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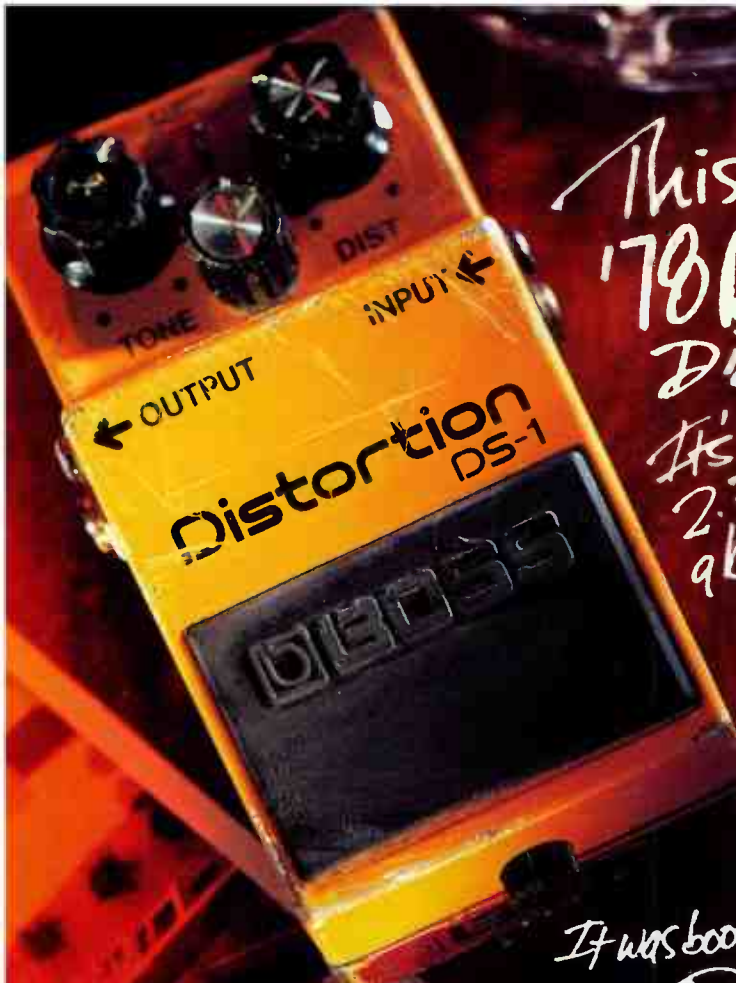
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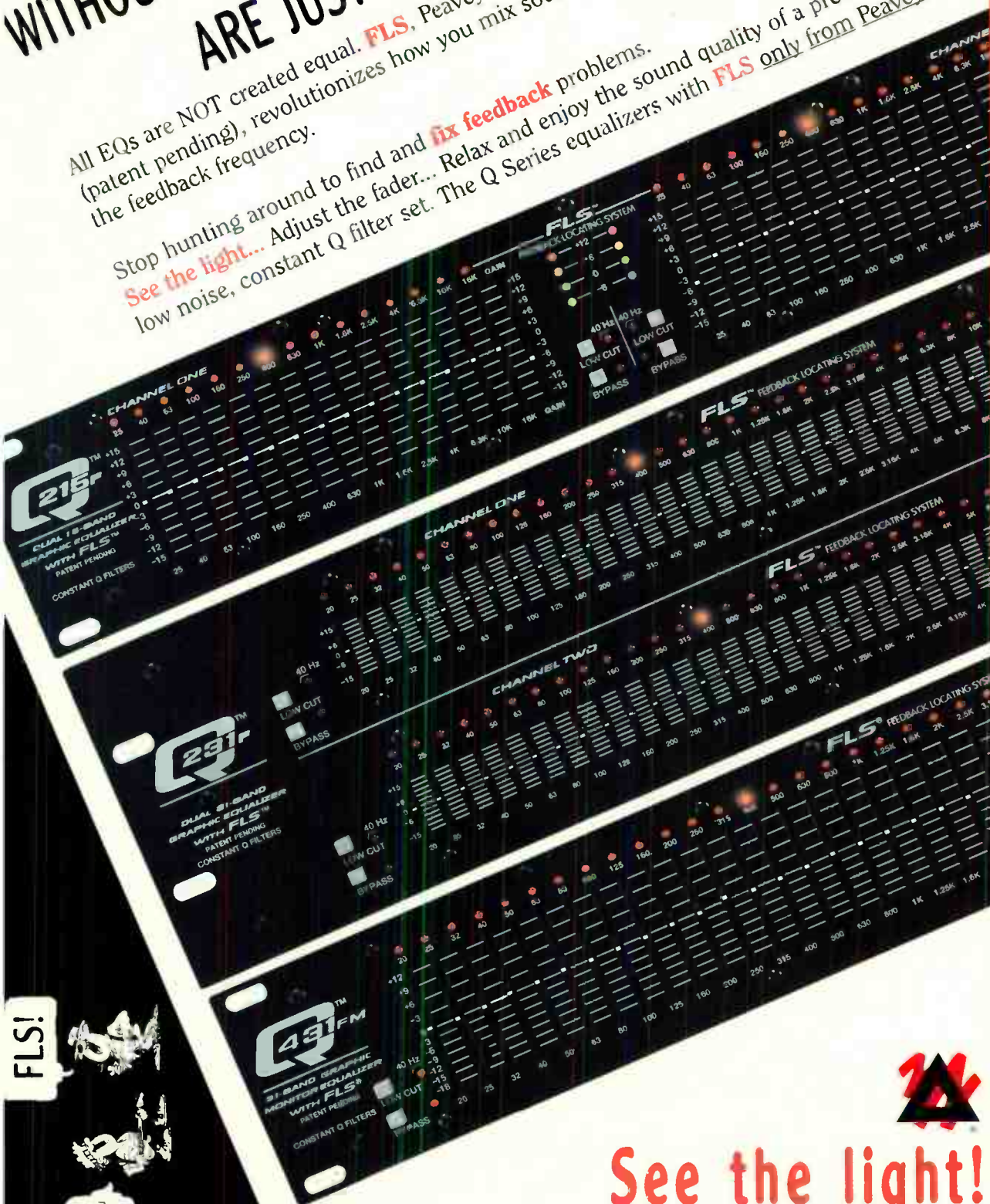
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letters

who's the wahs guy?

I wonder if Thurston Kelp, who stated in the Jan. '98 Backside that all wah-wah pedals should be "burned, or blown up, or destroyed in some way," knows how a good wah/guitar combination sounds. I suggest he check out "Wolfman's Brother" by Phish, "Bill and Ben" by Catherine Wheel, "Rain When I Die" by Alice in Chains, "Never Enough" by the Cure, "Enter Sandman" by Metallica, "Stop" by Jane's Addiction, "A Northern Soul" by the Verve, "Lucky" by Radiohead, "Black Hole Sun" by Soundgarden, "Blood Sugar Sex Magic" by the Red Hot Chili Peppers, "Soma" by Smashing Pumpkins, "State of Love and Trust" by Pearl Jam, "Pushing Forward Back" by Temple of the Dog, "Fight the Youth" by Fishbone, and "Those Damned Blue Collar Tweakers" by Primus before he opens his mouth. None of these players is "bringing back horribleness" by using what happens to be the only truly expressive electronic effect for guitar. In fact, most of these songs are performed by forward-looking artists who have pretty much defined rock guitar in the Nineties. By the way, what Kelp refers to as the "okay" wah-wah sound on Hendrix albums, many other people refer to as "God-like."

matt quatroche
WOODYMQ@aol.com

Sure, Jimi Hendrix was a fantastic guitar player, but has Thurston Kelp ever heard "Bulls on Parade" by Rage Against The Machine? There's a song with a political message and a great rock-ass riff built on a wah pedal. Kelp crossed the line by calling Hendrix the only player ever to sound good with a wah pedal.

jeff maceyko
IMaINVALID@aol.com

The wah-wah guitar does *not* sound like a duck! If that's the sound Thurston Kelp gets out of it, he can't play jack!

nell mulgrow
guitar_man97@rocketmail.com

I bet if someone plugged a guitar cord up his backside, Thurston Kelp would sound a lot like a duck too. Now *there's* a topic you should cover: How many guitarists would it take to plug a single 1/4-inch jack into Thurston Kelp? You can tell him I'll be first in line.

doug ballance
peoria, AZ

Was Thurston Kelp incessantly beaten as a child with a wah pedal? Did his dad get high, stuff him in his 4x12 cabinet, and play "The Star-Spangled Banner" all night? These are the things we readers must know before we spend our time delving into this kind of an article. Meanwhile, I'd love to have this Andy Rooney wannabe's mailing address so I could send him some recordings of things I've done with a wah. He'd combust on the spot.

gene barnett
Siamiam1@aol.com

Why doesn't Thurston Kelp strap on his favorite Strat, plug his wah-wah into the nearest Twin Reverb, and then jump in a hot tub? Perhaps I could write about that for your silly Backside.

bill illes
billes@micron.net

modular mania

Thanks for finally writing an article on those lovely machines called Moogs (Dec. '97). A lot of people have totally ignored the highly influential and awesome Moogical music in the last decade, and it's time that somebody got around to giving Bob Moog and the others their credit for giving some very trippy tunes over the years. One thing I noted was that you put Weezer on the cover, when actually Matt Sharp was the

only member of the band you interviewed. Give the hard-working guy some credit for being more than the bassist from Weezer, who records with a Moog every now and then. In any event, it was still a great article, and the Moog is still a great instrument.

caroline donnelly
siamesesias@hotmail.com

[At Matt's request, we had attempted to line up all the members of Weezer, but none was available at the time of our roundtable interview.]

under cover

My first reaction to Dilip Chandran's letter about cover bands (Jan. '98) was that he must be quite young and hasn't yet had to face the reality of earning a living. For every successful "original" musician, there are thousands of us working stiffly who play to pay the rent. Without us, magazines like *Musician* wouldn't have enough readers to stay in business. Translate that down the line to instrument manufacturers and the like, and you get the picture.

I play in a show band. I've been a full-time professional musician for thirteen years. I've been able to pay for everything I own by playing guitar. But I don't "play purely for audience response." [cont'd on page 70]

With this issue, *Musician* marks another milestone. As of the beginning of February, our home office will be transferred from New York to the Billboard Publications headquarters in Nashville.

This isn't the first time we've moved. Several years before I came onboard, the magazine left its hometown of Gloucester, Massachusetts, for BPI's main office at 1515 Broadway in Manhattan. There, high above Times Square, we built on *Musician's* foundation of great reporting and solid music journalism, to make this the one and only book for all working musicians.

While credit for this success goes to the staffers who've brought their talents to this endeavor, it's important to understand that their accomplishments have come within the context of Billboard Publications. Many of the bylines you've seen in our pages are those of *Billboard* staff writers, and much of

the direction we've followed has come as a result of support from and interaction with the people who chart the course for BPI's Music Division as a whole.

A key player in all of this is Karen Oertley, our group publisher. Her responsibilities as editor of *Amusement Business* keep her based in Nashville; our interest in working more closely as a team underlie this relocation.

But in a broader sense, I see this move as an affirmation of our national scope. With Michael Gelfand remaining on duty in New York, Mark Rowland working out of L.A., and a new office taking root in Music City, we'll be taking music's pulse in these vital areas and all points between and beyond. As always and more than ever, *Musician* is on the beat.

—**Robert L. Doerschuk**,
editor



From
the
Editor

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In describing your music, people tend to use schizophrenic hybrid terms, like alternative/pop/folk/cabaret. How do you describe it?

Well, when I was a real small child, the only records we had around the house were Christmas albums or musicals, like the Broadway cast recording of *The Sound of Music*. Now I'd say I just draw on life. Sometimes a little story will come out, and I won't even find out what the meaning is until many years later.

There's a narrative quality to much of your writing, which may owe something to the musical theater influence—not to mention folk and country.

I use the conditions I run into, given the cards I'm dealt. I live out in the desert now, and I've studied the plants and herbs that grow out there. I'm a firm believer that God put us here on this planet, and we have everything we need growing around us.

There's certainly a lot of natural imagery on your new album, Musings of a Creekdipper (Atlantic). When did you start working on it?

I started the album in June of '96. Then I did some touring, and then I went back into the studio. I think this MS thing has taught me to just go with whatever I'm handed. [Williams was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1992.] When we began recording, my hands went numb again and I couldn't play. But I thought, I'm not gonna put this record off again. So instead of having my guitar and voice lead everything, as I've done before, I taught parts to the other musicians. Then I put my parts on later, when my hands were better.

How are you feeling these days?

Pretty good. I just have to get a lot of rest. I'm taking a shot every day of this new drug. All I can do is hope for the best.

Your last album, 94's Loose, won a lot of positive attention from the press and the public. Is the pressure on for this new album to be your commercial breakthrough?

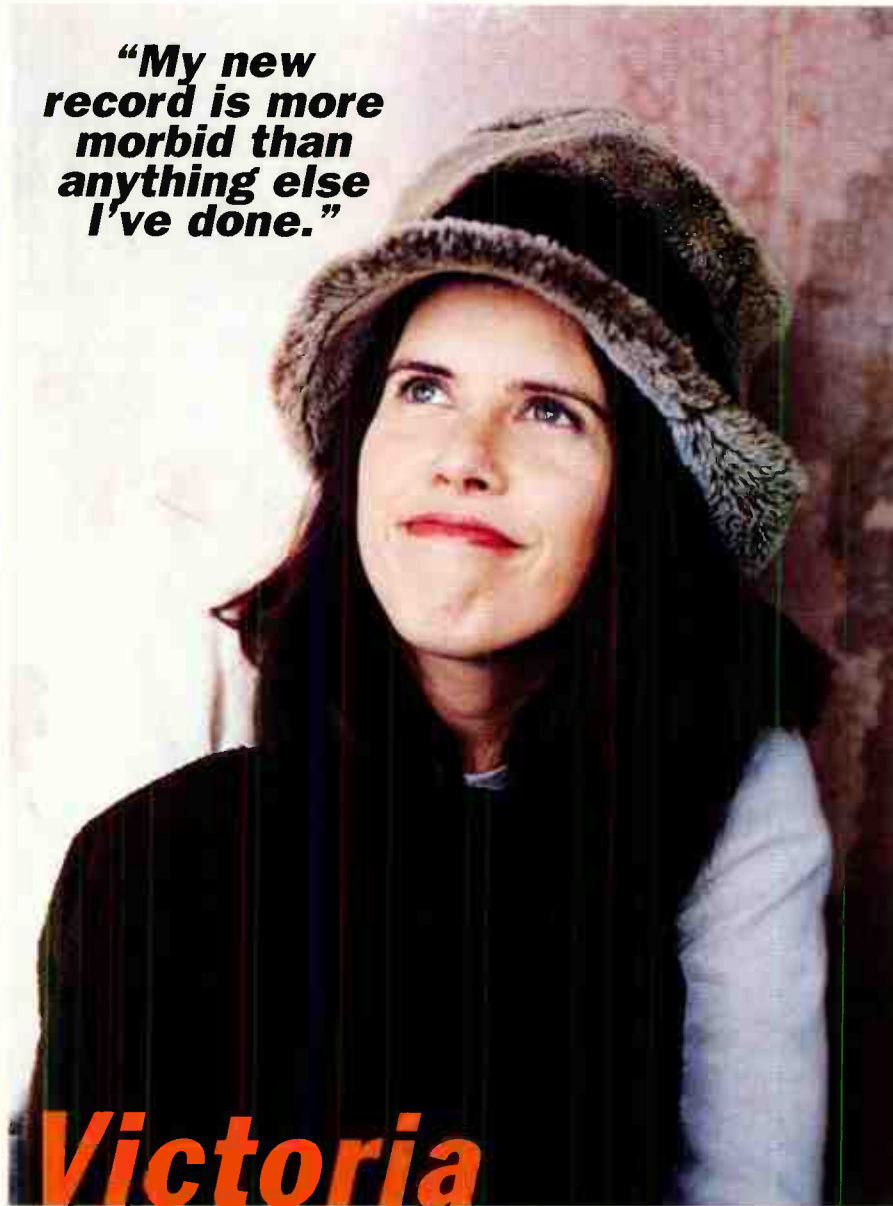
You know, one day, after I finished recording, I heard this sound blasting from my neighbor's house. I didn't know what it was, but I thought, "That's really nice." Then I realized it was my last record! And I got down on myself, thinking, "Well, if people didn't get that one, they'll never get this one. I can be really hard on myself. But I'm in a different place than I was when I made my last record, and I love the new one.

Does it frustrate you when people interpret your

optimism as naiveté and see you as this starry-eyed Pollyanna?

I remember doing this one show in London, and a reviewer wrote, "Doesn't she know that AIDS is rampant and people are dying on the streets?" Gosh, do!! The thing is, I don't want to glorify those horrors. The newspaper glorifies them enough, and reading it just brings

"My new record is more morbid than anything else I've done."



Victoria

Williams

me to tears and makes me pray for all those people. But my new record is probably more morbid than anything else I've done, so maybe people will like it more.

—Elysa Gardner

Andrew Southam

résumé

Robbie Robertson
David Torn
Jai Uttal
Ravi Shankar
Ram Dass
Buffy the Vampire
Slayer

Is there such a thing as a world music session cat, in the sense there are, say, jingle session cats?

Yes, definitely, especially now that you're hearing tablas, dumbeks, and Middle Eastern percussion in commercials, on television, in scores. But there aren't a lot of cats with Western training who can read and play with Western musicians and who are also seriously steeped in some of these esoteric traditions. It's important to understand how these alternative forms juxtapose against the Western tradition. Musicians need to understand these forms, even historically.

In other words, you want to build on your Western background rather than try to become a clone of someone from another culture.

That's it. A lot of American students of classical Indian music lose their center, which comes from the culture they grew up in. I continue to work on my Western chops, even though I'm studying with Zakir Hussain and I could spend every minute of the

rest of my life trying to play what he's teaching me.

Is there any conflict for you in doing a spiritually-oriented world music session one day and a car commercial the next?

Not at all. I want to do work that uplifts people in one way or another, so if I'm only doing that some of the time, that's better than none of the time. And I do have to make a living. But while one may seem musical and the other spiritual, they're actually the same. Nothing is *not* spiritual.

How do you know what gear to bring to a studio when you're called to do "exotic" percussion parts on a commercial date?

That can be a problem. Often people don't know what they want, so I try to understand what they want to get across, and we discuss that. Then I'll suggest sounds: "Do you want sustained, high percussion here? Tuned? Untuned? Do you want something that's a little disturbing or something that makes people relax?" And when somebody says they want something that's like belly dancing, I know they've heard a little bit of dumbek.

How does one find sideman work in world music?

That's the mystery part to me. A lot of it involves meeting and talking with those people who inspire you. You know, I walked up to Don Cherry one day on the street and said, "I love you. You're one of my heroes." He said, "Well, come play with me tonight." And I did.

Does your niche identity as a world music specialist work to your advantage?

It definitely does. Ever since I saw the Bangladesh concert with George Harrison back in '71. I've known that this was what I had to do, and I began digging for some meaning behind all this drumming. Mickey Hart would later uncover some of this juicy underpinning that has to do with drumming and keeping spirit alive. In a way, we're the sidemen of society, not just of musicians.

And being in the background as a sideman doesn't bother you?

Not at all. Ever since I was a little kid, the sidemen were the real heroes to me. They're the ones who make everything sound beautiful.—Robert L. Doerschuk

sideman

Geoffrey Gordon

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- Bill Bruford

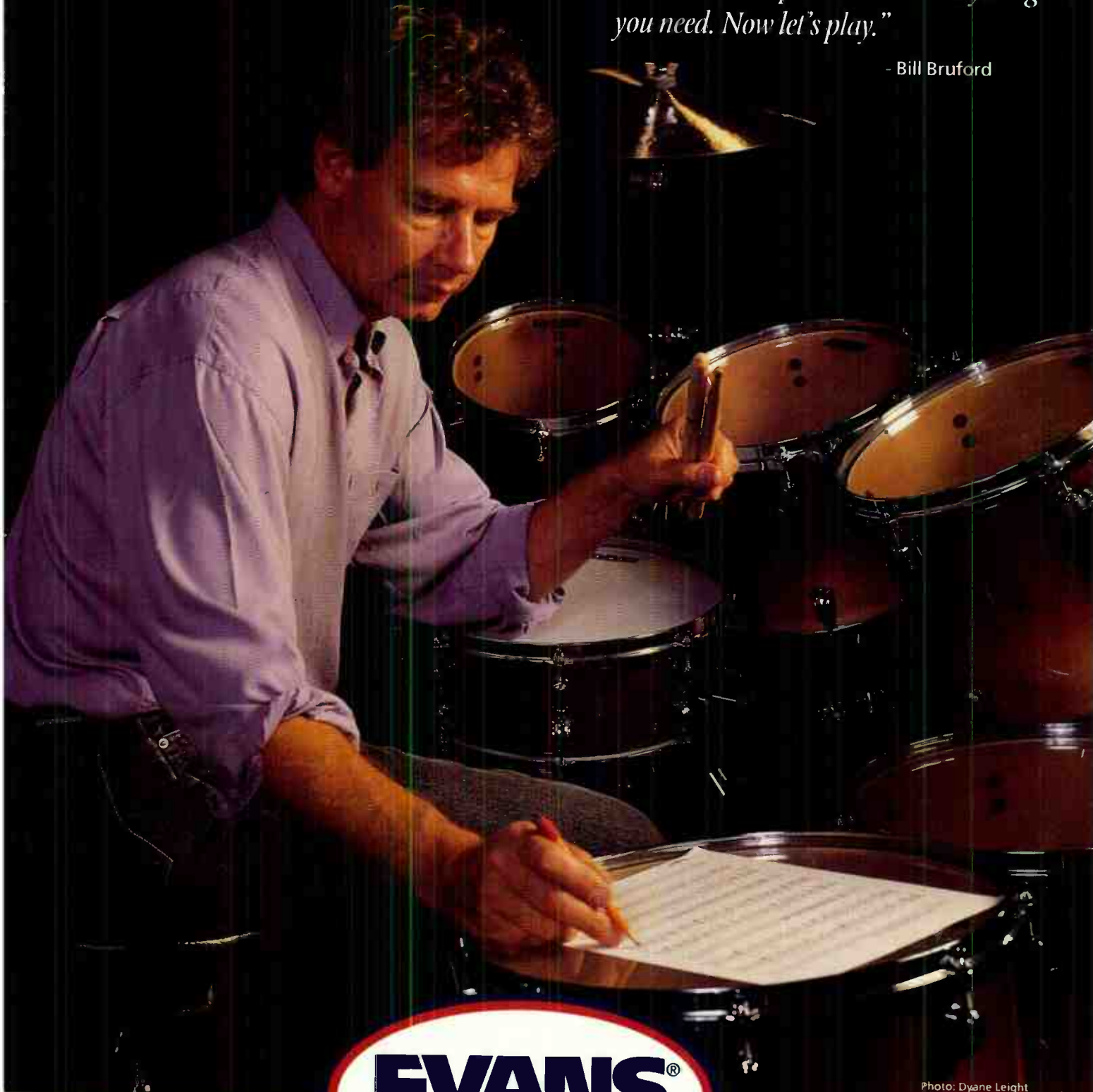


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World Radio History

Jack Hornady



Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Have you ever experienced pain or tingling in your joints after practicing or playing a gig? If so, it's possible you're suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome, which arises from the cumulative stress of performing repetitive motions—like forming barre chords on a low-slung guitar night after night. These motions can inflame the tissue surrounding nerves in your wrists and hands, potentially creating numbness or even shooting pain.

As Mark Price, drummer for *Archers of Loaf*, recently found out, that pain can be a pretty serious ordeal; after seeking two medical opinions, Price was forced to schedule surgery for his right hand. The operation was a relatively simple procedure that took 45 minutes, and Price is expected to recover completely (both physically and cosmetically), but he wishes surgery wasn't his last option. "It wasn't as scary as it was inconvenient. It can be fixed, but it's taken a lot of time—and it'll continue to," he says.

Currently finishing up five months of recuperation. Price is on a regimen of squeezing tennis balls, but he plans to help circumvent problems down the road by stretching before playing. "I never stretched out before, and if I had, I don't think there would've been any pressure." Price's advice: "Realize the limits your wrists can withstand. Don't ignore the symptoms. I might have been able to prevent mine with physical therapy had I known what some of the symptoms were."—**Michael Gelfand**



Robby Takac and John Rzeznik of the Goo Goo Dolls

Ego Wars

Some bands will never have enough talent, but when can too much talent be a bad thing? When two or more band members are prolific songwriters and each one wants their songs played. It doesn't have to be a problem, but it often becomes one, as in the case of the *Jayhawks*. "When the Jayhawks formed, Mark Olson wrote almost everything," explains guitarist/vocalist Gary Louris. "I was enjoying being a guitar player, but when I became less satisfied, Mark was more than willing to encourage me to write. In fact, he encouraged me so much that he probably ended up not having as much control of the band as he would have liked."

When it came to songwriting credits, the two musicians decided to take the Lennon/McCartney route. "We figured that sharing songwriting credits would make it easier to avoid the struggle of egos," recalls Louris. "For a while it worked well. We'd write songs and play them for each other—we were sounding boards for each other. But to share a band and a record means you give up a lot. I think we found we weren't getting enough satisfaction out of each having five songs on a record every two years." Olson's eventual departure from the Jayhawks was amicable, and the band has continued with Louris as the main songwriter. "I find myself in the same position Mark was once in," muses Louris. "Now I'm the one encouraging everyone else in the band to write. We'll see what happens."

Neil Zlozower

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The **Goo Goo Dolls** have experienced a similar songwriting situation, but things have worked out differently for them. The band's two singer/songwriters, John Rzeznik and Robby Takac, continue to work well together after the recent mega-success of the Rzeznik-penned "Name." "For some weird reason I work best on my own," Rzeznik says. "Robby is into collaborating. He writes all of the songs he sings, but he prefers to bring them to the band for their contributions and to credit his songs to the band. The most important thing about our relationship is we respect each other. We cooperate enough so that when it comes to choosing songs for records we're able to weave a common thread through things without having any major problems."

Of the band's recent successes, Takac says there really isn't that much stress between them. "If you look at the eleven year history of this band and the singles for radio, I'm losing big time, eleven to zero. That's if you're keeping score. I'm not. I did most of the singing on our first two records and I didn't have any radio hits on those. I don't see why I should have them now," he says. "What I do is different than Johnny, but it's valid nonetheless. I could get bent out of shape about it, but I don't base the merit of what I do on whether or not I have a million seller. It doesn't make what I do any less important to me."—**Kris Nicholson**



Law School

At some point during your quest for the perfect lifestyle—which is, by the way, a successful career in music—you're gonna need legal representation, *i.e.*, someone in a "suit" advising you on eyeball-rolling legal matters. Whether it's dealing in issues of publishing, copyright, or trademark protection, you're gonna find yourself in a head-scratching entanglement from which your brother-in-law won't be able to extricate you. Sure, there are some things you can handle alone, but before you get in too deep and get tripped up in a reel of red tape, seek counsel. But how do you choose from among the masses?



Jack Hornady

Pink Slips

Bands are like family: You see each other all the time, you usually love each other, and you often argue passionately. But while families are for life, band members are far less permanent—you *can* fire them. Your reasons for wanting to remove a member from your band are usually deeply rooted, but whatever the reason, there eventually comes a time when the ax must fall. After all, this is your career choice, and if you allow yourself to settle for a band situation that's inherently

dysfunctional, your band might not make it. Oftentimes the only way to work out your band's internal problems is by surgically removing a particular member (despite all the emotional anxiety such decisions might bring about). So how should you handle it?

"A probationary period is usually a good idea," suggests singer/guitarist Bill Priddle of **treble charger**. "It lessens the blow of, 'You're out of the band . . . right now!' But, sometimes, you have to bite the bullet and be unsentimental about it, and think about the long term big picture."



"We chose our lawyer based almost solely on the fact that he writes really good contracts," says Jennifer Herrema, who along with Neil Hagerty, comprises one half of the DC duo **Royal Trux**. (They selected Richard Grabel, a New York-based attorney.) "Plus, he charges a percentage of the total deal rather than hourly billing."

Hagerty and Herrema spoke extensively with Grabel about what they wanted from a contract, and were pleased with the agreement, save for one small aspect. "It was artistically inclined and fair," says Herrema, "but [the label] wanted to take out life insurance on us and we weren't comfortable with that; we couldn't get *that* dropped."

Grabel came in handy when Royal Trux wanted out of their deal with Virgin Records. "Because his business is based on cash, and because he believed in us, he fought hard to get us cash for our third record [instead of recording it and giving it to the label]." Now the band is set to resume their independent ties, having just released *Singles, Live, Unreleased* (Drag City), which is a collection of rare material.

Passionate punk rockers **Deftones** hooked up with their lawyer, Ken Hertz, through a referral. "He was interested in us as a band," says guitarist Stephen Carpenter, "then we met him, and we thought, 'This is our man.'" Hertz didn't come at the band from a "Hollywood" standpoint—he related to the band on its own

level. "We appreciate people who are real, who don't try to be down 'cause they see us as a moneymaker. As a band, we've got one basic rule: Treat others as you want to be treated yourself, and [Ken] did that."

Like Grabel, Hertz also works on a percentage, rather than an hourly basis. "He can bring us work if he wants to make money," says Carpenter. "It's a plus for both sides if he's bringin' us deals where we all benefit." Deftones also use Hertz as a source of information. "Anything we have a question about, anything we don't understand, we'll call him up and get a legitimate, unbiased opinion."

Choosing a lawyer doesn't have to be agonizing. Go with your gut, go with a referral, go with whoever makes you feel comfortable, or whoever you feel understands you artistically. But when it comes to red tape and legal complications, by all means, go with someone. "The way I see it," adds Carpenter, "is that it's better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it." —**Bob Gulla**

"If someone is dragging you down—for whatever reason—it's best to think of the whole band," says Priddle. "There'll be situations where you'll say, 'Well, maybe, this person can come around and will fix whatever it is that's not working,' but in some situations it's clear that it's not going to happen and you have to cut them clean."

Singer John Corabi has been on both sides of the firing squad. As the short-lived replacement for Vince Neil in **Motley Crüe**, he was unceremoniously "released," but years ago (before starting his new band, **Unlon**, with ex-**Kiss** guitarist Bruce Kulick), he found himself in the uncomfortable position of having to fire a bandmate who'd gotten sucked into the under-

belly of Los Angeles' hardcore drug scene. After repeated talks and relapses, Corabi took his friend aside and told him to get his act together or get out. "If someone's not coming to rehearsals or they're not doing what needs to be done to get ahead in life, then they're just dragging you down. Everybody needs to chip in," he says. "If someone's lagging, you just cut the string. It's that simple."

That said, how do you heal your bruised ego upon getting fired? "You can sit around with your thumb up your ass and sulk about it," says Corabi, "but if you get fired from a job, you have to get a new one. You just move on and find something that makes you happy and you do it—and you do it well." —**Karen Bliss**



Jack Hornady

Talent Shows

The days of being "discovered" at an open mic night are long gone, but there are still benefits to playing open mic events; they offer you an opportunity to try out your act in public, and if you're hoping to land a new gig, many venues that hold open mics do so to audition new acts.

No matter what your skill level is, open mics shouldn't become your career, says **David Poe**, who started out playing New York's open mic circuit. "They're a stepping stone to a gig or to the experience and fortitude it takes to do a gig," he says. "but at the point you have a following, stop playing them. There's a difference between playing for free because you feel like it and playing at a non-paying job; open mics are cool, unpaid gigs are an insult to the musicians craft. If money is being made, musicians should be getting paid."

According to Poe, *playing* is the bottom line. "Play wherever you can, don't obsess about doing a perfect gig, and remember that musicians are required to grow up in public," he says. "The process of that is what makes you good at what you do and inspires other people to come back and see you again. Just try to forgive the flat notes and flat songwriting that you're bound to encounter and just support your fellows because everyone's trying to get through it." —**Michael Gelfand**

Smokin' Like

by ken micallef

Bill Bruford
finds the
essence of
cross-rhythmic
phrasing.

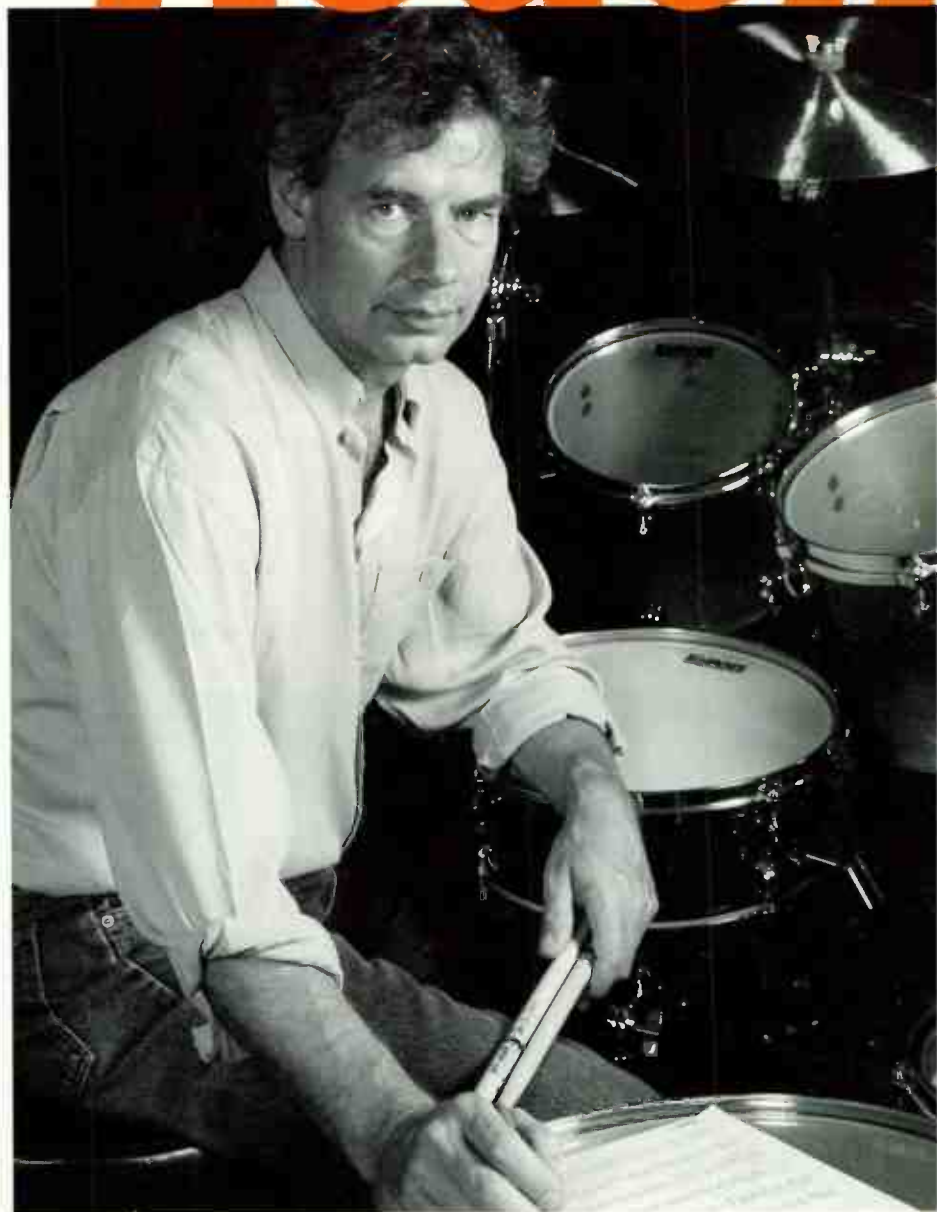
Among rock drummers, Bill Bruford is the great deceiver, the cunning trickster who has turned his (self-described) modest skills into an original style. Often taking simple patterns, he leavens them with subversive odd meters, cross rhythms, and unusual note groupings to create distinctive grooves that also reflect his jazz and ethnic influences. From his tenure with art rockers Yes in the Seventies, to solo albums *One of a Kind*, *Feels Good to Me*, and *Flags*, through experimental terrain with Earthworks to his endless gig with King Crimson, Bruford has reinvented rock drumming as a tasteful venture where some things are kept hidden and other things are revealed.

"In the Sixties nobody talked about rock and jazz, like they do now," recalls Bruford. "Mitch Mitchell was doing Elvin Jones with Hendrix, so I thought I would do Max Roach with Yes. [Bruford covered Roach's "The Drum Also Waltzes" on *Flags*.] I'll think up some cranky rhythm and delete notes instead of adding notes. I'll make like Max and try to get Art Blakey's press rolls."

On his latest effort, *If Summer Had Its Ghosts* (Discipline Records; order by phone at [213] 937-3194 or fax at [213] 937-9102), Bruford returns to the jazz of his youth, with a trio of bassist Eddie Gomez and guitarist Ralph Towner. Closer to an ECM-type recording than anything he's done previously, the album features simple melodies that leave plenty of improv space. And while his drumming is pared down, Bruford demonstrates that he remains the master of allusion.

"We can speak volumes about the ability to burn quietly," he explains. "In rock you wail away, and it takes a certain technique to play big strokes with articulation.

Roach



Ex. 1 Phrasing in 3
(swing 8ths)

Ex. 2 Phrasing in 4

Ex. 3 Phrasing in 6

I wasn't happy with that, so I started playing odd meters, trying to orchestrate the kit so you speak clearly and still have it be effective at the back of a concert hall. Leave the basic elements of the rhythm but remove whatever is unnecessary. 5/8 and 11/8 became my specialty, but now I'm more interested in disguising [unusual meters] in other ways."

The album's title track is prime Bruford. What sounds like a simple 4/4 shuffle is actually two bars of rhythm subdivided so the accents create an underlying forward motion. "I could have played a straight shuffle," he says, "but I thought, 'Wouldn't it be nice if we broke that up differently?' So I subdivided it into a really nice combination. That's drum composition, trying to create tension and release. That is three figures of 5 [sixteenth-notes] and one of 1, which brings it back to 4/4."

Bruford can't resist time-traveling, where a rhythm alludes to a pulse within a pulse. On "Some Other Time" he plays a

brief floor tom figure that was inspired by Joe Morello (see Ex. 1). These swinging eighth-notes in phrases of three over a 5/4 pulse offer a starting point for understanding Bruford's time allusions. "You can do this by developing some elementary patterns," he points out, "phrasing 3, 4, or 6 on top of 5."

He begins the rhythm on snare drum (snares off), slowly alternating strokes with the accents to grasp the sound of the bass drum and hi-hat phrases over the 5/4 pulse. When that's secure, he plays the accents only, eliminating the underlying grace notes, to create a cross rhythm. "With that structure in mind, you can flesh out the rhythm and incorporate the rest of the drum set. You have to become familiar with phrasing in 3 over the 5/4 pulse until your motor control takes over. Try to keep it as musical and understated as possible."

Ex. 2 uses groups of four phrased over the 5/4 pulse to create a longer turnaround time for the phrase to repeat. After estab-

lishing the pattern, Bruford changes the straight eighth-note pattern to eighth-note triplets. "With that there is no repetition until you're quite deep into the rhythm. The accents don't repeat for a while. That's the pleasure of it; it's a lovely sound."

Ex. 3 takes an even longer phrase, using groups of six, and eliminates the connecting tissue of eighth-notes. Here, Bruford plays the figure as a cross rhythm, then elaborates by adding rolls and punctuations, breaking up the rhythm, and beat-juggling in and out of the 5/4 pulse.

"The skeletons underneath the embroidered rhythms are really quite simple," he insists. "If you're Vinnie [Colaiuta] or Dennis [Chambers] you can add the rolls, drags, flams, and all the rest. But you can play very simple rhythms with no embroidery and make them sound very musical. Just by playing these exercises, you can play a very interesting solo. There's nothing to it and there's everything to it. The art is to conceal the art."

I will play music

Nothing but music

*Way back then it was cool
to play the blues*

*When hip-hop was be-hop
you know, straight ahead.*

*When a young musician
had visions of Oscar an' McCoy
settin' it out so smoothly-
kind of like Jordan taking flight,
but in the key of B flat.*

*Dreaming of being a student
in the Miles Davis*

*"turn my back to you"
original school of funk*

*Having knowledge of the old
keeps you prepared for the new.
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Birth of a *Song* Part 2

Last month's conversation with **Phil Galdston** and **Gordon Chambers** has come to an end. Now we watch as the two tunesmiths bring their talents together to create a new song.

We learned early on that their process is fueled by a tolerance for risk-taking. Throughout the afternoon they toss out ideas, never holding anything back for fear of seeming, well, stupid. The etiquette is to preface suggestions with something like "Now, this is just a dummy" or "I know this won't work, but . . ." If the other guy doesn't like it, he says so, without unnecessary elaboration, and they move on.

his Roland D-70 keyboard. A fragment of a motif had occurred to him that morning as he was coming home after walking his kids to the school bus stop. He's exploring it now, arpeggiating upward on an E chord with one alteration: an A above the G# on top. He stops, briefly hits an Fmaj7, then shifts to an A minor with a short figure—B to A to C—on top; these notes will soon evolve into the vocal pickup on the melody.

Galdston stops abruptly. "Okay, the title is 'When This Is Long Ago and Far Away.'"

They begin playing around with the chords, checking out whether to end the phrase on the A minor or the E.



Two award-winning composers pull music from the air.

by robert i. doerschuk

take all the time they need to let things develop. Long silences—thirty seconds or more—often ensue, as they mull over one or another problem. At a certain point, either it's solved or the duo drop it and begin to talk about something unrelated until it's time to come back, mentally refreshed, to work.

As this particular project begins, Galdston doodles on

Another important element in their method is informality. Except for those moments when they're on a creative roll, Galdston and Chambers

Then Chambers suddenly transposes the figure up to D minor. Galdston immediately exclaims, "I love that!" Which is all it takes to define the next four bars as essentially a repeat of the first four, moved up to D minor—until Galdston adds a descending bass line to the chord movement; this leads him to change the last chord from a D minor with an A in the bass to a C with an E in the bass.

The lyrics come after details in the chord voicings and melody—based on a descending line, suggested by the initial vocal pickup—are settled. It begins with conversation.

songwriting

Melanie Weener

"You know, Nancy and I went to see James Taylor this summer." Galdston begins, stretching a bit. "He has a song on his third album called 'Long Ago and Far Away.' It's beautiful, but he never says the words 'long ago and far away.' I realized that what made the ache for me was, how am I gonna feel about this moment after this moment passes me by? Is this gonna be the killer moment of 'I love you this way and I'll always love you this way?' Or is

it gonna be 'You love me this way—and you'll never love me this way again?'"

"I thought of two people who are at a breakup," Chambers muses. "One of them is saying, 'We'll get over this. We'll probably be friends. Maybe it's too soon for that now, but the agony will pass.'"

"That dichotomy is what this song should be asking," Galdston says. "The narrator would be saying, 'When this is long ago and far away, am

I gonna feel like it was a great experience and I had to go on, or am I gonna feel like I can't believe I let that go?' I want to make the pain of not knowing, the indecision, the point." He plays the opening notes reflectively, then asks, "Too intellectual?"

"I think so," replies Chambers. "We should just go for the sentimental. Like in that movie, *The Bridges of Madison County*." And now they're talking about Eastwood and Streep—only they're also talking about the song, twining it all together . . .

"So when you get to the passionate moment"—Galdston spins toward the keyboard to play the D minor section of the tune and ad libs some lyrics: "We're gonna walk out this door, we're never gonna see each other no more." Then, dropping down to the A minor, he says, "Here's the total ache."

He and Galdston begin improvising words to the music. Chambers comes up with "Something beautiful and wonderful remains," but Galdston mishears him. "What did you just sing?" he asks. "'Something beautiful and wild'?"

This catches both their interest. But Chambers asks, "What does 'wild' mean?"

"I wonder if it doesn't suggest a more adventurous concept?" Galdston says. "Like, young love, first love, it's never gonna be as inspired as this again. I mean, it's not like looking at life and saying, 'I'm a punter now, just eating sausages for breakfast every morning' . . . although that sounds pretty good about now." They laugh . . . and suddenly they're talking about low-fat breakfasts.

For the next hour or so, a lyric continues to take form, an instrumental intro comes together, and the form of the tune grows more focused. A rhythm track—an accidental inspiration born from Galdston's sidestick quarter-note click—falls into place. Several weeks later, the duo recorded a demo, complete with instrumental bridge; the final title is "Long Ago (and Far Away)."

We only sat in on this first session, but it was enough for us to see that in music, unlike physics, artists can make something from nothing. The keys, at least in this case, seem to involve patience, trust in the process, and enough contact with the real world to be able to write from experience—even if that experience begins with a walk back from the bus stop.



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World Radio History

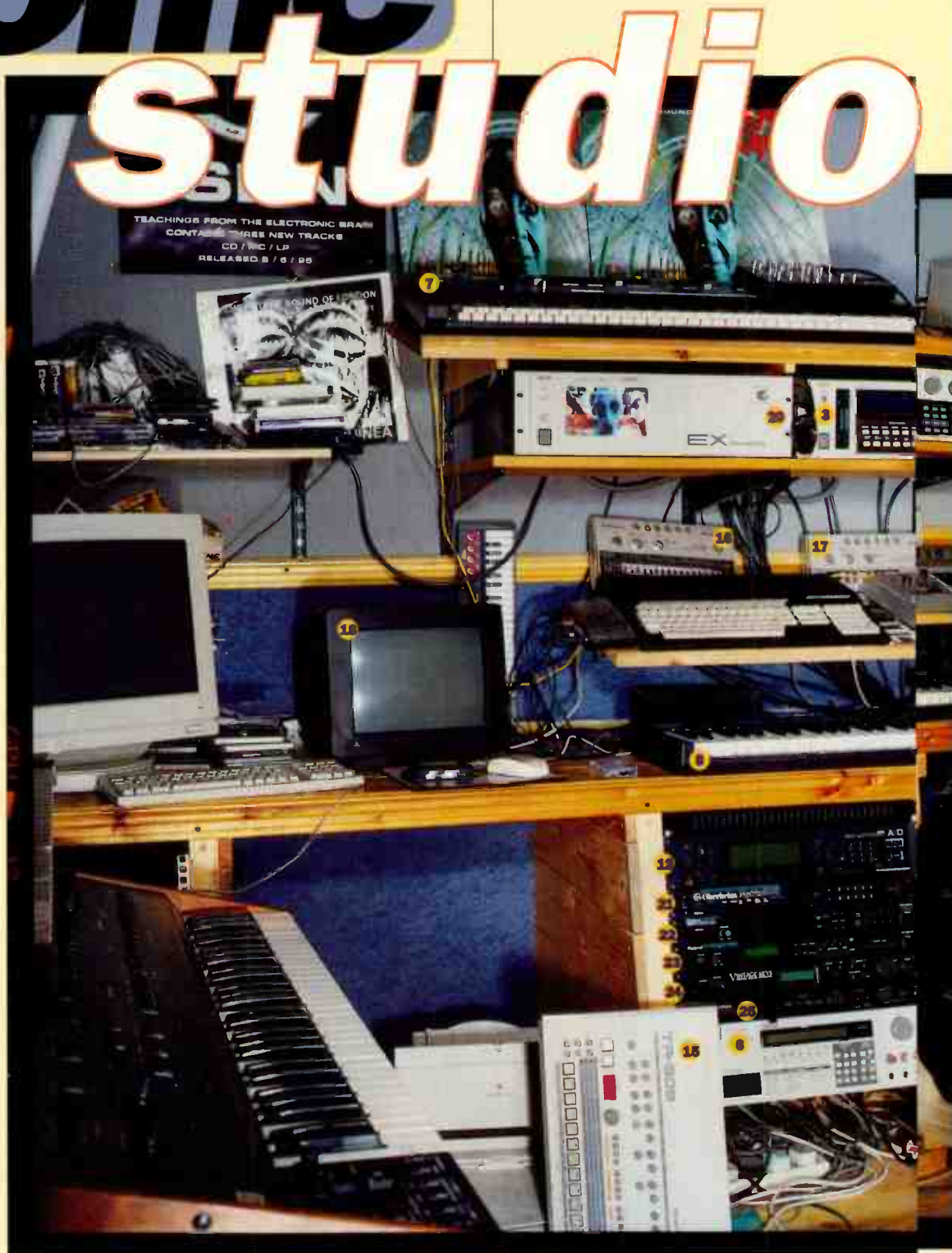


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home

by ken micallef

photographs by colin bell



Befitting the ominous scenarios found on their latest record, *Dead Cities* (Astralwerks), Future Sound Of London work and play in a typical, if not unremarkable brown building located in Dollis Hill, renowned as one of London's meaner neighborhoods. Unremarkable, that is, except for the high, corrugated-metal wall topped with barbed wire.

Walk through the steel door and down a passageway and you'll find a

small studio crammed with gear that ranges from the most recent sampling innovations to the same ancient synthesizer once used by Tangerine Dream. Calling their studio "a museum of old samplers," FSOL's Gary Cobain says their approach to creating and recording their dense collages is simpler than you might think.

"Is this about philosophy or technicality, or a bit of both," muses Cobain. "We're quite simple, actually. I feel a bit embarrassed when

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technical magazines come down. Largely it's about the sampler. Maybe it is interesting, but I just simplify it all in my head." While partner Brian Dougans (the technical wiz behind FSOL) remains strangely silent, Cobain relays FSOL's musical concepts with the skilled verbal agility of a cutthroat, stand-up comedian, occasionally shedding light on their unusual recording process, which ranges from using archaic samplers to their pioneering ISDN radio broadcasts.

"With FSOL there are some deep philosophies [and] some heavy technological shit happening," explains Cobain, "but at the same time we retain the right to be absolute idiots and to use technology in a very basic way. I like stumbling in after a drunk weekend and just using the computer like a canvas. Put it into RECORD, doodle your hand up and down the keyboard, try everything, then edit the good moments.

"The only reason why FSOL are good is because rather than have the ego to think

everything we play is great, we immediately assume that ninety percent of what we do will be crap," says Cobain. "But we're good at editing down the samples to the best bits."

FSOL's sample symphonies begin on a Technics ST 610 tuner, a Sony SLV625 NICAM digital video machine, or various Pioneer CD players and Technics turntables (none pictured). From here, the tour takes you past an array of pieces in the "sampler museum": an **Akai S1000** MIDI digital sampler ❶, an **Akai S3200L** MIDI digital sampler ❷, an **Akai S1100** MIDI digital sampler ❸, an **Audio Logic 2001** digital sampler ❹, an **Akai S612** MIDI digital sampler ❺, and an **Akai S900** sampler ❻ steal the show.

"I'm actually quite embarrassed about these samples. 'My Kingdom' is a fluke. I wanted to see if the computer and the sampler were working together. I jammed together the first two samples I could find." Other samples include guitars and yelling

from Run DMC ("Herd Killing"), Ennio Morricone-flutes ("My Kingdom"), Vangelis' *Blade Runner*, a choice audio snippet from *Once Upon A Time In America* spun backwards ("My Kingdom"), Oprah Winfrey coughing that's pitched to create a snare sound, Gerard Depardeau whistling, and a kid in London's Hyde Park saying "the blokes a nutter."

"We used to have fights about who owned our first sampler. It taught us the power of the snippet. Samplers for much of the late '80s were these dirty little boxes that were associated with theft. They used to sample these big chunks. If you're given a box of records and told you've got a minute's sampling time, you'll take the whole thing. But our immediate introduction to the sampler was the snippet. Consequently, we were always building tracks up from nothing that was ever longer than two seconds. But we never get rid of the old stuff."

Sources for FSOL's sampler scavenging

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include numerous synthesizers, including a **Roland JX-3P** polyphonic synth 7, a **Yamaha DS55** digital synth 8, a **JEN SX 1000** synth 9, a **Roland SH-101** synth 10, an **OSCAR** ("the '70s Prog-synth") 11, a **Mini Moog** (not pictured), a **Korg Wave Station** 12 and an **EMS Synthie** 13.

"The Synthie is our oldest piece of gear. We paid £25 for that," says Cobain. "It's a suitcase synth with an abacus-style function-board of effects, envelopes, and filters. We used it on *Amorphous Androgynous* (Astralwerks). But the days of ownership are over. Just have a sampler and loads of DATs exploring all these varied and different sounds."

Besides hiring a live drummer for some tracks, FSOL also uses a trusty **Roland TR-606** Drumatix drum machine 16, while a **Roland TR-303** Bass Line 17 is employed for bass. After sampling the desired bits, FSOL dump the ingredients down to an **Atari 1040ST** computer 18, then mix live on the **Soundtracs IL 3632** 32-channel board 19 using a wide variety of effects. The **Akai S1100 EX** 16-voice polyphony expansion unit 20 treats the vocals, while moods are created with an **Oberheim Matrix 1000** 21, a **Roland MKS-50** synth module 22, a **Roland D-110** multi-timbral sound module 23, an **E-mu VIntage Keys Classic Analog** keyboard 24, a **Yamaha TX-81Z** FM tone generator 25, a pair of **Alesis Quadraverbs** 26, an **Alesis Midverb II** 27, a **Yamaha FX 900** 28, a **Yamaha SPX-90** 29, a **BEL** digital delay 30, an **Ibanez DM 1100** 31, a **Roland GP-100** 32, a **Fostex 3070** computer limiter 33, a **Drawmer DS201** dual gate expander 34, a **Bel BF 20** stereo flanger 35, a **Mutronix Mutator** 36, another **Alesis Midverb II** 37, and a **Roland RE201** Space Echo 38. Mixes are dumped down onto a **Panasonic Pro DAT** recorder 39 or a **Tascam DA30 MKII DAT** (not pictured), or mixed down to two **Alesis ADATs** 40 that are controlled by an **Alesis BRC** 41. Playback speakers include **Yamaha NS10s** (not visible), **Tannoy Little Golds** 42, and **Urel 838s** 43, which, in order, are fueled by the following power amps: a **Quad**, a **Carver FM350**, and a **Soundtracs**. Gary and Doug can knock off some quick cassettes on a **Technics RS-0450** 44 or a **Tascam 103** 45.

The all important Prima/Musicam encoder/decoder 46 (used for ISDN broadcasts) sits atop the Tascam DAT, a casual place for such an important piece of gear.

"Technically, ISDN is pretty simple," explains Cobain. "You take two leads out of the board, and you encode it digitally through that little box [the Encoder] into your ISDN lines, which are just digital phone lines. At the other end, the radio or TV station loads it through their ISDN receiver and decoder into their mixing desk.

"More interesting are problems of the philosophy of ISDN," Cobain adds. "We do live transmissions around the world from this studio, but the problem begins when people start to view it as a gig.

"Our attitude is not one of two guys twiddling synth solos like Jean Michel Jarre," he says. "That's not good radio. We don't have that kind of patronization of radio. Radio has it's own history of having presenters and voice, but also this live element. So we approach it like a live gig with similar elements, but there are areas that are heavily voice-controlled, bits that we're flying in that we've composed like sound environments. You have all these weird philosophies bleeding in."

From their earliest Astralwerks albums on through *Accelerator*, *Lifeforms*, and *Dead Cities*, FSOL have made listeners and other musicians alike rethink the nature of the sample. Like some demented radio serial, they've made music that creates visual images in the head. "We think the visual aspects of music are beginning to deceive people now; [video's] been here a few decades. We're interested in the game you can play with ears, the ability to sit in your front room and start using your ears again instead of just looking. If you want to experience our transmissions, you don't come hear and watch us. We're not into the visual element. We're into the fucking ears, FSOL are about the ears."

And what about all that technology? FSOL are nature boys at heart. "We're not really about being pompous with technology. These machines are all around us. Life today is a mixture of organic and electronic living. You can't deny it. That's why sampling music is growing on a worldwide basis, because it actually represents the present for us. The fact that we use electronics to dissect and regurgitate the past—whether it's organic drum loops, or water drums—you can feed anything through these fuckers. That's the way that life is; it's electronic and organic. Now what was your question?"

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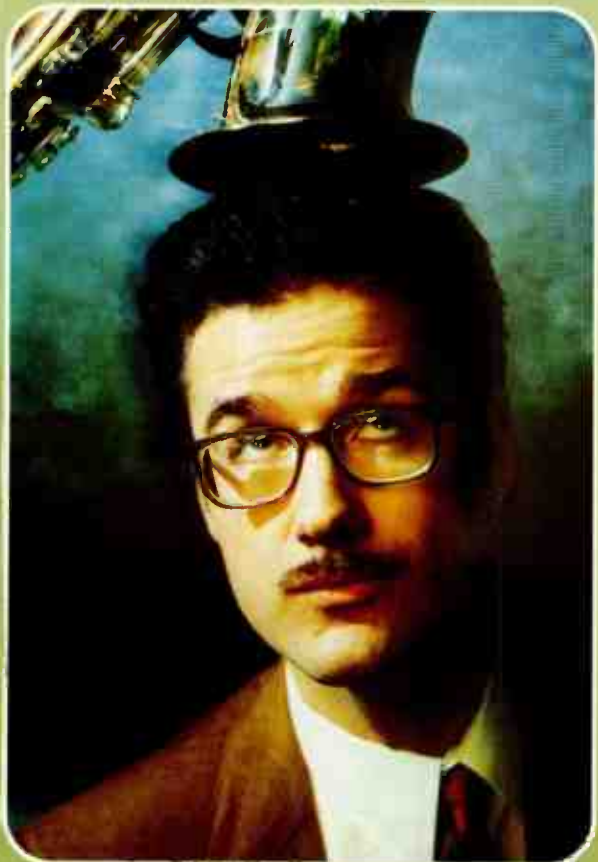
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Clockwise from R: Dennis Brockenborough, trombone; Joe Sirois, drums; Dicky Barrett, lead voice; Ben Carr, dancer; Joe Gittleman, bass; Kevin Leneer, tenor sax; Tim Burton, tenor sax; Nate Albert, guitar.





The Interview
Road Adventures
with the
Sultans of Ska

The MIGHTY MIGHTY BOSSTONES

By Ted Drozdowski
Photos by Neils Van Iperen



W e're midway through the smallest show on a sold-out two-month tour with the Mighty Mighty Bosstones, with a thousand fans jammed into the Mississippi Nights somewhere near St. Louis. By mid-show, singer Dicky Barrett's once crisp white shirt is sweat-pasted to his ribs. He paces the stage, sucking in a little wind himself, waiting for screams and applause to fade. Then he rears back to bellow like a howler monkey, cueing the horns to hit the intro to "Someday I Suppose" from 1993's major-label debut, *Ska-Core, the Devil, and More* (Mercury). As bass, drums, and guitar rush in a few measures later, the crowd sways to the chank-a-chank. But each time the "Tones tumble into the tune's thundering-rhino refrain, the current of humanity gets a little rougher until it's obvious that people are getting squeezed up against the barricades.

While he sings, Barrett pulls up an especially bedraggled boy and two young women and ushers them off stage-left, where they're allowed to remain. He doesn't miss a lyric, but when the song ends he gently admonishes, "Try to be easy on the people in front."

And all goes well, especially with "1-2-8," from their latest album, *Let's Face It*



(Mercury), which distills the band's musical strengths and plays the fans like a harp. There's a raw, punk guitar intro, Dicky pitches all his gravel into the verse, and then the chorus drops and smooths into sweet ska as the hornmen sing harmony to Dicky's Dino [Dean Martin] croon. Guitarist Nate Albert makes like Chuck Berry wrestling Steve Jones, and at the break Dicky screams in prolonged psy-

**WE GAVE 'EM A GOOD SHOW.
PEOPLE KEPT COMING.
THAT'S THE STORY.**

chotic intensity over pop-rocks of six-string dissonance.

But then things turn bad. As Bosstones and fans pop and groove to "The

Bartender's Song," some jerk lifts up the shirt of a crowd-riding woman and gropes her breast. Instantly Dicky's mic hits the floor; the impact ricochets through the P.A. as he leaps headlong at the offending arm. After fruitless windmilling, he floats back up from the throng, shoes first, empty-handed. The woman, with tears on her cheeks, stands behind him onstage, regaining her composure. And Dicky is flush with righteous anger.

"You *don't* have a right to violate people!" he shouts. "Who did it? Admit it! Be a man! Who the fuck did it?!"

Security hoists up a guy in a pullover shirt and chinos. Dicky wheels toward him.

"Did *you* do it?"

"No. I swear to God. I did not do it. I swear."

The guy's cheeks are ashen. Dicky stares into his eyes. Then he sighs.

"All right. I believe you." The guy slips back to the floor and Dicky turns to the crowd. "Guys, let's show that we know how to treat women. This is 'The Bartender's Song.' Do you wanna to hear it?"

"Yeah!" the floor roars back. But the joy's been sapped. Dicky heads offstage at the final chord, skipping the last song on the set list and barking, "Goodnight, St. Louis. We had fun." The bulging veins at his temples say otherwise.

Nonetheless, within minutes Dicky

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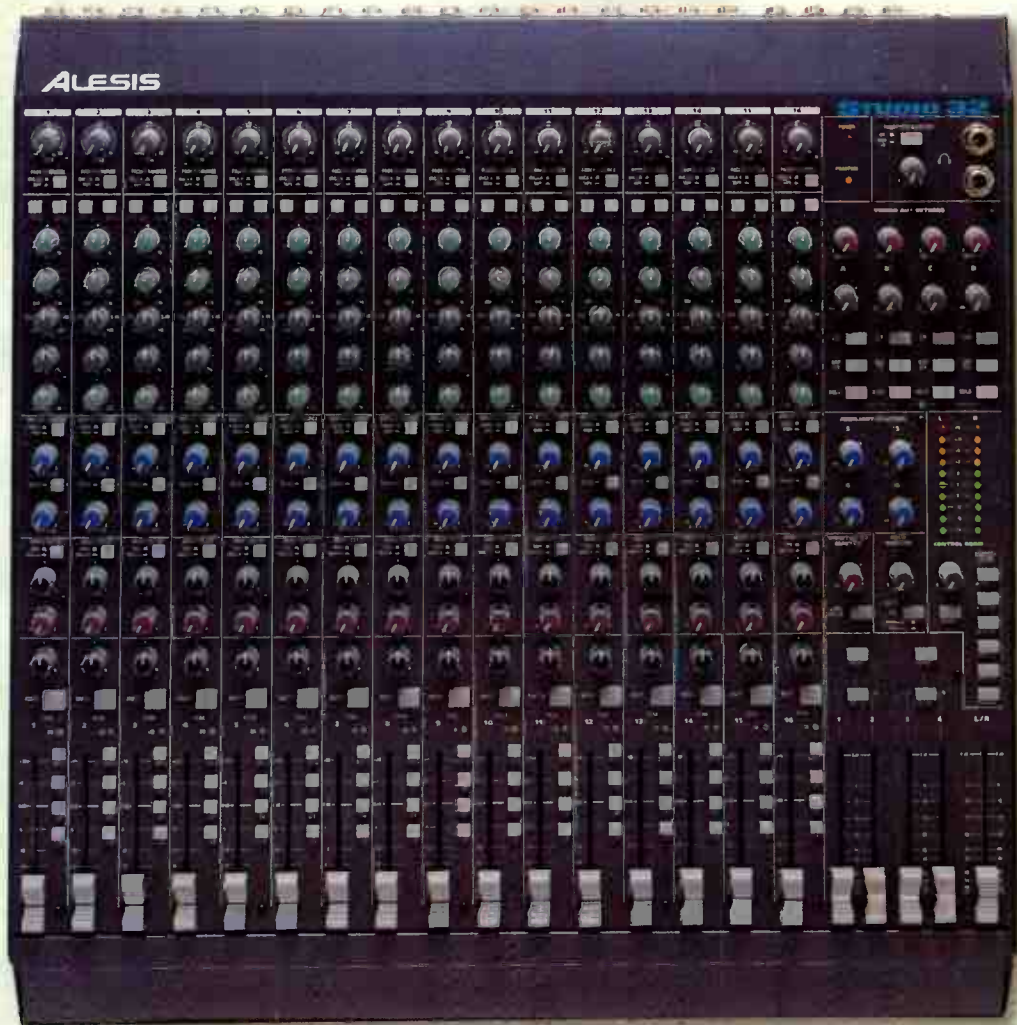
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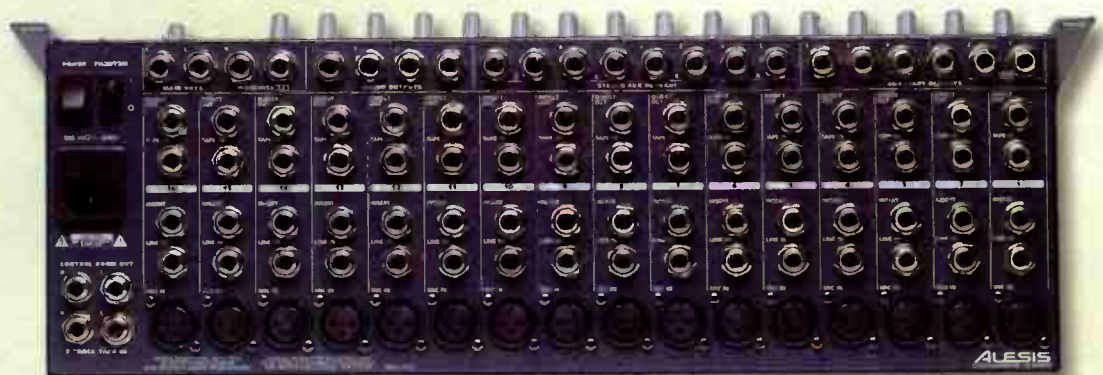
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ALESIS

Barrett—so seal-wet with sweat that he's actually steaming—sits in the middle of the club, signing autographs, drawing his trademark Dicky-as-Devil caricatures on shirts and tickets, and chatting to anyone who wants a word.

"Hey," he tells me later, "if you spend twelve or fifteen bucks to come see the show, and me writing on a shirt or saying hello can make it into a more special evening, that's nothing. If somebody wants to know why we didn't do a certain song or didn't understand something I said onstage, I can explain it directly. Look, I work an hour onstage and sit around for half an hour afterwards and meet people. Out of an eight-hour day, only two of them are filled with anything remotely taxing. It's not like I'm back roofing houses. I respect the people who come to see us, and I don't take that lightly."

The Mighty Mighty Bosstones take nothing lightly. They know that they owe their careers to their fans. "Radio? Hated

FOLLOW THE BOUNCING DICKY

Keys to the Bosstones' Live Sound

Mixing the Mighty Mighty Bosstones' raucous live shows takes a cool head and steady fader fingers; they're an aggressive eight-piece band, including seven vocalists, two loud guitar amps, pounding drums and bass, and acoustic instruments. Increase the challenge by touring without a P.A., as the band did last spring, ricocheting from halls to clubs with a wide variety of mixing boards and other crucial gear.

Then there's the Dicky factor. "Dick gets in front of the P.A.s a lot," says the group's longtime sound engineer Barry Heidt. "He'll go right to the edge of the stage and onto the barricade to get into the crowd. We have to watch that or the results"—whistling feedback—"can be fairly uncomfortable.

"We use Audix OM7 microphones because they have good output and really good rejection, which is important for Dick because there's lots of racket going on around him. We've had an Audix endorsement for three years, and the decision to use them was made for their durability as well as the way the mics perform. Dick beats them up a lot as he goes into the crowd and throws them on the floor.

"Another factor is that we've got seven vocalists. Six are lead vocalists, in that they each have featured parts, so a lot of processing needs to be done—like compression on each channel—and they all have different timbres that need their own treatments. The goal is also to get a good vocal balance, because when you've got four- and five-part harmonies, your voice has to be right there for you. And I have to watch the faders, because there are some really nasty instrumental parts that will smooth right out into four-part vocal harmony."

Miking and mixing the horns gets "really tough onstage," Heidt admits. "We use Audix D2s and D3s, which are bell-mounted; that helps give the horns some level. Mostly the problem with having an acoustic instrument in an electric environment is that the horn players can't hear themselves

onstage. They're right in front of the drum kit, and Joe the Kid is really whacking away. But if we had standing horn microphones, they'd amplify the drums blowing into them. So we put the mics on the bells."

Volumes differ from night to night. "In small rooms, we try to use finesse," Heidt says. "In large rooms, the bass player and guitarist need to hear themselves, so Joe and Nate turn up. When they're really going for it, the sound can get pretty aggressive. Theater shows tend to be more of a finesse game, where the band is performing but the heat of the crowd isn't really on them. When it's a club gig, we're in the trenches. The whole dynamic there is Dick: if he can get close to the crowd and be one with them, the live mic becomes more a part of the show.

"The hardest part of my job is advancing a P.A. company ahead of time. I have the clubs send me their specs, and if what they have won't do the job, I'll get references for regional production companies and make the calls. In a lot of places where clubs don't have the right equipment, the rental money for the outboard gear comes out of our pocket. I always tailor-order some things: an Eventide Harmonizer, Yamaha Rev 5s for drum reverb, ten channels of compression, six channels of gates, and a 40-channel desk out front and a 32-channel desk on the monitors, which John Langan handles. When you're asking for that level of gear, it usually guarantees you'll be using a decent P.A. company.

"I tape pretty much every show, so I put everything through the P.A., even for small shows," Heidt explains. "I run with overheads and stereo guitars and all that. And I like consistency. Being a player, I understand that knowing where the microphones should be onstage is important. If I'm behind the drum kit and I'm used to seeing mics set up a certain way, I like to see 'em that way every night instead of, 'Hey, why's that not here?' Familiarity in mic placement makes me comfortable, which helps in the long run."

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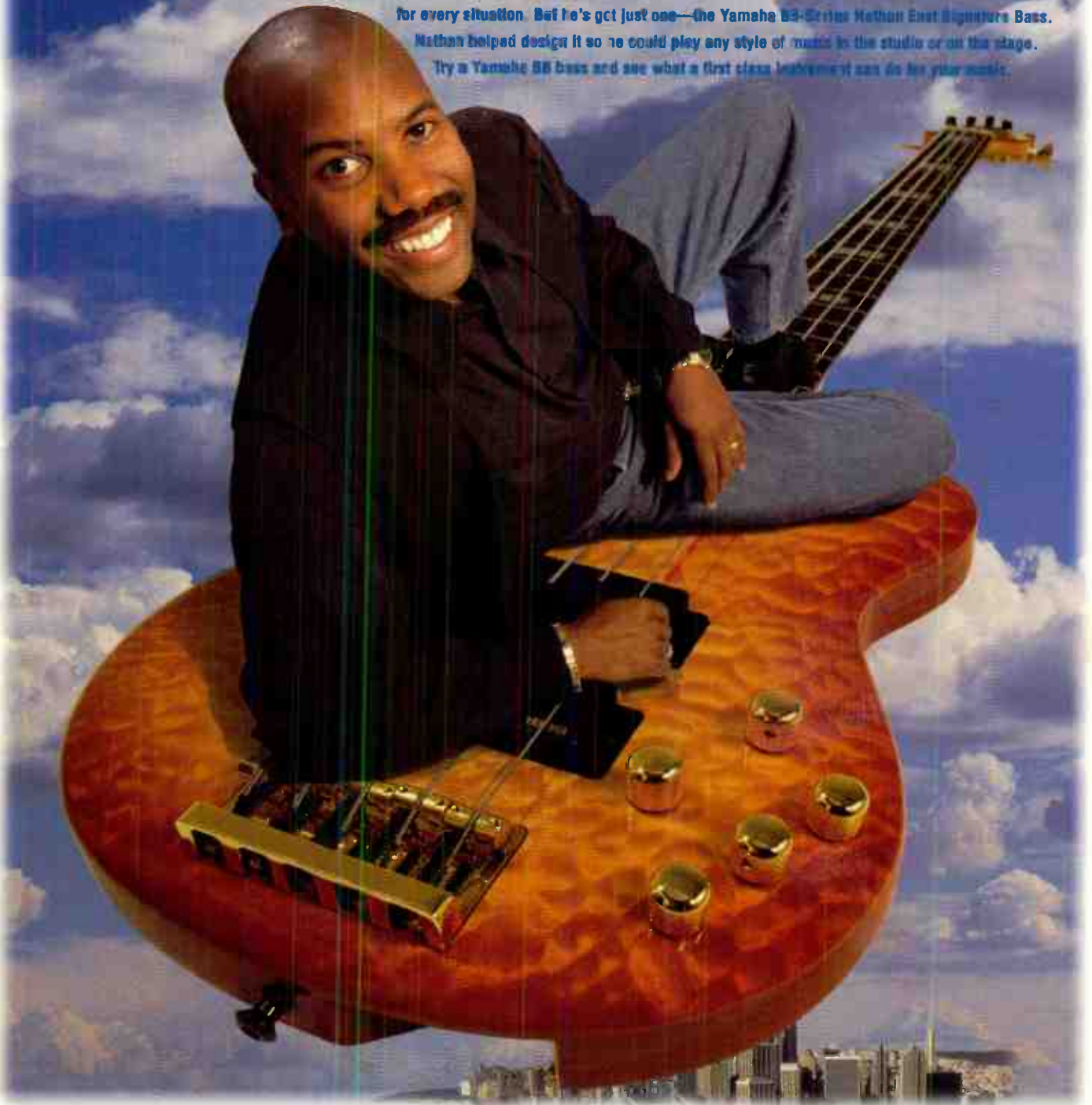
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us! Magazines? Hated us!" Barrett declares. "Sometimes we'd ask ourselves, 'Why aren't we cool?' In Boston we were never part of any scene. We'd show up and the party would end. But all the years this was happening, we were on the road and we delivered. We gave 'em a good show, and more kept coming. That's the story."

Counting mileage, the Mighty Mighty Bosstones have come a long way since they kindled in bassist Joe Gittleman's parents' garage in 1985. From the git-go, their mix of ska beats and hardcore punk laced with horn-led melodies stuck out in Boston's club scene, where garage rock's simple 'n' fast ways ruled. "We figured, 'What the hell can we do to stand out?'" attests Barrett. "There are fifty million bands in Boston, and we weren't musical geniuses, so what would separate us from Scruffy the Cat and the Outlets and the Blackjacks? So we had horns and a dancer, and we wore suits to look as un-rock & roll as possible. We liked the idea of dressing in plaid suits because of the checkerboard look that the old Two-Tone thing had. And plaid was kind of a mix of black and white and more, like it is in the world and in our music. Plaid became our flag for a long time."

The other thing that demanded attention right from the Bosstones' first shows was Dicky Barrett's voice. If fat, nasty, people-gobbling alligators could sing, they'd sound like Dicky. "But I don't think of what I do as singing," he insists. "I'm more of a vocalist. Let me put it this way: I just bought a new Dean Martin double-disc set, and the first lines of the liner notes were like, 'The greatest thing in my life was the day I realized I could put on a nice suit and make a living singing a song.' That's me!"

The Bosstones built their career the old-fashioned way, touring by van and growing their audience by word of mouth. "Back then we were in a fifteen-passenger van, just so happy to be out that it was fun," says Gittleman. "We were shit-faced on a big trip. We didn't really know where we were going, we didn't know if the next show was going to happen. We were just out there."

But success hasn't changed their work habits or their head for business. They've not taken a penny for tour support from

Mercury, not even for their brand-new, leased two-lounges-eight-bunks-A/C-stereo-satellite-dish-TV-refrigerator-toaster-oven-sink-toilet tour bus. "When they start charging you back for stuff like that, watch out," Barrett cautions. "Too many new bands fall into the trap of taking tour support and come home broke."

Back in '95, the band responded to requests for vinyl versions of their CDs by starting their own label. "We got Big Rig running on a minimal amount of money," Barrett explains. "We're talking like five thousand bucks for the initial investment. We paid for the vinyl ourselves, sold it, and turned the income right back into the label." Now Big Rig's catalog also includes CDs by Boston punks Mung, Impact Unit, Barrett's first hardcore band, and the *Safe & Sound* compilation.

The Bosstones did seek Mercury's help in pressing and distributing *Safe & Sound*. Released late in '96, it features Boston artists like Letters to Cleo, Tracy Bonham, the Gigolo Aunts, and Aimee Mann, join-

ing forces to raise money for women's health care concerns. The project was conceived by Letters to Cleo singer Kay Hanley after a friend of the band was murdered while working in a Boston area women's clinic. The album also includes an early mix of the Bosstones radio hit "The Impression That I Get," Barrett's contemplation on the pain and loss of those who knew the victim of the crime.

The band's most recent release, *Let's Face It*, also spends a sobering amount of time on all those Big Issues and Deep Emotions that Dicky says he doesn't want to beat over anybody's head. Throughout the album he delivers these more reflective lyrics in a more relaxed and articulate style than he was known for in the past. Hell, he actually sings in that crooner style he admires.

Maybe it has something to do with the band's material this time out. Songs like "1-2-8" and "Nevermind Me" capture the Bosstone's strengths, including a tighter grasp on dynamics as a tool for highlight-

THE CHARGE OF THE NOISE BRIGADE

At the bottom of the Mighty Mighty Bosstones' big beat, you'll find a couple of hard-working Joes: bassist **Joe Gittleman** and drummer **Joe Sirois**. Gittleman thumps standard-gauge roundwound GHS strings on a '73 Fender Jazz bass with Bartolini pickups run through an Ampeg SVT head and matching 8x10 cabinet. It's a classic, back-breakingly heavy Sixties rock 'n' soul setup, with plenty of clarity and low-to-midrange thrust—the perfect power tool to match Sirois' tuxedo-sharp tempo patter. Sirois hits Yamaha Maple Custom drums, and he hits them hard. His kit has a 20" kick, three toms (12", 14", and 16"), and endorsed cymbals from Sabian's "Metal" and "Stage" lines, including a 20" ride and an 18" crash. Sticks are by Vater.

Nate Albert favors new Les Paul Standards strung with GHS .11s. He also has a Les Paul Custom that's "light and really high-endy." Onstage he plays with his back to the forces of "Good" and "Evil," two signal paths accessed by his only foot pedal, a trusty custom-built A/B box: The "Good" sound is identified by a Day-Glo sign pegged to the front of his clean-running Mesa/Boogie Triple Rectifier, which powers a custom-made, extra-large 4x12 Mesa cabinet with (90-watt speakers) for plenty of headroom. The "Evil" sign, marking the expressway to Satanic distortion, is tacked to the grill cloth of his Marshall JMP 800 with matching 4x12 cabinet.

Among the horn-blowing Bosstones, **Kevin Lenear** plays a '47 Selmer balanced-action tenor sax with a Dave Guardella mouthpiece and "any reed that'll play." Trombonist **Dennis Brockenborough** hoists a Yamaha YSL-691 and a Dennis Wick 4C mouthpiece. And **Tim Burton** blows a Yamaha YTS-62 tenor sax with an Otto Link mouthpiece and Rico reeds. Like Lenear, he notes that "the quality of reeds in general is really poor. You buy a box of thirty and get about ten that are worthy." The horns are heard through Audix D3 mics that clip onto their bells.

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ing hooks. And while writers Gittleman and Albert have long cited the Police as influences, they only now echo that trio's crafty minimalism in "Another Drinking Song," in which the positioning of the bass, the guitar, and Joe Sirosis' neat-pressed snare and kick give the tune plenty of room to breathe.

"We wrote for two years for this CD," explains Albert. "Our songs used to be driven melodically by the horns, and we didn't really have dynamics at all. Now we've learned to steer the melodies to the vocals, which is where they should be. The horns still play melodies, but take a song like 'Where'd You Go?' You hear a catchy melody in the chorus, but it's not in the vocal. That only takes you so far. A really knock-out vocal melody in the chorus is more powerful. And bringing down the tempos as well as the volume was also crucial. It's really hard to play slow ska. But through making this record, we learned to do it without feeling awkward.

"When we started writing 'Let's Face It' we didn't have studio time booked," he continues. "Joe and I got our guitars and worked out songs. We talked about records we liked and how we always wanted to sound. It was a stretch for us to start thinking about music that way, articulating ideas we liked. 'Royal Oil' was the first song that came together that way. It was based on a vocal line we developed that was so strong it could hold up without music."

"It took about ten minutes to write," Gittleman chimes in. "Dicky gave Nate the lyrics, and then Nate wrote the music."

"I came up with a little bass figure, and the music wrote itself," Albert says. "I'm serious."

Albert often writes bass lines to serve as spines for his songs, while Gittleman frequently comes up with guitar parts that drive the tune. "I have no idea why that happens, although I do write on guitar," says Gittleman. "'The Impression That I Get' was like that. I came up with a guitar intro that I liked so much I worked everything else around a simple verse, some melodic ideas for Dicky, and . . . Well, Dicky's an amazing lyricist. The words he came back with were so powerful that we were done."

With Albert, Gittleman, and Barrett writing most of the songs, it's no surprise that they come up with as many of the horn parts as the section itself. "The band's a collective," explains trombonist Dennis Brockenborough. "We'll write parts or just play with everyone's ideas until we get the part, and then us horns will smooth it out. The unique thing is that we can play two roles. We can be very dense and chordal and massive and brassy, but we can also play lines and skip through melodies that give the music a different kind of flavor, the way a guitar can with power chords and distortion or nice single-note lines."

Onstage, Brockenborough and tenor saxophonists Tim Burton and Kevin Lenear stand at dead center, right in the eye of the sonic hurricane. "We're sort of meatheads, because we like to play at least as loud as the drummer, and we've got a very loud drummer," Brockenborough continues. "Power can become a thing in itself. But we have to address the problem of hearing onstage by using clip-on mics and having our own monitors. As a last-ditch effort, I'll wear earplugs, because it's important that we hear each other. We always fuck around with little variations on the parts, and one of us will always respond to whatever the other does."

The key to the rhythm that the horns ride is in Nate Albert's clean, propulsive, up-stroked skank beat, though the guitarist stirs it up with slamming power chords, grinding riffs, and blurts of noise. "I get stuff like that from Fripp or Jeff Beck," he says. "I love the idea of dissonance resolving into tonality, although Andy Summers was a great inspiration in demonstrating how to fill up the void between bass a drums, and Bob Stinson was a huge influence, just for messy coolness."


"Lately I've been getting into found objects, like beer bottles, and using what I've got on my Les Pauls for effects—the volume knob and the toggle switch. When we do this certain breakdown, Joe plays sixteenth-notes on his snare, and I've been trying to come in with the toggle at 32nds or 64ths. During the Eighties I learned a lot of the harmonics tricks, like hitting a note and then touching the strings with the pick an octave above to

ring the harmonic. Sometimes I'll pick over the nut and let the random overtones ring. I don't have a whammy bar, so I'll push down on the strings over the nut or push down on the neck to fake whammy moves. What I'm doing is color stuff: Sometimes I can go for a totally Jackson Pollock thing, so it doesn't matter what I'm playing, as long as the sound works. But on choruses I'm more straight-ahead, to keep them solid."

Despite these coloristic inclinations, Albert's role is most often percussive. "That's how it is with ska, and really with punk," he says. "I just try to go a step beyond that. Joe plays a really nice bass part in 'Hell of a Hat' that suggests jazz-like passing tones to me. Instead of just vamping on chords, I'll build harmonies or new chords off the tonic, playing a lot of sevenths and ninths. I got this one trick from Dr. Know of the Bad Brains: Normal power chords played with a bass line would be on the I, but I'll play on the V and drop it low so the tonal effect is almost like a drone. There are so many cool options with the old I-IV-V. Lately I've been going through a lot of old Beatles songs, because they're a source of really good advanced pop ideas—things like changing the IV to a minor to create more movement. The Beatles used such rich chords; I'd really like that to become a part of my vocabulary."

New harmonies are only one vision on the Bosstone horizon. With the bus pointed toward their next gig, the band finally settles back and reflects on what the future might hold for a group that's always lived so fully in the present.

"It's funny," Barrett says. "I went to Aerosmith's record-release party in New York, and I saw Gene Simmons there. I was thinking that all these guys never really had the luxury of becoming middle-aged dudes playing rock & roll. I look forward to doing that. I don't want to have to get my hair died blond or get a face lift or squeeze into tight pants when I'm fifty. I want to get old and comfortable as I play."

He laughs. "Hell, we've been dressing like our fathers since we were kids anyway." 

Contributors: Ted Drozdowski is a guitarist and freelance writer in the Boston area.

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World Radio History



Singer/guitarist Kathleen Mock chronicles one day's work in the subways of New York. Photographs by Melanie Welner



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6:00 a.m. At times in my life it would be the end of the night after a long gig. These days it's my beginning. Yep, Thursday morning in the fall. Coffee coffee coffee.

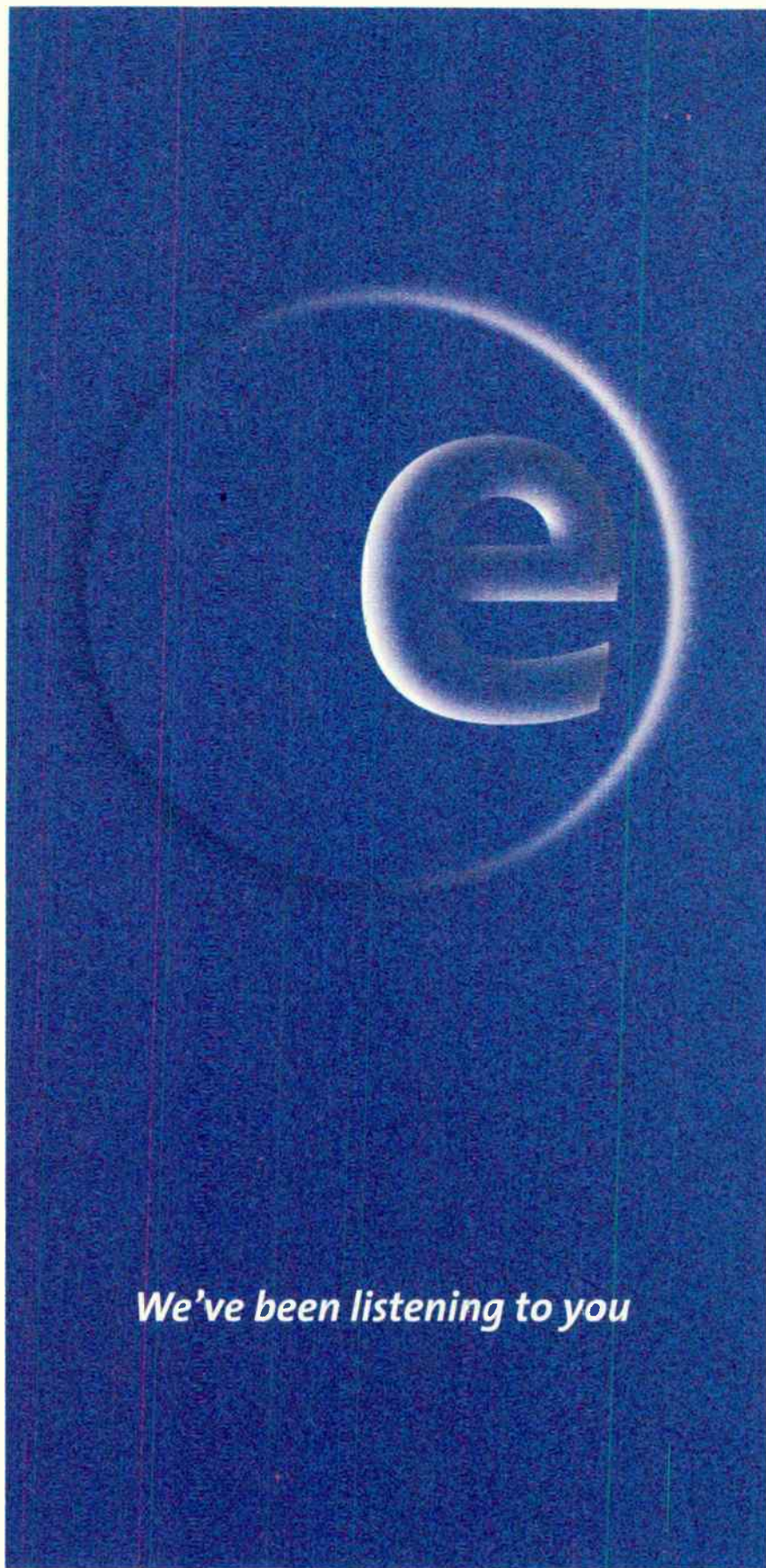
7:30 a.m. Time to hit the streets, stocking up my gig bag: clipboard with my mailing list on it, enough CDs for the day, flyers telling people who I am and that my CD is available at Tower and HMV in case I run out or someone doesn't have enough cash on them. I tie my microphone around my neck and under my shirt, gathering up my amp, which I carry and play through a knapsack. (Singing on the subway platform and accepting tips is legal in New York. Playing through amplification is not.)

8:25 a.m. I'm heading down Broadway to the bus stop. I live on the Upper West Side and usually play the stop up here on the No. 1/9 lines. It's all about catching the right crowd at the right time, which means knowing the patterns at the stations you play. This is a little bit of a late start for me: I'm usually out on the platform by 7:30 or 8:00, which is necessary on the West Side. Most everyone floods downtown by 9:30 in this part of the city, so I decide to head over to the Upper East Side because it has a great crowd even after the rush hour, all the way until late afternoon.

8:35 a.m. I catch the 86th Street crosstown bus—had to run, and oh boy, is that amp heavy—and get me a little seat. We buzz through Central Park. Hop off at Lexington Ave. and head underground into the subway in search of a spot. I really want 86th Street, but when I arrive on the platform there's a jazz duo jamming away. Trumpet and keyboard. Pretty early for most jazzers, but not these two.

8:45 a.m. I get on the train downtown to find a different spot. This time I'm lucky: There's no one at 77th. I set up. Got to find a place to sit that's out of the way of the turnstile and not "blocking pedestrian flow," which is a fineable offense—yet that's also a place where people congregate.

8:50 a.m. The hardest part is over. I'm set up, I feel good, and I'm ready to share my music. There's an amount I need to make today to cover my bills—especially those phone calls to my hometown of Montgomery, Alabama. Once I make that, I'll push myself to play longer, so I can grab a little chicken tikka from my favorite Indian restaurant for dinner. No, they sure



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World Radio History

don't do chicken like that back home.

9:00 a.m. This is my first time playing this station, and it's packed. As I start my song, the train roars in. New Yorkers on their way to their busy lives barely throw me a glance, let alone a coin, and get on their train. As soon as I can no longer feel the rumble through my sandals, I start again.

A lot of street performers play the same spots all the time, and most commuters take the same routes all the time; consequently, it can get a little repetitive for everyone. The best thing you can do is to switch up and play somewhere different for a while. People at the new station are excited to hear someone new, and when you go back to the old station you find that people have missed you.

9:30 a.m. It was all going too well. The train ahead has stalled, which backs up the whole line. I usually can sing only one song for the crowd during rush hour before the train roars in and then a new crowd packs in. That's about fifteen shows per hour. I just finished three songs in a row, which means we are in a major delay and a packed platform, too packed to move. People are trying to get to work; some start yelling at the token booth person. This is not a good time to sing, because people want to listen to the announcements and hear any news about the delay. And of course there are always those few really stressed-out people who don't hesitate to take it out on me and tell me to shut up. I've learned to take a break during delays.

9:45 a.m. The trains begin to move. I start to sing once more when another street musician approaches and wants to know how long I'll be playing. It's time to play "tag-up." What usually happens is that the person with the spot will play until the person who wants it next shows up, and we "tag up." I tell him I'm staying until 1:30, which he says is too late for him. A lot of times there will be a waiting list at the good spots for different times during the day. You rule the spot if you get it first; some prime spots are taken as early as 5:30 in the morning. It's the worst feeling in the world to get to a prime location at 5:50, only to find it's been taken by someone who got there a five minutes earlier. So you tag up and come back when they say they're leaving, hoping they don't leave early: You'll get back and three people will be hanging

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evolution

out for the spot. I always go back an hour earlier than they say.

10:05 a.m. A construction crew has arrived on the opposite side of the station and begun jackhammering. I'm not leaving just yet because it may just be for a few minutes. It stops, and I start singing. Then it starts up on me and people are looking at me like, "You poor thing." A few people tip me. After about 45 minutes of singing vs. jackhammering, the crew seems to be quitting. I feel I have won.

10:55 a.m. Peace again. Back to playing for the crowd. The jackhammer guys cross over to take the train on their lunch break. They hang out, listen a while, and actually tip me. Since they were making more noise than me, I briefly consider tipping them.

11:00 a.m. A new crowd is building. A little girl dances around, and then her mother starts up with her. This breaks down some barrier; the crowd warms up and starts smiling. You can act this way with your kids, I guess, although I've had a few adults without any children start dancing, and it humors a crowd just as much when some grandpa starts kicking up his heels. I have a



regular guy at one of my stations; he's about seventy, Sixties-style dress, headband and all, and he never passes by without dancing. I like him. He makes us laugh.

11:45 a.m. A couple preaching the gospel come along—shouting the gospel would be more like it. It's a free country, so I keep singing and they keep shouting. Sometimes

on Sundays you get a large group singing gospel music; they could care less that you were there first.

12:05 p.m. The next crowd brings in a nice young girl with some grapes, and she offers me some. She looks harmless, so I take a few. I don't normally take food from strangers on the street, but she was feasting on them herself. Sometimes it feels good just to trust someone.

12:15 p.m. The local crowd has died out a bit, and the tourists are starting to appear. They've got their maps out, cameras around the neck. They're too afraid to friendly-up to me, until someone gets up the nerve to take my picture. I don't mind; I smile. Then some New Yorker throws me some change, and pretty soon they all do. Before you know it three or four cameras are going off, some of them want to pose next to me, and I'm singing through it all. Their train approaches; ecstatic at having such a colorful New York experience, with pictures to boot, they wave good-bye as they stumble onto the train.

12:20 p.m. Now there are six people across the platform, wearing khakis and blue shirts with seeing-eye dogs; only one of these people seems to be blind. Must be a training school upstairs. Now a blind woman with her white stick is searching for my case. She finds it, taps it until she hears some change jingle, then throws me a dollar, right to the center of the change. Wow! She stays close by and listens until her train rolls in. The car she enters is full of children; they hear me and start waving, so I

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wave back as the train pulls out. The conductor waves too. Everyone is smiling.

I have my mailing list out. I'm getting people from North Carolina, Ohio, and New Jersey as well as New York.

12:35 p.m. I'm coming to the end of my song, and as the train rolls in someone jumps the turnstile onto the train. Little does he know that two undercover cops saw this, and they grab him off the train. How embarrassed he looks! The police will definitely take a few trains to write him his \$75 ticket; he'll surely be late now. Afterwards the guy comes up to me, and we both laugh. He listens to my music until his train comes in, throws me a buck, and he's off to wherever he was hurrying to get to.

So undercover police are hanging out in this station. It's not hard to spot them because they have to wear their bullet-proof vests when they're on duty. So far they're not bothering me. I'm definitely not allowed to display my CDs while they're here because that's a commercial activity and not legal. These cops hang out way too long, and it's killing my business.

A keyboard player comes along and asks me when I'm leaving. I say now, and I take off for lunch at home and a break before the evening rush hour.

5:20 p.m. After going through the whole preparation routine again, I head downtown to Prince Street in Soho. This station

is great in the evening. I often see people I saw that morning heading home, and they're shocked to see me. They think I've played the entire day.

6:00 p.m. I finishing setting up and start to play. I love this station. The acoustics are great, and this neighborhood is full of writ-



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ers, artists, and actors. Sometimes I swear they look like they spent the day at Disneyland instead of at work.

6:10 p.m. Here comes one of my regular crazies. I've seen this guy for years. He always carries a broom and a watering can. He starts at one end of the platform and sweeps methodically to the other end. Anything that's sticking up gets sprinkled with water. I see some people checking him

out and not knowing what to think. The train rolls, and everyone leaves with him.

6:40 p.m. The crowd builds up again and gets into the music when some kids come in from the basketball court and start dribbling all around me, shooting at an imaginary hoop above my head. I keep on playing and have to dodge to not get hit in the head. I don't get upset by this sort of thing anymore. I know it lasts only as long as it

takes the next train to come. The people listening to me get more upset than I do. Actually, I wind up getting great tips when something like this happens. Go figure.

7:30 p.m. I've had a solid half-hour of good crowds and attentive listeners between trains. As I come to the end of one song a woman runs up to me and says, "You're Kathleen Mock!" I say I sure am. She tells me that I made her fall in love with her husband years ago. He had purchased a cassette from me and sent it to her shortly after they first met; that was the beginning of their relationship. She had recognized my voice in the subway and, because she was in a huge rush, shouted all this to me as she was running onto the train. Things like this happen to me sometimes. I never get over the shock of someone knowing who I am without ever having met me or even seen me in person. I've been playing down here for ten years, so I guess I shouldn't be surprised. This is the first time, though, than anyone has attributed their marriage to my music.

7:45 p.m. Time to head home. I gather my gear, hoist up the amp, and catch the next train. Chicken tikka is calling.



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The Science of Busking

By Robert L. Doerschuk

These days he's the head of Headspace, an technology development company dedicated to music distribution on the Internet. Not too long ago, he was a pop star. Before that, he was a fixture on the sidewalks and subways of Paris, with guitar in hand, playing tunes by Dylan, Simon & Garfunkel, and other staples for busy passers-by.

Not only that: Thomas Dolby was a wanted man, which explains why he had abandoned his native England for the boho life of a busker abroad. "When I was about 21 years old—that would have been in '79—I made some tapes and sent them around to record companies," he says. "I got a lot of interest from one label in London. We sort of went all the way down the aisle, but just before we were to have gotten married they pulled out, and I was left with this huge lawyer's bill, which I had no way of paying. The lawyer actually hired some collection agency to hassle me for the money, so I thought the best thing to do was to flee the country."

Thus we find the future Internet whiz living on handouts that he and his partner would earn through song: "We would sit there with one eye on the hat, knowing that until it filled up with money, we didn't have enough to eat. On a good day you could afford to eat by about 11:00 in the morning. On a bad day it would be, like, 2:00 in the afternoon. Whenever that time came, we'd go to a café in the Latin Quarter where all the buskers used to hang out, and we'd have a big meal and a bottle of wine. It was very good training to learn how to make music that connects with the public because if you didn't, you didn't eat. That's hard to learn when you're sitting in some island somewhere, looking at your bank statements and chart positions."

As with Kathleen Mock in New York, Dolby learned that there were some locations in Paris that worked better than others, depending on the time of day. But the style of music presented by the busker made a difference as well. "Interestingly enough, the performers in Paris tended to match up what they were doing to the mindset of the crowd," he recalls. "There was one guy who was a sort of Charles Aznavour crooner, who had a mic and a big amp with a lot of echo on it. He'd sing for housewives coming home with their spoils from midday shopping sprees; they were always surrounding him and swooning over these sappy French love ballads he would do. Conversely, at 8:00 or 9:00 in the evening, when people were going out, you'd get an African three-piece with some marimbas and

a few big drums doing much more up-tempo music. In both cases the content was pretty much tapered to the audience and its mindset."

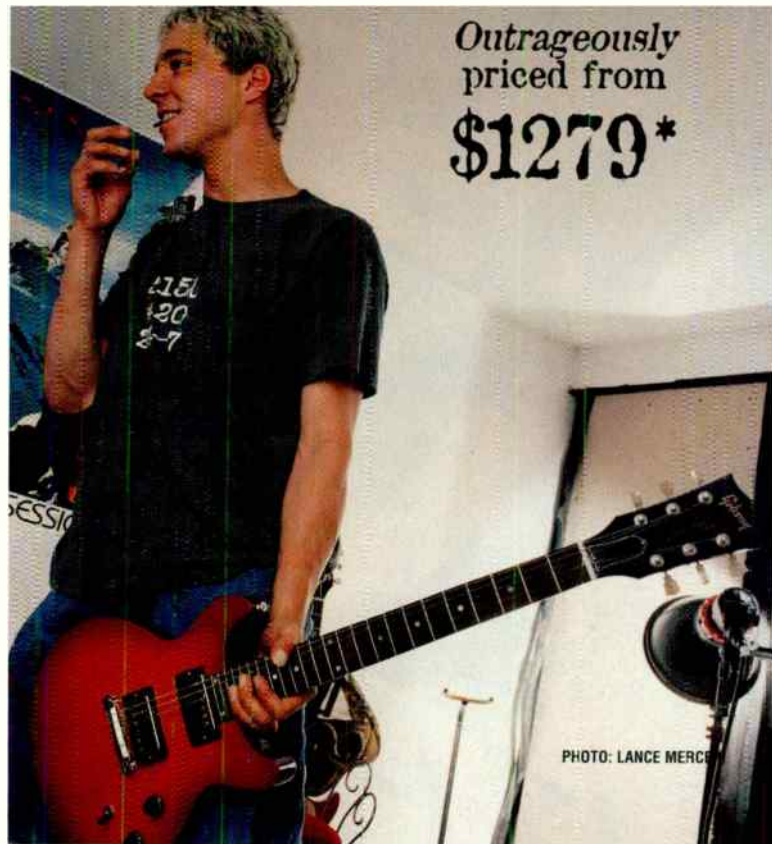
For a while Dolby did most of his busking near the Odeon metro station. Eventually he moved his act to the Pompidou Center, the city's modern arts complex and a haven for acts as diverse as street dancers and fire eaters. It was here that Dolby began dabbling in electronics, with a setup that included a battery-powered Wasp synth, a Roland Dr. Rhythm drum machine, and a Pignose amp. "I did Kraftwerk type stuff," he remembers. "A local mime artist would come over in whiteface and run through his routine to this synthesizer music. That was actually a big earner, because we got a big crowd of people around. We'd do a three-minute song. At the end there would be applause, and our assistant would go around with the hat. We made a lot of money, but right around that time I got the news from England that a record company was interested in signing me up to a contract, so I was out of there pretty fast."

The lessons learned in those distant days remain fresh for Dolby. "The main thing was to go with the right songs, ones that people would recognize. But you can't cannibalize them. If you sing 'Yesterday,' everybody's gonna know it; hopefully you'll pluck a few heartstrings and a few coins will be dropped in the hat—but only if you do justice to the song. There are buskers who go out there to get their own music heard.

That's very laudable, but I'd say that however good your music is, you're more likely to make money quickly playing standards.

"One important thing you learn from busking is to project your voice, especially if you're working without amplification. Number two would be that you learn to project your performance, to make people sit up and listen, even though they're not a captive audience. And, let's face it, there is a certain romance attached to this life. I think a lot of people would be willing to give up all sorts of creature comforts to live that way. I know I was very grateful for the opportunity—it sure beat working at McDonald's."

Thomas Dolby Recalls His Life As A Street Musician



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Over the past few years, Mike has developed a reputation as a "guitar fiend" among his fellow athletes. When he gets to a ski resort, his snowboarding friends will often have amps and P.A. gear set up, ready for an after hours jam. Whenever this happens, Mike reaches for his Gibson Les Paul DC Studio.

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Headlines

People often say that success in the music business comes down to being in the right place at the right time. Maybe so, but I also believe that we musicians shouldn't leave our careers entirely to chance. • Making sure that good things happen is hard work. A passion for a melody isn't enough to propel a career into the big time. One must also embrace the business. Not only do we need to get up and go to the right places at the right times, we had better be prepared when we get there. Thankfully for me, the hard work is paying off, and I'm Mmmbopping around the world with Hanson. • I grew up in the suburbs of New York City. Ever since I strummed my first chord, I knew my guitar and I were in it for the long haul. High school battles of the bands, local teen centers, and other community events felt like the "big time"

by Davi photos/by Eli Herahko



**Hanson's Hired-Gun
Guitarist Tells How to Find
Work With a Top Touring Act**

Managing yourself is a worthwhile education— as long as there are no dotted lines to sign on.

when I was starting out. But slowly I grew out of these gigs. It was a time to expand, and I adopted a philosophy of always searching for opportunities and making the most of each one.

Sure, this sounds obvious, but it astounds me how many people—including myself at times—don't take the responsibility for making their own opportunities. Yet most of the time, we have absolutely nothing to lose. The fact is, if you want to stimulate your career, and a unique offer is on the table, go for it.

Last February, I did just that. My friend Rob, who is now on tour as musical director for Vanessa Williams, told me about an exciting opportunity. Mercury, the label that signed Williams, was looking for a young guitar player for a road gig. He also mentioned that I was the first guy who came to mind. Could it have been the

Christmas card I had sent him?

"I gave the production coordinator your phone number," he said. "If you want to call her, she can be reached at..." I hadn't yet done a road gig, and Mercury isn't exactly chopped liver, so I instantly picked up the phone and made the call.

Greeted by an answering machine, I left a detailed message. I stated who I was, the purpose of my call, and how I had heard about the gig. Two days passed, during which she didn't return my call. Who ever heard of such a thing in the *music* industry! So being the assertive guy I try to be, I called again. This time I got through.

The production coordinator and I discussed some specifics of the band, the rehearsals, and the show. She asked me to send a press kit (photo, demo tape, and résumé) to the artist development people at Mercury. Despite feeling a little nervous, as soon as I hung up the phone, I threw myself into the task. Time is *always* of the essence.

Perched over a box full of tapes (I archive all my recordings), I searched for a place to begin. After reviewing almost everything I had ever recorded, I decided to send three "pop" songs in their full-length versions. Combining a few snippets from several tunes doesn't illustrate any ability to develop musical ideas. I was auditioning for a band, not a thirty-second jingle. My tape needed to show that I'm a good guitarist *and* a tasteful "song player."

I selected two cover tunes and one original. My composition was the first selection on the tape. After all, how often does anyone have a chance to get their own song onto the desk of a major label executive?

Next, I flicked through a few photo albums. Since Mercury was hiring for a performance position, I decided to send a live concert shot. The picture I chose wasn't the most recent, but I did look quite youthful in it. I remembered the word "young" from my conversation with Rob. *It's essential to remember those details!*

My résumé had already been prepared, but since I like to cater the presentation for each specific job, I did a little reordering and highlighting. In addition to my educa-

tion background and relevant job experience, I listed the notable names with whom I had worked and the prestigious places where I had played. I try to update my credits regularly. If too much time passes without an entry, I know I'm not working hard enough to advance my career.

Within a couple of hours of receiving my package, Mercury called to give me flight information. Soon I would be bound for Tulsa, Oklahoma, the home of Hanson.

Getting ready for this trip was no easy task. True, no one had really heard of Hanson at the time, but if Mercury was backing them, there had to be great potential there.

The first thing I did was hire *temporary* replacements for my regular gigs. You never know if anything will last in this business, so I wanted to make sure that I had some work to come home to.

I also told *everyone* what I was up to. Jinx it? Jinx is not a word in my vocabulary. I'm a big fan of the "verbal résumé." An association with a major record label gives a lot of credibility to a musician, and informing people can only lead to more good things.

Another reason for blabbing is to hear what others had to say. People touched on issues I hadn't thought of. "Are they paying you *well*?" The question made me realize that I wasn't sure what standard pay for a road gig was. "How about per diem?" I didn't even know what that meant. (Oh, spending money. Okay.) The more questions they asked, the more answers I sought. With the insight of friends like Rob, I was better prepared to negotiate a fair deal.

Should I get involved with an attorney or manager? I decided against it. At this point, there was no long-term commitment, and the dollar value wasn't significant enough. Besides, managing oneself is a worthwhile education—as long as no great fortunes are at stake and *there are no dotted lines to sign on.*

Mercury had not suggested that I sign a contract with them. I asked a few peers if this was unusual, and they all assured me that it was not. Still, I was slightly uncom-

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fortable because I like to put agreements in writing. After some consideration, I decided that requesting a “letter of intent” would be a good idea. A simple letter is less formal than a contract, yet it still provides some security. Also, I’ve found that a little professionalism will always command respect, and any trustworthy person in business will gladly commit his or her word to paper. Mercury happily obliged.

With the negotiations behind me, it was time to address the music. Since the record company had advanced me a copy of Hanson’s CD, there was no excuse for not being prepared. Every day I played along with the tracks. I learned each song and memorized every chart—even those that we were not intending to perform. When I wasn’t jamming with the tape, I was listening to it in my car or on the home system. *Never underestimate the power of subliminal absorption.*

Before leaving for Tulsa, I made sure that my rig was ideal. I knew I wouldn’t please anyone unless my sound was down. I even had piezo (acoustic) pickups installed on one of my electric guitars, just in case an acoustic sound was required. Yeah, it cost me a few bucks, but it was small change compared to the big picture. During the first Hanson show, I used them on “I Will Come to You,” and everyone was impressed that I had planned ahead enough to make that possible.

Deciding what to pack was easy. I could dress as I saw fit—gotta love rock & roll in the Nineties—and the label rented most of the backline (amps, stands, etc.) to my specifications. All I brought, in the way of gear, were my pedal effects and a couple of electric guitars.

I also made sure that I had backup for everything. At my request, our tour manager provided two amps, about twice as many sets of strings as I thought I would use, and plenty of the necessary accouterments (batteries, picks, cables, etc.). I may have gone as far as requesting guitar polish and cloths. Perhaps that was superfluous, given that the guitar tech would have it anyway. Still, I wasn’t going to overlook anything, and I didn’t want aerosol cans exploding in my luggage at an altitude of 35,000 feet!

I took one guitar onto the flight as carry-on luggage and checked the other,



which I transported in a top-notch flight case. That way, if the airline lost my bags, I would still arrive ready to play. Well, guess what happened: My bags didn’t make the connection in St. Louis. They didn’t show up in Tulsa until the following day. For me, Burt Bacharach’s song “24 Hours from Tulsa” will never be the same.

The Hanson family arrived two days after I did. They were returning home from Los Angeles, where they were shooting the “Mmmmbop” video. I was anxious to meet them, not knowing what to expect. But when Ike, Taylor, and Zac walked into

rehearsal, we all—including two other sidemen—instantly bonded. I had anticipated awkwardness among strangers but found myself jamming with friends. The chemistry was perfect.

I treated our rehearsals as an audition. Although no one had presented it that way, I knew that this was my chance to secure a permanent position. If Hanson were to make it big, I wanted to be a part of it.

My chief concern was “fitting in.” Musically, I had to play my best and adapt to the needs of the band. My extensive



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I treated our rehearsals as an audition. If Hanson were to make it big, I wanted to be a part of it.

preparation and training would have to carry me through. But in this image-driven industry, one also needs to *look* the part. I was especially aware of my appearance the first time I met the Hansons. That morning, I rummaged through my suitcase in search of something “hip” to wear. I selected black pants, a black tee, and a blue denim shirt, which I wore untucked. Of course, I also had a close “make me look young” shave. Several days later, when the Mercury A&R people appeared, I repeated the sequence.

This adventure was a prime opportunity to meet many record company executives. Hanson was getting ready to play at the NARM (National Association of Record Merchandisers) convention in Orlando, Florida. This is where labels introduce new artists to the people who sell their records. Perhaps if the opportunity presented itself, I could pass along a promotional package of my own.

Prior to leaving for Oklahoma, I had

made copies of my résumé (adding Hanson, Mercury, and NARM to my credits), duplicated my demo tape, ordered more business cards, and printed 8x10s of the photo that I had sent to Mercury. I think the promo materials took up more space in my suitcase than my clothes! When I arrived in Tulsa, I spent my first few free hours assembling press kits in my hotel room. By the time I had finished, I had stuffed fifty envelopes. The funny part is that I brought them all back home.

As my former guitar teacher Ratso always said, “It’s better to be prepared and not have an opportunity than to have an opportunity and not be prepared.” While I did encounter many record industry executives, I quickly realized that it would not be appropriate to distribute my own promotional materials. I was a member of Hanson, and it was my responsibility to support our team.

The show in Orlando was a smashing

success. When it was time to go home, the farewells were more emotional than I would have predicted. My new friends—the Hansons, sidemen, managers, crew, and label execs—were not only great business contacts but hopefully life-long friends as well. No one knew that we would soon be together again, playing all over the world and appearing on talk shows with David Letterman and Jay Leno.

Getting ahead in the music business is not a study in rocket science. A few basic principles can take you very far. For me, it really boils down to three things: Be a good person, do the best job you can, and always be prepared. ♪

Contributors: Ravi is a guitarist, singer, and songwriter living in the New York area. He can be reached via email at heyravi@aol.com; visit his Website at <http://members.aol.com/heyravi/index.html>.

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MIND YOUR P'S, Q'S, AND N E Q S,

Who one wants to kill creativity, but often musicians—as well as engineers and producers—need suggestions for ways to make your experience in a studio a success for everyone involved. If you learn nothing else from this article, at least be aware that above all, you must have respect—for people, for equipment, and for yourself. Acting like a toddler in a tantrum or an overpaid diva is not going to make your experience worth the almighty dollar you've saved for your time in the studio. And even if you've got a recording contract, your label isn't interested in offering you unlimited credit. If the label has to pay a studio for damages and wasted time, you can bet the money will come out of

to be reminded that there is a code of proper behavior in the recording studio. So said a panel of studio owners when we queried them on the question of session etiquette. In fact, one of them even looked up the word "etiquette" in the dictionary, which revealed that "etiquette consists of the prescribed forms of conduct in a polite society."

While no one is confusing the music business with "polite society," the fact remains that a lapse in manners while recording can backfire and end up costing the offend-

A Player's Guide to Studio Etiquette

By Debbie Galante Block/Illustration George Bate

When you're stoned, you may think you're 'on,' but most of the time you're not. That goes for everyone involved.

unlimited credit. If the label has to pay a studio for damages and wasted time, you can bet the money will come out of your royalties.

Without a doubt, the gospel according to everyone in the recording session chain is don't be late! Says producer Steven Miller, "I left a project last year because the artist was so arrogant and disrespectful. She must have read all the books on how to be a diva. One day, she was supposed to show up at two in the afternoon. She didn't make it in until about eight o'clock, when the musicians were walking out to get something to eat. She said, 'But I'm ready to work now!' They said, 'Yeah, but we're hungry.' Then she threw a fit. Part of my job is to

make the artist comfortable, but she was over the line."

Other time-wasters are disorganization and bad communication. Lou Gonzales, owner of Quad Studios in New York, says that if a musician or client is bringing in a particular tape they're planning to work on, "we need to be aware of the format they're bringing in so that we can be prepared. We've had people walk in with analog tapes when we're told it's a digital session. This wastes everybody's time."

Musicians should also be aware that there is at least one hour of setup time involved in even the most basic session, and that time is likely to be longer if you are bringing in your own equipment. Robbie Norris, Quad's operations manager, says, "Your gear may not be standard. You need to be aware of all the peculiarities in your equipment. Or call early to make arrangements for people at the studio to check it all out."

As far as the engineer's own equipment at the studio. Lisa Ratner, owner of New York's FasTrax Music & Audio, has this advice: "Be careful. When you come into a studio, you're anxious, so go ahead and ask questions but don't start touching everything." Ratner has learned this lesson from experience; prior to opening FasTrax, she wore the hats of songwriter—she wrote "Kiss Me in the Rain," recorded by Barbra Streisand—as well as arranger, producer, engineer, and musician. "When I went to my first big recording session as an artist, I put headphones on top of a tape box. The engineer jumped out of his seat, because magnets [in the headphones] can erase tape. I didn't know that." Luckily, no damage was done, but the moral remains, as Ratner puts it, "Be aware that you don't know a lot of things. You will learn."

Nervous energy can permeate a studio during a record or demo date. When people are nervous, they often eat, but worse than that is when they drink—carelessly.

Miller, who produced Dar Williams' recent album *End of the Summer*, remembers an especially horrific example. "My ex-boss was producing a Stevie Wonder record, and somebody inadvertently spilled coffee into the faders. They cleaned it up on the console, but some of the coffee dripped inside. Stevie came in for a playback later on, and he said, 'Something's burning.' He was reassured that nothing was burning. He went back into the studio to do another take, and later returned to the control room. Again he said, 'Something's burning!' 'No, Stevie, I'm telling you, nothing is burning!' But as they listened to the playback, flames started shooting through the console." The moral? Don't lay coffee—or anything else you might spill—down on equipment.

On the subject of equipment, pay homage to it. After using the headphones, don't throw them down. The same goes for microphones. Smoking is also terrible for studio gear. "If you smoke in the studio, you're hurting your own sound by blowing smoke into the microphones," says Gonzales. "Vocals at the beginning of an album won't sound the same all the way through if you continue to blow smoke into the mics. It also costs quite a bit of money to get them cleaned afterwards."

Drugs in the studio are another issue. Ratner advises artists to leave 'em at home. When you're stoned, she says, "You may think you're 'on,' but most of the time you're not. That goes for everyone involved. I worked in a studio once where the producer was an alcoholic. He had so many beers that there was no way he could be doing his best. We were working hard, and he was letting things go. After that session, it was all up to us [to salvage the results]."

Thankfully, hard drugs are not as common in the studio as they were in the late Seventies, according to Miller. He describes one date when a famous artist was supposed to leave the studio but instead barricaded the door. As the cocaine flowed, this

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The Gospel according to everyone in the recording session chain is: **Don't be late**

artist proclaimed that he was not coming out. "The police had to be called. These incidents don't happen much anymore, and I hope we'll never see them again. I haven't seen people breaking up studio equipment in a long time. Face it: Drugs contribute to bad studio etiquette."

Getting Your Money's Worth

If you're lucky enough to be signed to a major label, budgets are rarely a problem, but when it comes to making a demo, however, you'd better be much more aware of where the money is going, because it's all yours. Hard and fast rules are nonexistent, because each situation is different, although there are a few probabilities to keep in mind—for example, if you hire someone who can write, arrange, produce, and engineer your music, that person will expect to be compensated for doing four separate jobs.

As for picking a producer within your budget, Miller insists that the criteria should be the same whether it's a \$15,000 solo project or a \$400,000 major label album. "Go after your first choice," he advises. "I may hear an eighteen-year-old kid who is so brilliant that I'll be willing to risk time for less payment than I usually get."

The balance of control between the artist and the producer not only depends on your budget but also on the type of project and style of music you're recording, adds Miller. "On the one end, there is the

established band that functions and makes records. More often than not, the producer is an observer advocate in that situation. On the other end is a dance record where the singer is the observer. Then there are all of the situations in between."

If the producer has to make something really great on a limited budget, he or she must be proactive. "On a major label," Miller says, "the band may argue a point in the studio for three days. I might try to facilitate an understanding before finally stepping in. But, in the same situation, if you have a \$15,000 budget, I'll say, 'I can't waste more than fifteen minutes on this dispute.'"


The best advice for musicians is to be realistic about your situation. Miller recounts, "I was doing demos a few years ago. I had musicians walk in who didn't know the artist, didn't know the music, but in three hours they walked out with four tunes cut that were almost record level. The artist was disturbed because she thought I was racing around, not paying attention to her. I said, 'Don't you understand? You can only pay this amount of money, and the only way to get this is for me to race around and do my thing. Otherwise you'd be sitting here, still trying to explain the second chord on the first song.' In her ideal, she'd be able to take the time to vibe with the musician, but that wasn't realistic."

Probably the most important thing to remember about artist/producer etiquette is that you hired this producer because of

his or her experience. Even though you are the artist paying for the studio, that doesn't mean your head should swell out of proportion. "Listen to your producer," says Ratner. "He or she is likely to know more than you."

And humble thyself with others you work with as well. "I remember the first time I walked into a studio," says Ratner. "I was signed as an artist to Elektra. The studio was the Hit Factory in New York. I had all of the top players waiting to record. I walked up to the band and said, 'I think you'll find me very easy to work with.' Then they laughed at me. I was an eighteen-year-old pipsqueak talking to top professionals. These guys were playing with the likes of Stevie Wonder and Harry Chapin."

Rob Stevens, who has produced artists such as Yoko Ono and the Screaming Blue Messiahs, says, "When a musician expresses himself correctly, it's very valuable. When he expresses himself incorrectly, it's an intrusion and can be disruptive. I can learn from musicians, just as they learn from me."

It boils down to this: Musicians need to use common sense. If you offer respect to the people whose respect you want in return, the recording session should be as pleasurable and successful as you've always dreamed. 

Contributors: Debbie Galante Block is a New York-based journalist specializing in pro-audio and optical disc manufacturing issues.

letters

work that made him. If the guy wants to write music with no words, he should just do it and stop talking so much.

raymy krumrei
no address given

drugs revisited

With reference to your article on drugs and the music industry (Headlines, Jan. '98), ten years ago I wrote a book on this subject, called *Waiting for the Man*. So much has happened in this area since then—not least the U.K. ecstasy/dance scene, the profile now enjoyed by cannabis culture, and all those post-cocaine confessionals—that I am preparing a new edition of the book.

I would be very glad to hear from musicians via email about their experiences, both good and bad, in relation to drugs and their profession. I'm interested in all aspects, including the issue of drugs and creativity (covered in the May '92 issue of *Musician*) and examples of where the industry has colluded in the drugs/music dynamic. This could be anything from a policy of non-interference

to assisting in "supply on demand."

I'm also interested in hearing the views and experiences of managers, producers, roadies, record company executives, etc. All contributions will be held in strictest confidence.

harry shapiro
HShap52991@aol.com

wallflowers

I agree one hundred percent with Jakob Dylan's remarks regarding the opinions that critics and other musicians may have about his band (Jan. '98). A person's feelings about a piece of music has no bearing on whether that music is valid. All music is a form of communication. Constructive suggestions about that communication are one thing, but vicious personal attacks are Hitlerish at best.

russell j. reiser
forest junction, WI

loops 'n' jingles

Kudos to Shawn Clement on knowing what com-

puter tricks to use to create derivative electronic music for commercials (Power Users, Dec. '97). But how well suited is this method for making original or satisfying electronic music? Because of the recent surge of interest in electronica, we'll be seeing more products meant to make it easy for anyone to compose that "perfect" electronic track. But if you haven't spent some time listening to the music, learning its history (yes, there is history there), or understanding its influences, your work won't be any good. It'll just be the sound of someone jumping someone else's train.

I haven't seen the commercial that Clement scored, but I imagine that a second-generation blurred photocopy of a U2 tune is perfect for that idiom.

david heagle
sommernaut@earthlink.net

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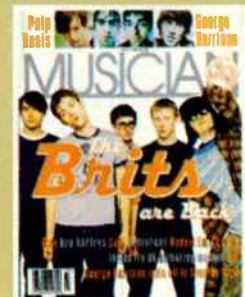
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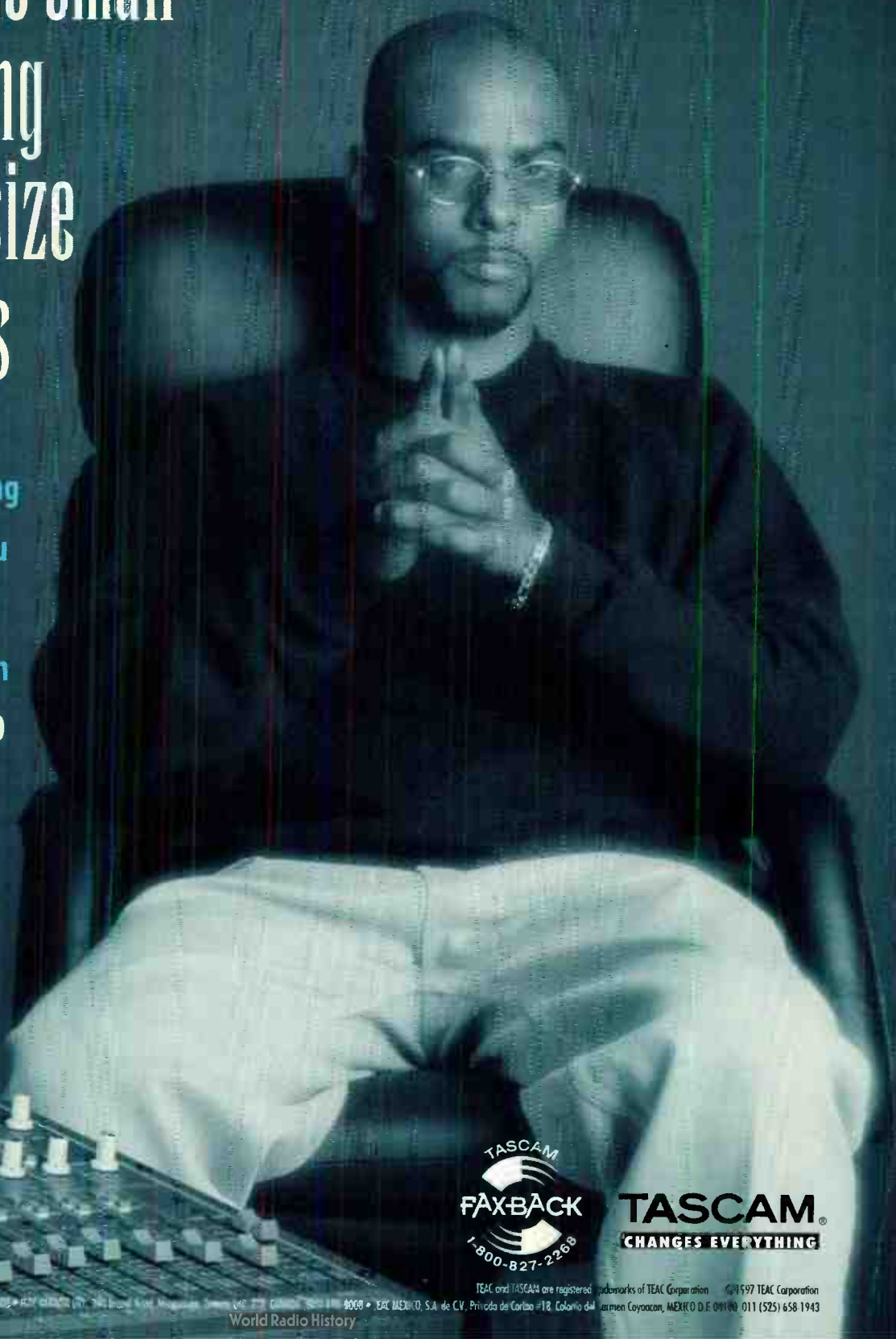
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1 Line 6 Amp Farm software

It might not be time for you to pawn your guitar rig just yet, but if Line 6 has their way, guitarists with access to a Pro Tools-equipped Macintosh computer won't have much need for amps or mics when recording. Their new Amp Farm software plugin (\$595) uses proprietary physical modeling technology to make your direct signal sound as though it were being played through one of eight classic amps ('86 Marshall JCM 800, Marshall '64 JTM45, '68 Marshall "Plexi," '63 Vox AC-30, '64 Fender Blackface Deluxe, '67 Fender Twin, '59 Fender Bassman, '87 Roland JC-120). All "virtual" amps can be tweaked during any point in the recording or mixing process, and feedback can be attained via your monitor speakers. ▶ **Line 6, 11260 Playa Ct., Culver City, CA 90230; voice (310) 390-5956**

2 Samson Series One UHF wireless instrument system

Tired of tripping over your instrument cable but can't afford a wireless system? Your stumbling days are over, friend, thanks to Samson's Series One UHF wireless system (\$449). Now you can do your best whirling dervish impression onstage without pulling your amp over or strangling yourself—or your checkbook, for that matter. The Series One operates in the 800-806 MHz UHF bandwidth and consists of a half-rack-size receiver equipped with two molded antennae, a multi-segment RF level meter, SQUELCH control, AUDIO PEAK and RECEIVER A/B LEDs, and two compact transmitters equipped with new PLL (phase-lock loop) technology that's said to lock in your signal while keeping passing taxi driver's conversations out of the mix. Other features include balanced XLRs and a single unbalanced 1/4" output. ▶ **Samson Technologies Corp., Box 9031, Syosset, NY 11791-9031; voice (516) 364-2244**

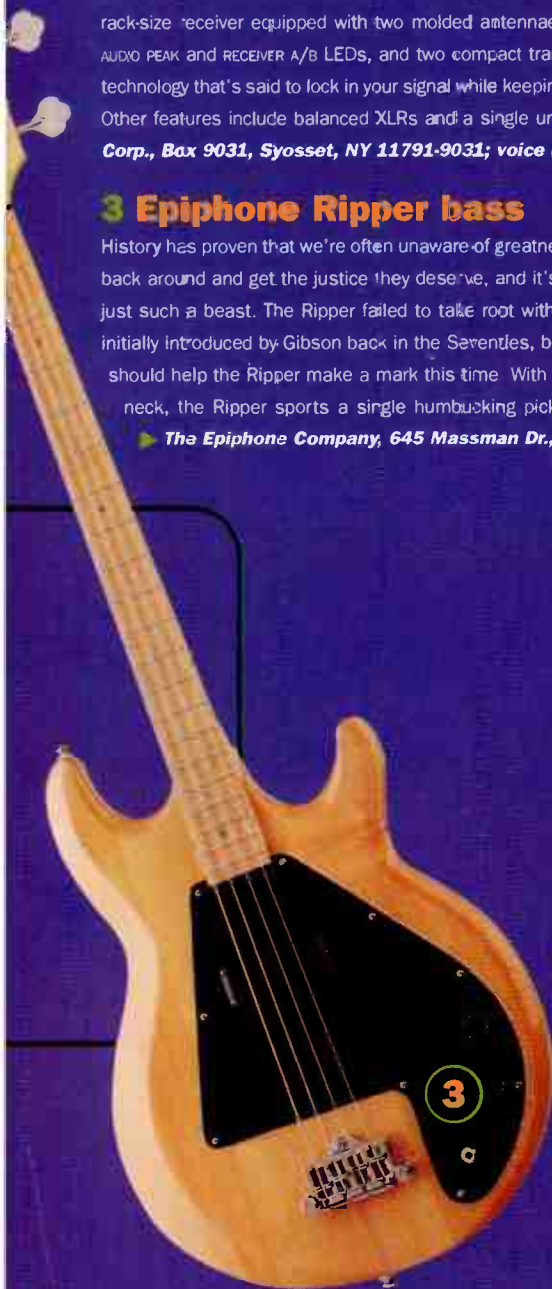
3 Epiphone Ripper bass

History has proven that we're often unaware of greatness in our midst, but some of the good things come back around and get the justice they deserve, and it's our guess that Epiphone's Ripper bass (\$750) is just such a beast. The Ripper failed to take root with the mainstream bass playing public when it was initially introduced by Gibson back in the Seventies, but it's oddly menacing curves and thin body profile should help the Ripper make a mark this time. With a solid maple body and a 34"-scale bolt-on maple neck, the Ripper sports a single humbucking pickup and is available in ebony or natural finishes.

▶ **The Epiphone Company, 645 Massman Dr., Nashville, TN 37210; voice (615) 871-4500**



fast f





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4 Akai DPS12 12-track digital personal studio

If you already thought the lines between professional and home studios were smeared, Akai's DPS12 12-track digital personal studio is poised to erase them altogether. Capable of recording up to eight tracks simultaneously, the DPS12 offers full editing ability via a jog/shuttle dial, and a backlit-LCD provides access to both the menu-driven interface and a virtual mix; six assignable function keys below the LCD grant access to most operations. The DPS12's 20-channel mixer (including 12 assignable faders) features six balanced inputs, two auxiliary sends, programmable digital equalization, and S/PDIF optical I/Os. The DPS12 is available in a variety of configurations (\$1,499-\$2,149) depending on which internal or external hard drive option you choose and whether or not you want the built-in multi-effects processor. ► **Akai Musical Instrument Corp., 1316 E. Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76102; voice (817) 336-5114**

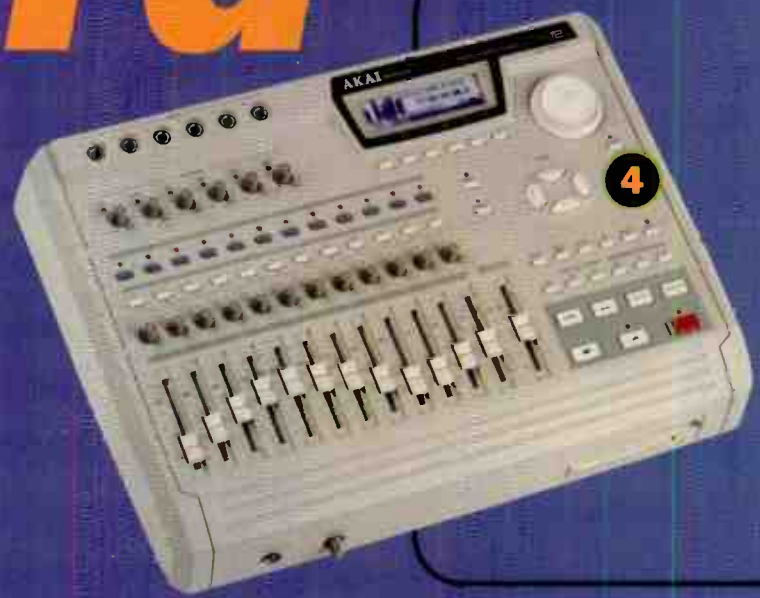
5 Lexicon LexiVerb software

Pro Tools aficionados take note: If you've been waiting to integrate topnotch reverb into your workstation, you'll be glad to know that Lexicon's LexiVerb (\$795) is here to save the day. This new TDM-compatible plug-in supports ProTools 4.0 automation and offers complete control over individual effect parameters; four main algorithms (CHAMBER, PLATE, INVERSE, GATE) are provided, each one with its own pop-up faders used to adjust the specific parameters. A frequency response graph displays low-, mid-, and high-frequency envelope bands. Other features include 24-bit DSP processing, 100 factory presets, and a built-in macro editor for grouping up to four effect parameters (with individual adjustments) at once. ► **Lexicon, 3 Oak Park, Bedford, MA 01730-1441; voice (617) 280-0300**

6 Farfisa G7 keyboard

We've come a long way from the days when Farfisa's Compact organs were the keyboard of choice for Sixties garage bands and Seventies narrow-tied new wavers, but the 61-key G7 (\$2,295 in black, \$2,350 in red or silver) is Farfisa's new statement for the Nineties. Designed for both live and studio applications, the G7 features "flash memory" that lets its memory act as both RAM and ROM without battery backup, 96 programs that can store sound and rhythm setups, a 16-track sequencer with comprehensive editing capabilities, 128 GM sounds (each with four variations, one of which can be modified), and a screen that displays song lyrics. ► **Farfisa, c/o Music Industries Corp., 99 Tulip Ave., Ste. 101, Floral Park, NY 11011; voice (800) 431-6699, (516) 352-4110**

Forward



An Inside Tip from a Professional.

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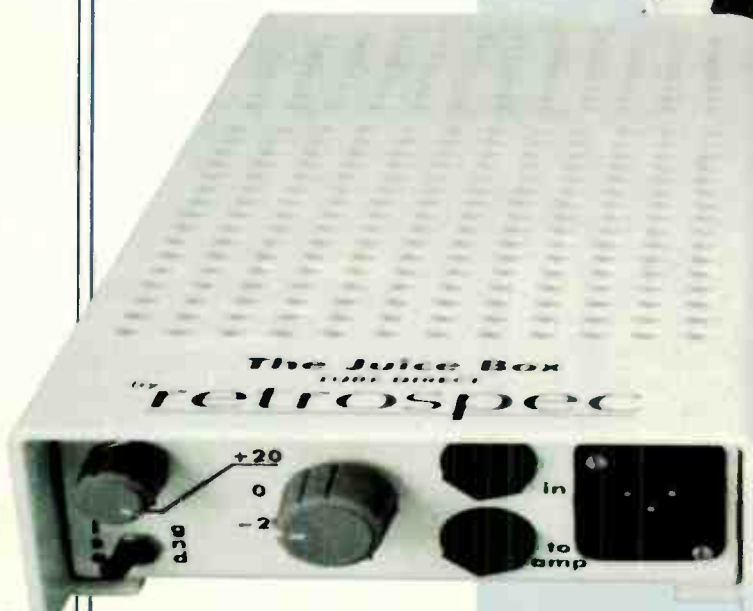
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World Radio History



Retrospec's two tube boxes will juice up your signal.

There are two kinds of fools. One says, 'This is old and therefore good.' The other says, 'This is new and therefore better.'
—Author unknown

This quotation is just about the best I can do to reconcile the simultaneous rise of digital recording with today's almost religious reverence for tube gear. At first glance, the pairing of the two seems incongruous—after all, isn't "new" digital supposed to deliver pure, clear sound without any of the hiss, grunge, and fuzziness wrought by "old" analog?

The truth just isn't that simple. In fact, many people feel that digital sound has an unpleasant edge, that there's something missing. There's plenty of definition, to be sure (and there

Mama's got a Squeeze Box

by howard massey

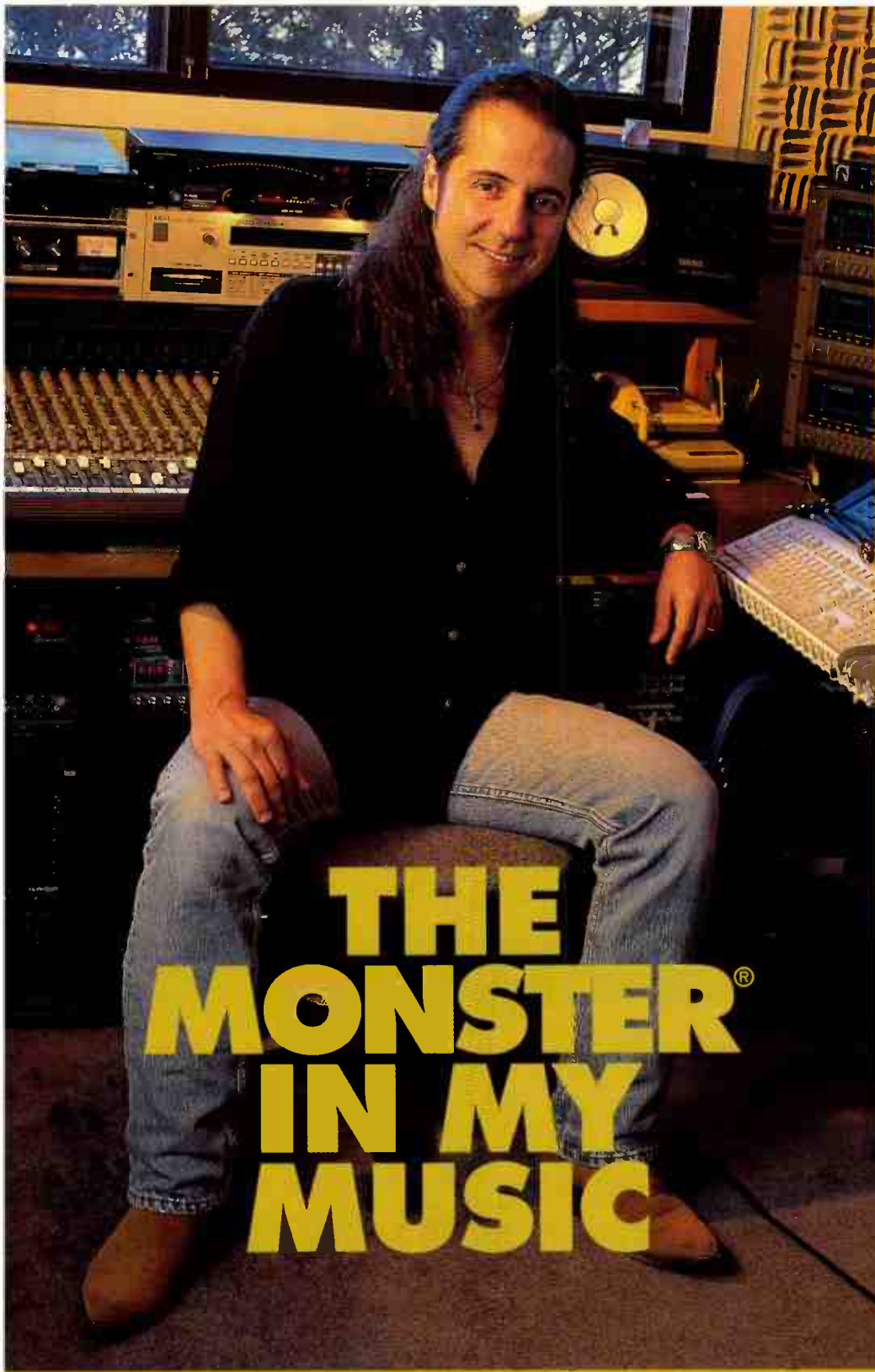
will be even more in future high-resolution systems), but the sound is often lacking in smoothness and warmth.

And that's where good old-fashioned tubes come in. Thanks to some immutable laws of physics, tubes happen to deal extremely well with musical transients, removing harshness and mellowing the sound out nicely by adding a certain something (even-order harmonics, if you must know) that most folks find pleasing to the ear. Combine a well-built tube device with a state-of-the-art digital recording system and you've got the best of both worlds—a marriage of old and new that any fool could learn to love.

Enter two extraordinary devices from a company called Retrospec: the Juice Box and Squeeze Box. Designed by the former chief maintenance engineer at New York's Bearsville Studios, both boxes provide an excellent, affordable introduction to the wonderful world of tubes—and both deserve of a place of honor in anyone's home studio or stage rig.

Belying its appearance as a kind of high-tech waffle iron, the Juice Box (\$595) is actually a tool known as a direct box (sometimes known as a "DI," or "Direct Inject" box). A direct box enables you to plug an electric bass or guitar directly into a mic input of your mixing console, bypassing the need to physically place a mic in front of a loudspeaker being driven by an instrument amplifier. In the studio, this can not only save you the expense of buying an amp, speaker, and mic, it can also spare you the hassle of neighbors





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by **howard massey**

Ground

Control (to Major Tom)

Hmmmmm. Bzzzzzz. Click! Zzzzshhhhh. Unless you're producing serious industrial/techno music, these are most definitely not sounds you want to hear coming from the speakers in your home studio. Unfortunately, one or more of these audio gremlins often make their presence known—and Murphy's Law being what it is, usually just as you're about to lay down a critical overdub or complete a tricky mix.

But the good news is that with just a basic understanding of a few electrical principles and the application of a little common sense, there are a lot of things you can do to minimize these, and other potentially more serious, grounding problems.

This is actually a subject that's near and dear to my heart. My first home studio was put together on an extremely tight budget, with most of the labor supplied by yours truly. Looking back with 20/20 hindsight, it's safe to say that I really didn't know what I was doing. As a result, the room was plagued with an assortment of clicks, buzzes, and pops, as well as an unacceptably high noise floor—all of which were a constant source of frustration to me. When I moved into a new home and set out to build my second (and current) home studio, I was determined to learn from my mistakes. This time around, I reached deeper into my pockets and hired a couple of professionals to do the audio and electrical wiring, peppering these guys with questions all along the way. Between the answers I got from them and the mistakes I made the first time around, I felt like I had taken (and passed) a crash course in grounding. And yes, my new studio is quiet and clean as a whistle!

In an ideal world, the flow of electrons that we call electricity would always be completely steady and would simply enter a device, do its work, and then quickly leave, departing for the lowest point it can find, called *ground*. However, this is hardly an ideal world. The electrical flow that enters your home and home studio is, in fact, notoriously unstable, affected not only by the demands placed on it from other sources (the reason your lights dim when an air conditioner kicks in), but also by a variety of environmental factors such as radio waves and other electromagnetic fluxes. These kinds of interference are so common, in fact, they've been given names of their own: radio frequency interference (RFI) and electromagnetic interference (EMI). What's more, when you interconnect multiple devices with audio cables, electrical problems tend to multiply. For example, you may be providing numerous paths to ground (each with a differing degree of resistance) or even creating *ground loops* where

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Trust the Force

Lukasz Gottwald
plugs into
TC Electronic

Lukasz Gottwald has a day gig. And like many musicians, Gottwald's day gig is somewhat different from his personal musical identity. But unlike most of us, the 24-year old guitarist/composer/producer/remixer has a day gig to die for: guitarist in the *Saturday Night Live* band. "I love playing guitar and I love the show," he says from the comfort of his Manhattan home studio. "But that's just part of what I do. For me, the guitar is just a musical tool, like a hammer. It's to be respected, but not revered." So soon after snapping off some blues runs and pronouncing a new retro-chic Tone King tube amp fit for action (the same model he uses on the show), Gottwald fires up his latest tool, the TC Electronic G-Force guitar processor, and cues up the remix of the *Mortal Kombat* theme, which he created along with partner David Beale. The cut's thunderous groove is driven by a hard-edged oscillating bass line that sounds like a stack of analog synths being played by a mad scientist. "That's all guitar, going through the G-Force," Gottwald points out as the tune continues. It sure is a far cry from the blues. "Outside of the show, I want people to listen to my mixes and say, 'That's a guitar?' I try to avoid standard chorus/ reverb sounds as much as possible."

TC Electronic may have had people like Gottwald in mind when they minted the G-Force. The single rackspace 24-bit processor is far cry from run-of-the-rack gear, offering a killer combination of deep programmability and a straight-for-

Photo: Sikora

ward user interface that should set the standard for future high-end guitar processing. "I just plug straight in," Gottwald says, "I like the fact that you can get cool sounds without an amp or anything else." Fully-editable effects include GATE, COMPRESSOR, FILTERS, PAN+TRIM, PITCH, DELAY (with tap tempo), DRIVE, CHORUS, and REVERB, and there's a built-in tuner onboard, as well. The effects can be arranged in a software chain that functions just like individual stomp boxes in a pedalboard. They can be placed in any order, routed in series and/or parallel, and chains can be broken off and patched into several directions at once. The factory presets (there are 225 of 'em) range from standard guitar combinations of distortion, compression, chorus, delay and reverb to some bizarre tone bending monster movie madness. But while the presets may offer some interesting sounds, the way to the Force involves creating your own patches; there's room for 100 user-definable presets.


Tweakers will instantly warm to the G-Force's excellent display and logical interface. "It's arranged for dummies . . . in a good way," says Gottwald as he scrolls through and demonstrates programs he's created (many of which may be offered in the future by TC as optional memory-card presets). "Each knob or button has a logical function that stays pretty consistent no matter what you're doing on the box. I hate boxes that are confusing—you should be able to conceive of a sound in your head and then go into the box and execute it right away."

Gottwald's creations draw on a wide range of influences (Jimi Hendrix, Wes Montgomery and Bill Frisell are his favorite guitarists), but he says he spends as much time listening to hip-hop as he does to his guitar heroes. He cites the underground hip-hop and jungle scene—especially New York's Rawkus label (for whom he has released a 12" EP under the name Kasz)—as an especially rich source of fresh ideas. "I see hip-hop as the vibrant music of today: originality is important, whereas in pop, sounding like someone else is often considered a good thing." The textures he showed me range from shimmering Andy Summers-esque voicings ("Portis Doll"), the impossibly squashed "Filthy" (which is designed to stand out in a dense mix), to the extreme industrial-strength nastiness of "Rave Rez Guitar," the central sound in the *Mortal Kombat* remix. "I love getting in there and using the filters like you would on a Waldorf [synth]. Sometimes, I'll run a track through the G-Force going to tape,

then run it back through a different G-Force program at mix time."

Many of Gottwald's most interesting sounds involve creative use of the G-Force's deep modulation scheme. Virtually every parameter in a given preset can be controlled with a low-frequency oscillator (LFO) or in real time with an external sweep pedal. An obvious application might be wah or volume-swell effects, but the G-Force is capable of going much further. Gottwald's "Sexy Chicken" patch uses the LFO, tied to the tap-tempo feature to create a distant twisted cousin to auto-wah. "You set the LFO to [the filter's] RESONANCE and have it trigger at four times the tempo, so it oscillates four times every beat. It acts like an auto wah, but it sounds very different."

Gottwald's use of real-time control really demonstrates the G-Force's creative potential. "The cool thing is the way you can have the pedal control more than one parameter at a time," Gottwald explains. He dials up another program: "The mod pedal affects the amount of distortion, the pitch shift mix level, and the chorus mix and width all at once." Each parameter can respond to the pedal

independently, *i.e.*, a full sweep might increase distortion by fifty percent but change the pitch mix level by only ten percent. As Gottwald sweeps through the pedal, his guitar's clean jangle smoothly gives way to distortion; only at the very bottom of the sweep does the lower-octave pitch-shift come in. As Gottwald plays a series of licks up the fretboard, his movement on the pedal only occasionally reaches far enough to mix in the octave. He hands me the guitar, but when I try the preset, I get very different results; there's a technique involved with the pedal that I haven't yet picked up. But as I keep at it, my own style emerges: By controlling the processor in real time, you're able to inject your personality into the sound in a way simply impossible with most other off-the-shelf rack effects. "I like every box to have its own sound," Gottwald said later. "You should be able to make it sound good or bad, but it should sound like nothing else." 

Contributors: E.D. Menasché is a composer, guitarist, and co-owner of PM Productions, a recording facility in Crompond, New York.

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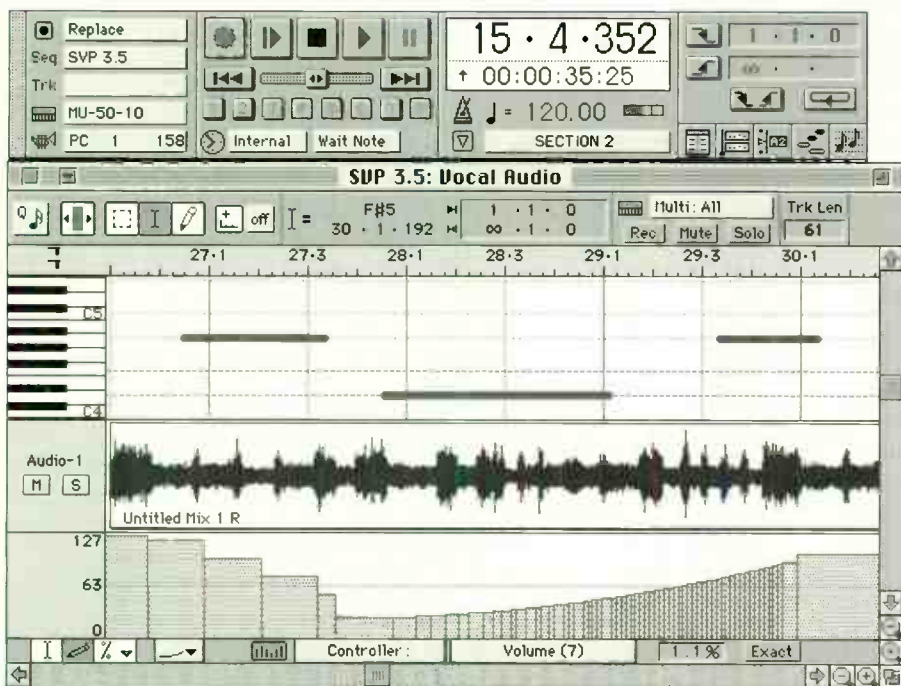
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While My *by e.d. menasché* GUITAR Gently Beeps

Talk about your underground movements . . . I use a computer sequencer almost every day of my professional musical life, and I know a lot of other guitarists who use computer sequencers, but you'd never know it from looking at the pages of most magazines or equipment catalogs. Maybe it's backlash against the bad old days of guitar synthesizers when "state of the art" offered a very uninspiring choice between lousy tracking or weird, emphatically un-guitarlike "controllers"—the very antithesis of the plug-and-play ideal we axe-grinders grew up with. Nowadays,

steel strings, hot glass & silicon get along just fine

though, guitar technology continues to reach new levels of creative power; yet guitarists are portrayed as modern-day musical Luddites, interested only in recreating the past. You can't market microchips to people still infatuated with the hot glass of vacuum tubes, can you?

The truth is, more guitarists are becoming aware of the compositional and recording power of sequencers. The guitar may never approach the keyboard as an ideal MIDI controller, but MIDI guitar has improved enough to take advantage of the guitar's unique character. Better yet, digital recording has become an elegantly integrated part of many of the top sequencers on the market,

among them Opcode's Studio Vision Pro, Cakewalk Pro Audio (Windows), Steinberg Cubase VST (Windows and Mac) and Mark of the Unicorn's Digital Performer (Mac). These software packages allow you to cut, copy, and paste guitar licks the way you would with MIDI data. In fact, though it can surely add spice to the computer-guitar relationship, a MIDI-equipped guitar isn't really necessary at all.

That said, if you haven't touched a MIDI guitar lately, you may be surprised at the quality of the options available. Roland's

**MOTU's
Digital
Performer**

GK-2 hex pickup can be mounted to any guitar and drive their line of guitar synthesizers, including the GR-30 and GR-50. Both

models offer full MIDI capabilities and have some interesting onboard sounds, though I found myself opting for other sound modules more often. The GK-2 senses each string individually and tracks quite well. Even string bending and vibrato translate, though not without some limitations.

Several guitar manufacturers have jumped onto the bandwagon by integrating GK-2 compatibility into their instruments. I recently tested the spectacular C-90PM from Brian Moore Custom Guitars, which offers standard magnetic pickups, a piezo for acoustic guitar type sounds, and fast-tracking MIDI-ready output that's compatible with all 13-pin guitar synths like the aforementioned Rolands and others. The guitar itself is a piece of art; fortunately all the electronic power does nothing to distract from the core playing experience. Link the C-90PM to the right computer package and you can create highly orchestrated music without ever switching instruments.

NEEDS

Let's assume you have a fast computer, a big hard disk, an audio card, and an attitude, plus a guitar and all the necessary accessories. You'll need a MIDI interface, a MIDI sound module, such as a sampler, synth, or drum machine, and some sort of controller. (MIDI guitar qualifies, but so does a keyboard or drum pad.)

Integration between digital recording and sequencing has improved so much recently that digital sequencers function quite well as digital multitracks and can be effective tools using little or no MIDI. These programs, for example, let you record as many tracks and takes as memory allows, sync the whole thing up to an external machine like a tape multitrack or video deck, automate mixing moves and, depending on CPU speed and your external hardware, even add effects like reverb, compression, chorus, delay, and more, either in real time with special software TDM inserts, or as edits written to disk. The MIDI utilities

are equally impressive: If you've never played around with a high-powered computer sequencer, the amount of freaky tweaking you can do to your music—from correcting timing anomalies to developing harmonies to creating random passages—will leave you absolutely breathless.

Computers are great at keeping track of information. For example, you can name and add comments about each track—a major benefit over traditional tape recording, especially when a song is in the developmental stage. Plus, when you come back to a song after a long layoff, all the important information appears on screen right away. That beats the hell out of rifling through disorganized notebooks trying to figure out what your handwriting is supposed to mean.


When composing with software, I'll often start by deciding on a tempo and setting up a click track. Next, I mic up my guitar and lay a basic rhythm guitar part or riff into the computer. The theory is to let the guitar dictate the feel of the song while my ideas are still fresh and my emotions are in motion. Recording in this manner is quite different from using tape because you can create new takes without necessarily erasing the old ones. And it's fast—the software locates instantly to precise locations. You can automate punch in/out, defining the area you want to record in terms of bars and beats, which is often much easier than keeping track of tape times. Cobbling a final take together is also easy—you can grab a waveform and move it around in the tracks window or double-click on the wave for more detailed editing.

In a recent example, I recorded a steady, repeating eight-bar riff, starting on the second measure. Then I told the software to loop the riff so that it would repeat without interruption. (Playback was smooth and glitch-free.) After putting a simple drum pattern in place, I started playing with the riff, first moving it two beats earlier, totally changing the groove from a mundane "four" feel to a pulsating backwards groove. Next, I moved the guitar's loop point forward by one measure, adding a measure of rest to the loop, essentially creating a 9-against-8 polyrhythm. This took a total of about ten minutes. The novelty of my musical adventure soon wore off, however, so I went back and realigned the guitar to its original position, got rid of the loop, copied the guitar riff into the

clipboard, and pasted it together to form a thirty-two bar "verse." This kind of editing is "non-destructive," so you can paste audio as many times as you want without chewing up disk space.

Once the basic guitar is in place, I'll go back and fine-tune the drums, using the guitar as a guide. From there, who knows? Depending on the song, I could stay traditional and lay down more guitar, bass and vocals, or go the opposite route and start moving things around and using synth textures and sampled loops. Or I may combine the two approaches. The point is, because guitar is my instrument of choice, I'm starting from a stronger foundation than I would if I were programming a drum pattern and using MIDI keyboards to create the harmonic structure of the song. But I still have power over my music that's simply unavailable when working with tape.

CHOICES

While tape still has an important place in any serious studio, the power and ease of working with a good computer package can't be ignored, even by us guitarists. Although entry-level MIDI sequencers are relatively inexpensive, making the leap into the digital audio domain can add up. Most high-end software packages list for nearly \$1,000, and that doesn't count the cost of the computer, interface, sound card or storage. And that's the one drawback for guitarists: In my view, the most appealing part of sequencing is the way it allows you to use your axe as a guitar first and a MIDI controller second, while still taking advantage of the power that sequencing has to offer. If you're a guitarist/composer, especially if you're interested in composing music for film or other media, I can't think of a more powerful creative tool, even if your style is heavily rooted in tradition. So plug in, mic up your tube amp, jack into your computer, and rip. Steel strings, hot glass, and silicon get along just fine. 

Special thanks to Patrick Cummings and Brian Moore Guitars for help in preparing this article.

Contributors: E.D. Menasché's most recent film score is Parallel Sun, to be released by Eureka Pictures.

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World Radio History

Slosh-Rock Serenade

Few metaphors can do justice to Shawn Ryder's kooky, cacophonous loose-groove collective, Black Grape. But picture this: a frat house full of drunken triple-kegging lunkheads, spilling out onto the lawn at three in the

morning and yowling, barely in key, at the top of their collegiate lungs. You pull the pillow around your ears. You want to hate these assholes, want to throw open the window and really give 'em hell. But—and this is the psychologically twisted part—you end up with a grudging respect for the lads and their lackadaisical loudness. The old "if you can't beat 'em, might as well join 'em" scenario.

Ryder occasionally worked that shtick in his old Mancunian outfit Happy Mondays, but on Black Grape's sophomore release *Stupid Stupid Stupid*—which he aptly describes as a "party in a box"—he positively flogs the concept to death. And surprise! You don't hate him for it.

Besides Ryder's bulldog-bark vocals, *Stupid* is aswim in conflicting, discordant noises, such as scratchy samples, repetitive grinding guitar loops, funky Hammond/Rhodes forays, and the tandem rap/toasting of Paul "Kermit" Leveridge. Producer/multi-instrumentalist Danny Saber keeps the mix so muddy and messy—a calculated sloppiness—it *does* sound like these guys have just tumbled "whoohoo"-ing from the ale-soaked Tappa Kegga Daily house. Sure, they've plundered historic pop-soul ideas here and there, Saber allows, "but even if we took a bass line off a specific record, I'll end up replaying it, then we'll throw another wild loop onto *that*, and then some guitar part from *another* record. So we might rip off something in a way, but it turns into something totally different by

Black Grape
Stupid Stupid Stupid
(Radioactive/MCA)

the time it comes out." Conceptually, Ryder adds, "We treated every track on the album like it'd be a single, did each song justice so it would *all* be entertaining."

Lofty aspirations. But sometimes—as on the thief-for-a-relative thumper "Dadi Waz a Badi" (which reprises the opening guitar line from "Free Ride" and boasts a no-brainer chorus of "You got it/I want it/You know I'm gonna get it")—the beer-goggled idea simply passes out in the yard before reaching fruition.

When Black Grape is firing on all slobbery six, however, you can't help but "whoohoo" along. Like the opening "Get Higher," a drug-themed shambler that revolves on a circular axe riff and Saber-rattling rhythms, and reconfigures words from a sampled Reagan speech until old Ron reveals that "Nancy and I are . . . hooked on heroin!" It's stupid, stupid, stupid, alright—a little dose of dumb fun in a straight-faced, weapons-of-mass-destruction world. Ditto for the Al Greenish "Marbles," a Phil Lynott-honoring "Spotlight," the vaguely Middle Eastern "Tell Me Something," and the album's addictive centerpiece "Squeaky," which sounds like it was tracked at the end of a week-long tequila bender. Ryder is in his element here, as guitars thunder all around him, hissing, "I wanna get cheeky with ya/I wanna get squeaky inside ya. . . . Ooh! She's *skanky!*" Party in a box, indeed.

Don't throw shoes. Don't call the police. Just put on your robe and slippers and trundle next door to join Ryder and company for a few fast pints. There's still two kegs to go, and they've got a *bitchin'* sound system, dude!

—Tom Lanham

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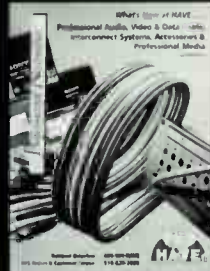


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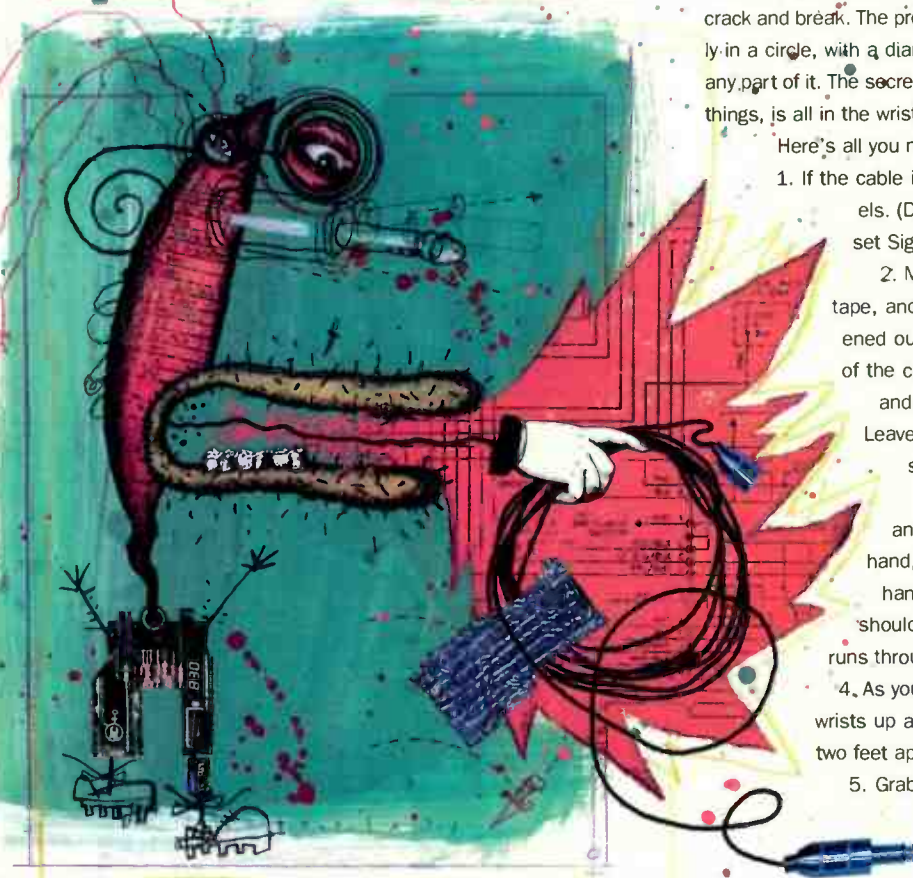
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It's a wrap: The fine art of coiling cable.

In fifteen years of playing, I've seen some great bands have some terrible fights. Many of the ones that escalated from tense words into a mic-stand-tossing battle royal, complete with a variety of loudly-shouted anatomically impossible suggestions, began with a simple disagreement—not over women or bar tabs, but over the correct way to wrap a cord.

I asked a half-dozen soundmen to describe the process. Several told me that it comes down to an extremely simple two-step procedure:

1. Don't touch it.
2. Hand it to me.

The other methods were pretty similar, with the clearest description coming from my old schoolmate Chris Murphy, who offered a brief history and overview of cord wrapping, followed by some basic steps. In his words:

"Cables are the most handled and abused part of any sound

system. They get pulled, thrown, stepped on, soaked by a variety of fluids, tripped over, run over, smashed in doors, laid in mud, rained on, spit on, and generally subjected to the type of abuse that would destroy the gear they're designed to work for. Proper storage and coiling will help lower cable maintenance, setup time, and soundman turnover.

"One of the worst ways to store a cable is the 'palm-elbow' wrapping method. This puts stress on each part of the cable that makes a 180-degree turn, and eventually those sections will crack and break. The proper way to store a cable is to coil it neatly in a circle, with a diameter that puts no appreciable strain on any part of it. The secret to a well-wrapped cord, as with so many things, is all in the wrist."

Here's all you need to know:

1. If the cable is dirty, wipe it off with some paper towels. (Disinfectant is necessary only after three-set Sigma Nu gigs.)
2. Make sure the cable is free of kinks, duct tape, and square knots, and reasonably straightened out. If you are right-handed, place the end of the cable in your right hand, with your thumb and the plug end pointing away from you. Leave a short amount dangling. (Huh, huh, he said dangle.)
3. Grab the rest of the cable loosely, and slide your left hand away from your right hand, letting the cable slip through your left hand as it moves; in this way your left hand should remove any kinks or twists as the cable runs through it.
4. As you pull your hands apart, slowly bend both wrists up and out; stop when your hands are about two feet apart.
5. Grab the cable firmly with both hands; while bending both wrists in and down, bring the parts of the cable in each hand together.
6. Pass the cable section from your left hand to your right hand, so

that your right hand is holding both sections of the cable. It *should* hang very neatly in a near-perfect circle from your right hand.

7. Repeat steps 2–6 until the cable is fully wrapped.
8. Secure the cable with reusable Velcro strips or, in a pinch, a *small* piece of duct tape.
9. If you are left-handed, get a right-handed roadie to wrap your cables.

Practice this method and you'll greatly increase the life of your cables. Not only that, but you'll have a much happier soundman and lots more time to argue about important things—such as, whose idea was it to let that stunning go-go dancer onstage? Who gave her the mic? And didn't anyone notice her Adam's apple?—**Reverend Billy C. Wirtz**

Thanks to Chris, the folks at Ace Music, and Diversified Audio for their help.

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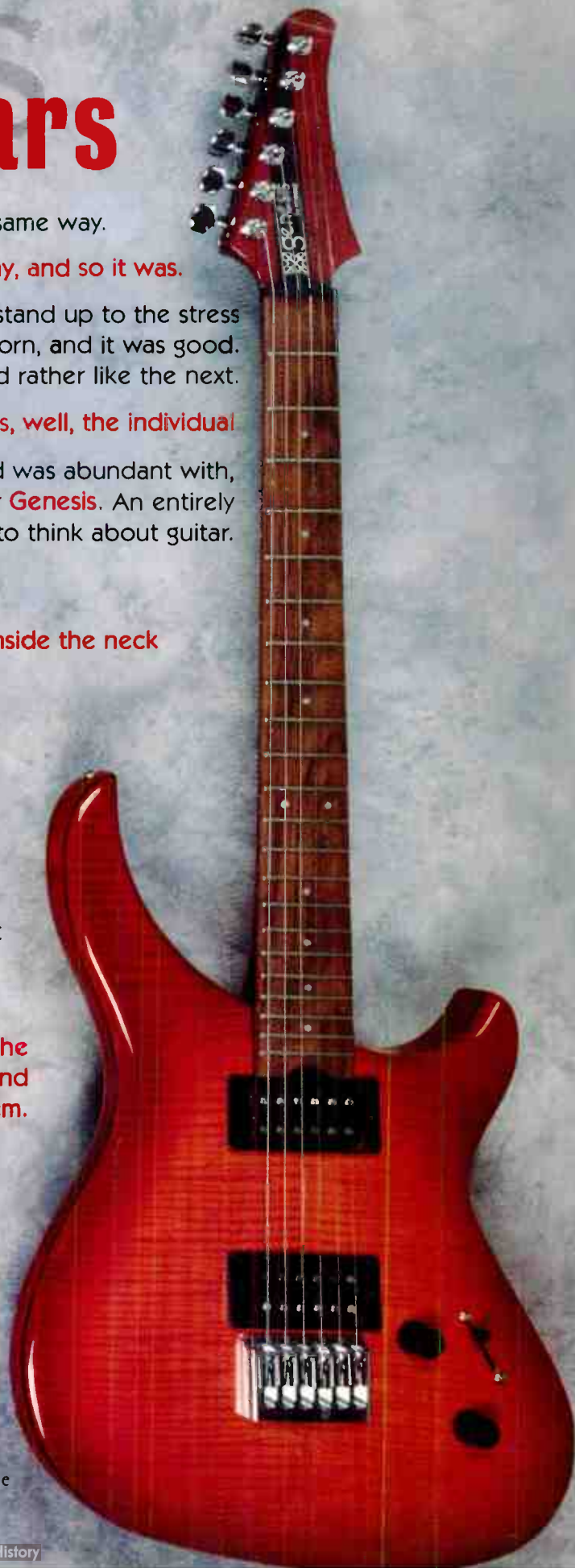


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