels won't schedule an album until the samples are cleared, but most artists wait until they've got a song done to ask about clearance," Shanahan notes. "So for each sample I'm looking at a minimum of two licenses, more if there's more than one publisher. You could have five separate negotiations going on for each sample, with each label you approach often having to track down the original artist to get their consent. Your artist wants this done yesterday, but for everybody else it's a very low priority."

THE SPIRALING COMPLEXITY of sampling deals has actually discouraged many entertainment lawyers from doing this kind of work. Attorney Eric Greenspan still passionately defends sampling as an art form, but has all but eliminated clearances from his practice. The man who, while working for Ice-T, put together the first major West Coast label deal for a rap act, says the business just became too discouraging. "As an artist's lawyer," Greenspan says, "if I charged for the work involved in sampling clearance by the hour, it ended up costing more than negotiating the whole record deal. It became very unproductive on my end."

SOMETHING OF A COTTAGE industry has sprung up to take over the lawyers' role, and companies like My Forte have flourished. Says Pat Shanahan, "It would seem that unless an artist has a lot of his own money, or has major label backing, he can't clear samples. But every time I think that fees have gotten so high that no one's going to sample any more, my business keeps growing."

THE BUDGET ALLOTTED by American Recordings covers the Lordz of Brooklyn's samples. But when the money got tight, the group got creative. Instead of sampling a guitar line from Traffic's "Dear Mr. Fantasy" for a track, they recorded a guitarist playing a close-but-not-quite facsimile. They got the vibe they were after, and avoided licensing problems. Lordz leader Kaves says that that is now the group's preferred approach.

I WAS WATCHING the PBS rock 'n' roll documentary the other night, and it struck me that all this sampling business is really nothing new. The Byrds said they were trying to do what the Beach Boys were doing and added some Dylan to it. That was sampling—except they did it with their heads instead of with clearances and SP-1200s. Frankly, it's still cheaper to use your head, and I think you get better sounds." - Chuck Crisafulli

Lately, their off-road schedule has become equally hectic, partly due to star machine demands—interviews, promotion, videos—but mostly due to their own. Muggs, a self-described "perfectionist," seems to be running a small factory of sound out of his home studio down the road, where he's been overseeing a flotilla of independent projects, and where most of *Temples of Boom* was recorded before the final mix to 2-track.

Even driving around in his car, Muggs will play a mix for days on end, examining its microscopic aspects until the other guys in the band have gone nuts listening, before finally settling on a track; or just as likely, he'll end up plundering it for a part for some other song, treating loops and samples like car parts in a chop shop. B-Real plunders lyrics in similar fashion. Over 30 tracks were originally recorded for *Temples of Boom* before the band pared to 15—three of which were completed in the final three days before the record was due.

Without a deadline, Muggs admitted, they might have tinkered forever—and with good reason. The "alternative" rock scene likes to flatter itself as innovative, but for more than a decade the real action has been in hip-hop, and the competition is cutthroat: Rest on your laurels and soon enough you'll be pushing up daisies.

"We created a sound, we used it, and I guess we sucked the life out of it," Muggs said, shrugging off the last five million records. "It was time to re-invent ourselves."

This portrait of musicians on a restless creative search seems somewhat at odds with the more familiar tintype of Cypress Hill as a bunch of blissed-out hippies. It's a rep that's starting to rankle B-Real as well. Understand, the band remains devoted to the issue of marijuana de-criminalization, proudly performs at benefits for the cause, recently donated a song to the NORML benefit LP *Hempilation*, and they'll puff away all day without apology. But except for "Spark Another L" and a CD bonus track "Everybody Must Get Stoned," the new record was shorn of overt pro-pot paeans, because, as B-Real put it, "everyone seems to think that's the focus of our group."

The other day he agreed to an interview for CNN while standing in front of a hemp shop. "I thought they were gonna ask about the album; we just ended up talking about the whole weed thing. I mean, that's cool, I'll support it forever, but our music is more important than anything. The weed ain't all there is to us."

"Yeah, there's crack too," Muggs deadpanned. "Weed and crack, mix it up. Some needle shit too—you know how we are."

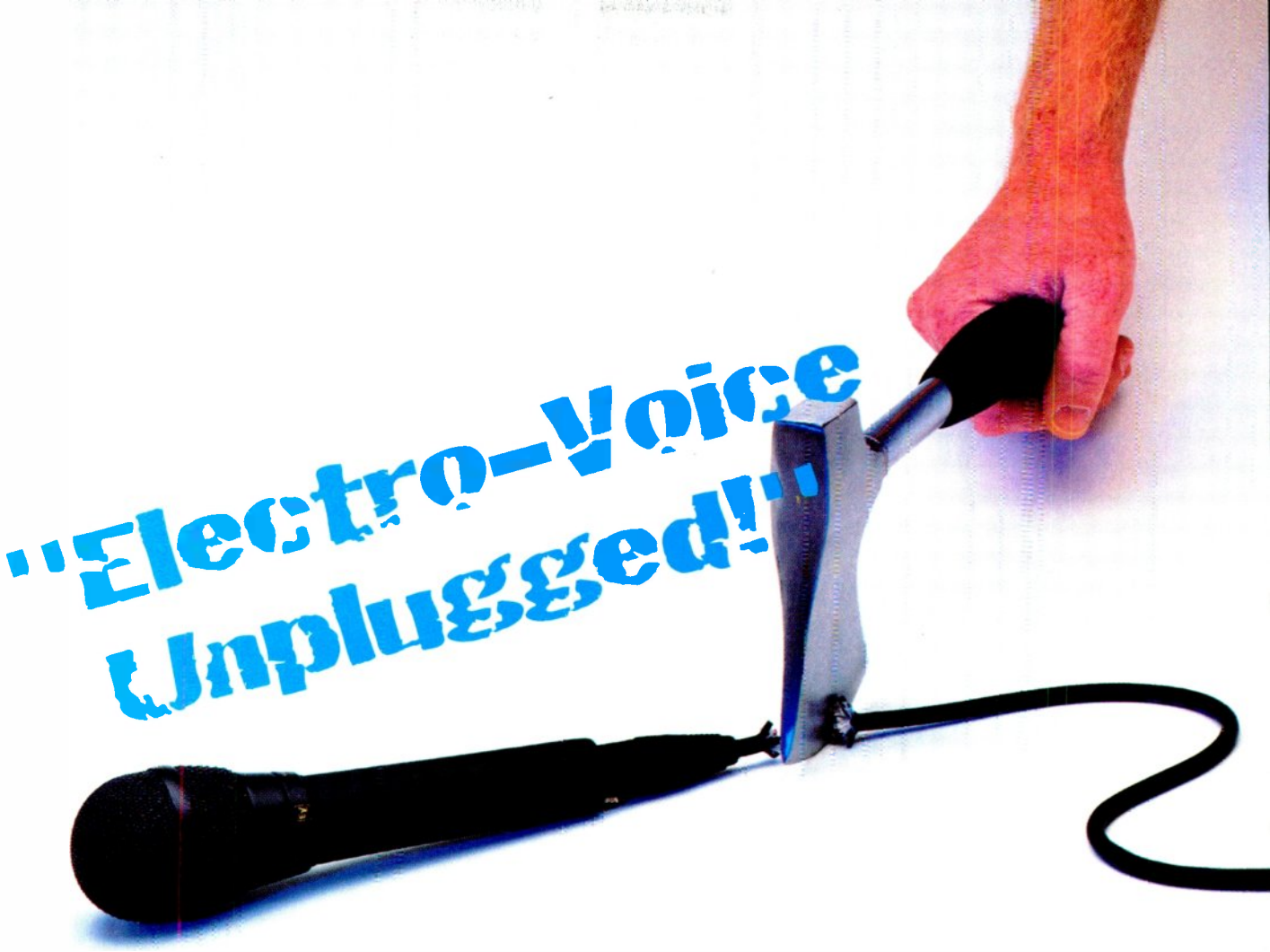
Bobo motioned at the television, which had been turned to MTV. "Ice Cube says 'hit the bong' and they don't bleep that out. But they'll give us shit."

"Cause he's not known for that," B-Real said. "We're the bad guys."

"We've done like 12 videos, and you only see two of them on the TV," Bobo said. "It's censorship, is all it is."

"In *Vibe* they got an eight-page article comparing videos that got played on MTV," Muggs said. "They covered the gun in Snoop's video but in Guns 'N Roses, Axl is killing himself. You got Marky Mark with drug dealers, but the 'three little pigs' smoking a fat joint—we can't even say joint, or even have marijuana paraphernalia; they bleep everything out. It's a double standard."

B-Real is girding for a similar reaction to Cypress' new single, "Throw Your Set in the Air," a song about a kid joining a street gang. "Certain radio stations are taking it like we're



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promoting gangsterism or whatever they're gonna call it. It's not that: It's a song about how I got recruited into a gang through an older guy. I'm trying to break that down, because a lot of kids don't see what's going on in themselves. You got to give it to 'em straight. Kids get involved in that shit because parents don't want to address it. That's why you got a lot of teen pregnancies; that's why you got a lot of these diseases. You gotta talk to them before these other motherfuckers get to 'em.

"When I was 13, I was right there," he went on. "So I don't like people to misconceive the songs. I wouldn't want to change what I've been through, because then I wouldn't be who I am. But I've come to the realization that I can help a little bit, throw my message in there, and at the same time make good music. So I try to use my judgment; mostly I go by what I feel."

"It seems like you can make movies real, and rock 'n' roll real," Muggs declared. "But when we try to say what's real—'oh no, that's too violent.'"

"A lot of people blame their kids wanting to be gangsters on this music," B-Real agreed. "Rap music is like the minority class of the entertainment business. Even though rap makes billions of dollars, they look at us this way.

"But I would never glorify—I lost too many friends, man. Just this year one of my good friends that I used to bang with got out of jail and said help get me out of this shit. And before he could even start his first day of work with us he got killed."

"He went to get his girl and his kid," Muggs said. "Pulled up in his driveway and they was waiting for him in the backyard."

"So I write songs in ways that people will be like, fuck that shit," B-Real said. "They're not turned off by the music but they're turned off by that kind of life."

Cypress Hill's crew is an extension of the band, made up of old friends that go back to their days in South Gate. Hanging together as a team, you get the feeling, is what's kept some of them from hanging quite separately.

"You can't break the chemistry; once you do, it goes to shit," said B-Real. "That's happened with a lot of groups. We've been lucky so far. But it helps that we all know each other so well. Because the money don't take away problems—it amplifies them."

"We lived with each other every day on the road," said Muggs. "Now we hang out all the time at home."

So what's changed, besides the money?

"We used to have nothing to do," said Muggs. "We had all the time in the world."

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musicians who own their labels

they don't wanna work on maggie's farm no more

Musician-owned and operated record labels aren't anything new. The idea of workers seizing the means of production and owning the commodity they've produced by the sweat of their brows has existed long before (Karl) Marx and (John) Lennon. Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks took matters into their own hands in early Hollywood, forming United Artists. In the rock era, a status symbol of the late '60s and early '70s was being given your own label. Of course, that often amounted to little more than a label logo on albums which were still distributed by the parent company, and signings that amounted to cronyism—the Beatles' Apple nabbing the Faux Fab Four in Badfinger, Led Zeppelin's Swan Song tapping glam Zep wannabes Silverhead, Elton John's Rocket imprint trying to make a star out of sidekick Kiki Dee.

These days, top artists still get their boutique labels as contract perks, though few manage to break any outside acts. A recent exception is Madonna's WEA-distributed Maverick label, which has established both Alanis Morissette and Candlebox—thanks in part to the savvy of executives like manager Freddy DeMann, ex-MTV executive Abbey Konowitch and young A&R phenom Guy Oseary.

But not everybody wants to be the next Alanis Morissette. Twenty-four-year old Buffalo singer/songwriter Ani DiFranco, a post-feminist

by roy trakin illustration by ryder

combination of Patti Smith, Suzanne Vega and Phranc who started Righteous Babe Records five years and seven albums ago, has refused numerous major label offers to maintain her independence.

"People in the business all tell me the same thing," she says. "'You're holding yourself back.' And I answer, 'I know!' Of course I am. I just don't fucking care! There's something I find inherently creepy about fame, fortune and mass recognition. For anything worthwhile, there are sacrifices to be made and you have to be willing to make them. Thinking small has served me well."

Longtime punk label kingpins Greg Ginn—former Black Flag guitarist who still releases his and others' music on his L.A.–based SST Records—and Ian MacKaye, the Minor Threat/Fugazi leader whose Dischord Records has been releasing Washington, DC–area punk since 1980, have consistently turned down major label entreaties to remain in control of their destinies.

"I try to stay away from what everybody else is doing," says Ginn, whose SST label grew out of a ham radio electronics equipment company when it released the first Black Flag album in 1978. "Punk rock for me is doing wild things, not copying solos off old new wave records. Our longevity has to do with not getting tied up in what's trendy. That's why there is no particular SST sound.

"We deal mostly with new groups whom no one else has heard of, and that's something the larger record companies have problems with. They usually like to sign something that there's already a buzz on. But I run a label to support music I like. I don't think it's particularly a place for someone who's trying to make it big."

Still, Ginn's label has been the launching ground for the likes of Soundgarden, the Meat Puppets, Sonic Youth and Hüsker Dü.

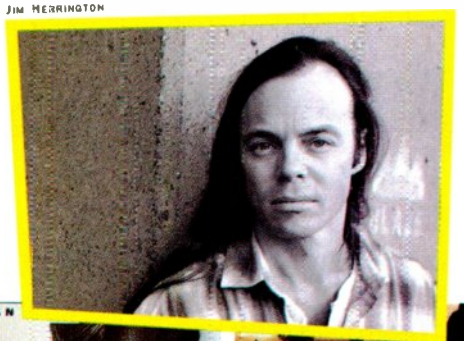
"It's a misconception that all those bands who signed with majors did better than they did here," he insists. "Most have had less sales and less success. I can sell just as many records as a major because I know the market."

MacKaye, whose Dischord label has moved almost a quarter million copies of each Fugazi record, discovered a punk underground of independent labels and fanzines which bound together musicians, artists and philosophers too.

"We're not interested in becoming this massive label," says MacKaye, though Dischord has graduated groups like Shudder To Think and Jawbox to the majors. "It's interesting that we can sell as many records as we do because we don't utilize any of the machinery the majors do. We don't do a lot of press or MTV or take out ads in *Rolling Stone* or *Spin*. For us, it's more about documenting this music. We have no problems with bands leaving us to sign with the majors—we always encourage groups to do what they feel is right for them. But we also encourage them to go through the process of growing as a band by putting out their own record . . . to understand and appreciate what's involved in the process.

"I think if a group gets a label deal too quickly, it upsets that balance which is necessary for growth. Putting out a record is easy. Once you demystify it and realize it's just a matter of goods and services, it's pretty straightforward."

Nashville-based singer/songwriter Kieran Kane uses the same word—"demystify"—to describe what he and fellow new country performers Kevin Welch, drummer/producer Harry Stinson, fiddler Tammy Rogers and slide guitarist Mike Henderson are up to with

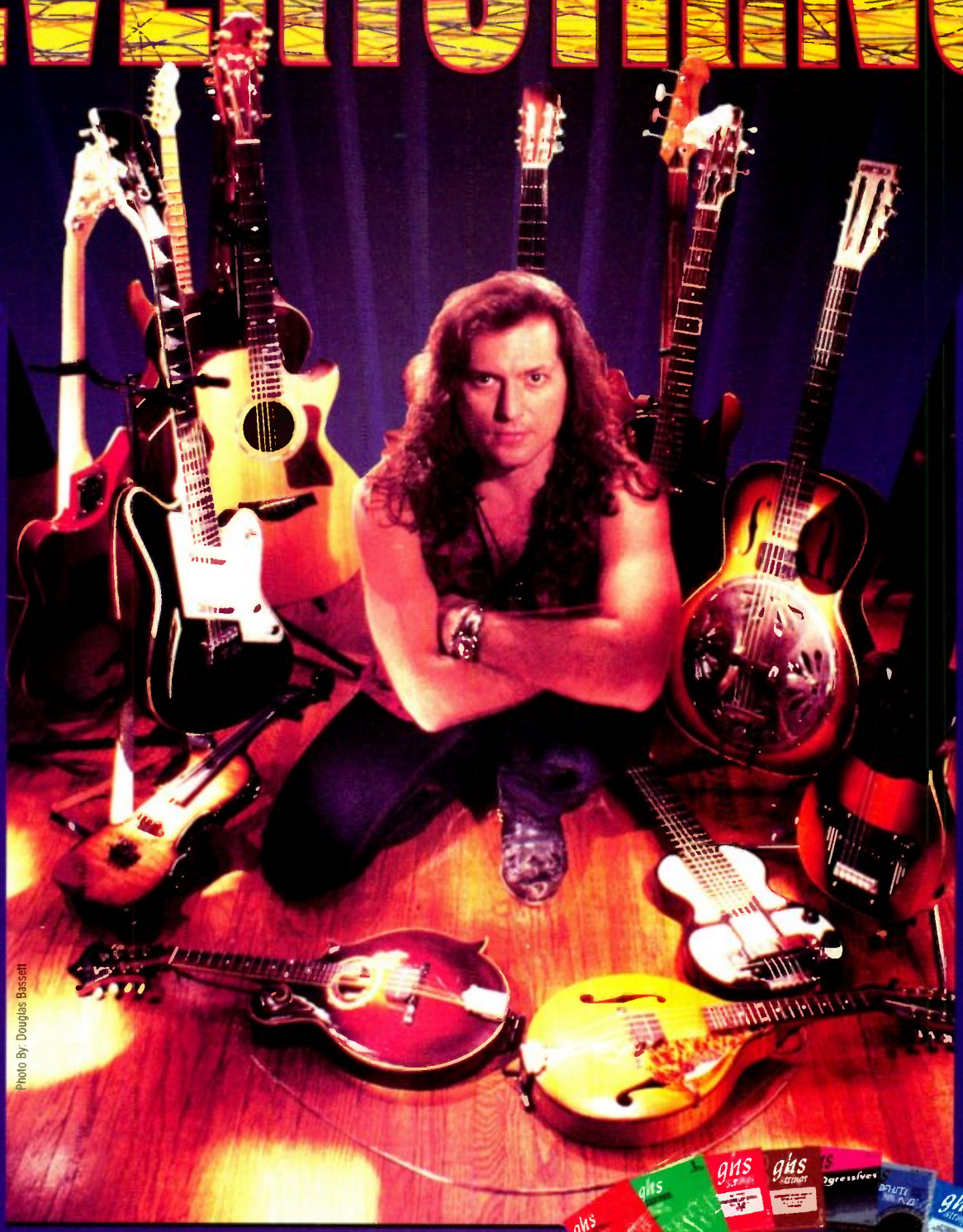


Kevin Welch: "Labels are bureaucracies; you can get bogged down by all the layers."

how to start your own record label

1. **Get international distribution. Mike Manieri began NYC Records with advances from Germany and Japan.**
2. **Hire family members. Carla Bley's WATT Records employs her "live-in lover" and daughter, while David Grisman's wife Pam runs publicity for his own Acoustic Disc.**
3. **Get an Internet Web site. Grisman has set up a Dawgnet site on the 'Net at http://www.sfm.com/dawgnet. Manieri's is nyc@jazzonln.com. SST's Ginn is moving his syndicated radio program, Screw Radio, to the Internet.**
4. **Target a niche market. Every artist-owned label has a particular audience, whether it's punk (SST, Dischord), post-feminist folk (Righteous Babe), mandolin music (Acoustic Disc) or even Hawaiian slack-key guitar (George Winston's Dancing Cat label).**
5. **Compile a comprehensive mailing list. Grisman's Acoustic Disc list has increased from 4000 to 18,000, while Manieri uses 800 numbers.**
6. **Pick a catchy name and an identifiable logo that relates to your music. Acoustic Disc, Dischord and Righteous Babe capture a vision.**
7. **Play the indie card. Support your independent distributors and local mom-and-pop stores.**
8. **You don't have to be a control freak. Delegate responsibility, but know what everybody's doing, because if you're a small label, everybody's doing everything.**
9. **Disdain major label interest. The more you play hard to get, the more fervently they'll want you.**
10. **Follow your muse wherever it leads. The further off the beaten path you go, the more likely you are to attract attention.**

EVERYSTRING



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Ian MacKaye, founder of Fugazi and Dischord Records: "Putting out a record is easy."

their recently formed Dead Reckoning Records. Their collective is at once a record company, a band and a group of solo artists who make up the label's roster, with office in Kane's Nashville home as well as in London and Dublin.

Most had major label experience as country artists, only to butt up against Nashville's mainstream mentality, which tends not to favor country styles incorporating British art-pop, western swing, folk-rock and bluegrass.

"We've tried to break the process down to fundamentals, starting with the recording process and then the business," says Welch, who recorded a pair of albums for Reprise in the early '90s before realizing "they were going to try to get involved on a musical level" for his next release.

"Large labels become like bureaucracies in trying to get things done. You lose all this energy just trying to find out the simplest information. Like, why aren't there records in that store in Boulder where you just played? We're trying to get to that place where you can go out, play music for people and sell them your record without getting bogged down by all these layers of services and support."

Dead Reckoning, like new music composer Carla Bley's WATT label, veteran jazz vibraphonist/producer Mike Manieri's NYC Records and mandolin player/producer David Grisman's Acoustic Disc, deliberately stakes out territory beyond the mainstream parameters of "jazz," "bluegrass" and "country" markets.

"My music was never very commercial," admits Manieri, who founded his NYC Records label three years ago to distribute his music in Europe and has just launched a second company, Exit Nine, for alternative singer/songwriters and bands. "What became apparent to me was that the lower-selling artists at these major labels were not getting an opportunity to have their music manufactured outside the U.S."

Armed with a tape of his longtime jazz fusion group Steps Ahead, which had already recorded for Elektra/Musician, Nippon/Columbia, Arista and Warner Bros., Manieri secured a deal in Germany though his pal Vera Brandes' Intuition label, and another in Japan, to get his label off the ground. NYC has gone on to release records by jazz/country "guitarpist" Philip deGruy and a Beatles tribute featuring guitarists Robben Ford, Michael Hedges, Robert Quine, and Charlie Hunter. Manieri's solo album *An American Diary*,

with jazz arrangements of compositions by Aaron Copland, John Cage and Frank Zappa, typifies hi genre-bending approach.

"I especially enjoy being involved in strange projects, and what major label would be interested in that?" asks Manieri, who has produced George Benson and worked with Paul Simon, Billy Joel, and Bonnie Raitt. "I'm not major-label bashing, but for artists like me, this is the way to go. I'm getting calls from guys who were let go by Blue Note, Verve and GRP. I know what it's like being on a major and not doing the big numbers. It's very difficult to get that phone call , through."

Manieri says he has no problem switching hats from musician to businessman and back. "My life is busy, but organized. There's a purpose behind everything I'm doing. I'm much more focused. It's having control over your destiny. If we have a bad quarter, we don't have someone telling us, 'If you just make that record a little more commercial and get it on the radio, we can really sell some numbers.'"

David Grisman left MCA and started up his Acoustic Disc label in 1990, after 30 years of recording for other companies. His first release, *Garcia/Grisman*, a collaboration with the Grateful Dead guitarist when he'd met in 1964 in the parking lot of a Bill Monroe concert in Pennsylvania and played with in the bluegrass band Old And In the Way, went on to sell 130,000 copies, sending Acoustic Disc off to a running start.

"The label wasn't so much for artists as it was for records," says Grisman. Acoustic Disc has since gone on to release 18 albums, including records by Czech mandolin player Radim Zenkl, Brazilian choro mandolin-player Jacob do Bandolim, the David Grisman Quintet and a collection of Jewish folk music Grisman recorded with Andy Statman.

"I'm into what I call real music," he says. "Music with aesthetic values, rather than just trying to chase last week's hit record. I've got little respect for the music industry. They've by and large ruined American music by putting out garbage. I didn't start this company so I could work my way back into becoming a major label artist. I'm definitely happier now. I'm on my eighteenth record in five years. No record company would let me do that."

As a musician, the 57-year-old Manieri was particularly sensitive to how the financial pie gets cut up. He shares the cost of production with his artists, recouping any advance out of the record's gross profits, rather than through the musician's percentage of royalties, which is standard industry practice.

"There's something inherently creepy about fame, fortune and mass recognition. For anything worthwhile, you have to make sacrifices. Thinking small serves me well." Ani DiFranco, Righteous Babe Records

Also, to alleviate an indie label's biggest headache—cash flow—he has a cash-on-delivery, no-returns program he strictly adheres to.

With the recent death of longtime pal Jerry Garcia, Grisman's label is suddenly in more demand, as his catalog boasts two albums with the Dead guitarist (including a children's record, *Not For Kids Only*) and a series of unreleased tapes from the '73 live Old And In The Way sessions he plans to make available for the first time.

"We did nothing to exploit Jerry's death," says Grisman. "We didn't take out a single ad. In fact, one of our distributors who had just dropped us came crawling back for records and we just said, 'You made your bed, go lie in it.'"

For many of these musicians/businessmen, starting their own labels has been a literal family affair. Carla Bley established WATT in 1974 with then-husband Michael Mantler after the demise of the New Music Distribution Service, which was originally launched to release music from the Jazz Composers' Orchestra label that put out Bley's groundbreaking jazz opera *Elevator Over the Hill*. The WATT and new XtraWATT labels—now distributed by ECM through BMG—have since become home to Bley's work, as well as the music of "live-in lover" bassist Steve Swallow, her daughter Karen Mantler and Mantler's ex-boyfriend, keyboardist Steven Weisberg.

"Family is sort of a sloppy word because I certainly don't have any kind of normal family," says Bley. "But that's what we say when anyone asks if we want to hear their tape. We say, this is a family label. We do ourselves. You do yourself. That's why we started our own label, because we couldn't get a deal anyplace else."

Bley realizes her music's not for everybody. "I would say every town has perhaps one person who would find my music important to them," she says. "I wouldn't feel comfortable if 50,000 people in that same town did. I'd wonder what I was doing wrong. It's definitely elitist—and that's not a bad word. The music's written exactly how I want to write it. For a very small, cooler audience who like it."

For politically motivated indies like Ginn's SST, MacKaye's Dischord and DiFranco's Righteous Babe, the quality of their following is more important than the quantity. "As a band, we've taken the stance that our music isn't oxygen," explains MacKaye. "It's not necessary for everyone to have it. Those people who take the time to search it out, that's the kind of people I'm interested in playing to. Punk rock was made on independent distribution and mom-and-pop stores. Those are the people who've gotten destroyed by all these bands signing with major labels."

For DiFranco, there's another issue at stake. "This isn't just about me," says the singer, whose sexually ambiguous songs have made her a favorite of what she describes as the "queer community," though she says she hates marketing niches. "It's about capitalism and how the forces of big business run counter to the interests of art and people. I think that's a bad thing."

Observes Bley, who has long been on the fringe of the pop music world, "It must be terrifying to be signed to a label like Columbia and lose your deal. That's something which could never happen to me. Unless I fire myself. But being on my own label isn't a philosophy. It's a good system. It works for me very well. If something's not broken, why fix it?"

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SOUNDS LIKE GARBAGE

BUTCH VIG AND CO. TAKE POP TO THE NEXT LEVEL

BY JIM BERKENSTADT

PHOTOS BY BRAD MILLER

Shirley Manson, Duke Erikson, Steve Marker and Butch Vig—the group collectively known as Garbage—are assembled in the second-floor lounge of Madison, Wisconsin's Smart Studios to talk about their new album and upcoming U.S. tour. Vig is in a jovial mood, laughing as he recalls the day when Nirvana's *Nevermind*—the epochal recording that established him as a top producer—knocked Michael Jackson out of the top spot on the *Billboard* charts. "The funny thing is," says Vig, "a lot of labels and managers started calling me up after that, wanting me to make *their* artist sound grungy. They thought I had some trick that I could take someone, like their blues band or even a polka band, and make them into whatever 'alternative' is." Even the U.K. press dubbed him "grunge's king knob twiddler."

However, the man who crafted perhaps the decade's strongest rock record modestly deflects credit for inventing the grunge soundscape that pervades today's music. Vig defers to the Beatles for this unique creation. "*Nevermind* was just starting to take off," says Vig. "I was talking about this whole grunge thing with a friend in L.A. when 'Helter Skelter' came on the jukebox. I said: 'Here's the first grunge song, listen to it!' It sounded just awesome. You know, the guitar and McCartney's voice. So it wasn't really anything new. I didn't invent grunge. And Seattle didn't invent it, either."

Vig may not have created the grunge epidemic, but his work with Smashing Pumpkins, Sonic Youth, L7 and others has played a huge role in spreading it across the pop culture terrain. But now, having recently finished production of Soul Asylum's latest album, *Let Your Dim Light Shine*, Vig has set his sights on forging another direction in music. Merging Manson's dark, edgy vocals with swirling guitars, computer noises and ear-catching samples of rhythmic cool, Garbage has concocted a strikingly organic product. It's pop music all right, but pop music kicked by a chaos of colliding counter-melodies, grooves and serious skronk. What began as a radical remixing process by three old friends has turned into one of the most thrilling debut albums of the year.

Formed in late 1993, Garbage is the collaborative effort of veteran Scottish singer/guitarist Manson and three producers: Vig (on drums, loops and sound processing), guitarist/keyboardist Erikson and noise and sample maker/guitarist Marker. The band has spent the early summer mixing their self-titled album at Vig's own studio, Smart—in the same room where Kurt Cobain once sang the hauntingly beautiful "Polly."

Butch describes Garbage's evolution, which began during session work for Nine Inch Nails, U2 and House of Pain. "It all came about while listening to our remix work and saying, 'This shit sounds like

garbage.' I worked with Duke and Steve on a lot of remixes where we would take songs, erase things, record lots of loops and do additional production. I realized, having worked with Duke in bands, and Steve in the studio, that I really enjoyed being with those guys. So we decided to put a band together." The production/remix trio of Vig, Marker and Erikson developed a sound that mixed rhythmic pop hooks with strange noises, a dichotomy of sound that grew out of Vig's production work with groups such as Nirvana, the Pumpkins and Sonic Youth. Marker explains, "We were aiming for a trashy, low-fi guitar sound, and then applied natural selection to noisy chaos."

Smart Studios held an infinite number of sonic possibilities for these three producers, who had always harbored the idea of making an album solely on their own terms. Vig and Erikson had been in two bands, Spooner and Fire Town, before Vig's production involvement with Nirvana. Both bands were long on potential and short on breaks. Marker, who had played with a number of local Madison bands, had never gotten to record his own work. Instead, he too became a producer, engineer and mixer. Vig, Erikson and Marker went through a laborious process of digital trial and error, analogous to finding the escape route off the virtual island in the CD-ROM game Myst. The missing piece of the puzzle appeared unexpectedly when the three observed their future lead singer performing a song on MTV one night. They called to see if she was available, and she came over for a visit that has yet to end.

"When we met Shirley," says Butch, "we loved her voice and her attitude. So we decided that we wanted her to do the vocals for Garbage. The record evolved from being kind of noisy and industrial into a collection of dark pop songs."

The lyrical tales of emotional extremes such as vengeance, hate, misery and obsession began to seep into the music upon Shirley's arrival. "Before then," says Steve, "all the words were like, 'My bitchin' Camaro....'" Adds Duke, "We weren't really a band until Shirley joined up. As we worked together, it became more of a four-way process."

"Garbage evolved fr
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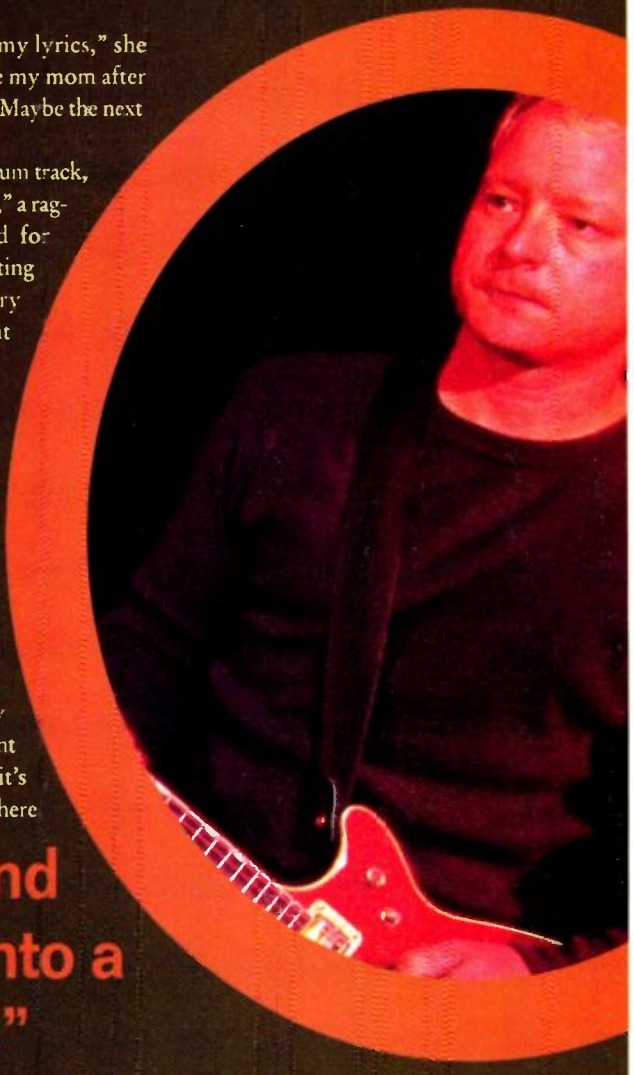
Shirley Manson, formerly of Angelfish and Goodbye Mr. Mackenzie, wouldn't have it any other way. "I didn't want to be just a session singer," she says, "and I made that clear early on." As you may suspect, Shirley is by no means the shy and retiring type. The group's debut single "Vow" features a scathing lyrical attack on an unsuspecting former paramour. Manson's lines could have easily been written by Charlie Manson (no relation): "I'd like to cut you up/I came to knock you down/I came around to tear your little world apart... Break your soul apart." Relaxing on the deck at Smart, watching the sun cast its long shadow across Wisconsin's state capitol, a smiling Shirley wants us to rest easy. "There's

more than a little acting in my lyrics," she says. "I even had to reassure my mom after she heard some of the tracks. Maybe the next album will be more jolly."

Shirley previews a new album track, "Only Happy When It Rains," a raging hooky rocker destined for heavy airplay with the repeating chorus, "Pour your misery down on me." Asked about the glaring contrast between her happy persona and the depressing lyrics, she explains, "It was tough at first coming to the U.S. to work with three guys I didn't know, who had all been friends with each other for years. And my previous experience with producers wasn't the best—I was afraid they'd be snorting coke every two seconds and wearing tight leather trousers. But now, it's like coming home when I'm here



m being a kind trial record into a k pop songs."

These guys are my brothers."

Not wanting to follow any preconceived formulas, the new band spent the better part of a year searching for the right sound. The ideas came from all four members during extended jams, discussions, sampling of loops and grooves, and drinking cheap beer at their favorite cafe.

Vig steps over to the DAT machine and pops in a new track. "This one's called 'As Heaven Is Wide,'" he says. "We used a double-tracked fuzz bass on it." As the pulsing rapid-fire dance track kicks in, Butch divulges his formula for crafting the unconventional sounds heard on the new album. "We would start with a sound effect or drum loop. Then we put on guitars and more sound effects and grooves. And then you start adding and subtracting, trying different melodies, placing vocals in and out. And," he concludes, "through a slow evolution, it somehow becomes a song."

Marker recalls how the eerie, ambient sound heard on "A Stroke of Luck" was accidentally discovered. "Somebody had been in the studio the night before and had hooked up something in a bizarre way and grounded it in the wrong place." Butch adds, "I think the air conditioner was wired into the mixing board." Steve continues, "It was creating this spooky, god-awful sound. So of course, we taped it right away. Then we ran the tape backwards, flipped it over and recorded *it* backwards. The sound created this mood we were able to carry throughout the whole song." Steve pauses after playing the track and offers an insight into the group's creative process: "Inspiration comes from weird places sometimes."

As Vig exits for dinner, he asks Duke to sample some harmonies onto an almost complete mix of the song "Queer"—a dark, groove-laden pop track that will serve as a follow-up single. At the song's vocal break, a *Revolver*-esque backward sample fills the void before Shirley's haunting ad libs draw the listener back into the melody. Listening to this track, it's difficult to purge thoughts of what John Lennon's music might have sounded like today. Duke confirms this impression: "There is a nod to the Fabs on some tracks, and of

garbage gear

STEVE MARKER's favorite guitar is a 1963 Gretsch Fire Jet. It's the only one he owns that stays in tune long enough to use on tour. "My guitars are all stuff a pawn shop would pass on," he says. "That's basically the only guitar I used on the album."

DUKE ERIKSON's weapon of choice on the album was a 1965 Gibson ES-335, which he'll take on tour. "We ran it through an old Fender Bassman that [Smart's] Doug Olson hot wired. It produced the most glorious feedback." Also in Duke's arsenal is a '66 Fender Jaguar, a Jerry Jones 6-string bass, a Fender Precision Bass and numerous pedals—including an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff—that were modified and strung together in different configurations. Both guitarists strum D'Addario strings.

SHIRLEY MANSON is still deciding whether to bring her prized Rickenbacker over from Edinburgh. "Up until recently, I've never thought to take it on the road because I couldn't afford the insurance," she confides. "It's the John Lennon model." Shirley's vocals on *Garbage* were caught by a 1957 Telefunken Elam 250, formerly used at RCA. "We like to *believe* that the microphone was previously used by Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley," says Butch with a smile.

BUTCH VIG used three different drum kits on the album: a 1963 Ludwig Beatles-style, a Drum Workshop kit and a Yamaha. Cymbals were mainly Zildjians. He probably will take the DW set on tour and primarily will use Pro-Mark sticks. "I'll also take the Yamaha snare on tour," he says. "That's the one we used on both Smashing Pumpkins albums, *Gish* and *Siamese Dream*." If that's not enough, Butch will take a Tech 21 SansAmp for processing drums and percussion.

Much of the album was recorded and all of it was mixed on a 1974 Harrison board that still bears the Osmond Family's (remember Donny and Marie?) studio sticker on the back. Steve explains, "It's totally out of date and sounds great. It was heavily modified by [Smart Studio electronics whiz and producer] Brian Anderson." The group also used an Akai S-1000 sampler and a 1980s Macintosh with no memory, running Mark of the Unicorn's Performer, for sequencing.

Lest we forget the air conditioner recorded on "A Stroke of Luck," Smart Studios manager Kelsy Boyd expertly informs us that the model is a Trane BSDS-2000.

course, Shirley is a big fan of John." However, the members of Garbage freely admit to drawing from a number of other influences—Captain Beefheart, Roxy Music, U2 and Nine Inch Nails, to name a few.

Several weeks later, the Garbage debut is released on the Almo Sounds label, distributed by Geffen; not surprisingly, Lennon's name pops up on the list of thank-yous. As steady MTV and radio rotation begins to churn on "Vow" and "Queer," the inevitable question arises of turning this post-grunge studio creation into a live touring unit. Garbage has had little time to prepare for the tour, given recent promotional jaunts to Europe, Australia (where "Vow" and "Queer" have reached Numbers 1 and 3 respectively on the alternative charts) and the U.K. for an appearance on *Top of the Pops*. "We never expected anything like this," Steve says. "We hadn't planned to put 'Vow' out as a single originally. We were even considering not putting it on the record. This buzz just developed on its own."

Given only a few weeks to turn layers of experimental sounds and samples into a living, breathing rock band, the "Low-Fi Foursome"

have begun rehearsals at a secret warehouse location on Madison's south side. Duke explains how the band first reached their decision to tour. "It happened when we were in L.A. shooting the video for 'Vow.' It was a 12-hour performance shoot. We set up amps and actually played our guitars. Butch was pounding away and Shirley had a live mike. After the first run-through, we all looked at each other and said, 'This feels really good.'" It was the first time that the four members of Garbage had played together in one room.

Shirley's busy schedule bounces her from Smart to the Edgewater Hotel and finally over to rehearsal. Just another crazy day of meetings, interviews and band details. Despite the long days of preparation ahead, her excitement for the upcoming tour is contagious. Aside from the obvious choice of songs from the group's only album, Shirley discloses Garbage's plan to play all of its B-sides from the U.K. singles as well as new tracks, including the unreleased "Trip My Wire." "We're also knocking up some covers after we finish the serious rehearsals," she says. "So we can entertain ourselves on tour."

Garbage's debut tour will carry them across the U.S. over three weeks' time before crossing the big pond to invade Europe for ten days prior to Christmas. The band has yet to figure out all technical aspects of the live translation. Butch returns from his fitting for stage earplugs and calculates some of the sonic details over a beer. "We're going to add a bass player, so Duke and Steve are free to play guitar. We may get a keyboard player to handle a few simple parts," he says. "I'll play drums over some loops and processed stuff. Basically, we need to strip it down and try to keep it more raw and visceral, without having to rely on layers and layers."

Steve admits the difficulty of trying to balance the complex album sound with a unique live approach. "We are not looking to be a cover band of our own material," he says. "We're trying to find these sounds again, some of which were quite obscure when we developed them." Duke adds, "We want to be able to keep it spontaneous and not be slaves to the technology." The others concur and head back to the rehearsal. The four music veterans appear relaxed and focused as they get back to the job at hand.

Jim Berkenstadt is co-author of the book Black Market Beatles, *published by C.G. Publishing Co., 1995.*

Dev Sherlock also contributed to this story.

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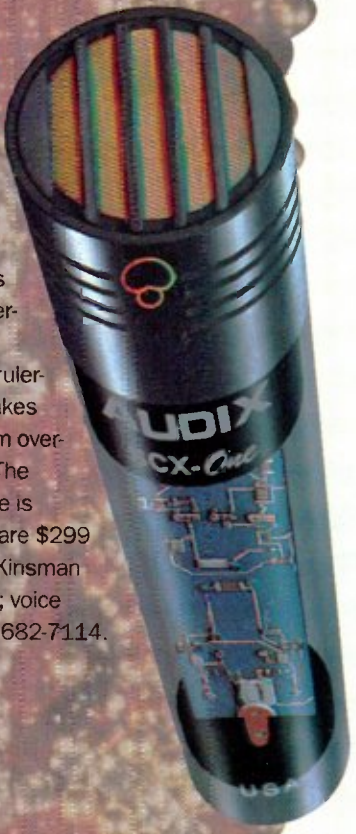

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GUITARS & BASSES

Schecter's PT-X guitars are made from a two-piece Honduras mahogany body instead of the more traditional alder for a warmer, fuller sound. The PT-X comes standard with sleek waist and elbow contours, two SuperRock humbuckers and a range of options including choice of transparent or solid lacquer finishes, contoured binding, and Floyd Rose locking tremolo system. *Schecter, 6920 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038; voice (213) 851-5230, fax (213) 851-9409.*

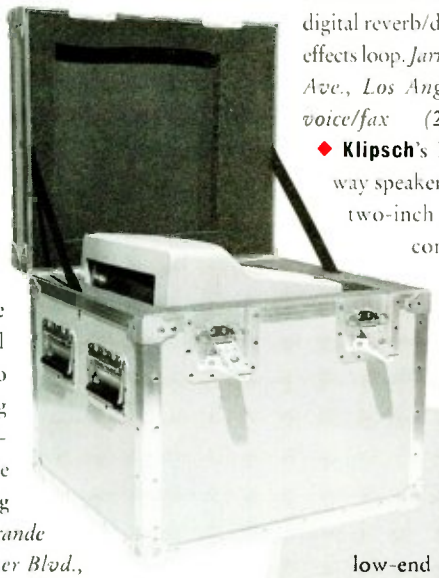
◆ The Barbeque Bucker from **Rio Grande** is a '50s-style humbucking pickup specially recommended for the bridge position of a Les Paul or a PRS. Ol' Buck fits into any standard humbucking mounting ring with no modifications required. Adjustable polepieces allow for fine tuning of each string's output. *Rio Grande Pickups, 3526 East T.C. Jester Blvd., Houston, TX 77018; voice (713) 957-0470, fax (713) 957-3316.*

KEYBOARDS & MIDI

The latest from **Kurzweil**: Two sampling synthesizers, the K2500 and K2500X. The K2500 features a 76-note semi-weighted piano-style keyboard and the K2500X features an 88-note fully weighted piano-action keyboard. Both instruments offer controller functions expanded from those of Kurzweil's PC88 Performance Controller. Two programmable ribbon controllers respond to pressure, direction and changes in finger position. The K2500 boasts an 8MB onboard soundset with 200 programs and 100 setups, including all-new drumsets. Disk storage consists of a single 1.44MB 3.5" drive. *Kurzweil, 13336 Alondra Blvd., CA 90703; voice (310) 926-3200, fax (310) 404-0748.*

AMPS & SPEAKERS

The all-tube Hooker Series of combos and heads from **Jarrod Lee** is available in acoustic and lead guitar formats. The lead guitar head has two footswitchable preamp channels with separate volumes, EQs and master on the overdrive channel. The acoustic head has two separate channels with three-way channel muting capabilities, sensitive enough for a microphone or piezo pickup. A speaker phasing switch reduces resonant feedback without equalization. Available combo configurations are 2x8, 4x8 and 1x12. Both lead and acoustic amps are 35W Class A/90W AB switchable and feature a 128-mode digital reverb/delay with external effects loop. *Jarrod Lee, 2411 Fifth Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90018; voice/fax (213) 733-3796.*



◆ **Klipsch**'s KP-3002-C two-way speaker system features a two-inch titanium dome compression driver coupled to a 60° x 40° horn for smooth, efficient performance. A 15", 300-watt woofer housed in a ported cabinet provides the low-end punch, while the enclosure's trapezoidal design allows it to be used individually or in multiple system arrays for broader coverage. *Klipsch, 149 N. Industrial Park Rd., Hope, AK 71801; voice (501) 777-0693, fax (501) 777-0593.* ◆ **Hughes & Kettner**'s TriAmp all-tube head and combo meticulously duplicates the sounds of original classic amplifiers with the convenience of MIDI switching capabilities. TriAmp incorporates three separate amplifier sections and a switching system which changes the character of the output stage to duplicate those of the amplifiers that it is emulating. Two footswitchable channels per amplifier selection, a cabinet simulator output, reverb, and a variable buffered effects loop are among TriAmp's other features. *Hughes & Kettner, 1848 S. Elmhurst Rd., Mt. Prospect, IL 60056; voice (800) 452-6771, fax (708) 439-6781.*

MIKES & MIXERS

AKG's C947CM and C921CM hanging condenser microphones are designed for high-performance choir, stage and auditorium applications. The C947CM's hypercardioid pickup pattern effectively "spotlights" the desired area with uniform coverage from 20Hz to 18kHz, precisely tapering off at pattern edges for balanced coverage when multiple microphones are required. The supercardioid C921CM offers a frequency response of 60Hz to 20kHz to effectively reproduce the full vocal range, while a signal-to-noise ratio of -67dB/A keeps the background quiet. *AKG, 8500 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA 91329; voice (818) 895-8850, fax (818) 830-1220.* ◆ **Studio Techniques** introduces the Positioner, a device that allows the up-down and left-right orientation of any microphone to be remotely controlled from 300 feet away. The Positioner consists of a motorized unit that easily attaches to a conventional mike stand or boom; the mike connects to the other end of the unit via a threaded mount. A small, battery-powered remote controller connects to the Positioner via a conventional XLR cable. Using the controller, any microphone can be rotated through 350° and tilted through 180°, providing full control of the capsule's orientation. *Studio Techniques, 100 Mill Plain Rd., Danbury, CT 06811; voice (203) 791-3919, fax (203) 791-3918.* ◆ **Fender's** MX-5200 Series mixing consoles are available with 16, 24 or 32 input channels and can be custom configured for nearly any installation. An onboard headphone amplifier is designed to help a mixing engineer hear above the crowd during a gig, or to satisfy any drummer in a home studio. The MX also features a pair of two-band parametric equalizers and sweepable 12 dB/octave high pass and low pass roll-off filters, which can be inserted into any input channel, submaster or master. *Fender, 7975 N. Hayden Rd., Suite C-100, Scottsdale, AZ 85258; voice (602) 596-9690, fax (602) 596-1386.*

SOFTWARE & HARDWARE

OSC's Metro 3 is a high-performance professional MIDI sequencer with true digital audio compatibility. Specifically built to work in tandem with OSC's Deck II digital audio software for the Macintosh, Metro 3 requires only one megabyte of free RAM. Features include groove quantizing, a drum grid display featuring user-definable drum sets and easy drum set transposition, 960 pulses per quarter note variable clock resolution, MIDI tempo mapping, and visual editing of controller data. *OSC, 480 Potrero Ave., San Francisco, CA 94110; voice (415) 252-*

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PASSPORT

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Photo by Joanne Cortes

0460, fax (415) 252-0560. ◆ Until now, musicians and multimedia producers have had no easy way to integrate MIDI and digital audio in Windows. That's changed with the introduction of **Cakewalk**'s Pro Audio, the first professional MIDI and digital audio recording system for multimedia PCs. The new Pro Audio edition allows users to record, edit and play back multiple tracks of synchronized MIDI and digital audio from within one program. This makes it possible to incorporate vocals, guitars, horns or any other audio input into a multi-track MIDI sequence. Cakewalk Pro Audio's digital recording and playback works with many popular Windows-compatible sound cards as well as Digidesign's Session 8 hard-disk recording system for PCs. *Cakewalk, P.O. Box 760, Watertown, MA 02272; voice (800) 234-1171, fax (617) 924-6657.*

SIGNAL PROCESSORS

DigiTech's single-rack-space MV-5 MIDI Vocalist is designed for keyboard players and MIDI enthusiasts who want instant vocal harmonies without programming. The MV-5 automatically creates up to five-part harmony from one voice input. Detuning provides instant four-voice thickening of vocal lines, while Vocoder harmonies allow the musician to play the exact vocal harmonies desired on the keyboard. *DigiTech, 8760 S. Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT 84070; voice (801) 566-8800, fax (801) 566-7005.*

RECORDING & PLAYBACK

The XR-3 four-track cassette recorder from **Fostex** was designed as a portable sketchpad for musicians and composers. A built-in microphone and auto track bounce feature allow musicians to use the XR-3 to record their ideas quickly, without having to spend time adjusting knobs and switches to set up their gear. *Fostex, 15431 Blackburn Ave., Norwalk, CA 90650; voice (310) 921-1112, fax (310) 802-1964.* ◆ **Otari**'s DTR-8 DAT recorder provides enhanced facilities for recording user-entered ID characters, allowing you to record and subsequently erase up to 60 characters at the beginning of each track. Various subcode time information (start ID, end ID, skip ID) can also be written and erased. *Otari, 378 Vintage Park Dr., Foster City, CA 94404; voice (415) 341-5900, fax (415) 341-7200.*

DRUMS & PERCUSSION

Drum Workshop's 100SP Balancer can be positioned on any 1/4" bass drum beater shaft and is adjustable vertically, horizontally, eccentrically and laterally for a variety of custom pedal feels. The standard weight included with the Balancer allows drummers to subtly change the balance of their bass drum pedals to fit their personal style, adding or subtracting power at a turn of the drum key-controlled weight adjustment. *Drum Workshop, 101 Bernoulli Cir., Oxnard, CA; voice (805) 485-6999, fax (805) 485-1334.*

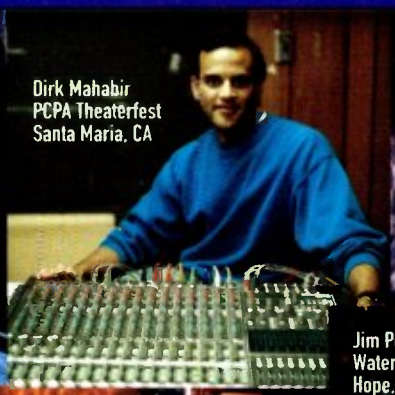
ACCESSORIES

Pro-Mark's Ringo Starr Autograph Series drumsticks are made of premium grade American hickory, with a wood tip. The Ringos are a long 5A, measuring 16 1/2" in length and 9/16" in diameter. *Pro-Mark, 10707 Craighead Dr., Houston, TX 77025; voice (713) 666-2525, fax (713) 669-8000.* ◆ The **Anvil** ArmorLite transit case is composed of a low-density extruded polyethylene core with two aluminum skins. Built with Nielsen/Sessions DuraLite hardware, ArmorLite offers the same durability as Anvil's original A.T.A. case, but is an average of 30 percent lighter. *Anvil Cases, 15650 Salt Lake Ave., City of Industry, CA 91745; voice (818) 968-4100, fax (818) 968-1703.*

THEY SHOWED US THEIR MACKIE MIXER

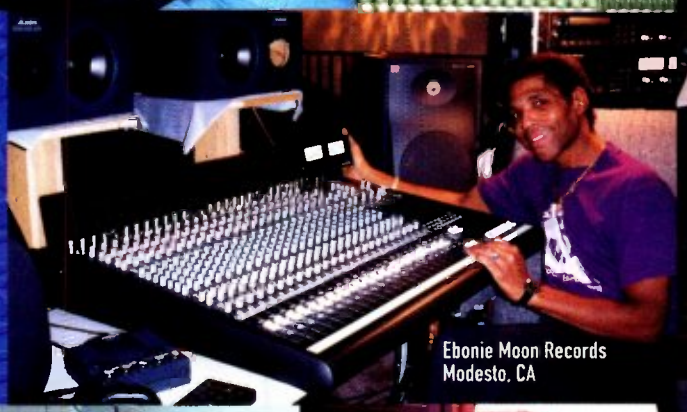
This is a tiny fraction of the mailbags of photos we've received from Mackie mixer owner's lately. All we did was place an eeny weeny ad that read "Show Us Your Mackie" in the back of a few magazines. The response was incredible. 1000's of snap shots of Mackie owners from around the world. Call us toll-free 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.

Bing Wang
Monterey Park, CA



Dirk Mahabir
PCPA Theaterfest
Santa Maria, CA

Doug Deden, Omaha, NE



Ebonie Moon Records
Modesto, CA

Jim Perry,
Watermelon Wasteland Studio,
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Randy Mason
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Desirée Tallman
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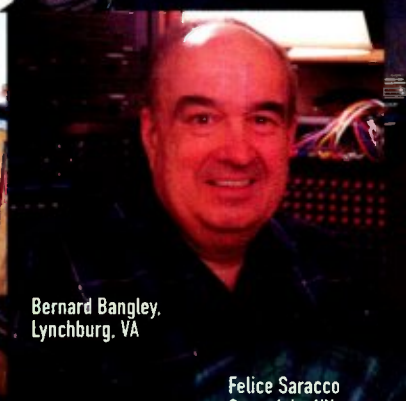

Bernard Bangley,
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Rodney Amos
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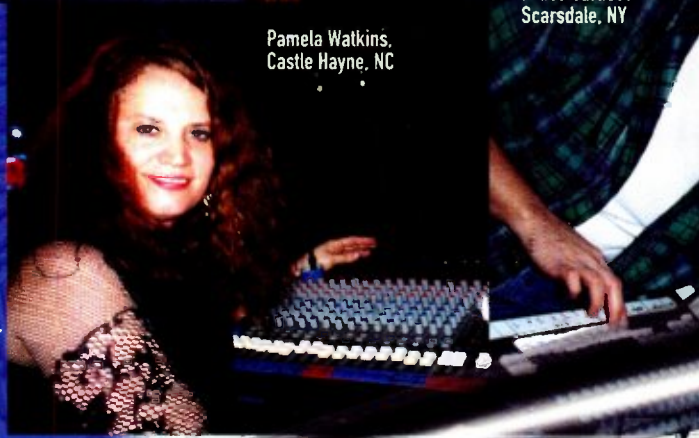

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PACK IT UP

Travel guitars are musically liberating. They also fit nicely in the overhead compartment.

BY E.D. MENASCHÉ

THE GUITAR IS the most adaptable creature in the great Western musical landscape. No instrument can be so easily mutated into so many sub-species while retaining its fundamental character and personality. Compact "travel" guitars are a case in point: axes built for easy packing can turn the compromises inherent in reduced size into new creative currency, offering something unique in tone and playing surface.

Martin claims that its mini acoustic guitar, the Backpacker ($225), has been taken to some godforsaken locations, both on the planet (Mt. Everest) and off (via space shuttle). This compact, sawed-off shotgun of an instrument certainly looks exotic enough to suit an astronaut. But it also fits well in more traditional spots: home, office, even the recording studio. It comes in both nylon and steel-string versions; we tested the steel.

The Backpacker has several things going for it: it's light (2 pounds, 2 ounces), easy to play, and it's got an offbeat tone. With its twangy high end and shallow, thunky lows, it sounds like a cross between guitar and banjo. The spruce top vibrates freely, allowing overtones to build. High notes project sharply, and low notes cut, but, as you might expect, have very little true bottom end. For an extra $125, you can rig your Backpacker with a piezo pickup; plugging in adds harmonic balance, filling out the low end and giving the little box a frequency content more akin to a conventional guitar's. (At a recent recording session, engineer Bill Philbrick came up with a cool technique: he threw a couple of ribbon microphones on the Backpacker's body and plugged its pickup into a guitar amp, which was left unmiked. The amp provided some low end, which the mikes read from a distance for a big but plunky sound.) If you play the Backpacker too hard, especially with a pick, the tone can get strident. A varied fingerstyle attack yields the most satisfying results.

Strapped on, the Backpacker is exceptionally comfortable to play, especially worn up high, where the diminished body size allows extraordinary access to the fretboard (made from either padauk, morado or rosewood). Because the neck is so smooth and the scale is nearly full-size at 24", the Backpacker is easy to adapt to. There are only 15 frets, but considering the guitar's raison d'être, that's an acceptable trade-off. A couple of things to be aware of: your picking hand can quickly become fatigued in certain playing positions, and the guitar is almost impossible to play while seated without a strap. Neither caveat takes away from the Backpacker's almost irresistible allure: if the guitar's visible, it gets picked up and played, no matter what one is supposed to be doing. Sure, it's built for the trail, but it's in the jungle surrounding your desk that you might appreciate it most.

Above: the Erlewine Chiquita; center: Fernandes' Pie-ZO EX bass

Above: Martin's Backpacker, somewhere other than Everest

The Erlewine Chiquita ($565, $680 with case) was developed in 1979 by Mark Erlewine and Billy Gibbons to meet the FAA standards for carry-on luggage. At 27 inches, the 4.25-pound solidbody is a hair longer than a mandolin, small enough to fit in an airplane's overhead baggage compartment. Unlike the Martin, the Chiquita alters the guitar's conventional playing field by cramming 22 frets into a very small 19" scale. (In comparison, standard scale on a Strat is 25 1/4".) Because of that, playing the Chiquita requires some adjustments.

Although the diminutive scale makes fingering 1st-position barre chords a tight proposition, it also allows for outrageous chord voicings and wide double stops that simply aren't possible on a full-sized axe. What's more, string bends, even with the factory-supplied .013-gauge strings, cover enormous territory. From the 8th fret on the B string (G), I was able to bend all the way up to C (a major 4th) with no trouble. If you're into imitating pedal steel, the Chiquita's wide bending range could be your path to nirvana. Of course, simple half and full-step bends take extra precision because there's little margin for error.

Small scale and pudgy strings also contribute to the Chiquita's

fat, round tone, especially when it's driving a tube amp to distortion. The Gotoh humbucking pickup sounds best with the volume up full and the amp overdriven. Clean, the Chiquita is fine and mellow; predictably, top end lacks in comparison with a larger guitar.

Clearly, portability is only one of the Chiquita's attractive qualities. It looks great and is well-made, with a beautifully finished mahogany neck-thru body, bound rosewood fretboard and adjustable Schaller bridge. It delivers a uniquely big tone and, perhaps more importantly, its small scale provides a platform for real experimentation.

With the ZO-3 guitar and Pie-ZO EX bass, Fernandes takes portability a step further. Remember those old Silvertones with an amp built into the case? Well, the ZO-3 and Pie-ZO EX actually stick a battery-powered amp and speaker inside the body of the instrument. In addition to making the Fernandes duo potent beach warriors, the inclusion of an amplified sound source *under* the strings yields intriguing tonal possibilities. You're not restricted to the squawk of the internal amp; there's also a 1/4" output for connection to an external unit. On both instruments, the internal amplifier is independent of this output, so you can switch it on (with a mini-toggle mounted next to the volume control) while the Fernandes feeds your external amp at the same time. Did anyone say feedback?

The ZO-3 is compact without being miniature: 5 pounds, about 34" from tuning key to toe, with a full 24 3/4" (Les Paul-sized) scale, 12" fretboard radius, and 21 frets. The instrument's funny "Map of the USA" shape makes it easy to hold in a sitting position without a strap (your thigh should fit neatly into the space reserved for the Gulf of Mexico). The ZO-3 is also well assembled for its $299 list price: fretwork is clean, the four-bolt neck is snugly attached. And thanks to the fully adjustable bridge, intonation is correct all the way up the neck.

At low volume, the internal five-watt amp is clean, dishing out a papery twang. You can overdrive it into harsh but not unpleasant rip by maxing out the single humbucking pickup's volume (there is no tone control). Feeding an external amp, the range of good sounds shrinks. The pickup sounds best with the volume up high; rolling it back too far robs high end, which is the strongest part of its personality.

The Pie-ZO EX bass ($599) is a little bigger than the guitar (35"), but relative to conventional bass dimensions, it's much more compact. The 25 1/4" scale neck is 1 11/16" wide at the nut and has a 14" fretboard radius, so the Pie-ZO plays more like a guitar with really heavy strings than a full-sized bass. This might make it attractive to beginners and [*cont'd on page 77*]

◆ **Erlewine**, 4402 Burnet Rd., Austin, TX 78756; voice (512) 302-1225; fax (512) 371-1655. ◆ **Fernandes**, 16123 Valerio St., Van Nuys, CA 91406; voice (818) 988-6790, fax (818) 988-3094. ◆ **Martin**, 510 Sycamore St., Nazareth, PA 18064; voice (610) 759-2837, fax (610) 759-5757.

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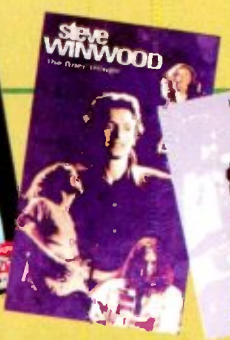

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BEATERMANIA

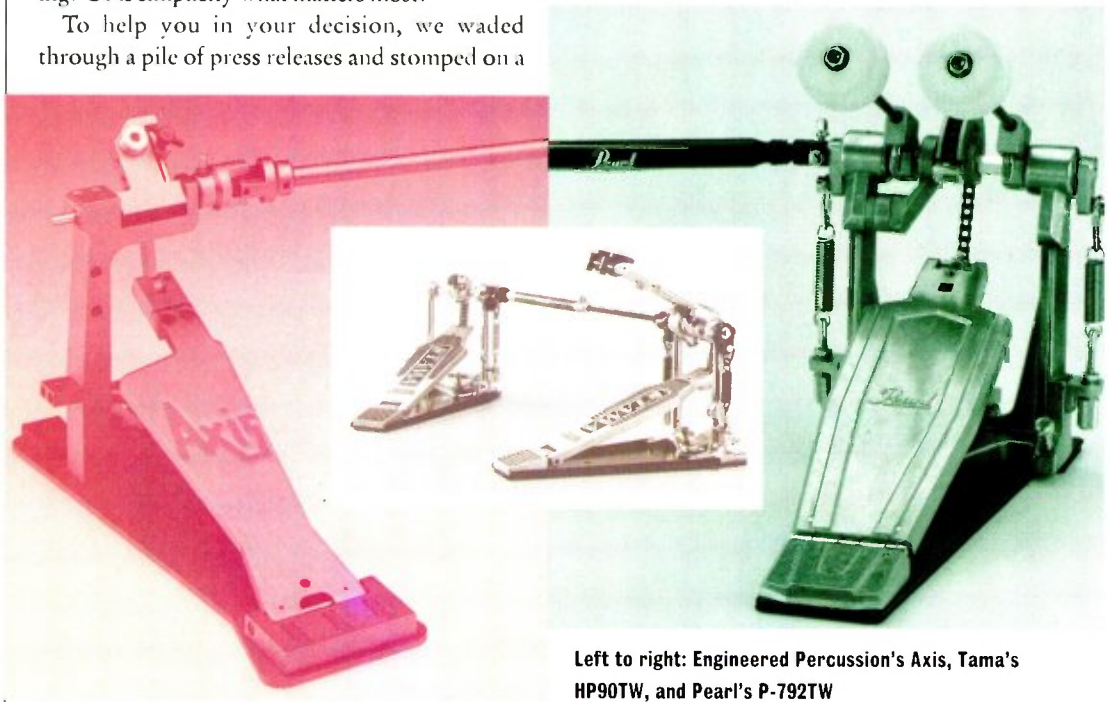
Double bass drum pedals make heavy grooves, but they aren't just for metal Teutons anymore.

BY ANDY DOERSCHUK

BACK IN 1950, inventor Otto R. Christian applied for U.S. Patent #2,581,515, covering a complicated contraption that would allow drummers to play a single bass drum with both feet. Sadly, though, the design was flawed; the secondary pedal activated the hi-hat and bass drum at the same time. The drumming world of the day paid little attention.

How times have changed. Now every major drum company has at least one double-bass pedal in its catalog. Many fusion and hard rock drummers would rather switch to bassoon than be without one. Of course, the technology has improved since 1950—chain drives, pedal plates and ball-bearing axles have become standard fare. But some of today's models offer an unwieldy number of options and add-ons, pushing prices into the realm of the unwell. If you're a first-time shopper, stop before plunking down any cash and ask yourself these questions: Do I really need a beater-shaft weight? Will ball-bearing rockers or toe-stops improve my pedaling? Or is simplicity what matters most?

To help you in your decision, we waded through a pile of press releases and stomped on a bunch of pedals. Results follow.



Left to right: Engineered Percussion's Axis, Tama's HP90TW, and Pearl's P-792TW

Drummers who want to learn double-bass techniques can experiment with inexpensive pedals such as Tama's HP20TW ($299.99) or Gibraltar's 7511DB ($295.50). Both models feature single-chain drives, regular barrel-shaped felt beaters and basic beater-angle or pedal-height adjustments. They also have Y-shaped radius rods that connect the heel plates to the pedal frames. This method of stabilizing the footboard has gone out of fashion to a certain extent, now that sturdy base plates have become an industry standard. Nonetheless, these are still good pedals for a beginner.

DW's Original ($349), Pearl's P-792TW ($335) and Gibraltar's Intruder ($435.50) pack in the most high-end features for the teeniest price tag. Original pedals come with a choice of three drive systems: a circular chain sprocket, a chain drive with an exaggerated profile or a strap system (DW is the only major company to make a strap-drive double pedal). The Original also offers perks like pedal plates, ball-bearing rockers and spring-noise dampers, and is available in a left-handed model. The P-792TW, like all Pearl double pedals, includes a toothless cam chain drive, extensive aluminum construction, beaters that hit equidistant from the center of the head, and axles that are supported by a pair of ball bearings. Gibraltar's Intruder pedals come with a choice of cam or sprocket double-chain drives and a hoop mount that's accessible from the top of the pedal. Beater-shaft weights can be adjusted independently, as can the beater hub and pedalboard. Unfortunately, it's only available in a right-handed model. Lefties may want to check out Gibraltar's sleek Avenger double pedal ($415.50), which has a few less doodads than the Intruder.

The higher your price range goes, the more performance options you get. In costlier pedals, you'll also notice an increased responsiveness between the footboard and the beater. The folks at Engineered Percussion have dubbed this the "waggle factor." Their double pedal, The Axis II ($659), was introduced in the early '90s to wide acclaim due to its slick sci-fi appearance and super-sensitivity. It's made waggling easier than ever. Axis II pedals come in right- and left-handed models, and are constructed from a structural grade of aircraft aluminum and stainless steel, with components machined from solid stock rather than casting. The pivot points of the linkage, main axle and spring swivel employ double-shielded ball bearings, and the leverage ratio between the footboard and beater stroke is adjustable. The pedals of the Axis II can also be separated and used as two single pedals by moving the beater and spring

assembly from the primary pedal to the secondary one—an awfully cool trick.

About a year ago, Tama introduced the Iron Cobra pedal range, which offers several distinctive features. A hoop clamp keeps the pedal flat on the ground no matter how the bass drum is angled, while a roller-mounted spring post prevents the spring from binding during normal playing. You can adjust the Cobra's beater angle independently from the footboard, and fiddle with its triangular-shaped locking nut to eliminate the tension loss caused by spring slippage. The Iron Cobra HP80TW ($529.99) features the Rolling Glide single-chain drive system with a round cam and comes in right- and left-handed models, while the Iron Cobra HP90TW ($559.99) features the Power Glide double-chain system with an offset cam and is available in only a right-handed version.

Sonor should win a prize for marketing the world's most expensive double pedal. The company's heavy-duty HLZ 5382 Signature Series model ($1,950) offers precise German engineering and loads of features, such as a double-chain drive system, a foot plate with cast-in brass bushing, adjustable conical felt beater with tempered steel shaft, two roller bearings, footboard with metal and vulcanized rubber inserts and a height-adjustable base. It even comes complete with three springs of different tensions—soft, medium or hard. But at almost two grand, how much better can it be than the rest of the pack?

If the pedals we've already mentioned don't suit your taste, you could also check out several solid models from Yamaha, which use the same chain as high-end Yamaha motorcycles and can be assembled with one key bolt on either side. Premier's double pedals have dual-chain drives with a round radius action. And there are even more high-, mid- and low-range models from Ludwig, Tama, DW, Pearl and Sonor. If none of these meet your criteria either, you probably weren't meant to play double kick anyway. Go back and study your Bonham licks.

◆ Drum Workshop, 101 Bernoulli Cir., Oxnard, CA 93030; voice (805) 485-6999, fax (805) 485-1334. **◆ Engineered Percussion**, 24416 S. Main St., Ste. 310, Carson, CA 90745; voice (310) 549-1171, fax (310) 549-7208. **◆ Gibraltar**, P.O. Box 507, Bloomfield, CT 06002-0507; voice (203) 243-7941, fax (203) 243-7102. **◆ Ludwig**, P.O. Box 310, Elkhart, IN 46515; voice (219) 522-1675, fax (219) 522-0334. **◆ Pearl**, 549 Metroplex Dr., Nashville, TN 37211; voice (615) 833-4477, fax (615) 833-6242. **◆ Premier**, 1263 Glen Ave., Ste. 250, Moorestown, NJ 08057; voice (609) 231-8825, fax (609) 231-8829. **◆ Sonor**, 10223 Sycamore Dr., Ashland, VA 23005-9998; voice (804) 550-2700, fax (804) 550-2670. **◆ Tama**, 1726 Winchester Rd., Bensalem, PA 19020; voice (215) 638-8670, fax (215) 245-8583. **◆ Yamaha**, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90620; voice (714) 522-9011, fax (714) 522-9832.

TRAVEL GUITARS

[*cont'd from page 74*] people with small hands, as well as guitarists who don't want to adapt to the demanding stretches bass normally requires.

The 10-watt internal amp puts out enough volume to compete with an acoustic guitar, though not much low frequency content. (If you hold the bass against your body, the vibrations will tickle you—ideal for lonely evenings at home.) A tone control would have been appreciated because the bridge-mounted Shadow piezo pickup dishes out *so* much top, even running through an amplifier. At moderate to full internal speaker volume, the Pie-ZO yields almost instant feedback. It takes skill to control, but you can get some super-chunky, endlessly sustaining noises out of the bass without killing your eardrums. Kim Gordon fans, take note.

Both Fernandeses are fun to practice on. Whimsical body shape aside, they're serious enough to make real music with, but compact enough to suit a beginner who might be intimidated by a larger instrument. Like the Backpacker and the Chiquita, they serve a practical purpose for those who need to bring a guitar into inhospitable territory. Yet the thing that stands out most from testing these instruments is how liberating it can be to have a familiar tool transformed into a specialized, unique and useful toy.

"Talent is a tough taskmaster; first of all, you never know whether you've really got any."
—Robert Wyatt, Aug. 1992

Harlan Howard already had five guitars.

But one day he walked into a music
store in Nashville.

I have a problem, he told Richard,
the owner. All my guitars have dried up.

Richard started to talk about how
the low humidity might be the problem.

No, not that, said Harlan. There aren't any
more songs left in them. They're *dry*.

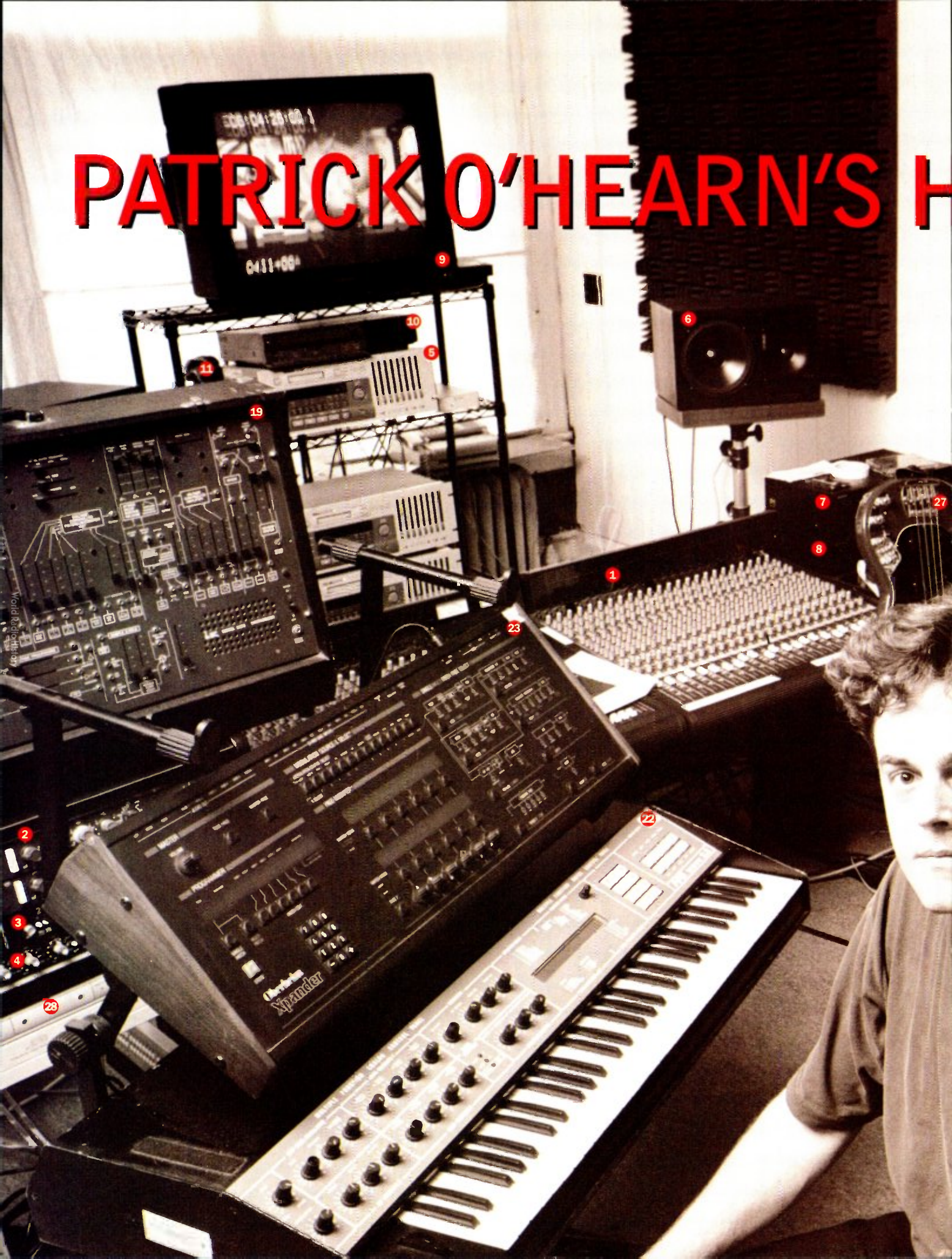
I need a guitar with some fresh songs in it.

A few hours later,
he walked out with a new Taylor.

We're glad to say that each Taylor comes
with a lifetime supply of new songs.

Provided, of course, that your
lifetime is filled with fair amounts of joy,
pain, tenderness and heartache.

PATRICK O'HEARN'S H



ÔME STUDIO

PATRICK O'HEARN'S studio has followed him on a journey worthy of the name of his publishing company: Gypsy Joker. Acquiring equipment at each stop, the studio moved from California to Oregon to Atlanta to (no joke) Bat Cave, North Carolina, where O'Hearn—former bassist for Zappa and Missing Persons, now making spacy, ambient jazz on his own—started a vanity press of sorts, Deep Cave Records. O'Hearn's first release on the label, *Trust*, came out worldwide late this past summer.

The studio space looks tiny, but its appearance is deceptive. "It's not a closet by any stretch of the imagination," he says. "The studio is 28x14. It's just full of junk. It's cluttered. Somehow I've convinced my wife and kids that I should be allowed to spend the majority of our income on ridiculous electronic items that are built for planned obsolescence." Sonex baffles help dampen the sound of a very live room. "I have plaster ceilings and wood panel walls. Without some foam up, it can make for a little too much reverb. I mean, I'm crazy about reverb, but not the short, bright stuff that makes your ears ring."

Just before his latest move, O'Hearn sold the "big, old, honking **Harrison**" console he'd hauled as far as Atlanta and replaced it with a **Mackie** 8x24 board with an 8x24 expander ❶. "I rented one for a gig last year," he says. "It's quiet and very transparent. I use rackmounted **Neve 1073** mike pre and equalizer modules ❷ out of an old Neve console. It's great for what I do, which is mostly overdubbed, part by part. The **API** modules are the same idea. The **512**s ❸ are the mike pres, the **550B**s ❹ are the equalizers taken out of API consoles. API makes them rackmountable. All I needed was a clean little console, and the Mackie fit the bill."

O'Hearn records on three **Tascam DA-88**s ❺ with an IF 88AE digital interface and RC 848 remote locator. Monitoring is courtesy of **Genelec 1031**s ❻ as well as **Tannoy LGM** 12" golds, **Yamaha NS10**s (not pictured) and **JBL 4430**s (in dry dock at present). He also uses a **Sony CDP-570** CD player ❼ and **Sony TCRX 4100** cassette deck ❽. For soundtrack work, a 27" **Mitsubishi** TV ❾ and VHS VCR ❿, a **Sigma Black Burst** generator ⓫, **JVC CP 5550U 3/4** and **Tascam SY88** come in quite handy.

Synthesizers of all vintages are present in the Cave, from two **Akai S1000** sampler modules ⓬

BY HANK BORDOWITZ

PHOTOGRAPH BY RUTH LEITMAN

(one record, one playback) to a retrofitted MIDI **MiniMoog** 13. These share a rack with a **Mark of the Unicorn MIDI Time Piece 2** 14, a **Digidesign** audio interface for Pro Tools 15, a **Digidesign Pro Tools** SMPTE Slave Driver 16 and a **Roland Super JX** module 17. He keeps four **Oberheim SEM** modules 18 in a smaller case and uses an **Arp 2600** 19, **Waldorf Micro-wave** and **E-mu Pro-cussion** 20. His keyboards include a **Roland D-50** 21 and a **PPG Wave 2.2** 22 with an **Oberheim Xpander** 23, and a couple of Prophet 5s.

Much of the atmosphere on *Trust* does not come from synths, however. Like the friends he employs on several tracks—Warren Cuccurullo, Peter Maunu and David Torn—O'Hearn also triggers sounds with Peavey and Fender Strats. "I've been fortunate enough to come into contact with three preeminent guitarists who are out there today," he says. "They share a common approach to the guitar, which is very unguitarlike. A lot of effects are involved; echoes, delays and signal processing can transform a rather ordinary and common-sounding instrument into something more otherworldly.

"The work that I do on guitar is almost entirely textural. I know enough fundamentals so I can get around. Usually, I'll take certain chord voicings, record them and then process them with the same treatments and echoes and all the associated trimmings that Warren, Peter or David might use. They come out somewhere between synthesizer pads and guitar. The advantage in playing these parts on guitar is that, unlike electronic keyboards, the guitar has a certain degree of natural animation. It's a real, physical instrument that's being played. There are strings that are vibrating. Even when you process them electronically, guitars can sound more natural than keyboards." O'Hearn achieves guitaristic otherworldliness by plugging into a **ProCo DB1** direct box and processing through road-boxed pairs of **Lexicon PCM 42** delays 24 and **PCM-70** reverbs 25, an **Eventide H3000SE** harmonizer 26 and a **Yamaha Rev 7**.

Bass parts are done on either a fretless five-string or standard **Music Man Sabre** 27. "I've got a four-string fretted Music Man too," O'Hearn says. "All three are quite delightful, and each one sounds entirely different from the others, but I prefer the expressiveness you can get on the fretless. It seems to work for me. The four-string fretless with the custom paint job was the first one they made for me. I bought the other two later on, so now I'm exclusively Music Man."

Once everything's recorded, O'Hearn works largely in the digital domain. "I mix my stuff down to a **Panasonic SV-3700** DAT 28. I'll do a digital transfer to (Digidesign) Pro Tools (3.0, run on a Mac Quadra 650 with a 17" **Apple** monitor 29, **Syquest** 45meg removable drive 30 and **Seagate** 1.2gig hard drive 31) if I want to do some editing or experiment with the structure. I have a fundamental, four-channel Pro Tools system, but I use it just as a two-track editor. Once it's recorded to the DAT, it stays digital."

Another important creative tool O'Hearn employs is his bust of **Elvis** 32. "He's there for inspiration. Almost in the tradition of Eno's Oblique Strategies, I have a selection of balloon captions I can attach to the King. One might say, 'Sounds good, Pat.' The other might say, 'A little too slow,' or 'I'm getting the groove.' "

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DENNY BROWN

GOT THE WHOLE NIGHT

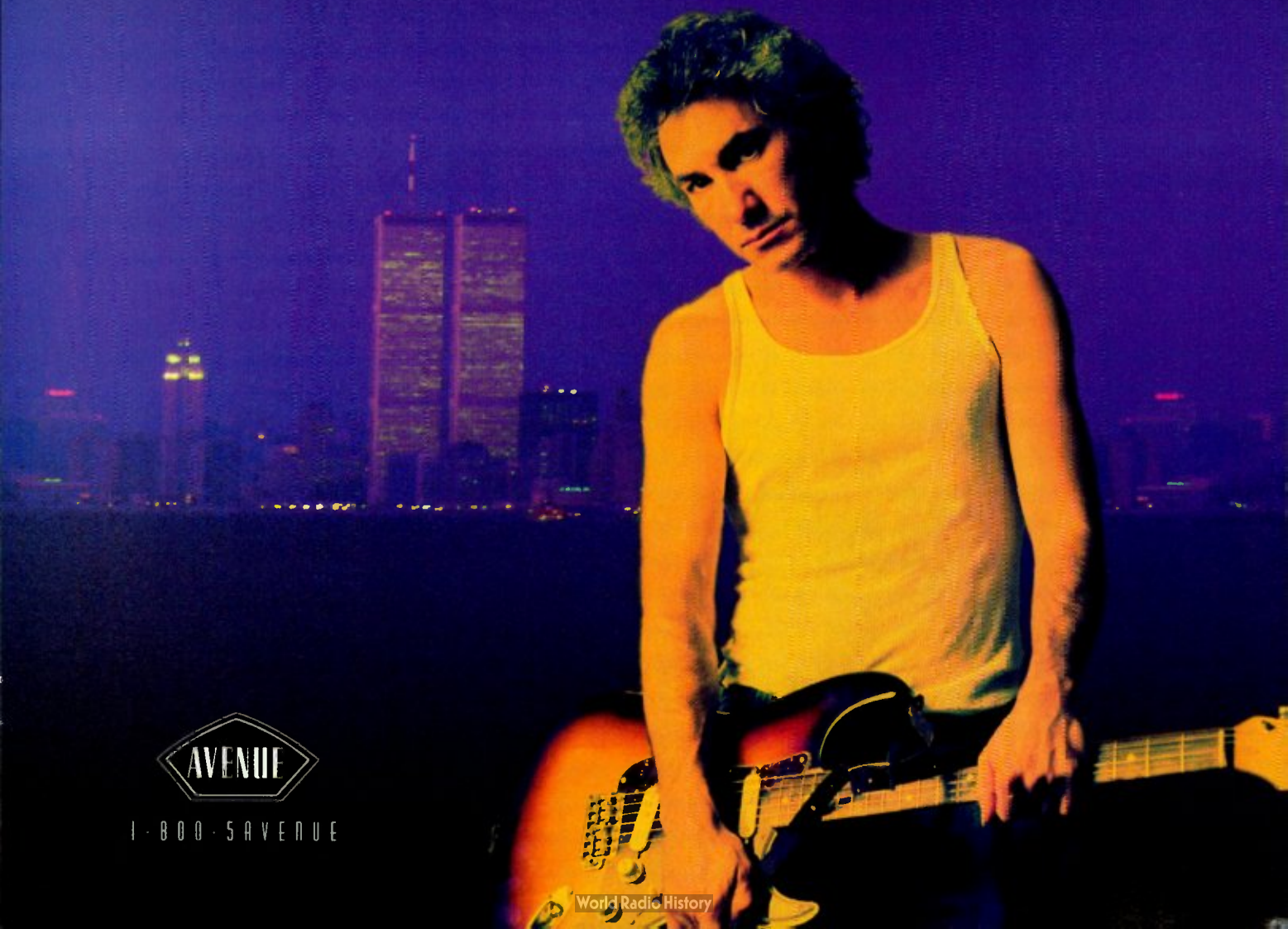
FEATURING

BOOKER T. JONES

FLACO JIMENEZ • DAVE GRISSOM

PRODUCED BY

ERIK NIELSEN



AVENUE

1·800·SAVENUE

Exile on Michigan Ave.

SMASHING PUMPKINS
Mellon Collie and The Infinite Sadness
(VIRGIN)

THEIR 1993 BREAKTHROUGH *SIAMESE DREAM* REMAINS my least favorite Smashing Pumpkins album. Maybe it's because their other two—1991's low-budget *Gish* and last year's odds-and-sods biggie *Pisces Iscariot*— were such obviously less ambitious sets. Those records depicted a band willing to try almost anything, not one sonically streamlined (no filler allowed) into the alternative radio fave-raves they've since become.

How surprising, therefore, that the Pumpkins' first official album after *Siamese Dream*'s success is so stridently all over the place, so laughably ambitious, and yet so satisfying throughout. This kind of thing doesn't usually happen. Before opening the shrink wrap, I'd guess that this record must suck big time: A "double CD"—timewise, that'd be four full LPs in the '60s—bearing both a dopey name and two distinct "parts" titled "Dawn to Dusk" and "Twilight to Starlight." Sheesh. Corgan himself has been speaking in terms of this album representing the "end of an era" for the group he's been fronting for seven years. Whether he's talking about jettisoning the remainder of his band (maybe) or adding more players (probably), the effect remains the same: This album was intended to showcase every style Corgan has at his disposal. There are many—and he does them well.

An artist who proudly admits he grew up listening to Cheap Trick, Queen and ELO—all of whom gleefully plundered from their own pop past—Corgan can easily stand beside them as a master of musical synthesis. Unlike those bands, however, he consistently puts a lot of himself into the mix. Despite the fleeting sonic reference points—I hear the Cure on "1979," Neil Young and hitmaker Erik Satie on "Take Me Down"—there's still a wealth of distinctively original material on display here. There are songs that will satisfy fans of *Siamese Dream* (try "Tonight, Tonight"), songs that will satisfy punk rock fans (surefire radio-ready hit "Fuck You [An Ode to No One]"), songs of a new mythology Corgan seems willing, almost eager to create ("Porcelina of the Vast Oceans" and "Stumbleine"). And while it's worth noting the involvement of Flood—the sonics throughout are marvelous—I'm not sure we would've gotten a different album had another bigwig been sitting in the producer's chair.

The happy result: This is music that looks forward, not backward, and throughout its duration offers something genuinely new. Excessive? Not at all. I hate analogies as much as the next guy, but in a world of post-breakthrough albums, let's just say *Sandinista!* this ain't.

—Dave DiMartino

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL ELLEDGE

KEVIN MAZUR

HOW MARIAH CAREY SPUN HER *DAYDREAM*

"I LISTEN TO hip-hop a lot, and have grown up with it, in a sense, as a listener," says Mariah Carey, explaining the street beats that propel much of her new album, *Daydream*. That's part of the reason why, in addition to longtime collaborator Walter Afanasieff, she worked with the likes of Jermaine Dupri, David Morales, Babyface and Sean "Puffy" Combs.

"I first decided to work with Jermaine when he did the Kris Kross record 'Jump' a few years ago," she says. "People would not exactly listen to that and go, 'Oh—Mariah Carey should work with this guy.' You know? But I'm listening to it as, 'This track is something that I could put a song over, and put my voice on top of, and make it into my own thing.'"

That's pretty much the way she and Dupri approached "Fantasy." Before she began work on the backing track, Carey says, "I had the melody and the background vocal parts, and then I decided to put them together with the Tom Tom Club song, and work on top of that. 'The Tom Tom Club' was, to me, one of the best tracks ever made. It evokes this really happy feeling, and reminds me of growing up. Really good times. So we contacted [Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth], and they were into the idea, and we did it.

"Then, when I wanted to do the remix, I wanted to work with Puffy, because I think he really has a handle on what's going on with the street. And I wanted to have O.D.B do the rap. Puffy used the same sample from the song, but a part that was more about the bassline than the pop version. So in a way, that was worked around the vocal as well, but he focused in more on the track being spare."

Other tracks were anything but spare, particularly when it came to the vocals. "I really enjoy doing background vocals by myself," she says. "I love creating a wall of vocals from scratch. I love playing with the different textures. I'll do, like, four breathy tracks, and then some harder tracks, and then some tracks with a different kind of style, and then put them together to try and see how many people I can make it sound like. I just play. It's fun for me to experiment with my voice."

—*L.D. Considine*

AL GREEN

Your Heart's In Good Hands

(MCA)

AL GREEN CONCLUDES ONE OF THE SONGS ON this, his first secular album in the U.S. in eighteen years, by stringing together the titles of five of his '70s hits. It's a clever gimmick, but what gives this album its strength is the way Green and his producers capture the essence of those hits—the silky melodies, the effortless grace, the abundant joy.

Those producers—David Steele and Andy Cox of Fine Young Cannibals, DeVante of Jodeci, Arthur Baker and Narada Michael Walden—did a good job of remaining true to Green's classic style while subtly updating it. Several cuts place Green in plush settings that are reminiscent of Luther Vandross' supper-club soul. "Could This Be The Love," which was written and produced by DeVante and features backup vocals by Jodeci, is a lean, muscular R&B ballad. Several songs join Green's secular and spiritual concerns. "This is what I believe," he declares at the outset of "Love Is A Beautiful Thing." In "Keep On Pushing Love," he sings, "We're all on this earth/for what it's worth/by God's design." The closing track, "People In The World (Keep On Lovin' You)" has an uplifting, anthemic sound, as if Green is suggesting a link between romantic, brotherly and spiritual love.

The record holds together very well, even though it's a patch job. Eight tracks were taken from Green's 1993 album, *Don't Look Back*, which was released outside the U.S. by BMG International. MCA dropped five songs, remixed four others and commissioned two new songs—the one by DeVante and the title track, which was produced by Walden and written by Diane Warren. The best tracks are those that most closely echo the understated class of Green's '70s hits. But it's a sign of the strength of Green's musical personality that even the title song—the work of ubiquitous hitmakers—bears his unmistakable stamp.

Green's courtly romanticism is out of fashion in the bump 'n grind music scene of the '90s. The ever-earnest Boyz II Men have attempted to pick up the slack, but they're no match for Green as a suitor. Green would never be so presumptuous as to announce "I'll Make Love To You." He wouldn't need to. He'd simply say "I'm Still In Love With You" and let things go from there. It's heartening to hear that, all these years later, the man hasn't lost his style.

—**Paul Grein**

HOUSE PARTY

What Are You Listening to Lately?

ROBERT PALMER

1. Adina Howard, Do You Wanna Ride
2. Terence Trent D'Arby, Vibrator
3. Dag, Righteous
4. Stina Nordenstram, And She Closed Her Eyes
5. D'Angelo, Brown Sugar

VIVIAN TRIMBLE, LUSCIOUS JACKSON

1. Astrud Gilberto, The Astrud Gilberto Album
2. Ween, Chocolate and Cheese
3. Dave Brubeck, Time Further Out
4. Ronnie Foster, Two-Headed Freap
5. PJ Harvey, To Bring You My Love

EDDIE PALMIERI

1. Los Muñequitos de Matanza, Conjunto Guaguancó Matancero
2. Chapottín y su Conjunto, Sabor Tropical
3. Orquesta Aragón, Heart of Havana
4. Art Blakey, Moanin'
5. Miles Davis, Kind of Blue

JOE SATRIANI

Joe Satriani

(RELATIVITY)

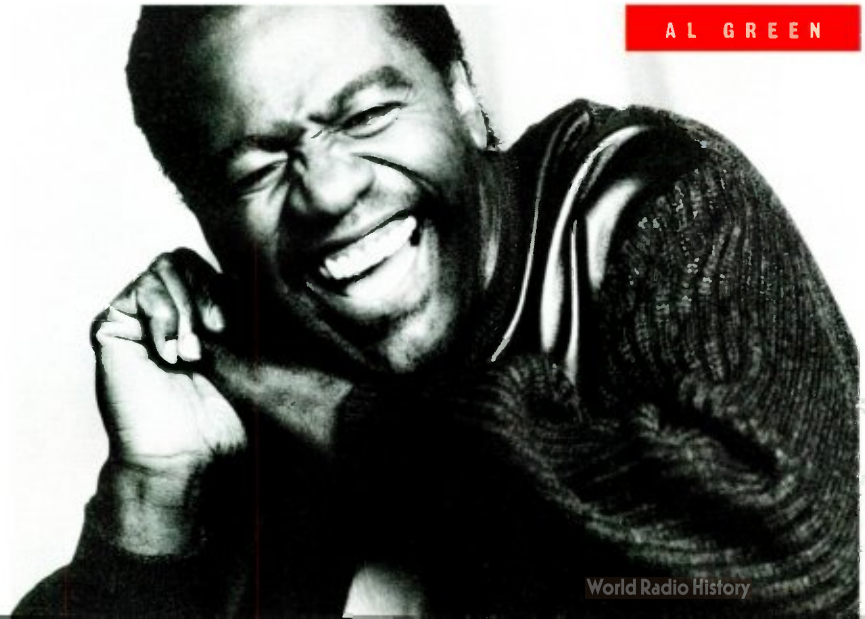
JOE SATRIANI'S LATEST IS EVEN MORE OF A straight-ahead instrumental rock album than his previous releases. Apparently, nobody told Joe that they don't make instrumental rock albums anymore. Instrumental rock, mind you, is not to be confused with (gasp!) metal or (wince!) fusion. The raunch in Satch's style owes something to metal, to be sure, and his prowess on the electric six-string is worthy of a fusioneer. But most of the time, he's managed to separate himself from those two genres by avoiding excessive plod and pointless chops-wielding.

Several famous friends help Satriani rock. The legendary Glyn Johns produces, and the backing band on nine out of 12 tracks comprises guitarist Andy Fairweather-Low, bassist Nathan East, and the always-classy Manu Katché on drums. Several tunes have a solid blues base. The two most obvious, "S.M.F." and "Slow Down Blues," may trigger a groan at first from listeners tired of that same old 12-bar, but Satch's solo on the former takes the classic Jimmy Page turn on "Since I've Been Loving You" at least eight steps further, while the final three minutes of the latter are a marvelous exercise in how to pulverise a riff until nothing remains standing.

There's real bite to much of this music, and Satriani's got a leaner tone to match. The glossy, airbrushed leads of earlier records are largely gone; in the few spots where they do appear ("Luminous Flesh Giants," for example), they take on a new air of menace. He's also less interested in flash. The opening cut, "Cool #9," is notable for a solo that's both ridiculously fast and singularly uninspired. It sounds almost as if Satriani wanted to get the speedy stuff out of the way so he could concentrate on what he really felt like doing. Tracks like "Down, Down, Down" and "Home" feature some of his most sensitive playing—even humorous whammy-bar asides are gorgeous.

The tunes are top-notch as well; Satriani is among the few hotshot axemen who can consistently write interesting melodies. But most important is this album's sound. Johns has perfectly captured the simple joy of musicians playing together in a room. Compression and reverb are minimal, all the better to hear Katché, East and Satriani chasing each other to the end of "Killer Bee Bop" or laying back on the lap-steel mood piece "Sittin' Round." The central concept—get some ace players together and let 'em go—isn't new, but it sure works here. **—Mac Randall**

AL GREEN



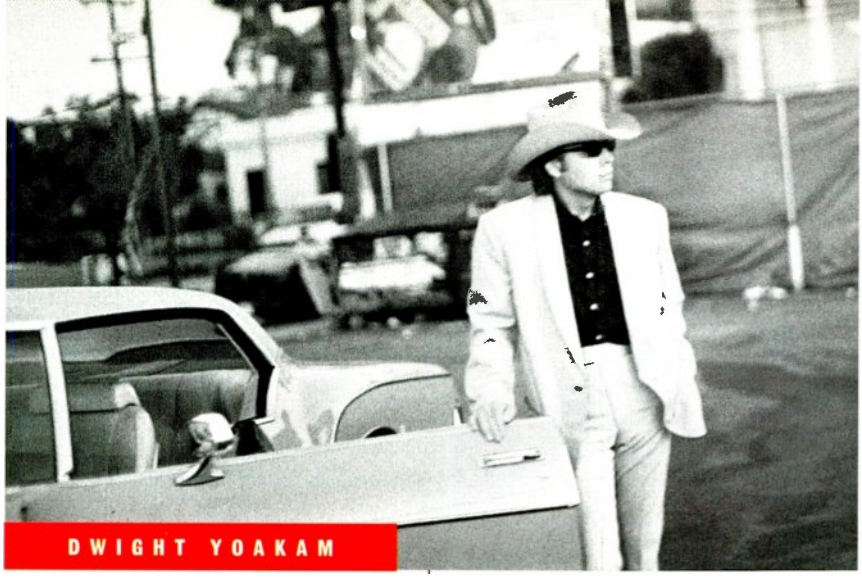
DWIGHT YOAKAM

Gone

(REPRISE)

IN NASHVILLE, STETSON-SPORTING DOGIE-wranglers are corralling the publishing house market on cry-in-your-beer tearjerkers, heavy on clever craft but light on soul-baring catharsis. Is that why so few sody-pop cowpokes attempt to cover Dwight Yoakam's rustic, roots-honoring material—it's too real for 'em? But don't cry for Dwight—judging from *Gone*, he'll be one of the handful of country artists left standing when the genre takes its inescapable tumble. His secret is really no secret at all—he not only reveres this music's sacred Carter Family/Jimmie Rodgers past, but is willing to test its stylistic limits to push it into the millennium, a chance few peers are taking.

Fortunately, Yoakam isn't fighting alone. His longtime guitarist/co-producer Pete Anderson is a master of hickory-smoked riff-ology, and seems to know the perfect tones and touches each *Gone* track warrants. Anderson's keynote on "Near You" may only be a tart vibrato on each verse, but it takes the track straight back to the Everly Brothers. Through the muddy harmonica-hammered mix of "Never Hold You," a Steppenwolf-sized anthem, Anderson's axework jumps from a



DWIGHT YOAKAM

chimey descending pattern (verse) to a gruff, cat-scratch riff (chorus), and again the effects, coupled with Yoakam's lonesome steer-bawl vocals, make the music tick. The accordion-crazed "Baby Why Not" zooms into mariachi-ranchero turf, and features Yoakam's most shamelessly madcap ramble at its close: "Why not, why not, why not, why not, why not?" he begs an elopement-shy lover, while his partner's 6-string clucks in solid South-of-the-border time. And just when you least expect it, after the boozy loser in "Sorry You Asked" vents his sorry spleen for a couple of stanzas, here comes a trumpet chart to pump up the remorse. It's startling, but strangely on target.

On Yoakam's early records, he appeared content to echo the past better than most of his contemporaries. But 1988's *Buenos Noches From A Lonely Room* was haunted by a dismal darkness that, like old Appalachian traditionals, often bordered on the homicidal. The Fellini-esque *This Time* ('93) was eclectic enough, but *Gone* goes further, cloaking its "Heart Of Stone" finale in richly orchestrated strings, à la Owen Bradley's classic arrangements for Patsy Cline. By testing his musical limits, Yoakam is also painting a picture of country music's post-Garth possibilities. While the rest of Music Row is rattling around in a Conestoga, Yoakam and Anderson are hurtling on down in their Mongoose-Snake dragsters. —**Tom Lanham**

GREEN DAY

Insomniac

(REPRISE)

THE MAJOR CHALLENGE SURROUNDING GREEN Day's second major-label opus is finding anything fresh to say about it, since *Insomniac* is virtually a continuation of the Bay Area trio's multi-platinum *Dookie*. In Green Day's case, that's a good thing. Co-produced again by the group and Rob Cavallo, *Insomniac* finds Billy Joe, Mike Dirnt, and Tre Cool ripping through another 14 ruthlessly economical, cheerfully alienated punk-pop flag wavers.

This still might be a ho-hum affair if Green Day didn't approach every number with its customary last-day-on-earth intensity. All of the hyper-adrenal elements found on the band's breakthrough set remain firmly in place here. The tunesmithing, which on *Dookie* was as acute as anything this side of the Buzzcocks, is even more chipper and melodic than on the band's starmaking outing. Especially impressive are the rich kid's boast "Brat," the hooky kiss-off "86," and the near-epic (3:34!) "Panic Song," in which the band comes close to showing its pre-punk roots by threatening to break out at any moment into the Who's "Sparks."

If there's a flaw on *Insomniac*, it may be in the value-for-money department: The album clocks in at a chintzy 33 minutes. But even this may be an asset in Green Day's hands: The guys know what they have to say, take just the right amount of time to say it, and don't clog up the chute with excess, or excessive, tuneage.

Same as it ever was? For the moment, yeah, and that's no biggie. Green Day is one of the most appealing rock bands at work right now. Their latest demonstrates nothing more than the group's very self-assured sense of mission. Flail on. —**Chris Morris**

OSCAR PETERSON

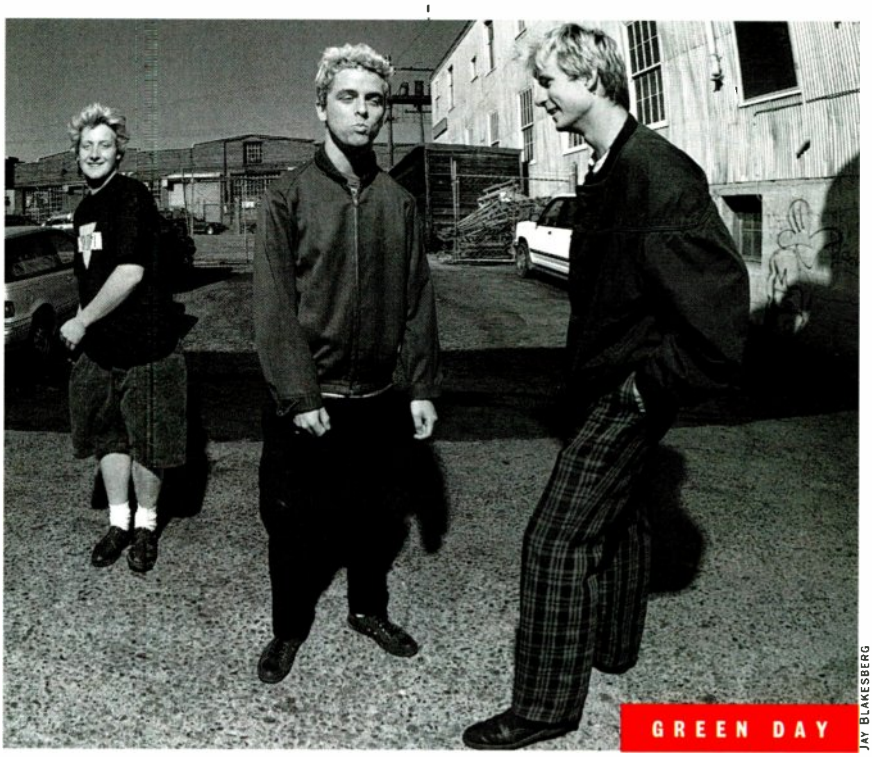
1951

(JUST A MEMORY/KOCH INTERNATIONAL)

An Oscar Peterson Christmas

(TELARC)

IT IS SOBERING RATHER THAN SURPRISING TO hear the effects of time on Oscar Peterson. *1951*, a set of duos recorded for broadcast to Korean War troops over Radio Canada, features bassist Austin Roberts trying to keep up with a young pianist who never stops pushing. Taken at moderate tempo, "Pennies From Heaven" comes in a tight package, bristling with sixteenth-note filigrees and flawless two-handed passagework. Peterson's rhythms easily compensate for the absence of drums, but Roberts plays a critical role, providing a foundation for Peterson's exuberant



GREEN DAY

JAY BLAKESBERG

World Radio History

exhibitionism; fragments from Ravel and "Royal Garden Blues" abut uneasily in "Body and Soul." Flash and fire, and promise of a brilliant future, illuminate *1951*. Even the gimmicky rework of a Brahms *Hungarian Dance*, complete with weird "Three Blind Mice" quotes, undeniably swings.

Forty-four years later, on *Christmas*, we hear a more relaxed groove. A sympathetic rhythm section simmers on the up tunes and cools down with taste on the ballads. Lorne Lofsky, in particular, shines with facile, bluesy lines on guitar. As for Peterson, he's playing more economically; his solos probe the harmonic corners of the tune, with plenty of space, an unhurried feel, and only the occasional hair-raising embellishment. Even so, one listens now, as in the '50s, for the kind of unique voice that one chord from Bill Evans, or even one note from Monk, can reveal. Instead, the "crushed" thirds of "I'll Be Home for Christmas," the sentimentally rolled octaves of "O Little Town of Bethlehem," and similar effects elsewhere reveal something that feels disturbingly like Floyd Cramer with chops and rhythm. **—Robert L. Doerschuk**

DAN ZANES

Cool Down Time

(PRIVATE MUSIC)

APOLOGIES IN ADVANCE TO ALL YOU GRAMMARians out there. I'm about to use several nouns as adjectives in an attempt to accurately describe the new solo album by Dan Zanes. I know this isn't proper, but if Corporate America can turn "impact" into a verb, I don't see why I can't have my moment of unfettered linguistic creativity. So here goes:

This is very tremolo channel music. It's very slapback echo, too. Quite electric piano as well (Wurlitzer, if my ears don't deceive me). And to round things off, it's semi-Mellotron and just a wee bit Clavinet.

I'd say that pretty much sums up the thing. But in case you feel that you need further information about this music, it might be helpful to know that Dan Zanes used to be in a band called the Del Fuegos. Overall, they didn't sound that different from the way this album sounds. A lot of people called them retro. I didn't like them much. But oddly enough, I like this album. A lot.

Why? Because the feel of these tunes is looser, the grooves funkier, than the Fuegos' stuff was. Check out how the rhythm section (drummer Jerry Marotta and keyboardist/producer Mitchell Froom) kicks in on the chorus of "Cruel Cold Feeling," or take a listen to the jaunty beat of "Little Blue Suit." That looseness blends well with Zanes' creaky drawl of a voice. The combination is heard to best advantage on "So Carelessly." The song's melody is sweet, the words (a plea to an old lover to light the fire once more) affecting—it could have been a real weeper. But the way Zanes sings and his band plays is so casual that the sentiment remains hidden. You have to dig for it, which in the end is more rewarding.

Some music can draw you in on sound alone. Think of how seductive it was to hear Tom Petty's voice completely dry on "I Won't Back Down." This album, with its pronounced analog warmth, has that kind of attraction. Yet, once the initial aural conquest is made, the melodies and lyrics stay with you. It's not a perfect record. But it's very tube. And highly spring reverb. **—Mac Randall**

DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER

Love and Peace:
A Tribute to Horace Silver
(VERVE)

THAT NOISE YOU HEAR IN THE BACKGROUND when listening to Dee Dee Bridgewater's latest album is the sound of other jazz singers slapping their heads saying, "Why didn't I think of that?" For the Paris-based Bridgewater, though, a tribute album to one of modern jazz's greatest composers wasn't just a brainstorm: It was the culmination of two and a half decades spent seeking the approval of her musical father figure. The result is the best jazz vocal release of the year.

Bridgewater transforms such classic Silver tunes as "Tokyo Blues," "Nica's Dream," "Doodlin'" and "Lonely Woman," supplied with lyrics by Silver himself, into future jazz standards. The father of hard bop sits in on piano on "Nica's Dream" and "Song For My Father," while Jimmy Smith contributes some low-down organ fills on "Filthy McNasty" and "The Jody Grind," upping the album's funk factor. Ably accompanied by her French rhythm section—Theirry Eliez on piano, Hein Van De Geyn on bass and André Ceccarelli on drums—as well as Lionel Belmondo on tenor sax and Stéphane Belmondo on trumpet, Bridgewater taps directly into Silver's deep soulfulness. She knows she doesn't have to force the funk, and one of the album's delights is her understated approach to the material. In the same way, the arrangements evoke Silver's classic Blue Note albums without getting in the way of Dee Dee's vocals. Now nothing's going to get in the way of this seasoned jazz and Broadway veteran's finally being recognized as one of the world's finest jazz singers.

—Andy Gilbert

THE PHARCYDE

Labcabincalifornia
(DELICIOUS VINYL)

THE PHARCYDE HAVE GROWN OLDER AND A bit less giddy in the three years since *Bizarre Ride II The Pharcyde* tickled hip-hop funny bones, but don't expect them to start quoting Dostoevsky just yet. Their second album *Labcabincalifornia* is clever, funny, sometimes downright gorgeous. Just because life shreds some of your illusions doesn't mean you can't dance on the scraps.

Labcabincalifornia reflects musical changes that have taken place in hip-hop over the past few years. This disc owes more to the Roots' elastic jazz grooves than it does to the dense, carnivalesque feel of *Bizarre* or the glossy G-funk of their West Coast brethren. The new production crew (beatmaster Diamond D. and JD, the latter an associate of Tribe Called Quest's Q-Tip) adds fluorescent touches and dreamy soul-jazz samples (Zawinul, Roy Ayers) that take the edge off Imani, Slim Kid, Fat Lip and Booty Brown's sobering, sometimes bitter phraseology. The idealized female of their 1993 hit "Passin' Me By" is replaced by the gold-digging skeezers of "Bullshit," for example. But no matter the subject—the recording industry ("Devil Music," "Something That Means Somethin'"), sexual relations ("She Said") or the self-examination thing ("Runnin'")—the tracks charm you into a bouncy alpha-wave nod.

By now, of course, listening to another allegory about the evil music business or moral decay is about as appealing as another baseball strike. (Someone should gather up the worst of this mewling and depth-charge it to the bottom of the Dead Sea, or distill it to a block of hard matter and lock it in an airtight container in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.) But the Pharcyde, at least, haven't lost their sense of humor.

Labcabincalifornia is at times as playful as *A Bizarre Ride*, even as their word play and in-jokes carry serious messages: personal responsibility, the value of watching your back. "Groupie Therapy" starts off as a goof (suggesting a 12-step program for sex-addicted performers), then leads into a serious-minded tale of on-the-road temptation. Not the most original subject, sure, but it damn sure sounds good. In a world that may or may not be interested in an artist's personal skeletons, that's all that really counts. —Tony Green

TAPES

AD INDEX

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Tapes will be reviewed by our panel of editors and music writers. Winners will be chosen by our panel of all-star judges, including Steve Winwood, Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard, Juliana Hatfield, Jimmy Jam, Pat Metheny Adrian Belew Matthew Sweet.

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ET CETERA

ERASURE

Erasure

(ELEKTRA)

VINCE CLARKE PROVED years ago that he is without peer on stone-age analog synths and obscure sequencing software. The problem with *Erasure* is that he's plowing the same field, and at this point it's sounding a little tired. Once again, toy-shop drums tap and anally-crafted synth lines twine around Andy Bell's innocent vocals. Unfortunately, the songs are less memorable than those on their '94 release, *I Say, I Say, I Say*, though the chorus of "Fingers and Thumbs" could have worked well with a *Hooked On Four Tops* arrangement of "It's the Same Old Song." —*Robert L. Doerschuk*

ANONYMOUS 4

The Lily & the Lamb

(HARMONIA MUNDI)

OKAY, SO MAYBE the cult of Mary no longer has the currency it had in the 1300s, but with all sorts of chanters and monk-ies moaning away on the classical charts, the ole Virgin is hotter than she has been in six or seven centuries. The text here—a collection of chant and polyphony from medieval England and Ireland—describes three variants of *Jesu Cristes milde moder* at the foot of the cross, alternating old English with Latin, monophonic and polyphonic arrangements, some hymns set to music of a later period where the original settings have been lost. And Anonymous 4 make beautiful music. Fear not, religion need play no role in your enjoyment of these songs—only the love of poetry and voice.

—*Keith Powers*

BARRY BLACK

Barry Black

(ALIAS)

ENDEARINGLY ZANY, MOSTLY instrumental vignettes from the desk of Archers Of Loaf leader Eric Bachmann, with assistance from several other indie types, most notably Ben Folds (of Ben Folds Five) on piano and drums. Bachmann's proficiency on a range of instruments is surprising. (He's a damn fine alto sax player! Who knew?) And his compositions are loads of fun—goony, mug-hoisting melodies, random noise, the occasional Waitsian growl in the background. "Golden Throat" features real singing, and sounds just like an Archers cut. More impressive are "Vampire Lounge," a dreamy bachelor-pad excursion, and "Animals Are For Eating," a modern-day Cossack stomp for chamber octet.

—*Mac Randall*

BUCK OWENS

Roll Out The Red Carpet
The Instrumental Hits

(SUNDAZED)

AMONG THE LATEST installments in Sundazed's resurrection of Owens' classic Bakersfield country albums (ten titles already, ten more coming soon), these two sound particularly fresh because they weren't big hits to begin with. *Red Carpet*, cut a few months before the famous *Carnegie Hall* live album, features gems like "We Split the Blanket" and the irresistable ballad "Cinderella"; and *Instrumental Hits* has the Buckaroos stretching out for an album's worth of brilliant twin Telecasters and pedal-steel. Impeccable sound quality and bonus tracks make these vital additions to any American music collection.

—*Thomas Anderson*

IAN HUNTER

Ian Hunter's Dirty Laundry

(NORSK IMPORT)

BUILDING ON THE same Dylan/Stones touchstones from which his best music has always drawn its spark, the former Mott The Hoople frontman delivers his most assured album in years. Eschewing the freeze-dried production of his last couple of efforts, Hunter and his new band—original Sex Pistol Glen Matlock and some Swedes—rip through a dozen stripped-down rockers that wouldn't sound out of place on Hunter's solo debut or Mott's *Brain Capers*. Pick hit: the ravaged-heart ballad "Scars," with fellow Mott vet Blue Weaver on keyboards. Some smart American label needs to put this out now. —*Thomas Anderson*

SHORT TAKES

BY J.D. CONSIDINE

QUINCY JONES
Q's Jook Joint
(QWEST)

FORGET THE star-glutted credits. What makes this album work isn't who Q puts on the guest list, but what he does when they turn up, for few deploy talent better than Jones. Who else could have found room in "Heaven's Girl" for the voices (and egos) of R. Kelly, Charlie Wilson, Aaron Hall and Ronald Isley? How many producers would have guessed that Phil Collins could carry "Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me"? Jones doesn't expand his songbook much, relying heavily on songs he's recorded before. But he's hardly repeating himself, as the hyper-energized "Stomp" and the sultry "Is It Love That We're Missing" make plain.

TONY BENNETT
For the Ladies
(COLUMBIA)

UNLIKE HIS previous tribute albums, the concept here is looser (songs made famous by female vocalists), and the arrangements more playful. As a result, Bennett is left with even more room than usual to make these songs his own, transforming "People" from stagey homily to a sly, swinging affirmation, and using the space between notes to bring home the blues in "God Bless the Child." But the best moments are those like the lithe, bass-and-vocal intro to "I Got Rhythm," touches that underscore Bennett's mastery without drawing undue attention to his chops.

MENSWE@R
Nuisance
(LONDON)

NUISANCE? THEY flatter themselves. Between their fashionably unpolished vocals and appallingly derivative songwriting (the Meat Puppets should get royalties for "I'll Manage Somehow," so closely does it resemble "Backwater"), Menswe@r epitomize everything that's second-rate about contemporary English guitar rock. No wonder they're such a big deal there.

K.D. LANG
All You Can Eat
(WARNER BROS.)

CONSIDERING HOW heavily hunger and longing color the songs here, Lang earns points for the deliciously ironic album title. But irony isn't an especially commercial commodity; despite its often gorgeous melodies, neither is this album. Still, there's much to love about these songs; from the bittersweet pop appeal of "World of Love" to the sultry, insinuating cadences of "Sexuality," Lang offers charms enough to seduce even the casual fan. And though songs like the bluesy, harmonically daring "Acquiesce" demand quite a lot of the listener, the added depth they bring to the album more than repays the effort.

CIBO MATTO

[*cont'd from page 20*] Eventually, the real world disrupted this idyll. As label reps began waving offers in their direction, Yuka and Miho had to figure out how to cope with the attention. "Many people were interested in us," Yuka says, "but we didn't get a good vibe from many of them. Some were just weird: They'd see a band and think they know everything about what that band should do. That's okay: A&R people should use their experience to help bands. But the most important thing is to listen, and to find out what the musicians want to do with their lives. Instead, a lot of the people we'd meet had no common courtesy. They'd tell us who should produce our album or how to play our own songs."

Respectful offers did come in, including one from Byrne for Luaka Bop. But, nervous about being stereotyped by the label's world beat association, they turned him down too. Shortly after that, Byrne suggested to Carr that he finally consider signing them himself. At long last, almost reluctantly, Carr bounced the idea off his friends. They said okay, and what had been inevitable all along came to pass.

What's the lesson here? According to Carr, it's all about commitment. "If a band really believes in itself, then maybe it's worth my while to work with them. The talent is the easy part. I don't know if Yuka and Miho moved from Japan to New York to get discovered, but I'm sure they moved to be in the middle of it. As much as you want the mountain to come to Muhammad, as good as it is to put packages together and record demos perfectly, it's really about playing live, and if you come from Minneapolis to New York to play once a year at CMJ, that's not enough. You have to leave your day job, your home and all the comfort, and come to New York or L.A. That's where the people in the business still are. Seattle only happens once a decade. If the girl at the cappuccino bar, the bartender, and everyone I run into is talking about you, then I don't have to hear about you from an attorney, a manager or some anonymous letter. Work your way from P.S. 122 to the Knitting Factory to CBGB's to the Cooler to the Mercury Lounge, and I'll hear about you from more than just my mailbox."

—Robert L. Doerschuk

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[*con't on page 92 and 95*]

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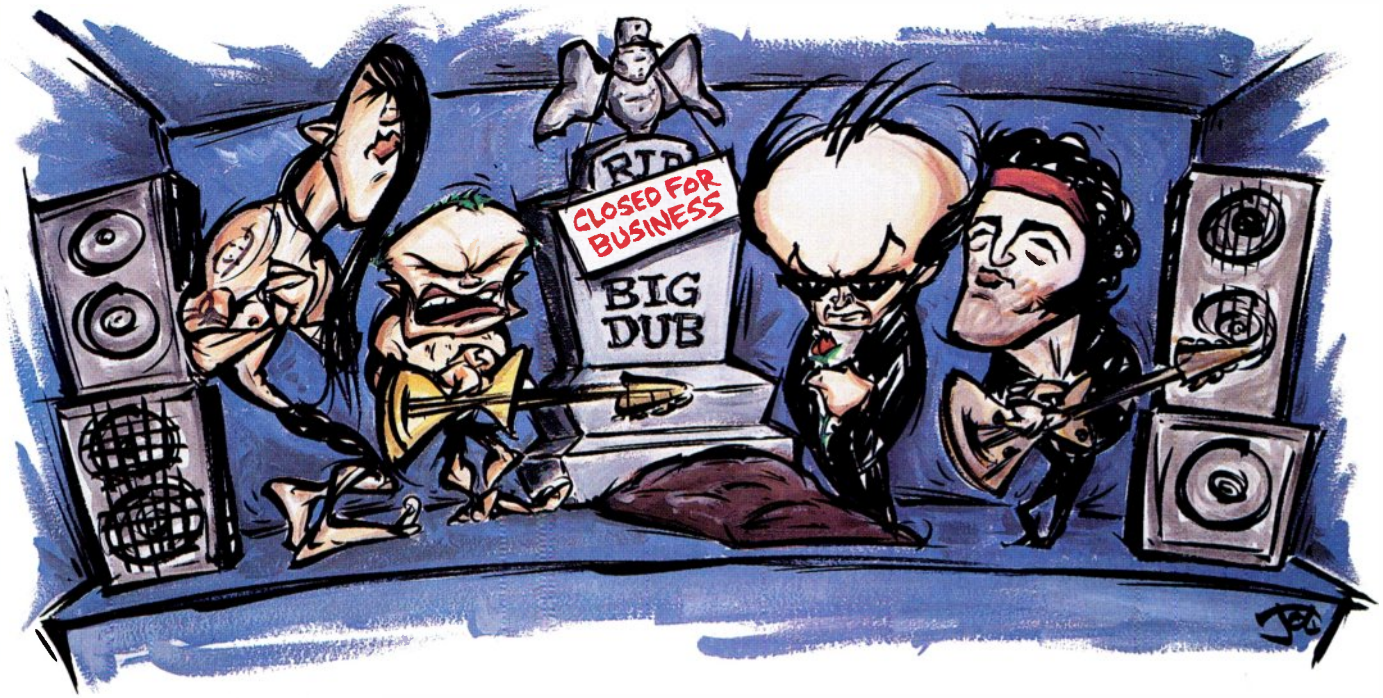

August '95 was a bad month. Garcia checked out, Elvis pilgrims suffered through a record heat wave in Memphis, and in Pittsburgh, after 22 years and over seven thousand nights of music, the Decade closed. Billing itself as "Pittsburgh's Home of Rock 'n' Roll," it retired undefeated, the belt holder and still champ.

The head of the household was a middle-aged, outspoken character named Dominic Disilvio—or, as he was known to everyone, Dom. A one-man Scorsese movie, right down to the warm-up suits and gold neckwear, he loved sambuca, pasta, and loud music. If it was authentic, original, or downright bizarre, he booked it. Over the years, aside from all the local greats, he featured a staggering parade of touring acts, including the Ramones, Albert Collins, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Cyndi Lauper, Sam Kinison, Marcia Ball, 10,000 Maniacs, and a hundred others. He was one of the first to book Stevie Ray, and one of the last to book the infamous Tubby Boots, a sixty-year-old, 400-pound, cross-dressing Borscht Belt comic, whose wardrobe included a nun's habit and pasties.

Memories of great nights covered the walls: busted drum heads, guitar parts, unpaid parking tickets. Springsteen showed up whenever he was in town. Bon Jovi shot part of a video there. Jack Nicholson loved the place. Whether you were famous or an opening act, you were treated with respect—unless you came in with an attitude. Dom hated prima donnas.

For many of us, the Decade was a home and a haven. For one member of the family, it also became a final resting place. Big Dub had been the in-house bouncer for a number of years. At the age of 36, he succumbed to a heart attack and, having no natural family, was put to rest by those at the Decade. After a frenzied wake/benefit, they had him cremated and ceremoniously buried his ashes, along with his baseball hat, under the stage. Over the wall outlets they placed a gold plaque inscribed with his name. For years to come, the regulars watched with glee as many a superstitious band (especially those from Louisiana) arranged themselves to avoid standing over the spot during their sets.

On Aug. 21, 1995, the place was packed. Over five hundred people showed up to say good-bye. Among them were married couples who first met there, Dom's septuagenarian drinking pals, and grateful individuals who had received desperately needed medical help from the countless benefit shows. Joe Grushecky played, everyone sat in, and many musicians openly wept. They swapped Dom stories and remembered long-forgotten gigs. Maybe they were remembering when "we'd cross paths with up-and-coming stars. It was like rock 'n' roll gunfighters battling it out on that stage. Sometimes they'd win, but a lotta nights, we sent 'em packin'. There was no feeling like it; you felt you were somebody."

It was a perfect rock 'n' roll bar. Dom opened it, and along with Billy and John, he closed it. It never became a chain, never opened a branch in Orlando or featured memorabilia donated by Bruce Willis. There was no VIP seating, no "light" menu. Hell, there was usually no toilet paper. The dressing room was outside and up a flight of treacherous stairs. There was a column in the middle of the stage. The women wore tight, anatomically challenging spandex. It was dark, hot, and reeking of sweat and stale Iron City beer, but no one seemed to mind. After all, it was home.

Reverend Billy C. Wirtz

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE FOURNIER

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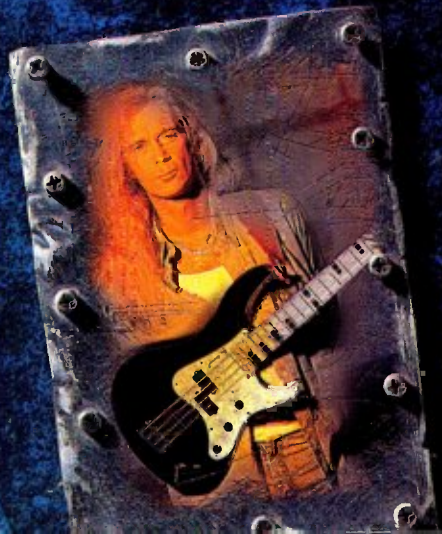

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