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MUSICIAN



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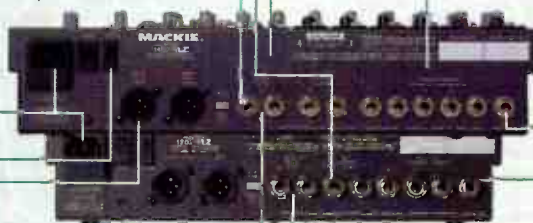


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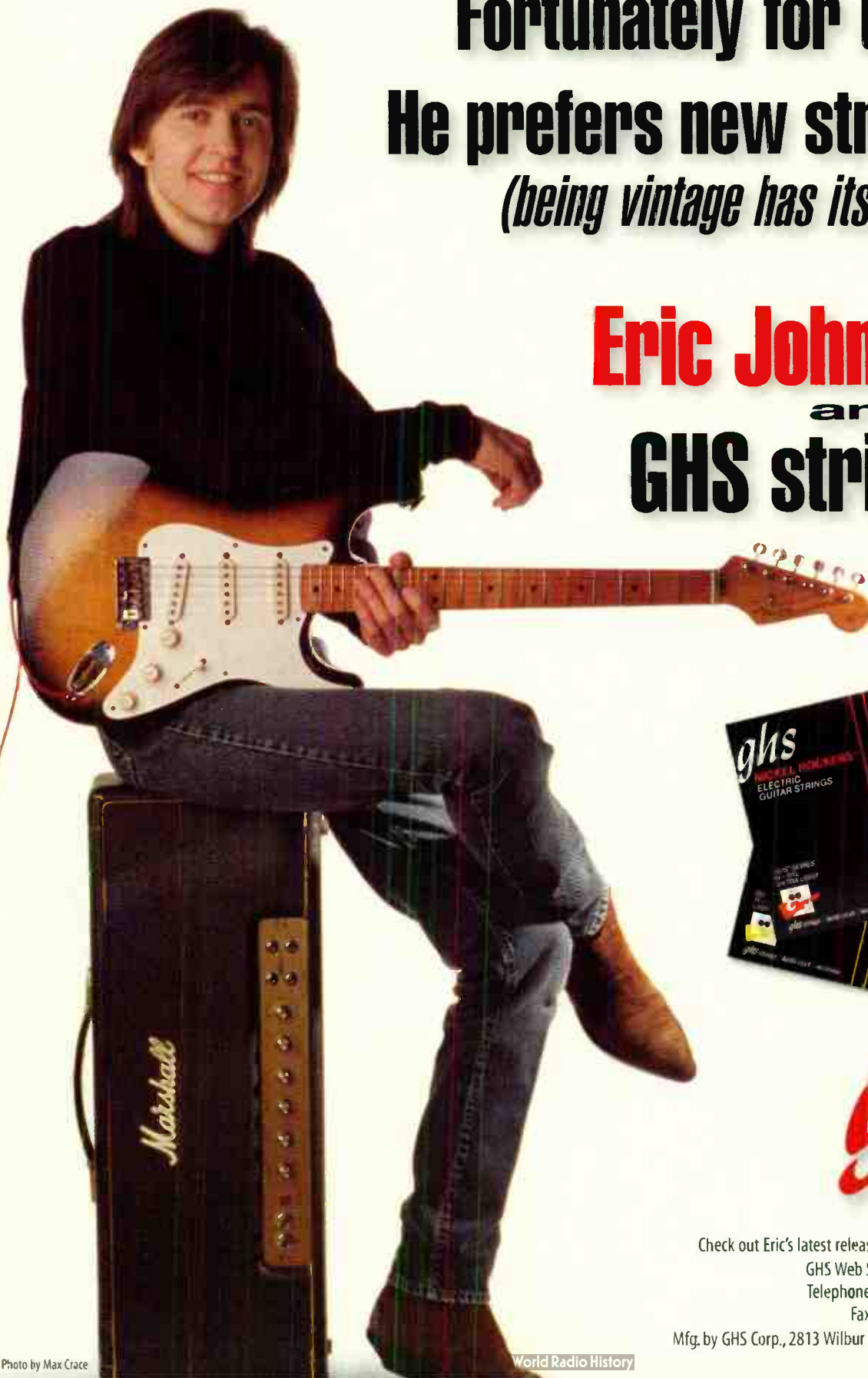
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contents

Musician Magazine / March 1997 / Issue No. 220



Departments

FRONTMAN: WYNTON MARSALIS

A jazz great's tale of slavery and triumph.
by robert l. doerschuk

11

SIDEMAN: TONY LEVIN

Does being with King Crimson crimp a
studio career? by chris rubin

12

TALENT

Meet this month's up-and-comers: Darla Hood,
Heavenly, Rahsaan Patterson, Olivia Tremor
Control, and Failure.

14

NEW SIGNING: SLOAN

What if your label bails on your sophomore
release? If you're Sloan, you try again.
by dev sherlock

15

SONGWRITING: RAY DAVIES

The master of narrative pop tells how to turn
a stroll to the front door into a song.
by robert l. doerschuk

23

PRIVATE LESSON: RITCHIE BLACKMORE

Rock with a fistful of Bach. by mac randall

28

RECORDS

Björk, Bruce Cockburn, Al Di Meola, George
Ducas, BeauSoleil, Bill Evans.

37

PRODUCT & AD INDEX

Also letters, 8; classifieds, 100.

10

BACKSIDE

So you can't write a love song about someone
who's falling to pieces? by rev. billy c. wirtz

106

Feature Section

METALLICA

Though still riding the crest of the metal wave, these headbanger gods are trading in the thrills of excess for the pleasures of musical understatement. by ted drozdowski

32

WHAT THE PLAYERS PLAY

Talkin' road gear with Bush, Soundgarden, 311, Wilco, Danzig, and Ben Harper.

43

A MUSICIAN'S GUIDE TO RADIO AIRPLAY

With merger mania strangling the radio industry, what can new bands do to get their music to the people? by roy trakin

54

Products & Applications

FAST FORWARD

Recent arrivals from Peavey, Warwick, Washburn, Kurzweil, and Electro-Harmonix.

62

TECHNOLOGY

No theme, but plenty of scary new gear, at AES. by howard massey

65

STUDIO TECHNIQUES

A user's guide to microphone selection and application. by michael cooper

69

POWER USERS

David Holman finds the key to carefree mixing for Bush, Stabbing Westward, and other top acts in CAD's MegaMix automation. by david john farinella

74

EDITOR'S PICK: JBL'S EON POWERSYSTEM

Powerful, punchy stage sound for bands on a budget. by michael gelfand

77

HOME STUDIO: DAVID TORN

Rippin' riffs and playin' high-tech blues in the Loopool. by baker rorick

82



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the flip side of cd plus

It's no surprise that artists and labels release "enhanced" CDs without anything worthwhile to put on them (Technology, Jan. '97) when you consider that no one can even decide what format to use to put the files on the disk and some of the formats they use won't work with all CD-ROM drives. Many of these disks have the computer files placed on track 0—bad idea, since several manufacturers' drives can't read track 0. And these are not just older two-speeds that need an updated driver, these are brand new eight-speeds that use track 0 for internal proprietary operations.

John green jgreen@apta.org

pay the pusherman

Are your articles paid advertisements by the artists or are they meant to tell the truth? Our doubts arose after reading Dev Sherlock's writeup of Pusherman (Talent, Jan. '97). We attended their performance on Nov. 13 at the Shelter in Detroit, and what we heard that night was safe, watered-down modern pop. Comparing their music to the Dead, Zeppelin, and Jane's Addiction is misinforming the public. As artists, we have a goal of expressing ourselves in our own way. But whether Pusherman makes music from the heart or for the bank account is up to the individual.

rev ripper & jim beam

Jim beam & the throwups
detroit, MI

stung again

When Mr. Sting tenderly declared that Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings* brought him to tears (Frontman, Dec. '96) and then backhanded him by adding that "I still can't believe an American wrote this," I felt the urge to vomit. Wouldn't we all be better off if we gave our narrow nationalistic filters a rest? Then again, when one listens to the pretentious drivelt Sting has produced lately, it's easy to believe that it was written by a Brit.

todd steed knoxville, TN
tozdilla@utkux.utcc.utk.edu

review roundup

In his review of Les Claypool and the Holy Mackerel (Nov. '96), Mac Randall asks, "What

exactly constitutes the appeal of Les Claypool and his band Primus?" Allow me to respond.

Les Claypool is a genius. His singing is a universal statement as well as an artistic revelation. Independent guitarists and drummers are still not able to set their egos aside and understand and appreciate Claypool and Primus. Yes, I am a bass player, but first and foremost I have an insatiable lust for great music, such as that made by Primus.

petty thoughts

I was all set to fire off an addendum to Taylor Young's letter (Jan. '97) about tact with regard to dealing with the press. Then I read Tom Petty's comment a few pages later about how getting records for free is "not the same as if you went down and bought it." This got me thinking. As Petty suggests, there's that thrill of discovery experienced by haunting the bins that just can't be duplicated by a trip to your P.O. box. And any music critic who takes his work seriously no doubt buys a ton of records in any given year—if I added up all my receipts from '96 they'd probably rival a small indie's annual budget.

My point is that some of us have no interest in being shills for labels, publicists, managers, and promoters. Not to sound noble or anything, but we actually go out of our way to discover—for ourselves, for our readers, or more likely for both—new and different sounds. The constant deluge of free music is, admittedly, not unwelcome; the incessant ringing of the phone is decidedly less thrilling, though I guess it's a necessary evil. (Hint to publicists: Get toll-free numbers and see your return calls from impoverished freelance writers multiply.) Still, I really don't care much about wading through reams of photocopied hyperbole or being put on the guest list or being "pitched" the latest brain-throb from the meanest/baddest/punkrockingest group of tattooed love boys on the block. I just wanna listen to the music and decide for myself if it measures up to whatever vague critic's and fan's standards I've developed over the years. If what I hear excites me, you can be damn sure I'll find a way to get the word out. To Young (and to Deborah Frost, whose article prompted Young's letter), I say good luck with the career, and thanks as well. Giving your overtaxed/overwhelmed local hack breathing room is indeed appreciated.

fred mills
tucson, AZ

It's important for readers who have not heard his masterpieces to understand that the lack of respect forced upon Claypool in your pages stems solely from one unreputable source: Mac Randall.

rama thomas cooper fort worth, TX

Hey! Anyone noticed that the price of new CD releases seems to be going up instead of down? Again?! I just read Mac Randall's right-on-target review of Adrian Belew's excellent new release *Op Zop Too Wah* (Dec. '96). I usually buy used CDs, but in a rare fit of aural instant gratification

I ran down to my corner Blockbuster Music—where they actually had it in stock!—and plunked down my hard-earned \$17.98 plus tax.

What a piss-off. Gimme "used" any time.

eric berg santa cruz, CA
ahlarts@3dshirts.com

ella fitzgerald

I've been enjoying the articles in *Musician* for the past fourteen years, including your Backside tribute to Ella Fitzgerald (Oct. '96). I couldn't get enough of the comments and reflections, so I thought I'd share with you my personal reflections of Ella.

Ella Fitzgerald. Beneath this very name lies an unmatched and unsurpassed passion filled with the kind of heart and soul that so many others in the realms of jazz, pop, and scat are missing. That's why each tune she sang became more than a song; she transformed it into a masterpiece that represented the best of both the composer and the singer.

Whenever Ella sang a ballad, it was almost like a lullaby. Whenever she sang R&B or scat, she would join us together in a glorified union of expressive musicianship. As a self-taught musician, I never get tired of listening to Ella alone and in her many great recordings with Louis Armstrong.

That is what Ella Fitzgerald means to me. Thanks, *Musician*. Keep up the great work.

peter e. greco
new milford, NJ

errata

Contrary to what was stated in our Dec. '96 Talent piece on Rasputina, the band's Melora Creager didn't open for Nirvana in '93—she actually played cello with Nirvana on their European tour that year.

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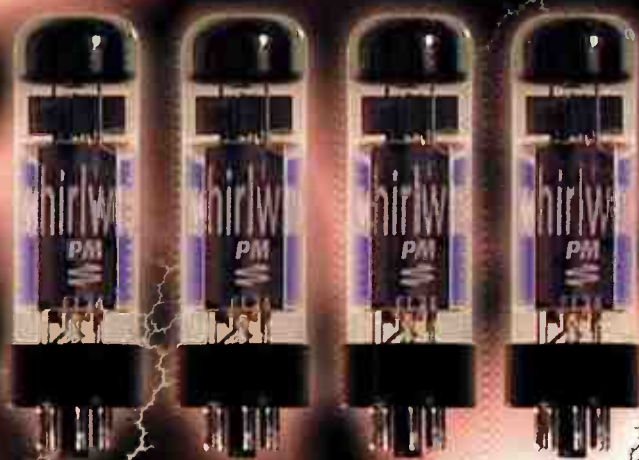
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frontman

Your latest major work, the oratorio *Blood on the Fields*, embraces a variety of musical styles, from ring shouts to bebop. How did you put them together without disrupting the musical and lyrical flow?

Well, I hear all those as the same. You have call-and-response, you have riffs, breaks, polyphonic sections. Once you establish a rhythmic identity, you can apply almost any harmonic language.

But you varied the orchestration, depending on the style you were referring to. Your clarinet line on "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," for example, wouldn't have worked in a piece that had a more modern feel.

I wanted that to sound like a country band that's unpolished and playing some wrong harmonies, but they're so well-meaning that it gives it a certain flavor.

So you wrote some harmonic clashes.

Yeah, although I did change the original clarinet line because it was too dissonant to get my point across. The consonance [of the other parts] is what makes it sound like that, the fact that they're playing unison and they're not really in tune. The clarinet is squeakin' up there, an octave above the trumpet.

What dictated where you would write out the parts and where you would leave space for improvising?

First of all, somebody's got to be improvising in the rhythm section. The more you write out the rhythm section, the less it's gonna sound like jazz. As far as the horns, most of the parts are written out at the

beginning of *Blood on the Fields*. Then, as it goes on, there's more room to play because the main character is getting free; as he starts to realize what he has to do to become free, his people start soloing more. But also I was running out of time [laughs]. Four days before the premiere, I was still writing all night and rehearsing all day.

The piece runs about three hours, and you're taking it on the road in January and February. Will audiences be as open to something this ambitious as they were to your more traditional jazz sets?

When I started doing extended pieces with my band, like *Blue Interlude* or *Citi Movement*, I could see my audience was like [makes groaning sound]. Even the cats in the band wouldn't want to play it, because you know once you start it's gonna be fifty minutes before you finish. I'm always paranoid when I write new music. With *Blood on the Fields* I had to convince the cats in the band that it was not noise, because it sounds avant-garde at first. It would be so dissonant, with so many things going on, they'd think, "Don't tell me he's joining the noise-makers too." But I don't like noise, so if something I write doesn't sound musical in some kind of way, maybe I wrote it wrong. Like when I did my string quartet, the transposition for the viola was not done properly, and the part was written up a whole-step. I could tell by the sound of their voices that it was like, "Oh, no, not another one of those pieces!" But the part was just wrong.

Of course, noise is a subjective concept in music.

Well, I have sections like that, but it's always a transition to something coherent. For me to capture the feeling of walking out into traffic is not really much of an achievement.

—Robert L. Doerschuk

Wynton Marsalis

"I'm always paranoid when I write new music."

Deborah Feingold

Tony **sideman** Levin

"Give the arranger what he wants, not what he wrote."

You worked with Peter Gabriel for nearly twenty years and have been a member of King Crimson for fifteen or so. Has that made you more in demand for other projects?

I did more records before I did high-profile tours with Peter Gabriel and King Crimson. Now I do maybe fifteen sessions a year, not all of which come out.

You own quite a few instruments: fretless, fretted, and three-, four-, and five-string basses, Chapman stick, even a didgeridoo. How do you choose which to play on any given song?

I don't decide until I hear the music. The instruments give me a variety of tones to choose from. Some basses lend themselves more to heavy rock, some to fluid notes and sustain. Ideally for me, I hear the music, let some process inside me decide what to play, and then choose which instrument, whether to dampen the strings, play with a pick, or whatever.

What are those drumstick-like things we sometimes see on your index and middle fingers?

I call them "funk fingers." I've been playing with them for a long time. They give a mallet-like, percussive sound, quite a bit like a thumb slap. You can hear them on "Steam" and "Secret World" [from Peter Gabriel's *Us*].

By your own count, you've appeared on between two and four thousand CDs and

have no doubt recorded on countless more projects that were never released. What has made you so successful as a session player?

I don't think of myself as a session musician. What I do is to focus on how I do it, my process of playing music. I never step back and get a distant perspective. My object is always to play the bass, just to play a good part.

Do you turn down a lot of work?

It varies. Sometimes I don't get called for months, sometimes all the calls come at once.

You came to rock rather late, after years of classical training and forays into jazz.

Did that background

prepare you

at all for doing rock sessions?

It gave me the ability to read music, but when I began to do studio work I found the technique of reading as in classical is not what's called for. You need to give the arranger what he wants more than what he wrote. When I began, I'd read—and play—exactly what was written, which is definitely not what most people want.

What do the best producers do in sessions that others don't?

The best producers try to make it all work. They're the ones who make the music end up good. I like the ones who allow the musicians to choose where their part will go.

Define the perfect session.

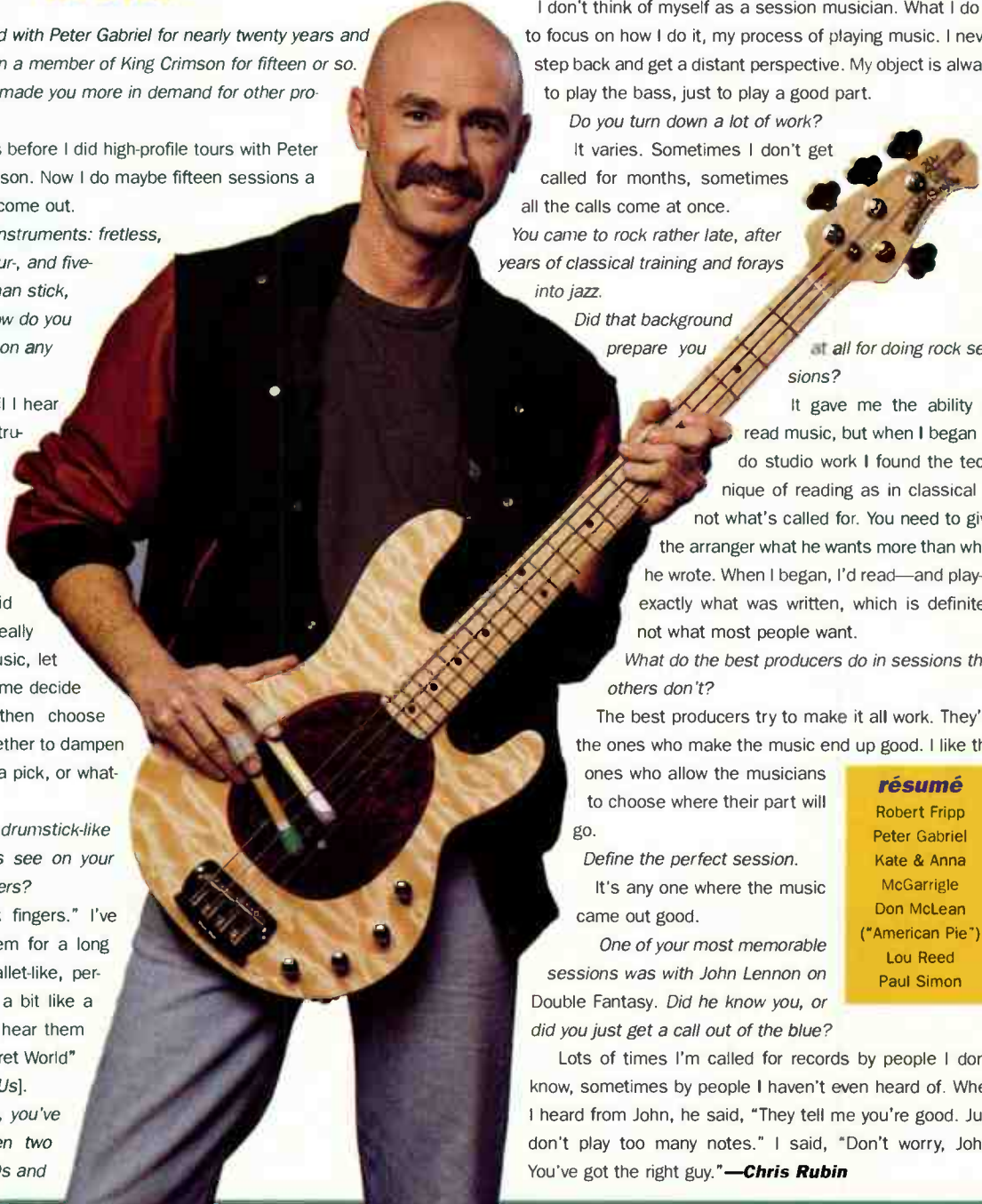
It's any one where the music came out good.

One of your most memorable sessions was with John Lennon on *Double Fantasy*. Did he know you, or did you just get a call out of the blue?

Lots of times I'm called for records by people I don't know, sometimes by people I haven't even heard of. When I heard from John, he said, "They tell me you're good. Just don't play too many notes." I said, "Don't worry, John. You've got the right guy." —Chris Rubin

résumé

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Peter Gabriel
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World Radio History

talents

I was going to school in L.A., studying film, and my brother was teaching me to play guitar," remembers **Failure's** singer/songwriter/guitarist Ken Andrews. "I had a crappy bass, a guitar, a crappy drum machine, and one mic. In the beginning it was just, 'Let's play a few shows, get the name Failure in the paper, and laugh about it.' It was only literally after we signed the record deal that I seriously thought, 'Okay, let's do this.'"

Failure's first album was cut after the band had played 22 gigs. Though they got to record with Steve Albini, Andrews had mixed feelings. "Part of it was the way we played, but most of the problem is that some of the sounds take away from the songs." The experience prompted Ken to get more involved. He engineered their second album *Magnified* and felt confident enough to take over production with bassist/song-



Alison Dyer

failure

writer Greg Edwards on their latest and most sonically sophisticated work, *Fantastic Planet* (Slash/ Warner Bros.).

"We took a little over half of our recording budget, bought equipment, rented a house, and set up shop," Ken says. "I don't like studios. They're sonically treated so that there's no artifact in what you're listening to. If you have a decent room that doesn't have any weird frequency responses, I prefer it to a studio. No one has a living room or a car that sounds like a control room."

The result is an album of rich guitar rock, heavily influenced by the sci-fi and spy movies the band watched while recording. Besides the disc's title, taken from the classic animated film of the same name, tracks like "The Nurse Who Loved Me" and "Solaris" attest to long hours spent in front of the VCR. According to Ken, "It's better to be inspired by a medium other than your own." Maybe that's why so much of *Fantastic Planet* conjures up images of starships gliding through space. One thing's for sure: It's a far cry from those early crappy gear days.

—Kris Nicholson

Picture yourself on a boat on a river with tangerine trees and marmalade skies. Suddenly someone appears at the turnstile...it's **the Olivia Tremor Control**. This quintet's new release *Music from the Unrealized Film Script Dusk at Cubist Castle* (Fly-daddy) features 75 minutes of pop-psychedelica, and enough John, Paul, and George harmonies to make you feel as if you've just arrived at the Maharishi's ashram circa 1968.

"Bill [Doss, guitar/vocals] is actually more of a Beatles fan than I am," Will Cullen Hart (guitar/ vocals) insists. "At an early age I bought Pink Floyd's *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*." He also cites such disparate acts as Oval, Sun Ra, Big Black, the Beach Boys, the Butthole Surfers,

using on puppy love amid new-wave styling and shining female harmonies, Oxford's **Heavenly** are the ultimate revenge of the girl groups. And that Heavenly are often branded as cutesy "twee" pop doesn't bother singer/co-songwriter Amelia Fletcher one bit.

"I'm more proud of it than ever before," she says. "It used to really rile me. When we began, we were so young. Though we were quite punky, we always giggled in interviews. We didn't think that fast on our feet. The media really ate that up."

The band's new album, *Operation Heavenly* (K), runs up a heady pop steam, but with newfound sarcasm. Lines like "He says he can't waste a good erection; I think I'm starting to lose affection" are like finding salty anchovies in a spongy-sweet Twinkie.

Stranger still is that the bulk of *Heavenly's* male-impaling asides were written by Amelia's drumming brother, Matthew Fletcher. Matthew's sharp and humor apparently covered a depressed spirit; he committed suicide shortly before the album's release. As the band carries on, their new songs are sure to form an ironic contrast with the happier times of *Operation Heavenly*.

"The next album will be more reflective, but it's only because I want to make a change," explains Amelia. "We get letters from people who put on *Heavenly* because it's made them feel good when they were depressed. It's such a pity that it didn't cheer Matthew up. It's a bit weird." —Ken Micallef



heavenly

the Kinks, John Cage, Sonic Youth, and Tortoise as influences.

Dusk was recorded primarily on a Fostex 28X 4-track. "We would fill a 4-track cassette up and dump that onto two tracks of an 8-track," explains Hart. "I learned a lot from Mark Lewisohn's *The Complete Beatles Recording Sessions*." In addition to obligatory backwards tape loops and sitars, the instrumentation includes Tibetan prayer-

side project. And what of the alleged film *Dusk at Cubist Castle* itself? "We don't actually have a script yet," Hart explains, "but we have characters and lots of images."

The OTC is part of a musical collective called the Elephant 6 Recording Company, made up of like-minded friends who grew up in or near Ruston, Louisiana. Its other members include Robert Schneider of the Apples (In Stereo)—who co-



the olivia tremor control

board, singing saw, and (of course) space bubbles. A limited edition of the album includes a bonus ambient disc, while the CD booklet solicits cassettes with details of your favorite dreams for a future OTC

produced *Dusk*—and Jeff Mangum of Neutral Milk Hotel. "We really didn't fit in that much," Hart says. "We only had a few friends in high school." Somehow it all makes perfect sense.—**Andy Gensler**

It's an alternative world these days, but *Darlahood's* debut, *Big Fine Thing* (Reprise), is a rock record and proud of it. Leader/singer/songwriter/guitarist Luke Janklow laughingly concurs. "It is a rock record. There's a real handmade kind of vibe. The whole attraction of being a musician is it's one of the few places you can still operate on instinct," declares the tall (6'6") New Yorker.

From slide to 12-string, guitars permeate the dozen melodic and edgily compelling songs on the album, though Janklow has no hankering to be a guitar hero. "I was a worshipper of Eddie Van Halen but I'm much more into rhythm. I played in bands with drummers that were...inconsistent," he says, choosing his words carefully, "and as a result, I developed a very percussive right hand. In fact, I'm a total

closet drummer and bass player—I'm really rhythm-oriented. By default, we ended up fooling around as a trio, and all of a sudden there was all this air and all this good space to work with—and a better palette.

"I just love big chordal textures, interesting voicings," explains Janklow, who owns about 20 guitars and used three amps simultaneously during the recording of *Big Fine Thing*, which was produced by Clive Langer, Alan Winstanley, and the band.

While the album's selections were carefully honed down to a dozen from an original batch of about 75, the name Darlahood was an eleventh-hour choice, taken from the childhood hearthrob of *The Little Rascals*. That kind of sardonic humor, Janklow suggests, mirrors his own sensibility. "I was born and raised in New York, and stuff with a dark edge tickles me on a humor level," he says, "even if it is at my expense."—**Katherine Turman**



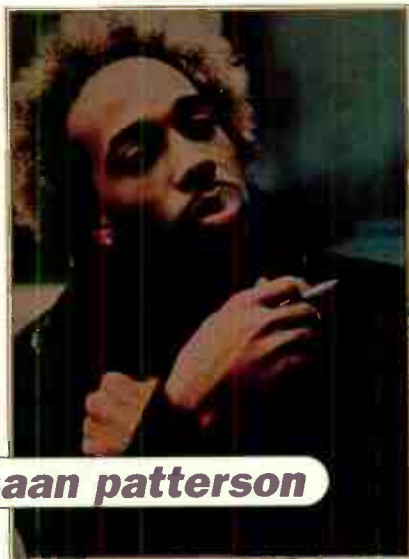
darlahood

Danny Clinch

Stevie Wonder and Chaka Khan are it!" exclaims **Rahsaan Patterson**. "They're my godparents, spiritually and musically. I'm the child they didn't know they had!"

On his self-titled debut album (MCA), this soft-spoken New Yorker does his elders proud, combining Khan's theatrical flair with a supple voice that recalls Wonder's Seventies prime. The kid's no nostalgia act. Though barely 23, he boasts more than a decade of dues-paying and a lifelong love of soulful grooves.

Brought up in the Pentecostal Church, where he sang solo in the choir, Patterson was a vinyl junkie from childhood. "I always had my own stereo," he recalls. "I'd listen for hours with my face literally in the speaker, smelling it and looking at the album covers."



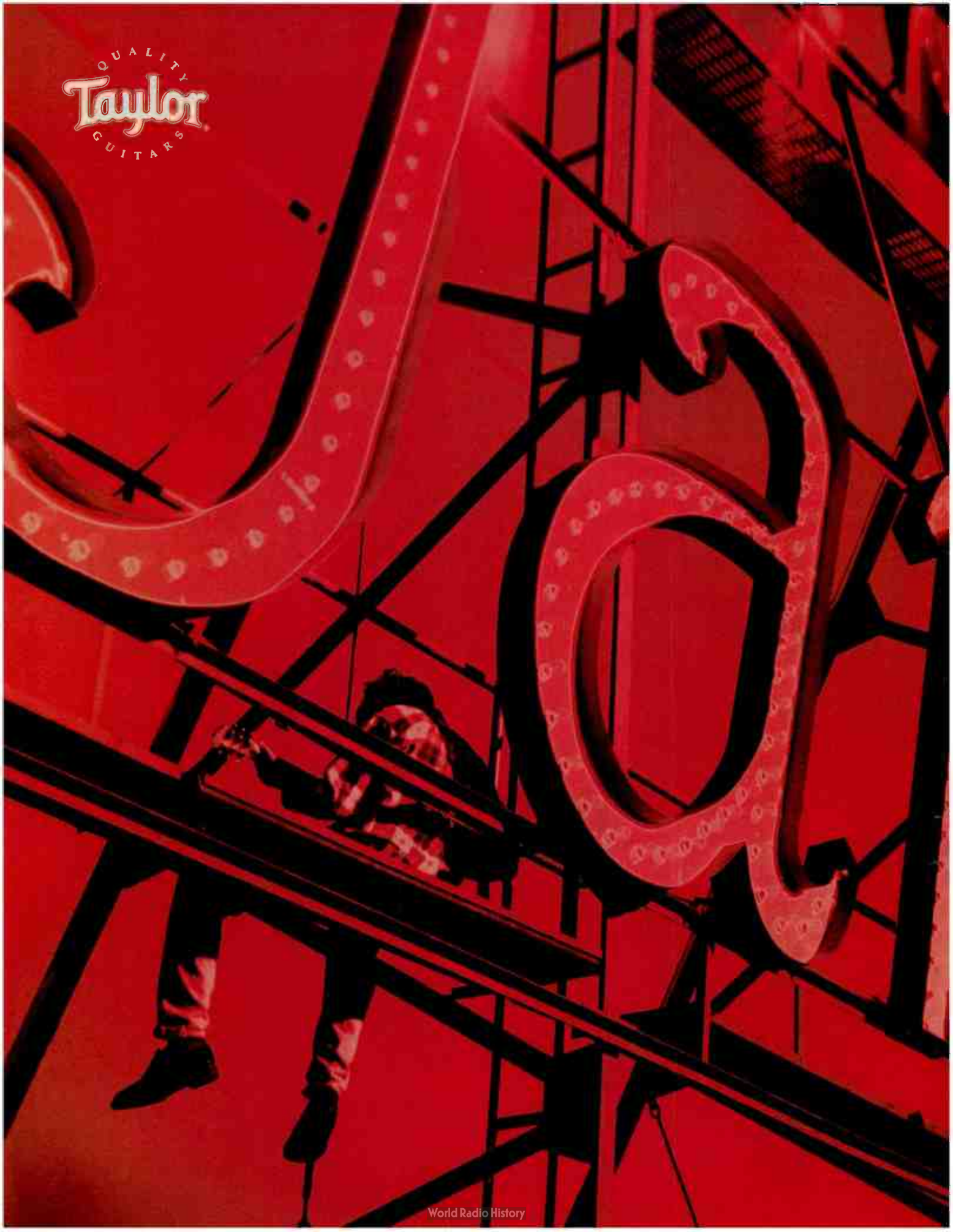
rahsaan patterson

Gizman

By age ten, he was pursuing stardom in Los Angeles, and subsequently landed a regular gig on the music-oriented TV series *Kids Incorporated*, as well as working live theater and doing commercials. Patterson's high voice changed with puberty, temporarily slowing his career. "I stopped singing for a year, because I was afraid of what I would sound like," Patterson notes.

Named after jazz great Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Patterson sang on albums by Stanley Clarke and George Duke and co-wrote songs for Tevin Campbell and Brandy (including her hit "Baby") before flying solo. Now, he's doing it for himself. "In 'Sir Duke,' Stevie Wonder sings that music is a world within itself," Patterson says. "I want people to know this place does exist. Sometimes I think I'm crazy, 'cause I go so deep into it."—**Jon Young**

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newsigning



My advice," begins Sloan bassist/vocalist Chris Murphy, "is don't sign to a major too quickly." The versatile Canadian band has recently signed with new American label The Enclave, but it's not their first major deal. The youthful guitar-pop quartet are getting a rare second chance. And they've learned a fair amount about the music business in the process.

The Sloan story begins in 1991 with a self-produced six-song EP, *Peppermint*, released on their own Murdereports label in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Within months, they are signed to Geffen label DGC Records in the U.S. (home to Nirvana, Sonic Youth, Guns N' Roses). They release their debut LP *Smeared* and hit the road behind the single "Underwhelmed." "I feel we were signed largely on the commercial potential of that song," remembers guitarist/vocalist Patrick Pentland. "And, unfortunately, we got lumped into that whole punk/alternative pile. We had yet to really define our sound when we made our first record—it was predominantly heavy guitars all over the place."

By the time Sloan entered the studio to record the follow-up, *Twice Removed*, in 1994, things had changed; their approach was more focused and stripped down, with much less guitar. Says Pentland, "That's when we began to feel friction from the label, because they didn't hear any radio hits. They were looking to build on the foundation of *Smeared*, but we'd moved away from that neighborhood. We weren't interested in being a noisy guitar band."

"They were frank with us," says Murphy. "They told us they couldn't really get behind [*Twice*

SLOAN

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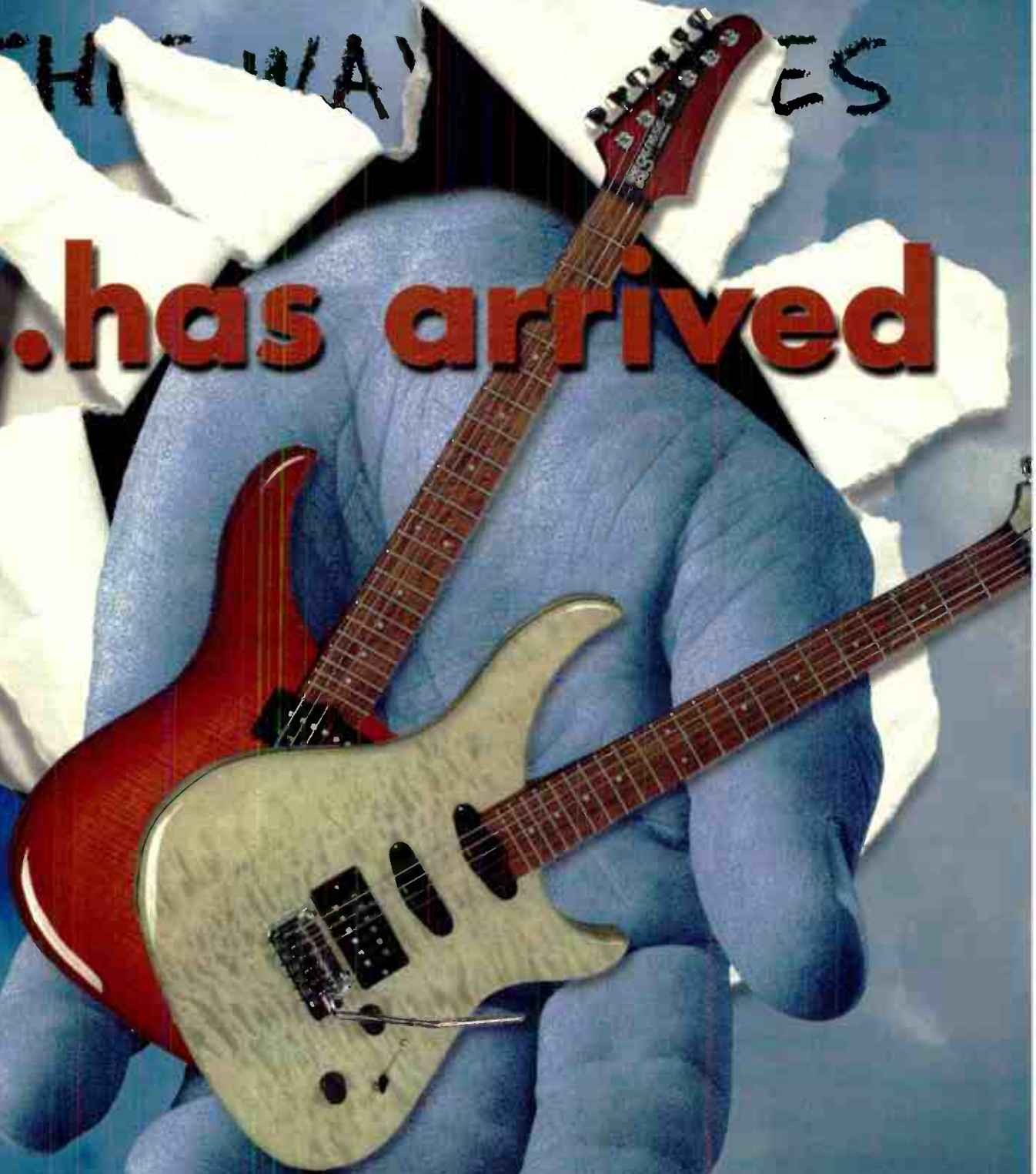
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Catherine Stockhausen

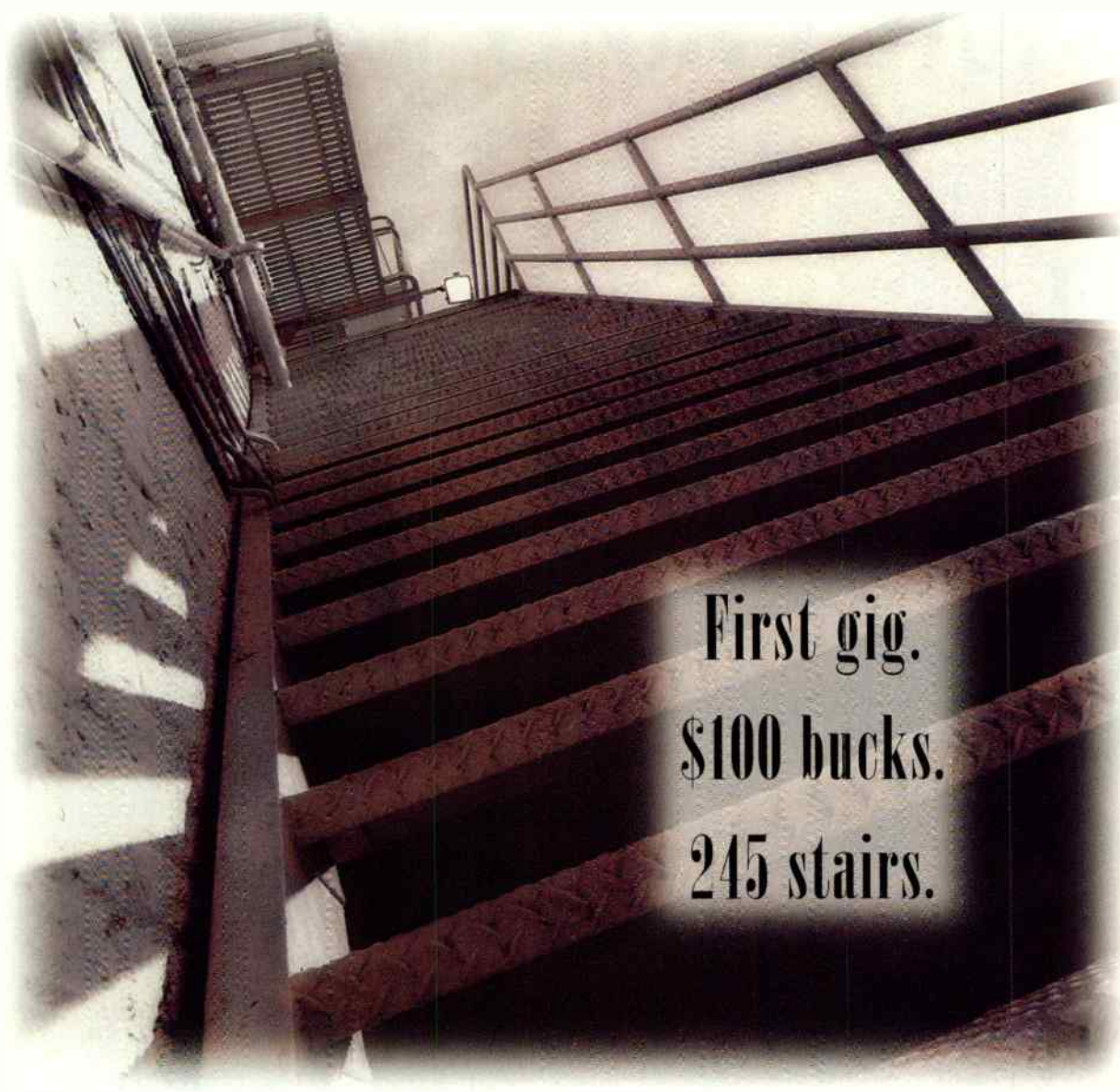
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Ray Davies

From the Table to the Door: The Discipline of Creativity

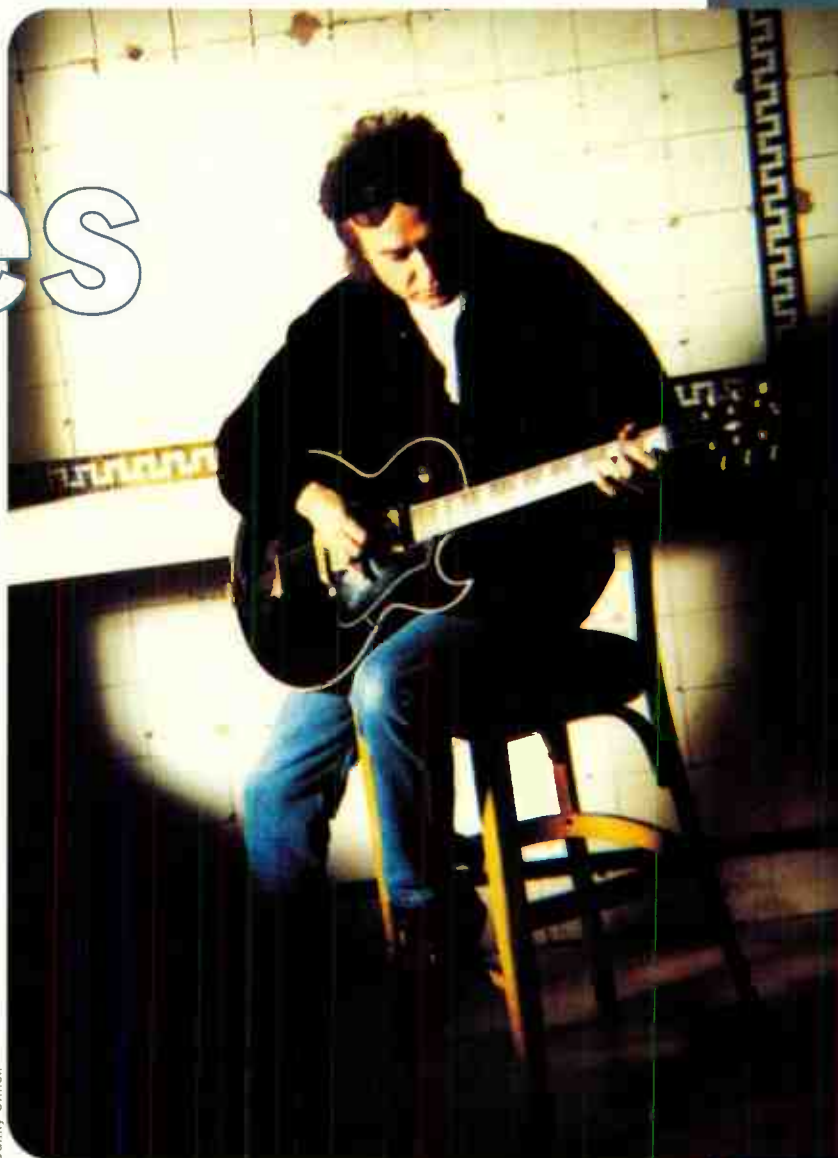
by **robert I. doerschuk**

He stood out like a Dickens character on the set of *Bright Lights, Big City*. Looming over the power lunchers, he threaded through the maze of tables in the Upper West Side eatery he favors while in New York, with hair far thicker than a man his age deserves, pointed birdlike features, and a spectacular scarf flung 'round his throat.

The scarf was no affectation, for this throat is home for the unmistakable voice of Ray Davies, one of the great rock voices of all time, as strong at full snarl and as delicate in repose as Roger Daltrey's, yet touched with an irony that sets him apart from brawnier bawlers. Of course, Davies has the advantage of great material—the classic tunes of his band, the Kinks, all of it written by his own hand.

Who can claim as wide and deep a catalog as this? The proto-metal, riff-driven "You Really Got Me," archetypal studies both affectionate ("Village Green Preservation Society") and derisive ("Dedicated Follower of Fashion"), daguerreotypes from some timeless time in London ("Waterloo Sunset," "Come Dancing"), songs of ribaldry ("Lola") and mystery ("Fancy")—an astonishing range. And on closer examination, the details of Davies' work—the vicious sing-song chorus to "Picture Book," the wedding of innocent lyrics and inspired key changes in "Days"—reveal an artistry that's unrivaled even in the work of less prolific composers.

On this autumn afternoon, the chill in the air had roughened the edges of Davies' voice. With a solo performance at Manhattan's Westbeth Theater only hours away, he nursed several bottles of mineral water and hunched over our tape recorder. Before the altar of songwriting, he spoke intimately, self-deprecatingly, with humor and insight, much like the characters in his songs. These similarities between life and art, we learned that day, are no coincidence; rather, they are the essential bridge that Davies the songwriter endeavors to



Danny Clinch

build.

For a couple of years now you've been leading five-day songwriter clinics three times a year in England. Is it really possible to lead participants closer to the place where songs come from?

It's not where songs come from, it's where our ideas come from. So much of what I do starts with a basic idea, and while there are ways of going through an idea, there are no rules to songwriting and nobody can teach you how to do it.

See, I'm interested in the way people see the world. I had a young boy come to one of my things. His name was Greg. I think, and he was an unemployed kid from Essex. Obviously he had very limited access to music, but he saw things in a very abstract way. He was coming out with really abstract ideas that we could draw out a bit, so I told him to read anything from any text he could find in a magazine and try to make something out of it. It's more difficult to come to terms in only four days with people who have a strong tonal sense or a chord progression they want to develop.

So trained musicians are harder to teach than novices?

Actually, the toughest people I've worked with have been journalists who've come to the course. I guess it's because they think editorially; they think of what they have to cut all the time, and that should be the last thing you're thinking of. You should just write everything and then cut it later.

But people who have quite a good grounding in music knowledge can be difficult as well; that's why some of the great lyricists are not really great musicians. I usually tell these people to get rid of the textbooks. I'm not a teacher in the sense I tell them to go home and study composition or counterpoint for a week and then come back. It's more about stimulating ideas, getting their nerve endings to work.

The interesting thing happens when I get them to do a "musical in a day"—sometimes two, if you get the right bunch of people. You do enough so that you can actually perform the musical at the end of the week and see whether it works or not. Last year, for example, we did *OJ: The Musical*. We each had different characters: I was Judge Ito. But the most stunning piece was "Nicole's Song," sung by her ghost in the courtroom.

How would someone develop the kind of awareness of life they need in order to write a narrative song?

They'd just need the right information. A famous writer took my course—she's got a career, so I don't want to mention her name—and she said, "I can't take all the information you've given me and put it into a three-minute song." So you limit yourself to what goes into your life between walking from this table to the door over there, which is ten feet away; that's the journey in your song. You adjust the way you take stuff in. I don't teach that; I just supply ideas and ways to work. Every individual makes his or her own decision. That's what's so great about songwriting.

What about the other side of the equation—the music? What do you tell people in your workshops who already have the words and want to find the song?

Sometimes I get them to make noises—the sounds of the words. I mispronounce words all the time in the way I write. The classic one for

me is that I say [speaking slowly] "spe-ci-fi-cally" rather than "specifickly," because I like the sound. That's my signature.

You don't pronounce it with the extra syllable in conversation.

No, but I say it that way to make it work with my melodic ideas. It's as simple as banging bits of wood together. The words have meaning, but they also have values as sound and rhythm. The sound creates the way we speak, a certain pattern—the musical pattern. I do whatever I can to break down that barrier and to make people accept the notion that they can make music from their words. Most people can make words, but they can't make music. I'd say eighty per-

People can make music from their words. It's as simple as banging bits of wood together.

cent of the people I work with don't have a musical idea when they start. People always ask me and most songwriters whether the music or the lyrics come first. I think that with most people who do both, the lyric would come first. On a great day, they'll come together.

How much writing are you doing these days?

I'm writing songs all the time, really. It's not until I have to sit down and come up with something that I intensify what I'm thinking about into a song. "To the Bone" [the title track to the latest Kinks album, on the Guardian label] is an example: I wrote five drafts of that song, in different ways, always using the title. One draft was about a dog, obviously. I wrote another one about my dentist. They're all finished songs, but the one that worked for me on the record was the relationship song, which was about a record being the soundtrack of someone's life: Now all he's left with is a soundtrack, and he's trapped in his gramophone because he keeps seeing his life over and over again.

When did you realize that you were going to be a songwriter?

As soon as I started playing the guitar. I learned the typical finger-picking stuff you learn in classical music, and I still write that way: My little finger goes on the soundboard. I started sitting in with people who were much better than I am, and I'd suss out the way they played. I'm not one of these guys who, when he sits in, does his stunning blues solo and then sits down. I'm more of a musical chameleon: I'll get up there and feel their style out for a couple of songs, and end up playing in their style. It never occurred to me until later on that I was actually composing as I played.

Because you were taking in their ideas as you performed.

Yeah. Writing songs came about because I was doing blues covers. I played Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf—then suddenly I had to start making pop records. "You Really Got Me" was one step in that direction. It was basically an R&B song in G. The breakthrough with it was when I took it up one step to A rather than to C. I have to say it was actually an accident: I wrote "You Really Got Me," "All Day and All of the Night," and a lot of the early songs with the Kinks on the piano, and I just missed the C. But the A sounded great, so I kept it in.

By the time you hit the V chord in that song, it functions differently than in a more traditional blues setting because you haven't heard the expected chord—the IV chord, on the C.

Do you know what the A major does? It says, "Oh, I know that this is about G-D-G-D; something is going to happen." If it'd gone to C instead, it'd say, "Oh, yeah, you're just moving it around to where it's supposed to go now." Of course, then it would have turned out to be [Roy Head's] "Treat Her Right" [laughs]. I can analyze that now, but I wasn't thinking at the time I wrote it that the D chord has that certain kind of tension because the A chord laid the groundwork for it. One of the secrets is to do this naturally, without analyzing why something works. That's why a lot of schooled musicians, unless they're very good, have such difficulty. It's the enthusiastic amateur—which I am, to a certain extent; I wouldn't still be doing this if I wasn't—who brings the energy into play.



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Ritchie Blackmore's

Mock Baroque

by mac randall

He's one of the classiest players in the hard rock school—clever, powerful, utterly distinctive. With Deep Purple and Rainbow, his playing has graced many a classic tune; it's also been the saving grace of quite a few borderline cases. All things considered, you'd think Ritchie Blackmore would be more in the public eye. Instead, he's kept a pretty low profile in the last few years, at least in English-speaking countries. He doesn't do a lot of interviews, and he hasn't toured much in the States, favoring Europe and Japan. The last Rainbow album, *Stranger In Us All* (Fuel), was recently released with little fanfare. As Blackmore admits, "The Rainbow type of music is going through a hard time at the moment. But I try not to let fashion dictate what I'm going to play, even if that means not selling out some hall or not selling a lot of records. I play what I like to play."

What Blackmore likes to play is an odd blend of hard rock grit and classical ornamentation. He's perhaps one of the least bluesy rock guitar players. "I have been heavily influenced by classical music," he says, "but also by blues too. I don't listen to much blues, but it's in there because I played that bluesy style for a long time. When I listen to music, it usu-

Finding the right blend of rock and the classics

ally has nothing to do with guitars. It's more singers or violins. Growing up, I listened a lot to Les Paul, Chet Atkins, Wes Montgomery, and especially Django Reinhardt—although I could never copy anything he played because it was too difficult. After a while, though, you stop listening to people so much, and you just pick up the guitar and play for yourself. A lot of guitarists tend to listen to guitar records and learn those runs. But I was always very bad at picking things up note for note. I would slow the record down for maybe 15 minutes, and if I hadn't learnt the solo by then,

I'd start to improvise my own version of it. That wasn't very good when I was playing in cover bands, but it kind of backfired in a good way—it gives you your own style because you can't copy somebody else's."

The classical underpinnings of Blackmore's style go back a long way, to his first year of guitar lessons. "I was classically trained in the beginning. We did things like 'Gavotte' by Bach. But I wanted to wail and get wah-wah sounds and they weren't teaching that, so I left that behind. I only came back to it about 10 years later. Although I don't profess to be good enough to be a classical player, I can do what you might call mock-Baroque—it sounds like I know what I'm doing."

Did the emphasis on reading and musty old composers in those early lessons tie your ambitions down or did those elements help your playing in the long run? "I think the

lessons helped me, especially technically. They taught me to use all my fingers. I learned from the beginning to use the small finger on my left hand in chromatic scales, rather than starting off playing blues scales, which emphasize the first and third fingers. I notice that a lot of players really favor two fingers of the fretting hand, but I started with all my fingers and it quickly became a habit to use them all, so I was lucky in that sense. As for the right hand, I play fingerstyle more than plectrum-style, and I always thought everybody did. I'm surprised that they don't, because to me it's second nature to use all the fingers on both hands." A positive vote for classical training. To keep all his fingers in proper gear, Blackmore works out with a special hand contraption, "one of those exercise things where you press each separate finger down. I don't know where it came from; I know I didn't buy it, but it found its way into

the house somehow."

All the fingers get into the action during Blackmore's solo on "Wolf to the Moon," the leadoff track of *Stranger In Us All*. The beginning of the solo was pre-composed, the ending improvised; the excerpt here is in the middle, and it exemplifies the Blackmore style. Jaunty eighth-note-triplet "mock-Baroque" lines trace out chord changes with heavy doses of chromaticism in the first four bars, while the rest of the example delves into luscious trills and hammer-ons, ending with a full-on bend that reminds us this is, after all, rock.

In keeping with his old-timey inclinations, Blackmore is currently working on an album that's partly rearrangements of traditional Renaissance-era songs, partly new material in the same vein. "I'm playing it predominantly on acoustic guitars—though there are a few electrics on it—and added instru-

ments like crumhorns and sackbuts. It doesn't really have a label as yet. I don't think too many people would approach it normally, as it's practically guaranteed not to sell. But it's something I've been wanting to do for a long time. Most of the material was put together sitting around the house with an acoustic. Rather than going into the studio and having to come up with a heavy riff, it's a pleasure to just sit down and play this way."

And yes, he does still make sure to practise every day. "It's generally about an hour a day, practicing various exercises and scales, and I'm usually watching television as I'm playing. It's strange how I can watch television and play something I think is quite good, and when I go to record it, it becomes very awkward because I'm concentrating 100 percent. Maybe I should bring a television into the studio."

M

With Swing Feel (♩ = ♩♩♩)

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Fmaj7 Am/E Am

full

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The first system includes a dynamic marking of 'ff' and a triplet of eighth notes. The second system continues the melodic line with triplet markings. The third system concludes with a 'full' bend instruction. Below the treble staff, a six-line guitar tablature provides fret numbers for each string. Chord changes are indicated by letters above the staff: N.C., (Gm), (Gm/Bb), (A), (A/C#), (Dm), (Dm/F), (E), (E/G#), Am, Am/G, Fmaj7, Am/E, and Am.

"Wolf to the Moon" by R. Blackmore, D. White, and C. Night; copyright: 1996 Weeya Music/G.A.W.D. Music/Silver Snow Songs (ASCAP).



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James Hetfield, Kirk Hammett, Lars Ulrich, and Jason Newsted Travel the Distance



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Kirk Hammett takes another draw on his coney island dog-sized cigar as he ponders what he's enjoying most about Metallica's leap to megastardom. Houses with kidney-shaped pools? All the guitars he could ever want? Closets full of the *mean streets* pimpwear he's taken to sporting? The gorgeous models who flocked to last night's show in Milan? ☞ Hammett exhales another of the clouds that have turned the van in which we're speeding through the Italian countryside into a smokehouse. "It's having our own jet," he says. ☞ "Yeah," I offer. "It must be great to fly at your own pace, not have to deal with the airlines. . . ." ☞ "Sah," he replies. "What's really cool is that we can stand up and drink when we're landing and taking off." ☞ Ah, thank you, Beavis. And Butt-head, too. As it happened, MTV's bastard sons were the second and third guys I saw after lurching from a cab at the Milan Forum the day before. The first guy was wearing a knock-off Beavis and Butt-head t-shirt; the dysfunctional duo's heads were dropped in full bang as they wore *their* Metallica shirts. A felliniesque double bootleg—ripping off not only the band's merchandising but MTV's as well. ☞ The Forum in Milan is a big ugly concrete blister in the hot October afternoon sun.

BY TED DROZDOWSKI PHOTOGRAPHS NEILS VAN IPEREN

But the crowd for the sold-out show wants in bad. They're already queued, three hours before showtime, some two hundred across and fifty feet deep. Somewhere a boom box blasts "exit light/enter night/take my hand/off to Neverneverland" over that familiar one-chord riff. It's the same scene that's played at every arena from Worcester, Massachusetts, to Warsaw, Poland—fans wearing their Metallica shirts like flags, the occasional whiff of drifting pot, sneakers, jeans, boots, and leather. Girls with long, straight hair; guys with beards that won't quite grow in.

Only the proscuitto and the weak beer remind me I'm in Italy. Signs for Coke and banks and radio stations dot the hall. A tall, modelesque woman with red hair and an American-flag midriff blouse capers by. People start pooling on the floor, flowing aimlessly like sticks in a stream. Finally, Corrosion of Conformity take the stage, their Marshalls braying like Japanese movie monsters over a machine-gun kick drum. Unfortunately, the sound's terrible. But



LARS ULRICH DRUMS DOWN

Taking a break from their seven-year touring and recording streak, *gorilla* drummer Ulrich has a chance to rethink his mega-whopping approach and the (gobal) like proportions of his drum rig.

"The big turnaround for me actually started on the *And Justice for All* tour, when the change

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with all these different time signatures became an exercise in trying not to fuck up," he recounts. "And that took a lot of the spark out of the live gigs. That's when I became interested in pulling the drums out of the front-line and letting the guitarists do the talking; that approach has given me more control as a player than I had when I was busier behind the kit. When we did the *zoo* session, we cut six songs, and I played to a click track for every one; that took me above what I was playing on the 'black album.' When I listen to tapes from the 'black album' tour, even though we were playing in a new, stripped style, the tempos still sound pretty rampart to me in places."

Ulrich applied the same restraint to his cymbal technique. "I wanted to listen to the song 'nonnie' on the radio this morning. I don't even hit the cymbal on the drumbeat; I don't hit it on the upbeat; I don't accent the fucking change in the guitar riff at all! For me, I just had to hear that again because for years I was so anal about nailing the transitions with accents, when I heard it—I didn't hear it—on the record, I thought, 'wow! that flowed really nicely.'"

But Ulrich's too much a lover of the term "trash" that cymbals produce under sustained hits to totally swear off his old ways, just cue your copy of *road* up to the beginning of "The House Jack Built." "I thought that was really beautiful, that shimmering that spreads right across the stereo spectrum. Now I'm actually playing a ride cym-

bal live for the first time in three or four years. Before that, when I wanted variation from the hi-hat, instead of going to a ride cymbal I would go to the crash and play half-time.

"I like cymbals that sizzle," he says. "Bright cymbals announce their presence with a big 'fuck you!' here I am' sort of thing. I always use zildjians, to me, zildjian and cymbals are like alcohol and soft tissues." In the studio, Ulrich prefers AS; live it's Zildjians.

While he hasn't cut back the number of cymbals in his live rig, Ulrich has pecked a few toms out of his setup and downsized literally every drum save for his snare. "During one year off, I went to Seattle and played with my friend Joey Covelli in Alice in Chains' rehearsal room. I played on [Alice drummer] Sean Kinney's kit, and it was a lot smaller than I was used to. At first I didn't like it, but we jammed for two or three days, and by the end I was seriously into it. I felt I could sit more on top of the kit and I was more in control. And the tuning was a lot easier than it was for my monster heavy metal drums from hell. I also became less interested in big soil pedal fills and more selective with fills, accents, and even cymbal hits.

"The one thing I wouldn't change is my snare," Ulrich states. "I really like the attack and the sound of a rumble snare drum called the 'hell cats.' They have depth and top and crispness. I use them in the studio, on the road. I sleep with it. I have it in the shower with me."



Chad Smith
Chad Smith

Snare CS Coated w/Black Dot/Ambassador Snare
Bass Powerstroke 3 Clear/Ambassador Smooth White
Toms Emperor Clear/Ambassador Clear

Steve Smith
Steve Smith

Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Snare
Ambassador Clear/Ebony
Ambassador Clear/Ambassador Clear

Marvin "Smitty" Smith
Marvin "Smitty" Smith

Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Snare
Powerstroke 3 Clear/Ebony
Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Clear

when Metallica take the stage, pummeling the flying monkeys' theme song from *The Wizard of Oz* out of their instruments, the aural details are as crisp as the look of their tight-shrunk jeans.

The colors of the day are black-on-black-on-black. So's the music, but in a beautiful way. This show, and the gig I see the next night in Torino, rank among the best arena rock concerts I've attended. Of the dozen or so Metallica performances I've seen since *Kill 'Em All* made me feel like I'd been force-fed an alien embryo in '83, these seem their most energized and vital, from an "Ain't My Bitch" that's all piss, venom, and raw power, through nearly two-and-a-half hours of postmodern heavy metal thunder. The set list embraces the old days of downstroked guitar fury and crazy quilts of chord changes, provoking the crowd into the kind of singalong on "Master of Puppets" you'd join in Cleveland—save for the Italian-accented English. And it whips along through the violently pacifist "One" to James Hetfield's chorus-drenched guitar intro to "Enter Sandman," the tune that made them nearly as big as Neil Diamond.

For *Load*'s "King Nothing," Jason Newsted strides to the rim of the stage, watering the guys in front with perspiration as he kicks off its moaning riff. It's all great playing, from Kirk's sweetly screaming slide guitar to Lars Ulrich's newly restrained power hitting to Jason's fat textural blasts and James' vinegar-sweetened-with-honeyed-melody vocals. Metallica touch all the bases and run straight over home, performing at an intensity more akin to the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion than any of their metal contemporaries.

After the show, down the cinderblock hall at the back of the Forum, fans are herded into a room for a meet 'n' greet. James and Kirk pose for pictures with members of Metallica Italia, their local fan club, and sign some LP-sized flats of the *Load* cover. Jason is the last Metallican to leave the Forum, but as we step outside—two hours after the last bellowing chord was struck—fifty or so fans are still waiting for him along the gate. He throws his travel bag in the back of a waiting Benz and strides to meet them, smiling and holding out his

arms. He shakes every hand, signs every autograph. "He seems proud to have such ardent fans, but hell, after fifteen years of knuckle-busting roadwork and groundbreaking recordings, Metallica's earned 'em.

"This is the most songs we've ever played on a tour," Lars observes. "We're hitting 21, 22 songs. We've tried to get away from the ten-minute guitar, bass, and drum solos; we realized they were destroying our momentum. The only reason those breaks were put in was so the rest of us could sit and rest for a few minutes. I think now we've grown a little older and the partying is subsiding slightly, just slightly, so



we're finding we can play longer and a little more intensely.

"Plus, when we were planning this tour, we realized it was the first time we were going to be playing indoors in three-and-a-half years. After doing stadiums and sheds and amphitheaters, one of my main hard-ons is being indoors again, where the energy and spectacle and vibe is contained. The loudness of the audience, the interplay—it's really cool."

So is Metallica's new stage setup, which American audiences will see in late winter. It's a huge, steel, raised figure-eight set in the center of the halls they play. The lighting is more sophisticated than past tours, and the pyro effects, for which the band's become notorious, are more, um...fiery, including the most flipped-out stunt I've ever seen a band pull off onstage. I'm loath to give it away, so let's just say it sure appears that if something went wrong, someone could get killed.

James half-jokes that the new production is so elaborate "if we break even on this tour, we're happy. But we want to put our money back into the band for things like this. It's worth it, because it's pretty fucking cool." So cool, and well-planned, that except for Lars, who's manacled to a drum kit, the players are free to rove any-

where on the immense stage and still hear their instruments "loud as fuck," as James puts it. "There are monitors everywhere, and our monitor guy has 24 mixes. He figured out that gives him something like 2,000 possible combinations for what's in the monitors, depending on where each of us is standing."

Just where Metallica stands in the current rock pantheon became an issue last summer when they were invited to headline Lollapalooza. The indie-rock aesthetics police were pissed. They charged Lollapalooza organizers with abandoning their alternative roots for metal's middle-brow appeal. But for some old-line Metallica fans, Lollapalooza also marked the band's final abandonment of hard-edged credibility—an erosion that began with Metallica's first video (for ...*And Justice for All*'s anti-war epic "One"), continued through the jettisoning of their early trademark air-hammer,

all-downstroke guitar rhythms on the "Black Album," up to the inclusion of a bona-fide country tune, "Mama Said," on *Load*. For such fans, Metallica's decision to embrace pop songwriting values like hooks and melodies and hits—hell, they cut their hair, too—suggested a treasonous embrace of mainstream tastes.

A more generous view might credit Metallica as a classic alt-rock success story. Combining punk energy and attitude with the then-new wave of British heavy metal (bands like Tygers of Pang Tang, Angel Witch, Mötörhead) and an ear toward the clangor of Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*, Metallica hit early-Eighties rock like a barium enema—something hardly anybody wanted but which nonetheless re-illuminated hard rock's guts and soul. As with fellow Eighties-bred superstars R.E.M., the rest was hard work and musical growth. These days, R.E.M. can rock out or sculpt ballads with generous melodies. So can Metallica.

And these days, explosive industrial outfits like Nine Inch Nails owe Metallica an unacknowledged debt for making sonic savagery a part of modern life's soundtrack. Says Kirk, who digs the sounds of Fear Factory and Ministry as much as he does John Lee Hooker's boogie, "Metallica was

a foray into very extreme heaviness. I think a lot of musicians didn't know that those levels of extremity could be reached until we came out. We opened up a realm of possibility with our first three albums. Even for the grunge thing: I remember Kurt Cobain saying *Ride the Lightning* was one of his favorite albums because it 'wasn't stupid.' Those were his words.

"To me, our music is very urban sound-

ing. I agree there's an industrial vibe. It's grim, based in reality. Our music mirrors modern life as much as Motown's mirrored the romance of falling in love. It says, 'You're being manipulated, man, by the big corporations, by the media. It's just that nobody's sorted it out yet.' And it's getting weirder, still, with things like the Internet. It's supposed to be the ultimate means of communication, yet you're sitting alone in

front of a computer 'talking' to someone else. It's isolation being sold as some sort of extroversion. Weird shit."

Indeed. But if the guys in Metallica have such a dire worldview, why do they look so happy? After tensions brought about by overwork, and inflexibility on the part of the group's hard-nosed founders Lars and James, the band members seem to be having fun again—exploring new sounds,



JASON NEWSTED HITS NEW LOWS

When Jason Newsted replaced Metallica's original bassist Cliff Burton in 1986, he found himself part of an ensemble with the unusual practice of structuring its rhythms around James Hetfield's guitar changes and Lars Ulrich's drums. In most rock bands, an absolutely symbiotic relationship between bass and drums is a given. But Metallica's always played by its own rules, to the extent that Ulrich didn't need to hear Newsted's bass at all to pull off a concert flawlessly.

That's changed with *Load*, where Newsted experimented more with sonics and technique in the studio. His bass even takes the lead on the riveting "King Nothing." "As opposed to the rigidity of many of our songs in the past, this time James wrote songs that gave way for me to play some groovin' bass lines," says Newsted. "Lars and James

also gave me the space physically by leaving the studio, which would have never happened before. Right away we were able to start experimenting more with amplifiers and speakers."

The basic bass sounds on the album were made via a collection of amps, mixed in various combinations: Ampeg SVT heads, Marshall guitar cabinets, Boogie heads, and Fender 400-watt bass bins with French speakers, plus a little Gibson amp that didn't live through the sessions. "There was a lot of experimentation with analog pedals, old stuff. I always play with a mu-tron, which can be a cool, heavy thing. It doesn't have to yield that 'boiny' Boatsy Collins kind of sound. It can also have some serious meat—a lot of character.

"I had different pedals and all those amps at the same time, in three or four different rooms in the studio. In one room, we had those big 18s just booming the fuck out of it. And we had mics up in the corners, at ten feet away, at four feet away, and at two inches away. And we could mix those in different combinations. Bob Rock is a genius at that kind of stuff." For a taste of the power all that overdriven wattage provided, plus the mu-tron pedal juiced to its nastiest level, check out Newsted's ultra-distortion on "The House Jack Built."

To get the ultra-lows that have thrashed through Metallica's last two studio albums, Newsted eschews five- or six-string basses in favor of an unconventional setup on his favored '82 Spectre. "I put a .128 on top, a .115 in the second position, and take off the little string and tune the bass like a five-string, with a low B. The bridge has to be set up differently for consistency, but it does offer quite a different sound." Newsted's gone the five-string route, but hasn't found anything that's felt right. For that matter, in his quest for sounds, perfect playability, and relief for his neck, aching from years of wearing a heavy Fender p-bass around it while hanging his head, he's tried just about everything off the top shelf. "Right now I'm using all Sadowskys on the road. I've got seven or eight of them, and they're holding up.

"I've had a lot of problems with high-dollar basses. As far as being able to take the sweat, the time and the temperature changes, the serious workout that instruments get from heavy gigs and weather, those high-end basses can't hang. The electronics freak out. They're also usually very heavy instruments. I could play them when I was 15, but that's not cool anymore."

In the studio, Newsted used an array of axes, including a Music Man and a Zon, and his trusty old Fender Precision Bass collection: a '56, '58, and '59. "If Stevie Nicks or Vaughan played bass, that '59 would be his bass," he says. "It's just bear to shit, but it's like butter."

writing new kinds of songs, sharing a more relaxed camaraderie. Even Hetfield, who earned his reputation as the most stoic Metallica, seems relatively cheerful—witty, good-natured, enthusiastic.

They're also at a creative peak. Coming off *Metallica*, the so-called "Black Album" that sold more than nine million copies in the U.S. alone, they've put together a record that's got more melodies, more hooks, and more imagination than anything they've created in the past. *Load* debuted at number one on *Billboard's* chart last June, selling 680,000 copies in its first week. And it's hung around the top 40 ever since.

In other words, everyone in the band is also rich—rich enough to afford, and need, bodyguards on the road. No doubt some of that money is the result of Metallica's new contract with Elektra, following a 1994 lawsuit against the label. In September of that year, the band had sued to be released from its deal, invoking California Labor Code 2855, which prohibits personal service contracts from being enforced for more than seven years.

That suit came in the wake of a shakeup at the label which resulted in the resignation of Elektra's then-chairman Bob Krasnow. Before Krasnow's departure, he and Metallica had allegedly worked out a joint venture relationship that waived album advances in exchange for a higher percentage of the profits than the 14% royalty rate Metallica had signed for ten years earlier. At the time of the suit's filing, Metallica's attorney Jody Graham Dunitz told *Billboard* reporter Melinda Newman that Warner Music Group chairman and CEO Robert Morgado nixed the joint venture after Krasnow left, then tried to renegotiate the old contract at a higher royalty rate. Metallica balked, feeling, Dunitz said, that the band "had a right to find its value in the marketplace."

Metallica eventually settled out of court, and the cash value of the new agreement remains a well-kept secret. Band members say they can't discuss it as part of the terms of the settlement. But label insiders say that Metallica now own their own masters, and that the band and Elektra

share record and video production expenses 50/50 while receiving a similar percent of the profits.

As Elektra's only real superstar rock act, Metallica was in an excellent position to bargain. The band's back catalog alone is a goldmine. *Metallica* has been on the Top 200 Albums charts since its debut, and when *Load* was released, 1988's *...And Justice for All*, '84's *Ride the Lightning*, and '86's *Master of Puppets* all moved into *Billboard's* Top Pop Catalog Albums chart, at four, six, and seven, respectively.

"We've got a very cool deal that's very, very different from most other deals," Ulrich acknowledges. "But, obviously, we've sold 35, 40 million records worldwide, so we're pretty set."



As it happened, though, the band's most recent rebirth followed a near-collapse after the "Black Album" became a mega-hit. Lars explains: "As the record went along, we kept touring and touring, and things kept getting bigger. There were more and more opportunities to play for more and more people, and we thought we might never have the chance to do it again at that level—getting invited to Eastern Bloc countries and out to the Pacific Rim. 'How do you know if a place like Singapore is going to be willing to let us into their country four years from now? We gotta go.' That was the attitude.

"I wouldn't exactly say I was hungry or driven, but I wanted to cram this thing down everybody's throat as much as I could. Just play everywhere! I was the one who really pushed. And I was very stressed out about it. Finally, after touring for a couple years, our manager came to us and said, 'Do you guys want to do another European leg in stadiums?' I said, 'Yeah, we gotta do this.' But James said, 'No, I'm gonna fuck up my voice.'

"We had started really pushing the whole touring thing relentlessly when we were, like, 26. And when the tour behind

the 'Black Album' ended, we were looking at 30. I realized in the next year that other things besides the band were important to me. I think I became less anal in terms of how much we want to push ourselves, work-wise. We'd just had a level of success that was unbelievable—how much was left to prove on that score? I could relax and let go a little bit.

"But there's still a lot of places to go tour," he adds. "Antarctica, the prairies of Central Africa, the swamps of the Amazon..."

Following the "Black Album" tour, the band members scattered. Lars threw himself into his scuba diving; James spent time on his ranch and hunted. Jason built a home studio and jammed with other players. "I tried to play different kinds of music with different kinds of people, different ages, from different walks of life—jazz players, dub guys, other metal dudes," he says. "That started all the experimenting that came on this album.

"The whole reason I played with outside musicians was so I can be the best bass player possible for the songs James comes up with. I've learned a lot from recording bands in my own studio and from being in the big studio with [producer] Bob Rock, because he teaches you stuff without knowing it. You just soak so much up, because he just knows so much about the technology and what needs to take place. And I learned a lot from playing with all kinds of other musicians—things I would have otherwise not been able to bring back into the studio."

For Kirk, staying off the road allowed him to explore the textural guitar playing he'd become fascinated with listening to recordings by the likes of Robert Fripp and Adrian Belew, and to get back into the blues. He became friends with fellow Bay Area resident Carlos Santana and sat in with him at a benefit for the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences school outreach program. "John Lee Hooker was there, and Buddy Guy, Vernon Reid, Wayne Shorter, Al Hendrix... But John Lee Hooker did not understand my piercing at all," he adds with a smile. "He just kept staring at it. When I met him, he said, 'What's this trinket in your lip?'"



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STRUNG OUT: HAMMETT & HETFIELD FIND A FRESH GUITAR APPROACH

Let's get some weird shit going," was James Hetfield's rallying cry when he and Kirk Hammett found themselves back in the studio to record the guitars for *Load*, it was a call Hammett was happy to take. "I was tired of the traditional approach," he explains, "and I became interested in the idea of coming up with a really cool sound that was more a part of the song than a guitar solo."

"And the means didn't matter," he continues. "A good example is the first break in 'The House Jack Built.' I recorded that at my home studio, then covered it with [bigdesign] pro tools, and added tremolo and weird flange. We put it on CD at my studio, and Bob Rock flew it in when it came time to track that part of the song. I think having a textural part like that, instead of your traditional guitar solo, just opens the songs up more."

Hammett says there are some things on *Load* that were a hard sell to his bandmates. Like the cloud of mosquitoes that's buzzing over the opening riff in "King Nothing." "That's a drone I came up with when I heard that intro," Hammett relates. "That's the E string on the 14th fret, and I just bend it up to an E and simultaneously pluck the open E string, with a flange and some auto-panning on that. I played it on my Parker fly guitar. I think it definitely establishes a mood right off." So does the organ-like guitar sound, somewhat like the tone of Hendrix's stratocaster on "Poli Garp," that appears on "Ableeding Me" and "Cure."

"That's the [Roland] VG-8," says Hammett. On "Cure," it's way down in the mix, but it fortens up the chorus so much. But you don't want to just let the cutting-edge technology stand by itself. You get great results when you bridge the gap between digital and analog by doing things like setting up a sound with the VG-8 and slapping an old Maestro

fuzzbox on it."

Although Metallica first used slide guitar in sparse brushstrokes on the "Black Album," it's a staple of *Load*'s six-string palette. Hetfield plays slide with a wah-wah on "Mama Said," and Hammett slings steel on "Ain't My Bitch," "Bleeding Me," "The Outlaw Torn," and "Poor Twisted Me." Usually, he favors his old Gibson ES-335 or a Les Paul Junior for his slide playing. And there's so much slide on *Load* that now you'll also catch him with his finger in a tube on stage. "On 'Ain't My Bitch,' that's slide with an old MXR phase 100—a total cop of Jimmy Page's sound on 'In My Time of Dying,'" Hammett allows. "I was standing in the studio cutting that solo, and Bob Rock and I looked at each other and said, 'This is not right for some reason.' I suggested breaking it up by doing some riffing with slide here and there, like Duane Allman. Bob said, 'ehhhh, do slides through the whole thing.' And it was one of those little epiphanies that happen in the studio sometimes."

Hammett is especially proud of his slide in the middle of the solo on "Outlaw Torn," which combines his interest in blues tradition with his newfound thirst for sonic sculpting. "I grabbed a slide and held it at a 45-degree angle so it's not really at the proper intonation—more like subtones or micro-tones—and slid it down the neck. The sound's real foreign. I've seen guitar magazines try to write that out in tab, and when they come to that part, there's a note that it's some weird outboard effect. But it's not."

If there's a little more bite in some of *Load*'s leads, that's in part because of creative use of wah-wah pedals by both Hammett and Hetfield. "Kirk and I both love wah," says Hetfield. "Sometimes I'll just kind of halfway cock it down to get a little honk going on the guitar's signal. In 'Mama Said,' I do these little digs between the phrases, kind of Jimmy Page-y clean wah, and it was me playing a Telecaster with a [parsons-white] B-bender and Bob working the wah in



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the studio, we did it in one take, and it fit perfectly, it's my favorite of the guitar parts I played on the record, that tone is really cool."

Hetfield also used a talk box, a device made famous by Peter Dinklage and more recently revived by Alice in Chains's Jerry Cantrell. "I used that to double the vocals and get some huge sickness going on in the background," says Hetfield. Unfortunately, the device proved too unstable for road use. "On this record, the boundaries between our guitar playing really bled into each other," Hetfield says. "We both experimented with sounds—lots of effects and stompbox doodads. I played some u-3 stuff here and there, didn't mean the slide guy, which frustrates me, and I did all the u-bender stuff, but the solo

and rhythm parts really blurred, if he had the vibe for something, he did it, if I had the vibe, it was mine."

Hammett continues: "Bob Rock would sit down with James and me to make sure that we didn't just double our rhythm guitar parts, we're always playing different things, even if we're both playing rhythm, that makes the songs more full, I guess I'm trying to be more tasteful and melodic," he says. "It's weird, because all these guitar magazines used to say, 'Kirk Hammett's fast, but melodic,' when this album came out, a lot of them said, 'Kirk Hammett's lost his frenzied, spazzed-out solos for a more bluesy kind of sound,' they can't really make up their mind."

Kirk also found time to make tapes, full of licks and riffs and changes and solo lines and sounds: a grab bag of ideas he could bring to the studio sessions for *Load*. Historically, Metallica's recordings have pretty much been the Ulrich and Hetfield show. Typically, they'd go into the studio weeks before Newsted and Hammett, setting the tempos, laying down the drum parts, cutting the rhythm guitar tracks, even some guitar solos and lead lines. Working with producer Bob Rock, of Bon Jovi fame, on the *Metallica* sessions changed that a bit; the group sounded less like a monolith and more like a band.

When Metallica reconvened for *Load* in May '95 at the Plant Studios in Sausalito, California, Kirk and Jason were creatively stoked by their outside work, while Lars and James were more relaxed. "I went on a hunting trip for a few weeks, and when I came back there was this tape," James explains. "They said, 'We've been doing some things. Kirk played rhythm guitar.' I was like, 'What the fuck?' I listened, and it was cool.

"So the whole studio thing changed. We found this new looseness. After the songs were coming together, we'd just let Jason and Bob go into a room and fiddle, and they'd come up with four or five different bass tracks. And we'd listen to them and pick the winner. The songs definitely wrote themselves. The parts came right together, or we'd have some changes and we'd jam on them, and it wouldn't quite click until somebody came up with a new part of the arrangement, or a vocal thing, or a tempo change—and suddenly it all fit.

"The idea that everybody's writing is a little bit of a misconception," Hetfield

says, "because Lars and I really sift through all the stuff, and it gets thumbs down or thumbs up from us. But we'll give every riff a chance. Kirk had a lot of good riffs on tape for this album. [Hammett has seven co-writing credits on *Load*.] And Lars and I would take one of those riffs and jam on it, and hammer it, until it made sense in a song. Like the riffs from 'Ronnie.' One's Kirk's and one's mine. We've got two guitar players; we finally decided it should sound like we've got two guitar players."

"Playing rhythm guitar and getting more involved with this album was much healthier and very inspiring," Hammett adds. "In the past, I was preoccupied with my solos. I'd be sitting in a corner practicing while the songs were going down. This time I contributed musical ideas as well, and got involved in textures and guitar edits and where the mixes were going. I wish we'd started doing this long ago."

The creative atmosphere grew to the point where it led James to break new turf in his vocal performances. "For the 'Black Album' sessions, Bob tried to get me to ad lib more vocal parts, between phrases, that kind of thing," he says. "But I was rigid; I just could not do it. This time he couldn't shut me up. We had old Green Bullet mics, and a lot of times I had a Green Bullet in one hand and a vocal mic in another, and I was just running around the studio, throwing the mics around and jumping off the mixing desk. It was fun! When the Bullet sounded too distorted, we'd just mix up more of the other mike."

Hetfield also credits Rock with turning him on to vocal melodies—the ingredient that, along with monster riffs, has made

Load work for mainstream radio. "I just knew that the vocals were gonna make or break some of these songs, because a lot of them are so simple," he says. "There's not a lot of guitar stuff to keep your attention, so something has to take it to the next level, and most of the time that's going to be the vocal."

The creative atmosphere of the session was so enervating that Hetfield and company ended up writing and recording nearly thirty songs during a nine-month stretch. Some seventeen or eighteen remain uncompleted, but should be ready for release as a new Metallica album later this year. "But this isn't the shit we had left over," Lars insists. "These are solid songs. That never happened before. Mostly, the reason a song got on *Load* instead of the record that's coming next is that the lyrics were completed."

Hetfield adds that the prospect of writing nearly thirty sets of lyrics for the new songs was intimidating. Letting some of them sit a while took pressure off, and let him concentrate on guitar and vocals—especially vocals. "What I really wanted was to get a little more character into them," he says. "They might not always be in key or in time, but they've got feel. I think that came from listening to other guys I dig, especially Tom Waits. Sometimes it sounds like he just pushes 'record' and goes, 'Good enough.' Doing all that stuff was a radical change for me."

For musicians who are used to free collaboration in a group environment, Hetfield's loosening of Metallica's creative reins might not seem like such a big deal. But it's worth understanding that James has been on his own since he moved out of his

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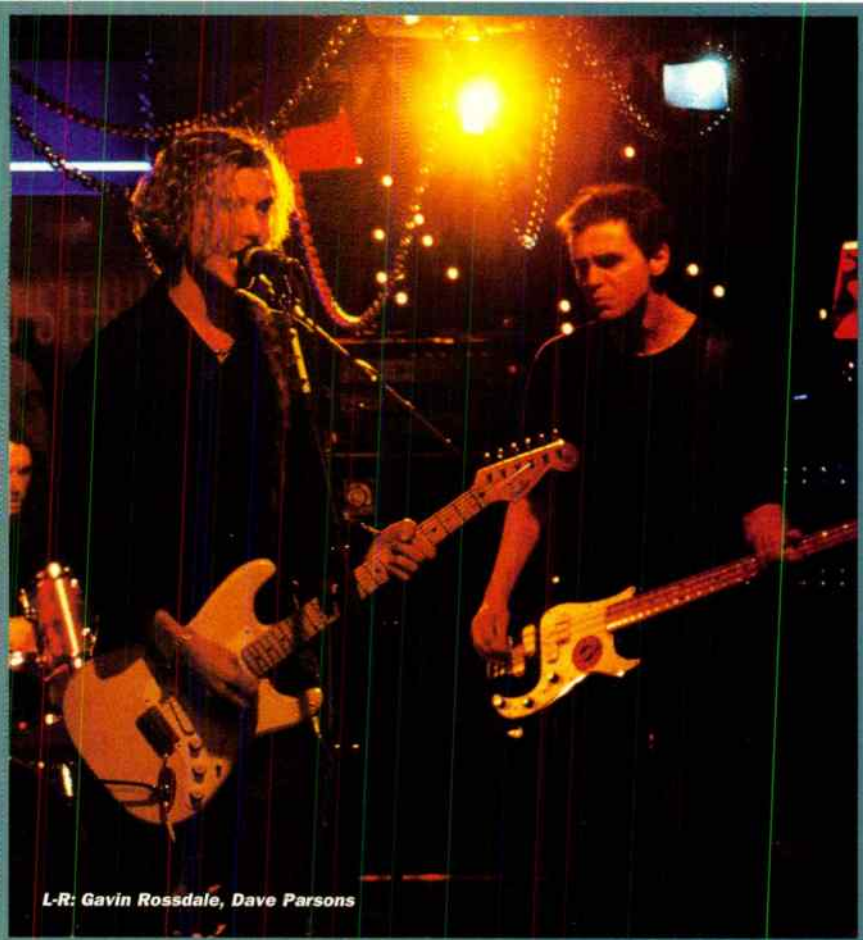
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what the racks that rock: what six bands players play use to stage that monster sound.

bush

Nigel Pulsford, the lead guitarist for Bush, is on the phone from his home in London, and he sounds awful glad to be there. No wonder. Two hundred and fifty shows in approximately eighteen months isn't a schedule to sniff at. The last month alone has included a three-week jaunt through the Far East—including Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Japan—and a quick visit to the States for appearances on *Howard Stern* and *Saturday Night Live* to promote the band's second album *Razorblade Suitcase* (Trauma/Interscope). "We're all fucked at this point, basically," Pulsford admits with a laugh.

Of course, during the course of this long past couple of years, this relatively young band has learned a lot about live performing. "You can't have too many preconceptions," Nigel says, "and you've got to be ready for anything." That's why he's got both a complicated switching system for his logic-challenging amp and effect setup (built by Bob Bradshaw of Custom Audio Electronics), and a simpler backup in case of emergency. "It's just a pedalboard with some fuzzboxes going right into the amp if the Bradshaw doesn't work. That's happened a couple of times, and it reminds me that it's actually cool to do it that way. You get bulldozed into having all this gear, but the old-fashioned way still works." Of



L-R: Gavin Rossdale, Dave Parsons

Kevin Mazur

the several distortion units he employs in his quest for maximum crunchiness, Pulsford singles out for praise the Fulltone 69 and the Bixsonic Expandora. As for the four-amp rig he's been taking on the road all the while, Pulsford is making a change: from a recent-vintage Fender Twin Reverb

to a new Mesa/Boogie Heartbreaker. "I just got it, and I used it for the first time on the radio in New York. Its clean tone is great."

Hopefully, one thing won't be changing soon: Bush's live sound team, led by Brian Ruggles. "You've got to have

friends on the road,” Pulsford says, “people who know what sounds you’re trying to achieve. The people in charge of the P.A. hold so much power over you, because they can hear what’s going on and you can’t. And we can play pretty loud, so it’s important to keep it understandable too. We’ve been lucky to have a great crew right from the start.”

Even so, it’s taken a while for Nigel to get used to some of that crew’s duties—changing strings, for instance. “For a long time, I wouldn’t let anyone else change my strings, because I thought no one else could do it right. I had to do it myself, and I had rules about it. I’d never change them before a soundcheck, for one. I finally realized that it was superstition. Well, mostly superstition—I never used to break strings, and now that the tech’s started putting them on, I notice they do break occasionally.”

In January, Bush starts rehearsals for the next proper tour, beginning in England and hitting America in March.

Bush

Gavin Rossdale. *Guitars:* Fender Stratocasters and Jazzmasters. *Amps:* Three Mesa/Boogie Trem-O-Verbs, two 4x12 Mesa/Boogie cabinets. *Effects:* two Bixsonic Expandoras, Mu-Tron pitch shifter. *Strings:* Ernie Ball, .010 to .046. *Vocal Mic:* Shure Beta 58. **Nigel Pulsford.** *Guitars:* Four Fender Stratocasters (one ‘62 and three ‘89s), 1958 Gibson Les Paul Junior. *Amplification:* Fender Princeton, Mesa/Boogie Heartbreaker, Trem-O-Verb, and Blue Angel, through Mesa/Boogie 2-90 power amp into three Mesa/Boogie 4x12 cabinets. *Effects:* Fulltone

69 and DejaVibe, Boss delay, pitch shifter, and Turbo Overdrive, Prescription Electronics Yardbox and Experience, Bixsonic Expandora, TC Electronic M2000, CAE Super Tremolo, Mu-Tron flanger and octave pedals, Morley wah/volume pedal. *Switching System:* Custom Audio Electronics RSB. *Strings:* Ernie Ball, .010 to .046. **Dave Parsons.** *Bass:* Fender Precision. *Amplification:* Two ‘70s Ampeg SVTs into two SVT cabinets. *Strings:* Ernie Ball. **Robin Goodridge.** *Drums:* DW. *Cymbals:* Zildjian. *Heads:* Remo. *Sticks:* Vic Firth. *Stage Mics:* Shure 451s for amps, Shure SM57s and AKG C414s for drums, Cambridge Audio for cabinets.

Among the things they’re looking into are carpeting to cut down the stage volume (“We can’t go deaf,” Pulsford acknowledges, “but we can’t wear earplugs either—we’ve tried and it just sounds like you’re in another room”) and possibly bringing along a string section for at least a few dates. “We’re thinking of asking the Rachel’s, who are a great

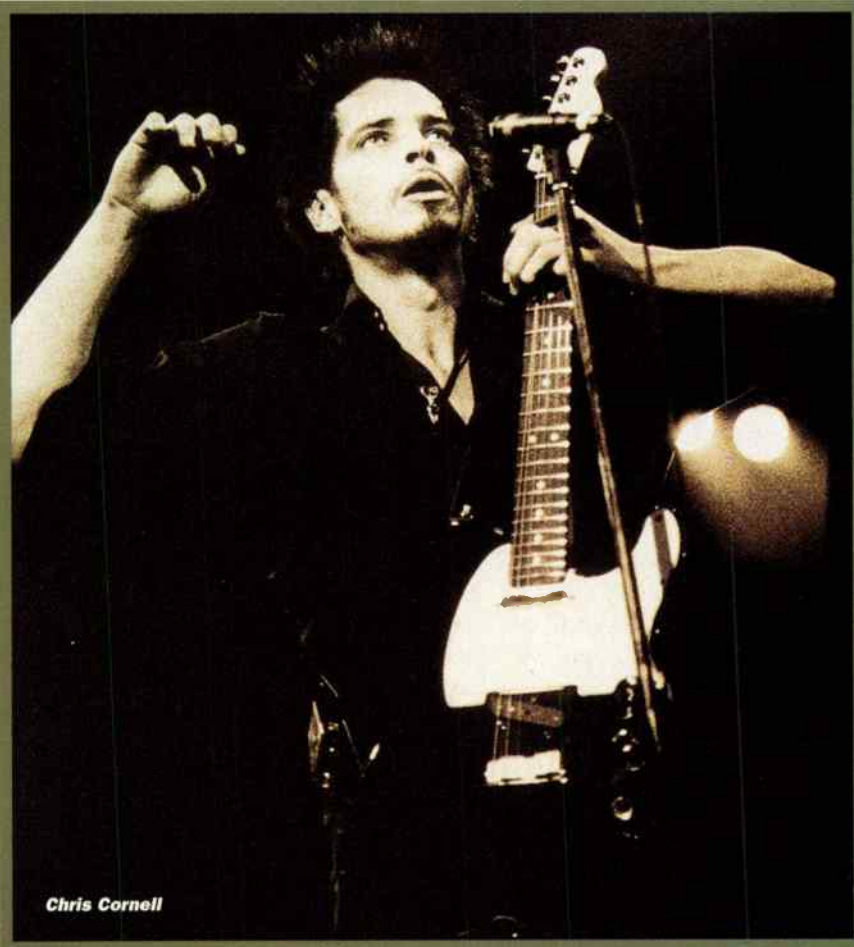
band,” Nigel reveals. “But honestly, I’m not as interested in doing it as I was. We’ve done it before, and since *MTV Unplugged* came along, everyone seems to have decided they’d like to have a quartet playing with them. But we’ll see. We’re certainly not getting a keyboard player, I’ll tell you that much.”

—Mac Randall

sound-garden

Truth be told, the Soundgarden team has had to plan for two tours this past year. After romping around the U.S. with the Lollapalooza folks, they had to load the buses again for their own headlining world tour. While each was a totally different beast, what made it easy, says soundman Mark Naficy, is that the band relies on the natural sound of their instruments and, believe it or not, real musical ability. “The band wants a real straightforward rock show,” he says simply.

Which, as drummer Matt Cameron explains, is the band’s live philosophy. “We try to keep it wide open and anything-can-happen,” he says from Seattle days before the band left for a European tour. “We don’t try to perform exact note-for-note renditions of our recorded versions of the songs. We like to bash it out a little bit more, I guess, and not really worry about perfection. That’s what the studio is good for, getting the perfect performance.”



Chris Cornell

Neils Van Iperen

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World Radio History

Soundgarden

Chris Cornell. *Guitars:* 1996 Fender American Standard Telecaster, mid-Seventies Gibson Les Paul Deluxe. *Amplification:* Marshall JMP-1. *Cabinets:* Mesa/Boogie 4x12 Rectifiers. *Rack:* Two each of the following: JL Cooper MSB Rev II MIDI router, Mesa amp switch, DigiTech GSP 2101 multieffects, Peavey Tube Fex, Mesa/Boogie Triaxis tube preamp, Uptown Technology Flash

Switcher, DigiTech DSR-24, Mesa/Boogie Simul-Class 2:90 power amp, EMB custom switcher, ColorSound wah, Lake Butler MIDI Mitigator. *Strings:* Ernie Ball, various gauges. *Vocal Mics:* Shure SM57s. *Wireless System:* Shure. **Ben Shepherd.** *Basses:* Fender Jazz, Musicman Stingray. *Amplification:* Mesa/Boogie V-2 pre-amp, Mesa/Boogie M-2000. *Cabinets:* Mesa/Boogie 2x15 diesels. *Wireless System:* Shure. **Kim Thayil.** *Guitars:* Guild S-100,

Musicman Silhouette, Gibson Les Paul. *Amplification:* Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifiers (3). *Cabinets:* Mesa/Boogie 4x12 Rectifiers. *Effects:* Dunlop Crybaby wah and RotoVibe, Boss OC-2 octave and CE-2 chorus. *Strings:* Ernie Ball. *Wireless System:* Samson UHF. **Matt Cameron.** *Drums:* Aytotte kit with 22" kick, 12", 13", 16" toms and snares by Keplinger. *Cymbals:* Zildjian. *Pedals:* Yamaha and DW. *Sticks:* Vic Firth. *Heads:* Remo.

If you've tuned in along the Soundgarden trail, you know they've ventured from the early dirty sounds of *Louder Than Love* to the shinier tones of *Superunknown*, but the touring philosophy has remained the same. On the *Superunknown* tour it got a little tricky when they brought a real live Leslie cabinet

on the road to capture the guitar parts on "Black Hole Sun," and on the sweep through the States they've programmed some background vocal parts for the songs "Blow Up The Outside World" and "Boot Camp."

Cameron sums it up this way: "Chris [Cornell] has started to delve into the

world of rack systems and programming different sounds for different songs." Then he starts to laugh a bit and finishes, "But Kim [Thayil] is still guitar cord into amp and Ben [Shepherd] and I just kinda dial in our own sounds and go for it." Truer words have never been spoken.

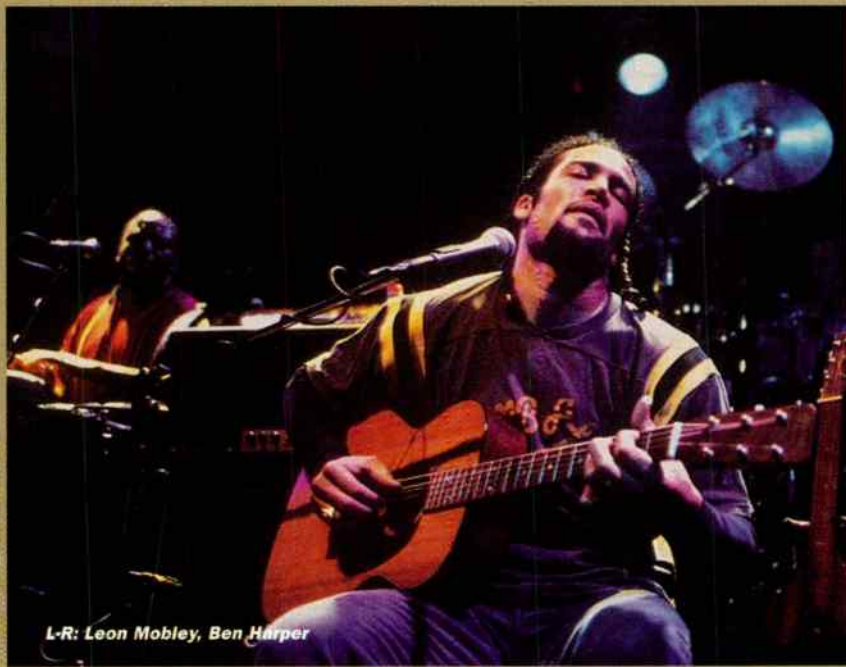
—David Farinella

ben harper

If you really want to get down the brass tacks of the matter, consider this quote: "Ben's a real guy, he's got a real message, it's real songwriting and he's playing real instruments." That comes from Bob Coke, who has been Ben Harper's soundman for the past two years. "The crux of his deal is really the intelligibility in it," he continues, "and a lot of our approach to sound has been to really respect his acoustic side."

And so the key to the Ben Harper live sound has been to make Ben's message as accessible as possible to the folks who come and hear Harper and The Innocent Criminals. The players that surround Harper (Oliver Charles on drums, Juan Nelson on bass and percussionist Leon Mobley) are simply strong musicians who don't rely on effects or tricks to get their sound through. The stage floor sports a grand total of four effects pedals, which fits into the Harper philosophy. "To keep the music alive you have to give it space to breathe," he says. "You clutter it up and it doesn't have space to move and communicate."

After experimenting with a number of



L-R: Leon Mobley, Ben Harper

BIZI-E.R.S./Ebet Roberts

different setups, the team has come up with a rig that Harper calls a good starting point. More than anything else—including the fact that Harper has a habit of singing anywhere from six inches away to right up against the microphone—it's his Weissenborn lap guitars that have perplexed the team. As Harper says with a laugh, "It gets a little complicated, and it so easily moves into that guitar geek category, which is all right, because I am professedly that." The solution has come in two installments, the first being the placement of

Sunrise pickups in all of Harper's guitars, including the traveling Gibson acoustic (though that gets miked too). For the Weissenborn it's a perfect pickup, capturing the resonance of the guitar top, the acoustic qualities generated by the air circulating inside the soundhole, and the magnetic pulses of the strings.

The second step in clinching the Harper sound has been his selection of amplifiers. After going through a number of heads, amps and assorted equipment, Harper has latched onto a Groove Tubes

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Ben Harper

Ben Harper. Guitars: Weissentorn Styles 0.1.2.3.4, Weissentorn Koril, Styles 1.2.3.4, Gibson J160E, all with Sunrise pickups. Amplifiers: Groove Tubes Soul O 175, Sunrise Studio Preamp. Cabinet: Marshall JCM 1500 W. Pedals: 3655 RW 2 with wah and CS-3 compressor, Jim Dunlop RCV. Strings: D'Addario light

to medium. **Oliver Charles**. Drums: Yamaha S. Output Custom Recording kit, including a 10" Poplar snare and a vintage Leedy ReLundie snare. Cymbals: Assortment of S. Evans and Zildjia's. Sticks: Vic Firth Carmine Abbio. **Jean Nelson**. Bass: Stuart Spector five string. Amplifiers: SWR Grand Prix preamp, Crown Macro-Tech 1204 power amp. Cabinets: SWR Galah II 4x10, SWR

Galah II 15". Pedal: Boss OC 2 octave. Strings: D'Addario medium-light guitar. **Leon Mobley**. Percussion: Remo 12" and 14" toms, Remo 14" djembe, Remo 15" djembe, Remo 22" djunglion. Latin Percussion Generation 2.30es bongos with Retha heads, Vibra Drums and tambourines. Cymbals: Sabian 10" splash cymbal. Sticks: Vic Firth.

amp. "I feel Groove Tubes are making the best amps on the market today. They're just amazing," he says. And at

the end of it all he comments, "Lord knows it took me this long to get to where I am with it, man. It's taken me a

long time because you walk in with a Weissenborn and they just don't know what to do." —**David Farinella**

danzig

Glenn Danzig's guitar must be awfully happy to see him leave town. On the concert trail, the Danzig frontman concentrates on his singing, leaving the guitar work to new bandmate Tommy Victor. But in studio during the making of the latest Danzig album, *Blackacidevil*, the well-muscled bandleader treated his solid-body Gibson Les Paul with malice aforethought.

"I like to take a guitar and bang it and make it scream," Danzig chuckles. "Make it feel like it's dying. That's what it's there for—to make noise. And whatever I have to do to get the sounds out of it, I'm gonna do. To my Les Paul's credit, it puts up with everything I do and just doesn't ever break. I've actually had past bandmembers walk out of the studio because I wasn't treating my guitar with respect. But with Tommy, not only is he a great player, he beats up his guitars even more than I do."

Victor's assault is helping to recreate live the dark charge of the album, which sets such Danzig staples as blood, sex, and unholy reptiles against a newly tooled blend of fierce guitar and industrial clamor. That sonic blend began to turn up on 1994's *Danzig 4*, but the singer says the sound is an older idea that's now receiving state-of-the-art execution. "The new stuff uses a lot of elements I was trying to use in the Misfits and Samhain—but the technology's gotten better. We're light years ahead, and if you can think something up, you can find a way to make it work. On our last



Glenn Danzig

Kevin Estrada

two albums, the band has been really free to play with its sound."

And Danzig feels he's found a way to make that freedom work in concert. "It can be tough to mix live and programmed

sounds on stage, but I approach this differently than most people. A lot of performers use click tracks or play with headphones on, and to me it seems they're just kind of making it hard on themselves trying to

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World Radio History

redo what's on the record. My attitude is, just put the programming through the monitors like another instrument. You keep a live feel that way. It's like having one more musician onstage—although it's a musician who's unable to stop."

As for the humans he leads, Danzig—who also played the lion's share of bass and keyboards on *Blackacidevil*—says his band pumps up his demonic visions in admirable fashion. "The songs don't change much live—they're just more intense and exciting. And a lot of that really comes from the people in front of us. When people are going crazy, and you know they can't get enough, it's a real payoff. With the new songs and the new line-

Danzig

Glenn Danzig. Mics: Usually Shure SM58s. **Tommy Victor.** Guitars: Fernandes H Series. Strings: Dean Markley, .010-.052. Picks: Dunlop. Amps: Mesa/Boogie head and 4x12 cabinet. Effects: Behringer Intelligate, Rocktron Intellifex, Vox wah pedal. **Wireless System:** Nady 950GS. **Josh Lazie.** Bass: Ibanez TR30C. Strings: Dean Markley, .045-105. Picks: Dunlop. Amps: two Ampeg SVT heads, two Ampeg 8x10 cabinets. **Effects:** dbx 160x compressor, ProCo Rat, Dunlop fuzz wah. **Wireless System:** Nady 950GS wireless system. **Joey Castillo.** Drums: Tama Artstar Custom—24" kick, 13" rack, 16" floor tom, 18" floor tom, 14" snare, 14" Ludwig Black Beauty snare. **Cymbals:** Paiste—14" hi-hats, 18" heavy china, 19" power crash, 20" power crash, 22" power ride. Tama hardware, Tama Iron Cobra pedals. **Heads:** Remo. **Sticks:** Calato Regal Tip 7000. **Electronics:** ddrum3, Tascam DA-88 recorder.

up, people are not only really shocked by the music, they really like it. That's very cool."

Can the dark sounds ever shock

Danzig himself? "My music makes me happy," he says with a laugh. "But the fact that I'm still here—that's shocking."

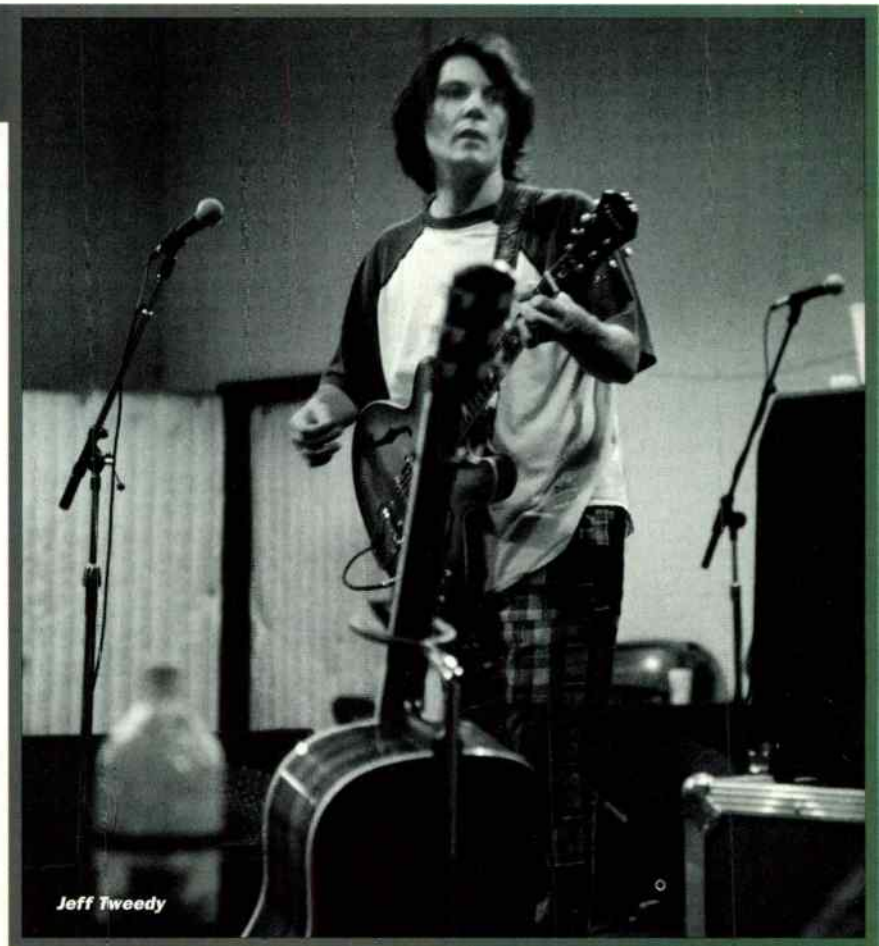
—**Chuck Crisafulli**

wilco

Wilco's Jay Bennett has been slashed: The former guitarist is now a guitarist/keyboardist. Bennett joined Wilco after the release of 1995's *A.M.*, adding preternaturally tasty licks to the band's sublime country rock. But while in the studio for sessions that led to this year's masterfully moody *Being There*, Bennett was encouraged by Wilco frontman and songwriter Jeff Tweedy to experiment with keys. "I didn't ask to play keyboards," shrugs Bennett. "It just kind of happened."

In fact, much of the music on this double-disc sophomore effort was allowed to "just happen." The band wanted to experiment with sounds and textures, so they left a lot of room for in-studio inspiration. "The bulk of the record is Jeff saying 'Here's a song' and the band saying 'Okay, let's go play it,'" says Bennett. "A lot of what helped us get varying vibes was avoiding cutting everything with two guitars, bass, and drums: It was always guitar, some kind of keyboard, bass, and drums. I used two pianos, a [Hammond] B-3, a [Hohner] Clavinet, a Wurlitzer, a beat-to-crap Rhodes—whatever felt right."

To bring the feelings back around in concert, Bennett is still splitting his time between guitars and keyboards, though he and the band don't do note-for-note replications of what's on record. "We might not play particular parts, but there will be



Jeff Tweedy

Jim Herrington

something there to cover the vibe. On a tune that had piano and organ, maybe I'll play piano and pedal steel will fill in for organ. Actually, I don't think we could really play exact parts even if we wanted to; it's more about filling a certain space with a certain feel. We talk a lot about getting the right tempo, about which sections should

be shorter or longer live, and we work a lot on the sequence of songs in a set. All those things are higher priorities than playing parts."

Bennett's double role in the band means that he is almost constantly in motion during concerts. "Physically it's hard to go from instrument to instrument because

the Vocalist's instrument

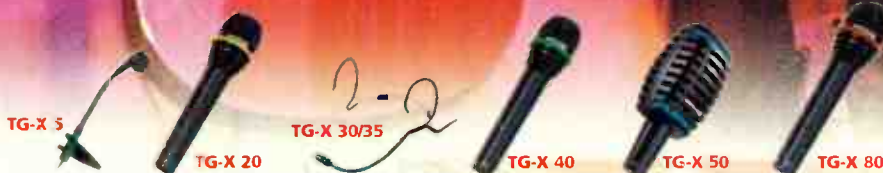
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Dynamic

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Feb. 4, 1997

Wilco

Jay Bennett. *Guitars:* 1969 Gibson SG, Fender Telecaster (dropped D). *Amplification:* Gibson Mercury 15"x10," Vox AC-30 w/ top boost. *Effects:* Ibanez Tube Screamer, MXR Blue Box, Ernie Ball volume pedal, Roland Space Echo, A/B box. *Strings:* D'Addario .010s. Plus "a shifting cast of portable keyboards." **Jeff Tweedy.** *Guitars:* 1995 Gibson Vintage-AJ, 1953 Gibson J-45, 1958 Gretsch Chet Atkins w/ Bigsby, 1966

Epiphone Casino, 1995 Hamer Daytona (dropped D). *Bass:* Ludwig "Bellevue" 4-string. *Amplification:* Vox AC-30, Fender Vibrolux. Acoustic guitars run to a Countryman D.I. *Effects:* Morley A/B/C switch box, Diaz Tremodillo, MXR distortion, Experience pedal. *Strings:* D'Addario. **John Stirratt.** *Bass:* 1971 Fender Precision. *Amplification:* Ampeg SVT head or Hartke Model 7000 through Ampeg SVT (8"x10") cabinet. *Strings:* D'Addario, medium gauge. **Bob Egan.** *Steel guitar:* 1929 National

Triolian custom fitted w/ two pickups through Fishman preamp & DI box, 1954 Rickenbacker lap slide, Zane Beck 12-string tuned to E9, run through DOD analog delay, Tech 21 SansAmp, Boss EQ, & Fender Reverb. *Amplification:* Peavey Stereo Chorus 400, loaded w/ old EV 12" speakers. **Ken Coomer.** *Drums:* blue sparkle Fibes (26" kick drum, 16" & 14" floor toms, 12" rack tom), Pearl snare. *Cymbals:* Paiste (22" ride, 20" splash, 17" crash, hi-hats). *Drum Remo.*

piano and guitar require different hand muscles, and if I play more than three or four songs on one or the other I start to feel like I have mittens. It's better for me to switch every couple of tunes. Technically, it's one more thing to go wrong, one more thing to stay focused on. I wasn't looking forward to it, and it took a while to get used

to, but now I'm enjoying it; I get to sit down every couple of songs. That's not such a bad deal."

When things do go wrong onstage, Bennett takes it in stride. "We've had three keyboard disasters in the last swing of our tour—meltdowns and jammed pitch shifters that meant I had to do some instant

transposing. But you can't panic. I think it's funny; it adds to the circus environment. Nothing ruins a show like watching a player yell at his tech or his band or at the monitor guy. You're out there playing music. Have fun no matter what happens; that's what people will react to." —**Chuck Crisafulli**

311

Not to knock the amped-up mix of rock, reggae, rap, punk, and funk that Nebraska-bred 311 have committed to disc on their three full-length releases, but they seem to be one of those bands that listeners don't really "get" until they see one of the band's frenetic, fully charged live shows.

"I agree," says Nick Hexum, who sings, plays guitar, and writes much of the material for the group. "Our sound is pretty different when we take it out there. We deliver the songs with more force, and there's a heavier groove and a power that you can't really appreciate until you see us play. We do have 'album fans,' but the most important thing to us has always been the [live] playing. We're not going to be media manipulators, or fashion kings, or this week's bunch of bad boys. What we want to do is play the music."

311 bring their wickedly tight arrangements to life with what looks like reckless abandon onstage, but Hexum says that the players never let showmanship get ahead of musicianship. "We make a conscious effort not to get too worked up before we get onstage. We don't want to be so pumped that we can't control the music. It's better to grow the groove and let it



L-R: Nick Hexum and SA Martinez

Ebet Roberts

311

Nick Hexum. *Guitars:* Guild Manhattan and Songbird, Fender Strat. *Amplification:* Rocktron Velocity 250 power amp through Rocktron S112 and SE112 cab nets. *Effects:* Rocktron Repliflex, Intelliflex, and Voodoo valve. *Strings:* Ernie Ball RFS .010s. *Picks:* Dunlop. Nord lead keyboard with Macintosh Power Mac 8500.

Tim Mahoney. *Guitars:* Paul Reed Smith Santana and Standard Mahogany. *Amplification:* Mesa/Boogie Tri-Axis Preamp, Strategy 500 power amp, and 4x12 Mesa Rectifier cabinets with 30-watt Celestions. *Effects:* Rocktron Repliflex and Intelliflex, Ernie Ball volume pedal, Boss SE-70 effects processor, OC-2 Octaver, & T-Wah dynamic filter, Digital Music Corp. ground control unit. *Strings:* Ernie Ball RPS .010s. *Picks:* Dunlop. **P-Nut.** *Basses:* Warwick five-string. *Amplification:* SWR SM 900 bass amp head, Big Ben 18" speaker cabinets, and Golath 1 4x10 bass speaker cabinets. *Strings:* GHS (custom set: .040, .060, .080, .100, .130). **Chad Sexton.** *Drums:* Orange County 6-ply maple kit (18"x22" bass drum, 6"x12" maple snare, 4-1/2"x14" free floating snare, 7"x8" tom, 8"x10" tom, 9"x12" tom, 14"x16" tom, 16"x18" floor tom). *Cymbals:* Zildjian (14" hi-hats, 20" K crash, 10" splash, "20" pie-aged drylight ride K, 20" Custom Lite ride (used as crash), 13" K Custom Dark crash, 22" Brilliant medium ride). Azuka Latin multirash with rivets. *Heads:* Remo (tom tops: clear Emperor, tom bottoms: clear Ambassador, bass drum batter: coated Power Stroke, bass drum front: black Power Stroke, main snare: Falame, side snare: coated Emperor). *Sticks:* Vic Firth (3A). *Hardware/pedals:* Pearl. **SA Martinez:** Shure wireless mics, Technics turntables.

blossom over time and then give yourself over to that, rather than run out onstage and immediately spazz out. You have to give the audience something to look forward to."

With guitarist Tim Mahoney handling solos and lead lines, and bassist P-Nut and drummer Chad Sexton laying down the meat of the grooves (on a Warwick five-string and an eight-piece Orange County kit, respectively), it's up to SA Martinez's

turntables and Hexum's guitar to thicken the band's sound with layers of rhythm and sonic texture.

"Tim finds a guitar tone and sticks with it," Hexum explains. "I end up playing with a lot more effects. I'll go from a rotary on one song to a guitar synth the next to a T-Wah on the next. I really enjoy playing with sound, and I'm making a concerted effort to get my technique up to match the sound-making ability of my gear. Equipment can do so much and we want to take full advantage of that."

The sounds of 311 are undeniably aggressive, but Hexum is quick to warn listeners not to mistake energy for angst. "Some people confuse angry-sounding stuff with anger, and a lot of bands will couple certain emotions with their sound to try and get a certain level of energy. But we wouldn't sacrifice personal happiness to make the music sound emotional, and I don't believe you have to be pissed to rock really hard these days. Energy and emotion can come from anywhere—not just from

negative experiences. It's a misconception that to be a musician you must have a tortured soul. Our stuff may sound aggressive, but we're not letting off anger—we're jumping for joy."

—Chuck Crisafulli

COMING NEXT MONTH

The Artist Formerly Known As Prince

On the wings of his triple-disc triumph *Emancipation*, the Lord of Paisley Park reflects on what it means to be creative, and explains why there's no such thing as a bad song, in this exclusive interview.

Live

Can the pride of York, Pennsylvania, follow up the phenomenal success of *Throwing Copper*? Ed Kowalczyk and his bandmates ponder the dynamics of rock band performance and the weight of commercial pressure as their new album, *Secret Samadhi*, hits the street.

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CONSOLID-STATE

A Musician's Guide to Exposure in the Era of Broadcast Mergers

Perhaps the most exhilarating scene in Tom Hanks' *That Thing You Do!* is the moment the Wonders first hear their song on the radio. The group literally dances through the main street of their small hometown, waving their transistors aloft in astonishment that the local station is actually playing their record. The time was 1964, and AM radio was king, presided over by wacky, echo-voiced DJs who played hits, from "Can't Buy Me Love" and "Do Wah Diddy" to "Hello, Dolly" and "Everybody Loves Somebody." The FM band, though capable of static-free broadcasts, was largely used for jazz, classical and dentist office wallpaper music—but change was in the air. That same year, to put a freeze on the overcrowded AM band, the FCC ruled that all FM stations in cities of more than 100,000 had to give at least half their airtime to original programming.

Mansion On the Hill, Fred Goodman's book about the transformation of the rock counterculture into an amoral multi-billion-dollar worldwide business, tells the story of how in 1968, Boston Tea Party concert promoter and *Phoenix* publisher Ray Riepen leased seven hours of airtime a day from the nearly bankrupt 50,000-watt FM station WBCN—whose major source of income was early-morning religious programming—to play "album cuts." Less than three years later, he sold his interest in the station for \$220,000. • "That's how FM started," recalls ex-Mercury promotion exec Jim Sotet, who was a DJ at Detroit's legendary progressive station WABX in the early Seventies. "You could buy an hour's time for next to nothing to play your Quicksilver Messenger Service albums and talk about revolution." • "I grew up under the spell of WABX," says producer and erst-

BY ROY TRAKIN • ILLUSTRATION BY RUSSELL JONES

while Was (Not Was) brother David Was. “It was one of those hybrid formats that has no place in today’s mass market, the freest-form FM’er of them all. Each disc jockey’s time slot was his own, and you might hear anything. That was when underground meant something, not just people consciously trying to be underground like Eddie Vedder.”

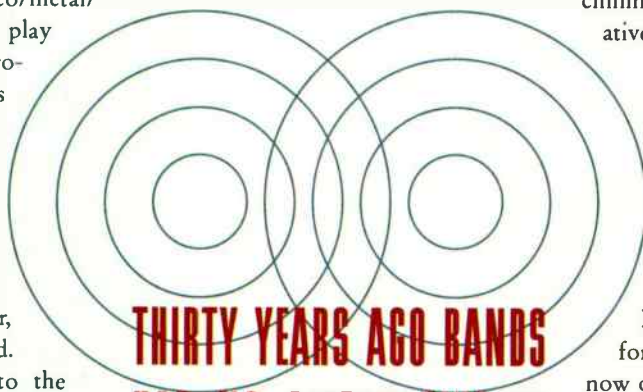
That eclectic mix—as Sotet put it, “not only Led Zeppelin but the people they stole from”—certainly influenced the twisted punk/funk/disco/metal/soul/R&B music Was chose to play with his partner Don and as producer for such disparate artists as Rickie Lee Jones and MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer. Progressive radio encouraged artists to break through the three-minute verse-chorus-verse outline of Top Forty radio in favor of a more linear, progressive, non-melodic sound.

Jump cut thirty years into the future to 1997. AM radio, according to Sotet, is now “angry white guys second-guessing the quarterback or whining to Rush about the liberals.” FM is now where the action is, though it has splintered into dozens of fragmented rotations spread among the pop offshoots of the day, from modern rock to adult alternative to hot adult to urban to churban to dance to mainstream rock to active rock to classic rock.

With the U.S. radio advertising pie approaching \$12.5 billion—more than domestic box office receipts or record sales—some major money players have emerged, especially since the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, a deregulatory law overturning the previous limits on the number of stations a company could own in a single market and overall. Just five years ago operators were allowed to own no more than 24 U.S. stations and no more than two AM and two FM stations per market, a limit imposed by the FCC to guarantee diversity.

Major companies like CBS Radio—which just merged in a \$3.9 billion stock deal with Infinity to form a conglomerate boasting 79 stations in seventeen markets (including WBCN) with yearly earnings

that will top \$1 billion—are stockpiling up to six stations in each major market, severely limiting much of the competition as well as the traditional mom-and-pop operator. Other companies who have been gobbling up stations like Pac Men include Jacor, Evergreen, American Radio Systems, ABC/Disney, Chancellor, SFX, Clear Channel, Emmis, and Susquehanna. Prices for stations are soaring; those that once sold for between eight and eleven times their cash flow are



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being sold now for between eighteen and twenty times.

“It’s changed the face of the industry,” says veteran radio man Scott Wright, who under his nom de broadcasting Shadow Steele was operations manager at Z100 N.Y., PD at B97 New Orleans, and VP programming for EZ Communications. “This used to be a very programming-driven business: young guys with their shirtsleeves rolled up who were passionate and aggressive about the business of running radio stations. Now it’s more of a business of bankers and investment types. The emphasis is less on creative programming and more on the bottom line.”

The Price of Freedom

Of course, in an environment where the emphasis is on selling product, the songs themselves can’t be allowed to get in the way of the message. You can’t have Sheryl Crow slamming Wal-Mart for stocking guns if you want to attract the retailer’s ad dollars. And as we’ve seen in other branches of American industry, from supermarkets to entertainment companies, when too much power is invested in a single entity, a chilling effect tends to descend on creative freedom.

Robert F. X. Sillerman’s company SFX controls eighty stations in 23 markets and bills \$258 million a year to rank seventh among broadcast groups. As executive chairman, he disagrees that consolidation limits artistic freedom. “In a market where there may have been two stations competing for the modern rock audience, if you now own both of them, instead of competing, you can have them complement one another,” he says. “Or you have a full signal to do something that might be more intriguing or experimental.”

“People are concerned consolidation is going to create fewer programming choices,” says Norm Patiz, chairman of Westwood One Companies and a refugee from the station ownership business since he sold 25 percent of his company, which now produces syndicated radio programming, to Infinity several years ago. “I don’t see that at all. It’s the marketplace, the listeners, which will determine what gets programmed. By combining ownership, you cut the cost of operations, maybe eliminate some general managers, merge a few sales departments. But you can’t cut back on the variety of formats as long as an audience exists for the format in that market.”

Not everyone is so sanguine about the effects of these mergers. Mike Morrison, program director for L.A.’s Triple A outlet KSCA, is feeling the heat from the station’s yet-to-be-consummated sale by Gene Autry’s Golden West Broadcasting to Hefstel, already the owner of two highly successful Spanish language stations in Los Angeles, including the Arbitron-leading KLVE. Two years ago manage-

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The DMTi was also designed to interface with Kurzweil's proprietary 8 channel digital protocol KDS-Kurzweil Digital Stream (offered as an upgradeable option for the K2500 series). The DMTi can perform sample rate conversion (in real time) on up to 4 stereo pairs of incoming digital data while acting as the master or slave clock; the DMTi can transmit 44.1K or 48K clock and can transmit or receive BNC word clock.

This device is well suited for use with popular digital mixers such as Yamaha's O2R, or Korg's Soundlink, or as a translation device from MDM to Digidesign's ProTools systems. The DMTi allows many different digital input formats to be user routed to a variety of digital output formats and sample rate converted. The Alesis and Tascam option cards are needed for conversion to and from these popular MDM formats. The DMTi can be seen and demonstrated at your local Kurzweil dealer.

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ment convinced the old cowboy to wait until he got an unheard-of bid of \$60 million for the station, the last of his once-extensive broadcast holdings. Now Autry is negotiating for what is believed to be upwards of \$110 million for KSCA, a price that Morrison laments will never support the station's demographic-rich but Arbitron ratings-poor Adult Alternative format.

"They're going to have a lot of pressure to get ratings for a return on their investment," says Morrison, who estimates the \$800,000 a month the new owner will have to pay as interest on their loan is equal to the station's billing right now—and that's operating expenses. "I guess that will lead to a format change. The thing is, there are examples of this format working in other major markets around the country because ownership has a commitment to doing well. We have a higher percentage of listeners with a salary of \$100,000 or more than any other station in this market. But this is a format that has to be handled with care and patience.

"Are there any quick fixes in the radio business? I'm not sure there are right now, though I guess going Spanish in L.A. is going to look like one," he concludes ruefully.

The Meaning for Musicians

Does this mean that all those angst-ridden folkie singer/songwriters should toss their acoustic guitars and get down with some banda? Not necessarily. In fact, Morrison wants to put those broadcast mergers to work for his format.

"Triple-A could be the perfect complement to a second alternative or classic rock station in your market that's generating strong 18-to-24 numbers," he offers hopefully. "If the same company owned both stations, it might be a good idea to skew the second to an older demo." Morrison admits he looks at the next few weeks while waiting for the sale to go through as "an audition to find a good home."

If radio consolidation doesn't affect the kind of music being played on the radio, it may well limit who's doing the

playing—according to which musicians play the game. "It used to be you had to call two hundred guys to get your records played," recounts Shadow. "Now you call forty or fifty gatekeepers."

"Today's winning strategy is tomorrow's dinosaur," says Steve Gottlieb, founder of TVT, the label which launched Nine Inch Nails. "As stations become more centralized and less responsive, it's a danger to everyone. Whenever there's a concentration of decision-making power, getting things started becomes that much more difficult. The creative end of the business remains something that the small independent operator is best at: identifying and nurturing talent. Big organizations lead to a corporate culture which, though it does have virtues, produces a group point of view—which by definition doesn't lead to the variety the vital independent community produces."

"It's not easy to get independent product on commercial radio in the best of times," admits KSCA PD Morrison. "And it's not going to get any easier."

"If I were a musician," says Sotet, "I'd stay as far away from radio as I could. Kids don't hear about music on the radio anymore. They read about it in fanzines or on the Internet."

The broadcast mergermania is not just moving vertically to other radio stations, but horizontally as well to complementary acquisitions. The latest move, in the tradition of Boston's Riepen controlling both the booking of the local rock venue and the rock radio station, is SFX's recent purchase of the East Coast promotion company Delsener/Slater, which has veteran rival promoter/manager/label chief John Scher of Metropolitan Entertainment more than a bit concerned.

"What wasn't quite a level playing field to start with becomes even more unbalanced for concert promoters," complains Scher, who blames SFX's move on the proliferation of "pseudo-benefit, acoustic Xmas"-type radio concert promotions which have become "six-figure profit centers" because the acts play for below their regular fee. "There's always the implied threat that

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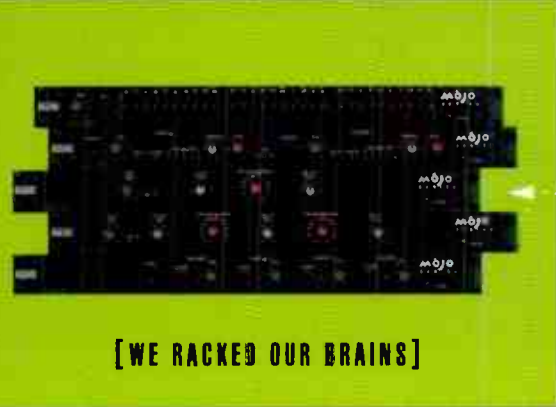
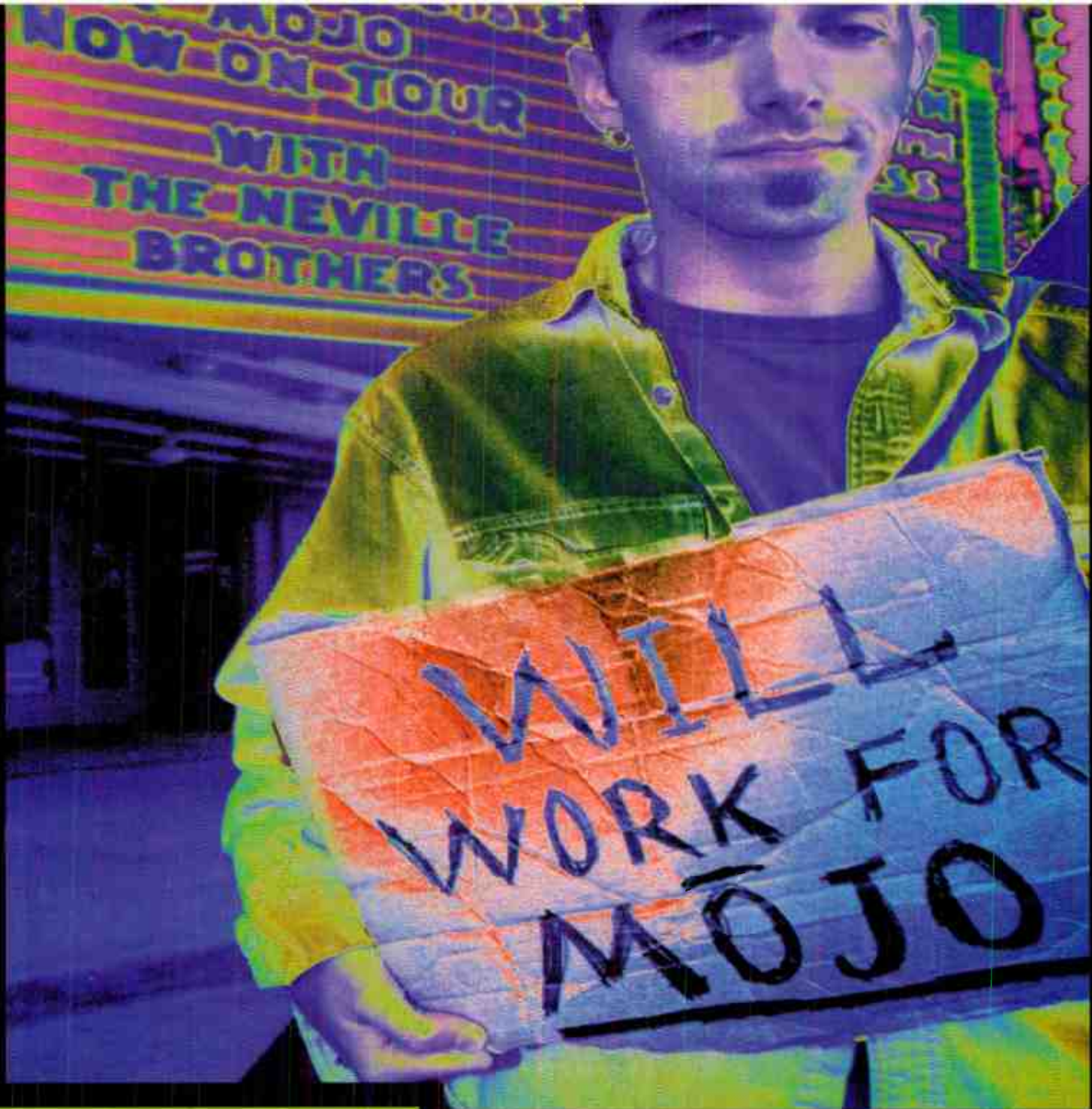
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ing an AES-EBU output from its 3-pin XLR connector. The price is still to be determined, but the company says it will "certainly" be well over \$1,000, so start saving those pennies now. The rest of us will have to stay content with analog mics, but there's lots of great new ones out there, including **AKG's** low-cost Emotion series of dynamics (\$90 for the cardioid version, \$99 for the hypercardioid version), **Shure's** new Microflex line (which includes lavalier, overhead, boundary, and gooseneck models—prices TBA), and **Samson's** QV and QE headset mics (both prices TBA; the latter is waterproofed so it can be used in high-humidity environments, such as aerobics workouts or glasses of seltzer).

Almost everyone seems to love that great **Lexicon** reverb, and the company's new MPX-1 includes not one but two discrete processors—one for the reverb, and the other for additional effects—all in a single-rack space unit for just \$1299. Drummers will welcome **Yamaha's** REV500 (priced, appropriately, at \$500), which is the first signal processor I've ever seen that includes two sound sources for patch-auditioning purposes (snare drum and cross-stick samples)—it's even got a demo built in! Home studio owners on a budget will want to check out **TL Audio's** moderately priced (\$795 each) Crimson Series, which includes mic preamp, equalizer, compressor, and power amplifier models. Singers will go nuts over **DigiTech's** Vocalist Workstation, which boasts a unique "Gender-Bender" mode for applying male or female tonalities to harmonies as well as providing extensive pitch correction capabilities. Guitarists will dig the DigiTech 2112, which combines a tube guitar preamp with digital multi-effects. Broadcasters will want to tune into **TC Electronic's** DBMAX Digital Broadcast Maximizer (price TBA), which uses circuitry adopted from their tremendously popular Finalizer (our Dec. '96 Editor's Pick). And live sound contractors found their little corner of heaven in the **Rane** booth, where they had a chance to play with the RPM 26, which com-

bines a crossover network with compression, limiting, delay, and parametric equalization, all under the control of Windows software.

Speaking of live sound, **JBL** raised a lot of eyebrows (and moved a lot of air) with the debut of their HLA Series large touring sound system, while **Peavey** countered with their DTH Series system. **Sabine** showed their SDA Series digital delays for acoustic alignment of speaker installations, as well as their single-channel FBX-Solo 620 and dual-channel FBX-2020, both of which provide automatic feedback extermination (squeal no more, brother!). **Community** introduced the new PC300 Series of medium-format pattern control horns. And there were lots of new power amplifier announcements as well, including additions to **QSC's** PowerLight Series and **Peavey's** new CS Series, which features modular input and out-

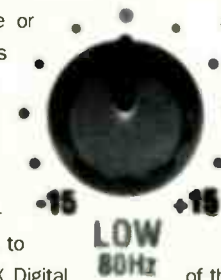
put hardware. A welcome new trend, perhaps initiated by **Mackie's** summer NAMM announcement of their HR824 active studio monitors (\$1498 per pair), are the new affordable self-powered monitor systems. **KRK** unveiled their Exposé series of biamplified monitors (price TBA), and **Genelec** showed their 1029A active nearfield monitor, which has a list price of just \$535 per speaker. If you like to rattle the floors, you can augment a pair of 1029A monitors with Genelec's 1091A subwoofer for an additional \$680.

On the software front, **Opcode** announced Studio Vision Pro 3.5, which can directly read and write QuickTime audio and music files. **Waves** unveiled their Native Power Pack, a suite of plug-in tools for various Mac and Windows products, as well as TracPac, described as a "no-loss" audio compression application. **Steinberg** showed new versions of their WaveLab audio editor, including a way cool plug-in called the Grungealizer, which actually adds noise and distortion—it even includes a "year" dial that lets you hear music as it would have been recorded in, say, 1956! **Digidesign** sponsored a slew of third-party TDM plug-in suppliers, including **dbx** (demoing

the DC66 compressor, which includes emulation of their OverEasy circuitry), **Drawmer** (showing a frequency-sensitive limiter/compressor plug-in), **Dolby** (a SurroundTolls AC-3 encoder/decoder), **Wave Mechanics** (PurePitch, a formant-corrected pitch shifter), **Liquid Audio** (a TDM plug-in version of their Liquifier software, which allows the user to preview audio at simulations of various modem speeds before publishing the results directly to a Web server), **Qsound** (QX/TDM stereo soundfield expander), **Intelligent Devices** (IQ, an "intelligent" equalizer), **Waves** (PS22-Stereomaker), **Spatializer** (PT-3D), **AnTares** (AutoTune pitch shifter), and **Cedar Audio** (DeClicker TDM). Will this trend ever completely negate the need for hardware signal processors? Only time will tell.

A hot topic in the "miscellaneous" category is balanced power; the use of highly shielded power supplies is said to be able to drastically reduce noise in the studio environment. A new company called **Equi=Tech** were debuting their various balanced power systems, with prices ranging from \$1389 to more than \$3000, depending on amperage required. In a similar vein, **Furman** were showing their IT-1220 transformer, as well as their new PlugLock, a terrific \$58 product—it's an AC power strip that provides adjustable clamps for "wall-wart" power supplies. Another great new idea came from **Signal Transport**, who showed their line of Swing Racks—hinged frames for patch bays that make rear-panel access a breeze. The company also markets a line of Project Patch kits, which bundle patch bays with connecting cables for various mixers and recorders.

Speaking of recorders, **Panasonic** introduced their SV-3800 DAT recorder (price TBA), which uses new 20-bit DACs, and **Sony** debuted their StorStation tape drive (price TBA), which holds 1 gig of uncompressed data or 2 gig of compressed data, so you can archive your audio easily. **Emu Systems** unveiled their E4K Turbo sampler, which provides 128 voices as opposed to 64 (\$5195), and announced that they will be distributing KAT percussion controllers. Last but not least, there were several new surround-sound products, including **Otari's** PicMix (\$5000), which adds surround sound capabilities to any mixer; **AKG's** K290 surround headphones (price TBA), and **Aureal's** DirectSound 3D accelerator chipset. ☺



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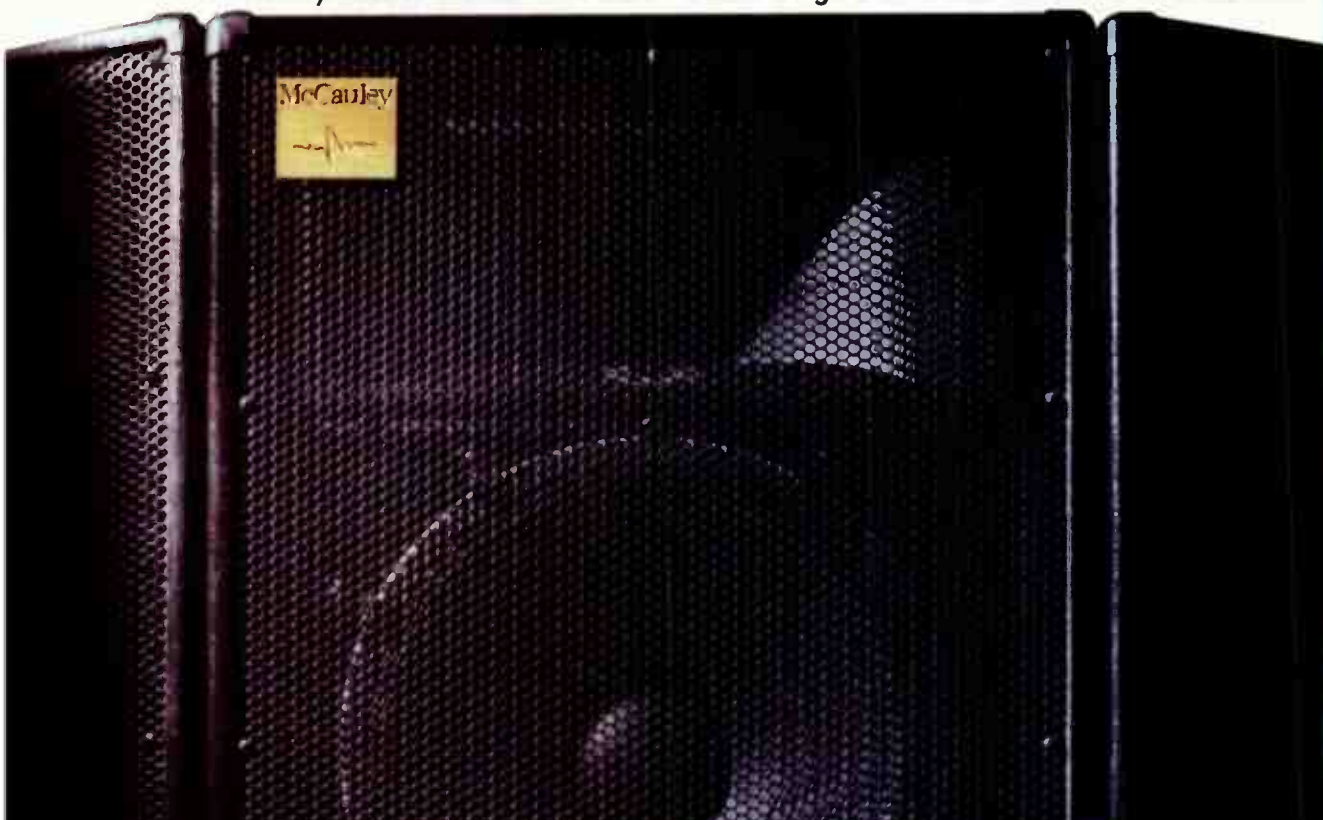
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Honing Your

MICROPHONE

Chops

by
**Michael
Cooper**

We've all heard the saying, "Garbage in, garbage out." The guy who coined that phrase must've been talking about microphones. The microphone is the very start of the recording chain, so which one you use and where you point it will largely determine just how good—or bad—your finished recording project will sound. But unless you understand what makes your mics tick, you'll be shooting in the dark on your hunt for killer-sounding tracks.

Why are small diaphragm condenser mics often the best choice on plucked instruments and drum overheads? How can switching a mic's polar pattern reduce vocal popping? How can you warm up a vocal track by changing the mic placement? Why will a large diaphragm condenser usually give you a less glassy sound on a guitar cabinet than its small diaphragm cousin would? The answers to such questions are no-brainers once you understand the commonly held properties of specific types of microphones.

Transient Response

Transients are essentially the short-lived frequency components that make up the attack portion of a sound. In other words, they are the pluck in a guitar string before the ensuing sustained tone, and the crack in a snare drum hit before the shell rings. Transients are comprised of mostly very high frequencies; that is, short wavelengths, here and gone in a fraction of a second. A microphone's diaphragm must react quickly if it is to capture these transients. The lighter the diaphragm, the quicker it will react, capturing more crisp detail. On the

other hand, transients are largely over and done with by the time a heavy diaphragm builds up enough inertia to move.

The mass of a condenser mic's diaphragm is only about one thousandth that of a dynamic mic's, which is why condensers generally offer far greater transient response and a more extended high-frequency response compared to dynamic mics. "Small diaphragm" condensers capture the most detail of all, as their diaphragms—roughly 1/2 inch or less in diameter—are even lighter than the 1-inch-diameter diaphragms typically found in "large diaphragm" condensers. A large diaphragm must also be tensioned tighter to prevent its center from sagging against the capsule's backplate and self-destructing; this rigidity makes a large diaphragm respond less readily to sound pressure than a looser small diaphragm does.

The small diaphragm condenser mic's superior transient response makes it an excellent choice for recording plucked and strummed stringed instruments (acoustic guitar, mandolin, banjo, etc.), hand percussion instruments (shakers, tambourine, congas), cymbals and even snare drum.

If you want a slightly softer and warmer sound with just a little less detail, use a large diaphragm condenser. If a drummer's technique is sloppy, however, you'd better put a dynamic mic on the snare drum—dynam-

**What
to
use
and
where
to
stick
it**

▶
**Audio-
Technica's
AT 4050**

ics are less expensive and far more likely to survive a misplaced whack of a drumstick. The tradeoff is that their transient response is usually quite poor.

The next time you're recording electric guitar with a dynamic mic, think of transient response. If tweaking the EQ in the upper mids and highs is only making your axe sound thin and bright, yet it still doesn't have enough edge, try using a condenser mic to bring out the detail of the pick hitting the string. A small diaphragm condenser will often capture too much detail and end up sounding too glassy; a large diaphragm mic will usually give you the perfect blend of detail and warmth.

Dynamic mics offer lower "sensitivity" (output level) than condensers, which is beneficial when trying to mike a loud drum kit without overloading a mixer or recorder operating at semi-pro, -10 dBV levels. (+4 dBV systems offer far greater headroom.) The **Sennheiser MD421** cardioid dynamic mic has long been an industry standard for miking toms. Sennheiser introduced an improved version, the MD421 II (\$485 list), at November's AES Convention in L.A.

The preamp electronics that reside inside all condenser mics give them a robust output, allowing you to keep the noisy mic preamp on a cheap mixer turned down for a quieter (less hissy) recording of delicate instruments. All other things being equal, large diaphragm designs are inherently less noisy than small diaphragm ones.

Reduce the Bleeding

A mic's polar pattern indicates how well it picks up sound arriving at various angles to the mic. You've probably seen polar patterns represented as circular graphs on spec sheets. To review briefly, an omnidirectional mic (or "omni" for short) picks up sound equally from all sides of the mic in a 360° sphere; *i.e.*, in front of, behind, to either side of, above, and below the mic. A cardioid pattern, so-called

because of its heart-shaped graph, picks up the least amount of sound from its rear (*i.e.*, at 180° "off-axis" from the front of the mic). It is said to be more "directional" than an omni mic because it picks up sound arriving at its front more than at its sides. The angle at which it rejects sound the most, in this case 180°, is called the "null point."

The more expensive large diaphragm condensers (and a few small diaphragm condensers as well) offer multiple polar patterns, usually changed by a switch on the mic. As a mic's polar pattern is switched from cardioid to supercardioid to hypercardioid to bi-directional (also called "figure eight"), three things happen: 1) The mic picks up less and less sound from its sides; 2) the mic picks up progressively more sound from its rear (from almost nil with a cardioid to equal pickup at the front and rear with a figure-eight pattern); and 3) the mic's null point moves forward from 180° (cardioid) off-axis to 126° (supercardioid) to 110° (hypercardioid) to 90° (figure-eight) or perpendicular to the front of the mic.

Remember point number 3 the next time you record an entire band in the same room. If you're miking a guitar cabinet with a supercardioid mic, for instance, make sure that the drums are set up 126° (roughly 4 o'clock position) off from the front of the guitar's mic for the least amount of bleed onto the guitar track. You'll be amazed at how tight and punchy your recording will sound if you just make sure all your mics' null points are aimed for maximum rejection of unwanted sounds.

Pop Goes the Microphone

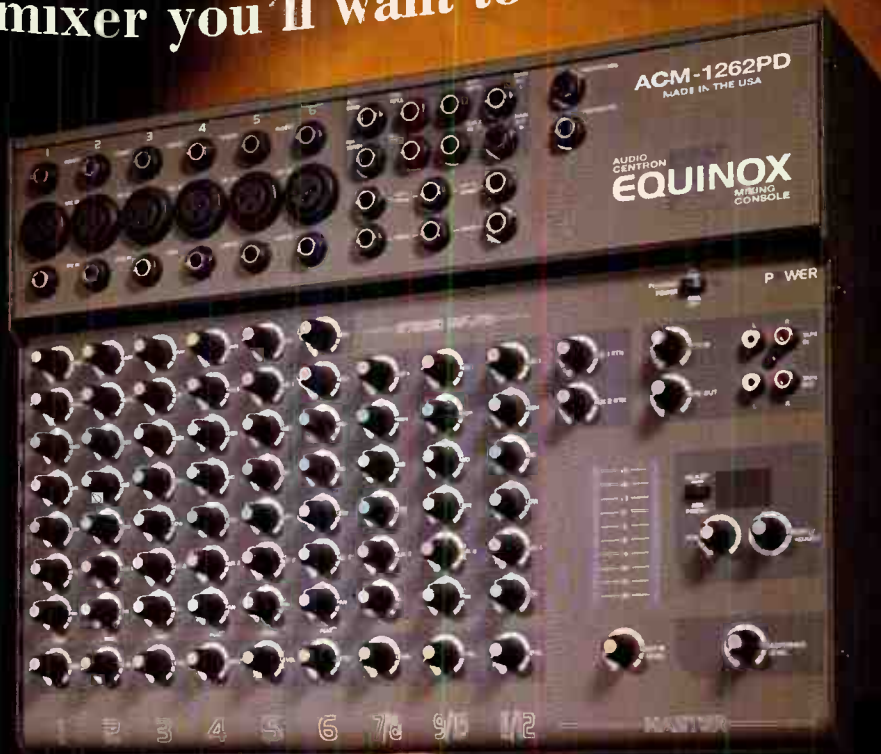
The more directional a mic is, the more sensitive it will be to wind turbulence (*e.g.*, gusts of wind popping the mic's diaphragm whenever you sing *p*'s and *b*'s too forcefully). So a figure-eight mic is more sensitive to vocal popping than a cardioid mic, and an omni mic is the least sensitive of all to "plosives."

If a wind screen fails to stop a vocalist from popping a multi-pattern mic set to cardioid mode, try changing the mic to omni mode. You might also want to move the mic closer to the singer to prevent the omni pattern from otherwise picking up more room sound. (Remember, omni mode will pick up more sound from the sides and rear of the mic than cardioid mode will.) If your studio's room acoustics don't sound so great, stick with cardioid mode and have the singer take a step back from the mic. Better yet, position the mic slightly above, below or to the side of the singer's mouth.

The lightweight, loosely-tensioned diaphragms of small diaphragm condenser mics generally make them highly vulnerable to popping and thus a poor choice for recording solo vocals up close; the **Neumann KMS150** (\$1495 list) is the only hypercardioid small diaphragm condenser mic I've ever heard that could be used for—and sounds great on—lead vocals. However, I've gotten incredible results recording vocals with a **B & K 4006** omni small diaphragm condenser (\$2060 list) by pointing the mic at the ceiling (with the top of the mic at throat level) and having the vocalist sing over the top of the mic. Generally speaking, though, small diaphragm condensers sound too glassy on vocals and dynamic mics lack the detail that makes vocals intelligible, clear, and intimate. That leaves large diaphragm condensers, the usual choice for recording vocals and voice-like instruments such as sax, cello and flute. The **Audio-Technica AT4050/CM5** (\$995 list) and **Beyer MC 834** (\$999 list) are the best-sounding large diaphragm



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condensers I've heard for under a grand, although the multipattern AT4050/CM5 offers more features than the cardioid-only MC 834. If you can afford to spend more, the highly adaptable **AKG C414 B-TLII** (\$1675 list) is a truly world-class mic. For people with really deep pockets, the **AKG C12 VR** tube mic (\$4540 list) is the overall best-sounding and most versatile large diaphragm condenser I've ever heard. It kills on vocals and sax.

Heavy Breathing

Back to practical tips, if an acoustic guitarist is breathing heavily while tracking, he's likely to pop a small diaphragm condenser placed on the fretboard. (If he's watching his fretting, that's the mic he'll be facing.) Putting a foam wind-screen on the mic is a good idea. Also try miking the fretboard from slightly above, with the mic at a 45° angle to avoid any breaths from hitting the diaphragm head-on. If the sound you're going for allows it, switch in the mic's bass roll-off filter (many mics have these). As a last resort, you can roll off the lows at the board with your EQ. If you have a music stand that will angle itself parallel to the floor, you can position the mic under the stand and pointed at the guitar. The stand will form a barrier to any wind and will aid in isolating the guitar track from any vocals if the guitarist is also singing. This method has its drawbacks: It can be awkward for the guitarist, and the sound of the guitar bouncing off the music stand and into the mic can be a problem for critical recording. Hey, we do what we have to in a pinch!

The **AKG C460 B** (\$699 with the cardioid CK61 capsule) offers the best price for value in a small diaphragm mic, and sounds awesome on guitar, mandolin, banjo, cymbals,

and choirs. **AKG** introduced their new **C480 B** mic (\$1001 with the cardioid CK61 capsule) at the November AES Convention in L.A. It's a transformerless version of the **C460 B**, offering higher sensitivity and lower noise—I haven't heard it yet, but I expect it'll be a real winner.

Where price is no object, the **B & K 4011** (\$2190) is the overall best small diaphragm condenser I've used, offering crystal-clear sound and lightning-fast transient response.

Don't Stand So Close to Me

With few exceptions (notably some Electro-Voice mics), most directional mics inherently exhibit a "bass proximity effect." As you move closer to the mic, bass frequencies will be boosted more than the highs. If you're miking a vocalist with a directional (e.g., cardioid) mic and he sounds too thin, have him move closer to the mic to enhance the bass frequencies. If, on the other hand, he sounds too boomy or muffled, try having him step back a few inches.

The more directional a mic is, the more pronounced its bass proximity effect will be. Omni mics don't have a bass proximity effect. Cardioid mics do to a moderate degree, supercardioids and hypercardioids do to a progressively greater degree. And figure-eight mics, being the most directional, have the most bass proximity effect. If you have a multipattern condenser close up on a vocalist and the cardioid pattern sounds too thin, try changing the polar pattern to hypercardioid for more bottom beef. Just remember that increased directionality means increased susceptibility to vocal popping. Also, the mic's frequency response will probably change when you switch polar patterns, so make sure the overall sound is still right for that vocalist.

Just Ask the (Off-)Axis

The smaller a mic's diaphragm is, the better its off-axis frequency response will be. In other words, sound arriving at the sides and rear of the mic will have roughly the same tone as if it were coming directly at the front of the mic. Take a large instrument like classical harp, for instance. If you mic this instrument closely, some of the strings (and part of the body) will inevitably be somewhat off to the sides of the mic. To keep the tone even (not too bassy, shrill, or muffled) across all of the strings, you'll want to use a mic with a good off-axis response. Quality small diaphragm condensers will give you the best off-axis and transient responses. They sound dynamite when miking harp, piano, and multiple cymbals in stereo. Large diaphragm condensers will generally give a warmer sound on drum overheads, but cymbals off to the sides of the mics will tend to be less sparkly due to the poorer off-axis high frequency response.

Exceptions to the Rule

A microphone's construction quality will affect its performance more than its type of design, so keep an open mind and an open ear. For example, the **AKG C414 B-TLII**, a very high quality large diaphragm condenser, has a better transient response than many small diaphragm condensers. Also, microphone choice and placement is largely a personal art form. For instance, some people prefer using large diaphragm condensers on acoustic guitars and drum overheads, while others prefer small diaphragm condensers. It all depends on what kind of sound you're going after. Knowledge is power. By knowing what characteristics your mics bring to the table, you can adjust your mic choice and placement to purposefully improve things that don't initially sound right. The next time someone complains about how your mic makes them sound, tell 'em where to stick it.

Contributors: Michael Cooper is a producer, engineer and owner of Michael Cooper Recording, a commercial studio in Eugene, Oregon. He's written over a hundred articles about recording.



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FAST MACHINERY

The gap between then and now is so huge that mix engineer David J. Holman can't believe he worked any other way. "There's a big difference between frantic, continuous attention to the console and spending my whole day detailing and computer crunching," he says. The tool that's taken him from the nearly impossible 72-channel manual mix he performed on a Nelson album to a snug cup of coffee while listening to a No Doubt mix is CAD's MegaMix automation.

Holman, who has been producing and recording albums since 1969 and whose most recent credits include Bush's *Razorblade Suitcase*, No Doubt's *Tragic Kingdom* and Stabbing Westward's *Wither Blister Burn + Peel*, admits that he was somewhat wary of using any type of extra machinery, but

once he did it changed his world. "It's just here to help you, you still have to be creative," he explains. "Sometimes it may make you work a little harder, because you can always attain that, 'It's really good, but...'" Then you've got to go a little further to make it really, really good. Then to get that incredible thing takes as much time, but these tools give you that capability." In addition to the MegaMix automation, Holman has stocked his Cactus Recording Studio in Los Angeles' Laurel Canyon (affectionately called The Bunker) with rooms of gear, including a custom built 88-input desk, three custom built Stephens 24-track tape machines and "so much outboard gear it's silly."

David Holman Automates with CAD's MegaMix

While he's experimented with nearly every other automation program on the market, it's the CAD product that has pushed him in a number of directions. "It's made it so that I can concentrate on the music instead of concentrating on the machine," he comments. "It's a wonderful

thing to be able to sit back and listen to a great mix, but then say, 'The downbeat kick drum on that one brings the section needs to come up just a little bit, so it's more present and more powerful.' To be able to just do that and forget it."

As an example, he points to the debut album by A&M artist Jamie Blake. "The two guitar tracks I've spread over eight tracks, so during the mix it switches to all these different tracks, which have different compressors, filters and equalizers. So, basically it's just switching through the whole track. You can see how impractical that would be to do manually."

While the Blake project is especially suited for automation, a lot of his most recent projects have not been set up that way. "I get my mix up on the console without automation, then I gradually plug it in as I need it," he says of the MegaMix system that he uses just like a piece of outboard gear. "I don't think there's a thing on any mix that I do nowadays that doesn't have some moving stuff going on and I use this automation extensively."

Vern Evans



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by michael gelfand

Embrace, for a moment, the insanity of a musician's vernacular, where the word "P.A." has somehow come to mean "any beat-to-shit, mid-Seventies keyboard amp not being used by the bassist." So ironic. After all, most of us would willingly give up a pound of flesh to purchase the instruments and amps we covet most. But if you apply that gotta-have-it rationale across the board, how does any band that's half-serious about rehearsing or playing gigs do without buying a real P.A.? For vocals, a P.A. is downright essential gear, and in a sizable performance situation it's what you rely on to reinforce your band's sound.

It used to be that kluging together a P.A. was a costly, cumbersome, and often confusing endeavor, but thanks to JBL's EON © PowerSystem (list \$2177), your band can take that next step toward relative professionalism without breaking the bank, your back, or your brain.

It's no secret that JBL makes some excellent speaker cabinets for pro sound applications, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that the EON PowerSystem uses some of the company's technological ingenuity to create a portable and reasonably priced P.A. for the masses. Consisting of two EON Power15 powered speaker cabinets, a 10-channel MusicMix10 mixer, two JBL E50S mics, and all the necessary cables, the EON PowerSystem is a

editor's pick

Pump

Out the Volume

complete P.A. package suitable for practice and small club jobs.

I auditioned the EON by placing it in a real-world scenario: the basement rehearsal space used by my band, the Floyds of Flatbush. My thinking was that almost any rock band with two guitars, bass, and drums generates enough competitive volume to demand a strong and accurate performance out of a P.A. Besides, the rickety impostor P.A. we'd been using until then never could handle our female vocalist's throaty mid-range delivery, so we gladly enlisted the EON to tackle both the main and background vocals along with some miked kick drum. I honestly expected the system to fall

on its face, but I was wrong. In fact, after weeks of rigorous practicing, the whole band agreed that the EON really made the grade.

First and foremost, the diminutive Power15s kick out enough volume for just about any practice situation. Measuring 27"x17-1/2"x 16-1/2" (h/w/d), each of these two-way speaker cabinets employs a biamped power section that's rated to deliver 130 watts to a 15" woofer and 50 watts to a 1-3/4" horn-loaded compression driver. While I didn't



**JBL's EON
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measure overall speaker output with any geeky equipment, my ears told me they were plenty loud.

The Power15s aren't just brown—they sound good too. Our singer actu-



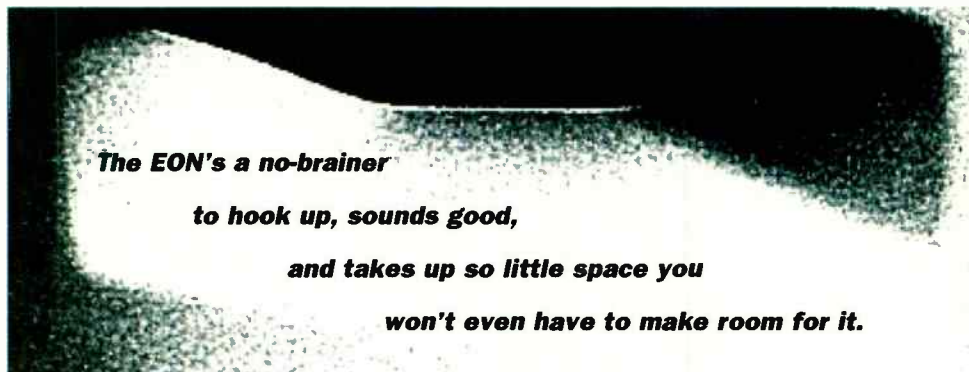
ally asked me to reduce her volume and notch off some of the high-end EQ from her vocals. She even complained of being too pronounced in the mix. Imagine that. Likewise, the speakers can handle the successive 60Hz thud of a kick drum without any problem. (No, they're not going too much lower, but that won't matter unless Barry White is your singer.)

Since these are powered speakers, you must hook them up to a nearby AC outlet by using the supplied power cords that connect to the rear-panel power jack. (This can be a slight hassle when it comes to speaker setup, but that's nothing a couple of grounded extension cords can't fix.) On the rear of each speaker you'll find an XLR input and output; these are used for connecting the speakers to the mixer and for daisy-chaining additional speakers. You'll also find a power switch, a level control knob, signal- and peak-LEDs, and a mic/line switch with a corresponding LED.

While the signal- and peak-LEDs are useful for monitoring the operating status of the

speakers, they're not nearly as critical as the level control knob. Once you've placed the mic/line switch into line position, you'll have to carefully adjust the level control's position in relation to the mixing board's main volume fader. It's the same kind of balance needed

LEDs for signal presence and peak overload. Channels 7 and 8 employ both 1/4-inch and RCA stereo inputs instead of XLRs; these channels aren't equipped with pan and trim pots, mid-frequency shelving, or LEDs for signal presence and peak overload.



The EON's a no-brainer

to hook up, sounds good,

and takes up so little space you

won't even have to make room for it.

between a power amp's master volume control and a preamp's gain setting. The thing is, if you get the balance wrong here, you either don't get enough speaker output or you get an earful of squealing feedback. Just set it correctly and forget it. I say. (When set in the mic position, the speakers can receive a signal from a single microphone, but that's not necessary unless you're using the speakers in a stand-alone setting without the mixer.)

Each enclosure weighs in at just over 40 pounds (thanks to a recently patented speaker design that exponentially reduces the weight of the magnet) and comes fitted with a comfortably placed handle that renders the speakers highly manageable. Notched slots on the rear panel allow for neatly hanging the speaker wire, and the speakers can be mounted on stands or hung via suspension hardware (available but not included) if need be—all thoughtful extras.

As I've already mentioned, you could choose to run a mic directly through the speakers, but that would defeat the purpose of the MusicMix10. This is a highly intuitive 10-channel mixer that's clearly laid out and offers space-age good looks to boot. Channels 1 through 6 are fitted with both XLR and 1/4-inch mic/line inputs, and each channel features a level fader, pan and trim pots, monitor- and effects-send level controls, high- and low-frequency shelving (at 12.5kHz and 63Hz, respectively), mid-frequency peaking (at 2.5kHz), and

Given this price range, it would be unfair to expect a lot of sonic flexibility from the individual channels, and indeed, they proved to lack midrange punch. That's not to say they were at all offensive—the trim pots are actually surprisingly quiet—but the limited EQ section isn't as effective as, let's say, three sweepable frequency bands with plus or minus 10dB boost/cut might be. I quickly learned to appreciate the signal presence LEDs, though. They came in very handy whenever anyone wanted me to change their channel settings on the fly.

The board's output section consists of left and right main output level faders, balance control, level controls for headphone, monitor, main- and monitor-effects return, LEDs for power and output, and a stereo/mono switch with a corresponding LED—all pretty standard stuff on any decent mixing board. Two 12-segment LEDs monitor peak-hold output, but if you're paying attention to what's coming out of the speakers, you probably won't need to use this feature much. There's also a full complement of inputs and output jacks, including the XLR speaker outputs, stereo RCA tape outputs, a stereo headphone output, and the 1/4" stereo effects I/Os.

I really like the presence of the phantom power (with an on/off switch and corresponding status LED on the back panel). This is most convenient for times when you might want to use condenser mics—overheads on the drum

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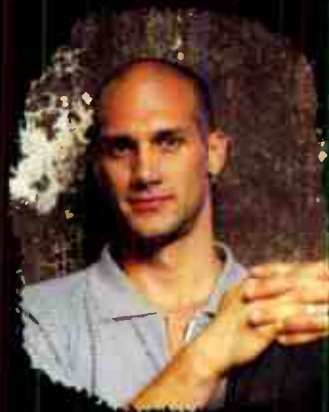
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kit, for instance. Unfortunately, the phantom power is only rated to deliver 14 volts instead of the more universal 48 volts. Many of the better-made condenser mics need 48 volts to operate, but I doubt whether anyone's going to

condenser mic that a user is likely to connect to an EON system. The decision to make our phantom power supply 14 volts was based on design considerations. We wanted to ensure that our mixer would power condenser mics on

Like the smaller version on the rear of the Power15s, you place your cables into the snug-fitting notches that stick out over the channel inputs. This holds the cables in place and keeps the board clear of tangled cables. It's such an obvious plus that I can't understand why every board doesn't have one.

The EON PowerSystem offers a whole lot of convenience, performance, and functionality, especially when you consider its relatively modest price tag. Think about it: For less than \$2200 you have a fully functioning P.A. that's a no-brainer to hook up, sounds really good for practice and small gig situations, and takes up so little space that you won't even have to make room for it. The added bonus is that you'll be able to give your old P.A. back to your bassist. Overdriven bass is in, man.

Contributors: Michael Gelfand is a writer specializing in consumer electronics and music pieces.

**While I didn't
measure the speakers'
output with any geeky equipment,
my ears told me they were plenty loud.**

bust out a vintage U47 to use with the EON. [Steve Steinhart, product manager for JBL Professional, notes that "most condenser mics will operate on anywhere from 9 to 52 volts. Fourteen volts will power almost any

all six mic input channels simultaneously without increasing the size and weight of the power supply."]

The notched cable management system is another winning aspect of the MusicMix10.

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- 209 4/96 **Gin Blossoms**, Luscious Jackson, Masters/Slide Blues Guitar
- 210 5/96 **Tori Amos**, Dwight Yoakam Meets Willie Nelson, KMFDM
- 211 6/96 **Hootie and the Blowfish**, Rage Against the Machine, Masters of Jazz Bass, Songwriter Royalties
- 212 7/96 **Brit-Pop**, Oasis, Pulp, George Harrison, Blur, Cast, Radiohead, Boo Radleys & Robert Smith of The Cure
- 213 8/96 **Kiss**, The Blue Nile, Ani DiFranco, Perry Farrell, Boyz II Men
- 214 9/96 **Duane Allman**, Vernon Reid & Junior Brown, Red Hot Chili Peppers
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home studio

David Torn

Welcome to The Loopool, guitarist/producer David Torn's home studio, nestled in the Catskill Mountains in Bearsville, NY. From this sanctuary emanate the majestic soundscapes of Torn's solo releases, guitar atmospherics for film soundtracks, and his contributions to records by other artists, like Patrick O'Hearn and Jules Shear. Torn's latest CD, *What Means "Solid," Traveller?* (CMP), was created entirely, from inception through final mastering, in this 14' x 20' room. Everything essential is arranged in a circle in the center of the room, surrounded by a plethora of ethnic percussion, bizarre guitars, and cast-off amps, which line the walls and crowd the corners.

Though versatile enough to produce records for others, the studio is not meant to be all-purpose but is primarily dedicated to Torn's own twisted sonic explorations, including *Pandora's Tool Box*, his second sampling CD for Q-UP Arts. While creating ungodly, insect-fear noises by subverting loops, delays and harmonizers to his own weird ends with massive amounts of distortion, he'll tell you he's just playin' the blues. It's a strange mix of primitive mojo and state-of-the-art technology.

The Loopool is littered with way too many stringed instruments of every description, from the ridiculous to the sublime. David's primary guitars are an *Ithaca Guitar Works acoustic/ electric* ①, a 1993 remake of a National Duolian metal-bodied resonator guitar with an absolutely huge sound (not pic-

by **baker rorick**

photographs by
randi anglin

tured), and a pair of *Klein* electric guitars ②. The Kleins are outfitted with Joe Barden pickups and one custom-wound pickup by DiMarzio's Steve Blucher. Torn tours with the primary guitars; the others—including a 1957 Gibson ES-350T, a customized Fender "Duo-Stang" (with a Mustang body and Duo-Sonic II neck), an original prototype Steinberger, and two new Ibanez Talmans—are saved for studio use.

"It's hard for me not to include something as critical as my main Rivera amp," says Torn, "because it's like an instrument to me. It's irreplaceable." His *Rivera M100* Slave-master 100-watt head ③, custom-built by Paul Rivera in 1990, can load the power amp signal through his effects to other amps, in effect slave-driving a pair of *Rivera Hundred Duo Twelves* ④.

David's live guitar rig, with its dozens of pedals, processors and footswitches, and its convoluted signal path—worthy of an article in itself—is the heart of the Loopool. There

are two pedalboards. The first ⑤ is home to about a dozen stompboxes and a TC Electronic Type 14800 protected power supply. Favorite toys are by Prescription Electronics: an Experience with octave (upper), fuzz and swell effects, a COB octave pedal, and a Yardbox overdrive. Other effects include a Boss DM-3 delay, TC Electronic XII phaser, TC Electronic Sustain + Parametric EQ, Visual wah/volume, Boss AW-2 auto wah, and another favorite piece of cheese that Torn picked up in Japan, the Guyatone WR-2 Auto-Wah. David tunes his guitars down a half or even a whole step with a Korg DT-2 chromatic guitar tuner.

The second pedalboard ⑥ holds a half-dozen foot controls for the rack-mounted looping and processing devices. A *Lexicon Vortex* audio morphing processor ⑦, *Lexicon Jam Man* ⑧, *Lexicon PCM-42* digital delay ⑨, and *Lexicon PCM-80* digital effects processor ⑩ are his main looping tools, sharing rack space with his *Roland S-760* sampler ⑪. Not in the rack at the time was another of David's favorite tools, an Oberheim Echoplex Digital Pro. Everything in the live rig is mixed through a *Mackie CR1604 mixer* ⑫ and samples are triggered with a *Peavey PC1600 MIDI controller* ⑬, when performing. Torn stresses that no synthesizers or keyboard programs are ever used, and his *Korg M-1* workstation ⑭ is only used for triggering samples in the studio. The *RCA video monitor* ⑮ programs the Roland sampler.

An *Alesis SR-16* ⑯ drum machine is only used for click tracks these days, as Torn cre-

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ates his rhythm tracks with drum samples from friends or commercial sampling CDs. Producing an upcoming record for bassist Mick Karn, who plays with David and drummer Terry Bozzio in the Polytown trio, will mean recording tracks with a live drummer at another studio.

Torn's computer is a **Macintosh Centris 650** (17), used in conjunction with **Mark of the Unicorn MIDI Express** (18), **Digidesign Pro Tools SMPTE Slave Driver** (19), and a **Digidesign Audio Interface** (20) to run his software programs: Digidesign Sound Designer II ("There are four tracks of it, with plug-ins, and I use all the plug-ins for it by an Israeli company called KS Waves."), Digidesign Intelligent Noise Reduction System, Emagic Logic Audio sequencing program, and Arboretum Hyperprism special effects processor.

"It's all for audio, done on the computer. Even my sequencer I use primarily as an audio sequencer; I don't use the MIDI stuff.

I also master here. I've been mastering pretty much everything on Alchemy Records these days, including CDs by Wayne Krantz and Leni Stern, Gary Willis and Dennis Chambers, and Tim Berne. For mastering, I use **Digidesign MasterList CD** with a **PCT/Yamaha CD recorder** (21). I have a number of hard drives, used either for my computer or the sampler; I switch 'em back and forth. I use **APS** hard drives—a little one and a medium one (22)—and a **Glyph Jaz drive** (23). Glyph is an Ithaca company specializing in computer storage for the music and video industries. I've also got two cheap **SyQuest** drives (24) and one discount-mail-order CD-ROM drive."

A **CAD Equitec E-200** (25) and a pair of **Shure SM57s** (26) are used primarily for miking speaker cabs. A hand-held Shaker harmonica mic with volume control and an old Astatic ham-radio mike found at a yard sale are used for dirty vocals. Torn has neighbors, and often guitars must be recorded so as not

to disturb them. For direct recording, he uses a **Tone King Load Box** (27), a silent speaker custom-built by Tone King president Mark Bartel, an **ADA MicroCab II** miked-speaker-cabinet emulator (28), and an **ADA Ampulator** (29), containing a pair of 12AX7s, with hum-injection and tube-bias controls to add more noise and buzz than a hive of angry African bees. **The Retrospec Squeeze Box** (30) is a footswitchable compressor/limiter. "It's got two tubes and uses opto-isolators, like an old Teletronics LA-2A. It's incredibly warm and squishy."

Genelec 1030A studio monitors (31) are "critical" when using the **Mackie 24-8** (32) console to record to a pair of **Tascam DA-88s** (33) and a **Tascam DA-30** DAT machine (34). Headphones are AudioTechnica ATH-910 PRO run through a **Rane HC-6** headphone preamp (35). A **Sony TC-WR690** cassette deck (36) and **Technics SL-PQ440** CD player (37) are available for playback as well.

"I've got all this high-tech shit and I'm trying to rootsify it, so it's not all cold and nasty but dark and muddy and murky. That harmonizer there"—pointing to a **Digitech DHP-55** five-part digital harmony processor (38)—"I only use it for fuzz and fuzz-wah, particularly for drums and vocals. I never use the harmonization and fancy stuff." The **Yamaha TX81Z** FM tone generator (39) doesn't get used at all anymore. Other processors include a **dbx 120XP** subharmonic synthesizer (40), **Tube Works RT-921** stereo tube 12-spring reverb (41), **Lexicon Reflex** dynamic MIDI reverberator (42), **Eventide GTR4000 Ultra-Harmonizer** (43), and **Lexicon LXP-15** reverb/multieffects processor (44). Power is conditioned by a **Furman PL-8** power conditioner (45). "I have a lot of expensive gear," Torn admits, "but so much of it is dedicated to fucking up sounds. I use distortion like other people use reverb. You wanna record your drum kit? I've got 10 fuzzboxes for you. You wanna do a vocal? I got a little mic and a guitar amp for you. You want crispy clean? I think you're in the wrong house!"

David whirls around the Loopool's circle of sonic tools on a wheeled, ergonomic stool by **Comfort Craft** (46), which helps to alleviate fatigue. "It's one of the most important things I've bought for the studio. I spend a lot of time in here. Can I offer a pro tip? A comfortable studio chair is essential!"

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Child's Play

Björk

Telegram (Elektra)

Every generation of music fans gets its Peter Pan. The Sixties had Tiny Tim, the Eighties had Michael Jackson, and the Nineties have an Icelandic kewpie doll named Björk. At a time when female rock stars are encouraged to openly explore (and exploit) their sexuality, the elfin ex-Sugarcubes frontwoman has maintained the image of a girlish, guileless mascot for the alternative rock set. This may be the only thirty-year-old woman alive who can get away with wearing pigtails in public.

And yet, as a musician, Björk reveals a sure sensual sophistication. Her feathery, restless soprano—one of the most distinctive voices in pop music today—can veer in an instant from a demure chirp to a mighty growl or a shivering, orgasmic wail. On her solo albums, 1992's *Debut* and last year's *Post*, she abandoned her old group's unapologetically sophomoric guitar-rock in favor of sinuous funk and jazz grooves. With a little help from techno and dance music savants like Nellee Hooper, Howie B., and Tricky, she's constructed a sonic playpen for kids of all ages, one that nods to the old school while drawing on state-of-the-art studio techniques.

Björk's latest effort, *Telegram*, is a collection of re-mixed versions of songs that originally appeared on *Post*. That approach might seem a bit self-indulgent for an artist with only two (solo) LPs under her belt. But for

Björk, who has always been a lot more interesting as a singer and musical conceptualist than as a songwriter, it's a clever idea that engenders some vitally creative—or at least vitally re-creative—music. A few of the intricately produced tracks here seemed like remixes to begin with; in doodling further, Björk often achieves the opposite of a typical dance remix—that is, she makes the original material sound warmer and more organic. On "Hyperballad," the Brodsky Quartet lends elegant, plaintive strings to complement the chilly urgency of her vocals. The wistful "Isobel" acquires seductive Latin percussion, and the funky "I Miss You" projects a pleasantly languid, trippy vibe.

Elsewhere, Björk is up to her young tricks, occasionally playing hide and seek with the listener by disappearing into the elaborate orchestration. "Enjoy" is refashioned so that industrial crunch comes to the fore, with Björk's voice distorted behind a wall of echo. She's fragile and fuzzy on the quietly ominous (and overlong) "Head-phones," and on "Cover Me," you can barely hear her at all over eerie electronic effects. But on *Telegram*'s one new song, "My Spine," Björk re-emerges in full force: She sings the goofy lyrics clearly and playfully, accompanied only by the tinkle of exhaust pipes. Performed by someone else, the number might sound like kitsch, but Björk's blend of childlike whimsy and grownup authority makes the results as universally entertaining as a good Disney movie. Or a least a good Michael Jackson video.

—Elysa Gardner

records

JUNGLE GENE?

Martin Rossiter's Brighter Side

Responding to a typical greeting of "How's it going?," tall, distinguished-looking Englishman Martin Rossiter slumps into his chair at a London studio and sighs a tentative "All right, I guess ... so far." Which means, ironically, that fans of the crooner's classy depresso-pop quartet Gene will be rejoicing, as the group was finishing up its sophomore disc, *Drawn to the Deep End*, with more lyrically somber, musically uplifting enigma songs like "Fighting Fit," "Save Me, I'm Yours," "Why Was I Born," and even an unblinking study of depression's darkest stage of self-mutilation, "Long Sleeves."

How did Gene capture its moody, textural sound this time around? Simple, says Rossiter. He hired a producer whose "track record was an odd one, because a lot of the records he's produced I don't actually like, although the production on them is fantastic." Fortunately, Chris Hughes did have one thing going for him, as far as Rossiter was concerned: He used to play drums with Adam and the Ants.

Before rolling tape on *Drawn* at London's Metropolis Studio (and also in sessions at Hughes' home), Rossiter and his colleagues opted for a little experiment: "We met him and worked with him for only three days. It was exceedingly relieving in the sense that he was getting things out of us really quickly that no one had gotten out of us before." Rossiter had been "a little disappointed" with the producer Phil Vinal's sound on the band's debut for A&M, *Olympian*. "So we were determined not to get it wrong this time: I think that was the essential driving force. We went in quite open-minded and open-eyed, and we were a lot less precious about certain arrangements, a lot more willing to accept new ideas."

"Long Sleeves," for instance, achieves a delicate balance between guitarist Steve Mason's echoed acoustic chords and Rossiter's tiny, distant vocals—the result, according to the frontman, of Hughes recom-

mending "quite an unusual mic: quite a rare one actually, although I tend to deliberately ignore the mics or amps used because I don't want to get bogged down in any of it. I know what I want things to sound like, and I'm not averse to saying 'I want a little bit more top, please' in the studio. But beyond that, I'm technically inept—and I'm happy being technically inept."

Conversely, the hellbent, wall-of-noise miasma of "Voice of the Father" was given such classic rock & roll chops by Hughes that it almost—almost, mind you—feels like a different group. Rossiter grins with pride over this minor coup: "That's the great joy of me with the record: We had fun in the mixes, and it does still sound like us. On the same album, you can have something that's tech-

nically a little off the wall, or something vibrant and exciting and full of energy. Or it could be the opposite: gentle and beautiful and reflective. Everything on the record was in us to start with, but we were simply pushed a bit more [by Hughes], to be honest. We haven't suddenly gone jazz-jungle fusion," assures Rossiter. "But then again, we just might."

—Tom Larham



L-R: Kevin Miles, Martin Rossiter, Matt James, Steve Mason

The Artist

Emancipation
(NPG/EMI)

Of all the pop stars out there, I can't think of anyone who has the talent, musical overview, and ambition of Prince Rogers Nelson, by that or any other name. At least, that's the way I used to feel. For me, 1987's *Lovesexy* and its accompanying tour were watersheds of modern R&B and rock, and I saw in Prince a pop Ellington for the Nineties, one whose reach never exceeded his grasp. The music seemed to just pour out of him, and it was everything he could do to get it down. But, alas, our hero ran afoul of his old record company when his desire to release this deluge ran contrary to, er, sound business practices, and for several years his career seemed stalled as he sought to free himself from a business marriage that wasn't working; much of his subsequent output ranged from the inspired to the indulgent to the indifferent.

But, having dissolved his label marriage and entered into a real one, He Who Haveth No Name has apparently re-emerged, re-energized. *Emancipation* is Prince's White Album, three CDs worth of fresh songs and arrangements that proceed with such joy and rage, sensuality and devotion, it's as if he'd never left us. I won't even pretend to have digested all the narrative and musical details in this elaborate trilogy—there's simply too much music, too many self-referential asides—but Prince's resounding production values and commanding technique invite the listener to jump in anywhere and any number of times without tiring of the game.

For me, each of the three CDs sustains its own sense of mood and purpose. Roughly speaking, *The Artist* engages in an operatic depiction of the conflict (or rather, the confluence) between his spiritual quest and his sensual longings and a streetwise expression of indignation as he strives to project and protect his vision of artistic growth, personal freedom and family values. Yeah, family values, because while a/k/a Prince still enjoys dressing up, playing at being an adolescent as it were, it seems clear that in jettisoning his old name (again) "the artist formerly known as..." seems determined to transcend his old image as well—even as he revels in it. Thus on disc 2 he proceeds from a typically elaborate, sexed-up funk arrangement of "Joint 2 Joint" (in which he goes through more intricate harmonic and rhythmic modulations in one song than your garden variety R&B band would in a lifetime), through deceptively bucolic depictions of death, deliverance, and re-dedication of purpose on "Holy River" (with its echoes of

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chuck's cuts

by charles m. young

Silverchair

Freak Show
(Sony)

Either you get the guitar tone right with riff-based metallic grunge, or you don't. If you do, everything is possible. If you don't, you suck. The guitar tone is right here, the arrangements not too obviously Nirvana-influenced, the riffs range from solid enough for hard rock respectability to genuinely catchy. Violins and acoustic guitars in "Cemetery" and a few other instruments that I can't identify in other songs keep things properly paced. Reports of the death of grunge are greatly exaggerated.

Original Soundtrack

Evita
(Warner Bros.)

The cocktail party cliché about Madonna is that aside from her genius for self-promotion, she has little talent. The evidence here is that she is singing with personality, vulnerability, and humanity, and is the only thing I want to hear again on this two-CD set that otherwise suffers from soulless Broadway production values. Maybe my rock & roll-attuned ears automatically rebel at the well-enunciated, and maybe it's too easy to dismiss Andrew Lloyd Webber, so I reserve the right to change my mind after I see the movie. Until then, this is, except for Madonna, Meatloaf in Buenos Aires.

Snoop Doggy Dogg

Tha Doggfather
(Death Row)

Anything you say about this album, the opposite is equally true. Snoop is conciliatory, Snoop is defiant. Snoop is renouncing violence, Snoop is celebrating violence. Money should be your guiding principle, creating a decent world for the next generation should motivate you. Party now, delay gratification so you can join the middle class. So other than jostling for status within the extremely capitalist hierarchy of gangsta rap, I don't know what he's getting at. If he ever figures out

what his values are, and sticks with them, his instinct for satire could make him infinitely more dangerous.

Big Jack Johnson & The Jelly Roll Kings

Off Yonder Wall
(Fat Possum/Capricorn)

Johnson can play the blues dirty, and he can play the blues clean. Here he finds a point that's about two-thirds into his really dirty stuff on Earwig and about one-third into

Hard to believe it's been twenty-five years since I sat down in my dorm room and first read Hunter in the fourth anniversary edition of *Rolling Stone*. I remember laughing as hard as I've ever laughed, and the book stands up to my memories today. Reminds you what it's like to lose all your middle-class superego coordinates, which is to say it makes you feel free, as a great work of art should. This oral rendition (Harry Dean Stanton, Maury Chaykin, Jim Jarmusch, Harry Shearer, among

session in 1959 and several re-recordings during the Sixties, *BJD* maps his development as a musician and composer in greater detail than the Rhino greatest hits collection *Return of the Repressed*. Meaning Fahey's taste for the weirdly dissonant when dealing with foul emotions and his fascination with tone to the occasional exclusion of almost everything else is on fuller display here.

Aphex Twin

Richard D. James
(Sire)

First cut "4" has one of the most irritating rhythm tracks I've ever heard. So I suspect he's going for anti-trance ambient, music that takes you so far out of the groove that, depending on your tolerance of post-modern post-melody, you'll either noodle dance in masturbatory aloneness or bitchslap your partner. Subsequent cuts confirm my suspicions.

Choying Drolma and Steve Tibbetts

Chö
(Hannibal)

You could allow yourself to become annoyed that Tibetan Buddhism has become fashionable, or you could be happy that its values are actually penetrating Western culture. I choose to be happy. This album also makes me happy. Tibbetts traveled to a small monastery in Nepal and recorded a bunch of nuns singing sacred songs with a couple of DAT recorders. He's added some of his understated but thoroughly mystical guitar and cello to enhance the atmospherics. Since recordings of Tibetan monks have been widely available for the past decade or so, the nuns at first induce a mild case of cognitive dissonance, like the first time you heard a female newscaster in the early Seventies. But then you realize your brain is floating somewhere beyond the ozone layer. So I'm going to listen to this until I achieve supreme enlightenment.



his latter-day B.B. Kingified stuff. I approve of this point. The Jelly Roll Kings (Sam Carr on drums, Frank Frost on harp and Farfisa organ) know how to groove, and damn few one says is crucial and damn few achieve. They also know how to get low-down, psychedelic, demented and sweaty, which brings out the best in Johnson's often whimsical musical imagination on guitar. All three of them deserve to be a much bigger deal. And no, they don't need a bass player.

Hunter S. Thompson And Various Actors

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas
(Margaritaville)

many actors) may seem intrusive on your imagination for the first few minutes, and then you get swept away in a time and place as distant as the American Dream Hunter set out to find.

John Fahey

The Legend of Blind Joe Death
(Takoma/Fantasy)

This is the headwater of the vast river that is solo steel-string guitar composition. And like all rivers, the water doesn't get any purer downstream. Lots of guys had more chops, nobody had more emotional range or profound melodic gift than John Fahey. Twenty-one cuts assembled from his first recording



the artist formerly known as prince

Dylan, a rocking release, and the novel assertion that "relationships based on the physical are over and done...if only one"; to a remarkably tender keyboard bass-inflected ballad ("Let's Have Baby") featuring his keening, feline vocals, to the personal revelations of "Friend, Lover, Sister, Mother/Wife." Rarely has the Glyphed One ever peeked out from behind the convenient ambiguities of his character to reveal with such deeply felt emotion.

There are also a wealth of giddy instrumental details worth savoring—nods to the guitar styles of B.B. King and Wes Montgomery, even intimations of Frank Zappa's rhythmic ensemble flourishes—along with a few radio-friendly evocations of the power ballad, dancing jams, sly soul covers and pop standards, some truly nasty rhythmic exorcisms of pent-up rage, and a hip-hopping comment on the vanities of vanity ("Style"). From the tongue-in-

cheek big band jazz of "Courtin' Time" to the futuristic techno of "New World" and "Human Body," this Artist has put his stamp on an amazing range of musical styles. Given the newfound freedom that rings through every note of *Emancipation*, it's clear that for him there's no turning back—he's already way past 1999.—*Chip Stern*

Various Artists

Dr. Dre Presents...The Aftermath
(Aftermath/Interscope)

Caveats first: Though Dr. Dre gets top billing here, this is not a Dre album (it's a sampler of Aftermath artists), nor is it a collection of Dre productions (he's behind the board for just seven of the album's 16 tracks). So if you're expecting *More Chronic*, you're going to be disappointed.

But the music still packs a punch. Some tracks, like RBX's "Blunt Time," stick close to the classic Dre formula, framing the rap with vocoder and a whining synth hook while grounding the groove with a lazy, floor-shaking bass line. Mel-Man's engagingly gritty "Shittin' On the World" adds new elements to the mix, including dub-style piano, pizzicato strings à la James Brown's "It's a Man's World," and a throbbing, off-kilter pulse. It's a total reinvention of the formula, and just as powerful as the original.

Apart from King T, who turns up with "the gangsta shit" on "Str-8 Gone," there's little of the hardcore attitude which characterized Dre's work for Death Row. In fact, a couple tracks pointedly repudiate the beat-'em-down posture taken by gangsta rappers, with Dre's "Been There Done That" the most eloquent, verbally and musically. The non-Dre productions suggest a similar change, or at least broadening, of attitude. From the densely layered "As the World Keeps Turning" by an aptly named Miscellaneous, to the slinky, soulful "Please" (produced and performed by Maurice Wilcher, who sounds like a Keith Sweat-in-the-making), this revue makes it clear that *The Aftermath* is more than a one man show.

—*J.D. Considine*

Bill Evans

The Secret Sessions
(Fantasy)

Turn Out the Stars: The Final Village Vanguard Recordings June 1980
(Warner Bros.)

Wagner had Bayreuth; Bill Evans had the Village Vanguard. Though Evans was by no means the only jazz musician to cut memorable live dates at the late Max Gordon's basement club, the pianist's 1961 Vanguard performances with his quintessential trio featuring bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian established the standard on which his later recordings were evaluated. Now Fantasy and Warner Bros. have simultaneously stepped up with a staggering total of 14 hitherto unheard CDs' worth of Evans' Vanguard material.

The Secret Sessions, as its title suggests, is an eight-disc bonanza of dates recorded between 1966 and 1975 by optical physicist Mike Harris, who bore basically the same relationship to Evans that Dean Benedetti did to Charlie Parker. Like Benedetti, who obsessively captured Bird's music in clandestine club recordings, Harris secretly lugged a Uher into the Vanguard to collect Evans' performances for his own pleasure; unlike Benedetti, he caught entire numbers and not just the leader's solos. Though he wasn't a professional engineer, Harris generally managed to get tapes of high quality with his battery-powered machine; despite their bootleg genesis, *The Secret Sessions* are excellent, strain-free listening. Culled from dozens of hours of archival material, this boxed set charts the evolution

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bruce cockburn

of Evans' richly lyrical style through various group lineups, most of which feature bassist Eddie Gomez as a constant. Seven different drummers are represented, including long-termers Marty Morell and Elliot Zigmund and ringer Jack DeJohnette, but the most exciting support is offered by Philly Joe Jones, whose propulsive work lights a bright-burning fire under Evans over the course of two CDs. For the most part, though, Evans' more contemplative side is heard here. Fans owe Harris a debt of thanks for his musical espionage.

Turn Out the Stars dates from early June 1980, when Evans brought his then-current trio, which included bass phenom Marc Johnson and drummer Joe LaBarbera, into the Vanguard for four days of recording, with an eye to issuing a two-LP set from the dates. The pianist died three months later, and the tapes remained unissued until recently resurrected as this six-CD set. (For non-completists, a distilled single CD of Evans' favorites, titled *The Artist's Choice*, is also available.) The pianist was plainly inspired in his last days by the smooth drive of LaBarbera and the throaty, electrifying accompaniment of Johnson, who reaches levels of empathy previously matched only by the sublimely simpatico LaFaro. The highlights of the set lie in four epic readings of Miles Davis' "Nardis," each of which runs over 15 minutes and bears exploratory Evans introductions and thrilling Johnson solos.

Few jazz artists ever left behind such an exciting and definitive testament as Evans did with these searching, cataclysmic sides.

—Chris Morris

Bruce Cockburn

The Charity of Night
(Rykodisc)

Pierce Pettis

Making Light of It
(Compass)

The world's a dark, ugly place, full of fear and injustice, and sometimes a singer/songwriter can't help but get weary dealing with it. In brief, that's the message of Bruce Cockburn's latest, his debut for Ryko. That means it doesn't sound so much different from the message Cockburn's been sending for the last twenty years. The big difference here is musical context: With a couple of concise exceptions ("Pacing the Cage" and "The Whole Night Sky," top additions to the Cockburn oeuvre), these are less songs than sprawling mood pieces, conjuring a sense of immense natural forces at play.

The stately vibes and authoritative upright bass of guests Gary Burton and Rob Wasserman help the mission greatly, but the main focus for once is Cockburn's amazing guitar playing. "Night Train"

features a cathartic, flailing solo, while the leads of "Live On My Mind" are more restrained but no less insightful. Too many "poetic" spoken-word passages threaten to drag the album down; one piece with a recitation at the center is fine to establish seriousness, but four smacks of self-importance (especially when two of them are by far the longest tracks on the album). The closing "Strange Waters" sets things right, though. An apocalyptic dirge with a creepy vocal, it builds momentum by adding layers of crunchy guitars, climaxing with a solo that bites so hard and deep you can practically see the bone coming exposed.

Like Cockburn, Pierce Pettis has just changed corporate affiliations. But the two have more in common than label switching—namely, an unassuming yet virtuosic guitar style (check out "Granddaddy Blew the Whistle" for proof of Pettis' chops); a soulful, slightly raspy vocal delivery (Pettis also owes Leo Kottke in this department), and—need it even be said?—great songwriting talent. Pettis can be just as serious as Cockburn, if not more so. His preoccupation with both Old and New Testaments is plainly laid out in several tracks here, particularly "Miriam." But whereas Cockburn seems to have mislaid his sense of humor on *The Charity of Night*, Pettis hangs onto his on *Making Light of It*. Individ-

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ual songs register less than an album-length vibe: warm, intimate, and assured. The guy knows what he's doing, and it's a pleasure to be in on it.

—Mac Randall

Al Di Meola
Al Di Meola plays Piazzolla
 (Blue Moon)

Paco de Lucia, Al Di Meola, John McLaughlin

The Guitar Trio
 (Verve)

Legend keeps having it that Al Di Meola is one of the strutting axe-slingers in jazz, full of precisionist perfectionism, romantic hubris, and chops that don't want to quit. But his recorded output, especially in the Nineties, tells a different story. On his World Sinfonia projects and now this homage to the late, great Astor Piazzolla, Di Meola shows a mastery of the acoustic guitar in settings that lean heavily on the coiled passion of the tango.

Piazzolla, master of the nuevo tango, has never been so well represented in our local music stores than in the years following his death of a stroke in 1992. Di Meola's tribute serves his memory well, with enough textural variation to maintain balance

and intrigue. On "Oblivion" and "Verano Reflecciones," he hunkered down in his studio to arrange and realize the tune's complexities, although the synth textures here pale by comparison to the acoustic splendors of the rest of the album. As a guitarist, Di Meola's exacting intensity befits the music beautifully. Vince Mendoza's string arrangements on "Cafe 1930," "Night Club 1960" and "Bordel 1900" offer a layer of wistful undercoating on music whose power seems to transcend fashion or era. The other hero of this recording is Dino Saluzzi, the powerful bandoneon player who was in World Sinfonia and who supplies the reedy brilliance and virtuosity to act as surrogate for Piazzolla himself, particularly on the "Tango Suite" and "Tango II." The album ends, poetically, with Di Meola's own "Last Tango for Astor."

Di Meola is also playing acoustic on the latest addition to the discography of the super-trio he shares with flamenco master Paco DeLucia and John McLaughlin, their first album since 1983. A title so definitive as *The Guitar Trio* might seem vain, were it not for the relative brilliance of all involved. The record brims with tight, fiery arrangements, daredevil solos, and inventive compositions, especially from McLaughlin's pen. At a time when other guitarists on the world music scene are putting mild-mannered flamenco riffs into restaurants and grocery stores, it's nice to hear fretboard firepower in the service of more ambitious musicality.

—Josef Woodard

George Ducas

Where I Stand
 (Capitol)

Nashville is a city of cyborgs these days, where "country" music is manufactured with all the passion of C3PO oiling a particularly squeaky joint. Newcomer George Ducas could be the warm, furry Wookiee among all that clanking metal. Listen to his sophomore *Where I Stand* closely, and you'll hear mostly classic pop influences from the late Fifties/early Sixties, not mock-hayseed hokum.

Granted, some of these sounds stem directly from the Duane Eddy-ish guitarwork of producer Richard Bennett. But Ducas deserves most of the plaudits. He spurns twangy formula for tangy retrofitted hooks in the seven songs he's co-cowritten here; in fact, it's only when he resorts to publishing-house fodder ("I'd Be Lying," "You Could've Fooled Me," and Buddy Miller's regulation two-step "I'm Pretending") that his unique, personable vision begins to falter.

The opening "Every Time She Passes By" sets the sunny pace: A galloping acoustic strum couples with Bennett's surf-frothy vibrato riff, which gives way to Ducas's non-inflected, regular-Joe singing voice—a serviceable instrument that's as good-natured as one of those eager gas station attendants from yesteryear. The lyric schematic is disarmingly simple, but the pieces fit together in perfect Everly Brothers symmetry—hear the tune once, and it'll

stick to your ears. Mostly, this is dumb fun that knows it's dumb fun and doesn't put on any highfalutin airs, like most of the best rock & roll and, for that matter, much of country's classic past. With any luck, *Where I Stand* bodes well for its future.

—Tom Lanham

BeauSoleil

L'Amour ou la Folle
 (Rhino)

BeauSoleil's new disc marks a milestone: the 20th anniversary of the band's founding. Like Los Lobos, they've sustained long careers in and out of the mainstream, playing traditional and contemporary ethnic music replete with unfamiliar pleasures. Two-steps and waltzes become whirlwinds of Cajun bliss, centered around frontman Michael Doucet, whose thick moustache, frenetically bobbing head, and flying hair give the appearance of an unleashed mad professor of the fiddle. The skilled ensemble, which includes brother David Doucet—whose flat-picking style re-invented the possibilities of the Cajun guitar—along with Jimmy Breaux on accordion, Al Tharp on bass and banjo, Billy Ware on multiple percussion and Tommy




Photo: Allison Dyer

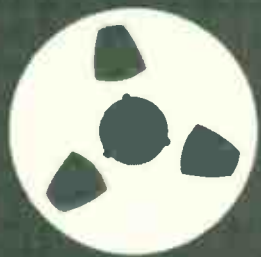
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Robley Duplex

Alesi on drums, brings a folk-acoustic sensibility to the repertoire of more traditional Cajun pioneers.

BeauSoleil has recorded for several labels, and some results have been better than others. The finest early discs—including 1984's essential *Parlez-Nous a Boire* (Arhoolie)—invigorate songs previously buried in folklore files. On this one, the band is in full stretch.

For "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie" ("C'est un Peche de Dire un Menterie") and "Danse Caribe," BeauSoleil reaches east toward New Orleans and beyond, as clarinetist Dr. Michael White interacts with Doucet's fiddle to thrilling effect reminiscent of early jazz combos.

On Augie Meyers' "Can't You See" ("Tu Vas Voir") the band is joined by Meyers himself for a bilingual trip to the honky-tonks of East Texas. The guts and soul of inherited tunes, such as the Amede Ardoin classic "Eunice Two Step," are honored by Doucet's impassioned, high-pitched singing and Breaux's driving accordion. And the title track, with guest Richard Thompson's electric guitar solos, would be equally suitable for either two-stepping or head-banging. The overall result is a record that fully realizes the band's mission to throw down a Cajun dance on the crossroads of tradition and change.

—Michael Tisserand

shorts

Various Artists

**Gravikords, Whirles & Pyrophones:
Experimental Musical Instruments
(Ellipsis Arts)**

In theory, this 18-track CD is only a companion piece to the book by Bart Hopkin that shares the same handsome yellow box. To be sure, the book's terrific—an intriguing look at fringe instrument-making through short profiles of 37 of its most

notable innovators, from Leon Theremin to Don Buchla, and a hilarious introduction by Tom Waits. But you can only read about bicycle wheel guitars or look at pictures of mammoth ocarinas so long before you want to hear them, and that's where the album comes in. Highlights include Clara Rockmore's dreamy Theremin playing, the kora-ish musings of Jacques Dudon's aquavina, an array of bizarro Harry Partch inventions that sound like an orchestra of slide zithers, and my favorite, Hans Reichel's daxophone—basically, a couple pieces of wood and a bow that produce some of the funniest, and funkiest, sounds known to humanity. A mere sampler, of course, but you gotta start somewhere.

—Mac Randall

James P. Johnson

**The Original James P. Johnson 1942-1945
(Smithsonian Folkways)**

They called him the father of Harlem stride piano, but if that leads you to expect an hour of oompah bass lines, think again. Johnson knew ragtime, boogie, and various forms of classical and jazz inside out, and he used them all in his startling improvisations and pioneering compositions. These Forties sessions, eight of which have never been previously released, marked the end of a decade-plus recording drought for Johnson; he'd left the jazz world and gone full-time into composing for both the Broadway stage and the concert hall (bits of his longform pieces, most notably *Yamekraw* and the exceptional "Jazzmine Concerto," appear here). In settings as different as a frisky run through the Gershwins' "Liza" and Johnson's own Latin-inflected "The Dream," you can hear the history of 20th-century jazz piano, from Waller and Ellington to the floral arrangements of Art Tatum and the fractured chords of Thelonious Monk. Sure is one swingin' lesson. —Mac Randall

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NANCY MIDDLETON BAND

Nancy Middleton put her first band together in 1988, but things have changed a bit since then. The North Carolina-based singer/songwriter/guitarist grew up listening mainly to folk and rock ("Joni Mitchell, Heart, Neil Young—older brothers and sisters-type stuff," says Middleton), but was turned on to country by the time she started playing seriously. "We started out playing covers of old country classics," she explains. "People like Patsy Cline and Loretta Lynn."

Her band line-up now consists of a number of Nashville-worthy players who she's hooked up with over the last four years. Together, they create taut, hummable tunes that are informed equally by country, blues and rock. As a



result, they've been compared to artists like Bonnie Raitt and, more recently, Sheryl Crow, "because we've become a bit edgier. I think—we've been rocking out a little more," says Middleton.

Equally important in the band's sound are their exceptional choruses and harmonies. Middleton gets backup from guitarist/key-board player Tommy

Hartley and bassist Jack Campbell (drummer Ed Butler rounds out the line-up, whose vocals are as strong live as on record).

With two self-released CDs, a solid fanbase around the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill region (their mailing list numbers several hundred), and a load of new material, the Nancy Middleton Group show no signs of slowing down.

WITHOUT RUTH

By day, John Reynolds is a country songwriter. By night, he fronts a rock n' roll band. Ironically, it was a songwriting career that lured him to his current home in Nashville, but it was his rock band, Without Ruth (which began merely as a side project with former partner Steve Rosen), that clinched him a spot among Musician's Best Unsigned Bands. Following this success, the two felt the need to assemble a band, which they did—albeit employing "a bunch of session guys," says John. But the chemistry wasn't there. Steve left to concentrate on producing full-time, John assembled a new line-up, and things have really started to click.

"Now I have a band that really is a band—a unit of guys who want to go out, hit the road, play shows, and that don't need to be famous and play with Linda Ronstadt or whomever."

While their sound was described by one local writer as "Steve Earle meets REM or Elvis Costello on acid," John calls them a "visceral, alternative, lyric and guitar-based, tongue-in-cheek, in-your-face bar band."

John also recently signed a publishing deal with Charlie Daniels' company that allows him to write an equal amount of country songs and rock songs. Luckily, coming up with material is not a problem. "Songwriting comes very easy," he insists. "I came to Nashville (via Boston and New York) five years ago with 500 songs, and I've written a hundred a year since then."

The band plays regularly at Jack's Guitar Bar in Nashville, and will soon be on the road. "The strategy is to get some dates and do the road for as long as it takes to get hot-hot, then start showcasing," reasons John. "In music cities, getting seen by labels is not difficult—the key is having labels see you when you're on fire."



MUSICIAN'S 1996 BEST UNSIGNED

THIRTY PIECES

When Brahm Taylor entered the Best Unsigned Band Competition, his band Nosferatu was essentially a studio project with Marc Kaducak, guitarist and long-time friend ("We've been playing together for 10 years, since before we could drive," notes Brahm). Since then, he's renamed the band ("We found out the name was already taken."), and added new drummer, Jim Vorich. Thirty Pieces, based in Plainfield, Illinois (near Chicago) is now a living, breathing, gigging hard-rock monster feuled by Brahm's songwriting.

"Until recently," says Brahm, "It was just me, down in the basement with my eight-track, writing and recording tons and tons of music, and waiting for something like this to happen."

Musical comparisons have ranged from Metallica to Led Zeppelin. "Flattering," says Brahm. "But I don't think we fit either of those." Instead he describes their music as, "heavy, dark, creative, and usually with a gothic, fantasy, or Biblical influence on the lyrics." For personal influences and faves, he cites Type O Negative, Al

Jourgenson, Nine Inch Nails, Black Sabbath and Uriah Heep, among others.

His songwriting, meanwhile, has also come a long way. Says Brahm, "Luckily I've had some guidance from people in the industry, like, 'Hey Brahm, they don't play too many fifteen-minute jams on the radio—maybe you should try to keep your songs within 4-5 minutes'—stuff like that. You learn to create something that can be sold as well as listened to."

"I'm coming off of Black Sabbath," he concludes. "It was different then—they didn't have to worry about getting their stuff on the radio."



THE SHADE

The songwriting team behind the Bloomington/Indianapolis-based band the Shade, Brian Depp and David Streets, have been writing songs together since high school. "They kinda sucked at first," laughs Brian. "But we'd caught the bug and had to keep going."

Ten years on, their partnership is thriving, despite a five-year period in between when Brian lived in Los Angeles ("We both had degrees and white-collar careers," he confesses. "But we bought identical 4-tracks and kept collaborating."). Today, the Shade are one of the hottest bands in the Midwest, where their rough take on heartland rock has been compared to everything from Donovan to R.E.M. to the Who. The pair also share an appreciation for local hero John Mellencamp's accomplishments, both musically and career-wise. "Among other things, we admire the way his band sounds together and the fact that he's been able to build his own studio," explains David.

In addition to David and Brian, who handle vocals/songwriting/guitars, their latest line-up features drummer Greg Finke (a student of Kenny Aronoff, coincidentally) and bassist Shawn Nugent. For now, the band are concentrating on gigging and writing before going back into the studio. "We have more than enough material for another record, but we're taking our time because we're going through such a fruitful writing period right now," says Brian. "We don't expect miracles to happen without a bunch of really, really, strong tunes." Although, we think they're already there.



ALAADEEN & THE DEANS OF SWING

Ask the Kansas City-based saxophonist/composer/arranger Ahmad Alaadeen who he's played with over the years and he'll humbly respond, "Oh, a few different people." They just happen to include the Temptations, Billie Holiday, the Four Tops, Ella Fitzgerald, Sam Cooke and Mile Davis.

He's been playing with his Deans of Swing for about 14 years now, combining originals and standards in their area live shows. "I haven't heard many comparisons with regard to my compositions," says Alaadeen. "As for my sound, they say I have a lot of John Coltrane, which is natural. And you can hear Charlie Parker, which is also natural."

Why? "Because they are two of the biggest influences in music," says Alaadeen. "Charlie Parker is a Mozart—he changed it all around, y'know?"

As a result of his experience, Alaadeen has become something of a father figure on his local jazz scene. "My other goal is to develop the young talent that exists in and around Missouri," he explains. "I'm always on the lookout for new talent and fresh people. On my next CD I have two or three people from the area I want to showcase."

As for the current state of jazz, Alaadeen hasn't heard much that excites him. "There are a lot of extremely well-schooled musicians being churned out by the various music schools, but they all sound like they've come out of the same bag. I'd like to hear a little more diversity in the playing."

"Jazz needs someone to come up from Slobos, Mississippi, whose never heard of The New School or Berklee—just come up outta the mud with their own thing. I think that's what will become the next layer."

And does Alaadeen want to be the one to find him? "I hope so!" he



SWINGSET POLICE

If there's one question musicians can always count on being asked, it's the one about who their influences are. The three Braam brothers who make up Swingset Police, Scott (21, guitars), Mike (33, bass/harmonies), and Tom (28, vocals/guitar) are prepared. "We have all taken an oath, specifically for this question, that we will only say one band," says Mike seriously. "Ready guys?"

"Cheap Trick!" answer the three in perfect unison, before collapsing into laughter. Why Cheap Trick? "We figure they embody everything that was ever good about any kind of music," explains Mike. "At any given time, they want to be the Beatles, Zeppelin—they even covered a Dylan song."

Quite simply, "It's rock n' roll with melodies," says Tom. Not unlike Swingset Police, whose hooky, punky pop has been likened to the Replacements, Plimsouls, the Lemonheads, the Romantics and, natch, Cheap Trick ("But I think that's probably because it's what we keep telling everybody," reasons Mike).

Since entering the B.U.B. Competition, they've released a full-length CD ("Kadickadee Kadickadoo (a true story)") produced by fellow Midwest pop fan Jef Murphy of Shoes, who also released the CD on his own Black Vinyl Records. Currently, the three are focusing on songwriting and playing live. They travel between Tom's apartment in Chicago (where they are forced to use acoustic guitars) and their hometown of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, 90 minutes north, where Mike and Scott reside. "We still rehearse in our parents' basement," reveals Mike. "We give 'em money to go out to dinner," adds Scott. Finishes Tom, "We get a couple of songs done, then they come home and kick us out."



BANDS MUSICIAN'S 1996 BEST

SEAN DRISCOLL GROUP

"Everyone wants to be a virtuoso," says guitarist Sean Driscoll. "So do I, but it rarely means as much to the guy off the street. A band that plays well together and plays musically, meanwhile, will have an impact a thousand times greater than some guy playing a million notes with just a band behind him."

Sean's belief is evident in the music of the 6-man, jazz-based instrumental group he assembled while a student at Berklee School of Music, in Boston, in order to record a self-released CD of his music. While they've been compared to the Pat Metheny Group, Sean notes a key difference: "We added a saxophone, which was a real break from that sort of sound—

more like Weather Report," he explains. "Having a wind instrument in the group completely changes the dynamics and how we have to deal with each other."

The music also shows traces of the progressive rock and jazz/fusion that Sean listened to growing up, albeit with a twist. "The only problem I have with that label is that we're not really related to the jazz/fusion bands of the 70's that that usually calls to mind," laughs Sean. "I like a lot of those bands, but I'd say we're more jazz-evolved. And, most of us in the band listen to a lot of Brazilian and Latin music."

Despite the lack of outlets for up and coming jazz artists around Boston, the group still manages at least a couple of live gigs a month. "I've never had a

band like this," enthuses Sean. "We just clicked. And when that happens, it's gold—you don't find it very often."

And, better still, there are no egos. "If something isn't working, we're good enough players that we can address the problem and fix it."



SHADES

"So many artists today think that all they need to do is lay down a good groove," sighs Martin Andrew, the singing half of the soulful pop/R&B duo, Shades. "They think that once they have people bobbing their heads, they're set. But you have to take it further."

"Yeah, those days are over right now," declares Damien Cornwell, his musical partner. "With the advent and affordability of so much new gear in recent years, people were getting all these fat sounds and samples. But now that everybody's had the stuff for a while and played around with it, they're sick of it and trying to get back to more conventional sounds."

"It's not that difficult to just come up with a really nice hardcore groove," confirms Andrew. "We try to write complete songs, with changes, melodies and hooks."

Andrew and Cornwell grew up together in upstate New York. Cornwell listened to such heavily-produced artists as ELP, Jan Hammer and Asia ("Where I learned about getting a well-rounded, commercial sound."). Martin, meanwhile, was raised on a diet of "hardcore R&B—Stevie Wonder, Funkadelic, Earth, Wind and Fire." And while both have musical parents, neither, they admit, have had real formal training. Each also have elaborate home studios (although they haven't always had it so good—their winning entry, they confess, was recorded in a bedroom).

And their future plans? "Right now, we write, produce and engineer all of our own stuff," says Andrew. "And we're also working on establishing our own record label and production company."

"We have so much respect for people like Jimmy Jam/Terry Lewis, L.A. & Babyface, Hall & Oates," continues Cornwell. "And we'd like to be next. Our goals go beyond just trying to get a record contract—we have a lifetime commitment to this."



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FULLTONE, 3815 Beethoven St., Los Angeles, CA, 90066, (310) 397-3456; 69, Dejavibe, **44**
FURMAN SOUND, 30 Rich St., Greenbrae, CA, 94904, (415) 927-1225; PL-8, **84**
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SWR ENGINEERING, 12823 Foothill Blvd., Unit 8,

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ZOM, 2682 Middlefield Rd., Redwood City, CA, 94063, (415) 366-3516; bass, **33**

a d i n d e x

Alesis—3630 Holdredge Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90016 (310) 558-4530.....	9
American DJ—4295 Charter St., Los Angeles, CA 90058 (800) 322-6337.....	Cover III
Audio Centron.....	71
Audio-Technica—1221 Commerce Dr., Stow, OH 44224 (216) 686-2600.....	79
Berklee College of Music—1140 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02215 (617) 266-1400.....	8
beyerdynamic—56 Central Ave., Farmingdale, NY 11735 (516) 293-3200.....	51
Community Professional Sound Systems—333 E. 5th St., Chester, PA 19013 (610) 876-3400.....	75
D'Addario—595 Smith St., Farmingdale, NY 11735 (516) 391-5400.....	47, 84
Electro-Voice—600 Cecil St., Buchanan, MI 49107 (616) 695-6831.....	13
Emu 1600 Green Hills Rd., Scotts Valley, CA 95066.....	84
GHS Strings—2813 Wilber Ave., Battle Creek, MI 49015 (616) 968-3351.....	3
JBL—8500 Balboa Blvd., Northridge, CA 91329 (818) 894-885033.....	22
Korg—316 South Service Rd., Melville, NY 11747 (800) 335-0800.....	37
Kurzweil—13336 Alondra Blvd., Cerritos, CA 90703-2245 (310) 926-3200.....	57
Lexicon, Inc.—3 Dak Park Rd., Bedford, MA 01730-1441 (617) 280-0397.....	87
Mackie Designs, Inc.—16220 Wood-Red Rd. N.E., Woodinville, WA 98072 (800) 898-3211.....	8
MAPEX Drums—3965 Atkins, Nashville, TN 37211.....	45
Martin Guitar Co.—Box 329, Nazareth, PA 18064 (610) 759-2837.....	42
Matchless—9830 Alburts Ave., Santa Fe, CA 90670 (310) 801-4840.....	81
MCA Records—1755 Broadway, 8th Fl., New York, NY 10019 (212) 841-8000.....	53
McCaulley—13608 94th Ave. E., Puyallup, WA 98373 (206) 841-3050.....	68
Modern Postcard—6354 Corte Del Abeto, #D, Carlsbad, CA 92009 (800) 959-8365.....	78
Modulus Guitars—575 7th St., San Francisco, CA 94103 (800) 758-2918.....	19, 21, 86
Musicians Institute—1655 McCadden Pl., Hollywood, CA 90028 (213) 462-1384.....	85
Neatco—250 Dodge Ave., East Haven, CT 06512 (800) 984-9800.....	91
Otari.....	41
Peavey—711 A St., Meridian, MS 39301 (601) 483-5365.....	7
QSC.....	49
Rane—10802 47th Ave. W., Mukitoe, WA 98275 (206) 355-6000.....	58, 59
Remo—28101 Industry Dr., Valencia, CA 91355 (805) 294-5600.....	30-31
Roland—7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040 (213) 685-5141.....	4
Sennheiser—6 Vista Drive/Box 987, Did Lyme, CT 06371 (203) 434-9190.....	Cover IV
Shure—222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL 60202 (708) 866-2200.....	25, 89
Switchcraft—5555 N. Elston Ave., Chicago, IL 60630 (312) 792-2700.....	78
Tascam—7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA 90640 (213) 726-0303.....	35
Taylor Guitars—1940 Gillespie Way, El Cajon, CA 92020 (619) 258-1207.....	16-17
Tommy Bolin Archives.....	96
Whirlwind—99 Ling Rd., Rochester, NY 14612.....	10
The Work Group.....	20
Yamaha—6600 Orangeforge Ave., Buena Park, CA 90620 (714) 522-9011.....	39
Yorkville Sound Inc.—4625 Witmer Industrial Estate, Niagara Falls, NY 14305 (716) 297-2920.....	73



Love *is* Strange

Back around 1958 Mickey and Sylvia told us that “love is strange.” With Valentine’s Day looming just ahead, it’s nice to know that buried beneath the piles of musical Hallmark sentiments and unchained melodies are a few truly strange, twisted, and even downright sick love songs. Here are a few of my faves:

“Moody River,” by Pat Boone

Pat’s woman apparently can’t bear the thought of having done the horizontal Macarena with his best friend. To relieve her guilt she jumps in the river, leaving Pat a glove (?) and a suicide note. Unfortunately for rock & roll, he doesn’t join her. First line of the song is borrowed from Othello. Features a real white-bread backup chorus.

“Pardon Me, I’ve Got Someone to Kill,”

by Johnny Paycheck

Banned in ’62. Song opens with Johnny thanking a bartender for listening to his troubles and then matter-of-factly mentioning, “Scuse me, I’ve got someone to kill.” Over the next couple of verses he tells the bartender why he’s gonna do it, how he’s gonna do it, and where the sheriff can find the murder/suicide note and all three bodies. Garth who?

“Radio Lover,” by George Jones

A classic. George is an all-night DJ, kissing his lovely wife goodbye. Little does he know that while he’s on the air, his wife is doing a little broadcasting of her own at home. Unfortunately for her, it happens that George has secretly taped the show so he could come home and be with her on this

night of their first anniversary.

“I Hold Your Hand in Mine,” by Tim Leary

Very, very sick tale of a guy who can’t let go. Literally. Matter of fact, a hand is all that’s left of his recently deceased wife. Put this one in rotation with an album of koto favorites at your next feelings workshop.

“The Whipping Post,” by Judy Reynolds

Grade-Z Marty Robbins ripoff. Starts out with an ominous male chorus. Over the next two minutes the following occurs: A stranger rides into a Puritan town, in the center of which is a whipping post. He seduces the mayor’s daughter, and her dad catches them playing hide the hamster. The stranger is told to leave town. He refuses and gets tied to the whipping post. As the whip descends, the girl runs in front of it and gets hit in the head. The mayor yells stop, forgives the two of them ... and the ominous male chorus shows up again to bring it all to an end. All in under three minutes.

“Laurie,” by Dickie Lee

J.B. may be the godfather of soul, and B.B. is surely the boss of the blues. But during the early Sixties Dickie Lee was the king of the splatter platter. In this one he meets Laurie at a dance, lends her his sweater on the walk home, escorts her to the door. Goodnight. Oops, forgot the sweater. Goes back, only to be greeted by her irate father, who informs him Laurie died a year ago tonight and observes that Dickie’s got a lousy sense of humor. On the way home (as the chorus hums softly), a strange force pulls him to a graveyard, and there on top of Laurie’s grave is ... his sweater! Song ends with the chorus swelling as Dickie reminds us, “Strange things happen in this world.”

“She’s Scattered Everywhere,”

by Archibald

A truly amazing cut by this early Fifties contemporary of Professor Longhair. His woman comes in, puts her false teeth on the dresser, her peg leg on the table, and her glass eye in his glass. Archibald is so shook up he starts praying. Then he gets upset because he wants to love her but ... you guessed it, “she’s scattered everywhere.” Would have made a perfect answer song to “I Fall to Pieces.” And next time you hear Bill Medley long for his darlin’ touch, don’t feel too bad for him—at least she doesn’t need reassembling.

Special thanks to Ben Wade and George Lasko for digging up (sorry!) these tunes. Happy Valentine’s Day!

—Reverend Billy C. Wirtz

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