SPECIAL ISSUE: THE CLASSIC INTERVIEWS

MUSICIAN

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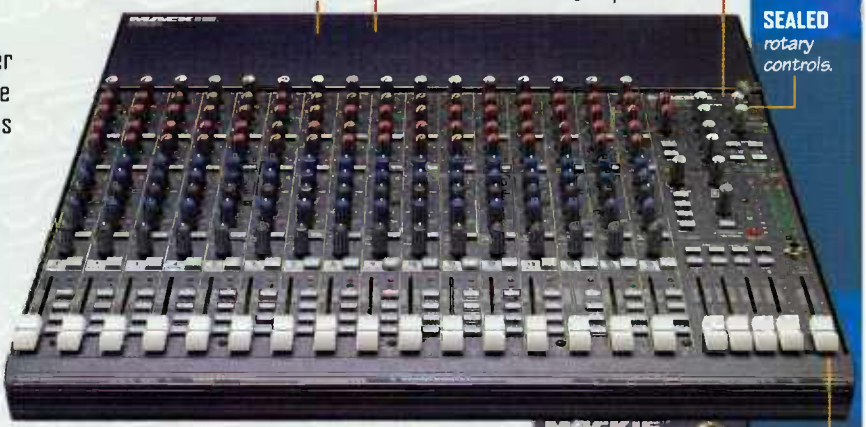

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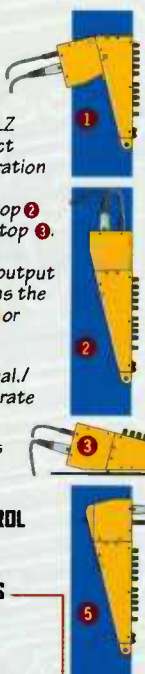

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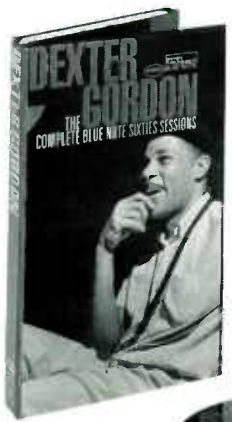

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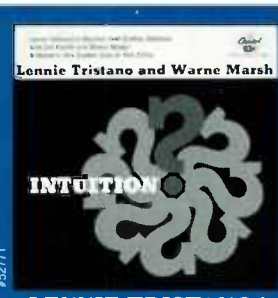

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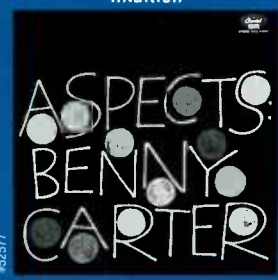

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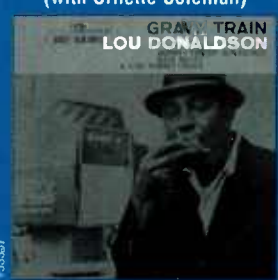

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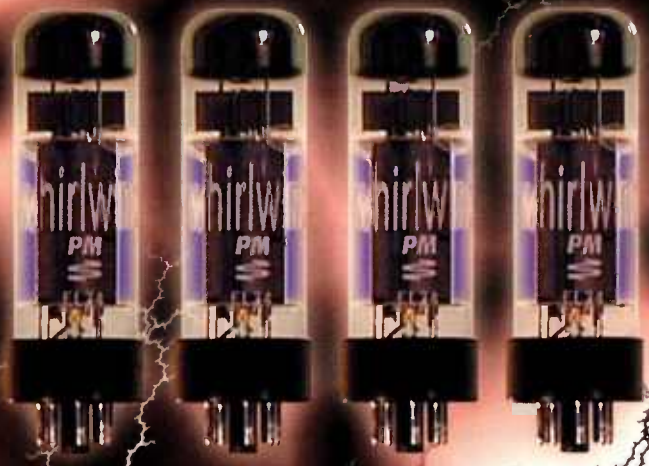

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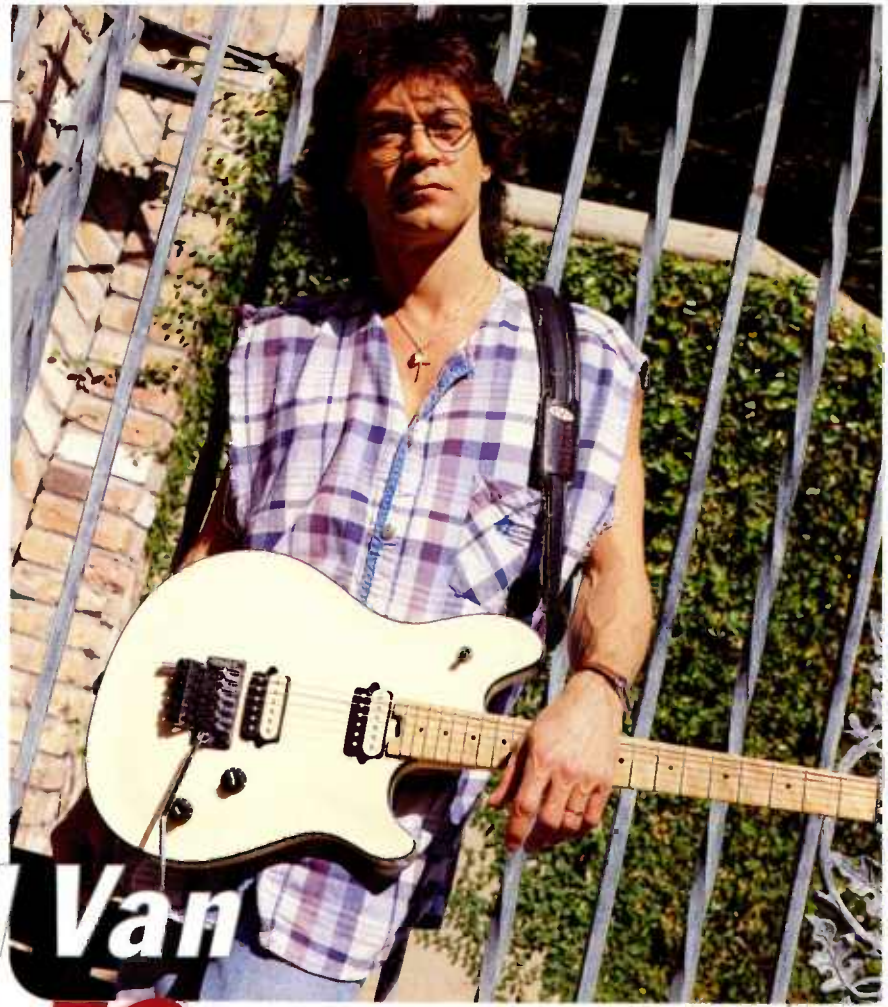
Edward Van Halen



"You can't sing 'I Can't Drive 55' over 'Stairway to Heaven.'"

Why is Van Halen putting out its first greatest-hits album now?

Both we and Warner Brothers realized that it had been nearly 20 years since we recorded the first album, so it was kind of an anniversary thing. Also, my wife's on the Internet a lot, and she's seeing a lot of fans whose first exposure to Van Halen was the *Balance* record [1995]. They're asking what other records they should buy, so I started thinking, why not put out a best-of? We never intended it to be any end of an era. The transition from [David Lee] Roth to Sammy [Hagar], and now to Gary Cherone, is seamless to me—Van Halen just goes on.

Wasn't Sammy opposed to putting out a greatest-hits?

He was very against the whole thing. It's ironic that Sammy himself has put out two greatest-hits. And a boxed set [*laughs*]. But Sammy quit. And contrary to whatever he's been mumbo-jumboing about in the press, he was not fired. In my last conversation with him, all I did was clearly reiterate eleven times, "Sam, in order for us to go on, you have to be a team player. Why do we even have a producer like Bruce Fairbairn or Glen Ballard when they ask you to try something and you refuse to do it?" But he was unwilling to budge. It was his way or no way, and that's not a band.

A week later, I guess reality hit, and he starts saying he was fired. It's difficult to remain friends with a fuckin' lyin' sack o' shit [*laughs*]. Same with Roth. We never lied to him. I'll take a damn lie detector test. People say, "Oh, they can't both be lying." But I'm saying they are. Basically, they both took their bat and their glove and their childish fuckin' behavior and went home, and we're moving forward with Gary Cherone as the new singer.

Are the two new songs with Roth on Best of Volume 1 any indication of what the new material with Gary will be like? It sounds like you guys are stretching a bit on those.

It doesn't sound like stretching to me. No, the new stuff's just on another level, man. You know, Extreme was a wonderful band, but Gary sounds so different with us. I'm writing music that's different too—in the last month, I've written close to 30 tunes—and we're gonna start doing it for a change. You know that song "Right Now"? I wrote that in '83. It didn't come out until '91, because [*carefully enunciates*] certain people wanted nothing to do with it because they thought it wasn't Van Halen. Well, I'm sorry, I'm a fuckin' musician. I make music, that's what the man upstairs put me here for. And now we have a singer who's open, who's just a normal guy like Alex, Mike and I. You can't phone the shit in, you know. You can't sing "I Can't Drive 55" over "Stairway to Heaven."

What's the reason for the hip replacement operation in December?

Just bouncing around onstage for twenty fuckin' years. As a musician, I'm in my prime; as an athlete, I'm not. Jumping off of stuff, sliding on your knees, kicking your amps. . .it's not good for you. So I've got evascular necrosis—somehow the blood supply got cut off—in both hips, both my knees are shot, and the cartilage in my left ankle's gone. Believe it or not, when I stopped drinking—October 2nd, 1994—that same week I started limping. I'm actually looking forward to [the operation] because sometimes I can't walk at all. It's just throbbing pain, like a root canal, except they didn't cap it. And I don't take painkillers because I'm sober and I'm not into that shit anymore. I tried it and I just felt looped out of my mind. I don't want to get addicted to something else.

Do you ever worry that even after all the music you've made, people might still remember you simply as the two-handed tapping guy?

No. I feel like I'm just starting. Listen, I gotta run. Valerie's just left for two months to do a miniseries, so I've got to pick Wolfie up from school, and then I've got a PTA meeting tonight. I've just got my hands full.—***Mac Randall***

Neil Zlozower

sideman

"I try to make the drums sound chordal."

Brian Blade

How important is music theory for drummers?

Well, the violin was my first instrument; that familiarized me with the technical aspects of music. When you're a drummer on the road, it's impossible to practice: You can go to the venue and practice before a show, and that's it. That's why I lug a guitar with me on the road, so I can keep my harmonic instincts sharp. You have to know as much about the harmonic and melodic aspects of music as possible. Even if you're a drummer, you can make or break the music if you don't know what's going on around you. With Josh's band, our rapport is so strong that our ears are practically glued to each other's instruments. It's a continual process, though; I'm always learning new things.

You're featured on Joni Mitchell's upcoming album, and you've also played quite a few gigs with her. How did you hook up?

Through Daniel Lanois. I knew him from New Orleans, and I played on Emmylou Harris' album *Wrecking Ball*, which he produced. Daniel had played her an album that had me on it, and she called the next day and asked if I wanted to play with her. I was just floored by that! I mean, when I was sixteen somebody gave me *Hejira*, and that music had a healing power over me. I owe such a huge debt to Joni. I never thought I'd play with her. The whole experience has been very inspiring because, before we hooked up, she was thinking about devoting all of her time to painting and getting away from the music, but our playing together has renewed her enthusiasm. I'm very fortunate that I've been able to make a living playing with friends and musicians that I admire.

Why do you think your drumming style is so compatible with Mitchell's music?

Her music has so much depth; it's not exactly straight pop. There's an expansiveness to her melodies, and I just try to play within the weave of the blanket, if you know what I mean. I try to flow in between what she's creating. When she's playing guitar, I try to finish her phrases. I also try to make the drums sound chordal, like one thing, as opposed to individual elements.

Do you change your tuning, depending on the genre of music you're playing?

I change my drums. I use my '63 gold glitter Gretsches a lot, which have a very warm, resonant sound. They're very versatile drums, and they give me that chordal sound. I like my drums to be as resonant as possible. I also have a set of '67 Ludwigs with a big 27" bass drum that I pull out every once in a while.

You have a very subtle touch with brushes. What's the secret to great brush work?

Looking at Art Blakey videos! Tone is everything. In order to achieve a certain metric quickness, you need the right tone. Just watching some of these guys in New Orleans, like John Radokovitch and Herlin Riley, really taught me how to play with brushes. Also, playing in coffeehouses in New Orleans taught me how to play soft.

Do you adjust your technique when you're playing with Mitchell as opposed to, say, Kenny Garrett?

In both of those situations, I try to keep it as simple as possible. I try to find the simple element that the music needs, whether it's a single brush stroke or a gentle tap on the cymbal. My objective at all times as a drummer is to get out of the way and let the music speak for itself.

—Marc Weingarten

résumé

Daniel Lanois
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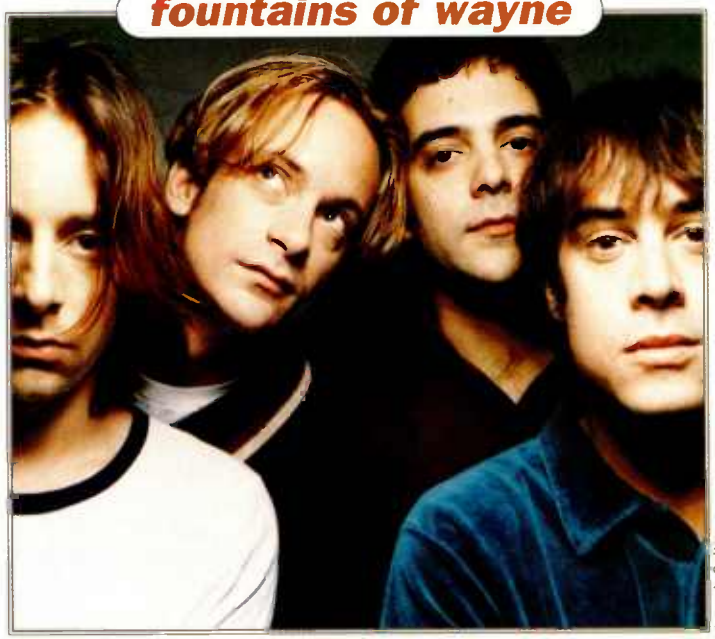
talents

fountains of wayne



Joseph Cultice

Fountains of Wayne do witty, whizzy pop songs with nods to '60s classics like Brian Wilson, the Zombies, and the Hollies and '80s tunesmiths like Aztec Camera, Prefab Sprout, and Everything But The Girl, served up with a grainy '90s guitar edge and a good dose of humor. With its cast of dysfunctional characters and over-vulnerable narrators, their eponymous debut album might well be subtitled *Songs of Low Self-Esteem*.

"The funny thing is, we didn't plan it that way," says singer Chris Collingwood. "But after it was done, people started saying it has that 'cheer up, loser' kind of feel."

Collingwood and Adam Schlesinger met at school and played in a few pop bands around Boston before going their separate ways for a while. Schlesinger (guitar, bass, keyboards, drums, vocals) formed the trio Ivy and co-founded Scratchie Records with James Iha and D'Arcy of Smashing Pumpkins. A song of his that he entered in a contest wound up becoming the big number on Tom Hanks' latest film, *That Thing You Do!* Collingwood (vocals, guitar, keyboards) fronted the Mercy Buckets and participated in tributes to Brian Wilson and Burt Bacharach as part of New York's "Lounge Losers" series.

In the Big Apple, Schlesinger and Collingwood met up again and decided to revive their old partnership. They say *Fountains of Wayne*—the name comes from a kitschy New Jersey shop—was written and recorded quickly, which perhaps accounts for its breezy feel and effortless sense of melody.

Schlesinger feels the disc has a heavier guitar vibe than anything he and Collingwood have done in the past. "We just decided we needed to rock a little more. Not that we rock that much anyway. Based on everything that's happened in the past five years, what would have sounded super heavy in 1989 doesn't really sound too heavy anymore. By those standards, I'd say our record is really pretty pop."***—Alan Di Perna***

Jaws dropped that day in Paris when ***Madeleine Peyroux***, a 16-year-old American busking with a band of fellow expatriates, opened her mouth and broke into "Georgia." Of course, some of those dropping jaws rose up again as the clientele at that sidewalk café chomped back into their crêpes, oblivious to what may someday be remembered as the gig that launched a remarkable career.

But Peyroux, looking back some seven years later, trusts that enough people dug what was happening, if only because no one stopped her. "I kept singing," she shrugs, "so something must have been going okay."

It's fitting that Peyroux began singing in Paris, a city that appreciates the vintage in both wine and

pluto

Micheal Lavine

"It's funny when we get to a show and it's sponsored by a radio station, and they always want to introduce the band or do some cheesy thing before the gig," Ian Jones, guitarist and singer for the British Columbia-based ***Pluto***, is setting up the punchline: "We always tell them very seriously, 'Okay, this is what you've gotta say: We're the hottest band from Vancouver since Loverboy!'"

The scary thing is, he may be right. With Jones trading vocal and songwriting duties alongside bassist John Ounpuu, Pluto's self-titled major label debut is a tightly wound snarl of glistening harmonies and fierce hooks that could make people forget that the headband-friendly '80s act ever happened.

Jones, a recording engineer who got his start working at the busy Vancouver Studios ("I got coffee for, like, the London Quireboys and Mötley Crüe"), found his job especially helpful when he formed Pluto in 1993 with Ounpuu, guitarist Rolf Hetherington, and drummer Justin Leigh. To record the group's first seven-inch singles, he says, "We would just go in, bang them off, mix them on some off time, and then put them out." Those early songs led to a full-length album, *Cool Way to Feel*, that was released by Vancouver indie Mint. It caught the ears of Virgin Records.

So while Pluto stands at the verge of establishing Canada as a source for vital music, this self-professed band of music fans shares a not-so-secret dream. "All we really want to do is to open for Redd Kross or Hole," Jones says. "And then we can die."

—Chris Smets

madeleine peyroux

Melanie Weiner

song. Though she looks like a child of the Nineties, her voice is an eerie throwback to the sound and spirit of Billie Holiday. On *Dreamland*, her Atlantic debut, she does the teasing vibrato at the end of long held notes, the affected pronunciations (singing "lones*hum* as can be" and "search-in' *foh* me"), and the half-smile purr that define the Holiday style. Hearing this from someone without a gardenia in her hair is downright disconcerting.

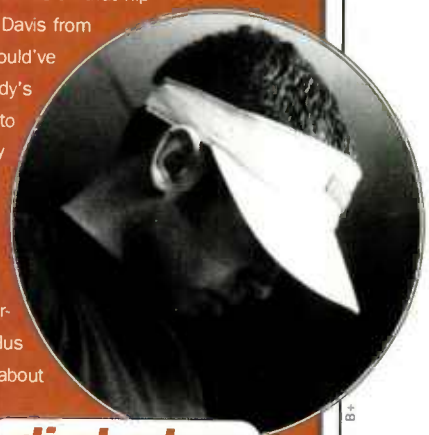
None of this escapes Peyroux's notice. In fact, she and Greg Cohen came up with some outside arrangements on *Dreamland* specifically to downplay the resemblance: Holiday did record "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter," but never with the bizarre harpsichord/bass marimba stride feel concocted here. Even so, that voice—sensual, laconic, caressing of lyric and langorous of phrase—can't be mistaken. (Or, to the perplexity of Holiday fans, apparently can.)

"Sounding like Billie Holiday all the time isn't going to be the end of what I try to do with my voice," says Peyroux. "I'm not Billie Holiday, and I'd like to be able to say that a lot, but that's harder to do than I'd like it to be. I hope to do more original songs on the next album; that's probably going to change things.

"Although," she adds, in a speaking voice that no one would mistake for Lady Day's, "what's happening with this record has been pretty good so far."

—Robert L. Doerschuk

dj shadow



B+

In the early Eighties, Run-D.M.C., Grandmaster Flash, and Public Enemy pioneered hip-hop methodology for the masses. But where they innovated, today's hip-hop is stillborn (trapped in formula?). In an ironic case of continental drift, beat science progression has sprung from Josh Davis, aka ***DJ Shadow***, a 24-year-old Californian expatriate signed for U.S. release through England's Mo' Wax label.

Shadow's *Endtroducing . . .* blends Satie-like beauty with hardcore pummel ("Stem/Long Stem") and lush atmospherics with spoken-word weirdness ("What Does Your Soul Look Like"), all tripping through warped beats and cryptic samples. "It's a perversion that hip-hop frowns on innovation now," says Davis from his London flat. "The hip-hop nation could've avoided commercialism but everybody's heroes sold out. [They're] unwilling to experiment if it endangers the money wheel. To me, hip-hop means the destruction of any genre walls that separate the music. Every form of music is legitimate."

Endtroducing is entirely sampler-derived, drawing from Davis' 3000-plus record collection. "The sampler is about power to the people, it's this generation's guitar. Just like a guitarist might want to be Hendrix, I want to be as proficient as I can on my instrument."

Writing 60% of his songs at home, then improvising the rest in studio, Davis is as musically astute as many "traditional" musicians. "I'll take a 4/4 break and put it in 5/4 or 3/4. 'Changeling' starts in 7/8, then goes into 4/4, then back to 7/8. Any time a tempo changes, it's to articulate a change in the mood."

Chained to his sampling search and the ever-present vinyl monkey hugging his back, Davis finds solace in the beat journey. "I'll drive from Sacramento to New Orleans just to buy records for sampling. When I'm not making music," he laughs, "I'm buying it."***—Ken Micallef***

jeremy enigk

A strange thing happened to Seattle's Sunny Day Real Estate on the road to being Sub Pop's next Nirvana: Singer/guitarist ***Jeremy Enigk*** found God. It was December 1994, the band was finishing a followup to their turbulent debut *Diary*, and Enigk broke the news to the world in a disarmingly candid Internet posting. "Yes sir, I have given my life to Christ," he wrote before going on to explain that this revelation had opened a rift in the band.

Sunny Day's explosive self-titled second disc arrived quietly the following year, along with the news that Enigk had left to pursue his new spiritual awakening. (The group's dynamic rhythm section, drummer William Goldsmith and bassist Nate Mendel, were quickly recruited by Dave Grohl for his Foo Fighters.) And then an even stranger thing happened to Enigk: He discovered the music of Mozart and Beethoven and was introduced, by Sub Pop honcho Jonathan Poneman, to a Seattle-based composer named Mark Nichols. The result: *Return of the Frog Queen* (Sub Pop), a lushly orchestrated solo debut that bathes Enigk's emo-core in Beatlesque textures, and reinforces his melodies with embellishments of piano, cello, harp, French horn, and glockenspiel.

"It's the whole punk rock thing put into the context of pretty music," is how the 22-year-old Enigk sums up his newfound aesthetic. "That's always been my musical background."

It's also not nearly as heavy-handed as Stryper, or Dylan's *Saved*. In fact, there's no direct mention of Jesus or God in the lyrics."I'm not writing to change other people's views about God," he explains. "But the songs are about my personal experiences with God, love, and life because that's who I am and it's part of my daily life."***—Matt Ashare***

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SONY

Some sage whose name escapes me once wrapped up an argument with the strongest curse he could muster—something like "Here's hoping you get what you're looking for, you frigging jerk." To be honest, this never seemed like an onerous fate to me—until, that is, I came across the story of Frogpond. This kick-ass quartet had spent a year or two blowing the cobwebs out of the clubs around Kansas City and Lawrence, Kansas—no small feat, considering that two of them literally learned to play their instruments after joining the band!—when Relativity Records came calling.

Cool, said singer/guitarist Heidi Phillips, guitarist/singer Kristie Stremel, bassist Justine Volpe, and drummer Megan Hamilton. They inked their deal in the summer of '95, slapped hands, and got ready for the big time.

The problem with getting what you've always wanted, though, is that fate can snatch it away. Which is what happened that day the phone rang at Frogpond's group house and Justine found herself saying hello to someone at Sony's New York office.

"They said that Relativity had completely wiped out its alternative division and shifted entirely to urban music," she recalls. "Everybody had lost their jobs. And suddenly we were without a label."

Fortunately, they weren't without friends. The most valuable at this juncture was Dawn Debias, a Chicago-based Sony regional A&R scout. "I had heard about Frogpond from a club booker in Kansas City," she recalls, "and from an engineer at Red House Studios, where they had just finished recording an eight-song demo. All I heard was one song, but it was enough to make me drive a couple of hours out just to meet them in Kansas City. When I first talked to them I realized they had only been a band for six months. So when I saw their live show about a month later, their musicianship still had a way to go, but their songs were really solid. Each one had a strong hook, even back then. Of course, musicianship is important, but that can always come with practice. Stage presence, the same thing. But I could tell from talking to them that they showed motivation: They had self-released this cassette, gone to local radio, tried to expand their tour base and solicit reviews.

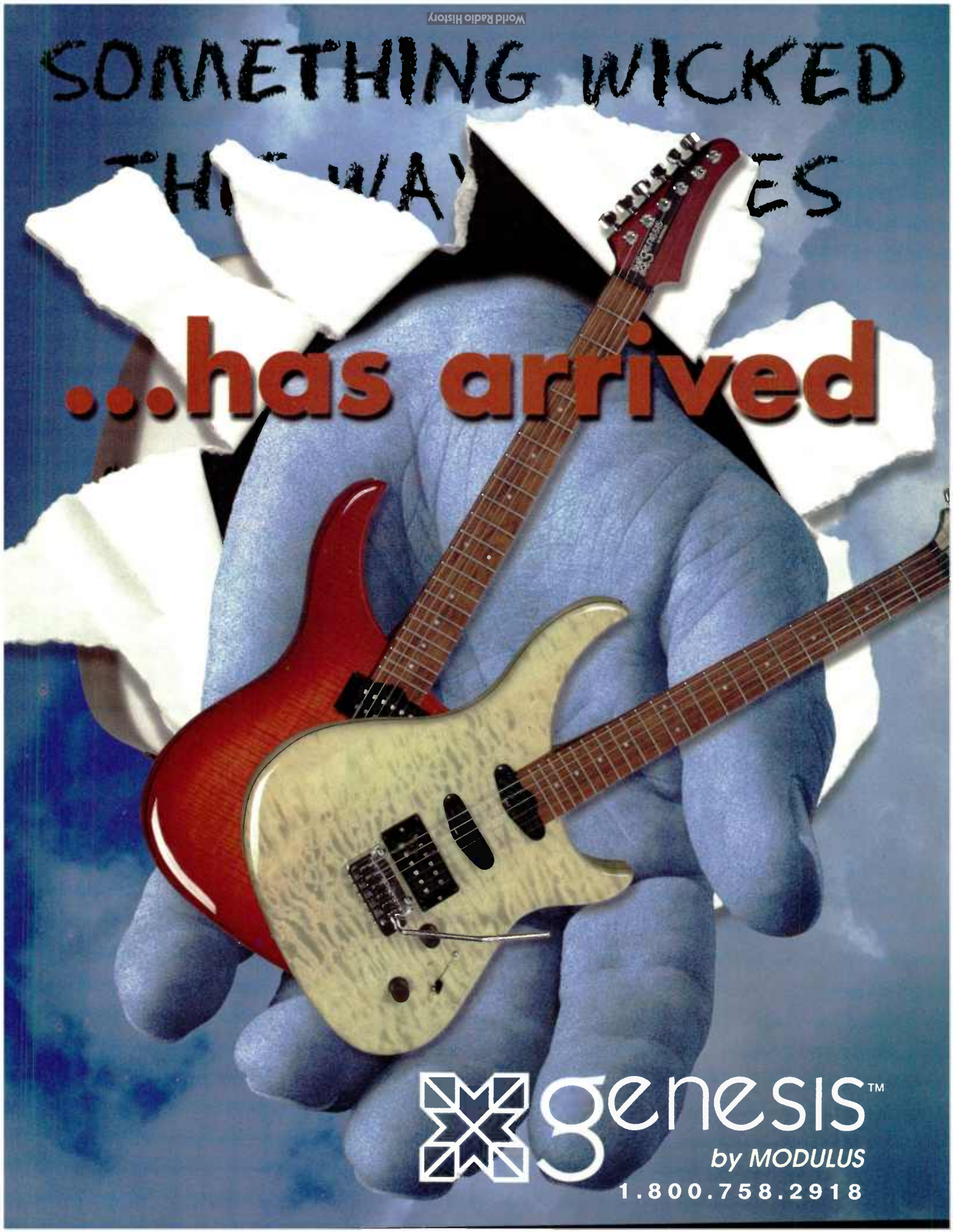
"The main point," Debias insists, "is that bands are wrong when they think the biggest hurdle is to get signed. Once that happens, an even bigger hurdle is to stay signed. If they can prove at an early stage that they have a solid work ethic, they're a good risk. And Frogpond made that clear to me from the start."

Reborn now as a Frogpond true believer, Debias began peppering the company with copies of their demo cassette. And after Relativity took the bait, she made sure their

FROGPOND

ALBUM TITLE: COUNT TO TEN
LABEL: TRISTAR/SONY
RELEASE DATE: SEPT. 24

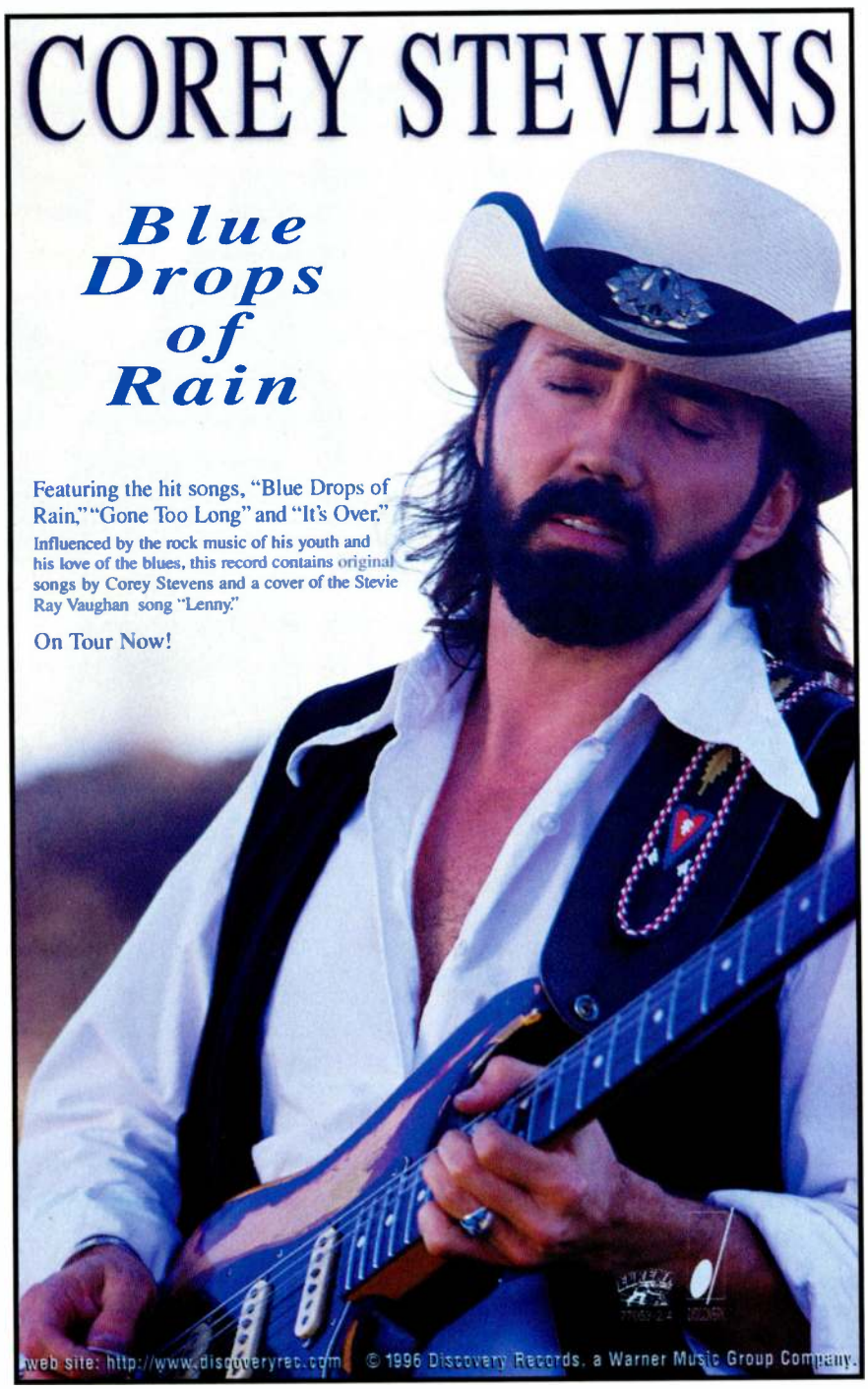
Brad Miller



contract included a right of first refusal clause, guaranteeing Sony labels first crack at signing the band if anything happened to the Relativity deal.

Because of their heavy release schedule, Columbia couldn't put an album into the stores until '97. Among the subsidiary labels, TriStar was the most enthusiastic. According to Debias, "their marketing director, Paul DeGooyer, was well aware of Frogpond because his office was on the same floor as Relativity, and their schedule was such that they could effectively work a Frogpond record in the fall."

But what kind of a record? The Relativity disc was supposed to have been an EP. This idea never appealed to Debias, and now that a new label was showing interest, she began lobbying for a full-length album debut instead. "When they recorded the demo, they only had 26 songs in their repertoire," she says. "Since then, they'd written maybe another 20 songs, some of which better represented where they were at the time."



And so, with Everclear's Art Alexakis taking time off from his own negotiations with Capitol to produce the session, Frogpond disappeared into Smart Studios in Madison, Wisconsin, and cut *Count to Ten*. "Quite frankly, their demo didn't fit together that well," says DeGooyer. "Some parts were really polished and other parts were rough. But when they did the album, they just hit it. It really worked."

As far as all parties are concerned, the Relativity debacle turned out to be an opportunity disguised as a disaster. With its four-person staff, TriStar has given Frogpond the kind of attention they might have missed in Columbia's teeming roster. "We put together a pretty steady diet of touring, press, advertising in the fanzines, and placing the record in the right Mom & Pop buzz stores," says DeGooyer. "We do some down-and-dirty stuff that Columbia might not do, like handing out postcards at their gigs. We've already gotten back 500 cards, which is a great database."

"With a bigger label we would have been competing with artists who were already generating massive amounts of money," says Justine Volpe. "Also, when we were on Relativity we were going to be handled by RED Distribution, and they handle TriStar releases as well, so it's kind of like we just moved over." With a full-length CD to boot.

Not only that: Frogpond goes back into the studio in February to record their next album—and this one's coming out on Columbia. "Rather than push a band on a public that's unaware of them," Debias points out, "it's easier to expose people to them on the smaller label and get them wanting to hear the next record, that major release."

None of this has turned the quartet's heads. "We haven't yet toured for months at a time," says Volpe. "But that'll come soon. Our ambition for '97 is to be out so long and get so homesick that we want to die."

Be careful, Justine. Once again, you just might get what you're looking for.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

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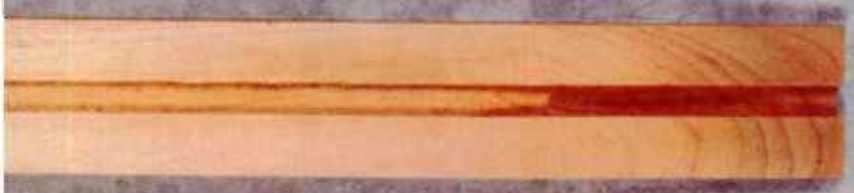

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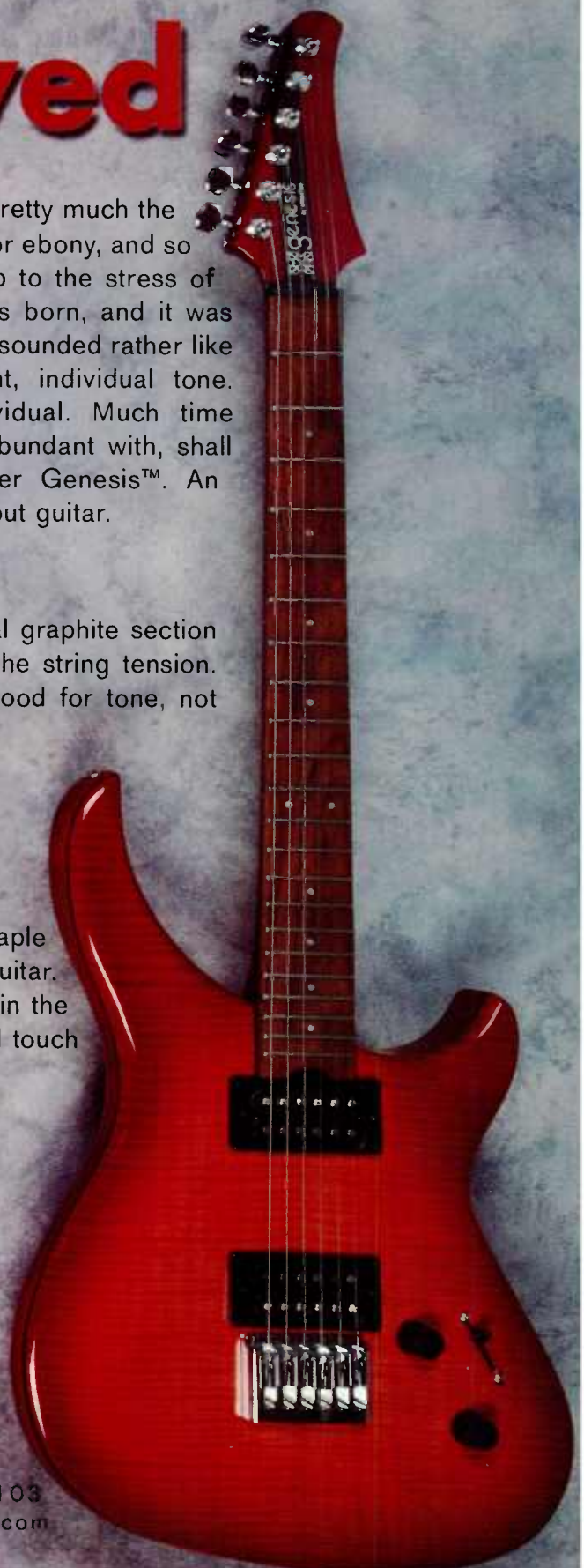

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songwriting

L-R: Graham Parker, Marshall Crenshaw, Billy Bragg

We Three Sing(er/Songwriter)s

by michael gelfand

Bragg, Parker, & Crenshaw weigh in on tune-smithery

Writing songs is no way to make a living. Unless, that is, you've got the gift—or the curse, depending on how you look at it. Graham Parker, Billy Bragg, and Marshall Crenshaw each view songwriting as a little of both. While none of the three has learned how to make songs appear out of thin air, each in his own way has managed to maintain a successful career as a songwriter.

Collectively, they've been writing and recording for over 40 years, with 34 albums to prove they've been busy. And they've nurtured careers that share striking similarities: each has been lauded as a critic's darling, each has weathered times of critical travail, and each has managed to evolve creatively while staying in touch with the style and sensibility that attracted listeners at the beginning of their respective careers.

Their longevity alone qualifies them to discuss the trials and tribulations of songwriting. They've each also recently come out with new records: Parker's *Acid Bubblegum*, Bragg's *William Bloke*, and Crenshaw's *Miracle of Science*. And to top it off, each has a passion for Indian food that won't quit, so when I suggested a lunchtime discussion over some Tandoori trout and chicken vindaloo at

Melanie Weiner

Bombay Palace in midtown Manhattan, the temptation was too great to decline.

Where does your inspiration come from? Do you cull from the experiences of everyday life or do you choose your topics more strategically?

CRENSHAW: You know, I really don't like to write about what's going on in my life. I'd just as well not write. Instead, I'll let time go by.

PARKER: Yeah, I'll do the same. I'll walk past a room with a guitar for many months because I know that when I pick it up I'm going to have to deal with stuff. I think I can talk for the three of us in that we write lyrics that mean something. They're not just fluff or an attempt at fashioning a hit or whatever. It comes from inside and outside and it's difficult because you have to face yourself and the fact that you're not as good as you think you are. I know that when I pick up a guitar, the first things that come out are not going to be good enough and that I'm going to have to work hard to make them good.

BRAGG: But isn't that like you're your own worst critic, then?

PARKER: Yeah, it is. Even when they're done and I know that everything in a song is credible, when I listen to the mixes, I just think, "Who is that gnarly little man? *[laughter]* This is not a pleasant person in there."

CRENSHAW: Do you ever go to the other extreme and think you're a god among men?

PARKER: I feel that as well, all of the time.

CRENSHAW: Me too.

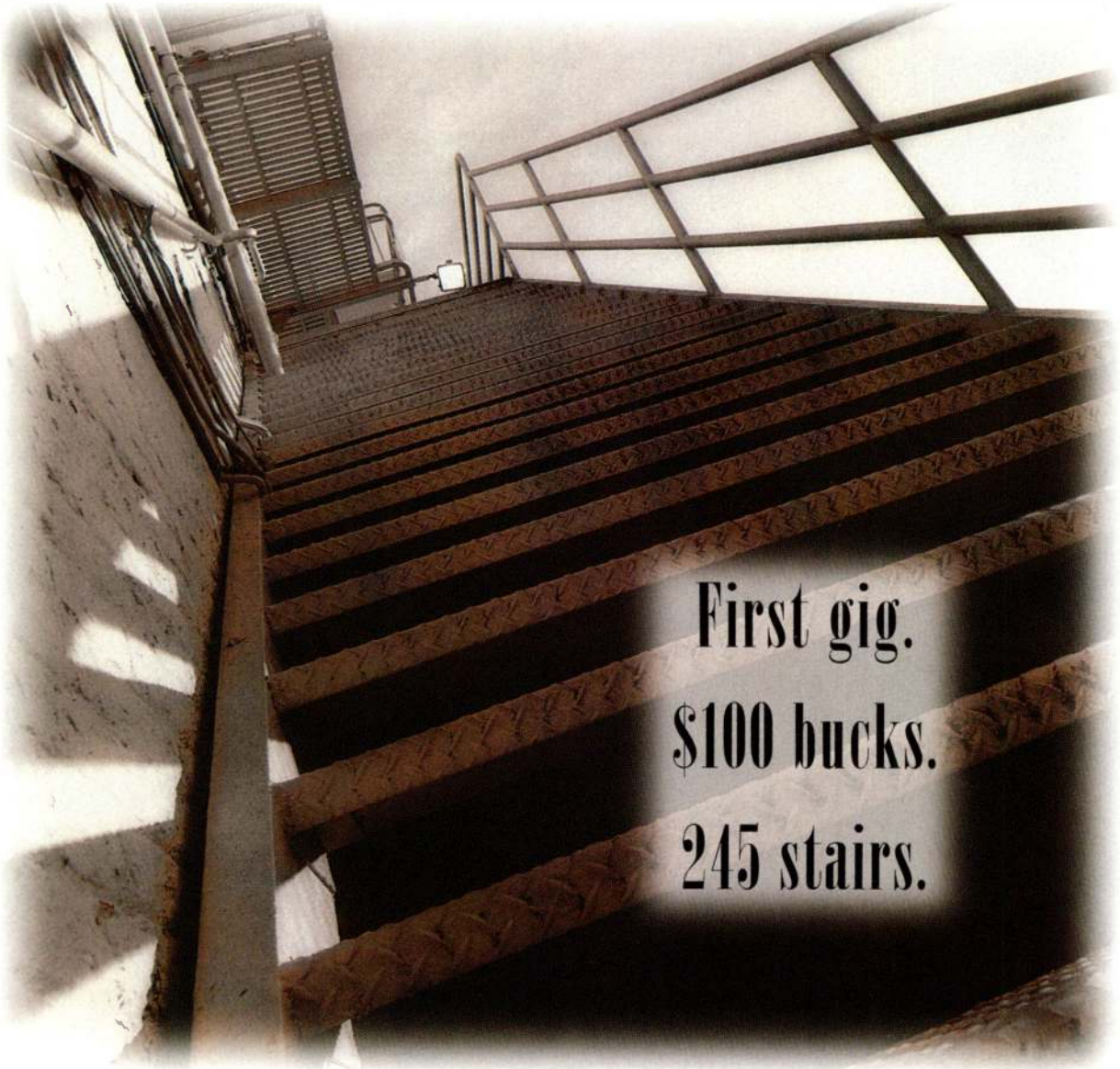
PARKER: I feel so damn superior. But then, when I pick up the guitar I realize that I'm very inferior and I'm just trying really hard. Compared with Dylan, Lennon/McCartney, and Jagger/Richards, we're all just trying hard anyway. If you see Hendrix in an old film, this guy wasn't trying. He was *there*. I just feel like we're pissing around compared to those people, and that makes it hard as well.

Does that make you more careful about your song ideas? Do you struggle to write melody lines, hooks, and lyrics and to get it all to coalesce into something that really works?

BRAGG: I don't know if it's always that conscious, but I think you always know when you've got a good idea. Question is, are you going to be able to articulate that with vision, or are you going to be lazy and just write "blah, blah, blah?" You might start off writing "blah, blah, blah," but as you work with the song you refine how you say it. Sometimes you go as far as you can before you put the damn record out. And then you keep hearing it on the radio and you know inside that you should've spent another couple of weeks working with it. Those ones can come back and haunt you.

Has that changed for you over your career, that ability to work a song into shape instead of just throwing it out there and saying, "Ah, I should have changed that?"

CRENSHAW: I'm still writing some of the songs I recorded ten years ago. I'm always changing them. You know, a syllable here, a bit of this or that, re-editing things. Then there are others that are the same every time, because



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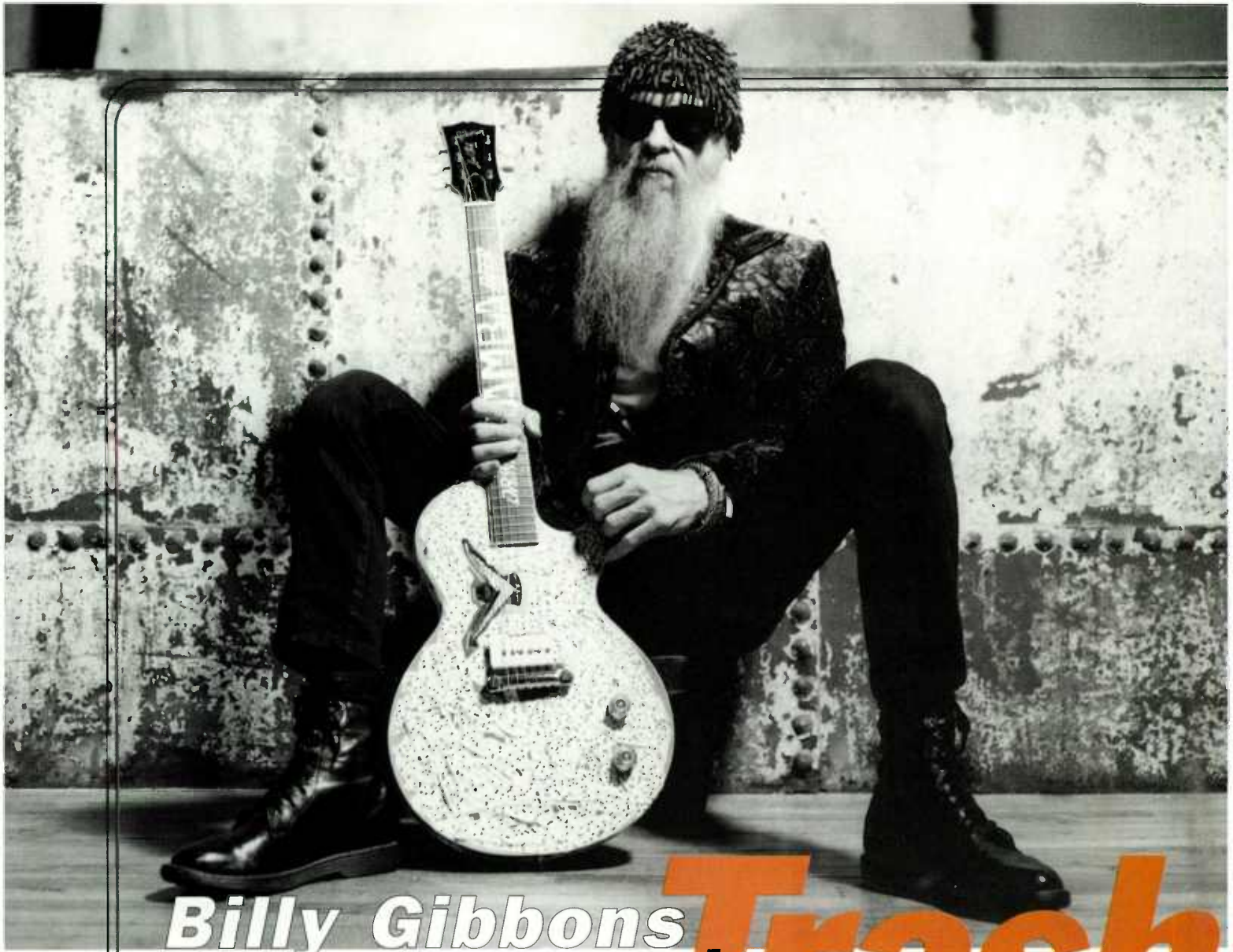


Billy Gibbons gets Trash

By Mac Randall

When first approached for this story, Billy Gibbons recoiled at the concept of a private lesson. "You're not going to have someone take closeups of my hands, are you?" he inquired suspiciously. Assured that wouldn't be the case, he sounded relieved. "Well, okay, let's do this, but let's keep it trashy. I don't want to do anything that sounds too academic."

Rest assured, I've never thought of Mr. William F. Gibbons as a scholar, and I don't think too many other folks have either. He sure don't sound like one on ZZ Top's latest, *Rhythmeen* (RCA), a welcome return to down-and-dirty form. No dabblings with electropop here; *Rhythmeen* is strictly live (in the studio) three-piece ROCK, played with unrepentant fervor by Gibbons and his longtime cohorts Dusty Hill on bass and Frank Beard on drums.

Still, once you meet him, there is something oddly professorial about Billy's demeanor and delivery. Or maybe it's just a knowing parody of the intellectual—the serious tone of voice and the long thoughtful pauses between statements (sometimes between words) are offset by the mischievous twinkle in his eye and the hint of a grin that's rarely absent from behind that generous beard. Gibbons comes off as a fellow who's most amused with himself. And rightly so.

But Vincent Price Said It's All Right

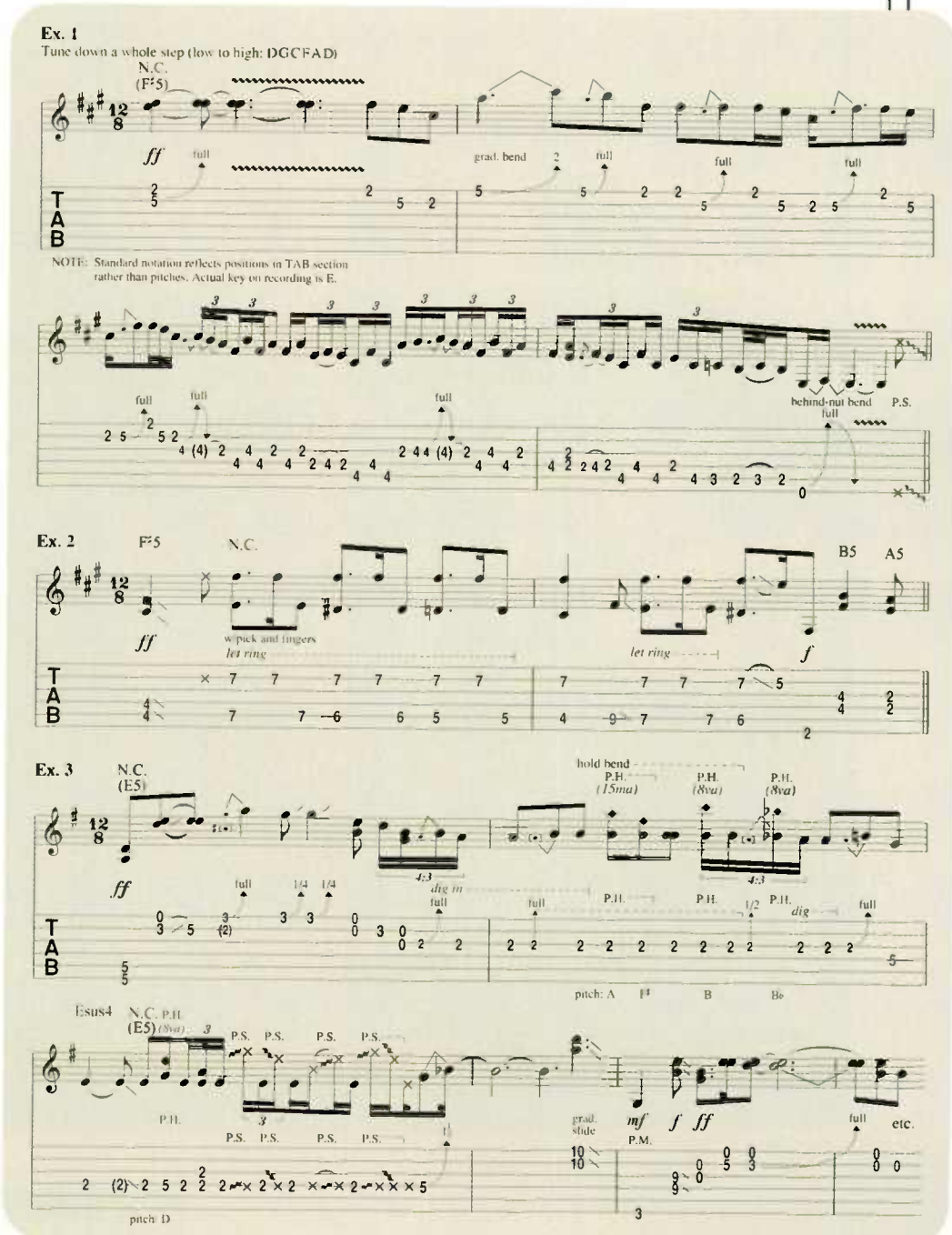
"This latest outing. . . is ZZ early-style...without a doubt," he says. "The engineer, Joe Hardy, and his assistants...insisted...on tone, taste, and tenacity. A wide range of...African artifacts...that we brought into the studio...such as masks, spears, shields...clothing...every Saturday-morning Tarzan movie memory...represented a means to stay focused on...what we...imagine...as simplistic...primitive...powerful...rude, raw, rough, and ragged. There was a good-

ly selection of our favorite photographs...including the Muddy Waters picture...where he's playing...a goldtop Les Paul with P-90 pickups...which suggested...we at least experiment...and see if there were some distinctive tones from that...sort of guitar...that might be appropriate...which there of course...were. It is the wise man who says, 'If it's good enough for Muddy Waters...'"

Indeed. Also important in the *Rhythmeen* equation were a vintage Fender Esquire, '66 Marshall 100-watt head, Marshall cabinet with two 10" speakers, Marshall JMP-1 rackmount tube preamp, and a distortion box called the Bixsonic Expandora, which Billy describes as follows: "It looks like a Skoal can with a 9-volt battery and knobs on it, but its existential circuit board flies a surprising tube-like richness into the amp." As Gibbons puts it, "The idea was to double-frazz all that had been fuzzed before." And to play real low—much of *Rhythmeen* was recorded with the guitar tuned down at least a whole step. "It's a different game, you have to be aware of that," he says. "Subterranean tuning can play tricks on fingering, the pressure you apply to the strings. It's certainly not insurmountable, and it's fun seeing your wires turn to spaghetti."

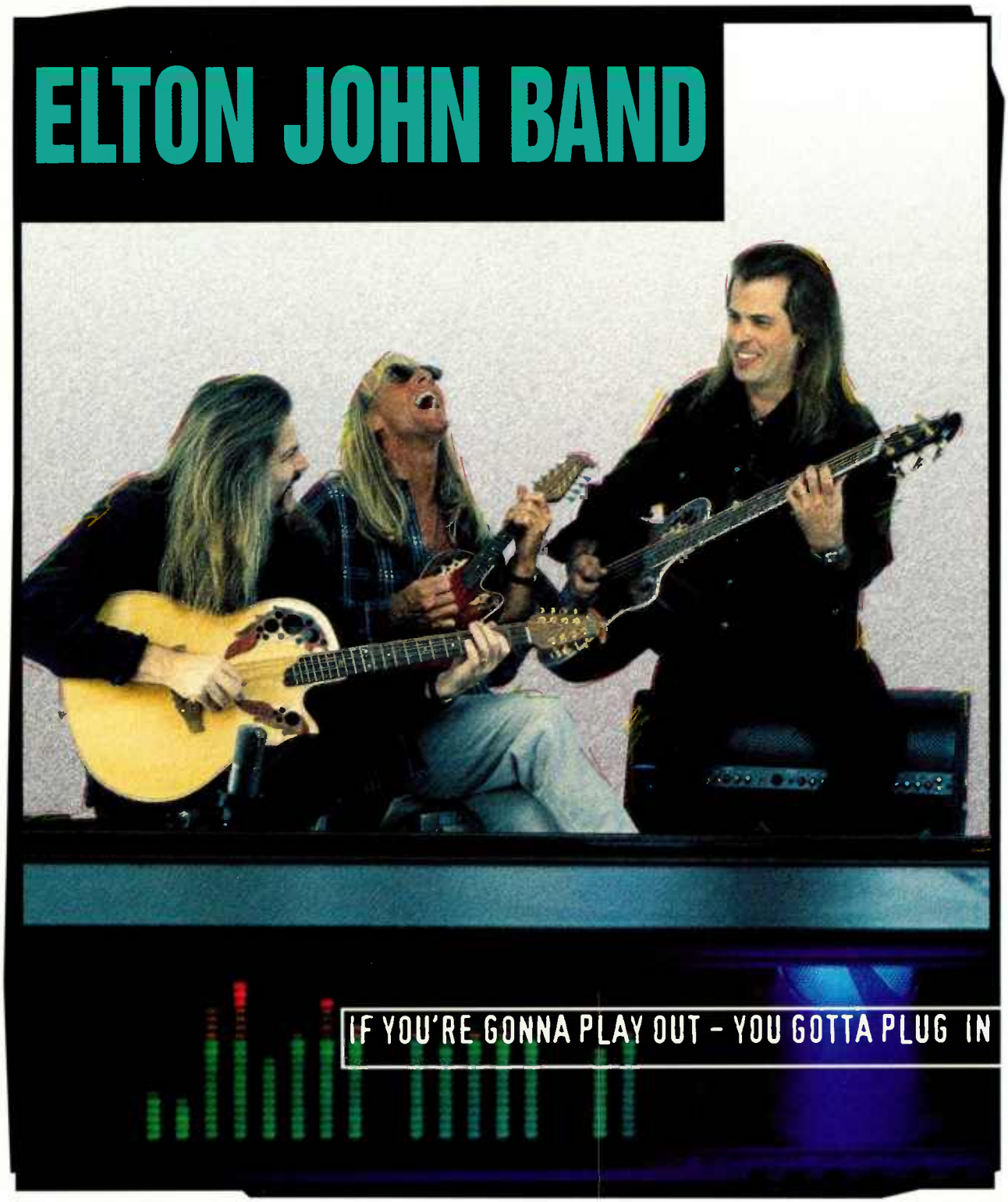
The most arresting combination of all these elements is "Vincent Price Blues," one of Gibbons' greatest performances, written and recorded in less than an hour. "The chord structure supports Vincent Price as the king of horror movies," he explains. "There's an F-D-B♭ change that I don't think has been used in a blues before, but it made it easy for us to name the tune, because it was terrifying."

All three examples here are taken from "Price," which was played in standard tuning a whole step down. Ex. 1 is the beginning of Billy's main solo, a clinic in staggered blues phrasing. Ex. 2, at the end of that solo, takes two well-worn 12-bar turnarounds and playfully welds them together. And Ex. 3, the climax of the outro solo, tastefully employs the trademark Gibbons pinch-harmonic technique (squeezing the pick's edge between finger and thumb to bring out a given string's higher frequencies) before degenerating into all-out fretboard scraping and ending with two loopy upward bends (exploring respectively the flat fifth and major seventh of the scale). "The humanness of all this—or the inhumanness, Vincent Price withstanding—is the playing, the delivery. . .and then you search for somebody to say, 'Continue. We don't know if it's a mistake. Just keep going.'" Thankfully, he does.



"Vincent Price Blues" by Gibbons/Hill/Beard, © 1996 Hamstein Music Company/Billy G's Hollywood Productions/ Dust Hill House Music, Inc./Beardwalk Music, Inc. (ASCAP).

ELTON JOHN BAND



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words & music

Robert L Doerschuk

Let's talk about music. What could be simpler? You're holding this special issue of *Musician* because music plays an important role in your life. Even people who don't consider themselves "musical" respond to the sounds they find on the radio or hear in the air around them. But for players and their serious fans, there's a deeper connection. You feel it, and so do I. It's something fundamental, like breathing. We look at people who don't have the gift, or haven't had the gumption, to pull the sounds they hear in their heads out into the real world, and wonder how it is that someone could not know how to make a guitar sing or even a computer bust a groove. And so you talk about music, and you listen to the players who know how you feel. You trade thoughts about some record you heard years ago, impressions of this new piece of gear, and war stories over the club grind. You talk, you listen—and you read.

This is where *Musician* comes in. For two decades now we've provided a forum for players who want to debate and celebrate the things that matter to us all. We've changed where changes in the business have made it necessary, but by and large it is now what it always was: a home base for the working musician. Whether you're packing stadiums with your fans or cutting your first demo in your home studio, this is your common ground, your marketplace of ideas, where your story—the music of our time—is documented.

The humbling part of all this is that the musicians do a better job of talking about music than anyone else. For all the talented writers whose work has graced our pages, the greatest enlightenment tends to come from the artists themselves. A few days spent poring over current and back issues of *Musician* confirms that if you've been in the business long enough to make a career out of it, you've got to be a lot sharper and more self-aware than your average Joe or Jill.

Which leads us back to that most guileless of suggestions—let's talk about music. Imagine yourself doing press on your first album. When the writer's mic is in your face, and the question is asked—what is there to say? It's one thing to talk with your buds about how cool Band X is, but when you dig below the surface, and try to put the magic into words that can convey even a trace of what it is in the appeal of music that lies beyond words, in the womb of awareness, in the seed of who we are, it's often bedrock that you hit.

Years ago I did an interview with an articulate and provocative artist who very nearly walked out in the middle of our discussion, not because we didn't get along—we had just had a rather pleasant lunch before hunkering down to the journalistic business at hand—but because the more he tried to talk about something as intuitive as music, the more bollixed he became. I watched as this guy felt his way through a verbal maze, looking in vain for the door that would open into that bright light where the right words waited to be summoned to explain the inexplicable, the primal, the .... *thing* that we all feel and communicate through this lick, or that beat, or even this glance in mid-solo to the rhythm section, which suddenly understands exactly what you're trying to say.

And yet, again and again, in every issue of this magazine, the leading artists of the day came close to bringing the passions of music into the realm of words. In their own ways, Lennon, Clapton, Zappa, Neil Young, Townshend, Springsteen, Bono, Michael Stipe, Tori, Joni, the Marsalis brothers, the punks, the jazz purists, the hair bands—all of the artists who've spoken their minds in *Musician* have captured and shared some of that light.

More than a tribute to *Musician*, their words over the past two decades and in the following pages honor all of us who are crazy and wise enough to commit ourselves to a lifetime of music. Thanks for taking part in the adventure with us.

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1978 to 1998

Sam Holdsworth

If there was ever one bedrock editorial principle underlying Musician it was this: Don't ask a musician directly what their music means. That's what the music is for, to express what can't be put into words. So Musician set out to talk to artists about their craft, while hoping that the deeper, more slippery goods might be revealed in the process. "Ask about how they make their music and follow your nose from there" was the extent of our guidance to writers.

After a very raggedy editorial and financial start, barely held together by the monthly sales miracles of my partner Gordon Baird, Musician came together as a jazz magazine with the almost simultaneous arrivals of art director David Olin, writer Rafi Zabor, and photographer Deborah Feingold. In trying to communicate the essence of the jazz we were writing about, we wanted the visuals to communicate as strongly as the writing. Great jazz has tremendous dignity, and we tried to match that with simple, elegant typography and powerful photography. Feingold's black and white portraits of the jazz legends we were covering were I think as good as any ever done. She captured that elegiac feeling of the music as played by masters like Charles Mingus, Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon, McCoy Tyner, Ornette Coleman, and others. Their dignity, and their pain and humility, their perfect concentration in their music, was reflected eloquently in Musician during those years.

But being a jazz magazine was no different than being a jazz musician: no money, no respect, and a fractious, contentious audience that wants you in one bag or another, or not at all. Besides, so-called fusion had overwhelmed jazz, wiping away the golden age of bebop in a nervous flurry of meaningless notes.

There was, however, plenty of interesting music in the rock world. Not in the mainstream, mind you—this was the late Seventies, the age of dinosaur bands like Journey, REO Speedwagon, and other unmentionables. But at the fringes was a lot of music as interesting and energetic as any of the jazz being played. Great music transcends labels.

To prove the point, we did a cover juxtaposing the Art Ensemble of Chicago with George Clinton of Funkadelic. We did a cover exclusive with Frank Zappa, who hadn't done an interview in years and was thrilled to be taken seriously. Word got out that Musician, the jazz magazine, was assigning writers who understood music, to do serious articles about selected rock artists. Add to that the insecurity of most rock musicians about being seen as frivolous as compared to jazz musicians who had real chops and played "real" music, and being in Musician began to infer a kind of credibility within the rock world.

That credibility was certainly a factor in getting what may have been the first in-depth interview with Steely Dan. Our momentum built from there: Brian Eno, Pete Townshend, Bob Marley, Mark Knopfler, Peter Gabriel, Talking Heads, Bruce Springsteen. Many were exclusives, some were first-time cover stories for emerging artists, and others broke new ground: Vic Garbarini worked his magic on Paul McCartney and got him to talk about the Beatles for the first time since they broke up. Some were bizarre, like putting Captain Beefheart on the cover with Michael McDonald. Artists began writing for the magazine too: Zappa, Ornette, Robert Fripp, Dave Liebman, David Grisman.

We were also the happy beneficiaries of Rolling Stone's excesses and conceits, which drove away some of their best writers, such as Timothy White, Dave Marsh, and Chuck Young. We welcomed them with open arms and paltry paychecks, for which they did some of their best work and enlivened Musician in the process.

At the risk of seeming too proud a parent, I believe we got on to something quite special in those early years. There was no other magazine at the time that looked or read like Musician. People noticed it, appreciated it, and were influenced by it. For that I can only thank all the writers, photographers, and staff of that era, who put so much on the line to make it what it was.

Sam Holdsworth, editor of Musician in 1978-85, is president of a financial information company and a painter. He lives in Santa Fe.

1976 to 1980

PUNK

"I saw the movie The Decline of Western Civilization and what I got from it was that a lot of rich white kids are now using music to express violence. They will or must eventually grow out of that, because violence usually leads to death."

—Ornette Coleman, Nov. 1981

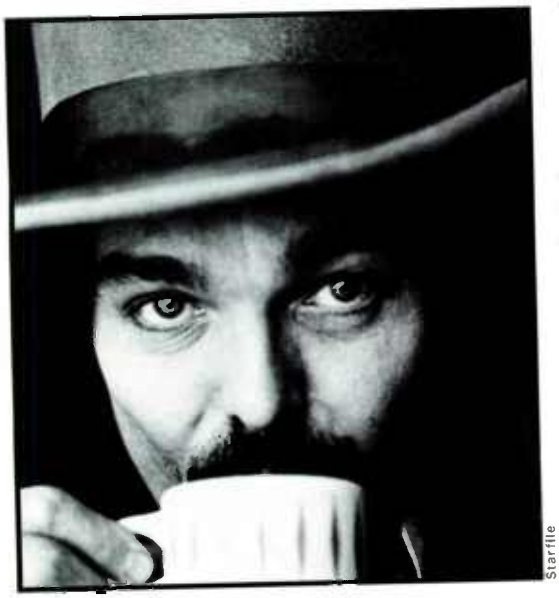
"Punk seemed like rock and roll utterly without the music."

—Steve Winwood, Oct. 1982

Ebet Roberts

A sound only has a meaning when you have a motion to fit it. And that motion has more to do with the person than the sound. More and more I find that most music that we write or are involved with is really a reproduction of something we've heard but has a different time or melody applied to it. For some reason our concept of ourselves is such that memory and repetition have more to do with the things we strive to enjoy rather than the presence of ourselves actually doing those things. Especially in terms of music, where it is designed and packaged to separate people from the immediate environment they're in, so it becomes as removed from true music as the commercials on TV are removed from having to do with the product they're selling. The commercial has much more to do with implanting all the sounds of the voice, the singing or the music than it does with the product. So then you put the sound in your head and relate it to the product. But the kind of music I'm playing, the harmolodic playing, is that which eliminates the more accepted fact of having to have a pattern to play an idea, which is somewhat of a style in itself. It is a way of doing things individually, rather than writing to another person's style.

Ornette Coleman, May/June '78



Starfile

Captain Beefheart, Dec. '80

Have you ever had somebody you looked up to as an artist? Can't think of anybody, other than the fact that I thought Van Gogh was excellent. *How about in music?* Never in music, a hero in music. No, fortunately. *So you didn't listen to like Delta blues and free jazz before you started to...* Not really. . .I met Eric Dolphy. He was a nice guy, but it was real limited to me, like blid-dleliddle-diddlenopdedit-bop. "I came a long way from St. Louie," like Ornette, you know. It didn't move me. *Dolphy didn't move you?* Well, he moved me, but he didn't move me as much as a goose, say. Now that could be a hero, a gander goose could definitely be a hero, the way they blow their heart out for nothing like that. *Is that because you think that people generally do it for purposes of ego?* Um, yeah, which I think is good because it gets your shoes tied. It doesn't scare old ladies, you get dressed. So I think that's nice. *You don't think it's possible to create art that's egoless, that just flows through you?* I'm tryin' to do that, on this last album definitely. *Well, one thing I find is that the more I know the less I know.* Me too. I don't know anything about music.

1976 to 1980

"When I joined the Sex Pistols they were a covers band doing Small Faces and Who numbers. There was no way I could get my head around any of that—because it wasn't from my generation."

—John Lydon, Sex Pistols, July 1994

"Back in the punk days we were fabulously pretentious. Twenty years later, people are still reeling from the shock and audaciousness of our pretensions."

—Malcolm McLaren, June 1995

1976 to 1980

"Punk was the sport that could've kept the Crips outta the streets."

—John Fisher, Fishbone, May 1991

"When I first heard punk in '77 I'd been waiting six years to hear that kind of commitment—to hear some geezer hit a drum as if all he wanted to do in his life was hit a drum."

—Robert Fripp, June 1981

"I saw the Police in a pub in Putney one summer evening. Sting was giving his all to a room with fifteen people in it. So he's got as much right to be punk as anybody else, really."

—Joe Strummer, the Clash, June 1995

"The New Wave stuff that was emerging helped to give me courage to go out and try something a little more daring."

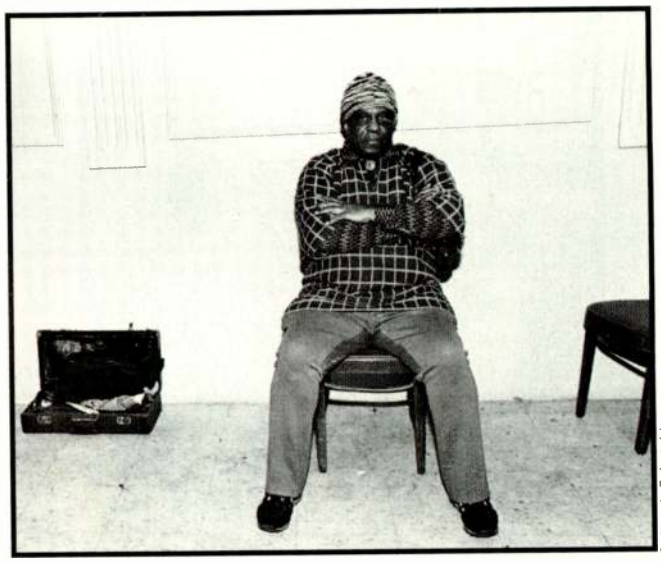
—Lindsey Buckingham, June 1981

"One influence I think I had in New Wave is that I was one of the people who popularized the notion that music isn't only the province of musicians. Just as one doesn't have to be an accomplished realist to make valid art, one doesn't have to be an adept instrumentalist to make valid music."

—Brian Eno, April-May 1981

"The bottom line on Sandinista! is that you can dance all the way through it. The only thing is you have to dance a certain way."

—Mick Jones, June 1981



Deborah Feingold

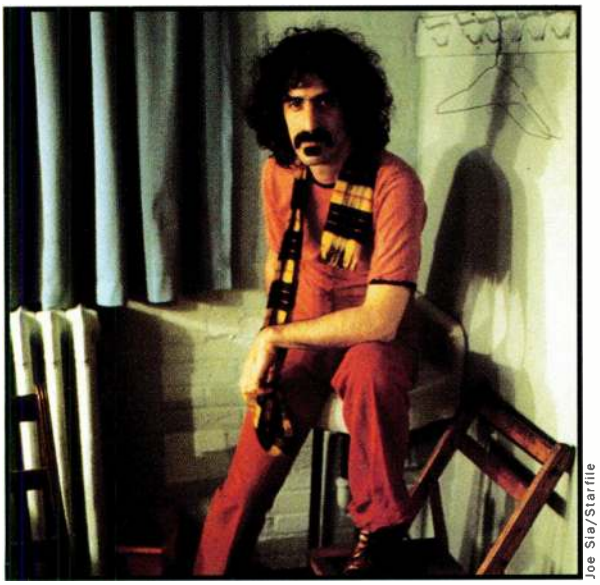
Sun Ra, April/May '80

I'd never try to rouse something as destructive as man. I wanna calm people down, put 'em in a sort of dream state, between myth and reality. They just gotta learn to use their intuition. Intuition is a survival mechanism, innate knowledge of the proper thing to do. Now you got people acting like savages, you just read the papers or watch the news. I've seen so much ugliness and stupidity on this planet. I've seen so many wonderful bands passed by: like the Sunset Royals, the Carolina Cotton Pickers; they played for the pure joy of it, just wasn't no place in this world for them. People here keep making the same mistakes, history repeats itself. It's very boring for me; I've been elsewhere, you see. I'd much rather be on Jupiter, there it's inexpressibly beautiful, splendorous, pure happiness. I can see why they say the word 'jovial' come from Jupiter. I was there just the other day, in what you might call a dream or a vision, but it was just as real as you and I talking right here. You got to learn to understand rather than overstand your position regarding so-called reality." Would he ever leave this planet, give up on it? "Well, the Creator wants me to be here, he just told me to get myself out there more than ever." He rolled his eyes and chuckled, "but I really wouldn't wanna be caught dead on this planet."

Deborah Feingold

George Clinton, Nov. '79

Funk ain't nothin' but a hyperventilatin' groovin'. That's all that happens when you hold a single pattern, and suddenly you feel like God. All you done is breathe yourself into hyperventilation, and it feel good. It's like taking acid, or Hare Krishna, or sex, or any other chanting or moving. And that's why so many people are fucked up in the discos now. They done got to a little dance music, but that's as far as they can go. I mean, disco started out as basic R&B, like Motown, but with a nine on it—like a bag of street shit that's been stepped on. There ain't nothin' wrong with it, it's just that they got the same tempo and tones. That's what's dangerous—there isn't a wide enough spectrum. They took a little of the bottom off it, and sweetened it up. It's as if the real low bass tones and the real high frequencies are dirty words on the radio. They don't want you to experience that, 'cause then you want to fuck. All that shit hits you right on your primal notes. They don't want you dabbling in that because you might get some other notions—something bizarre. Notice on radio the records that make it are real light, just a step or two above Muzak. It can get deeper than that. It can get what you call spiritual. It can free your mind so your ass will follow, till you out there acting the fool and you never thought you could; out there at a concert waving your hands, shaking your ass, doing the idiot jerk—and really be cool. You know what I'm saying?



Joe Sia/Starfile

Frank Zappa, Aug. '79

Look, the thing about people saying whether something is shit or it's wonderful is irrelevant to the thing being discussed. Neither one of our opinions matters. *But wouldn't you say that there's got to be some music—*That's total shit? No! Absolutely not. Because there's always somebody that likes it even if it's just the guy himself who's playing it—and he's entitled to love it, and he's entitled to be as good as he thinks he is. Whatever we say about it doesn't make any difference, because we don't know what went into the manufacture of it. A garage band that plays a one-chord song, and plays the fuck out of it because they're straining to fulfill 100% of their understanding of the E major chord on the guitar, has achieved something spectacular if the day before they couldn't even make an E major chord on the guitar. *Do you think the image that the media has of you is very accurate?* No, but it's irrelevant. *But there is an image.* Oh yeah, there's definitely an image. But I think that if anybody was ever to manifest an exact replica of the kind of person I really am and stick it in the newspapers, I don't think people would bother with it. Because what's exciting about a guy who gets up in the morning and sits at the piano and writes little ballpoint pen notes on a piece of paper, and then goes to bed? You know what I do when you leave here? I go back to the piano until it's time to go to bed. There's nothing exciting about that. It's better to have people thinking that I'm out being totally crazy—because that's exciting.

Do you crave an audience if you don't play in front of one for a certain length of time? Actually, no, it's the opposite. I need them even less. My motivation is simply to do what I know I better be doing at any given moment. It might have to do with getting exercise I haven't gotten for a few days. That would be just as important as writing. *You've talked about going "into the cave" to find the light. Do you have special forms of isolation, and what do you do when you compose?* I really don't know what I do [*laughs*]. Every time I've been tempted to analyze what I do, I lose what I was doing. Which is exactly why any real experiences have never been able to be explained for other people to understand. All the religious texts are nothing but the closest you can get by drawing parallels. The only thing we can talk about are secondary. *Because the moment of enlightenment is beyond.* I once had an incredible experience in the bathtub at home, and jumped out and went into the bedroom and tried to explain it to my wife. And she shrieked at me, "You're losing it! It's disappearing." I said, "You're right," and went back into the bathtub. I was incapable of expressing what had happened. It was a very simple thing. Somebody just turned the light on.

Deborah Feingold

Keith Jarrett, Feb. '79

1976 to 1980

"I've never held that disingenuous punk ethic that 'we can't play, we won't play.' I despise people who revel in the ignorance of not being able to play their instrument. There's a kind of pathetic side to it, really."

—Robert Smith, the Cure, July 1996

"We're treated fairly by New Wavers. They feel it's valid to come see ZZ Top because we like playing blues licks but we're not up there showing them off."

—Billy Gibbons, Sept. 1983

"Kurt [Cobain] died more 'punk rock' than when he started, because his music was embraced by so many people. He would play shows for jocks and realize how important his values were to him."

—Nils Bernstein, publicist for Sub Pop, June 1995

"Whenever I go to a punk show and it's all boys on the dance floor, I think, 'Hey, there's something missing here. Where's the sex?'"

—Tom Petty, March 1983

"You were selling the attitude, not the records. The records were just souvenirs."

—Malcolm McLaren, February 1982

"No self-respecting punk rocker is gonna hold his bass high—he'll look like a fuckin' jerk. It comes from wanting to be as cool as Sid Vicious."

—Flea, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Jan. 1994

1976 to 1980

"At least in England the kids who are punks or skinheads are involved in a total lifestyle. They don't just play and later wash the grease out of their hair like Sha Na Na."

—Nick Lowe, June 1982

"I couldn't believe you could be in a band and be so rebellious without spending ten thousand dollars on amplifiers. That's something you didn't get from seeing Jeff Beck."

—Dee Dee Ramone, July 1983

"Chrissie [Hynde] was hiding from people that she could do melodic songs, because it was the end of the punk era and there was still this aggressive attitude. But she kind of confided in us: melodic songs, that's what we need."

—James Honeyman-Scott, Pretenders, December 1981

"A bunch of these English punk musicians came up to me and asked if they could buy some of my records. So they must be on to something!"

—Sun Ra, March 1980

SONGWRITING

"Burt Bacharach isn't just another writer. He has to be the best there ever was."

—Michael McDonald, December 1980

"'Wildflowers' is the only song that ever came to me complete in one spurt. I kept listening back to it, trying to figure out if I stole it from somewhere."

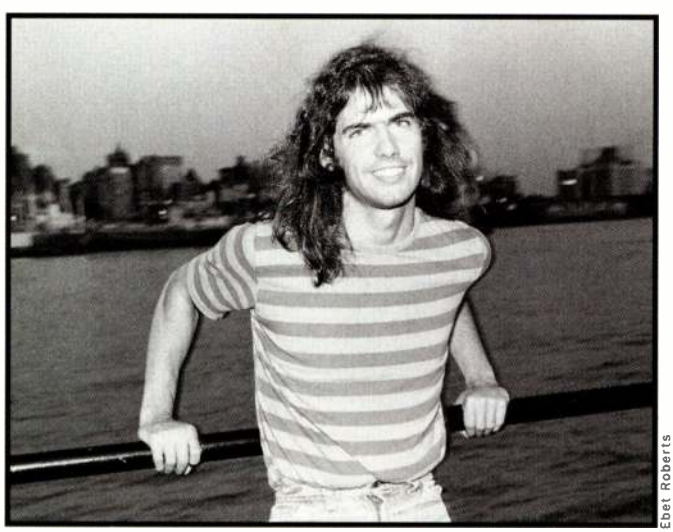
—Tom Petty, Dec. 1994

Does jazz allow for note-for-note written compositions? You have it backwards. The style doesn't dictate the use of orchestration. The user is the one who creates the styles. I don't say to myself, Does this work as jazz? I'll create the music and the forms I need without even thinking about style. We're seeing more orchestration in the jazz-inclined areas, or more structure, because there are more artists desirous of controlling the effects they create through performance and records. *Does note-for-note composition allow you to determine the effect more specifically than improvising?* It depends. There are certain musicians I could improvise with and obtain a very specific result. The palette I work with is not just the technology of the keyboards, scales, and notes. It's knowing what musicians can do and what results I'll get from employing a certain musical concept. *So note for note writing isn't inimical to jazz? Jazz doesn't require any particular procedure?* As far as I'm concerned, it doesn't. I used to question things a lot, though. Scientology helped me get through some of those barriers. A lot of it was confusion about what I was doing. That's a matter of your ability to know yourself. You like this, you don't like that. Bang! Bang!

David Gahr

Chick Corea, Dec. '78

At one point, when I was maybe sixteen years old, I was thinking, "Boy, I'm getting really good!" Then I heard a guy who just killed me, a saxophone player. Herman Bell was his name. He's an older black guy who works at the post office in Kansas City. Ever since that time I've never thought that I was that great. And I'm sure he wasn't that good if I were to judge him by my standards now, but I have this image in the back of my mind of the sort of looseness and freedom he had. That's going to stick with me probably until the day I die, that feeling of amazement. *How much practicing do you do?* This seems to surprise people, but I never practice. I found that after a certain point it got in the way of improvising, rather than encouraging you to improvise—I found myself playing the same things I was practicing when I was supposed to be soloing. *When you are soloing, do you think of the melody, the tune's changes, the rhythmic motifs?* I play my best when I don't think about what we're doing at all. Sometimes I intentionally distract myself: I'll notice that the bass drum is about to slide off the rug, or I'll think about having to do the laundry when I get home. It really works in such a way that your conscious mind is on one level, but the subconscious mind is where all the interesting stuff is—that's where everything you've ever learned or heard is stashed away. So if you let that stuff in back take over, then the real good stuff starts happening.



Ebet Roberts

Pat Metheny, June '79

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1976 to 1980

"Writing comes out of trying to get something out that I can't get out any other way. But for it to mean something, you have to give it to somebody."

—Rickie Lee Jones, November 1981

"If I wrote a song about the Gulf War then that would be making money out of the war! The only way is, instead of running away from the contradictions, I should run into them, wrap my arms around them, and give 'em a big kiss."

—Bono, U2, Sept. 1992

"'Losing My Religion' is nothing if not a rewrite to 'Every Breath You Take.' That was an amazing pop single, and lyrically really incredible."

—Michael Stipe, R.E.M., Dec. 1994

"I wanted Jerry Leiber to write a dozen brilliant songs, for me, so I could be a hero. He said, 'Jeff, I can't. I'm not a young man. I don't write angry young lyrics anymore.' I was devastated."

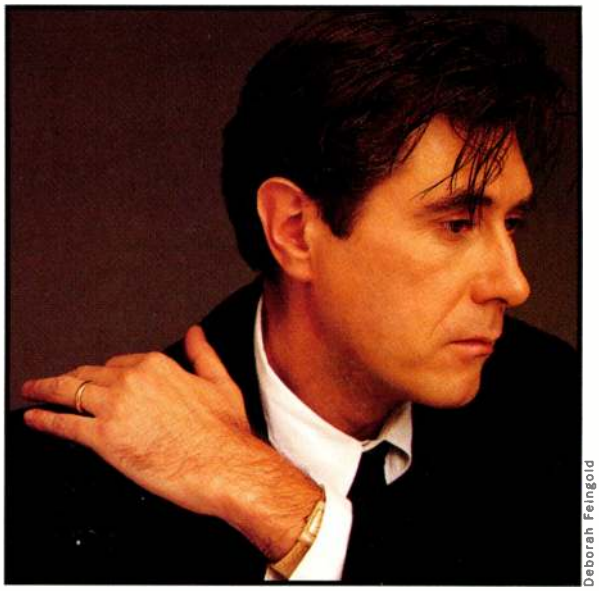
—Jeff Beck, Oct. 1993

"The tango is very boring music. I could write it in my sleep."

—Astor Piazzolla, May 1987

"Although we share this journey for this moment in time collectively, it's one that we enter and depart in solitary fashion. Perhaps all a songwriter does is to focus on that reality."

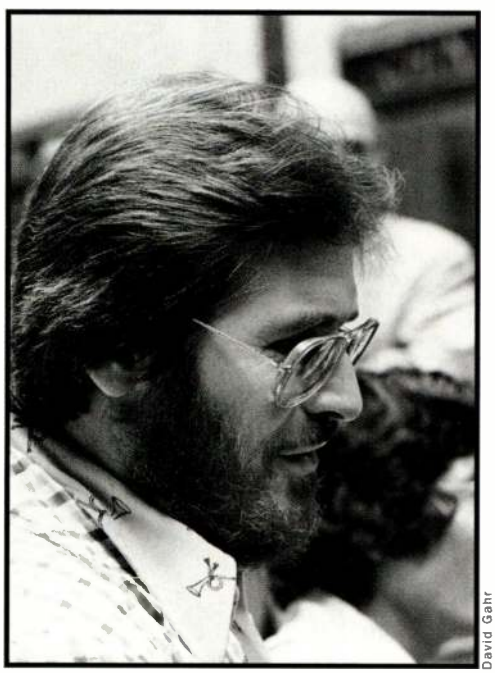
—Dwight Yoakam, May 1996



Deborah Feingold

Bryan Ferry, Nov. '80

We invited Eno to come along and tape us because he had a tape recorder." As befitting someone who calls himself a non-musician, "he didn't have an instrument." Phil Manzanera (real name Philip Targett-Adams Manzanera) originally enlisted as Roxy's soundman before eventually replacing ex-Nice guitarist David O'List. He remembers that at Roxy's early coming-out gigs at private London art crowd functions Eno mixed the sound and played his tapes simultaneously. "It was an enormous mixer too. Eno used to mix the sound for the band and play his tapes from the back. People would come up to him and ask him questions about this and that synthesizer, and he'd just go 'Sssh, go away' and start playing. In the beginning there were no amps onstage. It all went into the mixer directly." Ferry, however, is quick to point out that Brian Eno's role in Roxy Music is far too overstated for his comfort. He insists that Eno "was a very good person to have in the band. But we were coming very close to becoming a parody of ourselves. You see, the problem was that Brian couldn't really do anything onstage. I was becoming more involved in singing, and I felt I couldn't fulfill both functions, playing keyboards and singing, and Brian didn't play keyboards. Which is why I really didn't want to work with him anymore, in the context of Roxy anyway."



David Gahr

Bill Evans, Dec. '77/Jan '80

For me, technique is the ability to translate your ideas into sound through your instrument. What you have to remember is that your conception can be limited by a technical approach. Someone who approaches the piano the way Oscar Peterson does could never have the conception that Monk has. If you play evenly, attacking notes in a certain way, you wouldn't conceive of making the sound that Monk would make. If you could develop a technique like Peterson's and then tell yourself to forget about it, try anything you can conceive of ... I think a great technique would be to develop an entirely new articulation on the piano. *Something like Cecil Taylor, for example?* That's one type of example. Or being able to breathe through the piano. That's a great technical challenge. Erroll Garner did it some, but in a limited way. What I'm talking about is a feeling for the keyboard that will allow you to translate any emotional utterance into it. That's really what technique is about. You can't ignore the mechanical aspects [but] a musician has to cover more ground than that. That's one of the criticisms of rock and pop music. Kids get into being creative before they've experienced enough on their instruments. You need a comprehensive, traditional technique. You need both. *"Mechanical" can be a very threatening word.* Whenever I was practicing technique, if I spent a couple of days playing scales and so on, I found that my playing became a shadow more mechanical. What has to happen is that you develop a comprehensive technique and then say, "Forget that. I'm just going to be expressive through the piano."

Was Django Reinhardt a major influence on your development? Yeah. I never owned any of his records, but I did manage to listen to him quite a bit. He was such a natural and joyous guitar player, like Pete Townshend. Lonnie Johnson impressed me too. I first heard his stuff in 1969. I'd been listening to B. B. King since I was sixteen, and here suddenly was this amazing guy I'd not known about, and it turns out that he influenced B. B. King. I was really pleased when I found out about that connection. With all these guys the important thing to me was the way they could make one individual note sound. With each note there's a sense of the notes that have gone before and the ones that are going to come. Not necessarily all of them, but in a sense of the way the whole thing is going to move. In the same way that a great song will always be a great song, it brings what it has from the past with it into the future. Any great song will be recognized by that sense of past, present, and future all there at the same time.

Ebet Roberts

Mark Knopfler, Nov. '80

1976 to 1980

"If I've just had a dream about a song I try to pick out the chords before I go to the piano, 'cause if I hit the wrong chords the real sound will screw me up and start destroying the sounds in my head."

—Todd Rundgren, April 1983

"With James Brown, that 'Uh!' speaks volumes to me. That's genius; that's one of the best lyrics there ever was. Just hearing that gets you up in the morning."

—Henry Rollins, Apr. 1993

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1980 to 1984

Vic Garbarini

The dawn of the Eighties was a time of re-invention for Musician, as it was for popular music itself. Our mandate was to expand beyond jazz to include rock, pop, R&B, and whatever else the new decade threw at us. Most music publications at the time were either about gear or glamor. Why not cover the whole spectrum of music, as musicians actually experienced it? That would include every aspect of the creative process, from subconscious inspiration to effects boxes. From our two-man, grungy new editorial offices in lower Manhattan we fired the first shot with an Oct. 1979 cover story on Brian Eno by the legendary Lester Bangs—with Eno supplying his own video pics for the cover. The day we hit the stands, one of the Ramones ran into our office and began unzipping his fly. He looked up, startled. "Uh, sorry, thought this was the men's room." He quickly backed out of the door and disappeared. Clearly, this was a good omen—wasn't it?

Over the next five years, our main challenge was to document the shift in popular music from an essentially blues-based form, musically and lyrically, to the new hybrids emerging from the punk revolution. The so-called New Wave that took hold combined punk's raw energy and innovation with whatever aspects of tradition they chose to salvage. Talking Heads built on African music, the Police fused reggae and jazz voicings, U2 filtered their native Celtic modalities through postmodern effects. A garage band from Georgia called R.E.M. had the audacity to mix punk and Appalachian folk music with stream-of-consciousness lyrics. (God, those wacky kids.) And the Clash burned brightly for a while, naively promising to change the world.

Much of the new music was about expressing the ambivalence and dissonance of modern life that needed to find expression in new musical forms. Progressive heartland rockers led by Springsteen, Tom Petty, and John Mellencamp invigorated the mainstream, while bands like the Germs, Black Flag, and Flipper spoke to the darker frustrations just under the surface of the the Reagan era. We did our best to ignore the English hair bands and pop metal sensations of the time, while using our discrimination to expose readers to bands such as AC/DC, ZZ Top, and especially Eddie Van Halen and Stevie Ray Vaughan, who were bringing fresh energy to older traditions.

And of course we had a field day unleashing our stellar gang of writers on rock immortals including Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and the Beatles, Kinks and Stones. Black music innovators such as Prince and the then unknown Vernon Reid gave us extensive interviews, while the neo-classical jazz revolution led by the Marsalis brothers attempted to pick up where jazz had left off in the Sixties after being diverted by Miles Davis' Bitches Brew-era experimentation. It was also a time when the corporate rock of Journey and Styx completely dominated radio and arenas, with a few notable exceptions. Then MTV came along and put an uncensored music club in our living rooms, exposing the country to innovative bands that previously only L.A. and New York cognoscenti had heard. And people bought these "uncommercial" records, which allowed the magazine to put more of them on the cover and still stay in business.

By 1985 the young turks had taken over. U2, Sting, Prince, and R.E.M. were crashing the mainstream. Having suggested to Sting that he work with Branford Marsalis, I wound up in England documenting the blending of rock and jazz's new royalty for my last cover story as Musician's editor. I ran into the Clash's Joe Strummer in a pub on the Euston Road. "I ruined everything," he moaned, "I kicked my best mate out of the group. We thought we could change the world but we couldn't even get along in our own band," he lamented. A decade later, bands from Phish to Pearl Jam are struggling to know themselves before lecturing others, based on the positive and negative lessons of their heroes from the first half of the Me decade.

Vic Garbarini, who was managing or executive editor of Musician from 1980-85, is a freelance writer, consultant and lecturer on music, based in Nashville.

1981 to 1984

"I don't know what the lyrics are."
—Eddie Van Halen, June 1984

"We steal. We're the robber barons of rock and roll."
—Donald Fagen, March 1981

"The best songs are the simplest."
—Jarvis Cocker, Pulp, July 1996

"The fact that a song takes a long time to write is no guarantee of its excellence."
—Leonard Cohen, Nov. 1993

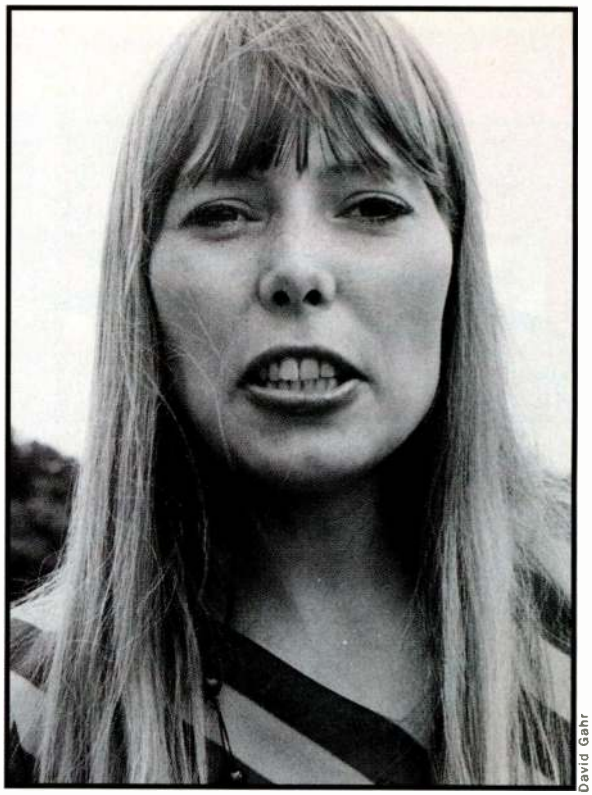
PHILOSOPHY

"Coleman Hawkins told me not to play with anybody old because they'll be hard to bend to the way you want them to play."
—Miles Davis, March 1982

"It's not really a talent. It's an obsession. I'm obsessed with music. I'm selfish. I'm a sick fuck."
—Eddie Van Halen, June 1984

"I don't think differently from the post-Joy Division bands, because I do think the bomb is gonna be dropped somewhere soon."
—Dave Wakeling, English Beat, July 1983

"Rock and roll is a field that really is not given to thinking, it resents thinking, which I think is a big error. We have to be able to expand the vocabulary to express more complex thoughts."
—Paul Simon, March 1984



David Gahr

Joni Mitchell, Jan. '83

If you had to point to a particular album that realized as much as possible what you were aiming for at a particular time and place, where you thought, "Yeah, that's as honest and clear as it's come through," what would it be?

The purest one of all, of course, is *Blue*. At the time I was absolutely transparent, like cellophane. If you looked at me, I would weep. We had to lock the doors to make that album. Nobody was allowed in. Socially, I was an absolute wreck. Imagine yourself stripped of all defenses...going to a party! [*laughs*] Not only did I have no defenses, but other people's defenses were alternately transparent, which made me very sad...or people really tend to aggress on you when you're weak. You know what it was exactly like? It was like being in an aquarium with big fish coming at you and they weren't saying anything, and sometimes the sound would shut off. It was just like that scene in *All That Jazz* when suddenly the heartbeat becomes dominant. That would be a beautiful space if it wasn't so scary. If you could just magically wipe out the fear. *That can be an awfully painful state....* But it produced that beautiful album. There is not a false note on that album. I love that record more than any of them, really....and I'll never be that pure again.

Bob Gruen/Starfile

John Lennon, Mar 81

I'd been under contract since I was 22 and I was always supposed to: I was supposed to write a hundred songs by Friday, supposed to have a single out by Saturday, supposed to do this and do that. It dawned on me that the reason I became an artist was freedom, because I couldn't fit into the classroom, the college, the society. But suddenly, it was exactly the opposite of what I had set out to be. I was obliged to a record company, obliged to the media, obliged to the public. So I said, "What the hell is this? I'm not free at all." I know freedom is in the mind but I couldn't clear my mind. At first it was very hard not to be doing something musical. But musically my mind was just a big clutter. It wasn't a question of not having anything to say—if you listen to my early records, there's a dumb song on *Sgt. Pepper* called "Good Morning." I never have illusions about having something to say but, "It's okay, good morning, good morning," as the dumb song goes. It wasn't a matter of nothing to say—it was a matter of no clarity and no desire to do it *because I was supposed to.* There was a hard withdrawal period, and then I started being a househusband and swung my attention onto Sean. Then I realized, I'm not supposed to be doing something—I am doing something. And then I was free.

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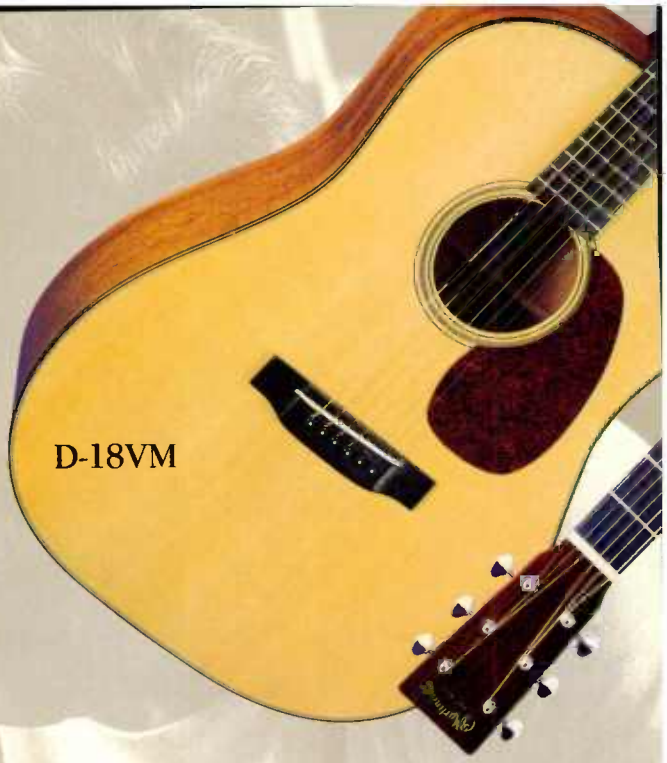

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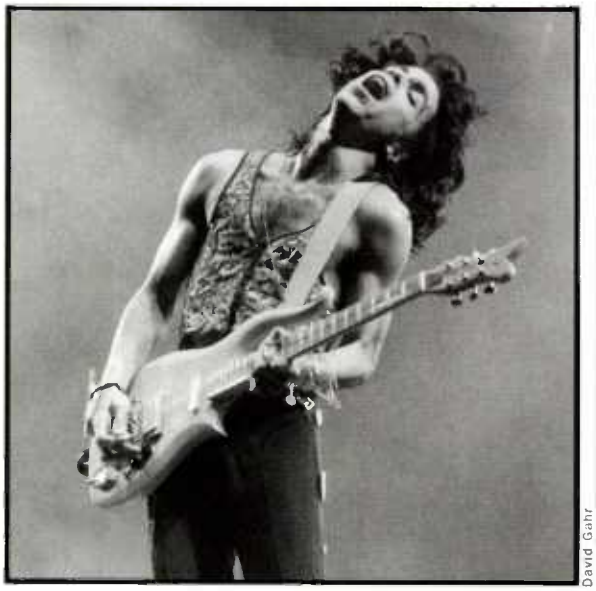
I would like to be a more loving person, and be able to deal with other people's problems a little bit better. Men are really closed and cold together, I think. They don't like to cry, in other words. And I think that's wrong, because that's not true. *Is there anything that you want me to mention that we haven't talked about?* Well, I don't want people to get the impression that sex is all I write about. Because it's not, and the reason why it's so abundant in my writing is mainly because of my age and the things that are around me. Until you can go to college or get a nine-to-five job, then there's going to be a bunch of free time around you. And free time can only be spent in certain ways. But if people don't dig my music, then stay away from it, that's all. It's not for everybody. *Will you always try to be controversial?* That's really a strange question, because if I'm that way, then I will be forever writing that way. I don't particularly think it's so controversial. I mean, when a girl can get birth control pills at age twelve, then she knows just about as much as I do, or at least will be there in a short time. People are pretty blind to life, and taking for granted what really goes on.



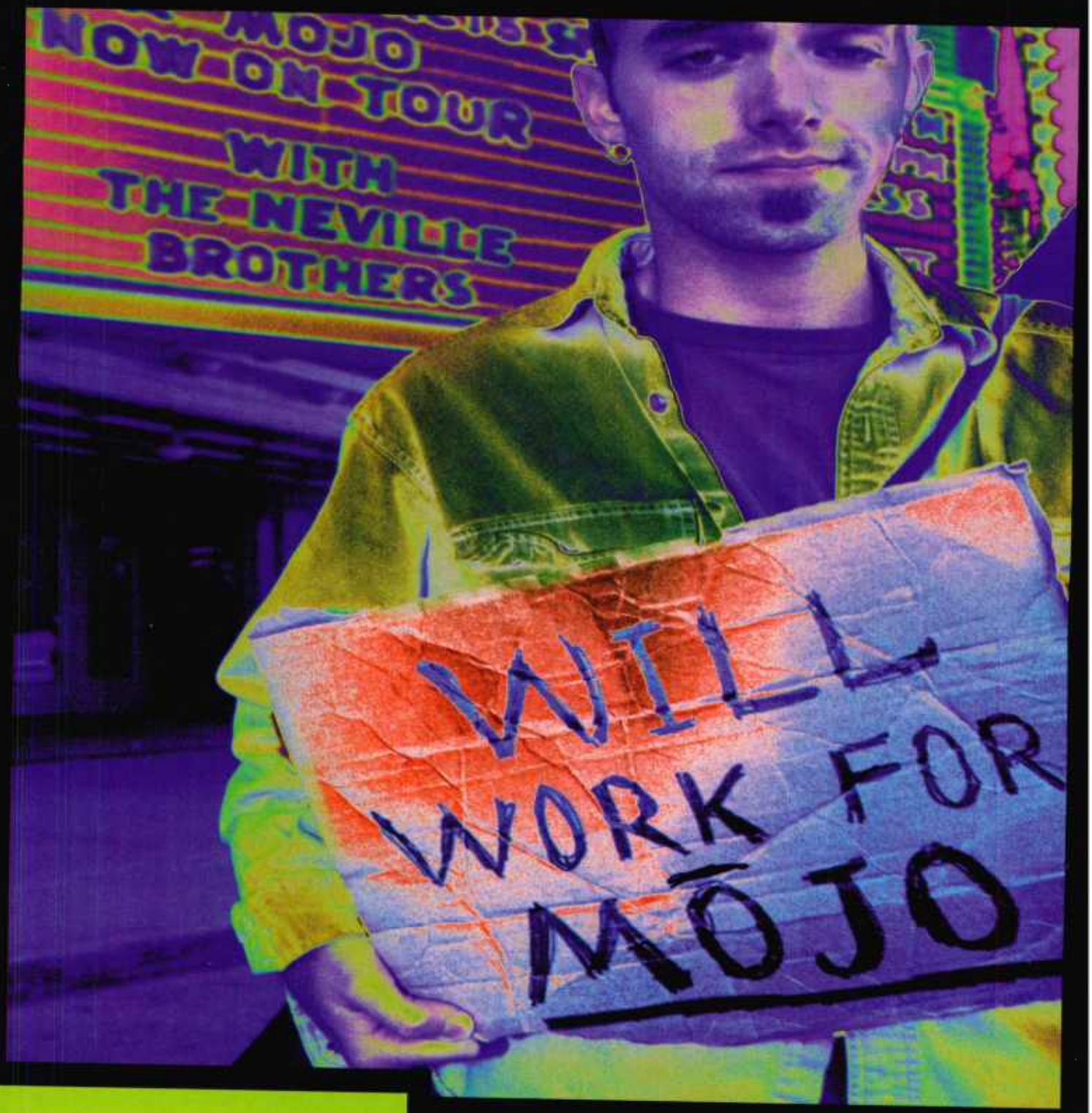
David Gahr

Prince, Sept. '83

Was there a social energy in the Sixties that is no longer as universal? Did rock lose its powers of communication and become just entertainment? I don't think entertainment is that bad. I still think it's one of the greatest services a person can perform for another man—to entertain him, to make him happy. Even if it's only temporarily. Let's face it, you turn to the greatest teachers to try to make you bloody happy for the rest of your life, and none of them can do it. Not even the greatest, not even Jesus Christ can make people happy for their whole lives. He doesn't even claim to. Jesus was an entertainer in some respects. It's important to realize the dark side of life, that the suffering and the indecision are a fundamental, valuable part. Without them there'd be nothing to write about. "Entertainment" is, in a sense, a diminutive for a much larger phenomenon; it needs a much bigger word. And that word to me is "rock," which embraces and encompasses entertainment but also does other things as well. *But rock once had the power to literally change your consciousness, and I don't mean just change your mind and opinions. Where is music that is doing that now?* I don't think it's doing it on the scale that it's done it in the past, but rock has never done what people are still waiting for it to do! It's not...no, I'm sorry, I don't accept the position that it used to do something which it doesn't do now. It started a job which it hasn't finished. That's the way I look at it.

Linda McCartney/Starfile

Pete Townshend, Aug. '82



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1981 to 1984

"I think everybody has great potential to understand. I think probably they should all take LSD or something. I did it at one point. It helped a lot of people."

—Graham Parker, June 1982

"I've always loved untrustworthy narrators."

—Randy Newman, Nov., 1988

"People say, 'god, how can you sing that? I'd probably feel worse if I couldn't."

—Loudon Wainwright, September 1989

"I never have had any trouble reconciling God and the devil, good and evil in the music business. All music comes from God, that's the source of it all. It would be a bad world without music, man."

—Johnny Cash, May 1988

"The first thing I do when I arrive in a city is to walk around, see the churches, the little streets. Then we have a good meal before playing. Afterwards, I get a good night's sleep. And that's what keeps me happy."

—Stephane Grappelli, June, '88

"When you're poor, your first responsibility is to yourself, but when you have money you have to think about other people—and other people are definitely thinking about you."

—Tracy Chapman, June 1988

"It's all country—one country or another."

—Willie Dixon, Sept., 1988

What about your guitars? I understand that some of them you built yourself. Yeah, I've still got the original guitar I built. It's the one I record with and play onstage with, and it's the biggest piece of junk you've ever seen in your life. *So why do you stick with it?* Every time I get a different guitar, we'll be playing and someone will say, "Are you using a different amp, Ed?" And I'll say, "No, it's a different guitar." They'll say, "Use your other one. It sounds better" [*laughs*]. I'll tell you how this happened. I used to have a Fender Strat. When I ripped the guts out—I didn't know how to put it back! I swear to God! The three knobs and the switch...I'm going, "Goddamn, I don't know what the hell's going on." So I just took everything out and took the two cords that went from here to there [*traces the path from the pickup to the volume knob*] and the two from there [*indicating the jack*] and switched them around until I heard something, and clamped it down. That's the way it is, and it works great. That's how I stumbled onto the one volume knob. All you see kids using now is one volume knob and one pickup. Little do they know it's out of ignorance.

Ross Halfin

Eddie Van Halen, Sept. '83

FAGEN: We're just trying to use what fits. It's the exact opposite of the *New York Times*, where it's "All The News That's Fit To Print." Here, we print what'll fit. It's not even a short story, hardly a paragraph, so the story doesn't always fit. If you get—as opposed to the kernel of the thought—the husk of the thought, maybe you can figure out what kind of story is there. *There is a school of thought which says, while the artist must communicate to his audience, he may also keep certain details rather private.* **FAGEN:** It depends on the song. The lyrics must be subordinate to the music and you can only give as many clues as you have time for. There's no intentional mystification. **BECKER:** We're not trying to protect anything. It's just that some of the smaller, pettier details in our story are the best ones. The little things that you retain in your sense more than in your mind; they may not make much sense but they color something. There may be something to what you're saying, in that, if something is open-ended, or means more than one thing, or is elliptical or whatever, someone listening to it carefully enough will in fact become creative, and fill in the spaces with their own intelligence. And you'd be amazed at the songs people have written about that we've written. Some guy wrote us and said "Rikki Don't Lose That Number" is about Eric Clapton and the number is a joint. We get letters, phone calls—from people who "know exactly what we mean" and they just have to tell us that they know.

Deborah Feingold

Steely Dan, Mar. '81

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-Emmylou Harris

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1981 to 1984

"Music is a strange profession and it's very hard to figure out how to apply yourself to this thing day in and day out. The drive to confront that question every day may be some measure of how much you love music."

—Steve Reich, June 1983

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

—Robert Wyatt, Aug. 1992

"I don't think anything has changed since the Doors recorded their first album in 1966. I think the things we were talking about were just as pertinent today: coming to grips with fear, with the madness that lies within."

—Ray Manzarek, August 1981

"Lionel Richie, you know, he wants to be rock and roll. I AM rock and roll."

—Tina Turner, Sept. 1984

"At least if you're cold, you're respected."

—Suzanne Vega, June 1990

"One can't be honest as a musician and dishonest as a person."

—Fred Hersch, June 1994

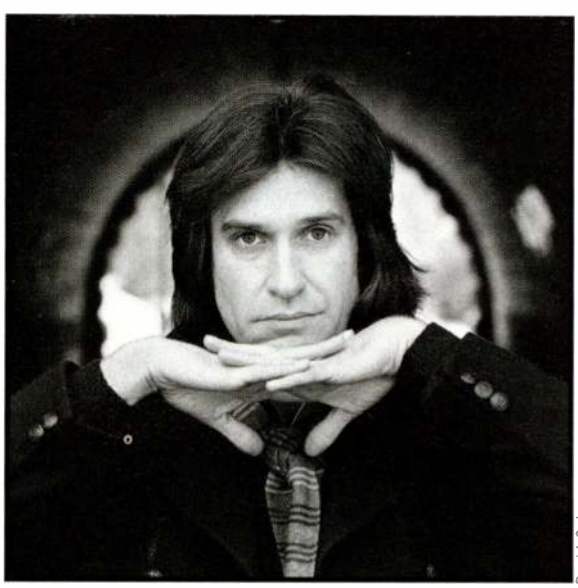
"Most times, music and art aren't necessarily trying to change the world so much as to just demonstrate a structure that can exist, and does exist, that people might be able to relate to."

—David Byrne, Talking Heads, April-May 1981

Ebet Roberts

Stevie Wonder, Feb. '84

You signed your thirteen-million-dollar contract with Motown in the mid-Seventies because, you said, Motown was the only "viable black-owned company." There's a tricky balance between vigilant support for your own people and heritage and your universal message about "brotherhood" and the erasure of color lines. Yes. Well, see, my thing is this: my attitude with Motown is a very simple thing. The fact is that society had written Berry Gordy out as a loser. Before he was anything, he was written off. No one expected it to happen—and that's why it happened. No one ever thought in a million years that from Detroit there would be some black guy from a family of carpenters to create this music in a place where people didn't even know music was happening. There is nothing wrong with being part of an achievement of your culture, particularly when there are not that many in comparison that are recognized. So I would want someone to say, "Well, Stevie Wonder stayed with a company owned by a black man for forty years." Or however many years it turns out to be. A lot of the other companies, they can get anybody they want. That's been proven—they've gotten most of the Motown acts. But I would like to see a certain amount of stick-to-it-iveness, and just being there for those people who don't have anything and look up to this. They can say, "Oh, it can work."

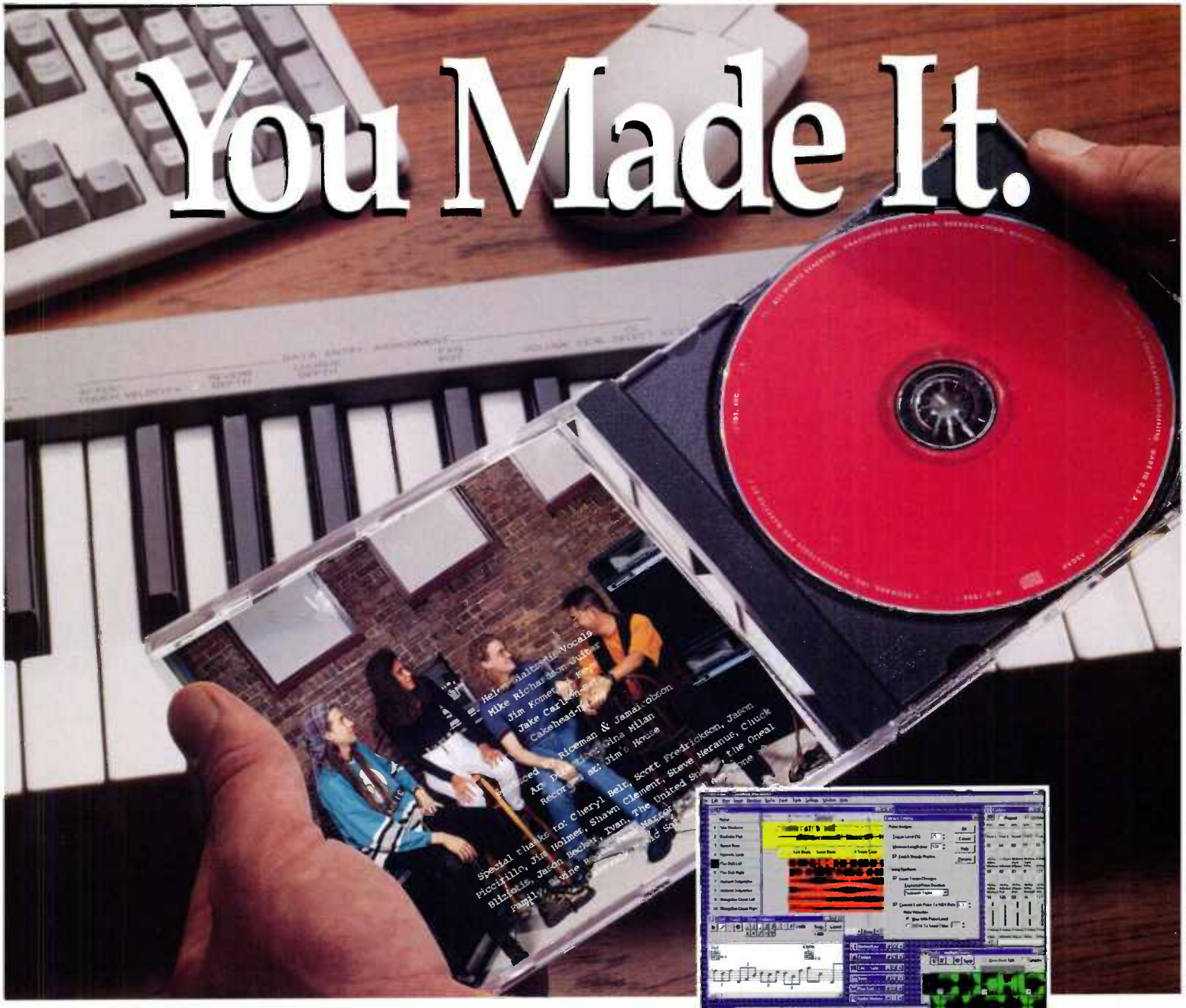


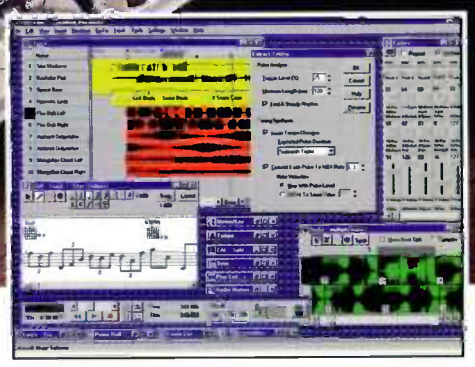
David Gahr

Ray Davies, Aug. '83

Pete Townshend claims to be unable to suss out what makes you tick. He's not sure whether you're really sad about the passing of certain values, or whether you're trying to make humorous commentary, or just fishing around for interesting song material. I don't use *any* of those devices. I'm naive, more than anything—a pretty basic person. I'm very atonal; I mean, I've got the scale but no quarter tones, no three-part harmony. Sometimes I don't understand when people analyze what I do. *But you spend so much time analyzing the world, it's not surprising that the world's going to analyze you.* I don't really analyze the whole world, just parts of it. This may sound silly, but when I think back on the Seventies, all I remember about it is trousers getting narrower. Or this woman I went out with a lot in the early days; I can't remember her name, but I recall her teaching me to stand on my head. That's what stayed in the end. I have to trivialize things like that, otherwise I'd get too heavy, too analytical. ✏ I've always been worried about writing subjective "You and me, baby" things, which bore me. "Waterloo Sunset" was one step removed from that, since when I finished it I found that all along it was more about the station than observing the people. After I finished the record, I did a really pretentious thing: I went down just to stand on the bridge, because that was my final conquest. It was like having your picture taken with your foot on the animal you had just shot [*laughs*]. I do silly things like that, you know.

You Made It.





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1981 to 1984

"Less is more. Simple is more powerful than complex. Much more powerful."

—John Fogerty, Nov. 1991

"I never understood being so cool that nobody heard it."

—Tom Petty, July 1981

"I never met a woman who could replace a guitar. But I've never met a guitar that could replace a woman either—some women, anyway."

—Willie Nelson, May 1996

"It's all about ideas. When you take on the mantle of a creative artist, you lay awake at night thinking and dreaming, and every waking moment is 'How can I do something different from what I did yesterday?'"

—Max Roach, Jan. 1994

"Artists are fucking tedious people, and people should realize that sooner rather than later."

—Brian Eno, Nov. 1993

"When you're listening to an Ice-T album you can agree or disagree. But you should never think everything I'm thinking, because then only one of us is thinking."

—Ice-T, Aug. 1991

THE BIZ

"I don't find it very stimulating making music. With the band, the marketing, the promotion side of things—that's quite interesting, selling our products."

—Andrew Fletcher, Oct. 1993

In a funny kind of way, *Born To Run* was a spiritual record in dealing with values. And then *Nebraska* was about the breakdown of all those values, of all those things. It was kind of about a spiritual crisis, in which man is left lost. He's isolated from the government. Isolated from his job. Isolated from his family. And, in something like "Highway Patrolman," isolated from his friends. That's what the record is all about. That happens in this country all the time. You see it on the news. I don't know what anybody can do about it. There is a lot of that happening. When you get to the point where nothing makes sense. Where you don't feel connected to your family, where you don't feel any real connection to your friends. You just feel that alone thing, that loneness. That's the beginning of the end. It's like you start existing outside of all those things. So *Born To Run* and *Nebraska* were kind of at opposite poles. I think *Born In The U.S.A.* kind of casts a suspicious eye on a lot of things. That's the idea. These are not the same people anymore and it's not the same situation. These are survivors and I guess that's the bottom line. That's what a lot of those characters are saying in "Glory Days" or "Darlington County" or "Working On The Highway." It certainly is not as innocent anymore. But, like I said, it's ten years down the line now.

David Gahr

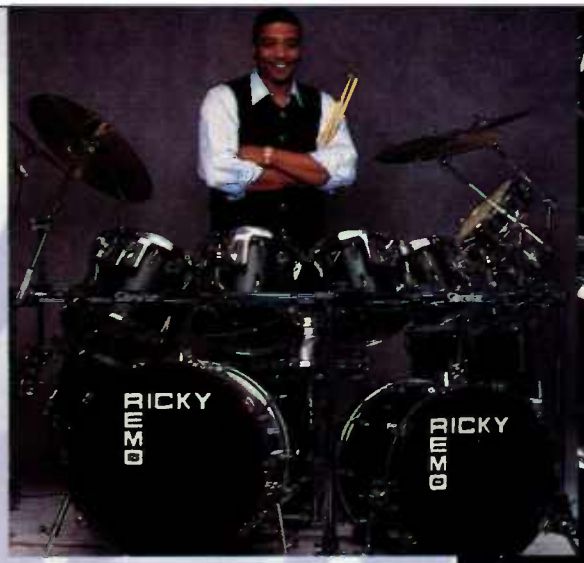
Bruce Springsteen, Nov '84

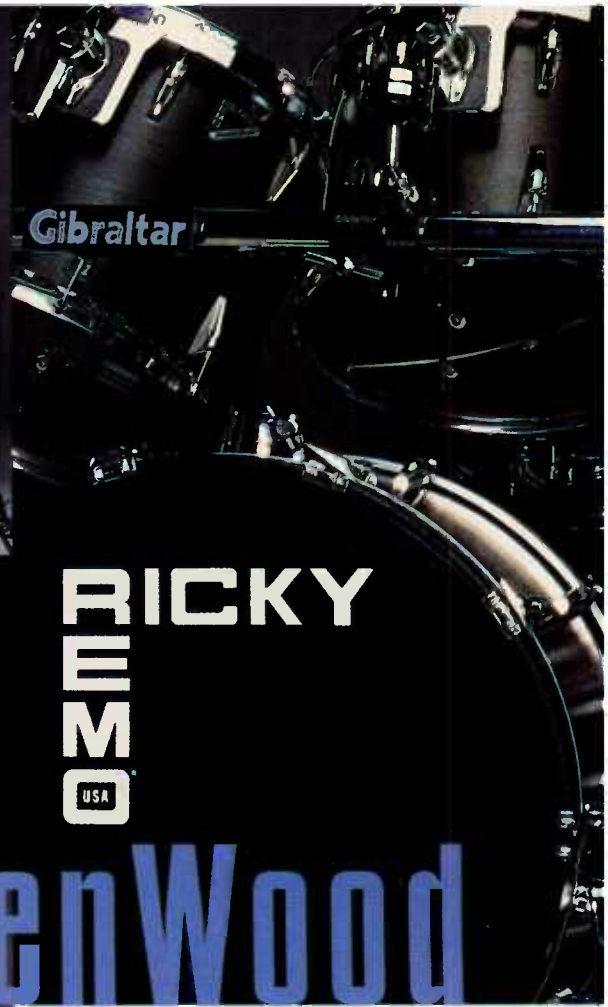
Bob Gruen

Marvin Gaye, Aug. '83

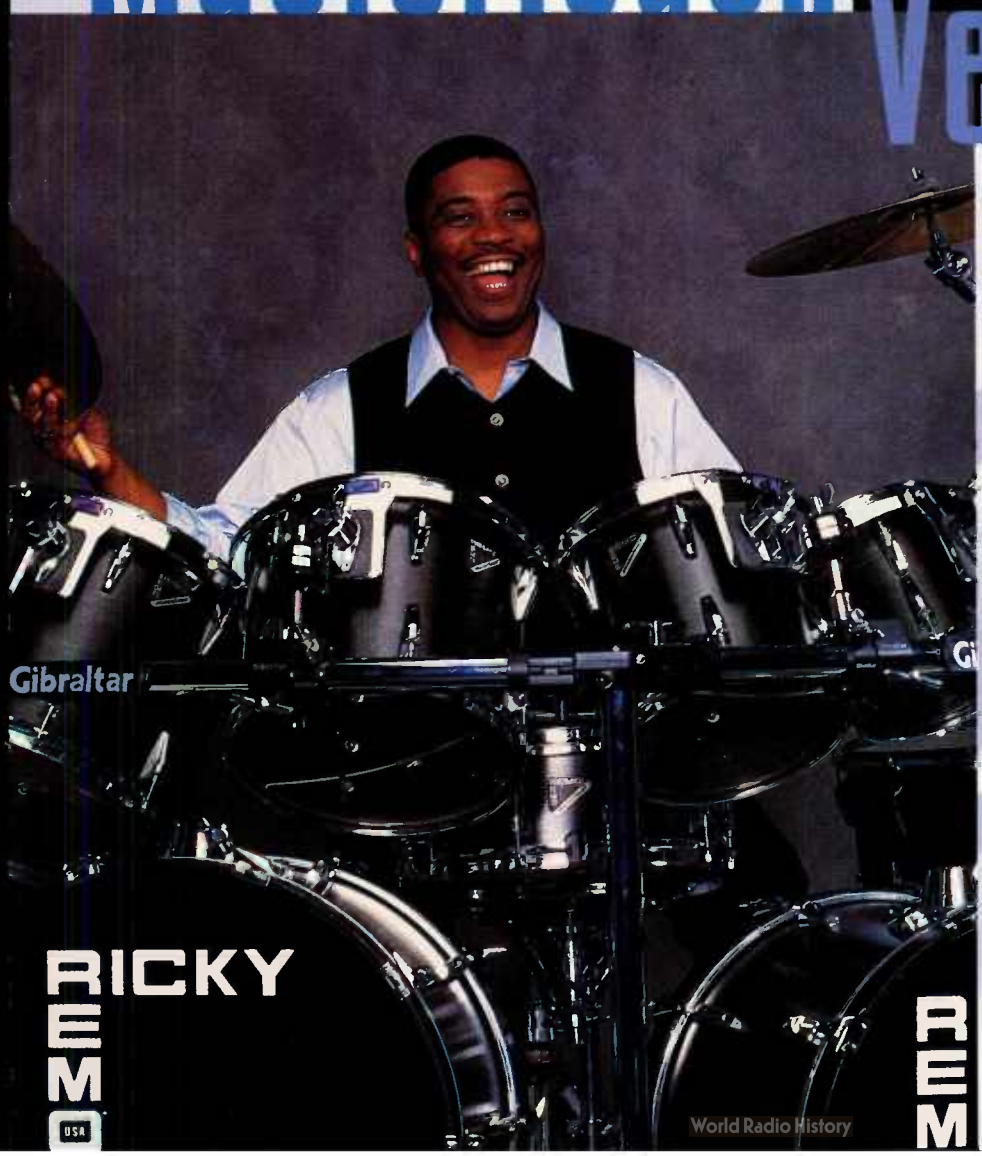
The times seem to call for the kind of commentary you provided on What's Going On. It seems to me that I have to do some soul searching to see what I want to say. It calls for fasting, feeling, praying, lots of prayer, and maybe we can come up with a more spiritual social statement to give people. *I take it that this process hasn't been going on within you for quite some time.* I have been apathetic, because I know the end is near. Sometimes I feel like going off and taking a vacation and enjoying the last ten or fifteen years and forgetting about my message, which I feel is in a form of being a true messenger of God. I was thinking this morning that in my stage performance I am not putting out the message like I should. Today I already decided that I am going to make a slight change. *What about doing what Al Green did and turn your back on the whole thing?* That's his role. My role is not necessarily his. That doesn't make me a devil. It's just that my role is different. If he wants to turn to God and become without sin and have his reputation become that, then that is what it should be. I am not concerned with what my role should be. I am only concerned with completing my mission here on earth. *What is your mission?* My mission is to tell the world and the people about the upcoming holocaust and to find all of those of higher consciousness who can be saved. The rest can be left alone.

Why is Ricky Lawson smiling?





MasterTouch VenWood



Is it because of the satisfaction and acclaim he's received after logging thousands of miles on the road with multiplatinum artists like Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Phil Collins and Steely Dan?

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1981 to 1984

"The ownership of music is a fairly recent phenomenon. It began in the 19th century and was firmed up in the 20th. But if money is to be made from the sale of my work then I wish to receive my share of it."

—Robert Fripp, April-May 1981

"These guys at record companies do not have mental priorities. Their priority is, 'I don't care whose dick I have to suck. I'm keepin' my job.' And they do. They move from company A to company B. The top executives just rotate."

—Frank Zappa, Nov. 1991

"Everybody could make their own records. It doesn't cost an awful lot to print up a few. But the industry has made people expect to pay money. If you start offering people cheap records, they'll think that the music on them is cheap."

—Bill Nelson, Aug. 1992

"I like the way the American press operates. It's very open and you can understand what's being said."

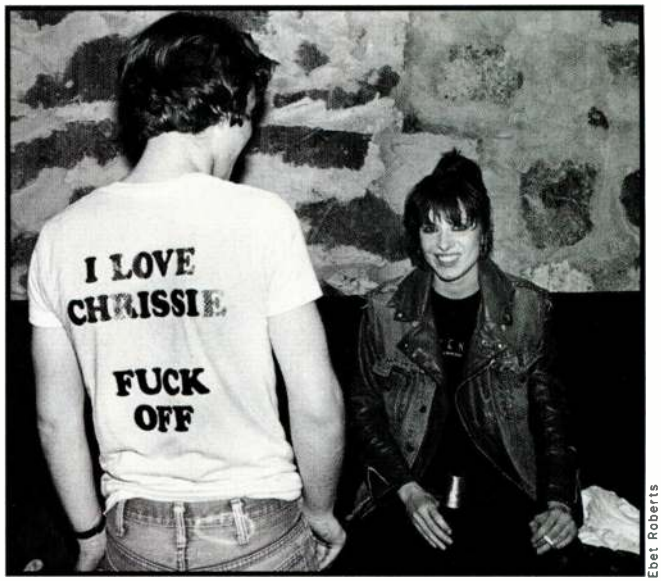
—John Lydon, January 1983

"Radio's like the Catholic Church: you can only paint the saints, that's all we want to see."

—Joni Mitchell, January 1983

"It must be terrifying to be signed to a label like Columbia and lose your deal. That could never happen to me. Unless I fire myself."

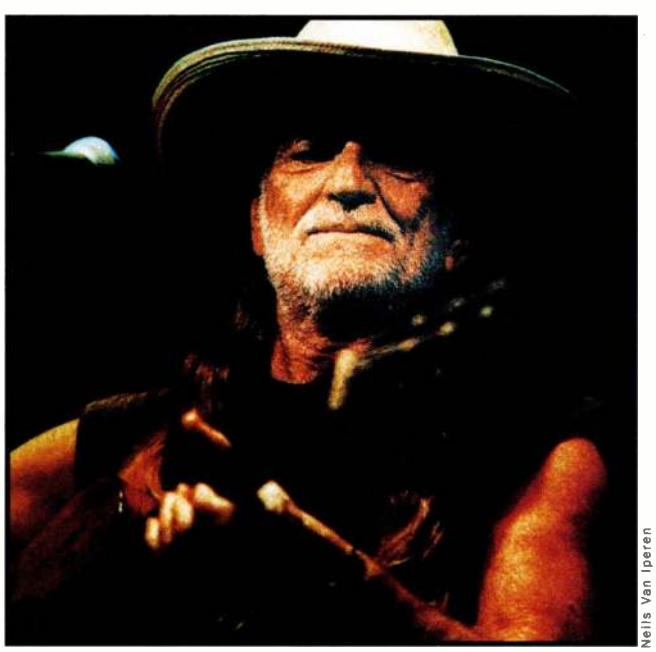
—Carla Bley, January 1996



Ebet Roberts

Chrissie Hynde, Dec. '81

I don't care what people do to the music. If you want to get up and dance, pal, you get up and dance. These American audiences are so used to being baited by the same old thing three times a week; they go to see their show, and it's always the same "Get up and rock 'n' roll," "Hey San Francisco, are you ready?" And they always go for it, every single time. It's the easiest thing in the world to walk to the edge of the stage and say, "Everybody up!" But this isn't the military, you know, I don't have to tell people that. That's what they want you to be, some sort of a chief that tells you what to do and all. It's pathetic. If I'm in the audience, I find it very insulting for the guy to say, "All right, everybody up, everyone clap!" If I want to clap, I'll clap. That was the whole idea of rock 'n' roll in the first place, wasn't it? Don't do what someone tells you to do, do what you want to do. Now everyone wants to be told what to do all the time. We did a show one night, and no one stood up, everyone sat there the whole time, and I felt like the band's not very good tonight, maybe the sound's bad. Towards the very end of the show, I said, "All right, you can stand up now." And the whole place was up! I said, "I guess some people always have to be told." You know, what a bunch of dullards.



Neils Van Iperen

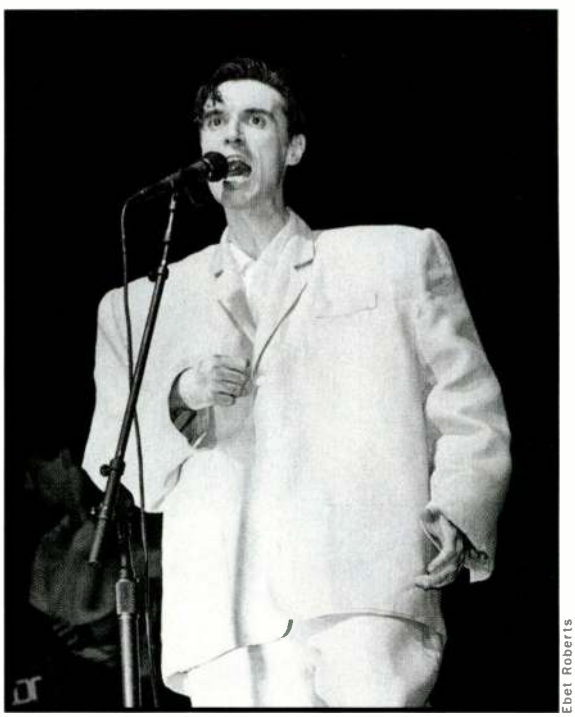
Willie Nelson, July '82

Well, I don't want to sound smart or anything, but I really did know there was an audience not being tapped. The young people with the long hair, the beards, the dissenters, the draft dodgers, all the kids who didn't want that war, had not been a welcome part of the "country" audience. There was a division between them and their parents, who thought they were long-haired, dope-smoking hippies. I knew better. I knew if a guy let his hair grow it didn't make him Charles Manson, and if he smoked a joint it didn't make him a drug addict. So I decided to join them. I decided I had gone as far as I could with my redneck friends. And then I just bowled on through. That was 1972, and my first get-together was in '73. I figured I'd have it on the Fourth of July because it'd be too hot to fight. Just lay back and listen, and that's what happened. My biggest thrill was when Leon Russell and I and several hundred friends gathered the night before. Had a little party, drank some beer, ate some barbecue, and picked until daylight. Leon and I went onstage right at sunrise, turned on the sound system, and started playing together, and we could see thousands of people streaming into the setting. That was the greatest morning of my life. I knew then something good was going on, and it hasn't stopped since.

Deborah Feingold

Robert Fripp, June '81

One night at the Marquee in 1969 King Crimson went out on a tangent—maybe just for five minutes—and you never knew where the hell it was, but I was telepathic—I knew everything that was going on, and what people were thinking. Because there was that energy in the room, and I became a human being in such a way that. . .if that's what it means to be a human being, then I want to become a human being! Once you've had it, you have to find a way of living like that again. Otherwise there's no point in anything. Sometimes—and this is only a theory—I think that music needs a musician to play it. That the music itself is alive, but you have to be out there to know it. And at that point it may be possible that the music is waiting to be played. So it needs a musician. A funny thing happened in Philadelphia during my Frippertronics tour. I was listening and I heard the next note I had to play. And I played it. Then I heard the next note, and I played that one. I'd been waiting 23 years for that to happen. And I started to cry while I was playing. I thought, well, this is shit, but I thought I should trust it. So I did. It's a question of trusting the music to play itself.



Ebet Roberts

David Byrne, Apr./May '81

If you call the kind of music we're doing now "non-hierarchical," then performing it for a community in a way describes the way a community can be organized, that it can work without having that kind of hierarchy. So the music becomes a sort of aural demonstration. *Music as metaphor?* Yes, as a metaphor for a social system. It doesn't even require thought when you hear it. It communicates more directly. People might hear a piece of music that's organized in a particular way and really enjoy it, because that's the way they'd like other things to be organized. Maybe it's the kind of social organization they're comfortable with, so the music really connects to them on some sort of deep level. *That's rather idealistic, considering our society.* Yeah, it does sound pretty idealistic. Yet most art shoots for the same thing: It comes to work as a way of organizing people socially or a way of looking at the world. If you look at it this way it's not so idealistic; most times, music and art aren't necessarily trying to change the world so much as demonstrate a structure that can exist, and does exist, that people might be able to relate to. *Your emphasis on spirituality is very much a great awakening from "the Me Decade."* Yeah. I'm part of the same society, so I'm probably part of the same phenomenon. The fact that our music implies a different kind of social order was a way out for me from all the predicaments our society has gotten itself into. We've achieved more by collaborating and cooperating than we could have achieved by everyone asserting their individuality. It's exciting.

1981 to 1984

"When I see k.d. lang, Belinda Carlisle, Chrissie Hynde—these militant vegetarian shitheads—put their foot in their mouths, I think, 'How shallow, how transparent, can one's unlearned opinions be?' Killing is cool. Murder is a sin."

—Ted Nugent, Apr. 1991

"The L.A. Philharmonic said they would like to have me write a two-piano concerto and they would give it the world premiere. I said, 'Oh, that's really very nice of you.' They said, 'Yeah, but we want you to buy us two grand pianos.' "

—Frank Zappa, Nov. 1991

"The music business has never been a sanctuary of saints. It's been the garment industry rejects."

—Billy Joel, Sept. 1993

"If John Lennon had any idea that someday Michael Jackson would be deciding the future of his material, if he could I think he'd come back from the grave and kick his ass, and kick it real good, in a way that we would enjoy."

—Tom Waits, October 1987

"A case can be made for the standardization of the industry. Back in the 'scream' age, if any of the twelve-year-old girls would get up and take an Instamatic flash shot, a uniformed policeman would beat her on the head with a nightstick and push her back into her seat."

—Mick Jagger, November 1983

1985 to 1989

Jock Baird

By 1985 it was clear that the post-MTV, indie-stirred ferment of young bands would produce a new generation of superstar musicians. For our first cover of that year—and of my editorial era—we made the (no-brainer) call that U2 would be one of them. Looking back, no other artist or group so dominated late-Eighties rock; they were the closest approximation to that Police-like union of musical weight and massive pop appeal that had energized *Musician* under its previous editorial regime. — Who were the other superstars who would be part of this changing of the musical guard? That was less clear. Wire Train, Wall of Voodoo, the Del Fuegos, and R.E.M. had all emerged as promising rookies in 1983, but by now we had a pretty good idea that only the last would be sticking around. When would "second-tier" bands like the Psychedelic Furs, INXS, the Cure, or Simple Minds be ready for prime time? Sadly, the answer in many of these cases was not what we hoped. — It was an earlier generation of late-Seventies stars that quickly stepped in to fill this vacuum. Experienced hands like Mark Knopfler, Phil Collins, Peter Gabriel, and ZZ Top deployed the new video medium with a consummate cunning. (Yes, *Musician* really did have a "Video Shorts" section once.) Elvis Costello and Bruce Springsteen, two songwriting giants, produced some of their grittiest, most introspective work. Prince did everything he could to undo his *Purple Rain* epiphany (and to avoid talking to us), but still managed some major grooves. Tom Petty and Van Halen (minus David Lee) refused to go on vacation, but Talking Heads, unfortunately, did. And we all watched with bated breath to see whether solo Sting could possibly match his former impact, or would even try. (Does anyone think the jury's still out on this one?) — Harder to explain was the troubling persistence of the '60s set. Whether it was Traveling Wilburys or former Led Zeps or the Who or Pink Floyd, members of rock's original royalty were determined to stay in the public ear. Clapton, by now a force of nature, continued to sell. All the Beatles but Ringo got their own covers, as did Mick and Keith. We were frequently criticized for our reverence for this generation of artists, but they were making some of the most satisfying music out at the time. Deal with it. — The old guys also dominated much of the jazz landscape. The '60s cast a long shadow, even as Wynton resurrected *Kind of Blue*, and our tribute to John Coltrane was one of the most memorable issues of the era. The tribute to Jaco was one of the saddest, and we said goodbye to far too many seminal players. Meanwhile, a stalwart group of jazz radicals like Steve Coleman, David Murray, and Don Pullen stood up to creeping Kenny G-ism. A new genre, world music, gained a deserved toehold—but so, alas, did new age. — Hyperbole, like much else, was extended in range and frequency in the Eighties, but in one arena some of the hype was deserved—the arrival of MIDI and digital technology, which really did change how music was written, arranged, and recorded. In 1985 top-quality MIDI sequencers appeared. 1986 saw affordable digital sampling. 1987 brought accessible SMPTE control and cheaper, better processors. DAT, and eventually the ADAT, provided a quantum leap in audio standards. And by the end of the decade, full-featured digital recording to disk was upon us. — At first we looked for the effects of the MIDI explosion in the trendy virtues and (Miami) vices of Jan Hammer, Howard Jones, the Thompson Twins, and other keyboard heroes. But ultimately it was the pop producers who really put the digital revolution on the radio. Purple refugees Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds, and Guy's Teddy Riley were all representative of the real MIDI/digital paradigm: musicians who became so intimate with the new technology that they could throw away the manual and communicate intuitively through their gear. The next decade, bubbling up with all kinds of hip-hop, grunge, and techno possibilities, would have at its disposal a range of sounds and techniques few could've imagined at the beginning of 1985.

Jock Baird, editor of Musician from 1985-89, is now senior technical writer at Datacube, manufacturer of real-time imaging hardware and software.

1985 to 1988

"People tend to have the opinion that successful artists are not made of flesh and blood or don't have human feelings. The industry doesn't give a shit about who you are. You're just a product, whored out to do certain things."

—Scott Weiland, Stone Temple Pilots, July 1993

"Being a rock and roll star is like having a sex change. People treat you like a girl. They stare at you, they follow you down the street, they hustle you. And they try to fuck you over."

—Bono, September 1992

"In the early Seventies there was no fear of breaking the rules, no concern about sales. Then it stopped and became a business."

—Lenny Waronker, April 1983

"Nobody asks us to try to make beauty if it's not co-signed by a corporation."

—Cecil Taylor, September 1983

"The Sugarcubes were about us getting hilariously drunk and having permission to travel around the world because some foreigner decided that we were brilliant."

—Björk, May 1994

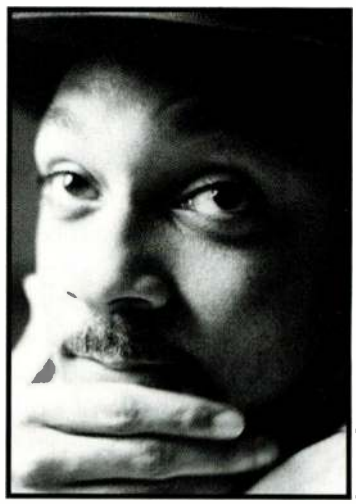
"I'd rather be cleaning windows than be fucked around by a bunch of A&R guys who meet you for an hour and expect you to listen to what they say."

—Graham Parker, July 1988

Ken Katz/Starfile

Kate Bush, Jan. '86

Is your production a benevolent dictatorship where what you say goes? [*Trying not to laugh*] Well, quite honestly, I think it is sometimes. But in most cases, I really do know what I want. I mean, I've never really been able to communicate properly like those producers you see sitting there talking about A-flats. Obviously I have to identify chords and things like that. But the most important thing for me is to convey the atmosphere of the song, the feeling that I want them to produce. So rather than say to each of them, "You do this" or "You do that," I spend a lot of time trying to explain the story and the atmosphere. *In one or two American reviews of* The Dreaming, *your music was described as "schizophrenic"—and it seems to me that, in a manner of speaking, it does represent a virtual compendium of psychopathology, alternately hysterical, melancholic, psychotic, paranoid, obsessional, and so on.* [*Laughter*] I think that is the most fascinating thing to write about, if I can find an area of the personality that is slightly exaggerated or distorted and, if I feel I can identify with it enough, to try to cast a person as perfectly as I can in terms of that particular character trait. Anger, for instance, is really fun to write from that point of view, because I very rarely show anger, although obviously I sometimes feel it.



Deborah Feingold

David Gahr

Wynton Marsalis & Herbie Hancock, March '85

WYNTON: I played in a funk band all through high school. We played real funk tunes like Parliament-Funkadelic, authentic funk. It wasn't this junk they're trying to do now to get their music played on white radio stations. Now, to play the Haydn Trumpet Concerto is a lot different from playing "Give Up the Funk" or "Mothership Connection." I dig "Mothership Connection," but to me what pop music is trying to do is totally different. It's really geared to a whole base type of sexual thing. I know tunes that they have out now: Here's people squirming on the ground, fingering themselves. It's low-level realizations of sex. Now to me, music to stimulate you is the music that has all the root in the world in it but is trying to elevate that, to elevate the people to a certain level rather than go down. **HERBIE:** It's not like that, Wynton. If it were, it would just stay the same. Why would the music change? **WYNTON:** Because they get new computers. **HERBIE:** Automation doesn't imply sex to me. It's the opposite of sex. **WYNTON:** But that's not what we're talking about. **HERBIE:** You said the music is about one thing, and it's about sex. And I'm saying it's not just about that. **WYNTON:** We don't even want to waste our time discussing that because we *know* that that's what it's about. Now check out what I'm saying. . . **HERBIE:** No, 'cause you've talked a lot. . . **WYNTON:** Okay, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, man. **HERBIE:** [*laughter*] Give me a break! I've never been on an interview with you, so I didn't know how it was. Wowww!

Ebet Roberts

Peter Gabriel, July '86

I'm not trying to deliver African pastiches. I'm using the influences as tools to take me to somewhere else within my own music. There are plenty of precedents for that process; for instance, in his painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, Picasso took the African mask and totally transformed his own style of painting. From that incident grew a whole realm of new work. Strictly speaking, the idea was "stolen," but it was a justifiable action. Similarly, for musicians to "steal" material from whatever inspires us is fundamentally important, and music as a whole is much healthier for it. In a small way I feel that I've contributed to that process, because while there's now a much greater awareness of the possibilities of semi-tuned percussion in rock, this wasn't always so. At the time I worked with marimbas on the third album [1980], that appreciation was very rare. I'd stolen that influence from Steve Reich, who in turn had taken it from Africa. Theft, if you like, is the lifeblood of all art. ☞ Actually I think that the idea of "talent" is incredibly overrated. A need to survive is much more important...If it becomes critical that you do well, you'll achieve it. If you went up to someone on the street with a gun and said, "In twelve months' time you'll be shot unless you produce a great work of art," he would suddenly find the motivation to do so.

I first dug Little Richard at the Two Spot, down on the corner of Fifth and Walnut. Seeing Little Richard singing "Tutti Frutti" and getting over, I went on to the WIBB studios in 1954 to do a demo of "Please, Please, Please." Don Robey from Duke/Peacock Records in Houston want it, Leonard Chess of Chicago's Chess and Checker labels want it too, but Ralph Bass of Federal put his job on the front lines for that tune. We went up to Cincinnati, me and my boys, to record it right, but Mr. Syd Nathan of Federal and King Records, he didn't want no part of that record. Mr. Bass loved that record to death anyway, lost his job over that record, and pushed the thing hard all during 1956 in Atlanta, in Birmingham, down in Florida with the help of promo man Mr. Henry Stone, 'til it was pandemonium from Federal for '56, hear me? Pretty soon Mr. Nathan, he saw the light, gave Ralph back his job, and we git down to serious business. Because of the Lord, who I thank in a minute, everybody's been seeing that same light shine since! ☞ Michael Jackson, he used to watch me from the wings and got his moon walk from my camel walk. I ain't jealous, I'm zealous. I ain't teased, I'm *pleased*. Who's gonna do James Brown better'n *James Brown*? Think! I'm not afraid to be the boss, see? That's how James Brown music came to be. Back when everybody was listening to soap-suds songs and jingles, I emphasized the beat, not the melody, understand? Heat the beat, and the rest'll turn sweet.

Ebet Roberts

James Brown, Apr. '86

1985 to 1988

"Young black musicians are realizing that we can do the same things the white musicians do, but we just have to be really good at it. There are more white people than there are black and unfortunately it shows up really strong on record sales."

—Rick James, October 1993

"America is the only place in the world where you can actually make some money from touring. And we have to make some money, Charlie and me, because we don't write songs. It sounds very mercenary, but it's the facts of life."

—Bill Wyman, November 1981

"I asked Ornette how to handle business. He said, 'I just tell them to add another zero to the end. It's not hard for them to do.'"

—Abdullah Ibrahim, Feb. 1982

"We want to see people who look healthy and are lost in the music, dancing. Beautiful bodies moving, people grooving on each other and on our music. We don't want to see these dildo jackheads in the first row—the record company or, more likely, the promoter they give these free tickets to. All these dinkbrains in front, I hope they get crushed."

—Neil Young, Feb. 1991

"The impression was I was only in it for the money. And I was. But that doesn't mean I'm not a good musician."

—Ginger Baker, May 1995

1985 to 1988

"I would write a song called 'Satisfy Yourself.' Leon [Russell] would rewrite it as 'I Wanna Satisfy You' and I'd get no credit. But it was a great learning experience."

—Tom Petty, December 1994

"Even Miles suffers from being committed to the marketplace. Much, much too much."

—Keith Jarrett, October 1983

"When I was a kid, 'making it' meant playing a good solo when it was your turn to play. Then you'd have to come back and 'make it' on the next tune. Music's not the stock market."

—Jim Hall, July 1983

"With all respect to the Who, their trip around America was a cynical exercise in making as much money as they could."

—Peter Garrett, Midnight Oil, January 1984

"One day the record company called and said, 'You've got a hit record. Why don't you get yourself a band to plug it?' I said, 'If I have a hit record, what do I have to plug it for?'"

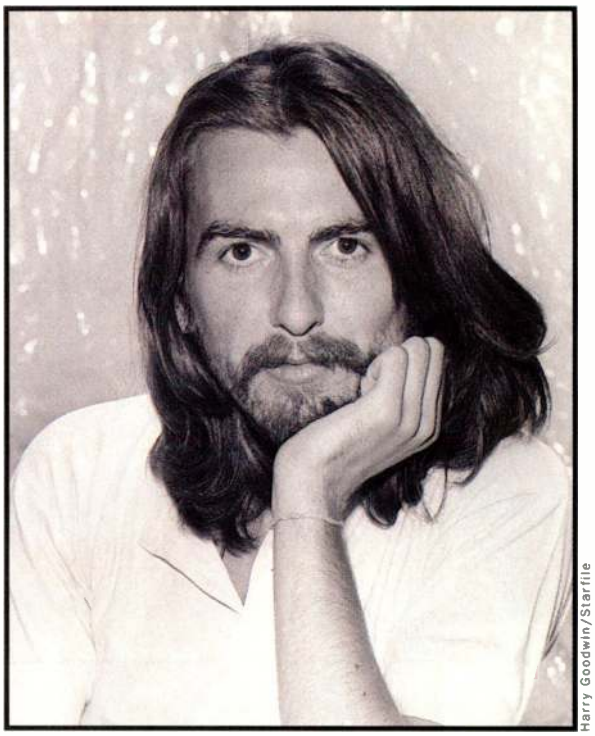
—J.J. Cale, July 1981

"Had I been 'smarter' on a commercial level, I would have imitated the Tribute to Nino Rota album 15 times and made a 'Willner Hill' label."

—Hal Willner, January 1989

"You know, I've never done a commercial in my life and I really don't want to start that shit now.

—Bob Seger, April 1983



Harry Goodwin/Starfile

George Harrison, Nov. '87

The first time I ever played slide was in 1969, although I supposed I stuck one of those things on my finger somewhere before that. Eric Clapton got his manager to bring Delaney and Bonnie over to England, and Eric was in the band. I went to see the first show in December. It was such a good rocking crew; I figured it'd be nice to be in it. They said, "Okay, we're coming to your house in the morning." And they pulled up the bus outside my house and said, "Come on!" I just grabbed a guitar and an amp and went on the road with them. They had a song out called "Comin' Home," which Dave Mason had played slide on. Delaney gave me this slide bottleneck and said, "You do the Dave Mason part." I'd never attempted anything before that, and I think my slide guitar playing originated from that. I've got two slides, and the main one I've used is a piece off the old Vox AC-30 amplifier stand. I asked the roadie we used to have in the Beatles, Mal Evans, if he could get me one, and he just got a hacksaw out and sawed through a piece of the amp stand. I used that a lot, and I had some glass slides made also. The glass slide tends to be a warmer sound, whereas the metal one is more slippy and brighter. But I couldn't tell you which one I've used where, because I don't make notes on it.

Jay Blakesberg

Los Lobos, Apr. '87

CONRAD LOZANO: When Louie introduced me to some South American groups like Los Incas, I just fell in love with it. I took up the *guitarrón*, and it took me a year just to get the strength to play it. I loved the sound and the challenge, I guess. We made a lot of instruments too. The reward was that older people would appreciate what we were doing, and then younger fans would start to get into it. **LOUIE PEREZ:** We didn't even have to say, "I'm tired of playing Top Forty": We felt it. But a lot of other people couldn't understand why we were making records we used to be embarrassed to hear our parents play. **CESAR ROSAS:** We didn't start off playing Tex-Mex and all that "button" stuff. That came years later. We became musicologists in a way. One of the things we were known for was having a harp in the band—not a blues harp, I mean a big harp. That was part of the music that had developed in Velázquez, Mexico. And then, around 1978, we decided to give up rock music completely. For two or three years I didn't touch an electric guitar, and for almost five years we never bought a rock & roll record. Just folk music—Mexican, African, Chinese, South American. **DAVID HIDALGO:** We've always been caught in the middle. Like we'd get ostracized by guys who thought we weren't political enough. Then we'd go to social functions and other people would ask us, "Where's your suits?"—meaning the damn mariachi suits. We'd say, "We're not that kind of band." "Oh," they'd go, "you mean you're political?"

Ebet Roberts

Tom Waits, Oct. '87

In music the intelligence is in the hands. The way your hands rub up along the ends of a table. You begin to go with your instincts. It's only dangerous to the degree that you only let yourself discover the things that are right there. You'll be uncomfortable and so you'll keep returning to where your hands are comfortable. That's what happened to me on the piano. I rarely play the piano because I find I only play three or four things. I go right for F# and play "Auld Lang Syne." I can't teach them, so I make them do something else. *Are you more free on guitar?* Not necessarily. I like picking up instruments I don't understand and doing things that may sound foolish at first. It's like giving a blow torch to a monkey. That's what I'm trying to do. Always trying to break something, break something—break through to something. *You use a lot of "found" items in your music.* That's a trap too, though there's something in the fact of a studio with instruments you've spent thousands of dollars renting, to walk over to the bathroom and the sound of the lid coming down on the toilet is more appealing than that $17,000 bass drum. And it makes you crazy. When the intervals and the textures begin to disturb you more than the newspaper, or your rocking chair or the comfort of your mattress, then I guess you're in for the long haul.

Cannonball and them all started using the Fender electric piano. We weren't copying the sound, we just liked it. Mainly because Joe [Zawinul] played so nice on the Fender. Now it's a little bit different, but I like it. They've taken the textures of orchestration and synthesized it: You can play with five pieces what used to take seventeen. So instead of playing against Sonny and Jackie McLean, you pre-record it on the keyboard and then play against that. It's just another challenge. I liked what Marcus [Miller] did for me on *Tutu*. We sequenced the drum parts because they're polyrhythmic, and Stevie [Thornton, percussionist] can't always remember them. I told my son, "If you want to be a true musician, you have to be like Marcus Miller: Be able to play piano, drums, bass, all of it." That's the way it is today and I love it. What I used to play with Tony Williams, Jack DeJohnette, Herbie, Chick, Cannonball, Bill Evans, all those different modes and substitute chords, we had the energy then and we liked it. But I have no feel for it anymore. Other people still do it, but it doesn't have the same spark. It's more like warmed-over turkey. Wynton Marsalis? I don't know about him, man. I know he doesn't talk like that when we're alone together. "Preserve this" and "preserve that": The way they're going, we'll have blacks back on the plantation. I mean, it already is preserved. Isn't that what records are all about? I just tell people it's like this: I can't wear bell-bottom pants anymore. And I don't drive an Edsel. I drive a Ferrari.

David Gahr

Miles Davis, March '87

1985 to 1988

MUSIC AND POLITICS

"Culture can be used to take people away from reality, like 'dance your troubles away.' The government can pollute the world, take our taxes, and nobody's looking at them anymore 'cause we're partying!"

—Max Roach, January 1994

"We're an Australian band. We're not going to preach politics. We act on issues that directly affect our lives."

—Peter Garrett, Midnight Oil, Jan. 1984

"I don't think that benefits do anything, other than just show that people are emotionally involved in the same complaint. We'd rather do a concert and then take that money and use it in some way which we hope will improve society."

—Pete Townshend, September 1982

"I did a radio show in New York with Bob Geldof recently and he said he didn't believe rock and roll could change anything. And I said, I disagree. At a good gig a kind of liberation can take place, and you don't go home and take quite as much crap from the news as you did before."

—Robert Fripp, June 1981

"If you've got a platform you should speak. But it's always musicians who are doing the work government is really supposed to be doing."

—George Harrison, March 1990

1985 to 1988

"I am South African. I don't express the revolution. I am the revolution."

—Abdullah Ibrahim, Feb. 1982

"One of the dangers of raising money with pop stars and big concerts is that people assume a miracle will take place. There are no miracles."

—Sting, Aug. 1991

"What Ice-T did with 'Cop Killer' indicates that people don't understand art. They think art is obvious. If you say it literally, that's what you mean. The context you present something in and the way you present it is meaningless to these censor types. That's where art meets the wall."

—Neil Young, Apr. 1993

"If the guy who owns K-Mart wants to put stickers on my records, I don't really give a shit."

—Frank Black, Pixies, Dec. '90

"If a pop figure is worth anything, given the failure of our political institutions, it's to assume a responsible position, a posture of salvation."

—Rubén Blades, January 1986

"If somebody wanted to torture me, they could force me to hear music through Ronald Reagan's ears."

—Charlie Haden, April 1984

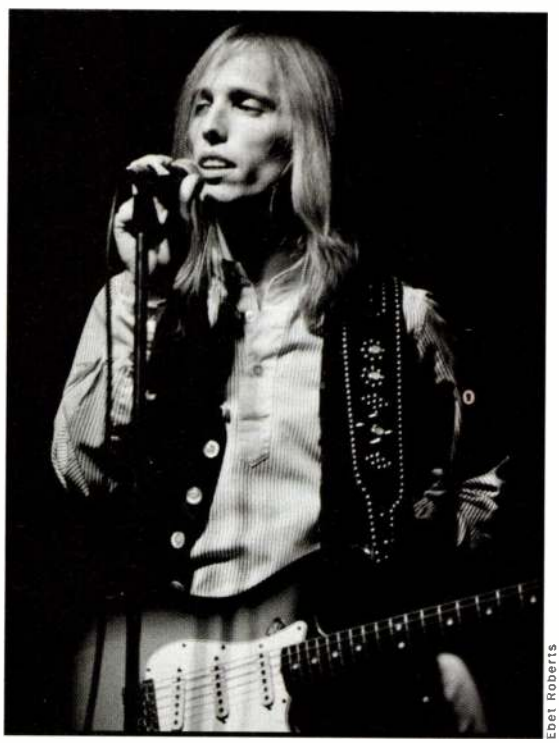
"There's one thing about MTV that bothers me—you don't seem to see many black acts on it."

—Bob Seger, April 1983

I'm not the kind of guy who puts himself up as being the greatest this or that, and I hate to say this, because I don't want it to sound like back-patting or whining, but there are so many things I came across over the years that I wanted to develop on the tenor that I had to sort of curtail because of dental problems and operations I've had over the years. I've just barely scratched the surface. It's just a matter of what you want to do. Who would have thought years ago that guys would be playing wind instruments using all these circular breathing things, holding a tone indefinitely? There's all kinds of expressions that haven't been developed. With different mouthpieces I've gotten enough notes that it sounds like chords; where you can play a note lower than the lowest note on the tenor, and not by slipping your hand over the bell either. And guys say, "Oh, Sonny, that's impossible." But I don't think there's anything that can't be done. Because music is such a spiritual thing, man. There's a place where I believe you can transcend these metal instruments and go to another area where you can impose a spiritual reality on the music you are playing. I don't even want to know I have a horn; I want the music to play itself. If you have the determination, if you have the faith, if you have the ear of God, you can do any of these things.

David Gahr

Sonny Rollins, May '88



Ebet Roberts

Tom Petty, Sept. '87

Success can wreck a band as well as failure. What accounts for the Heartbreakers' relative stability? The main reason I keep on is that I believe the music will keep getting better. We're not the kind of people who kid themselves very well; we're pretty hard on each other. Bring in a bad song and, boy, you'll pay [*laughs*]! "This is shit!," you know, or "No, I'm not doing another take because this song sucks." They're very blunt people. Let Me Up (I've Had Enough) *sounds upbeat, but the sentiments are consistently dark. There's humor, but it's gallows humor.* Sometimes all you can do is laugh, or you'll cry. Dylan gave us songs that made you laugh while informing you. It makes the medicine go down a little easier. You look up and what is there to believe in? The preacher is fucking his secretary while they take hundreds of millions of dollars off sick, arthritic people—the ugliest kind of crime. You can't go to a McDonald's without fear of being mugged. I know, you look at newspapers in the Twenties and they're filled with talk about the end of the world. But now we can't kid ourselves; they can blow us all up. I have to take exception to that. I saw Dylan getting criticized in Australia by this guy who was saying, "Your new songs aren't as relevant as your old songs." And Dylan said, "Well, I'm out here writing songs. What are you doing?" You know, like a whole generation is out there driving BMWs and trying to be lawyers, and at least I'm trying to do something. I thought *that* was pretty relevant.

1985 to 1988

"People are always going to use music as an escape, but if music doesn't serve to heighten consciousness or help rip away a veil of complacency, then it's an opiate."

—Tom Morello, Rage Against The Machine, Jan. 1993

"We made a demo with five songs on it and we would go from record company to record company and they'd go, 'The What? The Doors? How do you spell that?' We got rejected by everybody in town."

—Ray Manzarek, August 1981

"All of a sudden alternative radio is a big money thing, so you get all these guys in suits and ties who want to tighten the format. They have no knowledge of music and certainly no passion for it. They just want to play whatever sells."

—Howie Klein, VP/GM of Sire Records, Jan. 1994

"A whole lot of people in the gangsta community come to a point where they might want to change, but the day they change is the day they're labelled as sellouts."

—Branford Marsalis, July 1994

"[A Sex Pistols reunion] is not possible. What's the point of 40-year-old geezers trying to pretend they're 18 again? It would be fake and it would be purely for the cash. I would feel very guilty. It would ruin everything I've achieved."

—John Lydon, Sex Pistols, July 1994

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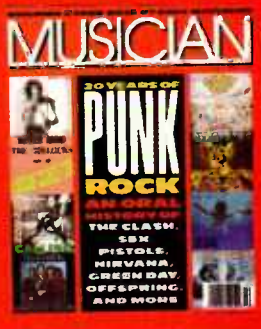

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1985 to 1988

"Independent distribution has vaporized over the last five years. In the long run, that's going to be the undoing of alternative rock."

—John Flansburgh, They Might Be Giants, Jan. 1994

HEROES AND VILLAINS

"Clapton was the only one I ever copied."

—Eddie Van Halen, Sept. 1982

"When I listen to Mariah Carey, I don't care what she's saying. I'm not transported to her point of view."

—Rickie Lee Jones, May 1994

"What's the difference between us and Led Zeppelin? I play guitar, Jimmy Page plays guitar. He sells one million, we sell six million."

—Nile Rodgers, Chic, Apr. 1992

"[Beck] is the best. He's the best guitarist in England."

—Eric Clapton, January 1984

"Pete Townshend may be one of rock and roll's rare authentic geniuses."

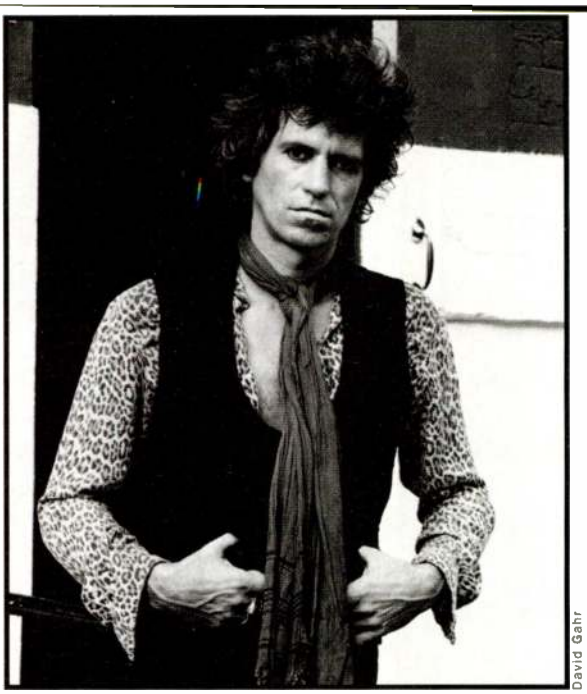
—Jerry Garcia, October 1981

"I hate the Who. A lot of people compare us but I never listened to them."

—Patrick Dahlheimer, Live, Apr. 1992

"Rod Stewart's an egomaniac and one of the meanest guys on two feet."

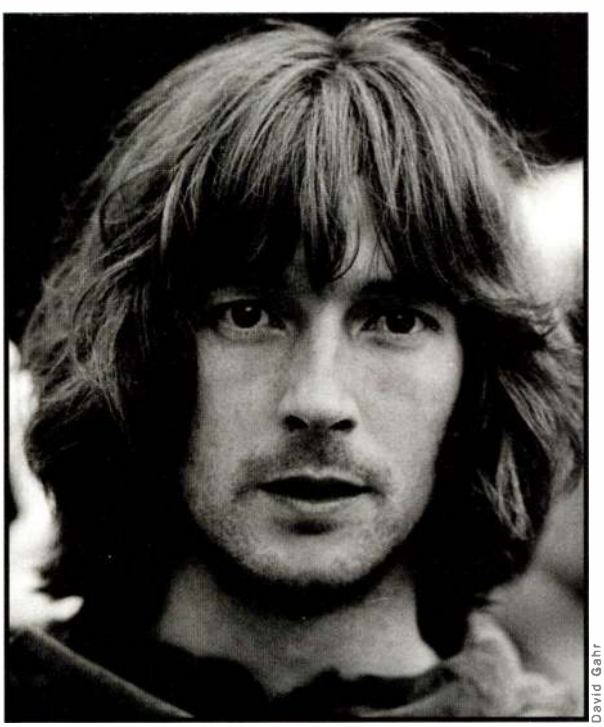
—Glyn Johns, January 1984



David Gahr

Keith Richards, Oct. '88

Mick and I talk about everything. Our battles are far different from what people imagine they are. All people hear is that we're pissed off at each other, but Mick and I have known each other too long. I've known him 41 years. Our battles are personal, and people should understand that we're just sparring. When you know somebody that long, it's not a simple matter to dissect. It's not just two rock & roll superstars arguing about who runs the Rolling Stones. It's many other things, all of them complicated. *I met Mick once several years ago at a Christmas party where my band was playing. I went up to him afterwards and said, "I don't know how you can do it for two hours. I ran out of moves after two songs. And he said, "I know, man, it's fuckin' hard, isn't it?"* It is hard. You're the focal point. The idea of a band is to support that, never detract from it, especially in larger and larger venues. In front of a hundred thousand people, the band has to make the singer feel that much more confident. He has to know that no matter what goes wrong, no matter if he sprains an ankle, the show goes on. Of course, what happens over the years is you give him so much confidence that he thinks he doesn't need you anymore. But that's another story.



David Gahr

Eric Clapton, Nov. '86

The shy teenager with a limited sense of self-worth is a big part of the guitar hero myth. Were you like that? Oh, all the worst things of adolescence, I went through. You know, the falling in love and getting hurt, all that kind of thing. Constantly going after women who were out of my reach. And, yeah, I think it's exactly that. I mean, guitar playing—it's like a bluff. Covers up all your wimp things. If you can get that down ... I mean, the first recognition I ever got amongst the crowd I used to hang out with was for my guitar playing. I tried to dress like them, I tried to get my hair right and look good, but I was lacking in these departments. So the guitar ... I think I was probably lucky, and was gifted in that way, because it didn't seem as hard as it should be. That was what got me through. I always wanted something other than the guitar. I hate the sound of just a straight guitar. When I pick up a guitar and it just sounds like a guitar, to me that's boring. First of all, I wanted to sound like Little Walter. I wanted to play the guitar and make it sound like a harmonica. Then I wanted it to sound, for a long time, like Junior Walker; if you can get a guitar to play like his saxophone, you were off and running somewhere else. Really, there is a series of phrases that all those musicians use, and whatever instrument you play has nothing to do with it. You just go for those phrases.

James Taylor said that while some songs he writes are confessional and some therapeutic, he figures the very act of making it rhyme and setting it to music gives it a distance from real events. He's right. I don't think I've written an autobiographical song in my life, though there's autobiography in a lot of my songs. I'm not a fan of the life-of-the-artist-as-art approach: "This is my life so it must be great." That's boring to me. Therapeutic? Yeah, it's therapeutic sometimes; hopefully it serves some other purpose than just self-confession. When you're on a stage or singing on a record, you're wearing another hat, a false beard and moustache. You're assuming some kind of role. This doesn't mean you're not sincere what you sing about, but it's not necessarily the truth as lived by you in your life. I know people who do write like that and it works very well. I just finished a record with Loudon Wainwright. He probably writes more literally about his life than anybody else. He has a way of doing it that's very honest. He doesn't shirk from the painful bits. I think it's tremendous but I can't do that. I'd rather turn it into something that for me has more meaning and a more lasting quality, and perhaps I can sneak in a little allegory or a little morality without anybody noticing.

Ebet Roberts

Richard Thompson, Dec. '86

It worries me that people judge us by their own assumptions regarding what the band is about. When *The Unforgettable Fire* came out there was a negative reaction to it in the United States-it wasn't a straight rock & roll album. At that point we could have made a rock & roll album, but we started to experiment, and experimentation is almost not allowed, because pop is the dominant force in music in the Eighties. Rock & roll criticism has to own up to its own limitations and uncertainties. And then there is the problem of being an Irish band in Ireland, and they're holding on to us, trying to turn us into some kind of icon. *You've taken a lot upon yourselves. It's a brave thing to have done.* Well, I'll tell you what I think. I see something changing. I think people are looking for art that doesn't just reflect the chaos, but challenges it. And that's why I believe there will be a re-examination of soul music, country music, gospel, and folk music made by people. As one French writer said about us, what's so extraordinary about being human? To a lot of the intelligentsia, the most offensive aspect of U2 is our lack of self-consciousness. But rock & roll is not an intellectual art form; it's much more to do with instinct. With U2 I'd like to achieve a balance between the head and the heart. I'd like to make a rock & roll album now that has at its core a sense of abandonment. There are so few artists owning up to what it's like to have both fears and faith.

Ebet Roberts

Bono, Oct. '87

1985 to 1988

"Leon Russell told me once, 'If you sing as bad as me and you don't put the vocal right up front, everybody is going to think you're trying to hide something. But if you do put it up front, they'll listen to it and think it's neat.'"

—Tom Petty, July 1981

"Bird was really selfish. If you had some dope he'd want all of it. If you had some food, he'd want all of that."

—Miles Davis, March 1982

"I love the way Willie Nelson sings. He phrases sometimes like I do."

—Miles Davis, March 1982

"I like Wes Montgomery, Grant Green. I never wanted too much speed. I always wanted a groove."

—Albert Collins, Dec. 1980

"Eric [Clapton] didn't want to play with me after a while, because I used to lift him into unknown territory. He's an incredible fucking jazz player but he doesn't think he is, because he doesn't want to go into unknown territory."

—Ginger Baker, May 1995

"Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, and Soundgarden are like this big vacuum cleaner, sweeping up all the stuff that got really corporate."

—Nuno Bettencourt, January 1995

"Madonna is responsible for my legitimacy."

—Liz Phair, Nov. 1993

1985 to 1988

"Listening to Enya makes me have to pee."

—Stephin Merritt, the 6ths, June 1995

"I was glad that John Lennon could be happy for a few years. If that made people nervous, so what?"

—Tom Petty, April 1983

"Betty Carter is by far the greatest jazz singer. A woman who stands there with all that strength, it's because she's vulnerable."

—Rickie Lee Jones, Nov. 1981

"Steven Spielberg has his fantasies, I have mine. I think Thelonious Monk was the alien in my bedroom."

—Donald Fagen, Jan. 1983

"I think that Marvin Gaye is as great as Thelonious Monk. I tell this to people my age and they get very upset."

—Cecil Taylor, September 1983

"I get the feeling that Phil Collins is pretending to be a rock & roller. It's an act. That's why it's unsatisfying."

—Roger Waters, Dec. 1992

"Since I'm the only person I know who doesn't dig the Police, I know they must be good."

—Randy Newman, April 1983

"After you've heard Hendrix, what are you gonna do? You can't get that out of your mind. You don't want to."

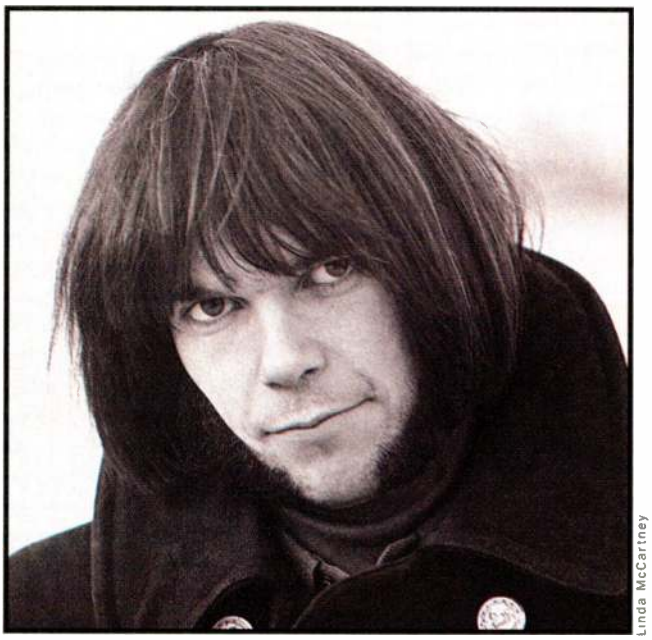
—Stevie Ray Vaughan, September 1983

I went out and got those records, the Pistols album and the Clash records, and I thought, "This is what's getting all the attention." I knew that the songs I'd written would sound really precocious, I knew they had a lot of American influences and that was very out of fashion. I thought I would just get dismissed out of hand. So I scrapped most of the material, keeping only the songs that were the most jaggedy. Then I wrote a load more that were very concise. That's where that first album came from. And that meant I was an album ahead, because I had songs that got dismantled or certain lyrics got used again, which was quite useful because it meant I could discard a lot of things. It sounds a little calculated in retrospect. But I'd been trying for three years, and I really did think I had some good songs. The process of writing wasn't such an artistic endeavor as some of the more pompous critics would like to believe. Every record wasn't the bloody tablets of stone. In the construction it was a lot more of a hack job. But hopefully in the heart of the thing, in the good songs, was the true bit. I don't have any purist tradition to lean on. Every pop musician is a thief and a magpie. I have an emotional affinity for certain styles, but none of them belong to me.

Ebet Roberts

Elvis Costello, Mar. '86

I read the book your dad wrote about you and was curious about your reaction to it. Well, I learned a lot about myself that I didn't know, because I saw myself through his eyes. *You share a restless nature, but it seems as if your dad's manifested itself a lot in personal relationships, and with you it's channeled through music.* I owe the fact that I'm so happy at home and have such a beautiful family to my music. If I didn't have my music I would be a really crazy person, not able to hold everything together. *A lot of the music you've made in the past few years is concerned with the importance of responsibility and commitment.* Yeah. I feel that my commitment to country music, when I was going through that phase, had a lot to do with that. I felt country music was really a family thing. It represented family values in a lot of ways. That's why I related strongly to it, and I still do. Country music is still a big part of my life even if it's not a big part of my music at this time. I don't think country and blues are that far apart. It's two different colors of the same thing. *As you get older, is it more of a challenge to keep a creative charge?* People get old; sometimes they get tired, and they don't change. It's definitely energy; that's all there is. Either you take care of yourself and you keep your energy healthy, or you just shit it away and it's all gone and you don't change and you become a relic. It's pretty simple.



Linda McCartney

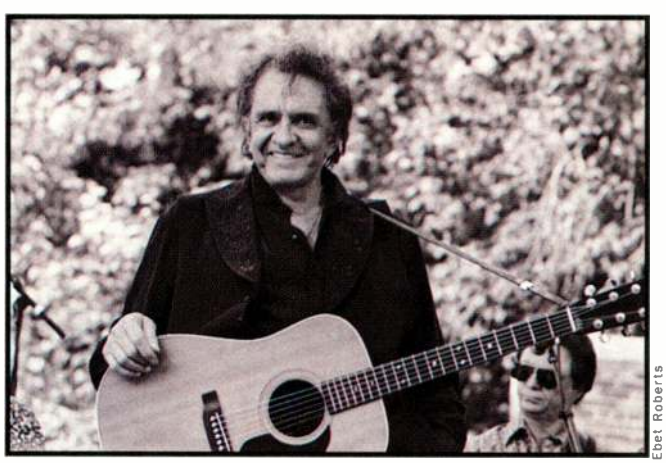
Neil Young, June '88

Ebet Roberts

Tina Turner, Oct 86

I'd like to write about fun experiences, and I haven't had enough fun yet. The memories I have now are still about my marriage. I don't want to sing about that, you know? The words to the song Mark wrote, 'Overnight Sensation,' go something like, 'I guess I've been working a long time, working in the back line ... but I have my dreams.' I would have loved to have written that, but I'm so sick of it that I don't even want to remember. I don't think I was a dumb woman for staying with Ike. I think it took a smart woman, because we had a business and there was money involved, and because there was family. When I left I left for all or nothing, except what I learned from Ike Turner, which was a lot. I think I became a great performer. He was a very good businessman too, and I'd made tons of money—more that was lost, you know? So I did walk out with flying colors. It wasn't something you could see or touch, but I knew what I learned. Ike could have been a great man, except that he followed the wrong light. I tried to prove that to him and to help and protect him, to prove I was his friend, and that is why I stayed so long. That's why I didn't become a drug addict or an alcoholic. I just became a coffee addict!

I love Bob Dylan, I really do. I love his early work, I love the first time he plugged in electrically, I love his Christian albums, I love his other albums. *You and he had an extensive correspondence?* I have probably a dozen or more locked in my vault. I never have shown those letters to anybody, not even June. Bob Dylan's a very private person, and he would be really embarrassed if I did. I will eventually destroy them. There's no big secrets in them, but it's a period of Bob's life right after he first started. He had his first album out when I discovered him. I was working joints in downtown Las Vegas—the Nugget and places like that—and I was staying up all night playing Bob Dylan after I got through. So I wrote him a letter care of John Hammond at Columbia and I got a letter right back from Bob in New York. I fired one right back and then he wrote me one from California, then one from Hibbing, one from Woodstock. It was just rambling thoughts, what he was feeling about things, and looking forward to meeting me. I was the same. I was writing him letters on airplanes and mailing them in those vomit bags. *Don't destroy that correspondence. Seal it for seventy years, like presidential papers; bury it in a time capsule. But don't destroy it. The Sixties letters of Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash will be valuable to American musicologists in a hundred years.* I would never do that unless Bob said it was all right. Nobody but me knows where they are in the vault, and nobody's got the combination.



Ebet Roberts

Johnny Cash, May '88

1985 to 1988

"I said to Randy [Newman], 'Bruce [Springsteen] does some great stuff!' He says, 'Sorry, I don't hear it.' I said, 'Well, who do you like?' He says, 'Hall & Oates.' 'Randy,' I said, 'it's okay, because I hate Hall & Oates.'"

—Bob Seger, April 1983

"I feel bad that Kurt [Cobain]'s not still writing songs, because he was brilliant and that guy could emotionally twang my heartstrings. Every song that he wrote spoke to me."

—Stone Gossard, Pearl Jam, May 1995

"Somebody has to react against Hootie and the Blowfish."

—Ben Watt, Everything But The Girl, Aug. 1996

"Prince redefined what pop music and black music is all about. But none of us knew where he was going."

—Lenny Waronker, president of Warner Bros. Records, July 1994

"U2 are consciously about making big statements. They wave the flag and want to stand for something. They're a real self-conscious band."

—Peter Buck, R.E.M., December 1994

"Ever since the development of rock & roll, there's been an Axl Rose. And it's just totally boring to me. Why it's such a fresh and new thing in his eyes is obviously because it's happening to him personally."

—Kurt Cobain, Oct. 1993

1985 to 1988

"Kurt Cobain was a bit of a silly lad."
—Liam Gallagher, Oasis, September 1995

PLAYIN' IN THE BAND

"It sounds silly after all these years, but we still don't really know each other."
—Bill Wyman, November 1981

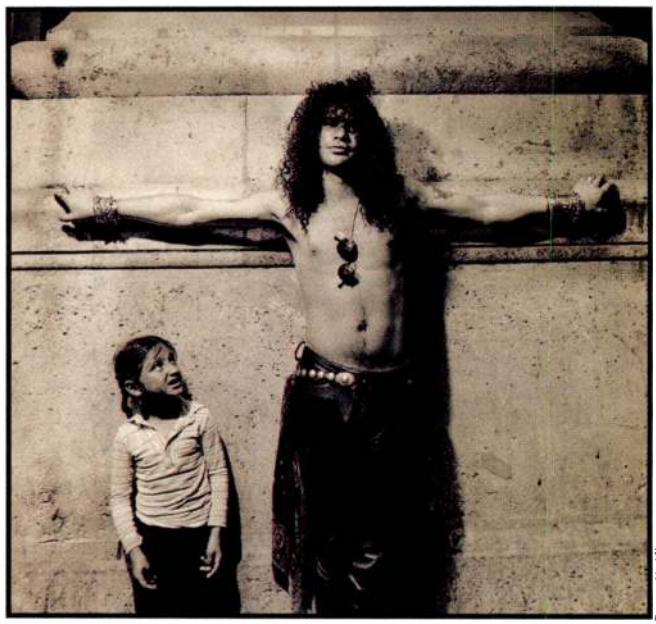
"I hate drum solos. I think they're boring. But people always applaud them because it's the drummer having his day."
—Ringo Starr, Feb. 1982

"Barry Manilow's got fans who feel about him exactly the way my fans feel about me. That is a humbling thought."
—Jackson Browne, Oct. 1983

"I want to be the best band in the fucking world. I want to be up there with the Beatles, the Stones, the Kinks, and the Who."
—Liam Gallagher, Oasis, Oct. '94

"I do make concessions to the audience. [The producers] wanted more rock & roll tunes, we're into that."
—Branford Marsalis, Oct. '91

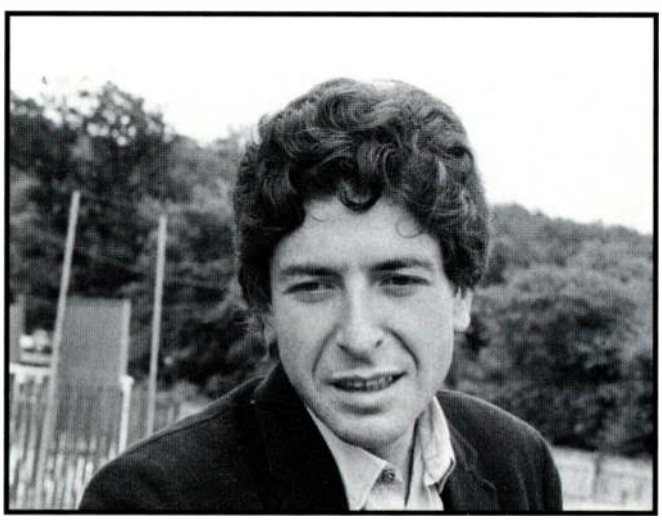
"I went into biker bars when I first started, and I would sing romantic ballads, because in the movies, Elvis would go and sing a romantic ballad and the place would quiet down. I didn't understand how the whole thing works."
— Chris Isaak, June 1993



Ross Halfin

Slash, Dec. '88

Slash grew up in England; his father designed album covers for Geffen Records, his mother fashions for artists like David Bowie and the Pointer Sisters. Surrounded by pop music, he enjoyed artists from the Jefferson Airplane to Minnie Riperton, but the Stones, Zeppelin, Beck, Faces, and Aerosmith were "major. When I was fourteen I was over at this girl's house I'd been trying to pick up for months, and she played *Aerosmith Rocks*; I listened to it eight times and forgot all about her." He credits Jimmy Page as his biggest influence: "that bluesy sound. And I've always been a real 'riffs' person. ☞ "Guns N' Roses is sort of like, we were the only five people in L.A. that could enjoy what each other did enough to start a band and keep it together. We're like this mirror of what kids really go through, what the reality of being a teenager is about, having to work nine-to-five and having shitty parents and dealing with authority. So we're very close to the kids we play for. That's what rock & roll is for me, a kind of rebellious thing, getting away from authority figures, getting laid maybe, getting drunk, doing drugs at some point. For a rock show we are doing something more unpredictable, that has a certain amount of ... recklessness."



David Gahr

Leonard Cohen, July '88

I always find it interesting when people designate me as a figure of the Sixties, because I certainly never bought the [Sixties] point of view. I was enflamed in the Sixties, as so many of us were. My appetites were enflamed: To love, to create, my greed, one really wanted the whole thing. I remember feeling at a certain point that this was not working. You'd wander around the East Village in New York, there'd be a paper called the *East Village Other* which seemed to indicate there was some kind of community. Only you'd walk the street and there'd be no evidence of any such thing. The evidence started to accumulate that nothing was happening. ☞ Somebody observed that whoever marries the spirit of their generation will be a widow in the next. I never married the spirit of my generation, because it wasn't that attractive to me. I've since moved further and further from any possible matrimonial commitment. As you get older, you get less willing to buy the latest version of reality. Mostly, I'm on the front line of my own life. *But you were in a community of folk singers who played together, sang each other's songs...* And everybody went for the money. Everybody. The thing died very, very quickly; the merchants took over. Nobody resisted. My purity is based on the fact that nobody *offered* me much money. I suppose that had I moved into more popular realms I might have surrendered some of the characteristics of my nature that are now described as virtues.

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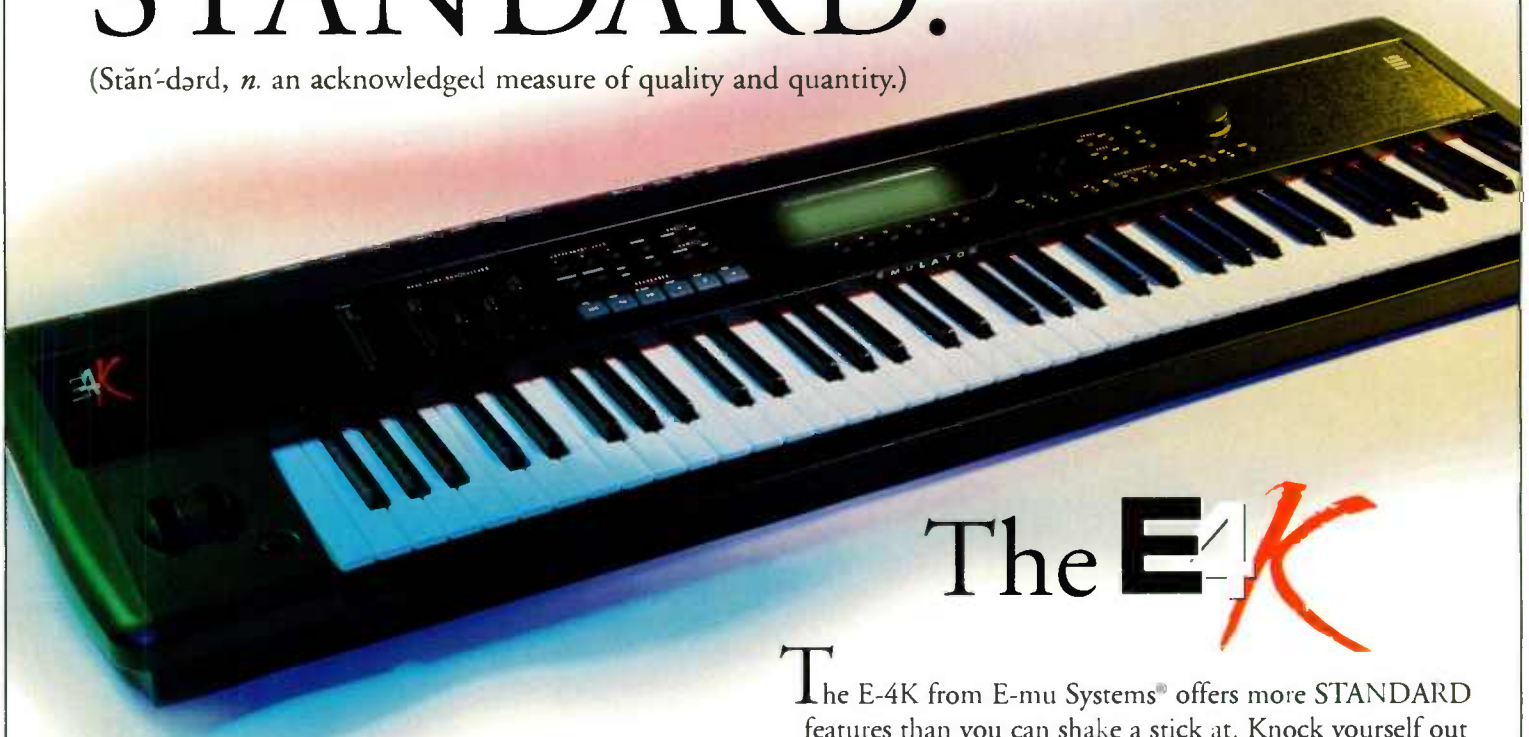

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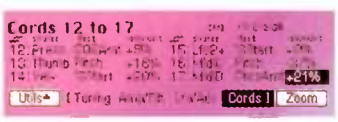

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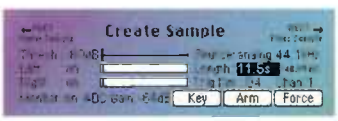

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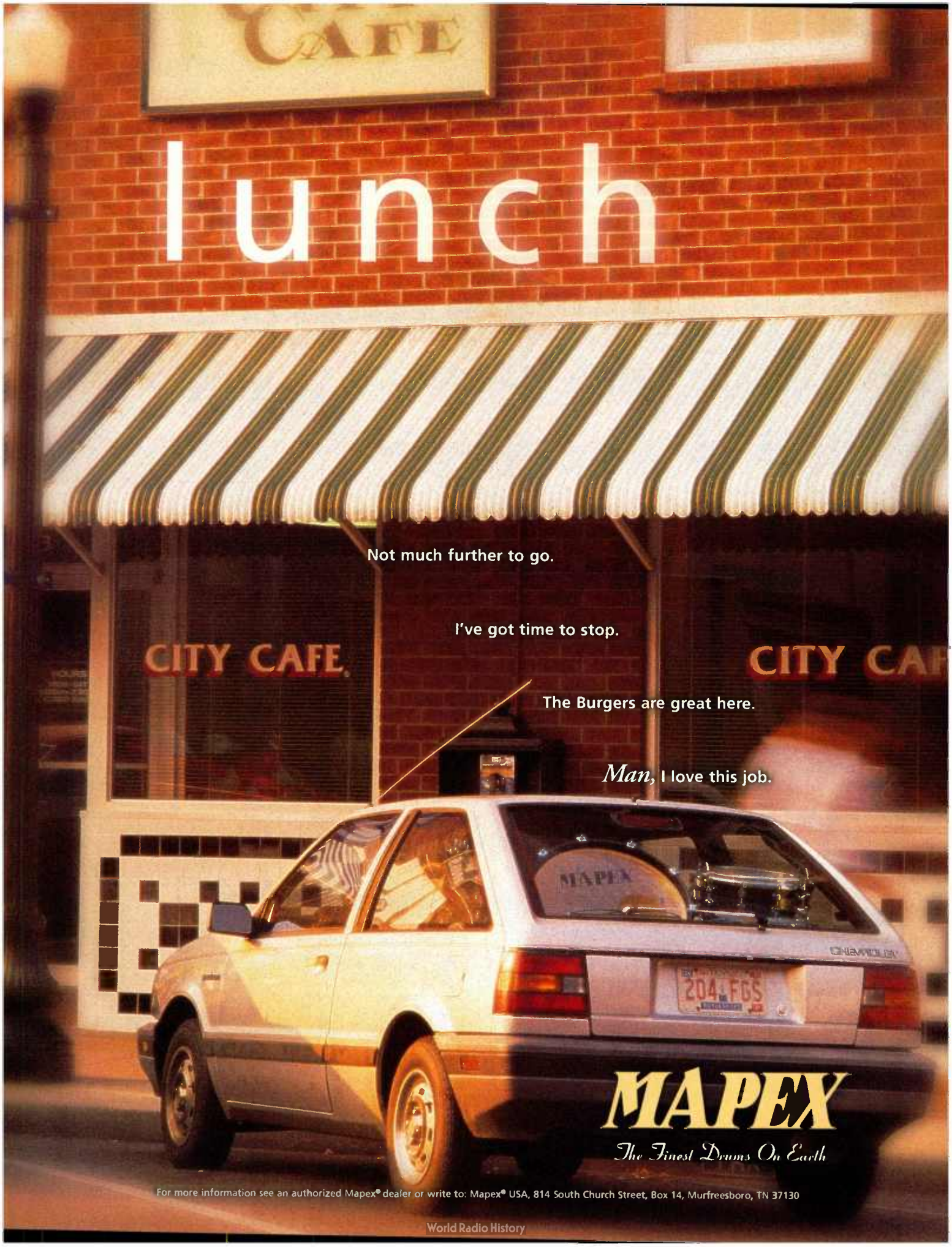


1991 to 1996

Bill Flanagan

The fuse punk lit in 1976 didn't blow until 1991, when Nirvana exploded. At *Musician* the first good news was that there were a lot of exciting new bands to write about. Maybe it was a rockist prejudice we should have outgrown, but we had been introduced to music by the Beatles and the Stones and always thought of the band as the primary unit of rock & roll. Unfortunately there had been a band void since the early Eighties, when the Clash, Talking Heads, Police, Pretenders, and other groups who succeeded commercially and artistically all seemed to disintegrate at once. Sure, U2 and R.E.M. grabbed the falling flag and planted it gloriously—but we couldn't write about U2 and R.E.M. every month (though God knows some readers said it seemed like we did). The explosion of '91–'92 was a direct result of the work of bands who made all the breakthroughs but never got the breaks. *Musician* had spent the second half of the Eighties championing groups such as the Replacements, Hüsker Dü, and the Pixies, expecting that sooner or later the public would catch up with them. Instead, those bands broke apart and left it for Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Smashing Pumpkins, and Soul Asylum to cross the finish line, often using tricks they'd learned from the beautiful losers they left in their dust. Half of the great rock & roll ever made has been by musicians who heard someone else's idea and said, "Look what I can do with this!" To some degree that's what the Cranberries did with Sinead O'Connor and Oasis with the Beatles; they invoked the honorable rock tradition of saying, "If you're not gonna be using that style, would you mind if I took it for a spin?" And of course, every new band brought something new to the party. That's how the form evolves. There was one element that Nirvana and the Nineties bands added to the stew that made a huge difference in its appeal: They added a taste of heavy metal to their punk. If you go way back to the late Seventies, that mix would have been unimaginable: The Sex Pistols were a reaction against Led Zeppelin and all that they represented. The Pistols were the Bizarro Zeppelin. But what seemed impossible then and seems pretty obvious now (especially to those who saw the Pistols' solid arena rock reunion tour) was that all decent electric guitar/bass/drum/ screaming singer hard rock bands have more in common than they want to admit. So to kids like Kurt Cobain and Billy Corgan who grew up without a Rock Critics Rule Book, there was no reason not to mix some Deep Purple into their Pixies. The result was "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and a whole new world. You know who really deserves some credit for being ahead of that wave and then getting washed under it? Guns N' Roses. In the dark pre-Nirvana days when it seemed like the only popular rock bands left were Spandex poodle heads like Warrant and Trixter, GN'R plowed into the herd of posers and—love 'em or hate 'em—really meant it. Axl Rose saw himself as the inheritor of the Sex Pistols and the Rolling Stones, and for a while his band was the biggest rock group in the world. When Nirvana appeared—on his label too—Axl saw them as brothers, rushed to embrace them, and got a stiff arm from Cobain, who saw in GN'R all the bullyboy macho he believed his music opposed. Then, while Nirvana grabbed the brass ring from him, Axl submerged himself in lawsuits, personal issues, and fixing up his inner child. You could argue all night about which of those two unhappy boys—Kurt or Axl—had the more generous view of his music and his audience, but it seems likely that in the long run Axl's ongoing exile will turn out to have been a blessing in disguise. He stepped away from a fight he couldn't win and took a seat on the sidelines—just as John Lennon, Paul Simon, and a few other crafty survivors sat out the punk rebellions of the late Seventies. When all the smoke from Seattle has cleared, don't ignore the possibility that Guns N' Roses will still be standing.

Bill Flanagan, editor of Musician in 1989–95, serves as vice president/editorial director of VH1 and writes a monthly music column for GQ.

1989 to 1996

"We don't want to sit around for a half-hour and whine about sexism. All of a sudden we're a women band. That's bullshit. We're a band on our own terms."

—Donita Sparks, L7, Oct. 1992

"Even if we were good, people didn't like it as much as when we completely fell apart. We got away with murder. Which is why I'm glad we're not alive anymore."

—Slim Dunlap, the Replacements, Oct. 1993

"Things like having a guitar tech have been very meaningful for me."

—Dave Pirner, Soul Asylum, June 1993

"I don't think dressing up in flowers onstage, painting my face, and wearing masks is particularly good if you want to be taken seriously, but a lot of that was emotion being expressed, however simply and bizarrely it may look now."

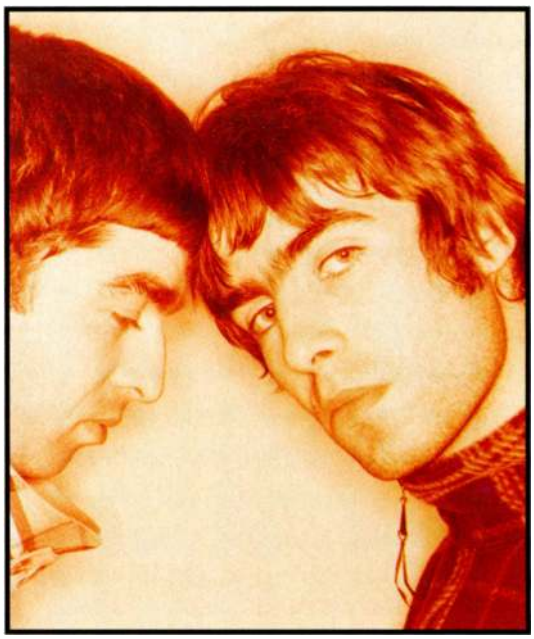
—Peter Gabriel, Dec. 1992

"Our mission is to get our message out to these people tonight and really feel it and mean it. It's not E major and F#. It's fuck and you."

—Trent Reznor, Nine Inch Nails, March 1994

"[My band] is like family. I'm not into divorce or putting my kids up for adoption. You would probably like to see me explore different avenues. Well, I'm not into it."

—Eddie Van Halen, May 1991



Michael Wong

Noel Gallagher, Oasis, Sept. '95

You used to be a guitar tech with Inspiral Carpets. You must know your way around the nuts and bolts of the instrument. I knew how to change strings, how to tune a guitar, and change a fuse or a plug, and that's about it, really. When I speak to real guitar technicians, they go on and on about stuff, and I haven't a clue, mate. Not a clue. I just lied when I got the job. *You didn't like Inspiral Carpets much?* No, they didn't treat us well at all, and I didn't like the music. They had a couple of good tunes, but they didn't have any spirit. They were just going through the motions for the money. And then, well, I'd be looking at them and thinking, "Fucking hell, if they can get away with it, I can." So I started me own band. *In four years with them, you didn't get found out once for not knowing anything about guitars?* Not at all. No. *If someone asked you to set up a guitar, you couldn't do it?* If they'd have asked me, I'd have fucked about with it and given it back, and said, "That's right now, that." The guitarist knew less than I did, so it was the blind leading the blind. I remember once his amp went down onstage. I stood behind it, pulling jack plugs in and out. Then, I just belted it on the side—*whomp!*—and it came back on. That was the only crush we had during the show.

Ebet Roberts

John Mellencamp, Aug. '89

A friend of yours told me that one of the issues that obsesses you is finding a way to rock gracefully into middle age. Well, it is. It's tough because I grew up in the Sixties. The fight song was "My Generation." "Hope I die before I get old." How many times has that been said? *Do you feel closer to an answer?* No, I'll tell ya, I'm farther away than I've ever been. Right now I don't know nothin' about nothin', no how, nobody. I'm not open to anything, I'm not interested in new ideas. I am really in a place where I hate to be. I don't want to look back and I don't want to look forward. I just want to sit here. And I want to paint. ✒ It's very confusing. This middle-aged stuff, there's something to it. I kinda thought I'd just coast through it. It's like I say in one of the new songs, "Mansion in Heaven," "I'm not an old man, but I'm not young anymore." Here's a poor fuckin' guy trying to justify his life through dying. When I wrote that song, it scared me. "And the angels will be descending to wrap me up in red velveteen." Ooof! What a horrible thought. Sad, don't you think? It was for me. I didn't like that I wrote the song. I thought, where's "Hurts So Good" when you need it? ✒ I'm not really stuck. I can pick up a guitar and write a hundred songs about the space I'm in now, about being lost. But I'm not satisfied at all. I can't do another record. *Why not?* Well, I could; I kinda did with *Big Daddy*. I did a lot of songs like that. But I couldn't do it again. As soon as I do that, it's *Lonesome Jubilee III*. Anyway, the last few months since I got this record done, I haven't wanted to deal with it. I'm just trying to run away from it, I guess. I don't even mean my career. It's just me. Sometimes I get so sick and tired of myself. I get tired of the way I look, the way I wear my hair, the shit I say to people. You wonder why you even bothered saying it in the first place. But that's okay. I'd rather be here than trying to justify something I don't believe in anymore.

KURZWEIL K2500

THE REVIEWS ARE IN!

There has never been a keyboard like the K2500 and the K2500X in the world! Kurzweil has created the ultimate performance keyboard, with more standard features and control, more expandability, and more power than any other instrument at even twice the price! With an uncanny ability to recreate the sound of all other keyboards, the K2500 Series establishes itself as the benchmark to which all other keyboards aspire. Now that we've had our say, don't just take our word for it... read what the reviews have to say. Then visit your dealer to hear and see what you've been missing. In a world of me-too clones the K2500 stands alone... anything else is settling for second best!

ELECTRONIC MUSICIAN - MAY 1996

" There are so many enhancements in the K2500 that it would be impossible to describe them all in a single review. The K2500 is even deeper and more powerful than it's predecessor the K2000. The K2500 has one of the most powerful sequencers in any keyboard workstation today. I found it very easy to get around thanks to a logical layout. The editing functions are remarkably complete, and provide a variety of useful record and playback parameters, including quantization on input, auto punch-in and punch-out, looping, synchronization, count-off, and click options. Of special note is the powerful arpeggiator that can be used in Setup Mode. The ribbons are great fun to use. They let you play incredibly expressive vibrato and pitch bends. You can audition samples directly from disk without loading, which is very convenient. I applaud the breath controller input; it is far too rare in the synth world. The setups inspire creativity when you play them. It sounds fantastic, it's packed with useful and well-implemented features, it's lineage is impeccable, and it will continue to expand and improve. The K2500 is truly an awesome instrument. All that remains is for you to write a check! " - *Scott Wilkinson*

KEYBOARD - MAY 1996

"As a synthesizer, the K2500, like it's predecessor is easily the deepest instrument you can buy. We couldn't wait to get our hands on one. The piano daughterboard (optional) provides a stunning stereo grand. . . you'd be hard-pressed to find a more playable instrument. It's warm, full, and responsive, and sounds equally realistic from one end of the keyboard to the other. The ribbon (controller) surface feels just right. The control over key velocity is superb. Basically, this is a serious piece of gear. The built-in sequencer has enough power to keep you jamming for a good long time. The sequencer has a much higher clock resolution than any other built-in sequencer that we know of. The K2500 is unabashedly aimed at the professional. . . it's a class act all the way. When it comes to overall musical muscle, this instrument really has no competition...this is the Steinway of electronic music." - Jim Aikin

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1989 to 1996

"I like to play in a band, but I don't particularly like the adulation, the attention, all that focusing on me. The Beatles was a brilliant thing, but if you look at it from another point of view, what a waste of time!"

—George Harrison, Sept. 1992

"It would take a book to tell you what went on within our band, and Roger [Waters]'s megalomaniac years, and precisely what he was attempting to do to all of us."

—David Gilmour, Aug. 1992

"One of the club owners had ripped off other bands, so I decided to make sure that we'd never get hired back. At the end of the set I jumped off the stage and slid all the way down the bar. Unfortunately, after the show the schmuck came up with a big smile and said, 'You guys were great!'"

—Perry Farrell, Porno For Pyros, June 1994

"I've been given the opportunity to travel most places in the world. But you never really go home, do you? You have no home."

—Jazzie B., Soul II Soul, June 1990

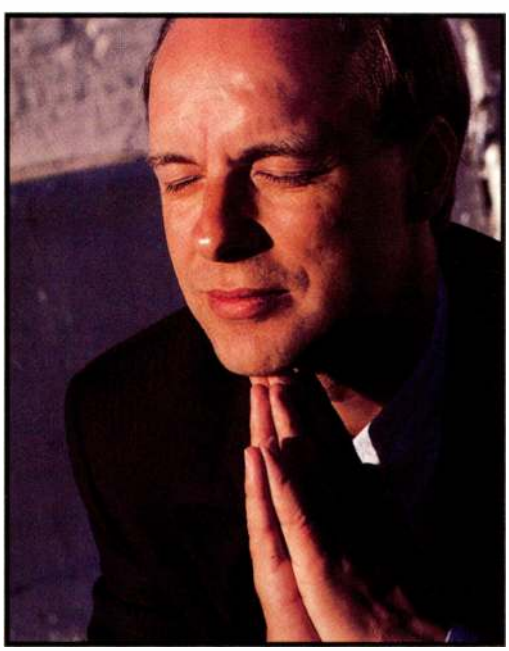
"When I traded Jim Messina my orange Gretsch for that old black guitar, boy, I really scored big. Old Black has a life of its own. It's so alive you can literally talk into the pickup and be understood through the amp."

—Neil Young, Nov. 1982

I'm heartened by the fact there's such great political music out. A baby songwriter like myself, it's a goal of mine to get better and let a little of that come through more. I'm not saying that defensively; I don't have a need to make an overtly political song. But there are some things I relate to on a personal level: a lot of women who are divorced, alcoholics, their kids are turning on them and they don't understand, and there aren't a whole lot of movements for them to be joining. *It surprises me to hear you describe yourself as a "baby songwriter."* I've only recently begun to inhabit this being that I'm in. I have a strong heart, and it didn't really have a car to ride in. I don't know if it's judgment I'm talking about. I'm just saying that I think I had an extended adolescence. When I was a teenager I really had my nose to the grindstone; I wanted to save the world and was completely committed to the blues and to social causes, and I was gonna be in the Army of the Righteous. And in my twenties I just kind of got off and had my adolescence, you know? My thirties too. Now I feel like I'm 21 years old and settling down to my life's work. It's interesting to embrace maturity and responsibility. Hey, we like doing this for a living. We're outlaws. We didn't want to conform to society's standards of what "adult" meant. I didn't want to be in mainstream America or mainstream music, mainstream politics. And I didn't want to get married, and I didn't want to settle down. I didn't want to go to sleep. I lived life really passionately. Sometimes that meant doing things to excess. And I don't regret a single minute of my "adolescence." But you know why change happens? Because you don't have a choice. People don't change until they're pushed to the point where it hits their pocketbook, or it hits their backyard, or it hits their pride, their sense of what's right.

David Gahr

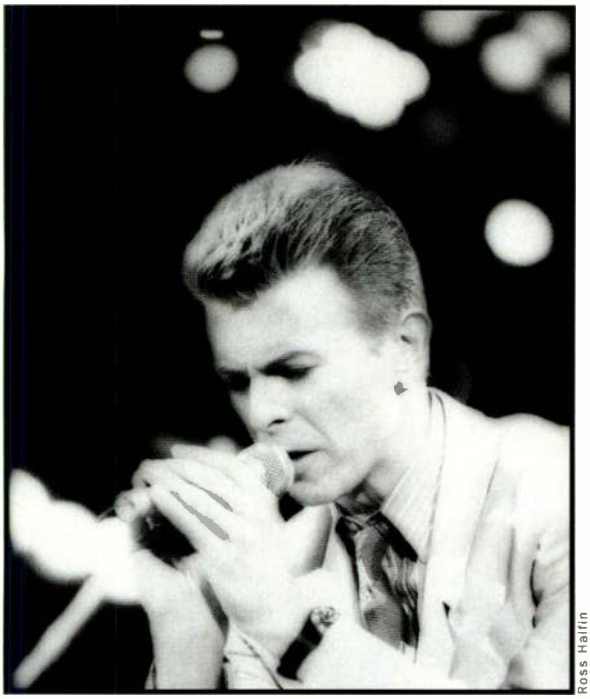
Bonnie Raitt, Aug. '89



Jay Blakesberg

Brian Eno, Nov. '93

If you're going to fail, it's best to fail very, very badly. I'll tell you why: Because a real failure cleans the slate. You're fresh. You can start again. That was the way James felt after *Seven* and the way U2 felt after *Rattle & Hum*. This is often the point when people want to work with me. I often think that my job as a producer is to persuade people to put their confidence in new places. Everyone else—the record label, the public—is going to encourage them to put their confidence in old places. That's why I often take extreme positions in the studio. I try to push opinions as far as I can, even to the point of saying, "This is potentially the best piece of music I've ever heard in my life. And here, next to it, is possibly the worst." It gets people's blood going, gets them fighting to defend something. I want to find out what they really want from it, what they like about it, what they believe is special about it. If you can figure that out, you might be able to get rid of all the baggage that's coming along with it.



Ross Halfin

David Bowie, July '90

I was very much under the influence of William Burroughs' writing techniques, and the idea of discharging all sorts of elements and images into one palette. The idea would be that you'd take three different subject matters, cut them up, and put the pieces together. And out of it you get a fourth subject matter. For example: If you write one sentence about a table, and one sentence about a blonde, you might get this table with curvy legs out of it. *What was the period like of writing* Low *in Berlin in 1976?* It was traumatic, it really was. I was having a very bad fight with cocaine. I was going through a series of very deep depressions, and I think it became evident on the *Low* album and then again on bits and pieces of *Heroes*. But you can also hear me coming out of it through the span of those four albums: *Low*, *Heroes*, then *Lodger*, and then finally *Scary Monsters*. *Scary Monsters* for me has always been some kind of purge. It was me eradicating the feelings within myself that I was uncomfortable with. *The excesses that creative people can put themselves through are a peculiar form of insecurity. It's almost as if they want to speed their lives up to get to the good parts.* That has an awful lot to do with it. And with cocaine you have the false impression that you're a lot better at what you're doing than you really are, because if you see a really bad artist paint when he's on cocaine, his paintings are every bit as terrible as they would be if he wasn't doing it. There's just more of them!

You put a lot of attention into nuances of recording your vocal parts in order to capture the characters of your songs. It's not me: They have me by the fucking throat. Really, I'm just translating. Once I accepted that this isn't really about me, it's just about tapping into different sides of Woman. Then I can take on these parts. I don't necessarily think they're parts of me. I'm a part of that, but it's just part of this ... this ... being. That's what my life is. These beings. They come in and out, these fragments. *It's a big job to nurture that concept in the minds of your engineers who are used to hearing music as something more tangible.* I see it as Formula One racing. They're serious car racers in there, but I built the car, so I know what it can do. I want to capture the frequency. When you hear "Beauty Queen" you are hearing this girl in that moment. She's standing in the bathroom, watching those girls put on that lipstick. I don't want us to be talking to her fifteen minutes later about what she realized in that bathroom. I want her to go back to that moment in the bathroom: It's white. It's that funny fluorescent light. It's that tile, with the green crud in between. It's those old toilets with the beautiful handles. You can hear the sound of the water dripping. This is not a confident girl. You are in her brain, getting triggered. ☞ *You want to bring that moment ...always* onto the tape. Every time you hear it, that girl is in the bathroom, putting on that lipstick. *Every* time.

Katz Pictures/Outline

Tori Amos, May '96

1989 to 1996

"I'm always aware of where my gum is onstage."

—Joan Jett, September 1989

"Stiv Bators always used to leap off the stage into the crowd, and I would have to go after him. It was, like, fine for him—the crowd passed him over their heads. I got the shit kicked out of me every night."

—Joe DeLorenzo, ex-Dead Boys roadie, July 1993

"Watkins Glen was the biggest concert in history; there were 650,000 people and we were playing on the highest stage I've ever been on in my life and kids were clinging to the edge of it. Bill Graham kept going over and stepping on their fingers; you'd hear them scream as they fell back into the crowd. I said, 'Bill, don't do that when we're playing.' And he said, 'Robbie, you can't smother them with love all the time.'"

—Robbie Robertson, November 1994

"I don't need to have a life. What would I do with it? Become miserable and make others miserable. It's better to keep traveling."

—Mark Eitzel, American Music Club, July 1992

"To be a modern rock band and not be innovative is to suck. To suck is to be lame. To be lame is to be weak. And to be weak is to be a jerk."

—Flea, Red Hot Chili Peppers, January 1994

1989 to 1996

"The Mahavishnu Orchestra was not a cooperative band. That was why we broke up: because the band received very, very little acknowledgment from John McLaughlin on a business level."

—Billy Cobham, Apr. 1993

"I had problems with Jan Hammer and Jerry Goodman. They were just fucking jerks! Jan still has some weird problem with me twenty years after Mahavishnu Orchestra."

—John McLaughlin, Sept. 1990

GHOST IN THE MACHINE

"Working a song to death is pointless. You do a take and it has the magic or it doesn't."

—Tom Petty, March 1983

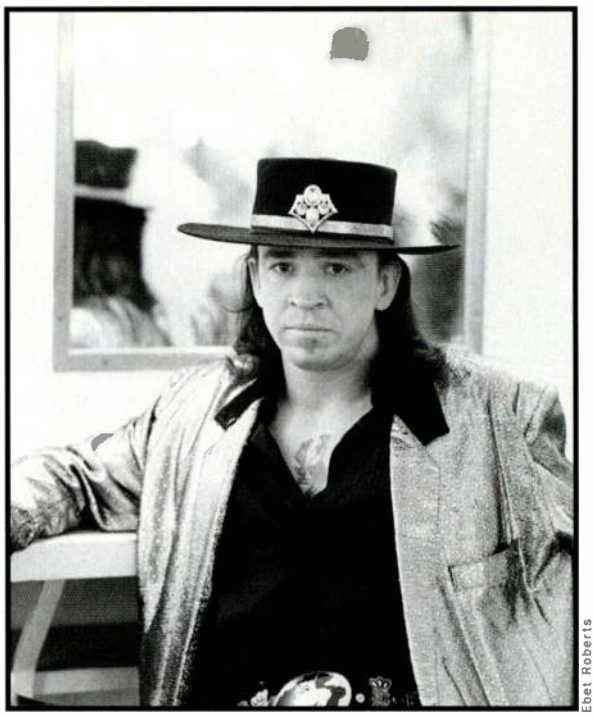
"Guitar players ask me how I got that sound. The answer is, don't read the instruction book! Everyone mikes the speaker. Why not just plug the amp right into the board? That sounds crazy to some people; it's not technically a 'good sound.' Who cares?"

—Trent Reznor, Nine Inch Nails, March 1994

"Today there are probably more 'interesting' things happening with electronic music than there were ten years ago. No matter how 'good' the music might be, the process itself is poison. Something that takes your connection from the soil away is a kind of poison."

—Keith Jarrett, October 1983

When I was about twelve I had been a dishwasher for a while, and part of my job was to clean out the trash bin. That involved standing on these big 55-gallon barrels with wooden lids on them, where they'd put all the hot grease. One day I was out there cleaning out the bin, having a blast, and the top broke and I fell in. Just as I got out—I'd been up to my chest in grease—they came with two fresh hot vats of boiling grease, and I got out just in time. If I'd taken a break later I would have been fried! The woman fired me because I broke the lids on the barrel, and right then and there I decided, "Wait a minute, this is not what I want to do. I want to play guitar like Albert King!" And that's the last job I've had other than playing guitar. So, thank you, Albert, for helping me there. *A song on Soul to Soul, "Ain't Gonna Give Up on Love," has a bit of that Albert King flavor.* Some of my favorite stuff, man, is to play Albert King things and be able to do them in 1989 or whatever—2010! I hope that style and the reality of blues never leaves our music. Hope we don't decide to get rid of all the real things and just put in the synthetic hypnotic music.



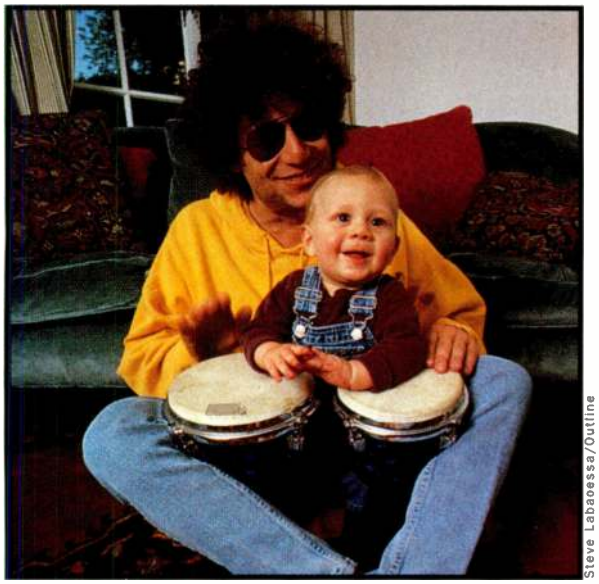
Ebet Roberts

Stevie Ray Vaughan, June '91

The drinking is one side of us. We can do that. But we certainly can get up there and play too. We've been booed for playing good. It's hard. The audience is split: Half want to hear the quiet things, half want to hear the rockers, and another fraction just wants to hear the bullshit and see us fall down. We can't please everyone, so we just try to please ourselves. Some nights what pleases us is to get rip-roarin' drunk and fall down. That happens less and less now, though, because you can't do it all the time and still be around. It was getting old last time [the Tim tour]. We could tell by the people who were getting into it that it was less a matter of real kicks and more serious alcoholics being there and needing reinforcement: "Look, I can be fucked up because they're fucked up." We got to see some of that, and it was getting pretty scary. I dare say it almost got to be a shtick. But that was a few years ago. Last year it was half-albatross and half-confusion: "If we don't do it, they're gonna hate us, and if we do it, they're probably gonna be sick of it anyway." Shit, I've probably already alienated all the people who first saw us. But I am not in this to lose any fans. I just wanna make new ones. If I'm gonna have a core of fans, I'd like to have the ones who liked us from the beginning. I don't write for kids anymore. I've tried, and I can't. Most people who respond to what I do are my age or older. Some kids will get it, but they usually are...bright...This is sticky. It's not like I'm trying to play up to dumb kids by saying this, but I feel more for the dumb, confused kid than I do for the highly intelligent adult who's maybe in financial difficulty.

Ebet Roberts

Paul Westerberg, Replacements, Feb. '89

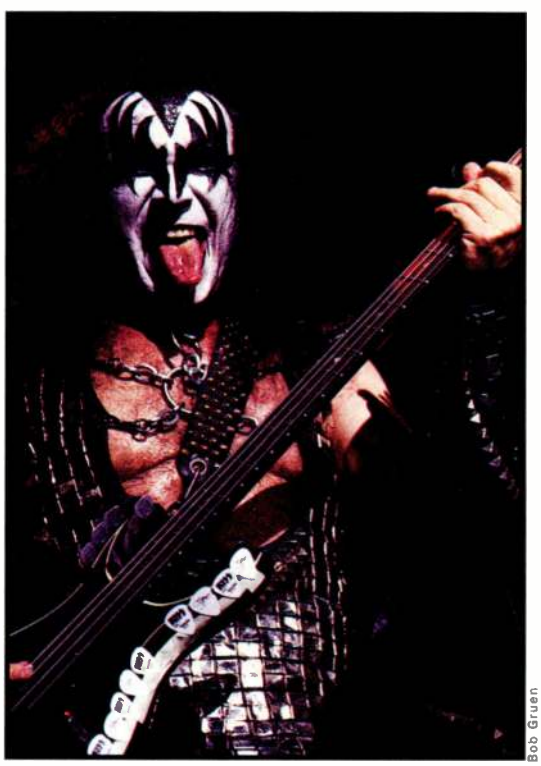


Steve Labaoessa/Outline

Don Was, Aug. 94

In the old days, you could actually sustain an FM station with ads from bookstores and headshops. Now an FM station in a major market brings $50 million, so the little entrepreneur's out of the picture. Broadcasting corporations come and buy these things. They have to make the investment back, and that means Ford Motor Company ads. And record companies have yielded to that and make artistic decisions based on, "Well, if you'll change this and this and this, people won't turn you off before the Ford commercial." Those two pressures, the bands taking a shitload of money that has to be earned and radio determining what music is gonna be, are the single largest threat to good music. That's why the record companies have had to live off of their catalog sales for the last fifteen years. ☞ It's really important for any artist, whether they've made thirty records or whether they're fifteen years old, to close their eyes and be able to hear what they want the music to sound like finished and, in this day and age, how, visually, they want to be represented on MTV. And if this is *not* me, I don't care if it does lead to a hit record, I'm not wearing that funny hat, I'm not putting those strings on; that's not how I get my music. If you have your vision, you have something to stay true to. If you don't, you're gonna get washed away like sand on the fucking beach. It's happened to me. I was producing other people and telling them to stand firm: "Don't compromise." There was no one around to tell my partner David and me, "Maybe you shouldn't do that 'Dinosaur Dance.'" Really, it killed my band.

If an event, act, or band means absolutely nothing, that doesn't mean it's not valid. Meaningless noise is one of the great reasons for being alive. Sounds good, feels good. Maybe that's as far as we should get. *That sounds like a mammoth critical justification for the impact of Kiss.* Well, when you're having a good time, why look around? See, rock is different from movies, plays, everything. Grammys mean crap; nobody cares. Nobody pays attention to the critics. I know lots of people who like Madonna and Michael Jackson, and you're talking to one of them. *You do?* Absolutely. Can you do it as well? *Madonna's made a career out of being an empty symbol.* Doesn't matter. She's the queen of all women and you know it. There's no single female walking the face of this planet who's made a bigger impact. If you can think of one, tell me. *Well, Joan of Arc, Joni Mitchell ...* The problem is, they didn't get rich, she did—she wins. She didn't have to get crucified too. She wins! Hands down. It's great to have beatnik art and it should exist in the coffeehouse circuit, but the people want John Philip Sousa, stuff with beating drums and big trumpets, and they wanna march! You tell *me* what Sousa means—doesn't even have lyrics. But it's *great*.



Bob Gruen

Gene Simmons, Kiss, Aug. '96

1989 to 1996

"Digital is completely fucked. We're in the dark ages of recorded sound. We're not listening to music; we're listening to a reconstituted replica clone of music."

—Neil Young, April 1993

"Tape is robust and affordable. It will be around for a good while."

—Peter Chaikin, Yamaha, Jan. '94

"About ten years ago, the use of technology on records increased exponentially. Snare drums became electronic cannons, eighth-notes were quantized perfectly rather than played with a human feel, and guitars started sounding more like 'Space 1999' than 'Funk #49.' All this helped to suck the life out of countless bands."

—Audley Freed, Cry Of Love, July 1994

"The air conditioner was wired into the mixing board. It was creating this spooky, godawful sound. So, of course, we taped it right away."

—Butch Vig, Garbage, Jan. 1996

"I don't think Mick and Keith have a clue how to make records. I don't think they ever did."

—Glyn Johns, Dec. 1988

"The recording studio is a very unnatural place to make music. It's dark, it's dead-sounding, and someone is saying, 'This is take 4, please be a genius.'"

—Jimmy Iovine, April 1983

1989 to 1996

"I remember once Devo got a hold of Sandy Pearlman when he was mixing our sound, and they said, 'Tell us how it's done!' They didn't realize it wasn't what slave amps you had in the P.A. or whatever. It was the way we were going at it."

—Joe Strummer, June 1991

"Bush Of Ghosts and Remain In Light were composed in the studio. That technique eliminates the problem of trying to get a sound you've developed while rehearsing onto the tape. Instead you get the sound first and then decide where and how you can fit it in."

—David Byrne, April-May 1981

"Foreigner albums are incredibly high quality, and if you sit and talk to these guys they're good people. I suppose what's lacking is the depth."

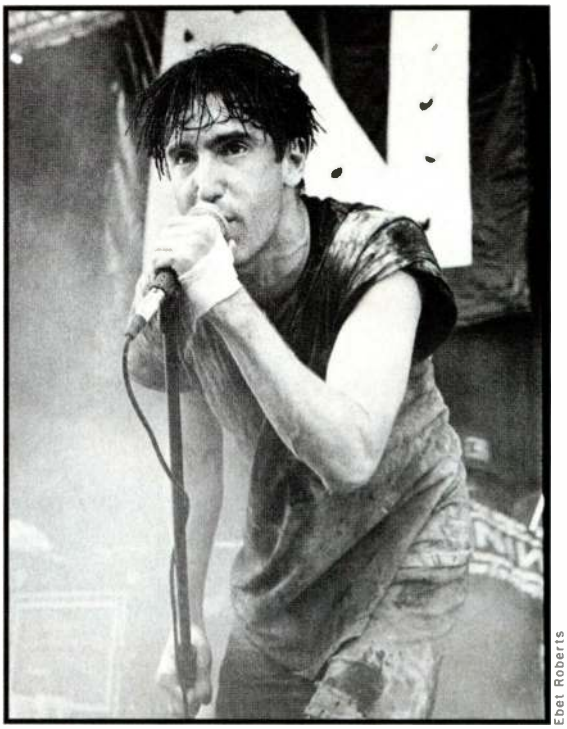
—Pete Townshend, The Who, August, 1982

"The idea of great rock & roll is dynamics. Not to have the Marshall on number 11 all the time. I love power taken down to subtlety."

—Ray Davies, The Kinks, June 1993

"The first rule of music is that there are no rules, but if there was a rule it was this: You can't shine shit. The problem is, with recording techniques today, that rule is out the window. Today you can make shit shine, and shine like bloody chrome."

—Nick Lowe, June 1982



Ebet Roberts

Trent Reznor, Nine Inch Nails, March '94

Some of my stuff is pretty intense, and I can see how it could be dismissed as calculated or theatrical. But it's real to me. When I think about the state I'm in, I feel like a fucking loser because I've got things I really should be glad about. I'm aware that I'm fortunate to live in this house and do what I've always wanted to do and be one of the few who got the record deal. I hear myself bitching about "it sucks to be popular" and I have to stop because it's bullshit. By the same token, I'm not more happy or content with my life than I was ten years ago. I got everything I wanted in my life, except I don't really have a life now. I don't have any real friends. I've turned myself into this music-creation/performance machine. *Pretty Hate Machine* was written from the point of view of someone who felt the world may suck, but I like myself as a person and I can fight my way out of this bullshit. *Broken* introduced self-loathing, which is not a popular topic with anybody, especially in a song. Then there's the weird juxtaposition of singing to audiences about being isolated and not being able to fit into anything or relate to anybody. To find a niche you can disappear into and be normal. And you're onstage with ten thousand people grabbing at you, do you know what I mean?

Frank Nicoletta/Outline

The Edge, U2, March '92

You're inducting Beck, Clapton, and Page into the Hall of Fame. All of you worked in power trios, but U2 seems to have more in common with the Who model, where all three pieces are equal and the guitar is the glue. I've always had a slight problem with the whole idea of guitar heroes and gunslinger guitar players. I was never really attracted to that. Townshend is different from the other players you mentioned because he's primarily a songwriter. He understands the importance of guitar playing within the discipline of songwriting, as opposed to guitar playing that just justifies itself. I can appreciate, I suppose, guitar players who just get up there and improvise over bass and drums, but it's not something that interests me that much. *How did your style develop?* It starts with picking up the electric guitar, age fifteen, and playing a lot of cover versions. Knowing a few Rory Gallagher licks or whatever. Then suddenly you're in this band and there's all this fantastic music coming at you that challenges everything that you believed about what the electric guitar was for. Suddenly the question is, "What are you saying with it?" Not "Can you play this lick?" or "What's your speed like?" Suddenly guitars are not things to be waved in front of the audience but now were something you use to *reach out* to the crowd. If you were in the fourth row of the Jam concert at the Top Hat Ballroom in Dunleary in 1980, when Paul Weller hit that Rickenbacker 12-string it meant something. I had to totally re-examine the way I played and say, Well, what are *you* saying? What does that note mean?

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1989 to 1996

"Musicians should get used to recording as much as possible, even if it's just at home—because basically, the tape doesn't lie."
—Steve Winwood, March 1991

"At some point, tape is not going to make sense. Systems like the Alesis ADAT are a transitional phenomenon."
—Rob Currie, DigiDesign, Jan. '94

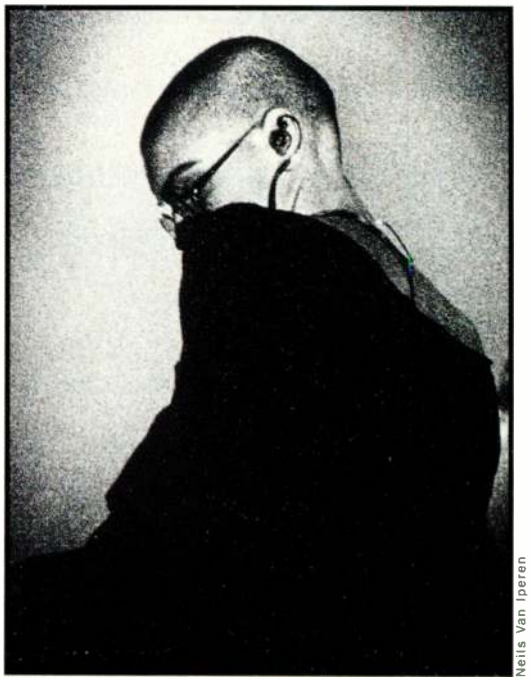
"If you really want to play, you will overcome a bad setup, bad intonation, a warped neck, crappy strings, buzzy pickups, whatever. History is filled with phenomenal performances by players who play horns made out of plastic, guitars made out of masonite."
—Joe Satriani, Apr. 1994

"Whenever I see a red guitar, my reaction is, 'It's going to sound cold.' I haven't been wrong yet."
—John Abercrombie, Dec. 1994

"I wouldn't dream of trying to learn a new technique; I'm into player piano. But I think the future of music is probably in electronics."
—Conlon Nancarrow, Sept. 1984

"It took me five months to do the first record and it's perfect. And that's the problem with it. It wasn't really me, it was like a machine."
—Prince, Sept. 1983

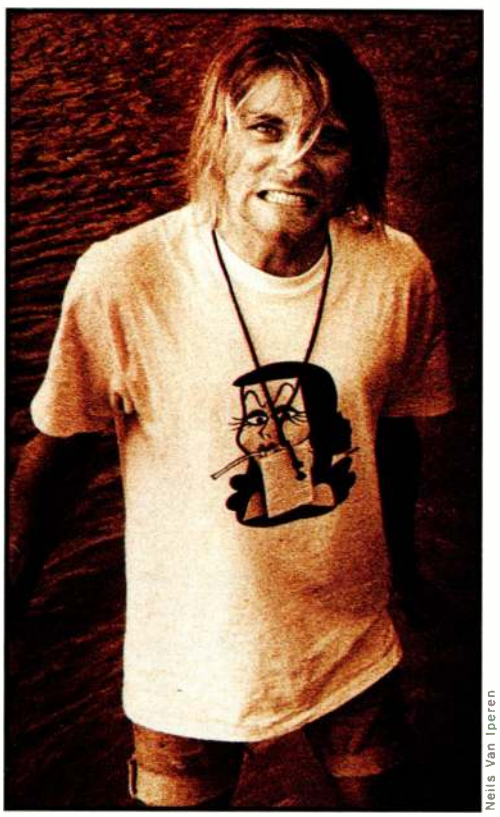
"Manufacturers have made obscene tones available."
—Billy Gibbons, Sept. 1983



Neils Van Iperen

Sinead O'Connor, Aug. '90

In many Insh songs, if you do evil you die, and if you resist evil and maintain your virtue, you still die. How you live your life depends purely on what you think is going to happen to you after you die. I believe very much that this isn't what it's all about, that there's far more going on afterwards, and I can't wait to get there [*laughs*]. I've got a long list of questions. To even say "I believe" sounds a little like I'm convincing myself. It's just a simple matter of fact to me, as much as putting my socks on in the morning. *Have you always felt this way?* Always. I don't know how anyone thinks otherwise. It's completely ludicrous to me that anyone would think this is all there is and live their life accordingly. It's why the world's so greedy and why people are obsessive and mad and only concerned with money and fame. Because they aspire to the things that we have made important rather than the things that God has told us are reality. If we all believed there was something happening afterwards we'd treat each other with far more respect. The world is in the mess it's in because people have no sense of spirituality. They think that Earth is the most important planet and white people are the most important people. And they believe that when they die they're just going to rot. But they're not. *What a joke on them.* Well, precisely. It's a subject that an interview can't really be conducted with me without discussing. Frankly, if anybody doesn't like it, tough. Fuck them, y'know? They're the ones who are mad. We're sane.



Neils Van Iperen

Kurt Cobain, Jan. '92

Seems like this hard rock and underground rock is fusing together and being thrown into this one melting pot. It's being considered as almost the same thing. I've noticed a lot of the cock-rock bands—Poison, stuff like that—in interviews, and in the image they're to portray with their new record, the tougher, meaner street attitude, and in meet-and-greets backstage with other alternative bands, that they're trying not necessarily to jump on the wagon but to make it seem as if they're cool and hip, accepting it. So they're role models, and the people who like their music are listening to what they have to say, and they're listening to the new bands that they're supporting, these supposed 'alternative' bands. There are a lot of really mainstream bands who sound just like Poison or resemble Poison very much, and they're being promoted as alternative bands. I find that really offensive. One of the biggest examples of that would be Pearl Jam. They're going to be the first type of band to say that they're 'alternative' and then accept the Poison bands as much as the Poison bands are going to accept them. They're going to be the ones responsible for this corporate, alternative, and cock-rock fusion. *So what, exactly, is alternative music?* The only way I can describe 'alternative' anymore is 'good music.' I don't care what it sounds like. It doesn't matter anymore.There are so many bad bands and so many bad songwriters out there that the only alternative to bad music is good music. And that's very rare.

Michael Lavine/Outline

Sonic Youth, Dec. '95

THURSTON MOORE: The fact that we were headlining Lollapalooza was perverse. We're not a superstar band, more like a recognized brand-name. Maybe the people who are seriously into what's out there in weirdoville would stay for Sonic Youth, but the MTV generation for the most part wants to see Courtney [Love] say "Fuck you," then go home. **STEVE SHELLEY:** If Neil Young had played after Hole, people wouldn't have had the same attitude. But that suited us fine. People are leaving all day; you've got to psych yourself into it and say, "We're playing to more people than we would on our own." For a lot of people, it was their first concert ever, and if they made it all the way from Jesus Lizard to Sonic Youth, what a first concert they had. **MOORE:** Amphitheaters don't really foster audience energy. A lot of kids don't know about getting reserved seating, so they're stuck all the way on top of the hill. Beck referred to it as a "reverse mosh pit." All through the day, you'd see these empty seats in front and people sitting reading their programs, and way up there are the moshers. That was the most stupid thing about the whole tour: putting these high-energy club bands in an environment made for James Taylor. Lollapalooza doesn't really cater to people for whom music is a priority. It's more like Spinal Tap playing the theme park.

We're on the road, kickin' our ass, working and working, and the economics of it are just insulting! It's all recoupable. When you make a record the label lends you the money to make it, but you've got to pay it all back out of your very small percentage before you see any money. So you pay for your own record, but they own it, and they're making money on it long, long before you've recouped. They've got a million excuses, but it's crap. I can see the percentage, but it should be paid back out of the gross, as far as I'm concerned. It's just a way for them to keep you owing them money forever. They say, "Don't complain, you make millions of dollars!" No, you don't. The guys in the band are all broke except for me. I got a publishing deal so I get some extra money. I gave some of my publishing to the band, which is the only reason they're even surviving. We're out there on the road making $200 a week now—a salary we pay ourselves out of our merchandising deal—doing a very good job promoting a record that the label gets all the money from. And the touring money is recoupable too! So we're paying them to be out on the road promoting a record that they get 80-90 percent of! You think about that for a while and it's incredibly insulting.

Neils Van Iperen

Adam Duritz, Counting Crows, May '94

1989 to 1996

"Any idiot can put together an acceptable set of chords and a decent drum beat, 'cause you can buy them off the shelf."

—Brian Eno, Nov. 1995

"The whole thing about the guitar is that the guitar sounds good. Why try to make it sound like another instrument?"

—Joe Satriani, April 1989

"We're still banging metal bottles together. The first thing we recorded in the new studio was a ukelele submixed with a Roland Juno 60. It's all in the brain, you know, not in the equipment."

—Dave Stewart, Oct. 1983

"Glyn Johns didn't think we could play rock and roll. I said, 'Glyn, can't you make me sound like John Bonham?' And he sorta looked down his nose at me and said, 'You don't play like John Bonham.'"

—Don Henley, July 1983

"When I heard Kraftwerk I knew I liked that kind of music. So I started getting into the equipment."

—Neil Young, November 1982

VIDEO AND ITS DISCONTENTS

"In Australia music video shows have been big for at least five years, so we're obviously well into the whole idea ourselves."

—Greg Ham, Men At Work, July 1983

1989 to 1996

"Making a video has nothing to do with rock and roll. That's why we do them live, it saves us from all that Hollywood crap."
—Malcolm Young, April 1984

"The form of music videos is very limiting. You're dealing with musicians who nine times out of ten couldn't act even if you wanted them to act, which is not very often."
—Kevin Godley, Nov. 1983

"Everybody looks like old farts on Saturday Night Live. Everybody's being cool, but that don't have shit to do with rock."
—Neil Young, Feb. 1991

THE JAZZ COMMUNITY

"There are rock critics, for example, who have the audacity to judge a jazz album! I'd never judge a rock record. I might dissect it or analyze it, but I wouldn't judge it."
—Wynton Marsalis, May 1982

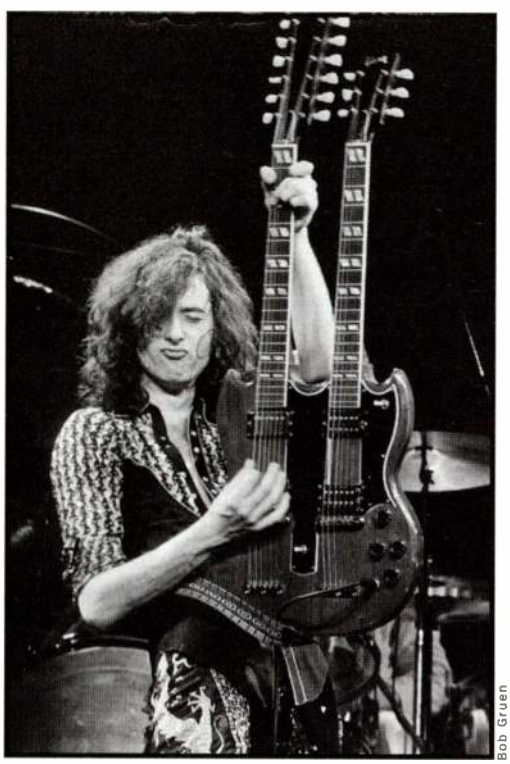
"The first time I put on an Ornette record I said, 'This is Charlie Parker except the guy has a plastic saxophone and no chord changes.' I couldn't believe that people talked about how 'modern' it was."
—Walter Becker, March 1981

"Wynton Marsalis spearheaded this new wave of young musicians. My problem with these guys is that it's just copying something. It takes more effort and a little more courage to be an original."
—Stanley Clarke, Dec. 1995

Ebet Roberts

Rickie Lee Jones, May '94

Did you ever consider working with jazz players? Oh, no. Jazz is hideously boring. I hate jazz. With only a few exceptions, only the really outstanding spirits, it's the most boring thing. *So virtuosos don't necessarily interest you in their own right. It's more a feel.* It's just whether or not they sing. What they call jazz is so repetitive and so uninspired. The form was okay for truly inspired players, but that form has been regurgitated over and over by really mediocre people who continue to bask in the glory of it, as if they're doing something creative, and they are not. I know jazz is a cool word, and I think what I do with jazz standards is completely unique. It's really excellent. I tip my hat to influences, but I don't think it in any way relates to traditional jazz. There's a weird phenomenon in the Nineties of people insisting that it not be the authentic article. It has to be something they've already seen and heard. They'll accept it as authentic if they recognize it. And, of course, if you recognize it, it's not authentic. That started, for me, when Madonna imitated Marilyn Monroe. A few years earlier people would have snubbed their noses at such a blatant grasp: "Well, I'm floundering now, I'll use this, I'll do this." But the media accepted it, and she rose and in fact somehow adopted the credibility of Marilyn Monroe. It continues to happen: People imitate a thing, and they're given the credibility of that thing, and when you do something new, you have no credibility.



Bob Gruen

Jimmy Page, Nov. '90

I know I invented the backwards-echo thing, because we did it on a Yardbirds track which I don't believe even came out. It was used at the end of "You Shook Me," and then I started experimenting far more than that, using it to run into choruses. Not backwards guitar, but the backwards echo. You turn the tape over—you *did* turn the tape over in those days—and then record the echo which is obviously after the signal; you turn the tape back and it precedes the signal. I used it quite a bit on the harp as well. "When the Levee Breaks" has got all that sort of stuff in there. *When did you discover that the acoustic guitar could be such a powerful instrument?* I guess listening to flamenco players, and the first couple of albums that Bert Jansch did; he was really getting into some incredible stuff. There was a little network of folk guitarists that would sound almost like Charlie Mingus. *Zeppelin was probably one of the first power bands to use odd meters.* What, shifting the goalposts, you mean [*smiles*]? Yeah, that could have come right from the Indian stuff, but from my end I'd say from Howlin' Wolf, because I found his riffs would cut across the regular 4/4, like "Meet Me in the Bottom." I guess it's just the way one started to think, and it just became more progressive and more apparent.

Chris Carroll/Outline

Michael Stipe, R.E.M. Nov. '94

Many of the bands who look up to you were literally born into a world of disillusionment, both personally and socially. Yeah, they didn't even have a Nixon to bounce off. It does seem that everything has sped up. Emotionally they're still experimenting, trying to figure things out, yet in terms of input they're ten years ahead, and these two things clash. I feel much more in line with them than I do with many of my contemporaries. I just started a long time before they did. The main thing is I've had the experience to be able to say, it's going to pass. Don't eat yourself alive, don't let it get to you. *Did you address that with Kurt Cobain?* Yeah. Nirvana was going to tour with R.E.M. They'd been asking us, "Please go on tour so we can tour with you." They got to the size where it would be a dual headlining thing. It was pretty much a done deal, and then Kurt died. I had been talking to him at home up until his death, up until he disappeared, and so his death in some ways was not as much of a shock to us as to everyone else. We knew he'd been missing for seven days, and we knew a phone call would be coming at some point. We were hoping it would be a good one. And it wasn't. *Do you think he heard what you were telling him at all?* Apparently not. It's a shame. Kurt was a comrade on the front lines.

What did you get out of playing with Sting? Aggression. Sting is one of the few people in rock who can actually use chord structures to convey varying moods in music. And he's talking about his parents' death on the record in a way the average person cannot conceive of, so there's a bit of jealousy there. People talked about Kurt Cobain's ability to talk about his angst. And basically he would get on his records and say, "I ain't shit and I hate everybody." And he wouldn't do it in a particularly inventive way. It was very direct and in your face. People would have loved Sting's record if he'd said, "My mother's dead, wah wah wah, my father's dead too, wah wah wah." But when he sings about it by saying, "Birds on the roof of my mother's house, coming to take her away. Birds on the roof of my mother's house will be on my roof someday," people can't get that, because American groups don't use metaphors. *Have you read the lyrics to Nirvana's "Lithium," for instance?* I don't read lyrics. The kid was on lithium, okay. *No, he wasn't. The word lithium was used in reference to a kid who had lost himself in some religious cult or belief. It's what we call a metaphor.* Forget about Nirvana then. Take the average song that's out there and the shit they talk about. *It's your theory give me an example.* Okay. Liz Phair: "Let me fuck you 'til your dick turns blue." *Maybe it's finally time a white, intellectual woman said that directly. Can't you accept that?* No, because no matter what kind of woman fucks me, my dick *can't* turn blue.

David Gahr

Branford Marsalis, July '94

1989 to 1996

"The greatest thing that I've achieved in life is tomorrow morning. To awake to the sunshine. To feel neutral to all that has happened. To have no expectations."

—Pat Martino, November 1994

"Jazz has kinda lost its way. There's something reactionary about it that's just not very satisfying. No one wants to hear a retread. Just to recreate one style is an academic exercise."

—Donald Fagen, Steely Dan, Sept. 1993

"Every musician in the world wants to take a solo, before he can even read the notes. He thinks that's everything. It is everything—if you have a message."

—Illinois Jacquet, Dec. 1988

"To have to pursue sounding like Wes Montgomery just to bring attention to myself as a deserving guitarist is an unacceptable position."

—Kevin Eubanks, November 1994

"Miles was wise to use the best attributes of electric instruments. But what happened was a whole generation of cats that might have played jazz didn't, because of those directions."

—Branford Marsalis, July 1994

"Fusion had a tendency to make me overplay to the point where I began to wonder where I was and what I was playing."

—John Abercrombie, September 1986

20 years of Musician interviewers

thanks to the following writers for the interviews excerpted in this special

Lester Bangs: for Captain Beefheart

David Breskin: for Steely Dan, Stevie Wonder, David Byrne and Willie Nelson

Ornette Coleman: for Ornette Coleman

J.D. Considine: for Eric Clapton and Eddie Van Halen

Bob Doerschuk: for Tori Amos

Bill Flanagan: for Richard Thompson, Johnny Cash, Counting Crows, Elvis Costello, Sinead O'Connor, Edge and the Replacements

Chet Flippo: for Bruce Springsteen

Dan Forte: for Frank Zappa and Pat Metheny

David Fricke: for Bryan Ferry

Robert Fripp: for Robert Fripp

Vic Garbarini: for Stone Gossard, Michael Stipe, Branford Marsalis, Joni Mitchell, Sting, Pete Townshend, Ray Davies, Wynton Marsalis and Herbie Hancock, Trent Reznor and Mark Knopfler

Nelson George: for Marvin Gaye

Barbara Graustark: for John Lennon and Prince

Ted Greenwald: for Brian Eno

John Hutchinson: for Bono and Peter Gabriel

Len Lyons: for Chick Corea and Bill Evans

Chris Morris: for Nirvana

Jon Pareles: for Chrissie Hynde

Steve Perry: for John Mellencamp and Paul Westerberg

Mac Randall: for Sonic Youth

Jerome Reese: for Chet Baker

Matt Resnicoff: for Jimmy Page and Gene Simmons

Mark Rowland: for Tina Turner, Leonard Cohen, Bonnie Raitt, Los Lobos, Tom Waits, Miles Davis, Tom Petty, Neil Young, Slash and Don Was

Fred Schruers: for Rickie Lee Jones

Michael Shore: for Sun Ra

Conrad Silvert: for Keith Jarrett

Chip Stern: for Sonny Rollins and George Clinton

Peter Swales: for Kate Bush

Timothy White: for Stevie Ray Vaughan, David Bowie, James Brown and George Harrison

Charles M. Young: for Noel Gallagher and Keith Richards

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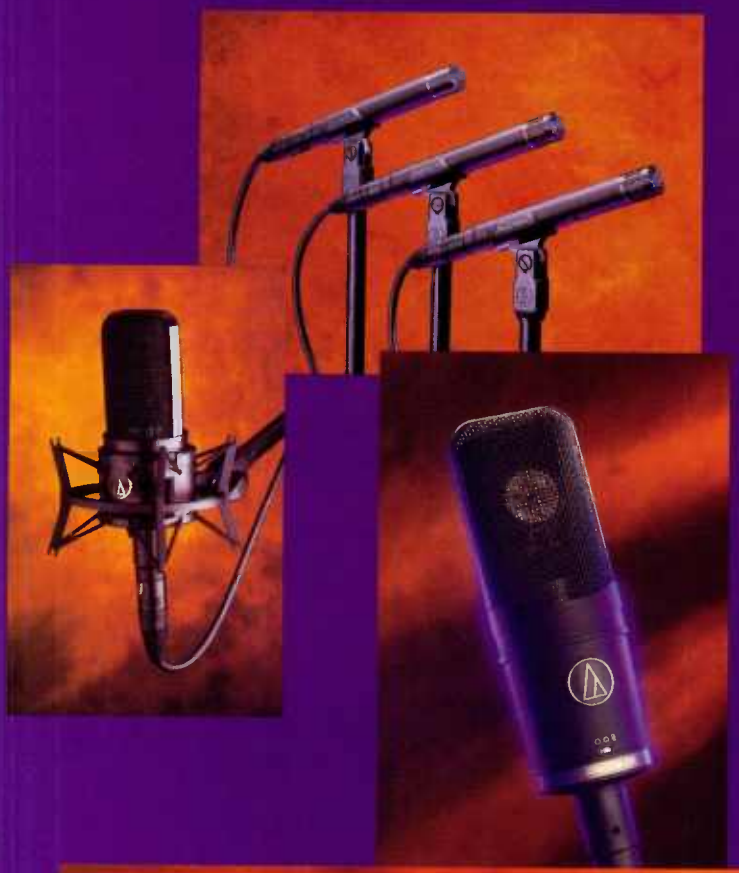

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From the Walkman to the ADAT, it's been a wild two decades.

Howard Massey

In many ways, 1976 seems like an eternity ago. Hazy memories of Jimmy Carter's fatuous grin, post-Watergate trauma, interminable gas lines, disco (yuk), and polyester leisure suits (double yuk). And, of course, the birth of *Musician* magazine. It's relatively easy for me to recall the technological state of the art circa 1976 because that was also the year I made the fateful decision to ditch the menial day job and become a full-time musician. The paraphernalia I had accumulated after two years at a "legitimate" job and half a decade of bar-band moonlighting tells the story—I can still picture the small, cluttered "music room" (precursor to a home studio) I holed up in for hours on end. In the "retro" corner was an out-of-tune upright piano, acoustic guitar, Fender Bassman amp, Fender Tele, and my prized Rickenbacker 4001 bass, along with a smattering of MXR and Electro-Harmonix stomp boxes (including the venerable MXR Phase 90, a staple of every bad disco record made in the Seventies). In the "techno" area was my brand-new Minimoog (which, as I recall, cost an astronomical $3000), a primitive Lafayette mic mixer, a Revox open-reel sound-on-sound tape recorder (with splicing block and lots of single-edge razor blades) and a Harman-Kardon cassette deck. And off to one side was my KLH stereo and record collection: several hundred vinyl LPs. Pretty spiffy for 1976, but utterly laughable in the context of what is available today. And what a long, strange trip it has been. Join us as we look back at the ten most significant technological developments that have occurred during the twenty-year history of *Musician* magazine.

1. The Walkman

In 1976, the audio cassette was a relatively new phenomenon. Once enmeshed in a format battle with 8-track cartridges (a premonition of the VHS-versus-Beta video war which was to follow a few years later), many believed at the time that the cassette would lose out—after all, it only provided two tracks instead of the pseudo-8 offered by the cartridge (actually, just four sets of two tracks each). Sure, the cassette was smaller and cheaper, but what really sealed its fate as the audio delivery system of choice—to this very day—was Sony's inspired Walkman, soon to be followed by equivalent products by competing manufacturers. For the first time, millions of music lovers could take their favorite music with them everywhere they went, and without the risk of offending others (boombox haters of the world unite!). As the perfect jogging companion, the Walkman probably also played a significant role in the health kick this nation went on in the late Seventies, but that's another story altogether...

2. The Compact Disc

Even as we were happily listening to music on cassette (through the hiss) and vinyl (through the pops and clicks), the slide-rule boys over at Sony and Philips were planning a revolution that only a few audio insiders knew about. In 1982 the plot was revealed to the world. All of a sudden, there were these shiny silver discs which delivered music with no background noise whatsoever. True, the first compact discs sounded pretty awful, largely due to the first-generation filters being used and a terrible idea called "emphasis," but these problems were soon overcome and, slowly but surely, all but the most diehard vinyl fans were shelling out their hard-earned bucks to re-purchase the same music on CD. A marketing coup, to be sure, but the audio CD is also a terrific innovation that allows us to hear music with greater clarity.

A less obvious consequence is the CD's impact on the way music is produced and recorded, since it makes painfully obvious any sonic limitations in the recording equipment used. This has led directly to a greater concern in the studio for signal degradation and to the development of greatly improved speakers, amplifiers, mixers and signal processors. Some may argue that the original designers of the audio CD imposed too many limitations—that it should have used a higher bit

...rs of ...nology

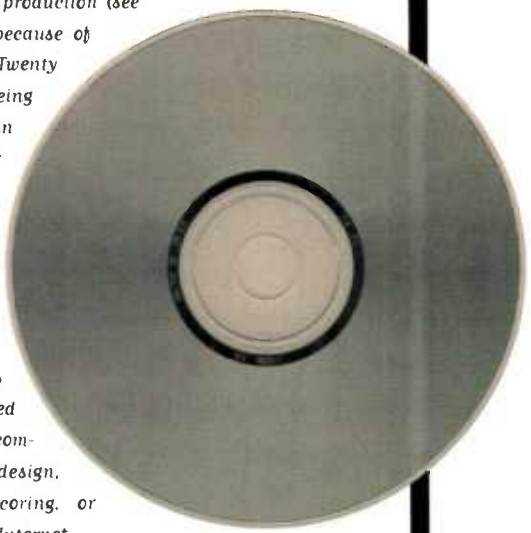
resolution or faster sampling rate (issues which may be addressed by the audio DVD of the future)—but you'll hardly find anyone who wants to go back to the noisy old days of vinyl and audio cassette.

3. Mix Automation

Thanks largely to the innovations of George Martin and others, the technology of recording music advanced by leaps and bounds in the Sixties. Despite these advances, however, mixing continued to be a somewhat bizarre communal project. A tightly clustered group of people would gather around a console, each assigned to a couple of different faders or knobs, trying desperately to remember and carry out their assigned moves. Half Keystone Kops, half Twister, the mix session would often run into the wee hours, with the engineer more often than not having to conjure up the final two-track by splicing together bits and pieces of different takes. Little wonder that the records of the era often sound artificial and forced. This comedy of errors was mercifully ended with the advent of mix automation (introduced in the late Seventies and in widespread use by the early Eighties), where a computer is assigned the task of remembering all the little tweaks and moves that help bring a recording to life. With automation, the engineer and producer are given the luxury of actually listening as they mix instead of having to focus on the mechanics. What's more, extremely detailed and complex mixes can be constructed, since the computer's got a better memory, faster reflexes, and drinks considerably less beer than the assistant engineer's sister's boyfriend. The best news of all is that mix automation is starting to find its way into the home studio, where it will undoubtedly have a similar impact on the quality of the music we crank out of our converted spare bedrooms and basements.

4. The Home Computer

The home PC has arguably proven to be the single most significant technological innovation of the 20th century, period. But it has had special significance for musicians, not only because of its impact on music composition and production (see items 5–10 below) but because of the birth of multimedia. Twenty years ago, all music being created was either an entity unto itself (for release on vinyl and/or cassette) or was designed to accompany film or video. Today's prevalence of home computers have created whole new pathways for music to be delivered to the masses, such as computer game sound design, interactive CD-ROM scoring, or online delivery over the Internet.



5. MIDI

In 1976, there was no such thing as musical instrument interconnection. If you played a riff on one instrument and you wanted to double it with another, you had to physically play both instruments and hope you got the phrasing and intonation right. The interest in synthesizers in the late 1970s ultimately led to a solution to this problem (and inadvertently opened up a whole universe of creative possibilities) when all the major manufacturers finally got organized in 1982 and agreed on a standardized communications protocol called MIDI. Originally designed simply to allow layering of sounds, musicians and engineers have evolved it into everything from a compositional and production tool (via MIDI sequencers) to a master controller (via MIDI Machine Control), forging the remarkably robust and versatile interface of today. Perhaps most importantly, MIDI enables a musician to add real-time expression and musicality to an electronic instrument (imparting pitch bend and vibrato, for example). MIDI was not only a great idea, it was a concept that came at just the right time, in perfect conjunction with the rise of the home computer. And there's every indication that MIDI will survive into the foreseeable future, thanks to a number of forward-thinking revisions currently under consideration, including the use of a much faster and wider-band physical interface (FireWire) that will tie it inextricably with digital audio transmission, in both local networks and over the Internet.

6. samplers

More accurately, this section should be labeled "Analog-To-Digital and Digital-To-Analog Converters," but we thought a few of the more technophobic among you might have fainted at the prospect. But it was the development and mass production of these chips in the early 1980s, together with the availability of affordable Random Access Memory (RAM), that has made sampling technology possible—and with it, the rise of some of the more interesting genres of late-twentieth century music, such as rap, hip-hop, and rave. What's more, samplers are an integral tool in the remixer's arsenal and so have also made that art form possible.

7. sample editors

As important as the technology was, samplers didn't really come into general usage until the availability of computer-based sample editors in the mid-1980s, with Digidesign's revolutionary Sound Designer leading the way. This program not only singlehandedly made the Macintosh the computer of choice for musicians (which has been the case until very recently, when PC-based sample editors and MIDI programs of equivalent quality have appeared), but it also m-m-m-made possible the phenomenon of Max Headroom, forever impacting the visual approach of ad agencies creating TV commercials (who l-l-l-love this kind of thing), and Saturday morning kid's shows like PeeWee's Playhouse.

8. digital synthesizers

There were synthesizers in 1976, to be sure, but they were of the strictly analog variety and they had a certain artificial filter-open, filter-closed sound quality which many today find charming (retro glasses are always rose-colored) but which, even then, many people found irritating (one well-known rock singer of the era called it "the sound of a dozen bees in heat"). All that changed in the mid-1980s with the appearance of all-digital synthesizers like the Yamaha DX7, Roland D-50 and Casio CZ-101. True, these may have had their own annoying characteristics, but at least they were different annoyances. And, if nothing else, they presented new sonic palettes that the discriminating musician was able to access with increased control and expressiveness.

9. MTV

In 1976, the professional musician was judged largely on the quality of his or her music and only secondarily on the choice of wardrobe and makeup. But, in 1981, all of a sudden, image was everything. We had a professional actor as President and we had MTV on every cable service. Coincidence? At the risk of sounding like Oliver Stone, I think not. But love it or hate it, there's no question that the rise of MTV has forever changed the way most people assimilate and enjoy music. It's no longer enough to paint an interesting sonic landscape—it now has to be accompanied by an at least equally interesting video in order to gain commercial acceptance. Hand in hand with that goes the concept that the musicians making the music have to also look interesting. Lawyers and accountants have always played a prominent role in the music industry, but now they are joined by video directors, choreographers, wardrobe designers and makeup artists. Is this a sad commentary on our times or simply the inevitable evolution of an art form? You be the judge.

10. The Home Studio

The happy culmination of all these technological innovations is the rise of the home studio in the 1990s. For the first time in the 100-year history of recorded music, the musician is not obligated to work outside of his or her natural environment in order to achieve commercially acceptable results. Even today's budget-priced home recording equipment is far superior to anything found in the professional recording studio of 1976, and mid-priced products such as 8-track MDMs (Modular Digital Multitracks) and hard disk recorders deliver astonishingly high-quality audio—extremely close to that provided by today's top professional gear. Beyond the recording and mixing stages, there are even hardware and software innovations that enable the final mastering of CDs right in the home. These are the true fruits of technology—tools that empower the average musician. Even though we've still got mountains to climb, we've come an awful long way since 1976.

Contributors: Howard Massey is Musician's technology editor.

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Players Reflect on Past (and Future) Musical Milestones

As we look back on the panorama of two decades, and edge forward toward the next millenium, we began asking ourselves a few questions: What, for us, was the most important musical event of the past twenty years? How did it change us as musicians? And what did we see in store for music over the next twenty? Not having any answers at our fingertips, we figured we'd ask some other musicians for their responses. Here's a taste of what we got. (We'd like to hear your answers too. Feel free to send 'em in.)

The most important even in music over the past twenty years was the invention of the sequencer. Its impact on me was to turn me into a composer (who's actually earning a living at it). Over the next twenty years record stores will be able to print CDs (or whatever) on the spot. This means that they won't have to maintain physical inventory, which means they will be able to "stock" everything that has ever been recorded. Which means that fringe artists will not have to struggle for shelf space. Any obscure record you want will be available at any store. Any obscure music that I want to make will find its audience.

—stewart copeland

Greg Dulli

The most important event of the past twenty years was *Sixteen Stone* by Bush. How did it affect me? Positively in a positive way. And the Steve Albini/Bush collaboration will set the trend for the next twenty years.

—greg dulli, afghan whigs

I can't say that there's one major musical event that's the most important in my life, though there have been several key moments. The first was spending endless hours searching around the radio dials when I was very young and encountering these wonderful charismatic disc jockeys who chose their own music—people like Alan Freed, Jocko Henderson, the Magnificent Montique, and Symphony Sid—helping to create and define what were the beginning stages of rock & roll. Another key moment was meeting Muddy Waters, for whom I became something of an unofficial valet. He took me under his wing, and what he taught me could fill volumes. Another of the great bluesmen that I had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with was John Lee Hooker, and he is still a great influence for me. I'm so glad he's gotten the recognition he so deserves. As far as the future of rock & roll and where it's going, as long as there are musicians young and old who have the passion to look back and think forward, it will always prevail.

—peter wolf

Suzanne Vega

The most important event in music for me, obviously, was when my song "Luka" became a hit in 1987. What do I see happening in music over the next twenty years? More women in all aspects of the industry, more acoustic music, more independent labels. Also, unfortunately, more segregated formats in radio and retail.

—suzanne vega

The most important event of the past twenty years for me was seeing Heart in Boston by myself when I was nine. I was so scared by the bikers there that I ran home and played guitar all night. Over the next twenty years there will be some good bands that are successful, there will be some bad bands that are successful, and there will be some good bands that aren't successful and bad bands that aren't successful.

—evan dando, lemonheads

These events in the last twenty years really got my blood pumping: The Live Aid concerts. One of the primary reasons that music is such a powerful force is its ability to bring people together around issues much larger than their own personal problems. These concerts galvanized an entire spectrum of people all over the world. The concerts reached a viewing audience of one and a

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half billion people. Almost a quarter of the planet's population saw musicians who were dedicated to making the world a better place for those not as fortunate as ourselves. Standing on the edge of the stadium that day in Philadelphia, I experienced a rush of emotion almost comparable to taking part in the births of my children. The death of Elvis. What a sad waste of the life of one of the most unique rock & roll musicians in history. In his glory (before entering the army) he was absolutely the best in his class. To see such a sad end was heartbreaking to me. He touched millions of people with his raw talent. Such power and vitality has not been seen since. Singing with my heroes. On a personal note, when I finally got to sing with the Everly Brothers live onstage in Toledo, Ohio, in 1990, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. They were the very reason that I sing harmony in the first place, and ever since I'd been a child I'd dreamed of this moment. "So Sad" in three-part harmony is a memory I will cherish forever.

—Graham Nash

Peter Wolf

It's hard to pinpoint what specifically is the most important event—it could be the emergence of grunge, the re-emergence of blues, or the death of John Lennon. But, although it's on the negative side, I think it's been the stagnation of American radio. It seems like radio in this country has been lost for at least ten years, and as a musician that affects you greatly. In the next twenty years music and artists will continue to expand and evolve, stretching boundaries and genres.

—Richie Sambora, Bon Jovi

Evan Dando

The most important event in music in the past twenty years for me was the recent Kiss reunion. Kiss was one of my influences growing up, and the reunion was very inspirational. I have no idea what will happen to music over the next twenty years, but I hope that good musicianship will come back into play because right now you don't have to be an accomplished musician. You just play two chords, bang on something that sounds like a trash can, and call yourself "alternative"—and you can be the next big thing!

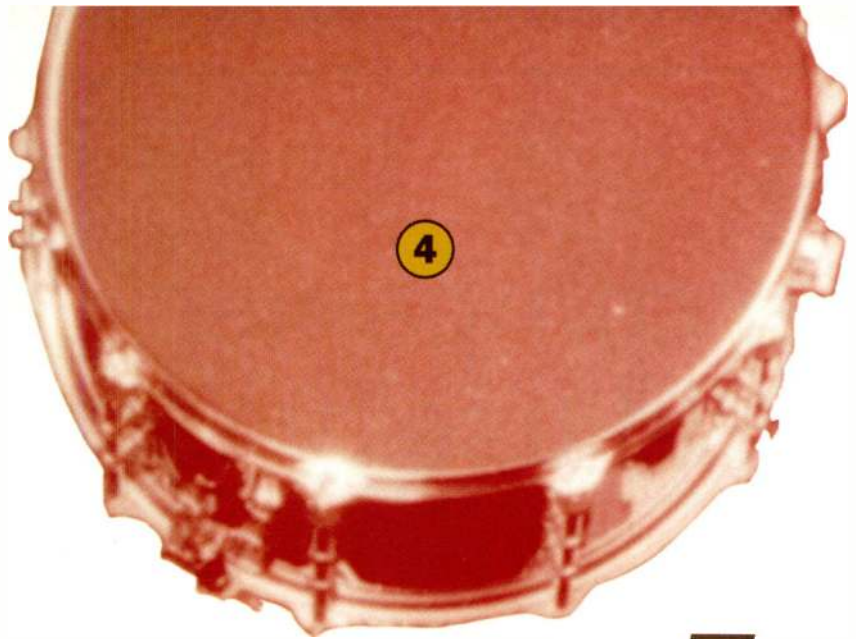
—Vinnie Paul, Pantera

For me, Bob Marley was the most important musical event of the last twenty years. Although reggae came out of a long musical tradition in Jamaica—from calypso to ska to reggae—the rest of the world thought it was a brand new sound. Reggae drummers literally did turn the beat around, and "playing a riddim that fights against the system" produced a refreshing groove. Doing a drum fill and then bringing in the bass drum on two instead of one was a mind-bender. Although the sound was soon co-opted by the Police, Paul Simon, etc., no one could match Marley's lyrics. They came from an almost new language, I and I say, and were laced with political and spiritual overtones. Since Bob left Babylon, reggae hasn't been the same. What I'm trying to say is that Bob Marley has had a strong effect on the music world since the mid-Seventies. As for the future, it's uncertain, and the end is always near. But whatever kinds of artists are out there in the next twenty years, be it grunge or techno acid jazz, if they speak about the human condition from the heart, not just as entertainment, their concentric circles will be wide.

—John Densmore, the Doors

The amazing explosion of creativity and art—dark rock/new wave, 1978 to '83. The streets of Los Angeles were alive with a new generation of artists, poets, musicians, dancers, and poseurs, all fueled by the hyper-aggressive sounds of the punk/new wave revolution. What a time! I thought I was back in the psychedelic Sixties. The Sunset Strip was boiling. Clubs were everywhere: Hollywood, Venice, East Hollywood, West Pico, even Chinatown—Madame Wong's and the Hong Kong Café. Man, I used to eat at those places, and all of a sudden X is playing at both of them. I even got to play with X, probably the best punk rock band that ever was-certainly the most literary, and certainly the most expert on their instruments. Wow, what a five-year ride! We will not see its likes again. It was good, hot, hard, intense, wild, and so goddamned creative. I loved it! The future holds the merging of the Judeo-Christian/ Muslim myth into the one religion that it actually is anyway. Those who can transcend the old myth can then begin to create the music of the spheres. The 21st century holds my dreams and yours too.

—Ray Manzarek, the Doors



ward

1 Carvin Holdsworth guitar

Another guitar legend gets his name plastered on a new axe. Carvin's Allan Holdsworth signature model features a semi-hollow alder body with a set-in 24-fret neck and 25.5"-scale ebony fingerboard. The locking tuners are Sperzels, the nut is graphite, and the pickups are special H22 humbuckers. Options include flamed or quilted maple tops, single or dual pickups, and a Wilkinson vibrato system; prices start at $809. ▶ ***Carvin, 12340 World Trade Dr., San Diego, CA 92128; voice (619) 487-1600, fax (619) 487-7620.***

2 E-mu e6400 synthesizer

Designed and built with the same sampling and synthesis engine as the higher-end E4X and E4XTurbo, E-mu's e6400 ($2795) comes standard with more than 400 megabytes of sound data on CD-ROM. Once you've loaded the presets (which takes a matter of seconds), you can alter them with 21 filters, 32-voice layering, 128-voice cross-switching or fading, and a patching system that lets you choose between 50 different synthesis "destinations" and 58 modulation sources. And as long as you've got a mic, the e6400's automated sampling system is a breeze to use. ▶ ***E-mu, 1600 Green Hills Rd., Ste. 101, P.O. Box 660015, Scotts Valley, CA 95067-0015; voice (408) 439-0324, fax (408) 438-8612.***

3 Passport Encore software

It's already considered one of the top music notation software programs, and now with version 4.1, Passport's Encore ($595) has just gotten a little kinder. Among the new wrinkles are a device file that lets you choose among an array of preset synth sounds from Korg, Roland, Yamaha, and Alesis. Other additions include a pop-up pitch indicator that identifies notes by name and octave and a continuous deletion option that makes for more fluid editing. ▶ ***Passport, 1151D Triton Dr., Foster City, CA 94404; voice (415) 349-6224, fax (415) 349-8008.***

4 HQ SoundOff pads

One thing's certain if you outfit your drums and cymbals with SoundOff silencer pads from HQ Percussion: No matter how late it is and how many neighbors you've got, you can get a groove going. Actually, one other thing's certain too: SoundOff will give you all the responsiveness of a drum head without the usual clunky feel of pads. Prices range from $6.50 for a 6" tom silencer to $27.50 for a 24" kick silencer; a four-drum silencer pack runs $34.50, and a three-cymbal silencer pack goes for $26.95. ▶ ***HQ Percussion, P.O. Box 430065, St. Louis, MO 63143; voice (314) 647-9009, fax (314) 644-4373.***

5 Tascam 414 Portastudio

Amid all the talk of MiniDisc demo recording, let's remember two things: 1) Cassette four-tracks still exist, for much less money, and 2) Tascam is still making them. Their latest entrant in the field, the 414 Portastudio ($449), has the capability of recording simultaneously on all four tracks, making live performances that much easier to capture. Other nifty features include a discrete sync output to drive MIDI gear, separate L/R monitor and main outputs, and a long throw master fader that eases your way to a smooth fade in or out. ▶ ***Tascam, 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA 90640; voice (213) 726-0303; fax (213) 727-7635.***

6 Viscount EFX-3000 processor

Looking for that perfect room sound? Check out Viscount's EFX-3000 multieffects processor ($1995), which features a built-in spectrum analyzer that (so the company claims) can recreate any acoustic situation. The two-rack unit, designed principally for guitarists, also features four banks of 128 fully programmable memories, and allows you to combine up to nine effects (from amp simulation to pitch modulation) simultaneously. Complete MIDI implementation adds flavor. ▶ ***Viscount, 306 S. Main St., Ste. 2B, Ann Arbor, MI 48104; voice (800) 253-0293, fax (313) 930-0179.***

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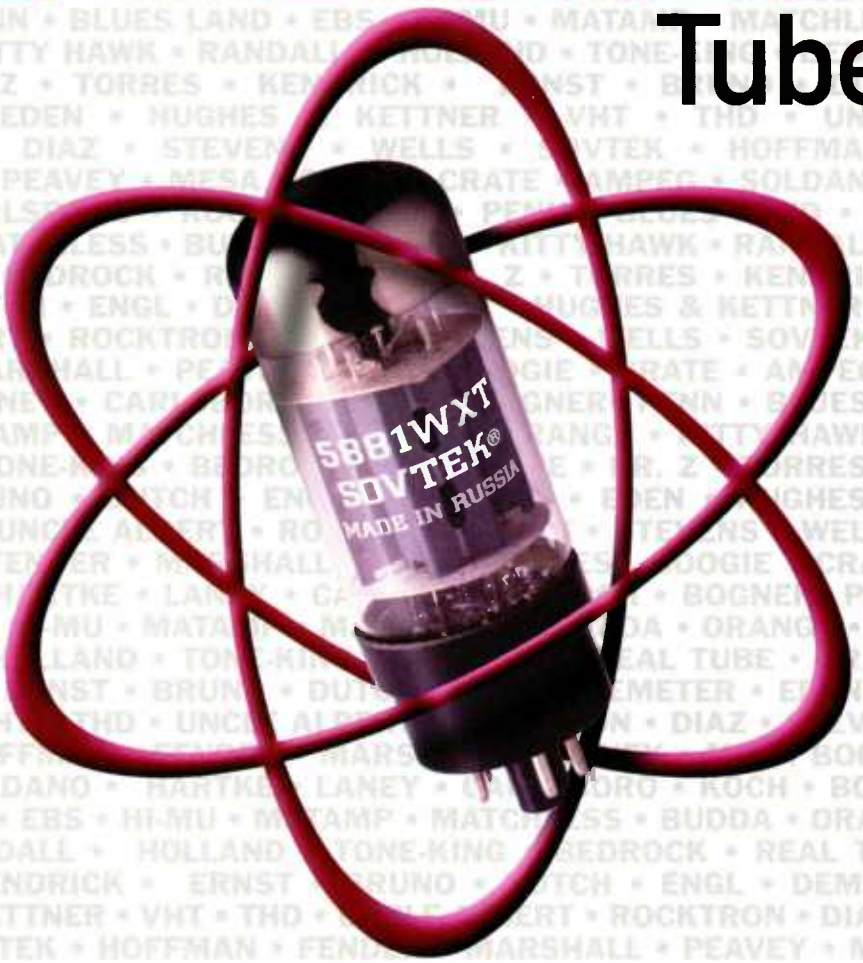

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editor's pick

Abundantly Amped

Line 6's AxSys 212: the first all-purpose guitar amplifier

by mac randall

A conscience can be a terrible thing. All that gnawing at you day and night with high-and-mighty moralizing is a real pain when all you're trying to do is your job. It can get so bad that the only thing left to do is shut your conscience down and stop thinking. That's what I eventually had to do while testing out the AxSys 212, a digital guitar combo from a new company called Line 6. The big deal about the AxSys 212 is that it uses physical modeling technology in an unprecedented manner, simulating the sounds of many different classic amplifiers. It does this so effectively that every other minute my conscience kept telling me, "Stop it right now! This is cheating! You can't do this!" But because the AxSys was so clearly proving that you could in fact do this, I simply had to turn off my conscience, stop thinking, and just listen.

And what sounds I heard. By pressing just a couple of buttons or turning a knob or two, the AxSys can go from the crunch of an overdriven vintage Marshall to the warmth of a Fender Bassman to the sparkle of a Roland JC-120. And that's only the start: There are 128 preset sounds, nearly all of which are eminently usable with no tampering required. If you're in a tampering mood, though, get ready for a little piece of heaven: over 50 parameters to edit, from cabinet type to reverb diffusion, each one with a multitude of subdivisions. Then, if you liked the changes you've made, you can store the new sound into any one of 128 open user slots. When you've got that sort of power at your fingertips, it makes letting go of your conscience a whole lot easier.

What's the secret behind this modern miracle? The folks at Line 6 call it TubeTone™; basically, it's a type of digital signal processing. A very strong type too—the two 24-bit processors in the AxSys can perform 48 million instructions per second (most of today's processors go up to about 6 million). Besides doing the more "normal" things that you might expect, such as reverb, delay, compression, flanging, etc., the amp's twin processors also model the sound of three kinds of tubes commonly found in classic guitar amps: the 12AX7 preamp tube and the EL34 and 6L6 power amp tubes. Each of these tubes responds to high input signals by distorting them, but each one does it in a different, distinctive way. By analyzing the characteristics of all three and replicating them in one box, Line 6's technicians have come up with what may be the guitarist's closest equivalent to the Holy Grail.

The digital display on the left and the extra buttons on the right of the amp's front panel are an early indication that this is an odd beast, but in other respects the AxSys 212 is fairly normal. It looks pretty sturdy, though I can't testify as to its roadworthiness. As its name suggests, it's got two 12" speakers, both custom made by Eminence. It pumps out 100 watts of power (which means that once the master volume's past 2, earplug wearing is advisable). And it does have regular control knobs, just like any old amp: taken in

reverse order, Delay/Reverb, Gain, Treble, Mid, Bass, Drive, Master, Aux, and Guitar. Only the last two warrant explanation. With the AxSys, as with any processor, you have to set the volume of your input for maximum effectiveness. The AxSys has two inputs, both with separate controls: Guitar and Auxiliary (which could be used for a mic, drum machine, tape player, or another guitar—by the way, the Aux input doesn't get the benefit of all the processing). For each input, you turn the volume up until the Clip light flashes, which tells you you've gone far enough. (Of course, sometimes you may want the signal to clip; the distortion that results is harsher than that caused by turning up the Drive or Gain controls, but still has its charms, especially if you're on the industrial tip.)

Scrolling through the sounds is as easy as pressing the two Sound Bank buttons and the corresponding quartet of A, B, C, and D (the 256 total sounds are divided into 64 banks of four). Some titles were a bit mysterious; I couldn't figure out what was so Jeff Beck about "A La Jeff Beck 2 (w/Rat)," although that delay did remind me slightly of Beck's "Where Were You." Still, the patch's singing tone was a winner. The "Beatles" option stood up well to the timeless Harrison solo from "Hey Bulldog," while "Surf" had me doing my best Dick Dale imitation, and "Bassman w/Slapback" got me pickin' and grinnin' in no time. The sole disappointments in the AxSys' whole array of sounds were the so-called "acoustic simulation" patches. They're not really simulations of acoustic guitars—instead, they simulate the sound of a piezo pickup running through the board (at about half the volume of the amp's electric sounds). It's possible, I suppose, that musicians exist who are actually fond of that unspeakable tone, but me, I'll take a real acoustic. As for "Lukather Style Lead" and "5150 Crunch," I couldn't stand the originals, much less the simulations. But if you want such sounds, I can confidently say they're duplicated convincingly by the AxSys.

Editing the sounds is almost as easy as scrolling through them; it's the amount of choices you have that makes for the difficulty. The funny-looking charts on the right side of the front panel are called edit rows; buttons on the left of the rows let you select which one you want. Once you've done that, the six main knobs (one beneath each section of the row) become the controllers of the given parameters. Turning the knob may not automatically change the parameter, however; each patch has its parameters preset, and you first have to turn the knob to the level of that preset before you can alter it (the relative brightness of the light by each knob tells you which way to go). This "capturing" of the preset level saves you from sudden unwanted shifts in volume, amount of reverb or distortion, etc., but it does take getting used to.

There's not enough space here to go into all the tweaking you can do with the AxSys, from changing preamp type (36 options) to altering distortion (3 different fuzzboxes, each with 3 different tones and 9 different gain levels). I'll only mention that the 12 delays are surprisingly warm for digital, the random envelope filter is ultra-cool, and the hum canceller is a brilliant idea, especially for guitars with single-coil pickups (as with many features of the AxSys, hearing no amp hum is at first disconcerting, but soon welcomed). The one problem with the amp's editing setup is that when you want to turn on an effect that isn't part of a preset, you first have to select the type of effect in one edit row, turn the given knob to get it where you want, then turn the effect on by selecting another edit row and turning another knob. It's not exactly an economical process, and if you miss one step, nothing gets changed, at least not audibly.

Which leads me to the AxSys' only real flaw: It's not designed for absolute spontaneity. By that I mean simply that not every parameter can easily be adjusted while in the heat of playing. In order to sound spontaneous, you have to do some work in advance—first getting used to the amp and the way it works, then getting the sounds you want and programming them in order. Between capturing a preset's level and selecting an edit row, altering a sound from the front panel takes time, which is fine if you're fiddling around in the studio but which limits the AxSys' usefulness as a live tool. (Let's be fair, though: If you were dealing with a pile of rackmount effects, you'd have way more logistical trouble on your hands.) Line 6 has taken this into account and is designing a foot control panel to go with the amp (projected to cost about $300), including built-in volume and wah pedals (to control both the internal wah sounds and any of 24 other assignable parameters). This could be the key to true live monstrousness with the AxSys, but as the footswitcher wasn't ready by the time of this review, I can't say for sure.

Then again, some might say, with sounds like these, who needs spontaneity? And fair enough, if you don't mind a certain amount of programming before the gig, you will be well rewarded by the richness of the AxSys. At $1099, it ain't the cheapest amp on the market, but it's far from the priciest, and when you consider how much you can get out of it, frankly, nothing else comes close.

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[cont'd from page 24] *more—I want to go in a different musical direction?"*

PARKER: Nothing would ever keep me from writing what I write because it's hard enough as it is. If you write something that's credible, I don't care what it's about or what direction it leads in. If it's love or hate or whatever. If it's good it's good. Just thank god for another one.

CRENSHAW: As opposed to stopping myself when I'm writing something that isn't typical of me, I stop myself if I catch myself second-guessing what I'm doing according to what somebody else might think. If I'm second-guessing, then I'm on the wrong track and I need to rethink it.

Have any of you ever consciously thought about writing a hit?

CRENSHAW: If you're influenced by pop music and really love it, you just sort of go there.

BRAGG: If you go out consciously to do something like that, you're much more likely to bollocks it up. For writers like us who are talking about the craft of it, rather than the pure hit-machine mentality. I think we're trying to write albums in that sense. We're talking about a much broader view than having hit singles. The Top 40 has become so marginalized lately with what gets in and what doesn't that we're never likely to qualify. So there's no point to it.

Is there a writing process that you go through? Do you put on a certain sweater or drink lots of coffee, or write late at night?

PARKER: Pop stars in their underwear—that's what you're getting at, eh? [*laughs*] No, I have to make sure I'm not under the influence of anything at all, so I try to write in the daytime before I decide to become under the influence later on. I've got to be really clear about what I'm doing. There's no dressing up. I don't put on women's clothing. But maybe I should start expressing my feminine side . . .

BRAGG: Sometimes I'll go to bed and think about a verse and have to get out of bed, creep downstairs like a burglar, and write it. It's a bit of a solitary experience for me.

PARKER: I'll write for a half hour or so, and when I get to a point where I'm still excited but not quite there, I'll watch TV until the energy builds up again and I'll rush out and get back at it. It's better than sitting in a room with a guitar for four hours, which would be like prison to me. I have to walk out every now and then.

CRENSHAW: I do a lot of writing in the car. It's a great place to just listen and think, or pull over. Solitude is necessary, and when you're in the car, the scenery is rushing by, you're moving. There's no set rules. What I hate is that when I get really engrossed in writing, it just won't leave me alone. It stays in my mind all the time and I can't hold a conversation.

PARKER: Yeah, it's very bad for anybody else who's around.

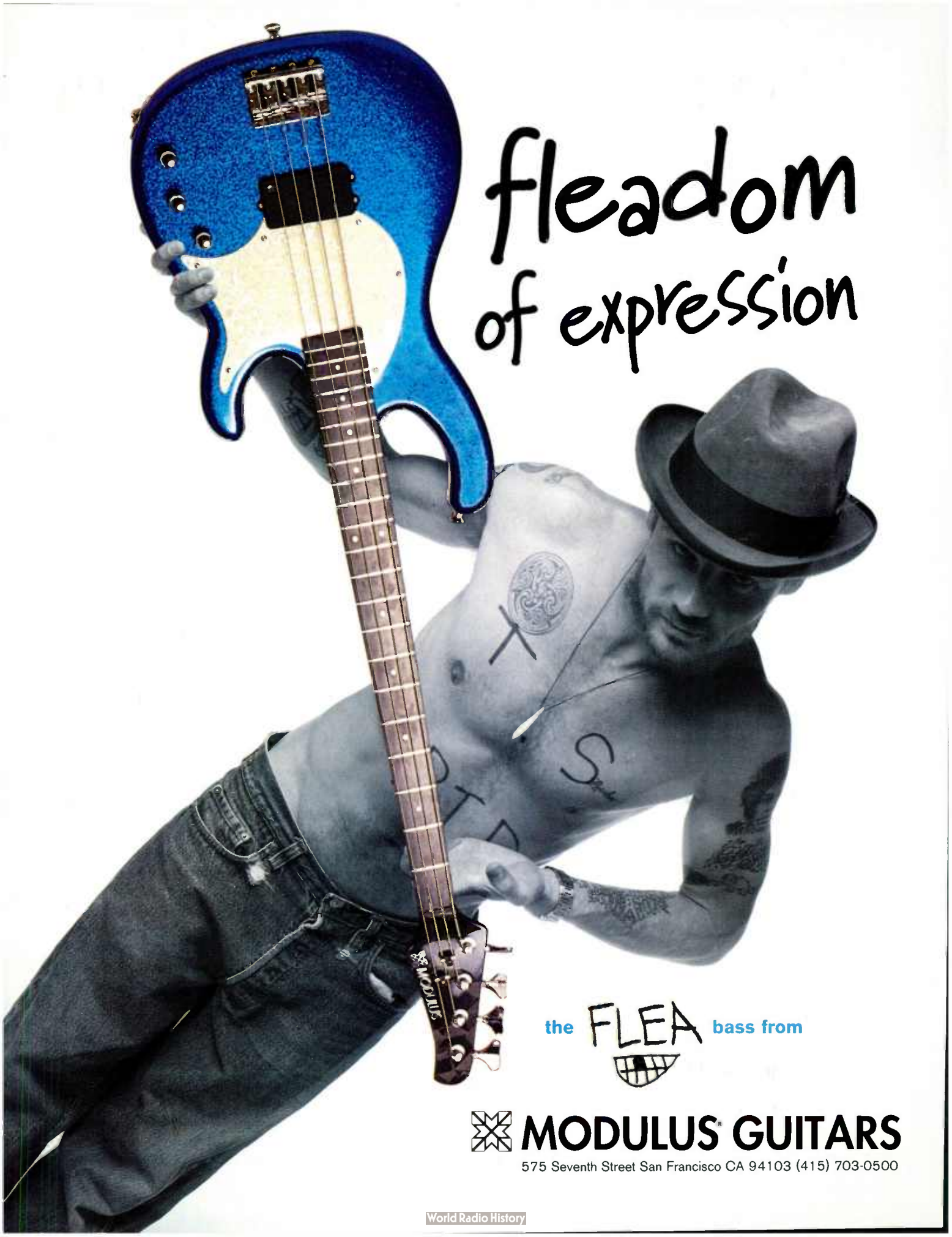
CRENSHAW: What did Franz Kafka say about intellectual pursuits, how they cut you off from life and it's no way to live? Well, I really love what I'm doing, but sometimes I see his point.

So did you guys choose the right career path?

BRAGG: Yeah, but sometimes you find that you still have to do the kinds of things you hated at your old job but twice as fast. I remember sitting in the bar after hours some mornings feeling really sorry for myself, while a car would be waiting outside to take me off to the next gig that was somewhere I didn't want to go. I remember thinking to myself, "Fuck it, I got this job so I wouldn't have to do that shitty morning-dash-out-the-door bollocks." But it's always there.

PARKER: Billy hit it just right—the difference between getting it right and going back to the factory is like fucking hell.

BRAGG: Some people just flip out. They make their first album and it's such a relief. When it comes to the second album, they just take this look down and they never get around to doing it. If you're a good songwriter, before you've got a first album, you've probably already got enough for the second album. But by the time you get to that third album, if your first album was any good, your life has changed so much that you'd damn well better be plugged in so you know what's going on. Because if you can't tune into that same person who used to write songs in your mom's bedroom, it can be an awful shock.



IRRESPONSIBLES

Things are going well right now for the just-outside-of-Boston-based Irresponsibles. Shortly after their selection as one of Musician's Best Unsigned Bands, they received a call from B.U.B. judge Adrian Belew, who offered to produce their next album. "I really like his sound–we're definitely planning to work together," enthuses Peter Montgomery, singer/guitarist/main songwriter. The band also features Dan Rudack/drums, Mark Nigro/bass and Dave Thomas/lead guitar.

Peter started the band a decade ago ("Our first gig was at a nursing home," he laughs. "It was straight out of a David Lynch film.") and the current line-up has been together for four years, playing regularly around Boston, New York and points in between. They've appeared on compilations and released a CD of their own that is rich in hook-filled pop tunes, harmonies and smart arrangements. They are most frequently compared to the Beatles (Peter's playing career began at age twelve with a guitar 'borrowed' from his sister and a Beatles chord book) and XTC. Do these references bother the band? "Hell no!" says Peter. "That's intelligent music. We are a bit harder live, though."

With a canon of great songs, a solid live show (they've recently appeared with a 3-piece string section), and a mailing list of several hundred fans, the Irresponsibles are definitely headed in the right direction.

"I love the current wave of Beatles/Oasis-type pop with really wet, juicy production," Peter offers. "It's the kind of music this band's been interested in since the start and now it seems like the industry is swinging back around in this direction."

SHABAZZ 3

Even though the Texas-based Shabazz 3 are all in their early twenties, they make intelligent hip-hop music that is steeped in classic references. "I'm mostly influenced by jazz and soul—Roy Ayers, Donald Byrd, Les McCann, Ronnie Foster, Ramsey Lewis, James Brown," lists Ty Mackland, the band's mastermind and self-taught studio buff who provides the music and samples that lie at the foundation of their compositions. "I love the old warm sound and that's what I try to capture in our music."

Ty is aided by his cousin Jonathan Dangerfield on lyrics/vocals and DJ Bobby May, a master of the cut n' scratch on the turntables and a mad record collector. As a band they've been together for two years. Their songs provide a richly-textured alternative to today's sample-by-numbers hip-hop. Ty explains how: "First I find a good groove. Then I tend to keep layering stuff on top of that. But everything has to be in key. When I put stuff together, I'm always thinking in terms of notes and keys—which isn't always the case with hip-hop bands. I like hip-hop that's melodic, with something musical going on, not just two cats and a drum beat."

Another attribute is their use of live intruments. Their new material features guitar, Rhodes keyboard ("Which I just bought a wah pedal for," adds Ty) and stand-up bass. And that which isn't live surely sounds like it is. "The trick to that is good EQ-ing," Ty laughs. The results will end up on the bands first full-length CD, and Bobby is confident they can keep hip-hop evolving. "Just wait til you hear this stuff," he promises.

MUSICIAN'S 1996 BEST UNSIGNED BANDS

COOLIDGE

Coolidge rehearse inside the notorious "music building" on 8th Avenue in Manhattan. For musicians who don't live in New York, we asked them to describe the vibe. "Let's see, it's 12 floors with six studios on each floor," explains guiatrist/singer Denny Blake. "As you go up past each floor in the elevator you hear everything from Sex Pistols-like punk on one floor to mellow acoustic ballads on the next to reggae on the next. It's like one giant party sometimes, complete with kegs and people spilling out into the halls."

This diverse communal atmosphere suits Coolidge, a tight, powerful funk-rock trio that also includes Malcolm Gold on bass/vocals and drummer Yancey Drew (who plays with Brooklyn Funk Essentials and dance diva Joi Cardwell, as well). Says Denny, "It's wierd, we've got an old-school soul drummer, a funk bassist and a blues-rock guitar player, but together it really works."

Frequent comaprisons? "I think we have but one Chili Peppers album between us, but that's a band that all the reviewers seem to mention," says Denny. "I guess people hear the funky bass line and immediately think of Flea."

In fact, their influences are all over the musical map. "Well, today I went from listening to Ravi Shankar to Chet Atkins—I'm pretty eclectic," offers Denny. "So am I," admits Malcolm. "Which is probably why we work so well together. I listen to a lot of reggae, jazz, pop, old funk, R&B, everything."

The band have been together for a couple of years, have one CD out, and gig regularly around New York. As for the future, says Malcolm, "We'd just like to get out on the road and tour more extensively."

"We're definitely a radio-friendly band," adds Denny. "With the right team behind us, I think we could do well. The ultimate fringe benefit is that we'd be able to get out and play live more because that's our favorite thing to do."

ANTIHERO

Antihero is, for all intents and purposes, one man: Tao Jones. His card reads "Rock Musician/Spiritual Advisor/International Spy". Add to that "Brilliant Songwriter".

His latest project began is only a year and a half old (the rest of Antihero is made up of various local musicians on loan from other bands), but the 28 year-old has lived and played all over the country (Colorado, Seattle, California, New York and, presently, Northampton, Massachusetts). "My last band was sorta original funk/metal/groove, I played guitar and sang, but there were a few too many egos," he explains. "Before that I played in all kinds of different bands that either did or did not make any money—including keyboards in a Blondie tribute band, which did make money."

Musically, he's "a product of the 70s—Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, the Stones, the Who, and eventually the Beatles. As for nowadays, I can't really recall the last thing I bought."

Says Tao, "My reviews have spanned a spectrum of bizarre comparisons, though the Buzzcocks have been mentioned more than once." But, while the song that clinched his spot as one of Musician's Best Unsigned Bands ("Anjie, Where's My Medicine?") is both impassioned and angst-y, it's not, he decides, a stereotypical Antihero number—or is it?. "It's kind of a heartbreak song–most of my tunes are slightly faster and more sarcastic."

"Well, I don't know," he reconsiders. "I probably write about half and half emotional songs and comedic songs. Sometimes I just feel stupid writing emotional songs. But then you can't always come up with a great comedy song either."

"Strange" was how Tao described a recent a series of meetings in L.A. following his B.U.B. victory. "I'm slightly intimidated when every office I walk in to has gold records all over the wall," he says. "But the only people I tend not to like is A&R people. Some are perfectly likable, but they're just so practiced. Practiced in nicely rejecting you, that is."

Watch for more Best Unsigned Band profiles on THIRTY PIECES, NANCY MIDDLETON BAND, AHMAD ALAADEN, THE SHADE, SEAN DRISCOLL GROUP, SHADES, WITHOUT RUTH and SWINGSET POLICE next month

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Rules

No purchase necessary. All entries must be received by December 31, 1996. Entrants must not be signed to a recording contract by an established independent or major label. Artists retain all rights to their material. However, tapes cannot be returned. If selected as a winner, artists are responsible for final mix and photographs appearing on "Best of the B.U.B.s" CD. Inclusion on the "Best of the B.U.B.s" CD does not demonstrate any contractural relationship with Atlantic Records. "Best of the B.U.B.s" CD is not for sale and will not generate any royalties. All decisions are final. Employees of Musician magazine, JBL Professional, Lexicon, and Atlantic Records are not eligible. Void where prohibited.

ATLANTIC

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ENTRY FORM

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Contact Name _____

Address _____

_____

City, State, ZIP _____

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Email _____

REQUIRED MATERIALS

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2. 2-Song Cassette (original material only)
3. Name/address of each musician in your band or who plays on the tape
4. Processing fee of $17.50 (check/money order — US funds only)

Send to: Musician/B.U.B., 1515 Broadway, 15th Floor, New York, NY, 10036

DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS DECEMBER 31, 1996

home studio

By David John Farinella

Sitting in a plush white chair, Dweezil Zappa leans forward, rests his elbows on his knees, and says with a straight face, "We are now sitting in the master control area for the Tutti Muffin Research Kitchen." That's the semi-official, fully-joking name for the control room of his father's large studio. Dweezil has staked his claim in the former vocal booth for a wide variety of upcoming projects. "Well, you know, we have a techno-country-gospel album that we're going to do and a Zappa Family Christmas album," says the man himself. "I'm really excited about both of those." And then he laughs, loudly.

While he's always had the ability to use the large studio located downstairs from his living quarters, the original idea of putting his own spot together was born out of frustration. "I'd been doing a bunch of recording projects and I'd been a slave to other people's schedules," he explains. "I finally said, 'I've got to learn how to do this myself.'"

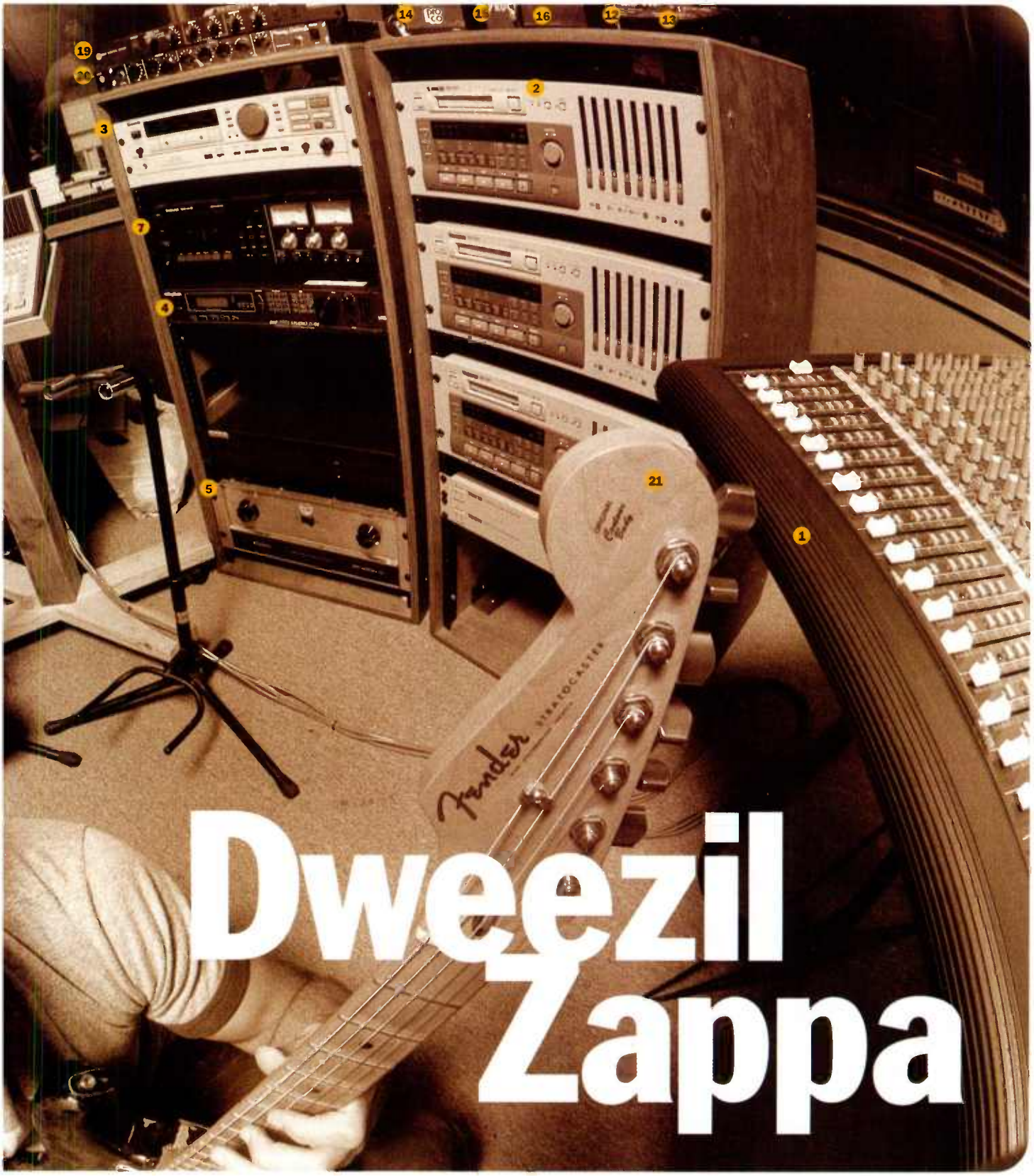
One of the things he's speaking of is the 75-minute opus, *What The Hell Was I Thinking?*, which features Zappa's fifty favorite guitar players (from Angus Young to Brian Setzer) and has been five years in the making. Then there was an album with guitarist Warren DiMartini and a couple of songs that could either appear on a solo project or an album by Z, the band he formed in 1993 with his brother Ahmet. All in all, the junior room of the Tutti Muffin Research Kitchen has been a busy place since he first plugged in his ***Mackie 32•8*** 1 and three ***Tascam DA-88s*** 2 .

Zappa Family Headquarters includes

MUSICIANS INSTITUTE

HOME STUDIO PRESENTED BY
THE MUSICIANS INSTITUTE, HOLLYWOOD, CA.

photograph by mitch tobias



Dweezil Zappa

Dweezil's studio, a recording and mixing room, and a mastering room in another part of the house. "We're fully equipped to go from start to finish," he explains. "We can't manufacture here yet, but we can do everything else. No one can stop us!" Even though the big room has all the best technology, in Dweezil's eyes, the simpler the setup, the easier the work. "I generally use the big studio for mixing these days, but I get much closer to the sound I'm hearing in my head through my equipment," he says.

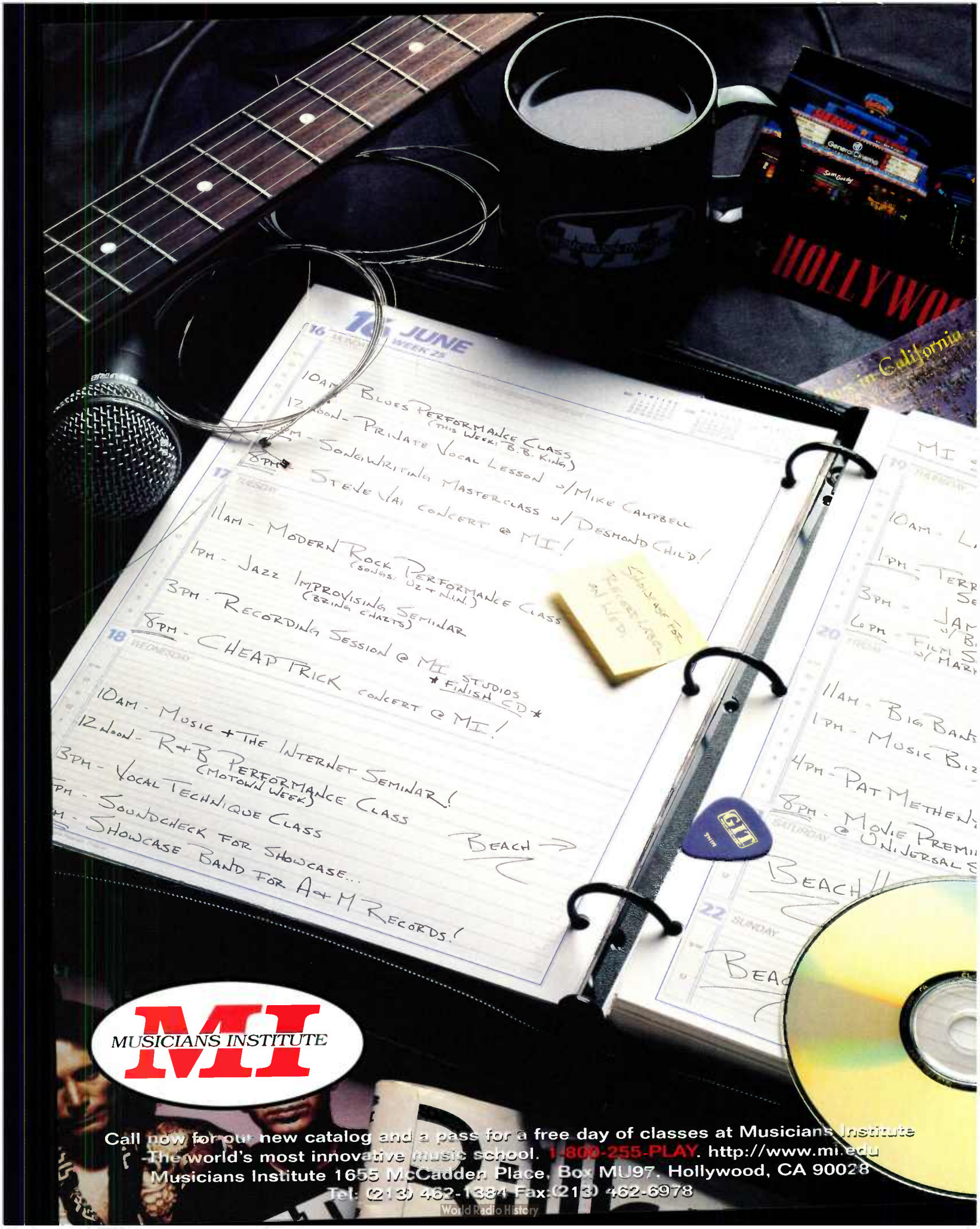
Reliability and ease of use seem to be the criteria for all the gear Dweezil's stocked his studio with, from the Mackie board to the ***Panasonic SV-3700 DAT*** machine to the ***DigiTech GSP 2101 studio tube preamp/processor*** and a ***Crown DC300R power amp***. Even the ***Boss Dr. Rhythm DR-660 drum machine*** that's stashed on a nearby shelf fits the bill. "Oh, yeah, whenever I want to keep it on the down low," he says of the drum machine with a laugh. The other permanent gear for the small room includes a pair of Yamaha NS-10M monitors (behind the board), a ***Tascam 122 MKIII cassette machine*** and the ***Tascam RC848 remote control unit***.

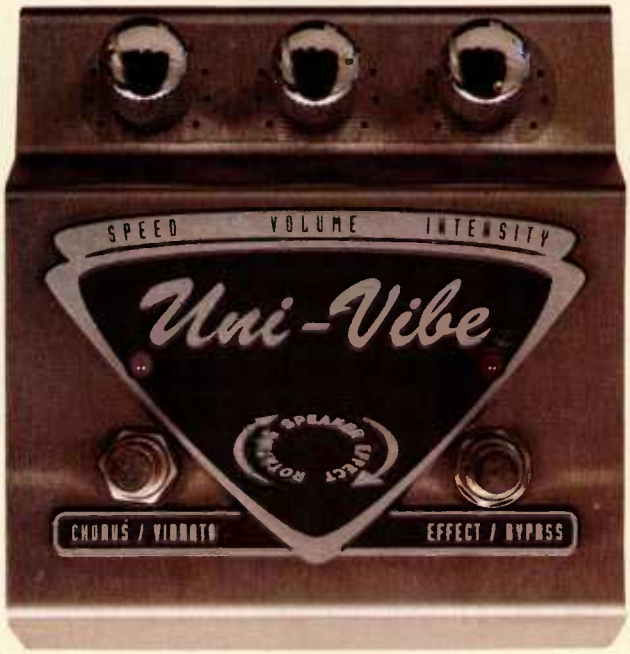
On the movable shelves located by the back wall of the small room is a random assortment of heads, including a ***Marshall 100-watt***, a ***Vox Super Beatle*** and a ***Peavey 5150***. Beneath and on the shelves next to the heads are a wide variety of pedals. "Just say tons of pedals," says Dweezil, and he's not joking. At just a quick glance through the room, old distortion stompboxes like a ***Roger Mayer Voodoo-1***, a ***Vox Tone Bender Fuzz***, and a ***ProCo Rat*** compete with a ***Voodoo Lab Proctavia***, ***Prescription Electronics Yardbox***, ***Dunlop Uni-Vibe***, ***MXR Micro Flanger***, and more that can't quite be made out in the photo, including a Boss CS-3 compressor/sustainer, MXR Phase 100, MXR Analog Delay, and a Fender Super Fuzz Wah. Then there's the ***Chandler Stereo Digital Echo*** and ***Peavey Valveverb*** propped up on the cabinet holding the DAT machine and the Crown power amp. There's no rhyme or reason to what's in the studio on any given day—suffice to say there's a lot of everything and anything lying around.

Dweezil's guitars are arranged, in no particular order, in the main recording room of the studio. Just for kicks, he pulls in a ***Fender Stratocaster*** that he found under a staircase at the house some years before. It turns out the Strat had been given to his father by Jimi Hendrix, who'd burned it on stage during a show in Miami. He also grabs a guitar that looks suspiciously like an old ***Ibanez Iceman***, even though Dweezil had a new neck put on and his standard P-100 pickups installed. "I wanted it to be a real subtle paint job, you know, so I made it like the super-Vegas Iceman," he says of the gold glitter finish. Also in the room is a customized ***Kramer Flying V*** with a candy-cane paint job, and a light blue ***Gibson Firebird*** that sister Diva gave to him for Christmas last year. "Always a safe gift for me."

Besides the flexibility he's found in his own studio, Dweezil has the ability to do even more with the equipment he's purchased. In fact, that was the idea behind the first thing he recorded with the DA-88s. "My first experiment was to have the meters sit in the red and not move. Just record it totally distorted, just to see. It came back fine. The funniest thing was, we put it in Sonic Solutions and it was completely filled from top to bottom. Normally you have peaks and stuff, but it was filled top to bottom with a log of music. I thought, 'That sounds good.' And the engineer who was working with me said, 'Well, that's interesting, never seen that before.' So I'm gonna do that all the time. No dynamics, just full on."

And that brings us back to the Zappa Family Christmas album, coming to a store near you. "Well, that was a joke, but every time I joke about it I'm like, 'That's a good idea.' Now that I have the setup to do it, if I wanted to record a fucked-up 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer' at two in the morning, I can and I don't need to call an engineer. That's the freedom. I can do the Zappa Family Christmas album that I've always dreamed of."





***L to R:* Diaz Texas Tremodillo; Dunlop Uni-Vibe; Demeter Tremulator**

The RIPPLE Effect

by steven wishnia

Tremolo made Link Wray's guitar ripple menacingly on "Rumble." It shimmied along with Bo Diddley's neo-African beat and made scores of surf instrumentals shimmer like the California waves. It was a standard feature on American guitar amps through the Sixties, most notably Fenders, before fading away (though Johnny Marr's heavily tremoloed guitar was the hook on the Smiths' "How Soon Is Now" in 1984).

Maybe it's the fiendish nostalgia of aging baby-boomers, maybe it's that Diddley and Wray rocked with more energy and soul (and wrote more memorable licks) than a brigade of shredmeisters packing $10,000 worth of digital rack-mount gear, but there's been some resurgence of interest in tremolo and its cousin, vibrato. In the last few years, both boutique and big-name effects manufacturers have come out with tremolo and vibrato pedals. It's not just a retro effect. You can use tremolo like you would a repeating delay, to set up a clock-based groove and explore the area between the organic music of electric guitars and basses and the electronic pulse of synthesizers.

Tremolo and vibrato aren't the same thing, but they're both coming back.

Tremolo and vibrato are often confused; in fact, the two cheapest tremolo units we found are both called "vibratos." Both effects are similarly quavery, but tremolo varies the volume—like playing with the volume knob—while vibrato varies the actual pitch. (Thus, a whammy bar is not a tremolo.) The standard controls are speed (of the variations) and "depth" or "intensity." Most of the more expensive ($199 and up) tremolos have an LED that blinks in time with the speed, which can range from a slow, gradual swirl to a rapid whirr.

Venturing into the marketplace bearing a not quite pre-CBS Telecaster and a no-name 22-watt tube amp of "Pipeline"-era vintage, we first find the **Rocktek** Vibrator ($59.99), a Chinese-made plastic stompbox. On our review unit, the speed and depth controls were mislabeled and the battery compartment cover kept popping off. But it actually sounds pretty good, although its top speed is relatively slow.

DOD's metal-flake candy apple red VibroThang ($99.95) combines tremolo with a phase shifter. This sounds best on a few specific set-

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Option Overload II

Further reports from the digital recording front

by craig anderton

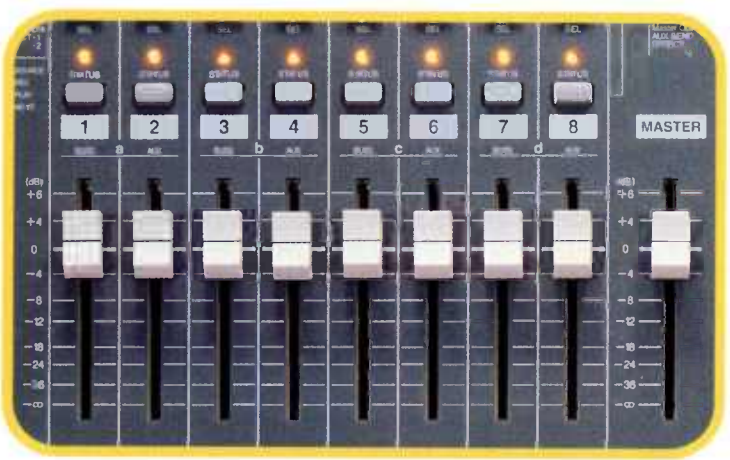
Now that you've pored over last month's list of digital recording formats, you're more confused than ever, right? Well, we're here to help, so . . . here are a few more options to ponder! (In technology as in life, when it rains it pours.)

. . . But I Hate Computers!

Several manufacturers have cleverly disguised a computer-based hard disk recording system by putting it in a box, making it truly "plug and play," and giving it a familiar interface. Examples include the **Emu** Darwin, **Akai** DR family, **Vestax**, and **Otari** RADAR. **Roland**'s VS-880 is the current hot item, as it folds in a digital mixer, eight tracks of simultaneous playback, and optional effects. Often these machines, being computers at heart, are expandable via SCSI hard drives, digital tape interfaces, extra analog or digital inputs/outs, and even graphic interfaces—it all depends on whether the unit was designed for expansion. (Of course, when buying anything, make sure the expansion options actually exist; the future is always subject to change.)

Another variation is a system like **SoundScape**, which uses a personal computer mostly as a "front end" graphics interface to their own hardware and software. The system comes with SoundScape hardware, a card that plugs into your PC, and software; you supply the hard drive and computer. **Yamaha** has taken a similar approach with their CBX series of hard disk recorders, as has **TimeLine**. One advantage is that you don't need an ultra high-end computer for this type of application, as the system provides the dedicated hardware "smarts."

As with computer-based systems, backup remains essential and crashes are possible. But because stand-alone devices are dedicated solely to recording and don't have to deal with such computer-related issues as extensions and interrupts, stand-alone systems can be a bit more reliable.



Roland's VS-880 (above) offers eight tracks of simultaneous playback; Alesis' ADAT-XT (below) has new improved meters.

Digital Tape Multitracks

Modular Digital Multitracks based on digital tape continue to hold their own against the computer invasion; more than 100,000 of these units, from several different manufacturers, are out in the field. **Alesis** not only updated the original ADAT, it introduced the ADAT-XT, our May '96 Editor's Pick. The new model offers a slew of new options, faster shuttle speeds, and better metering. **Fostex** continues to support the ADAT with their new CX-8 model, as does **Pana-**

sonic with the MDA-1.

While these machines all use the same S-VHS tape format, there are some minor differences. For example, the Fostex uses a 25-pin connector for balanced audio I/O instead of the ADAT's 56-pin connector block, while the MDA-1 dispenses with multipin connectors altogether by including eight rear-panel, XLR (balanced line) inputs and outputs.

Meanwhile, over at **Tascam**, the recently introduced DA-38 is a lower-cost version of their DA-88 that works by itself or as a DA-88 "expander." It lacks the video and 9-pin sync options of its bigger brother, although if locked with a DA-88 it will follow whatever the DA-88 is synced to. But the DA-38 includes some more "musician-oriented" features than the 88, such as an A-440 tuning standard, error display, internal track-to-track copying, and optional MIDI/MMC sync with the MMC-38 adapter card.**Sony**'s PCM-800 recorder, which resembles a DA-88 with a few refinements (such as XLR connectors and eight channels of AES/EBU interfacing), has also climbed on the Hi-8 audio bandwagon. As with the DA-88, an optional sync board is available; it handles MIDI sync and MMC and 9-pin RS-422 control, and chases to SMPTE.

Though these types of machines are cost-effective and easy to use, they need periodic maintenance. Conditioned to think that digital means "never wears out," people are sometimes surprised when heads or parts in the tape handling part need replacing. (Veterans often recommend servicing every 200-300 hours of operation.) Head life is typically around 1500 hours, with ADATs having arguably longer head life, but much of that depends on a proper operation environment (smoke-free, for starters) and proper head-cleaning techniques.

Tape is also crucial. Fortunately, manufacturers like **Sony**, **Ampex**, and **BASF** recognize the importance of this market and are producing tapes specifically for MDMs. Whatever tape you use, rewind and fast-forward it several times before formatting it. This helps minimize dropouts by excising loose bits of tape and dust. If these shake loose after the tape has been formatted, you could lose part of a sync track. With S-VHS it's also a good idea to take up any slack in the tape before inserting it into the machine; this seems to improve the head-to-tape contact.

RAM Recording

Although samplers are seldom thought of as part of the digital recording family, more and more musicians are loading them up with as much memory as possible and treating each key like one track of a multitrack recorder. For dance music, this is a real-time, performance-oriented alternative to hard disk editing. Furthermore, each "track" can be looped, processed, or triggered by a sequencer, and the number of tracks equals the number of voices—which can be as many as 128 with today's sam-

plers. Also, there are no moving parts, which is a nice bonus.

In addition, samplers often include real-time signal processing (typically reverb, chorus, delay, and EQ), along with such editing options as filtering, amplitude envelopes, and real-time pitch-bend. Because samplers are designed for playing onstage, the immediacy of using one for remixing can be more satisfying than being parked in front of a monitor and doing all your work with a mouse and QWERTY keyboard.

But considering how much memory digital audio requires for storage, installing something like 64 megabytes (which would give a little under 15 track-minutes of sound) costs a bundle. Also, backup is mandatory, since any sounds stored in RAM disappear when the power is turned off. Fortunately, most pro samplers offer interfaces for backing up to hard disk or other mass storage devices.

And The Winner Is . . .

It really depends on your application. If you're considering a cassette multitrack, save your pennies and spring for the MiniDisc version. For live use, it can be inconvenient to carry around a computer, which implies either digital tape or a stand-alone hard disk recorder. Tape still remains the fastest and most intuitive way to lay down parts, though hard disk systems are getting easier to use and are unparalleled for editing.

One option for those who want to have it all but work within a budget is to record on digital tape and bounce over tracks that need editing to a computer-based editing program such as **Digidesign**'s Sound Tools, **Passport**'s Alchemy, or **Bias** Peak on the Mac or, for the PC, **Steinberg**'s Wavelab, **Sonic Foundry**'s Sound Forge, or **Syntrillium**'s Cool Edit. Doing digital transfers maintains the fidelity, and you can back up what you do on the hard disk by digitally transferring the audio back to tape. In fact, many hard disk system owners take advantage of digital audio tape to provide inexpensive backup. Digital tape stores gigabytes of information for about $10; no other removable hard drive option is as cost-effective. And digital tape can provide a "common denominator" for file transfers between otherwise incompatible hard disk systems. This assumes that both systems offer a digital tape interface and that both hard disk owners have compatible digital tape formats (S-VHS or Hi-8).

If you define your needs as specifically as possible, you'll be able to narrow your choices to what works best for you. Remember, specs and features are not as important as making sure that the recorder doesn't get in the way of creating music—which is, after all, what this is all about.

Contributors: *Craig Anderton is the author of Home Recording for Musicians, published by AMSCO, and host of the Sound, Studio, and Stage site on America Online (keyword SSS). He is a frequent contributor to Musician magazine.*

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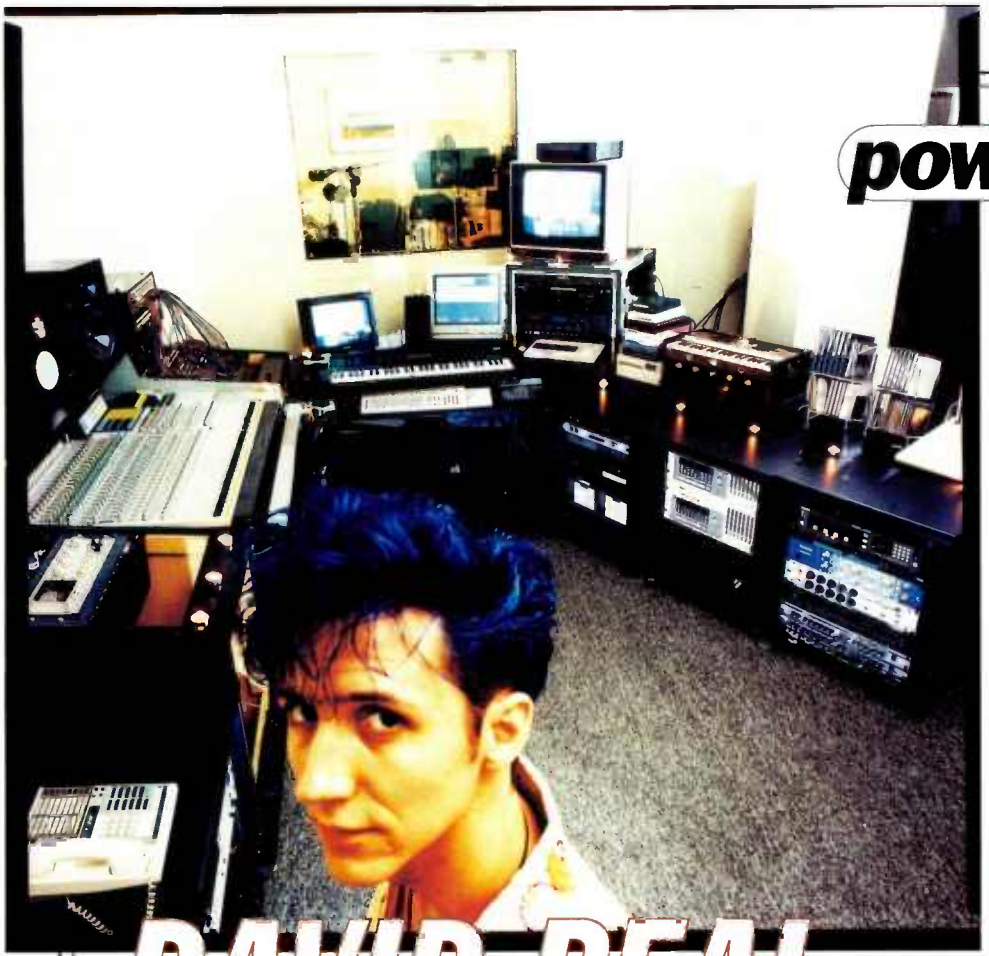

DAVID BEAL DIGS INTO STUDIO VISION PRO

by greg sandow

David Beal has candles in his compact studio, on the ninth floor of a building on a busy Manhattan street. He likes to work by candlelight—a perfect setting for one who makes music with his computer, the screen of his Mac glowing brightly in the dark.

Beal starts his copy of Opcode's Studio Vision Pro (our Editor's Pick, July '96), showing me his last big project: a sharp, ironic version of the *Mission: Impossible* theme, performed by Adam Clayton and Larry Mullen Jr. of U2. Since Studio Vision lets you combine MIDI and audio on a single track, Beal explains, if you need to synchronize the two, you just zoom in very close—which the program easily lets you do—and align the notes and waveforms visually.

He plays an analog synth sound with an insistent tremolo. This isn't a hardware effect; Beal literally drew it on the screen, using a handy feature of Studio Vision Pro called the "strip chart." It appears, if you want it to, beneath the "graphic" window, which displays MIDI or audio data (or both) for any track. Its function? To graphically display MIDI controllers, right under the notes they affect.

Since SVP handles audio volume exactly as it handles MIDI volume, this effect was easy to create. Using a pencil cursor, Beal drew alternating peaks of sound and valleys of silence, quantizing both to a steady rhythmic interval. *Voilà*—tremolo! Having first recorded the sound from a sampler to his hard drive (to get it into SVP), Beal made a copy of it, as easily as you'd copy text on a word processor. He delayed the copy by precisely 86 ticks (less than a sixteenth note), adjusting the start time numerically in SVP's "list" window to add some sonic tingle. Then he lowered the volume, drawing that on the screen, just as he'd drawn the tremolo. The result, with one wave red and the other one green, could hardly have been clearer. The red wave pulsates; the green one is steady in the background. The sound shakes, but never wholly disappears.

Finally, Beal recalls a perfect bass line that Clayton had laid down. Beal had processed it, adding several effects—but then the arrangement changed: The chords were different, and the bass line no longer worked.

Disaster? Not at all. Studio Vision Pro lets you convert audio to MIDI and then back again. Beal brought Clayton's bass line into the program, converted it to MIDI, edited the MIDI data until the notes were right, and then changed them back to audio.

Magic, right? Not entirely. These transformations take a while, though that may be because Beal's computer is an old, slow Quadra 650. And they're not automatic. To teach the program how to do them, you need to set parameters, telling the program how to distinguish one note from the next. SVP gives you templates for that, but the choice isn't necessarily obvious. Clayton's playing came out best when processed with guitar parameters, not the ones for bass.

"I work with artists who hang out in music stores," Beal says. "They've seen perfect demos. They think you can do anything." Not him, though. Beal depends on Vision, but in the end he says, "I don't need to be the master of the tool. I need to be the master of the great record."

Eli Hershko

dealersindex

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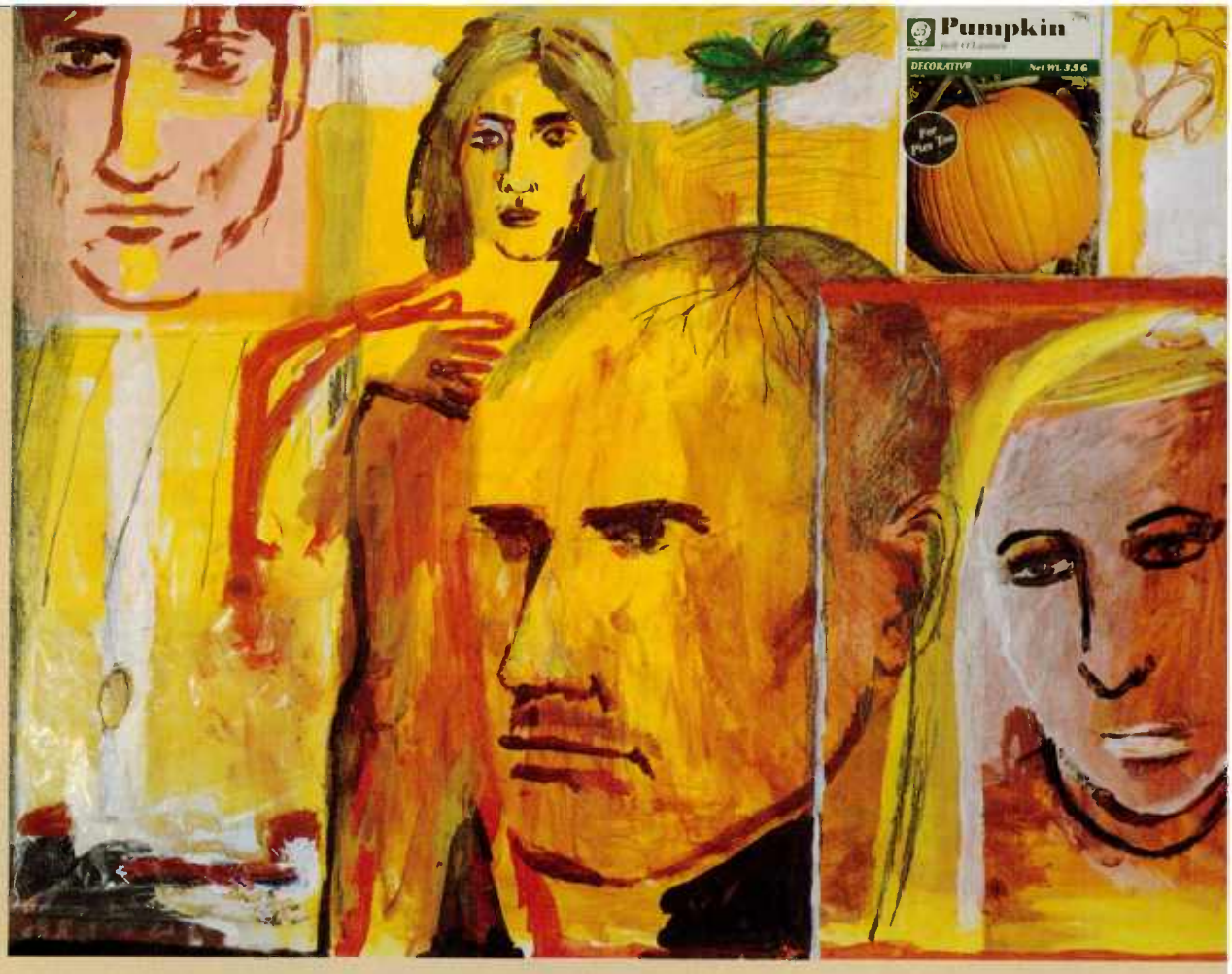


Pumpkin Seeds

Smashing Pumpkins

The Aeroplane Flies High (Virgin)

In the Beatles' early days, John Lennon once told the press that he didn't plan on singing "I Want to Hold Your Hand" when he was thirty. Back then, rock was still considered an adolescent art form. More to the point, it was assumed that adolescence did not extend past the age of, say, 25. But pop stars are now expected—indeed encouraged—to grow up less quickly. Current thirtysomething teen idols like Trent Reznor, Tori Amos, and Courtney Love have legions of fans who look to them as spiritual siblings rather than as people who are biologically old enough to be their parents.

Smashing Pumpkins frontman Billy Corgan hits the big three-oh in March, but he too seems in little danger of forfeiting his high school role model status any time soon. Corgan's breathy baritone remains the frustrated, awkward, petulant, pleading voice of pre-adulthood: If you carry a fake ID and use acne medication, this man feels your pain. His lyrics, also, are full of the melodramatic angst and the weird mixture of idealism and paranoia that define those tricky teens. "The world is a vampire, sent to drain secret destroyers," Corgan groaned on the group's 1995 single "Bullet With Butterfly Wings." Bummer.

But like most artists who are able to pull off this arrested-development stuff, the Pumpkins have relatively sophisticated musical ideas. The group's new five-CD box set, *The Aeroplane Flies High*, includes "Bullet" and four other singles from the 1995 double album *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, and while only one of these tunes, "1979," has a melodic hook worth writing home about, they're all executed with irresistible power and grace. The darkly seductive guitar riffs on "Zero," the gentle, shiny warmth of "Thirty-Three," the ticking tension and pummeling release of "Tonight, Tonight"—these are the things that small pop miracles are made of.

Most of the other 23 tracks on *Aeroplane*—there are only six or seven per CD—are B-sides that have accompanied these singles in the U.S. and abroad. This can be dangerous turf for artists, the territory on which they feel most comfortable getting esoteric and self-indulgent, and Corgan and friends do at times succumb to temptation. The title cut is an exercise in bombast, with a dopey pilot's soliloquy ("I feel the ocean with my feet") and droning guitar parts. The spare, tuneless "Juniper's Lament" sounds like it was written during ten minutes of down time in the studio. Worst of all is "Pastichio Medley," an insufferable 23-minute instrumental hodgepodge consisting of outtakes recorded after *Mellon Collie*. (I confess to having lurched at the cassette machine and pressing "stop" after twenty minutes.)

But those willing to invest the time and money will find a few gems here. "Ugly" captures the Pumpkins' flair for dynamics and atmosphere, with Corgan's vocals ebbing and surging over a sinuous bass line. And the mandolin-laced "Meladori Magpie" has an acoustic elegance reminiscent of some of Lindsey Buckingham's work—which I assume was an influence on the Pumpkins, given the Southern California folk-rock feel of several ballads on this collection and that the band covered Fleetwood Mac's "Landslide" on 1994's *Pisces Iscariot*.

Speaking of covers, there are five of them on *The Aeroplane Flies High*, ranging from the Cure's "A Night Like This" to Alice Cooper's "Clones (We're All)." My favorite is a beautifully layered rendition of Blondie's "Dreaming," with a lithe hip-hop beat and shimmering synth chords. You can just picture a twelve-year-old Corgan bopping around his bedroom, visions of Debbie Harry in his head. Who says you can't stay young forever? ***—Elysa Gardner***

Karen Caldicott

Sun Ra

The Singles (Evidence)

Fanatical Sun Ra fans (you know who you are) will relish this special collection of wildly varied performances, which serve as conceptual missing links for the entire Saturn catalog, as brilliantly resuscitated by the folks at Evidence, who to date have released fifteen stunning volumes of rare, enigmatic, brilliant orchestrations. It makes a compelling case for comparisons to such eccentric ringmasters as George Clinton, who also drew upon popular culture to recast the black music tradition into a fresh set of rites and rituals.

Sun Ra a godfather of funk? You betcha, because Herman "Sonny" Blount didn't merely march to the beat of a different drummer, he set out to create his own musical omniverse, equal parts big band swing, blues, R&B, performance art, black vaudeville, twentieth-century harmony and Afrocentric rhythm-n-ning, animated by a folksy vision of the cosmos and a generous dollop of hokum. That Blount, in his alter ego as Sun Ra, was able to attract and sustain a core group of dedicated musical disciples (such as Marshall Allen, John Gilmore and June Tyson) speaks volumes as to the depth and integrity of his musical outreach.

But as *The Singles* demonstrates, the process was as much a matter of practicality as any grand conceptual plan, and a good half of *The Singles* is given over to Sonny and key members of his Arkestra functioning as a house band—not unlike Ellington's role in the Cotton Club revue—accompanying a garden variety of song stylists and bluesmen who range from sublime to ridiculous. Those expecting "Space Is The Place" might be startled to hear George & Ira Gershwin's "A Foggy Day" popping out of the speakers. The Cosmic Rays handle some challenging harmonies on the 1955 rendition of "Dreaming," whose intimations of a "...world where things aren't what they seem..." offer your only clue that this single ain't your father's Oldsmobile. Still, you'd be hard-pressed to find a jazzman who'd handle the street corner changes of "Daddy's Gonna Tell You No Lies" with the aplomb and lack of condescension that Ra's troupe brings to the performance. On "Muck Muck" and "Hot Skillet Mama"—featuring one Yochanan, a wino version of Screamin' Jay Hawkins—humorous percussive touches and John Gilmore's meaty tenor elevate the tunes beyond mere oddity.

Disc two brings us to the Sixties, with Ra and company backing sad mothers such as Little Mack and a decent Chicago bluesman named Lacy Gibson (with Buddy Guy on rhythm guitar). Check out the saucy horn work and skittering Ra piano on "The Blue Set," or how Sonny deconstructs the form on "Big City Blues." Even more intriguing are the singles from the Seventies (such as "The Bridge," "Mayan Temple," "Disco 2000," "Cosmic Extensions," and "Outer Space Plateau"), wherein Ra elicits uncommonly expressive sounds from cheesy combo organs and electric pianos, electric celeste, Clavinet, and Minimoog—he was a pioneer in discovering the possibilities of electronic keyboards. All in all, not a great recital, but a fun one, with just enough instrumental highlights to balance out the curiosities. Special thanks to annotators Michael Shore, Robert Pruter, Robert L. Campbell and John F. Szwed, who place this music in a properly rich historical context.—***Chip Stern***

Tricky

Pre-Millennium Tension (Island)

The musical version of a persistent, gnawing stomach ache, *Pre-Millennium Tension* inspires deep feelings of cosmic dread. Just a few months after the *Nearly God* project, which featured guests like Björk and Alison Moyet, this enthralling, often creepy work spotlights just Tricky and partner Martina. And what a dour fellow Mr. T is! Exhibiting symptoms of both depression and rage, which add up to a forbidding sullenness, this studio whiz constructs dense, hypnotic soundscapes that suggest primal terrors. Forget dancing—this stuff's meant for pondering the hopelessness of it all.

Having outgrown his hip-hop roots, Tricky is an all-purpose presence rather than a standard rapper, an ingenious mischief-maker rather than an author of old-fashioned beats. Preferring muttered rants to traditional rhymes, his curt, heavily processed vocals seem like a grudging afterthought, as if words were an admission that the unorthodox grooves aren't enough. In fact, they

Life After Elvis:
The Return of Scotty Moore

It's a beautiful October day at the foot of Nashville's Music Row, where a small band of graying musicians circle up within the eighteen-inch brick walls of Masterlink Studios, once a Civil War-era church. But these are more than just your typical studio cats; these boys are from Memphis, and they witnessed the dawn of rock & roll.

Guitarist Scotty Moore and drummer D. J. Fontana are recording *The King's Men*, their first collaboration since 1968. It's an all-star tribute, with guest shots by Keith Richards, the Band, and many other contemporary big shots. Today, however, they're reuniting the Bill Black Combo—minus upright bassist Black himself, who died from a brain tumor in 1965.

Moore, Fontana, and Black comprised the Blue Moon Boys back in '55, when they backed Elvis Presley on the sessions that arguably launched the rock & roll era. Today, they're tracking a snaky little shuffle called "Going Back to Memphis," with Reggie Young, a founding member of the Black Combo in '58, on guitar. Beneath a portrait of Muddy Waters, Young lays down a propulsive, twangy rhythm on his well-worn '57 Strat, which he then embellishes on overdub with a tick-tack bass foundation.

Roy Harris, the Combo's original engineer, observes while TNN Broadcasting engineer Stan Dacus leans over an enormous 1970s-vintage Neve console. Aside from using a vintage EMT plate for some warm reverb, there's not much between the pickers and the Otari 24-track. "Stan got his training like they did in the old school," says Scotty. "The shortest distance between two points is a straight piece of wire."

Later, in the basement kitchen, the cats gather around the table and the talk turns from world tours and TV specials to recent troubles with enlarged prostates and colon polyps—a scene, perhaps, from the Gotterdämmerung of rock & roll.

That evening, when almost everyone else has left, Scotty ambles out into the room and tunes up his hollow-body Gibson Chet Atkins, a gift from the man himself in 1988. The manager runs back from the nearest bar and hands Scotty a takeout martini. Scotty has just finished laying down one final, toasty-warm track when Reggie has a wry idea: At his suggestion, Scotty throws in a lick from "Heartbreak Hotel" on the fadeout. You-know-who may be spinning in his grave.

—***Wheat Williams***

Jim HARRINGTON

midnight oil

Sam Collins

usually are: From "Vent," where Tricky and Martina sigh, "Can't hardly breathe" over murky psychedelic loops, to the ghostly deconstructed blues of "Bad Things," it's the uneasy vibes that matter, not literal meaning. Although the grumbling about record contracts and lack of privacy may reflect his superstar status back home in England, he'd probably be just as cranky discussing cheeseburgers.

As his growing portfolio of remixes for other artists implies, Tricky's strong suit is juggling sounds (*i.e.*, producing). Tracks such as "Sex Drive," a rare uptempo song, and the staccato "Christiansands" fall flat when judged strictly as compositions; only his clever embellishments bring 'em to life. Savvy covers of Chill Rob G's "Bad Dream" and Eric B. and Rakim's "Lyrics of Fury" merely underscore the thinness of Tricky's own material. *Pre-Millennium Tension* makes swell nightmare fodder. It might also be a blueprint for future collaborations. The luminous "Makes Me Wanna Die" echoes, of all folks, angst-mistress Lisa Germano, and "My Evil Is Strong" could teach those wan alternative bands a thing or two about dramatic brooding. Whatever Tricky does next, it won't be dull. Perplexing, perhaps, but not dull.—***Jon Young***

Johnny Cash

Unchained (American)

Long before Steve Earle cranked his guitar and Garth Brooks began to work out his Kiss fixation, Johnny Cash played country music like a rocker. So as radical as it may seem to see Cash recording with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers plus such special guests as Lindsey Buckingham and Flea, there's nothing at all odd about the result. If anything, *Unchained* sounds like the sort of album most of us had hoped Cash would make during his last fling with rock & rollers (remember the Nick Lowe collaboration on "Rockabilly Blues"?). Despite a song list that includes everything from Petty's "Southern Accents" to Soundgarden's "Rusty Cage," the sound is pure Cash—all chesty rumble and straight-strummed guitars with nothing funkier than a rockabilly beat from the rhythm section.

Naturally, that leaves the rockers seeming a tad restrained. There's no real crunch to "Rusty Cage," as Cash and company replace the overamped distortion with acoustic guitar and piano; even the ultra-metal riff on the bridge is rendered no heavier than a Johnny Burnette arrangement. But that sort of scaling back is smart, because Cash's low, languid voice is much better suited to the kind of just-behind-the-beat singing he does on "Country Boy," a rockabilly workout cut from the same cloth as "Get Rhythm," or the damned-and-resigned-to-it snarl of "I Never Picked Cotton."

Besides, Cash more than makes up the difference with the gospel numbers. Rather than sound the usual notes of piety and exultation, Cash goes for something grittier, bringing a sense of the blues to Spain's "Spiritual," and an almost morbid exuberance to "Kneeling Drunkard's Plea." Toss in a she-done-me-wrong song or two—and "Mean Eyed Cat" is as good as any he's sung—and *Unchained* seems such classic Cash it almost doesn't matter who's playing with him.
—***J.D. Considine***

Midnight Oil

Breathe (Work)

Somehow the arrival of a new Midnight Oil album just doesn't seem as important as it used to. The balance of the pop music world has shifted, after all, and the Eighties are long gone. Do people really need an outward-looking, passionate, *serious* rock band anymore?

If the Oils keep making albums as excellent as *Breathe*, the answer to that question is an unequivocal yes. However, those who purchase this latest opus expecting the usual gut-punching tunes and explicitly political lyrics are in for a surprise. The overall sound is subtle and subdued, with lots of atmospheric keyboards and acoustic guitars; even when the boys launch into a balls-out rocker like "Bring on the Change," Peter Garrett's singing stays firmly rooted in a quieter space. And while the bulk of the words he sings still imply that the world needs improvement, they focus more on spiritual transformation rather than specific worldly actions. Titles like "Common Ground" and "Time to Heal" pretty much speak for themselves.

The choice of Daniel Lanois protégé Malcolm Burn as producer indicates that Garrett and Co. were consciously looking for a new sound. It wouldn't be completely wrong to say that sound is more U2-ish, but it would be too easy. The immensely satisfying crack of Rob Hirst's snare drum on "Underwater" and the doomsday keys coupled with Garrett's pained falsetto on "In the Rain" certainly owe something to *Achtung Baby* and *Zooropa*. Yet the Oils aren't trying to catch up with technological advances or dance music trends. If anything, they're going back to the land. "One Too Many Times" and "Home" are more than a little C&W—the latter even includes a guest appearance by Emmylou Harris. And as with everything else on this album, Midnight Oil succeed at playing country too.

Longtime fans worried that their heroes are going soft shouldn't bother; a recent New York appearance showed the band in typically hard-rocking form, tackling both old and new selections with gusto. Sounds like one of the Eighties' best bands may make waves in 1997 as well.
—***Mac Randall***

chuck's cuts

by charles m. young

Chuck D
Autoblography of Mistachuck (Mercury)

"What good is the rhyme without substance?" asks Chuck D, bewailing the degeneration of rap from "the black CNN" to just another form of pop music purveying the materialist, hierarchical values of the überculture. His immediate target is "Big Willie"—that is, the black music executive whose corruption is indistinguishable from his white counterpart—but Chuck's not arguing that a few rotten apples are spoiling the barrel of the entertainment industry. He's saying the barrel is rotten, denouncing the tentacles of greed wherever they spread, which is, as I say, all over the barrel. His solution? Bring back the Sixties. Spread the word about the true history of a time when the moral climate of the country vastly improved because millions of people made it clear that continuing civil rights abuse and the American invasion of Vietnam would result in profound disruption of business as usual. I raise one quibble: Why make your clearest diatribe unclear with a lot of electronic weirdness and bury it five minutes after the end of the last cut?

The Presidents of the United States of America
II (Columbia)

I thought "Peaches" was a perfect parody of alternative rock, nailing the sonic clichés and dead serious pretensions of profundity. *II* seems to be coming from a mindset similar to They Might Be Giants: fun but not that funny, satire so arch that there's not much of a target. Energy and arrangements hold interest, but I keep waiting for danger or laughs or even a point. Maybe the video will convince me I'm missing something.

Hot Tuna
In a Can (RCA)

Every time I talk to a Jorma Kaukonen fan, I am bitterly assailed as a representative of the music biz who bears some moral responsibility for the early Hot Tuna albums being out of print. Well, it wasn't my fault, and I'm hereby publicizing the re-release of all five of them, appropriately but somewhat inconveniently packaged in a can. So don't bug me anymore. Jorma had and has a deep understanding of the humor, sex, eccentricity, and home-grown mysticism that make American folk and blues so fascinating. He can inspire awe and wonder whether playing out or soft, is the foremost interpreter of the Rev. Gary Davis, and has composed lots of intricately fingerpicked melodies besides "Embryonic Journey." Some of the experiments don't work for my ears—Papa John Creach's violin playing sometimes doesn't fit—but there are plenty of compensating moments, such as: In blues fingerpicking, Jorma's thumb handles the bass line, and this unties Jack Casady from the usual bass anchor for a more intricate counterpoint. Otherwise informative liner notes could have explained more about their obtuse commercial sense.

Billy Bragg
William Bloke (Elektra)

Having become a parent since his last album five years ago, Bragg wants to balance his political and personal commitments. He finds that balance in "a socialism in the heart" and facing such dilemmas as: "Should I vote red for my class or green for our children?" Growing up and not selling out—it's an endless problem, and nobody gets through it without some compromising, but Bragg's command of melody and morality makes it more tolerable. He's also a witty observer of the purely social. "Everybody Loves You Babe" describes the excruciating situation of being in a relationship with a woman that everyone except you thinks is perfect: "There's just no ignoring, you're pretty but boring."

Phil Collins
Dance Into the Light (Atlantic)

For a pop singer, Phil Collins sure likes long songs. Which is too bad, because he has a pleasant voice and has occasionally inserted some deep hooks into his audience. Here he's intent on stretching most of his tunes two to four minutes longer than any lyrical or musical insight justifies. High point: "River So Wide," which has a nifty percussion riff and a nice liberal sentiment that doesn't resort to Phil's habit of ambivalent hand-wringing. Low point: a toothless cover of "The Times They Are A-Changin'." Reminds me of when a bunch of rock stars sang it at Clinton's first inauguration. The song is a threat, an ultimatum, not an opportunity to suck up to a political hack who happens to be a Baby Boomer. Nobody is allowed to sing it again until the times actually are a-changin'. In the meantime, let's memorize "Won't Get Fooled Again."

Richard Meltzer
The Night (Alone) (Little, Brown)

About ten years ago in a Hollywood cabaret, I heard Meltzer read a poem about fucking his mother. It cleared the room in about two minutes. For the five of us left by the stage, it was one of the most jaw-droppingly honest excavations of the unconscious that had ever appeared anywhere. Generally credited as the progenitor of the insistently subjective style of rock writing, Meltzer is himself descended from the Beats but has achieved something unique. Nobody who explores his own depths with greater abandon has more precision, and nobody with greater precision has more abandon. And nobody is funnier, period. *The Night (Alone)* is billed as a novel. This apparently means that he has given himself and his friends slight variations on their real names. But don't look for long-term narrative flow. Look for short, intense episodes and observations that dwarf the word "whimsy." Way better than Prozac if you're depressed.

Baby Fox

A Normal Family (Roadrunner)

Morcheeba

Who Can You Trust? (China UK/Discovery)

In the universe of electronic-based music, things move quickly. Last year, via artists like Portishead, Tricky, and Massive Attack, trip-hop made inroads in the U.S. with its slow, spare beats and spooky atmospherics. At the same time, its rapid-fire cousin, jungle, was experimenting with jazz and fusion. But while jungle swiftly evolved into what is now called drum 'n bass, trip-hop is nearly dead on its feet, its latest purveyors doing little more than sticking to the blueprint. So any newcomers with the slightest trip-hop affiliation are going to have to add something new to the mix or risk going down with the genre. Here are two new English acts who are taking steps in the right direction.

Morcheeba are saved from Portishead comparisons mainly by their fondness for guitars. Their laid-back beats and gentle, smoky tunes are enhanced by Ry Cooder-ish slide, funky wah-wah and other simple guitar flourishes, as well as a reappearing Hammond organ and some occasional strings. Album closer "End Theme" is a highlight, with its uplifting vocal and matching Herbie Mann-like flute line over a semi-broken samba beat.

Sporting an identical lineup (two male techno boffins on tunes and a sultry-voiced female on vocals), but a tad more upbeat are Baby Fox, whose success lies in their shameless appropriation of vintage dub and reggae. Lead single "Curlylocks," for example, is an update of the Lee Perry classic, complete with gurgling bong sample in the background. Elsewhere, they borrow equally from Junior Murvin and St. Etienne—their sound ranging from slow, mellifluous and echo-drenched ("In Your Dreams") to dance-y and sample-filled ("Za Za"), but all the while adhering to wonderfully skanking beats. Two small steps for trip-hop, then.—***Dev Sherlock***

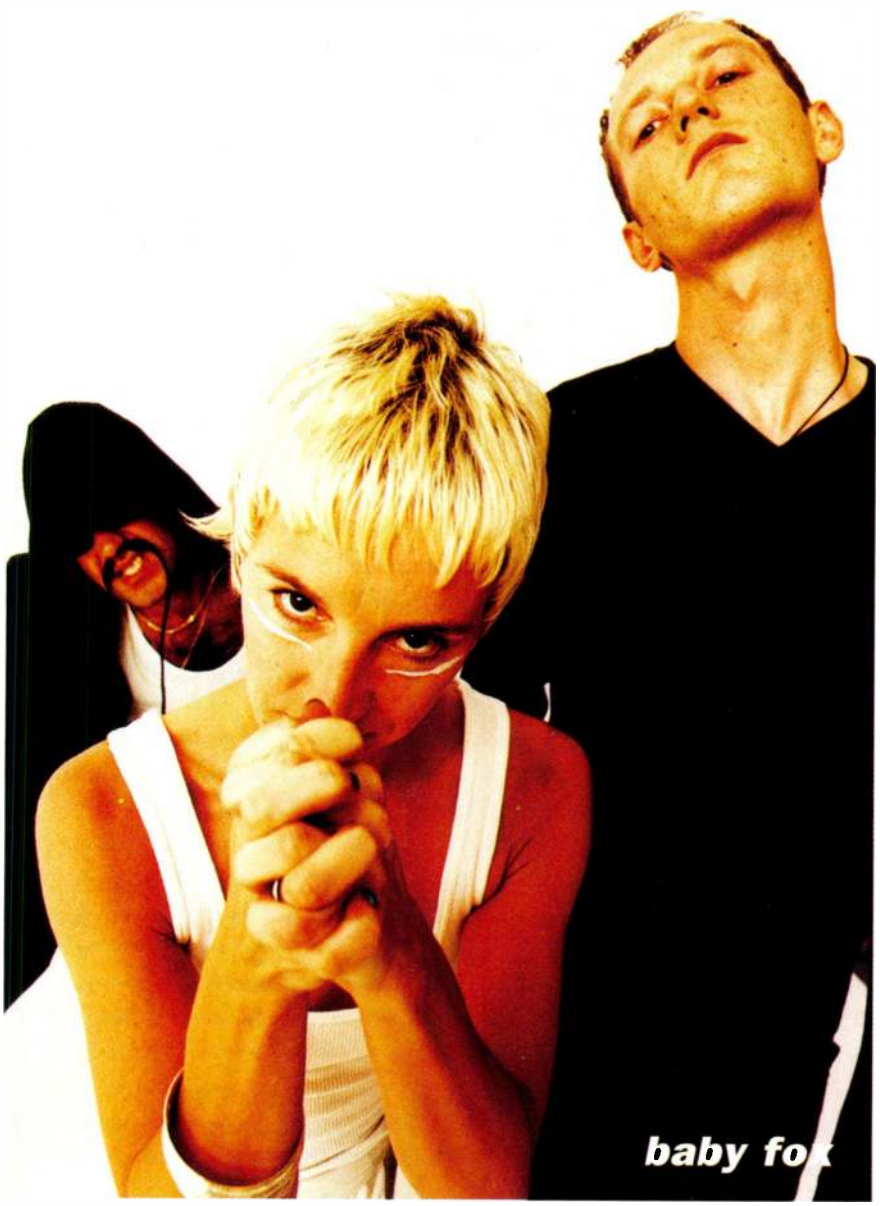
Béla Fleck and the Flecktones

Live Art (Warner Bros.)

Ginger Baker Trio

Falling Off The Roof (Atlantic)

If you're not familiar with Béla Fleck and the Flecktones, be sure to check your musical preconceptions at the door. The trio consists of two guys—banjoist Fleck and bassist Victor Wooten—who push their instruments to conventional limits and beyond, and a third, percussionist Future Man, who is so out there he's had to invent his own (the Synth-Axe-Drumitar—a highly customized electronic instrument that allows fingertip control over drum and percussion sam-



Steve Gullick

ples). The collective virtuosity is stunning—like Jaco Pastorius two decades before, Wooten has redefined the bass—but the true magic of *Live Art* is the way they push each other and their guests, including luminaries like Chick Corea, Bruce Hornsby, Branford Marsalis and Paul McCandless, to new heights onstage.

Throughout the Flecktones manage the difficult task of making intensely complex music accessible and fun for their listeners; these guys love playing together, and it shows. With an arsenal of effects pedals and synthesizers, Fleck coaxes a remarkable range of sounds from the oft-beleaguered banjo. On "Lochs of Dread," he employs organ chordings that provide a solid base from which he and Wooten can trade licks; on the infectious "More Luv," he pays a banjo-driven steel drum solo. There's inspired composition here, from the uplifting "New South Africa" to the sinuous "Sinister Minister."

By comparison, *Falling Off The Roof*, the new release from the Ginger Baker Trio, sounds tired. Fleck guests on three cuts, adding modestly tasteful underpinnings which help flesh out the sparse sound. The title track gets things off to a lethargic start, and two of the cuts—bassist Charlie Haden's "Taney County" and guitarist Bill Frisell's appropriately titled "Skeleton"—are almost embarrassingly simplistic in both construction and execution, though the trio comes to life on Haden's "Sunday At the Hillcrest" and the Charlie Parker tune "Au Privave." For all his well-executed press rolls and polyrhythmic excursions, the guy just doesn't seem to keep time any better now than he did back when he was with Cream.—***Howard Massey***

shorts

The Beatles

Anthology (Capitol Video/Apple)

[For more classifieds, see page 132]

An unprecedented ten-hour authorized video autobiography that takes up eight tapes, costs 159 dollars, and is worth every penny. The band's story makes much more sense than on the criminally truncated ABC version (at this length, it better), and the performance segments don't get barged into by voiceovers as much (though there's still the occasional annoying instance). Like any nitpicky fan, I've got my problems with what did and didn't make it in. Some bits, like the quick-cut-laden first encounter with "Twist and Shout," seem to exist purely to show how much footage of the song existed, while other clips, like the too-brief snippet of "If I Needed Someone" from the Manila concert, just don't get their due. And certain important pieces of history are conveniently forgotten—the deaths of Stu Sutcliffe and the Lennon and McCartney mothers, for instance, or George Martin's suggestion to speed up "Please Please Me."

But other moments are sufficient recompense: Neil Aspinall saying that the biggest difference about the Allen Klein era at Apple was that Paul wasn't there, or the mix of wistfulness and pride in George Martin's face as he listens to the rough first take of "A Day in the Life." In the end, of course, the music matters most, and both the quality and quantity of the offerings here are staggering: "Some Other Guy" at the Cavern in '62, "From Me to You" at the Royal Command Performance in '63, "This Boy" on Ed Sullivan in Miami from '64, "I'm Down" at the '65 Shea Stadium show (John plays the organ solo with his elbows), a beautiful "Nowhere Man" from Munich in '66, and those gear proto-videos—"Day Tripper" (Ringo cuts a cardboard bus apart with a saw), "Paperback Writer," "Strawberry Fields," "Penny Lane," "Hello Goodbye," "Revolution," "Something," and my personal fave, the "I Am the Walrus" segment from *Magical Mystery Tour*—all looking and sounding unbelievably crisp and clear. For those who care, "Free as a Bird" shows up at the end of tape eight; "Real Love" does not follow. That just about accounts for one hour. There are nine more, courtesy of the best band of all time.—***Mac Randall***

Jimmy Smith

Angel Eyes (Verve)

Sub-titled "ballads and slow jams," this collection of standards finds Smith in a quieter mood than the frenetic organ chopsmeister is usually associated with, and more impressively in the company of small-to-mid-sized ensembles with the likes of Nicholas Payton, Roy Hargrove, Mark Whitfield and Christian McBride. Unapologetically gorgeous melodies are the rule here, including a fine exploration of Mancini's unsinkable "Days of Wine and Roses" with Payton and McBride, and an elegiac solo on the closing "What A Wonderful World." But the highlight is a deft sextet arrangement on Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments," with twin trumpets playing the theme in unison and Smith comping behind the soloists with the harmonic and textural range of a small orchestra. Any chance of taking this on the road?—***Mark Rowland***

Mississippi John Hurt

Avalon Blues: The Complete 1928 Okeh Recordings (Columbia/Legacy)

These stunningly beautiful recordings, at once rooted in the blues of the Mississippi delta where Hurt lived and completely apart from it due to Hurt's syncopated guitar style and favoring of minstrel melodies, became high-priced collector's items and eventually led to Hurt's rediscovery and later recordings for Vanguard a few years before his death in 1967. Hurt's voice was deeper and more mature as an old man, but its honeyed warmth is evident here, and his dexterity as a guitarist, his elegant, seemingly effortless style, seems even more remarkable, as many of the songs here are taken at faster tempos. The fare is happily familiar—Hurt originals like "Louis Collins," "Candy Man Blues" and the title tune have long since ascended into the pantheon of classics.—***Mark Rowland***

Vampyros Lesbos

Sexadelic Dance Party (Motel)

Spanish B-movie director Jess Franco made a lot of films (over 160, in fact), but he specialized in what some pundits have called "horrotica," a garish blend of cheap occultism and lotsa flesh. This album features selections from the soundtracks of three late-sixties Franco extravaganzas produced for the German market—*Vampyros Lesbos*, *Sie Totete in Ekstase* (Mrs. Hyde, She Kills In Ecstasy), and *Der Teufel Kam Aus Akasava* (The Devil Came From Akasava)—conducted and written by Manfred Hübler and Siegfried Schwab, names that should live in the hearts of retro bugs and trash heads forevermore. All fourteen tracks are clinics in the art of bizarre stylistic juxtaposition; buzzing-mosquito guitars, plinky Zappaesque harpsichords, a drunken accordion/violin combo, and those mock-triumphant horn blasts apparently peculiar to films of the late sixties are just some of the elements that groovily co-exist here. And what else would you expect from folks that list among their instruments "Infra-Lur in P-soft minor," "electro-dissonatar," and a "13-part resurrection harp"? Absolute genius. (Motel Records, 210 E. 49 St., New York, NY 10017)—***Mac Randall***

Various Artists

Shots in the Dark: Del-Fi Does Mancini (Del-Fi)

Henry Mancini's music is nothing if not adaptable, as this fine tribute compilation proves yet again. Many of the highlights here are pretty trashy; the Tiki Gods (led by ex-Car Elliot Easton) turn in a lost-in-space lounge version of "Mr. Lucky," while the Boardwalks' "Banzai Pipeline" is consummate sleaze and Cramps guitarist Poison Ivy's "Peter Gunn" is exactly what you'd expect. But there are also a few surprises: two ghostly renditions of "Charade" (vocal and instrumental), the Wonderful World of Joey's somewhat abstract "Days of Wine and Roses" (featuring a warbling theremin), and Nan Vernon's scratchy-78 "Moon River." Whether the various artists are having a laugh or a sigh with Mancini's work, not a single track is less than worthwhile.—***Mac Randall***

Various Artists

Safe And Sound (Big Rig/Mercury)

Subtitled "A Benefit in Response to the Brookline Clinic Violence" (where two people were killed outside a Boston abortion clinic by a pro-life gunman two years ago), this compilation features a multitude of talent from Boston's consistently-fruitful music scene, including Juliana Hatfield, Buffalo Tom's Bill Janovitz, Belly, Morphine, Letters To Cleo, Aimee Mann, Tracy Bonham and Lou Barlow's Deluxe Folk Implosion. Despite the over-abundance of benefit-type releases these days, this one—released on the Mighty Mighty Bosstones' label—gets points for the number of previously-unreleased tracks, demos and alternate takes. Proof positive that Boston still rocks.—***Dev Sherlock***

productindex

Here's our product guide which lists the equipment and page number where the players talk about the gear they use. Feel free to call or fax the manufacturers listed below for specific info on what the best players play.

AKAI, 7010 Soquel Dr., Aptos, CA, 95003, (800) 433-5627: DR family, **113**

ALESIS, 3630 Holdredge Ave., Los Angeles, CA, 90016, (310) 558-4530: ADAT, ADAT-XT, **113**

AMPEX MEDIA, 401 Broadway M/S 22-02, Redwood City, CA, 94063, (800) 227-8443: tape, **114**

BIAS, 202 Donahue St., Sausalito, CA, 94965, (415) 331-2446: Peak on the Mac, **116**

BOSS, 7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA, 90040, (213) 685-5141: Dr. Rhythm DR-660, **106**

CARVIN, 12340 World Trade Dr., San Diego, CA, 92128, (619) 487-1600: Holdsworth guitar, **95**

CASIO, 570 Mt. Pleasant Ave., Dover, NJ, 07801, (201) 361-5400: CZ-101, **90**

CHANDLER GUITARS, 370 Lang Rd., Burlingame, CA, 94010, (415) 342-1490: Stereo Digital Echo, **106**

CROWN INT'L, 1718 W Mishwaka Rd., Elkhart, IN, 46517, (219) 294-8000: DC300R, **106**

D'ADDARIO, 595 Smith St., Farmingdale, NY, 11735, (516) 391-5400: strings, **32**

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FENDER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, 7975 N. Hayden Rd., Scottsdale, AZ, 85258, (602) 596-9690: Bassman, Telecaster, **88**; Bassman, **97**; Stratocaster, **106**

FOSTEX, 15431 Blackburn Ave., Norwalk, CA, 90650, (800) 7FO-STEX: CX-8, **113**

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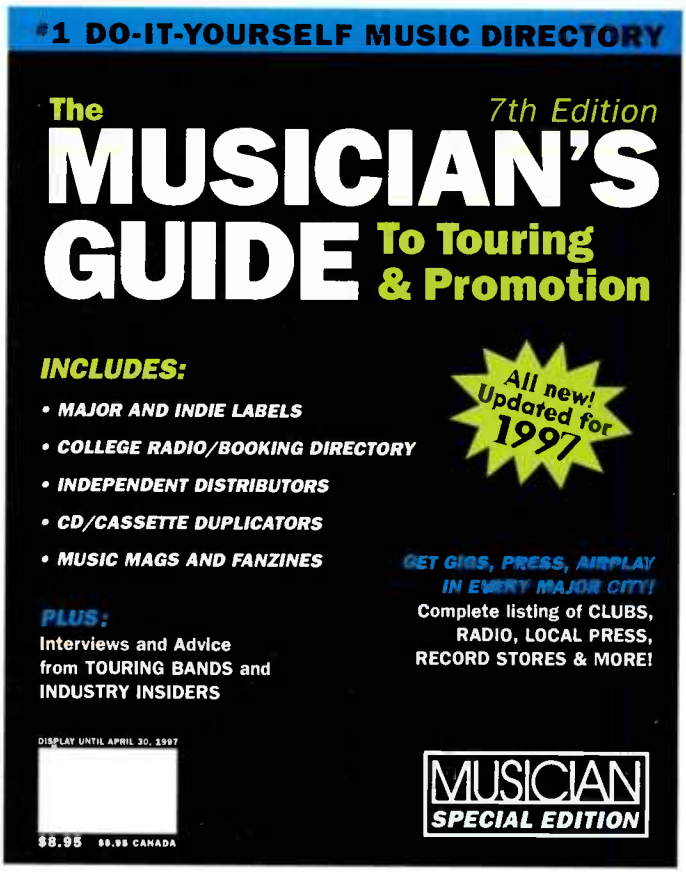

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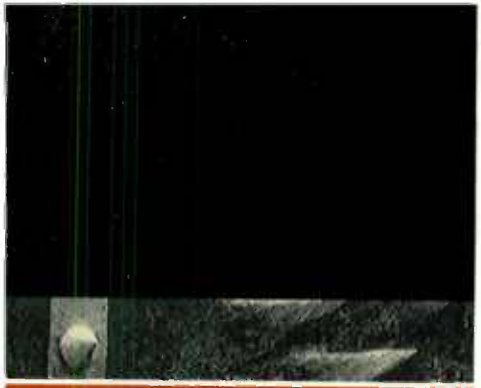

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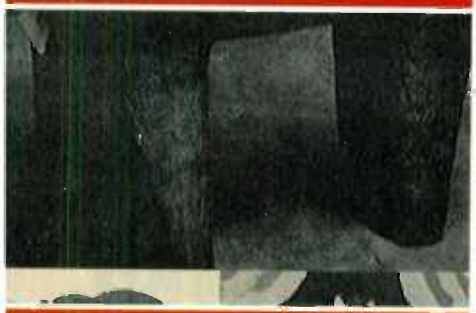

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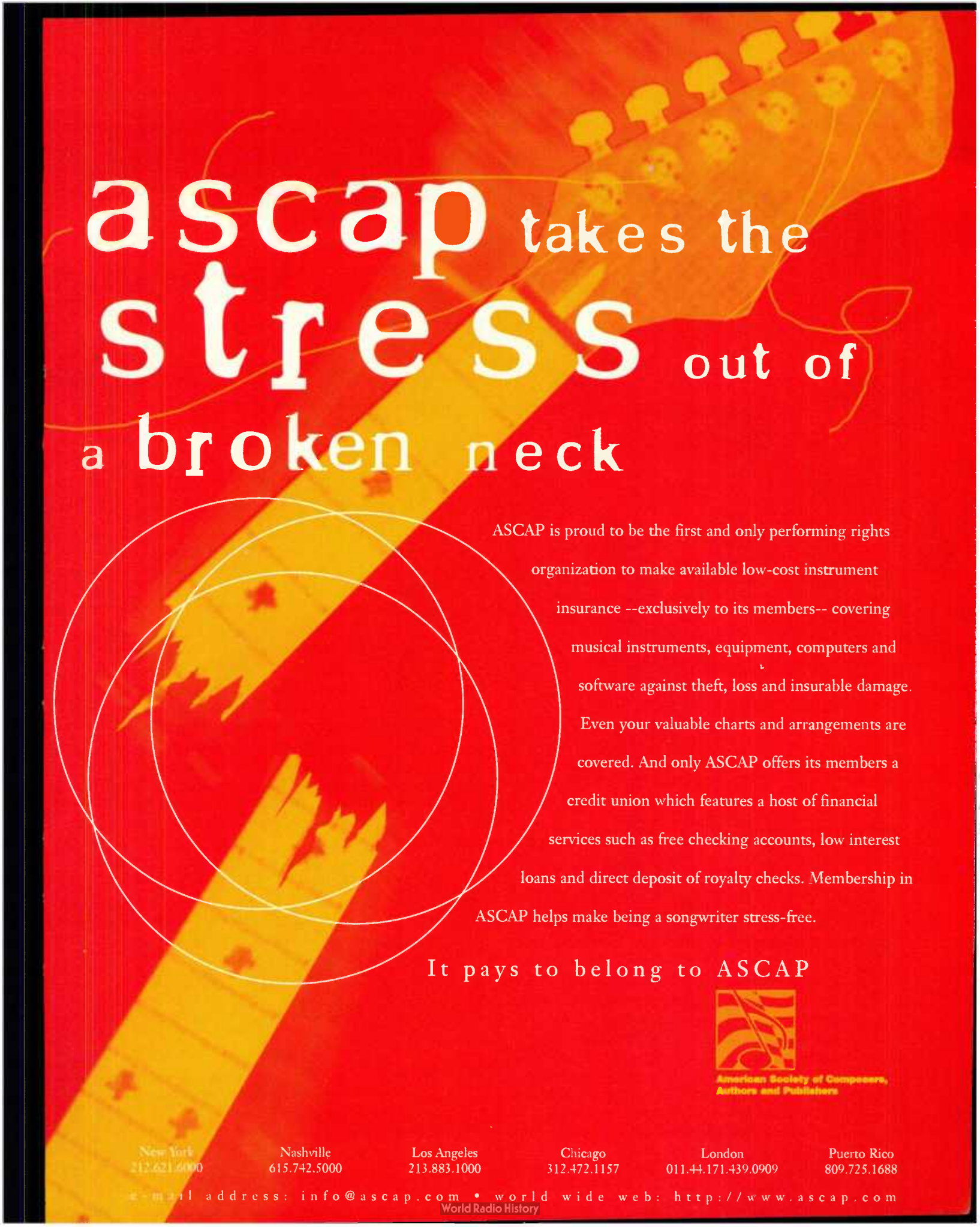

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Here's what you have to do. Before the gig:

(1) Make hotel reservations at least a month in advance. Although the rates will be astronomical, get the best place you can afford. You deserve it. Besides, it beats spending the wee hours next to a roomful of drunken roofers at the Motel 5-3/4.

(2) Set up as early as possible on the day of the gig. At all costs, do your best to avoid setting up while employees are hanging streamers and playing with the helium tank.

(3) Eat someplace before the gig. Otherwise you may have to subsist on leftover shrimp and the ever-present cheeseball.

(4) Practice "Auld Lang Syne" at least once, and don't forget to decide in advance whether to use the minor seventh chord.

Then, during the gig:

(1) Keep an eye on your soundman's rate of consumption.

(2) If somebody makes you play "Macarena," do it as a polka.

(3) You will be surrounded by drunks, so learn to identify them. The most common types are singing drunks, crying drunks, weaving drunks, running drunks, fighting drunks, charitable drunks, talkative drunks, sneaky drunks, amorous drunks, mischievous drunks, sleepy drunks, and animal-loving drunks, as well as knockout-blonde-with-pissed-off-boyfriend drunks, I-used-to-have-hair-down-to-here drunks, roadie-for-Kiss drunks, and finally Leo-Sayer-never-got-the-respect-he-deserved drunks.

(4) Always follow "Auld Lang Syne" with "Louie, Louie."

(5) Remember, anything thrown offstage gets thrown back at the band twice as hard.

(6) Keep your soundman away from the cheap champagne.

Finally, after the gig:

(1) Go home, chill out, count your loot.

(2) Avoid Denny's.

(3) Don't let your soundman talk you into a nightcap at the Booby Hatch.

(4) Don't—don't—go over to the knockout blonde's place. By the time you get there she will have deteriorated from amorous drunk to weaving drunk, and you may find yourself stuck at five in the morning trying to wake a sleeping drunk and listening to Leo Sayer.

—Reverend Billy C. Wirtz

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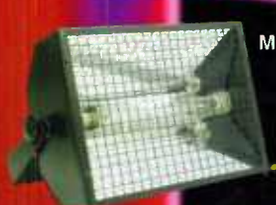

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