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MUSICIAN

JUNE 1990

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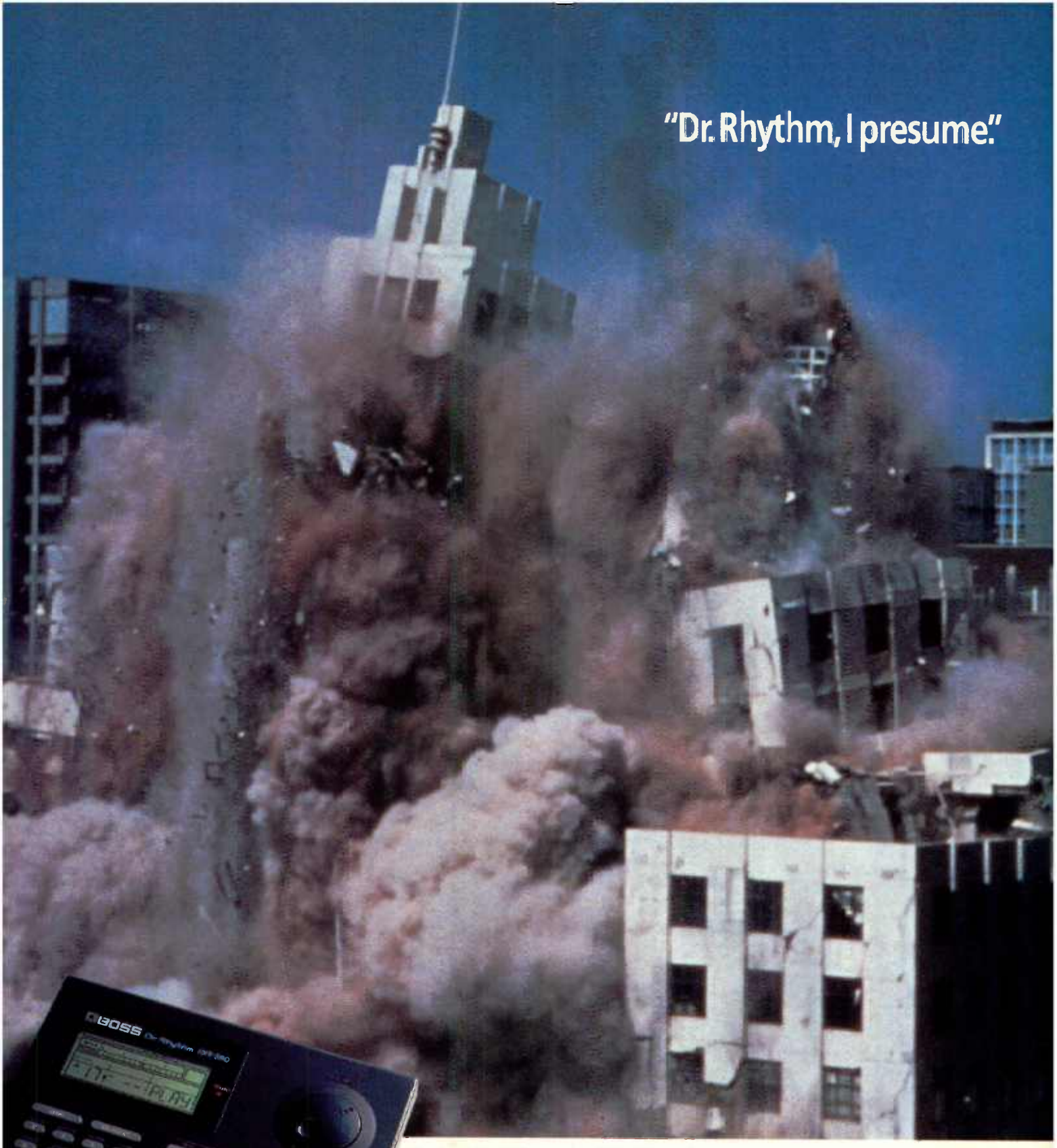

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A Billboard Publication *No. 140 • June 1990*

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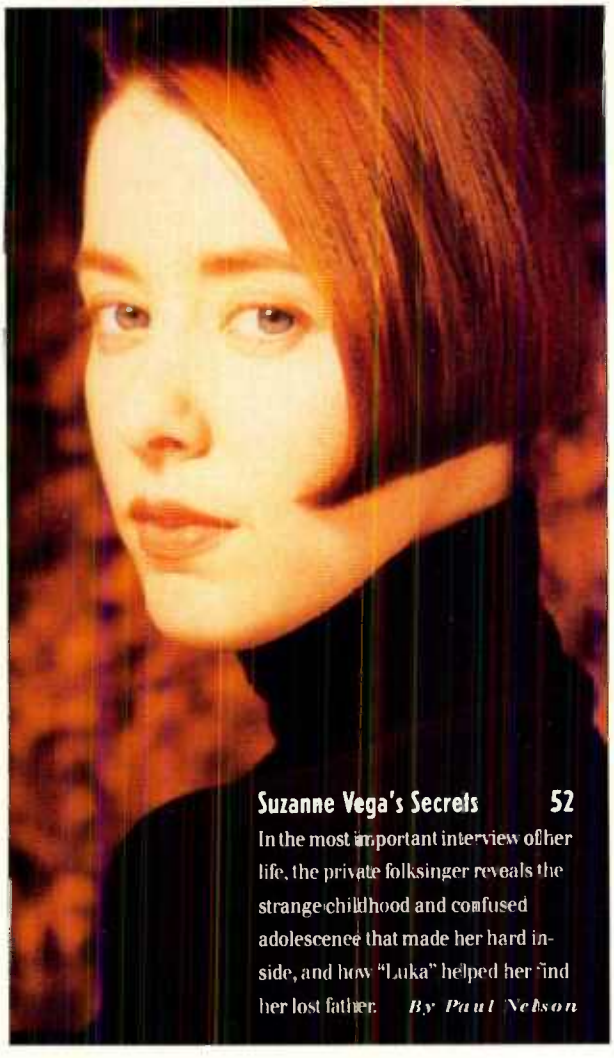

Suzanne Vega's Secrets 52
In the most important interview of her life, the private folksinger reveals the strange childhood and confused adolescence that made her hard inside, and how "Luka" helped her find her lost father. *By Paul Nelson*

Working Musician Special: The Hottest Drummers of 1990

Departments

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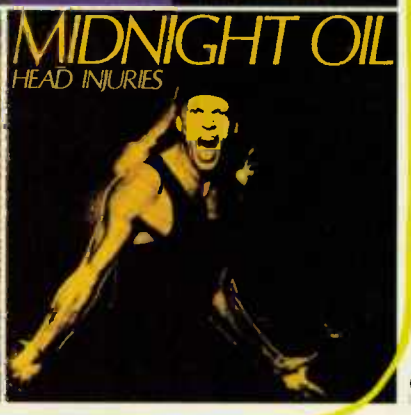

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Pete Townshend

Before the Who tour, you said the big band was not the Who. Yet the cover art for the new live album Join Together *is pure Who memorabilia, smashed guitar and all.*

I'm suspicious of the cover art, and so should record-buyers be; it's misrepresentative to a great extent. It really was a joining both within the band and with the band and its new and old audience, but the record is by no means definitive Who. I mean, I didn't pick the title, cover or collection of songs, and I wouldn't be hurt if a Who fan told me they weren't going to buy it. John is complaining you can't hear the bass [*laughs*], but he has on every record since the dawn of time. I'm not trying to undersell it, but it's very much a part of the process that took over once we got on the road, where the history of the band was so much bigger than any of our intentions. I'm upset with people suddenly deciding that nostalgia is one of the world's great evils, because it isn't. A lot of fans just didn't want to see the truth, though, which was that this was a band that didn't *exist* anymore, and that's how I feel about the record.

"I QUITE LIKE BEING ATTACKED, SOMEBODY CARING ENOUGH ABOUT WHAT I DO TO BRING IT INTO QUESTION."

Critics were more unforgiving towards the Who's return than the Stones'.

That didn't piss me off because I'm a Stones fan, and was really quite worried about what life was going to be like without them. Our thing wasn't what the Stones did. You know, Mick Jagger gave up, but I will never give up! [*laughter*] Sometimes the bully and the blackmailer forgive the victim, and I refuse to be bullied or blackmailed. I know that somewhere along the line Mick Jagger gave up some dream he had of doing things differently, and I just can't do that. I've still got changes to go through.

I've still got tremendous hunger for innovation. I feel that as a writer I haven't even started. If you're lucky to have a couple of hits when you're young, they tend to *weigh* on you because they're born of innocence and honesty. Then you gather up experience and wisdom and cynicism, and it becomes *much* harder to use catchphrases and rhetoric and just blame everybody else for what's wrong with the world or your life, and songwriting becomes more complicated.

Do you still play guitar around the house?

Yeah, I got to be quite good again through playing every day. After that accident on the American tour, I feel very grateful I can play at *all*. I literally impaled my swinging hand on the whammy bar of my guitar. It went in one side and out the other between the bones of my little finger on my right hand. I was overcome with shame: "Well, I've paralyzed my right hand for the rest of my life and this is going to make everybody who sent a letter saying 'Please tour' feel really guilty." I went into deep shock. A brilliant microsurgeon did tests and told me I was going to be okay. But for a while I wasn't so much praying as cursing.

Everyone got a bit heated about the Who's music being used in ads.

Because I get heated and raise my voice, people think I'm angry, but what's actually happening is I'm excited and I feel I'm alive in the real world. I quite like being attacked; it's the feeling of somebody caring enough about what I do to bring it into question.

Partly as a result of those criticisms, I turned down more than two million dollars for a song. Coca-Cola was teasing me, saying they wanted a song from *Iron Man* and would pay for a special video—an idea I was attracted to because I'd run out of video money—and then revealed that what they really wanted was "Pinball Wizard" battered into "My Generation" for their "generation after generation" campaign. It was quite a good feeling to walk out.

I don't know if it's possible to represent a Who song without Keith Moon. The greatest compromise I've ever had to accept is that they'll never sound that way again, and after that the other compromises seem very small. To my mind, the rest of that stuff onstage was necessary. I don't know whether it's necessary for you and if it hurts you, I'm sorry. You know, music is just music, and all these complaints are really about tarnished nostalgia. If you want to talk nostalgia and take one on the nose, go see Tom Petty or Neil Young or one of the current Bible-punchers that seem to think it's the worst sin since masturbation. I certainly enjoyed the tour, and I don't regret anything. It's strange; for the first time in my life I really did know what I was getting into, and I'll take the knocks. I'm a little tired of the guitar-group sound anyway—people might throw up their hands in horror. You know, I thought *New York* was a great album, but I would have liked to have heard a saxophone, or maybe even a synth. I don't know who's living in the past and who's living in the future, really.

I decided only yesterday not to do a world Who tour; we had a lot of offers in Australia and Japan and everybody wanted to do it but me. Right now I am writing songs for an album which I'm hoping to start in September.

Are you going to make the next album a concept piece?

If it's not going to have a concept, it would certainly have a manifesto. Atlantic want me to do a "formula album." I could create a lot of red faces by asking what the formula is. I might try to write a manifesto to meet that brief. [*laughs*] That would be fun.

—Matt Resnicoff

Photograph: Steve Double/Retna

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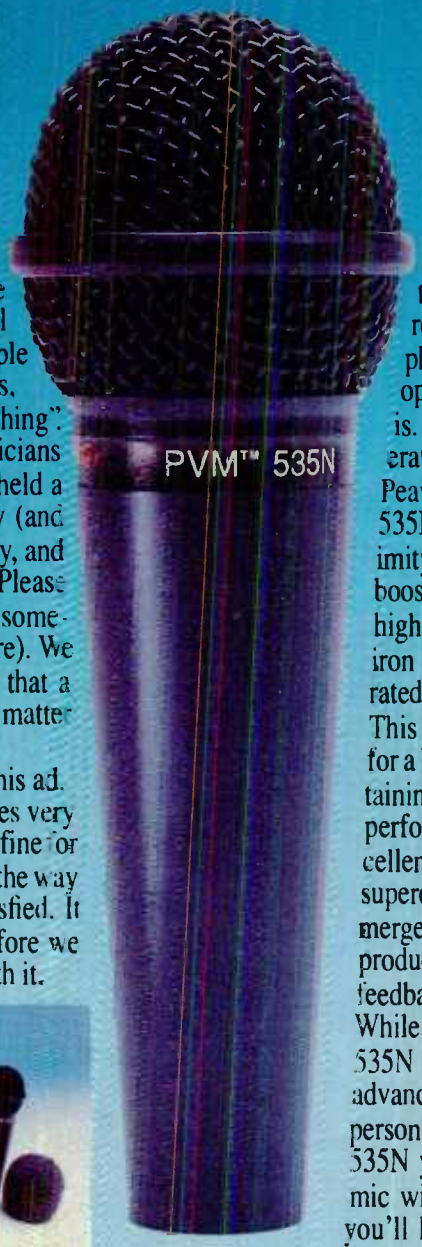

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LETTERS

My Mindset on You

I'M GLAD TO SEE George Harrison is getting the recognition he deserves (March '90). Since the Beatles unraveled in '70, the media preoccupation with Lennon and McCartney has continued. In the mid-to-late '70s it was "Wings"; in the early-to-mid-'80s it has been "martyr's charm." I am delighted that the musical/spiritual/theatrical craft of Bangladesh George and Wilbury George can be seen as something more than creative book ends for John and Paul. As for me, darkhorse rules!

Joe Little
New York, NY

A GREAT ARTICLE on George Harrison; here's hoping the Wilburys make another enjoyable album. And thanks to Max Aguilera-Hellweg for a beautiful cover photo.

Connie Marini
Bridgeport, CT

WE ALL KNOW there can never be a Beatles reunion, but hey, could Paul rate as a possible Wilbury?

Curt Weaver
Saco, ME

WHEN PAUL McCARTNEY mentioned the possibility of writing songs with George Harrison, the quiet Beatle replied, "There will be no Beatles reunion so long as John Lennon remains dead." What kind of an absurd remark is that? Is he going to say the same thing about the Traveling Wilburys? I'm sure George Martin would like to produce the Fab Three.

Kent Couch
Richmond, VA

Well-Respected Man

THANKS TO GEORGE Kalogerakis for the wonderful article on the Kinks (March '90). I smiled and laughed the whole time I was reading it! I think they are one group that bridges the musical generation gap today. Which reminds me, "You Really Got Me" was playing on the radio the other day and my nine-year-old said, "The Kinks are awesome."

Scott L. Arnold
Geneva, IL

PART OF THE REASON for the Kinks' success lies in the quality of their fans. A new album by the Rolling Stones or the Who may be greeted as a public event, but a new Kinks album always appears as a victory of the personal over the forces of commercialism. Kinks fans take "I'm Not Like Everybody Else" and "Misfits" as their anthems and feel proud they can see the Kinks in concert halls rather than stadiums.

Audrey Bilger
Cobham, VA

Bon Mots

JON BON JOVI'S ridiculous comment about the Replacements (*Backside*, March '90) saddens me. How can a band as talented and intense as the 'Mats go virtually unnoticed while sappy, watered-down schlock metal like Bon Jovi's proliferates on the airwaves? I guess all that hairspray and sculpting gel has affected the brains of the hoi polloi.

Steve Mirek
Norwalk, CT

IT DIDN'T COME as a surprise that a no-talent pantywaist like Mr. Bon Jovi had never heard of the Replacements. I don't ever recall seeing Bon Jovi's face on the cover of *Musician*, but then again only really talented artists make it. So much for Jon.

Ken Dague
Valley Grove, WV

IF JON BON JOVI paid more attention to what is happening musically than he does to his hair, he might know who the Replacements are.

Kevin Cain
Montgomery, AL

WHEN PEOPLE talk about the great bands of the '80s, the Replacements will be at the top of the list and Bon Jovi will be buried somewhere between Quiet Riot and Survivor.

A Loyal 'Mats Fan
Nashville, TN

Roche Clip

I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN that if any magazine would give the Roches the coverage they deserve, it would be *Musician*. Thanks for not disappointing me.

John McElligott, Jr.
Fullerton, CA

Jingle Jungle

YOU GOT ME singing the jingle blues. The context of your article, "The Weird World of Jingle Writing" (March '90), excited me, but the content left me hanging. It was nice to get a "behind-the-scenes" look at jingle houses and advertising. However, as a composer/musician trying to break into the business, I wish you included more information geared towards those who are just recording demos, hoping to hook up with a jingle house.

Jerry Halatyn
Astoria, NY

No Takers

IN HIS BRIEF REVIEW of the new *Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music* (*Short Takes*, Feb. '90), Chris Morris considerably understates the book's shortcomings. The entries for "rap" and "new age" are particularly obnoxious and ignorant. Donald Clarke's sarcastic dismissal of rap music is nothing short of racist. His summary of new-age music repeats the most derogatory phrases associated with the genre ("yuppy music," "aural wallpaper," etc.). In addition, the Australian rock group Midnight Oil is left out altogether! And New Order is mentioned only under Joy Division.

These errors and biases are outrageous for a work that Morris says "serves as the most useful and historically sound musical reference available."

Paul A. Seaman
Severn, MD

Geil Fuegos

I WOULD LIKE to thank you for the support of our band, the Del Fuegos (Feb. '90), and all the great articles and interviews of great artists, both old and new, which you continually present. The interview by Bill Stephen was fun to do and came out very well. However, I would like to clear up one misquote. I am quoted as saying, "Seth and Magic Dick came in with these arrangements that were all over the song," in reference to the song "Dreams of You." Neither Seth nor Dick play on this song. I am referring to the horn players in this quote. Seth and Dick are the ultimate pros; it was a very high-energy, creative environment and they helped make it that way.

Thomas Lloyd
Del Fuegos
New York, NY

Whatsizname?

J.D. CONSIDINE'S critique of Randy & the Gypsys (*Short Takes*, March '90) does not even comment on the music, only on Randy Jackson's apparent decision to drop his last name. The question remains: What is this album's music like, and is it to be recommended?

Peter MacLaren
Porterville, CA

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FACES

NICK LOWE

Class reunion

"I'VE DONE ENOUGH crummy ones to know a good one when I hear it," says Nick Lowe of his latest album *Party of One*, also his first for Warner Bros. "Elvis Costello wanted me to tour with him, and I had to listen to all my old records to relearn the songs. I discovered that often my best records had the worst songs, and my best songs were on the worst records. 'Why did you do it like that, you bloody stupid . . .'"

Figuring to give his best songs their best recording, Lowe spent time doing solo acoustic sets to watch audience reactions and refine his musical architecture. Then, between bouts of depression, he started assembling musicians. The first step was making up with Dave Edmunds: "We fell out after Rockpile. One morning I woke up and I couldn't remember why. It was too exhausting to hold a grudge."

Next he connected with Ry Cooder, Jim Keltner and John Hiatt with the idea of forming a Traveling Wilburys–style supergroup. Hiatt backed out ("He seemed to think the world was waiting for another John Hiatt album") but Lowe was pleased enough with his own new songs that he went into the studio with the remnants of the non-Wilburys with Edmunds producing ("He has the proper contempt for modern studio equipment"). The result is undoubtedly Lowe's finest album—hilarious, full of hooks, wonderfully quirky. It is also Ry Cooder's most spirited work in years. "I told Ry to play his punk-rock stuff," says Lowe. "Nobody plays punk better."

—Charles M. Young

THE SUNDAYS

Songs without subtext

"WE LIKED the sound of it, sort of Victorian in an ironic way. We just like the words, they sounded good enough to have as a title." So says songwriter/guitarist David Gavurin of the Sundays' elementary album title *Reading, Writing & Arithmetic*.

Gavurin doesn't take this business of music too seriously and suggests that perhaps you shouldn't either. Since the release of their album they've risen to the esteemed status of other U.K. alternative pop bands such as the Stone Roses, Happy Mondays and House of Love, and are now readying themselves for an official stateside introduction. The outfit, comprised of chief songwriters Gavurin and Harriet Wheeler (vocals) along with drummer Patch and bassist Paul Brindley, burst upon the scene over a year ago with an acclaimed three-song EP titled *Can't Be Sure* for Rough Trade Records.

Reading, Writing & Arithmetic follows an almost stream-of-consciousness approach, but don't bother reading between the lines for a deeper meaning. "We've never gotten into that whole pop-star mentality," says Gavurin. "It's condescending. There's no particular or hidden meanings, really. Our lyrics reflect an everyday quality, unlike a lot of commercial garbage. The songs should stand out on their own and be stimulating. The music and the lyrics have a very natural quality; that's the message."

Has U.K. celebrity altered the Sundays' down-home view? Gavurin says, "Our approach to everything has stayed exactly the same. You just have to make sure that your songs are good. Not for anyone else really, but for yourselves."*—Bill Coleman*

Photographs: Laura Levine (top); Tom Sheehan/LFI

World Radio History

SARAH VAUGHAN 1924-1990

There will never be another you

SARAH VAUGHAN, the Divine One, died of lung cancer at her Los Angeles home on Tuesday April 3. The phenomenally gifted singer, who extended the influence of jazz in pop music in a nearly 50-year career, was 66.

Like Ella Fitzgerald, Miss Vaughan began her career by winning the amateur talent contest at New York's Apollo theater, in 1942. The 18-year-old worked a year for Earl Hines as singer and second pianist, then starved a little, became a founding member of the Billy Eckstine band (including Bird, Diz, Miles and Art Blakey) that crystallized bebop, developing the harmonic ear and the improvisational ability that made her the most distinguished vocal counterpart of bebop's instrumentalists and that would inform her music ever after. Her gorgeous voice has been called the greatest in our century and she had a fluid three-octave range, immense power and exquisite colorations. Together with trumpeter George Treadwell, whom she married in 1946, she developed the singular approach that matched her hornlike phrasing and dazzling vocalizations (she could sing quarter tones and flex quarter notes into sixteenths) with commercial music as well as jazz without compromising her jazz sensibility. Perhaps the greatest of all scat singers, she was celebrated for her effortless execution and rhythmic freedom.

Earlier, Miss Vaughan was criticized for overwhelming her songs, but her singing improved over the decades as she found the best direction for her great gifts and used her swoops, slurs and lush vibrato to enhance the meaning of the lyrics. Her mature voice seemed limitless, remaining supple as it deepened and gained a rich bottom and full middle and retained its delicate top. Age did not wither her powers. At the time of her illness and death, Miss Vaughan's voice was undiminished.—*Celestine Ware*

GEFFEN GOES GOLD

Taking over the asylum

THE WHOLE COUNTRY sat up and took notice in March, when David Geffen pulled his 10-year-old Geffen Records company away from distributor Warner/Elektra/Atlantic and sold it to MCA for MCA stock worth an estimated $550 million. In a front page story, the *New York Times* reported that the deal not only made David Geffen MCA's biggest stockholder, it made the 47-year-old one of the richest men in America. Geffen held onto his film company (which turned out *Risky Business*, *Beetlejuice* and other buckmakers), WEA will probably keep overseas rights to the record company, and Geffen will continue to run his record label.

The last-minute deal with MCA stunned the entertainment business, which believed that Geffen had agreed to make his new deal with EMI. Apparently MCA only approached Geffen on Thursday, March 8th; the deal was announced late on Tuesday, March 13th. Given how much power Geffen now holds in MCA, he was probably justified in telling his top brass that this wasn't a sale, it was a merger.

BLUES POWER

EVER SINCE Peter Guralnick wrote about the young Hendrix-influenced blues musician Chris Thomas in issue #133, folks have been writing and phoning *Musician* to find out where his album is. Well, wait no longer: *Cry of the Prophets* by Chris Thomas has just been released on Sire Records. It's driving blues purists crazy and the rest of us to ecstasy.

Photographs: Ken Franckling/LGI (top); Karen Warren

World Radio History

FACES

APPEASEMENT

AS WE GO to press the record retail industry, the Parents Musical Resource Center (PMRC) and local state censorship groups have announced an agreement about record labeling.

The PMRC, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and the National Association of Recording Merchants (NARM) announced on April 6 that from now on the major record companies will affix to some albums stickers that read "Explicit Lyrics—Parental Advisory." Apparently this has satisfied legislators in 13 of the states that had stickering or censorship legislation pending; those legislators (in Alaska, Arizona, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee and West Virginia) are reportedly suspending their record labeling bills.

No doubt some of those legislators are glad to have an excuse to drop an issue that was turning into a political hot potato. No doubt others will be back later, in new disguises.

At press time pro-censorship forces were still hanging tough in Delaware, and in the two states with the most draconian bills, Florida and Missouri.

The extremism of many of the state censorship bills gave Tipper Gore and the PMRC the unexpected opportunity to position themselves as moderates, making peace between the record industry and the radical right. The basic stickering agreement that has now been accepted was what the PMRC wanted when they started lobbying in 1985. Brushed off at the time, the PMRC's soft censorship became appealing to record merchants and manufacturers as more extreme laws were introduced across the country.

THE HAVALINAS

High hopes

THEY NAMED THEMSELVES after hairy wild pigs and glare out at you from their album cover flashing mean tattoos. But the Havalinas are just out to have a good time. "We're the loudest acoustic band in the world, man," says singer/guitarist/songwriter Tim McConnell. Trying to pull himself out of the classic rock 'n' roll crash-and-burn, McConnell (a.k.a. Tim Scott) decided it was time to strip his songs and his band down to the raw essentials. "I've had three record deals over the past 10 years that did me no good at all," he says.

McConnell got up, dusted himself off and called up Smutty Smith, bass player and compadre from his early-'80s days in the Rockats. Fusing that band's rockabilly spirit with a '90s edge and lyrical punch, the pair convinced a reluctant Charlie Quintana, fresh out of the Cruzados, to shake off his rock star trappings and join their little combo. "I'd just gotten off the Fleetwood Mac tour, and it was like hey, I gotta carry my own snare drum?" Quintana laughs.

The Havalinas' less-is-more approach has kept them working. They opened for Dylan on his recent European tour and will soon support Melissa Etheridge in this country, giving American audiences a taste of a raucous live show that belies their acoustic trio format. "It's a matter of hittin' it where it goes and lettin' the people fill in the blanks," says McConnell. "We figure with our combined weight and bad attitude we come on like one big wild Havalina."—*Peter Cronin*

RANDY CRAWFORD

The silent success

PICTURE THE FIRST: The Singer at home in Cincinnati performing in front of a mirror, committing to memory every nuance of Nancy Wilson's classic, "Guess Who I Saw Today."

Picture the second: The Singer backstage in some dive, doing her school work. Moments later, she will go onstage. Bassist "Bootsy" Collins will be in her band. The air will be blue with cigarette smoke and she'll find it hard to breathe.

And picture the final. The singer winning acclaim from George Benson and Cannonball Adderley. Warner Brothers knocking on the door, contract in hand. Superstardom and monster checks follow, right? Well, not quite. Eleven years ago, Veronica "Randy" Crawford said to me of stardom, "If it happens, I would feel proud, but it's just not the most important thing in my life."

A few weeks ago, she told me, "I always wanted to be able to support myself as a singer. I never really got into it for fame, fame, fame. And so I think my objectives have been met." Give her points for consistency.

Crawford's best known as the lead voice on the Crusaders' "Street Life," but that's just the tip of the iceberg. She is an exceptionally talented singer of jazz- and blues-inflected songs—a singer with a warm, husky voice that you might think was Anita Baker–influenced, except that Randy was here before anyone had ever heard of La Baker. Yet, despite a string of remarkable albums (*Rich and Poor* is the latest), she remains an obsession to her core of fans and an unknown outside of that. While she allows that "I've long felt that I deserved a lot more exposure here in America than I've gotten in the past," she's not losing any sleep over what she calls her "silent success." As she puts it, "When I leave the stage and people have given me a standing ovation and they've been satisfied, then I usually have been as well."

—*Leonard Pitts, Jr.*

Photograph: Ebet Roberts
Illustration: Merritt Dekle

World Radio History

THE MUSICIAN CHARTS

Top 100 Albums

The first number indicates the position of the album this month, the second its position last month.

1 • 1	**Paula Abdul**	*Forever Your Girl*/Virgin
2 • 2	**Janet Jackson**	*Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation* A&M
3 • 4	**Phil Collins**	*. . . But Seriously*/Atlantic
4 • 37	**Bonnie Raitt**	*Nick of Time*/Capitol
5 • 10	**Michael Bolton**	*Soul Provider*/Columbia
6 • 5	**The B-52's**	*Cosmic Thing*/Reprise
7 • 22	**Alannah Myles**	*Alannah Myles*/Atlantic
8 • 3	**Milli Vanilli**	*Girl You Know It's True*/Arista
9 • 12	**Linda Ronstadt (Fea. A. Neville)**	*Cry Like a Rainstorm, Howl Like the Wind*/Elektra
10 • 7	**Aerosmith**	*Pump*/Geffen
11 • 6	**Billy Joel**	*Storm Front*/Columbia
12 • 17	**Technotronic**	*Pump Up the Jam—The Album* SBK
13 • 11	**Quincy Jones**	*Back on the Block*/Qwest
14 • 8	**Tom Petty**	*Full Moon Fever*/MCA
15 • 18	**Mötley Crüe**	*Dr. Feelgood*/Elektra
16 • 19	**Kenny G**	*Live*/Arista
17 • 16	**Babyface**	*Tender Lover*/Solar
18 • 9	**Bobby Brown**	*Dance!. . . Ya Know It!*/MCA
19 • —	**M.C. Hammer**	*Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em* Capitol
20 • 33	**Don Henley**	*The End of the Innocence*/Geffen
21 • 15	**New Kids on the Block**	*Hangin' Tough*/Columbia
22 • 14	**Young M.C.**	*Stone Cold Rhymin'*/Delicious
23 • 92	**Basia**	*London Warsaw New York*/Epic
24 • 21	**Gloria Estefan**	*Cuts Both Ways*/Epic
25 • 24	**Roxette**	*Look Sharp!*/EMI
26 • 20	**Eric Clapton**	*Journeyman*/Duck
27 • —	**Lisa Stansfield**	*Affection*/Arista
28 • 30	**Taylor Dayne**	*Can't Fight Fate*/Arista
29 • 32	**Skid Row**	*Skid Row*/Atlantic
30 • 25	**Richard Marx**	*Repeat Offender*/EMI
31 • 27	**Luther Vandross**	*The Best of Luther: The Best of Love*/Epic
32 • —	**Midnight Oil**	*Blue Sky Mining*/Columbia
33 • 43	**Michael Penn**	*March*/Geffen
34 • 26	**Whitesnake**	*Slip of the Tongue*/Geffen
35 • 23	**Soul II Soul**	*Keep On Movin'*/Virgin
36 • 79	**Soundtrack**	*Beaches*/Atlantic
37 • 51	**Michel'le**	*Michel'le*/Ruthless
38 • 39	**Seduction**	*Nothing Matters Without Love* Vendetta
39 • 52	**Elton John**	*Sleeping with the Past*/MCA
40 • 55	**Kaoma**	*World Beat*/Epic
41 • 28	**Rolling Stones**	*Steel Wheels*/Columbia
42 • 36	**The 2 Live Crew**	*As Nasty as They Wanna Be* Skywalker
43 • 46	**The Smithereens**	*Smithereens 11*/Enigma
44 • 35	**Cher**	*Heart of Stone*/Geffen
45 • 29	**Bad English**	*Bad English*/Epic
46 • 40	**Soundtrack**	*Born on the Fourth of July*/MCA
47 • 34	**Tesla**	*The Great Radio Controversy* Geffen
48 • 42	**New Kids on the Block**	*New Kids on the Block*/Columbia
49 • 59	**Peter Murphy**	*Deep*/Beggar's Banquet
50 • 45	**Warrant**	*Dirty Rotten Filthy Stinking Rich* Columbia
51 • 50	**Heavy D. & the Boyz**	*Big Tyme*/MCA
52 • 60	**The Kentucky Headhunters**	*Pickin' on Nashville*/Mercury
53 • 38	**Joan Jett**	*The Hit List*/Blackheart
54 • 41	**Joe Satriani**	*Flying in a Blue Dream*/Relativity
55 • 95	**Slaughter**	*Stick It to Ya*/Chrysalis
56 • 32	**Soundtrack**	*The Little Mermaid*/Walt Disney
57 • 74	**Kiss**	*Hot in the Shade*/Mercury
58 • 63	**Fine Young Cannibals**	*The Raw & The Cooked*/I.R.S.
59 • 57	**3rd Bass**	*The Cactus Album*/Columbia
60 • 48	**Tears for Fears**	*The Seeds of Love*/Fontana
61 • —	**Ozzy Osbourne**	*Just Say Ozzy*/Associated
62 • 91	**John Lee Hooker**	*The Healer*/Chameleon
63 • 56	**Ricky Van Shelton**	*RVS III*/Columbia
64 • 65	**Lenny Kravitz**	*Let Love Rule*/Virgin
65 • 47	**Alice Cooper**	*Trash*/Epic
66 • —	**Jane Child**	*Jane Child*/Warner Bros.
67 • 53	**Harry Connick, Jr.**	*Music from "When Harry Met Sally"*/Columbia
68 • —	**Rod Stewart**	*Downtown Train/Selections from Storyteller*/Warner Bros.
69 • —	**Oingo Boingo**	*Dark at the End of the Tunnel* MCA
70 • 49	**Rush**	*Presto*/Atlantic
71 • 58	**Rob Base**	*The Incredible Base*/Profile
72 • 70	**Clint Black**	*Killin' Time*/RCA
73 • 69	**Paul McCartney**	*Flowers in the Dirt*/Capitol
74 • —	**Tommy Page**	*Paintings in My Mind*/Sire
75 • 82	**They Might Be Giants**	*Flood*/Elektra
76 • 61	**Madonna**	*Like a Prayer*/Sire
77 • —	**k.d. lang & the reclines**	*Absolute Torch and Twang*/Sire
78 • 77	**Biz Markie**	*The Biz Never Sleeps*/Cold Chillin'
79 • 87	**Regina Belle**	*Stay with Me*/Columbia
80 • —	**Julia Fordham**	*Porcelain*/Virgin
81 • 31	**Jive Bunny & the Mastermixers**	*Jive Bunny—The Album*/Music Factory
82 • 88	**Hank Williams, Jr.**	*Lone Wolf*/Warner/Curb
83 • —	**Restless Heart**	*Fast Movin' Train*/RCA
84 • 86	**D-Mob**	*A Little Bit of This, A Little Bit of That*/FFRR
85 • 71	**UB40**	*Labour of Love II*/Virgin
86 • 54	**Scorpions**	*Greatest Hits—Best of Rockers n' Ballads*/Mercury
87 • —	**Sinéad O'Connor**	*I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*/Ensign
88 • 44	**Chicago**	*Greatest Hits 1982–1989*/Reprise
89 • —	**Dianne Reeves**	*Never Too Far*/EMI
90 • —	**Troop**	*Attitude*/Atlantic
91 • —	**Babylon A.D.**	*Babylon A.D.*/Arista
92 • 80	**Randy Travis**	*No Holdin' Back*/Warner Bros.
93 • 75	**Red Hot Chili Peppers**	*Mother's Milk*/EMI
94 • 73	**Melissa Etheridge**	*Brave and Crazy*/Island
95 • —	**Willie, Waylon, Johnny & Kris**	*Highwayman II*/Columbia
96 • 81	**Earth, Wind & Fire**	*Heritage*/Columbia
97 • 96	**The Stone Roses**	*The Stone Roses*/Silvertone
98 • 62	**Neil Young**	*Freedom*/Reprise
99 • 98	**Enuff Z'Nuff**	*Enuff Z'Nuff*/Atco
100 • —	**Adam Ant**	*Manners & Physique*/MCA

The Musician *album chart is produced by the* Billboard *chart department for* Musician, *and reflects the combined points for all album reports gathered by the* Billboard *computers in the month of March. The record company chart is based on the top 200 albums. The concert chart is based on* Amusement Business *Box Score reports for March 1990. All charts are* *copyright 1990 by BPI Incorporated.*

Top Concert Grosses

1 Billy Joel *Miami (FL) Arena*/March 8-9, 12-13, 16-17	$2,184,091
2 Neil Diamond *Seattle (WA) Center*/March 29–April 2	$1,129,367
3 Grateful Dead *Capital Centre, Landover, MD*/March 14-16	$1,109,692
4 United Negro College Fund Benefit: Janet Jackson, Chuckii Booker *Madison Square Garden Center, New York, NY*/March 15-16	$1,053,548
5 Aerosmith, Skid Row *Great Western Forum, Inglewood, CA*/March 3, 5 & 6	$1,051,200
6 David Bowie *SkyDome, Toronto, Ont.*/March 7	$927,124
7 Grateful Dead, Balafon Marimba Ensemble, Michael Doucer & Beausoleil *Oakland–Alameda County (CA) Coliseum*/Feb. 25-27	$905,520
8 Billy Joel *Florida Suncoast Dome, St. Petersburg, FL*/March 6	$857,362
9 Billy Joel *Richfield (OH) Coliseum*/Feb. 26-27	$848,543
10 Aerosmith, Skid Row *Cow Palace, San Francisco, CA*/March 9-10	$697,500

Top Labels

1	Columbia
2	Atlantic
3	MCA
4	Arista
5	Geffen
6	Epic
7	Virgin
8	Capitol
9	Elektra
10	EMI
11	A&M
12	RCA
13	Reprise
14	Mercury
15	Warner Bros.
16	Sire
17	SBK
18	Qwest
19	Solar

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CHARTBUSTERS

"It's not art; it's a momentary trend."

Technotronic's Philosophy of Phunk

Reducing house music to the bone

BY

Jim Macnie

MAKING DANCE RECORDS isn't like recording a Bob Dylan song," says Jo Bogaert. "Dylan can write whatever he wants at any time. With dance music you have to constantly update yourself to the beats and grooves playing in the clubs." The 33-year-old Bogaert is the unlikely Belgian brainiac whose role in dance music's hottest unit, Technotronic, is a bit like the Wizard of Oz: The guy's behind the curtain of this amorphous outfit, pressing the buttons, throwing the switches. And he certainly knows about shaking some butt. Since their irresistible "Pump Up the Jam" busted out of the Belgian club scene last year, Technotronic has rocked the global boulevard. Across Europe and here in the States, the high-tech heartbeat of Bogaert's computosynths and vocalist Ya Kid K's cheerleader rap has emerged as the beat to beat. Number one on all the dance charts sure, but "Pump Up the Jam" rose to the upper echelon of the pop charts as well, without sacrificing the elements that prove it progeny of formal house music. Technotronic have opened a huge door for crossover.

"I hear my bass drum everywhere these days," muses the low-key Bogaert on house and hip-hop's beg, borrow and steal syndrome. "People have been asking me to do remixes of their songs, so that they would resemble 'Pump.' It's crazy."

What's also crazy is the way Technotronic works. The group is a revolving door. The night before this interview, the crew appeared on "Arsenio Hall." The scene included dancers, music and Ya Kid K speak/singing her way through "Pump" and its clone-grooved follow-up, "Get Up." The ensemble's other rapper MC Eric was in Europe doing promotion for an upcoming single, and bossman Bogaert was at his home outside of Brussels, interviewing another candidate to join the Techno team. "Strange things happen when house goes on the road," chuckles Bogaert. "I'm basically a shy person and don't really see how dragging my studio out on the stage would add to the music. With programmed stuff you don't really need a band; it's not like rock 'n' roll."

Adding to the mystery is the person most associated with the group, the blue-lipsticked chicmeister named Felly who graces Technotronic's album cover. "She was only hired to do promotion for the record," sighs Bogaert, obviously tired of explaining the situation. "She's not the singer and never was. Ya Kid K, who was born in Zaire, has always been the voice of 'Pump Up the Jam.' She wrote the rap."

Although it's the cushioned beat that relentlessly drives the song along, it's Ya Kid K's (a.k.a. Manuela Kamosi) bent vocal that brings an offkilter humanity to a fully synth-generated track. It's also the element that listeners can't shake from their heads. "When Jo sent me the tapes, he asked that I come up with a rap in the Inner City 'Big Fun' kind of style," says the 18-year-old Kamosi over lunch at an NYC hotel, "but I didn't hear it that way. In my mind was this Zairian chant, and that's what I wrote it around. I didn't want to make it too complex, and in the end it just kind of flowed out. I had lingala in my head."

Both Bogaert and Kamosi wanted to stress warmth in the music. "You can program machines to sound friendly," claims Bogaert, who gave up a past as rock 'n' roll guitarist to jump into the dance world. "I wanted to be like a trash band. Somebody like Kraftwerk wants their music to sound very electronic, very computer. I intend to make music that sounds like a band. I get my drums out of time—maybe a bit early or a bit late—it turns out to be a mix of human and machine."

Bogaert is a philosophy teacher who

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Photograph: Lynn Goldsmith/LGI

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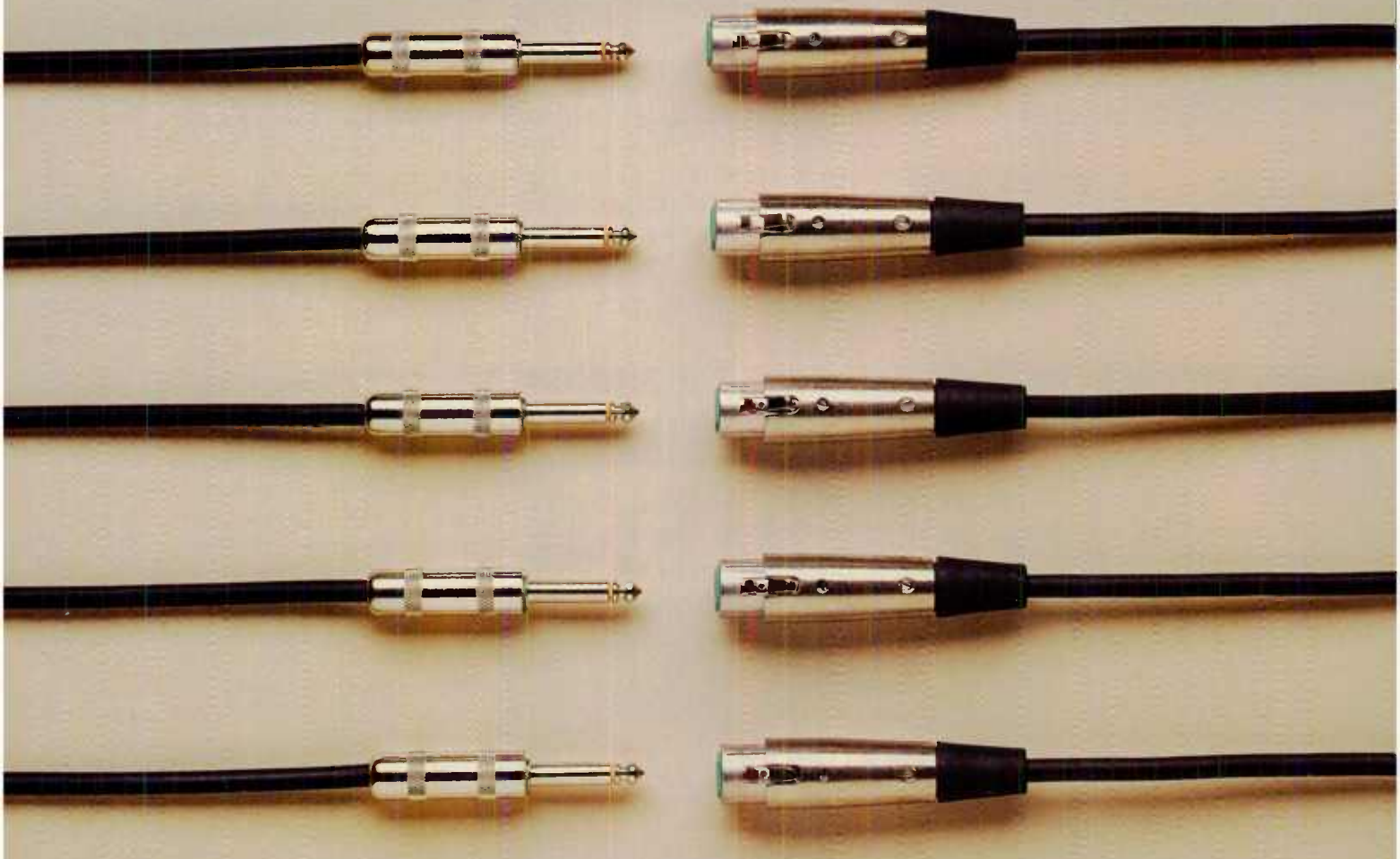

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brings a scad of experience to the Technotronic project. His yen for avant-garde theater (for which he has produced beatless synth sounds), as well as the late-model structuralism of Webern and Messiaen, belies his prowess for creating unadulterated funk. "I started out as a rocker," he admits, "but I got tired of it and started writing pieces for ballet and sound installations. Then I bought my first sequencer and the beat turned me on. I've been making dance records for three years, so by the time I got to 'Pump Up the Jam,' I knew what I could do, what I shouldn't do and what I must do. The main thing is to keep it simple. I love complicated music, but for house you've got to reduce everything to the bone: arrangement, harmony, rhythm. Otherwise people are not going to relate to it. They have to dance to it the first time, or else the DJ will see there's no reaction and he won't spin it again. Your record is lost."

"This isn't exactly the music I have a special affection for," chuckles Ya Kid K. "It's fun to do, and it's fun to hear, but I appreciate art. And you know, it's hard to refer to Technotronic as art. I think it's more like a momentary trend. I think 'Pump Up the Jam' works, but it's really nothing more than a party chant. In my solo project I'm going to have some messages; I can write lyrics."

"A lot of people look down on dance music," says Bogaert. "The last great period for dance was disco, and that has a bad connotation. People think it's too easy, too light. But dance music has got to have a lighthearted side, otherwise people wouldn't dance to it. And really, it's not that easy to come up with a big hit and make people move. Just check out a few hits; what makes them big is hard to qualify."

Yet Bogaert's baby is getting big. As Ya Kid K and I spoke, MTV was announcing Madonna's summer tour; Technotronic will open the show, trying to deploy the aesthetic of the club scene in arenas. "You can bring any kind of music to the stage if you really work on it," she says. It's an event that will most likely find shyguy Bogaert up on the boards. But you know his heart will be back in the studio somewhere. "I like piecing together tracks," he concludes. "I consider the 12-inch a format that should be treated with the same respect as a 7-inch. I like making long pieces of music. If I could make a 12-inch 30 minutes long, I would. If someone could do that, and have no filler, it would be a masterpiece."

PUMP IT UP

I'M A HANDICAPPED keyboardist," confesses JD BOGAERT, "not a very accomplished pianist. But I can play the guitar pretty well; that's why I'm considering buying a MIDI guitar, so it can go right into the computer." Once the information arrives there, Bogaert will manipulate it with several electronic devices, including a Steinberg Pro 24, a Steinberg Q Bass, an Atari computer, an Akai S-900 and S-1000, an E-mu Systems E-max, a Prophet S, "which I love," an Oberheim Matrix 6 Module rack, "which I love," and a Yamaha DX7, "which I still love. It's a synth that you hate after two or three years, put away and fall in love with three or four years later. I do analog recording mostly, to save some of the warmth. The hottest thing in the house at the moment is sampled drum loops; I just started using them. I take real drums recorded on the DAT and loop them into my sampler."

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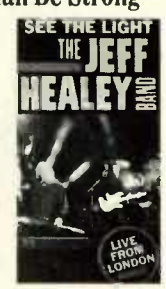

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NOISEMAKERS

Soul of a Pretty Hate Machine

Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor does it himself

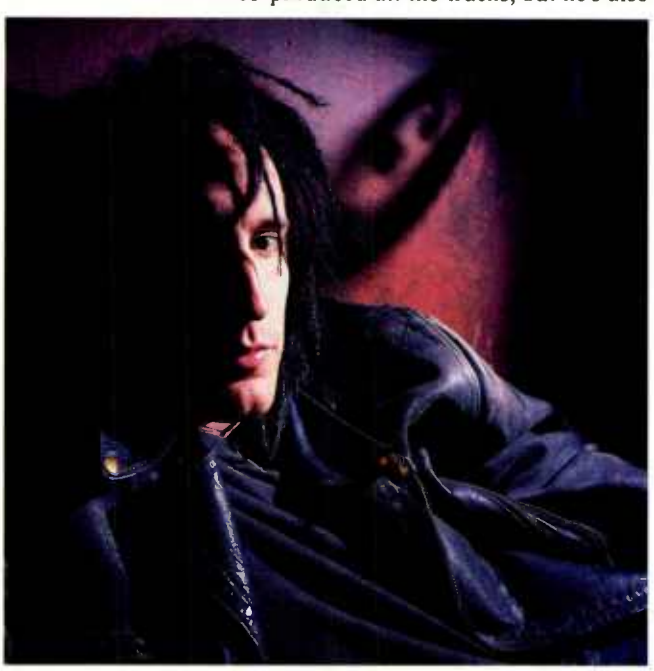
BY

Mark Coleman

WHAT DO YOU CALL this stuff, anyway? How about spiritually depressed electro-industrial dance music? Morbid boogie? Maybe "Death Disco," in tribute to John "The Godfather" Lydon. Eleven years after the release of Public Image Ltd.'s hallowed ground-breaking *Second Edition* (a.k.a. *Metal Box*) album, this nameless and insular sub-genre is flourishing—somewhat perversely, like a hothouse flower. Depeche Mode and Erasure play for a mass audience of teenyboppers and housewives, while groups like Ministry, Nitzer Ebb and Skinny Puppy deliver the *serious shit* to a far-flung, ferociously loyal cult following. And whatever you do, don't dare suggest that "it all sounds the same" to a fan of Nine Inch Nails.

"There's a built-in crowd for 'industrial' music in every city," admits NIN mastermind Trent Reznor. "But the typical comment I get from people is 'Usually I hate this kind of music but I think your record is the most . . . whatever.'" Uh, exactly.

Pretty Hate Machine would be a striking debut just because 24-year-old Trent wrote all the songs, played all the instruments and co-produced all the tracks, but he's also managed to insert a consistent sense of melody (and restraint) into the pounding high-tech mix. Along with the requisite shrieking intensity and relentlessly pessimistic vision, *Pretty Hate Machine* delivers something more accessible than any of the groups Nine Inch Nails has been lumped in with.



"Just a bummed-out guy from Cleveland with a death band."

"Growing up, I think I was always a mildly depressed person," Reznor says, almost cheerfully. As with many other budding musicians in small towns, "certain records" reached Trent in rural Pennsylvania, alerting him to a wider range of possibilities.

"Not necessarily records in one genre of music," he explains, "but they all had the common link of 'Hey, I can relate to *that*.' So instead of taking the typical macho-man rock 'n' roll approach with my own music—or spouting some political nonsense that I'm not into to start with—I just tried to address personal things that, hopefully, somebody could relate to. I felt like the only thing I could do was to keep it honest lyrically."

When Reznor says the songs on *Pretty Hate Machine* were the first ones he'd ever written, or that he adopted the DIY method for economic rather than aesthetic (or egotistic) reasons, it doesn't sound at all disingenuous. In conversation, he's refreshingly straightforward. A classically trained pianist who went on to play keyboards in various teenage garage bands, Trent realized that he "wasn't getting any younger" right around the same time he moved to Cleveland and reached the legal drinking age in Ohio (21).

"I realized the only way I was going to do this was by myself," he says. Conveniently, he was working nights at a recording studio. "I came up with some rules and ideas—set up some parameters and go! Musically, it was 'Any instrument I'm going to use I'm going to play myself.' So I had to learn bass and try to make an original sound on it; same with guitar. My range isn't all that great and my voice is raspy—maybe I'm not really a singer—but after punk, it was like, 'Hey, I can sing as well as this guy and I mean what I'm saying.' Despite my constantly stuffed-up nose, I feel like I've got my own thing now. Lyrically I followed the theory of an introspective, small-scale record: painfully honest, I guess. Like when you hand somebody a demo tape and then have to leave the room."

There's also a compelling strain of religious obsession in Nine Inch Nails' songs, popping up in ironic titles like "Sin" and "Sanctified" or lines like this hook from the single "Head Like a Hole." "Bow down before the one you serve/You're going to get what you deserve."

"I was brought up, loosely, as a Protes-

Photograph: Larry Ford

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tant," Trent says. "I didn't have to go to church, but it was *suggested*. When I realized that I wasn't getting anything out of it, the hypocrisy of it all bothered me. Look, I'm not trying to do a Matt Johnson [of the The] kind of thing—'I know what the world is all about and it sucks.' I'm still trying to figure it all out, and the vulnerability in my music reflects that."

Earlier this year, Nine Inch Nails toured with Jesus & Mary Chain and Peter Murphy, leaving Trent Reznor vulnerable to criticism from mysterious people he calls "electronic music purists." Jesus & Mary Chain and Peter Murphy, you see, are mope-rockers—a crucial distinction. Let alone the fact that Reznor is mounting the NIN live experience with a four-piece band: two guitars, keyboards, taped backing (of course) and a real *drummer*! Heresy!

"Some people I respect have made the comment," Trent begins, "and I never thought I'd hear this, but I have . . . 'You've watered down an electronic show into this strange half-rock, half-hardcore *thing*.' But I knew what I was getting into. Number one, it's more aggressive and interesting for both the audience and us onstage this way. And I also knew I wanted to reach a different audience. I didn't want to go on tour with Depeche Mode; I'd rather go out with Jane's Addiction."

That openness is what sets Nine Inch Nails apart from the whatever-you-call-it pack. It may not seem like much, but in context it's quite a leap.

"In our touring van the other night," Reznor says, "the driver had a country channel on the radio. And I'm sitting there haunted, not able to sleep. Listening to those lyrics, God, they were so bad I was sick to my stomach.

"But then I thought, 'If I was a simple truck driver, driving around in Idaho with a load of potatoes in the back and missing my girlfriend at a truck stop, I could totally relate to these lyrics.'

"But I'm not," declares Trent Reznor. "I'm just a bummed-out guy from Cleveland who has a death band." Ⓜ

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A LOT OF *Pretty Hate Machine* was done with an Apple Macintosh computer, using Performer software," says TRENT REZNOR. "As far as the keyboards, most of it was done on an E-max sampler, along with Prophet VS, Oberheim Expander and Mini-Moog. All the drums and percussion stuff was done via the sampler—stolen off other people's records! Guitar-wise and bass-wise, it was some kind of Kramer; I couldn't really tell you what it is. That goes hand in hand with my guitar philosophy of knowing as little as possible about it. On keyboards I have some technique, I know what I'm doing, whereas on guitar I don't, but it's fun to just pick it up and play barre chords. So I've extended that philosophy to equipment in general. I just put things together and then if they sound cool, great.

"On this album I experimented a lot with looting other people's music—very subtly. Like taking a drum loop, and turning it around backwards and beginning it on beat two instead of beat one, so you get this weird syncopated rhythm. A lot of the time it sounds terrible, but sometimes you get this incredibly complex percussion track where you didn't precisely program all the parts."

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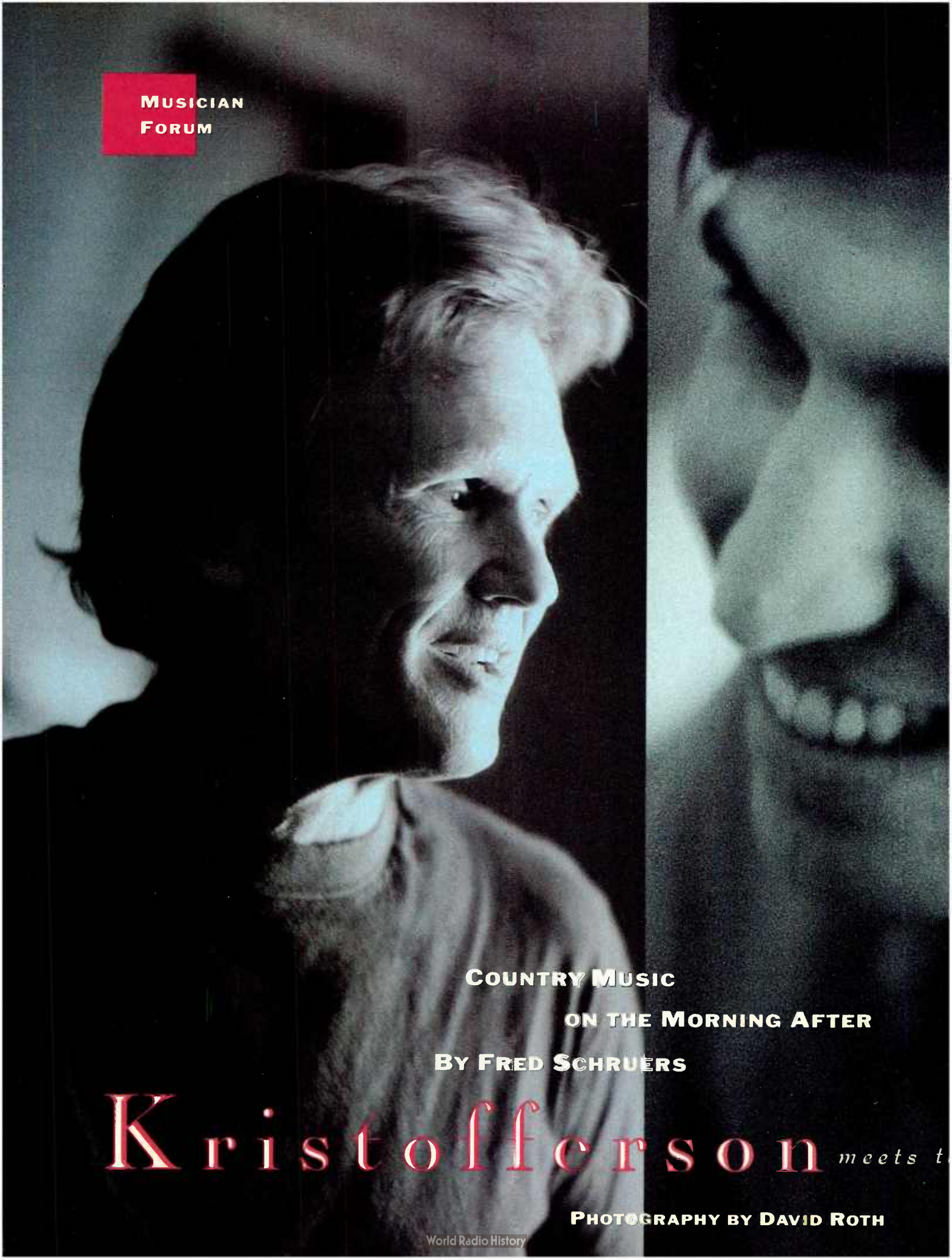

MUSICIAN FORUM

COUNTRY MUSIC
ON THE MORNING AFTER

BY FRED SCHRUERS

Kristofferson meets t

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ROTH

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Cowboy Junkies

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON OCCUPIES an unusual place among American songwriters. His songs have been covered by such legends as his inspiration Bob Dylan ("They Killed Him"), his girlfriend Janis Joplin ("Me and Bobby McGee") and most of Nashville's finest. But anyone around for his turn-of-the-'70s successes has a soft spot for the songwriter's own determined croak on the likes of "Sunday Morning Coming Down," "Help Me Make It Through the Night," "For the Good Times," "Loving Her Was Easier (Than Anything I'll Ever Do Again)" and his biggest crossover hit "Why Me."

Cowboy Junkies intersect most wholeheartedly with Kristofferson around the figure of Dylan—the biggest pin on a map that includes Kristofferson's home state of Texas, the Junkies' home town of Toronto and their shared nexus somewhere in Nashville.

When we introduced Cowboy Junkies' brother/sister team of Michael and Margo Timmins to Kristofferson in a Los Angeles hotel suite the morning after the Grammy awards, their respective statures in the industry were being revised. With the release of *Third World Warrior*, Kristofferson was challenging just about any marketing rule you could name—right down to his timing, which had him lionizing the Sandinistas just prior to their ouster by the Nicaraguan electorate. But this is the man who celebrated a 1981 Grammy win by growling, "Let's get the hell out of El Salvador!" As a son of the Texas border he is almost obsessively concerned with U.S. exploitation of Latin America. The new LP opens with ringing chords vaguely reminiscent of

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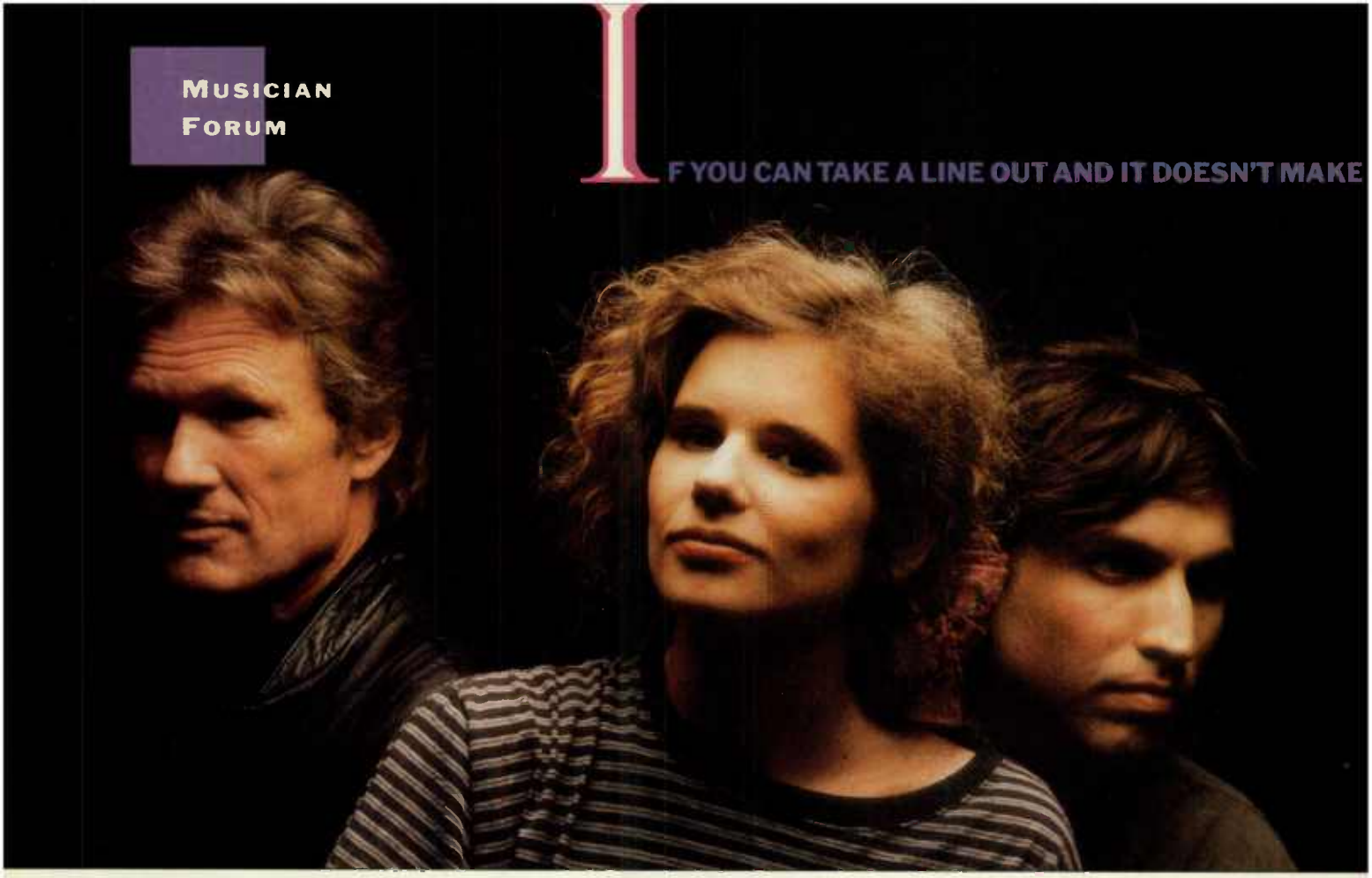
IF YOU CAN TAKE A LINE OUT AND IT DOESN'T MAKE



AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE, WHAT FORGIVENESS: KRIS KRISTOFFERSON, MARGO TIMMINS, MICHAEL TIMMINS, L.A., MARCH 1990

"Me and Bobby McGee," but the landscape has changed: "I will fight and I will die for freedom/Up against an eagle or a bear." Though Kristofferson is tickled when the hotel's valet parkers deposit his '78 Chevy ("The Rhino Chaser") among the German luxury cars, as an artist/activist hungry for a wider audience he feels the impact of diminished critical acclaim and faltering sales.

Cowboy Junkies are starting to feel that pinch themselves. *The Trinity Session*'s critical raves fueled a respectably selling debut, but they scrapped a session that sought to recapture that LP's atmosphere for the more mainstream *The Caution Horses. The Trinity Session* is already on the store racks amid the Super-Savers, as Margo Timmins drolly told an L.A. club crowd when she introduced "'Cause Cheap Is How I Feel." The new one is suffering from critical backlash and radio's indifference.

So the veteran American and the still-learning Canadians came to this dialogue with a fair amount of shared vulnerability, and as songwriter/performers, obvious mutual respect. As they chatted before a photo shoot, Kristofferson brought the Junkies not only his teenage daughter's respects, but a recollection of listening to their record on an isolated island in the Indian Ocean where he'd worked on a film; the Junkies were solicitous in turn, eager with questions even before the session started.

The silver-tongued devil treated the stunning Margo with unlicentious deference, though he grinned at her before aiming his exit line at her high-cheekboned brother Michael: "Tom Petty lookalike, right?"

MUSICIAN: *What song would you all perform if you were backstage with 10 minutes till you went on together?*

KRIS: Gawd, I have to go out on tour with John Cash and Willie and Waylon and I haven't got a clue what we're gonna do—and I'm going out tomorrow! I don't know, maybe "Masters of War."

MARGO: We used to do "Masters of War." Terribly, but . . .

MICHAEL: For everyone writing songs these days, Dylan is the benchmark. At one point you have to put your song against one of his and realize you got a long way to go. My favorite album is *Blonde on Blonde*, that's the one I tend to go back to—the writing on that.

KRIS: I was the janitor in that studio. My first job was when they recorded *Blonde* and I was the only songwriter allowed at the session. He would go in there and write all night long and record in the morning, after the musicians played cards all night.

THE BIG

MICHAEL: So a lot of that was live recording?

KRIS: Yeah. He sat in there for hours at the piano and nobody would mess with him. I never talked to him the whole time he was there. He's an action painter. He just wasn't about to keep going over things till everybody had it—which was totally contrary to the way they record in Nashville. They used to do three songs in three hours three times a day and he was the first guy they'd ever seen like that. When he started recordin' it was just one after another. He was definitely running the whole show.

I can remember every songwriter in Nashville saying, "Listen, I

Photography: David Roth; Hair & Makeup: Wendy Ann Rosen for Cloutier

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understand who the tambourine man is." Like, "He's the last man in a New Orleans funeral."

MUSICIAN: *Just to put Michael and Margo on the spot, which Kristofferson song would you cover?*

A DIFFERENCE, THERE WAS FAT IN THE SONG."

MICHAEL: Definitely "Help Me Make It Through the Night"—to me that is one of the most beautiful love songs around.

MARGO: That's one I think I could probably do . . .

KRIS: Do it! If I was doing one of theirs, I think it would be "Misguided Angel."

MARGO: I was traveling around and listening to a lot of country music. I got the idea for "Misguided Angel" listening to Waylon and Willie. But basically Waylon. He was the true "Misguided Angel," a guy that you would be really attracted to, but no, you shouldn't get involved with [*laughing*] . . . better to read the novel.

KRIS: Because Jesse [Waylon's wife] might *kill* you. No, that's perfect.

MARGO: I put you in that group, that sort of, you know . . .

MUSICIAN: *Possible troublemakers?*

KRIS: No, probable . . .

MARGO: At least it would be exciting while you're in trouble.

MUSICIAN: *It's a changed world in terms of attitudes towards drugs and drink. When you write a song depicting that behavior, are you thinking, "Well, I better not make this at all admirable"?*

MICHAEL: Not really, I don't go for that idea that songs corrupt people; I don't believe that some kid puts on a song about being drunk and then all of a sudden they go out and get drunk. I've never held to be true that sort of hysteria that I think a lot of people, especially in the upper echelons of this country, would like people to believe. It's a way of controlling artists and I don't believe in that.

KRIS: I don't think that you can censor yourself at that stage of the creative process. If you start saying, "Well, I can't make it look attractive," you'll never finish the song—or the poem or whatever. You might have some questions about it after ya finish the thing, what kind of effect this might have, but if it's a good song, you'll go ahead and put it out anyway. Like "Billy D.," which was about a guy who O.D.'d. It said, "Some folks called it suicide but we said he was crucified." I thought at times it might be glamorizing it, but it was honest, and that's I think the only question you can really ask yourself: "Am I honest? Am I bullshitting? Am I doin' what I want to do?" I got a song now that Waylon and I are gonna do that's called "Handsome When You're High." Waylon and I are both clean and sober, but the song is funny, it says, "Ain't you handsome when you're high—and bulletproof."

MUSICIAN: *The contrary view is the one espoused by the Parents Music Resource Center. They want warning labels on the packaging.*

KRIS: Well, I think that's a dangerous direction, ya know? Because they might be labeling drugs or pornography today, tomorrow it'll be politics. Maybe sayin' ya can't put out something that glorifies the Sandinistas 'cause we believe in the Contras or some bullshit.

I can't help but think the freedom from boundaries makes the limits a little bit bigger and you just have to work harder to make sure that you're using the right images, and not just doing something to shock somebody or 'cause you can get away with it. But the less restriction ya have or the freer you are has to result in better art.

MICHAEL: We come up against boundaries all the time because our music is so slow and quiet. That's such a stupid boundary to be fighting against, but we're always told we're too slow to do this or too quiet to put on this station. That's a big problem, which is amazing.

MARGO: The programmers don't know what to play before us and what to play after us.

KRIS: Shake hands with the devil. They don't know what slot to put me in in the record store. So they've all agreed not to play any of my records. All I can do is just remember that William Blake wasn't even published in his lifetime, and ya gotta keep creating.

MUSICIAN: *There are quite explicit spiritual, religious elements in Kris' songs. With Cowboy Junkies it's harder to pinpoint, but you can feel it. For starters, did it mean anything that* The Trinity Session *LP was recorded in a church?*

MICHAEL: The reason we recorded in a church was strictly for acoustics. We were raised Catholic, so you can't walk into a church and not be affected by it—we're not practicising Catholics now, but still there was that sense of quietness and hush, once you see the light streaming through the stained glass.

I have my own sense of spirituality and I connect with it on my own personal level, and the way I do that is through music. It puts me in touch with something that I know is greater than me and that's channeled through playing music. All our lyrics really deal with people and their relationships and how they deal with each other, and I suppose when you get to that level there has to be a certain amount of spirituality involved—otherwise you're not analyzing your relationship very accurately. So from that point of view there's a lot of spirituality. Music is a very spiritual art form.

KRIS: My religion is like yours, it's more personal than organized. I've never really responded well to organized religion. I think I've probably gotten more spiritual as I've gotten older and as I've gotten more sober. But it's in terms of human things. Like Michael says, how people relate to each other and taking care of your brother.

LEAP IS GOING FROM BEING A PRIVATE SONGWRITER TO A PERSON WHO GETS UP IN FRONT OF PEOPLE. THE TASK IS TO BE AS HONEST AS YOU CAN."

MUSICIAN: *Kris, you said a writer once got your quote twisted around and it was printed that you wrote "Why Me, Lord?" as a joke—when in fact it was your most fervent expression of faith.*

KRIS: Yeah, I've never done a more directly gospel expression of humility and thanks.

MICHAEL: You can tell that's serious. To listen to that song and not think it's serious . . .

KRIS: It would be misunderstanding me totally.

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MUSICIAN: *Another common thread in your work is the notion of musician as a kind of outsider.*

MICHAEL: I think in our songs, being Canadian, we have this great distance from America. America's filled with these great myths, one being that of the outsider, and for anybody growing up listening to music it's really attractive. Anybody in a band gets that sense of being an outsider, especially if you're attempting to bring your music to people and coming up against barriers from the industry.

KRIS: Yeah, I would think starting out as a band, anytime you're going your own way and speaking your own words you're an outsider tryin' to bust in. I mean, I feel like an outsider in this business today, and I've been in it for 20 years. It's like Blue Rodeo.

MUSICIAN: *It took Johnny Cash dragging you onstage at the 1969 Newport Folk Festival to start you off.*

THE GREATEST COMPLIMENT I GET AFTER A SHOW IS WHEN THEY SAY, 'YOU'VE GIVEN ME SO MUCH HOPE.'

KRIS: Yeah—yeah. God bless him, man, he busted the barrier down for me right there. I didn't realize at the time what a generous thing he did; he had a half hour and he cut into it to give me two songs.

MICHAEL: What did you sing?

KRIS: "Bobby McGee" and "Sunday Morning Coming Down," and it got me a ticket to folk festivals and stuff like that from then on—the first time I was ever on a stage. And it was the place where Dylan had freaked everybody out with his electric band and where he had met John Cash, and shoot, James Taylor was there, and Joni Mitchell and Van Morrison. It was heady stuff! It was the highest time of my life. Never had to work again.

MUSICIAN: *Do you feel like there's better cross-fertilization between rock and country and pop and folk, as represented by the Cowboy Junkies, for example, than we've had in a while?*

KRIS: I think people are listening to words more now. I've noticed the last three years that audiences are receptive to activist-type songs and things that have a message.

MICHAEL: Yeah, I think so. That's reflected in the so-called folk revival. The common denominator for all the people they call new folk artists is lyrics; they're writing songs worth listening to.

MARGO: I think the people listening to music are older than they used to be, at least in our crowds. They're 25 to 45 and they're ready to sit down and listen and not drink the whole night away, or entertain the girl that's sitting next to them—'cause the girl that's sitting next to them is their wife.

I think it's getting back to being really important to people. We went through a stage where there wasn't very much good stuff coming out and now there's so much, people are really turning on to it again.

MUSICIAN: *We better discuss the syllabic match of "Sunday Morning Coming Down" and "Sun Comes Up, It's Tuesday Morning."*

MICHAEL: Yeah, funny, we were doing an interview a week ago with an English journalist who didn't know we were doing this and he mentioned your song as compared to "Sun Comes Up." With any songwriters, if you look at their work long enough, there's the common denominator of getting down to talking about relationships with people. You're always coming at them from maybe a different perspective but trying to get at the heart of how people relate.

KRIS: Yeah, I probably wouldn't have written "Help Me Make It Through the Night" if I hadn't heard [Dylan's] "I'll Be Your Baby Tonight."

MUSICIAN: *In "Sunday Morning" each line depends on the one before it—like walking up a set of steps, which is a country-music style. What's happened to the guy in that song is complicated, and you learn about it as he paints the word-picture of his day. Do you think, Michael and Margo, that your counterpart song also works that way?*

MICHAEL: Definitely. "Tuesday Morning" is stream-of-consciousness. Every line does feed into the next. It's not the sort of song you could take a verse out to shorten for single airplay—it wouldn't make sense all of a sudden. There are some songs that you can do that to, but certainly with any good narrative song, if you can take a line out and it doesn't make a difference, then there was fat in the song.

MUSICIAN: *Let's talk about singing. Kris has this, um, rich baritone . . .*

KRIS: Aw, come on. [*laughing*] I usually think I sing better than other people think I do, but I never heard *that*. I could definitely listen to Margo a lot longer than I could to me.

MUSICIAN: *Cowboy Junkies write a fair amount of talking songs. Yet when you do a blues chestnut like "Dust My Broom," you do fine as a belter, Margo.*

MARGO: Every once in a while I like to sort of belt it out just to prove to myself that I can do it, but right now it's not the vocal style that I feel I do best. I think my best voice is at this level, just keeping it subtle, and I can do more with it. In the old days, just pushing it, I had no control. As I do it more I'm getting more control at that loud volume, and I guess as I keep trying it I'll be able to do more with it. Right now it takes all my effort just to push the voice out, and once it's out there I can't do anything. I'm just not very good at it yet; it's a matter of skill and practice and experience.

MUSICIAN: *Like Kris, you got pushed onstage. Were you "just the sister," or were you a musician/sister?*

MARGO: Not really. I always was very interested in what Michael was doing, and certainly music was a big part of my life: listening and going to the clubs to see bands. But I never intended to sing onstage until Michael asked me to join the band.

KRIS: Risky business.

MARGO: Yeah, 'cause he knew he'd have control. [*laughter*] At that point the band wasn't really a band; it didn't have any money or anything and there wasn't big talk—at least that I knew—of going into clubs. But when I joined things started to click. It started to make sense and then we went into the clubs and . . .

MICHAEL: We haven't stopped since.

MARGO: Life has changed.

MUSICIAN: *After 20 years in this life and three marriages, do you have any advice to offer these two on relationships?*

KRIS: I was gonna ask them to give me some. I'm going on the road

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tomorrow and I'm already going through the separation blues. I have no advice except clean up your own act and try to be honest with yourself and the other people. I have a feeling that they're already ahead of me. You're talking about a guy that's been in several broken marriages, and it's a miracle that we're all still civil with each other. I got seven kids that all still like me—six, one on the way.

MARGO: That's great; must be doin' something right. My husband's really supportive of what I do and I guess knowing he's back home and knowing that there's something even more important than my music is good. It gives me a security. Because I find this business really crazy and I don't know how it works or what it functions on. I don't necessarily believe that it functions on good music. So it could all disappear tomorrow and if it does, I have a place to go where I belong, so it gives me a strength.

KRIS: That's a healthy attitude, 'cause this'll all change, ya know, and you got some rock that's solid.

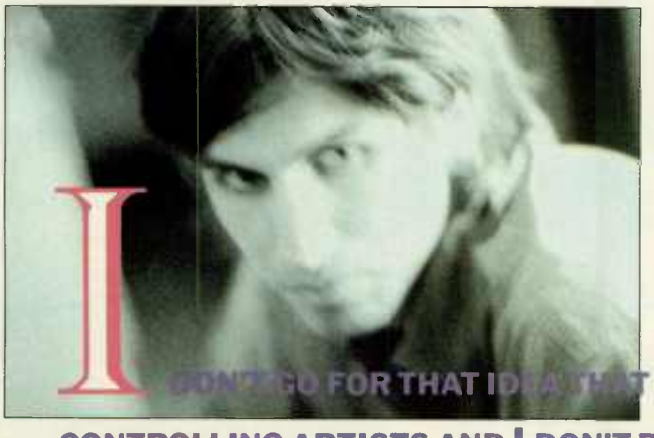
MUSICIAN: *This one's for both Kris and Margo: How do you deal with that sense of apartness, of being singled out? As Waylon says, "I've seen the world with a five-piece band/Starin' at the back side of me."*

MARGO: Yeah, I love that line. To me it's just part of the job. I'm the front person in the band and it's just like interviews, getting your photo done. When we're on the stage, I'm no longer the front person who's separate. When the band's off, I'm off and if I'm off, hopefully the band can get me through. That's why I turn around so much when they're playing, because I like to watch them play and be a part of what's going on; to look at them, to feel what they're doing.

MUSICIAN: *There was a little byplay between brother and sister the other night at the Roxy gig.*

MICHAEL: Oh yeah, the carefully plotted set list.

MARGO: I skipped . . . oh well, let's go on to the next one. Those things happen. When I make a mistake, even though I'm not looking at him, I can just feel his eyes on me. I turn around and I get this face,



"I DON'T GO FOR THAT IDEA THAT SONGS CORRUPT PEOPLE. IT'S A WAY OF CONTROLLING ARTISTS AND I DON'T BELIEVE IN THAT."

then I reread my set list and find out that I skipped a song.

MUSICIAN: *It's entirely possible that Hollywood would come looking for Margo. Kris certainly has lived in that milieu. What sort of advice would you give her?*

KRIS: Don't let the bastards get you down. I don't think there's any contradiction in performing on a stage and performing in front of a camera. Just be honest. To me the big leap was going from being a private songwriter to a person who got up in front of people, and the task was to be as honest and strip away as much bullshit as you can. It's what you do every night, you try to be as honest and portray your life and that's all you would do in film. So the task for you is to find something that you can identify with: the right script, don't pick up something where ya have to be a hairdresser or something.

MUSICIAN: *In* A Star Is Born *you played a self-destructive rock star—typecasting at the time.*

KRIS: It was also hard, because I had trouble identifying with the music we were doing. I couldn't do my own, which was the only thing I'd ever done. I used my band, I fought my way onto there: got the band on and Barbra ended up liking them so much I couldn't get hold of them! But the music wasn't mine, because I didn't publish with their publishing company. So we had to work that into something that was comfortable. But I wanted to be standing up for Jimi Hendrix, Janis, Hank Williams, different people who had gone through that, and that's how I was able to identify with it.

MARGO: I cried through that whole movie.

MUSICIAN: *Let's talk about the sheer mechanics of writing songs. Kris, do you simply use an acoustic guitar or do you have some synths sitting around?*

KRIS: I'm a computer dummy. Anything mechanical is scary to me. And I'm also not a very disciplined writer, I don't sit down and write every day. The last thing I wrote was months ago; I have to wait for the inspiration. Then I can write, but I don't need to have a weapon with me. Maybe a guitar.

MICHAEL: I too am a Luddite when it comes to mechanical stuff. I'm writing all the time, but it's usually in my head. A lot of just going through ideas, and then when I get to a point where I think it's ready to be explored, I pick up the guitar and start thinking of melodies. Occasionally I'll come up with the melody first, but it's usually words, and so I work out chord structure and lyrics, then I bring Margo into it and we work out the feeling. Then the rest of the band gets introduced to it. It's a real process with us, a song isn't finished when I'm done with it, there's Margo's input and then Peter [Timmins] and the bass player and the drummer's input. They have a huge part to play in forming the feel of the song and how it's gonna be put across.

MARGO: Which changes often; we'll change everything that I planned or set out, then they'll do something and I have to reinterpret the whole song; that's when it really goes through a lot of growth.

KRIS: That's one of the beauties of being with people you've been with a long time. My band can express what I want better than I can.

What you're doing in a successful song is moving somebody's emotions—you're not really attacking their brain. If you're successful with a political song it's done the same way as if you're writing a song, like you said, about a man and a woman. If you try to attack it on an intellectual level I think you're gonna fail. The things that have been most successful that I've done have been things that people would get emotionally involved in, just moved, and don't necessarily tell anybody how to think.

MUSICIAN: *What supplies the inspiration on off-days, the jazz that a snort and a slug of Wild Turkey used to provide?*

KRIS: Well, there's definitely the feeling that I have a message it's important that I share. I know that keeps us out on the road a lot of times when due to lack of support from the record company or whatever you might have a tendency to say, "I'll go sit and play with the kids instead." The notion that it's important—just from the feedback I get from the people that haven't been exposed to the ideas

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that I exposed them to—gives me the inspiration to go back out. And right before you're going on, just to think about [*glancing heavenward*], "Hey, I need your help. If you're not out there with me on this stage, we're in big trouble, 'cause I'm tired, man."

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever pick someone out to sing to?*

MARGO: I don't. I'll smile at people and hopefully get a smile in return; when I don't it's a little disturbing. But I don't necessarily sing a whole song to somebody. I think it would make that person uncomfortable. [*laughter*]

KRIS: You might avoid looking at certain people. I know a lot of times the people right in front are the least reactive, probably because they're uncomfortable in the lights. I tend to look over them. I was thinking of that last night at the Grammys. Poor Gary Shandling was running the whole thing and sitting in the front row is Miles Davis who's looking at ya like "I wouldn't smile at you no matter what you say." Thank God we're not stand-up comics.

MUSICIAN: *Where do you look back for inspiration?*

KRIS: I feel a spiritual line back to Woody Guthrie, Hank Williams.

MICHAEL: We do a lot of Robert Johnson songs and we're the furthest thing from him in a socioeconomic place, but there's something . . .

KRIS: Yeah, but it struck a chord with you.

MICHAEL: Exactly, it touched us and I don't know exactly why or how, but it does.

MUSICIAN: *His greatness is immediately apparent and also indefinable. What is it about him?*

KRIS: What is it about a mockingbird? It's just natural, and real. Why do you like Jimmy Reed? He's just *good*. I used to try and explain why I liked Hank Williams back in the '50s. Hank Williams never got played on any crossover, it was just hard country. When his songs were popular they were popular by Jo Stafford or Tony Bennett and I said, "God, you oughta hear the guy who really sings 'em." They did and they didn't like him. But to me one was like bland mayonnaise and the other was like salsa.

MUSICIAN: *I guess it's a coincidence that so many of those great roots artists died young. I'm sure no one here wishes they would; you still got a chance, you guys.*

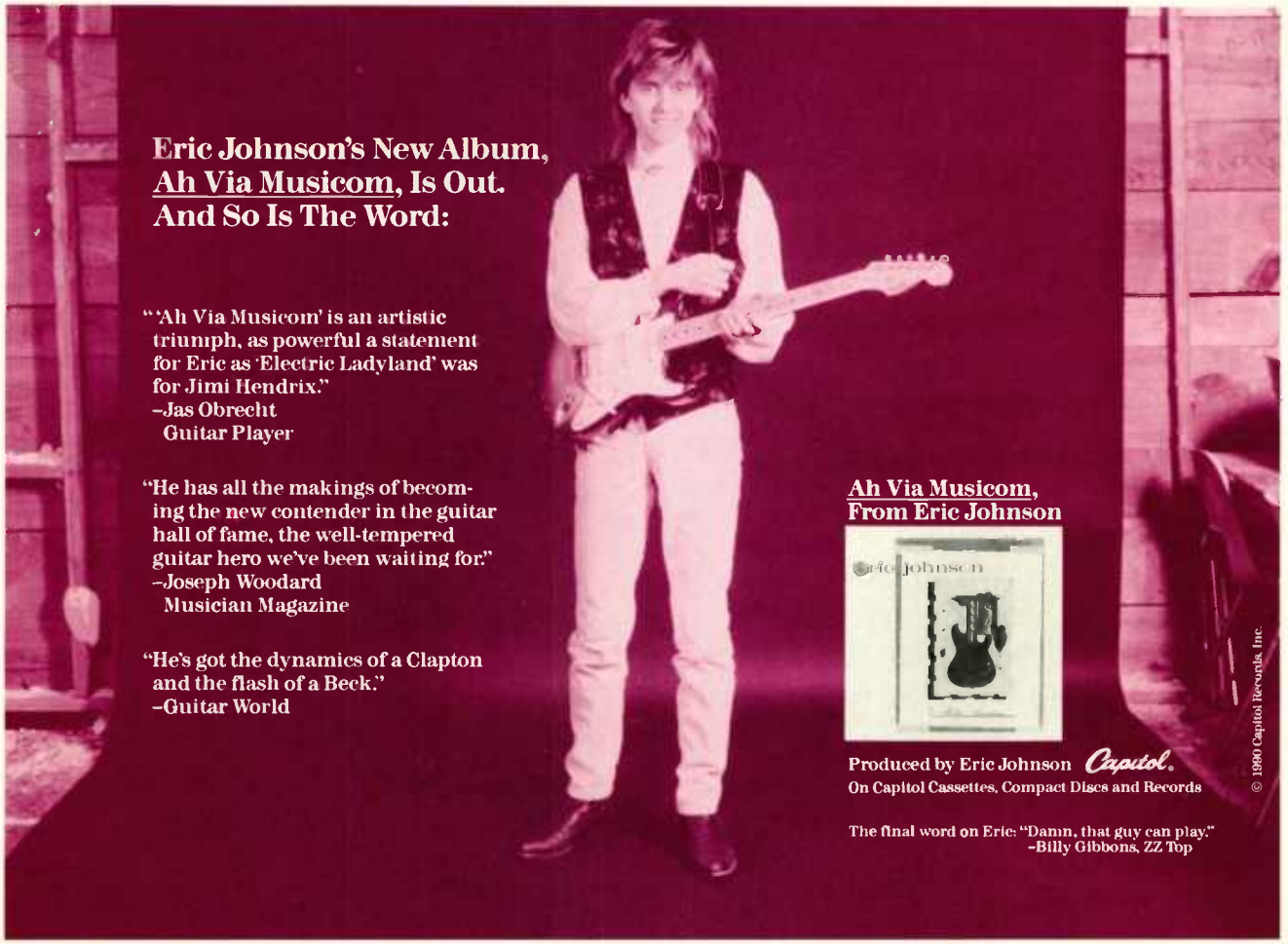
KRIS: I was gonna say you looked quickly away from me! It's too late for me to die young!

MUSICIAN: *Did genius drive them into that corner where they died, or did the death amplify the legend?*

[*cont'd on page 66*]

COWBOY JUNK

MICHAEL TIMMINS plays a 1966 Fender Stratocaster and a 1973 Gibson Howard Roberts. His amp is a Fender Twin, and he uses Dean Markley strings. PETER TIMMINS plays a Gretsch Custom Rock kit; he uses Remo coated Ambassador heads, a Pearl free-floating snare, Regal brushes and a DW 5000 pedal. ALAN ANTON plays a Fender Jazz bass through a Trace-Elliott amplifier with 4 x 10 Hartke speakers. MARGO TIMMINS sings live through a Beyer M-88 microphone.



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SOUL II SOUL

JAZZIE B KEEPS ON MOVIN'

BY MARK ROWLAND

JAZZIE B SAT NEAR ONE CORNER OF THE CROWDED North Hollywood sound studio, watching the musicians casually file into the room and take their places on the triple-tiered stage. Across the floor stood Patrice Rushen, examining her keyboards. Gathered behind her was the 20-plus-piece band she'd put together at Jazzie's request, players whose studio credits ran the gamut of '70s and '80s soul, gospel and R&B, from George Duke to Smokey Robinson to Andrae Crouch. Hanging out at the top of this makeshift pyramid was Earth, Wind & Fire's three-piece horn section. Jazzie B shook his head, the dreadlocks framing his face shimmered like a bamboo curtain, and he smiled.

"These are the people I listened to and read about," he said. "I spun their records in the clubs. They're my heroes, and here they are in this room . . ."

He didn't need to complete the sentence. They were in this room to rehearse music composed by Jazzie B, music better known to pop fans as Soul II Soul. For the last year Soul II Soul's debut disc on Virgin Records, *Keep On Movin'*, has made a steady march on the dance and pop charts, spawning two platinum-selling singles, "Keep On Movin'" and "Back to Life"; the album sold over a million copies as well. More importantly, the music of Soul II Soul, percolated in the West Indian community of North London, spiced with reggae, soca and African percussion as well as American jazz and pre-Prince-era R&B, suggests the possibility of a third British invasion of America in as many decades. Only this time the Brits are black.

The band knocks out richly orchestral arrangements of "Back to Life" and the new Soul II Soul single "Get a Life," the latter introduced by a call-and-response rap between Jazzie and his alter ego D'addae Harvey. "Be objective," Jazzie counsels in his deadpan delivery, "be selective—be an asset to the collective." The song floats from a rap to a sing-song chorus to a beautiful melodic verse featuring singer Marcia Lewis. It couldn't be less formulaic, but it sounds like a hit. By the time the song ends with a snappy four-bar horn cadence, everyone in the room is either playing or dancing.

Jazzie tends to keep his emotions in check, but he's juiced about the sound. "I never heard it like this before,"

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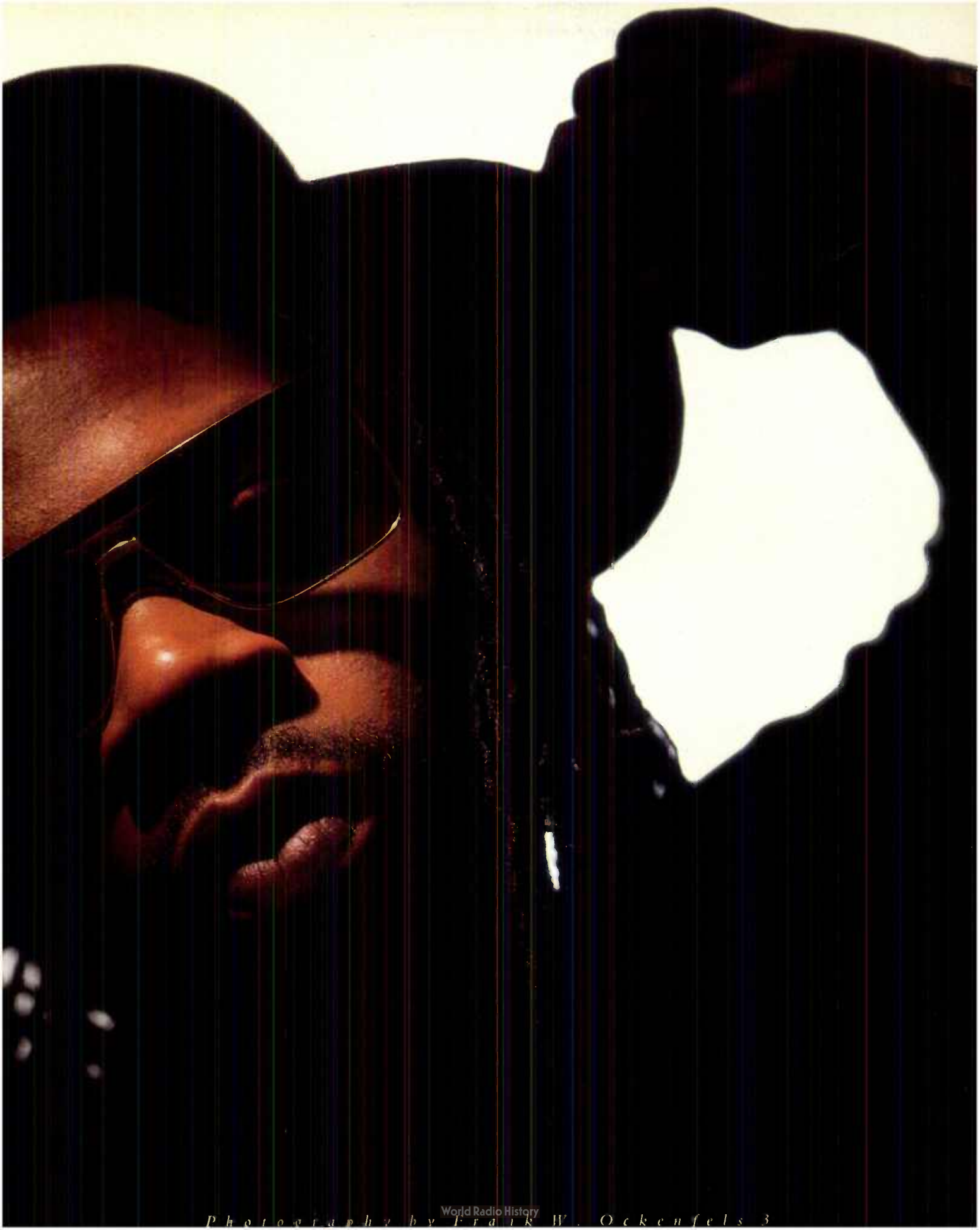

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Photography by Frank W. Ockenfels 3

he tells Rushen. Of course he'd be excited to hear some of his early heroes play his tunes. But he's also using the occasion to build a bridge between two musical communities otherwise separated by an ocean and a generation—soul to soul. "When Jazzie says he's been listening to you for years, that's a special feeling—it validates me as well," Patrice Rushen says. "I want to feel like I'm an asset to the collective, too."

Jazzie B is in L.A. this week for the twentieth annual presentation of the Soul Train Awards. Soul II Soul has received four separate nominations, more than any other artist, which says something for the group's standing in the black community. Unlike Janet Jackson, or Terence Trent D'Arby or Neneh Cherry or even Public Enemy, there's little about Jazzie that seems consciously molded for "crossover" success, perhaps because he's always worked outside normal music-industry channels.

During the awards show he performs "Jazzie's Groove," one of the most unlikely dance hits of all time. If you haven't heard it, the song is basically Jazzie discussing the concept of Soul II Soul in a manner at once rambling and cryptic, with a primal percussive pattern and occasional horn fills. "The future of Soul II Soul?" he asks near the end of the song, as if it's a question on everyone's mind, and then gives the answer: "A happy face, a thumpin' bass, for a lovin' race."

A little later on the program, Quincy Jones receives a lifetime achievement citation, and gives an eloquent acceptance speech, impressing the need for the black musical community to see itself as part of a historical continuum, and to treat each other like a family. It's a lot better summation of the philosophy underpinning Soul II Soul than "Jazzie's Groove," but maybe Quincy's speech wouldn't work so well on the dance floor.

Soul II Soul wins three more awards that night, part of a growing stash which includes two Grammys. "I give all my awards to my mother," Jazzie reveals. "She deserves them."

JAZZIE B, NOW 27, grew up as Beresford Romeo, the youngest boy in a brood of 10. His parents had moved to Britain from the Caribbean island of Antigua around the end of World War II, emblematic of a wave of immigrants from the West Indies, mostly from islands that had once been under British colonial rule. In areas like North London they created communities that attempted to preserve that Caribbean heritage, in part, Jazzie asserts, because their chance of truly assimilating into England was negligible.

"There's still a lot of English people who don't even realize that black people exist," he says. "I think my parents' generation were brought there under false pretenses. They were brought in to rebuild the country after the war, and they took all the labor work. And then they were rejected by the class system."

It's a lesson Jazzie has taken to heart. Though he returns to Antigua at least once a year, which he likens to feeling "at peace with yourself," he ruefully notes that he's still half-British whether he likes it or not. "You grow up with this sort of makeshift image of what it's like in the Caribbean," he says. "Then you go there and fall flat on your face because it's nothing like that." The result is that Jazzie feels himself "an alien with a passport."

Jazzie's was not a musical family per se. His parents were "Sunday singers" who tried to force piano lessons on him, without much success. "I'm sorry I didn't deal with it properly," he says in a familiar refrain, "but when you're forced to do something it's a different kettle of fish." He did relate to the music he heard around the house, from Barry White and the Whispers to salsa to reggae and soca.

By the age of 11 he was working in sound studios, starting from the bottom, hooking up tape, less interested in become an engineer than in learning the techniques necessary to find his own sound. "I guess the people I worked for thought I'd make a shit engineer," he laughs. But a few years later, Jazzie was a club DJ with the knowledge and connections to make his own tracks, often dubs and mixes of songs he liked, using innovation he'd absorbed by reggae sound system pioneers like Coxsonne Dodd and Jack Ruby. The biggest influence, though, was Bob Marley, "because he's an influence on my whole life. You see, it's very important that we strive to stay together and keep these achievements alive for another generation. So when they come up they'll know there are other people who have done it before them."

Though not technically a Rasta, Jazzie sports its accoutrements: dreadlocks, hat with Ethiopian flag stripes, and a philosophy he identifies as "funki dred," emphasizing that "everybody is somebody." But Jazzie, for all his ideals, is a street-smart pragmatist who believes in "getting the job done. That's what's important," he says, "getting things done instead of sitting on a park bench just talking about it. What hurt, after Marley passed away, was that all the other people who were sort of bubbling up at the time just never came through. That was a bit distressing. But maybe they just never had it that much together."

Like the Wailers, whose sound came together in the crucible of Kingston's Trenchtown ghetto, Soul II Soul began as a neighborhood family affair that slowly grew in size and reputation. Jazzie's rap partner D'addae Harvey is "a lifetime buddy—we've been together since we were kids." The rest of the group "respected and looked out for each other. When we started building up it was common knowledge that anybody who came in was like part of the family."

On the live rap "Feeling Free," Jazzie makes mention of a society in which communities like Soul II Soul's are seen as collections of unemployables, useless appendages within the larger social fabric. "Through the sound system you kept your spirits up," he recalls. "Together you gave recognition and respect within the realm of your community. You'd have house parties where you'd invite your friends, club situations and dances—which were more or less the same thing. It was all done word of mouth. But the methods were very basic. I say it's unorthodox because nobody else would dream of doing things like that. But until you prove yourself it's a bit difficult for even your best friend to take you seriously."

"AFTER MARLEY DIED ALL THE OTHER PEOPLE WHO WERE BUBBLING UNDER JUST NEVER CAME THROUGH."

More a revue than a band, Soul II Soul's self-contained aggregate included DJs, MCs, programmers, singers, even models. They always put a strong emphasis on clothes and fashion, and in fact were first known for their clothing—"I had my own stores before I was taken seriously in the music business," Jazzie notes. For all the talk about family, it's not a democracy; the music is essentially Jazzie's

Photograph: (previous page) Frank W. Ockenfels 3/Outline

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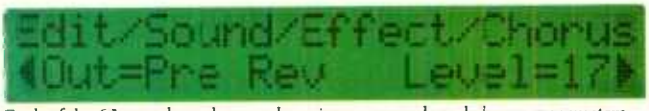

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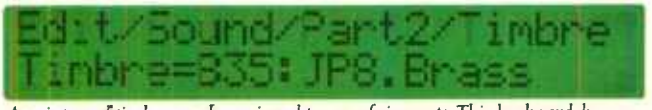

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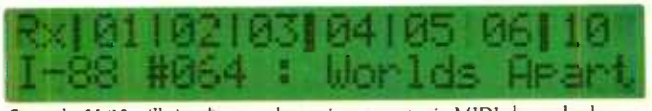

Since the U-20 will simultaneously receive on up to six MIDI channels plus a rhythm channel, you can create entire arrangements with an external sequencer, and split or layer up to six sounds on the keyboard.

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conception, and he keeps final say on it. "For one to make a decision and the rest to follow—that's Soul II Soul," he says, as if reciting a Biblical inscription. "That's never changed and it never will."

Jazzie admits he never really anticipated success for Soul II beyond North London. "It started to jell when we were making the records and couldn't press enough to meet the demand. We only had one truck, and we'd be taking the records around to different jobs, pirate radio stations . . . it was the same with the clothes. People just liked the stuff that we wore. Whatever money we made we'd put back into Soul II Soul. So the image and the music went hand in hand."

Jazzie isn't intimidated by success, perhaps because he's been the architect for so much of what he's earned. "You ever been in a situation where you want a bicycle in a shop but you can't ever afford it, and it gets to the point where you have to *make* a bicycle? I just used a bit of common sense, looking back in history and seeing what the whole thing is about. You sign a contract, it means somebody makes an investment in you. When I had my sound system and wanted to play out, I had to find a venue. I made records, I had to find a studio. Now I've got my own studio, my own songs, my own music, you know?" He laughs, his gold tooth gleaming. "I've just got my own shit."

"UNTIL YOU PROVE YOURSELF IT'S DIFFICULT FOR EVEN YOUR BEST FRIEND TO TAKE YOU SERIOUSLY."

With that success, his ambitions have grown. He talks of putting together Britain's first black-owned record company. It sounds as if he sees his role as becoming that of a leader, or at least a role model. Jazzie isn't sure he likes the image, but says this: "If I can show that me, as a normal guy, can do this, that'll give the other guys I grew up with an incentive to go on and do it. Now if that means leadership, then there you go, I'm a leader. But all I'm trying to do is be a shining example as to what we, as a race of people, can do. Because so many of us feel that we can't do shit. We don't put ourselves out any further than we see necessary. But we *need* to go further. We need to poke and examine. We need to take care of our business. I've just grown up that way. I'm black and this is what I've got to deal with. Because somebody has to do it."

THE AFTERNOON FOLLOWING the Soul Train Awards, Jazzie and his orchestra perform their two rehearsed numbers on the Arsenio Hall show, then head over to the China Club in Hollywood for a party and preview of the new Soul II Soul album, tentatively titled *Vol. II—1990 A New Decade*. Hardly the musical departure the title implies, it does

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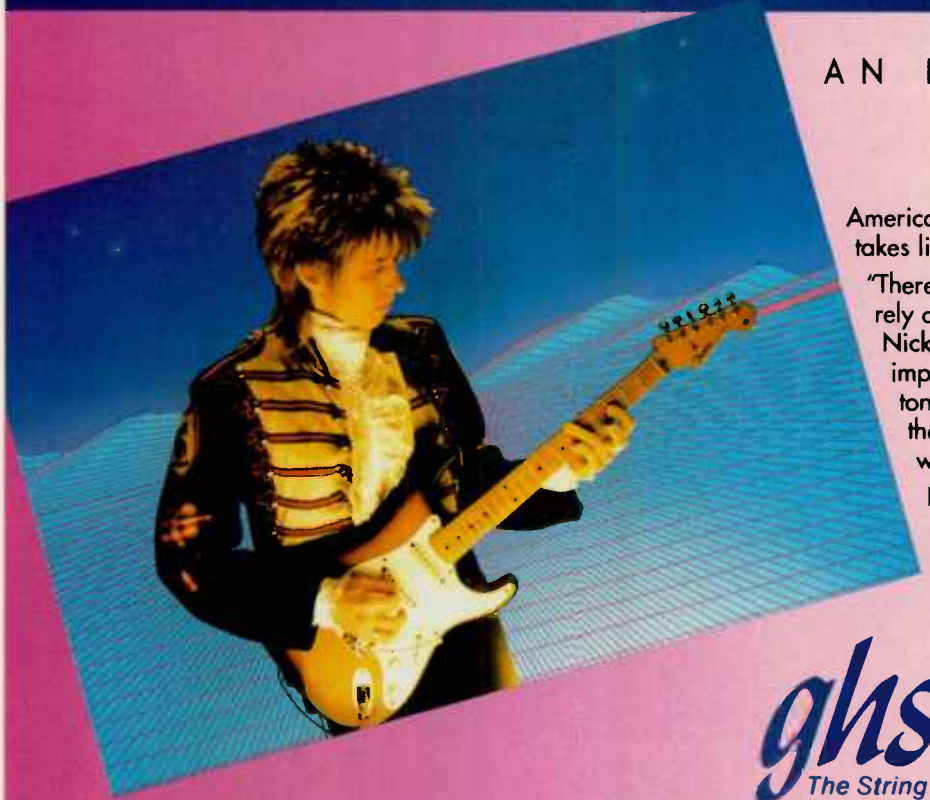

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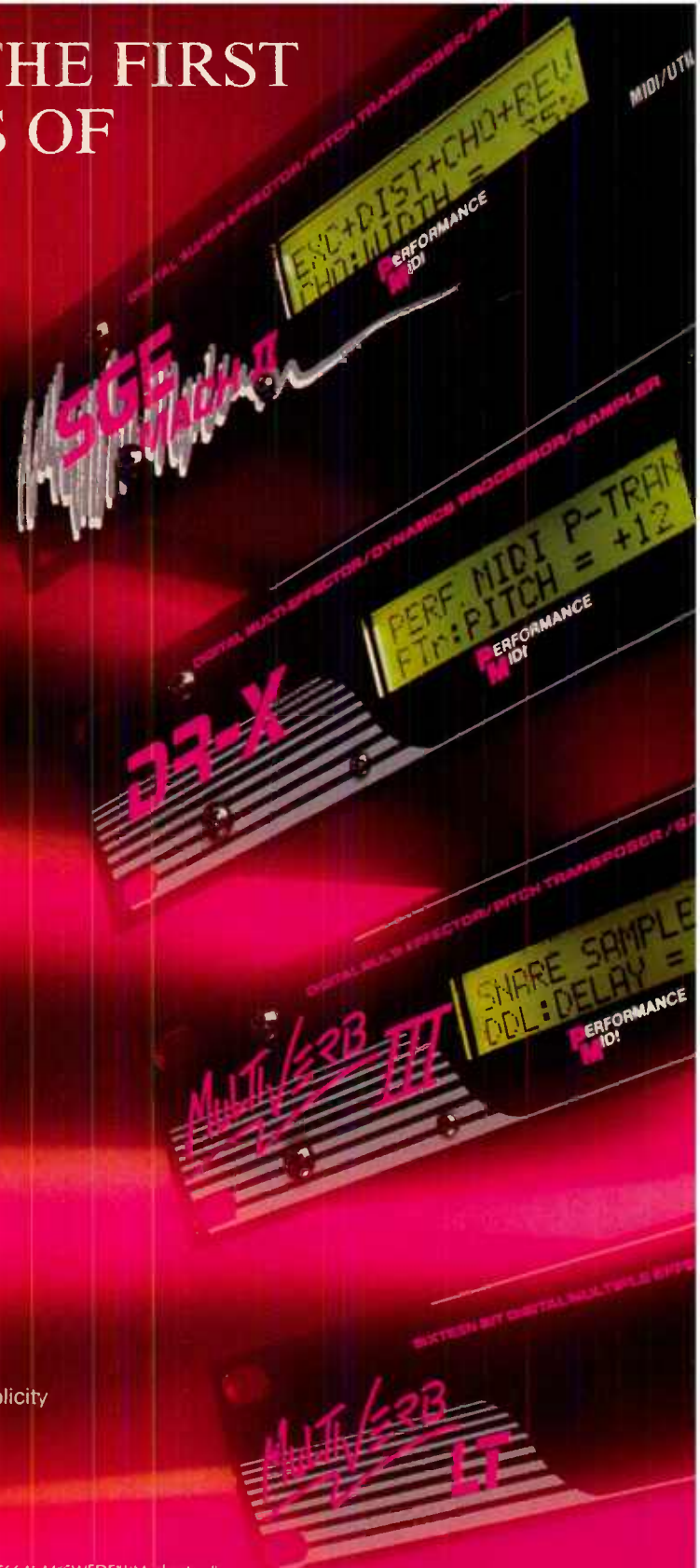

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reassemble Jazzie's signature sounds—melodic vocals, warm cushions of synths and sturdy African percussion—in fresh ways. The title track has a seductive Brazilian lilt, while "Dreams a Dream" harkens to classic Earth, Wind & Fire. An instrumental track features an extended solo by saxophonist Courtney Pine. Jazzie B, it turns out, is a jazz fan. "It's how I got my name," he admits.

Part of what makes Jazzie's music so engaging is that it sounds at once modern and classic. He says he usually builds songs from a vocal melody, marrying studio technology to the warmth inherent in that melodic craft—not to mention real live musicians. Several members of the Reggae Philharmonic Orchestra, a London-based black string orchestra, play on both records, for instance, and Jazzie says he's moving more in the direction of that "natural" sound. "What's real seems to be what's missing in music today," he observes. "I've picked that up through traveling—just listening to the sound of the ocean, you know? Or the engine of a car. Then you hear the Top 40 and it sounds synthetic from top to bottom. It *is* harder to get a band together these days, but if you can lay down a direction, get a good class of musicians to follow it, well, all you can do is make it better."

The members of the Reggae Philharmonic Orchestra who are in attendance tonight speak well of Jazzie as a bandleader, saying that he has a strong sense of what he wants but is open to suggestions from the musicians. On the other hand, it's still unclear why none of the three singers on Soul II Soul's *Keep On Movin'* LP—especially Caron Wheeler, whose gorgeous rendition of the title tune made her perhaps that record's most obvious asset—are around anymore. Marcia Lewis, the new singer, is also Jazzie's cousin, while the children who sing the chorus of "Get a Life" are his nephews. Looks like Soul II Soul is really becoming a family affair.

Wheeler was recently signed by Island Records as a solo artist. Jazzie claims the decision to leave Soul II Soul was hers, and that the split was amicable, though sources close to the band suggest otherwise.

"The whole idea of Soul II Soul is that you give the opportunity to as many people as possible, and from there . . . you keep building up and up. We work with a lot of different artists, for their benefit and for ours. So I guess you could take Soul II Soul as a kind of school."

At the China Club, Jazzie is presented with the two Grammy Awards won by Soul II Soul a month earlier. He can't think of anything to say. "You want to be prepared for this, but you never are," he finally confesses. "I guess I should have joined the Boy Scouts." For the next hour, fans and corporate types alike line up to have their pictures taken with Mr. B, while the dance floor takes a pounding from his rhythms. Later, I ask Jazzie if such outpourings of affection have softened his sense of personal alienation, if he feels less like "an alien with a passport" and more a member of a spiritual community bonded by music like his own.

"Not really." He smiles slightly. "I mean, I really haven't thought about it on that level. I'm just doing what's necessary, and I guess these are the perks that go along the way. That's how I take it, no less or more. I do feel I'm taken more seriously, and that has given me more encouragement to go on. More confidence, more strength. Now I have been given the opportunity to travel most places in the world. But you never really go home, do you? You have no home."

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"I'M NOT SUCH AN OLD HIPPIE"

Robert Plant Stops Being Polite

By Charles M. Young

THREE YEARS OFF CIGARETTES, a few weeks off caffeine, four hours off the Concorde from London, Robert Plant settles down in a tightly packed armchair in his New York hotel suite with only a pot of room service decaf to stimulate the interview process.

"I just lost a tooth," he says, fingering a well-capped incisor, the bags under his eyes radiating the imminent onset of jetlag. "I bit on an Indonesian meatball and it cracked—the tooth, not the meatball—and it didn't actually fall out until I was doing this live interview on television in Amsterdam. Did you ever try to talk while holding a tooth in with the tip of your tongue? I sounded like one of the Goons from the BBC. Then we mimed a song and I wore these black gloves that I waved mysteriously in front of my mouth. Made it even more deep and meaningless. Made it *peculiar*, deep and meaningless. I always thought I'd lose it to some young lady delivering a fast upper cut, which happened once. Who would have guessed an Indonesian meatball? Ah well, it's only right that people who have been around as long as I have should occasionally fall apart a little bit."

Peculiar, deep and meaningless isn't a bad start toward describing Plant's latest album *Manic Nirvana*. Throw in "ferocious" and "hilarious" and you've just about nailed the apt adjec-

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tives. Over a decade since the demise of Led Zeppelin, Plant has almost come full circle—first away from Led Zeppelin with albums that explored his interest in Middle Eastern music and early rock, then swerving back with the hard-rocking technodazzle and autobiographical mockery of *Now and Zen* in 1988. A louder, funnier and raunchier *Now and Zen*, *Manic Nirvana* burns with intense introspection on slow tunes like "Anniversary" and "Liar's Dance." And it explodes with his trademark extroverted howls of lust on fast songs like "Nirvana" and "Big Love."

"*Now and Zen* was a tremendous joining of forces," says Plant, referring to the first effort of his current and most potent band since Zeppelin: Phil Johnstone on keyboards, Doug Boyle on guitar, Chris Blackwell on drums and Charlie Jones on bass. "I think the presentation at the time was appropriate, but the mix was a little polite. In fact, we nearly blew it in the mix. When we got back from playing to just under a million people on our tour, we took three weeks off and started to record again. It was like, 'Let's *go* this time. Let's forget about being polite. Let's mix this thing like we mean it. Let's attack this thing and have no sweetness about it. Let's have fun.'"

It is massive fun to crank it up and then bounce off the walls of your living room.

"Exactly. Over the years I've made so many excuses, so many turns in so many directions, which seemed right at the time, and it's too late to do anything about them now anyway, but this thing comes out and hits you in the face with a hammer. At the same time, it's tickling your ass as well. I've found my niche. Whether it's successful is secondary. I suppose I'll have better perspective to judge when I do my next one, but I think this is it. This is how it should be. In the recording, if it was sounding too corporate rock, I'd say, 'Let's get the Gene Vincent in there! Let's get the rock in there!' But the proper rock. Not the tired postures of Lurex-clad tosspots."

In Plant's last interview with this magazine, two-and-a-half years ago, he had a jolly time at the expense of certain rock stars who have made a career of swimming in Led Zeppelin's wake.

"No, that wasn't a reference to David Coverdale [singer with Whitesnake]," says Plant of a previous target. "You'll have to work for this interview. I'm not slagging anyone off this time."

"THERE WERE SOME great tricks that didn't make it on the album," said Phil Johnstone, Plant's co-producer and main co-creator, back in London. "We had one called 'That Ain't Me Singing, It's Another Guy.' We thought the rap section in 'Tall Cool One' worked well the last time, so we tried to do it again. And this rap named a number of singers like Lenny Wolfe of Kingdom Come and who's the guy in Great White? Can't remember. Anyway, they're all going to the bank and Robert is desperately screaming in the background, 'That ain't me singing, it's another guy!'"

You actually sampled the other singers?

"No, we didn't go that far. When we did the vocals, I was urging Robert, 'You've got to sing more oohs and ahs. Lenny would. Come *on*.' We'd sit there actually listening to 'Get It On' to get it properly, so it was this bizarre situation of Robert trying to copy Lenny Wolfe copying him."

Was David Coverdale in the song?

"We're not mentioning him in any interviews. It's be-nice-to-David-Coverdale year. We all love his latest album."

Manic Nirvana is nothing if not full of influences. What's the difference when you steal from other bands?

"We can't take some poxy radio programmer into consideration when we're trying to make music. A lot of bands sit around saying, 'Yes, we're going to make a classic record here, we've itemized our market, they listen to Journey, Boston and Led Zeppelin and a bit of Free.' And they mix and match and combine a bit of 'Stairway to Heaven' with 'All Right Now.' In the case of Def Leppard, they do quite well. But we can't do that. It's more unconscious with us . . . uh, it's like, stealing influences, why even call it . . . It's not trying to stay in one place. It's not saying, 'That was a successful record, let's steal it.' We don't steal from successful records. That's why we don't have any hits. I steal from Randy Newman. And if you steal from Randy Newman, you're likely to make a Randy Newman and sell 200,000 copies, as our manager says. It drives him wild."

The Emperor's New Clothes: "If Robert and Jimmy were to play

What did you steal from Randy Newman?

"Lots of little bits. On 'Your Ma Said You Cried in Your Sleep Last Night' I have to take the credit or the blame for that embarrassingly lame '60s guitar line: Dee dee duh-dee dee. It's heavily influenced by 'Simon Smith and His Amazing Dancing Bear,' which isn't even my favorite Randy Newman song. I'd love to see some headbanger just getting into the record, having just heard 'Tie Dye on the Highway' and going, 'Wow, this is great!' Then 'Dee dee duh-dee dee.' The point is, if you're King-

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together again and it were announced, it would be a disaster."

dom Come, or whoever is having their year this year, are you pushing forward the frontiers of music when you steal 'Kashmir'? Take another field, like science. Because Pasteur found penicillin [*It was Alexander Fleming—Ed.*], other scientists can carry on with it and earn lots of money. They steal bits from the work of others and build on it. They don't have to reinvent penicillin."

"HE MUST BE English. That's the only place they know that song," says Randy Newman in Los Angeles. He plunks the purloined theme from "Simon Smith" on his piano. "That's nice. God knows I must have stolen it from somewhere. Gee, you'd think he'd have more commercial sense. You'd think he'd steal something from the Stones. Kind of a dippy guitar line."

That's what their manager told them. He said they were doomed to commercial failure if they stole from you.

"That's flattering. At least he didn't steal a big hunk of something."

What's your philosophy of theft? When is it okay to steal and when isn't it?

"There's a point at which people should be hung for it. But sometimes who the hell knows? You don't know you're doing it. You shouldn't be hung for stealing a lick. I'm sure he didn't do it consciously. There are inadvertent things that happen to people all the time because there are only 12 notes. And then there's 'Let's try to do something exactly like Jody Watley's last record.' If you do it for about 32 bars, it's not okay. On radio there used to be a show called 'Sigmund Spate: Song Detective' and he'd ferret out people who were stealing, point out some popular song was lifted from Chopin. Probably wouldn't do real well in the ratings today."

"DID HE REALLY?" Plant gasps in horror. "I can't believe what a thief Phil is. He's some kind of evil ferret, that guy, stealing from Randy Newman. But at least the writing credit went to the guys who originally wrote it."

Given your own history of theft going back to the early days of Led Zeppelin, why is it okay for you to steal and not okay for Kingdom Come or someone to steal?

"Well, it's perfectly all right. Everyone can nick everyone else. We're all fair game, and that's reasonable. There are so many songs within songs on this album, I don't know where they all came from. After all my life in rock 'n' roll and all the music I've heard, some imitation hasn't been intentional, and some has."

As in?

"The 'Whole Lotta Love' situation, the lyric being from Willie Dixon's 'You Need Love.' [Led Zeppelin was sued and settled out of court.] My vocal style I haven't tried to copy from anyone. It just developed, until it became the girlish whine that it is today. Sampling is another matter altogether. And when the song is built around a sample of someone else performing, and the whole tune and commerciality and vibe is created by someone else, that's still another matter."

"Whole Lotta Love" did push rock 'n' roll another couple of steps. If the lyric hadn't been stolen, the music would have been lesser for it. The mistake came in not crediting Dixon.

"Page's riff was Page's riff. It was there before anything else. I just thought, 'Well, what am I going to sing?' That was it, a nick. Now happily paid for. At the time there was a lot of conversation about what to do. It was decided that it was so far away in time and influence that . . . well, you only get caught when you're successful. That's the game. Now this thing that we do is not so blues-based. The area from which you can poach becomes wider."

"WHILE WE WERE REHEARSING and writing at Robert's house," Phil Johnstone says, "there was a charity gig that Robert said he would do with [his former guitarist] Robbie Blunt. We put together a band with Dave Charles on drums, Robert's old bass player Paul Martinez and me on keyboards. We didn't know many songs, so we did mostly covers. Robert has an old jukebox at his house and every morning we'd put on a load of records by the Lafayettes or whoever. And I put on this Kenny Dino thing, 'Your Ma Said You Cried in Your Sleep Last Night.' At the gig we did a slow grunge version with piano and guitar, and long after we'd finished playing it, the audience carried on singing it. 'La la luh-la la.' It was a hit. We gave Chris and Charlie the assignment of coming up with a really funky version. They sampled one drumbeat from the record. The original idea was to do our version, and in the middle use their drum roll, because they do this totally out-time drum roll. If anybody is dancing to it, they'd all break their ankles. We were recording on 48-track digital, so we weren't getting the benefit of any analog tape hiss to cover up our mistakes. We were listening to the scratch on the original and it made it sound like a classic. Like when you listen to your favorite record, and it's

Photograph: Ebet Roberts

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scratched because you were always out of it when you put it on. I can barely listen to *Pet Sounds* anymore. So we put *more* scratch in. You've got a CD player. Aren't you glad to hear surface noise again?"

Yes and no. Jokes are funny once. Great songs you can listen to forever. Plant's singing "Black Dog" as the final verse is also funny and has the added benefit of not being annoying after repeated listenings. "He was supposed to sing 'Your Telephone Man' but he forgot the words. The only lyrics he could remember off the top of his head were his own. It sounded great, so why not?"

"I've made so many excuses... and it's too late to do anything about it now."

It was a happy accident.

"It was incompetence."

To borrow a phrase from Led Zeppelin, it was tight but loose.

"Yeah, we've had a lot of reviews where it said the band really tightened up, where in fact the exact opposite has happened. If you listen to *Now and Zen*, there's not a beat out of place. Whereas if you listen to this, we're all over the place. During the tour we would deliberately leave areas where we hadn't rehearsed, just to see what would happen in front of 12,000 people. You've got to do that to keep your edge. Once you can do that, you're ready to make a record. If something sounds great but it's a little out of time, you ask yourself, 'Will it sound as good in time?' Sometimes we changed it and sometimes we didn't."

This record is more human-sounding than the last one.

"In fact it's more techno. The computers are more harnessed now, more subtle. So far the critics are all picking up on the James Brown sample on 'SSS&Q.' That's an obvious joke, and once and for all, it was from 'Papa's Got a Brand New Bag,' not 'Cold Sweat.' And there are many not-so-obvious jokes, some of them with terrifying implications if they were actually heard. If you listened hard, you'd be quite amazed at what's buried in the mix. We deliberately made it dense to obscure the more wickedly funny ones."

THE MOST INTRIGUING short story among the lyrics on *Manic Nirvana* is "Big Love," about flying to see one's girlfriend but ducking into the airplane bathroom with someone for a quickie before landing. It's difficult to imagine a person of Plant's stature, hairstyle and face recognition slipping unobtrusively into such a liaison.

"Well, it wasn't with *her*," says Plant. "She asks what can tear love apart, and I answer 4000 miles and 21 years, which was our difference in age. But you're right. It's hard to imagine such a thing ever happening. You'd have to own your own airplane. I do know people who have received that kind of attention from the staff and crew of airlines."

You were fictionalizing?

"I'm afraid so."

Were you inspired by Aerosmith's "Love in an Elevator"?

"Absolutely, yeah. I went to see them play in London. They've become born-again teetotalers, so there was the little question mark as to whether you can write it if you can't live it, but they were great."

That they don't drink doesn't mean they can't screw around.

"I know. They probably do it a lot better. I can't even imagine what it would be like. But I did enjoy them so much. They were having a great time, and the humor was so essential. It's crucial to de-seriousize rock 'n' roll. We can't leave it to just Loudon Wainwright, can we?"

Phil intimated there were a number of obscene jokes buried in the mix. It's difficult to discern what they might be even after close listening with the earphones.

"I can't imagine he would slip something in there when I wasn't around. A couple of songs like 'SSS&Q' deal with the more lax side of the personality, I guess. But it's all quite straightforward. I don't think there's anything hidden there. Phil has a way of hearing things that no one else can hear, like a dog whistle. When we started working together on the last album, he was feeling his way personality-wise with me. Then about 50 concerts into the tour, our relationship was fused forever in chronic sardonicism. It's quite exhausting to be in the same room when we both fire up."

He can't stop being sardonic?

"He can't stop anything at all. He won't diet either. The whole thing is quite a problem for everyone else, as he quips his way through life. The important thing is that the band has jelled. It exists for the right reasons. We're doing our best to stay on the edge, and nothing else matters. Apart from all the satire, we did some thumpingly intense shows on the last tour, and that was such an achievement for me personally. I've absorbed myself into the band and it's settled into a solid, good democratic thing. We're rehearsed and ready to go again on July 5 in the States. I just want it to be thumpingly intense."

The song "Liar's Dance" makes it brutally clear that it cannot be thumpingly intense for Led Zeppelin again, and no matter what the offers, Plant remains adamantly against a reunion tour.

"You can't make a record with as much confidence as *Manic Nirvana* and consider doing anything else. There's no point in me stumbling around football stadiums in the U.S."

You seemed particularly offended by the greed involved.

"Yes. I'm sure that entertainment-wise it would be great, but the wonderful thing about Led Zeppelin was that it was truly good. It had some terrible moments, but it was good. At this point it should be thought of in terms of imagination rather than in terms of reality."

Did you see the Who reunion tour?

"Yes, I came to New York to see it. I went to Radio City Music Hall and to Giants Stadium. My manager [Bill Curbishley] also manages them, so whatever I say will jeopardize my relationship with the man I think so much of. Bill, I'm sorry. Here it comes."

Photograph: Ebet Roberts

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Well?

"It was all very efficient."

It was like a show band doing note-for-note renditions of the Who.

"What a ridiculous statement to make, that a band that is clinically dead can still perform those songs again . . . Look, Pete is a serious guy, and it's not for me to say. I can't make a career out of being controversial about other musicians. What I saw was very well done. Maybe the audience didn't know what it wanted to see. Or maybe it was like the emperor's new clothes. If you want to see something badly enough, you can make the most wonderful outfit. You critics can say what you want, but the guy who pays for his ticket has to get something out of it."

When Led Zeppelin reunited for the Atlantic Records Birthday Party at Madison Square Garden, it was a similar phenomenon—an ecstatic audience, the music not cutting it.

"Had you been there the night before at soundcheck, it was spectacular."

What happened?

"I can't tell you. I have no idea. I'm sitting in exactly the same spot as you, asking the Great Void, 'Why?' But a lot of people thought they saw something great."

If John Paul Jones came to you and said, "Robert, I can't make my mortgage payments anymore, could we just do 10 stadium shows and I could live on that for the rest of my life," what would you do?

"I'd lend him the money. Or I'd go with him to the bank manager. I'd find some way to help him. I wouldn't do the tour. The thing is, you must keep working in your own way. You keep working because your heart wants to create music."

"IF ROBERT AND JIMMY were to play together again and it was advertised as such, the situation would be so pressurized it would

SONIC NIRVANA

PHIL JOHNSTONE believes that the artistic temperament is the "disease of amateurs," and indeed there seems to be little territoriality, destructive competition or egomania among ROBERT PLANT's very professional musicians. So much so that they all participate in the songwriting process, and they all occasionally play each other's instruments with mixed but enthusiastic results (witness Johnstone's deliberately bad and purloined guitar line on "Your Ma"). So the following listing of instruments represents tendencies, not exclusivities. When on keyboards, Phil Johnstone plays the Akai S-1000, Korg M-1, Yamaha DX7 Mach II, Roland D-50, an "ancient" Roland Juno-60, Roland D-110, Oberheim 1000 and Prophet ZF. When on guitar, he strums a Danelectro and a battered old Rickenbacker through "multifarious" amplifiers. DOUG BOYLE plays mostly Hamer guitars for their "very punchy sounds." On "Hurting Kind" he used a B.C. Rich for its "very fat, middly sound." And he occasionally fell back on his 1958 Gibson 335. About 20 percent of the time on the album he went through a MESA/Boogie Studio-22 preamp into a Marshall 4 x 12, and the other 80 percent was a Marshall head. CHRIS BLACKWELL composed "Tie Dye" on his Atari computer at home in "about 10 minutes." Onstage he pounds Tama drums and Ziidjian cymbals that are built into a Power Tower cage. He is also responsible for the Roland pads that trigger an Akai S-1000 which handles special effects and big background vocals. CHARLIE JONES plays Warwick basses with Marshall amplification. He also likes his Kinkade acoustic bass.

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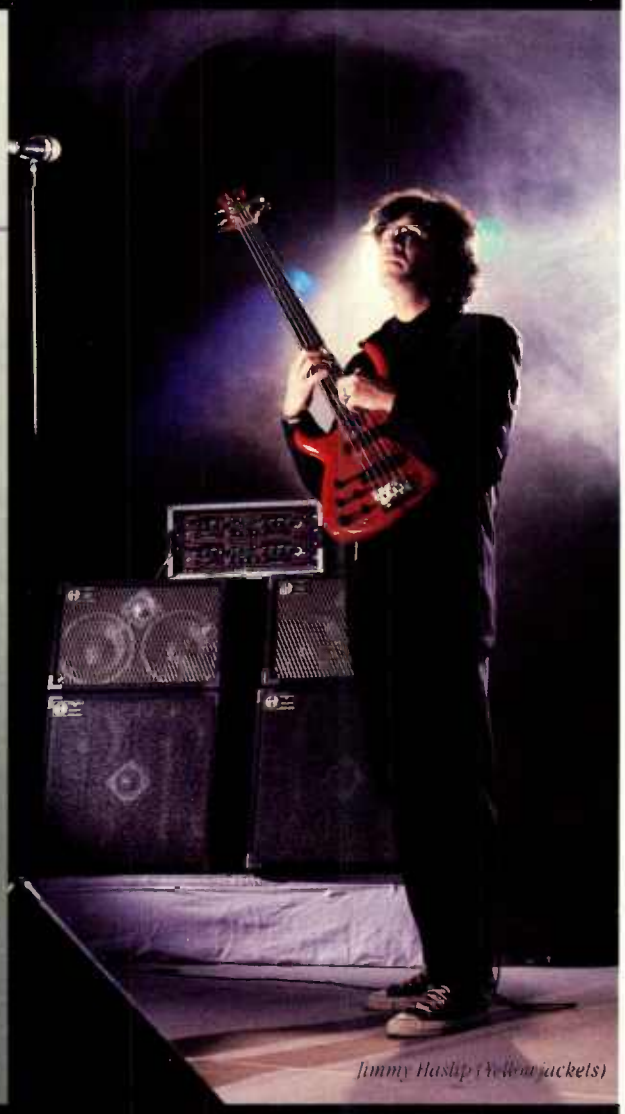
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be a disaster," says Phil Johnstone. "The two times they did—at Live Aid and the Atlantic Records thing—were total disasters. I was at the Atlantic Records concert and there was nothing I wanted to see more than Led Zeppelin on form, but it never jelled. At the beginning of our tour before we came to the States, we played the Hammersmith Odeon and Jimmy did six numbers for the encore. He was only going to play three but it just went so well. He was relaxed and brilliant that night, and I'm honored to have played with him.

"Then there was Carmen, Robert's daughter. He threw a big party up in Birmingham for her twenty-first birthday. Jimmy was there with his daughter. And we had the Nashville Teens playing. And then we all got up and put together a band. I was playing keyboards, Charlie on bass, Jason Bonham on drums, Jimmy and Doug Doyle on guitar, Robert singing. It was a totally relaxed atmosphere, and Jimmy played brilliantly. It was just a pub band, and we had a great time. I've got a video of it, but it won't be going into general release just yet. I'll wait until I'm feeling a bit poverty-stricken."

FOR ALL HIS resistance to a Led Zeppelin reunion, Plant remains hugely fond of the '60s, and says so in the throbbing "Tie Dye on the Highway," which makes liberal use of the *Woodstock* soundtrack for atmosphere and imagery like: "With the messengers of peace/In the company of love/All the passion and release/And love from up above."

"I was still willowing on to the band long after the tour ended about the cosmic days of the '60s," says Plant of his considerably younger musicians. "'All you guys can do is ape it. I was *there* and it was marvelous and blah blah blah.' Like an old man by the fire with a dog at his feet talking about how 'In my day . . .' I still get off on that, the thrill of having worked with the Doors, Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe, Big Brother and the Holding Company. All these things and I wasn't even 21 yet. It was just a tremendous time. And the chaps in the band are going, 'Yes, yes, yes, you fucking old hippie.' And I was thinking, 'I'm not such an *old* hippie.'"

There's a huge amount of nostalgia out there for that time. For all their contempt for old hippies, kids seem to regret missing it as the high point of youth culture.

"Well, let's not get sentimental. There were moments that were tremendous, and those are the moments I hark back to. I don't hark back to all the blur. But there is a lot to be gained from the telling of the tale. People like Stone Roses and Happy Mondays are making quite a decent living by harking back to that period. Toward the end of 'Tie Dye' you hear the announcer at Woodstock saying, 'We must be in heaven, man.' But the greatest line of all was 'Tell them who we are.' That was Stephen Stills. I don't think Crosby, Stills & Nash had been announced, and you can hear the very career-minded Stephen Stills saying [*assumes hilarious American accent*], 'Hey, tell them who we are.' You don't have to have been there to get the irony."

Given your hippie values and concern for preserving the integrity of rock 'n' roll, why did you endorse Coca Cola and allow "Tall Cool One" from *Now and Zen* to be used as a jingle?

Plant issues a long sigh. "I know," he says. "I know is all I can say."

It was dismaying to see you equating the burn with soda pop.

"I know. I don't know why I did it. I just thought—and it sounds so inappropriate now—I just wanted to get [*cont'd on page 107*]

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PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE LANGE

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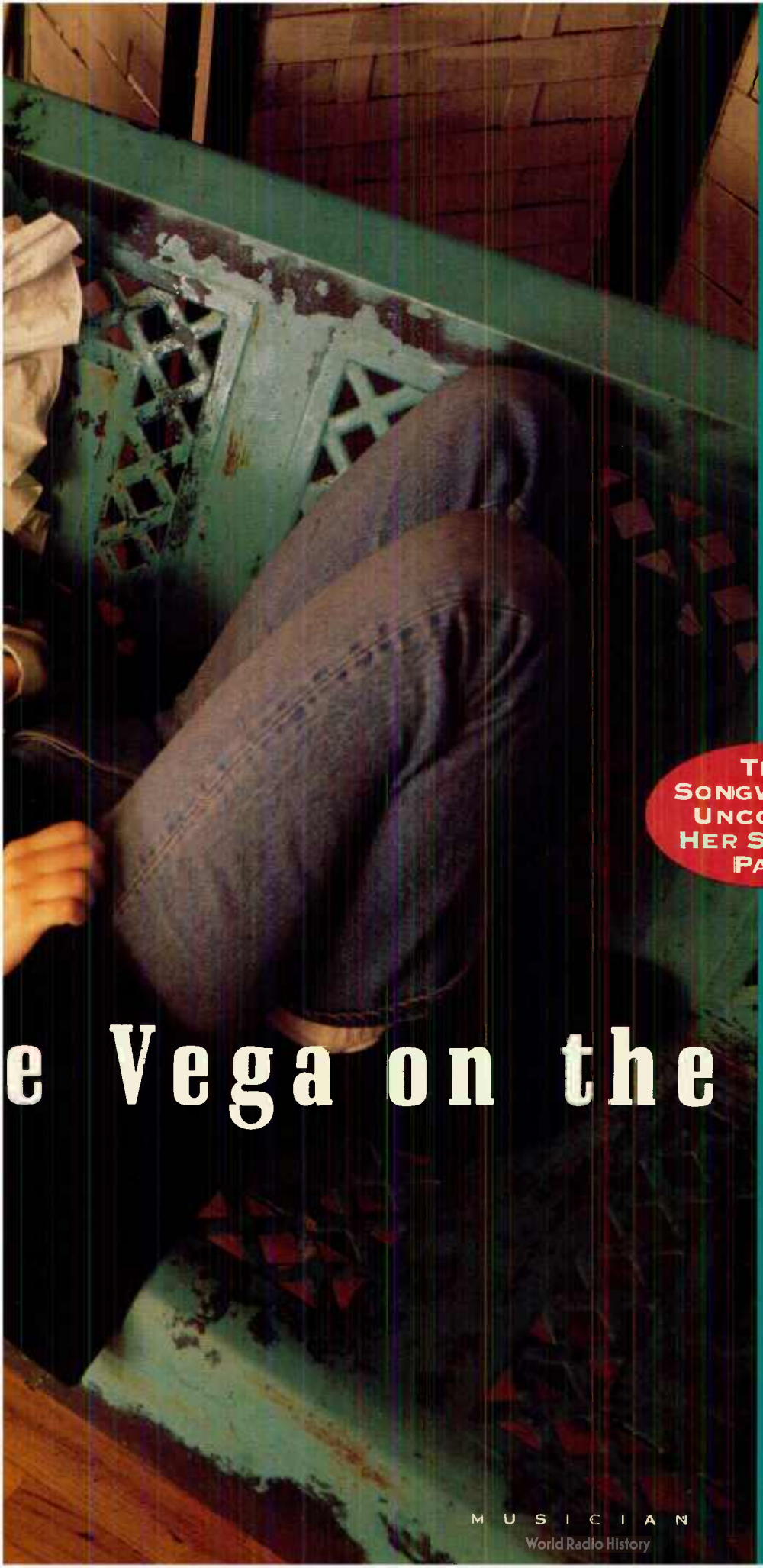

e Vega on the Couch

THE SONGWRITER UNCOVERS HER SECRET PAST

LET'S TELL THE FUTURE.

Let's say you're nine years old. You're a tall, shy, skinny, awkward, artistic, underconfident girl who's sometimes hassled by other kids for looking like a boy. At home—which can be an inspiration or a battleground: no real haven there—you're the quiet and introverted one in "a family of very intense people who talk a lot and argue a lot in a heated atmosphere" rife with '60s politics and passions. Your father is a well-respected writer and teacher who was born in Puerto Rico, and your mother, who works with computer systems, is a half-German, half-Swedish Minnesotan. You think of them as always yelling at each other and fighting. At school on a very mean street in Spanish Harlem, you're really into Puerto Rican pride and learning about your "Hispanic roots." This is the turf on which you're trying to figure out how to be tough enough to defend yourself and your two younger brothers and sister against long odds. Then one day your father tells you he's not your father, that you're not half-Puerto Rican, that your real father is white, is somewhere in California and hasn't even bothered to get in touch with you for seven years. Boom. Let's tell the future.

By Paul Nelson

World Radio History

SUZANNE VEGA and I are sitting, both nervous as hell but almost concealing it, at a long wooden table—old, brown, dark, full of holes—on two of the six iron-and-felt chairs that surround it. On the table are three white candles burned to half-mast and set in three arched black metal holders. Through the six front windows, I can see the river in the distance and hear the Manhattan traffic below. This is the front part of Vega's downtown loft, at once artfully comfortable and artlessly casual: "a cool, well-lighted place" as she might say with her hard-won, spontaneous, better-late-than-never schoolgirlish laugh—and there's a poster with Spanish writing on a brown brick wall, a white guitar close by it and a large globe in the corner next to several plants.

Vega, whose work I much admire and who sells a million records in the United States and several million in Europe, is 30, stands five foot six, has short red hair and is wearing a plain white blouse and stylish black slacks. (For the second day's interview, she switches to a white sweater and blue jeans.) There's a lot I'd like to ask this woman about her life, her career, her family and the case of the lost father, a matter that has taken on new and fabulous dimensions.

We start by talking about the new album, *Days of Open Hand*—I can't help thinking about all those "fist" images in many of Vega's earlier songs—and pretty soon we're at the heart of this or any other matter: A story of fractured families, a biological father, a stepfather, a mother, half-brothers, half-sisters and a damaged young girl, all of them haunted by eerie, early memories that *something* happened—something perhaps terrible—but they aren't quite sure what.

"I would think that the characters in *Days of Open Hand* are the family I grew up with and not Richard, my biological father whom I recently found," Vega says. "Because the family I grew up with, we're still very, very close, and we're still very emotionally involved as a family. And I wasn't sure what the effect would be when I found Richard. It wasn't like Richard was a substitute for Ed, the father I'd grown up with. It was a completely different thing. Suddenly I saw where I had come from and where I'd gotten some of my temperament and my body from, but the relationship I have with Richard is part of a different configuration. I think of my family as a configuration. We have this effect on each other. We all kind of hold each other in orbit. And Richard is just different. He's over there in California, and we talk, and it's just a different branch of the tree."

When did you decide to look for him and how did you find him?

"Well, it's a weird story," she laughs. "My mother, Patricia, knew that he lived somewhere in California but didn't know where. It was in August of 1987 and I was on tour in California and 'Luka' went to number three on the charts, which I never in my life thought would happen. So I hired the detective the week that 'Luka' went to number three to find him because I thought, Well, why not just do all of my wildest dreams at the same time? I'd always wondered about him because I'd heard that he played jazz piano and was a nice guy. That's all I knew about him. I had a picture or two. And I just wanted to *know*: Where is he? What does he look like? What are his feelings? And the detective found him in two weeks.

"I was still on the road—we were making our way back from California—in Salt Lake City when they told me that they'd found him. And at the time I didn't want to deal with it. It was like, Oh, I'm in the middle of this tour. I don't want to call this guy. I don't know him. So I waited until I got home, which was a few months later, and I sent him a Christmas card saying, Hi, I'm your daughter. This is my address. If you want to talk to me, you can. If you don't, well, I

Photographs: Deborah Feingold/Outline; (previous page) George Lange/Outline

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understand and have a good life or whatever. I tried to keep it as cool and dispassionate as I could because you never know what kind of response you'll get. He called within a week, and we started talking to each other."

I don't imagine that you had any memory of him at all, since he left when you were two.

"No. In fact, when they told me that I had another father, I was really confused because I had this really strong identity as a half–Puerto Rican girl. I had been to Puerto Rico and everything. Of all the kids [brothers Matthew and Timothy, sister Alyson], I had—and probably still have—the most Puerto Rican identity. And it turns out I'm the one who isn't really Puerto Rican. I had all these really weird ideas about white people. [*laughs*] So to realize that I was in fact white was obviously a big shock."

How did you find out about Richard?

"Oh, Ed just decided one day that it would be a good idea if I knew. He was always trying to sit us down and have us tell him what we were feeling. I never really thought much about how I felt. It's such a weird thing for a kid to sit down and think about how she feels. But as a family, we were always having these formal discussions, and during one of these, Ed mentioned this to me. And I thought it was a joke, a strange child-psychology test or something." She laughs. "Tell her she has a white father in California. See what she does. And I went, Are you kidding? That's not possible. Are there any other surprises like this? Because my name was different and everything. On my birth certificate, I have a completely different name."

What is it?

"I would really rather not say.

"But this was eerie. My mind just turned it over for days afterward. I have another name. I have another father. My father is white and he lives in California. I thought about it all the time. I never talked about it much, but I wanted to know what the situation was, partly because there were things I didn't understand about myself. Like, Why don't I get angry more often? I don't know. Why am I so introspective? Beats me. When I met Richard, I found that he isn't really that introspective. He doesn't read a lot. But he's very musical. His mother had played drums in a band, but he was adopted so he never knew his mother. So all these connections were broken, and yet the blood things still spoke up, which I find really remarkable.

"And the fact that Richard's mother had been a professional musician who toured as well; I guess the traveling thing recurs in that branch of the family. There was musical ability on my mother's side as well—she sang and played the guitar—but it didn't seem to be as fervent as on Richard's side. My mother played jazz, and Richard's mother played bebop music. Her name was Helen Grant, and during the '20s and '30s she toured the Midwest with the Merry Makers Ladies Orchestra. You see pictures of her, and she's this enormously glamorous woman. She had four children, and she put three of them in an institution and gave up my father for adoption and continued with her music. The father, I guess, had left the family. He was a trumpet player, and he went to the Philippines during the Depression because he couldn't handle having four kids or something. So all down the line there are all these stories of people leaving. And Richard felt that he had done the same thing."

When Richard called you, did he know you were *the* Suzanne Vega?

"On the phone when he first spoke, he went, There's a singer who has your name." She laughs. "I said, Yes, there is, and that's me. And he went, 'Luka'? That's you? And he was very happy. But what pleased me was that he wasn't impressed by the fact that I was successful and had just had a Top 10 recording; that didn't make a dent. He thought that was hunky-dory, but he was happy because I was his daughter who was contacting him. I felt good about that. If he had said, Oh, you're rich and famous, why don't you send me some money?" She shakes her head. "Then I would have gone, Well, gee, Dad, I don't know if I want to know you."

Meeting must have been terrifying.

"Yes. But I figured it had been a long time and it was something I wanted to do, so I flew to California. It was really a *long* six hours, and I flew on the plane by myself because I felt that this was something I should do alone. And when we met at the airport, we were like . . . you just look and look as though you can't stop looking because you can't *believe* it, and you're sort of just matching things.

"In some ways I thought he would look different than he actually did, but there were other things that seemed so familiar about him. At first I thought, Oh, I'm imagining it. There's a way that he looks at people. He puts his head down and kind of has this way of looking at you from underneath his eyebrows. It's extremely direct, and I've seen that same quality in my own pictures.

"But he's this big, jolly guy; I thought he was going to be thin and pale and melancholy. He's about six foot and 200 pounds. That surprised me. I figured he'd look like James Joyce. And he doesn't care for reading. But he *draws*. That's what he does in his business. He makes architectural renderings, so he has all this spatial information, a way of seeing the world.

"He's friendly. I think he's the kind of guy who'd be good with animals. He's empathic and decent. He can say, Oh, you must be feeling this because of that, and usually he's accurate. The two of us were very curious about each other, so we kept looking at each other. It was interesting to see the kind of person he was because I wanted to know who I was descended from. To know what his tendencies were, moralistically as much as anything else. And he seems like a man who's always tried to do the right thing. I appreciate that."

"The week that 'Luka' went to number three I hired a detective to find my father. Why not do all my wildest dreams at the same time?"

Does he like your songs?

"I think he does. We don't talk a lot about what they mean. Of course, he liked 'Gypsy' because of the chorus ['Oh, hold me like a baby/That will not fall asleep']. I think he felt really moved by that song because he had known me as a baby and hadn't seen me since.

"He told me that when I was born, I was the only person of his flesh and blood that he had ever seen because he'd been adopted. And I

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realized, God, he's right. He said he didn't realize until I was gone what had happened. I'd come to New York with Ed and Pat [who both knew Richard in California], and I guess that he hadn't realized what the effect was going to be on his own life.

"But there was still all that time when nothing happened. I get different stories. Richard says one thing about why 25 years went by, my mother says another. I don't know what really happened."

Why did they break up?

"Well, they were really young. They were 18, they knew each other in high school, they were fooling around and, oops, here's a child. It just didn't work out. I don't blame him for that. A man and a woman don't get along with each other and they break up. That's natural. It happens all the time. It is different though when you're blood to the person, and sometimes you're not even aware of what that means until many years later.

"He sent me lots of pictures. I was astonished to see all those pictures of me in circumstances that I knew nothing about. I didn't know I was christened. There's me in my long gown. There's Richard, real skinny, with a pair of sunglasses, looking like James Dean, sort of holding me up there. That almost said more than the stories."

Vega has to leave for a moment and I look around the room. On one wall, there's a large photograph of the painter Francis Bacon. A big black book, *Egon Schiele* by Rudolf Leopold, sits on a table next to a huge black wrench. Sixty-four Crayola crayons. A German gold record for *Solitude Standing*, Vega's second album. Another book: *First Aid for Quilts*. Two green apples in a brown bowl. A plaque that reads: "The Center for the Elimination of Violence in the Family, Inc. expresses appreciation to Suzanne Vega 11/16/88." Green candles by a small mirror. A grandfather clock. It's a wonderful place. When Vega returns we start again.

"Now that I don't have to do my duty, the hard part is learning to relax. Sometimes when you take off the uniform, it's still with you."

After Ed told you about Richard, did it stay with you?

"Yeah." She pauses. "It would rear up because I just tried to deny it. I went, 'So who the fuck cares about this guy in California? Just because I'm not really Puerto Rican doesn't mean that I can't try to be Puerto Rican.' One of the first singing jobs I ever had was with the Alliance of Latin Arts in this show called *Boriquen Canta!* I was the only white girl in the show. I was 15. This was a summer job, and we were city-sponsored. We'd travel in this bus and go sing in the South Bronx and at Lincoln Center. We put on an all-Spanish version of *The Sound of Music* at Lincoln Center and I was a nun. But it was hard for me to accept that I had this other *thing* that seemed to mark me as being different from my family. I didn't like it, and I wanted to get rid of it. Finally I just started to accept the truth and stopped trying to make believe that it wasn't there.

"In the '60s everybody was being raised to be proud of their ethnic

THE OPEN HAND-BOOK

NOTES ON HER NEW ALBUM

By Suzanne Vega

"Tired of Sleeping" is a song from the dream images. I find it weird to sing because it makes me feel sad, but I also feel that it's one I *have* to sing. It's a song of having intense dreams and wanting to wake up from them in your real life, as opposed to a deluded dream world where no one's connecting. The "Oh Mom" lines aren't specifically about birth. But probably there have been times in my life when I felt that I was the child reassuring my mother that everything would be fine. I put the quote marks around "clean quilted heart" because the phrase was so clear in the dream. In the dream, the man was trying to prove his innocence, to show that he was pure. It's a little strange, but it makes emotional sense to me. I trust that and go with that.

To me, "Men in a War" is about missing a piece of yourself, whether it's a physical piece or a part of your will or spirit. I put the woman in the song because I wanted to show these two people in opposite circumstances, both of them feeling incomplete. The man is feeling something he doesn't have, and the woman is not feeling something she has.

"Rusted Pipe" is like "Language" from the last album. "Language is liquid" there and "Words are like water" here. And I'm rusted. The "creak" is like a faucet turning on. Basically, it comes down to feelings. Because as a child, I think I must have decided that feelings were impractical and not useful, so therefore you put them away for a while. It's a song more about *finding* the story than telling it. But Paul Nelson's reading of it—that it could be about a baby who wants to speak and walk but can't do it yet—is accurate. Not in a literal sense, but to me, a song is like a piece of sculpture. You hammer at it from all angles until the pure thing is left in the middle. And then if it works from every angle, you know you've got something.

In "Book of Dreams," I wanted to write something about the way I wish things would be. Again, it has dream images, but they're more like daydreams or fantasies. It's me going, "What do I wish I could do?" Unlike the situation in "Institution Green," your name will be called. And *everybody* is in my book of dreams. No one will be forgotten.

"Institution Green" could be about a mental institution, going to vote, a police station or waiting to get blood taken in a doctor's office. The context isn't so important. It's whether I hit the emotional bull's-eye that makes a difference to me. The actual events here are a combination of doctor's office and voting. When I was a kid, I'd go to the clinics with my mother. If you don't have any money, you go to free clinics, which means you wait for hours. And it's all dependent on this one person in charge, who, if she's dropped your card on the floor or she's having a bad day—well, you'll wait forever. It's extremely dehumanizing to feel that you're just one of a million people, and that a lot of people have your last name and no one cares enough to pick you out. That's where the rage comes in. You want to say, "I want to go in now," because you've waited hours and hours.

"Those Whole Girls (Run in Grace)" was inspired by the feeling of wanting to be whole and confident and complete. I was reading Annie Dillard's *An American Childhood*, and she seemed so sure of her feelings. She seemed so different from the way I was as a child, when I always felt that I had to look two ways before I took a step. Also, I was playing with the

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heritage. The schools I went to all emphasized that. And I'd go, Yes, I'm learning about my Puerto Rican self, and we'd get all this literature from the Young Lords, who had their offices right up the street. So it was not a very cool thing to suddenly be told that you were white. Where am I at? Where are my roots? No one wanted to hear about my white roots. All my friends and the kids in school were half-black or half-this or half-that, and the friends that my parents had were all very political and artistic. So it just felt *weird* to know that I was," she pauses in mock solemnity, "*the white girl.*"

What a great title for a B movie.

"Yes." She laughs. "I felt it internally, but I don't think that Ed and Pat had any knowledge I was feeling this way because I never talked about it. I kept myself to myself. I had my own ideas about the world and just spent a lot of time by myself, writing in my notebooks. I was a pretty withdrawn kid. I had a lot of stuff to deal with."

Richard is English-Scottish-Irish?

"Yeah. And most people don't think of my brothers and sister as being half–Puerto Rican. Most people think they're white, I guess, just because Ed and Pat were really very strict about how we spoke. If we came home going, 'Dis ain't no fun' or whatever stuff we'd picked up in school, they'd say, What kind of language are you speaking? They'd both been to college and were well-educated and they hammered into us that we had to be articulate. So we all speak very well and we've all gone to good schools, and most people think, What's the big deal? You're about as white as anybody else. So what? But when you're growing up, all of that has a huge feel to it."

What streets did you live on?

"Five years on East 109th Street between Lenox and First, then 12 or 13 years on 102nd and Broadway, which is really mixed. A block to your left there's the beautiful West End mansions. A block to your right there's the projects. And you don't go through the projects because people will throw things out the windows at you. So it was very carefully mapped out where you could walk to school so that you wouldn't get hit on by a gang of girls or somebody who wanted to take your money."

Ed is a novelist, short-story writer, essayist, teacher?

"All of those things. He writes in English, and some of his writing has an almost hallucinogenic quality to it. Not realistic. More dreamlike. He recently won a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. He's a member of PEN."

He must be one of the big reasons you wanted to write.

"Well, yeah, because of his life-style. Both of my parents thought that being an artist was the only reasonable thing in this society that a person could do. Or at least Ed thought that. My mother worried that we weren't going to make enough money to support ourselves, so she was always trying to drill it into us that we had to get skills. Ed was always going, You must not give in and conform to what 98 percent of the people expect of you. You must *challenge your dreams.*"

An exciting, turbulent household.

"I can't say it was restful. You had to be on your toes. In some ways it was great because it really prepared me for going out into the world. But at the same time, if you wanted security and not stress,

"I had this terrible fear that I would disappoint my teachers the way I felt I had disappointed my parents. That I would be boring and mousey and just disappear into the wall."

language. I liked each word being one syllable. And the *crunchiness* of the consonants and the way the words felt in my mouth. I didn't write the song with any malice or bitterness. It's more that I would like to be that way one day.

"Room Off the Street" was originally called "Cuba." It was what I imagined Cuba might feel like at some point. The feeling of giving your life for the cause, and how it incites all sorts of passions that don't have to do with the politics but with the feeling in the air. The poster of the man with his hand in a fist was a recurring image in the posters we had at home.

"Big Space" is about the body being a network and finding the center. Then you think, what if there isn't any center? Or what if you get there, and there's nothing? Those were the fears I was trying to confront as I sat down to write this album. "Anger in a cold place"—that's like, well, what do you hide when you put on the uniform to get through the day? What are the things you're not acknowledging? What does the calm face hide? And it's the feelings that you're taking away. You just strip yourself of them, and you become not human—or wooden, as in "Wooden Horse (Caspar Hauser's Song)." I guess as a kid, I felt like a *thing* sometimes. Or like an object. I felt sometimes that I wasn't sure. As a child, it's easy to get that confused. You look at a doll, and it seems to have a life. Then you look at yourself, and you seem not to be able to move.

Leonard Cohen's "Who by Fire" was an influence on "Predictions." One day, I was looking up a word or something, and I suddenly came across this weird list of ways that people have told the future. And each one of these ways has its own name, its own *-ology*. I thought the images were so beautiful and pure. And all of these objects—the hatchet, the nails, the dough of cakes, the wax in the water—are the kind of things you'd find around your house. I loved the idea of magic being contained in these everyday objects.

"50-50 Chance" is based on a real incident. Someone I'm close to had that experience last year. A suicide attempt. She's okay now. She hasn't tried it again.

"Pilgrimage" comes from the incense bowl. I've been a Buddhist since I was 16—the Nichiren Shoshu sect. So every morning I chant and burn incense. It's that linear thing of time as a line that's burning. Sometimes I watch the incense burn, and I imagine that it's this great journey from one end of this big, dusty bowl to the other. The song starts off with the one line of incense that turns into the life that turns into the land, and I felt happy with the idea of expansion. I'm saying, "I'm coming to you/I'll be there in time" to death as well as to the source. But there's a feeling of, when I die, it will be okay, because I will have done what I mean to do. I won't have missed it.

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forget it. There was this constant feeling of . . . battling. Somebody battling somebody else. My parents would always argue, which they're famous for. They've been together for almost 30 years, and it's just what they do: They argue. But they're still together, so I don't know. No one can explain what happens.

"Ed was always trying to get us all to learn something about life, and sometimes it seemed that we had learned it and other times it seemed that we had not. And I'm still trying to put my finger on what it was that he was trying to teach us, because he spent so much time trying to teach it to us. It had something to do with risks and being honest and having courage, but that's not good enough. That hardly begins to touch on why the house was in such an uproar all the time.

"He had an idea—he *still* has this idea—and he wanted to talk about it. He wants you to get in there and grapple. It doesn't matter that you're six years old and don't know what the hell anybody's talking about. You have to take your stand. If you want to come home and feel like it's your little haven, it's just not going to happen."

Did you have your own room?

"Sometimes. And sometimes I had a room with my sister. [*laughs*] Very early on, when the kids would have bad dreams, they'd come into my bed. So I'd wake up and all four of us would be sprawled out over my bed. And if my parents were arguing or whatever, I would entertain the kids, amuse them, make puppet shows or drag them off somewhere. I felt very protective of my siblings. I still feel like I'm the big sister looking after them, fretting over them."

I guess you were held up as a good example to them.

"Yeah, although that kind of shifted. There were times when Suzie had to set a good example, but there were other times when it was like I just wasn't participating. I wasn't wild enough. I wasn't like . . . for example, this is something that happened when I was younger. My parents had a wild party one night and decided to take out the watercolors and draw on the walls. So they filled up the hall with these murals and sayings and pictures and cartoons. And I woke up the next morning wondering, 'What happened here?' Because Timothy, my younger brother, would also draw on the walls with his crayons, and he got yelled at for doing that. Suddenly my parents were doing the same thing, and I was in this weird in-between state, old enough to know better and not old enough to do what I wanted. This was a constant feeling I had."

You once said that something happened to you when you were 12 and that you "got hard." And that as a child, you sometimes felt you were a "bad person." Why? Because you were introspective? Because you felt that you weren't living up to your parents' expectations?

"Yeah." Vega speaks quietly and matter-of-factly. "You pretty much hit it. I did feel that my parents were looking for something that I wasn't providing. Ed was always pushing me and trying to make me reach my limits. He wanted a reaction. And *any* reaction was better than nothing. And it just felt wrong to my nature to do that. So I constantly had the feeling that he thought, Oh, she's just too quiet. She's just too orderly. She's just too *good*. Why is she doing her homework, for Christ's sake? Why isn't she more rebellious? He had this longing for rebellious children, and he could have handled that. Instead, he had me. I was trying to figure out what he was talking about or what was expected of me, and that seemed to bother him—that I was trying to understand what was expected of me. So there were ways in which I grew up that were very beneficial, but there were other ways in which it was very difficult and not at all what you would think of a childhood as being like.

"It always seemed that I would brood over things and mull them over and drag them into a room and think about them for two years. Even when I was seven years old, I would say, I'm going to think about this for a while and I'm not going to tell anyone about it until two years have gone by. And I would think about it the whole two years. Then I would tell somebody what I'd been thinking about, and they'd go, *What* are you talking about? *Why* did you wait two years to say this?" She laughs. "Because I thought that it was a safe period of time. I had a plan and I stuck to it. It's just a different way of being.

"And some of these questions I've been thinking about since I was seven years old. So, yes, there was a sense of having failed or disappointed them. And, without getting specific, they had their own problems that they were going through. I really believe the emotional truth is more important than the specifics, although I'm sure the specifics would make it easier for people to know what I'm talking about. I am being abstract, but there are just some parts of my life that I keep to myself.

"Anyone who's had experiences like I had growing up *knows* whether or not I hit it on the money. And feeling like I'd become hard when I was 12 is a very accurate description. I made a conscious decision to stop expecting certain things, to just say, 'One day I will be grown up and I will earn my own living and have my own place. I know this because I am planning this. And I am going to carry this plan out. I'm going to do what I have to do so that I can come out the other side and be independent.'

"The problem with an attitude like that is, when you get it that young, you can't get out of it sometimes. I still feel that way sometimes—that I'm removed. In stressful situations—if I'm on tour or tired or sick—it's like the shell comes down, the uniform goes on, and I'm not a person, not a human being. It's like, *I'm doing my job*, I'm doing my duty. And I don't like that about myself."

The *uniform*?

"I think that's what the soldier imagery in some of my songs has to do with. It came from a military jacket I had. Because of all the political involvement, we were always going to rallies. At one of them, they had a pig's head on a stick. I just remember the violent image of the pig's head and the slab of bacon of the pig's neck.

"When I was about 12, I saw this green military shirt at a rally. You could pick out a silkscreen to go on the back of it, and I picked one of a Vietnamese woman with a baby in one arm and a gun in the other. And this was my emblem. I'd get up in the morning and I'd put on my jacket and I'd be dressed for the day. This was my thing. It covered me from my neck down to my knees, and I felt like the coolest person in the world when I had my jacket on.

"And, to me, it was also like, that's what you have to do: You put on your uniform and you get through the day. I felt like a soldier in my own life. I woke up in the mornings ready to fight, ready to do my duty. It had nothing to do with how I felt, really. Nothing. You know, I might have liked not to have had to fight. I might just like to go take a nap. But I can't do that, so *I will do what I must.* I will do what has to be done to keep the family together and moving forward, and I will try to keep my own private dream alive of being a performer. I trained myself to do what I had to do to survive and be independent. And it was good training.

"But now that I don't have to get up every morning and do my duty, the hard part is learning how to relax. Suddenly, I go, Well, what should I do? I mean, what is there to do? Sometimes when you take off the uniform, it's still with you."

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AS I'M WALKING DOWNTOWN for the second day's interview, the story seems to be everywhere. About a dozen blocks from the loft, there's a restaurant, boarded up, called the Vega. A messenger boy pedals by on his bike, singing "Barbara Allen." Blips of Suzanne Vega abound. The first concert she ever saw—she was 19—was one by Lou Reed, and his "Caroline Says, Part 2" showed her how to extend the folk tradition by exploring certain subjects she had previously thought beyond inclusion. Reed's influence can be heard in "Cracking" and "Neighborhood Girls." When she was 12 or 13, she went to what was called "a 'free school'—100 kids in a brownstone—and basically they taught you all about nonviolence. Although it was the most violent school I ever went to. I wouldn't throw the first punch, but if I was hit, I would go crazy and hit back. I felt like I wasn't going to cry or be picked on anymore. The kids were pretty brutal."

When I asked her yesterday about her kids-as-weeds imagery in "Ironbound/Fancy Poultry," she said: "Well, in my family, I think that my sister was the only planned birth. So we all felt like we just kind of sprouted up. I felt like a weed, and I was proud of it. Some people are cultivated roses, but I'm just this tough dandelion. Weeds are just there. They're tough. They stick around. You can step on them, and they'll still bounce back. They're not anything splendid, but they serve their little function. Someone once said I had a weedy voice, and I went, Yeah, so what?

"I never thought I was a really great singer. I thought, well, I'm a songwriter, so I have to sing my songs. I always considered my voice plain and fine—no big deal. The kind of voice that you use to sing to your children or your brothers and sisters. I like to think of it as a pencil. It's very useful. It's ordinary. Everyone's got one. Mine can carry a tune, but there's no vibrato, no great skill behind it. As a child, I didn't like vibrato. It seemed the way grown-ups sang. My voice is like a little kid singing a tune. She's putting on her socks and she's singing. That's all."

WE SIT AT THE TABLE again. Vega lowers her head and runs her hands through her hair. It's a characteristic gesture, done without thought. Like her laugh, it's very endearing. On a drawing board, there's a wooden hand with long golden fingernails. Ivy crosses a window in diamond-shaped patterns. Paints and an easel stand in a corner on the brown hardwood floor. She shows me one of her first paintings: a self-portrait, angular and highlighting a huge eye. It's exceptionally good. I notice the dimple on her chin.

We talk about the High School for the Performing Arts, which she attended. The school made famous by the movie *Fame*. Going there must have been as turbulent as life at home.

"Well, same kind of thing," she says. "Because everyone had that same temperament, and they're all running around emoting and crying and yelling and screaming and kissing each other. I wanted to be a dancer. But I had this terrible fear that I was going to disappoint my teachers the way I felt I had disappointed my parents. That I would be bad theater. That I would be boring and mousey and just disappear into the wall. I had this craving to be noticed by the teacher or by anyone. So I would stand in the front of the classes—always to the side, but in front." She laughs. "I was so silly.

"I suppose I felt bitter sometimes because I was very aware of not being in the in-group. Everybody in the drama department wanted to be either David Bowie or Liza Minnelli in *Cabaret*. I was into Dylan and carrying my acoustic guitar around and wearing these big sweaters and blue jeans. And everyone thought, Oh, she's just kind of missed her era. So I was very aware that I wasn't, uh, cool.

"Sometimes I'd think, You don't want to be involved in that typical teenage bullshit. You want to be an artist, you want to be a fucking Van Gogh, and that means you have to spend time by yourself writing in your notebooks. But in my heart, I'm sure I missed it. At one point, I did have a boyfriend, and we did go to a movie once. We went to see *Tommy*, and it was kind of a thrill.

"A lot of my teachers felt that I was talented but had things holding me back. They felt that I thought too much and could never just give myself up to the physicality you really need to be a great dancer. You have to have great technique and stop thinking about things when you're dancing. But I wasn't really interested in the technique. I found it very frustrating and boring and irritating.

"So I was depressed a lot and very obsessive about eating. I would eat and eat until I couldn't eat anymore and then eat again a half-hour later until I just couldn't move. I'd get up at seven in the morning and walk from 102nd Street down to 46th Street and Broadway and then take four dance classes. I was trying to do something to my body—I don't know what. Make it explode or something.

"So I gave up dancing after I left there. I said, I'm *not* going to make it as a dancer. I don't have the temperament. I don't have the technique. I can't stop eating. I can't control my body. So that was the end of the dream, in a sense."

This must have been very difficult to accept. Yet you had been writing songs and singing and going to auditions during your later high school years.

"It was a pretty major disappointment, yeah. I just didn't have what it took. There was a feeling of, Oh, I guess I'll just go be an ordinary person. And it seemed so dubious that I could ever make any mark in music, since most people kept telling me that it was impossible. They'd say, You're out of style. You're doing that folk stuff, which is suicide. You may as well be a poet and collect welfare. And I couldn't get any gigs down in the Village. I'd drag myself down to the Other End every week and get rejected." She laughs.

"I was playing and writing songs, but I always felt like that was my reserve. I had no musical training. I used to sing to my brothers and sister. Ed would sing Leadbelly songs in the kitchen, and I would come in and sing with him. Because that was a peaceful time. It meant that no one was arguing. When he was singing, it was like peace had come to the land.

"So there was a sense of being lost my first year of college. Of being doubtful of my abilities as a singer and a songwriter. Plus, I had this dread of really being fat, so I joined the swim team without even knowing how to swim. At the tryout, I started to drown, and they had to get the big pole and drag me out. They were like, What's your problem? But they said I had a good attitude, so I stuck it through for two years before I realized I was torturing myself for no good reason."

While you were at Barnard, you also started playing in some of the college coffeehouses, didn't you?

"Yes. And I started to get a little following. So I made this mailing list and sent out these flyers. I had a small, kind of hand-sewn audience, and I was very single-minded. I kept a notebook of every gig I got, what songs I sang, how I did my hair, what the audience response was and how much money I got. And each time, I would try to do it better. It was my self-discipline thing. If just one or two people liked me, that was enough to keep me going."

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When your dream to be a dancer ended, why did you rule out writing short stories or novels?

"First of all, I wasn't sure I could do it. I started to write some short stories and couldn't get the emotion into them. All the details wouldn't add up to anything. It was like the music was missing. And when you're 18 or 19, the thought of sitting down and writing something more than 50 pages long is scary. How could I make it cohesive from beginning to end? I'd work on it for two days and go, Ah, this is boring." She pauses. "Also, I must have had some fear of competing with Ed. I knew how hard he worked.

"And there's something so nice about working in a small medium like songwriting. There's something about a chorus that I really like. The idea that it comes back appeals to me. And you can all join in. There's so much satisfaction in spending a few hours on a song and really nailing it. And then you can sing it. And people will admire you for singing it. Whereas a novel seemed endlessly thankless."

And when you took an audition tape down to Folk City, people did admire you.

"Yeah. There were people down at Folk City who had the same ideals that I did, and I was really happy to be part of the group. And I was the youngest one. As a songwriter, I was the baby. Most people down there were in their mid-30s. They'd go, There's this girl and she's only 20 years old and she's got these songs. Wow. Who is she? These people weren't going, Oh, give it up. Keep your day job. They were like, Wow, that song's cool. They wanted to talk about the meaning of the words and the symbolism or the melodies. I felt accepted. I was popular. I'd stay out and drink all night, and I had a lot of fun. Actually, I felt sad in some ways in 1985 when the first record came out. Suddenly, I was picked out of there and flung onto a tour around the world. Then it's like you're not really part of the group anymore. I'd go back sometimes, but there was this awkward, she's-got-a-record-deal kind of thing. But that five years I spent there was like finding my own tribe of people, and it was really great."

Tell me what happened when you played the Albert Hall in London.

"Well, that's where D.A. Pennebaker had filmed *Don't Look Back* with Bob Dylan in 1965. And everyone was making such a big deal out of my appearance there, which made me feel that perhaps I wasn't up to all the expectations. I was tired and thought, What if I'm disappointing? I felt lost with all the film crews and the pomp and circumstance. Ron Fierstein, my manager, was really excited and going, This is the biggest gig of your career—of your life! And you don't want to hear that. You want to hear, Oh, everything will be fine. So I kept thinking, It's not such a big goddamn deal. I can walk out right now if I feel like it. But, of course, I didn't. So there's pictures of me and the band stomping off the stage after the concert, looking completely grim and upset. And the audience is going *Yea!*"

Do you ever worry about being unduly influenced by other artists?

"No. I hope I am. I hope that I soak in some of it. I hope that I'm as witty as Elvis Costello. As sardonic and sharp and tongue-in-cheek. I want to be as eclectic, playful, smart and funny as They Might Be Giants. You know, my sister Alyson and I collect information about them. I hope I am as mysterious and disturbing as Leonard Cohen. I want my images to have the kind of feeling that Dylan's do."

Let's talk about the new album. At first, I

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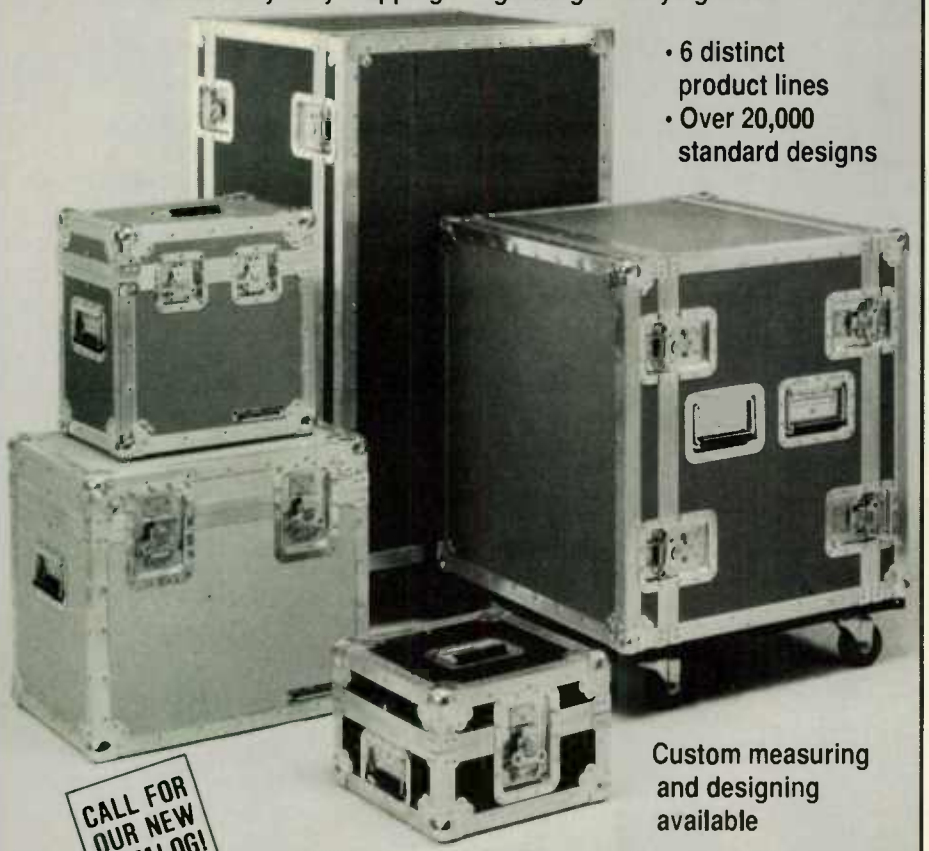

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had a hard time with it. I felt moved, but some of the songs baffled me. They reminded me of how I'd felt when I first saw Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*. Particularly the opening scene where this kid—Bergman, I guess—watches a very disturbing montage from the whole Bergman *oeuvre*. It's a fast, Jungian blur of archetypes and primal, almost tribal, images. Then he turns toward a glass wall and sees this woman—his mother, I suppose—and reaches out a hand toward her.

"Well, what you described is very much how I felt when I was starting this album, because I didn't have any preconceived idea of what I was going to do. I'd come to the end of my songs—all the songs that I considered public songs—so I had nothing to fall back on. Then I realized that some of the best songs that I've ever loved were songs where you don't know what the meaning is, but you love them anyway because they make you think in strange ways. Like John Lennon's 'Strawberry Fields Forever' or 'I Am the Walrus.' So I felt that surrealistic way of working was a good way to work for right now.

"And I found that I was working from my dreams, because my dreams are really vivid and visual and really violent. And often filled with people I don't even know. The images stay with me for a long time—years and years. A man in the street. Children doing things. Children setting themselves on fire. Or a man is burning in the street. I would *feel* these things with me all day. Also, I wanted to approach this album by making notes of things I saw in the city—I had gone to London to try to write the songs—as well as things I saw in my dreams at night. Then I would mix them together."

Why did you call the album *Days of Open Hand*?

"It's a line from 'Book of Dreams,' and I felt through the whole process of making the album that I was trying to *receive* songs and impressions. And when you tame a wild animal you approach it with your hand out like that." She opens her hand. "To me, it also meant kind of releasing the past and receiving the future. That was the stance of it, as opposed to some of the earlier songs that were more defensive. I broke all sorts of rules for myself with this record. For the first time, I put in major chords. And it made me happy because the songs still sounded like me, but they had a different texture and color than the old ones. Also, I suppose that the feeling of having met Richard and putting that piece from the past in its place is somewhere in there, too."

LAS VEGAS

SUZANNE PLAYED about half of *Days of Open Hand* on a signature-model Yamaha APX acoustic-electric, both miked and direct—"whatever seemed right at the time," says keyboardist/co-producer Anton Sanko. Her other instrument was a 1940s Martin 000-45 that she bought at Staten Island's Mandolin Bros. "It's a wonderful instrument," says Sanko; "you just look at it and fall in love with it." Suzanne's strings are D'Addario J-16 phosphor-bronze lights. "What was critical for this album," says Sanko, "was that guitars, bass and vocals—everything except synth and drums—went through a James Demeter tube mike preamp. It's got a great, controlled, warm sound; it's like the best of the Neve mike preamps, except it's new and doesn't cost a fortune." Suzanne sang through a Neumann U-67 mike.

"It's a huge, rocking, happy, delicate and funny record that makes everything else released this year laughable." —*New Musical Express*

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Do you like the new record?

"Well, I can't be objective. There's the relief that it was finished, that I just didn't go, Sorry, guys, there's nothing left in there. Then there's this feeling of, Wow, I made all this up! I just sat in a room and made it up, and now it's a thing. People will listen to it, and it will have some effect. I went to my first concert when I was 19, and six years later I had my own record deal. That still feels strange."

Although most reviewers have treated you pretty well, a few have said things like "Suzanne Vega is a yuppie's dream" or called your music "new waif music." "Her cold, icy eyes can bore into your psyche" cracked me up.

"I don't mind 'cold,' but I do mind 'precious' or 'She's so sensitive and frail' or 'She's up there with her big eyes,' because that's not how I carry myself, I don't think. I was surprised the first time I heard 'new waif.' I thought, what do they mean? I could see it in a Dickensian way, because Dickens' waifs were pretty smart and streetwise. They weren't pitiful. I didn't like the 'pitiful' overtones. I'm a person who's worked hard to keep my dignity both onstage and off, and I don't like it snatched away by someone who has never looked me in the face and doesn't know what my life has been like."

You don't mind "cold," though?

"No, because I think it can be accurate. It's the shell coming down, the uniform. At least if you're cold, you're respected." Ⓜ

COWBOY JUNKIES

[*cont'd from page 34*] KRIS: Nah—the death didn't amplify it. Maybe the tortured thoughts that drove them to the heights they climbed to . . . Janis, Hank Williams, think of that, Hank Williams wasn't even 30. A lot of people died at 29. Christopher Marlowe. Live fast, love hard and die young. I can still remember the first time I heard Hank Williams on the Opry and he had five encores. I was about 13. It probably was like you the first time ya heard Robert Johnson. I remember when I thought Johnny Cash was gonna die young—everybody did. He was the same sort of tortured, driven performer.

MICHAEL: Johnny Cash was the first concert I saw. I was about nine, my mother took me. I was a big Johnny Cash fan for some reason. I don't know why, where I was in Montreal, Canada, but I loved him.

MUSICIAN: *Do you all ever worry that the audience thinks that every little thing in the song is true of the singer?*

MARGO: No, I don't worry. When I hear Springsteen songs I think, "Well, Springsteen must have all the answers." That's the wonderful thing about music. There's something about looking up at people and hearing their words and being transported away.

KRIS: And that is who they are, too. All those things that Dylan wrote, that's who he is as much as what he's gonna do in his living room. That's part of the whole thing. We do what we do to share whatever that is.

MARGO: The greatest compliment I get—and it's usually women—is when they say, "I've just broken up with my boyfriend and you've given me so much hope."

KRIS: That is the best, if you can give people hope, that's the payback. Whether you gave 'em hope about the world situation or about making it through the night. What we do at its best is talkin' soul to soul, and it's an exchange where you lift the audience's spirits and they lift yours. What a blessing to make your living that way. Ⓜ

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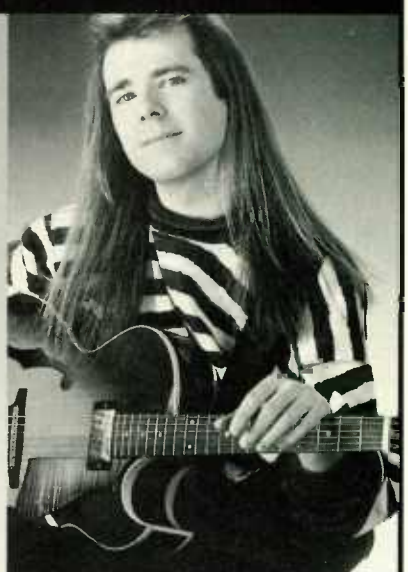

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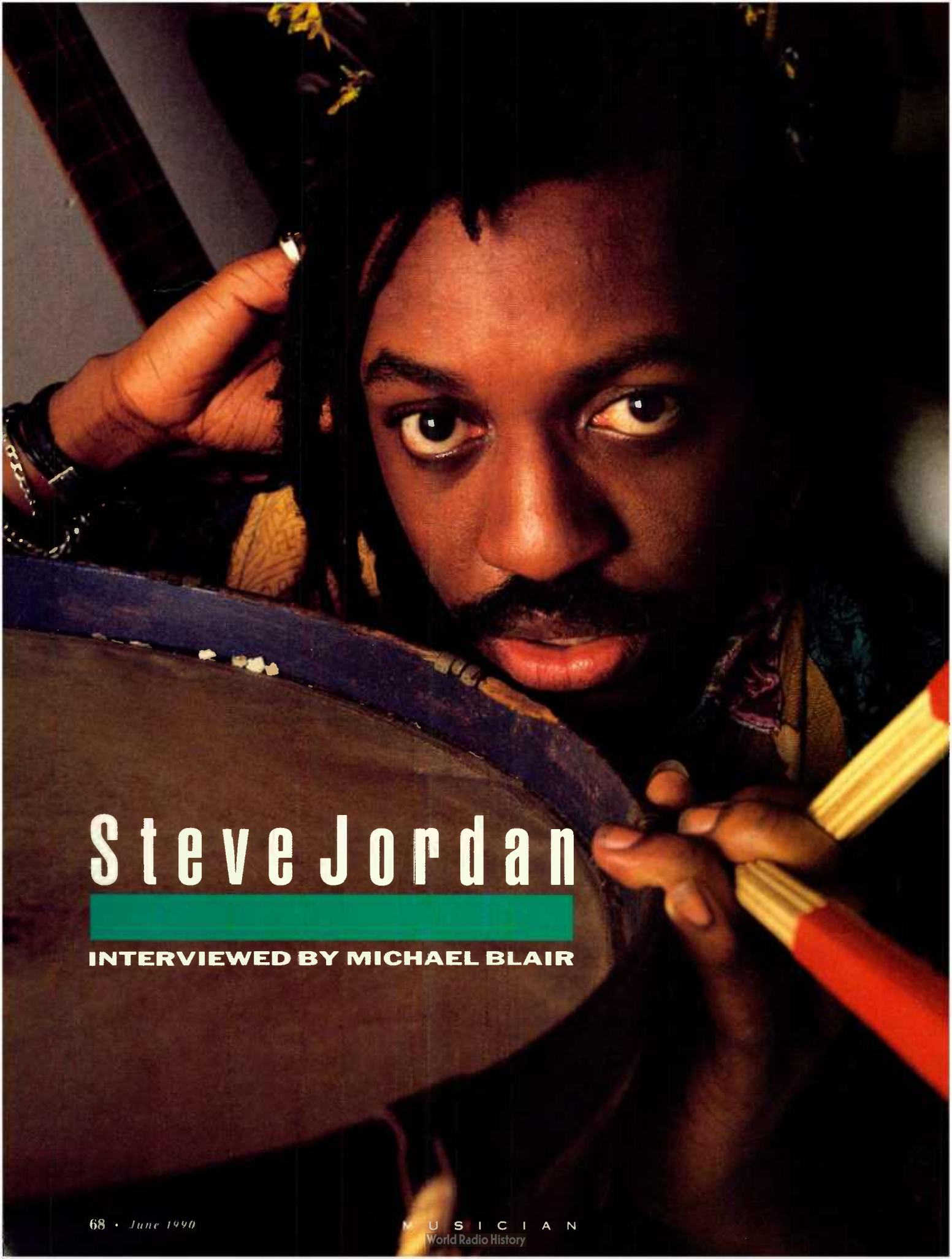

Steve Jordan

INTERVIEWED BY MICHAEL BLAIR

World Radio History

DRUMMERS SUMMIT

1990 DRUM SPECIAL

I'M SITTING in Steve Jordan's New York loft. Out the window we see the street torn to pieces, two stories deep into the ground. The late-night floodlights remind us of *2001* or *Aliens*: The planet's innards are exposed. When things break in New York City they break big. Steve's loft is a multi-functional space: part domestic abode, part music store and part shrine to the Beatles. There are strategically placed boom boxes all over: in the kitchen next to the toaster for dishwashing music, next to the bed for late-night mix checks, one in the actual studio area with the amps and piano, and one in the necessary room so Steve can sing in the shower. One of the tape machines runs a bit slowly, so Frankie Valli ends up sounding like Lou Reed.

I've listened to Steve's work since he was a fusion star with the 24th Street Band and Stuff in the '70s, and when he was a budding recording ace with Spyro Gyra and the Brecker Brothers. Steve was in on the breakthrough of hip house bands on TV, with "Saturday Night Live" and David Letterman, and also powered the Blues Brothers with John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd.

He was fortunate enough to live in a musical community and attend the High School of Music and Art in New York City. He listened to rock radio as a kid, and heard the best jazz players in New York. But the key to Steve's rise to prominence was a natural enthusiasm and willingness to communicate, in and out of a musical context. Trustworthy instincts and genuine friendliness: a potent combination. These traits have sent Steve on a long and deep journey through many musical styles, records and tours. He re-examined his intentions, refocused and relaxed his playing.

As a session drummer, Steve has played with Chuck Berry, Neil Young, the Pretenders, Steve Khan's Eyewitness, John Scofield, Feargal Sharkey, Little Steven, Don Henley and Bob Dylan. His long association with Keith Richards developed into his co-producing and co-writing Richards' solo album, *Talk Is Cheap*. Another longstanding relationship is with drummer/multi-instrumentalist Charley Drayton. They collaborate in their own band, the Raging Hormones, which also includes current B-52's bassist Sara Lee. As we begin talking Steve cradles a special Christmas present: a late-'50s mint-condition sunburst Gibson acoustic guitar given to him by Richards. Steve says, "Keith told me to practice two hours a day on it. I should get really good."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Chris Carroll

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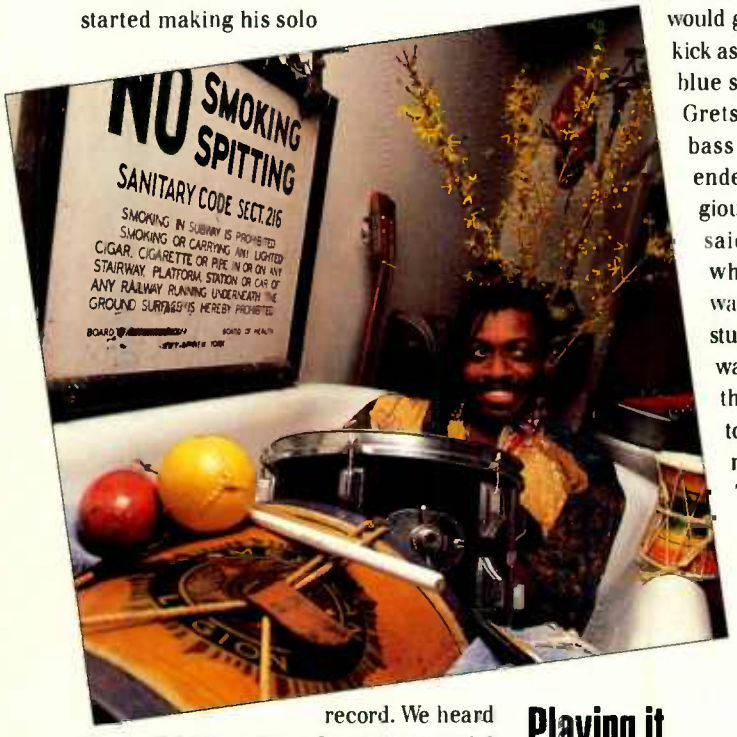
BLAIR: *Two of your employers seem like long-lost brothers. Keith Richards and Tom Waits got along really well.*

JORDAN: Yeah. Keith and I got together with Tom out in California before Keith started making his solo



record. We heard *Franks Wild Years* there. It blew my mind. I said, "If we can make a record half this good, I would be happy." Keith and I also went to see you guys play on Broadway. That was one of the best shows I've ever seen in my life. The bass drum sound was unbelievable. It really shot you. It was so big, but at the same time so round. It had the point, but it wasn't like "Oh, that's a bass drum."

BLAIR: *Well, thank you. You used that big bass drum yourself, in the Chuck Berry movie* Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll.

JORDAN: Yeah, I used a big bass drum, but we had a sample behind it. Although we didn't use very much of the sample. The engineer was excellent, but he was doing different kinds of records and didn't understand what I was talking about. And he didn't understand [NRBQ bassist] Joey Spampinato's sound at all. We spent a lot of time when we were mixing working on getting the bass guitar and bass drum right.

NRBQ is my favorite band. Along with the Beatles and the Stones. They're doing what I want to be doing. They've got it.

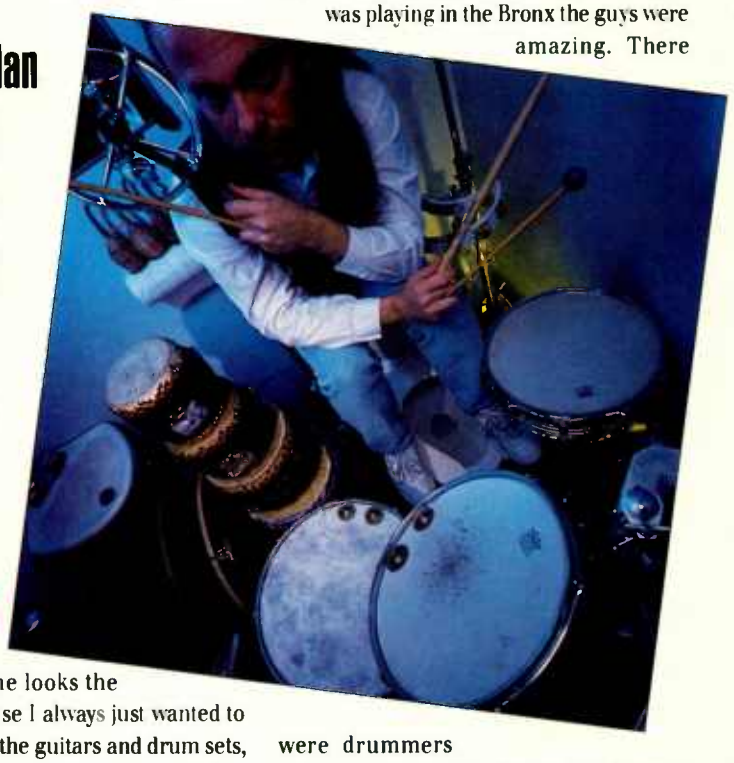
BLAIR: *What concerts do you remember seeing as a kid in the Bronx?*

JORDAN: One of the first people I ever saw live that inspired me was another guy from the Bronx, Paul Kimbarrow. He played with the Bronx Worldwide Chorus, which was directed by Dennis Bell, who now runs the New Voices of Freedom. This cat was funky, he was bad. I couldn't believe it. He was this short squirrelly guy with glasses. Then he would get on the drums and kick ass. He was playing this blue sparkle kit. He had a Gretsch floating-action bass drum pedal and I ended up using one religiously for a while. I just said to myself, "That's what I'm gonna do." I was always banging on stuff and my parents just wanted to make sure that I was really going to be into it before they made that investment. Then my grandmother bought me a Zimgar gold sparkle snare drum when I was eight. So my mother took me into this music store where they gave private lessons. My home looks the way it does because I always just wanted to be locked in with the guitars and drum sets, accordions and basses. I always wanted to stow away in there. So anyway, my mother takes me in and they sit me behind this blue sparkle Gretsch kit and they said, "Well, do you really want to play the drums?" And I said, "Yeah." And I'm sitting on the chair and I can't believe I see these mechanisms around me. The high-hat. The chrome and the rims and the sparkle. It was so hip. They said, "Will you practice?" "Yeah, definitely." "Okay, great. You come back next week and you can start." I came back in. Same room. There's no drums in the room at all. It's just this piece of rubber on a slab of wood on a stand, man. They say, "You got to work on this first before you can get to the drums." And I said, "What, are you kidding me?" That was cold-blooded. I never recovered from that. That really fucked me up. That was so cruel. How could you do that to a kid?

BLAIR: *Well at least you're laughing now. Tell me about Freddie Waits.*

JORDAN: He was teaching at Jazz Interactions, which was on 72nd Street, I think. It was a wonderful organization that had workshops and classes. I was still in high school and it was great to have a place to go in Manhattan. Jazz Interactions was a transition to help me get from junior high into the Music and Art high school. I wanted to learn real badly. 'Cause there were funky cats in the Bronx and I wasn't one of the players that was even thought of. Meeting these other guys in the city was different input. When I was playing in the Bronx the guys were amazing. There were drummers who were incredibly funky. And I wasn't anywhere near these guys. I didn't have as much natural ability so I always had to work

Playing it clean: Jordan (above) and Blair show that none of the hard work goes down the drain.



Michael Blair has recorded and toured with Elvis Costello, Tom Waits and many others. He produced Victoria Williams' new album.

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Photographs: (top) Chris Carroll; (bottom) Aldo Mauro

Nº 4,809,581

On March 7, 1989, the United States Patent Office granted Paiste the patent registered under the above number. This patent allows Paiste the exclusive use of the new bronze alloy they invented for the creation of cymbals. For the next 17 years, Paiste is the only cymbal-maker that will supply cymbals made from this new alloy.

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CYMBALS SOUNDS GONGS

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that much harder. It just seemed like these guys didn't have to practice at all. So I did a lot of shedding. I would go home every day, I couldn't practice as long as I wanted to because my dad would come home from working hard all day and didn't want to hear the drums all night. So I had to get home, and would get that key time from after school to before everybody got home and wanted to chill out. So I had two hours, which was good. People talk about practicing eight hours, that's impossible.

BLAIR: *Being able to really focus for two hours is worth a lot. I always wondered when people said, "Yeah, man, my whole life, I've been practicing eight and 10 hours a day." Yeah, right. How long is your coffee break? How many times do you go to the john?*

JORDAN: Eight hours, that's bullshit. You practice that much and you shouldn't be playing. It can't be any fun for you after a while. Getting back to Freddie Waits, when I met him he was so impressive; he had this stature. I really expressed to him that I wanted to learn more. And I got some private instruction. He took me under his wing and we became very close. During that time he turned me on to a lot of cats. We were hanging out at the clubs. I heard Max Roach play a lot. Freddie taught me a lot about being a good human being.

BLAIR: *A few years go by, we're in the mid-to-late '70s. I'd like to talk to you about the fusion scene. When I first heard you, you were in the 24th Street Band with Will Lee. People talked about you. You were starting to break through in the session scene. You had the articulation, and the cymbal and the snare drum chops. And you were one of the only guys coming up that could handle the groove and the gymnastics at the same time.*

JORDAN: The fusion thing for me started when I got out of high school in 1974. I'd played in the Jazz Interactions big band and the small combo. You had to read first trumpet parts, so I was a really good reader for a while. I started playing fusion with Michael Urbaniak, who had Basil Fearrington on bass. Michael had done an album with Steve Gadd and Anthony Jackson. Basil was Anthony's protégé, and I could do some of that stuff, but he and I wanted to lend more of a groove element to the music. With a lot of the fusion that was going down at the time, like Alphonse Mouzon and Billy Cobham, they were playing all over the music. Billy Cobham used to be my idol. At my graduation he was the keynote speaker and I gave him a standing ovation. But I thought the stuff was too busy. The music I loved that I grew up with was Motown, Stax, the Beatles, the Stones, the British Invasion. I was drawn to things that rocked and grooved. The first album I ever owned was *Peter Gunn* by Henry Mancini. Now that's a groove like a motherfucker. My first single was "Yakety Yak." In fusion there was just too much playing going on. That whole genre of music is basically guys looking at each other and saying, "I can play this and you can't." Like war. So I tried to add some peace time to it. When I was listening to it at the time I thought it was happening. But it really sent a lot of players in the wrong direction. Because the only thing that is really important is the groove. You have to let the music take over. Let the music play itself. Don't slam dunk the music.

In 1977 I started playing on "Saturday

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Night Live." And started recording more. Actually, the more technique I lost, the more gigs I got. I was playing on jingles, and thought they were very important musically, until some people tried to pull my coat and tell me that I was getting too into the music, that the producers didn't want that shit. So the worse I started to play, the more work I got. For a minute I thought I didn't have any originality. If someone wanted me to sound like Steve Gadd, I could sound like Steve Gadd. If they wanted me to sound like Harvey Mason, I could sound like Harvey Mason. I didn't know who I was or who I sounded like. If somebody said, "Sound like Steve Jordan," I couldn't tell them who that was. Charlie Watts sits down, he plays the drums. He sounds like Charlie Watts.

BLAIR: *It seemed the same players were doing all the jingles and all the TV shows. A lot of them have stayed in jingles and TV.*

JORDAN: Some of them have gotten out. When you're playing all these jingles, you have to play four or five dates a day to make a decent living. You have to be overbooking. People don't work very much because there isn't much of that kind of work anymore. And they always have to pull some scam.

BLAIR: *But you didn't pursue that line of work.*

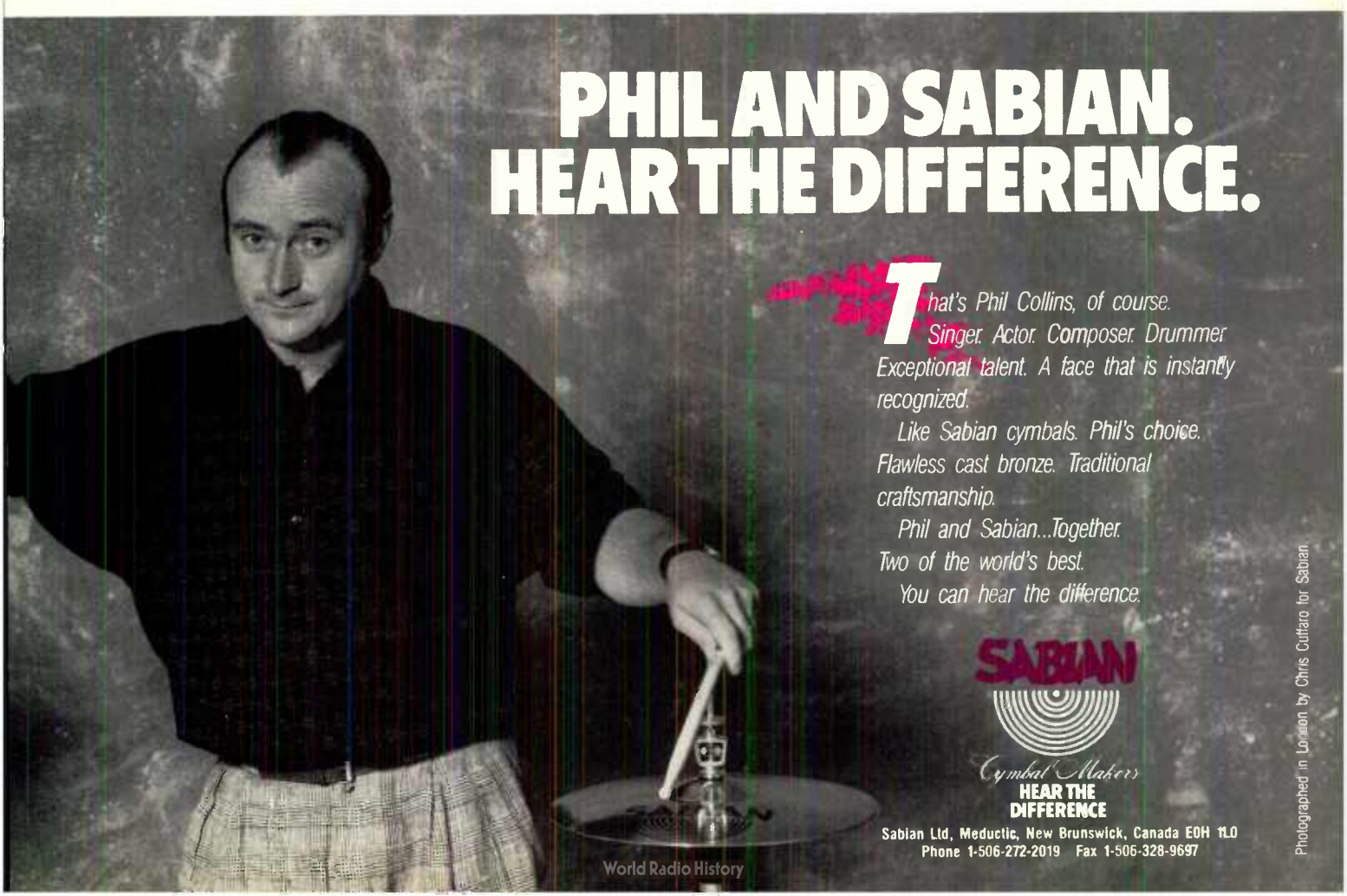
JORDAN: You see, I was young. It was fun and I played well. I met Stevie Wonder around that time. And I met Greg Phillinganes the day that Greg met Stevie Wonder. The Brecker Brothers, Roberta Flack. I really got a crash course on being a professional. But eventually I left "Saturday Night Live." I tried to ease myself out of the jingles scene and pursue real music. I could've kept doing dates and been amazingly frustrated and unfulfilled. I was a musician to make music, not to make a living. Around '77 my first time out of town was with this disco group Reflections. Then I did that tour with Michael Urbaniak, which was real road warrior stuff. But my first real gig was with Joe Cocker in 1976. And the group Stuff was playing with Cocker. There were three drummers. Steve Gadd opened the tour, I did the middle of the tour and Chris Parker did the end.

BLAIR: *Was that just because of scheduling?*

JORDAN: Well, Gadd and Parker were doing a lot of dates and I was the guy who was cleaning up after them. You know, whatever fell off the plate. I got the "Saturday Night Live" gig because Rick Marotta was out of town. Gadd was too busy and Marotta was gone, so they asked me to join the band. I was friends with the crew and everybody. I didn't know we weren't supposed to fraternize. I hung out with Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi. I was there to communicate. No one's done the stuff that we ended up doing. There was never a four-piece band on television every night before the Letterman band. Nobody was playing that kind of funk every night on TV.

BLAIR: *On the Letterman show, your bass drum and snare were mixed way up front. It was unusual to hear that on television.*

JORDAN: It was the best sound in the band so they turned it up! We had an engineer named Pam Gibson who was outstanding. She really dug the low end. Pam cared about how the band sounded and loved the bass drum and snare. We had microphones all over the kit, just like a recording studio, more mikes than ever for TV. Later Pam took a



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leave of absence to have a baby. The sound really suffered after she left.

When I went with the Blues Brothers, people who weren't even talking to me were giving me work. It was so bizarre. You would read charts and play five songs in a session. Then you'd take a break and the second session would be the second side of the LP. Then you had the commercialized fusion thing, like Spyro Gyra. Will Lee, John Tropea and I played a lot of that stuff.

BLAIR: *Which gave you the chance to play more grooves.*

JORDAN: Exactly. So I didn't really mind playing that stuff. But it wasn't rock 'n' roll and I still wanted to play rock 'n' roll. How do you build a musical identity if you're playing everybody else's stuff all the time? Not that you have to do just one thing, but there's got to be some kind of thread that goes through it all. And when I finally latched onto it, I felt that I could play one way throughout all the music I ever wanted to play. I play the same now, no matter what. I can play the same drum kit for whatever kind of music is being played. It's how I'm living. It's how I feel. It's how I'm breathing.

BLAIR: *It's the same ability that allows you to be receptive, to just play the music.*

JORDAN: Exactly. It's all the same. It's all communication. It seems so simple. So now I'm happening. I'm a friendly, happening guy. People used to think I was weird. Then they thought I was cocky and too outspoken. I had an attitude. I was just too crazy. But now I'm happening. It's funny how it changes. Ⓜ

"MAKE IT UNIQUE"

STEVE JORDAN strives to find the appropriate drum for each situation, and you'll rarely see him with the same setup twice. He endorses Yamaha drums, which he used throughout his three-year stint on "Late Night with David Letterman," but he is also an avid collector of vintage instruments, which he uses whenever possible.

And if Jordan doesn't own it, he'll borrow it for the occasion, such as when he backed Neil Young on the first "Saturday Night Live" show of the current season. "It was a physical song," Steve says. "'Rockin' in the Free World.' That's *physical*, you know what I mean? So I approached it in a real athletic sense. I use large cymbals anyway, but that night I used several cymbals in a different configuration than I'm used to being seen with. I used double floor tom-toms on that; I can't remember the last time I used double floor tom-toms that had legs on them," Steve laughs. "It wasn't one of those one-piece stands with two toms and a cymbal on it. This was like *six legs*. It was a beautiful old set of white marine pearl drums that Artie Smith helped me put together. It was my Eames snare drum, but we went to Carroll's Music and got a nice 26" single-tension bass drum, a couple of old WFL floor tom-toms and a beautiful 12" Gretsch mounted tom-tom. So I had that approach: Make it unique."

The Eames snare drum has been the one common element in the majority of Jordan's setups. A gift from drummer Danny Gottlieb, it measures 7 × 14 and is made from 15 plies of maple. Jordan's collection also includes a vintage WFL snare drum, from which Steve removed the bottom head, rim and snares. "I call it my 'timbale' snare," he says. "It's made of wood, so it doesn't sound as metallic as a timbale, but it really cuts." That drum can be heard on several cuts on *Talk Is Cheap*. Other drums Steve is fond of include an old Ludwig Black Beauty and a 3 × 13 Ludwig piccolo. The newest drum in Jordan's collection is a 6 × 12 snare made by Australian drum maker Chris Brady. Steve's drums are most often fitted with Remo Ambassador heads.

Steve endorses Paiste cymbals: "The new Paistes are incredible." He is also enthusiastic about some new cymbals Paiste made especially for him: "They're pink," he says. "I'm the only guy in the world with pink cymbals. The high-hats are really wild: 17 inches. I played 15" high-hats for years, and then one day I heard Charley Drayton using 18" high-hats, and they sounded really cool. So I got a couple of 17" crash cymbals and made high-hats from them. When Paiste made the pink cymbals, they made 17" high-hats for me." Steve also has a collection of old K Zildjians, but hasn't been using them recently. "They aren't as appropriate for the music I'm doing now," he explains. "Plus, they're such great cymbals that I wouldn't want to break them."

When Jordan backed Chuck Berry for the *Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll* concert, his kit included two old Ludwig tom-toms with calfskin heads that Steve found in Berry's studio, and a 26" Slingerland Radio King bass drum. For the Keith Richards tour, Jordan used his Eames snare drum, a 22" Yamaha Recording Series bass drum and two black Gretsch tom-toms that he borrowed from Charlie Watts. And proudly displayed in Jordan's loft is a drumkit he is especially fond of: a '60s black oyster pearl Ludwig kit like the one Ringo Starr used with the Beatles. Generally Steve stays with four-piece drumsets. "I used to use more toms," he explains, "but then I decided to get back to the basics. You don't need a lot of drums to be funky, and I'm a funky kind of guy."

—RICK MATTINGLY

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JASON BONHAM GROWS UP

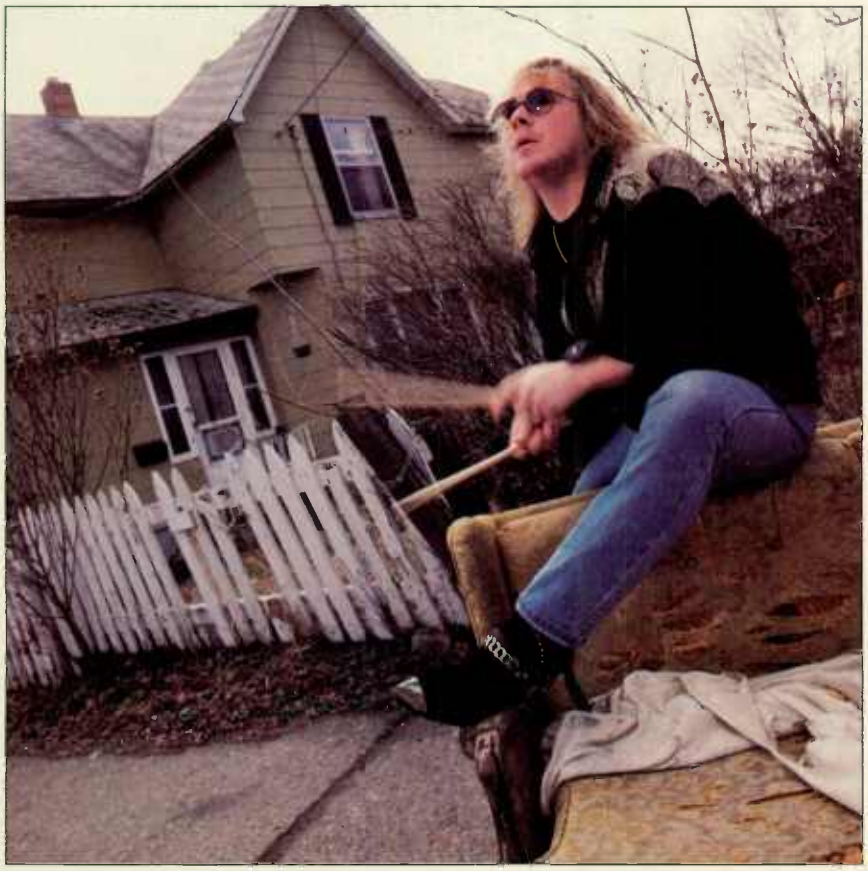
First-rate timekeeping for rock's second generation

By J.D. Considine

SOMETIMES, Jason Bonham wishes that the rest of his band would just grow up. Today, for instance, the band is ensconced at the Holiday Inn North in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It's clean, it's quiet and it's close to the gig, but it's definitely not the best hotel in town. That's the problem. Because the band has done so well with its first album, *The Disregard of Timekeeping*, the members of Bonham—in particular, singer Daniel MacMasters—feel they belong in the best hotels. Jason thinks that's a bit premature.

"On our first tour of America," he explains in amiable exasperation, "we were each lucky to get our own room. On this tour, if we don't get a Ritz Carlton or a Four Seasons, we're all mad. It's like, 'Come on, guys, let's put our feet back on the ground. We're a new band, you know. Maybe we've got a gold record, but let's be real about this. Let's just thank our lucky stars.'

"But no, he won't. He's like, 'We're Bonham. We *should* have this.' He expects it. Loveable Daniel." He laughs, and adds, "We all love him, really. He's, like, 21 years old. Big ego. Doesn't really show he has a big ego, but he has. But he's very funny, very naive and very new to it."



Jason Bonham, on the other hand, is neither naive nor new to it. Still, it's hard not to be amused by this voice-of-experience lecture, because, for all his hard-won experience, Bonham is himself just 24. How did he manage to learn so much about the business in such a short time? "I eavesdropped a lot," he laughs.

Of course, it helps that the folks on whom young Jason was eavesdropping happened to have been some of the best-known names in hard rock. Because his dad was the legendary John "Bonzo" Bonham, houseguests would include the likes of Jimmy Page, Robert Plant and Paul Rodgers; not only did that make the conversation intriguing, but the constant flow of music and musicians made the younger Bonham's vocation all but inevitable.

"Drumming's been a natural thing from when I was a child," says Bonham, whose youthful memories include "being woken up in the middle of the night to play drums for various guests. The thing is, I can't remember being taught. My kit was set up in the corner of the music room, and he'd program the jukebox and just sit back, listen to his favorite music and watch me . . . fuck it up, I suppose. He always made me play *with* a song rather than *to* a song. Feel it more than anything else.

"Later on my father showed me things. He'd do certain drum fills and say, 'Now you do that, practice it, tell me when you can do that.' I'd practice for a while, and get smart with him and go, 'That's easy now, Dad!' So he'd come in and play some mighty, over-the-top drum fill and go, 'Try that one.' 'Ahh, I can't do that one! Give me a break, will you? *I'm only nine years old!*" Then again, a lot of drummers feel that way when trying to imitate a John Bonham fill.

However unorthodox it might have seemed at the time, Jason's training was fairly traditional. As he sees it, there really are only two ways to learn the drums: "You get taught, like I was, just the natural way to play stuff, and then learn the fancy stuff later on," he says. "Or you can be taught the music school way, where you're taught the rudiments and know the difference between a flam drag, a Swiss Army triplet and a single

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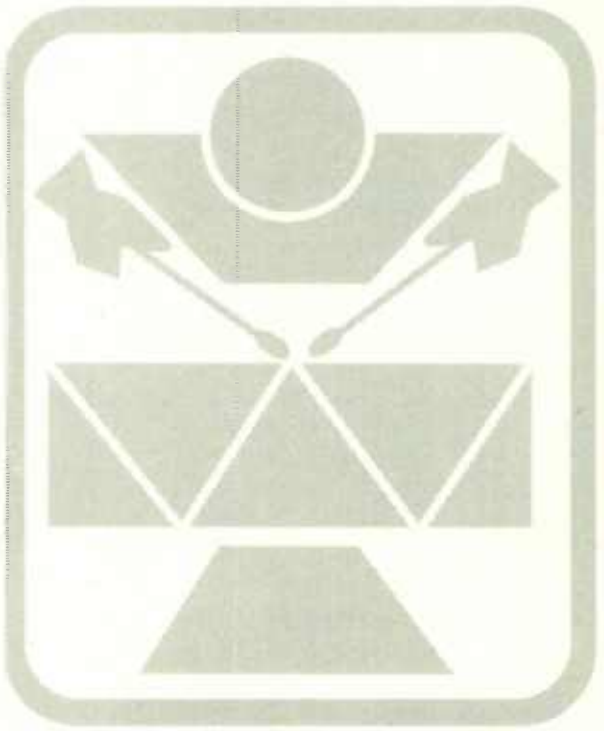

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ratamacue. A friend of mine, Simon Phillips, is one of those drummers. He can describe everything he does, correctly, and with every term. Whereas when people say to me, 'Oh, you did a ratamacue and a doodleysquiggle,' it's, 'Did I? Thank you very much. I thought that was a bad cough.'"

Yet as much as Bonham admires quick-wristed pyrotechnics—"technical drumming," he calls it—he insists that the most important thing a drummer can do is get a good groove going. Because without a solid pulse for context, no amount of stunning stickwork can save a drummer. "To learn the feel is one of the hardest things," he says. "You can have every trick to pull out, but if you can't get the feel, if you can't groove to the song, you're just banging your head against a brick wall. A terrific example is a friend of mine in England. He's the best guy to ever take into a music store and get on the kit. He just blows you away. He can do single-stroke rolls and his hands will be a foot off the snare drum. But when you get him with a band, he can't play at all. It's very strange, that."

That's not to say Bonham is against showing off; it's just that he has his priorities. "If you can make a groove sound exciting without throwing any fancy stuff on it—if you can get people to move from that—and *then* you do something fancy, they go, 'Wow! Did you hear that?'"

Those are the moments Bonham fans remember most, the unexpected twists and idiosyncratic turnarounds, like the jittery fills in "Bringing Me Down" or exquisitely placed accents in "Holding On Forever"; they lift Jason's playing above the norm. It's not a matter of technical prowess so much as taste and timing, meaning that the most dazzling thing about him often isn't the stickwork, but the thinking behind it.

Another bit of wisdom passed down to Jason by his father was the idea that the drummer shouldn't follow the bass player; he should follow the guitarist. "In Led Zeppelin," Jason says, "my dad's approach was that he'd watch Jimmy, and he'd play with Jimmy. John Paul Jones would have to watch my dad and play with my dad. Jimmy'd be watching Robert. Usually people say, 'Oh, the bass player and the drummer want to stick together.' Not if you want it to be fiery. If you can go with the guitar, and then the bass player will go with you, you've got an awesome setup there."

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SAMPLE *THIS!*

JASON BONHAM has the kind of drums that must be seen to be believed. It's not that his kit is especially huge, just that it's uncommonly colorful. "It's all custom paintwork by Voodoo Force, who is a guy in Canada that does airbrushing work," Bonham explains. "One side is the Swan Song logo, which fades to white to the *Led Zeppelin I* album cover across the side. It's just perfect, like a photo. The rack toms are all Dali, and we've got the tree in the desert with the melting clock over it. It's just very weird and wonderful artwork. The back tom looks like a whole piece of coral, volcano stuff. It's got Flintstones around the side. They've all got punk rock hairdos, and Dino the dog's chasing after the car and Barney with shades on is going, 'Bone-ham rocks,' which is quite funny. It's a great kit."

Underneath all that paint, he has wood-shelled Drum Workshop drums, held together by Drum Workshop hardware, and using Drum Workshop pedals. "Everything they make, basically," says drum tech Phil Alge. "He's a total endorsee."

Perhaps the most unusual thing about the kit is its monster bass drum, a 28"-deep-by-22"-high behemoth. "It's like a torpedo," laughs Bonham. "It's really long. I saw Larrie Londin had one done two inches shorter; I was at the DW place and said, 'What's that?' He said, 'That's Larrie Londin's bass.' And I said, 'How long is it?' He said, '26.'

"'I want mine 28!'"

Bonham's toms are more conventionally sized, and are all rack-mounted, even though some are floor-sized; they run 16" wide by 14" deep, 14 × 12, 12 × 10, 10 × 8 and 8 × 6. His snare is 14 × 6. His sticks are by Rimshot, and he uses Remo Ambassador heads in the studio, but on the road, Alge prefers applying Aquarian Classic Clears. Why? "Aquarians seem to hold up a little better for the live situation," Alge says, "as far as being able to last the whole show without detuning. Ambassadors sound great, but by the time you do an hour-and-a-half set, at the end of the show they're all pretty well detuned. That's my opinion."

As far as cymbals, Bonham "switches around a lot," says Alge. At the moment he's using a 20" Zildjian K ride, 13" K high-hats, a 17" dark crash, a 16" medium crash, a 16" China Boy high and a 17" China Boy. "But he gets bored," adds the tech. "He has me switch cymbals. I say, 'What do you want me to put up?' He says, 'I don't care, just change it.'"

Bonham's kit is miked with the Michael May Miking System. "All the mikes are internal," says Alge. "In the kick drum there's a Shure SMS7 and an AKG D112, I believe. The big toms have got the AKGs in them. I'm not sure what's in the smaller drums. There's a Sennheiser in the snare drum, and then we add a Shure SMS7 for the top snare, which is internally mounted." As for the cymbals, they're handled by the Zildjian miking system.

Bonham's only electronics are a Kat pad and an Akai S-1000 sampler. "I use it for background vocals," says the ever-traditional Bonham. But when he broke his wrist earlier this year and couldn't play the old-fashioned way, he made do with a Roland Rhythm Composer triggering samples from the album.

However, he insists, there was "not one sample on our album."

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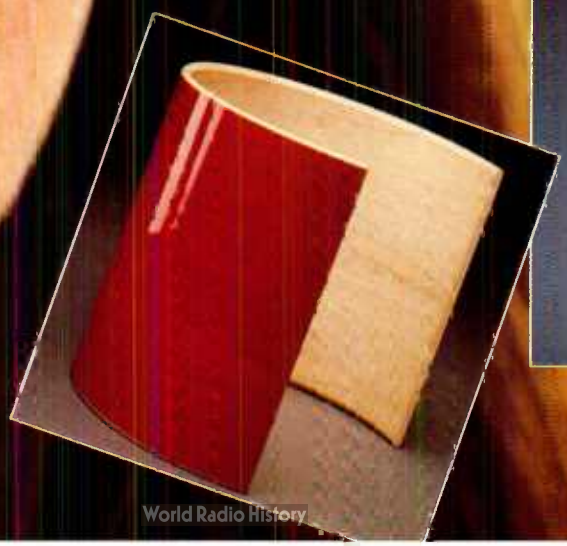

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his dad's live tapes—becomes apparent as he talks about touring with Jimmy Page. "Playing live is good with Jimmy, because you never know what he's going to do," Bonham says. "He would go off onto a tangent, just like the old Zeppelin days. I'd be right there with Jimmy, because I'd been brought up listening to that music, listening to all the live stuff, and the way my dad played it. I knew roughly what was going to happen. I thought, 'He's going to go off like he did in 1975.' And he did, with a twist of '77 at the end and maybe a bit of '73 later on. 'Oh, and he's ending on a '68 note.' That sort of thing. So I was always well-prepared for that."

Obviously, Bonham relishes those moments when the music heats up and the bandmembers begin to feed off each other's ideas. From a player's perspective, that's definitely where the fun begins. But as a listener, Bonham feels it's the song that matters most. "I like songs," he says. "I'm not into players. I don't go out and buy an album just because it's got great players on it. There's a great song by a band called Enuff Z'Nuff called 'Fly High Michelle.' It's got really good changes in it, as it goes into the bridge before the chorus, and real good melody. That impresses me.

"One thing I'm really enjoying at the moment is *Manic Nirvana*, Robert Plant's new album. It's fantastic. I like the approach [drummer] Chris Blackwell's put on it, although I wish it did have real drums. The top part is Robert, guitar, kick-ass. Underneath is computerized, almost, like synthetic-drum-type things. On a couple of tracks, if it had real big drums it would sound very Zeppelin-y. But because he changed that, he's got something different. At least when 'Tie-Dye on the Highway' comes on the radio, you don't think it's just another rock thing."

Blackwell's taste for technology has influenced Bonham a bit, however. Although the young drummer insists that he would never use samples on his own albums, he did follow Blackwell's advice to buy a Kat pad. "It stayed in its box for three months, until we actually figured out how to work it," he laughs. Bonham uses it to trigger backing vocals. "I'll be playing and I'll just go"—he mimes hitting the pads—"'Guilty, ah' . . . 'ooh' . . . 'Hide your love, lock it up.' A long 'Guilty . . .' It's good. Keeps you on your toes to remember all that."

Still, he says, "I think drums are probably one of the only things that won't be completely taken over by elec- [cont'd on page 113]

SIMON SAYS: DO IT YOUR WAY

Rhythm ace Simon Phillips powers the stars with unique style

By Chip Stern

ALRIGHT, SO STOP ME if you've heard this one. How many drummers does it take to put in a light bulb? Ten. One to put in the bulb, and nine to figure out how Simon Phillips would've done it . . . BrrrrrDum . . .

Such is Simon Phillips' stature as *the* virtuoso drummer/producer on the British music scene. He's not only become the first-call rhythm ace for employers like 801, Jack Bruce, Jeff Beck, Mick Jagger, Pete Townshend and the Who, but has inspired countless punchlines and imitators. As a drummer Simon Phillips embodies the fundamental attributes which distinguish the great sessionmen from run-of-the-mill hockers: great time, bottomless reserves of power and a characteristic sonic signature—all tempered by aesthetic restraint. And as his self-produced CD, *Protocol*, demonstrates, there's more on his mind than drumming.

MUSICIAN: *When you toured with the Who,*

Photograph: Ebet Roberts

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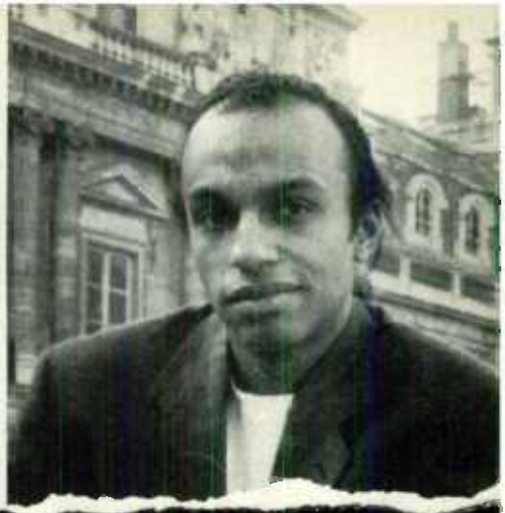

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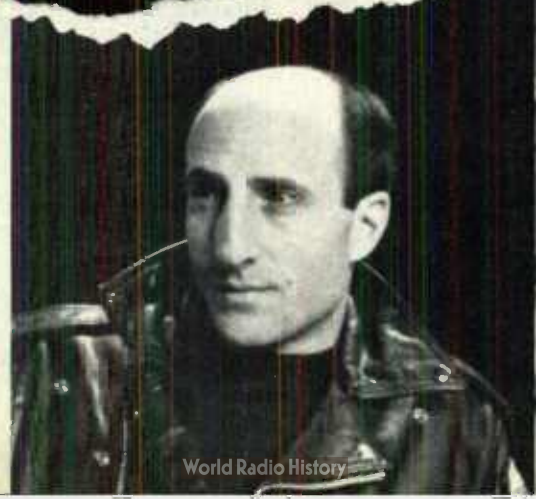

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it must've been an extraordinary spiritual challenge, as closely identified as Keith Moon was with those tunes.

PHILLIPS: Yes and no. My responsibility is simply to play in whatever manner the song needs to make it work. Obviously I've played with Pete a lot before, but I was just playing these songs the way I felt that they should be played. It just so happened that a lot of those things were probably quite similar to the way Keith *did* play them. There was a certain humor in Keith's playing that I enjoyed, and I might have incorporated some of that, but it was never really a conscious effort. And there was obviously a lot of thought about how I'd be accepted; there's a lot of Keith Moon fans, and also some Kenney Jones fans. But as far as I was concerned there's a job to be done, songs to be played, and there's 15-odd people onstage depending on me to let them know when to come in and when not to come in, what the right tempo is, and to make sure we get from beginning to end without too many spins [*laughs*].

MUSICIAN: *People seemed to accept you a little more in that chair than Kenney Jones. Kenney's a very good drummer, but he's more of a pocket man, whereas you're more volatile . . . you can approximate order masquerading as chaos.*

PHILLIPS: [*laughs*] Obviously my style is a lot more extroverted; it's a lot more *like* Keith's in a way—but probably a lot more disciplined. Keith was fabulous—an absolute maniac. So maybe for some people it was nice to hear that sort of energy back in the songs—to bring back another identity, I suppose, for the band.

MUSICIAN: *You would have come of age in the second wave of great British drummers, after Baker, Watts, Hiseman, Moon, Bonham, Mitchell and Bruford. Do you think there is a British style of drumming?*

PHILLIPS: Oh yeah, very much. I think there's a British style of playing anything—it's just the attitude. What things were available to us as kids was quite different. It was very hard for us to get ahold of Ludwig and Slingerland gear in the '60s, and a lot of people couldn't afford it, so we tended to make do with Premier kits, Ajax, Hayman—whatever we could get ahold of. Also, we always had to take our equipment into the studio. Now in New York in the '70s—when I was there—every studio had a kit, and drummers would just show up with a stick bag and a couple of cymbals and a snare drum—I found that most bizarre. So in England there were a lot of different types of tuning, and everybody's kit sounded different on record.

MUSICIAN: *When did you first realize you were a drummer?*

Such a supple wrist: Simon supports Elton and Daltrey at the 1989 *Tommy* show in L.A.

PHILLIPS: When did I realize I *wanted* to be a drummer? Well, I was born in 1957. My father was a clarinet player, and had a Dixieland band, so I basically grew up with music going on all around. But it took until I was three before it meant anything, coincidental to him getting a new drummer. I remember being put to bed, and I could hear the band rehearsing in another room, and I was just tapping along. And with this it just clicked. I did actually go on the road with him for four years when I was 12.

MUSICIAN: *Were you conscious of Cream and Hendrix and the whole emerging progressive music scene in England when you were growing up?*

PHILLIPS: Sort of, but my father was really not into it at all, and that sort of music wasn't in the house at all. I was also at that time much more interested in jazz: Stan Kenton, Count Basie; Buddy Rich and Louis Bellson were certainly role models. The first thing to really grab me in pop would probably have been Chicago Transit Authority, Blood, Sweat & Tears, and then the Mahavishnu Orchestra, I think [*laughter*]. I was very influenced by Billy Cobham in the early '70s. He and Tony Williams were my major influences, but at the time Billy was the main goal. I was also very into Grady Tate, Bernard Purdie and a lot of popular R&B—that was a heavy influence. I used to love Bonham—Bonzo was great. Ian Paice, also. I suppose I picked up on a lot of different styles, and just tried to learn to play them.

MUSICIAN: *When do you suppose your own approach started to crystallize?*

PHILLIPS: Well, when I was about 16, after playing with my dad's band, I did the London production of *Jesus Christ Superstar.* Then I started in doing session work and record dates; I could read that well. I would find out whatever the style was of the song we had to do, then I would sort of recall what I'd heard before, so if it was a groove similar to something I might have heard on a Quincy Jones album, I'd put myself in Grady Tate's shoes and try to recreate that groove as closely as possible. And that's where it all started: learning by copying, as a lot of people do, and then as you integrate things of your own into that, you begin to develop your own style.

I did go to a drum teacher who'd played in my dad's band years ago, and he taught me to read. But basically I just played to records; that's all I did, never went to any sort of school. This all started off with my dad's music: Benny Goodman, Stan Kenton, basically jazz. Then it progressed to Don Ellis—slightly more modern jazz—but at the same time I was playing to the singles and the pop music of the time. The only specific thing I would have practiced at one stage would've been double bass drum technique, but really nothing apart from that.

I would get a record, put it on and play to it straight away, tuning the drum kit so that it sounded like the record, which was very difficult, because obviously those drums were recorded, and I would try and make them sound like that acoustically. And I could never really play until I got the sound right. And that's something I still hold to today: If you play a certain type of music, and it doesn't sound right, I just can't play it. Your drums have got to be in tune to the music, with the right feel and everything.

MUSICIAN: *Sure. If you tuned your drums high and open with a resonant bass drum, that might make it on a jazz gig, but you'd get run off if you went to a rock session like that.*

PHILLIPS: Hmmm, except that I use a very

Photograph: Ebet Roberts

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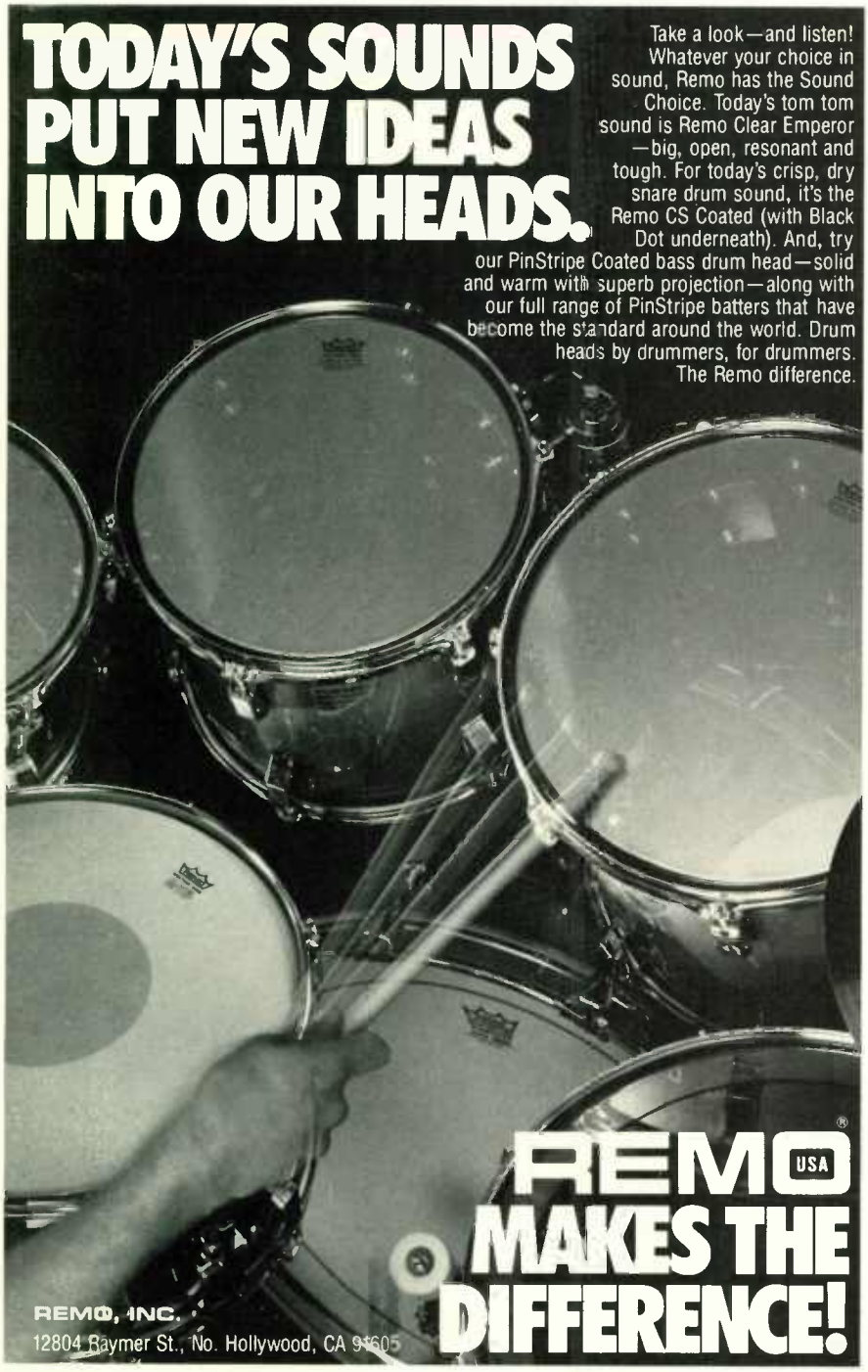
jazz form of tuning in rock 'n' roll. I basically use clear Ambassadors all around, tuned really high, with no damping. And the bass drums have their front heads on as well. I've always used that kind of tuning, and it's funny, because no matter what situation I'm in, it usually stays pretty much the same, although we'll sometimes modify things to suit the song we're doing.

I tune to the sound of the drum, with the top and bottom heads very even, and very high. With the number of tom-toms that I use, it's very important that you hear each tom-tom, so if you don't tune the heads the same, each tom-tom will cover a larger range, and the tone will actually move from one to another—too much spread. So if you do a quick run around the toms, it will actually sound like three or four toms, not six or seven.

MUSICIAN: *Most people think that to get that studio sound you need to tune your bottom head higher, and your batter head fairly slack. But I always come back to fairly even tuning, with the bottom head sort of slipping of its own accord.*



PHILLIPS: Exactly. And the top head, as you hit it, is changing all the time. However, that studio sound you speak of is a bit of an illusion. It's funny. To achieve what people hear on a record or on a live gig, you have to actually go the other way. That's because microphones do very funny things to the drum sound, and so does tape. And while a lot of my sound starts off with the drum kit, it also has a lot to do with how I'll record it. I can make the tom-toms sound quite different just by the amount of level I'll put to tape. The more level you put on tape, the more tape compression you get, so the drums sound liver. The transients go a little bit, but you get more tone. If you record them at a lower level, they sound clicky and thin. As a rule, a bass drum and a snare drum would be recorded fairly low, because they're very high-peaking instruments; cymbals, too, unless you want them to compress. But with tom-toms, the needle jumps right off the end of the meter—yet they sound great.

MUSICIAN: *What is the basic rig you took out with the Who?*

PHILLIPS: It's basically the same as the kit on the cover of *Protocol*, except with a modified Tama rack system. I also moved down one step to a smaller, slightly more concise kit that worked very well in large stadiums, where you're taking this small drum onstage and making it sound huge out front, because of this immense P.A. system. With smaller drums you can mike everything a lot hotter and they're less prone to feedback. It's funny, but with a smaller head you can actually get a lot more bottom end into the drum. The bigger drums tend to be a little more slappy and they boom a lot more.

I use double-headed bass drums, so generally you've got to put something inside, and a good-quality Sheraton Hotel towel usually does the trick, taped to the batter head so that it's barely touching. I try and use as little damping as possible, and use the tuning to get 'round any funny overtones. Depending on the size of the halls, the resonating head might start undamped, but if you're using a massive P.A. with a lot of level, then you might have to damp it a bit more. In a smaller club, you might be able to get away with a bit more liveness.

MUSICIAN: *Have you given much thought to getting your own thing more front and center, or isn't that important to you?*

PHILLIPS: Yes it is. Although I didn't get the kind of release I wanted with *Protocol*, the way it was accepted by the people who heard

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it was very encouraging. I would actually like to make another album, a full and proper album, as soon as I have the time to do it. I have probably half the material now.

I spent a lot of the time around '84 through '86 engineering and producing. I stopped playing for a while, actually. And when I got back to the kit, there was a different slant to it; I could approach it with a fresher attitude. And nowadays it's lovely, because I do a mixture of both.

MUSICIAN: *Did it give you a new perspective on what producers want from drummers?*

PHILLIPS: Oh certainly. I can now produce myself, as it were. A lot of times people send a multitrack tape to my studio here, and I'll put the drums on myself. So I'm actually becoming a producer. I'll listen to a track and then I have to negotiate with myself and tell myself what not to play.

MUSICIAN: *How did you record* Protocol?

PHILLIPS: I was going to the States to start a world tour of drum clinics, and I had about five weeks to get it all together. I knew the day I was leaving, the day I needed all of my CDs to arrive ready to ship out, and worked back from there. It takes three weeks to manufacture it; it takes a week to get the artwork ready. So I was left with seven days. Most of it was written and in the sequencer ready to go, so it was a question of tidying things up, doing a few arrangements, then actually going into recording.

SIMON'S SET

I USE A TAMA ArtStar II maple kit. My bass drums are 16" × 24", tuned very much the same—trying to get them to sound like one drum. Although it's pretty much impossible in practice, that's the concept. The toms, from small to large, are 9" × 10", 10" × 11", 11" × 12", 12" × 13". All pretty much standard Tama power toms, except for the 9" × 10", which is a custom item; they make a 10" × 10", which to me is totally wrong, and it looks worse than it sounds. The next tom will be a 13" × 14" and a 14" × 15". And a 14" × 20" Gong drum. Then there's two snare drums, which are either an 8" deep wooden snare, a 6½" deep wooden snare or a wooden piccolo. The one on the left is either a 5" × 14" metal or a 3" × 13" wood. Then a low set of Octobans.

"The high-hats and main ride cymbal are played with the left hand, and sometimes I'll play with the right hand. I just don't cross over. I have an X-Hat over on the right in between the two floor toms—a pair of 13" Zildjian Dynobeats—and my main high-hats on the right are 14" A New Beats. Then from the left I have a 24" Swish-Knocker without rivets, a 22" K Custom, which has a dry, bell-like sound, a 12" A Splash, a 19" A Thin Crash, a 17" A Thin Crash and a 22" China Boy.

"All the tom-tom mikes are Electro-Voice ND-408s, which are a fairly new model I've been using since '88 for studio work and live. For the Octobans I use an EV ND-308. For the snare drum, it's generally a Shure SM57, because it's really the only mike that works well with a snare. The bass drums are where I probably change the the most in terms of microphones, mike placement and how I tune them: whether I put full closed heads on, or a front head with a hole in it. But generally, it's either an AKG D-12 or an AKG D-112, or an Electro-Voice 408; sometimes I even use a condenser mike—a Neumann U-47. And for the cymbals, I'm using a pair of new omnidirectional Bruel & Kjaer 4006s. They are the most amazing mikes in the world, just incredible—very, very transient and transparent."

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MUSICIAN: *So you worked in the reverse mode from a typical drummer's album, in that you had the music first and the last thing to go down was the drums?*

PHILLIPS: Oh, absolutely, yes. I'm used to playing with music tracks when I go and overdub on other people's records, so I never have a drum machine. Sometimes I don't even use the click; I just play to the instruments when the machine drops out. With *Protocol* we didn't use any click anywhere. I just played to my sequencers. It was nice. It gave it a little bit of freedom there, and instead of listening to a cowbell or the click you listen to the music.

MUSICIAN: *Now there's a concept.*

PHILLIPS: Isn't that amazing? Maybe we've discovered something really new. Ⓜ

SWING MASTER

Jazz drummer and leader Mel Lewis sounds off one final time

By **Karen Bennett**

"I DON'T WANT to be tired," Mel Lewis began. He had just been released from the hospital. Lewis was battling cancer, and it was obvious, from this opening comment as well as the intensity with which he spoke of his band and his career, that he was battling the disease with his entire spirit.

Intensity was not out of character for Lewis, especially when discussing his lifelong passion. "I love the drums," he explained. "I love them, I think, more than anything else—well, next to my family. I have played them all my life. I've never done anything else, since I was two years old."

Mel Lewis was born Melvin Sokoloff in Buffalo, New York, in 1929. His father was also a drummer; Mel's professional career began when he was in his teens, following a brief but crucial stint on baritone sax in his high school band. (Since he was not taught to read drum music, Lewis says he "only saw horn music in my head. So I got this whole attitude about playing a horn on drums, which lives with me today.") He began working with the orchestras of Lenny Lewis, Boyd Raeburn, Alvino Rey and Ray Anthony ("He fired me 11 times. Eleven times but I never left"). When he was given an offer to join Tex Beneke's orchestra, however, he quit Anthony's gig.

After that Lewis joined big bands led by Stan Kenton, Gerald Wilson and Terry Gibbs; toured with Gerry Mulligan; played Europe with Dizzy Gillespie in 1961 and the USSR with Benny Goodman in 1962. Lewis also did studio work with singers Barbra Streisand and Peggy Lee, among others, as well as touring and recording with Frank Sinatra. In 1965, Lewis and Thad Jones convened the now-legendary 17-piece Mel Lewis orchestra, which has held tenure on Monday nights at the Village Vanguard for 24 years. Jones left in 1977, but the band has stayed intact, frequently featuring the compositions of Bob Brookmeyer, who Mel met during his years with Ray Anthony. Lewis also played with the American Jazz Orchestra during its second season in 1986.

Mel Lewis' reflections were as vast as his career. During our interview, he held forth passionately on several topics, not least the individual musicians now playing in the Mel Lewis Orchestra, whom Mel, it is safe to say, adored. "You have to forgive me," he said at one point while rhapsodizing about the saxophone section, "but I'm speaking as a man who knows what the hell I'm talking about."

On Thad Jones: Let's start with Thad leaving, instead of with him coming. Because that's been an albatross. I still play [his] music, but I think this is the Mel Lewis Orchestra. It's not his band. It's my band. There were 13 years that he was in front of the band waving his hands and putting on a show and all that, which was *marvelous*. But half the time he gave these signals, I'm the only one who knew what he was talking about, and every-

Photograph: Photofest

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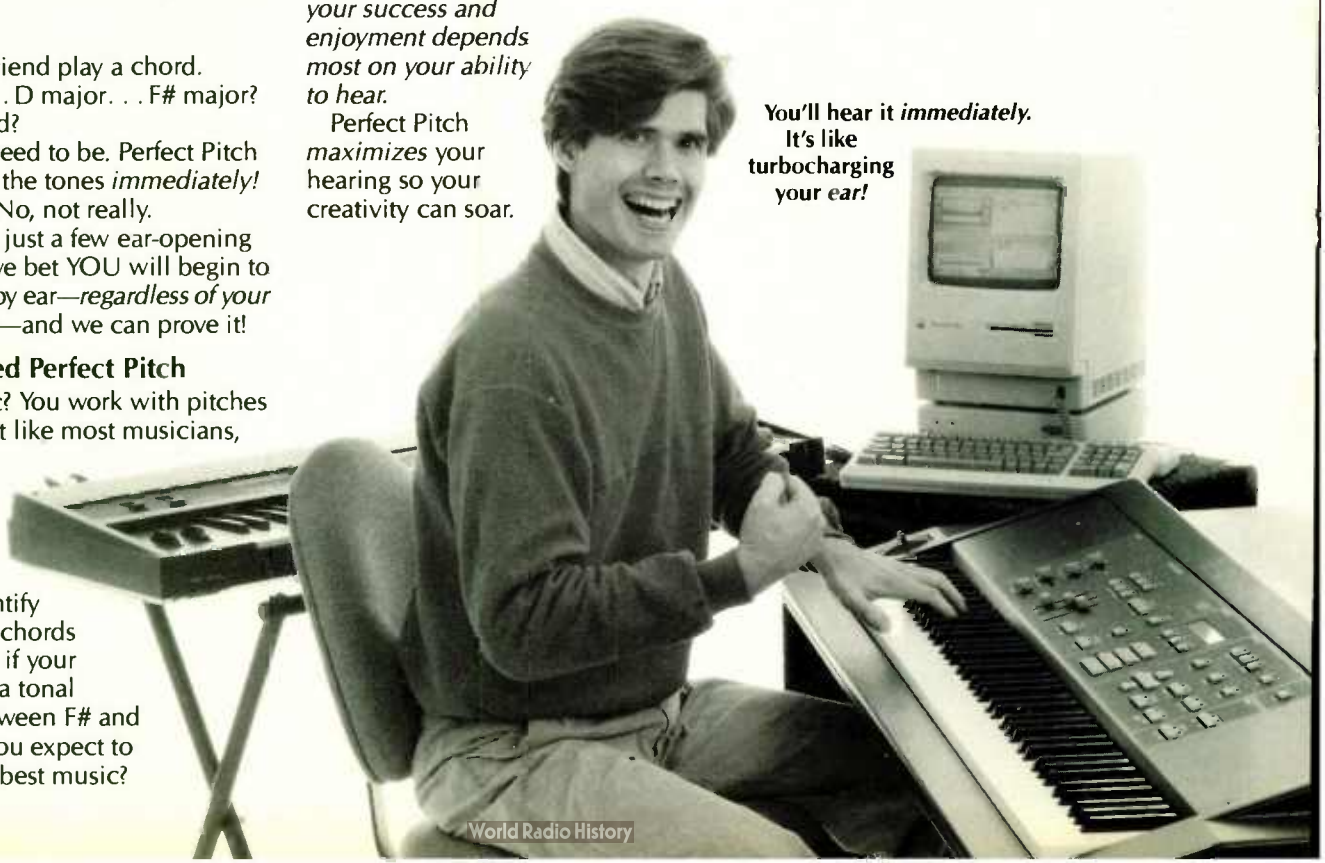

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- "I heard the differences on the initial playing, which did in fact surprise me. I think it is a breakthrough in all music." *J. Hatton*
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body followed me. And when he left, everybody followed me anyway.

He was more into show biz, especially near the end. He wanted to get out, but he didn't want to let us know that. Then he started picking on me, creating scenes, which was unnecessary, because I never gave him a hard time. In fact, for those 13 years, I was good to him and he was actually pretty rough on me. There's a lot of inside stuff people don't realize. We had a hard time. So when he finally left, it was a relief. Although the man was a fantastic player and we all missed that.

On leading a band: A band shouldn't be playing with a conductor. A band should be playing with its ears. If you're playing with your eyes, you're not looking at your music. And even if you've memorized your music, you've still got to hear! The whole thing is listening. That's what made me what I am. I've been listening all my life, listening to what's going on around me.

On money: I pay the best kind of bread I can get. There are other bandleaders in this business who, because they want their band to work, will sell cheap, and that makes it rough for all of us. I'm not out to *make* money, but it should be reasonable, for chrissakes. These rock-and-rollers, they get anything they want! As far as I'm concerned, they don't deserve it.

I remember one recording company owner came by the club one night when I was trying to sell my record, and he says, "Why don't you sell it to me?" I says, "What are you going to give me?" He says, "What everybody else would." I says, "Five thousand dollars, right?" He says, "Why not?" I says, "First of all, it's worth more than that. Secondly, I want everybody in that band to be paid the amount of money they're supposed to get. I don't care about me, but I want a good royalty, and you're not going to give me that. So the answer is no." He says, "I've got good distribution." I said, "You can take your distribution and shove it." I haven't heard from this guy since.

On technique: My father had a fantastic beat, and I acquired it or inherited it. We had a lightness, playing light . . . I guess that came from when I was a young kid. I played on big drums, and I was a little kid, so I took it easy. As I got older, I got bigger. At one point, I was a 220-pounder. But there was something about the sound of the drums that I wanted to maintain, so I never got louder. In fact, when I joined Stan Kenton, [cont'd on page 100]

HEADS YOU WIN

Innovation in drumhead technology; CAD/CAM design helps carry a tune

By Chip Stern

FROM BEHIND HIS DESK in Dodge City, Kansas, Bob Beals appears as unlikely a candidate for musical immortality as Leo Fender. "I'm not a musician. My expertise is in engineering and machine work—I'm a former watchmaker and all—so I depend on drummers to tell me about the technical aspects of the instrument, but it works out pretty good." He pauses. "You see, the average drummer is not too mechanical."

But they can hear, and over the last several years this sedate, bespectacled engineer has been listening. Thanks to Beals' patented new CAD/CAM drumhead-hoop design, Evans Products, Inc. has established a new standard of excellence in a marketplace dominated by the industry leader, Remo, and as the competition heats up, drummers have a better choice of tuning options than ever before.

It wasn't until the 1950s that recording technology was remotely capable of captur-

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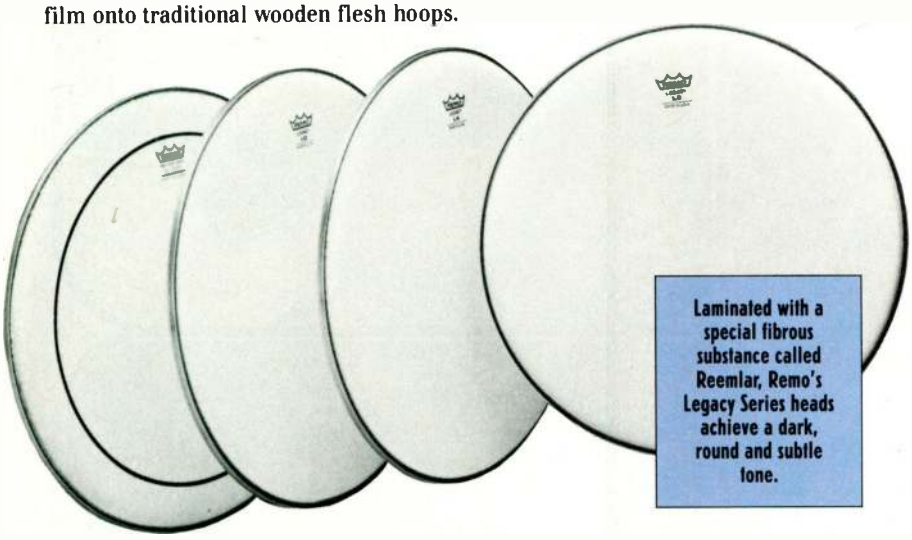
ing the dynamic range of the multi-percussion kit, but drummers were still limited by the infuriating inconsistencies of calfskin heads; for all their earthy tonality, these were wildly susceptible to climatic changes and difficult to tune. Then, in 1957, drummer Chick Evans caught a TV broadcast demonstrating a new DuPont plastic. To document its durability, they beat on it with hammers and such, and Evans was motivated to write DuPont and ask for samples. Shortly thereafter he produced the first commercially available Mylar drumheads—Evans All Weather—by tacking the polyester film onto traditional wooden flesh hoops.



Laminated with a special fibrous substance called Reemlar, Remo's Legacy Series heads achieve a dark, round and subtle tone.

But by the time Chick, Beals and their two partners incorporated to form Evans in December 1958, North Hollywood drummer/retailer Remo Belli had beaten them to the punch by devising a metal hoop design, and was already marketing his Remo Weatherking drumheads.

The ensuing legal wrangle was eventually settled out of court, and Evans developed a flexible hoop (made of reinforced fiberglass) that was deemed sufficiently different to avoid coming under the Remo patents. "Years ago, you could hardly find a drum shell that was truly round," Beals explains, "and the bearing edges were very inconsistent. We developed our flexible hoop to give drummers a fighting chance of getting the head to sit right, so it would conform to the irregularities of the shell, and then you could tune around them."

Meanwhile, Remo drumheads—particularly the thin Diplomat and medium-weight Ambassador—became (and remain) the industry standard. But as rock decibeled out, drummers were forced to mike up and play harder. Both Remo and Evans responded with double-ply, laminated heads that could withstand more punishment *and* be tuned to a lower pitch with fewer overtones. Soon, with the trend towards muted sounds, Remo introduced their CS design (with the familiar black dot in the center), but this time it was Evans that hit paydirt with their famous blue Hydraulic heads. "Because of light diffraction, people were convinced that there was a layer of oil in our double-ply blue heads," Beals says. "We'd have to cut them open to prove otherwise. Finally, as an experiment, we decided to put a layer of oil in there, and discovered that it eliminated all the overtones."

Thanks to Steve Gadd, the wet and funky attack of Evans Hydraulics (with clear Diplomats on the bottom) represented *the* generic studio sound of the '70s and early '80s—and became Evans' biggest seller. Meanwhile, Remo continued to push the envelope through the '80s with their FiberSkyn series: the ingenious PTS heads (a pretensioned, pre-tuned head on a hoop), the popular PinStripe design (a livelier double-ply head with only a single ply of Mylar around the hoop) and their latest creation, the Legacy Series, in which a fibrous material (Reemlar) is laminated to Diplomat, Ambassador, Emperor and PinStripe-gauge heads, yielding a singular brush surface for a subtle damping effect and a darker, rounder tone.

Meanwhile, the Remo influence could be seen clearly in the proliferation of new labels that began offering drumheads to the consumer. Traditionally, drum companies had turned to Remo or Evans to manufacture heads upon which they could put their own corporate logo, but as the decade evolved, companies like Ludwig, Premier and Aquarian began manufacturing their own heads, which by and large—subtle differences notwithstanding—were variations on themes first orchestrated by Remo with their Ambassador, CS and PinStripe designs. For instance, around 1979–80 Ludwig began marketing the concept of matched heads and promoting their own hoop design, and introduced their Rocker series. Among these heads was a CS-style batter head that employed a silver dot instead of a black dot; both the dot and the polyester film seemed lighter, so the head had a brighter, livelier feel and a slightly more open sound. But outside of their use on Ludwig drums, the heads never caught on in a big way, although recently a rough-coated Rocker snare batter (with the dot—inexplicably, for brush players—on the outside) has gained some acceptance. This heavy-duty head is very rugged and can be cranked up or tuned slack with equal effectiveness, which is why premier New York drum maven and technician Artie Smith has been using them lately on his sessions.

During the '80s, the demand for flat drum sounds (and increased head life) inspired manufacturers to employ new materials. Sam Munchnik—a chemist who'd collaborated with Remo in the early days—developed a head from woven Kevlar for Duraline, and subsequently Campo came out with a Kevlar model, as did Remo with their Falams (a laminate of Kevlar and Mylar). And in the mid '70s, Andy Criscuolo of Canasonic introduced a line of fiberglass heads that yielded a flat tonal response without any external dampening. Recently Canasonic added a new Power Play head to its line, in which a Mylar top is molded to a new fiberglass compound for a brighter sound, greater resonance and improved stick response—illustrating that as the decade came to a close, the trend was swinging away from a muted sound and back to live-sounding, resonant drums.

So to keep pace with changing tastes and technology, the '80s and '90s brought new directions for Evans as well. "With better bearing edges, rounder shells and flatter counterhoops, drum manufacturers have come to produce a more accurate product," Beals explains. "I made quite a study of drumheads, and discovered all sorts of mechanical irregularities in the hoops—the collars were uneven, the Mylar material was unevenly distributed, the metal was too soft and the hoops weren't as stiff as they should be. I realized that if you could produce a

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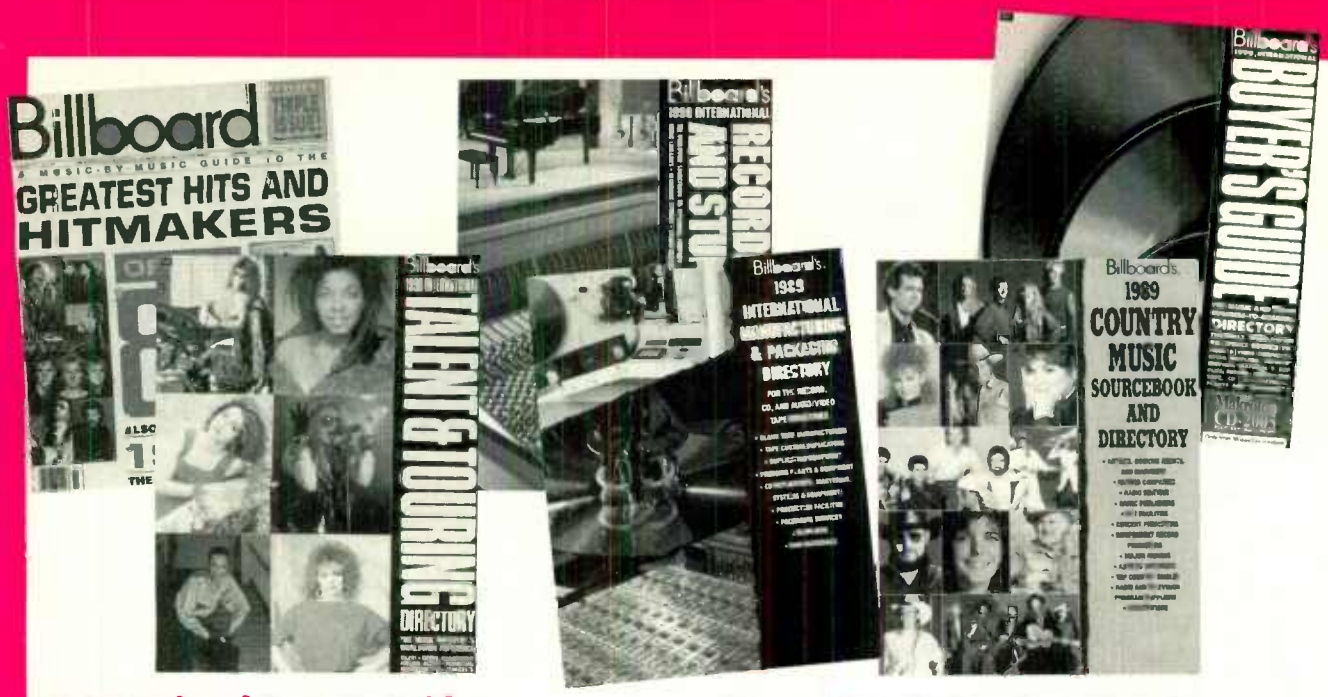

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stiffer hoop, you could tune up the drum much faster and do more things with it, whereas you couldn't with our flexible hoop. So I concluded that if we're going to make a drumhead with a metal hoop, we needed to make a revolutionary one. And that's the main thrust of this CAD/CAM hoop—the rigidity, the precision, the consistency. And at first, manufacturers of what we call roll-form machines told me you couldn't take that complicated a shape and make a perfectly round hoop out of it within such close tolerance of being round."

But Beals found an enterprising machinist, and it didn't take long for the word to get out about Evans CAD/CAM drumheads. The single- (Uno 58) and double-ply (Rock) designs are remarkably warm, stable, lively and easy to tune over an extended range; his heavy-duty double-ply ST drumheads stand up to the fiercest fusillades of single strokes without losing tone; and his light-gauge Resonant "bottom" heads really accentuate the resonance of tom-toms.

But most intriguing of all are the radical refinements of Evans' new Genera system of "tone control" heads. Through research with Noble & Cooley on the Zildjian Alloy Bronze Drum, Evans devised an extra-light-gauge integral tone ring to float on the inner collar of the head, thus retaining tone and stick response in a single-ply head, while damping high overtones. And the extra-thin Genera "snare bed" heads (Opaque 200 and 300) employ a unique parchment film with a matte finish (like wax paper), which yields a dark, grainy snare sound. Finally, Beals discovered that by venting the plastic around the hoop with tiny, precisely drilled holes, he could get a dry response without impairing the head's structural integrity.

But it's Evans' innovative new Genera bass drumheads which represent the ultimate breakthrough in bass drum tuning. Sold in pairs, Generas are available in Ambient or Studio configurations, employing identical batter heads: Evans' vented 1000-gauge Glass mylar with a rough coating, a 1000-gauge beater patch and a pair of 1000-gauge internal tone rings (one integral with the hoop, and a removable E-Ring that slips into the fixed collar). The Ambient Resonant head employs vented 700-gauge black Mylar with a 1000-gauge integral tone ring, while the Studio Resonant head is the same, but instead of venting, there's a grille punched in the center of the head, directly across from the beater patch, ready for [cont'd on page 101]

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN CRASH, BOOM, BANG

Designer piccolos, "boutique" snares and monster hardware for the monster income

By Alan di Perna

NOBLE & COOLEY started the current vogue for "boutique" snare drums. And a swell idea it is—top-drawer snares in special designer piccolo and soprano sizes, made by a small, exclusive shop that specializes in snare drums. But now the big drum companies have started to move in with their own mass-market knockoffs. So what do Noble & Cooley do? Turn the tables, of course, and come out with a full, all-purpose drum kit—priced within the means of your average drummer. It's called the Horizon Series and it's N&C's first foray into multiple-ply drum shells. Before this, they were a strictly solid-wood operation. But by going to a ply design, the company can offer larger drum sizes than solid wood can yield: tom diameters up to 16", and bass drum diameters up to 24".

Now for this month's science lesson: The Horizon drums have what are called Horizontal Ply Shells—Noble & Cooley's own

Pearls of the Quarter: Pearl's adventurous new Quarter Toms are available in 12", 15", 18" and 20" depths, offering the drummer an array of tantalizing timbres.

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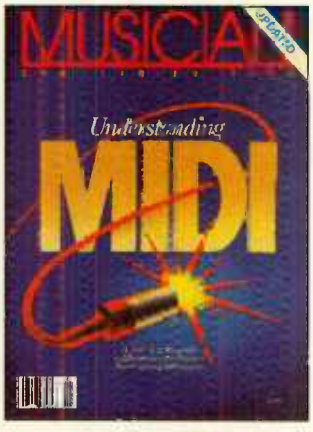

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idea. Alternating plies of maple and mahogany (seven or eight of them, depending on the drum) are assembled with the wood grains all going in the same direction rather than being cross-laminated in the traditional way. This, says N&C, provides the deep tone of ply drums without sacrificing the kind of attack transients you get from solid shells. Horizon kits will sell for around $2200 to $2600, including Drum Workshop hardware but excluding a snare drum. If you want a Noble & Cooley snare, you'll have to get one of their solid-wood models, which means you'll have to add about $800 to the kit price. Sorry, no budget options here.

Maybe it's Bush-o-nomics. Maybe it's the revival of interest in acoustic drums. Whatever the reason, there seem to be a lot of affordable kits emanating from prestige names these days. Sonor has just brought out a $1,595 kit called the Force 2000. The shells are nine-ply, cross-laminated poplar. The hardware is single-braced, although you still get those groovy tubular chrome lugs Sonor uses on their pricier HiLite drums.

But if you're a hard-poundin', heavy-perspirin' kind of drummer, check out one of Yamaha's new RTC Hard Rock Kits. Aye, they've brawny drums: The kicks and floor toms have a whopping 11 plies of alternating mahogany and birch for low end like a stadium stampede. All other drums have eight plies of the same woods. The drums are finished with a phenolic resin, which provides extra volume and projection. Toms are available in square sizes and conventional dimensions. And no matter how hard you beat the things, Yamaha's new assault-caliber Monster hardware will hold them firmly in place.

If you've got a Monster income, you may be interested in Yamaha's Carbon Custom kit. The shells are made of a new miracle carbon fiber. The hardware is gold plated. The price? Only $38,000. Now if only the whole thing would fit in the trunk of the Rolls. But all this talk of kits doesn't mean that drum makers have turned their backs on fancy snares. Yamaha's got a new 4" × 14" Peter Erskine model, and Sonor has added a new 4" × 14" piccolo and a 5" × 12" soprano snare to the HiLite line. Meanwhile, Zildjian and Noble & Cooley have gotten together on their second "secret bronze alloy" snare, this one less deep than the first, at 14" × 4⅝".

In other drum developments, Premier has just started distributing [cont'd on page 100]

PERFORMANCE OF THE MONTH

WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH

Garth Hudson & Friends at St. Ann's

By Tony Scherman

FIVE MINUTES before showtime, the backstage area of St. Ann's, a gorgeous, crumbling 150-year-old church in Brooklyn Heights, is aswirl with Garth Hudson's 30-odd (some of 'em *real* odd) co-perpetrators. Hudson himself—surprisingly slight beneath that mighty, bulbous brow—wanders through the crowd, dreamily fingering a saxophone. My God, this show's got everything but jugglers, and no one knows if it's all gonna come off. But it does: a mix of the sublime, the whimsical and the underrehearsed, its common denominator Hudson, the self-effacing overgrown elf whose keyboards, accordion and sax once flowed like a happy river through the Band.

As the house lights dim, a motley-looking aggregate takes the stage, a sort of world-music string band led by Hudson on accordion. They globetrot briskly from Romanian folk songs through British ballads to the lovely "Feed the Birds" (Hudson's contribution to *Stay Awake*, producer Hal Willner's 1988 collection of Disney music).

Next it's jazz standards time: Hudson at the grand piano in a series of duets with his singing wife Maud, trumpeter Lew Soloff and Clifford Scott, a 61-year-old saxophonist from Texas whom Hudson, an ardent admirer, tracked down for this show. The revelation here is Hudson's jazz playing: I'd no idea he could toss off such knotty, Tatumesque/Garnerish runs. It's clearer than ever to what extent Hudson's talents and curiosity went untapped in the Band, despite all his contributions. If any musician deserves his own album right now, it's this fella.

Turning to his Roland A-80, Hudson accompanies Soloff on the Appalachian hymn "When Jesus Christ Was Here on Earth," the evening's high point. Hitting a sustain switch, Hudson disappears . . . and re-emerges in the organ loft at the rear of the church, surrounded by a choir. Then Garth plays on alone, forsaking the sacred for the demonic, the spotlights shining eerie-blue, then hellish-red, on the organ's huge bank of pipes. Garth gives a passing nod to "Chest Fever," dips lugubriously into "Shortnin' Bread" and finishes with a final, glorious blast.

After such splendors, the rest of the night is fun but anticlimactic; it's mostly the Mike Reilly Band, Hudson's sometime gigging buddies from L.A., romping through pure roadhouse blues with Garth on keyboards and a stomping, high-decibel horn section.

The evening's final, typically oddball note: a video of the late, little-known lap guitarist Thumbs Carlisle, another hero of Hudson's, playing "Over the Rainbow."

Is an album brewing here? Hopefully, says Willner, the concert's co-producer. "This show was exactly the kind of record I try to make. It was wonderfully surreal, right up my tastes. I wish I could take credit, but I can't. It was all Garth." And Hudson allows, in his deliberate, growly voice, that, yes, he'd like to make a solo album with Willner producing. But don't hold your breath. As Janine Nichols, the other co-producer, said, "I've never seen someone more able, and less willing, to take the spotlight."

Photograph: George Wieser

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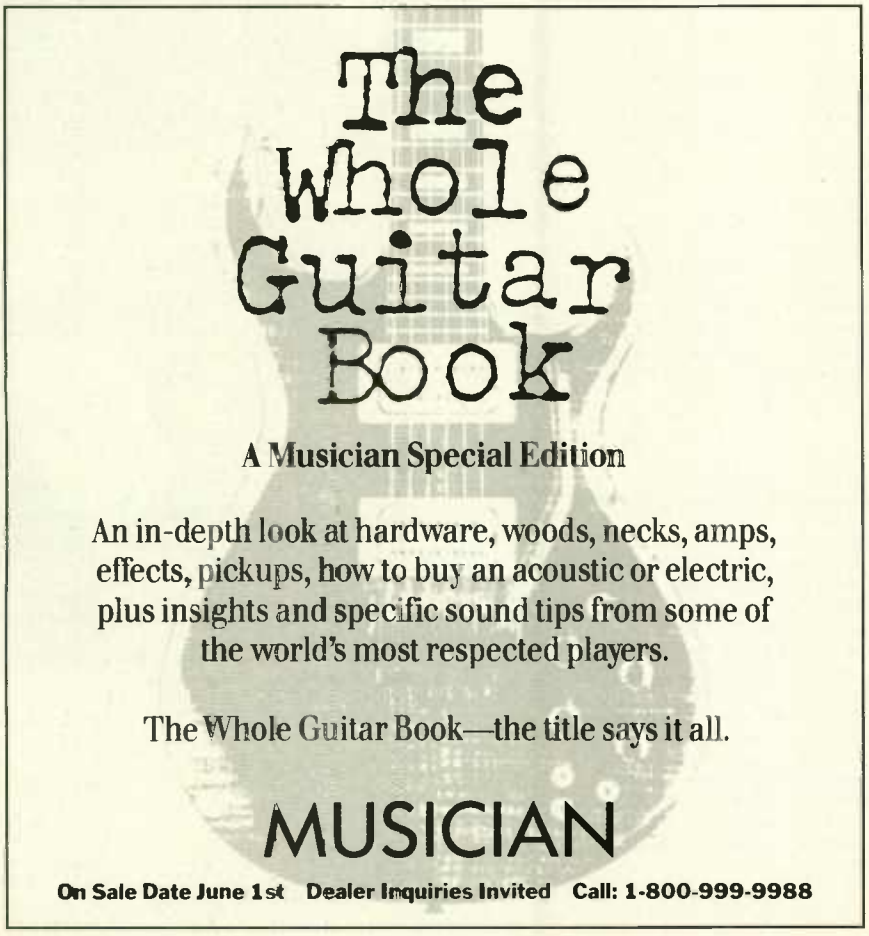


DEVELOPMENTS

[cont'd from page 98] Voelker drum rack systems. They're designed by race car builder Greg Voelker. And come to think of it, a Voelker rack looks a lot like a few yards of chrome exhaust pipe fashioned into a roll bar for a '57 Chevy. They come in single-bass and double-bass configurations, single-tier and double-tier, and go for between two and three thousand dollars.

Drum manufacturers report that racks are neck-and-neck with conventional stands in popularity among drummers. While racks are stronger and allow for more precise, repeatable placement of drums, they don't pack up as tightly or travel as lightly as stands. But Drum Workshop has come up with a rack to help close that gap. Called the SoundRack, it's very compactly and functionally designed, with Purecussion's high-prestige RIMS drum mounts built right in.

But many of you may have already opted for one of the earliest and most effective rack systems, Pearl DR-1/DR-2. If so, you can now get a cymbal tier that fits on top of it. Called the CR-1, it's a U-shaped jobbie that can be pivoted at a number of angles. It should look great arching triumphantly over a brace of Pearl's new Quarter Toms: punchy aluminum-shell drums, just 6½" in diameter, and available in 12", 15", 18" and 20" depths. To complete the look, why not add a few of Sabian's new 16" AA Bright Crash cymbals? The quest continues for a crash that can cut through the music without resorting to a lot of brute, low-end thud. Sabian have answered the call by putting a big rock bell on a relatively light-bodied cymbal.

And on that note, we'll ring off for now. Ⓜ

LEWIS

[cont'd from page 92] he came over one day and yelled, "Hey Mel, can you play louder?" And I said, "No." He said, "Okay, I just thought I'd ask." And because the band played softer, all of a sudden the band started swinging. We're there to entertain people musically, not to make a lot of noise.

On Miles: Miles Davis and I became good friends. In '55, when I was with the Kenton band, Miles was there every night. He'd come down and sit in the bleachers section. He liked Bill Holman's writing and he liked Bill Russo's writing. Miles always liked forward writing, and I don't blame him. Knowing him today, you'd realize that he would. When I

World Radio History

lived in California years later, he was kind enough to let me sit in with his group. I think I'm probably the only white drummer that ever played with that group, with Coltrane, as far as I know. He's always been nice to me.

Sounding off: When Tony Williams was with Miles, he insisted on playing so hard. Why? He definitely would have been heard better if he played softer. He's still one of the loudest drummers in the world. I don't see it and I don't understand it. A lot of guys that have played with me learned that they didn't have to pound their instruments. Get your sound. Softness is sweet.

Advice to young drummers: You've got to feel like you are your own boss. You don't have to be arrogant. That isn't even a good trait. But listen to the masters, like Papa Jo and Sonny Greer and Sid Catlett. Study them very well—not copy them, just listen to them. These were the guys who the leaders followed.

It's just playing and playing. There are too many young drummers today who only listen to young drummers. These young drummers don't know anything! They think, "Oh, I'm not going to play old-fashioned." Nobody says anything about playing old-fashioned, but listen to how modern that old-fashioned actually is. It's not old-fashioned!

Mel Lewis died February 2, 1990, in New York City. He was 60 years old. Ⓜ

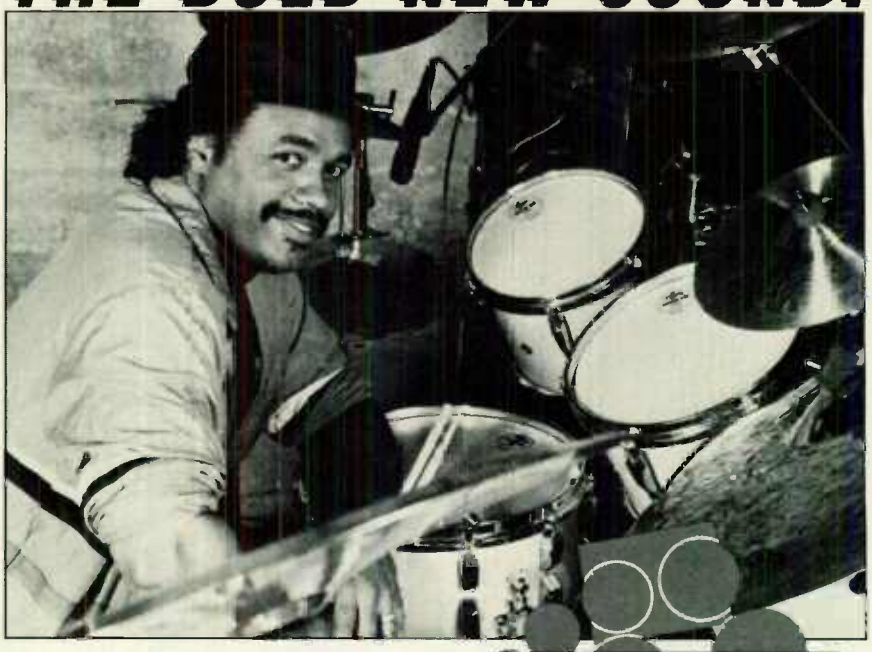
DRUMHEADS

[*cont'd from page 96*] miking.

Beals has found that elusive median between the open resonance of a bass drum and the muted attack of a kick drum—in a double-headed system without blankets or pillows. The Ambient combo has livelier acoustic qualities (particularly with the optional E-Ring removed), while the Studio combo emphasizes beater impact. Most significantly, the bass drum talks back to you as you play. You can always hear the overtones and internal resonance of the drum, allowing you to manipulate attack dynamics and pitch while projecting a clean, satisfying thump—without overring or obscene looks from the soundman. The bass drum is part of your set again.

"I kind of enjoy this period we're going into," Beals concludes. "It's become highly technical, because nowadays players are really trying to make the instrument *sing*," he chuckles in his dry Midwestern twang. "They're working towards the point of making the drum a musical instrument." Ⓜ

THE BOLD NEW SOUND.



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Sound Off!

MUSICIANS AGAINST CENSORSHIP

LET'S ASSUME THE RIDICULOUS. Let's assume that we could arrive at a clear-blue-eyed definition of obscenity, that we could design a warning sticker that wouldn't desecrate album artwork, and that these warnings would actually prevent this dreaded music from impregnating the ears of our children. If such a thing could be safe and sanely accomplished, why would anyone be crass enough to oppose it?

The answer is simple. Often we have to tolerate (and even encourage) that which is crass and vile, in order to maintain a climate where all can freely create. All attempts to rigidly define or ghettoize music are dangerously paternalistic. The minute you give up even the smallest slice of identity and control you open yourself to the possibility of having to hand it all over. If you agree to have your music labelled "obscene," what stops you from at some future date being branded: "politically disturbed" or "sexually indecisive" or "racially impure" or "artist under the influence of drugs"? Not a hell of a lot. As long as there is fear and ignorance there will be people trying to bulldoze over your rough edges. Why make it easy for them?

The Walkabouts

MUSICIAN

WHERE THE PLAYERS DO THE TALKING.

MUSICIAN Magazine continues to invite recording artists to sound off! If you would like to make a statement about music censorship, contact Paul Sacksman at 508-281-5110.

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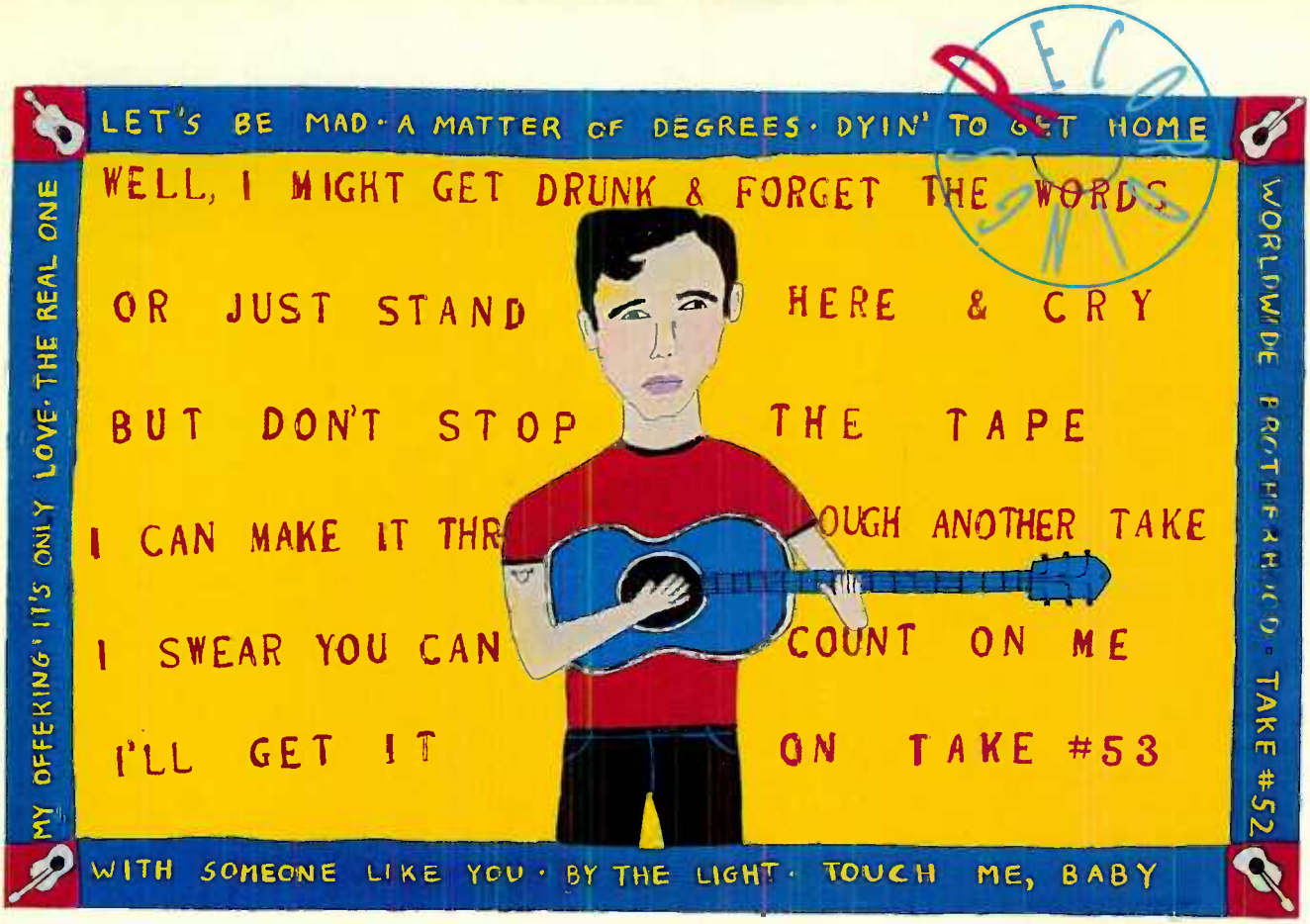

CONTENTS

See How He Is

John Doe Has the X Factor

Meet John Doe
(DGC)

I'VE KNOWN John Doe for over 10 years; I saw his old band, X, play more than a hundred times; I got to know him and his bandmates well while writing a book about them. I suppose I fall into the category of "X superfan," which made me leery about critiquing his first solo album—what could I say if it was a bomb? Happily, *Meet John Doe* is a strong and satisfying record, rewarding both the die-hard X acolyte and the more casually involved listener seeking thoughtful, heartily played rock 'n' roll. You don't have to be on the payroll to get off on this one.

Produced by Davitt Sigerson (David + David, the Bangles), Doe's album packs the blues- and country-derived barroom punch one associates with the latter-day X lineup that featured Dave Alvin and Tony Gilkyson on guitars. Here, Doe (who plays acoustic guitar) employs two lead guitarists: Richard Lloyd, co-architect of Television's keenly visionary style, and Jon Dee Graham, late of Austin's country-punk unit the True Believers. Their widely dissimilar approaches allow for a broad range of musical expression, from the roadhouse rumble of "Let's Be Mad" to the balladry of Hank Cochran's "It's Only Love" and the graceful beauty of "By the Light." The rhythm section of ex-Cruzados bassist Tony Marsico and drummer Jeff Donavan works to a broil throughout, while such guests as Pat McLaughlin, the Bangles' Vicki Peterson, ex-Divine Horsemen frontwoman Julie Christensen, Little Feat's Billy Payne and k.d. lang's steel player Greg Leisz embellish the ensemble sound adeptly.

Over the years, Doe has developed into perhaps the most honest and mature vocalist to emerge

Illustration: Laura Levine

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from the Los Angeles punk scene. His baritone has a warm sincerity one never associated with the genre—he crooned where others ranted. On *Meet John Doe*, you never hear a false or strained vocal moment; Doe's singing is as emotionally direct as it is supremely confident.

Several of Doe's new songs, as many of X's were, are deep-focus observations of romantic disorder and domestic discord. "The battle that's fought between women and men who pretend they try to be true/Is a battle that's lost and paid at the cost of sleep by the light of the moon," he sings, in a number exemplary of a good deal of the album's thematic thrust. The bashing "Let's Be Mad," the stomping "Dyin' to Get Home," the somber "With Someone Like You" and Cochran's "It's Only Love" all focus on precarious relationships. But the true crusher is "Take #52," co-written by ex-spouse and ex-bandmate Exene Cervenka. Seen from the point of view of a musician watching his life unravel as he struggles to finish a painful love song in the studio, it's the album's most nakedly autobiographical track.

The disc is hardly a remake of *Ain't Love Grand*, though. A cover of John Hiatt's "The Real One" and the tender "My Offering" offer a more romantic take on life, while "Touch Me, Baby" is a stormily erotic rocker. "Matter of Degrees" and "Worldwide Brotherhood"—one a lush rock tune, the other an almost caustically comic rip-snorter—reflect Doe's widening lyrical purview.

Lean, assured, rootsy, *Meet John Doe* builds new stories on the creative foundation Doe carved out with X. To fans and newcomers alike, he proves he's a man worth meeting.—Chris Morris

Can

Delay 1968
Monster Movie
Soundtracks
Tago Mago
Ege Bamyasi
Future Days
Soon Over Babaluma
Cannibalism I
(Mute/Restless Retro)

NOT MANY PEOPLE bought the first Velvet Underground album, the cliché goes, but everyone that did started their own band. Yeah, right. You want to talk *really* influential bands? Bands whose 20-year-old records *do* sound like they were recorded yesterday? Check out Can, check out these CD reissues, all recorded between 1968 and 1974, and check out the facts:

1) Public Image Ltd.'s famed *Second Edition* totally ripped off Can.

2) David Byrne and Brian Eno's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* totally ripped off Can.

3) The entire late-'70s disco era totally ripped off Can.

4) The hippest bands of the '70s and '80s—including Pere Ubu and Sonic Youth—totally ripped . . . oh, what the heck, *certainly liked Can a lot.*

5) Most '80s hip-hop and rap music wouldn't sound out of place on a Can album.

6) Gary Numan once told me his favorite album was *Tago Mago*.

7) Australian band Hunters and Collectors took their name from a Can song.

8) Hipster indie band Thin White Rope cover Can's "Yoo Doo Right" on their new album.

9) One of the half-nude women on the cover of Roxy Music's *Country Life* is the sister of Can's guitarist!

10) The Buzzcocks' Pete Shelley wrote the liner notes to *Cannibalism*.

11) The Fall's Mark E. Smith once wrote a song called "I Am Damo Suzuki," the name of one of Can's lead singers!

12) And so on.

The simple fact is that Can was one of the very best bands ever in rock 'n' roll's history—and so drastically underheard by the masses that, to many, the statement seems laughable. But these CDs, which document the German-based band's finest years, contain music that is so extraordinarily otherworldly, so obviously pioneering, and so very much ahead of its time that you're likely to be astounded by just one listening. Jointly issued by Mute and Enigma (the same company sharp enough to recently reissue both Tim Buckley's *Starsailor* and Captain Beefheart's *Lick My Decals Off, Baby*), the Can titles put to rest the tired spiel that the most groundbreaking music of the '70s came with the Ramones and the Sex Pistols.

Can was a complex band, with many distinct "sounds," and texturally, each of these CDs is totally unlike the next. Largely responsible for the variation is the band's lead vocalist rotation. Malcolm Mooney, a black American, sings on *Delay 1968*, *Monster Movie* and parts of *Soundtracks*; Damo Suzuki, a Japanese street singer, can be heard on *Soundtracks*, *Tago Mago*, *Ege Bamyasi* and *Future Days*; guitarist Michael Karoli and keyboardist Irmin Schmidt take over on *Soon Over Babaluma*. Despite the vocal variations, the instrumental core of Can—Karoli, Schmidt, bassist Holger Czukay, drummer Jaki Liebezeit—is a constant throughout these albums. Their interplay remains close to staggering.

Only *Ege Bamyasi*, *Future Days* and *Soon Over Babaluma* were released in the U.S. previously. I'd recommend *Future Days* to the cautious, *Monster Movie* to the smart, and every single one of them to anybody with the slightest interest in great music.

To be blunt: If you haven't heard these records, then your opinions about rock 'n' roll matter very little indeed.

—Dave DiMartino

Billy Idol

Charmed Life
(Chrysalis)

BILLY IDOL has always had a ravenous curiosity about himself, for good or ill. He'd completed *Charmed Life* just prior to his recent near-crippling motorcycle crash, but any easy ironies are eclipsed by the record's blunt message: If you've got a big appetite, you'd better learn to swallow hard.

Looking in the mirror, Idol sees himself as one of a restless mass of undiscriminating ravers, weaned on fast sex, slippery Harleys and the nihilistic legend of the Lizard King. But the crackling homily of *Charmed Life*'s "The Loveless" ("Hopelessly we look/Into the barrel of a gun/We gotta pull ourselves together!/And make a plan") makes it plain that he's grown much more concerned with

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personal accountability since Generation X or the "More More More!" phase of *Rebel Yell*. All his career Idol has been cast as the ultimate self-mocking rock star on a spree, but the consequence of such a selfish agenda is boredom that crushes the will. On "Prodigal Blues," Billy, who recently became a father, wakes up to his duties as a lifegiver; not since "Stairway to Heaven" has a rock narrative had as much splendid sweep.

Idol's soulbaring is more propulsive than pensive, however. His zesty cover of the Doors' cautionary "L.A. Woman" (long a concert staple) replaces Jim Morrison's sullen lament with a tart determinism. Throughout much of *Charmed Life* (particularly "Trouble with the Sweet Stuff") we hear a reformed spirit's recap of his weirdest scenes inside the gold mine, but without the self-promotional *mea culpas* of Hollywood's Just Say Maybe crowd. Instead we get a chilling cry of conscience, whose arrangements serve a stark story-telling design. Idol's candid vocals carry a new might, and the luminous dialogue guitarist Mark Younger-Smith creates with drummers Keith Forsey and Mike Baird puts ex-collaborator Steve Stevens' doodling to shame.

At a time when true hard rock has been eclipsed by the empty bromides of metal bluster, this album restores the form to near-cinematic grandeur. Idol has a role in a forthcoming film saga of Jim Morrison's strange days, but once fans hear Billy's reverberant "The Right Way," they might be more pumped to see the screen premiere of *Charmed Life*.—Timothy White

Lounge Lizards

Voice of Chunk
(Lagarto Productions)

A FROSTY FILM NOIR sensibility seemed to inform the work of the Lounge Lizards in their earliest incarnations. Equal parts tribute and parody, altoist John Lurie's vision of modern jazz owed as much to the atmospheric, slightly decadent scores of Henry Mancini and Pete Ruggolo as to any breakthroughs by the likes of Bird, Trane, Dolphy and Ornette. But by seeking to be both send-up and rave-up, the Lounge Lizards were not received warmly by the mainstream jazz community, and Lurie was forced to endure comparisons to musicians who'd cut their teeth on blues and bebop. Calling his music "fake jazz" didn't help much either.

But with *Voice of Chunk*, Lurie and the Lounge Lizards have carved their own musical niche, and not from any Hollywood backlot (though there is a very strong visual component to Lurie's program). Transmuting the ofttimes insular mannerisms of New York's downtown scene through contact with the greater global village, *Voice of Chunk* represents a very high order of musical miscegenation. Scores of styles snuggle up and do the wild thing, yet still manage to respect themselves in the morning.

Cutting through it all is a Lurie leitmotif (heralded as "Bob the Bob"), a simple chanting figure that suggests the Near Eastern modalities of nontempered reeds, and al-

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ludes to an underlying unity. Thus do we arrive at a mingling of reggae and salsa ("Voice of Chunk"), or an Italian wedding and an Afro-American shuffle (on brother Evan's "Tarantella"), as Lurie's bulbous alto and soprano blend with Roy Nathanson's reeds, Curtis Fowlkes' trombone and Marc Ribot's trumpet like some Philip Glass–inflected bagpipe section ("A Paper Bag and the Sun"). The rhythm team of Evan Lurie (piano), Ribot (on guitar), E.J. Rodriguez (percussion), Erik Sanko (bass) and Dougie Bowne (drums) offers counterpoint and commentary, cutting in and out of the front line in a game of hide and seek, busting loose with echoes of free jazz on "Sharks Can't Sleep."

Voice of Chunk is a cunning synthesis, not some jive fusion. No one is ever going to mistake John Lurie for a bebopper—thank God for small favors—and at precisely the point that he's abandoned all faux-hyphen notions and found a *sincere* sound, the Lounge Lizards stand poised to make a musical breakthrough. (Not available in stores. Call 1-800-44CHUNK or write to Lounge Lizards, Box 1740, New York, NY 10009)—Chip Stern

The Notting Hillbillies

Missing... Presumed Having a Good Time
(Warner Bros.)

IT'S BEEN FOUR YEARS since Dire Straits hit the concert trail and five since their last album, *Brothers in Arms* (the biggest-selling album ever in Britain), so fans starved for Mark Knopfler's gorgeously lush guitar work will no doubt approach this album with a preordained agenda. A moonlighting gig that finds the 40-year-old Brit hooking up with two old buddies from college (Steve Phillips and Brendan Croker) and Straits keyboardist Guy Fletcher, *Missing...* won't disappoint them either, as it resonates with the same lyrical grace that informs all of Knopfler's work. He's an extremely tasteful chap, witty and soulful as well—a tough combination to pull off.

Taking a leisurely stroll through various genres of traditional music (gospel, western swing, country and folk), *Missing...* has elicited comparisons to larky supergroup the Traveling Wilburys; however, this record is more reminiscent of Ry Cooder circa *Paradise and Lunch*. Unlike the Wilburys, the Hillbillies don't focus on new material (only three of the 11 tracks here are group originals), and like Cooder, their ace in the hole is superb taste in vintage material. Featuring covers by the Delmores, the Louvin Brothers, Charlie Rich and Lonnie Johnson among others, this record comports itself with the sepia-toned warmth of a Frank Capra movie. An exercise in Americana that includes a railroaders' work song, a gospel tune about World War II and a sunny calypso love song, it seamlessly interweaves music from several different decades.

Lending unity to this grabbag of disparate styles are consistently elegant arrangements and the engagingly modest attitude of the players. Knopfler, for instance, sings lead on just one track (a not particularly inspired composition called "Your Own Sweet Way"), and leaves Croker and Phillips to swap lead vocal duties on the remainder of the album. None of the three, however, get into any vocal grandstanding. You get the feeling that the Notting Hillbillies have too much regard for the songs they're covering to steal the spotlight, and that respectful affection is what lends this record its considerable charm.

—Kristine McKenna

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band

The New Orleans Album
(Columbia)

I KNOW THIS is supposed to be jolly listening—and much of it is—but there's something about records like this that taps a small vein of irritability in me, that often contained but consistent discontent which probably led me to be a critic in the first place. In this case, it started when I read in an interview with Dirty Dozen trumpeter Gregory Davis about the flak the band used to get when they would introduce a Duke or Bird song into one of their New Orleans street gigs, and how they've concluded they can get away with their eclecticism as long as they keep the groundlings' toes a-tappin'. And it continued, like a caraway seed against a sensitive gum, as I've listened to this new one, the band's second Columbia album, and noticed how first they'll do one for the band, and then one for the audience, and then one for the band... and so on. Eclecticism starts to sound like self-defense—that is, a toning down of originality made to keep people happy—especially when the balance between crowd-pleasing moves and less self-conscious music-making is (compared even to last year's *Voodoo*) so unsmoothly struck.

True, this is all very curmudgeonly, but it comes from years of being disappointed by musicians who in turn have been disappointed by the reception of their more spontaneous efforts of expression. Anyway, the record at hand probably doesn't deserve such cynical scrutiny. It offers two types of songs, the ones with a vocal, which draw from traditional R&B/New Orleans/swing sources and are generally humorous or at least good-timey in intent, and the ones without, which tend to be riffish jazz pieces with impressive solos from trumpeter Davis and baritone saxist Roger Lewis; solid post-bop solos with just a tincture of "free jazz," usually in the form of raucous split notes and unruly squeals (which I like to interpret as the angry outbursts of musicians forced by the marketplace to play below their abilities, but which are more probably just the result of the heating-up process mandated by the songs' repetitious structures). The rhythm section, which is most of the band, is masterful, especially Kirk Joseph's sousaphone, virtuosic without a hint of unwieldiness. The band uses guest stars much as they themselves have been used—sparingly, as hip seasoning—notably Elvis Costello, who belts like a champ on "That's How You Got Killed Before," easily pulling off the kind of jump song that got Joe Jackson rightly creamed.

So it's all just no-message fun, and if the desultory feel of the chuckle tunes and the sense of involvement the players project (not to mention the intensity reached) during the

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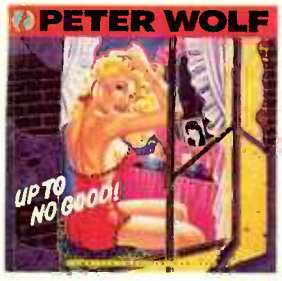
improv sections suggests, to me, their disaffection with the compromises they've had to make, then I'm probably just projecting some sort of bad attitude problem of my own. Yeah, that must be it.—Richard C. Walls



Peter Wolf

■

Up to No Good!
(MCA)

TOO OLD FOR juvenile court, too young for the easy chair, Peter Wolf searches for his place in the cosmos on *Up to No Good!* That is, having spent his salad days rockin' the blues, the former J. Geils frontman wonders whether it's still appropriate to imitate a randy tomcat. Like the Stones with *Steel Wheels*, the Wolfman hasn't found a satisfactory answer—there probably isn't one—but the quest for fulfillment produces some cool, and some uncool, moments.

Make no mistake, Jake: The cat can still squeeze out dirty sparks. "Go Wild" adds buzzsaw guitar and sleazy keyboards to Wolf's wicked snarl, recalling the greasy grooves that paid the rent a decade ago. Elsewhere though he uses catchy, contemporary pop to tackle the Big Questions inspired by middle age. Punctuated with jumbo horns, "Arrows and Chains" finds Wolf admitting he can't change the world; in the toe-tapping "Shades of Red—Shades of Blue" he notes the shortage of absolute truths. "River Runs Dry" combines the best of early and modern Wolf, using clattering percussion and ratty harp (please come back, Magic Dick!) for a terse tale of societal decay.

However, "99 Worlds" and the title track display a forced bravado that suggests he's trying too hard to be a rascal, while "Drive All Night," co-written with superhack Desmond Child, is drab power rock. Alas, these hints of desperation seem like nothing next to the logo: Attempting to create a brand-name, *Up to No Good!* sports a prominent insignia of the rail-thin Wolf in silhouette, circled by the phrase "If it's in you it's got to come out." Guess nobody realized this silly slogan could refer to nausea or satanic possession, as well as the urge to boogie.

In his unpretentious liner notes, Wolf expresses the desire to make music with personality. Clinkers aside, he succeeds, from those familiar rave-ups to the cornball ballad "When Women Are Lonely" (Randy Travis fodder) and the spacey "Daydream Getaway" (shades of Jimi). Alternately dandy and dumb, *Up to No Good!* has the distinct feel of a transitional album. We'll see where it leads.—Jon Young

PLANT

[*cont'd from page 51*] across to the guys who watch ballgames. I wanted to get across to people who don't care about music. There are a lot of people who reach a certain point in life and they switch the radio off. They might still pay to see Eric Clapton, but they will not listen to anything new. My plan was to rampage and scavenge through their heads while they were waiting for the Giants or the Rams. Probably wasn't very clever."

Do you think it worked? [*cont'd on page 107*]

CONGRATULATIONS!

THE FOLLOWING BANDS represent the first round of semi-finalists in *Musician*'s third annual Best Unsigned Band Contest. Next month the second and concluding list of semi-finalists will be declared. Winners will then be selected by our all-star panel of judges: Lou Reed, Robbie Robertson, Vernon Reid, Lyle Lovett and Branford Marsalis. Stay tuned . . .

Susan Streitwieser—Berkeley, CA
Dirt Fishermen—Boise, ID
This Is Edwin—Los Angeles, CA
A Better Place—Wolcott, CT
The Whirlees—Salem, OR
The Big Ifs—New York, NY
Randy & the Ravebreakers—New York, NY
Jaime Byrd & the Big Dogs—Van Nuys, CA
Jane Barnett—Brooklyn, NY
Perfect World—Brookline, MA
Eddie Charles Ceballos—Nappa, CA
Fat Man Waving—Ottawa, Ont.
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Chase-Loran—Hudson, IL
Force of Habit—New Orleans, LA
Ken Janssen—Villa Park, IL
Paul Presto, Jr.—Turnersville, NJ
Kooly—Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Rāmākar—Santa Cruz, CA
Fandango—Kanagawa, Japan
Who's Ginger!?—Des Plains, IL
Laughing Man—Mt. Prospect, IL
Bop "Harvey"—Providence, RI
Kool Ray & the Polaroidz—Eureka, IL
Ruby Jillette—Brigantine, NJ
The Earthkeepers—Austin, TX
The Motion!—Cerrillos, NM
The Pagan Babies—Honolulu, HI
Countenance—Austin, TX
Marques Bovre & the Evil Twins—Madison, WI
Line Drive—Piniole, CA
The Pyramids—Candor, NC
Bleu Food—Palo Alto, CA
Almost Romeos—Cambridge, MA
Screaming Iguanas of Love—Satellite Beach, FL
Satellite Boyfriend—Raleigh, NC
The Worthy Constiguents—Austin, TX
Blow Up—Allston, MA
Marshal Kane—NorrKöping, Sweden
Tim Grimm & the True Hearts—Chicago, IL
Lawrence Lebo—Santa Monica, CA
Sam I Am—Lexington, KY
Gene Taylor—Waterford, MI
Mike Muldoon—Aiea, HI
Primal Scream—Fullerton, CA
Rude Awakening—Los Angeles, CA
92 Degrees—Park Ridge, IL
New Man—Boston, MA
Melissa Murray—New York, NY
Strength in Numbers—Decatur, TX
Maryanne Heckhaus—Bayside, NY
Go Dog Go—Studio City, CA
Fred Brandstrader—Chicago, IL
The Extinct—Hollywood, CA
The Gathering—Fullerton, CA

MUSICIAN

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SHORT TAKES

SO MUCH MUSIC, SO LITTLE TIME

ROCK

By J.D. Considine

Hunters & Collectors

Ghost Nation (Atlantic)

GIVE THEM SONGS like "When the River Runs Dry" or "Love All Over Again," and the Hunters sustain an apocalyptic party groove Oingo Boingo has spent a career chasing; ask them for balladry, and they deliver something like "Blind Eye," in which steely sentimentality is played out against a melody as panoramic as the Great Outback. Which is why it would be hard to imagine a more quintessentially Australian band than this, and harder still to imagine the listener they couldn't win over.

Digital Underground

Sex Packets (Tommy Boy)

WHEN THE D.U. crew talks about "cold gettin' stupid," they aren't kidding—some of the stuff on *Sex Packets* is so silly it makes De La Soul sound like a bunch of philosophy professors. But that's cool, since without such gung-ho goofiness it's doubtful they could have created "Doowutcha-like" or "The Humpty Dance," much less what must be the least sexist sex raps on record.

Lee Atwater

Red Hot & Blue (Curb)

COME BACK, Blues Brothers. All is forgiven.

M.C. Hammer

Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em (Capitol)

HAMMER'S MESSAGES—Drugs Are Bad, Save the Children, I Can Dance—may not be particularly profound, but he pitches 'em like they were revelation itself. Like any good salesman, he keeps the pitch simple and insistent; like any good cheerleader, he repeats each catch-phrase with a you-gotta-believe fervor. When it works, it's almost enough to make you forget how hackneyed his music is.

Nick Lowe

Party of One (Reprise)

A REAL RETURN to form for the one-time Jesus of Cool, in which he not only churns out a steady stream of low-key witticisms (best rhyme: "Rick Astley" and "ghastly," from "All Men Are Liars") but matches the wordplay with a set of unassumingly catchy pop tunes. It may not change your life, but it will give you something to hum.

The Beloved

Happiness (Atlantic)

BETWEEN JON MARSH'S uppercrust elocution and the high-gloss house grooves that back him up, the Beloved might seem just a further refinement of the Pet Shop Boys approach. But where that duo abets its efforts with campy conceptualism, the Beloved relies on pure pop. Which is why the achingly sincere "Don't You Worry" is as convincing (and catchy) as the shamelessly shallow "Hello."

The Havalinas

The Havalinas (Elektra)

AT LAST, hard rock's answer to the Violent Femmes.

A Tribe Called Quest

People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm (Jive)

MOST RAP ACTS take an aggressive approach to rhythm: They hype the beat, pump it up, make it bigger and harder. A Tribe Called Quest takes a kinder, gentler approach, one that emphasizes swing and finesse. Which is not to say this crew can't kick it—"Footprints" or "Ham 'n' Eggs" make that much plain—just that they know that there's more to funk than brute force.

Bela Fleck & the Flecktones

Bela Fleck & the Flecktones (Warner Bros.)

JAZZ-ROCK BANJO players are about as commonplace as Japanese basketball stars. Listen to Fleck play, however, and his choice of instruments quickly becomes irrelevant. Like Dave Grisman, Fleck draws from a variety of idioms yet maintains an utterly individual voice. That, not his unabashed virtuosity or cheerful eclecticism, is what makes him worth hearing.

Scatterbrain

Here Comes Trouble (In Effect)

IMAGINE ANTHRAX with better chops and a loopier sense of humor, and you'll have an idea of what makes these guys the most enjoyable thrash act in years. Worth owning if only for the exuberant "Don't Call Me Dude."

Poi Dog Pondering

Wishing Like a Mountain and Thinking Like the Sea (Columbia)

EVERYTHING I'VE ALWAYS hated about collegiate rock—from the smug eclecticism of bad worldbeat to the cosmic inanity of hippified lyrics—in one, easily-disposed-of package.

JAZZ

By Chip Stern

Sonny Rollins

Falling in Love with Jazz (Milestone)

WONDER HOW LONG the snobigentsia's going to maintain the fiction that Rollins' albums are hopelessly outclassed by his live performances. *Falling in Love with Jazz* cultivates a more relaxed approach to recording: Just go in, put down a tune or two live to digital, then split—repeat until you have enough material for an album. The controlled frenzy of Rollins' mutations on the title tune belie his studio surroundings, and his droll rendition of "Tennessee Waltz" is an unexpected gem. Sonny's working band (ringer Jack DeJohnette, regulars Jerome Harris, Bob Cranshaw, Mark Soskin and Clifton Anderson) mirrors his moods, while a special grouping (Branford Marsalis, Jeff Watts, Jerome Harris and Tommy Flanagan) contributes a different kind of lyric contrast. Sir Branford—acting as Sonny's stunt double—plays the '50s straight man (very much in the manner of the formative Rollins),

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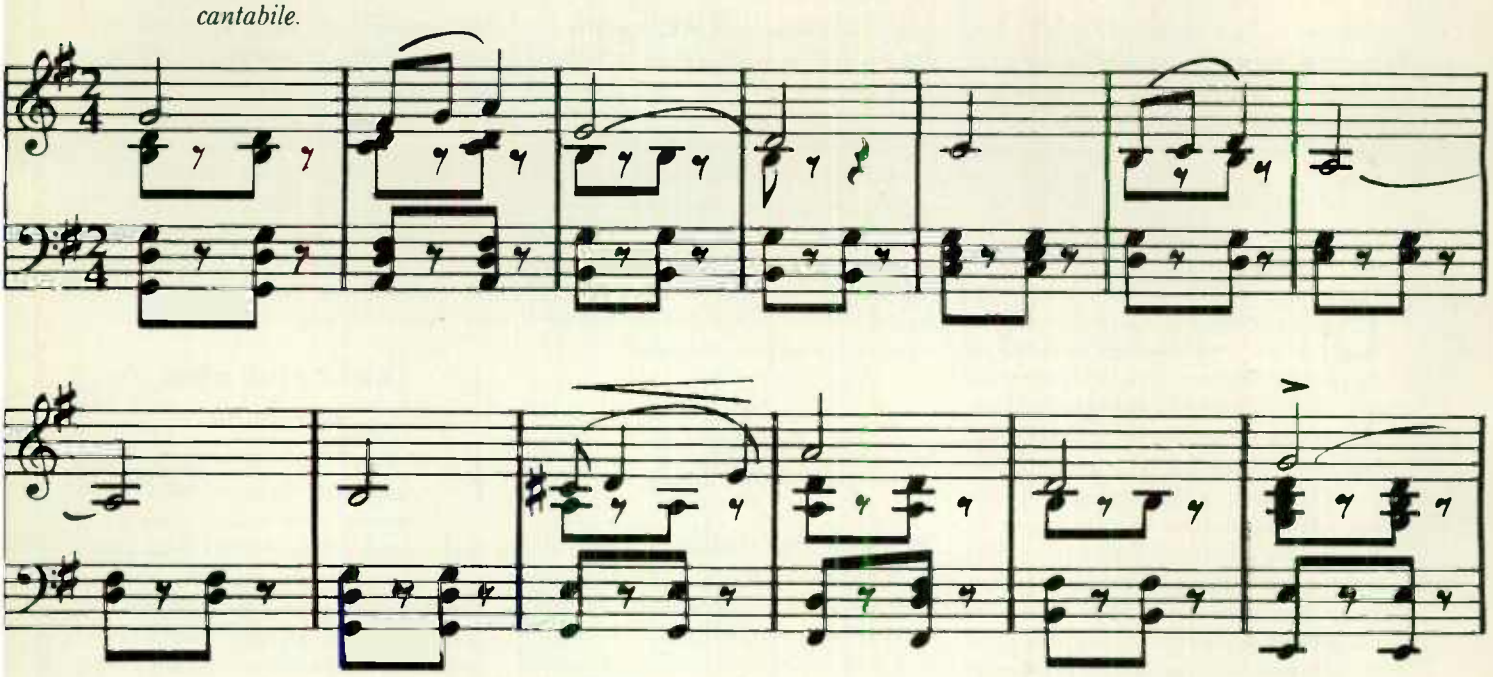

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coyly weaving in and out of the master's line, illustrating just how far Sonny Rollins' *sound* has evolved over 30 years as a work in progress, and how moldy the figs really are. (Note: Sonny's original "Amanda" is absent from the LP configuration.)

Tony Williams

Native Heart (Blue Note)

DISTILLING THE BEST aspects of his first two Blue Note group recordings, *Native Heart* is the great Tony Williams album fans of the drummer have been waiting for since *Emergency* (or perhaps since *Spring*). Which is not to suggest that Tony's been in some kind of 20-year slump, but clearly his PolyGram and Columbia recordings reflect the frustration of an artist who originated a rhythmic style (not to mention fusion music itself) and then watched everyone else go to the bank with it. What stands out on *Native Heart* is the extraordinarily mature quality of his writing, and the manner in which his unique energy and canny structures help his band transcend the stylistic quagmire of '60s clichés. Trumpeter Wallace Roney, in particular, has never sounded better; ditto for tenorist Billy Pierce and pianist Mulgrew Miller. There are indeed echoes of the great Miles Davis Quintet in the writing and improvising, but more as an extension than a reflection (and none of Miles' other imitators have Tony Williams on drums). With *Native Heart*, this great stylist has reinvented himself and his music. Hot damn!

Jay Hoggard

Overview (Muse)

LEAVE IT TO Jay Hoggard to treat "Put On a Happy Face" as a jazz standard. But then the vibist has confounded expectations for years, waxing avant-garde one moment with Anthony Davis, fashioning Earth, Wind & Fire–styled airplay prayers the next. What's remained consistent is his commanding presence as a vibist, and if he hasn't exactly settled in on any one niche, he's been more than capable in any bag you care to mention, which on *Overview* is a decidedly mainstream groove. His heavyweight quartet (Geri Allen, Ed Rozie and the late Frederick Waits) rein in their more elliptical notions in favor of a relaxed swinging cool, with some lovely Latin overtones (the title tune and "Aguacato") and a touch of hard bop and R&B on "Convergence."

Carmen McRae

Carmen Sings Monk (BMG/Novus)

WITH THE BENEFIT of 20/20 hindsight, it's impossible to comprehend how anyone ever viewed Thelonious Monk's work as weird or impenetrable. Thanks to the swinging Ms. Carmen McRae (and Jon Hendricks—among others—who penned the majority of the libretto), it's possible to see Monk's music in the context of song form, and its allure is undeniable. McRae's sense of drama is tart and understated—she lets the power of the music speak for itself, never italicizing for the sake of effect—and her tough, playful rendition of "Well You Needn't" and the low slow "Monkery's the Blues" (a.k.a. "Blue Monk") should be required listening for today's young high-octane/low-sensitivity thrushes. McRae finds all the sweet (and sour) spots in Monk's melodies, and as the touching "Ruby, My Dear" demonstrates, Monk wasn't above indulging sentiment—never cheap sentiment.

Nat "King" Cole

The Complete After Midnight Sessions (Capitol)

NAT KING COLE would nuzzle up on top of the beat, caress the melody and nudge it forward with an airy, weightless kind of phrasing, à la Lester Young, that distilled all the corn out of a song while reveling in its sentiment. Nat's melodic approach was as concise and unobtrusive as Basie's. Such was his vocal mastery that people forget how influential his trios were in the 1940s, and what a relaxed, resourceful improviser he always was. These inspired 1956 sessions put it all together by augmenting the trio with guest soloists Harry "Sweets" Edison, Stuff Smith, Willie Smith and Juan Tizol. Tizol's molasses-timbred valve trombone provides surreal counterpoint on melancholy tunes like "Lonely One," while the taut bluesiness of Edison's trumpet enlivens finger-snapping classics such as "Route 66." This represents the complete artistry of Nat "King" Cole, and what with its superb sound and five previously unreleased gems, *After Midnight* is about as perfect a jazz CD as you're likely to hear.

Tony Bennett

Astoria: Portrait of the Artist (Columbia)

FRANK SINATRA is the hipster's choice, but Tony Bennett's my favorite saloon singer, bringing elements of jazz and swing to bear on his canny repertoire of standards, ballads and dramatic pieces. The latter are very much the focus in this sentimental journey through the singer's past, and his ability to sell it all on a personal level, as if it had been lived (like the filial pride of "Antonia"), is what elevates it above "Danny Boy" borscht. But it's the ingratiating grace of his phrasing and the way he works magic with his trio that make tunes like "Speak Low" and "Where Did the Magic Go" happen for jazz fans.

Earl Klugh

Solo Guitar (Warner Bros.)

HERE'S A DISC that sat on my shelf for months, and when overcome by curiosity, turned out to be a pleasant surprise—by far the best record Klugh's made. These are easy, ingratiating ballad performances that are long on style, if short on substance; marked by a nice bouncy beat, a clear full-bodied tone and a gorgeous recorded sound. For a guitarist whose name was long synonymous with somnolence, *Solo Guitar* (and his previous *Collaboration* with George Benson) marks Klugh's growing maturity, and if this material doesn't exactly challenge the precepts of his adult contemporary audience, the lyrical grace of these performances is a pure and simple delight.

Chick Corea Elektric Band

Inside Out (GRP)

INSIDE OUT is Corea's least ostentatious, most compelling fusion outing. Instead of endless one-chord vamps, there are tight, punchy harmonic changes; and where unison rhythm figures used to be the order of the day, Corea manages to suggest an inner tension more akin to jazz polyrhythm than flamenco camp. Even inveterate cornballs like Frank Gambale and Eric Marienthal have distilled their virtuoso effusions into effective melodic variations. Corea the composer seems frankly inspired by the possibilities of his acoustic piano/MIDI hookup, resulting in an organic ensemble sound that extends on the work of his Akoustic Band, without an endless stream of synthesizer clichés. And with extended freedom to interact and groove, the Weckl-Patitucci rhythm team is growing by leaps and bounds.

CLASS

Giuseppe Sinopoli

Tannhäuser (Deutsche Grammophon)

TANNHÄUSER, the bardic hero of this early Wagner opera, is so surfeited with pleasure at the start of the tale that, in an existential snit, he leaves paradise to go in search of a meaningful punishment. A typical medieval bummer rather explicitly subverted by Wagner's music: Sinopoli conducts the "Falls version" which incorporated later additions by the post-*Tristan* Wagner, the one who perpetrated, in Mann's memorable phrase, "perfumed fog shot through with lightning." One such revision, the richly suggestive Venusberg music, makes it even clearer that Tannhäuser's salvation entails a precious loss. Placido Domingo, as our hero, has the chops needed to suffer grandly, while conductor Sinopoli encourages a certain restraint, even in the more rousing passages—some maestros seem to think the Hymn to Venus is a coronation march (which in fact it resembles). A good production then, not as dark as some, but satisfyingly romantic/heroic.

—Richard C. Walls

World Radio History

Mitsuko Uchida

Debussy: 12 Etudes (Philips)

ARTICULATING DEBUSSY'S shifting dynamics with effortless clarity, Uchida gets to the heart of these studies, highlighting even the subtlest shades of the composer's harmonic palette in each luminous phrase. Her secret isn't delicacy, but strength; Uchida's command over the instrument is so absolute that it becomes almost unnoticeable. Could this be the new Michelangeli?—*J.D. Considine*

Moondog

Moondog (CBS)

AS A LITTLE KID, I remember driving into Manhattan with my parents, and seeing this ancient-looking blind man with a gray beard and a Viking helmet holding court somewhere in midtown. Turns out he wasn't just a street character, but a unique composer/philosopher by the name of Louis Hardin, a.k.a. Moondog. "Western civilization will be buried in 4/4 time," he used to maintain, among other pronouncements, but for years I was unable to find any of his recordings, until CBS recently made this compilation of 1969 and 1971 LPs available in CD form, and it's something else—like an odd concord between a pre–J.S. Bach contrapuntal composer and a gaggle of African drummers. Rhythms and thematic materials circle and dance around each other in an unadorned melodic processional. Charming.

—*Chip Stern*

Leonard Bernstein The Vienna Philharmonic

Sibelius: Symphonies Nos. 5 & 7 (Deutsche Grammophon)

MOST CONDUCTORS view Jean Sibelius as a post-romantic, but what Bernstein presents on this disc verges on meta-romanticism. Particularly his Fifth—fevered, impetuous, its last shuddering climax seems almost orgasmic in its finality. Those looking for deeper meaning might try Berglund; for cheaper thrills, Salonen. But for sheer sonic ecstasy, this is untoppable.

—*J.D. Considine*

BOOKS

Hal Blaine and the Wrecking Crew

Hal Blaine and David Goggin (Mix Books)

PORING OVER the mind-boggling list of Top 10 hits he played on (covering *six* pages!), it starts to sink in just how pervasive Blaine's drumming was on '60s/'70s radio. Blaine, Leon Russell, Glen Campbell, Carol Kaye and other session players were dubbed "The Wrecking Crew" by the older musicians they were replacing as rock 'n' roll began to dominate the L.A. studio scene. Glimpses into the making of records by the likes of Phil Spector, Brian Wilson and even ol' Blue Eyes himself make for a fun read.—*Peter Cronin*

Every Little Thing

William McCoy and Mitchell McGeary (Popular Culture, Ink.)

DON'T GET CAUGHT UP in listening to your records too closely," the authors warn. But that's exactly what makes *Every Little Thing*—subtitled *The Definitive Guide to Beatles Recording Variations, Rare Mixes and Other Musical Oddities, 1958–1986*—so fascinating, or irritating. We're talking about extra tambourine beats, early fade-outs, alternate takes and the like on 45s, albums of all nations and even open-reel tapes. Too bad the authors' cut-off date virtually excludes compact discs. Expect a sequel. (Box 1839, Ann Arbor, MI 48106)—*Scott Isler*

Only the Lonely; Roy Orbison's Life and Legacy

Alan Clayson (St. Martin's Press)

A FEW YEARS AGO Clayson, an Englishman, gave us an invaluable history of British beat with his *Call Up the Groups!* He's on considerably shakier ground with this reverent biography, which largely recycles quotes by Orbison and others from newspapers and magazines. Clayson's writing is replete with clichés and not without factual errors. Wait for the authorized version.—*Scott Isler*

You Just Fight for Your Life

Frank Büchmann (Møller Praeger)

EXECRABLY CONSTRUCTED as it is, this impersonal, unimaginative life study of the inventive swing saxophonist Lester Young—for a time America's most important tenor player—may be of real interest to musicians for its lucid expositions of instrumental technique. Prez was often rejected at first; later his revolutionary sound and concept were more honored in his imitators than in their innovator. This bio fails to present a larger understanding of American society and its expectations of artists, or of the restricted roles allowed to black musicians. Nor are there profiles of the people who were important in the life and work of this complex, poignant figure, whose death from alcoholism seems almost to have been a conscious decision.

—*Celestine Ware*

VIDEO

Various Artists

Ladies Sing the Blues (V.I.E.W.)

IT'S HARD TO MISS with a concept this alluring: rare and not so rare footage of the great jazz and blues divas, from Bessie to Billie to Dinah Washington and more. The well-traveled Holiday clip, surrounded by Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster and enough smoke to gag a Rasta, is alone worth the price, but what steals the show here are the orchestral settings; the much undervalued Helen Humes reunited with Count Basie, the lush and sultry Peggy Lee swinging with Benny Goodman's band, Ethel Waters, Lena Horne, Connie Boswell and Sister Rosetta Tharpe help round out a very classy package. (34 E. 23 St., NY, NY 10010 [800] 843-9843)—*Mark Rowland*

The Rolling Stones

25 × 5: The Continuing Adventures of the Rolling Stones (CBS)

ONE OF THE BEST rock documentaries yet—which is as it should be considering that the filmmakers had access to 25 years of Rolling Stones footage, including unreleased bits from *Rock and Roll Circus, Cocksucker Blues* and home movies of various Stones weddings. They also had the cooperation of the whole band, who comment on (and color) the history as we watch it. From 1964 to 1967 the group develop their public image and learn to express themselves as performers, then writers, and finally generational totems. In the clips from '67 to '72 the Stones are dangerous in a way that makes most of today's heavy-metal imagery seem like shabby artifice. The performance of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" is startling, "Memo from Turner" is flat-out shocking. The '80s revisionism is suspicious; the Stones imply that the most notorious scenes in the suppressed *Cocksucker Blues* were staged for the cameras, they are all good family men and their drug use is behind them. But that's the price of passports these days. It's a terrific movie and worth twice the cost just to hear Charlie Watts talk.—*Bill Flanagan*

The Sugarcubes

Live Zabor (Elektra Video)

LIKE THE BAND itself, this grab-bag of concert footage, interview segments and video silliness is at once maddening, entrancing and delightful. However much the show might seem to belong to Bjork and Einar, a vocal duo whose interplay suggests Mickey and Sylvia as scripted by Zippy the Pinhead, it's the playing that ultimately shines brightest. Although the grocery store segment ain't bad, either.—*J.D. Considine*

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BONHAM

[*cont'd from page 82*] tronics, like electric guitar did. Nothing, I think, can ever beat real drums. You can always add technology, but you lose that realness. If you don't want real drums, use the electronics. But if you want a real drum kit, you make it sound like a real drum kit in the studio. You don't make it sound like a computer kit. If you're going to do that, you might as well get five or six drum brains and MIDI them all together, and have a whale of a time. And just hope you don't get any power surges when you're playing."

In the meantime, Bonham's kit keeps getting smaller and smaller. Part of it is for variety—"It keeps you on your toes. You don't fall into a format where you do the same fills every night"—and part sheer traditionalism. "What I'm going to do eventually is go back to an old Beatles-vintage kit," he says, "with two cymbals, ride cymbal, crash, high-hat, snare drum, rack tom, one floor. Shallow things, little 20-inch bass drum.

"I'll be happy."

PLANT

[*cont'd from page 107*] "I don't know. When I go to a ballgame and stand in front of people to see if they recognize me, they yell at me to sit down. So obviously it didn't have the greatest impact. I shan't be doing it again. The problem is, on the last tour the adverts often had a sponsor without me having anything to do with it. Some deal between the sponsor and the promoter. I was furious. I concluded that Neil Young was right in 'This Note's for You.'"

What does your 11-year-old son think of your music?

"I think he gets a bit embarrassed by his dad. He's very conservative and he doesn't like the fuss. But we love each other very much. He liked the band Europe and asked me what I thought."

What did you tell him?

"I can't remember. I think I played him something by Bukka White, and followed it with the Fugs or the Brain Police. And he said, 'But, but, but . . .' He did like Guns N' Roses very heavily. And I thought, 'Thank God.' We drove together in the car for miles and sang along. Then I got in the car a few weeks ago and he put on New Kids on the Block and I knew I was lost. I guess there's still time for Muddy Waters or Robert Johnson. At least Guns N' Roses has conviction, 10 times more conviction than their nearest rival. They're the nearest thing to the real thing. The real thing isn't here anymore."

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BALLADS OF A THIN MAN

MUSICIAN'S TOP 10 ROCK SONGS THAT MENTION BOB DYLAN BY NAME *

1. "Hear this, Robert Zimmerman, I wrote a song for you about a strange young man called Dylan with a voice like sand and glue"
—*David Bowie ("Song for Bob Dylan")*
2. "Feel so suicidal, just like Dylan's Mr. Jones"
—*The Beatles ("Yer Blues")*
3. "Mr. Hughes hid in Dylan's shoes"
—*Rick Nelson ("Garden Party")*
4. "Dylan, Berlin, Bay of Pigs Invasion"
—*Billy Joel ("We Didn't Start the Fire")*
5. "I asked Booby Dylan—he couldn't help me either"
—*The Who ("The Seeker")*
6. "They don't know if they want Matt Dillon or Bob Dylan"
—*Gil Scott-Heron ("Re-Ron")*
7. "He's so unhip, that when you say Dylan he thinks you're talking about Dylan Thomas, whoever he is"
—*Simon & Garfunkel ("A Simple Desultory Philippic")*
8. "How come you didn't get big like Dylan?"
—*Loudon Wainwright III ("How Old Are You?")*
9. "I'm not Bob Dylan but I never miss a beat"
—*Nils Lofgren ("I Came to Dance")*
10. "I don't believe in Zimmerman"
—*John Lennon ("God")*

**No thinly-veiled poetic references allowed (The "American Pie" Exclusionary Rule) No "Je ne regrette rien" escalator-riding (The Joan Baez Exclusionary Rule)*

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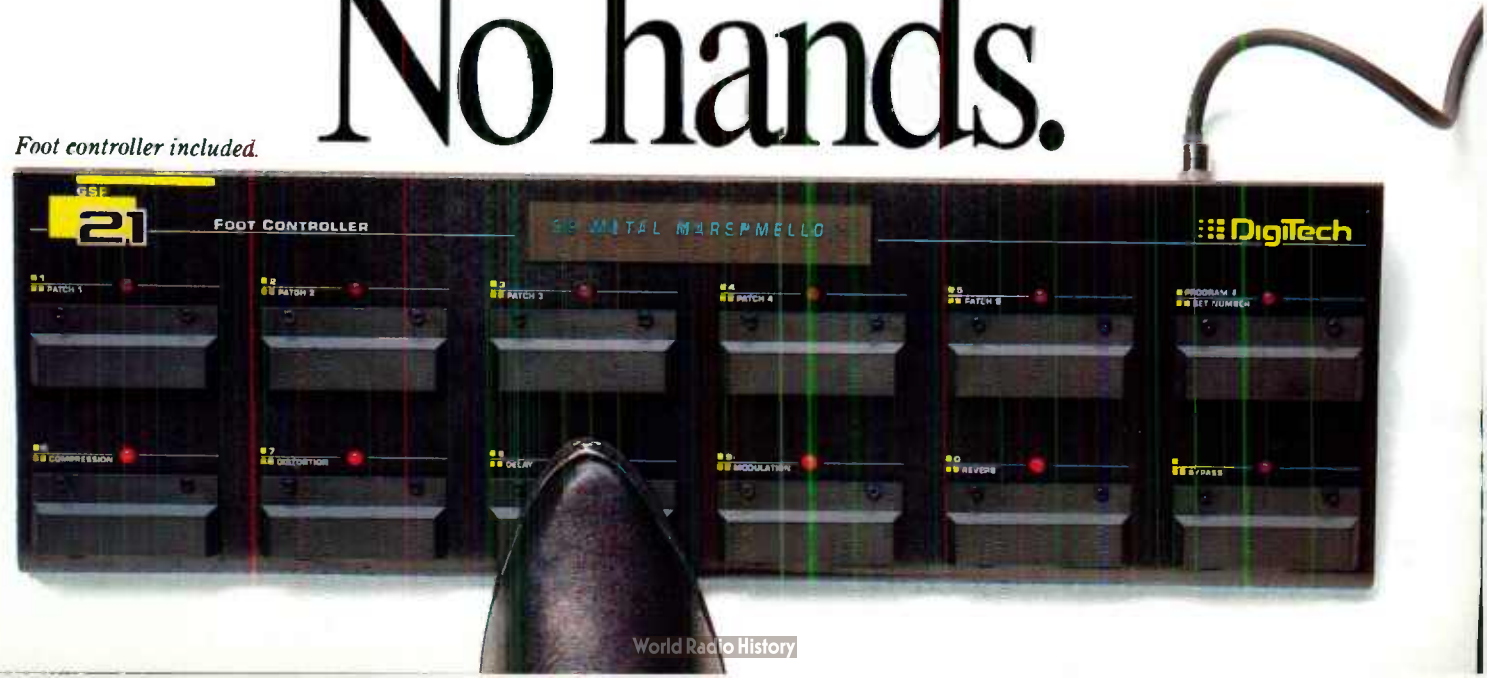

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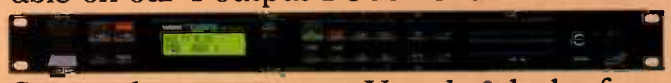

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