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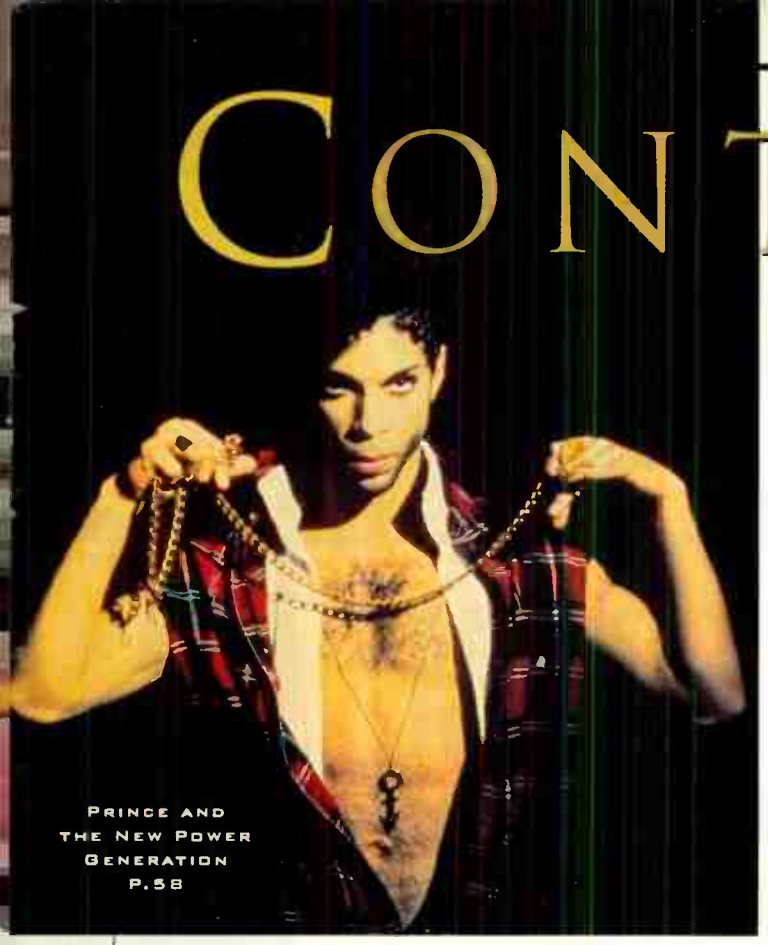

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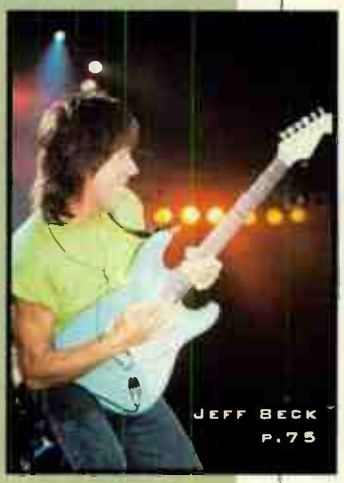

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BILL FLANAGAN
editor

JOHN KORPICS
art director

MATT RESNICOFF
senior editor

MARK ROWLAND
(310) 273-7040
west coast editor

KEITH POWERS
production editor

PETER CRONIN
developments editor

RUTH MAASSEN
typographer

MAC RANDALL
assistant editor

JOCK BAIRD · J.D. CONSIDINE
SCOTT ISLER · JIM MACNIE · TONY SCHERMAN
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contributing editors

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publisher

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DAN DORT · NICHOLE BURKE
administration

JOAN MASELLA
circulation director

ALLIS RUNCO
assistant circulation manager

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main office/production/retail sales

1515 BROADWAY, 39TH FL.,
NEW YORK, NY 10036 (212) 536-5208
advertising/editorial

GORDON BAIRD
SAM HOLDSWORTH
founders

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LETTERS

US TOO

Bill Flanagan has produced some outstanding articles in his time, but he outdid himself with the U2 interviews (Sept. '92). It's articles like this that should encourage tabloid-shy musicians to talk about themselves and their art. Besides, you've gotta admire a guy who's willing to risk radioactive testicles for the sake of a story!

Janine Mendes
Diego Martin, Trinidad

Damn it, Bill! Hanging with Prince, U2 and George Harrison all in one issue. You got a neat job.

Marc Nichol

Thank you for waking me up from this nightmarish disappointment over *Achtung Baby*. It was not the music that had upset me but rather the band's attitude. It was awkward to hear such change after they had revealed so much on *The Joshua Tree*, but I realize that breaking the surface was and has been the band's most challenging aspect and this time I forgot to follow through.

Nina Hussain

I've liked U2 since the *War* days—now I know why. The intentional risk of radiation contamination is beyond the calling of a rock band. Greenpeace and U2 have left me awestruck by their commitment and sacrifice.

Ann Arbor, MI

Oh nooo! Bono, not you too! Not another rock star that thinks he knows what it's like to be a "babe" (Pete Townshend—the first to admit it). Not until they have their period every month for about 30 years will either of them know what it's like!

Jayne
New York, NY

After Bill Flanagan's article, I can honestly say my view of U2 from here has changed. I still don't fully understand what makes them tick, but I do have a strong conviction of what their music means. Ironically I also realize that half the time they're full of crap. Which is really okay, because half the time we're full of crap too.

Paulina Garcia
Denver, CO

U2 has fallen into the "Who trap": They have become something that in their youth they preached against.

Thomas Maton
Fort Smith, AR

HIGH PRAISE

It was interesting to contrast the David Gilmour interview (Aug. '92) with the Bill Nelson/Robert Wyatt interview in the same issue. Gilmour talked more about finances and about Roger Waters than he did about music. Must be nice just to sit on your houseboat next to Townshend's place and leisurely think about your next project, eh? In contrast, Wyatt and Nelson, despite their problems, are far more interested and alive to music and to the world than Gilmour.

Mark Saucier
New Orleans, LA

Many young people are singing the praises of Axl and Madonna. Give me Robert Wyatt's "Moon in June," *Old Rottenhat* or *Dondestan* any day.

Billy Baxter
Richmond, VA

Bill Nelson and Robert Wyatt made it very clear that the greatest success in life is personal success—the satisfaction and quality of one's work. For the independent musician, the music industry is not a beast to be conquered. It's an ox in the road, too stupid to get out of the way.

Carl Weingarten
St. Louis, MO

Mac Randall should be commended for his insightful, intelligent interview of two men whose individual expression takes precedent over everything.

Richard Farquhar
Atlanta, GA

You should be commended for publishing a fascinating interview by two very important artists who compromise nothing.

Mark Rushton
Kansas City, MO

Metaphorically, in the music biz supermarket you'll find the glossy romance novels (Madonna, C&C Music Factory) in the checkout lane alongside the comic books (Van Halen, Bon Jovi, etc.). The classic literature (R. Wyatt, B. Nelson), on the other hand, is on the dusty, private library shelves and in the unpublished manuscripts.

David Hawkes
Ripley, NY

FAVORITE SOLOS

Our Sept. '92 feature, "The 25 Greatest Guitar Solos," drew a wide response, with most readers suggesting their own "Greatests." Here's a sample:

"Crossroads"—Eric Clapton; *Matthew Wester, Rohnert Park, CA;* "Free Bird"—Lynyrd Skynyrd; *Neil Bennett, South Pittsburg, TN;* "Statesboro Blues"—Duane Allman; *Tom Heany, St. Petersburg, FL;* "Evil Woman"—Spooky Tooth; *Gary R. Ortleib, Detroit, MI;* "Sympathy for the Devil"—Keith Richards; *Mike Laskavy, Sun Valley, CA;* "Let It Be"—John Lennon; *Michael Macchi, Quincy, MA;* "Sign Language"—Robbie Robertson; *Stephen Robinson, Washington, DC*

PARKER RESPONDS

Your review of my record (*Burning Questions*, Sept. '92) had some nice moments but also a few dodgy ones I must revile in print. Firstly you say this is a surprisingly strong album—surprisingly strong? From moi? Are you kidding? Then of course you have to drop that other songwriter's name, a wearisome example of lazy journalism made worse when you say that on "Platinum Blonde" I "recreate" something by somebody I preceded by two albums, a fact you of course neglect to inform the reader.

The last paragraph of your piece was a beauty, though, showing your enormous misjudgment of the depth of this record. To suggest I should stick a couple of throwaway songs on an album like this is like saying that the Sex Pistols should have done a few vaudeville tunes on *Never Mind the Bollocks*. What a strange idea! I'm sure neither my record company nor my fans would appreciate a couple of bananas popping up amidst the mayhem. Still, thanks for the thought, maybe it will be appropriate on the next one.

Graham Parker
London, England

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MICHAEL WILDERMAN

CARMEN BRADFORD

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When the legendary Nancy Wilson yells out, "Sing 'chall!" to your every inspired phrase during your record party showcase at the Blue Note in New York and writes your debut album's liner notes, when jazz trumpeter Bobby Bradford and song stylist Melba Liston are your parents, and when your first professional singing gig is with the Count Basie Orchestra, you're obviously born to swing.

After a nine-year stint with Basie, Houston-bred jazz vocalist Carmen Bradford, 30, has released *Finally Yours*, her diverse debut album. It showcases her full-bodied pipes on standard chestnuts, early '70s R&B covers, Brazilian-flavored originals and knockout big-band swing tunes arranged by Frank Foster, the current musical director of the Basie Orchestra.

"My experience with Basie was a great education," the belting Bradford remarks in a hushed speaking voice. "But it was still very hard-traveled. I was on the road for 50 weeks a year but I only was onstage for 14 minutes during the show. It was definitely time for me to go. Singing solo now feels like a breath of fresh air."

Her current solo status has also allowed Bradford to share her soul and ballad stylings with the world. "Working with a big band has influenced my sound a great deal. But growing up, my first loves were Motown, Aretha and Chaka Khan. I actually didn't learn to appreciate jazz standards until I was 13. It's funny, when I first started singing with Basie I would riff and run anywhere. But one night, Joe Williams, who was on the bill with us, said to me, 'You've got to make up your mind whether you're doing jazz or gospel, girl.' So, now when I'm doing blues I go to my R&B riffs, but if I'm doing serious ballads, I don't fool around. I try to tell the story."

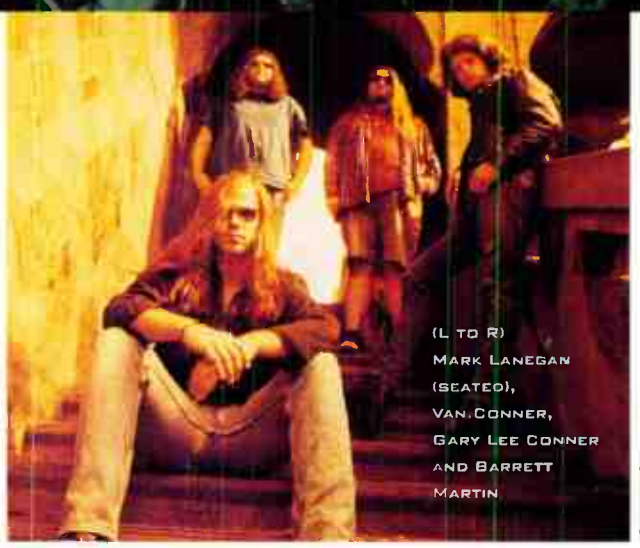
GORDON CHAMBERS

SCREAMING TREES

The Aesthetics of Oblivion

Now that everyone in the music business is looking to Washington (State) for direction, the Screaming Trees may finally get their due. With their sixth album, *Sweet Oblivion*, these eight-year veterans of the Seattle scene have produced their finest work yet. "We actually thought it might be our last record," singer Mark Lanegan says, "'cause everyone was getting burnt. But now it feels like a new band." Bassist Van Conner agrees, but hopes any new converts will be drawn by the music itself rather than where it comes from. "This 'Seattle sound' thing is so uninformed; I just read some paper saying *Sonic Youth* were from Seattle."

The Trees *are* different. Yes, they can summon up just as much distorto grandeur as any of their lumberjack-shirted counterparts, and Lanegan's weathered voice slightly resembles Kurt Cobain's. Yet songs like *Oblivion*'s "Dollar Bill" have a vulnerability and sense of drama that set them apart from the grunge pack. A love of '60s pop is also evident on the first single, "Nearly Lost You", while for a B-side, the Trees pull out a faithful cover of the 1968 Small Faces classic "Song of a Baker." "We've ripped that song off so many times," Lanegan quips, "we felt we ought to do it."



(L TO R) MARK LANEGAN (SEATED), VAN CONNER, GARY LEE CONNER AND BARRETT MARTIN

CHRIS CUFFARO

While making *Oblivion*, the band broke with tradition, recording in New York rather than the West Coast, using a real producer (Don Fleming) and writing songs together—"all in one room, the *Ishtar* method," explains Lanegan. "It's good to get past everybody's egos and make a group effort," Conner says. "All four of us were more involved this time, and we decided, 'Let's forget about what we've done before and try a new approach.' The songwriting was important, but just being friends again was important too."

MAC RANDALL

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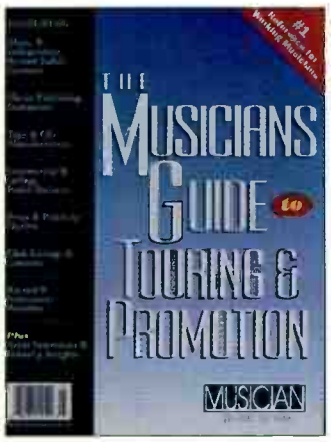

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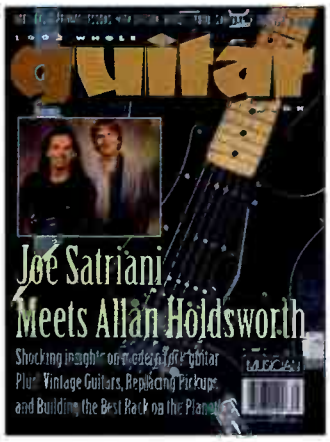

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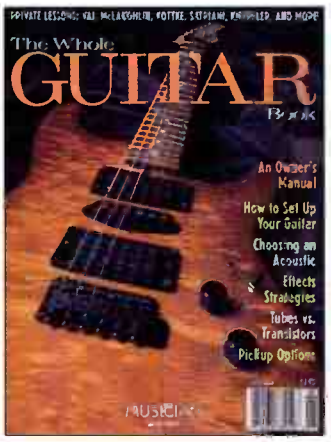

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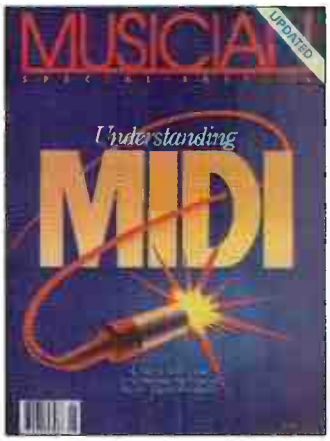

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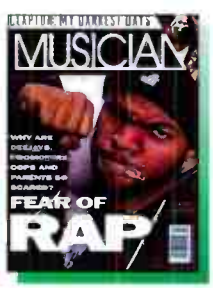

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KURT MUNDAHL

KYUSS

Iron Butterfly

"We sounded like this when Soundgarden still had their amps on 2," says Josh Homme, guitarist of Kyuss (rhymes with pious), a non-grunge quartet from Palm Desert, California. So, even if you haven't heard of them yet, Kyuss precedes Seattle, and they dread the prospect of their desert idyll suffering the same *Day of the Locust* descent of underassistant West Coast promo men and the attendant corruption of a prematurely hyped scene.

"If you have a butterfly in your hand," says Homme, "and you yell to your friends, 'Hey, come here, I've got this beautiful butterfly,' then you open your hands to show it around...it's gone."

It may already be too late for Kyuss to keep that butterfly. *Blues for the Red Sun*, their second album, could have A&R men combing the cacti for Kyuss Jr. With the aid of producer Chris Goss, otherwise guitarist of Masters of Reality, they've come up with an original sound at an age (they range from 19 to 22) when most bands are still lost in their influences. Goss has given some shape to the metallic barrage that characterized their first album *Wretch*, and together they've created a huge wall of mud, like a rainstorm in the desert washing a mountain onto your town. A number of critics have heard a Black Sabbath precedent. "Sabbath had an interior sound," says singer John Garcia. "They were on that eerie Gothic trip. We're into heat, the earth. We're more affected by the environment."

An environment of big bikes and mythic highways, not ecological admonitions. They also like irony. The album's slowest cut, "Thong Song," echoes the refrain, "I hate...slow songs."

"Lots of Josh's lyrics have that John Lennon touch," says drummer Brant Bjork. "'Thong Song' is about the dumb kid with the Iron Maiden T-shirt who swears he hates slow songs, when that would be his favorite one."

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MORRISSEY IN MANHATTAN

THOSE WHO LOVE MORrissey love him with such whole-hearted devotion that no criticism could dissuade them and no praise could further encourage them. In September I went to the Paramount in New York City to see Morrissey for the sake of the rest of us, rock fans who have never been able to reconcile Morrissey's pose of mopey ennui with our preconceptions about the minimum requirements of rock 'n' roll. We all know great rock can be nerdy—but the great nerd rockers have always been angry. We know great rock can be homo-erotic, but the great gay rockers have been extroverted. Morrissey confuses us because he adopts a languid, self-pitying "I'm going out in the garden and eat worms" pose that we associate with people who disdain rock 'n' roll and all us unwashed thugs who like it.

So why is Morrissey held a rock hero in the hearts of half the population of England's disaffected bohos and America's freshman dorms? I have been to the Paramount and now I understand. Morrissey, who in his lyrics, on his albums and in his interviews shows self-immolating weariness with the insensitivity of the world, comes alive in concert as a stomping, rocking, posing, [*cont'd on next page*]

MICHELLE SHOCKED

MICHELLE SHOCKED MADE one of the best albums of 1992, *Arkansas Traveler*, and it didn't dent *Billboard*'s Top 200, despite the fact that Mercury Records asked Shocked to write a pop single to sweeten what the execs no doubt recoiled from when they heard it, an albumful of *fiddle* tunes forchrissake. Never mind that they were shrewdly rewritten, the point being to replow the heartland, to nurture tradition by reimagining it.

At least Shocked managed to get her Arkansas Traveler Revue on the road, and into Carnegie Hall in October, in pretty good style. Taj Mahal was there, and a tight backup band, and folk-rockers Uncle Tupelo. Despite what must've been a trauma—the pull-out of the Band, a big part of the Revue—Shocked was unfeignedly delighted to be at Carnegie Hall and responded with unphonily delightful music: the Texas reel "Cotton Eyed Joe" recast as "The Prodigal Daughter" to put some sharp questions to the old Bible story ("What's to be done with the prodigal son/Welcome him home with open arms/But when a girl goes home with the oats he's sown/It's draw your shades and your shutters"); the breakdown "Soldier's Joy," now a dirge about morphine-addicted Civil War veterans called "Shaking Hands"; "Custom Cutter," a new song [*cont'd on next page*]

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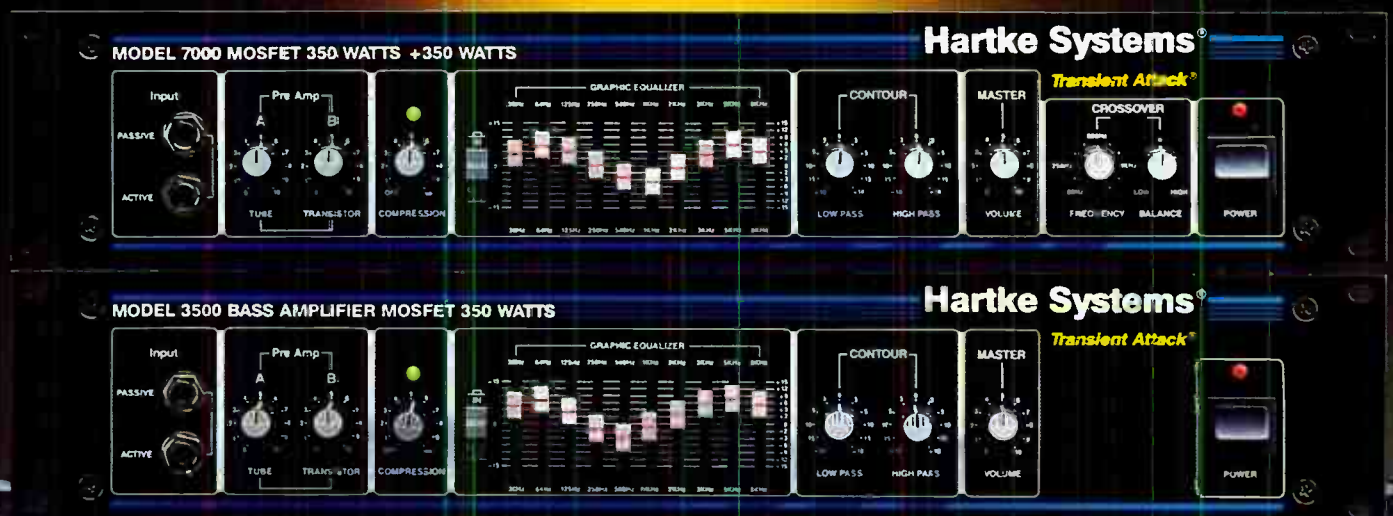

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SHOCKED

about a farmer waiting, half-nuts with impatience, for the harvester to come. You can see why Shocked was so pissed when the execs weren't satisfied with the *Arkansas Traveler* songs; only, the one they asked her to add, "Come a Long Way," is the strongest of all, maybe the best she's ever written, a natural hit somehow blown.

Shocked's a charismatic performer: boyishly sexy, with a beautiful full-throated old-timey voice she can unleash into a yowl; gawky in a charming way—the real thing. You'll always hear artists gush about playing Carnegie; Shocked managed to do it touchingly. Not only that, she pulled off a non-sickening family reunion when she hauled out her mandolin-picking father, a little dude named Dollar Bill, and her fiddling brother, and announced that her grandma, convalescing from major surgery, had insisted on flying in: "She's seen me a million times, but she's never been to Carnegie Hall!" (After the show I spotted a very small lady backstage, clutching about a dozen programs.)

Taj Mahal was a pleasure, too. I've seen this complicated man give angrily perfunctory shows, but tonight he was on, hopping from piano to guitar, recycling the blues with flair (he, too, is a rewriting fool, not too shy to rework Robert Johnson, and that's what folk music's all about, right?). He couldn't have ended his set in a more nakedly emotive, affecting way, bawling one word—"Corinna"—up into Carnegie's depths, over and over, as he faded out.

The audience was once young with Taj Mahal, now they're not so young with him. Can folk music survive in the post-rock era? (Which is what I decided we're now in, watching Faith No More and Helmet the next night.) There were no kids at Carnegie, none; at 30, Michelle Shocked is younger than her fans. I hope her embrace of tradition doesn't land her in the margins, cynical and drunk and peddling homemade tapes in some dark cafe.

—TONY SCHERMAN

MORRISSEY

sweating, handsome and scream-inducing star. This is powerful stuff. If I were a freshman writing a term paper I'd say, "The physical catharsis of the rock show is excused and justified by the elitism of the nominal subject matter." But as a rock critic trying to squeeze somebody else's fun into the toothpaste tube of rock's narrow tradition, let me instead say, "It was like the Kinks!"

No matter how pained and precious "You're the One for Me, Fatty" or "November Spawned a Monster" sound in the privacy of your bedsit, when they are played onstage with loud amps and frenzied fans, they turn into party music. That's especially potent for kids who rarely get invited to parties.

The day after the Morrissey show I went to the football game with my colleague Charles M. Young. "How was Morrissey?" he asked as a 49er rammed his elbow into the neck of a Jet.

"Strange," I said as a player was carried off the field. "The wimpy kids stood on their chairs and pumped their fists in the air and screamed and the wimpy singer ripped off his shirt. All the people who usually mock the big hairy-chested rock show had a big hairy-chested rock show of their own. It was touching. Like the Special Olympics."

A 49er smashed into a Jets receiver before he had the football. We could hear bone snap. "Are you gonna put that in your review?" Young asked.

"Nah, I'd never say that in print," I said as we stood up to get a look at the injury. "It's too mean."

"If you don't write it," Young said, "you're the wimp."

—BILL FLANAGAN

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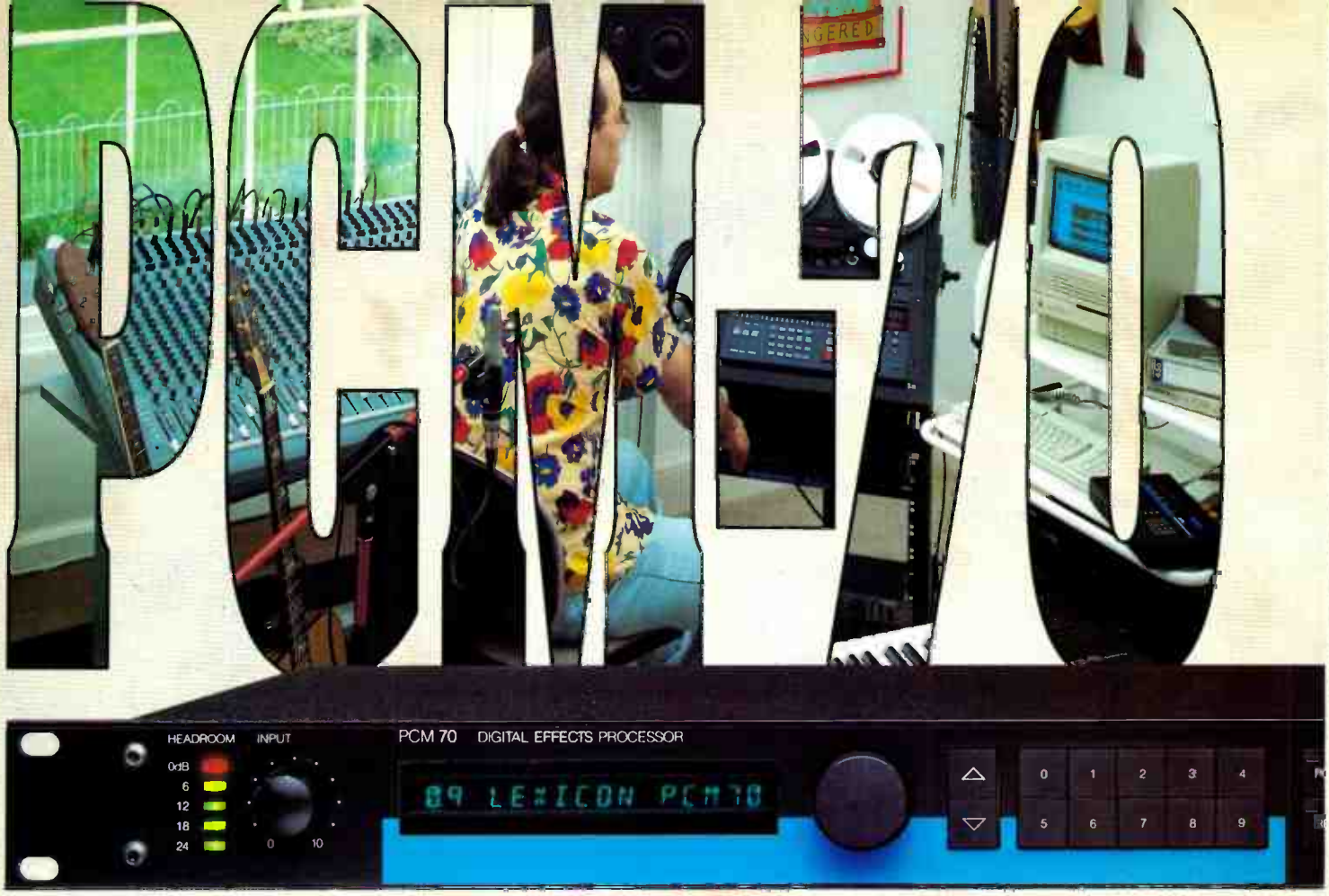

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BOB WEIR: THE DEAD ARE ALIVE

THE OSTENSIBLE PURPOSE OF THE NEW YORK EVENT WAS A PRESS screening of the Grateful Dead's new video documentary, *Backstage Pass*, with Bob Weir and director Justin Kreutzmann in attendance. But the question hung in the air, thick as pot smoke at a Dead show. Unasked, it was so deafening that Dead spokesperson Dennis McNally felt he had to address the issue even before the screening began. Jerry Garcia is alive and well, he told the invited audience, and that's that.

Well, not quite. You can't just defuse four weeks of intense anxiety with a pat statement. After all, we're not talking here about the President of the United States; we're talking about the idolized lead guitarist of a legendary band—a band that lives by its touring and had recently cancelled dates due to Garcia's "exhaustion"—and a band that wouldn't confirm whether the 50-year-old guitarist's condition was serious.

There was an eerie déjà vu to the situation. Almost six years earlier to the day of Garcia's August 4 collapse, he had suffered a diabetic coma. And *that* was not long after he reportedly cleaned up from eight years of heroin use. (The incentive was a drug bust.) It's been a while since the stocky, gray-bearded Captain Trips looked like he was capable of navigating anything other than a reindeer-driven sleigh.

"When Jerry comes onstage next time, there will be rumors it's not him."

Backstage Pass itself reinforces what a precious cultural resource Garcia and the Dead are. Although an unDeadly short 35 minutes, it manages to traverse the band's career in six songs and a welter of footage. The newest performance shows Garcia and Weir, both on acoustic guitars, and electric bassist Phil Lesh all seated while playing Bob Dylan's "She Belongs to Me"—the Grateful Dead unplugged.

Official reassurance notwithstanding, the media still had Jerry questions for Weir after the screening. "He's really in much better health than he's had for a long time," the rhythm guitarist patiently responded. "When you see him next time you won't recognize him." This remark may not have had its intended effect.

Part of the mystery is that Garcia hasn't been heard from since before his illness. Wouldn't a statement from the guitarist himself help douse the rumors?

"I think he just doesn't want to hassle it," Weir says after the media menschen have shuffled out of the screening room. "I think he'd just rather let his actions speak for themselves when he comes out and plays and looks good."

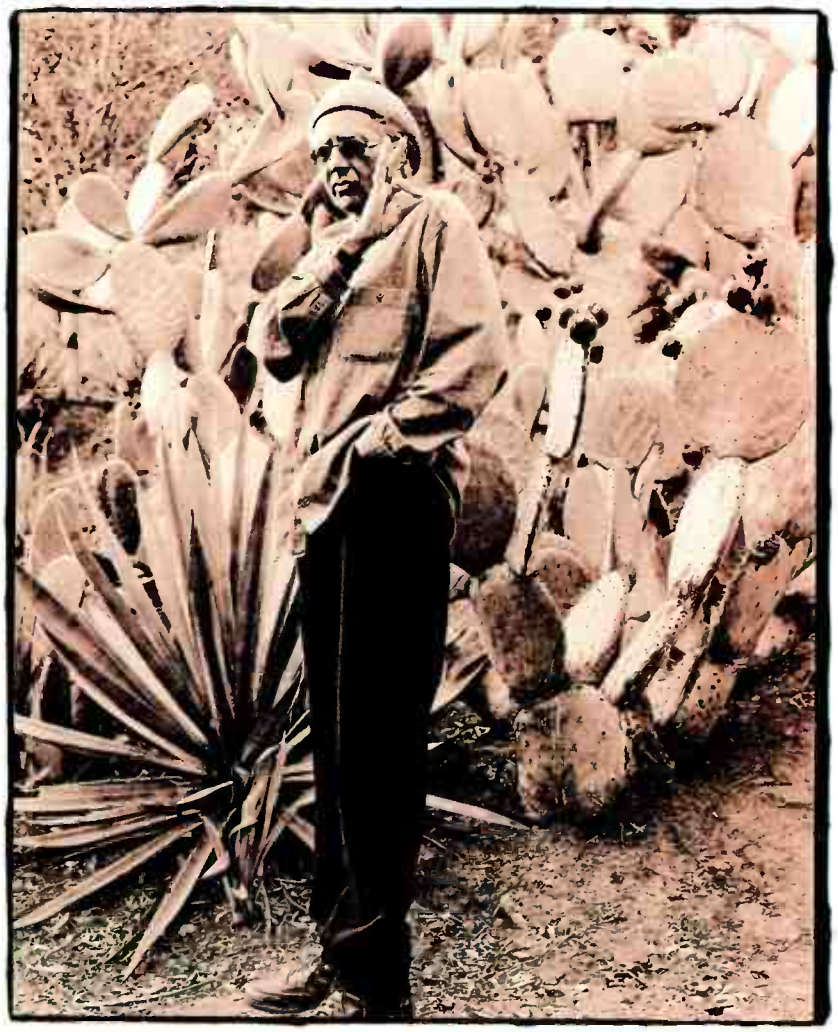
In the meantime, however, speculation is likely to run riot. "People are going to say what they're going to say," Weir sighs fatalistically. "I've heard some amazing rumors. When Jerry comes out onstage next time, I'm sure there will be rumors going around that that's not him. The more outrageous the rumor, the more believable it is to certain people."

Weir had just wrapped up his own tour in August when he called the Dead office and learned Garcia was sick. "A lot of people in our office were inclined to take it a little more seriously than I am. I've been there. We've been through this before. For some reason this is the kind of thing I don't take particularly seriously. There's nothing you can do about it. But also I have a great deal of faith in Jerry's constitution. I just don't see him disappearing in the near future."

Such optimism flies in the [*cont'd on page 30*]

BY SCOTT ISLER

THE RESURRECTION OF CHARLES LLOYD



People thought, "He's too far out to think about."

UNTIL A FEW MONTHS AGO, CHARLES LLOYD HAD AN IDENTITY PROBlem, at least among jazz fans. The problem was that no one was paying attention to him anymore. Then came his fateful performance at the John Coltrane tribute during the 1992 JVC Jazz Festival in New York, where his volcanic, telepathic playing alongside Coltrane vets Elvin Jones and McCoy Tyner was generally regarded as an apex of the event. Stirring a steamy lather of ideas and intensity, swaying as if in a gust of inspiration, closing his eyes but not his ears, he provoked thunderous reactions from both listeners and press. Suddenly Lloyd was back among the living, anointed with the holy mantle of a "comeback." Thus saith the *New York Times*, even.

But what has Lloyd been doing since he shook the music world—both jazz and pop—in the late '60s, and helped launch the career of a restlessly gifted young pianist named Keith Jarrett? For after disbanding that '60s quartet at the height of its popularity, Lloyd seemed to simply disappear from the jazz scene. And while his re-entry actually began in 1981, when the 17-year-old French prodigy Michel Petrucciani knocked on his door in Big Sur, and Lloyd has gone on to record two albums with Petrucciani and two others under his own name, until the Coltrane tribute few fans seemed to be paying attention.

This makes Charles Lloyd smile. "All people know is what Freddie Hubbard said: 'Charles Lloyd? He's up on a hill meditating somewhere,'" he says. "People thought, 'He's too far-out to think about.' But I never lost my humor about it. Because sometimes, from a far place, from a place of quiet, you can get a lot done."

Today Lloyd lives much of the year on a hilltop property in Montecito, California—an affluent burg adjacent to Santa Barbara—in a modest hacienda of a house on 10 acres. The panoramic view, with the Pacific Ocean spread out below, is to die for, or to live for. Here, Lloyd meditates and acquiesces to his spiritual guru, Rama Krishna; he practices his tenor and writes music; he does business and checks on the real estate investments which have secured his future; he lives quietly with his wife, the artist Dorothy Darr, and his dog Josie.

The call for Lloyd's JVC fest appearance came from organizer Bill Cosby, a longtime fan, who thought the saxophonist would "bring something special" to the affair. It's an understandable conceit, for at his best, Lloyd taps into the Coltrane canon for his rubato extrapolations and impressionistic modal washes over sustained, suspended chords. His playing is gauzy, but energized with harmonic tension and musicality.

BY JOSEF WOODARD

PHOTOGRAPH: REISIG & TAYLOR / OUTLINE

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L TO R: AARON COMESS, MARK WHITE, ERIC SCHENKMAN AND CHRIS BARRON

BY JON YOUNG

BACK WHEN WE WERE WORKING CLUBS, WE CALLED IT OUR GOOD old days," remembers Spin Doctors guitarist Eric Schenkman. "Now we're playing theaters and trying to bring back that same vibe, so we've christened this the new good old days."

He's entitled to smile. A year after the release of *Pocket Full of Kryptonite*, New York's Spin Doctors recently had the unlikely pleasure of seeing their overlooked studio debut blossom into a hit. Most unproven bands would long ago have given up the album for dead, but this cool quartet has gone from also-ran to headliner. So how does an honorable flop become a gold record? Divine intervention? Satanic bargain? Try good old-fashioned hard work, in the form of endless touring, enhanced by belated radio interest.

"Our record company said right up front that they weren't gonna hype us," explains extra-skinny singer Chris Barron between forkfuls of salad at a Manhattan Italian restaurant. "They put us out on the road and allowed us to build up a following."

An ingeniously simple strategy, because once exposed to the music, anyone with ears can tell Spin Doctors are a superior rock 'n' roll band. Best known for *Kryptonite*'s mean-spirited radio hit "Little Miss Can't Be Wrong" (more about that later), the guys twist catchy pop tunes into intriguing shapes. While Barron's warm, sunny vocals stake out the melody, Schenkman alternates fat, chugging chords with lightning-bolt guitar solos, anchored by the uncommonly deft rhythms of bassist Mark White and drummer Aaron Comess. The songs range from three minutes to 10, from spacious '60s psychedelia to curt nouveau funk, but the Doctors always seem to know where they're headed.

It's the day before a big gig at Roseland, unofficially commemorating Spin Doctors' emergence as stars, and the boys are on dinner break, in the middle of rehearsing lesser-known tunes from their portfolio of 60 originals. The better to give the hometown crowd a memorable night, notes Schenkman. "We have a reputation now for having a good live show, so people expect a lot. We owe it to them to do the best we can."

> *"A crowd has big slow thoughts. I can read its mind."*

Delivering the goods onstage has been the Doctors' credo since they started practicing nearly four years ago. "We didn't want to start by shopping around demo tapes," recalls Schenkman. "This band was designed to pay the rent, if at all possible, so that we wouldn't have to go to work in the morning. We knew we had to gig to survive, and within about a year we weaned ourselves off our day jobs.

"I remember us saying, 'Do you think we have a sound?' We were freaking out because we thought we had a sound. It's hard to describe how amazing that feeling is."

Artistic fulfillment manifested itself in subtle

 PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT LEWIS

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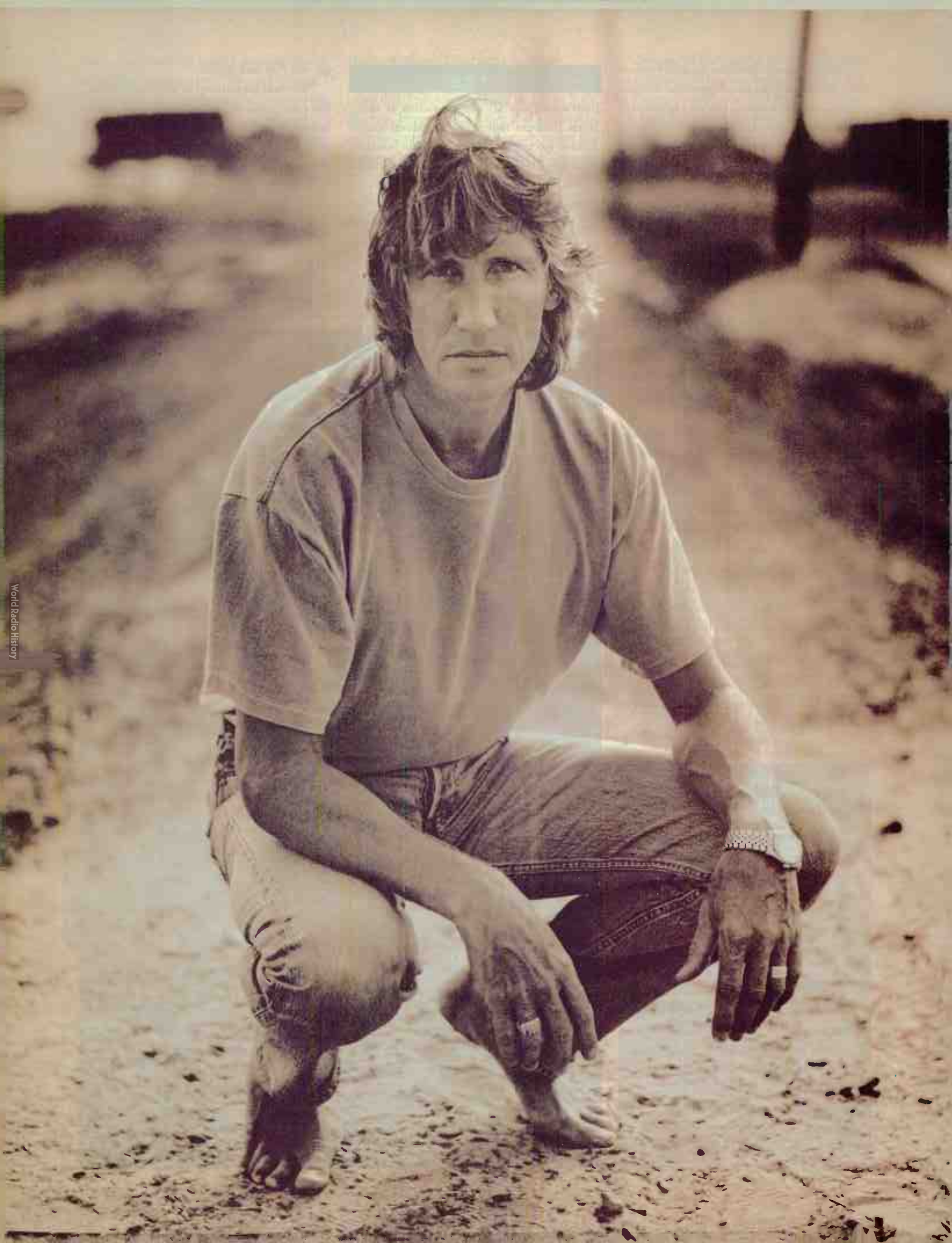

ROGER AND ME

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PINK FLOYD STORY

"Roger gave you an interview?" There was a slight lilt of surprise in Dave Gilmour's customarily baronial tone. "Well, yeah," I said, "he has a wonderful new album about media desensitization and the self-destruction of the human race." "Had he seen the article you did about me?" "He had. He was a bit miffed by some of the things you said, in fact." "If someone said such things about *me*," Dave laughed, "I'd sue them." Such things would have burned Roger's ears off even if he'd never seen them. Of course, he had. I'd faxed him some pre-publication excerpts as an invitation to rebut the tales

BY MATT RESNICOFF

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANK W. OCKENFELS 3

of Roger's egomania, dissentiousness and delusions Dave told in a

of London—I'd have been in with them breaking heads, and if I could destroy their right to free speech I would have. There comes a time when you have to stand your ground and say, 'What that guy's printing is wrong.' You can't climb onto cattle trucks shouting 'Everybody's entitled to their opinion.' No fuckin' way—they're *not* entitled to that opinion. However, I'm very anti-*People Who Try And Stop Us Saying 'Fuck' On The Radio*, because that is smokescreening.

"I was in L.A. for the riots. I didn't watch TV much, but I watched occasionally to see people having dialogues in the streets. I found it *fantastic*."

"I thought the dialogues were disheartening," I said. "In front of the smashed stores, people blithely looting and smiling."

"That didn't worry me. What was interesting was that they would take *anything*—it didn't matter what—and then come out and wave at the cameras on the way to the car. I thought that was actually rather *heartening*."

"Jeez..."

"Because it showed you they weren't ashamed; it was like they were *shopping*, they just weren't spending any money. It made you realize their lives were such that they didn't feel any guilt, at the time. Apparently a lot of them did later on: 'Hang on, maybe that was stealing.' Maybe I'm talking out of my ass, but I get a sense that in tough, downtrodden communities like south central L.A., a large part of the population have adopted some Christian ethic, and are very moral, proper American people who probably hang onto church and what that means in far more Christian ways than George Bush does. George Bush says, 'Jesus *wants* us to go murder people in Iraq. I happen to know that. We can go do whatever we like, secure in the knowledge that Jesus is on our side.' What a load of crap. A lot of those people are going, 'I don't think Jesus wants us to rob. Jesus wants us to help people,' all that passive stuff. So I had a lot of respect for the people stealing stuff and waving at the cameras.

"What happened with Rodney King was just a bunch of bullies beating somebody up. It was pure, simple *West Side Story*. It had nothing to do with the *law*. L.A. is an unbelievably racist town, and it's exacerbated by the influx of a recently arrived, economically strong Asian community. I had people not too far from the making of this record complaining about all the Japanese in their kid's school. Whose land is this? Is it any more yours than it was the Indians'? And why is it any more yours than the Japanese's, just because you're of European descent? You're all Americans. There's a weird thing developing about the Japanese just because they're good at making cars. Well, wake up! You taught them! You went in there after World War II and said, 'Guys, this is how you do it.' You destroyed their ancient culture, if you like. All right, they were a warlike people; they were expansionist—it's *inevitable*. That's what happens when you get a powerful and intelligent people who live on a tiny island. They learned how to do it, and they're doing it within the law. So just swallow it!"

"Well," I said, swallowing, "forgive me, but the same argument can be used to justify the recent actions of Gilmour, Mason and Wright."

"How?"

"'You taught them, you introduced the industry, they're expanding within the law.' Look at Pink Floyd as an industry, an institution; it continues, takes its lumps, absorbs your disdain. That you see it as a fraud parallels American prejudice against a cheap Japanese product. Slicker version, cheaper price."

"I don't...for you to work for a magazine called *Musician* and attempt to make that connection shows how desperate you are to get me to talk about Pink Floyd. I can't make a connection between what I do...writing songs

any songwriter can do, he knows you just can't fight city hall. Though God and recording them, making films, putting on rock 'n' roll shows, whatever it is I might want to do—I started writing poems and a bit of prose as well—I think that's intrinsically different than making automobiles. I don't see Dylan Thomas and Henry Ford as being in the same business. One tries to explain our condition, and by virtue of explaining it to himself, explains it to the rest of us, and the other is making motorcars, which explain nothing."

WHAT NEED HAS Roger Waters for subjection to such "journalism"? Like Benny, a put-upon character from his second solo record *Radio K.A.O.S.*, he's been treated somewhat unjustly; Benny throws a rock in protest and goes to prison, while his crippled brother, who can receive radio waves telepathically, prevails and changes the world. In this futuristic sketch, the innate desire to communicate is rewarded, if not with approval, then with peace. Waters' most optimistic, stylized statement was rewarded with the distinction of being the least memorable thing he's ever done.

"I WAS NEVER A BASS PLAYER. I'VE NEVER PLAYED ANYTHING."

WATERS, MASON, BARRETT AND WRIGHT

"You're absolutely right," he said. "I allowed myself to get pushed down roads that were uncomfortable for me. I should never have made that record, Matt. I love some of the songs—'Home' is one of the best things I've ever written. 'The Powers that Be' is great. And it comes out icky-prissy, because it's sequenced. I remember the producer saying one day, 'Oh no—that sounds old-fashioned,' and alarm bells went off in my head.

"After my experiences with *Pros and Cons* and *K.A.O.S.*—I would play in Cincinnati to 2,000 people in a 10,000-seat hall while my colleagues were playing in a football stadium down the road to 80,000 people, and it was a bit galling. But what I cling to from that *K.A.O.S.* tour is kind of like Henry V—'The fewer guys in the battle, the greater share of glory.' I like the fact that to those 2,000 people in that hall—and there were *loads* of them all over the middle west—it was kind of a little exclusive club. Because the people who came were fans. There was a strong feeling of connection I got."

Roger's colleagues Dave Gilmour, Nick Mason and Rick Wright—in that order—continued as Pink Floyd after Waters declared the group creatively bankrupt in 1986 and began full-time work on his first solo album *The Pros and Cons of Hitchhiking*. The album's story came to Roger in the same writing spurt as *The Wall* seven years earlier, and though it was the *less* autobiographical, was rejected by the group.

The biggest creative conflict Waters experienced during Pink Floyd's latter years was over two versions of *The Wall*'s "Comfortably Numb," one

GET SERIOUS

used to sing harmonies, but rarely sang any lead on his own. So the three of us sang. That's what being in a group's about: You all do what you can for the greater good. That's the buzz, as anybody who's ever been in a group will tell you. Of *course* he had to sing my stuff, because he doesn't write...but that's okay. It's all right for somebody to write and several people to sing."

"When Rick was expelled in 1979," I said, "the band dynamic changed; a rock quartet losing its keyboardist leaves a very crucial element of its sound to an outsider, like a session player. That alone is a real indication that you were effectively disbanding the group even then."

There was a very, very long pause.

"I think you could say that 'Wish You Were Here' was written, partially specifically about Syd, but largely about my sense of the absence of one from another, and from the band. So as far as I'm concerned, *Wish You Were Here* was the last Pink Floyd album. *The Wall* was my record and so was *The Final Cut*, and who played or didn't play on it—though I don't want to belittle Dave's contribution to *The Wall*. He played some great stuff, and wrote a couple of great guitar riffs as well: 'Run Like Hell,' the intro to 'Young Lust.' But by and large, those records were nothing to do with anybody but me. And certainly Ezrin's contribution to *The Wall* was far greater than anybody in the band. He and I made that record together. And he was a great help. You know, Rick had drifted out of range by that point.

"In 'Wish You Were Here,' we *weren't* there. All of us at different points had left, and I think in a way that's why it's a good record, because it honestly expresses that. The reason *The Wall* is a good record is because it's an honest autobiographical piece of writing of mine. And the machinery in place that enabled me to make that record was good. But it was only machinery by then; there was no question of there being a *group* anywhere. And the same with *The Final Cut*. And with the next one. And clearly, the problem with the *next* one is that it's a lot easier to replace a keyboard player than a writer. And if you don't write, it's very hard to produce art. You can do it, but it's *really* hard—you have to get *other* people to write it for you. And then it becomes really, really difficult. I *suspect*. That's not something I've had to do, because I write. That's the only way I can answer this specific question about Rick. You know, Rick had left *long* before the summer of '79—*long*, long before. He was *gone*. We split up years before. And it wasn't the unilateral and heinous, wicked thing that gets described in the *unofficial* histories."

"Do you take solace in the fact that a band shaped by your writing could continue so successfully as an institution?"

"What's all this about an institution wanting to continue? How does the institution suddenly develop a personality and an ego? Do institutions make decisions about what they want to do? Institutions are controlled by individuals. It's not an institution. Pink Floyd has no feelings—it's two words. I mean, it only exists as a label to describe something. I would prefer that it was used to describe what happened between 1965 and 1977, but that's not the case. It is being used to describe other things. Well, so be it. I made an attempt to stop that happening. I thought it was wrong that that label be used to describe something other than what I felt was the real deal, which was a group that Dave Gilmour and Nick Mason and Rick Wright and myself and Syd Barrett, in one form or

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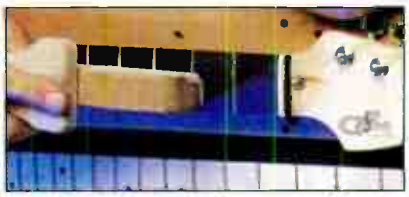

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another, were all part of over a period of 20-odd years. That's all. The institution hasn't decided anything. Various other *institutions* have."

ROGER TOOK A break, returned to the den and asked to run the recorder. "You can draw a line between what I'm interested in and what I'm not interested in," he said. "On one side you can name Dylan and Lennon, who observe the world and have *feelings*, and write songs directly from those feelings. On the vapid side you have pop groups who need material and write songs to fill the hole, rather than getting somebody else. But they might just as well get somebody else, because it's a manufacturing process. It's not poetry, because it doesn't spring from their heart or guts or wherever John Lennon's or Dylan's songs came from. And in my view—I seem to always wind up attacking poor Phil Collins," he laughs, "but it's only because he's so visible—he's symptomatic of an awful lot of it. He might well disagree and so might his fans, but the *feeling* I get is that he's pretending to be a songwriter or a rock 'n' roller. It's an act. That's why it's unsatisfying. And those videos underscore that feeling. If you cared about what you were doing, you would *not be able* to do that silly walk, one behind the other, because you would find it impossible to ridicule your work in that way. 'Mister Picasso, we think it would sell this work if you hung by your heels from a crane and held it upside-down with your trousers down.' Pablo's not gonna do that because he's serious about what he does. Just a passing thought. That's taken over an awful lot of the business. You could say, 'Well, why shouldn't it?' Absolutely *no* reason, so long as it doesn't take over and *squeeze* out the Lennons and Dylans because they're too good for it. They *won't* take their trousers down and do silly walks on the beach."

When Roger sings "God wants Semtex," it sounds like "God wants subtext," which could just as well be the pivot for his concept, and the last five years of his career. "'Semtex' is, in England, almost in common usage like 'Hoover,'" he said. "It's the most popular plastic explosive. Semtex was used to blow down Pan Am 103, and set against the other lyrics, 'sedition,' 'sex' and 'freedom,' it's shocking. But with all due respect to the people who lost relatives on the flight, what's really shocking is that the guys who put the Semtex on the plane were also doing *what God wanted*. They were fighting for freedom and for God in the same way as the American pilots who incinerated those people fleeing on the road to Basra. I can't turn my camera, or my brush, away from those ironies. They become the stuff of news stories, we assimilate them and we become inured to the horror. Of course, the women and children on Pan Am 103, and all the soldiers and their families on the road to Basra—maybe 2000 families—are completely fucked, for the rest of their lives. And who gains? What's the point? It confuses me."

"Is it less cathartic to write about subjects that present themselves so clearly, that can't really be transmuted by your art?"

"I don't know. I like working. Not all the *time*—I like fishing as well, and all kinds of other things. But I enjoy the process. As I said, I've been writing some poetry and prose, and what a surprise *that* is: You write, you read it, you say, 'This is all right, I think. I don't know; maybe it's not.' I always question stuff I do. There's a moment after making a demo of a song and sticking it on in the car when I really get off on it, but it doesn't last very long. And then when it's in a finished record and you listen to it once or twice, it's there, but again, it doesn't last. I think it is in the nature of all people who do these things—in the Lennon, the Dylan, the Pete Townshend manner, that come from the heart—that the gratification doesn't stay with you and you feel compelled to go start the process all over again. I think that is the burden all artists carry around."

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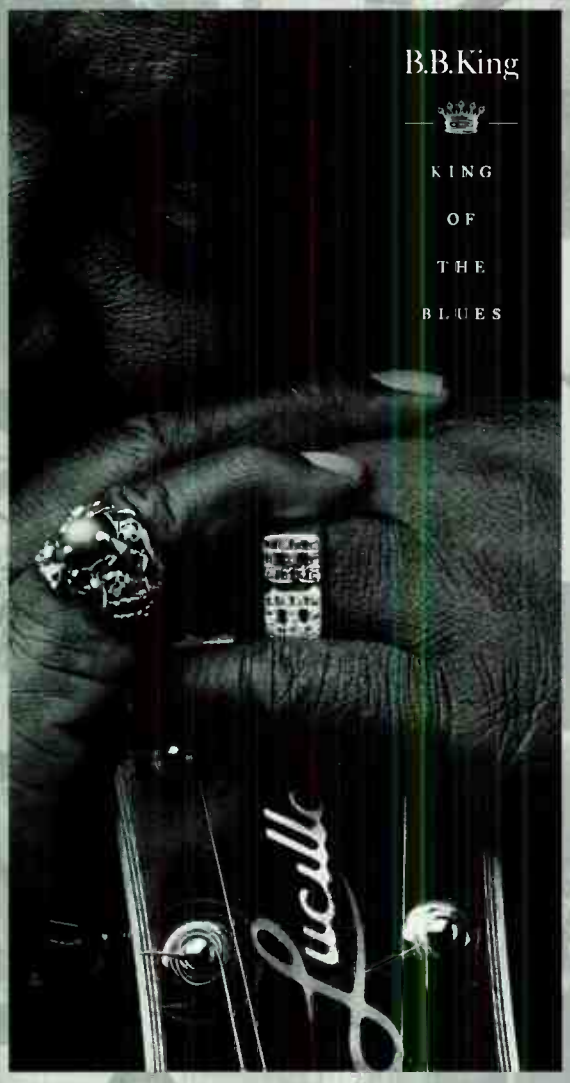

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NENEH CHERRY'S SOUL STEW

Her first album was Raw Like Sushi. Her new one is well done.

BY MARK ROWLAND

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS CARROLL

NENEH CHERRY LEFT school at 14, joined a band at 16 and had her first child, Naima, at age 19. Now 28, she's performed and recorded three albums with the British avant-funksters Rip Rig and Panic, lived in London, Sweden and New York, put together an international smash hit, "Buffalo Stance," that deftly fit rap's political brain into hip-hop's dancing shoes, enjoyed critical and commercial kudos with her debut

album, *Raw Like Sushi*, and brought into the world a second daughter, Tyson, whose father, Cameron McVey, a.k.a. Booga Bear, is Cherry's closest musical collaborator and the co-producer of her brand-new record, *Homebrew*.

So Neneh, do you ever get the feeling you're moving at a faster pace than everyone else? "No, I feel a lot slower!" she laughs. "'Cause I'm a Pisces and I really vague out. I don't always do the amount of things I should; sometimes I don't even read for months. And I'm definitely not the most serious person in the world.

"But I also feel I've got to get on with my stuff here, 'cause time is short. In this last period two dear friends of mine have died. Giving birth and losing people created a sense of calm, but also urgency. I think sometimes I'm 'in search,' like I'm on a mission, but something must have happened in the course of making this album—all of a sudden I really feel grounded. Probably temporarily," she laughs again. "But I'm feeling like, 'Let things be.'"

Cherry is taking in the palmy afternoon air at a patio table near the pool at a West Hollywood hotel; last night, having flown here from London for the MTV awards, she was introduced to "shooters," a drink from which she's mildly recovering. So if she's feeling less wired than usual today, she's got her reasons. Cherry's personality isn't all that different from her music: Both boast a wide range of expression, yet always seem to find their natural pulse.

In that respect it's no accident that her new record arrives an unhurried three years after the startling success of *Raw Like Sushi*, with a sound and with songs that feel as lived in as Cherry's home, where the music was recorded.

"There are a lot of people hungry for simplicity. Things get over-manufactured and by the time they reach you there's nothing left that relates to you."

"That's why we called it *Homebrew*," she says. "It *had* all gone down at home. Behind closed doors, me banging my head trying to get lyrics out, asking people for words—it's been a real knitting session. Obviously there was pressure: 'People are gonna forget who you are!'" she exclaims, lightly mimicking an anxious marketing executive refrain. "But we knew we couldn't rush it, and if we had it would have been blood, sweat and tears that wouldn't have been worth anybody's time. And if people are gonna forget who we are that quick, then we'll remind them—later."

Most fans won't need a reminder, but they may be surprised. "Buffalo Stance" came on like a bombshell, and the video provided ample evidence that Cherry was one too, while *Homebrew* suggests a character who has gained more focus and depth. Her first album was the latest fresh tip in a hip-hop scene where freshness was what really mattered. But *Homebrew* arrives at a moment when hip-hop and rap are taking greater stock of their cultural traditions, and Cherry's new batch brings to mind the classic '70s sound of artists like Curtis Mayfield and Minnie Riperton.

"Wow, what a compliment!" she responds to the comparison. "Well, those are records I will live and die by. I've been listening to Minnie Riperton all summer, she was a fantastic woman. But I think what it is, we've just expressed ourselves a bit better this time. And that's what made those records timeless, there was something about them that always made sense. That's why we didn't want to make just a dance album."

Cherry's frequent use of the word "we" when describing her work isn't English modesty; the album was deliberately conceived in a communal atmosphere, and fed off a disparate collection of local and far-flung talents. "The big part of this trip was being around Massive Attack—they were literally working on our landing at the top of the stairs—and watching them put their album together. We worked with people we met and liked as well as people who were well-known, to give it a different edge." The result is a record that includes collaborations with Michael Stipe ("Trout") and Guru from Gang Starr ("Sassy"). But there are also contributions from relatively untested talents like Geoff Barlow and Twilight Firm, who helped construct "Somedays" and "Twisted," respectively two of the album's more nuanced and sophisticated arrangements.

"I think we just traveled with it," she notes of the record's mostly unplanned twists and turns. "We took the time out we needed to soak up some inspiration, look around the world—so there'd be something to say! Then we let time take its course. We didn't spend months on every song taking it apart and changing it; we'd get to a certain point and then go off someplace else, and come back with a fresher perspective. 'Cause it's easy to get fed up with that bassline, you know, and then you want to change it and you lose it.

"I remember my daddy trying to teach me piano and I couldn't do it. Then I'd come back and it would all fall into place. This album was like that. It's more digested. I've grown the way anyone does, and so the album becomes a vehicle to move on to the next thing. You laugh and you cry...and now that the record is done it's like sending your kid off to school."

Cherry has a warm, down-to-earth manner. Dressed in red overalls and with little makeup, she has a casual yet dignified bearing, although as fashion spreads and videos indicate, she's not averse to playing the glamorpuss, either. "I come as I am—I can't play the game really," she avers. "But I can be in a situation and make the best of it, even if it's to get out of there quicker. That's when I'm working—it's a job, right?" She smiles at the thought. "It's not always easy. But everyone has that problem."

Certainly Cherry's musical choices have been anything but slick. After "Buffalo Stance" she resisted crafting another dance tune—even another dance tune with a message—and felt relieved when the brooding "Manchild" was released in England as a followup single:

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"'Buffalo Stance' was a good calling card, but we wanted it known that the album wasn't gonna be like that." Cherry's inventive mix of raps with straight-on singing, which seemed radical at the time, has since become part of the mainstream, a development she terms a "relief." But *Homebrew* still has its share of musical quirks. A couple of rough monitor mixes, replete with tape noise, have been left on the record. Songs and raps end abruptly, or segue from one to the other without a pause for breath. Odd sonic clinks jar the atmosphere of carefully constructed musical moods. It's all part of what Cherry calls her search for naturalness and "doing something that's from the heart."

"I think there are a lot of people hungry for that simplicity," she says. "I think things get over-manufactured and by the time they reach you there's nothing left that really relates to you. I mean, we can enjoy the campness of something that doesn't take itself seriously, that ABBA-esque kind of drama. But at the end of the day there's something that strikes a chord where you can't help but be moved by it.

"I saw Bruce Springsteen at the Amnesty International show in London. And having lived in New York, it was like all the white kids were into 'the boss,' you know?" she laughs. "That bandana posse thing. But he got up onstage and he was really pumpin' and his veins were bustin' out and you know—I liked it! I wouldn't buy the record but I liked it. And that's the power of real communication. If you're open enough to take it in, it'll get through to you, no matter what it is.

"I think Prince was one of the first people to break into the pop world with a twist. He wasn't just soul, there was a bit of Jimi and Sly Stone, and the rock thing...now you see hip-hop relating to jazz, and that's great. Because I think a lot of people have felt rootless. There's a wicked thing in America, which is that you have to deny who you are to be completely 'American.' I see it in Sweden now too, people are coming there from all over and there's this pressure to be 'Swedish.' And when people ask me where do I come from, I'm never really sure what to answer," she says drily. "I go, 'Well...that's really complicated.'"

Cherry is half-Swedish, on her mother's side. Her father is an African percussionist, but the couple separated when Neneh was young. Mostly she was raised by her mom and step-dad, the well-known jazz composer and trumpeter Don Cherry, with whom she retains an emotionally close if geographically distant relationship. The odd thing, she observes, is that growing up, "I had a trip where I didn't see myself as musical. My dad would try to teach me stuff and I would say no, I can't. I tried playing the bass for a while and didn't have the concentration...I was trying to get into it but I just didn't know what I was gonna end up doing. And then, I kind of found my way into it, and all the different ingredients that were handed down came into my life later."

As Cherry unfolds her story, it seems evident that her musical and social visions were influenced more by other members of the

CHERRY PIE

NENEH CHERRY's mike of choice is an AKG C12. *Homebrew* was recorded at Cherry Bear Studios in London on a Soundtrax Quartz 48 desk and Yamaha DMR 8 mobile. Electronic instrumentation included Akai MPC60 and S1100s, a Roland JD 800, JX3D, TR909 and D50 and a Yamaha RX7 and SY22. It was mixed on a Neve desk.

family. "My mother is a very, very serious woman," she says with obvious admiration of the Swedish artist Moki Cherry. "She's got a spirit and knack for survival that is really something. She's one of those people that can make a feast with five dollars. For some weird reason she trusted me when I was growing up, so she gave me a lot of space to move in. Then when I left home I found that I could cook food, I could put a house together, I could survive—and I learned it all from her. She's deep.

"And when I brought that little girl into the world—or when Naima *came* into the world—something happened emotionally, something really opened up. It's not just, 'I'll do whatever the hell I want.' You've got this commitment and bond."

Though Cherry voices the standard songwriter disclaimer about her work ("they're not really about me"), there are biographical details, and songs based on persons and situations she's encountered. More telling is Cherry's knack for weaving vignettes together in a way that's at once familial and universal. "Buddy X," which Cherry based on an acquaintance, is a cautionary tale about marital infidelity that touches on larger issues of integrity and self-respect. "Trout," written with Michael Stipe, includes a topical message about the importance of children's education and the invidious effects of state censorship. The album's chilling closer "Red Paint" is another true story in which the victim of a shooting bleeds quietly by the door to a city market, whose patrons continue with their shopping, their shoes dragging his blood across the floor. "I Ain't Gone Under Yet" evokes a woman living in poverty without compromising dignity, and eloquently lancing the arrogance of political figures who preach, as Cherry puts it, "that if you just pull your act together you can get a job."

Through it all runs a consistent if currently underemployed definition of "family values."

"The only real shame is that people have to be personally affected, like you need a war at your back door before you realize that you don't want to send your kids to war," Cherry opines. "But I can't help but hope. Every little thing counts, doesn't it."

On one of Cherry's fingers, almost unseen among a gaggle of elaborate snake rings, is one of those little things, a wedding ring signifying her recent marriage to Cameron McVey. "We really *were* married before," she says. "We just wanted to celebrate it. We'd come out from the album and this work-heavy year and we were still there. We do just about everything together, though work is a separate thing—well, it is and it isn't," she admits. "If we're working and Cameron touches me accidentally or not, I always get kind of embarrassed, like, 'Don't do that, 'cause I'll melt.' Or I'll get shy if I'm showing him ideas, playing tapes—I feel like a little girl or something."

On "Twisted," perhaps the key song on *Homebrew*, Cherry sings about the tentativeness of a romantic relationship, and by extension the kind of wary optimism with which she tends to view the world. "That song is about him," she says. "'Cause when I met him it was like he knew me, it was the weirdest thing. He went, I can help you, you know. And I felt something I'd never felt before but at the same time I was trying to brush off. It's that line in the song: 'You pushed your way through my attitude.' My friends were all saying you really need some time on your own, don't be falling into a relationship, and so here I was going against my grain for some weird principle. And at the end of the day it was like, I don't care. If we make it through we make it, and if we don't it'll still be worth it for what it was."

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With all the SOUND you want, and more EFFECTS than you'll ever need, these exciting, innovative products from Peavey Electronics take you, the musician, to the edge of music technology and beyond! Check it out! **FACT 1** The PRO-FEX is a proven favorite among professional guitarists. This powerful *Guitar Multi Effects Preamp* is capable of up to 16 simultaneous effects, and effect blocks may be arranged in any desired order. With individual mix or level controls, the effect blocks can be combined in series or parallel for added flexibility. Also, the 128 preset effect chains were created by today's leading guitarists! Some of the **29 effects types** available are Compressor, Distortion, Chorus, Delay, Pitch Shift, Reverb, Exciter, EQ (4 types). MORE FACTS: 5-segment LED array for input/headroom adjustment, up to 4 optional programmable function footswitches, dynamic effect parameter control via MIDI continuous controllers, stereo headphone output, optional PRO-FEX II MIDI Controller, and much, much more. The PRO-FEX's wide variety of effects and features offers you maximum flexibility! **FACT 2** The new PRO-FEX II *Guitar Multi-Effects Preamp* takes the applications of an instrument preamp/effects processor a step further. Building upon the success of the PRO-FEX, a movable, programmable effects loop (which may be placed anywhere in the chain), a RAM cartridge slot (the RAM cartridge adds storage for 128 more sounds and a third program bank), and an optional dedicated PRO-FEX II MIDI Controller have been added to an already powerful package. So, with the PRO-FEX II, you get many of the original PRO-FEX features plus added possibilities! MORE FACTS: two Pitch Shifters can be placed in separate locations, panned to either side, and mixed independently. A separate user and factory preset bank allows you to create up to 128 custom effects while still providing access to the 128 factory sounds. Each effect has independent mix and level controls, and up to 8 simultaneous effects can be placed in any desired order and combined in series or parallel. **33 effect types** are available. Excellent distortion sounds, coupled with the ability to use several EQ types at once, give you maximum flexibility through your effects! **FACT 3** The new BASS-FEX *Bass Guitar Multi-Effects Preamp* is our response to what professional bass guitar players told us they wanted in an instrument preamp/effects processor. Whether you want up to 8 simultaneous effects positioned in a single (stereo) chain, or a splitter/biamp (crossover) effect (which allows you to split your chain at any point and follow it with separate effects on either side), the BASS-FEX offers you maximum flexibility. Some of the **34 effects types** available are Compressor, Distortion (2 types), Chorus, Delay, Pitch Shift, Reverb, EQ (4 types that can be used simultaneously), Exciters, Speaker Simulator, movable effects loop, and many more! MORE FACTS: Like the PRO-FEX II, the RAM Cartridge provides storage for 128 new presets and a third program bank. A separate user and factory preset bank allows 128 custom sounds to be created, while still providing immediate access to the 128 factory sounds. Also, the BASS-FEX has individual mix and level controls. In addition, the optional dedicated PRO-FEX II MIDI Controller has been added for maximum flexibility and convenience! **FACT 4** Once again, Peavey technology proudly leads the pack with the addition of the PRO-FEX II MIDI Controller. This innovative MIDI Controller is designed to give you variety, convenience, and ease of use. The PRO-FEX II MIDI Controller may be used as a smart, dedicated controller for the PRO-FEX II and the BASS-FEX (which allows you to display the current preset name and chain, bypass individual effects in a chain, and control effect parameters), or with an optional power supply it may be used with the PRO-FEX (or any other MIDI equipment) as a general purpose MIDI program and control change controller.

All these facts are practically unbelievable, so you'll have to contact your nearest authorized Peavey dealer to see and hear them for yourself!

Try the PRO-FEX, PRO-FEX II, BASS-FEX, and MIDI Controller together or separately, and believe the facts...after all, they're from Peavey!

Made in the USA

The NEW POWER GENERATION *learns that*
PLAYING WITH PRINCE *is a* PRIVILEGE *both*
SUBLIME *and* GRUESOME

POP Life

LIKE EVERY ONE OF THE MILLION BANDS IN MINNEAPOLIS, Doctor Mambo's Combo had known this could eventually happen and were trying to get through it without losing their heads. There he was again. Watching them, listening to them, judging them. Prince had started appearing at the band's gigs with creepy regularity. Clearly he had something in mind. Or somebody. The band tried to keep focused on their playing, but each of them wondered if *he* was the one Prince was considering. Billy Franze, the guitar player, was in his 40s, a lifelong rocker with a red mohawk and better chops than 90 percent of the musicians with record deals. Maybe after two decades devoted to dues paying and music making he was finally going to win the lottery. With Prince there was no way of knowing. He came down from his castle on the hill, studied the peasants at his leisure and then, once in a while, pointed a finger at one of them and said, "You." It was like Prince Charming with his glass slipper. It was like Dracula.

Michael Bland, the drummer with Doctor Mambo, was just a kid, barely out of his teens, playing in the band for fun while he finished college. Michael was majoring in theology, reading Nietzsche in his spare time, and was not about to peg his life to music and

By BILL FLANAGAN

Photographs By JEFF KATZ

NPG (L-R): MICHAEL BLAND, SONNY THOMPSON, KIRK JOHNSON, PRINCE, LEVI SEACER JR., TONY M., TOMMY BARBARELLA AND DAMON DICKSON FLANKING MAYTE GARCIA— DANCER AND INSPIRATION FOR PRINCE'S NEW ALBUM.

end up playing in bars in 20 years. One Sunday afternoon his phone rang. It was Prince. Would Michael like to join Prince's band? The glass slipper.

"The way Prince honors people is, he chooses them," Michael explains. "I was chosen by Prince, I didn't have an audition. He just called me and asked me to do it and I said, 'Yeah!'" Three years after being chosen, Michael is dressed in flowing black robes and a big jeweled hat. He is here in London with Prince for a week of concerts at Earls Court. He is part of the New Power Generation. It is a wonderful and terrible honor.

Ricky Peterson must be a man of either remarkable integrity or lunatic ego. Any musician who spends years working in bars a thousand miles from the nearest major record label knows that a shot at playing with a superstar comes, if you are very, very lucky, once in a lifetime. While populating the New Power Generation with musicians from the same scene that spawned him must offer Prince an extra level of comfort and ease of communication, it also (intentionally or not) gives Prince a lot of control over his band. After all, if Prince hired some top gun like Doug Wimbish or Nils Lofgren or Nathan East and one day the top gun didn't feel like wearing his black robes and big hat, he might tell Prince no. But no one who's been yanked from bar-band obscurity and dropped into the world of intercontinental travel, limousines and screaming fans is going to do anything to risk screwing it up. As one of Prince's employees says when no one else is around, "People disappear around here. One day you come to the gig and you say, 'Where's Joe?' 'Joe's gone.' 'What happened?' 'He must have done something Prince didn't like.' 'What did he do?' 'He doesn't know. Nobody knows. He's just gone.'"

That's the sort of fear that keeps things extremely professional.

> "THE VISION *is really left up to* PRINCE. *We're the* MUSICIANS. *We're just* DOING OUR PART. *It's like the* MANHATTAN PROJECT. *You don't know what you're working on.*"

Michael still thinks of Billy and the other musicians he left behind.

"Billy's a real musician," the drummer says. "I just wonder why he didn't get his chance. If I ever get enough leverage in the industry he'll be one of the first people I make sure gets to be heard. I owe him that much. I don't know what it's like for them to be still there. I don't know what goes through their heads when I'm out here doing this and they're back at home doing...that."

Michael heads down the backstage corridor at Earls Court. It's a couple of hours before showtime and the dressing rooms are buzzing. Diamond and Pearl, the pretty dancing girls, hurry by looking a little less otherworldly than they will when the spotlights and makeup kick in. Organist/singer Rosie Gaines sits quietly chatting with a friend. Prince himself glides by rapper Tony Mosley in some sort of white superhero suit and extremely high heels. Michael heads into one of the band rooms, where he joins bassist Sonny Thompson, guitarist Levi Seacer and keyboard player Tommy Barbarella.

Sonny and Tommy used to play in a part-time band with Michael called the Flash, but their main gig was with the Steeles. They were pulled into Prince's orbit when the Steeles contributed to the soundtrack for Prince's movie *Graffiti Bridge*. Since losing Sonny and Tommy, the Steeles have not been the same.

"Basically, Prince goes after whatever he wants," Michael says. "He makes the call and if you want the gig, it's yours."

So if a Minneapolis band starts to happen, there's a chance Prince will appear and pull the best people out?

"Don't say *pulled*," Levi cautions. "It's like, 'Hey, I like the way you play and if you want to do this thing, it's open.' It's an opportunity. I used to play with Rosie but when I joined Sheila E.'s band it was an *opportunity*."

"I always wanted to play with Prince," Sonny adds.

"You can help your friends more from this," Levi says, "than from just staying there, sticking it out."

Did anybody ever tell Prince no?

The four musicians confer. "Didn't Ricky Peterson say no?" Tommy asks.

"Yeah, Ricky Peterson said no," Sonny answers, "but he said no to *Miles*."

Everyone laughs and says, "Ricky Peterson's just one of them *No* dudes, he wants to do his thing."

TONIGHT, PRINCE DECLARES, is $150 funk night. That means that whichever member of the New Power Generation—rapper, dancer or musician—comes up with what Prince judges to be the wildest surprise during the show wins $150. The musicians feel at a disadvantage, because they have to be onstage *playing* the whole time. The dancers get to hang in the wings and plan. Sure enough, the dancers return from one break wearing some sort of bizarre Egyptian robes. Prince likes it. $150 to the dancers!

The show is spectacular on every level. Prince does songs from his new album (the official title is a combination of the symbols for "Man" and "Woman"; for the sake of convenience we will refer to it here as *Hermaphrodite*) as well as crowd-pleasers dating back to "1999." After the house lights go up Prince lurks unseen under the stage, sending roadies to warn the band that they are going to go back on as soon as the house is half-empty. Prince crouches, he waits and then he springs, pounding out a roof-burning funk jam while kids trample each other rushing back into the hall. After that finale finishes the band buses squeeze through a street-strangling knot of British fans and back to their hotel. Time to relax, hit the bar and—news flash—Prince has decided to do a recording session! All hands on deck!

Obviously being in the New Power Generation is a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day commitment. "Oh yeah," Michael smiles, "if you're in there, you're in there. Like the fire department."

Levi finds that hilarious. "Fire department!"

"You get time off," Michael shrugs. "You just don't know when you're gonna get it. You have to just...risk it."

Levi adds, "And then either get cussed out for not being around or say, 'Whew, I made it.'"

How long can you maintain a commitment to something so demanding?

"Maybe another couple of weeks," Levi says, then he laughs. "No. The tour's got a couple of weeks to go. It's not like torture. We're in a very unique situation and I think everyone in the band feels lucky to be here. We get a chance to play every style of music. Nobody even puts a name on us. I think everybody feels, 'Hey man, as long as there's some wood to burn to keep this train going, let's go.'"

ONE REASON the New Power Generation comes up with music that doesn't sound exactly like anything anyone's heard before is that each member of the band hears music slightly differently. When they throw their ideas together they are sometimes blessed with a healthy *mis*communication. Take "Willing and Able," a tune on *Diamonds and Pearls* that might strike the listener as Prince's tribute to *Superfly*-era Curtis Mayfield. Michael describes that song originating with a spontaneous studio jam in Japan, when he began playing a drum pattern he remembered from an old Rockpile record. Levi had the bass in his hands and joined in, but he wasn't thinking Rockpile—he was thinking ska. Tony M. got the idea of rapping over the track—which he, focusing on the chord changes, thought of as Mississippi delta music. Talk to Michael, Levi and Tony separately and you'll discover that each of them still hears "Willing and Able" through the ears he brought to it at the beginning. The listener, though, hears something else, the sound of all those ideas working together to make something new.

"With Prince," Levi says in the hotel restaurant on a very sleepy Sunday afternoon, "you try everything. That's the biggest thing I've learned from him. If it doesn't work you can always take it out, but if it *does* work... There's no limit."

"It's constant surprise," Michael says, landing in a chair across from Levi. "He's always thinking of something I've never thought of before, so of course it sounds wrong to me at its conception. For a lot of people, every record that he comes out with they go, 'I *hate* this thing! I don't know where he's coming from now!' Then half a year passes and they say, 'I really dig that.' I was that way for a long time. I didn't dig Prince till '87, man. Till 1987 I never liked anything he did. Then *Parade* came out and I was like, 'Wow, he can do *that*?' It was totally different. *Purple Rain* was a mainstream success, then *Parade* came out and I was floored." He adds diplomatically, "Then I went back and bought everything."

Prince's shows operate at so many levels—from circus to symbolism—that the viewer can remain detached and enjoy the spectacle, or start pondering the big themes and enjoy the speculation. Although Levi warns that Prince is a sharp enough showman to make people think there is more subtext to his work than there may really be, Michael agrees that Prince's recent music and concerts are to some degree addressing the possible reconciliation of apparent opposites—rich and poor, black and white, east and west, love and violence, and—most of all—man and woman.

"We don't really talk that much about concept," Michael says. "The vision is really left up to him. We're the musicians. We're here to help him focus on that vision, to get it a little clearer. We're just doing our part. To use a terrible analogy, it's like the Manhattan Project. We're just working on one piece at a time. You don't know *what* you're working on, really."

"Until it's done," Levi adds.

"Until it's done," Michael agrees. "And then we see, 'Oh right—there *are* some dualisms there.' But we never know until later on."

The E Street Band used to say that they would record a song like "Fire" or "Because the Night" and figure, boy, that one's a hit—and then the album would come out and those songs would be replaced by something like "Factory" that was far less compelling musically, but which fit Springsteen's theme. The New Power Generation say they identify with that.

"We see a lot of material going past," Levi says. "It either goes down to the vault or to somebody else. I'm sure it's important to have a hit all the time, but I think with artists of the stature of Bruce or Prince you come to a point where you *know* what it's like to be at the top. Now you want to do something for your own soul. You can say, 'I don't know what everybody else will say, but *I* think this is great.'

"I think that's something the public doesn't understand. They always want a number one, they always want hits. Now Prince can do that. Prince can do a number one any time he wants to. But it's a journey, man, it's a journey. And if you want to go on the trip then you gotta go wherever the train is going."

Tonight the train is going to a private party at a small London club. Too small, as it turns out. The band had hoped to have a jam session for their friends and guests, but the club, Tramps, is so tiny that there's no room to set up gear. It's just an entry hall with a couple of couches

"IN BLACK MUSIC *a kid won't go out and* BUY A GUITAR *or a set of* DRUMS. *He's gonna buy a* MACINTOSH. *Prince thinks that if kids knew* HOW MUCH FUN *it is to play, they'd probably play.*"

and two posh rooms not much bigger than any rich guy's study. After recording all night and sleeping all day, getting tarted up and marched to an enforced festivity is not the NPG's idea of fun. But this is their job, so at 9:30 p.m. the group—in full flash gear—begin assembling in the hotel lobby. Mike Pagnotta, Prince's principal publicist, is getting an ulcer. He told them they had to *leave* at 9:30! Pagnotta starts calling the rooms, telling procrastinating NPGs to get the hell down here. Once he's roped everybody in, he splits them into two groups—New Power Generation in the first limo, dates and friends in the second. There will be photographers outside the club, Pagnotta explains, so the NPG has to get out of the same car and enter in one group. Their friends can catch up later.

One thing you pick up on after spending a few days in Prince's world is that everything is work. Since Prince is not good at giving interviews—but does want publicity—his publicists have to hustle all the time to create events to get Prince's name in the papers. So a phony story about one of Prince's new protegées being pregnant with his child shows up in the gossip columns; then Prince puts out a single called "Sexy Motherfucker" which stirs up enough controversy to get him in the news pages; then the loony claim that Warners has just given Prince a $100 million contract gets his name in the financial section. It's all nonsense, but if the media have gotten so greedy (or so gullible) that they are willing to repeat hype, whose fault is that? Not Prince's and not the publicists'. The only suckers who believe that baloney are suckers who want to believe it. The New Power Generation treat such PR duties with the *let's get it over with* resignation of kids being dressed up for a school portrait.

En route to the club William Graves, the NPG DJ, lets out a howl. "Guess what I forgot!" he yells. He forgot "My Name Is Prince," the surprise new track he is supposed to debut at tonight's party. The band tells the driver to turn the car around and go back to the hotel. They know that Mike Pagnotta's ulcer just got worse. When the NPG-mobile finally pulls up at Tramps, the sidewalk is filled with snapping paparazzi and squealing fans. The band jumps out of the car, smiles, waves and rushes through the velvet ropes into the basement club. The wood-paneled walls and Victorian furniture aspire to old-world elegance but, as Sonny points out, "This place looks like a haunted house! I expect to see ghosts comin' through the walls!"

Hey, Sonny, that's not a ghost, that's Boy George. And—call the exorcist—there's Tom Jones! This is one exclusive party. Rod Stewart wafts in with Rachel Hunter on his arm, Malcolm McLaren appears and starts cadging free drinks, and Mick Jagger floats in with Jerry Hall. Michael Bland lights up: "Hey, I met Mick once before!" he says, "I gotta go say hello." The drummer walks up to greet Jagger, who brushes right past him. Michael comes back to the NPG table ripping. "He blew me off, man! Mick Jagger blew me off!"

Well, Michael is reminded, you know how cold Prince sometimes has to be just to get through a room—you've seen him cross a whole hotel lobby ignoring a small child tugging on his coattail and calling his name. "Yeah, I know," Michael fumes, "but Mick's coming to *my* party!"

Sonny takes a seat at the foot of the stairs with Diamond and Pearl. As time drags along they begin to wonder if Prince is perhaps not coming. Sonny asks Pagnotta for permission to leave. NO! Sonny sits down. Two big security men with genuine Secret Service earphones come down the stairs,

blazing a trail. Then, like Scarlett O'Hara descending her staircase, comes Prince.

And it's funny. He doesn't seem any more comfortable or in charge here than anybody else. He makes small talk with Sonny and the dancers, he wanders around the small rooms. He nods politely when Tom Jones comes up and gladhands him (just two randy blokes in tight trousers who had hits with "Kiss"). Prince really is just a guy. His reputation, however, is so huge that the other stars at his party swirl around him in a Rolex vortex. Prince can say *anything* and people throw their heads back and howl with laughter and go, "HA HA! 'Nice place!' Great one, Prince! '*Nice place!*' Did you hear what Prince said? HO HO HO!" At one point Prince is standing in a small group saying nothing remotely interesting when Mick Jagger comes up and starts talking and the first thing you think is, "Gee, I wish Mick would quit interrupting Prince." Then you realize how nuts that is. *He's got YOU doing it.* But that's star power, and Prince works to maintain it like some throwback to Hollywood's golden age.

Prince goes and sits in the corner with Kate Bush. He's a big fan of her album *Hounds of Love* and she sent him one of her songs, which Prince rewrote and re-recorded and returned to her for use on her next album. The musical team-up thus succeeded far better than Prince's similar attempts to collaborate with Joni Mitchell and Bonnie Raitt, both of whom ended up saying something along the lines of, "Hey, Junior, I've been in this business a long time—I'm not Trilby and you ain't Svengali." Prince makes small talk with Kate, Rod and Rachel on one side of them, Mick and Jerry on the other, and the DJ cues up "My Name Is Prince." Whoops, go the New Power Generation when the song comes on, time to get to work. They all put down their drinks and go onto the tiny dance floor, where for the duration of the track they move with the stylish interracial high-fashion grace of an MTV video come to life. Prince acts like he doesn't notice, but the effect is striking. As soon as the song is over the NPG all go back and sit down and return to what they were doing.

It's important that you understand how this stuff works in case you get home tomorrow night and the phone rings and it's Prince asking you to join the New Power Generation. Prince is a great bandleader, a brilliant singer and songwriter, a fine musician, innovative record producer and one of the world's greatest performers. Let's face it, he's probably the most talented rock musician of his generation; of course you're going to accept. But as you pack your bag you might ask yourself, "What do I need to bring with me?" You won't need your instrument—Prince will supply you with great new gear. You won't need your clothes—Prince will have you tailored and dressed like a Mardi Gras queen. You certainly won't need money—Prince will take care of all your material desires. No, if Prince calls and asks you to join the New Power Generation you will need only two things—a Mack truck filled with Wonder Bread and a U-Haul of mayonnaise. Because working for Prince means going through a ton of baloney.

IT WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS. Sonny Thompson met Prince when Sonny was 15 and Prince was 13. Sonny waited 20 years for his callback. Growing up in Minneapolis, he and Prince both led groups. "He had a band called Grand Central," Sonny says. "I had a band called the Family. We'd play the same places. We used to hang out and jam and play all night. I had all the equipment in my base-

ment. He'd come over and play the drums, play the keyboards. He was talented for years, people just didn't know it. I mean, everybody on the north side of Minneapolis knew it...

"We would play the standard grooves: some Clinton, some Sly, James Brown, Earth, Wind & Fire. We'd work some original stuff and just try it, see what happens. We were playing places like the Cozy Bar, Peacock Alley, the schools, the WMCA, the Black Community Center. We'd throw dances and everybody could come in and party. It was cool back then. It's a lot different now. Minneapolis has changed so much, 'cause so many people have come in from different places. You've got gangs now. There were no gangs back at that time. It's a weird place now." Sonny catches himself and amends, "I love it, but it's a weird place.

"At one time Prince played in my band. Maybe for about a month. He was trying to go to New York at the time. We hired him, we paid him straight out. We were saving our money so we could buy equipment. He played guitar and keyboards."

Sonny played on Prince's demos, and then while Sonny's band and all the other local groups worked on upgrading their equipment and getting better bar gigs, Prince took his tape to New York and got a record deal.

"A lot of people were shocked," Sonny says. "But I always believed he was going to do it, 'cause we always talked about what we were going to do; 'I'm gonna have real strings on my album!' Prince always had the vision of really wanting to be big in the industry.

"Most of the guys were shocked, though. They were like, 'Man! *Prince* has got an *album* out!' I said, 'I told you he was gonna do it!'" Sonny pauses and asks, "What else *could* he do? He just worked around the

BLUE LIGHTS

LEVI SEACER plays a Gibson Epiphone ("Because my stuff is *clean* stuff") straight into the board. He has a rack-mounted Zoom unit 9010, a Cry Baby chorus pedal, a Roland GP8 and a Boss digital delay pedal. On "Thunder" and "Live for Love" Levi pulls out an Ibanez guitar with double humbucking pickups. Levi uses D'Addario strings. When TONY M. reaches for a guitar, it's either a Charvel or a hollowbody Epiphone. Tony's strings are either GHS lights or Dean Markleys. He has a Zoom effects processor. SONNY THOMPSON plays an Oswald bass (though he admits his favorite is an Alembic, "a great bass") with a GB8 effects processor, an Akai Octaver and a Boss Octaver. Sonny uses a Heavy Metal distortion pedal and plugs into a Trace Elliot amp. He prefers GHS heavy strings because "they seem brightest—they keep the *boing* longest."

ROSIE GAINES plays a Hammond organ onstage, and has a Korg and Roland D-50 MIDI'd to the Hammond. Rosie sings through Shure microphones. Rosie is also leaving the NPG to go out on her own. TOMMY BARBARELLA plays a Roland A80 and an A50 controller, a Korg T3, an old Prophet which he uses on "Kiss" and a few others "for that old analog sound." Tommy also carries a new Roland JD800, a couple of E-mu E-max 2s, a Proteus 1 and Proteus 2, and a Roland D550. MICHAEL BLAND's drums are a combination of Sonor, Yamaha and Gretsch, with Zildjian cymbals and Vater sticks. Trying to get more details out of Michael is useless. "I abhor shop talk," he says. "I don't know when we change heads, I don't know when we get new cymbals. I don't have any emotional attachments to gear at all."

clock, always writing tunes and playing. It was just inevitable.

"There was some feeling like," Sonny adopts a nasty, jealous voice, "'Ahh! Prince! So what? He got a deal, huh? I can do that!' There were people like that. And there were people who were glad. I was really happy for him because I knew what he went through. It wasn't a piece of cake. It was long hours. He put a lot of work into it."

Asked if he saw Prince in the long years between those demos and Sonny's invitation to join the New Power Generation, the bassist looks away and says vaguely, "Oh yeah, I seen him from time to time out in clubs. Or I'd see him on the street."

Did you feel bad he didn't invite you to join any of his projects?

"Not really. I was trying to explore my instrument at the time. I really didn't feel I was ready. I was still learning all my scales and technique and playing with jazz groups and just discovering other music." Sonny's face brightens. "But I was damn happy when he called me! Like, I'm ready! I'm ready!"

Pretty amazing to play with someone when you're kids, go separate ways for years, and hook up with him again when he's an international success.

"Oh yeah, it's amazing," Sonny says. "I think about that a lot. He's just grown into this mega-musical monster. He was great then, but some of the stuff I hear him play now I'm like, 'Where did you get that from, man?' It's like he's got a *pipeline*, stuff just being piped in." Sonny shakes his head and says, "It's great."

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER New Power Generation Promotional Event. This time the band's making an in-store appearance at a London record shop. In the cab on the way, Michael Bland talks about Prince's pipeline to the muse: "He's most fluid improvisationally on piano, I'd say. But, man, he's one of the *greasiest* bass players on the planet. He really is an intense bass player. His feel's recognizable instantly. But he seems to have his own voice on every instrument, really. What's funny is he reminds me a lot of Thelonious Monk on all of them. It's just that combination of a sense of humor and a sense of adventure in his playing. On every instrument he thinks, 'Okay, what's missing?' He plays like a composer all the time."

Rosie said that what the members of the New Power Generation have in common is that they are "all goofballs." Anything deeper?

"Oh gee," Michael says, looking a little embarrassed. "We have our sense of community, but it's more *upholding* something. We really feel—whether or not this is true, and in no way do I mean to sound condescending—like we're the only ones doing what we're doing. In black music things have gotten to a point where a kid won't go out and buy a guitar or a set of drums. He's gonna buy a Macintosh. Almost every track on *Diamonds and Pearls* has real drums. Prince has, we all have in the back of our minds that if kids knew how much fun it is to play, they'd probably play. But they don't know so it's going to take somebody like Prince to bring playing back. We feel we're doing our share of bringing back the live thing—no DAT, no sequencers, no nothing. We have our share of electronics but everything is done live, for real. That's the thing that's missing in black music now."

Lately Prince has allowed two other voices to share his songs with him—singer Rosie Gaines and rapper Tony Mosley. Backstage before that night's concert, Rosie talks about the remarkable amount of freedom Prince has granted her: "At rehearsal or soundcheck

we'll just create certain things or jam on a song. All of a sudden I can sing something or Tony will rap something and Prince will say, 'Hey, that's funky! Let's use that.' He told me, 'The stage is yours. Do what you want to do. If you feel like singing, then sing.' That's what keeps it so interesting up there. He gave me that kind of freedom and I think he gave the same to Tony. I can go way out in left field if I want to, as long as I get back to the base."

Ever get out there and then wonder how you're going to get back?

Rosie laughs. "Oh yeah! I have those nights! I think Prince also has those nights. Sometimes we don't know exactly what he's going to do. He does 'Purple Rain' different each night. We don't know if he's going to say, 'I want the solo to go for another 16 bars,' or if he's going to cut it and go back into the song. So it's being aware of each other and being in tune with each other. This band is like fitting into a glove."

And the "goofball" criteria?

"Having that sense of comedy is what makes everybody get along together. Each individual in this band is extremely talented and locked together. It's a spiritual thing to me. We have nights where everybody is positive and everything just works. We have had nights when nothing works at all, because people are in a different frame of mind."

Occasionally Prince's sense of humor—and NPG camaraderie—comes at the expense of musicians Prince sees as rivals. When Guns N' Roses come to one concert Prince plays his ass off on guitar and then announces, "This is NOT rock 'n' roll." When George Michael shows up another night Prince leads the band through the thickest funk they can cook up and then yells, "George Michael has LEFT the building!" Prince seems to have a particular burr up his butt about U2; in the studio he comes up with a difficult, technically impressive part and then asks, "What do you think U2 will do when they hear *that*?" His greatest antagonist, though, is the *other* enigmatic singing/dancing/crotch-grabbing superstar—Prince takes shots at Michael Jackson all the time. His main dig at the King of Pop is the couplet "Come to your senses/ There are no Kings—only Princes," which hangs at the backstage entrance on a sign, leaps from Prince's lips during the concerts and is faxed to the press by his publicists. Public feuds, too, are good PR.

But if Prince takes no prisoners among his peers, he has backflipped regarding the most popular genre in black music. These days, as the presence of Tony M. makes clear, Prince is making room for rap. The hip-hop community took umbrage at what were considered Princely put-downs of the form on the unreleased but much bootlegged *Black Album*. According to Tony M., that was all misunderstanding.

"It's a misconception a lot of people had," Tony says while getting ready for the next show. "A lot of people thought 'Get On It' was very derogatory. That wasn't it at all. In the mid-'80s rap wasn't saying anything but, 'Yo, baby! Party all the time! I got this, I got that.' In the late '70s and early '80s Grandmaster Flash and Grandmaster Melle Mel were *saying* something, but then it went back to strictly party stuff. Then, after that, we got KRS-One, Chuck D, Heavy D., saying things that maybe people didn't want to hear, but a lot of things they predicted are going on today—such as the riots in L.A. Prince doesn't stick me into boundaries of 'Talk politically all the time,' or 'Talk socially all the time.' We can have fun with the rap, I can be angry—he lets me run the gamut.

"When I came into this [*cont'd on page 103*]

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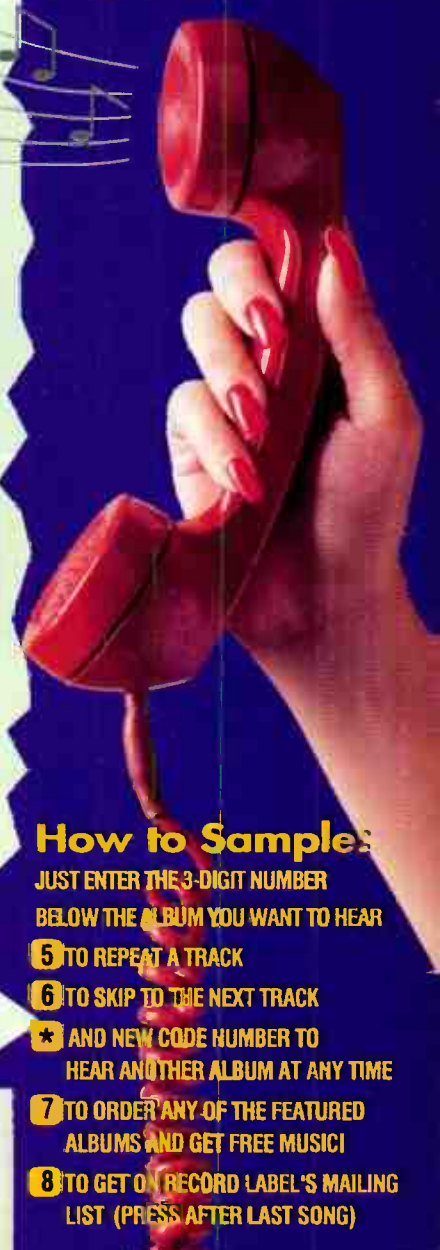

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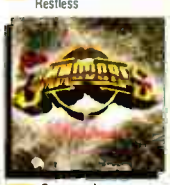

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CUT OUT AND SAVE

BY JON PARELES

HAPPY MONDAYS

NO APOLOGIES

THEY WERE UNEDUCATED TEENAGERS, BROKE AND JOBLESS IN A DECAYING URBAN ECONOMY.

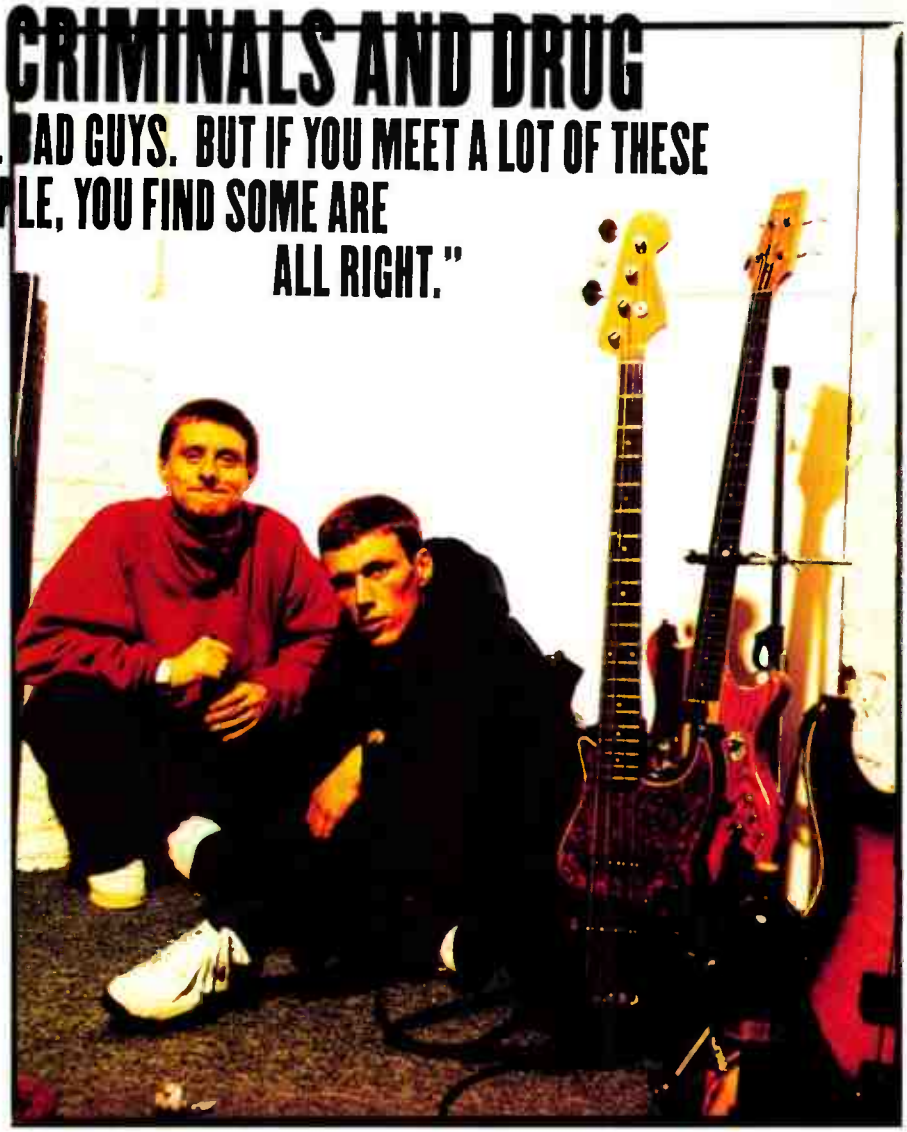
PHOTOGRAPHS: KEVIN WESTINBERG

FOR CASH THEY STOLE WALLETS. And when a new drug became available, they became some of its first local dealers.

Around 1982, they started to dabble in music, building songs on bits of old hits, gradually moving out of basements to rock local parties and clubs. Despite their own casualness, and a gift for drugged-out self-destruction, their music caught on, making them famous across the country. Yet even now, says the band's singer and leader Shaun Ryder, "We're still a gang." ■ That may sound like the resume for any number of hard-core hip-hoppers. It's not. It's the story of Happy Mondays, the band from Manchester, England that crawled out of the slums to take over Britain's pop charts and reinvent the rock concert as a rave: an all-night dance party with thousands of revelers in Ecstasy-fueled motion.

Happy Mondays (along with the folk-rock-redux Stone Roses) made Manchester the capital of English rock in the late 1980s.

"PEOPLE SAY CRIMINALS AND DRUG DEALERS ARE ALL BAD GUYS. BUT IF YOU MEET A LOT OF THESE PEOPLE, YOU FIND SOME ARE ALL RIGHT."



For Happy Mondays, every kind of pop that ever made people dance was fair game. A pounding beat echoed house and disco and old-fashioned funk, while guitars and keyboards floated and rippled with the liquidity of psychedelia and the futuristic swoops of electro-pop. Although the band was fond of swiping the odd couplet or bassline, by the time it was through with them, the music sounded like nothing but itself.

Amid the music's fun, fun, fun, Shaun Ryder's singing was true to the Manchester tradition of bad-news bearers like Joy Division or the Smiths. "Kiss me for screwing everything in sight," he murmurs in the band's mock-romantic new single, "Stinkin' Thinkin'"; in "Angel," he chants, "Where did the pain start? When did the symptoms begin?"

In the United States, Happy Mondays' music faced translation difficulties. Although the band has released three albums and an EP on Elektra—*Bummed* (1989), *Pills 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches* and the EP *Hallelujah* in 1990 and *Live* (1991)—its following was limited: *Pills* peaked with sales of 180,000 copies. Between the band's blurry swirl of guitar and keyboards and Ryder's thick accent, most American listeners couldn't get a grip on the songs.

When Happy Mondays opened in the U.S. for bands like the Pixies and Jane's Addiction, they recruited a few fans and bewildered others. As Ryder bawled, Bez, the band's silent member, jittered and flailed across the stage. ("He's there solely for us," says Ryder. "It's like we're the band in the porno movie, and he's the action.")

In Great Britain, meanwhile, Happy Mondays became famous as the band for whom the party never ends: an unpredictable, late-to-interviews, gig-skipping, marijuana-puffing, Ecstasy-dropping (and, early on, dealing) kind of group, with big hits and no apologies.

To make its new album, *Yes, Please*, Happy Mondays went to Barbados to record at Eddy Grant's Blue Wave studios. One reason was to keep band members away from hometown temptations, notably heroin, which Ryder says he had been using for 12 years. But in Barbados, the British pop magazine *Select* reported, the Mondays racked up "two crack habits [for Shaun Ryder and his younger brother Paul, on bass], eight car crashes, a shattered arm, [and] a £10,000 rehab bill." And the songs weren't even finished.

"When people told us they were wild and out of control, we assumed that was an exaggeration," says Chris Frantz, who co-produced *Yes, Please* with Tina Weymouth; they're the drummer and bass player for Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club. "We didn't really know that they were what Guns N' Roses are only supposed to be. They just didn't know how much trouble they were getting themselves into. In the end, we were lucky that nobody died."

Amid the turmoil, however, Happy Mondays went through a metamorphosis. "They were afraid that if they made another Manchester-sounding record, everyone would say, 'No new story to tell,'" Frantz says. "What it boils down to is that they want to be remembered as having some artistic value and not just being a fashion thing."

Pills was a fabrication of computerized samples and effects; *Yes, Please* is the work of a hands-on band, closest to the band's import-only debut album, *Squirrel and G-Man 24 Hour Party People Plastic Face Carny Smile (White Out)* (Factory, 1987), which was produced by John Cale. "We've gone back to playing live in the studio rather than relying on loops," says the band's guitarist, Mark Day. "We've gone back to basics." And the mix peels away just enough of the trippy layers to let Americans appreciate what Ryder is bawling about.

"Their management told us, 'The last time, we sold this amount of records in America,'" Frantz said. "'This time we want to sell more or we might not get another chance.'"

MANCHESTER WON'T MAKE any list of England's most picturesque places. The formerly industrial city no longer has its old textile industry; it looks like Poughkeepsie with mullioned windows. But its chronic unemployment breeds bands.

"We got into jamming around with music because the only thing to do was sit around and smoke spliffs," Shaun Ryder says. "It's a bleak city and the jobs that was there wasn't worth doing, because the pay was crap anyway. You sit around smoking pot and then you start playing your own songs."

Like Leeds, Manchester has a university that serves a student population, and a football team that brings out the roadies. (While students would go hear live bands, Shaun Ryder once explained, the band members would go to clubs, which gives the band's music its danceable bottom.) Like Liverpool, 26 miles away, Manchester has docks where licit and illicit materials arrive from afar. But Manchester is also the home of Factory Records, the independent label that released some of the most important albums of the last decade.

In the 1980s, Factory expanded its local empire to include the Hacienda, a dance club that was the cradle of the British rave. The scene was hyped to the skies at the turn of the 1990s, and A&R hordes poured in to sign bands from Inspiral Carpets to 808 State. By now, Manchester is proud of its music. In September, the Corner House, "Manchester's Cinema and Visual Arts Center," mounted an art exhibition of album covers and posters called "Manchester Music and Design, 1976 to 1992."

Happy Mondays' new Manchester headquarters is a one-story loft building, a former mill next to an industrial-gases plant. Inside, past an iron gate and a thick metal door, is a big open room recently painted white. The band's equipment is set up in a rough U shape; the Mondays' five musicians, minus Shaun Ryder, are jamming through the new material.

It's not a Just Say No rally. Mark Day, on guitar, offers me a head-spinning toke of pot; Paul Ryder, before showing me his bass setup, disappears into the bathroom and emerges minutes later, glassy-eyed. "I'm in a band because I love music, not because I love drugs," he tells me when he reappears. "I also like drugs sometimes. But we take great pride in our music."

Around the rehearsal hall, work *is* being accomplished. Paul "P.D." Davis, on keyboards, and the band's programmer and sound engineer Simon Machan are assembling samples and sequences, mostly percussion. Unlike most live sound engineers, Machan works with the band as it records, collecting samples and programming keyboard sounds instead of trying to reconstitute them later.

As Davis pumps out the organ/keyboard hook of "Cowboy Dave," Day, Paul Ryder and Gary "Gaz" Whelan on drums ease their way into the funk. Onstage, Whelan generally plays to a click track in sync with computerized percussion and effects. But at the rehearsal, he doesn't need a metronome to keep a rock-steady beat. "When I'm using the click track, I'm playing on the same beat, so I never hear it," he says.

The rehearsal is inconclusive; having a journalist around has thrown things off. But it's obvious that the band has the syncopated snap of a working unit—hardly the vision of computer-crutched incompetence their reputation might suggest. Making *Yes, Please* seems to have toned up the musicians.

"The album was all of us playing together," Paul Ryder says. "We went down to Barbados with about three-and-a-half songs, grooves really. For the first three weeks we just settled in a studio and banged away, which we hadn't done for ages. We jammed for three, four weeks, and later, as we got the grooves we'd sit down and work on one song at a time and structure it. We obviously had a beginning, and we needed a middle eight, and a breakdown.

"Chris and Tina taught us things like that. Usually we don't know when to start or finish, we just go, and we end when we can feel it ending. It was good to structure songs, which we've never done before. Next time we come down to writing we'll know how to do it.

"We were actually writing songs and jamming—me, Mark, Gaz and P.D.—starting in the studio at 11 in the morning and finishing at nine at night. It was really hard work, but really enjoyable. We didn't realize this crazy madness was going on.

"The studio was purely work. But after we finished work, we'd go for a drive, and the next thing, we'd find a fucking crack den. We went looking for a bit of adventure—and we found it. When you've got six lads together, man, things just happened."

WHAT HAPPENED WAS slapstick mixed with disaster. Bez overturned a jeep, breaking his right arm, and broke it again when he tried water sports too soon; the metal superstructure that eventually held his arm together is prominent on the album art. Shaun Ryder also totaled two jeeps, though he emerged unharmed, and Shaun and Paul Ryder started smoking crack, with Shaun up to 50 rocks a day. "I'll deny everything," Paul says.

"There was a point," Chris Frantz says, "where we had the music going along just fine, but no lyrics were being written and no ideas were forthcoming. There was so much lack of discipline on the part of the band that we were just, like, 'What do we do here? We can't play it ourselves, that wouldn't be right.'

"It got to the point that if it were the bass player's day, we'd go to his apartment, wake him up, make sure he had a cup of tea, take him to the studio, make sure his bass was in tune, show him how to play the part and make sure he learned it."

Frantz and Weymouth also guided the band in songwriting. "One day when they said, 'Oh no, we have to write another song,' I said, 'Okay, it's soca day,' and we took them out to hear soca," Frantz says. "As a drummer I've been trying to play that soca beat for years, but one day Gary just came back and did it. He plays like a drum machine, because he grew up learning how to play drum-machine songs."

When the Barbados sessions ended up with tracks but no songs, the band returned to England. After some rehab Shaun got down to work, writing lyrics and recording vocals in Surrey. The producers helped him with lyrics, giving him a list of words and suggesting he work them into a song, even casting the I Ching at one point.

"Eventually they came to their senses," Frantz says. "Shaun in particular realized that, 'Gee, I should really take responsibility for myself and not just be a self-indulgent rock star.'

"It ended up with everybody really happy with each other," Frantz concludes. "They're great guys, they have a great spirit. Shaun of his own free will checked into a detox place and cleaned himself up. I'm hoping he'll stay that way. But I don't know how it turned out to be such a good record. It's a miracle."

FINDING THE BAND in Manchester was the easy part. Finding the singer—well, that takes a little more time. Nathan McGough, Happy Mondays' manager, phones Shaun Ryder at his house a few miles out of town, and asks him to come do an interview. Ryder will call a cab, he relays, and should arrive within the half-hour.

Two hours later, McGough phones him again. Apparently waiting for Shaun is a familiar pastime. "You get used to it," McGough says. "Like anything chronic."

Shaun eventually arrives, grumbling. He'd just been having a day off with his wife and toddler, smoking "some nice sensi," and now he had to do an interview, and....

But as he sips a lager and lights the first of many cigarettes, he quickly warms to his task. His songs, he says, don't have much to do with his life. "All I do is put together puzzles," he says. "I'm good at picking phrases so all these things sound like pure nice good entertainment.

"I haven't got all this pain that I have to pour out," he insists. "Obviously things will pop out. But something that to somebody outside might sound like a heavy line, to us it's just our sick sense of humor. It's like taking the piss out of a cripple, it makes us laugh. Afterwards you can look at it and see it's really a dark, heavy line.

"I get one line, things out of the papers, a bit of something I did, a bit of my own experience and then put them together. Afterwards, you can read 'em and you could say, 'Oh, this could be autobiographical,' but it's not really."

Or not entirely. "Stinkin' Thinkin'," he says, is a phrase he got during his time in rehab. It means "bad thoughts, when you start getting paranoid about some of the stunts you've pulled. I could never really sit down and write what it's like to be in a rehab—it was corny old crap—but when I saw those two words on a blackboard, I thought: song."

How about the soca tune, "Cut 'Em Loose Bruce," with lines like "Get wired with the boys and shoot the place down"? "It's a folk song," Ryder says. "Dustman," about a "bug-eyed mung worm at the bottom of a bottle"? "That does sound a bit alcoholic, but I was actually conjuring up some kind of mung worm that lived in the bottle, not me."

"Cowboy Dave," he admits, is about a Manchester character, a sometimes music-business figure and pimp who was briefly associated with the band. When he was murdered, some news programs reported that a member of Happy Mondays had been killed. "So Bez rings up," Ryder recalls, "and he says, 'Who's dead?'

"The way I write is that they get a tune and it gets me going," Ryder says. "I'll just put the recorder on Record, and I'll come out with anything that pops up in my head."

But not in Barbados. "I went over there and came back with nothing," he says. "I just got into, like, partying, because it was a holiday. I was having a bad time out there, I was smoking like shit."

Why? "It was there, and it was very cheap," he says. "I don't mind spending £1000 on a shirt, but to get stoned on rocks when in England, it's $50 for one, to me it seems like a great big waste. But when we get over there it's like 20 English pence for one, and it was all over the place. I had fun, and I didn't really feel guilty because I wasn't wasting pots of money. But I got myself a habit. Now heroin, it's a very big warm soft thing. Crack, that's the worst.

"So I went to Barbados, partied, came back, had four or five weeks of rehab and tuned up, no booze, really did it right. The doctor said, 'That personality that you have, it's still going to be there, and it's down to you to stay off it.' I got rid of the heroin, and when we went into the studio, Chris and Tina were there, and they know this business of writing songs. Other times, I was stoned when I was writing, but it was a pleasure writing for this album straight."

Is rehab good for his image? "You can still have a good time," he says. "You just don't have to be into an addictive horrible drug. You can still have a drink, have an E [Ecstasy], as long as you don't have that fucking monkey on your back.

"A drug like acid, you can't get a habit—once you've done all your tripping you've done it," he says. "The same with Ecstasy. Me, now, if I want a nice dance on Ecstasy, I'll have a quarter of one, that's all I need.

"Manchester was a place for heroin, and downs, and speed until the E came in. And the E was a love drug, and it was good. Even all the football crowds, instead of wanting to fight, the drug made them just want to have a good time."

By now, Shaun is revved up, and I realize he's the opposite of most rock stars: He's coy about songs, but conceals nothing about his personal life. Out of cigarettes, he idly fishes in the ashtray, picks out a filter and a stub, screws them together and lights up.

He seems to have forgotten the wife and kid; he's raring to go out. We make our way to a brightly lit Chinese restaurant.

He's talking now about Manchester's seedier sections, about serial rapists and gang fights, about a teenager who dropped a slab of concrete sidewalk on a victim's head. "People like that, they just live to do people, go to jail, get out and do people again," he says.

It's not like his scofflaw days. "Even when I've been desperate for money and I've seen some granny collecting a pension, I've never beat up an old person," he says. "People say criminals and drug dealers are all bad guys. But if you meet a lot of these people, you find out some are all right, they're pretty normal. It's just what they do."

Opening a menu, Shaun goes straight for the lobster; when it arrives, he tears into it like Albert Finney as Tom Jones. Two women at the next table, in their 30s or early 40s, recognize him, stare and smile. He wanders over, gets into animated conversation with the blonde, seems to be smooching the brunette. At 1:30 a.m., the night is young; it's time to find a club.

Shaun leads an entourage, now including the women, to the I Don't No Club, a speakeasy-looking basement with a glitter-flecked ceiling, brightly polished brass rails and a dancefloor the size of a doormat, where Chinese and Anglo couples wriggle under flashing lights. As last call is announced, Paula, the blonde, gazes moonily into Shaun's eyes. "I'm not into your music," she says. "I'm into soul, really. But when you meet someone so genuine, well, it changes your mind."

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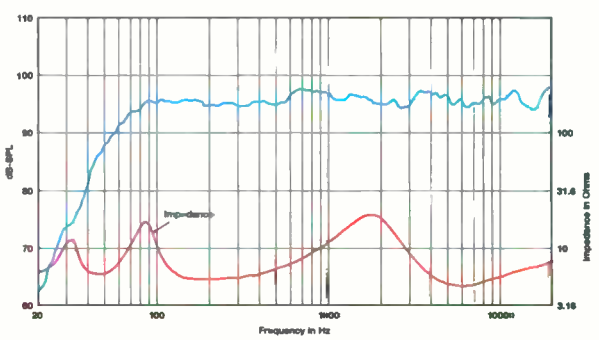
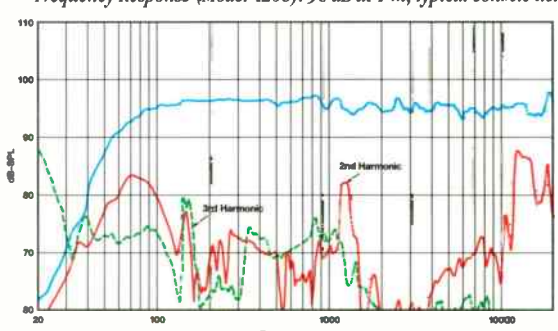


Frequency Response (Model 4206): 96 dB at 1 m, typical console listening levels



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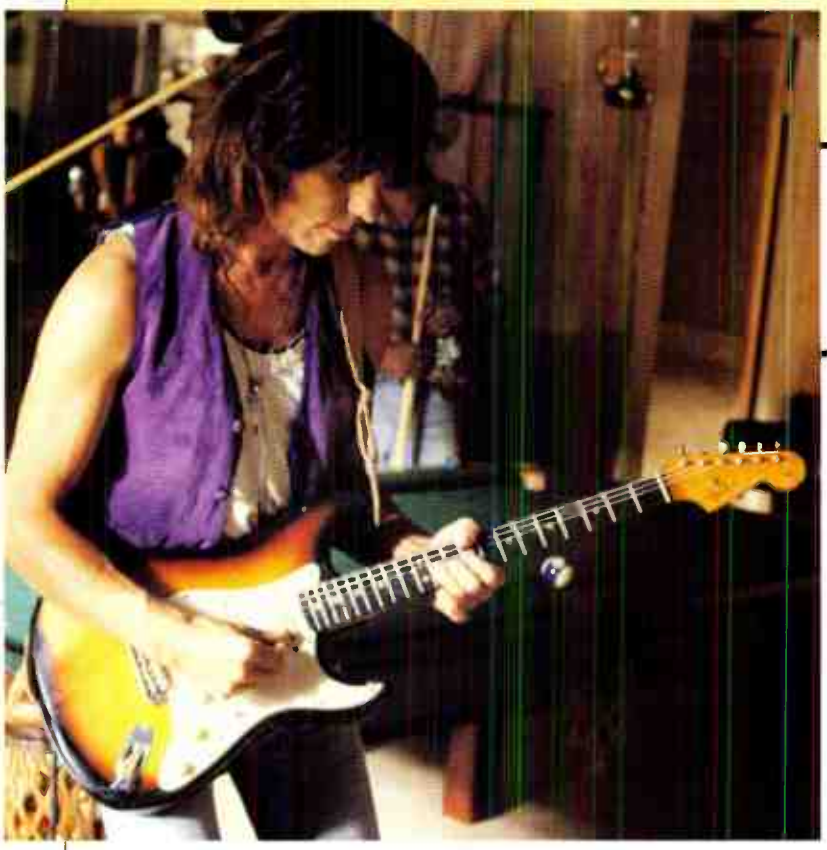


From rockabilly to Roger Waters

by MATT RESNICOFF

It took almost 30 years for the man who put concept into rock guitar to play on his first concept record. "He had been chasing me for several months," Jeff Beck says of his sessions for Roger Waters' *Amused to Death*. "I didn't really respond because I was busy doing other things, but then he caught me on a good day when I was sort of around town and he said, 'Look, you don't have any obligation—I'll rent a studio for you for two hours and you can go along and listen, with just an engineer to play you the tapes.' I heard 'What God Wants' and I loved it, so I made the commitment. And I enjoyed it. I really did. It was more like a comedy half-hour every day than hard work."

It's a dark comedy with stark twists, but Jeff Beck likes playing on the fringe. He seldom surfaces, and only does when he responds to urgency in the music. Waters said that like most guitarists, Jeff would pick up his instrument and continue to improvise straight through whatever he was overdubbing until asked to stop; but unlike most guitarists, Jeff wanted guidance from his colleagues and left them with performances they'd remember for the rest of their lives. "Roger's a good musical director," Beck says. "But when he put me on, the thing was nowhere *near* completed or in any shape where you could say, 'Ah, I know exactly what's needed.' He would play me only the pieces where he wanted the guitar. I think he tried to prevent me from getting too blown away by the majesty of the whole album, you know? He heard some of the stuff I did on *Guitar Shop* and he liked it a lot, and I think that's why he thought, 'I want that element; it would be good for that.' But he never *told* me that; he just let me play."

To create the Becknique that would attract Waters and astound many others, Jeff never even touched wood. The melodies from *Guitar Shop*'s "Where Were You" and "Two Rivers" were painstakingly executed by striking harmonics—notes brought out by plucking strings held lightly just over the fretwire—and bending them solely with the vibrato arm. Beck left his Kahler-loaded Jackson Soloist in the case for those tracks, preferring to tough it out on a Fender Strat live and on record. The catch is that he'd often begin with a harmonic already bent *up*, as in "Where Were You," hit it and have it sink, then move to other natural-harmonic locations on the neck and continue the line, bending in and out with the bar for discrete intervals as small as semitones.

"That's the song Roger loved the most," Jeff says, "and he told me, 'I want you to do *that* kind of stuff on my album.' I said, 'Well, that took a lot of writing; we had to spend ages working out where all the harmonics were and then bending the arm to make the tune. I write by inspiration of one note going into another.' And he said, 'Well, let's just throw something at the wall and see what happens.' [Keyboardist/producer] Pat Leonard hit a few chords just at the tail, the end-of-the-session messaround, and we recorded about five or 10 minutes of that. And then one day, the story goes, at the end of a long recording day, Roger was driving home from the hills and he played this tape of the day's work, and at the end of it he couldn't touch the tape machine because he was driving. It ran on and suddenly this stuff came on, and he thought, '*Jesus* Christ, what's this? I want this straight away.'"

The forgotten jam became the intro and backing for the spare album opener "The Ballad of Bill Hubbard"; elsewhere,

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK WEISS/MWA

Beck places slide-like screams through several reprises of "What God Wants." Hard to believe the guitar odyssey began nearly 30 years ago with Jeff's diehard affection for Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps' brilliant lead player Cliff Gallup. Today Beck is working on an album of note-for-note covers of Gallup's bebop-inflected rockabilly solos alongside the Big Town Playboys. The Playboys are an authentic swing/blues/country-rock band Jeff met with in London and nearly adopted as his own, before discovering how incompatible his current writing was with his initial motivations to be a musician.

"It's a very topical question as to whether it's a 'Jeff Beck project' or not," he says, "because I'm really using another band which exists already to participate with me on it. Packaging is going to be quite a talking point with us, because we need to put the focus where it's going to be effective, you know what I mean? It's really just to prove how advanced the music was, and how exciting it was in '56...but with the modern recording sound that we've got, we're trying to bring out more dynamics and sonics. We used old mikes in some of the tracks, but going through modern SSL desks and stuff, so kids won't be able to complain about the sound not being up to scratch."

Breathing new life into classic forms defines Jeff Beck; his vibrato technique, in its white-knuckled melodic simplicity, extends the legacy into its next phase. And it's the hardest work he's done. "Sure, yeah," he says. "It is, but I feel pretty happy about spending the time with it because the rewards are there; people seem to respond to the emotion that you can get from that style. And the purity of the harmonic note is just another angle of what the electric guitar can do. I mean, people use it all over the place in rock, but not with those sort of nice sweeping melodies. It's kind of my little thing I've got going, you know?"

BLOW BY BLOW

The old Bassman amplifier JEFF BECK got from the men at Fender London, autographed by associates Buddy Guy and Eric Clapton, was stolen from the main hallway in his house, where it waited to be loaded and unloaded on trips to and from studios. "I only wanted it for sessions and stuff, where I could keep my eye on it, but," Jeff laughs, "I didn't. It's gone." He's still got tabs on his many Strats and an old Gretsch Duo Jet just like Cliff Gallup's, which he used for all his note-for-note galloping through the Gene Vincent tribute record with the Big Town Playboys.

Sting Puts the Bass in Its Place

Returning from a bassman's holiday

by BILL FLANAGAN

As bass player with the Police, Sting helped revive the old idea (as old as Cream, anyway) of the singer/bassist as bandleader. When he launched his solo career, though, Sting switched to guitar. He strummed through his first two post-Police albums, *Dream of the Blue Turtles* and *Nothing Like the Sun*, and the tours that went with them. Only on his *Soul Cages* tour last year did Sting return to the bass. We talked to him about the joys and frustrations of his chosen instrument.

"In a way I took a holiday for five years," Sting said. "Playing bass and singing is quite difficult. Strumming along to a song on a guitar while you sing is all the same thing. Often basslines are opposed to the rhythm of the singing. It's contrapuntal, quite difficult, so I just took a holiday, got a couple of really great bass players, sang my songs and strummed along. I enjoyed that holiday. But my instrument is the bass. I feel affinity with the bass and I feel I have a contribution to make, so I'm playing bass again.

"I mean, I played the bass on the albums. I didn't give it up entirely. In a way, taking the time off from playing onstage refreshed my imagination on bass.

"It's much easier to control the dynamic of the band with the bass than with any of the other instruments. Also, when David (Sancious, the keyboard player) plays a C chord, it's not a C chord until the bass player has put his note in. I can change the chord at will. Therefore I can change the harmonic structure of the song, the dynamic structure of the song, and having the low end with the bass and the high end with my voice, I feel I can really drive this thing without *seeming* to drive it or being dictatorial. So it's ideal for a bandleader, especially in a small group which is trying to have the flexibility of a jazz group without playing jazz."

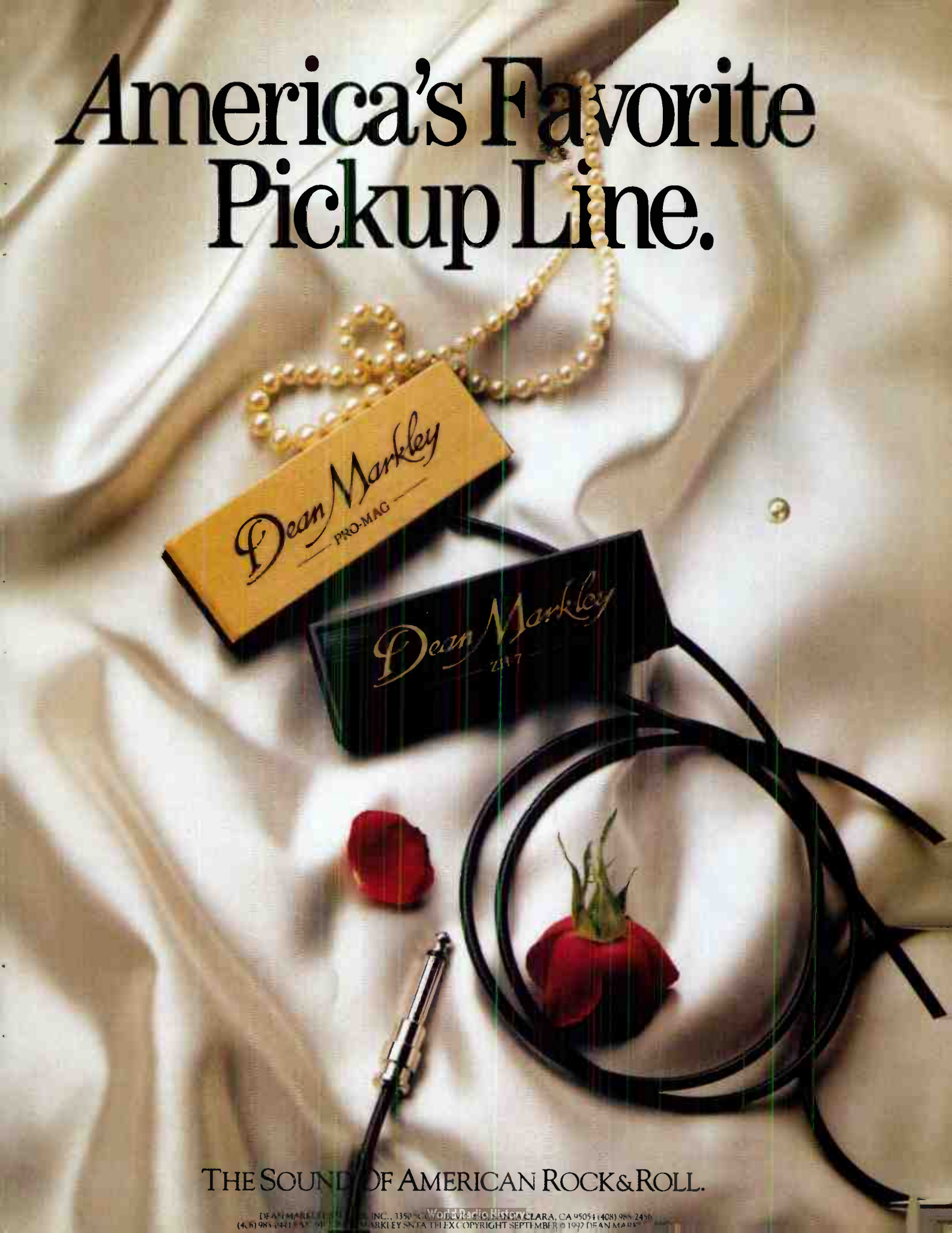
Although Sting says his basic philosophy of bass playing comes from "Stax and Motown, I love eight beats to the bar," he is nothing if not ambitious. "In a way," he said, "if you're serious about music you become more and more adrift. Musicians are trained to use a part of the brain that most listeners don't. Most listeners to popular music can cope with thirds, fifths, sevenths, simple intervals. Once you get into sixths or thirteenths... In my case, what I love now is atonal music, I love that bitter sense it gives me. I really find it exciting, it draws the tension out of me. So I suppose my music will eventually veer towards something that will not be to the popular taste. Even though I'd like it to be. In a sense my job is to be a populist, to try to popularize more difficult ideas than you would expect on the radio."

To add to his musical palette, Sting has been studying cello. "It's funny," he explained, "the cello has the same scales as a Fender bass, but tuned in fifths. So it gives you ideas; you play a blues scale and fall into different stuff."

Asked which of his songs were built from bass riffs, Sting said, "'Walking on the Moon' was a bass riff. A lot of the Police songs were. A lot of the *Soul* [*cont'd on page 82*]

 PHOTOGRAPH: DIEGO UCHITEL/OUTLINE

America's Favorite Pickup Line.



THE SOUND OF AMERICAN ROCK & ROLL.

Henry Butler: Polishing Chestnuts

How to breathe life into an old standard

by TOM MOON

On his recent *Blues and More, Volume 1* (Windham Hill Jazz), pianist and vocalist Henry Butler tackles, among other things, that resort-hotel lounge pianist standby "Jamaica Farewell." It's not a parody, and it's not such a distant free-form extrapolation that the melody vanishes.

But, as is the case with much of Butler's work, it's not wholly traditional—in a sneaky, insurgent kind of way. There are powerful tonic chords that swell up into gospel glory. There are little fugue-like turnarounds that tip the hat to Johann Sebastian Bach. There are simple chord vamps for improvisation that help Butler call forth some unorthodox bebop.

And yet, it's impossible to miss the sing-songy melody. "The melody just kept coming back to me," Butler said recently, sitting in front of a nine-foot Steinway, his piano of choice. "It occurred to me that it was a challenge—to make this old song unique enough for me to play it and be interested in it."

A native of New Orleans, Butler is on the faculty of Southern Illinois University. He says tackling such a shopworn song aligns with what Professor Longhair used to do, and also dovetails with the sermon he preaches to his students. "Before you even start working on a tune, you have to know that every tune you play is yours. If John Doe is playing a piece you like, it's his piece while he's playing it. But when you play it, you should be able to adapt it to fit your personality, the way you live and think, the way you approach the piano. It doesn't matter what people think—when I'm playing it matters what I like. That's a difficult thing for students to learn."

Butler faced some serious work to make "Jamaica Farewell" his own. He started with a little figure at the end of each verse that took the song out of its E♭ key center, and extended the form. "I used the vi chord (in E♭, a C minor chord) as the pivot for what is essentially a quick modulation. It functions as a dominant chord, and it can take you to F, only for a short time. Then I play another minor vi chord into a G altered dominant, which again has the minor third. Then it goes back to E♭, where there are some very plain-sounding chords to lead into the next verse."

Butler used the same device at the tag ending—except each ascending whole step is preceded by its dominant, which creates the effect of moving around the cycle of fifths. He believes that by adding measures to the form—for the pianist playing solo, it's an easy thing to do—he can give this familiar song a challenging (if not progressive) element while remaining true to its folk roots.

Along the same lines, he added a blowing section in the middle of the tune. It's based on a simple I-IV vamp, and it moves through different key centers—at one point, before returning to the E♭ verse, it alternates between D♭ and G♭. "I was mostly looking for flavor there," Butler says, rippling through a stream of New Orleans blues over the changes. "It was just about changing the hue a bit...A lot of guys, they'd be playing the augmented 11 chord there, getting into something almost beboppish. I didn't want to do that too much, though it definitely can work. Even at the end, I wanted to

 PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE BARRY

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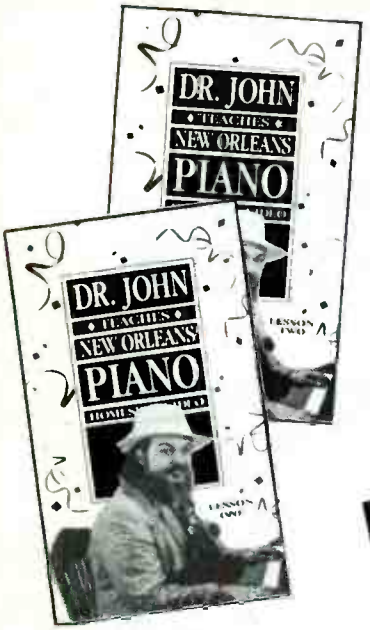

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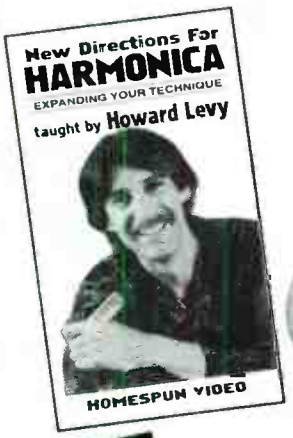

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two-year gig gave Blevins the confidence to move to New York. "To this day my Hiatt association still gets me work. A lot of people saw that band."

He now splits his living between cutting albums and demos, touring and playing Manhattan clubs behind everyone from hopeful singer/songwriters to established artists like Shawn Colvin. As hackneyed as it sounds, working regularly depends on who you know. "Any kind of schmoozing, party- or club-going I do is aimed at making contact. It's hard, 'cause I hate being in a smoke-filled room, but since I know a few people I'll usually be introduced. Then I can strike up a conversation and exchange phone numbers. You write your number on the back of a card and often people will dig it up and call you.

"When I get off a tour, I'm on the phone. If you don't let people know you're back they won't call you. You have to touch base every week."

The amount of money he can make ranges from $100 plus cartage for showcasing at small venues like the China Club or the Bitter End to $50 a tune for songwriter's demos to the union minimum recording scale of $240 ("I always ask for more") for three hours when he's in the studio with people like Hiatt or Colvin. On a "rock 'n' roll world tour" the salary ranges from $750 to $2500 a week. For television appearances like Hiatt on "Saturday Night Live," the ballpark is "five to six hundred for a couple songs. And I got paid more than the bass player because I sang backup. The money goes up the more you can do.

"Negotiating over price is something I'm better at than I used to be. Now I can make calls, haggle, bargain over the fee. Even if they say no and hang up, a lot of times they'll call right back. You have to know when to take that chance. I never ask for too much. I can't demand what Keltner would, I don't have his resume."

Being your own manager, agent and publicist can backfire. In the fall of '91 Blevins was asked to tour and record with the Waterboys, and was even given points on album sales. He'd made a deal. As he was leaving for the airport the band's management called and told him the album was postponed. Tours he'd been offered with Curtis Stigers and Marc Cohn for the same time were lost, leaving Blevins with three blank months to fill. "I'm not the only guy this has happened to. Maybe I should have investigated a little more. I'm a working musician, I'm not a songwriter. I don't have residuals coming in. I'm not an artist, I'm a player. When somebody tells me something I take it at face value. It was a bad experience, but I see it as part of learning."

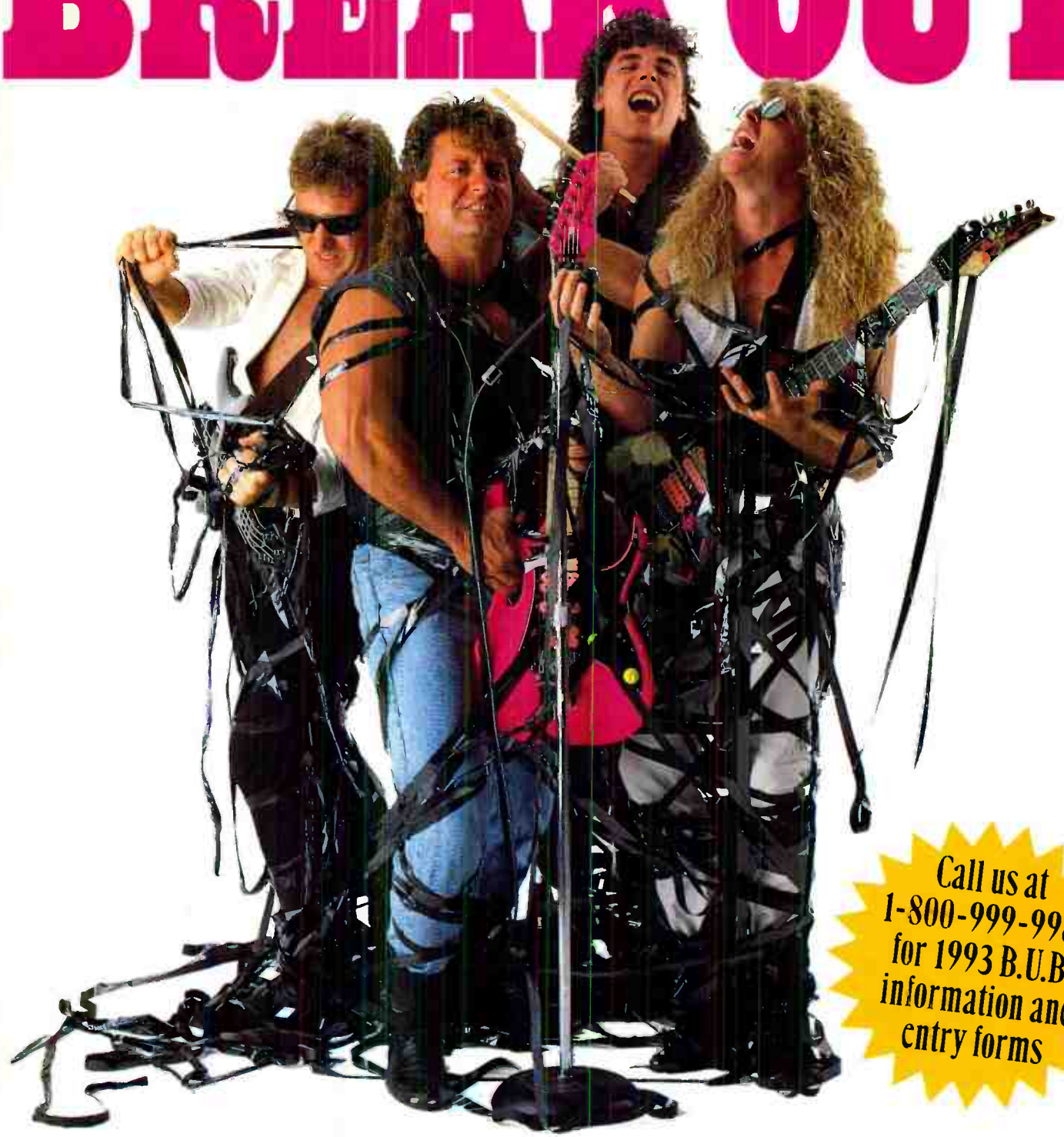
Blevins has been fortunate: How many drummers would come to New York without knowing how to read music? "I don't think I'd work more if I read. I'm viewed as a drummer from Louisiana with 'that feel' that people seem to like. It helps me to find my own niche. I could play Latin, klezmer—if I can get along with someone, I can play their music."

But does the on/off nature of the music business leave this usually relaxed man biting his nails? "Like a lot of musicians, I have my bouts with feeling bad. You make money for a while, then you're out of work. But coming from Louisiana, where it's so hot you'll bust a vein if you worry, maybe I have an attitude that keeps me calm." It's the same, he says, with working: "It all really boils down to how well you can play and get along with the people you work with."

JAM-BALAYA

KENNY BLEVINS thumps Drum Workshop mounted tom-toms measuring 8x10 and 9x13 and a floor tom that's 16x16. He bangs three Solid Percussion snares: a 14x6 maple, a 14x4 red oak and a 14x4 cocabola. And he crashes Sabian cymbals.

BREAK OUT



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MUSICIAN

STOMPIN' WITH ACE AND EDDIE

ACE FREHLEY AND EDDIE KRAMER PONDER THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ZOOM 9000.

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS THE STOMP BOX. Just kick that sucker and it fuzzed or wah'd or whooshed or whatever. Then came the multieffects processor, forcing players to learn to read a manual. Finally we've evolved to the multieffects stomp box. That's right folks, two mints in one—a whole bunch of nifty parameters that you can step on. Working as Jimi Hendrix' engineer, Eddie Kramer was helping to invent these sounds long before anyone put them in a box. And Ace Frehley has always gotten his grunge the old-fashioned way. "I can't use these fuckin' things," says the former Kiss guitarist. "I end up smashin' 'em in one show. I just plug into an amp, turn it on 10 and it sounds fuckin' great."

Musician put these two seasoned cynics together with three popular boxes—Digitech's RP1, Zoom's 9000 (with footswitch) and the new A4 from Korg. What we got was an extremely unscientific (and brutally honest) look at a few of the strengths and weaknesses of these units. They're all programmable, but we stuck with the factory settings for this quick test. "The presets on these things are great," says Kramer. "If you want a particular sound quickly, you can just zap it in there. The Korg really surprised me. Both Ace and myself like to create real-time delays in the studio, and these delay sounds hold up very well. Also, it's obvious they've done their homework in the distortion department." Frehley agrees: "The Korg was warmer, more like a tube sound, and the separation between the pedals is a little wider. That makes a difference to a guy with a big foot, like me." Bigfoot Frehley also had a problem with the Digitech RP1's two-tiered design. "I stepped on footswitch 8 and by accident I also stepped on 3," he says. "That's totally fucked! You gotta be a ballerina to use this thing." Uh *huh*...well, Ace, what *else* do you like about the RP1? "This unit has more gain, and putting the input and output controls right on the front panel keeps things real straightforward. It also gives you more options soundwise. The RP1 has a better variety of sounds than the others, but it's a lot easier to work with your hands than your feet." Fair enough. Now, Eddie, how about this wedge-shaped wonder from Zoom? "It's a nice, compact box, made to fit under the handle of an amp. But who's to say you're going to have a handle?"

"It could be gaffer-taped to your amp," suggests Frehley, "but the problem is these little buttons. None of 'em have any writing on 'em. It's like fuckin' braille. If you were blind, this would be great. Also, I'd have made it bigger, but the Japanese have little fingers."

Kramer plugs in the Zoom and Frehley cranks it up. "This has got some unique little sounds, no doubt about it," says Kramer. Frehley stops shredding long enough to yell, "Bank 3, setting 4 [a monstrous octave-lower distortion patch], I could do a killer solo with that sound. Zoom patch 34 is death."

"Overall, I think we've heard some really interesting sounds," says Kramer. "For pure coolness and availability of sounds at your fingertips, the RP1 is very useful. It also pushes the amp better than the others."

"If I had to use one of these boxes live, I'd take the Korg," says Frehley. "The Digitech is great for the musician who wants to use pedals in the studio. And I'd buy the Zoom for that one sound, I swear to God."

Special thanks to Roy Clark, Victor Moore and everyone at Manhattan Center Studios.

PETER CRONIN & MATT RESNICOFF

PHOTOGRAPH: LINDA COVELLO

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SYNTH I FELL FOR YOU

Mention guitar synthesizers to a roomful of players and the responses will most likely fall somewhere between disinterest and mockery. The new GR-1 from Roland could do a lot to change these lingering perceptions. Touted as Roland's most advanced guitar synth yet, the GR-1 delivers phenomenal tracking and dynamic range in a compact floor unit packed with features. Weighing in at seven pounds, the GR-1 combines multi-timbral, state-of-the-art sampled sounds with a well-designed interface that even novices will find easy to navigate.

The companion GK-2 Synthesizer Driver, which mounts easily on any electric or steel-string acoustic, provides individual string pickups and allows you to merge the guitar's audio signal with digital control information. The GK-2 also provides a synth/guitar/both output switch, a synth volume knob and two data buttons for easy access to GR-1 parameters. User friendliness is critical to wide acceptance of a guitar synth, and the GR-1's footpedal design, coupled with plenty of knobs for direct editing, makes this the best unit I've seen. There are 200 onboard samples, and that number can be doubled using a soon-to-be-introduced wave expansion board (priced in the $300 range). You can layer two tones per patch and store a series of critical parameters with each patch. My favorites are string sensitivity for each string (critical for style and dynamics, from fingerpicking to tapping), tone assignment to strings (for splits), open tunings, velocity mix of the two tones, and chromatic or smooth bending. Staple digital effects (chorus, delay, reverb) are also provided. The multi-timbral feature allows multi-channel access to three parts and a separate drum set. You can also play a guitar part on top, within a limit of 24 voices. Although tracking with external MIDI modules isn't quite airtight, the results are impressive.

I found few superfluous tones in the original sound set, with clean, crisp piano and horn samples, great strings and synths, and surprisingly realistic guitars, basses and organs. The editing functions are simple and intuitive, and extensive MIDI features allow the player to perform with complex systems under GR-1 footpedal control. Routing options include Mix Out, Guitar Return, Guitar Out, Volume Pedal and Expression Pedal (assignable to a variety of MIDI control functions). You can program advanced pitch-shift functions, split octaves, add modulation, or hold notes (three types of sustain) by using optional footpedals. Other cool features include a tuner that displays the name of any note played, pitch-offset between tones for harmonization, and a simple four-track, 2000-note sequencer. A well-written manual (hooray!) makes it easy for MIDI beginners to dive in.

At a breakthrough price of $1295 (about what you'd expect to pay for a good effects unit), this is the guitar synth for everyman. The GR-1 is Roland's seventh-generation model, and proof that their lasting commitment to providing a truly guitaristic controller has finally paid off.

MIHAI MANOLIU

SOUNDBITES

FOSTEX has entered into a licensing agreement with ALESIS and will be utilizing the S-VHS format and ADAT technology. Look for a product introduction from Fostex in early '93. SWR has upped the power with the SM-900. This 24-pound bass amp squeezes a cool 900 watts into two rack spaces. Also on board are two three-band, sweepable EQs, which can be controlled by footswitch, and an all-tube preamp. Eric Johnson and James Taylor have been "unplugging" into the Trace Acoustic amp from TRACE ELLIOT. Adrian Legg played his Ovation acoustic through one at a recent mini-set in *Musician*'s New York office, and if his sound was any indication, this amp is worth checking out. ZOOM is going high-end with its new 9200 Advanced Reverberation Processor. The unit features 31 effect templates and can be configured to act as one, two, three or four independent digital signal processors. The price? $2995. JL COOPER has unveiled the Datasync MIDI synchronizer for the ALESIS ADAT recorder. The unit plugs into a nine-pin port on the back of the ADAT and converts the recorder's sample clock to MIDI time code. That way you don't eat up any tracks. Also from JL Cooper is Softmix. This software allows musicians to automate their SOUNDCRAFT Spirit console through a Macintosh, and retails for $499.95. The folks at SAMSON are beginning to attract a lot of attention with their distribution of German-made BEHRINGER signal processing gear. Samson has also found the time to introduce the Model 2242 Portable Mixer, featuring 10 XLR inputs, six stereo inputs, four stereo effects returns and onboard phantom power. A lot of stuff for a list price of $1129.99. AKAI is making it easier than ever to get into sampling with the new S01. This easy-to-use sampler delivers 16-bit quality sound and retails for under a grand.

PETER CRONIN

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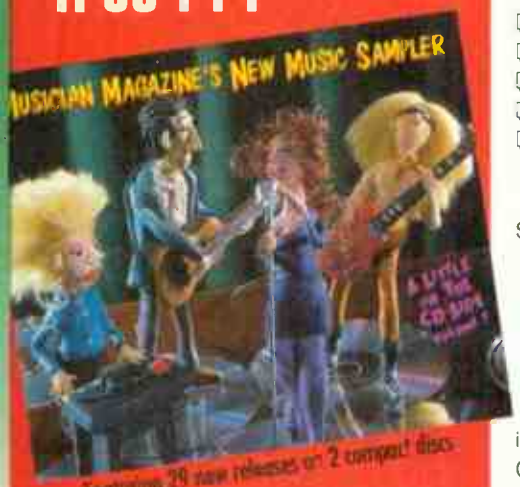

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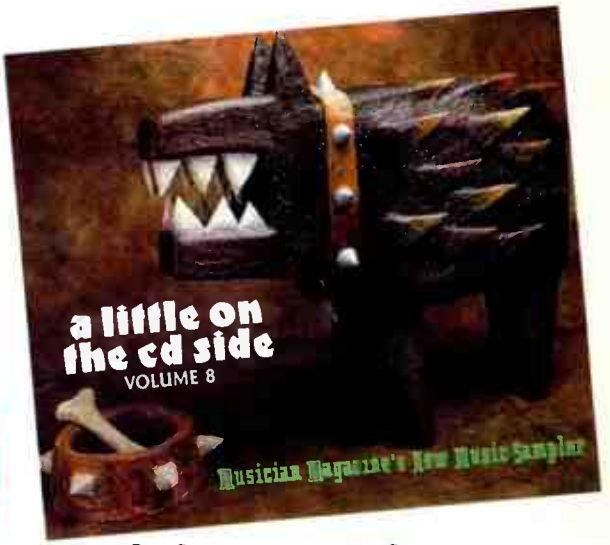

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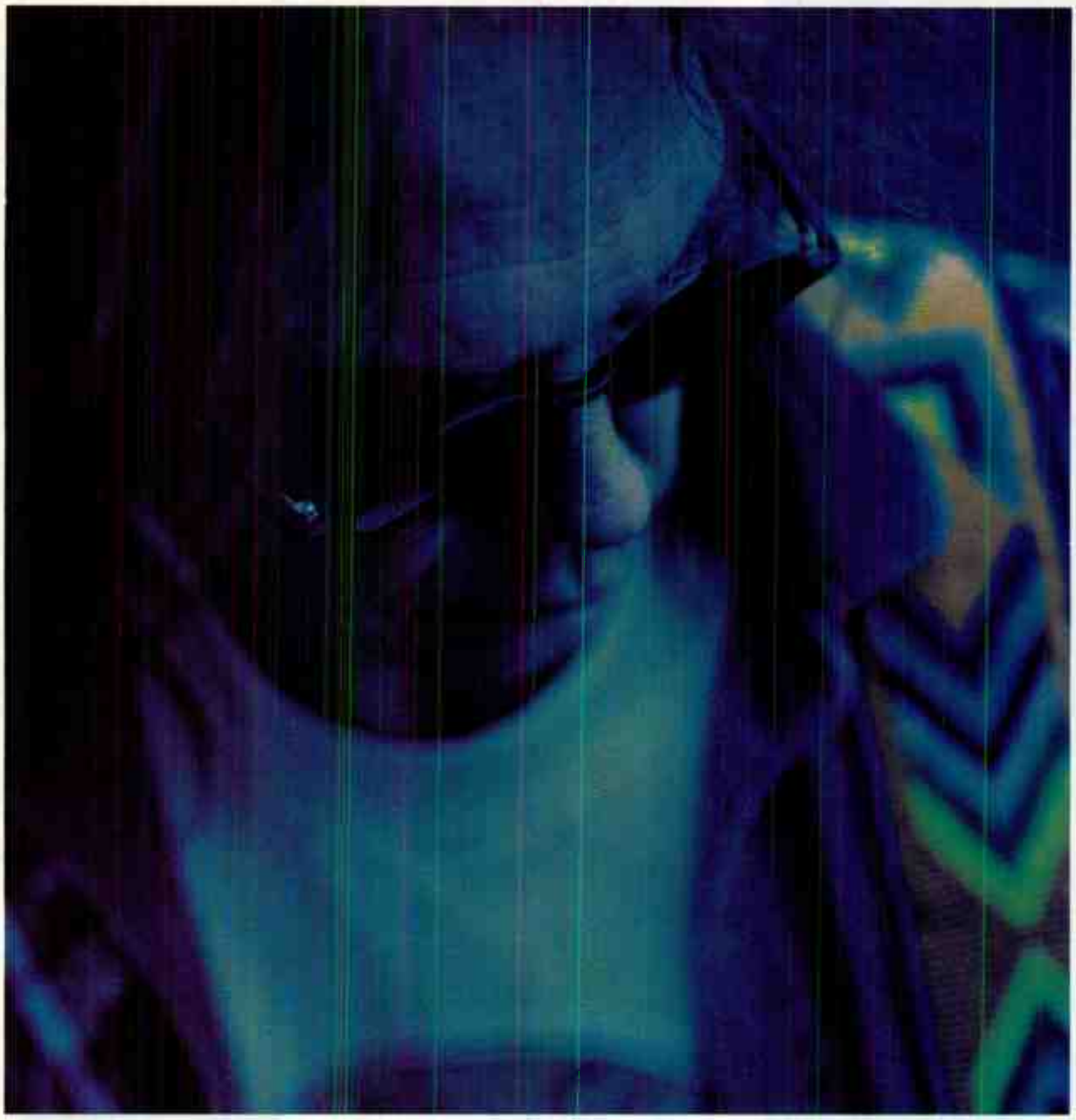

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This record is being widely touted as a sequel to *Harvest*, Neil Young's greatly loved folk album of 1972. The only one of his albums to yield a Top 10 hit single ("Heart of Gold"), *Harvest* and the style Young blueprinted there have played an important role in this iconoclastic pop hero's ability to continue to fill large arenas on the concert trail. Young's easily accessible "soft rock" is hardly the most compelling aspect of his sensibility, but it's kept him in the game commercially; for that, we who love his oddball stuff the best can be grateful.

But perhaps because he's traveled so far and wide with his music, has tried on so many stylistic hats and battered down so many doors with scorching rock 'n' roll, this unadorned folk music also exudes real weight. As with *Harvest*, the central theme here is romantic love, but Young has grown up in important ways over the past 20 years and his point of view on the subject has changed considerably. Where *Harvest*'s lonely protagonist is driven by a melancholy quest for romantic perfection that's presented as unattainable, *Harvest*

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID PETERSON

TEST PATTERNS

Or how not to impress everyone down at the music store

Remember the scene in *Wayne's World* where Wayne, about to buy the guitar of his dreams, begins to pick Jimmy Page's most famous arpeggio and is interrupted in mid-strum by the salesclerk, who points to a sign on the wall reading "NO STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN"? Pure fantasy, right?

Wrong. Though there may not be a sign on the wall, there is a "No Stairway" policy at the Sam Ash store in White Plains, New York. "There's no 'Stairway to Heaven,' no Poison songs, no 'Smoke on the Water,'" explains guitar salesman Rob Knippel. "The keyboard players can't play 'Jump.' No keyboardist who plays a Van Halen tune is allowed in the store."

Seem a little touchy, do they? Well, you would be, too, if you had to hear the same half-dozen songs butchered over and over, day in and day out. "It's not that you get sick of it," avers Knippel, sounding, frankly, sick of it. "It's hard to say. We know a lot of these kids, and we'll rap with them or whatever. The first time they'll play this song, it'll be like, 'Can't play that song.' 'Why not?' 'You can't.' 'Why not?' 'Because we don't like that song.' They'll play three more songs off the list, and we'll say, 'Nope, nope, sorry, no.' Then we give them the generalities. 'I'm sorry, no Poison. You cannot play any Poison tunes. You can't play any Guns N' Roses tunes.'

"I think 'Stairway to Heaven' is up to beheading."

Part of the problem, argues Ralph Perucci, a former Sam Ash salesman who now reps for Paul Reed Smith guitars, is that none of these kids know an entire song. Instead, what they'd wank away on would be a jumble of bits, what PRS general sales manager Mike Dealy describes as "House of the Rising Smoke on the Stairway to Freebird."

"They'd practice all week to come to the music store and try to impress someone," Perucci says. "They'd play their fastest lick over and over again. I'd go over and put a dollar on the counter and say, 'If you can play a song from start to finish, you can walk out with this dollar.' And they'd look at me like I was from Mars, but no one would be able to play it."

There was a time, though, when the sales folk counted themselves lucky if they heard even a whole riff wafting over from the guitar racks. This, of course, was during the Age of the Hammer-On/Pull-Off, when every kid who ever saw Eddie Van Halen felt compelled to rush to the nearest music store and hammer away. One music industry vet reports that these kids were called "typists" (because all they did was tap at the guitars?) by beleaguered guitar salespeople.

Still, there were ways of getting back at them. "We had a guitar that was just strung with one string," recalls Perucci. "People would say, 'I'd like to try a guitar,' and we *knew* they were going to play something that was off the latest hammer-on album of the day. So we'd hand them this guitar with one string, and they'd just look confused."

This seems to be mostly a guitar player's disease, by the way. "With keyboard players, most of them are classically trained to an extent; they can play," says Dave Belzer, a salesman at the Guitar Center in Hollywood. "Drummers, you'd be surprised. A lot of good drummers come through.

"Guitarists are a different breed. A lot of them can't play the songs correctly, or with rhythm. Rhythm is definitely lacking. And it seems the worse they play, the louder they play. The ones who can play, they don't get excessive with the volume. The ones that can't, they'll turn it up as loud as can be." (Reportedly, the noise got so bad at one trade show that a few of the manufacturers were considering installing a neon sign to announce song titles and chord changes, so at least everyone would be playing badly in the same key.)

But if you really want to know what scares music store employees, it isn't the kids who can't play—it's the kids who *can*. "It's amazing how good some of them are," says Knippel. "It's a far cry from when I started. These kids come in at 16 or 17, and they're showing *me* stuff. 'How long you playing, kid?' 'Oh, three years,' and the guy's completely burning.

"Back in the old days, when they used to play the songs, they used to play them bad," he adds, wistfully. "Now they play the songs, and they play them *good*. Those are the ones we hunt down and kill."

ILLUSTRATION: EVERETT PECK

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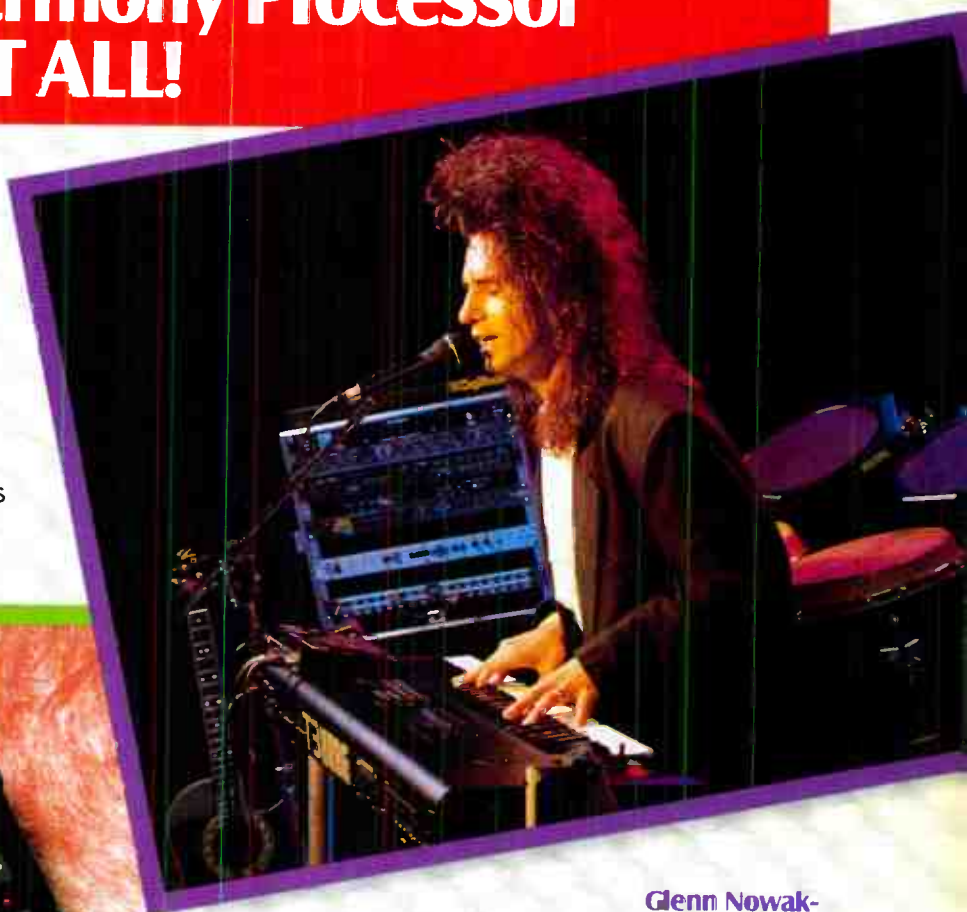

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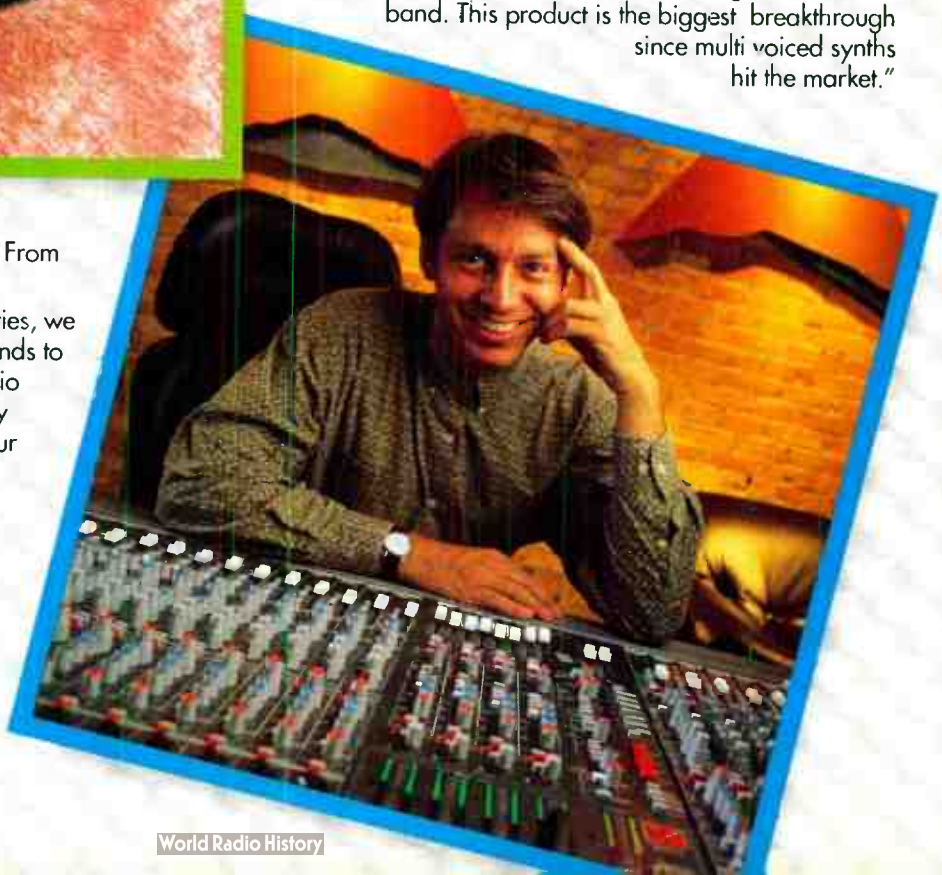

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