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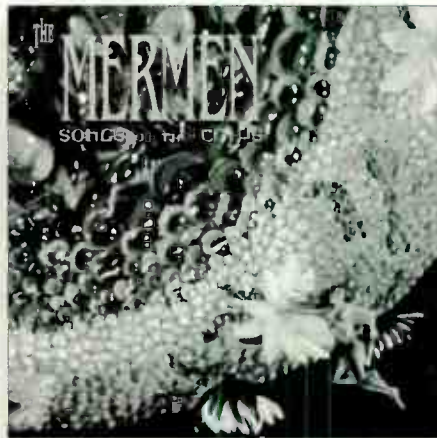
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We could have simply bought thousands of tubes from the existing factories, thrown away most of them, and sold the ones that happened to accidentally perform well. That system is inherently unpredictable, however, and there is no

way to guarantee that the tubes which do pass will continue to perform after a few hundred hours of use. We also had new designs we wanted to produce.

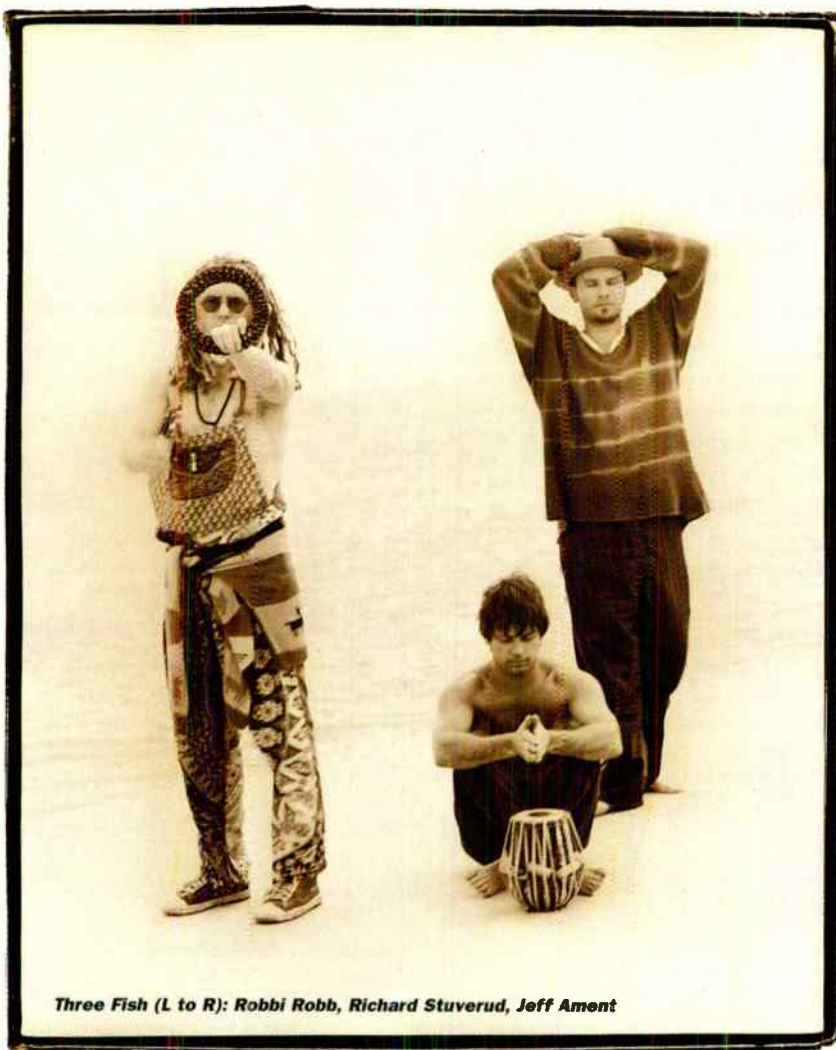
So with the services of some of the top engineers from the world's classic tube companies, we set out to match and surpass the best of the classic tubes using selected Chinese manufacturing plants.

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PM



Three Fish (L to R): Robbi Robb, Richard Stuverud, Jeff Ament

**E**ddie Vedder recently worked with the Sufi singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and now you're in Istanbul promoting your Three Fish solo project, based on the mystic poems of the Sufi saint Rumi. Is there a connection, or are you just trying to escape Ticketmaster?

I did give Eddie a book of Rumi's poems when we roomed together during our first tour. We were listening to a lot of the stuff Peter Gabriel was putting out on Real World, like Nusrat and the Burundi drummers. Being on the road in a rock band context, I think we were searching for something else. Robbi Robb of Tribe After Tribe and I had some intense conversations over the last few years, and one night in the studio he asked me if there was a particular Rumi poem that affected me. I showed him the story of the Three Fish, and he started reading it out loud. I strummed this riff on acoustic guitar and later we realized we'd begun to improvise something that was

# Jeff Ament

**"We weren't put on this earth to be politicians."**

musically legitimate. I think Rumi was saying that in order to communicate you have to open your heart, become vulnerable, and move beyond the fear and darkness. Three Fish sprang from that kind of intimacy.

*Many Sufis I've met in Turkey over the years believed that some of that consciousness enters our own culture through rock and jazz. Have you felt that onstage with Pearl Jam?*

Yeah, and it's weird. You look around and not only are your arms and legs flailing around, but your band members and the audience are swirling in this insane energy. But at the core of it, in the very center of yourself, you suddenly come into this incredible place of calmness and peace. That energy even stays after the gig—sometimes you have the most incredible dreams.

*You're about to release a new Pearl Jam album. You've been battling Ticketmaster, refusing to make videos, struggling against all the starmaker machinery. Has the internal wear and tear been worth it?*

There's been a few moments when I didn't know if it was worth it, in terms of our friendships. I do think we got a bit sidetracked, but they were legitimate things to be sidetracked with. I don't know how we're going to deal with the ticketing thing, but we're definitely going to tour. The tension and negativity isn't coming from any one of us—it's coming from around us. Everybody has opened up to each other, probably more than any time since the first record.

*What's the most important thing you*

*want to carry over from your solo project to Pearl Jam?*

The strength and confidence Robbi gave me by telling me when I'd played something that touched him. I'm having conversations with the band now about how I don't care about outside adulation, I need you guys to tell me when I play or do something that affects you, that I'm a legitimate force in your life. We're in a much more relaxed place where we realize we weren't put on this earth to be politicians or judges. Fighting Ticketmaster, and even to an extent touring, is a secondary thing. Getting into a room and making music is what we need to feel comfortable with.—**Vic Garbarini**

Lance Mercer

**T**echnically, you're not a sideman working for Deep Purple; you're a full-fledged member. But there must have been something session-like about coming in to replace Ritchie Blackmore.

Actually, I had no problem at all with that. The ice was really broken before I got there, by the fact that they had already toured with Joe Satriani on guitar.

Still, this seems like a strange gig for you.

Not at all. The one reason I ended up with them is that we just fit together. I mean, I loved the sound of that heavy distorted organ playing those triplet lines with the guitar, like at the end of "Child in Time." But when my manager told me they were looking for a guitarist, the first thing I

But Paice and I were jamming as the other guys came in. We started working on this idea I had, and by the end of the day we had recorded the version of the song you hear on the record. You can hear on the guitar parts where I went for some harmonics and didn't quite get them, but it was still a cool vibe, and anyway I'm very much into using first takes 'cause they have some kind of magical good luck.

Did you change your usual rig for the

**"I just fit together naturally with Deep Purple."**

Purple gigs?

Actually, I did. The fact that I'm playing with an organ with a Leslie in a non-instrumental context made me think that a more traditional electric guitar sound would be best. Normally I use a little more midrange than most people, but the band had a Peavey 5150 head, which has an abundance of low end, midrange, and high end. Having more low and high end in the sound gave me more of a typical '90s sound and saved me from just having a honky midrange sound with Jon Lord's midrange organ.

What's it like playing within Jon's rock-oriented open voicings, as opposed to the jazzier changes you've dealt with in the Dixie Dregs and the Steve Morse Band?

I love those open voicings; that's just how I love to hear the keyboard. That's one of the best things about playing in this band. Not only is it easy to play with the guys backing me up—there's plenty of guitar solos [laughs]. There's really no excuses for not liking the gig.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

# Steve Morse

said was, "Are they going to try to make me look a certain way?" [laughs]

Many of Purple's songs bear the strong imprint of a Blackmore solo. How do you approach those songs—do you follow his lines or do something completely fresh?

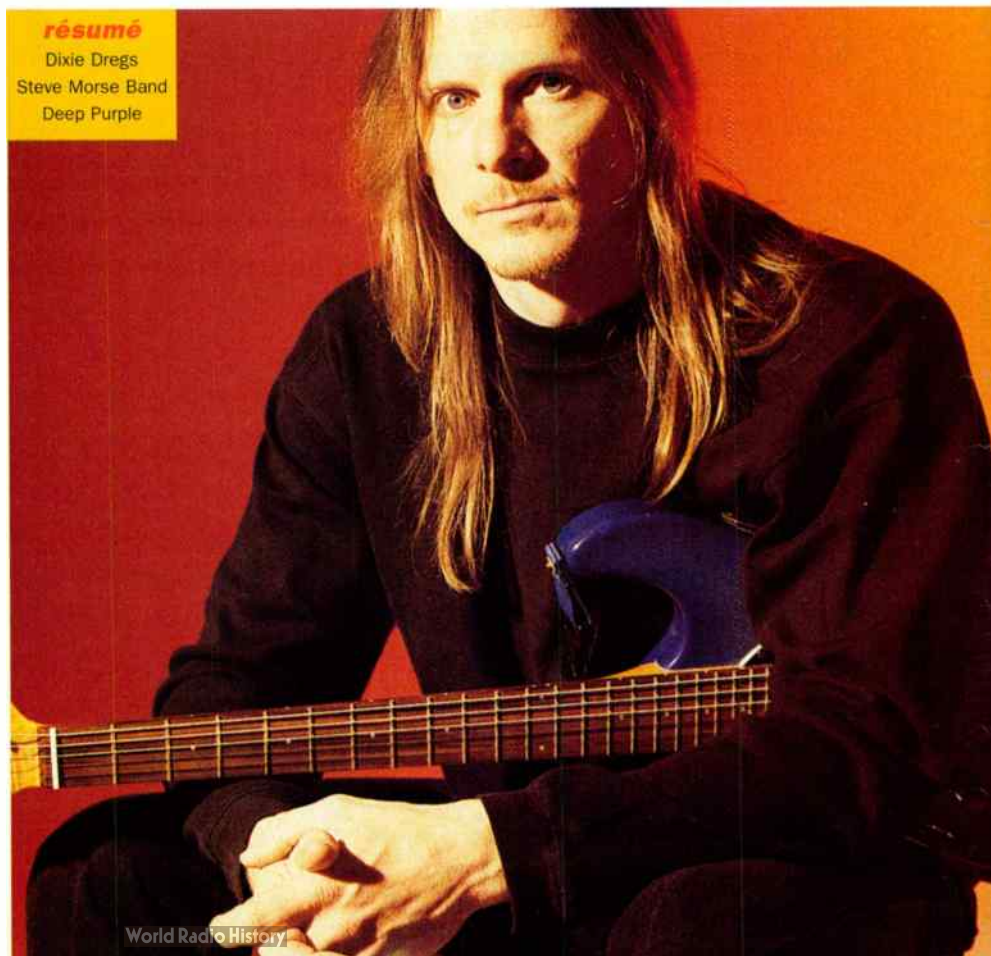
A little bit of both. The "Highway Star" solo is one of my favorites: I play the fast parts exactly like Ritchie recorded them, although we play it a bit faster than the record. There's enough thrown in there so people know that someone else is playing, but out of respect for the solo I'll try to get the main themes across before messing with them. The very end of my solo in "Smoke on the Water" is exactly the same as Ritchie's, with that little pentatonic minor thing at the end, but before that there's quite a long section where we're jamming over [drummer] Ian Paice's Bayou march.

How long did it take to get into their style?

Everything was pretty quick. Some of the things on the album [*Purpendicular*] are even demo takes. For the first song we did, "Sometimes I Feel Like Screaming," we actually came in to record a different tune.

## résumé

Dixie Dregs  
Steve Morse Band  
Deep Purple



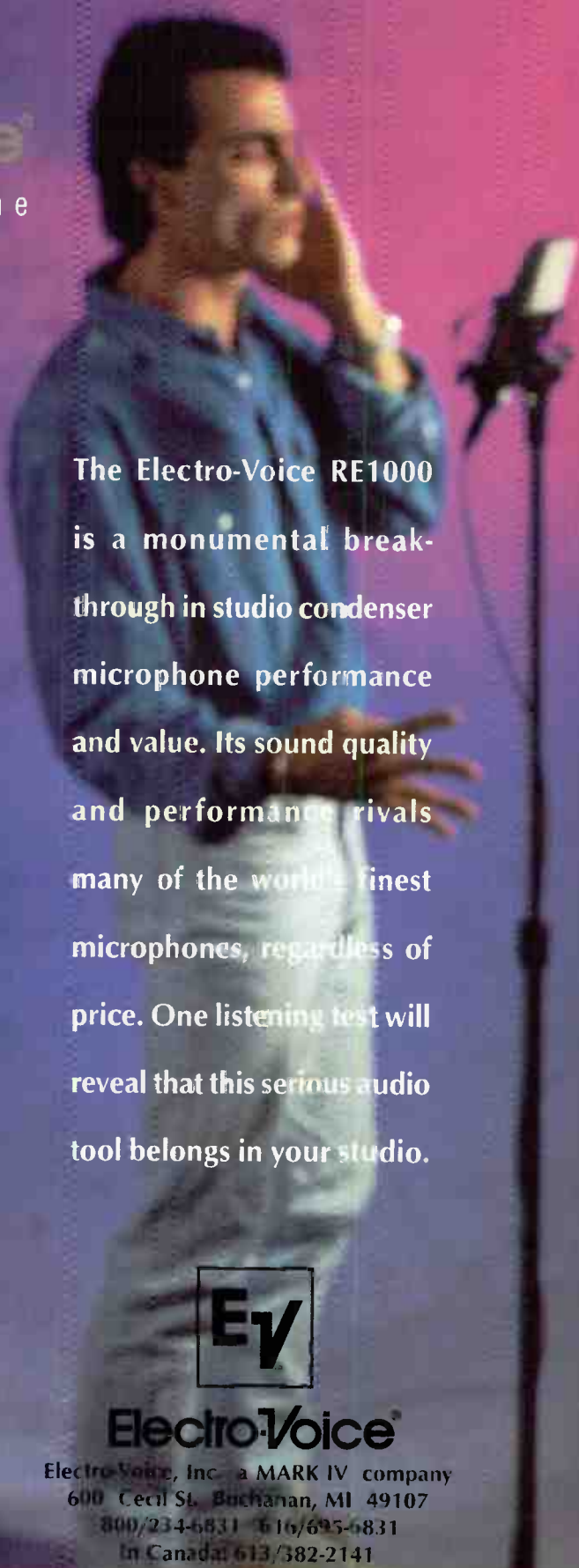
Jay Blakesberg



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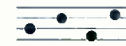


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## gene simmons

The article on Gene Simmons [Aug. '96] is phenomenal. Obviously you can tell that he's a teacher and a very bright individual. If you could do more interviews with people who have brains like that, the younger generation would be in much better shape.

**dana walsh**  
**brutality**

[*Brutality*, Walsh's band, records for the German label Nuclear Blast.]

## britmania

Your article on the new British invasion was a jagged little pill to swallow, with terms like "timeless rock riffs" and "angry young man lyrics." Give me a fookin' break you guys! If Oasis is the harbinger of the new Britpop, then, brothers and sisters, we are in for a musical dry spell. Yeah, "Wonderwall" is a catchy tune, but it's also bloody mundane. After listening to (*What's the Story*) *Morning Glory*? the first word that pops into my head is "banality." Sorry, blokes, I've heard it all before. Neither am I impressed with Liam Gallagher's three-note vocal range. It's bad enough that we have to put up with Hootie and the Borefish without subjecting ourselves to refried Brits. (Nice interview, though, with Georgie Harrison.)

**david rauh**  
**cincinnati, OH**

The main article to tie your Britpop issue together is a reprint of a George Harrison interview from your sister publication *Billboard*. Not only does that type of laziness reflect poorly on *Musician*, it leads me to believe that Robert L. Doerschuk doesn't care so much about his readers as he does getting the magazine out the door and into production as quickly and easily as possible.

**tony perry**  
**cst@juno.com**

Oasis is a lot like the TV show *Friends*: They took the best parts of what everyone before them had done, clumped it together, sold out, shoved it in our faces until it came out our ears—and called themselves the best. Were I Paul McCartney, I would kick some British ass.

**almée garten**  
**jullan, CA**

Obviously Mac Randall has never actually sat

down and listened to an Oasis album. If he had, he would know that their songs aren't "immediately accessible" ditties. "Columbia" and "Morning Glory" are excellent examples of how complex their music can be. We Oasis fans are oh so sorry that Liam Gallagher doesn't prance around onstage in baby tees, climbing up on speakers and stomping on the band's instruments, as does Damon Albarn. If that's what it takes for a band to be perceived as hard-working, then I suggest that every musician trash the next venue they play-hey, at least they'll have Mac in their corner.

Thank you so much for the issue on up-and-coming British bands (July '96). It seems too often that most American mags focus solely on already established British bands like *Elastica* and *Oasis*. Some of the bands you covered may be considered quirky by our standards but are definitely worth looking into as a relief from the norms of American radio standards. As a response to the idea of the British being more interested in the fashion sense of bands rather than the music: Look a little bit deeper and sometimes you'll be rewarded with one of the best things you've never heard.

**roberta mckay**  
**seffner, FL**

**Jennifer mcdonald**  
**groves, TX**

What is wrong with Damon Albarn's neck? In all three photos (cover, page 22, and page 30) his head is cocked quite far to the right. Perhaps he could use a good chiropractor.

**James vander berg**  
**eastpointe, MI**

## no moore

Today someone brought to my attention your Sideman interview with a drummer by the name of Cheron Moore (June '96), who says, "In L.A. you don't need talent. It's who you know and how you hang out." What a load of crap! The top cats in L.A.—J. R. Robinson, Simon Phillips, Jim Keltner, Ricky Lawsen, Harvey Mason, Herman Mathews, Kenny Aronoff, Denny Fongheiser—are the guys you should be interviewing about playing and what is truly important to making it in the music business. You should also spend a bit more time researching the background of those you interview. The next thing Moore will claim is that he played on some of the Beatles' original songs.

**Joe hibbs**

**bensalem, PA**

I've been making music for 31 years, with 15 years on the blues circuit. Being a bandleader, I've been through a lot of musicians, Cheron Moore being one. Please check this musician's references more closely: Just because he sat in one night doesn't give him the right to include that artist on his résumé.

I know Albert Collins. I've played with him many times. I know his management. I don't think they remember a Cheron Moore. I know James Cotton; one of my tunes is on his album *Mr. Superharp Himself*. The guys in his band for the past ten years are my homies. Again, no Cheron Moore.

When he worked for me, Cheron was of average ability. When I discovered he couldn't do a decent blues shuffle, I taught him a Chicago shuffle myself. And I'm a guitar player! In fact, less than two hours before I was to cross into Canada for the second half of a six-week tour, he quit without notice because my road manager "insulted" him by saying I was a better drummer than he is.

**ossee charles anderson**  
**pocatello, ID**

[We spoke with Cheron Moore, who encouraged us not to print these letters, declined to offer a response in print, and suggested that we write a full-length feature on him as the best means to clarify questions related to his résumé.]

## faerie tales

I was enraged by the three Tori Amos-bashing letters in your July '96 Letters column. This so-called "K-Mart Kate Bush" is in reality a healer, an open heart, a talented musician, songwriter, poet, and singer, a comfort, and most importantly, a faerie friend. Not only that: Three out of three of her albums have gone platinum. *Boys for Pele* debuted at number two on the *Billboard* charts. My heart goes out to those of you who don't see the magic of Tori Amos. I hope someday you can. But if you can't appreciate her beauty, both inside and out, you are more dense than the deepest phathom [sic] of the deepest ocean. Have a nice day.

**a.b.**  
**california**

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Spacehog: (left) Richard Steel, Royston Langdon; (right) Anthony Langdon, Benny Cragg

LEE HERSHKO

was for me, just to consume a bit of space on the old airwaves in a good way. It's not taking the piss at all; it's a completely positive song.

The idea of putting in the sound of an English telephone ringing and being engaged came later. I thought of it as a metaphor for asking questions and not getting an answer. That sound was sampled off a Penguin Cafe Orchestra album with an Akai 2800; the track's called "Telephone and Rubber Band." I had to time-stretch the ringing to fit the song's tempo and change it into the different keys. It was pretty easy to get it to ring in E, but the A was quite tricky. I've always loved messing around with samplers. There's a lot of samples on the album [*Resident Alien* (Sire)], some of which are just samples of ourselves, but I can't disclose them all—I'd probably get sued. I'll tell you one: Don McLean. The others you'll have to work out for yourself.—**Mac Randall**

## Spacehog's Royston Langdon

### How I Wrote "In the Meantime"

**W**hen I write a song for a band, as opposed to just recording a demo for myself, I try to arrange the song around the band, always keeping it within as simple a format as possible. It's a limited palette playing in a band, after all: You've got drums, a couple of guitars, a bass, and a voice, and there you are. Creativity-wise, you can do whatever you like, but you've got a much broader scale to work with in writing the song than you've got translating it to a band situation, unless you can have an Egyptian orchestra playing as well.

"In the Meantime" was one of those tunes that had been floating around in my head for quite some time, but I never actually did anything about it; I just let it stay there. Eventually I got it

down. Both the tune and the words for the chorus came together, but the verses were something different—they were more Hendrix-y. The guitar riff on the chorus came out of my head very early on; to me, it's just part of the tune. It's all the same thing. Everyone says, "Oh, that's very David Bowie and Mick Ronson," but at the time, that didn't seem relevant. The bassline was part of the original tune as well, and the important thing was to fit the vocal line to the bassline, instead of the other way around, which is the normal way.

For the words, I thought, if I could possibly write a catchy pop hit, what kind of message would I want to get across? And the answer was, let's get out a really positive message, for no reason other than you can. That's all it

# ro

**I**n the June '95 issue we looked at the two major ways to go in your project studio: digital or analog tape, and hard disk recording. This time we'll look at the two major subgroups within hard disk recording: personal computer-based systems and standalone hard disk recorders.

Most personal computer systems are desktop Mac or Windows oriented. There is a trend, already well under way on the Macintosh side, of software products that use the onboard 16-bit audio and motherboard-provided audio interfaces for pretty sophisticated multitrack recording and mixing with no additional hardware. The next generation of

JOHN HERSEY

# At The Tibetan Freedom Concert

by Adam Yauch (a.k.a. MCA)

**A**dam Yauch is a member of the *Beastie Boys* and a co-founder of the non-profit *Milarepa Fund*, organizers of the *Tibetan Freedom Concert* in San Francisco last June.

Bands get approached by different organizations all the time. You get so bombarded with requests to do things that you just don't have the time to look them all over and still make your music.

This idea of doing a concert to raise awareness about Tibet had been around for a while. Because the Tibetans' struggle is a non-violent one, the main way that change is going to come about is by having more people aware of the situation with Tibet and of the human rights abuses within China.

So a concert was a logical approach.

We basically invited a bunch of bands that we love, but we also wanted to diversify the bill. For example, I've seen Hugh Masekela perform before and he's just incredible, so I thought it would be great to have all these young people who've probably never seen him before experience that—his vibe is just so positive and so powerful that it felt really relevant to the event.

Our corporations are doing a huge amount of business with China because they get cheap labor, so it's important to realize that every time we spend money, we're basically voting for or against human rights. If you buy a pair of jeans that were made in China, there's a good chance they could've been made by forced labor, child labor, or prison labor, by somebody who was exercising their right to free speech by saying, "Tibet should be



Yauch and friends.

free," or "China should be a democracy," and ended up in jail.

We're also trying to become more aware of our own involvements. We're currently doing internal audits on the *Beastie Boys* to figure out where the corporations that we're involved with are investing and what they're doing—like with Capitol, who is tied to EMI, or our lawyers and accountants, who are tied in with other corporations. We hope that others will start doing the same.—**Dev Sherlock**

# ugh mix

Macs (and probably some PCs) are expected to provide even better audio and video interfaces, such as FireWire (IEEE 1394) and S/PDIF.

Currently, nothing can match the ease of editing, processing and mixing on a computer monitor. But if you don't need as much control, then one of the stand-alone hard disk systems might be for you. At the most basic level are recorders like the Akai DR series or the E-mu Darwin, which pretty much substitute for a stand-alone tape machine. They sound great and there's no rewind time. These recorders offer more



sophisticated cut-and-paste editing and track bouncing than any tape-based machines. Some even have mixing capabilities and big screen add-ons, blurring the line with PC systems. They may not have the

power of a computer-based system, but for recording music they might be all you need. Just add a mixing board and some outboard gear and you're in business. Newer variants on the stand-alones such as the Fostex

DMT-8 add an integrated mixer, while the Roland VS-880 adds a mixer, effects, and a larger, more sophisticated editing LCD screen. That still might not be as finely focused as a computer-based system, but if you want to pick up your whole digital studio and carry it under your arm, you can't beat it.

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**Larry Fast** has worked

extensively with Peter Gabriel and other top artists, and composed for movies and television. Visit Larry at <http://www.eclipse.net/~synergy> or send questions c/o Musician.

## new signings



In Ryan Downe's home studio his main demo axe—a Korg O3R—sits on a low table. To one side, mounted on the wall, is an array of Orthodox icons, austere studies of saints in muted tones and shadows. Opposite, a handful of candles, each etched with a seductive Vargas image, stands erect as a choir in anticipatory arousal.

The profane and the sacred, circling around the heartbeat of music, is a metaphor for this young artist's method. On his debut album, *The Hypocrite*, Downe offers songs of unapologetic intimacy, songs of musical depth and

blunt expression. "I wanted to hurt you so bad," he sings, "I wish I could kill you. Don't you dare laugh at my pain."

Maybe it's not John Donne, but who can't relate to this kind of anger? What puts Downe on the podium is the music behind his message. He writes tightly,

### RYAN DOWNE

DEBUT ALBUM: THE HYPOCRITE

LABEL: ROCKET/ISLAND

RELEASE DATE: JUNE 4

with strong hooks and roller-coaster melodies; his voice, capable of slipping from a smooth croon to the edge of hysteria, handles each pivot and plunge with ease. And, as a player, he isn't afraid to experiment, going so far as to lay down a unison vocal part to a guitar line in "Vegas" by blowing and singing into the pickup on his Les Paul to get what he calls "that little Arabian effect."

Clearly the guy is good. He's also a '90s kind of artist, a do-it-yourselfer who put *The Hypocrite* together with Steinberg/Jones Cubase on a Tascam eight-track, then turned his collaborator

Tom Pitt

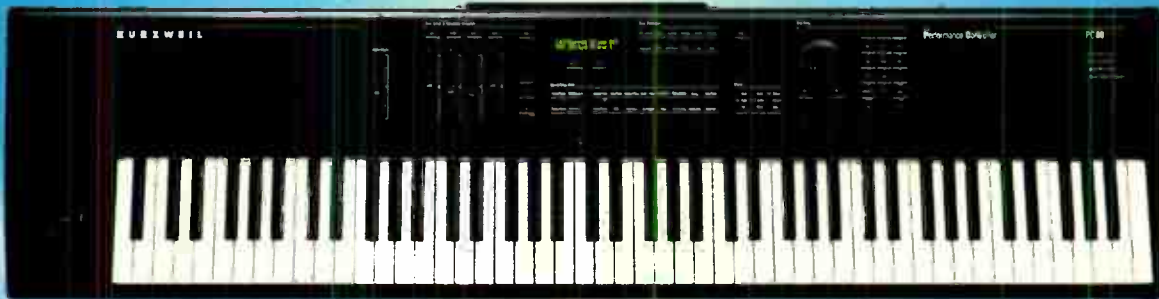


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## new signings

Bob Marlette loose to cut drum tracks and dump the results onto his Alesis ADAT. Yet there's a throwback element to him as well, something in the arena-filling size of his sound and the craft of his writing, that harks back to a different school—that of Bowie in his glam phase, or Elton John at the height of his powers.

So how does someone like this get discovered? With help from Elton John, of course.

But first, back up a few years, to Downe's spell as a history major at San

Francisco State. Bitten by the songwriting bug, he leaves for L.A. and begins chasing a dream through local clubs and showcases. On one of these jobs he's heard by a friend of John Reid, a music biz veteran whose ties to Elton John stretch back to 1971. Reid sends someone down to catch Downe a few weeks later; impressed, the emissary offers him a management deal on the spot.

At this point the story gets interesting: Unlike practically any other unknown performer being offered a deal

with Reid, Downe turns it down.

"I told him, 'I don't really think I'm ready for a record deal,'" he remembers. "Then they said, 'Well, there are lots of other ways we can continue. For instance, we can take you to England.' So I packed my bags and went."

The plan was not to rush into a record deal but to accept Reid's offer to nurture his talent by setting him up with musicians, facilities, and time to develop his studio chops in the friendly creative climate Reid knew in the U.K. Clearly the

## talent

**bluetones** Ask singer and chief lyricist Mark Morriss what direction his band's music is taking and he answers: "You just go where the wind blows you." So far the wind has blown these four Brits to some very kind places, including opening slots for Supergrass and Oasis, a sold-out headlining tour of their own throughout the U.K., a hit single ("Slight Return" hit the number two slot on *Melody Maker's* Top 30 U.K. singles chart) and a major label deal with Polydor. While their sound fits comfortably in the Britpop vein, that wasn't conscious. "We've been doing our own thing

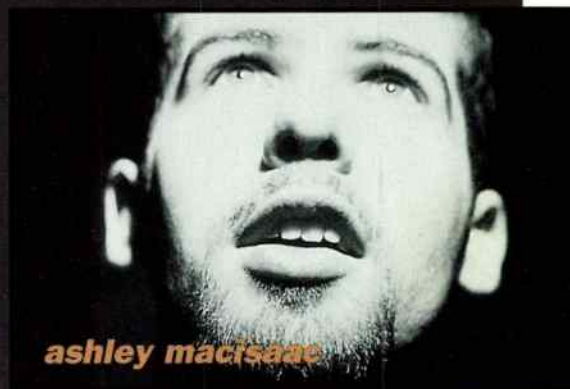


for the past five years," Morriss says. "When everyone starts doin' it, it gets a bit boring."

While their debut album *Expecting to Fly* (A&M, due out July 30) has seen its share of the limelight overseas, the band isn't rushing to hit the States anytime soon. "We haven't any major desire to get to America more than Bangkok or Japan," Morriss says. "We're lookin' forward to breakin' anywhere. All in good time, really." —**David Farinella**

**ashley macisaac** From step dancing at five to picking up the fiddle at nine, Nova Scotia native Ashley MacIsaac has always sought the center of attention. His wild, wooly ways with a bow and six strings have won notice from the likes of Philip Glass, Allen Ginsberg, and David Byrne. Says the 21-year-old MacIsaac, "Everyone has latched onto the fact that I'm a Cape Breton boy playing fiddle music who has now gone completely mad."

For some, his rebellious yet respectful style recalls that of the iconoclastic British violinist *cum* Hendrix fan Nigel Kennedy. "The very first time I saw Nigel Kennedy was at the Royal Variety Performance four or five years ago on CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]," he recalls. "I remember that he had a fishing hat with ties on it, a crazy-looking beard, combat pants—just a freak! And the Queen is up there clapping her hands." Admits the bearded,



bleached-blond MacIsaac, already famous for wearing kilts with army boots, "I think I probably took a lot from just seeing him that one time."

But unlike Kennedy, MacIsaac won't be playing "Purple Haze" on the fiddle anytime soon. Instead, his debut album, *Hi™ How Are You Today?* (A&M) finds him building a mosaic of sleepy hip-hop beats, thrash workouts, samples, loops, and string quartets around traditional Celtic melodies. The album took two-and-a-half years, several studios, and two producers to make, but the results have already generated at least one hit single and video in Canada, where it was released last fall.

To keep him from being pigeonholed by a category-obsessed American public, no singles are planned for U.S. release. But MacIsaac is raising his Stateside profile this summer. As opening act at large venues for the Chieftains, he is proving what Canadian audiences already know about him: "I like to really play my whole arse off." —**Chris Smets**

# new signings

work paid off: Shortly after Downe's arrival came the intro to Elton Himself, whose advice and support helped guide him along the home stretch of his demo.

Yet even having a superstar in your corner doesn't cut it if the demos aren't killer. Which is why, Downe admits, "nobody responded to them. I remember being very, very up on them right after I had finished, but a week later I had this thought that I myself wouldn't go see this artist because there was nothing worth taking too seriously here."

It was this dissatisfaction that made Downe decide to move back to L.A. and work even harder on getting his studio chops together. Meeting Bob Marlette turned out to be the final step in crystallizing the style that drives *The Hypocrite*.

The moral to the story is that patience can be even more important than oppor-

tunity. "That's the number one reason I've gotten where I am," he insists. "And it's not just in music. Patience is a quality that's dying faster every day. But in the sense of music, you've got to be patient. Let's say somebody from England had responded to those demos: I don't know if I would have had the will power to say, 'Well, I don't know.' If I had gotten a record deal and released that material, it would have been a very big mistake, because those demos didn't represent what I am about, and that would have lessened my chance of longevity."

It also helps to connect with a label where the boss is himself an artist. As the first signing on Rocket, Downe benefited from the sense of support and—again—patience that Elton John has made a part of the corporate culture. During one critical period, Downe found

himself low on energy; work on his demos trickled to a halt for reasons he couldn't then understand. "He was feeling run-down, with no energy to even get out bed," says Rocket A&R exec Todd Interland. "Kind of an Epstein-Barr thing. Shortly thereafter he was diagnosed with a thyroid disorder. I reassured him that however long it took him to recuperate, we wouldn't go away; we would still be here."

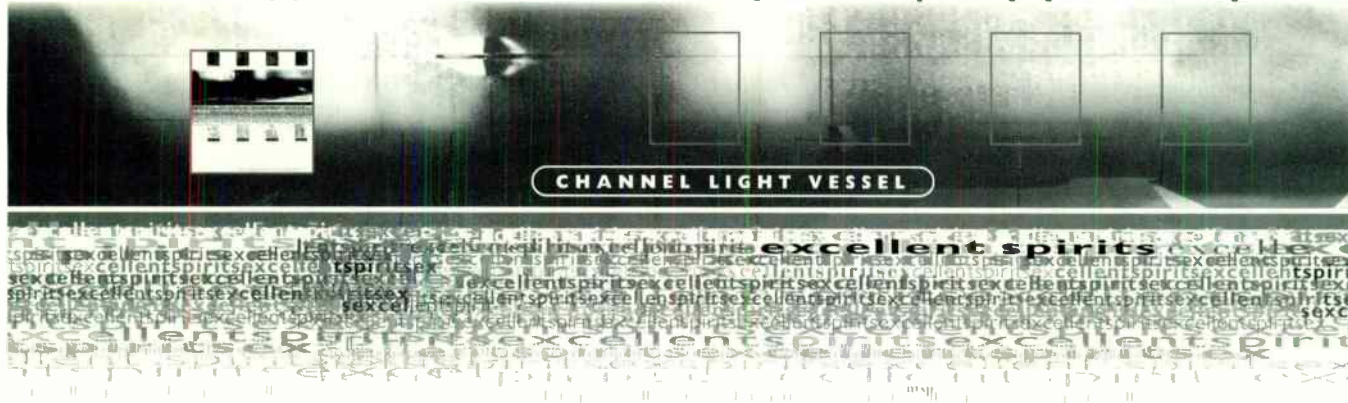
And so they are now. Downe was putting a band together and psyching up for the tour when we last spoke. "The album is theatrical because I intended it to be theatrical," he smiles. "And I'm kind of a ham. So I'm not afraid about pulling it off live. Because I know I can."

The time for patience is past. Look out: Downe is on his way.

—Robert L. Doerschuk



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# TRIBUTE

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THE GUITAR LEGACY OF DUANE ALLMAN

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, ON OCTOBER 29, 1971, Duane Allman, slide guitarist nonpareil and charismatic leader of the Allman Brothers, died in a tragic motorcycle accident near his home in Macon, Georgia. He collided with the back of a flatbed truck carrying steel rods for bridge construction. There were no skid marks. He was impaled by the steel rods in three or four places. He took one through the heart, one through the center of his body and yet remained alive for six hours. He was just three weeks short of his 25th birthday.

With Duane's passing, less than a year after the death of Jimi Hendrix, the music world mourned the loss of yet another brilliant, intuitive player whose contribution and impact during his relatively short time on the planet was staggering. Only a handful of musicians in rock's history have ever communicated with such intense passion and

BY BILL MILKOWSKI — PHOTOGRAPH MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

directness on their instrument or with such a distinctive voice. And few have had such a profound and lasting influence on generations of aspiring players.

"His sound was instantly recognizable to me," says the Subdudes' resident slide guitar ace Tommy Malone, who grew up copping Duane licks off records down in rural Edgard, Louisiana. "What was so cool about him was you could take all of those licks he was playing on a big loud rig—obviously a Gibson Les Paul through a Marshall amp—and easily adapt them to acoustic guitar."

Those who witnessed the original lineup of the Allman Brothers in concert won't soon forget the feeling of all that exhilarating energy surging outward from the stage as Duane and Dickie Betts swapped hot licks. The sight of those two rail-thin, blue-jeaned blond Southern brothers—bare-chested, long hair blowing in the breeze, eyes closed, lost up in something they can't put into words—is forever embedded in their memories. And the piercing sound of Duane's slide work, an extension of his personality just as the tenor sax was a pure extension of John Coltrane's spirit, still rings in their ears.

Growing up in the late '60s and early '70s, particularly in the South, necessarily meant encountering "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed," "Midnight Rider," "Statesboro Blues," and "Whipping Post." At the heart of this quintessentially American music is Howard Duane Allman, born on November 20, 1946 in Nashville, TN. Younger brother Gregg came along a year later, and in 1958 their mother Geraldine, recently widowed,

**Contributors:** *Bill Milkowski is author of Jaco: The Extraordinary and Tragic Life of Jaco Pastorius (Müller Freeman).*



"HIS TONE CUTS STRAIGHT THROUGH TO YOUR SOUL." —Warren Haynes

moved the two brothers to Daytona Beach, Florida. While on a visit to their grandmother's in Nashville during the summer of '59, the brothers saw their first rock 'n' roll show at the Nashville Auditorium.

In 1960, Duane bought his first Harley Davidson motorcycle while brother Gregg bought an acoustic guitar. It wasn't long before Duane would swap a bunch of motorcycle parts for his own first guitar and begin learning from local Daytona guitarist Jim Shepley, who was four years older than Duane and well schooled in the blues licks of Jimmy Reed, John Lee Hooker, and Lightnin' Hopkins. By 1961, while attending Sea Breeze High in

Daytona, the brothers were playing guitars in local bands at YMCA dances, trading off lead and rhythm functions on Chuck Berry tunes and hits by Hank Ballard and the Midnighters. In 1962, after forming the Escorts, Duane convinced younger brother Gregg to switch from guitar to Vox organ and become the band's lead singer. After Gregg graduated from high school in 1965 (Duane had dropped out after completing the ninth grade), the brothers formed the Allman Joys and went out on the road for the first time, performing blues classics like "Spoonful" and "Crossroads" as well as pop hits of the day like the Yardbirds' "Shapes Of Things."

The Allman Joys broke up in early 1967. (Some demo material that they'd recorded at Bradley's Barn in Nashville was eventually released on Buddy Killen's Dial label as *Early Allman*.) After relocating to Los Angeles, they regrouped as the Hour Glass and quickly released two records on Liberty—1967's *Hour Glass* and 1968's *Power Of Love*—that blended their Southern blues and R&B roots with the

prevailing psychedelia of the day. It was during this stint on the West Coast that Duane started to play slide. Specifically, Taj Mahal's recording of Blind Willie McTell's "Statesboro Blues," featuring Jesse Ed Davis on slide guitar and Ry Cooder on rhythm guitar, inspired Duane to pick up his first glass Coricidin bottle and slide across the frets.

After the Hour Glass broke up in late 1968, Gregg remained in Los Angeles while Duane returned to Florida, where he began jamming with bassist Berry Oakley and the band he was playing in at the time, the Second Coming. The regular guitarist in that band was Dickie Betts. It was on these informal jams that Duane

Michael Ochs

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World Radio History

and Dickie began exploring the distinctive twin leads that would become such an identifiable part of the Allman Brothers sound.

In November of 1968, while staying in Berry Oakley's Jacksonville pad, Duane was summoned by producer Rick Hall to come to Muscle Shoals, Alabama to participate in a Wilson Pickett session which resulted in a brilliant rendition of the Beatles' "Hey Jude." Duane so

impressed both Hall and Pickett that he was instantly invited to finish recording the rest of the album. It was Pickett who gave Duane the nickname "Skyman." As he put it, "He's always up, man. He's always happy-go-lucky, everything's beautiful, he's having a good time."

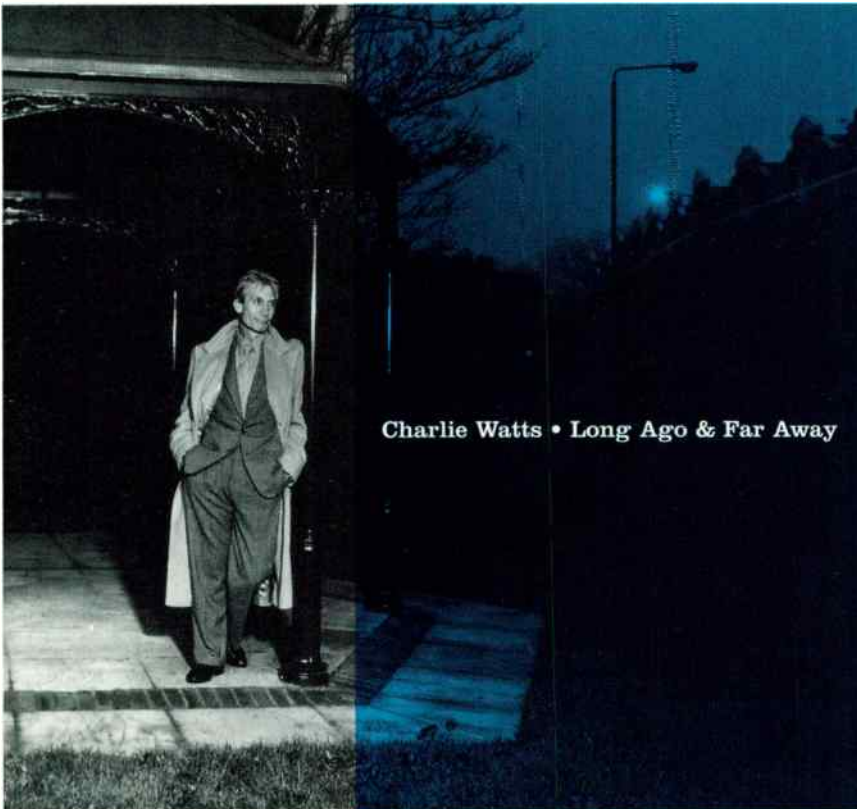
When word of Duane's searing blues prowess reached Jerry Wexler, producer and Atlantic Records VP, a string of session work was lined up for Duane. He

went on to make significant, soulful contributions between 1969 and late 1971 to a variety of rock, blues, and R&B sessions for Atlantic Records, including Aretha's *Soul 69*, King Curtis' *Instant Groove*, John Hammond's *Southern Fried*, Clarence Carter's *The Dynamic Clarence Carter*, Delaney & Bonnie's *To Bonnie From Delaney*, Boz Scaggs' self-titled debut, and half a dozen others. While some developing players at the time were wiped out by Duane's supercharged slide work with the Allman Brothers, others were more taken by the finesse he demonstrated on these Atlantic sessions.

"They haven't really used anybody since that time on a lot of different records playing slide guitar," says slide monster David Tronzo. "That was the era when they used players who had signature sounds as guests on other people's records. They don't really do that anymore. I can still remember the sound he got on Herbie Mann's *Push Push*—Les Paul goldtop on the front pickup, really purring through a Fender amp. It was a very different sound than the rawer tones he got playing Les Pauls with overdriven SG pickups through a Marshall amp, which was his standard setup with the Brothers."

In September of '69, the Allman Brothers went to New York to record their self-titled debut album. Duane makes typically searing slide statements on "Dreams," a modal precursor to "Whipping Post," and on the loose jamming vehicle "Don't Want You No More," a precursor to Betts' "Elizabeth Reed." A killer rendition of Muddy Waters' "Trouble No More" from that initial Allman Brothers outing stands as a prime example of Duane's powerful approach to slide guitar.

"To my ears," Tronzo says, "Duane sounded like he had so much he wanted to put through the instrument, but the slide only lets you put through a certain amount; it restricts you. So there's this force that comes across in his playing because he was really pushing it out. Whereas you get a guy like Tampa Red or Blind Willie Johnson or even Lowell George—for all the differences in their styles, they sound like they're taking



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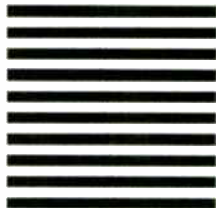
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If there is a cooler segue than the Allman Brothers' "Don't Want You No More" into "It's Not My Cross to Bear," I haven't heard it. This is the prototype that inspired Billy Gibbons to weld "Jesus Just Left Chicago" to "Waitin' For The Bus" a few years later.

The opening solo shown here is a masterpiece of soul, power, and grace. There are no wasted notes, no noodling—just raw emotion. With the exception of bar 7, Duane uses a blues/pentatonic variation: 1, 2, flat 3, (3), 4, 5, 6, flat 7. You could break this solo up into a few different scales, but I imagine Duane just thought of it as "Blues in B." The notes that really change the mood are the flat 3/3 and the 6/flat 7.

Duane was a master of building tension and "aggressive" notes in the scale. By emphasizing the flat 3 and flat

# ESSENTIAL DUANE: "IT'S NOT MY CROSS TO BEAR"

7 he creates an intense, dark mood. At the same time, he creates even more tension by bending "around" the actual notes. By bending slightly sharp (the D in bar 2) or slightly flat (the F# in bar 5), he plays around the scale much like a horn player or vocalist.

In bar 7, he bends up a minor 3rd to

A#, then quickly falls back to the G, implying the harmonic minor color as the IV chord changes from major to minor. This passage has a very vocal quality to it, like something B.B. King would do with his falsetto.

By bending all the way into the D# in bar 9, Duane releases all the tension created in the previous 8 bars. By prefacing this note with G# instead of G, he creates a sweeter-sounding passage.

Other trademarks of Duane's are the rakes (literally rake your pick/fingers across the adjacent strings) in bars 7 and 12, the sweet, perfectly controlled vibrato, and that amazing tone. This is as good as it gets.—**David Grissom**

**Contributors:** David Grissom is a guitar player who has worked with Joe Ely, John Mellencamp, Storyville, Robben Ford, Chris Isaak, Ringo Star, and John Mayall.

**Guitar Solo**

The image shows three systems of guitar notation for a solo in B major. Each system consists of a standard musical staff with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a time signature of 8/8, and a corresponding guitar tablature staff. The first system covers measures 1-3, the second covers measures 4-6, and the third covers measures 7-9. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and vibrato marks. The tablature uses numbers 1-15 to indicate fret positions, with some notes in parentheses indicating bends. Chord symbols B7, Em, and F are placed above the staff. The word 'T A B' is written vertically on the left side of the first system's tablature. The word 'full' is written above the staff in several places, indicating full bends. The word 'rakes' is written above the staff in measure 7, indicating a rake technique. The word '8va' is written above the staff in measure 7, indicating an octave shift.



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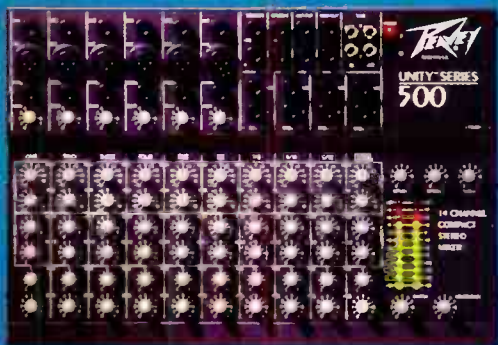
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their time, like they kind of know what phrases they're gonna play. It sounds much more relaxed and laid-back. Duane, on the other hand, sounds like somebody who's hurtling through space."

Warren Haynes, resident slide guitarist in the current Allman Brothers lineup and leader of the audacious power trio Gov't Mule, concurs. "What grabbed me about Duane's playing was the whole picture—his tone, his touch, what he chose to play, the way he made it sound like a harmonica. All of that was just so vital, it cuts straight through to your soul."

Tom Dowd produced three Allman Brothers albums: *Idlewild South*, *At Fillmore East*, and *Eat A Peach*. Dowd once described *Fillmore* as "the first rock-jazz album," due to the considerable amount of stretching and daring improvisation done by guitarists Duane and Dickie in that live setting. Dowd also produced another rock milestone, *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs* by Derek and the Dominoes. That 1970 classic paired Duane with the reigning guitar god of the day, Eric Clapton. Duane's Gibson Les Paul was quite distinctive from Eric's brighter, thinner-sounding Fender Stratocaster, and his slide playing added a splash of color on

tunes like "Anyday," "Why Does Love Got To Be So Sad," and the epic "Layla."

Duane's swan song with the Brothers was *Eat A Peach*, only half-finished at the time of his death. In a two-year period from late '69 to the fall of '71, the Allman Brothers had played 500 dates across the country, bringing their sound to the multitudes and inducing more than a few aspiring guitarists to take up the bottleneck.

"Just from listening to Duane on record, I knew he played with his fingers," recalls Nashville sessioneer Lee Roy Parnell. "It's the skin, you know? If you have a pick in your right hand and glass or metal in your left hand, it totally isolates you from the instrument. So I took a tip from Duane and threw away my pick early on. Plus, there's this natural dampening effect that occurs when you use fingers that you don't have when you've got a pick. And Duane was really who I learned that from."

Warren Haynes is quick to point out another important aspect of playing with fingers as opposed to using a pick. "Duane used the fingers that he wasn't using to mute out the other strings so you didn't hear all the unwanted noise. To me, playing that kind of slide guitar, that's a necessity. You can't sit with a flat pick and play that kind of stuff without it

sounding like shit."

But Duane Allman never sounded less than inspired, whether in the studio, before throngs of cheering fans, or just casually sitting around his hotel room with a dobro or acoustic guitar in hand. As Atlantic Records executive Jerry Wexler once said, "Some of Duane's best playing was on my front porch with Delaney Bramlett."

Duane's influence was towering. He was one of those incredibly forceful, magnetic players whose voice on his instrument was so strong that it threatened to overpower and smother an aspiring player's own voice. As Lee Roy Parnell recalls, "I had to put the Allman Brothers' records away when I was about 25 years old. I put 'em under the bed and didn't listen to 'em consciously again for another 10 years because I had to find my own voice. As long as I was listening to Dickie and Duane, all I wanted to do was emulate them."

Duane lived hard and played hard, always searching for that magical moment when the band became a vehicle for something greater than the sum of its parts. "That was his thing," says Parnell. "When the band was right he'd walk off the stage and say, 'We were hittin' the note.' That's what he lived for. He was a musician with a capital M, a vagabond

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man with a vagabond heart and a love for getting it right.”

“He was soulful like a motherfucker,” says Tronzo. “But it was white soul. I mean, he didn’t try to *not* be white, you know? He just was who he was. He was truly devoted to great, soulful guitar playing.”

And to hittin’ the note.

#### WARREN HAYNES

Slide guitarist, current member of the

Allman Brothers band and leader of the power trio Gov’t Mule.

The weird thing about me joining the Brothers was, I didn’t want to all of a sudden have to sound more like Duane. To listen to me play outside the Allman Brothers, you can hear Duane’s influence, but mixed in with a hundred other guitar players. It does come out more strongly in my slide playing, because there have been hundreds of great guitar players but only a handful of really

great slide players, so your slide influences are a lot more obvious. But I was a little concerned that I would have to sound more like Duane to be in the band and it would confuse people even more as to what I really sounded like. So it was good for me that as soon as I joined the band, they were like, ‘We want you to play like you!’ Now every night I make the decision on how much of Duane’s influence to insert into the music. And I would be crazy to just go against the grain and not let it show through, because he was such a huge part of that band sound.”

#### LEE ROY PARNELL

Slide guitar virtuoso, top country session-man in Nashville and Arista recording artist.

If we want to pinpoint Duane’s playing, you’d have to say he plays more like Little Walter plays harp than like Elmore James plays slide. Listen to ‘One Way Out’ [from *Eat A Peach*]. That’s dead-on Little Walter. Little Walter was voodoo, man, and Duane knew it.

“A common misconception among slide players is that Duane played on the bass pickup, but he rarely ever did. He played on the treble pickup, turned his amp up and backed off the treble knob on his guitar. That’s where you’re gonna get all that sustain and tone. And Duane could sting you with that setup. Playing on the bass pickup doesn’t have the same bite; it rounds off the note. There are times, like on ‘Dreams,’ that he’s probably playing on the bass pickup. But ‘Statesboro Blues,’ ‘Done Somebody Wrong’ and all of *At Fillmore East*, that’s all treble pickup.”

#### DAVE TRONZO

Slide guitarist, former member of the Lounge Lizards and the John Hiatt band, currently a member of Spanish Fly and leader of the Tronzo Trio.

As much as I loved and was affected by Jeff Beck or Jimi Hendrix, I didn’t really relate to them personally. I mean, I’m not gonna look at a Hendrix record and go, ‘I’m gonna be that!’ First of all he’s black, second of all the clothes, third of all the drugs, the crazy shit. But Duane Allman struck me like he was a whiskey-drinking cracker, and I could definitely relate to that. I could relate



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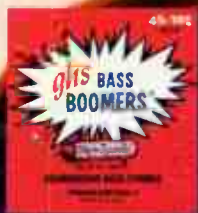


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to the way he dressed—it was just '60s hippie white guy. I could relate to the way he looked, the way he sounded, just the whole idea of it. There was a real strong connection for me there. And it just seemed like before I knew it, he was gone.

“Man, when I heard about his death, that shit killed me! I felt like I lost a brother. I was devastated. I remember the night it happened I went to this dance. I had been really crazy about this girl. . . I mean, I’m probably like 13 years old and I was so sad the day I heard this news I couldn’t even deal with the girl. I was at the dance but I couldn’t deal with anybody there. I mean, it was profound. I’ve only felt that a few times in my life. At the time I had no way to express it to anybody, but I remember that the feeling I was left with really carried me for a long time. After I heard that Duane had died I said to myself, ‘I’m going to become a great slide player. I’m going to do this as best as I can do it.’ It really was like a devotional thing. I have a feeling that’s how *he* was, just from things that I heard. It’s obvious. You can hear it in his sound.”

#### SONNY LANDRETH

*Slide guitarist, former member of the Clifton Chenier and John Hiatt bands, currently a Liberty recording artist.*

I remember at the time that *Layla* came out my friends and I saw that picture of Duane on the inside with the fire-bird peacock shirt and we all said, ‘Man, what a cool shirt!’ Fast forward all these years later: A friend of mine who used to be really close to the Allmans ended up with the shirt. So she gave me a part of it, and I’ve kept it. It’s like my mojo. And every time I look at this shirt I



Sonny Landreth

reflect back to that night I saw him play in Lafayette. It reminds me of the magic that inspired me and compelled me to do what I’m doing now. We took a snapshot of that shirt for my first CD, *Outward Bound*. That is what’s on the cover.”

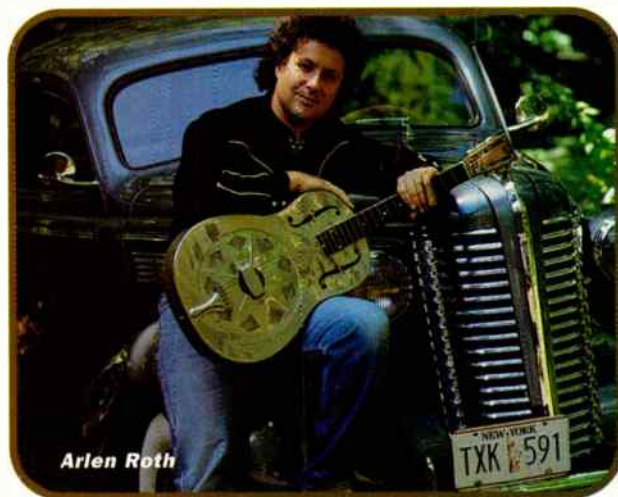
#### ARLEN ROTH

*Guitarist, author of the 1974 best-seller Slide Guitar (Oak Publications) and founder of the instructional video company Hot Licks.*

When I was doing the soundtrack to the movie *Crossroads* with Ry Cooder, we always had that argument about big glass slides versus what I like, which is brass slides. But Duane used those Coricidin bottles. It had a certain kind of tone, and also those bottles didn’t have a heck of a lot of sustain to them. So he relied a lot on volume. If you notice, he’s always playing at break-neck volume with a quick decay to the note. That’s because he was using glass and not very good quality glass.

“He also played flat a lot. Some of it I think was intentional. For slide, the pitch is up to you because you’re not pressing on the fret. Duane had a tendency to kind of whip that slide, and because he was using something that was bigger than his finger, he was sometimes a little flat.

“Any proper slide guitar should be played in open tuning. Duane would use an open G tuning. You can replicate the kind of things Duane did in E tuning but in G tuning you can get more brightness. Your same licks are basically moved one string higher, so you’re playing on the G string what you were playing on the D string, which gives more of a bite to it. When I heard Duane play I immediately zeroed in on the fact that it was



Arlen Roth

either G tuning or straight tuning. Normal tuning is very close to G tuning because you have that open G chord, the open D, G and B strings. So you get a lot of the same licks in both styles.”

#### RONNIE EARL

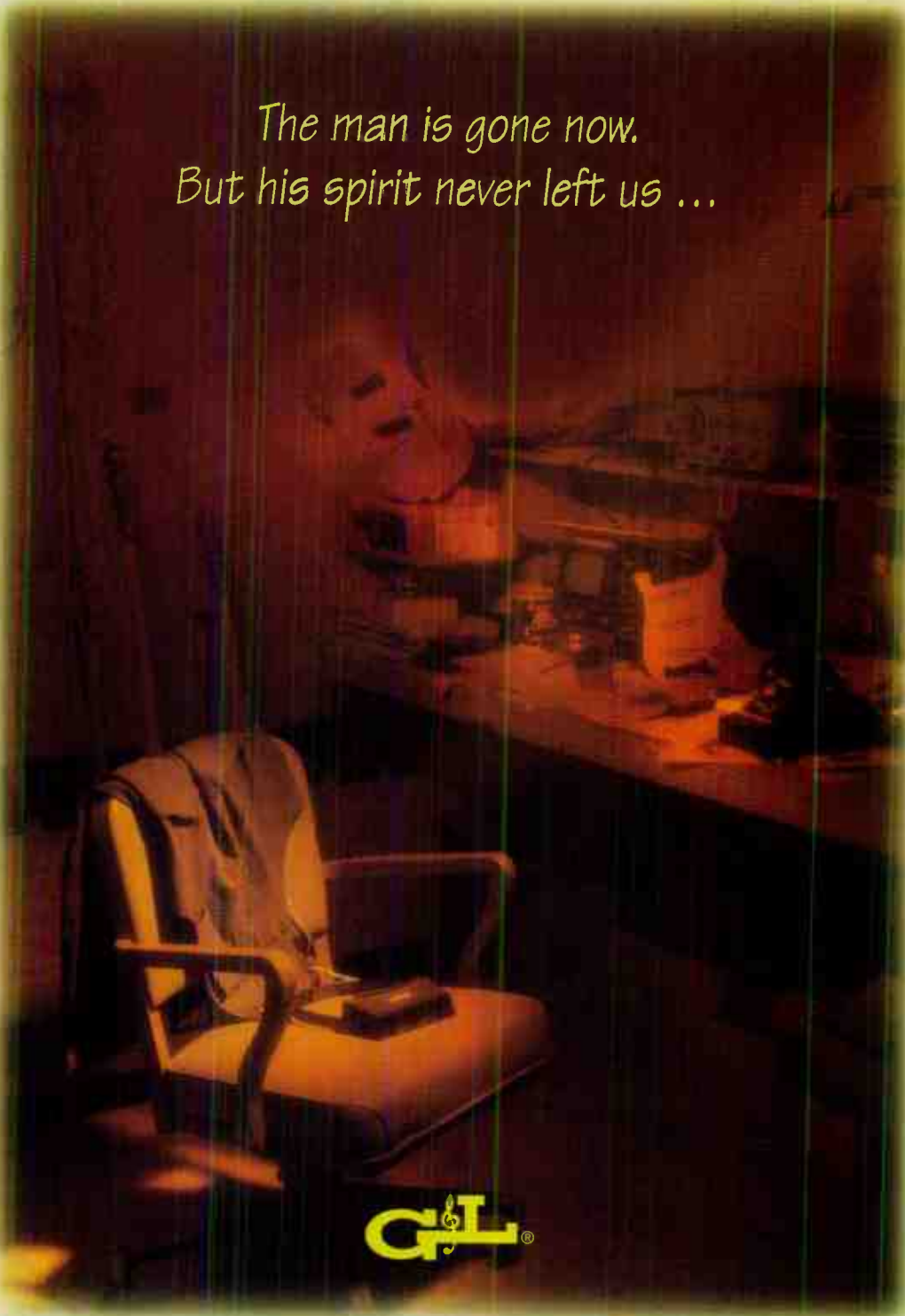
*Blues guitar virtuoso, formerly a member of Roomful Of Blues, currently a Bullseye Blues recording artist.*

I never got to see Duane, but he remains one of my favorites. His tune ‘Little Martha’ is probably my favorite song in the world—that pretty little two-minute song at the end of *Eat A Peach*.

“Duane’s playing just makes me really happy. I’m a Yankee but I can appreciate the Southernness of it. His slide guitar on ‘Statesboro Blues’ or even on the first album. . . it kind of shook me up. And he invented that. I know he went to see Jesse Ed Davis and that the first Taj Mahal album influenced him, but he came up with his own thing. Plus, his non-slide playing is great.

“You know, the other night I sat in with the Allman Brothers in Memphis, and I was standing in Duane’s spot, next to his brother. And I was getting the chills. And it’s funny because some people have said to me, ‘I didn’t know you were interested in the Allman Brothers.’ But really, I was into them before I was introduced to Magic Sam or Earl Hooker. Then I had to go on my path and learn the blues from the old guys but all the while still enjoying the Allman Brothers blues—just a different color of the rainbow, right? Like Hendrix, Santana, Duane Allman. . . different colors of the rainbow. All very beautiful.”

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seems to say. Junior is every bit the tender to cast the new long shadow in country music—"country" being an indicator for *this* country, which leaves room for blues and rock—and his recordings like *Guit With It*, *Junior High* and the raging new trucker's tone poem *Semi-Crazy* (MCG/Curb) find him writing compassionately about indigence and homelessness and waxing disarmingly droll about whatever's left. Junior is pulling together not just lots of

styles of American music, but the means to the music as well: His Guit-Steel is a half-Telecaster, half-steel guitar that he designed just to have all those sounds at hand simultaneously. Through it, his music takes on the edge of hard blues and the sighing whine of gratitude for a reformed life, of happily distant memories of hard living.

Vernon's *Mistaken Identity* (Epic), the first recording under his name alone, comes after a protracted period of dread

over the creative demise of his longtime band Living Colour. Since the breakup, Reid has been performing around Manhattan with Masque, an intense collective that wound up at the core of a solo album filled with emotional and spiritual high points—no doubt coaxed by co-producer Teo Macero, the colossus of collage behind Miles Davis' great records—and notable as much for its articulation of Reid's many cultural interests as for the funky, slinky, humorously organic way those interests are addressed. And although in Junior's presence he claims to be a slouch at steel guitar (an instrument he played with jazz drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson), Vernon the guitar player hits it hard all over *Mistaken Identity*, offering some of his most impressive improvising yet.

The day they met, Vernon watched Junior get out of his car and noticed how his handlers took no less care with a tiny road case than with the huge trunk containing his precious Guit-Steel. The smaller hardshell container sat on the couch next to Vernon all morning; it contained Junior's cowboy hat, which Junior felt compelled to bring along, but not to wear. When it came time to be photographed, amid swinging dreadlocks, out it came—the one idiomatic concession between them.

**Vernon:** I caught a set of yours in Austin at the...

**Junior:** Continental Club? That's where I play when I'm there.

**Vernon:** Yeah, it was wonderful.

**Junior:** Oh, thanks. I missed you at the Jimi Hendrix thing in Seattle. I heard you were there, but I had to leave.

**Vernon:** Yeah, it was so funny, so weird and disorganized.

**Junior:** Too many people trying to show off.

**Vernon:** My tech told me that there were a bunch of guys behind their amps that all had cans of lighter fluid.

**Junior:** They all wanted to light up! "Me next!" [laughs] Yeah, I left before all that.

**Vernon:** [Pearl Jam's] Mike McCready burned his guitar. It got a little silly.

**Junior:** Been done, been done. What time

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did you play up there, late?

**Vernon:** Yeah, I sang "Crosstown Traffic" middle of the show. At that point the show was kinda out of control.

**Junior:** It didn't start off like that [laughs]. They got Al Hendrix up there in this big crown and put this robe on him, and it just wasn't right. It was like, "Oh, you're our king because you were the King's dad," and it was undignified.

*Were they celebrating that he finally won back the rights to his son's material?*

**Vernon:** That was great.

**Junior:** I don't think that's what they meant by that.

**Vernon:** I was really happy for the family, but it's funny; Hendrix just pulls out the best and the worst in people. And there's a thing that happens with guitar players where they're like "I'm the next," it's like the Hendrix Sweepstakes. [laughter] I was never interested in that. The thing Hendrix taught me is, be yourself. There's never gonna be another Hendrix. Those conditions don't exist.

**Junior:** They do the same thing with Elvis. Way out of control.

**Vernon:** But what Elvis did was vital and dangerous and then...there are videos of the last concerts he did, and it's terrifying. It's like, they hand him the guitar and he kinda strums in front of the guitar, not even playing it, and they hand him roses and he goes to the lip of the stage and he hands out roses. It's like a trained dancing bear—frightening.

*I wonder what Hendrix would be up to in today's music, or if it would be substantially different because of his presence.*

**Vernon:** I'd like to think the best. The fact is he was bored near the end. He just wanted to be free. He was in R&B bands all his life, so he just got his little four or eight bars. Little Richard kicked him out of a band because he was too flash, and all of that that was in him was bottled up. When he finally got free, he didn't let anything contain his imagination, and that's the genius of it. There are certainly other players with the potential, but the question is, "Would they have allowed themselves to just go wherever?" His music is the only music that doesn't sound dated, the feelings, the emotions...

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**Junior:** Right. Even the recording techniques, totally up to date. You sit down and listen to it and go, "Wow, that could be 24-track," but it's not. It's *four*.

**Vernon:** But we'll never know. Like, Clapton *did* live, and he went different places. Jeff Beck didn't die; he has done pretty interesting, great things too.

**Junior:** Yeah, but none of them was ever as good as Jimi, so we don't know. They were all behind him. I hope I'm not making anybody mad, but that's just

how I look at it. He's just a better player, a better writer. Better singer. *Better*. So there's no tellin' what he'd be doin' now, if anything. I think he'd be like all or nothing. I think he'd be totally involved or he'd be a hermit and give up music. That's how he was.

**You met Hendrix.**

**Junior:** I just met him one time at a concert as a fan, in the backstage area. That was his last tour. He wasn't happy, I could tell, but he was real nice to me, real down

to earth. Albuquerque. Right before he died.

**Vernon:** You played a Hendrix song during your set. Do you do "Foxy Lady" or "Purple Haze"?

**Junior:** I mighta done something out of it, a lick. I do a lot of them in "Sugarfoot Rag."

**Vernon:** I gotta tell you, "My Wife Thinks You're Dead" has gotta be the best title. I love that.

**Junior:** Thank you. I had the title before I wrote the song, thought it was really funny.

**Vernon:** And the story's crazy: "Look here now, I done gone down the straight and narrow path, don't you come showin' up now. Good to see you honey, but..."

**Junior:** "...leave. Leave *now*. Leave a few minutes ago." [laughter]

**Vernon:** Did you start playing both instruments at the same time, or did you play the steel a bit later?

**Junior:** No, guitar first.

**Vernon:** So you had the doubleneck built. Do you just have one?

**Junior:** I got two now. I liked both things and I didn't want to have to unplug one and plug into the other one and all that.

**Vernon:** I used to play very bad lap steel. I have a Fender, and I would stand it in front of me, and I'd have to reach over...

**Junior:** That's what I did. You're just banging one into the other.

**Vernon:** And it starts to move around and your leg starts gettin' wobbly.

**Junior:** Yeah, so I said, Why do this? Make it one. And then of course, it makes it easier to sing while all that's going on.

*You really seem to be integrating your use of the two instruments.*

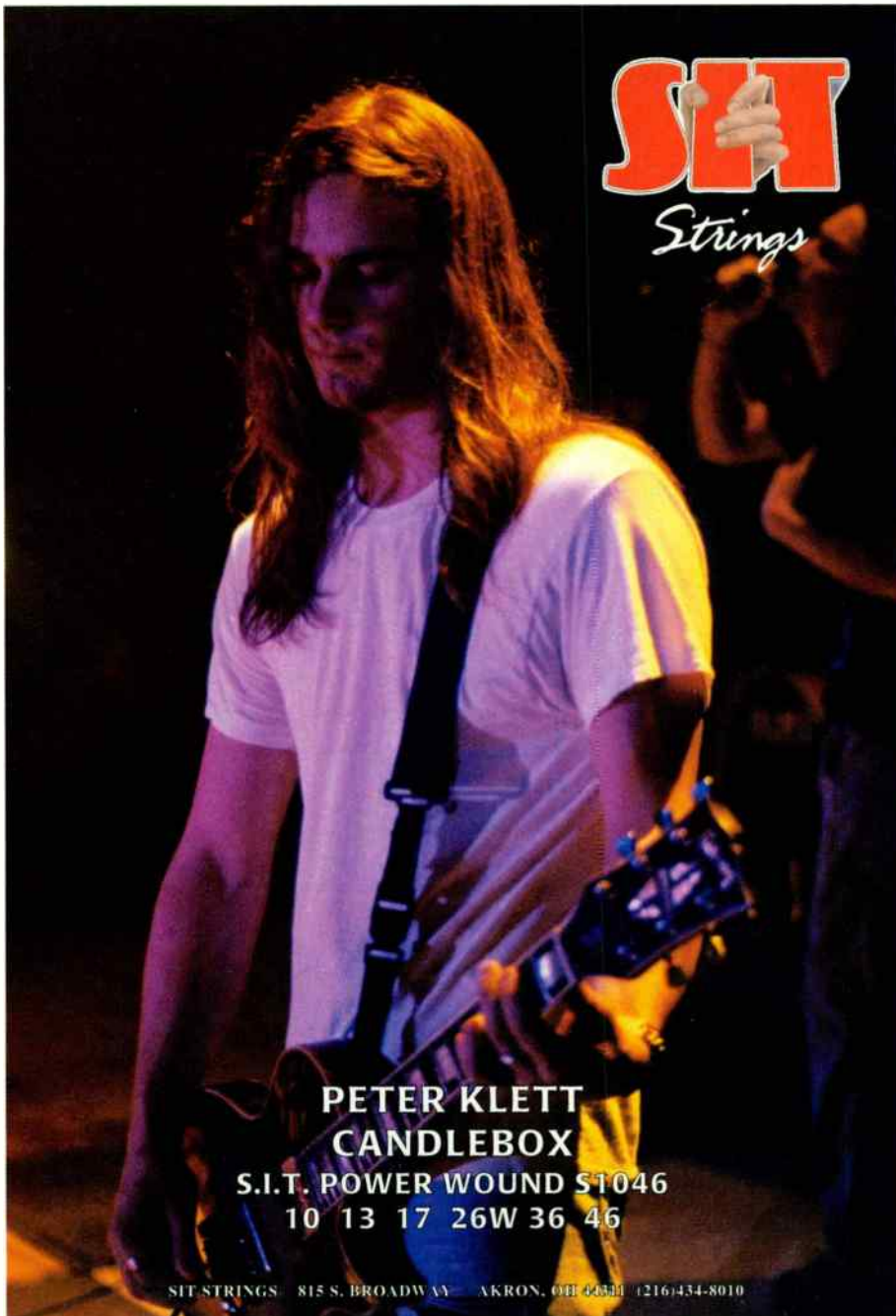
**Junior:** Yeah, in the studio you can put a steel wherever you want it, guitar wherever you want it. It's onstage I was a victim, play the whole song on one or the other. Now I can switch.

**Vernon:** So where do you keep the bar?

**Junior:** In a felt-lined hole on top. The felt's kind of worn out but it still holds it in there. [laughs]

**Vernon:** It's pretty seamless, you moving from one to the other.

**Junior:** Sometimes when you're in a hurry you have to grab an open string, and hopefully that string'll be one you want [laughs] depending on the song, or how





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much space you have.

**Vernon:** No, you push it; you do things that go...

**Junior:** ...too far. [laughs]

**Vernon:** No, it's great, because a lot of guitar players don't risk anything, and when you're doing those muted triplets on the steel and the tempo's up and you're right up on it, it's like, "Wow."

**Junior:** I appreciate that, thanks.

*Growing up, did either of you envision what actually became of you in terms of the status of your craft, and how it's been accepted?*

**Vernon:** Well, I knew I wouldn't be able to help being me. Before I played I had different ideas from my peer group; I listened to a wider range of music. It was like knowing I would go to that place they weren't gonna go. The big battle was accepting that. When players influenced me, it was like, "This person sounds like himself," not, "How can I sound like this person?" But it comes at a cost. You're not always the most popular kid in class. [Junior laughs] Junior knows what I'm talking about.

**Junior:** Yeah, it just all gets you there eventually. Like Vernon said, the more of yourself you put in, the better, the more you can cut the umbilical cord and use those influences to develop your own thing and not lean on them. To get there, though, you have to imitate a little bit. You still call on those things but you try to do it in your own way, and the more you can do that, the more you grow.

*Your tone is more aggressive than most country players like Albert Lee or Ray Flacke, and your sensibility's more twisted. What did you woodshed?*

**Junior:** Everything. I get bored easy, so I just dart around to different styles. I went to Hawaii and played Hawaiian for a while. Playing Hawaiian and playing on the Grand Ole Opry are completely different, but yet, you can connect 'em somehow if it's all part of your musical experience, which in my case it is. That and the jazz and blues, everything I'm interested in.

*So you've both got the islands in your blood—Vernon's got the Caribbean.*

**Vernon:** Yeah, my parents are from Montserrat, so I grew up with reggae, calypso, James Brown, Herman's Hermits. I

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**J**unior Brown records with a Fender Vibrolux, but onstage he runs his unique Guit-Steel through two Y-jacked Twins. "I gotta keep 'em worked on all the time," he laughs. "It ain't solid-state, man—you gotta pay for that sound! But I like the warmth. I'm looking for a good solid-state amp I can bang up on the road and won't have to maintain." The Guit-Steels were built by luthier Michael Stevens, placing a normal Tele-style guitar atop a steel guitar; the guitar takes GHS .011s, the steel a standard C6 set. Junior hops up his live sound with a Boss preamp.

The guitar Vernon's holding in the pictures is a MIDI controller built by Harvey Starr, but his techie interests are usually in the service of true vintage tone. "The newest advance is computer models of amps and instruments, like the Roland VG-8. They're working on a technology that can emulate certain-era tones." There's a bit of VG-8 on his new *Mistaken Identity*, but most of the guitars went through tube amps like a Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier, a Blue Angel or a Matchless. His Hamer guitars use EMG or Tom Anderson pickups and D'Addario strings, .011 through .059. "I had a guitar that would always go out of tune and the guy setting it up said, 'Heavier strings will make it stay in tune, and it'll sound better because there will be more metal moving over the polepieces.' Now it's hard for me to play lights. I have a Steinberger and they don't make Steinberger strings in .011s, so the lightest I ever go is .010."

remember hearing "Black Dog."

**Junior:** [laughs] All right. Where'd you grow up?

**Vernon:** Brooklyn. Crown Heights, and *all dem kinda ting, man*. And then also B.B. King—it's funny, on *Semi-Crazy* there's

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one solo you take on Telecaster where I hear this Albert Collins thing, but it's not a Collins lick, it's this *feeling* that you just kind of move through.

**Junior:** All right. *[laughs]*

**Vernon:** 'Cause Albert's got that cold-hearted phrasing. What song is that, with the overdrive?

*"I Hung it Up"?*

**Vernon:** Yeah, that's it. That's cool.

**Junior:** That one didn't quite come out the way I wanted it to. I do that better live

than in the studio for some reason.

**Vernon:** My favorite song is "Parole Board."

**Junior:** *[laughs loudly]* Oooh, you talkin' some serious cryin'-in-the-beer stuff there, I'm tellin' you.

**Vernon:** I got a song on my record called "Saint Cobain." Kurt Cobain's suicide shook me because I was in this thing where I was wondering what I was gonna do with Living Colour. It made me unhappy just to *think* about the

band; everywhere I turned in my heart there was no way to work it out, and the morning Kurt did that I was like, uh-oh *[chuckles]*, like you gotta do something definitive to change the situation. "Parole Board" is like facing up to that feeling. I've never been suicidal, but to go to that place... Americans for the most part don't want to be depressed, they wanna act like that's not a factor; when you ask them how they're doin' they say, "Well, I'm alright."

**Junior:** Yeah.

**Vernon:** And really, people that ask don't want to hear the real answer. There's a tradition in country and western, and certainly in blues too, like "Hellhound on My Trail," that just turns around and looks at that.

*But it's also notable how it's laced in Junior's music with wry irony. Maybe someone like Robert Johnson is too stark or devastating for most listeners.*

**Vernon:** Well, the humor makes it even deeper, because there is something absurd about this life—we don't have it long.

**Junior:** There's humor in the blues, too. That's why the back and forth between being depressed and being funny—that's what country is in a lot of ways. All the emotions.

**Vernon:** I dug that. Because it wasn't this macho thing. It's like, you see the parole board once a year, *[laughter]* just like Christmas.

**Junior:** That's all you got! Yeah, that's sad. *Where does that song come from?*

**Junior:** Just puttin' myself in the place of a guy who had given up like that, that's all. Not that I ever spent any time in jail. One night was enough, *[laughs]* taught me. When I was a kid I got thrown in for drinking or something—never wanted to be there again.

**Vernon:** I hear when you hear that door close...

**Junior:** That was a bad feeling I'll never forget. "I don't need to get out right now, but I may soon." You know? "And if I *do* need to get out, I won't be able to."

*Do you surround yourself with people who inspire you to bring these things into your writing, or do you remember a glimmer of something that happened to*

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*you and turn it into a song sketch?*

**Junior:** That's more like it. I get the title first a lot of times. The title suggests a story and I'll go with that.

**Vernon:** I have a title I think can be cool. I don't know what it's gonna be: "God Doesn't Play Dice With the Cosmos But He Plays a Mean Game of Pool."

*So musical ideas lie around and then when a title comes you start working it together?*

**Junior:** Yeah. It can go the other way. You can come at it from an instrumental, jamming standpoint and then you write the lyrics around that, so it depends on the song. But there's a clash goin' on. The *other* half of me wants to just jam and then write the lyrics around that, so it's one or the other.

**Vernon:** Like, my record's mainly pushed by instrumental melodies, and a lot of times I'd have to put the song together and live with it, and then go, "What is this about?"

*Is the steel a completely different ball of wax for you now?*

**Junior:** Well, it is and it isn't. It used to be. You talk to a lot of guitar players that play steel, or steel players who play lead guitar, they'll tell you the same thing: You play one all night and the next day you can't play the other because you're out of practice. Or if you play one *half* a night, you can't play the other half on the other one very easily. But since I developed that instrument where I'm aying it on every song, switch back d forth, it's become one thing in my mind.

**Vernon:** Do you have a volume pedal for your swells?

**Junior:** Yeah, the pedal's basically to keep it one volume, like if I need a little extra zoot I'll have it, but mostly to keep it steady, because that's how steel is—it dies out and then as it decays you have to bring it back to give it more volume. That's why they use it, whereas the guitar is more percussive, and sustain is not the main thing unless you're using it with the amp.

**Vernon:** Is the steel in standard tuning?

**Junior:** Pretty much. It's a C13, and I got the bottom string a little different. It would be [low to high] Bb, C, E, G, C, and a G on top. I may have missed one,

but that's basically it.

*Is it tough to play well when you're touring hard and don't get enough rest?*

**Vernon:** You work it out. The way we used to tour, we used to get there early enough to do the soundcheck. It's more an emotional thing, because every day is Saturday night on a tour. I've never got onstage and was out of it; something just happens. Playing with Living Colour, everybody's so up, that would wake you up.

**Junior:** Reminds me of this fiddle player I know, Danny Levin. We had just come back from Europe, where you're completely messed up from the plane, your body clock don't know what time it is, you've jetlagged three or four times in the last three or four days, completely exhausted. Then this guy got up and did an *Austin City Limits* show with Joe Maphis. He says, "C'mon, let's go over there," and I'm sayin', "Are you gonna be able to *do* this? What are you runnin' on?" and he says, "I'm just runnin' on adrenaline or somethin'." He knew he had to do it, he psyched himself up and went and played great, and the guy hadn't slept in days and neither had I, so I knew how tired he was. He wasn't on drugs or anything. Every time I feel I can't play, I go back to that feeling, making yourself excited about it. If you can't look forward to it, it's much harder to do when you haven't had sleep or food. Out on the road, things go wrong. It's the desire to do it, that's all.

**Vernon:** Sleep deprivation is wild; you start thinking weird stuff, like "Yeah, I'm gonna write a song, run around the block, fix the carburetor." The times I've been awake for 24 hours I start thinking wild things, and it's clearly not within my grasp to do them, but it's hubris: "I don't *need* sleep!"

*You tape Letterman later, then do a show tonight.*

**Junior:** Oh, yeah. It's a full day for me.

*So is it everything you want or thought it to be?*

**Junior:** Yeah. Trying to keep the writing going as long as I can. Playing's no problem, singing every night, but you never know what you're gonna write or if you're gonna write, [laughs] you either get songs or you don't. A lot of these

guys do it by formula, but I don't. There's nothing *wrong* with that because it gets a lot of product out, but I haven't been writing songs that long. Started in the '70s, but the early '80s is when I got serious about it. Hopefully I'll write more good ones, but there's no guarantee.

**Vernon:** You can discipline yourself to do it, but you can't make it happen, because if someone could, they'd do it all the time.

**Junior:** There's no controlling songwriting; you take what you get from the Lord.

*Funny, because most musicians feel that composition is the realm of control and improvising is a crapshoot every time out.*

**Junior:** Oh, it is, but you can *control* it better; you can set out, plan it and follow it through. You can't plan a song.

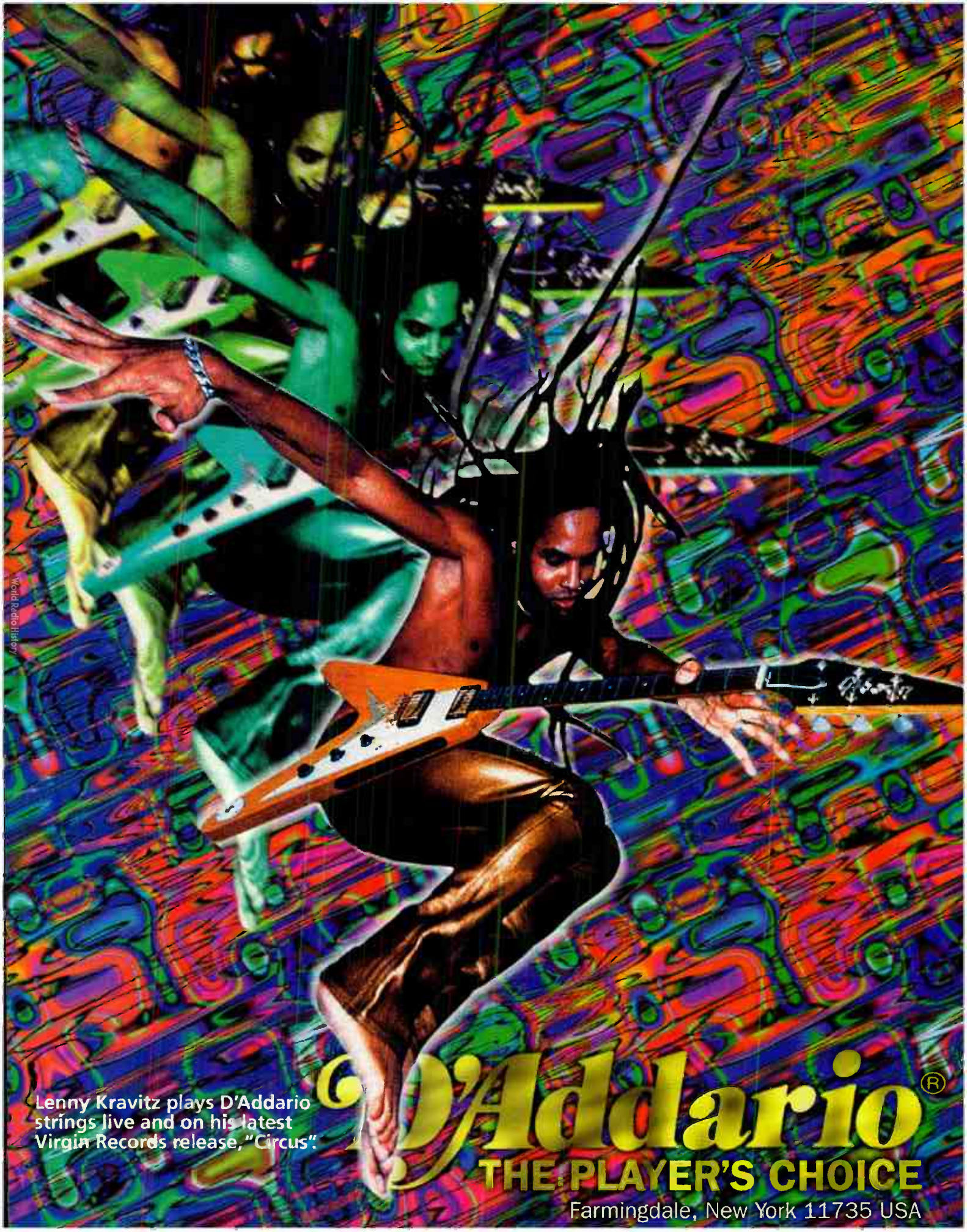
**Vernon:** It's interesting—I find the whole thing is up for grabs. There's certain things you can control in terms of guitar playing, but a lot of times I find that the desire to do a thing is the very thing that stands in the way of doing it; like, I really want to go out and blow everybody's

**"Hawai and the Grand ole Opry are completely different, but you can connect 'em somehow."**

mind.

**Junior:** Yeah, and then you get...I get nervous. You try too hard.

**Vernon:** And then you're just not doing it. I was with a certain musician playing a multi-night stand, and one night, the muse showed up and everything he did was amazing and the audience was on their feet. The next night the same song came up and he started to play, and I *felt* him actually trying to make that happen, wanting the people to...and it didn't



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work at all, because last night was last night, and it's hard to accept that tonight could be better, the same or not happen at all; even if it's the same people, *they're different*. That's it, the degree to which letting go of control is the way to where you want to go.

*Are you both Albert King fans? I think he's the high holy god, and I bear a lot of him in the music, especially Junior's.*

**Junior:** I like Albert the best.

*"Guit Steel Blues"? That's got ornery Albert shit all over it.*

**Vernon:** There are Albert King stories that'll curl your hair!

**Junior:** [chuckles] People didn't like him much; that's why they didn't make a big deal out of it when he died, he made so many people mad, you know? I never met him. When I got the *Live Wire/Blues Power* album, live at the Fillmore or whatever, that thing knocked me right down, man. I said, "This is it right here." And then I started seeing where Jimi had gotten most of what he does—not all of it, *most* of it. I made that connection and then 15 years later, here comes Stevie Ray Vaughan getting mileage out of it, but I had been aware of it way before most people. One string—what he could do with one B string, just *all* the way up. One string.

**Vernon:** Yeah. He *hated* Hendrix too.

**Junior:** He did? [laughs loudly]

**Vernon:** You think I'm joking. Albert did not like him: "That ain't no blues. I don't know what that boy *thinks* he's doing." Man, there's a story I heard from a trumpet player that worked with Albert. Now, Albert was famous for his pipe. The other thing Albert used to carry was a pearl-handle .45. [Junior laughs] Mean, killin' machine. Apparently, Albert would just pay cats when he felt like. You didn't have a regular pay schedule, and if you pissed him off, you'd go for a couple of weeks and not see any pay. So Albert didn't pay this one guy for three weeks, so the cat's gettin' hot, you know, and every night he's doin' the set, not saying nothing and he knows the other cats are gettin' paid. So this cat decides he's gonna go toe-to-toe with Albert King. [Junior laughs] so he walks up to him and says, "You son of a gun"—I'm paraphrasing—"Where's my money?"

And the cat says, "You wanna know about your money, huh?" Now, Albert has hands the size of a ham. So he says, "I got your money right here," and he *slaps* him and shoots his gun off at the same time with the other hand. The guy thought he was shot. [Junior cracks up] So the cat fell on the ground and curled up in a ball and he's cryin', feelin' himself because he knows he's dead for sure, right? And Albert said, "Don't you ever...I'll pay you when it's time."

**Junior:** Ooooooooooooo!

**Vernon:** And everybody jumped because everybody thought the cat had shot him. Basically, there was a hole in the ceiling. *I hear Junior does that to his band.*

**Junior:** There you go!

**Vernon:** These cats are so rough, in a way, a lot of the greats of the blues, jazz, country/western music...

**Junior:** ...they came up out of the rough world, the rough times.

**"The desire to do a thing is the very thing that stands in the way of doing it"**

**Vernon:** But in their *music*, you hear all...it's almost like getting in touch with the feminine side. Their sensitivity showed up in the fact that the cats became *musicians*, you know?

*Did either of you ever think twice about becoming a musician?*

**Junior:** I didn't. I just always wanted to play and sing.

**Vernon:** Do you remember your first concert?

**Junior:** My dad took me to a couple of classical things when I was a little kid. I saw Duke Ellington. I didn't go to many concerts.

**Vernon:** I saw Parliament/Funkadelic at the Garden. Rare Earth, War and Parlia-

ment. Cats wearing diapers. *Cosmic Slop* was out, '73, '74.

*When I saw them do Funketelechy, I was the only white guy in the whole Garden.*

**Vernon:** Really? Well, that's the history of rock and roll, like all those rock and roll bands that were never considered as such—War, Mandrill, Automatic Man, Edward Birdsong, Mother's Finest, the Isleys. All those bands were, say, rock and soul bands. But because it wasn't written about...I mean, there was radio for it at that time, but for the most part it wasn't critically assessed, it *still* hasn't been...

*I imagine these bands didn't play around where Junior grew up.*

**Junior:** I grew up all over, so I was exposed to a lot of different things.

**Vernon:** Did you grow up an army kid?

**Junior:** No, my dad just changed jobs a few times and moved around. He liked classical music; he played piano.

*Was he encouraging?*

**Junior:** Yeah, in a way. In another way he wasn't. He didn't like the electric guitar. When I was a kid, there weren't that many electric guitars around, and that made it harder to borrow stuff. Then when I finally did buy my own, it was such a thrill just to *own* something like that, it was forbidden. It was more of a thrill. Because I knew there wasn't nothing wrong with it.

*What was it?*

**Junior:** The first one I ever got? I think I had a J-45 with a pickup stuck on. I got a Danelectro Silvertone before that.

*I wonder why there are many white bluesmen but no black country artists.*

**Junior:** Gatemouth Brown. He played country guitar.

*Some, but he was more of a blues-jazz guy.*

**Junior:** Yeah, but he loves country music. He's played a lot of it.

**Vernon:** My favorite was Hank Williams. There was a period in the '70s when my father was totally into country and western because he spent a bunch of time in Oklahoma. That's where they train air-traffic controllers. I also used to like Ray Benson, Asleep at the Wheel.

*Didn't you play with them?*

**Junior:** No, I just filled in a few times for



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another steel player. In Austin I did sideman stuff, you're talking like 25 years, on both steel and guitar, depending on what was needed. Just night after night, band after band, club after club, state after state, after a while the law of averages'll get you through, if nothing else, 'cause by that time you learned so much. *What was the hardest gig?*

**Junior:** Probably some of the jazz things, if I didn't know some of those complicated structures; you can only fake it so far

on that stuff.

**Vernon:** Do you know [pedal steel legend] Speedy West?

**Junior:** Yeah, I know Speedy. Real sweet guy. Out there. [laughs]

**Vernon:** Next rocket straight to Mars!

**Junior:** We got together over near where he lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I've never played with him. He had a stroke a few years ago and gave up playing. He's talking good and everything, but I think he's had a hard time with his hand. He wears

a glove; I think it gets cold, circulation or something.

*Is that a little flight case for your hat, to avoid damage in shipment?*

**Junior:** [laughs] Yeah. I don't ship it, I carry it around so I don't have to wear it all the time.

*So country-music status doesn't obligate you to wear it wherever you go?*

**Junior:** I would hope not.

**Vernon:** Do you have someone who makes your hats?

**Junior:** Naw, I just buy 'em and tell 'em how to shape 'em.

*Vernon's life has changed a bit; did you have a band in New York, Masque?*

**Vernon:** That's the core of the record; there's other things that happen for four or five cuts. There was a little problem with clearing the name because apparently somebody has it, so it was weird. My attorney did a title search and said, "Don't call it a Masque record." I had a lot of experience with that whole thing because of what went on with the TV show *In Living Color*.

*There was a problem even though you didn't spell it the same way?*

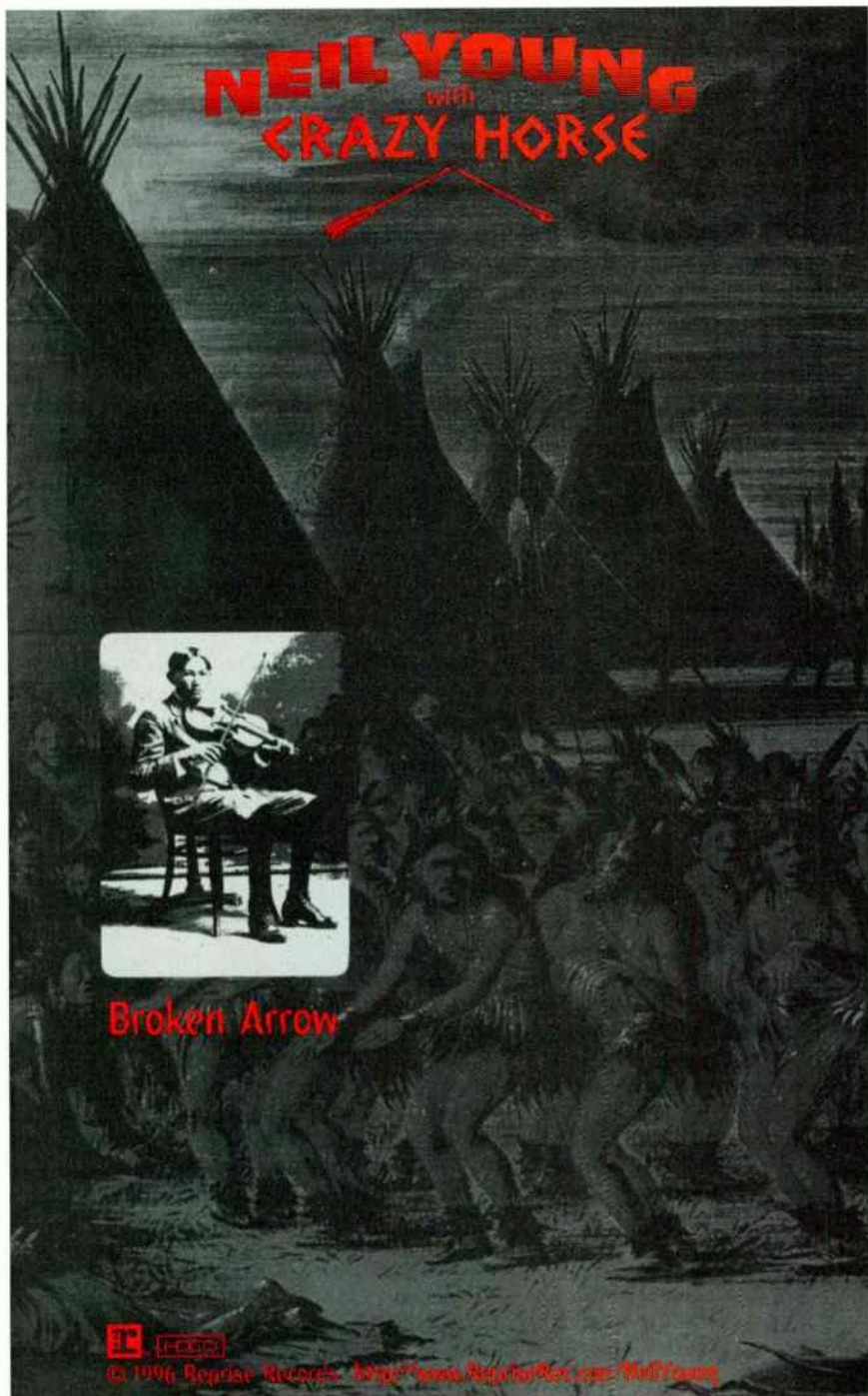
**Vernon:** Oh yeah, it was wack. The whole thing is whether or not a court decides there's an infringement, and we settled.

*Is it a different vibe going from a big band to a solo gig with fewer commercial pressures?*

**Vernon:** Well, the way I figure it, this record's about me connecting to music, and the record's not out yet, so I don't know if it's less commercial.

*Well, you seem decidedly in the frame of mind that it's not a priority.*

**Vernon:** Oh, you always take the same risks. Plenty of people get into radio-friendly this and that and the record comes out and nothing happens. In hindsight, *Living Colour* was commercially viable, but when that first record came out, "Cult of Personality" was the first song and for six months, nothing happened. The thing that connects this record to that record is that I didn't worry. I was just happy, just did it. I have been thinking about the abstract way the public pays attention to instrumental songs; there are quite a few Number Ones. It's possible. I don't think anyone could listen to [Weather Report's]



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*Instrumental success is a very tricky thing.*

**Vernon:** All popular music is. When those songs came out, the public was no less

“Letting go of control is the way to where you want to go.”

enamored with vocal music. “Feels So Good” by Chuck Mangione—I heard it on the radio, the next thing, it’s Number One in the country. I’m not predicting that will happen [with my music], but the possibility led me to say, it’s not in my control. And I have pretty good support at the label, because I’ve been talking in terms of the possibilities, so I made the record I wanted to make without going, “Man, I gotta get another singer.” The main thing was to do honest music that reflects where I’m at emotionally.

*Junior, how come it took you so long to come out as a solo artist? Was it the concern about committing to an identity and facing public opinion?*

**Junior:** Mostly the money. Starting a band costs money, and you almost have to have a day job while you’re starting. With other bands I could always work and not worry about the details, but starting your own band you have to book your own job, buy a P.A., all those things.

*But did you always have in your mind a concept of the Junior Brown experience?*

**Junior:** Not until I started writing the songs. I didn’t think I could do it until then. Then I started thinking if nothing

else, I could get a publishing deal, you know? But before that I hadn’t thought about it; I just wasn’t focused in my twenties and early thirties. I started watching people I knew who were working in bands with me, who had these publishing deals where they didn’t have to do nothing but just write. So I started figuring out that was the angle [laughs]. So I’d just write, and it turns out my style is a little different from whatever the normal style is, but it expressed what I wanted to express for the most part, so I managed to get a few albums’ worth of stuff. Hopefully I’ll write a few more, but like I was saying, there’s no guarantee.

**Vernon:** Your writing’s really unsentimental. The time country and western music wears on me is when I feel it being cloying. I just turn off to all that button-pushing, happy-ending stuff. I don’t like the way most songs are written about love, like “love is flowery and beautiful” and all that. Love is an amoral emotion, like a force of nature. It doesn’t matter if you’re married, or it’s not proper, it just comes in and that’s it.

*Do you ever have to catch yourself writing clichés?*

**Junior:** Oh, as you write you’ve constantly got your monitors on. “Is this gonna sound the way I meant it? Did it roll off the tongue? Does it rhyme well enough? Does it have to rhyme?”

*Which do you consider your most well-crafted tunes?*

**Vernon:** “My Wife Thinks You’re Dead”!

**Junior:** That’s probably one of the better ones, yeah. That was one of the *easiest* ones to write. I wrote that in 15 minutes. “Still Life With Rose” is pretty good, ‘cause it has the wordplay. I like “Semi-Crazy,” I think that’s good.

**Vernon:** Who’s the truck driver you’re talkin’ to?

**Junior:** That’s Red Simpson. He wrote “The Highway Patrol,” my first single.

**Vernon:** How tongue-in-cheek is that song?

**Junior:** I don’t know how *he* intended it to be; it’s in the ears of the beholder, I guess.

*Were you always confident about your singing voice? I’d guess that somewhere around puberty you realized you had a*

*career, right?*

**Junior:** No, there was a lot I didn’t like about it at first. As I’ve gotten older it’s gotten better. I think anybody that listens to themselves sing for the first few times over a tape recorder gets that jolt, like, “Hey, that don’t sound like that in here.” So I’m gonna make some changes, that’s all. It had to do with singing more from my chest and stomach, the pelvis, the diaphragm, and less from the nose and throat.

**Vernon:** One of the cuts on the new record has some weird guitar effects.

**Junior:** Oh, the backwards stuff, turning the tape backwards! Country music, right? [laughs]

*It’s cool that you don’t feel confined because it’s “country music.”*

**Junior:** Well, it’s not really a country record; it’s just a Junior Brown record. It’s got a little of everything, based on country. If I feel like doing something I do it, that’s all. There’s barriers on most country albums. I have a reverence for what a good country song should have in it—I have a sensitivity to that—but I’m not bound by other people’s rules. If it sounds good, I’ll throw it in there, like the backwards thing. It could have ruined another song very easily.

*Ever gotten too extreme for your audience?*

**Junior:** Naw, because I’m careful when I produce the albums. The point at which you go, “Oh, I’ve gone too far” happens during the writing, so it never really gets out to where, “Oops, I made a mistake.” You put your safeguards in long before that.

**Vernon:** Now, you just made me laugh, because I’m tryin’ to picture you writing, like [feigns lifting pen and looking at paper] “Ohhhhhh, no.”

**Junior:** “Don’t wanna put *that* in there. ‘Ran home, drank a beer and kicked the dog.’ Let’s take that out—we got animal lovers out there. You wrecked a pickup truck—that’s okay, we’ll leave that.” [laughs]

**Vernon:** One day, Junior Brown, you gonna make a record where you leave all that stuff in! “I kicked the dog, I shot the cat...”

**Junior:** [Grinning viciously] “I kicked the dog and I’m proud of it!”

# When John Hiatt and his band go acoustic, they go by way of Fishman.



## Fishman Equipment used by the John Hiatt Band

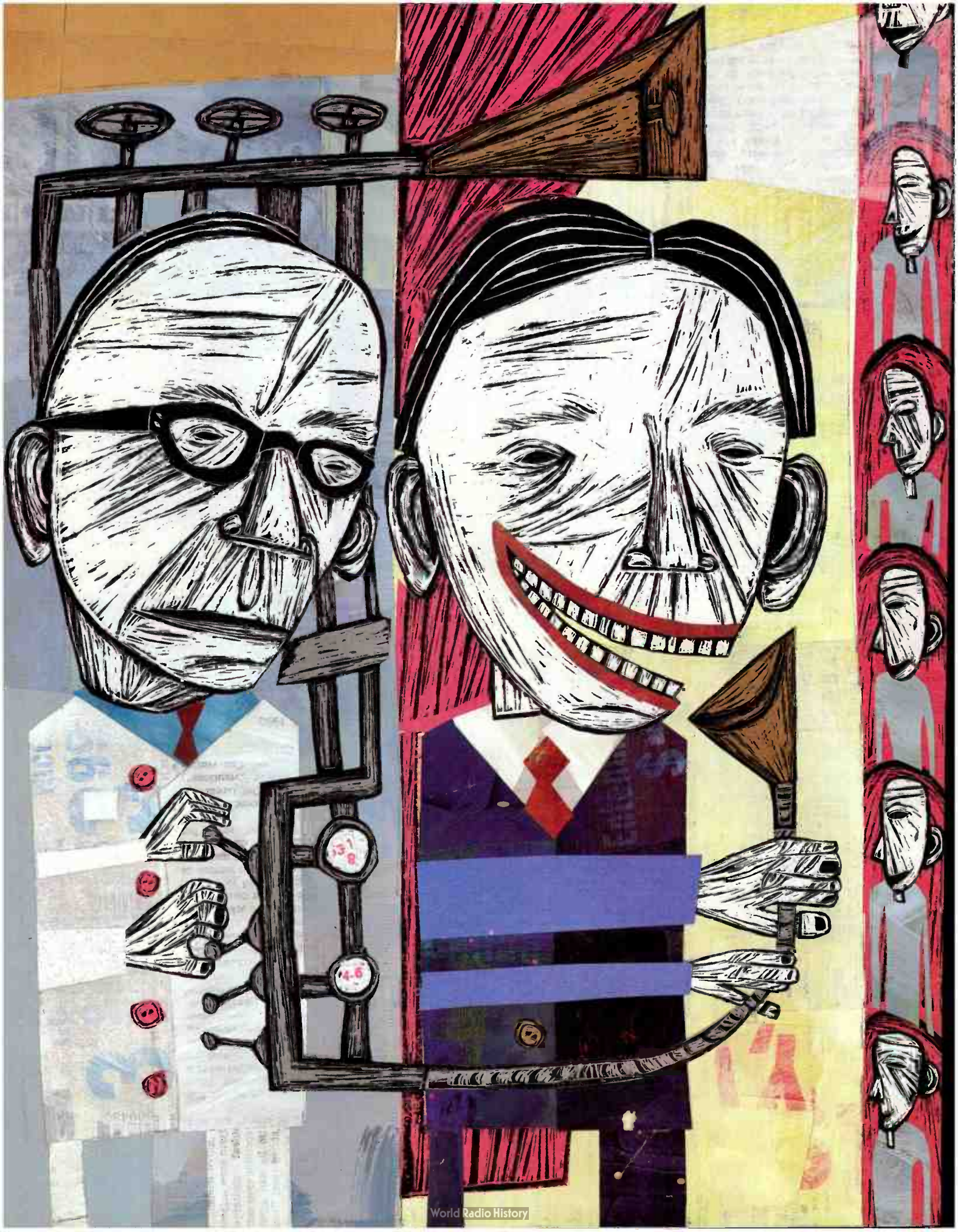
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Check out John's latest  
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by julian colbeck

# SOUND REINFORCEMENT FOR THE MUSICIAN

**I** can hear it, I can hear it," yelled the guitarist, exasperated by the engineer who was not transferring his hard-wrought sound into the monitor. "Well, what do you want me to do, then? Come down and mike your fuckin' ears up?" shot back the voice from behind the house mixing board. ■

'Twas ever thus: Musician versus Sound Guy. Sound people exist to louse up musicians' sound, restrict their movements, deafen with occasional blasts of feedback, blind with science. Musicians exist to trash equipment, misunderstand every scientific principle deduced since Pythagoras, be moody, deaf, and uncooperative. And the apotheosis of this intriguing but regrettably symbiotic relationship is the live gig, where, to sprinkle more spice into the conflict, there are the pressures of time, money, and a waiting audience. ■ With all this potential for disaster,

the least you can do is make sure your gear doesn't give you problems as well. And here's where the manufacturers of sound reinforcement products are only too happy to step in. The term "sound reinforcement" is a catch-all term for equipment used to "pass on" sound generated by musician and instrument. There are zillions of components and micro links in this chain but for the purpose of this article we'll stick to the three basics: mixers, amplifiers, and speakers, all geared for the cramped but cozy stages of small clubs, "function" gigs, and college bars—*i.e.*, the real world (at least for most of us). Note: Sound reinforcement is such a burgeoning business that in the interest of manageability we've found it necessary to leave out a few companies that are generally well-regarded (Fender, Tascam, and Community, to name three). Therefore, look upon our humble offering as a rough guide, not an absolutely comprehensive mega-list.

# A MARRIAGE OF INCONVENIENCE?

illustration by melinda beck

## MIXERS

**F**or small club work, you may have to mix yourself from the side of the stage, following the set-it-and-forget-it approach. But what console to choose? While the basic design and cost of amps and speakers have stayed relatively steady in recent years, a revolution has shaken up the world of mixing boards. Let's start our discussion with the two principal revolutionaries: Soundcraft's entry-level wing Spirit, and Mackie (and keep in mind that powered mixers—*i.e.*, mixers with built-in amplifiers—always make an ergonomically sound choice).

In Spirit's slimline but sturdy Folio range emerging bloodied but still working), the eight-channel standard Folio SI (\$899) or the rackmount, 10-channel Folio Rac Pac (\$1099) are strong candidates. Both units can accept additional inputs via stereo returns; each features three-band EQ (with sweepable midrange) and high pass filters. The four-bus Rac Pac, with its six auxiliary sends, has more flexibility if you need to combine project studio recording with live performances. Spirit also has a series of so-called Live desks (from \$1299) that come in a range of frame sizes encompassing eight- to 24-channel models. Unlike the Folio models, the Live boards include balanced lines (helps to reduce hums), mike inputs on all channels and Spirit's pro-quality Ultramic Plus mike preamps. On the powered mixer side, Spirit offers the Powerstation (\$1599). In addition to eight mono and two stereo input channels with Folio-style three-band EQ, the Powerstation gives you more than 250 watts per side of amplification, plus built-in digital reverb and delay effects from Lexicon.

Mackie's audio quality is unquestioned, but the controls on its world-beating 1202 mike/line mixer seem a little too cramped for live use. However, the recently revamped 1202-VLZ (\$429), with three-band EQ, switchable high pass filter, PFL/solo/mute on every channel, and 60dB of gain in its four mike channels, now has the more spacious look of a Spirit. Elsewhere in the Mackie line, the six-channel CR-1604 (\$1099), released several years ago but

### Mackie's 1202-VLZ: unquestioned audio quality, now with more space.

still going strong, remains hard to beat with its multiplicity of aux sends, quality three-band EQ, balanced mike inputs, and handy rotating rear panel for either tabletop or rackmount applications. For \$100 more, the CR-1604 comes in VLZ (very low impedance) form too. In addition to the low-impedance circuitry, the new model is now a true four-bus design, helpful for live broadcast or recording situations.

Elsewhere in the mixing domain, Peavey's Unity Series 1000 mixers come in eight- and 12-channel versions (\$400-\$500), and even a rackmount form, the Unity 1002-8R/M (\$799.99). With their low-impedance, low-noise mike preamps, three-band EQ, phantom power, and monitor and effects sends, the Unity Series offers features more commonly found on boards that sell for almost twice the price. In March '96 Peavey also released the XRD 680 powered mixer (\$769.99), a chunky unit offering eight channels with both balanced and unbalanced inputs, three bands of EQ per channel plus a master nine-band graphic, dual 300-watt amplification and a built-in digital effects.

Another contender comes from SoundTech, whose powered MetroMix eight-channel M860SB (\$1249.90) is housed in a Tolex-clad steel chassis. It's flexible, in that you can switch amplification from a two-channel P.A. configuration to main + monitor. There's 2x300 watts of power available, with the mixer section offering three-band per channel EQ. SoundTech's compact AL5 (\$999) and AL5 Jr (\$599) systems are also well worth checking out, as is Yorkville's AP-1220 (\$2899). With 1200 watts of power under a deceptively small hood, this 20-channel powered mixer could be ideal for even mid-size venues.

Yamaha's new EMX 3500 powered mixer looks tempting in both 12- (\$1999) and 16-channel (\$2199) versions. Both models have XLR or jack inputs, channel



inserts, three-band EQ with parametric mod range, and two effects sends—an impressive list for a unit also housing a 2x350-watt power amp.

From Audio Centron, the Equinox series offers a built-in 99-preset semi-programmable digital effects processor on its ACM1262D (\$625) and powered ACM1262PD (\$985) models. These are both developments of the plain ACM1262 (\$400), released in 1995, and come in the same 24-input (six balanced XLR), three-band EQ, eight-mono-plus-two-stereo-channel format. The third and latest board in the series, the ACM1262P (\$800), boasts a 2x150-watt power amp but no digital effects processing. Audio Centron designed the effects processor itself, electing not to buy in technology *à la* Spirit/Lexicon.

The names of Ross and Phonic may lack the gloss of Yamaha, Soundcraft, or Mackie, but both companies offer a wide range of keenly priced standard and powered mixers. The Ross RCS1402 14-channel rackmount desk (\$599) offers a potential 18 inputs, six of them balanced mike inputs, along with four stereo inputs, and two aux sends and three-band EQ per channel. With its rotary gain controls and rackmount design, the 1402 would make a good onstage mixer—with knobs less prone to getting shoved up or, worse, down than sliders—if you're on a tight budget. Ross also specializes in powered mixers, offering the unusually specified seven-input (mike or line) PC7250 (\$730) complete with 250 watts, and the PC8400 (\$1250), which scrambles to eight channels and



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# what the racks that rock: what six bands players play use to stage that monster sound.

## red hot chili peppers

**O**n the last leg of the most recent Red Hot Chili Peppers tour the band made a pitstop to record "Love Rollercoaster" for the *Beavis and Butt-head* movie. Although the studio was booked for two days, the band took just two hours to rip through the tune and every tech on the scene was thrown for a loop. "We were done," says guitarist Dave Navarro with a shrug of his shoulders. "I waited for another hour, because I thought they were kidding," laughs Dave Lee, Navarro's tech. The episode exemplifies the way the Chilis work, both in the studio and onstage.

Brian Doyle, who handles tech duties for Flea, says that the bass sound he gets is purely Flea's doing. "It's just him, the way he plays and the way he holds the bass when he plays. Watch his hands, if you can." Rather than jumping from effect to effect, bass to bass, Flea changes tones by changing where his hands are located on the bass and by changing his attack.

Likewise for drummer Chad Smith, according to front-of-house magician



L-R: Flea and Anthony Kiedis

Jay Blakesberg

## Red Hot Chili Peppers

**A** **mples:** Mesa/Boogie. **Microphones:** Audix OA-7. **Flea:** Basses: Four Music Man basses (one silver sparkle and three black), one Tobias black bass. **Amps:** Three Gallien Krueger 800RBs. **Cabinets:** Mesa/Boogie—two dual 10", two dual 15" per side. **Strings:** GHS Boomers, medium gauge. **Pedals:** Boss Auto Wah and Bass Overdrive. **Dave Navarro:** Guitars: Fender Strat, Parker Fly, Fernandes Tele-style and Strat-style models. Paul

Reed Smith. **Amps:** Marshall JCM 900. **Cabinets:** four Marshall 4x12s and a Mesa/Boogie 4x12. **Effects:** Dunlop Jimi Hendrix wah pedal, Roger Mayer Octavia, Boss DE-3 delays, Super Chorus, Phaser, Turbo Distortion, and Noise Suppressor. **Strings:** Dean Markley. **Chad Smith:** Drums: Pearl kit, Ludwig snare. **Cymbals:** Sabian—14" hi-hats, 6" and 8" cymbal discs, 18" medium crash, 10" splash, 21" ride, 17" and 20" crashes, 14" mini chinese. **Heads:** Remo Ambassadors. **Sticks:** Vater.

Dave Rat. "It's all straightforward generic sounds, right off the drums," he says. The only thing that Rat adds from his position, as well as your typical vocal reverb and delay, is a couple of pops from a sub-harmonic synthesizer which

drops Flea's lowest notes an octave on the songs "One Big Mob" and "Deep Kick."

Even Dave Navarro, who bleeds melody and edge at the same time, doesn't run an effects-o-rama. About the only

special trick he's put together is the amp setup, which is split between a clean channel and a dirty channel. "That way he can switch between a real clean tone for certain songs and then just hit a button for a real overdriven sound," says Lee, who Navarro calls one of the greatest guitar techs he's worked with.

The effects Dave does use are all on a pedalboard so he can goof around with them during a show; they're mainly Boss pedals, simple to replace and easy to use. (Side note: "MIDI is shitty," agree Navarro and Lee.) "Also," says Navarro, "when I was a kid learning how to play, those were the things I bought. When I was 12 or 13 years old I had Boss pedals and I liked 'em." So there.

— David Farinella

## october project

Imagine the joy soundman Geoff Keehn must experience when the four vocalists in October Project step up to the microphone during a soundcheck. Keep in mind that these aren't just four vocalists taking turns at the lead mike; these are four vocalists who share singing duties for every song, interweaving complex harmony parts, each of which has to be heard clearly. Too bad they've got those pesky instruments in their hands too.

"The vocals are the main thrust of what has to come across for me," Keehn comments. "They have to sit on a bed of warmth and richness." The way Keehn builds that bed is by using four different types of effects, including a vocal reverb, a percussion reverb (for depth), a multieffects processor (to create a sense of space in the stereo spectrum), and a mono delay (set to 1,130 milliseconds for the song "Hero").

From their first small club tours to their opening slots last year with Sarah McLachlan and Crash Test Dummies, October Project has learned one vital lesson: In order to put on the best show, they need to hear one another. So with



October Project vocalist Mary Rahl

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## October Project

**A**lthough the touring version of October Project can include up to eight people, the band's core is: **David Sabatino**.

**Guitars:** Fender Strat, Martin HD-35, Yamaha APZ 10. **Effects:** Boss ME-10, Rocktron Midi-Mate, Dunlop Crybaby, Alesis Midiverb Ili, Rock-

tron Intelliflex, Rockman Octopus MIDI Switch, Rockman Octopus Remote Loop. **Amps:** Pendulum HZ-1 SE preamp, Marshall JMP-1. **Strings:** D'Addario. **Emil Adler.** **Keyboards:** Yamaha KX88, E mu Performance Plus, Roland JV 1080. **Marina Belica.** **Keyboards:** Roland A 30. **Vocal mikes:** Shure SM58s.

the help of Keehn and band members/gearheads David Sabatino (electric and acoustic guitars and vocals) and Emil

Adler (keyboards and vocals), the group designed a full custom monitor rig, which they haul to every gig. "From my

position onstage," Sabatino explains, "the problem is that we have a lot of different rhythms and internal harmonies going on, and we have to hear them all. The few times we went without our monitors, it was a total nightmare; we were in a compromised situation. From a musician's standpoint it makes the experience less than desirable. Other bands would probably just bag it. But because we have the knowledge, we just won't settle." —**David Farinella**

## cracker

**I**f James Brown is still the hardest working man in show business, then David Helberg is his Valium-addled stepson. As the soundman for Cracker's current romp around the world, Helberg may have the easiest job in the entertainment industry—he doesn't deal with compression, uses minimal effects, and adds nary a speck of EQ to the band's sound. When asked why it sounds so good, he responds, "I have a good band." And when pressed for specifics, he says with a classic New York combination of humor and contempt, "It's just making everything on stage louder. It's so simple that people overlook it."

Of course, it's not quite as easy as that; Helberg does have some things to do while he's behind the board, but nothing too dramatic. Luckily he's working with a band that relies on musicianship, not a bevy of effects. The only thing they've brought along from their most recent studio days are some Mellotron samples that keyboardist Kenny Margolis plays and a Peavey Valveverb that singer and guitarist David Lowery uses.

Guitarist Johnny Hickman's rig con-



Left: Johnny Hickman and David Lowery

Jay Blakesberg

tains only four effects pedals, including the ever-ambiguous Dimension C pedal from Boss. "I use it all the time," he says laughing. "I don't know what it does. Instead of a wheel, it's got four buttons and you can go one to four, depending on how much Dimension C you want to use. It's kind of a horrible purply pink color and I've never seen another one of 'em."

Picking up on the theme, Lowery

says, "Johnny is the most low-tech guitarist I've known. If he has an effect, it has to be in those boxes and they have to have lights on them so he can see when they're on."

To which Hickman adds, "They're the ones that guys play till they can afford something better, I just don't change 'em." Hey, whatever works.

—**David Farinella**

## Cracker

**D**avid Lowery. **Guitars:** Charvel Surf-caster, Ibanez Telmax, Ibanez acoustic. **Effects:** Peavey Valveverb. **Amp:** Sovtek Mig-50, Matchless 3/C-30. **Cabinet:** Marshall 4x12. **Strings:** D'Addario. **Johnny Hickman.** **Guitars:** 1969 Gibson Les Paul Standard with a Kahler tremolo unit, Gibson

Les Paul 1960 Classic, Fender EC Stratocaster. **Effects:** Boss CS-2 compressor, Boss DM-2 delay, MXR Microamp Overdrive, Boss DC-2 Dimension C, Boss AW-2 Auto Wah, Boss BCB-6 Pedal Board. **Amp:** Matchless Superchief 120, Fender Twin Reverb. **Cabinet:** Marshall slant 4x12. **Strings:** D'Addario. **Bob Rupe.** **Basses:** Fender Precision, Gibson SG. **Amp:**

Ampeg SVT II Pro. **Cabinet:** Ampeg SVT 8x10. **Strings:** Rotosound roundwounds. **Johnny Hott.** **Drums:** Pearl kit with a Ludwig snare. **Cymbals:** Sabian. **Sticks:** Zildjian 5B nylon tip. **Kenny Margolis.** **Keyboards:** Korg M1 and Roland RD-500 for piano sounds. **Rack Units:** E-mu Vintage Keys Plus, Voce V3 organ module. **Vocal microphones:** Shure SM58s.

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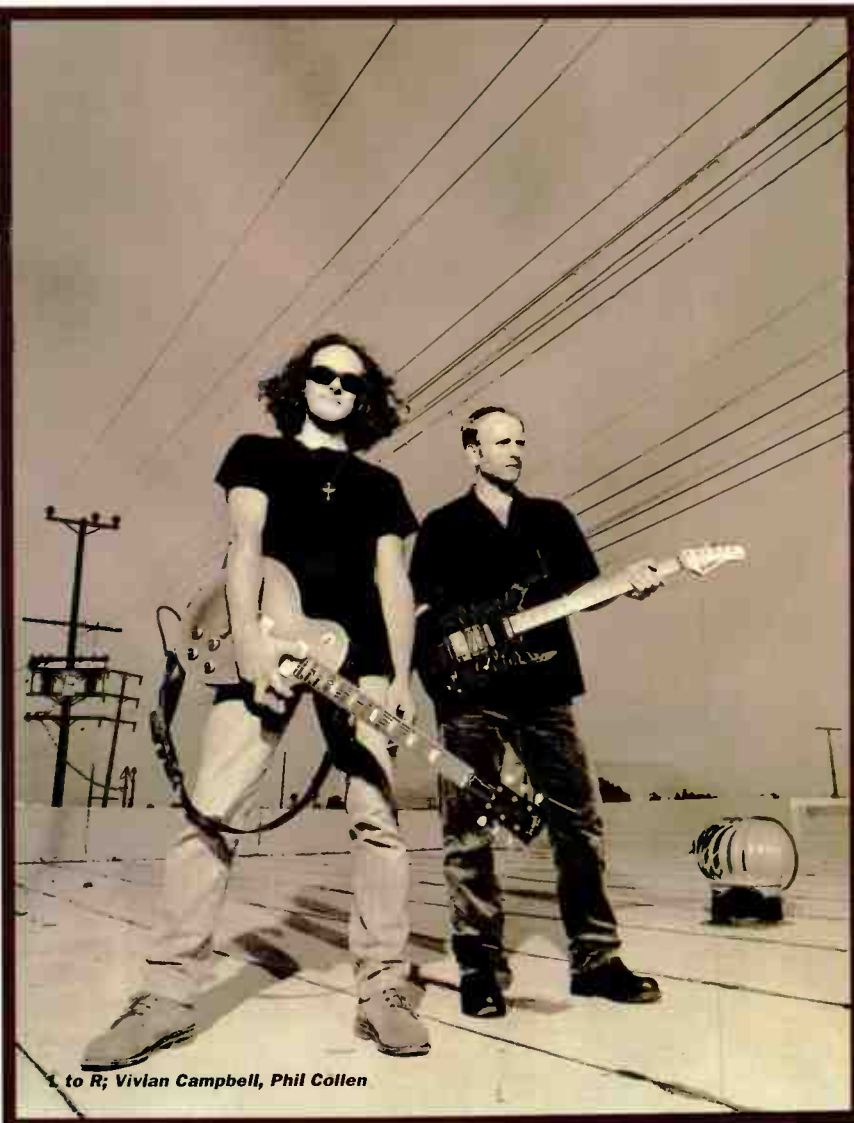
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# def leppard

**S**hocking it may be, but when Def Leppard—erstwhile kings of pop-metal confection—take to the stage for their 1996 world tour, they'll be pouring very little sugar on their arena-sized sound. Touring behind monster albums like 1987's *Hysteria* and 1992's *Adrenalize*, the band prided itself on digitally rendered polish and precision. But behind this year's looser, groovier *Slang*—their first album of new material in four years—the fellows are taking a much more casual approach. "In the past, we worried a bit too much about making the live performance sound like the record," explains guitarist Phil Collen. "And now we don't give a fuck. On our last tour we played in the round, everything was mechanical, and we realized the band was secondary to the production. We wanted to turn that around."

For Collen and co-guitarist Vivian Campbell, turning around meant getting away from the solid-state sound and digital presets of old in favor of raw Les Paul-to-Marshall power, with the barest minimum of effects underfoot. "It's a change I think we had to make," says Collen, "because guitar playing in the '80s got to be like an Olympic competitive sport. It was ridiculous."

The stripped-back approach was a bit more of a challenge for drummer Rick Allen, who's been drumming with one



L to R: Vivian Campbell, Phil Collen

Ross Hullfin

arm since a 1984 accident. Allen previously relied heavily on sequencers and electronic drums to generate a full sound, but this time out the heart of his kit is acoustic. Electronics will only be used to fill in the sound, with Allen's left foot

adding snare, bass, tom, or percussion sounds via three pedals triggering various samples of his own kit. "I enjoy the physical pleasure of playing drums," says Allen. "Pads never excited me too much, and it's not very fun to play along with

## Def Leppard

**Phil Collen.** *Guitars:* '59 Gibson Les Paul Reissue, Les Paul 40th Anniversary Edition, Jackson/Charvel Phil Collen model, Guild 12-string acoustic. *Amps:* Marshall SLX 100 watt head, Marshall 9200 power amp. *Cabinet:* Marshall 4x12s. *Strings:* GHS .012-.052. *Effects:* Lo. electronic delay, Sony digital chorus unit. **Vivian Campbell.** *Guitars:* '59 Gibson Les Paul Reissue, '78 Les Paul Custom, two Tom Anderson Classics—one

with fixed bridge, one with floating whammy bar. Gibson J-200, Martin D-28. *Amps:* Marshall SLX 100 head, Matchless Club 35, Marshall 9200 power amp. *Cabinet:* Marshall 4x12s. *Strings:* GHS .012-.052. *Effects:* Eventide H3000 Ultra-Harmonizer, Sony D-77 for delay, Yamaha D-1500 for delay. *Picks:* Dunlop Tortex. **Jon Evans.** *Guitars:* Gibson Les Paul Custom, Gibson 175 acoustic. *Amps:* Marshall SLX 100 watt head, Marshall 9200 power amp. *Cabinet:* Marshall 4x12s. *Strings:* GHS. **Rick Savage.**

*Basses:* Hamer 5-strings. *Amps:* Trace Elliot system, BGW power amps. *Strings:* GHS. Uses Dunlop picks. **Rick Allen.** *Drums:* DW acoustic bass drum and floor tom, Alesis D-4 for snare sounds. *Cymbals:* 2 med. crash, one ride, 3 fixed hi-hats, one foot-controlled hi-hat—all Zildjian. *Electronics:* 2 Hart Dynamics Acupads, 3 DW EPF pedals run through an Apex Impulse, which triggers samples in an Akai S3000. Crash cymbals, snare drum, and fixed hi-hats mounted on custom rack.



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World Radio History

clicks. I've been missing the primal vibe."

That's what the Leppards are all about this time out, adds Collen. "We're not going to worry about gear, or even arrangements so much. People at shows don't hear what guitar you're using, what

equipment is on—they may not even really hear the song. They're just soaking up vibe. We want to give them less precision and much more vibe."

If any unwanted precision does creep back into the sound by way of wheedly-

deedly guitar solos or painfully high vocalizing, Collen says the band has some ephemeral gear that will set them straight. "We've got these special warning bells that go off," he laughs—"80s alert!!"

—**Chuck Crisafulli**

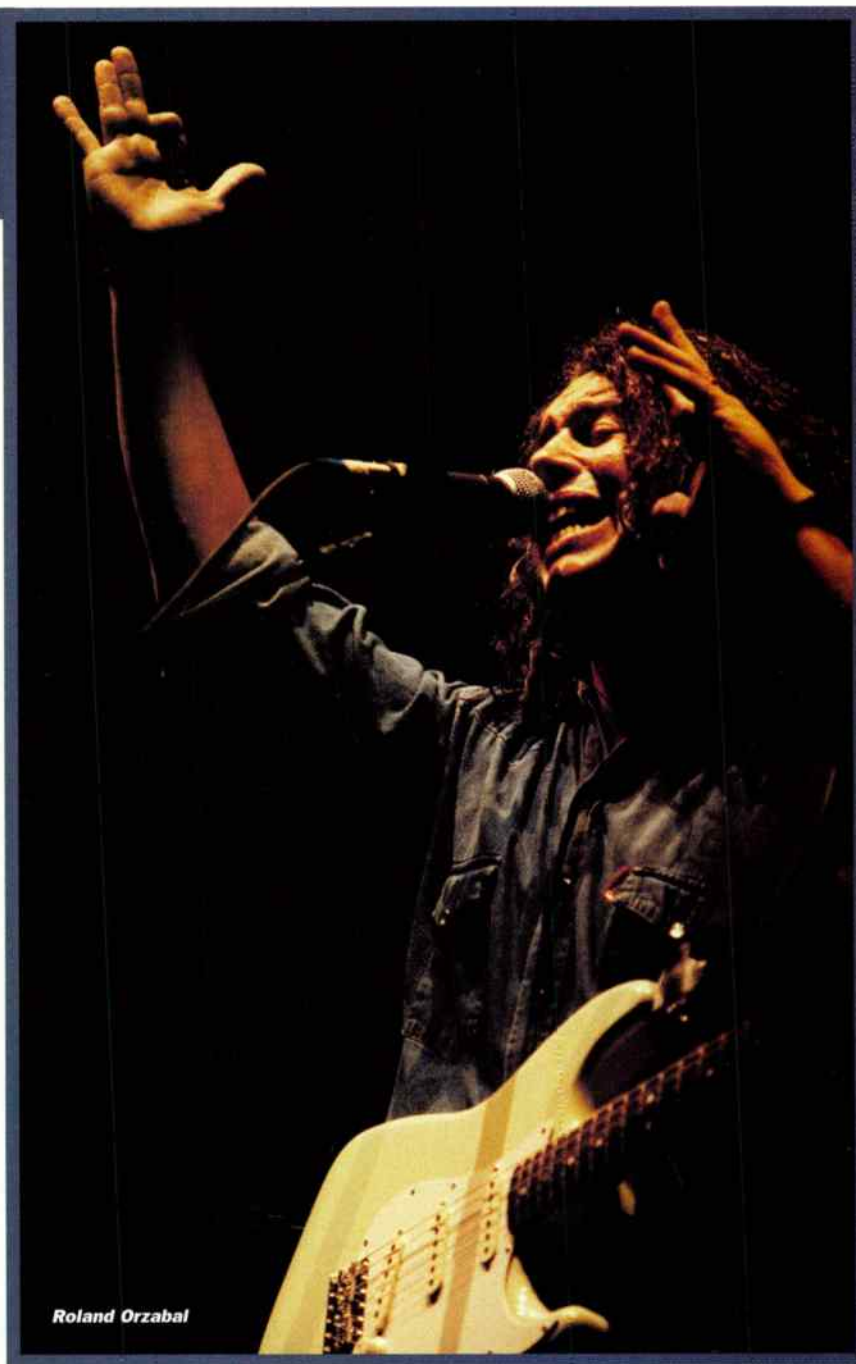
## tears for fears

**T**he opening minute of *Raoul and the Kings of Spain* outlines the challenge facing Roland Orzabal as he began preparing for the current Tears For Fears tour: Dynamics span the gamut from bone-rattling peaks to mellow and meditative. Synth pads buffet guitars that jangle full-blast and etch delicate fills. Orzabal's vocals ring true through carefully crafted effects. And all of it is clear as crystal.

Yet the band doesn't go to anal extremes to replicate their album onstage. "There isn't a lot of missing information live," Orzabal says. "We're running sequences in a lot of the sound, so there is the occasional orchestra chiming in. Our drummer, Brian MacLeod, is so brilliant at playing to clicks that we really have a band feel, yet nothing is left to the imagination; everything you hear on the album comes flying back at you."

If any one effect stands out, it's the processing on Orzabal's singing. "We use a [Yamaha] SPX1000 on a couple of numbers to duplicate my voice a fifth above and a fourth below," he points out. "There are about three tracks where you hear that effect quite strongly on the album; it sounds like backup vocals. That's quite a nice effect."

The most significant addition to the band's stage rig is the Roland VG-8 that Orzabal picked up after finishing *Raoul*. "I got one immediately after they came out, because I've always been a reluctant rock and roll guitarist. I was used to twiddling knobs on synthesizers; that's what I did when I got into making records. So the idea that you're playing something that's quite fake appeals to



me. That's how I see the VG-8: It's not really a guitar; it's another instrument, with its own talent. It's been quite inspirational; I've started to write things around some of the sounds, especially the

detuned ones. But I use it live because I use so many different guitars on the album and I can't stand changing guitars live. This way I can do it all on one instrument."—**Robert L. Doerschuk**

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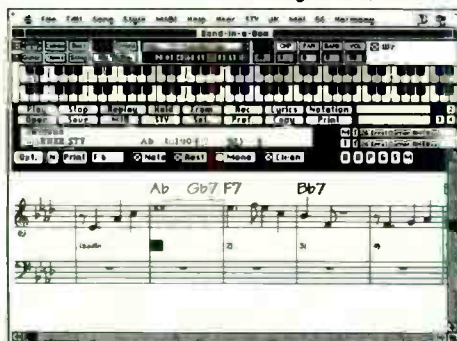
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## 4 gretsch 1955 nashville

The 1955 Gretsch Nashville holds a distinguished place in rock 'n' roll history, for it was Eddie Cochran's guitar of choice. No surprise, then, that a '55 Nashville reissue (\$6500) is one of the first entrants in Gretsch's Custom U.S.A. series. A 16" solid carved maple top, finished with hand-rubbed lacquer, is the immediate draw, but the flamed maple on the headstock and that nifty thin black line on the back of the neck are way cool too. • **Gretsch, P.O. Box 2468, Savannah, GA 31402; voice (912) 748-1101, fax (912) 748-1106.**

## 5 rane mojo series

Affordability and efficiency were foremost in the minds of Rane when they developed the five products that kick off their new Mojo line. Contents: the MH 4 four-channel headphone amplifier (\$299), MX 22 stereo two-way crossover (\$299), MX 23 stereo three-way crossover (\$399), MQ 302 stereo 1/3-octave graphic EQ (\$399) and the MC 22 stereo compressor (\$299). Each unit, taking up merely a single rack space, is available separately (though they do look lovely all together in that rack, don't they?). • **Rane, 10802 47th Ave. West, Mukilteo, WA 98275-5098; voice (206) 355-6000, fax (206) 347-7757.**

## 6 spirit folio notepad

It looks small—well, actually it is small—but that just makes Spirit's Folio Notepad mixer (\$249.95) all the more impressive. Thanks in part to its top-quality mike preamps, the Notepad delivers ace audio, both live and in the studio. The rundown: ten inputs as standard, four mike and two stereo inputs, two-band EQ, post-fade aux send, dedicated stereo effects return, global +48V phantom power, and switchable RIAA preamps for turntables (remember them?). • **Spirit by Soundcraft, 11820 Kemper Rd., Auburn, CA 95603; voice (916) 888-0488, fax (916) 888-0480.**

# New Frontiers in Expandability

by **howard massey**

**H**ere's my recipe for building the successful synthesizer of the '90s: Start with a base of tried-and-true proven technology, stir in a healthy dose of innovation, and add expansion options as seasoning to taste. Our Editor's Pick this month—Korg's Trinity Workstation—meets all these criteria, and then some. In some ways, it's like the Transformer of the synth world—pop in a board here, it becomes two synths in one, pop in a board there, it becomes a hard disk recorder.

With its sleek, brushed silver casing and oversized backlit LCD display, the Trinity certainly looks like something out of the starship Enterprise—but it's what's beneath the surface that counts. This futuristic packaging is not just cosmetic—it really is a reflection of the instrument's forward-thinking design. The Trinity builds on Korg's past successes with instruments such as the O1/W and M1, but it also has the ability to fulfill the needs of just about every level of keyboardist, from the gigging musician who just requires good basic sounds and an onboard sequencer to the professional recording musician who's got to have every bell and whistle in the book.

At its heart, the Trinity is a wavetable synthesizer, like most of the other synths currently on the market. These instruments use sampled waveforms as their

basic building blocks, which are then combined and processed in various ways to produce complex sounds. As with most other synths, if you press Trinity's edit button, you'll find a bunch of filters, envelope generators, and LFOs (Low Frequency Oscillators), as well as onboard signal processors (such as reverbs, delays, flangers, phasers, etc.), all doing their thing in order to deliver the sound you hear. But within this established domain, the

Trinity adds a number of twists, such as an unusually large number of 48kHz 16-bit ROM waves to pick from (375 instrument multisamples, plus another 258 drum samples which can be organized into 12 custom drum kits), dual multimode filters for each oscillator (enabling very fine filtering), a highly flexible modulation system, and allowance for up to five different effects to be applied. If you're into editing and creating your own programs, the Trinity clearly provides a wealth of powerful options.

And if you're into really huge sounds, up to eight individual programs can be layered together in "combi" mode—or up to 16 when using the onboard sequencer. Both modes also enable multitimbral use, since each program can be set to respond to a different MIDI channel. The 16-track sequencer can store up to 20 songs and up to 100 patterns (to a maximum of

80,000 MIDI events), and can play back standard MIDI files stored on a DOS-formatted disk (loaded from Trinity's built-in floppy disk drive). Though the sequencers built into keyboards are usually bare-bones, this one offers a number of advanced features typically found only in computer-based MIDI sequencers.

Much of the innovation in the Trinity is literally surface-deep, since the large LCD display that dominates the front panel is actually a touchscreen—you select parameters simply by touching them! This is faster and much more intuitive than using buttons to move a cursor around a screen. Most importantly, this technology, in conjunction with the sheer size of the display, has enabled Korg's design engineers to create a graphic user interface for the Trinity that incorporates many of the features provided by Mac and Windows computers. You'll find all sorts of familiar



## Korg's Trinity



amenities here, such as radio buttons, pop-up windows, scroll bars, dialog boxes—even onscreen QWERTY keyboards that simplify the process of naming things, a tedious chore in many other synths. In addition, large graphics enable you to view envelope shapes and effects processor routings, concepts that can be difficult to visualize just by looking at a

screen full of numbers. It is the graphic interface above all that makes working with the Trinity extremely easy, almost as if you had a computer with patch editor software permanently connected.

There's innovation beneath the surface, too. Most modern synths provide two onboard effects processors for the addition of reverb and the like (though these are often stereo, so you can sometimes squeeze four discrete effects out of the system with judicious routing). The Trinity enables up to three mono or stereo "insert" effects to be applied simultaneously to a sound (four if you're using a drum kit), *in addition to two stereo "master" effects*. When layering sounds together in combi or sequencer mode, multiple voices can share the same insert effects. These insert effects include compressors, limiters, gates, amp simulators, resonators, exciters, and ring modulators,

of a piano sound board and sympathetic string vibrations), "talking modulator" (which allows you to sweep through formants, creating a voice box effect *à la Frampton Comes Alive*), and "decimator" (which allows you to reduce the sampling rate on the fly, thus adding a unique kind of grunge to the signal—perfect, I suppose, for that elusive yet mythical Seattle techno sound).

The Trinity also provides an abundance of features for the performing musician. These include a performance editor that allows you to make changes to a few critical voice parameters on the fly without having to hit the edit button. And there are plenty of ways to add expression to your performance: In addition to three pedal inputs (two of which are assignable), there's a ribbon controller, a four-axis joystick with integrated center-sprung pitch bender, and two programmable switches that can be used for a variety of functions,

These devices provide a flat strip of plastic which outputs a continuous control signal as you move your finger along it. On today's synths, this control signal is a stream of MIDI commands which can be used to bend pitch, change filter settings, or alter pretty much any aspect of the sound in real time. This allows ribbon controller or joystick movements to be recorded into the Trinity's onboard sequencer or transmitted to any connected outboard MIDI device. As an added bonus, the Trinity's ribbon controller is both position and pressure-sensitive.

The Trinity is touted as being a "workstation," and there's probably no word in the synth world that's been more abused. A workstation is pretty much any instrument that provides both a sequencer and a bunch of sounds for the sequencer to play. But the Trinity takes this concept to new heights by virtue of its large number of expansion options.

▼ *The Trinity puts hard disk recording in the players' hands.*

## fulfill the needs of



## just about every level of keyboardist.

as well as the more usual variety of equalizers, flangers, phasers, Leslie simulators, choruses, reverbs, and MIDI-controllable delays. There are also several truly esoteric insert effects, such as "piano body damper" (which simulates the resonance

including "locking" the current position of the ribbon controller or joysticks. Ribbon controllers, which were fairly common on many early pre-MIDI synthesizers, are starting to make a (most welcome, in my opinion) comeback.

First of all, for an extra \$500 (list price), the basic 61-key Trinity (list price: \$3599) can be retrofitted with an expansion board that actually adds Korg's monophonic Prophecy solo synthesizer (minus the arpeggia- [cont'd on page 94]

# Synthesizers, R.I.P.?

**Industry leaders reflect on the state of the keyboard revolution.**

by **Connor Freff Cochran**

Depending on who you talk to, those sounds coming from the synthesizer industry are either the growling of a feisty tiger or the mumblings of a terminal patient on maximum life support. If you're a synth *player*, of course, these are great days: Thirty years of rapidly advancing tech have brought the instrument to a point that nobody could have imagined back when the journey began. But to at least some synth makers, the killer axe of the '80s is stagnating, squeezed by the very same technological and economic forces that helped make it a success.

One of the people holding that opinion is Hartley Peavey, CEO of Peavey Electronics. "The whole state of affairs is reminiscent of what happened with organs. Years ago, electrical organs were fairly simple devices; people could just sit down and play them. But as competition hotted up, all the engineers tried to outdo each other, as opposed to satisfying the customer. The same thing is happening with synthesizers. The keyboard business has become very much the same as the computer business, where there's no longer any real difference between products. Unless there's a win-win-win situation, where the customer, the dealer, and the manufacturer all come out ahead, we aren't going to have those quantum leaps in performance. If anybody in there loses, that three-legged stool won't stand up."

The synth business has always been volatile. Voyetra Technologies found it impossible to keep up; that's why they stopped building their Voyetra 8, arguably the finest analog synth ever, and found a niche in multimedia. Not surprisingly,

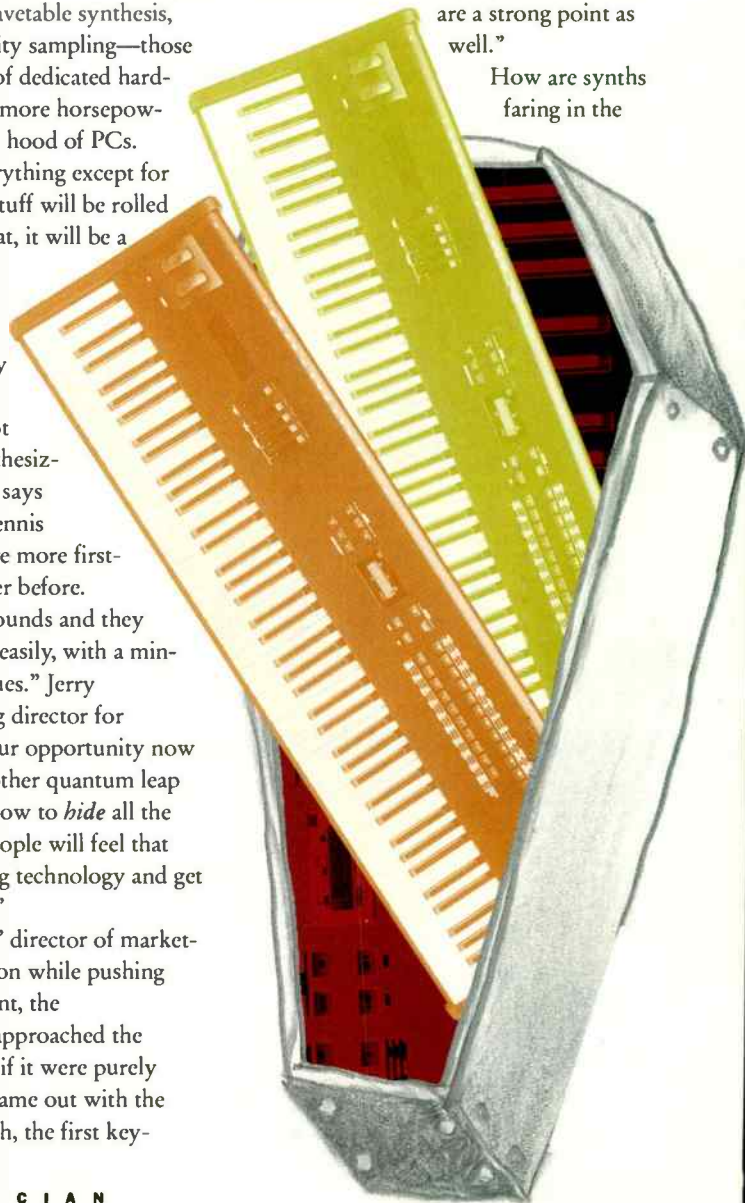
their president, Carmine Bonnano, shares Peavey's guarded assessment of the synthesizer's future: "Synths will evolve out of the current marketplace. If you look at the history of hardware, what tends to be done in a separate box is what can't be done efficiently in a PC. The worthwhile synths now are the ones where there isn't enough horsepower in a PC to do the job. Real high-quality wavetable synthesis, extremely high-quality sampling—those are still the domain of dedicated hardware. But more and more horsepower is going under the hood of PCs. Down the road, everything except for the most high-tech stuff will be rolled into the PC; after that, it will be a software game."

Are the synth's days really numbered? Not at all, say some, as long as the public's needs are not forgotten. "The synthesizer is far from dead," says Roland president Dennis Houlihan. "There are more first-time buyers than ever before. They want certain sounds and they want to get to them easily, with a minimum of control issues." Jerry Kovarsky, marketing director for Ensoniq, agrees: "Our opportunity now is not in making another quantum leap but in figuring out how to *hide* all the technology. Then people will feel that they can stop chasing technology and get back to their music."

Jim Mack, Alesis' director of marketing, learned this lesson while pushing their entry instrument, the Quadrasynth. "We approached the keyboard market as if it were purely spec-driven, so we came out with the original Quadrasynth, the first key-

board to have 64 voices, with 76 keys and all these sounds—spec numbers that blew our competition away. Only we had our specs thrown back in our face. People weren't buying. Why? You can't discount the fact that the *feel* of the keyboard is just as important as the sound. We were naïve, thinking that since we had so much success in making drum machines and drum sounds that it would just translate into making a full palette of keyboard sounds. But it didn't. In the current run of products, though—the Quadrasynth Plus Piano, the S4 module, the QS6 keyboard, and the QS8 master controller—we went after this 'musical' aspect, and the sounds are a strong point as well."

How are synths faring in the





# How to Sound **PUNK**

## Pedal suggestions from DOD and Ibanez

Punk rock's seminal guitarists didn't use effects; they just turned their amps up to 10. Unfortunately you can't do that in most situations, especially not if you're 15 and trying to figure out the changes to "When I Come Around" without getting dismembered by your parents. Which is where DOD's FX76 Punkifier and Ibanez's Soundtank SP5 Slam Punk pedals come in. Both offer an appropriate mix of melody and chainsaw, control names like "anarchy" and "menace," and enough gain to get a rage-ridden roar from a barely cracked-on Fender Super Reverb.

The Punkifier (\$119.95) has two distinct distortions, one like a late-'70s Boss Overdrive and one like a Big Muff Pi fuzzbox. With the "punk"

(overdrive) control all the way left, it's as close to '70s Stones or AC/DC as it is to the Sex Pistols. (Contrary to common belief, punk rock rhythm guitar doesn't need overkill distortion; the secret is to play hard enough for your intensity to overdrive the amp.) Mixing in a little fuzz yields a harsher sound, like the Ramones' first album or early Black Flag; more fuzz puts you in grungier Stooges/Mudhoney land, slightly prone to strange breathing effects. It also recorded well direct into a 4-track through a cabinet simulator.

The Slam Punk is closer to the thrasher tones of '80s hardcore, with a heavy power-chord sound like Mötörhead's "Killed By Death." Even with the treble ("spike") turned most of the way up, it's still bassy. It's plastic, and its controls are a little rickety, but at \$69.95 list, even the crustiest Berkeley street punk might be able to raise enough spare change.—**Steven Wishnia**

traditional M.I. market? "It actually seems like we have more competitors than ever," says Korg president Mike Kovins, "what with Technics coming into the market. Yes, things have flattened out somewhat from the '80s. We've got to work a little harder to get more consumers. Fortunately, even though prices are going down, and people expect bigger and bigger retail discounts, the costs of technology are coming down also."

Steve Johannessen, Kurzweil's director of artist relations, agrees that things are in flux. But he is absolutely clear on one thing: Keyboard synths aren't going away. "Dedicated hardware is still a more viable alternative than software-based synths that would go into computers," he insists. "Plus, there is a case to be made for real playing. The performing artist doesn't want to sit onstage with a computer and a keyboard, and it is performers that drive the synth market."

Johannessen's views are undoubtedly colored by the reasonably strong sales racked up by the K2000, K2500, PC88,

MicroPiano, and other Kurzweil pianos. But elsewhere the perspective isn't so sanguine. Consider Yamaha. This company led the synthesizer pack through the '80s, but these days their direction in the American market is anything but clear. Avery Burdette, product manager for digital musical instruments, believes this has more to do with market saturation and American culture than with Yamaha itself.

"Everything [in the States] is focused around sample-playback technology workstations," he says, "and the belief that more is better—more voices, more ROM, more channels, more tracks, more polyphony. But in Europe, live music is much more alive and well than it is here. They have tremendous opportunities for people to go out and play as single acts in beer joints, pubs, community halls and such. It has led to an industry: the one-man band who takes some sort of keyboard to a gig and plays all the parts, either live or live against sequenced tracks. There's a lot of areas that can and will be addressed with different kinds of hardware."

For my money, it's far too early to declare the synth era closed. Hartley Peavey's organ metaphor assumes that synth buyers, as a group, aren't changing. This is clearly not true: They've evolved along with their instruments. Catalog sales and the used gear market are booming because keyboardists don't need as much support as they used to, from dealers or anyone else. The days when musicians were panicked by technology are long gone. They've become more discriminating and are making their priorities clear: "Give us musical firepower and we'll love you. Give us musical firepower with a lame interface or some other flaw, and we'll stay away in droves."

**Contributors:** Connor Freff Cochran is a musician, writer, and former juggler.



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## fast forward

LISTENING TO THE boisterous swamp-boogie rock and roll that comes out of Steve Jordan's and producer Niko Bolas' Notech Studio, one feels lost in a time warp where Muscle Shoals and Motown have suddenly landed in Manhattan. Jordan's spacious loft is a dream of contemporary art deco styling and old-time quality. At one end, a '50s Grundig console stereo sits among fuzzy '40s furniture, while across the room a large curved wall replicates Frank Lloyd Wright's design for the Guggenheim Museum. Scattered around the space are old record players and vintage amps.

Steve Jordan made his name as a '70s studio drummer (everyone from Spyro Gyra to the Blues Brothers to the first and best Letterman band), but soon his Al Jackson-meets-Ringo groove was in demand with Keith Richards and Booker T. Nowadays, Jordan collaborates with folks such as Dave Pirner, Kim Wilson, David Sanborn, and Richards (cowriting *Talk Is Cheap* and *Main Offender*) while producing such artists as Tom Jones and his own, still unnamed group. Jordan's original, rumbling R&B tumbles out of Notech in primal bursts, like *Sticky Fingers* Stones jamming in a New Orleans church.

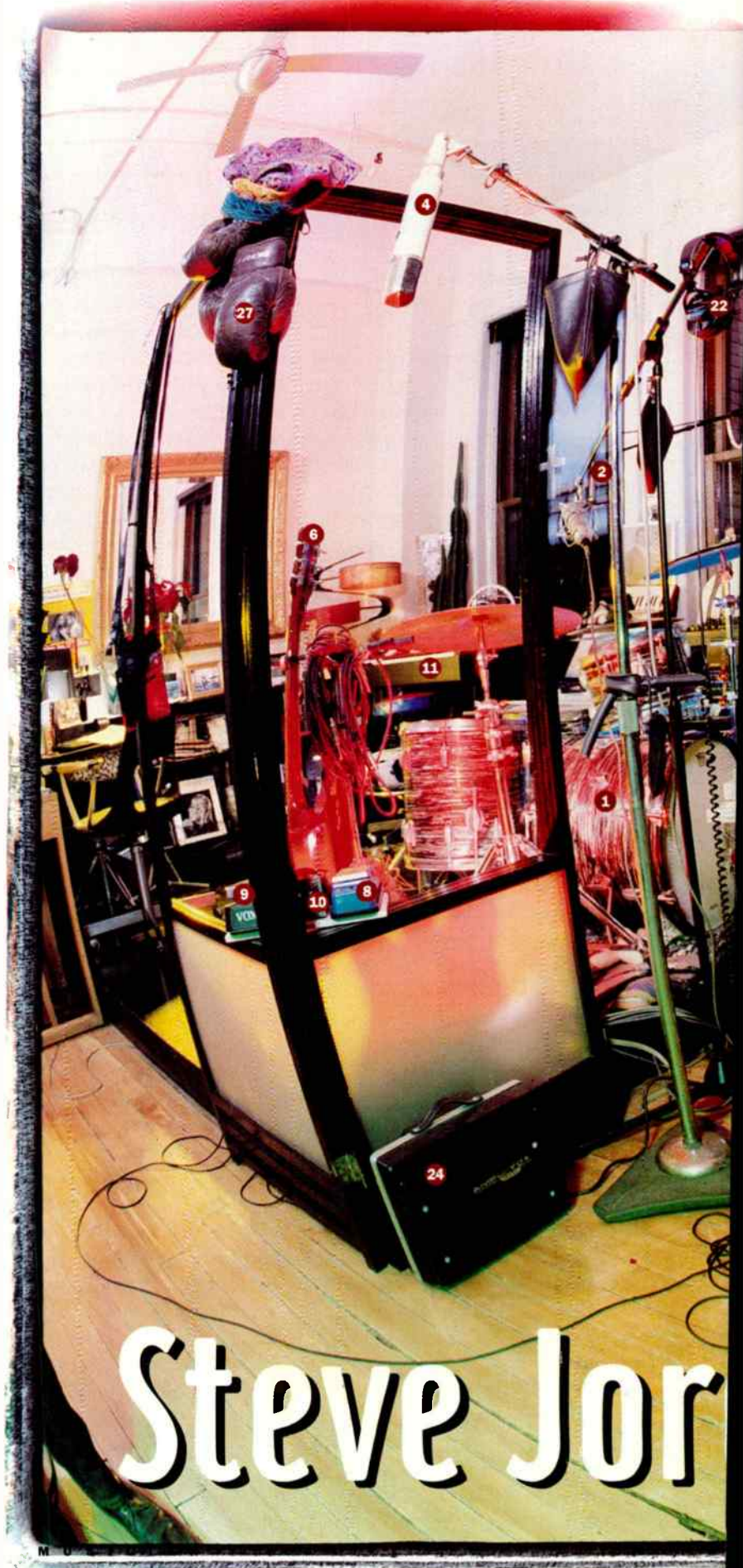
"I'm not supposed to be able to make music like you just heard in here," says the rebel Jordan, after playing a couple tracks. "You're supposed to have a big two-inch analog machine with a bunch of old people playing it and a big budget for them. There's got to be some risk factor and you have to wait till Jupiter aligns with Mars. *This* is about taking power away from the companies. Totally. When the music's all over the Internet there ain't going to be no companies."

Jordan eschews most things digital; his motto is "No automation, no doctoring." That's one factor determining Notech's warm, powerful sound; the oddly shaped loft space ("the curved walls cut the standing waves and

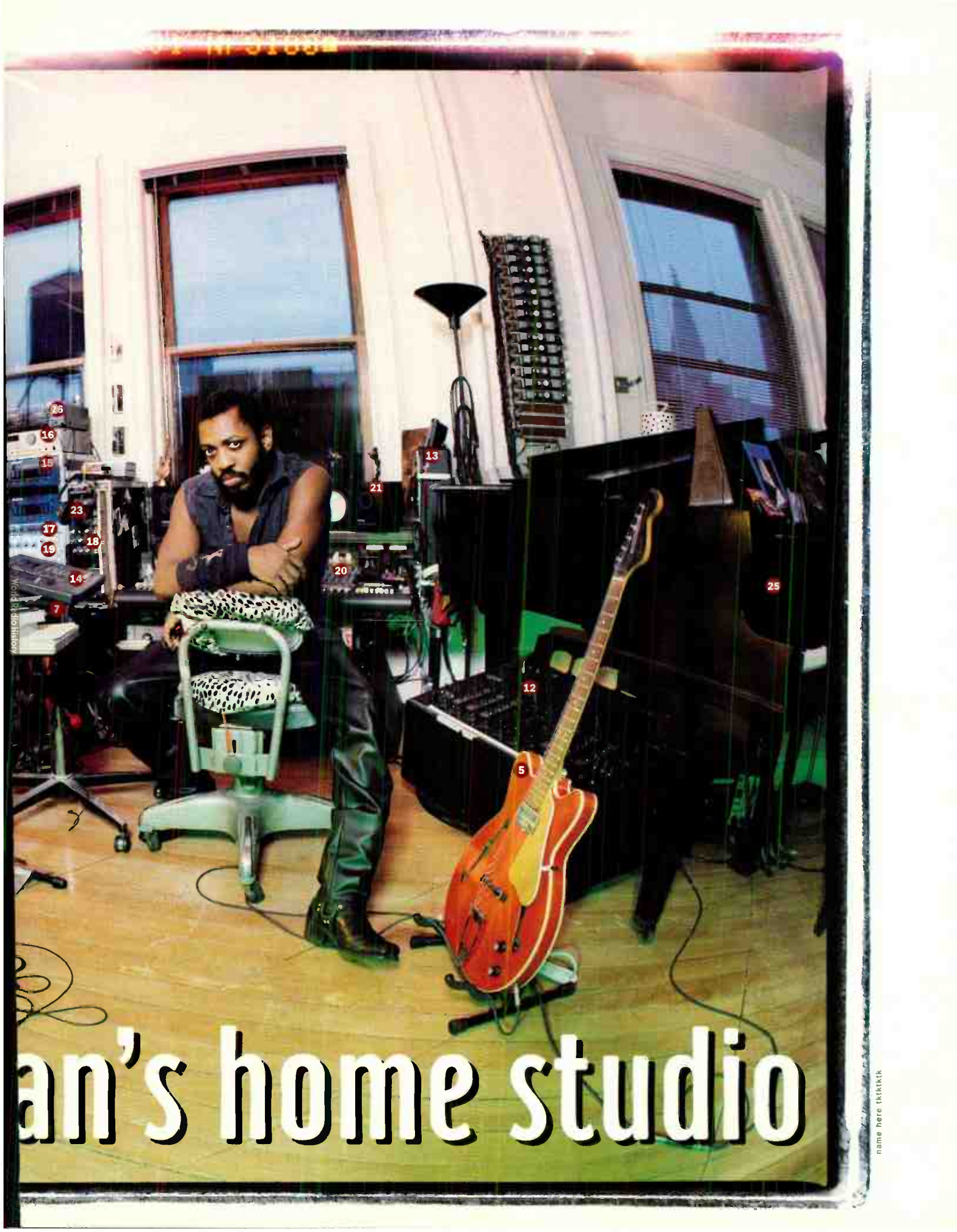
BY KEN MICALLEF

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# Steve Jor



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# fast forward

make the sound warmer”) is another.

“After making records through the ’80s,” explains Jordan, “when the idea was to spend as much money as possible, everyone using 48 tracks, 96 tracks—it was horrible. I never want to use more than one machine again. I don’t have time to save every breath on a vocal. I just want to get back to making real music.”

Jordan’s jukebox begins with a 1963 oyster-finish Ludwig four-piece kit ●, plus a selection of old Zildjian and Paiste cymbals. Drum microphones include a Shure SM57 ● overhead and Neumann U67s ● on the kick, mounted tom and below the floor tom, while a Telefunken 251 ● handles most vocals (“We only use tube and ribbon mikes unless it’s the Shure dynamic or the new Beyer”).

If buddies Danny Kortchmar or Pino Palladino aren’t around, Jordan handles guitar and bass duties. A 1965 Fender Coronado ● is the main axe, accompanied by a mid-’60s Rickenbacker 360 ●, a ’52 Fender Esquire, ’64

Fender Musicmaster, ’63 Danelectro bass, Zorko electric upright bass (prototype for Ampeg baby bass) and Zorko B18 amp miked with an AKG C12.

Using a Marshall mini stack head ● (“It makes a blood-curdling sound”), Jordan treats his guitars with a variety of effects. His Kay tremolo ●, Vox Crybaby ● and Maestro Fuzztone ● run through additional amps like a Fender Vibroking, Magnatone High Fidelity Custom 480, Kay, and Rickenbacker (none pictured). When hankering for a nasty, gnarly organ sound, Jordan plays his Farfisa Combo compact organ ●, the exact one used on Don Henley’s “Dirty Laundry.”

With its nine channels and three big control knobs, the studio’s glowing tube goliath, a 1962 Universal movie mixing board ●, gives Jordan’s music a huge soundstage. “This is an all-tube board [refurbished by home studio guru Tay Hoyle], the tubes are behind me there on the wall. The warmth of the sound

comes from that. It doesn’t sound like digital. The board gives the sound dimensions, it captures the whole thing. It’s not just stereo, it’s left, center and right. It has a main gain and two ways of adjusting the gain that change the overall sound.”

Powered by a Crown DC300 amp (given to Jordan by Neil Young during the *Landing on Water* sessions—not pictured), and accompanied by a mid-’60s Neve remote broadcast board ● for various vocal uses, the whole shebang then runs into an Alesis BRC ●.

The recording process continues at two Alesis eight-track ADATs ●. For echo Jordan pulls in a Scully quarter-inch mono reel-to-reel. “I use the Scully for mono slap echo. It’s the sound on those old Chess records. Any type of reverb here is plate or coil reverb, but never digital.”

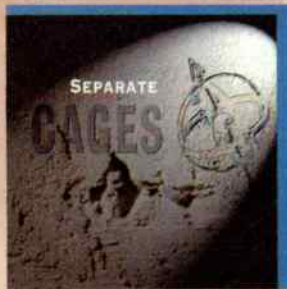
Mixdown occurs at a Panasonic SV-3700 DAT deck ●, with the sound running through various effects, including a Behringer Composer MDX 2000 limiter/compressor ●, a rack with eight API EQs ● and a pair of original Motown EQs ●. “They were a big part of the Motown sound, with a tone no other equalizer has. When the old Motown studios closed I was able to buy a couple of them. They’re worth every penny. They look plain, but you open them up... you have to be from NASA to know what’s in there.”

A Mackie 32•8 board ● handles playback only, while a pair of Yamaha NS-10M monitors ● (or JBL 4311s) deals with Jordan’s penchant for cranking the volume. Before his ears are totally fried, he puts on either Sony MDR CD1000 ● or MDR 7506 ● headphones.

A Vox portable amp ●, Hazelton Brothers grand piano ● and a common Tascam 202WR cassette deck ● round out Jordan’s studio. And if you get him mad, perhaps by playing some digital mix with sequencers and drum samples, Jordan might strap on his Wilson Pro Series boxing gloves ● and crown you one.

“Some people just don’t know how to play,” says Jordan. “Part of the process I love is to actually play the music. There’s no sampler that can do what you heard. You can’t sample that, you can’t sequence that. I love the dinosaur aspect I find myself in right now.” 🐊

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# records

## Fathers and Sons

### Kenny Garrett

*Pursuance—The Music Of John Coltrane*  
(Warner Bros.)

### Miles Davis

*Live Around The World*  
(Warner Bros.)

**A**lto saxophonist Kenny Garrett seems to recognize, as do few players of his generation, that tradition is a continuum of ideas and parallel realities; it represents an invitation to build on the past, not dwell in it. Which is why, throughout his blistering solo spots on Miles Davis' curtain call, *Live Around The World*, and on his own *Pursuance—The Music Of John Coltrane*, he always comes across as his own man.

But then, so did Miles—right to the end. It's clear from the 1988-1991 vintage of *Live Around The World* that Davis was evolving a fresh ensemble style, couched in the raiments of contemporary rhythm and electronic technology, but firmly rooted in 40 years of melodic and harmonic wisdom. Miles' salty choruses on "New Blues" and his lyrical open horn on "Mr. Pastorius"/"Amandla" point to the continued vitality of his conception, while on the latter, the group's shifting percussive canvas, bittersweet overlay of synth harmonies and polyphonic call and response suggest a scaled-down big band. For "Human Nature," Davis transforms har-

monies into nocturnal ruminations, while Garrett creates a gripping rhythmic testimony out of short melodic fragments. "Intruder," "Wrinkle," and "Tutu" bear witness to Davis' singular vision of funk, while his balladry on "Time After Time" is a poignant display of autumnal ability, as Doc Cheatham puts it, to beautify weakly articulated notes, work them into painterly phrases, and make you love them.

*Pursuance* is largely a reappraisal of John Coltrane's middle period, from the Atlantics through the sweet modernism of Impulse! recordings such as *Crescent* and *A Love Supreme*. Garrett's keening, bulbous alto tone recalls the preaching sound of R&B and gospel horn players, and his acute sense of rhythm allows him to suggest the lyric core of Trane's cathartic, convulsive phrasing without getting caught up in an endless maze of notes.

It all could easily have dissolved into a string of well-intentioned neo-con tributes if not for Garrett's sure sense of self, a solid Brian Blades-Rodney Whitaker rhythm team, and some of the finest Pat Metheny playing in recent memory. Metheny's spirited interplay with Garrett on the title tune really ups the emotional stakes as a prelude to the benediction of "Alabama." Trane's epic lament for four little girls killed in a Birmingham church bombing, Closing Out, Garrett and Metheny (on guitar synth) feed off of each other's phrases on a simmering "Latifa." It's final proof that if you approach Coltrane's music with the same sense of individuality he brought to it, his spirit can nurture and guide, and not overwhelm. —Chip Stern

## editor's pick

[cont'd from page 77] tor). The Prophecy (which has a list price of \$1250) is itself a hot new instrument that uses physical modeling technology (essentially, very high-speed digital signal processing) to create classic analog synth sounds as well as a variety of extremely realistic acoustic instrument sounds. There are also three models of the Trinity that come with the Prophecy board already installed—the 61-key Trinity Plus (list price: \$3999), the 76-key Trinity Pro (list price: \$4799) and the Trinity Pro X, which has 88 weighted keys (list price: \$5999). Not cheap, but the best rarely is.

Knockouts on the rear panel of the Trinity testify as to additional expansion options that are expected to be available

soon. The most exciting of these is the HD Option (list price: \$660), which will allow Trinity to be used as the engine of a hard disk recorder. This adds a SCSI port (for the connection of devices such as hard drives and CD-ROM drives), two analog-to-digital (A/D) inputs, and an S/PDIF digital input/output for DAT backup and direct recording of digital signal. In addition, an Alesis Digital output (list price: \$150) will enable Trinity's audio tracks to be ported directly to an ADAT via its "light pipe" digital interface. We're told that the HD Option will enable two channels of simultaneous recording and four channels of playback, all automatically synchronized to the internal sequencer. Audio tracks will be able to be routed internally to Trinity's master effects (though not to insert effects) for signal processing in the digital domain. A flash ROM option (list price: \$650 for eight megabytes) completes the picture, allowing user samples to be used as wavetable sound sources to create new sounds. These samples can be input via the SCSI port or loaded from Trinity's floppy disk drive, which can read DOS AIFF files or Akai samples.

Of course, none of these technical details would be worth squat if the Trinity didn't sound good—and it does. The 256 factory programs provide you with every basic tool (clean, crisp pianos, wailing guitars, funky basses, lush strings, punchy brass, and absolutely killer drums, including some of the best brush drums and orchestral percussion I've ever heard), and also give you an arsenal of unique synth effects. If you've got the Prophecy card installed, a third bank of 64 sounds add the best of that instrument's factory sounds. The flash ROM option adds two more banks of 128 sounds, and, of course, the onboard disk drive (which can store program and combi data as well as sequences and setup data—all in the same file/folder hierarchy used by Mac and Windows computers) lets you save and load an unlimited number of sounds.

In fairness, there are a few things about the Trinity which bother me a little. For one thing, the total polyphony of the unit is 32 notes, which really isn't enough when you consider that the use of dual-oscillator voices halve that and the layering of sounds in combi or sequencer mode reduces polyphony further still. Another niggle is the slight delay in screen redrawing—typically less than a second and having no effect on sound generation or timing, but nonetheless reminiscent of the bad old days of under-powered computers as opposed to the crisp performance we've become accustomed to in today's digital devices. Last but not least, even though there are four discrete output jacks, individual programs cannot be routed to the two secondary jacks except via some convoluted master effects routings. It should be a much easier process to extract individual outputs, and I'd hope to see this addressed in future software revisions. (Happily, the Trinity operating system can be updated from floppy disk, in contrast to many other synths, which require new chips to be installed.)

Overall, however, the Trinity is a real winner. With its basic yet informative training video and from four to six well-written though dense owners manuals (the number depends upon the installed options), you'll be up and running in no time, thanks in large part to the well-thought out graphic user interface. The Trinity is a highly recommended instrument that can easily serve as the centerpiece of any live performance or recording rig.

*Special thanks to Mike Kovins and Jack Hotop at Korg for their assistance.*

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# products index

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and voice chip: When sensor detects maid's hand reaching for doorknob, voice chip screams, "It's not checkout time! Go away! I am an escaped mental patient and I'm going to kill you!" over strains of "Helter Skelter." Available in English and Spanish; Alabama and West Virginia residents include \$5 extra for half-speed models.

● **Mogabker.** New software program virtually eliminates need for agents. Includes nationwide guide to crummy motels, lousy restaurants, and marginal, low-paying gigs. Also gives vague, roundabout directions and drive time estimates based on fair weather conditions for Ferraris.

● **Mr. Stubble.** Ever notice how all the really big-time singer/songwriter guys have that swarthy, three-day-old beard growth? Let's face it: What tortured, sensitive soul has time to shave when there's a concept album to be made? If you're a vagabond troubadour at heart but still working a nine-to-fiver and adhering to the Ross Perot dress code, try Mr. Stubble: Just a quick spray and that baby's butt jawline is hopping a freight toward Salinas. It's water-resis-

tant and will not come off, even during vigorous head movements in songs about world peace or Colorado. Avail-

able in Mysterious Black, Earth-Tone Brown, and World-Weary Salt & Pepper.

● **Tease Me Tina.** Life-size inflatable Tina wears extremely tight clothing over her polyethylene curves. Undulates to music (requires 12 D batteries) while blue eyes seductively stare and lips pout. Upon being touched, administers powerful ego-bruising electric shock and deflates. Great party gag and training device for the newly married or converted.

Remember, kids, technology is our friend. After all, look what the cordless mike has done for the world of professional 'rasslin'.—**Rev. Billy C. Wirtz**

Rich Borge

It's time once again for everybody's favorite high-tech flea market: the summer NAMM show. Time for a militia of merchandisers to convince you that last year's almost-paid-off, state-of-the-art gear is, alas, this year's CP-70. Hey, don't get me wrong: I love dropping five grand on a keyboard that gives the definitive "Tubular Bells" sound. But there are a few other products I'd like to see as well:

● **Scenhausen Mike-So-Fresh.** Tired of stepping up to the house mike and being hit with that lingering bouquet of stale beer and last night's pizza? This handy recyclable disc slips under the head of the mike to eliminate odors and trap stray food particles. Available in

# In the Sweet Buy-and-Buy

Seabreeze, Mountain Waterfall, and \$29.95-Motel-Almost-Pine scents.

● **Scenhausen Skidden Mask IV.** Eliminates, once and for all, health and fashion doubts regarding your road crew. Small adhesive strips attach to underwear and socks. By third day of wear, strip glows bright vegetation-green, reminding wearer it's time to change.

● **Sleep-Eze Motel Security System.** Attractive, laminated, hanging Do Not Disturb sign. Contains motion sensor

Mike Frondelli - Engineer/Producer  
Director Capitol Records Studios

Capitol  
STUDIOS

**M**ike Frondelli, Director of Capitol Records Studios, has a connoisseur's mic locker, including more than 50 Neumann mics dating back to the 1940's. Newest in the collection? The mic Mike calls "the working man's Neumann," the TLM 193. Because it sounds so good in so many applications, Frondelli recommends the TLM 193 as "the one mic to have" for Capitol acts setting up project studios.

The TLM 193 is a stripped down, cardioid-only version of our famous TLM 170. It provides oodles of headroom, has virtually no self-noise, and can immediately give your project studio that professional sound (particularly on vocals) that you've been missing. (By the way, the TLM 193 has become our biggest seller.) It carries a retail price of less than \$1500.



TLM 193

Robert Scovill, live sound stalwart and winner of three TEC awards for Live Sound Excellence, knows a great microphone when he hears one. He has toured as the front-of-house mixer with bands like Rush, Def Leppard and most recently Tom Petty. "I am using the new KM 184 both out on tour and at MusiCanvas." (Robert's studio in Scottsdale.) "The KM 184 carries all of the Neumann signatures, and I have had great success on a wide variety of sources, from the subtleties of violin to the extremes of distorted guitar." The KM 184 is perfect for instruments of all kinds, and excels at overhead drum miking and capturing the elusive acoustic guitar. For professional quality at less than \$700 each, a stereo pair of KM 184s can easily be a part of ANY studio.



KM 184

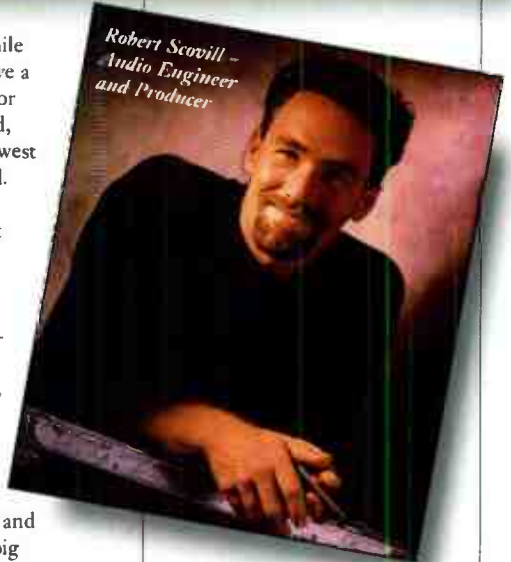
Let's face it. While Neumann mics have a stellar reputation for rich, opulent sound, they are not the lowest priced mics around. Why? Because we have to ensure that our microphones satisfy even the most demanding engineers in hyper-critical recording environments. But, we have found a way to take a few of the bells and whistles off a couple of our mics and still give you that big (HUGE) studio sound on a project studio budget.

The bottom line is this: before you go dropping big cash on outboard gear trying to make your studio sound good, consider the most important part of the signal path, your microphones. The only way to get great sound out of your studio is to capture great sound. And no other microphone captures sound as well as Neumann ... not even close.

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