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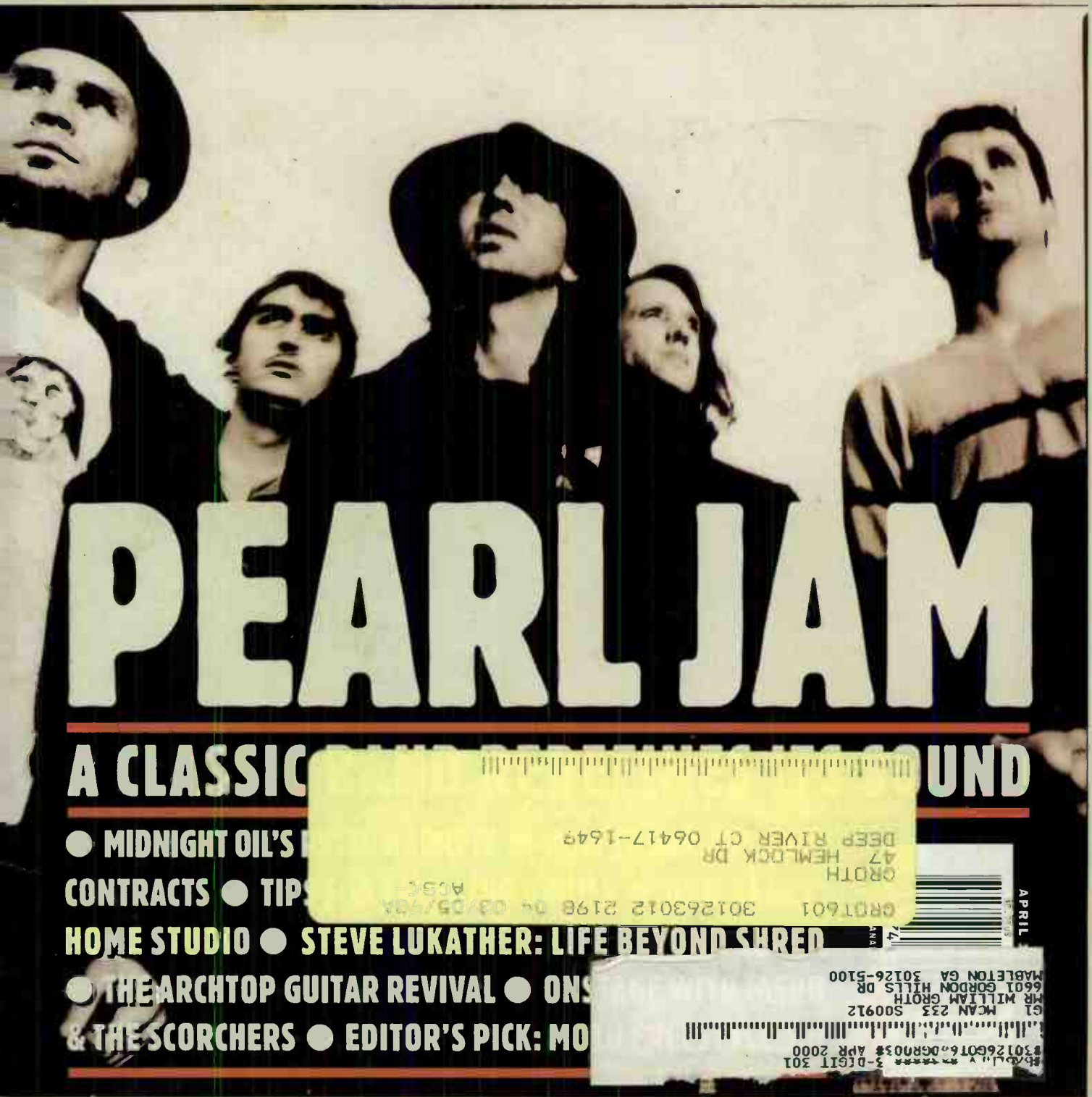

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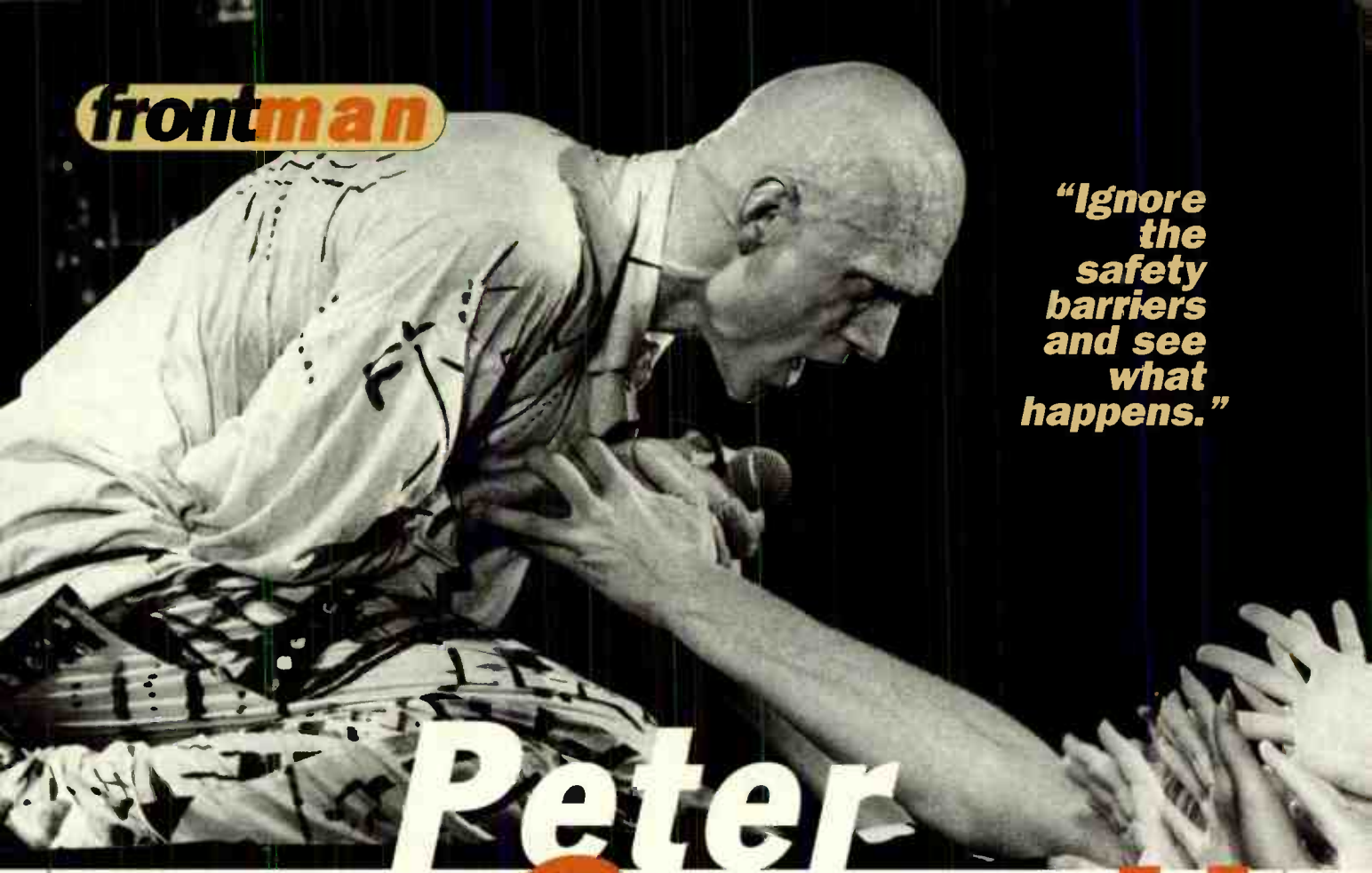

"Ignore the safety barriers and see what happens."

Peter Garrett

To many people, Midnight Oil is perceived as a very issues-oriented band. Are you really a dead serious band, or is there room for fun and flippancy?

I would think that a serious pulpit is the last thing rock & roll should be, and it's the last thing I'd think Midnight Oil was. I would think that we're actually a very different animal to that; we've just got an extending arm that happens to have a McNeil-Lehrer component. I think that we're primarily writers and performers, and before anything else, we—and I—approach the stage in a very primal sense. This is the place where you're going to carve out something that moves and surges from the raw material of amplifiers and prehistoric drum kits with bits of animal skin and bits of wood and bits of electricity; anything that happens after that is a byproduct of that initial, primal carving.

I think the only misconception that people have about us is that we're just a bunch of serious students of world issues that sit around all day nodding our heads, reading copies of *Foreign Affair*, and trying to figure out ways of making a rhyming couplet out of "global warming" and "fish aren't spawning." That would be a real caricature of what we do. Our marriage of word and music happens like a stew. It doesn't happen like an agenda. It's not something that's necessarily premeditated. It can be quite intuitive.

How conscious are you about the way you present yourself on stage? Do you make decisions when to be animated or dramatic?

No. I approach the stage in a fairly naked frame of mind. I'm just responding to the pulse of the music. Any performance aspects, which ultimately do become incorporated into what you do on-stage, have generally come about as a gut response as things happen. I like to move, but I don't analyze the movement. It's not choreographed.

How do you navigate between what's natural and unnatural?

There's an element of performance that's communication, and there's a place for the grand gesture if you're in a grand place. If it's a grand moment, you can do it and it'll work. I've certainly got a lot of grand gestures in my repertoire, but I try not to think about using them—I just hope that they'll pop out at the right time.

Has it gotten easier for you since you began performing as a band back in 1977?

Some parts have become easier, and other parts have become harder. Some people draw a fence around their performance; it's highly stylized and can be very effective in an entertainment sense, but you always get the feeling that it's never going to go any further than that. With Midnight Oil, we're not so much interested in the visual aspect of it. We're just interested in the effect of the band that gets itself in a certain place and then tries to throw that at the people. Some times you've got to take risks, and you've got to ignore the safety barriers a little bit and just go for it and see what happens.

—Michael Gelfand

Brent Mason

There are songwriters in Nashville who enjoy a good chord now and then.

sideman

résumé

Alan Jackson
George Strait
Trisha Yearwood
John Michael Montgomery
Randy Travis
Brooks & Dunn

When you're breaking into the Nashville session scene, is it a plus to display the stylistic diversity you show on your solo debut, Hot Wired *(Mercury)?*

Well, if a guitar player comes into town, and someone wants him on a country or a pop session, and they go out to a club and he's playing bebop, they might end up thinking that's all he does and he wouldn't be right for this session.

When you were the new kid in town, fresh from Ohio, what did you learn that you can pass along to today's newcomers to Nashville?

You know, those early days were a lot different than today. It's almost sewn up here, as far as cliques of musicians. Plus, some L.A. musicians have come here because there's more of a human element needed in the music. It's not like the old days, where you'd hear a kid playing down at a club, and the next day he'd be playing with Buck Owens.

So what do the new kids do now?

Well, one way to plug in would be to do some songwriter-in-the-round things at the Bluebird or these other hip places. A lot of music-business people go there to watch the songwriters play. If you do demos and get to know the songwriters, pretty soon you're playing in a showcase.

Has the influx of L.A. players changed the feel of Nashville sessions?

It's enhanced it. A lot of us felt shackled to a certain thing: If you're country, don't throw in too many outside chords or rhythms. These guys coming in—plus the producers and the writers—stretched those boundaries a little bit. The more music they played on, the more people realized that something broader could still be considered country.

Have they made it easier to bring jazz elements into a country date?

Well, jazz has been fitting into country very well for a long time. Bob Wills was just guys with fiddles and steel guitars playing big band music. It had diminished chords, augmented chords. Plus there are songwriters like Janis Ian in town now—people who enjoy a good chord now and then [*laughs*].

Songwriting is a big part of the culture in Nashville. Did getting a publishing deal for yourself make it easier for you to find studio work?

It did. When I was with CBS Songs, I'd write with the guys there, then we'd have to set up a demo. I had the lick and everything, so I'd just elect myself to play guitar. All of a sudden producers were calling me up and saying, "Hey, we need that kind of guitar on this song we're doing." There you go: You get your foot in the door, you play on a couple of cuts, you're in, and you build from there.—***Robert L. Doerschuk***

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Harry Campbell

Are You Ready To *Showcase*

These days, bands playing showcase gigs are a dime a dozen, but most of them don't realize that playing one before your band's ready can be a huge mistake. "Timing is everything," says ***Gordon Schur***, who as president/owner of Flip Records has witnessed lots of bands fall on their faces. "No buzz and no tape portends bad things: your band might not be ready, your sound might not have fully evolved yet, or maybe the band's not comfortable with each other. You want that good buzz so it seems like it's happening. If you do showcases that are unknown, the band can give the appearance that it's in disarray."

Instead, he says, practice patience and restraint. "Rehearse the fuck out of it, make a killer demo, start doing shows, and do them in places where you can give yourself enough time to get the vibe out. Maybe even get a residency thing going on in a certain area over a period of time so you're playing around once a week. Beyond playing a lot of shows, get into fanzines and pass out homemade tapes."

Being a part of the artist community helps as well, he says. "Other bands that are doing well that like your show might let you open for them, so if you think you can make a meaningful contribution, go to shows with tapes and try to vibe other bands on what you're doing. And disregard A&R guys until they're in your face." ***—Michael Gelfand***

Hang the DJ?

Good musicians are the ones who draw inspiration from their own musical influences, feeding off of ideas from other genres and other times in order to create a vital style that stirs their own soul while innovating and enervating the musical boundaries at large. ***Limp Bizkit*** is a band who's done just that by successfully integrating a DJ into their band—both live and in the studio.

Singer Fred Durst recalls when the band first decided to experiment with the idea: "We [originally] had a keyboard player, but when we became good friends with [DJ] Lethal, he told us how he wanted to do more than just play DAT tapes and scratch. He had all these crazy ideas about running MPCs and turntables through wah-wah pedals and envelope filters, and he wanted to go through a Marshall amp." At the same time that DJ Lethal's former band, House of Pain, was breaking up, Limp Bizkit happened to be looking for a second guitarist, so Lethal sat in with the band and made a strong impression. "When they broke up, I told him, 'Fuck that, Holmes, you're coming with us,' recalls Durst. "He's like the second guitar player. [It's] not just wiggy-wiggy. He's not a just a DJ—he's another member. He's not just doing samples. He's on a totally different level than that."

Limp Bizkit

Carlos Serrao

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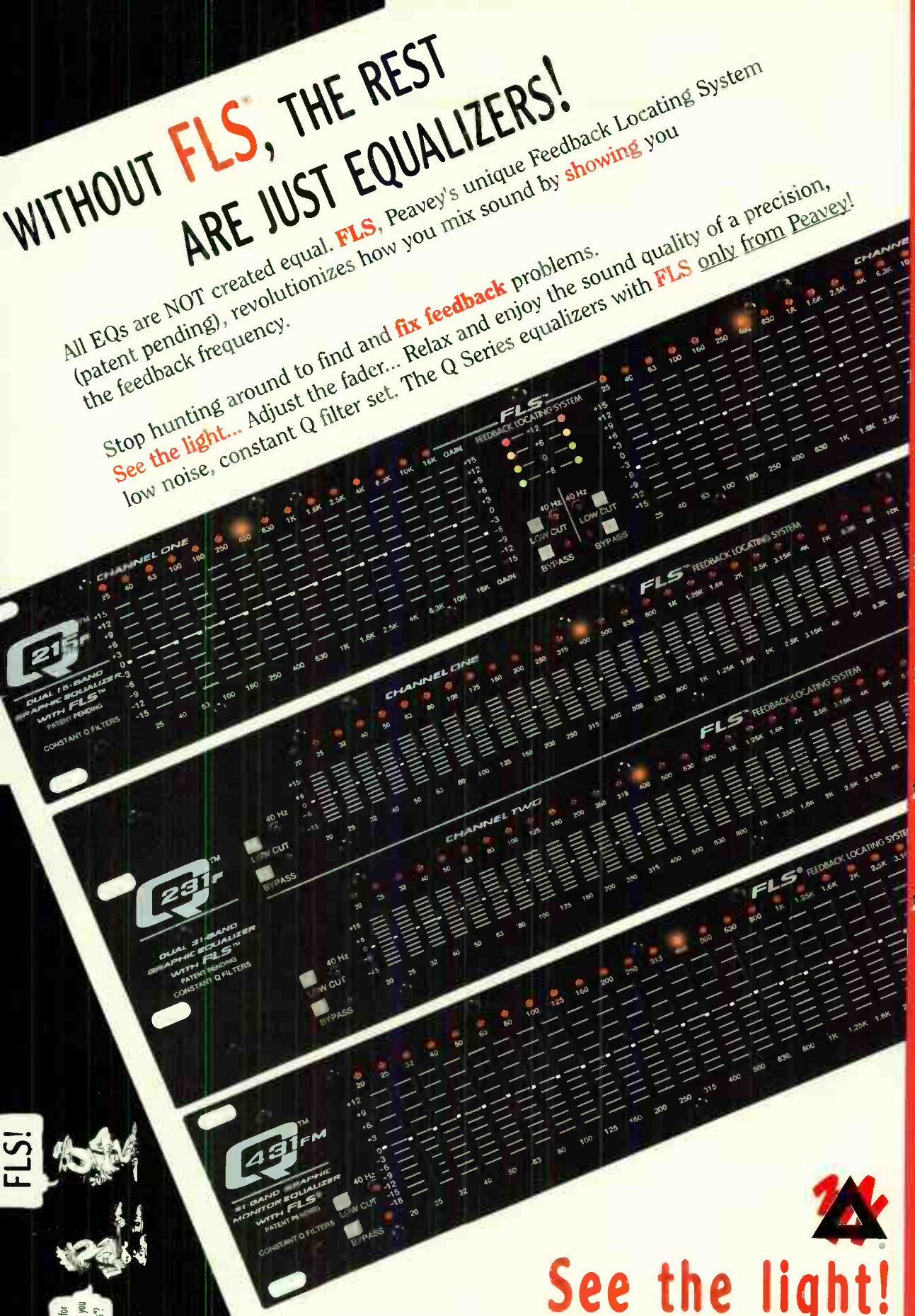

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"I've been preparing for something like this for a long time," explains DJ Lethal, "puttin' weird sound effects records and outer space records away in a box. Those are the more ambient live sounds, I guess." Lethal's rig goes well beyond his record collection, though: a heavily-weighted turntable and an Akai MPC-3000 sampler feed into a mixer, which runs out to an array of foot pedals [various envelopes, wahs, phasers, delays, talk boxes] before screaming through a Marshall stack. "I try to get really creative with it. Everybody's got a DJ band, but they're just doing regular hip-hop bird sounds. It takes a lot of improvisation," he says. "It's not just using regular records," he says. "You've got to concentrate more on making sounds.

"For hip-hop, it doesn't really matter," he says. "You don't have to worry about keys; it's just scratching [spoken] word records. You've got the vocals and everything set to one tune, so you don't have to worry about anything but a DAT machine, so you scratch during the choruses and pick your nose during the verses [while] two guys run around. It's all right, but it gets tired after a while. This is totally different energy. You've got to adapt to it." ***—Michael Gelfand***

Harry Campbell

Sound Advice

People are always looking to blame someone else for their failure, and a favorite target among musicians is the soundman. Popular logic dictates that if your gig went poorly, just blame the soundman and all guilt is absolved. Unfortunately, such generalizations aren't always fair, and no matter who's right, you should never treat the soundman as just another poor schlep working behind the mixing board during soundchecks and shows. Remember, he or she might not have the talent to make you sound like you're playing at Carnegie Hall, but they can surely make you sound like bloody hell. That's why it's imperative to treat soundmen with respect and understand what they expect from you—before, during, and after your set.

According to Kurt Wolf, house engineer at New York City's Mercury Lounge, "successful gigs are a result of good planning." The first step is obtaining soundcheck and set times when you book the show and making sure all the band members are ready at the appointed times. Josh Wertheimer, soundman at New York's CBGB, says soundchecks are mainly for the benefit of the band. "My main concern is getting the band members happy with what they're hearing on stage," he says.

Joey Altruda says one key to a soundcheck is making sure the monitors sound loud enough—you want to be able to hear them above the crowd noise when the room is full. "It's a lot different when you're soundchecking in an empty room versus [playing] in a room full of people," he says.

Time is also of the essence. When it's your turn to play, the soundman will expect you to set up your gear as quickly as possible and get ready to play at the agreed time. Wolf stresses that the most difficult part of the soundman's job is keeping things on schedule, so to avoid running long, he recommends that bands time

Ham strung

One of the biggest headaches every guitarist confronts is whether or not to restring a guitar before a gig: New strings sound so bright and crisp, but as new strings stretch, they go out of tune. What can you do? ***Radiohead's*** guitar tech, Peter Plank, told *Musician* how he keeps the band's newly strung guitars in tune and outlined an eleven-step process that will let you do the same.

1. Remove the old strings by loosening the tuning pegs and cutting them around the twelfth fret with wire cutters.

2. Attach the entire set of new strings to the bridge and lay the guitar down on a flat surface.

3. Run the first string up the neck and through the corresponding slot in the nut.

4. While holding the end of the string above it's tuning peg, cut the string four inches past the tuning peg.

5. Now place the string in the tuning peg so that the cut end sticks out about 1/4 inch.

6. Wrap the string around the peg once so

their set during rehearsal. Another key to keeping the soundman happy is to avoid problems that the soundman can't do anything to correct. "One of the most difficult things is trying to make bad sources sound good-instruments that aren't tuned," says Wertheimer. "The difference in volume between clean and distorted guitar signals is another common problem."

As far as gratuities are concerned, avoid approaching the engineer before the show, as it may come across like a bribe for preferential treatment. As a rule, gratuities aren't expected, but you should consider tipping for special requests, such as providing the soundman with a set list that includes instructions for different songs.

And *always* remember that the soundman can make you or break you. Brett Sparks of the ***Handsome Family*** advises that bands immediately establish a good relationship with the house engineer upon arriving at the club. "I come up and introduce myself and explain our setup. Most soundmen are incredibly professional. One guy even asked for a copy of our new CD so he could familiarize himself with our music and determine the best way to mix us. We play dark, rural story songs, so we want the vocals to be above the mix." Altruda agrees: "I find that you get the best sound job if you are friendly and treat the soundperson with respect. I've seen bands mistreat soundmen because they think, 'Oh, we're some cool band.' They don't realize that this guy can make you sound bad on purpose."

—Jason Zasky

Harry Campbell

Meet Your Master

Writing, playing, recording and mixing are activities most musicians are familiar with, but mastering . . . what the hell is it?

Mastering is the final creative step in the recording process; half-science, half-art, it's the procedure of applying equalization, balancing, and editing to your final mix. Equalization is one of the primary tools a mastering engineer has at his or her disposal to affect the sound of your recording. Techniques vary, and what works for one mix may ruin another. Sometimes an individual instrument sounds too low in the mix, but subtracting a specific frequency that might be covering up the sound can solve the problem. For instance, a dull mix might require decreasing the low midrange (200-400 Hz), which can bring out a weak kick drum transient or make a lead vocal punch. But sometimes subtracting is not enough on its own, so adding some EQ at certain frequencies can help. When vocal intelligibility is lacking, a boost in the midrange (1.5-4 kHz) can add clarity, and sometimes adding "air" (12-20 kHz) will achieve the same goal. Or let's say the kick and snare aren't popping; a boost around 2 kHz may add some weight and crack to the sound.

Remember, mastering engineers aren't alchemists, and we can't always bring the dead back to life, so try to get it right in the mix. Next month, we'll look at how mastering engineers balance the level of your mix. ***—Joe Palmaccio***

Joe Palmaccio is a mastering engineer at Sterling Sound in New York.

that the winding runs below the last 1/4-inch of string.

7. While holding this first wrap in place with one hand, pull the length of string running along the neck so that it's taut and the wrap stays in place. Now wind the tuning peg so that the string is tight and you end up with about three or four windings on the peg.

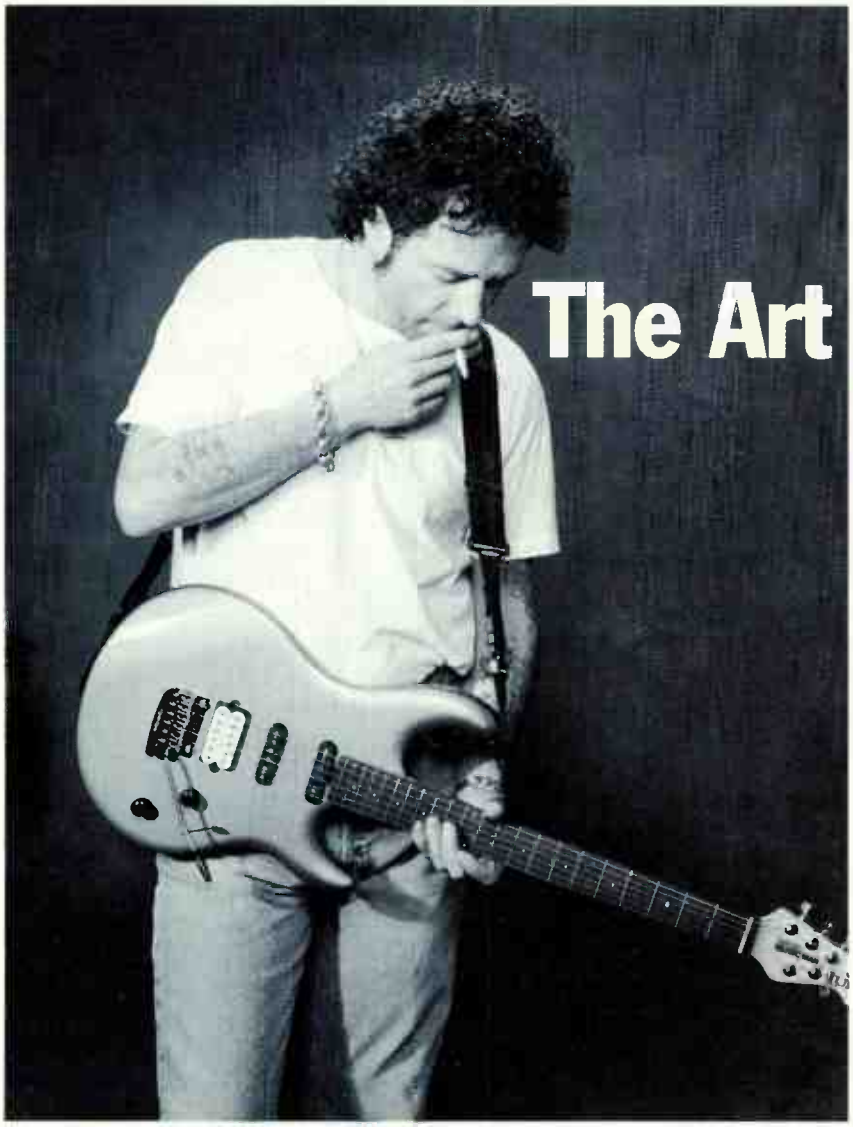
8. Repeat steps 3-7 for the other five strings. If done properly, you should end up with very neatly wound pegs with no excess string.

9. Tune the guitar.

10. Once the guitar is strung and tuned, the next—and most crucial—step is to stretch the strings. The proper way to do this is to place your thumb on one side of the string with the index and middle fingers of the same hand about two inches down the length of the string from the thumb. Push with your thumb while at the same time pulling with your index and middle fingers. Do this up and down the entire length of all six strings. This should definitely throw each newly tuned string thoroughly out of tune.

11. Retune the guitar and repeat the stretching process until the stretching no longer causes your strings to go off pitch. ***—Chris Paton***

When not on tour with Radiohead, Plank builds guitars out of his workshop in Oxford, England. Besides the guitars he has customized and built for Radiohead, Joe Strummer has been spotted banging away at a Plank tele-style custom.



Guitarist Steve Lukather on the Virtues of Pinky Prowess

The Art Of The Hook

by alan di perna

Steve Lukather's name generally conjures up images of fretboard hijinx—at least for the coterie of musicians who have followed his solo career, his prolific activity as a session ace and his ongoing membership in album rock chartbusters Toto. But for his new album, *Luke (Miramar Recordings)*—his third solo disc to date—Lukather decided to take a different direction.

"I didn't want to do a flash guitar record," he says. "Maybe it's because I'm working with Jeff Beck on his new album. And he's the ultimate guitar hero. I'm at a point in my life where I don't feel I have to prove myself as a guitarist. So for me, this is a 'growing up' album. This time, I wanted to make a record that other people besides musicians could enjoy. Basically, the whole record is written in the first position. You could strum the songs on acoustic guitar and sing the melodies."

Actually, Lukather ventures well beyond the first position; some of the solos match anything he's done in the past for sheer six-string incandescence, living up to his reputation as a first-rate guitar virtuoso and first-call session ace. But this time out, he focused more on classic song forms—from Dylanesque folk rock to Zepplinesque stompers—finding new slants on timeless moves.

Luke turned forty recently, but maturity hasn't dulled his instinct for the kind of concise, killer guitar hooks that helped put his recordings with Toto at the top of the charts in the Seventies and Eighties. Take, for instance "Tears of My Own Shame," a slow, moody, E minor blues off of Luke. "That's my tribute to Jimi," Lukather laughs, "This whole record is about my musical influences. It's shameless. I was gonna call it Shameless Use of Influence."

The song is anchored by a soaring two-bar pentatonic riff over a chordal base of E minor, D and C. [Ex. 1]. The lead line ascends while the chordal base descends. Doing something fresh in the pentatonic blues idiom is a real challenge for any guitarist, but Lukather rises to the occasion. A bold tonal leap—from D up to B—toward the end of the first measure imparts a sense of drama to the riff. The drama is heightened by Lukather's execution. Where many guitarists would play this figure at the twelfth fret, bending up to the high B, Lukather starts at the seventh fret, on the A string. The last four notes of the first measure are all played on the G string with the pinky, sliding up and down the fretboard, imparting a glissando quality somewhat akin to a theramin or synthesizer pitch wheel. "A lot of people think I'm using a wang bar for that," Lukather admits, "But it's all with the pinky. You could do it at the twelfth fret, bending up to the high notes, but you don't get the same fluidity that way."

Elsewhere on his new album, Lukather builds some nice guitar hooks around open drone strings, both in open and standard tunings. "I'm still trying to find new licks in open positions," he says. "They still exist!" "Reservations to Live" is in double dropped D tuning (D-A-D-G-B-D), with melody and harmony patterns played on the G and B strings. Another tune on the album, "Love the Things You Hate," is in standard tuning and boasts a catchy electric sitar hook played against an open A string. While breaking the lick down, Lukather points out that it is actually composed of two different drone parts—a melody and a low harmony— played on electric sitar and conventional electric guitar and overdubbed several times.

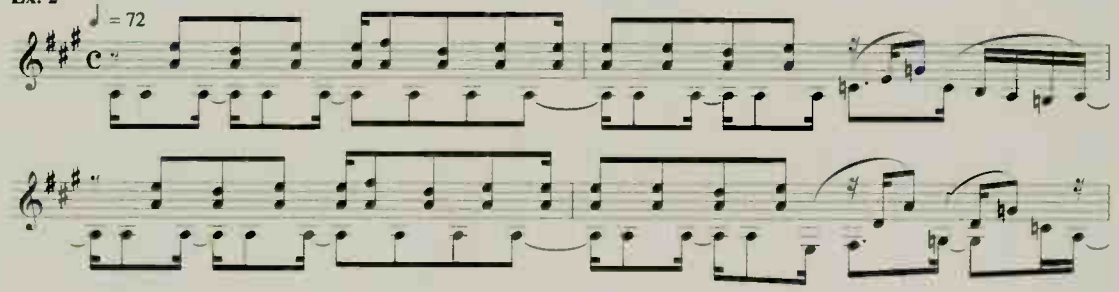
"I did it in a couple of different octaves when I layered it," explains Lukather, who recorded the album at his own studio in North Hollywood. "I did two main riffs and two of the harmonies. And I did one main riff an octave higher than the other two. From there it was just a matter of balancing out the different octaves in the mix." The higher, lead voicing [Ex. 2] is based around a root-and-fifth figure played an octave above the open A drone string, (at the 7th fret on the D string 9th fret on the G string). The harmony voicing also uses the open A string as a drone. But here, the D string is held down at the fifth fret, sounding the dominant seventh (G), while a counter melody based around the major third is played on the G string [Ex. 3].

"So you get the seventh and the [major] third in the lower riff," says Lukather. "And that makes a really interesting noise when you put it together with the main riff. The way the seventh and third in one riff work with the root and fifth in the other riff is very Jimmy Page." [Ex. 4] The harmony part even exploits a trick Page used in his well-known riff for "Whole Lotta Love:" having a fretted note adjacent to an open string sounding the same note for a bit of sympathetic vibration. In the low harmony riff for Luke's "Love the Things You Hate," the fretted G is adjacent to the open G string. The riff also includes a B note, fretted on the G string, adjacent to the open B. By sounding these open strings in unison with the open notes, the player can achieve a natural chorusing effect for added fullness and "drone power."

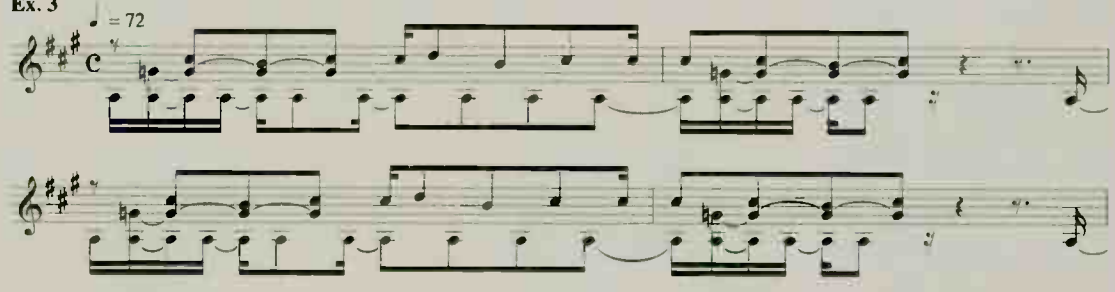
The art of the guitar hook lies in small details like these. By nature, a guitar hook is a big, obvious thing. Solid craftsmanship is what keeps it from becoming too obvious. Or, as Lukather puts it, "A guitar is just a tool. Like if you give two different carpenters the same box of tools. A good carpenter is gonna build a bitchin' house and a lame one is gonna hurt himself and bang his thumb with a hammer."

Ex. 1

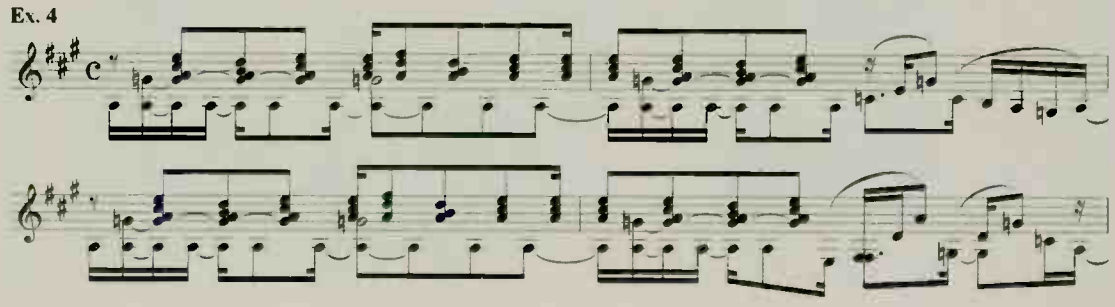
Ex. 2



Ex. 3



Ex. 4



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songwriting

Across the Music Bridge

Stellar Songwriters Find Harmony in Ireland

by robert l. doerschuk

It's a misty November morning in Connemara. To the east lies the village of Clifden; to the west, steep cliffs tower over the icy Atlantic. But no one feels the chill inside the Abbeyglen Castle s pub, where songwriters greet each other with mugs of steaming coffee in hand.

Welcome to Celtic Harmony, the latest in a series of all-star songwriting summits sponsored by an organization called Music Bridge. Previous gatherings took place in Russia, Romania, and Bali. each pairing off American and local writers. The idea is to build bridges between cultures that might otherwise have trouble finding accord.

And if anyone can find accord, it's a songwriter.

A spoon taps against a glass, and Alan Roy Scott, self-described "founder and madman" behind Music Bridge, announces the daily lottery. Slips of paper are put into two hats; through random drawing, Irish and American writers are matched in pairs. The collaborators—which include Delbert McClinton, Jeff Healey, Speech, nearly forty artists in all—drift off to begin the day's task of writing and cutting a demo of a new tune.

But at the end of the drawing, three Americans and one Irishman are left over. The Yanks—former Atlantic artist Jill Sobule, Charlotte Caffey of the Go-Gos, and Nashville gospel rocker Ashley Cleveland, talk with Irish solo performer Garrett Wall, and all agree to try working together as a quartet.

The rest of the day is spent in Caffey's suite. Despite a nagging sinus infection ("It's like there's a Nerf ball in my head"), Sobule is the main source of energy. Seated on the floor amidst a clutter of open guitar cases, she picks up on a thread in the conversation—everyone is talking about Peter Sellers' anarchic Sixties classic *The Party*—by strumming a perky Bacharach-like chord sequence.

Talk continues: Peter Sellers leads to Heidi Fleiss, and from there to the idea of building a song about a stalker onto Sobule's poppish pattern: Emaj7, D#m7, C#m7, Bmaj7, F#sus. As the melody takes form, the participants begin groping for words. Jill provides the unlikely opener: "Binoculars."

"This person is getting dressed," Charlotte muses, "like to go to her job. But her job is stalking."

"But she only does it on Sunday, because the rest of the week, she's nine-to-five," Garrett adds. "This is like her church."

"What rhymes with binoculars?" Jill asks. She begins playing, then sings. "Binoculars. he's so popular . . ."

Kay Williams

There's a short silence, except for Garrett softly humming Jill's theme. Then he says, "What about, 'Binoculars, eye makeup, and tea?' The things she uses to get ready; it's very mundane for her."

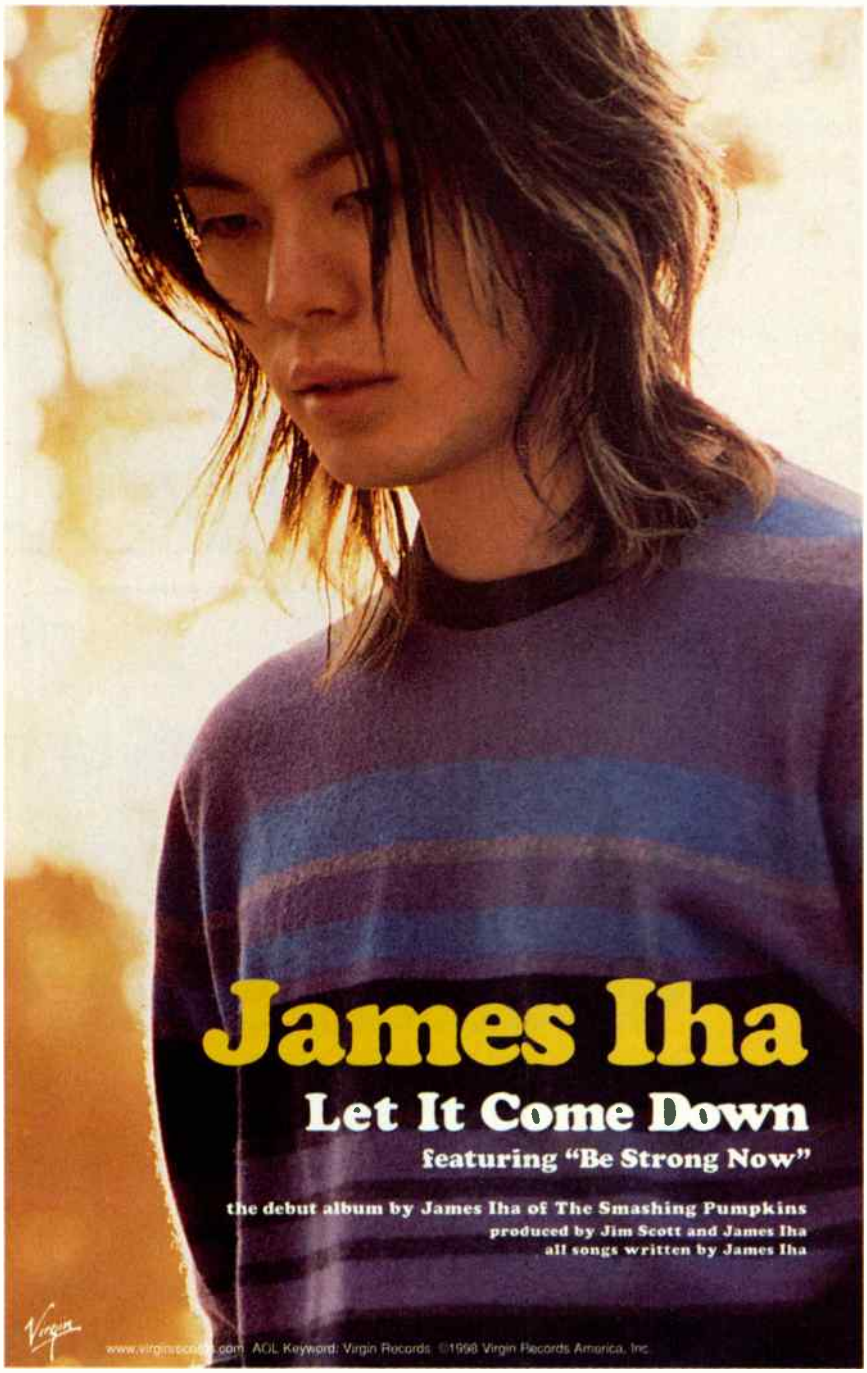
"That's nice because they don't go together at all," says Jill.

"I was thinking you could use a line like this," Garrett adds. "'Binoculars, eye makeup, and tea. Blah, blah, blah . . . obsessively, me."

Jill tries it out, singing the line as if it were a Bacharach hook. Then she laughs, "Oooh, it's so *sick!*"

"'Obsessively, Me' is a great title too," Charlotte says.

Toward mid-afternoon the verses are done, but the bridge proves elusive. The feel should contrast with the gentle sway of the verse, and the lyrics should be more direct, but no one can find the right chord until Garrett, out of the blue, starts hammering a G-C-Em-D pattern and singing lyrics that seemed more memorized than improvised: "Someday you will love me, someday you will need me, someday you'll have no choice, someday you'll come 'round. . . ." The Americans cheer and applaud; the G chord is a hit. "G for genius!" one of the women yells, and another answers, "G for Garrett!"



That night, the quartet records in the studio set up off the Abbeyglen lobby. Later that week, a selection of these songs will be performed onstage in Dublin, with proceeds donated to Cooperation North, a charity dedicated to Irish unity. But now, with a fire roaring in the nearby hearth and "Obsessively, Me" nailed on tape, we ask for a post-mortem.

"What made it work was that everybody was able to relax because it wasn't a serious thing," Ashley says. "It was fun, so you could be real stream-of-conscious and not have to edit yourself too much. I mean, I play rock and blues, so this was the antithesis, lyrically and musically, of anything I do. That's probably the value of something like this: You end up doing things that, left to your own devices, you would never attempt."

The very thought of writing a bossa-nova about a stalker would seem to trigger unexpected inspiration. "That's why this song was good," Jill insists. "We could be goofy and stupid, whereas if we were trying to write a serious love ballad, I know *I* would do more self-censorship."

According to Garrett, the point isn't that weird ideas lead to great songs; rather, it's that you can do quality work about *any* idea, especially those that have currency in the real world. "You can make a song out of the most mundane scene or word," he says. "You can give a word a million connotations you've never thought of before. I love to write about run-of-the-mill things. Some of the best songs are about things you don't think about, like black coffee or something simple like that. It's not that songwriters see the world any differently, but I do get a kick out of writing in a way that makes *you* see something in a fresh light."

Participants in upcoming Music Bridge events will include winners of the new Unisong contest for unknown songwriters. For information, write to Music Bridge, 5601 Mason Avenue, Woodland Hills, CA 91367.

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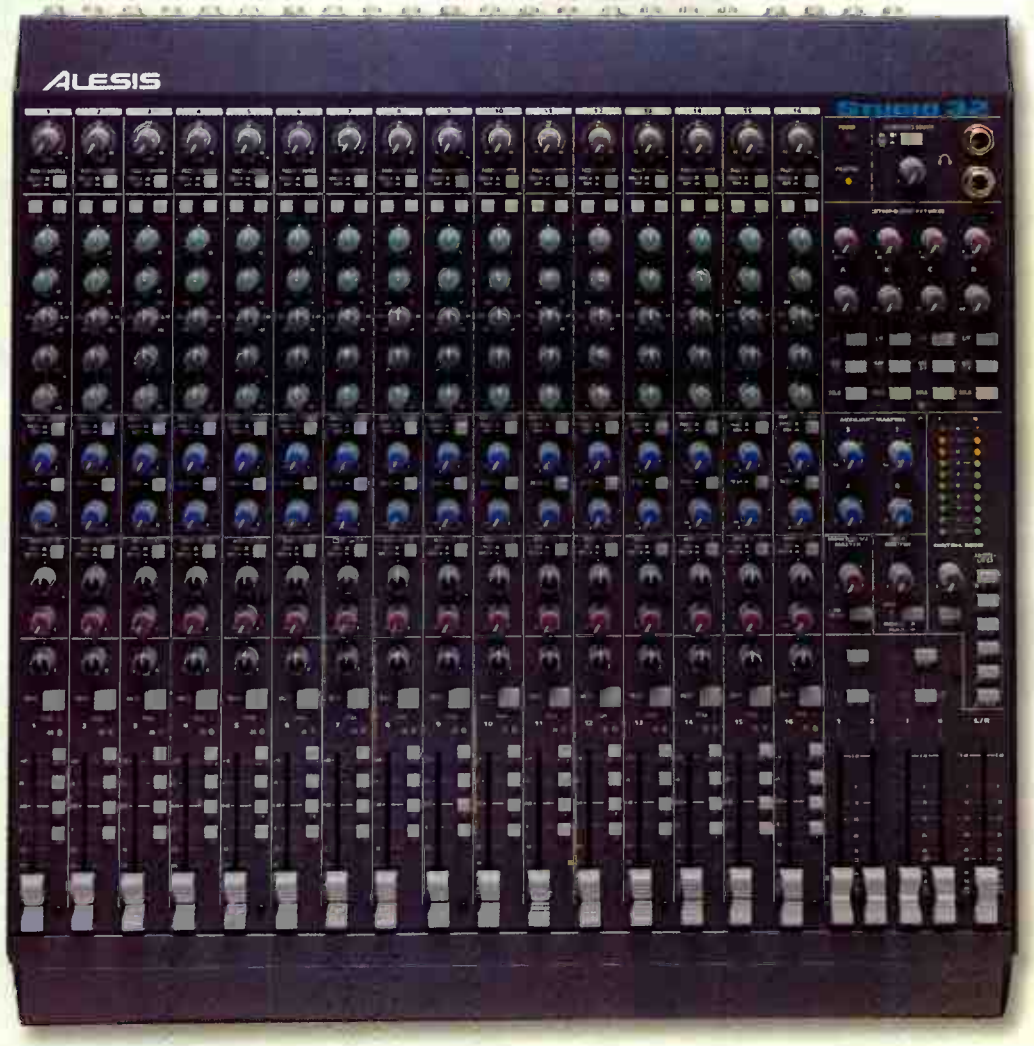

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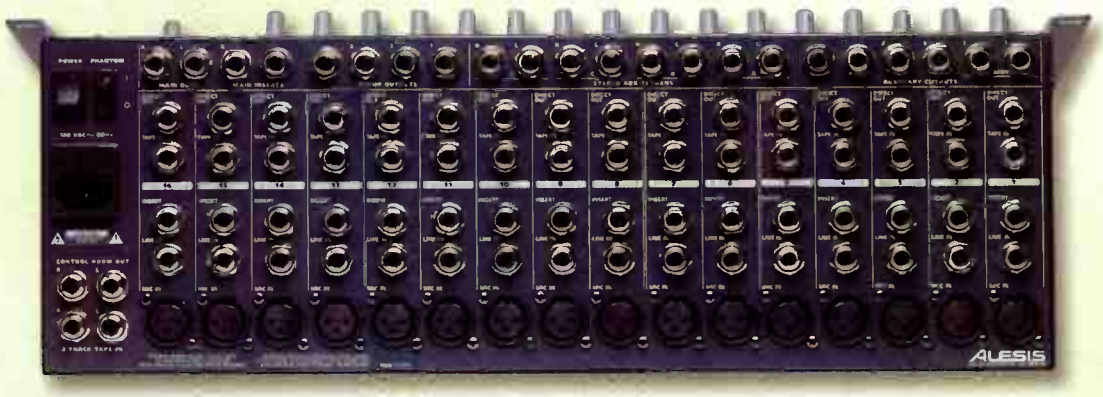

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home studio

by mac randall
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eli hersko

Dan Zanes

If you're seeking the major and minor shrines to the great god of reverb, be sure to pay a visit to the meat-packing district on the west side of Manhattan. There, inside a former warehouse, is the private studio/rehearsal space of Dan Zanes—a place where analog warmth is prized over all else. Zanes is probably best known as a former member of Boston-based roots rockers the Del Fuegos, but it was actually a later stint writing music for films and TV (including part of the soundtrack to Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*) that served as the practical and financial impetus for setting up a full-fledged home studio. It's here that he practices with his new string band and works on music for the followup to his 1995 Mitchell Froom-produced solo debut, *Cool Down Time*, still in progress.

The heart of Zanes' recording setup is an **Otari MX5050 MKIII-8** half-inch eight-track machine with auto locator 1 and a **Mackie 24•8** console 2 with a set of **API** mic preamps 3. "Before the Mackie I had a Ramsa 18-channel board," Dan says, "and I've got to say, even though I liked having the Mackie's extra channels, I missed the sound of the Ramsa for a while. But then I got the mic pres, and that just evened everything out." The no-name patch bay is "dirty but functional—like me."

The cornerstone of Zanes' studio, however, is his collection of analog reverb and echo units, inspired by a long-held affection for the sound of vintage Jamaican recordings. There's a **Blamp MR/140** spring reverb 4, a **Fender Reverb** reissue 5, a **Multivox** analog delay 6 ("very dark-sounding"), a **Roland RE-301 Chorus Echo** 7, a **Maestro Echoplex**, and two spring reverbs by **Master-Room**: a one-channel **XL-121** 8 and a two-channel **XL-210** 9. The second channel of the 210 has been altered by a guitar tech friend of Zanes named Blackie, who cut its spring drastically for a shorter reverb. "Spring reverbs are really easy to find, and they're cheap," Zanes says. "I picked up a Master-Room for $75. No one seems to care about spring reverbs—but I care a lot. I'm not against digital stuff, but for my purposes, the warmer the better."

Indeed, several examples of more modern effects technology lurk nearby, including a bunch of **Alesis** gear: a **MicroLimiter** 10, a **MicroGate** 11, a **MicroVerb II** 12, a **3630** compressor 13, and a **QuadraVerb** 14. "I do keep the QuadraVerb plugged in," Zanes says, "and I do use it from time to time. But I unplugged the MicroVerb a long time ago. It just doesn't compare to my spring reverbs."

Rounding out the outboard gear are a **Lexicon Jam Man** 15 and a **Tech 21 SansAmp** and **SansAmp Bass DI**. But that's only the beginning of Zanes' effects collection. We haven't even discussed the veritable vault's worth of stompboxes: a **Mu-Tron Bi-Phase** and **Phasor II**; a **Morley Analog Echo Reverb**; a **Boss PN-2** tremolo/pan, **FV-50** volume, and **BF-2** flanger; a **Maestro Parametric Filter**; a **DOD 680** analog delay 16 (used on nearly all *Cool Down Time*'s vocal tracks) and **FX65** stereo chorus 17; an

Ibanez OT10 octave, **FL9 flanger**, and **TS9 Tube Screamer**: a **Vox V847** wah-wah; a **Dunlop Crybaby 535** wah-wah; and an **MXR Phase 45** 18 and **Dynacomp** 19. "I'd like to run a whole mix through the Mu-Tron Bi-Phase," Dan says. "Lee Perry used to do stuff like that."

There are nearly as many instruments as effects in Zanes' arsenal. Guitars include three **Harmony Silvertone** Jazzmaster-styles 20, reissue **Fender Stratocaster** and **Telecaster** models, a '57 **Gibson Les Paul Junior**, a Fifties **Supro** double-neck lap steel 21, and a **Guild F-30** acoustic 22. Dan has real keyboards too: a **Wurlitzer 200** electric piano 23, an **ARP String Ensemble**, and a **Korg M1**, which Dan says is "collecting all the dirt and dust that settles in the studio. If I got rid of it, all that dust would have to go somewhere else, so I hold onto it for that reason."

There's a variety of amplification to choose from as well. A **Music Man 65 Reverb** head, a **Supro Golden Holiday** 24, and a rebuilt Fifties **Gibson BR-9** 25 share space with a bunch of **Fender** items: a tiny Forties **Champ** 26, a **Vibro Champ** 27, a '65 **Deluxe**, a **Sidekick 10**, and a **Pro Junior**.

When Zanes or any of his friends feel like pounding out a beat, they tackle a blue Sixties **Ludwig** kit, with both a **Radio King** and a **Rogers** snare and **Zildjian** crash and hi-hats. **Matador** bongos 28 and a **Latin Percussion** hand drum 29 coexist with other percussion implements, including several stray pieces of maple brought down from Zanes' place in upstate New York.

But these days, Dan's less likely to be hitting the skins than strumming on his fave axe, a turn-of-the-century **Washburn** five-string banjo, or blowing into one of two **Hohner Melodicas** 30. **Shure SM57**, **Sennheiser MD 441** and **MD 421** 31, and **AKG C414** 32 mics help capture both instruments and vocals, and Zanes keeps it all tonal with either a **Peterson Model 450** strobe tuner or a small **Lockon** tuner that fits conveniently into his shirt pocket 33.

Once everything's been recorded, Zanes turns to his **TASCAM DA-30** DAT machine 34. "I mix to DAT just to be part of the world," he chuckles. "It makes it more convenient when giving tapes to people." When convenience isn't essential, Dan mixes to a **Sony K717ES** cassette deck 35 or records direct—just voice and guitar—onto a **Panasonic Desktop** cassette recorder bought at a New Hampshire yard sale. For monitoring, he uses either a pair of **Tannoy PBM 6.5s** 36 or one of his more recent acquisitions, a set of cheapo **Realistic Optimus** speakers 37 (total cost: $10). A **Sony GX50ES** stereo receiver 38 provides necessary wattage; the old **Crown** power amp (39) in the corner is "permanently retired."

Though most of the recordings Zanes makes in this studio are demos or instrumental experiments, he doesn't rule out the possibility of cutting a record here. "I do love the way this stuff sounds, and I love working this way. Everything's set up to go, and there's a nice balance between recording on my own in solitude and playing with a band. It's great."

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A Mega-Band Harnesses The Power Of Restraint

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ART & ECONOMY

By Dave Marsh Photos By Anton Corbijn

Rock bands are like families on the Tolstoyan model. The happy ones are exactly the same (perhaps because they're nonexistent?) while the unhappy ones are each uniquely fitted to their own miseries. ● *About no contemporary has this been more true than Pearl Jam, whose every successful step seemed accompanied by a moan of anguish, to such an extent that by 1995 the band seemed to have whittled down its options to simply making records. The group's followers could have been forgiven for thinking that it no longer existed as a band, except in the spectral sense of Steely Dan.* ● *Yet there was Pearl Jam in November 1997, with a new album in the can, playing four nights in San Francisco*

PEARL JAM:
THE COMPLETE STAGE SETUP

Eddie Vedder. Guitars: Fender Telecaster (1983), Gibson ES 335 (1968), two Schecter imitation Telecasters, Jerry Jones electric sitar (1993). Strings: GHS Boomers (.101-.50). Picks: Dunlop Tortex .60mm. Amplification: Marshall Power Brake, Marshall JCM 800 100-watt head (previously owned by Johnny Ramone), Marshall 1960B 4x12 cabinet. Microphone: Audix OM-7. Harmonica: Hohner Marine Band (key of G). **Mike McCready.** Guitars: two Fender Stratocasters (1959, 1959 reissue), three Gibson Les Pauls (1995 Deluxe 1959 reissue, 1996 Classic 1960 reissue, 1956 w/Bigsby tremolo), Gretsch Silver Jet reissue (1991) Gibson 335 (1968), Ibanez Flying V ('70s). Strings: GHS Boomers (.010-.50 or .010-.52). Picks: Dunlop Tortex .88 mm. Signal path: Sony WRR-840A wireless through pedals (R to L: Ernie Ball volume, Dunlop 535 Crybaby wah, MXR Phase 90, Boss DM-2 delay, MXR Dynacomp compressor, Ibanez TS-9 Tube Screamer), thru Jester Enterprises Hydra 2x6 tube splitter into (1) Fender 2x12 Twin (1959) and (2) Marshall 50-watt JMP head (1968) into Marshall 1960A 4x12 cabinet atop Orange 2x12 cabinet. **Stone Gossard.** Guitars: Fender Strat (1959), two Les Paul Deluxes (1953, 1973), Fender Tele w/Bigsby tremolo (1968), Hamer Duo-Tone acoustic/electric (1993), Gibson Flying V ('80s). Strings: GHS Boomers (.101-.50 or .011-.52). Picks: Dunlop Tortex .60mm. Signal path: Fender spring reverb (1965) into pedalboard (R to L: Ernie Ball volume, Dunlop GCB-95 Crybaby wah, Uni-Vibe chorus/vibrato, MXR Dynacomp, Ibanez TS-9 Tube Screamer & Sonic Distortion, Diaz Tremodillo tremolo, Boss DD-3 digital delay). Amplification: Matchless 2x12 DC-30 (1995). **Jeff Ament.** Bass: Modulus Jazz (1996) two custom Modulus Jazzes (1993 in drop-D tuning, 1996), Wal four-string fretless (1993), custom Hamer eight-string (1990), custom Hamer twelve-string (1991), Carruthers Sub-1 upright electric (1992). Signal path: Sony WRR-840A wireless system into Furman VU-40 signal meter, Ampeg B-18 60-watt Portaflex amp w/additional gain/EQ & adjustable line output, & Brooke Siren AR116 D.I., which sends signals to house & into TCM Design 24cx-4 active crossover, which divides signals into subs (up to 125Hz) & highs (120Hz & above). Sub signal runs into Ampeg SVP-Pro preamp, which sends balanced output thru monitor console, Crest 6001 power amp, & RAT 2x15 monitor sidefill cabinet. Highs run through pedalboard (R to L: Boss SYB-3 bass synth & CH-1 Super Chorus, Dunlop TS-1 tremolo, SansAmp Classic distortion), another Brooke Siren AR116, Ampeg 300-watt SVTI, Acoustic 360 preamp, Marshall 100-watt Super Tremolo amp, Ampeg B-15R 60/100-watt Portaflex, & Sal Trentino custom four-channel load-box, which cycles back to Uptown Flash. Signal continues to dbx 166 compressor/master volume & power amp sections of three Ampeg SVT-II Pros, two of which feed two SWR Engineering 6x10 speaker cabinets, while the third feeds SWR Engineering 2x10 cabinet used as offstage monitor for bass tech George Webb & custom-built 2x10 bass wedge monitor positioned near Ament's pedalboard. **Jack Irons.** Drums: Slingerland 22"x15" bass drum w/Drum Workshop Turbo 5000 single-spring pedal, four Slingerland toms, assorted snares (two Ludwig Acrolites, Ludwig Black Beauty, or Ludwig Supra-Phonic w. Yamaha Power Hoop rims), two headless Remo Roto Tom rims, Alpine cowbell. Cymbals: Zildjian 14" K custom dark hi-hat bottom w/14" dark crash thin top, 17" K custom dark crash, 22" A custom ride, 18" custom dark crash sizzle, 18" K custom dark crash, 21" metal trash can lid. Heads: Evans Genera G1, Remo Ambassador & Emperor). Sticks: Pro-Mark TX737SGW hickory wood-tips w. Gamma Sports tennis racket tape for firm grip.

opening for the Rolling Stones and preparing to conduct its first full-scale American tour in a coon's age.

What happened? Somehow this band survived the kind of crisis that usually ensures a breakup—a crisis that not only engulfed them but swirled through the city of Seattle during the grunge rush of the early Nineties. As singer and principal writer Eddie Vedder said, "It wasn't just a Pearl Jam crisis. It was the whole city. Nirvana was even in front of us as far as taking it head-on."

To the world outside the band, in the months after Pearl Jam's first three albums—*Ten* (1992) *Vs* (1993), and

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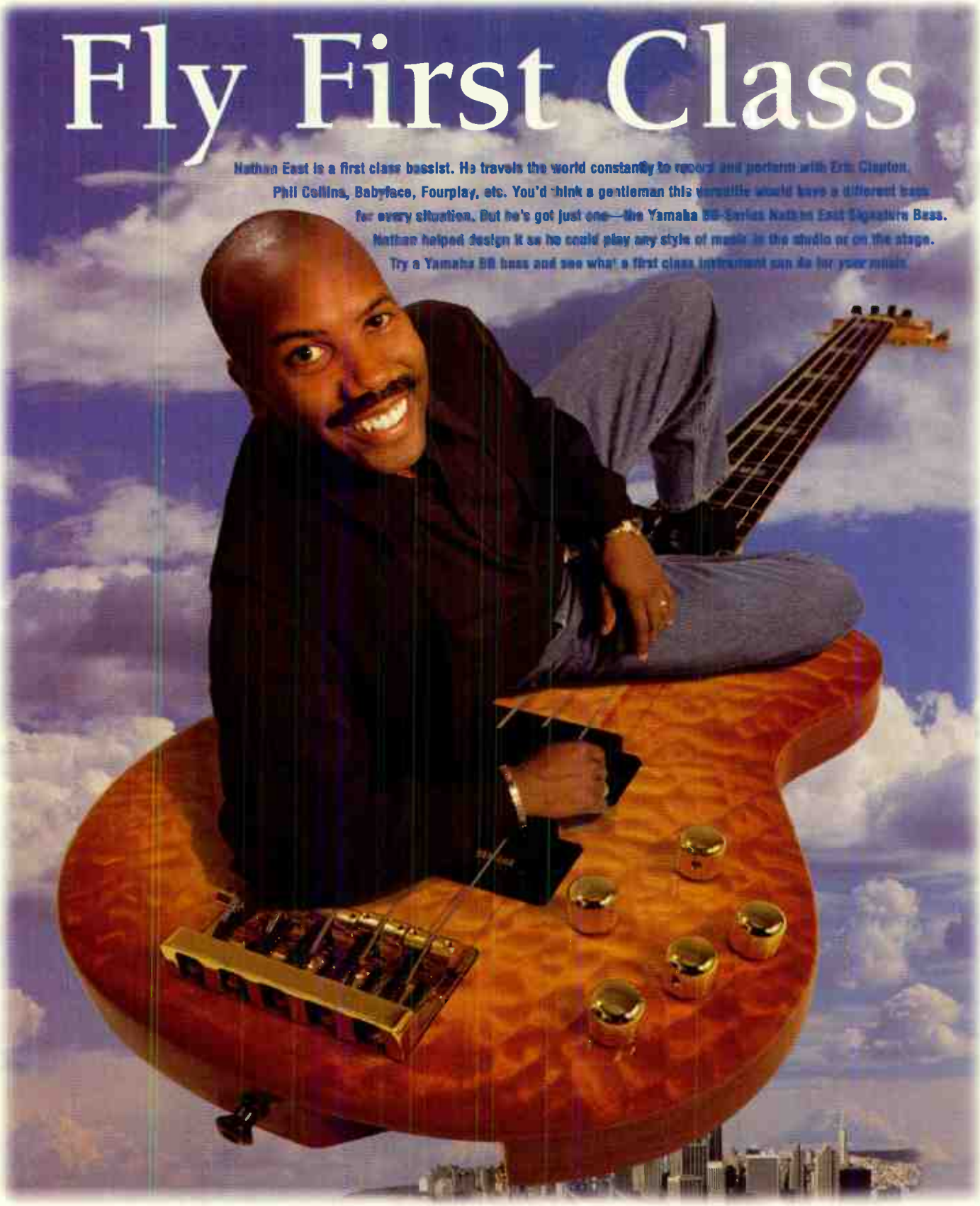

YAMAHA BASSES

Vitalogy (1994)—each sold between five and ten million copies, the situation seemed even more volatile. There was no Pearl Jam album in 1995; instead, they made *Mirror Ball* with Neil Young, an act of homage for them and a battery-charge for him. Then, when they tried to tour on their own, Vedder contracted the most famous case of food poisoning since George Bush puked on the Japanese prime minister, and had to cancel a 50,000-seat concert in San Francisco after less than twenty minutes onstage; Young filled in and got booed. In the wake of that episode, a U.S. tour was canceled. Pearl Jam toured Europe as Young's backup group. The band's fourth album, *No Code* (1996) sold fewer than two million copies. There was no effort to do a U.S. tour; it was hard to believe that the band still had any interest in doing one.

"It's difficult to see, when you're in the middle of it, that you're not having a great time, sometimes," says Stone Gossard. "At least for me, just because there was a lot of pressure to keep going and to keep writing songs and to kind of justify selling as many records as we did. I think we all felt like we really wanted to get better and to feel like we deserved this sort of attention. But at the same time, we weren't really communicating very well. I don't know how much we really were enjoying being around each other. And I don't know whether it was just the pressure we'd kind of created around all this. I don't know exactly what the causes and effects were. It felt like a real adolescent period of time in the band, in terms of the kinds of things that we were having disagreements about."

There was a temptation to see the crisis—more precisely, the series of crises—as stemming mainly from Vedder, whose voice and onstage persona dominated the band's image. But it wasn't just Vedder, although as the band's charismatic frontman, lyricist, and main spokesperson, he articulated grievances most often.

"I think everybody has a different way of dealing with those sorts of things," says bassist Jeff Ament. "Maybe we were a little bit more ready [than other bands struck by success]. Then there are aspects of it that there's no way you could be ready for. There's no way that you could be ready for being in a grocery store at ten in the morning and having a bunch of people run up to you and ask for your autograph. Especially if you've been in this neighborhood for ten years. To have that happen all of a sudden one morning, you're just like, 'What was that? What happened over the last two months that changed?'"

In a situation stressed both by internal relationship problems and an attempt to control the virtually uncontrollable perils of fame, any one of three things can happen: The band's leader can take over and turn the project into some kind of solo act—the Alice Cooper model. Or the band can break up and begin the arduous process of finding out whether any of them has it in him for a solo career—the Beatles model. Or the band can deny the problem and soldier on—the Who model. None of these approaches is conducive to creativity, and only the latter will give a group longevity.

Pearl Jam, it would seem, has cut a new path. It has come through the crisis, found out some things about itself as well as about the nature of success, and decided to

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see what might be made of continuing its career. "I think the only way we could get to the place where we could all go home and then not do anything for a little while and then have a little bit of excitement about getting together and writing songs was to say, 'We can't tour anymore. We can't do any interviews. We can't make five videos for this record,'" says Ament. "That's all the stuff that just tries you. It's a lot of sitting around and waiting around, and just being frustrated, and maybe putting the creative control in other people's hands, and maybe feeling like you're not being represented the way you want to be. The way that things happened for us and the way that initially everybody wanted a piece of us, I think we had to say no a lot. And that probably did come across as [us] being control freaks.

"It was about being burned, too—about somebody saying, 'Oh, yeah, I'm your friend and I'm gonna do all this,' and then a year later you find out that they're collecting stories to write a book about you."

Ament's bandmates were equally forthcoming about their feelings; all said they shared this sense of frustration and rejection. All five agreed that what enabled them to survive as a band was learning how to limit their commitments, and realizing that there was a way to scale down the process of success and render it livable.

"I feel like we went through the fire a little bit and ended up coming out and realizing . . . especially after we stopped doing press and stopped doing videos and things started to settle down a little bit in terms of everyone feeling like, 'God, we're not doing that stuff, and everything's still fine! We can still make records. We might not be selling as many records, but everything seems fine,'" says Gossard. "Going through that kind of allowed us to then sort out a lot of our own personal issues and then get to the bottom of what may be some of our fights."

Jack Irons, who replaced original drummer Dave Abbruzesse, is a year or so older than the rest of the band. He's got the most critical distance on what happened, since the height of their fame came before he joined and he's not from Seattle. (A former member of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, he still lives in California.) Irons also has perhaps the most professional perspective in the group—and the most adult, since he's the only one who has kids. "This band wanted to be together," he insists. "They actually like each other, and it was just the circumstances that were kind of closing in. With time and good intent, that sort of goes away. You've still got to deal with it, but it doesn't have the same power anymore."

All the other bandmembers say essentially the same thing. Vedder sums it up: "At some point, we realized that the one small circle of people who would understand what each of us might have been going through on an individual level, even moreso than the other people we had closest relationships to, the only people we could really communicate to about the situation that we were in, were the other guys [in the band]. They were the only ones."

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Even if statements of solidarity are inevitable when a band returns to the touring circuit, what Pearl Jam is saying seems real. That's mainly because the music on the new album, *Yield*, confirms that something like this must have happened. Although it does contain several songs that evoke the classic Pearl Jam of the first two albums (Ament's "Pilate" and "Low Light," McCready's and Vedder's "Given to Fly"), *Yield* is an eccentric vehicle, not at all a typical approach for this band.

Part of the reason is the songwriting credits. There hasn't been such a diversity of voices in Pearl Jam's songwriting since *Ten*. Ament in particular has been absent as a writer, and he's never contributed lyrics prior to *Yield*. "We approached this record so differently in terms of writing," he says. "I think it's the first time that everybody came to the sessions with demos of complete songs or partial songs or ideas. Ed actually gave a lot of us the confidence to do that. He said, 'You know, if any of you guys feel like bringing complete songs the next time we do this, that would be great.' And that was huge."

Veder's perspective is, naturally, a bit different. "Pretty much everyone has always written music. That might mean bringing in a piece of slop, saying, 'This is music.' My job for a long time was to make something of it. I loved that. I was in control. I could dissect it in my lab and then come out with something. I was writing songs too. Then they started writing, and more music was coming in. But it was still in this linear shape.

"All I know is that this year we came back and there were good songs just handed to me," Vedder continues. "Completed: bass, drums, guitars, vocals, words, backgrounds. And some of them were totally moving. You just listened to it, and then you'd go in and play it, and there was none of this democratic hammering out of the riffs. I remember the first time Jack and I played 'Low Light' with Jeff. I just sang it over the guitar and the drums, and I got chills. Part of it was knowing that Jeff wrote it. And it just sounded good; I really enjoyed what he had written. It sounds kind of lush and lovey-dovey, but it was just a great moment. I was so thrilled that we were making music and it was gonna be this easy. You know, there's nothin' wrong with easy once in a while.

"It was just so cool," he says, "'cause it got to be homework after a while. As great as that is. I mean, if I sit at home and write something, and if words or something don't happen immediately, I'll just play something else. But if someone gives you something that they really like, and something doesn't happen, then you have to start circling it and getting in it, seeing if you can just throw a couple of things out. Sometimes that just happens, and it's great and it's done. But other times it's a little more difficult, so it would become a little bit of homework. And for them to come in and just have this stuff together . . ."

Vedder shakes his head. "So now I'm sheepishly saying, 'Sounds great, you know.' Kinda waiting to say, 'Well, you can sing it, 'cause I'm not gonna. Your version is good. Let's record it.' They'd pretty much say, 'It'd be great if you could sing it' or ask me to try this or that, and then I'd embrace it and go at it."

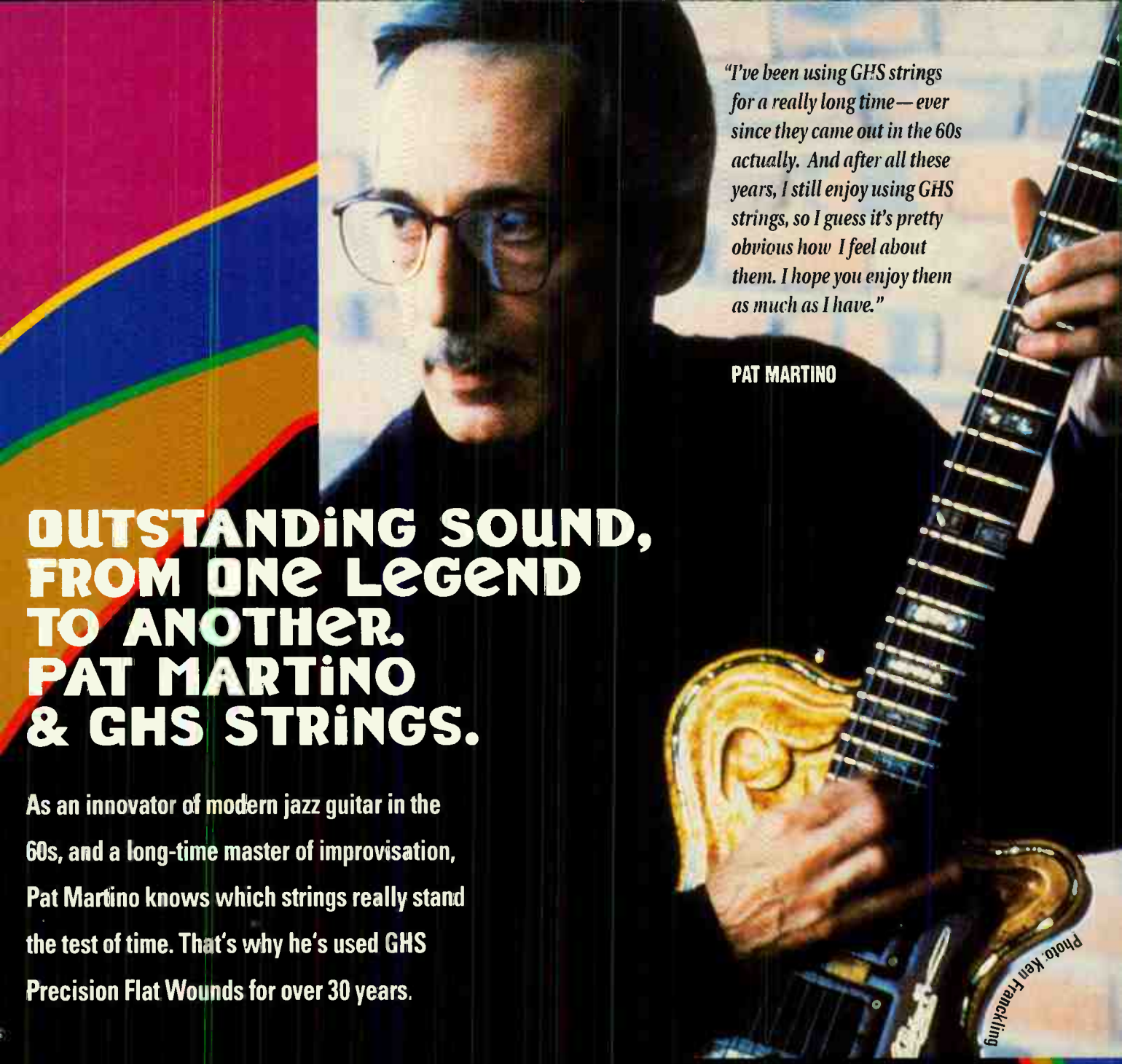
Still, Vedder insists that not very much has changed in the band. Certainly not its sound: "I think we just kind of experiment. We try something, and it happens, and that's what it is. If it really doesn't belong, we don't put it on the record."

What's different, he thinks, is that the band has found a new relationship to the world outside itself. "I just thought that you didn't have to be so extreme, that you could still play, that when you made a record you didn't have to tour the whole world and then take another year off because you've spent a year and a half with these people and you can't stand another minute, you know, with the guitar player's voice in your ear, or ordering food or something—these little things. Look, all I want to do is play music. Now I have an opportunity. I want to keep going. I'm gonna be playing music for a long time. I'd like to keep offering it to people. I don't need to offer it on this superhuge, megahype level. There are some rewards [from that approach], but not really important ones. And there are sacrifices."

For example, the band seems to have taken a series of fairly conscious decisions to downsize its popularity. This was the consequence of a sequence of changes that began with a change in the band: the addition of Jack Irons. Jeff Ament talks in detail about how Irons' playing opened up Pearl Jam's sound: "It's made me rethink a lot about how I play, because he approaches the drums from such a soulful place. He never has a shortage of beats: He'll play some crazy groove, and everybody will fall in.

"I feel I'm approaching the new songs way differently," Ament adds, "so it makes me excited to be playing bass again. Then I feel like Jack has given some of the old songs a lot more space. All of a sudden, a song like 'Evenflow,' which I feel like we've struggled with . . . I knew it was a great song all along, and I felt that it was the best song that we got the worst take of on the first record. There were a hundred takes on that song, and we just never nailed it. Then all of a sudden Jack starts playing, and it's like, 'Wow! That's how it was supposed to be played.' Leaving a big space there and a little space there, all of a sudden the song opens up and it swings.

"I think some of it, too, is Stone and Mike and me learning how to not play. So



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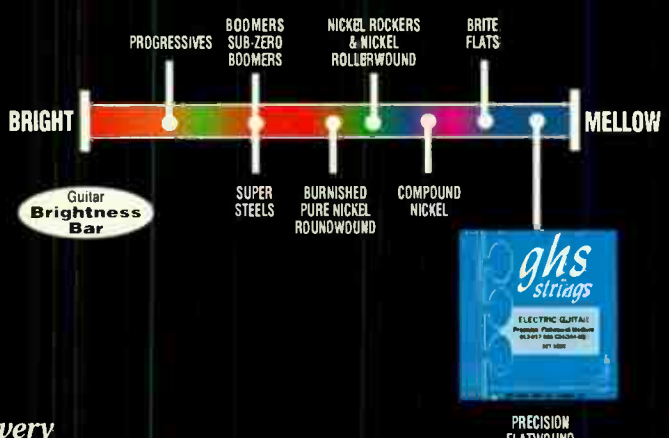

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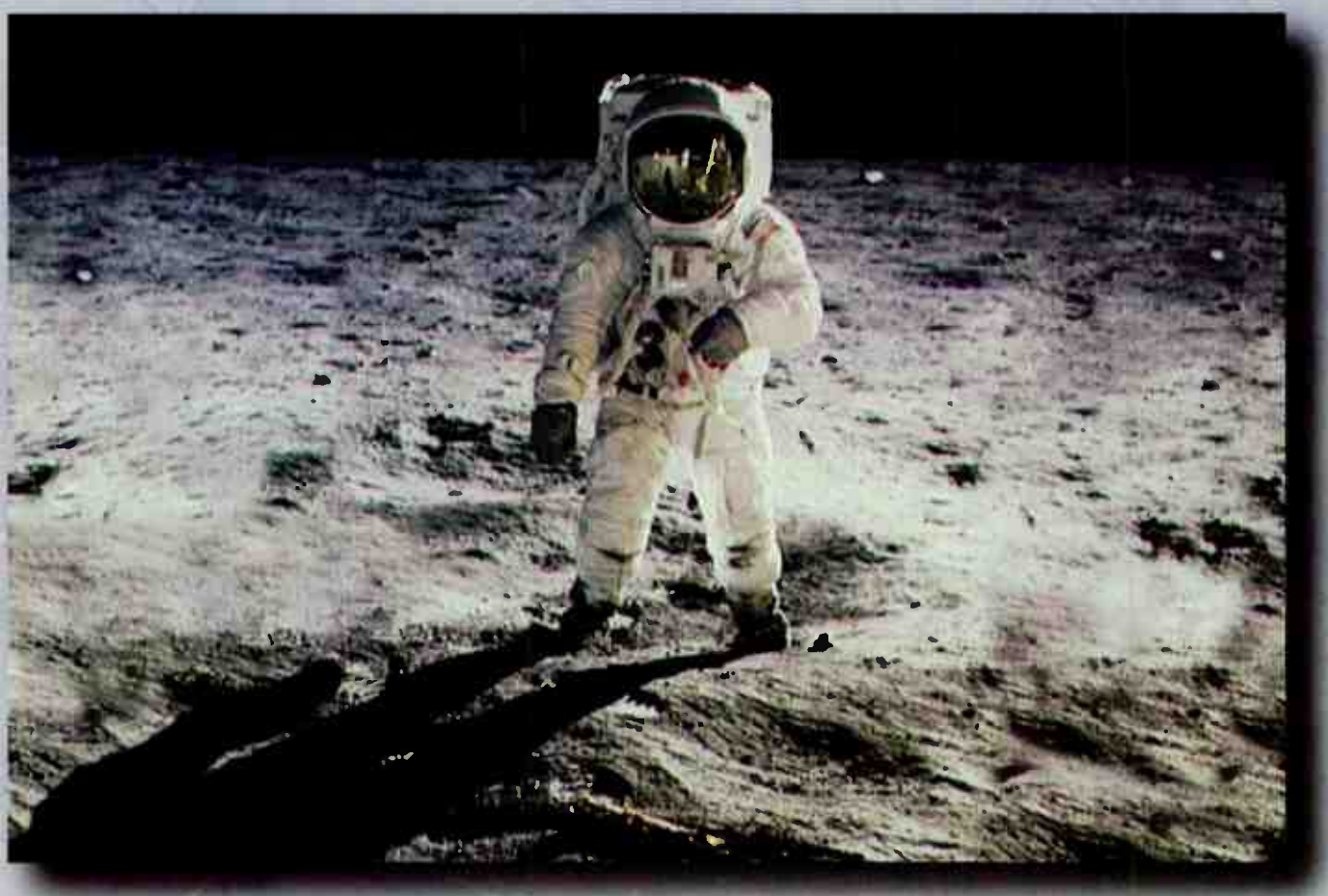

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much of the first couple of records, Stone's riffs were kinda going the whole time; they were like the hi-hat of the song or whatever. Now there are huge spaces in songs where people aren't playing at all.

"Neil Young said something about how we were wise in that we knew when not to play. I don't know if we were necessarily doing it at that point, but him saying that's what we were doing, that made us realize that that's how you get to that point. It's just like any relationship: It's about givin' it up at certain times, and letting somebody else hold the floor.

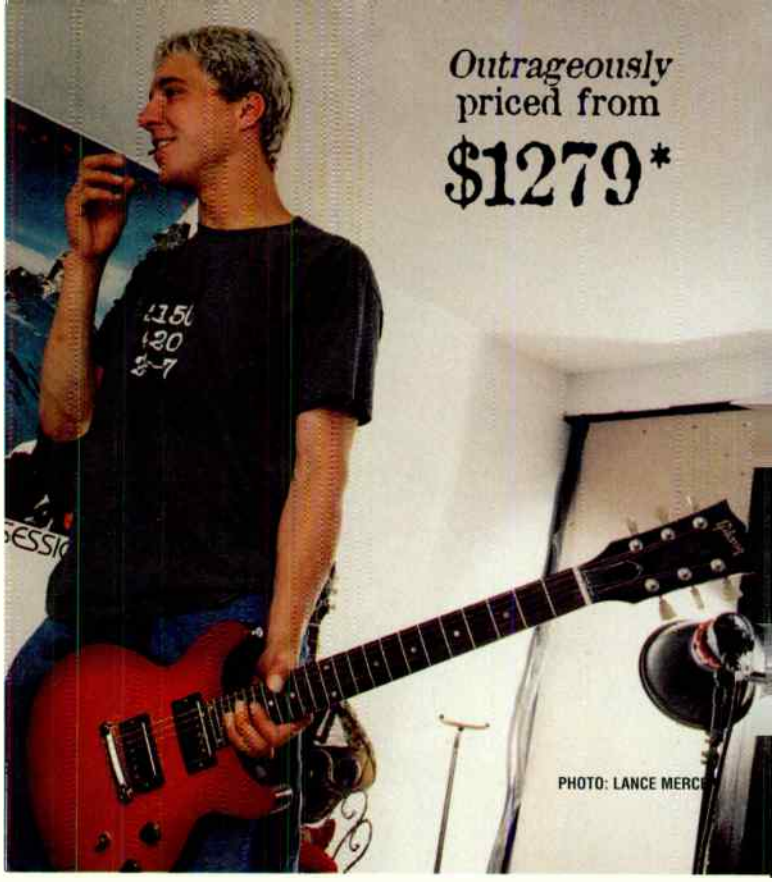
"For me, a couple of the songs I didn't play on at all—which are 'No Way' and 'Evolution'—are two of my favorite songs on this record. Three or four years ago, I don't know if I could have said that. I think I'd have been kind of bummed that I wasn't part of the song, or wasn't at least playing bass or doing something on the song. At that point, it seems like it's interesting to sit down and learn a bass line that Stone wrote. It's great to listen to something purely being a fan of the people I play with, to sit back and have a pure perspective and just say, 'Wow, that's a great song.' It's not because I played on it; there's nothing to do with my ego in this. It's just about listening to it as a song and as a fan. I think there's been a lot of growth in this record in that way—just giving up things to other people and letting other people do things."

As McCready is Pearl Jam's most musically obsessed member, Mike tends to see everything through the lens of music. His reflection on the band's squabble over concert surcharges: "When we took on all those issues, Ticketmaster or whatever, that started to get in the way of just creating music and playing shows. That was when it started to get not so fun, for me. Once we get out there and play again, that's when I love it."

But, perhaps because he sees so much in terms of how it affect the music, Mike's also the bandmember who best defines how the band's musical evolution has altered its way of working together. "We've opened up and started talking a lot more than we ever have before—confronting each other on issues, having arguments, whatever."

The trick in all that is that it never sounds forced. It sounds like five guys who understand each other so well that they can use whatever irritants remain in their lives and relationships as fuel for their fire. For thirty years, bands have been trying to figure out how to live with success. Pearl Jam might not have discovered the definitive answer, but they've found one that works for them: Not quite so much success, but a lot more communication. At least that's what it sounds like when Vedder says they've found "a real manageable something that allows us to have lives and really enjoy the fact that we get to be a band and release records and play live.

"It really did happen," he muses. "We really did turn a corner. Now it's just movin' on and bein' a band and just doin' what we do. We've kind of established what we do, and we're not gonna defend what we do. If someone doesn't like it, fuck off. I don't really have time to hear it. I'm doin' something pretty good with my life, and I challenge them to do the same."



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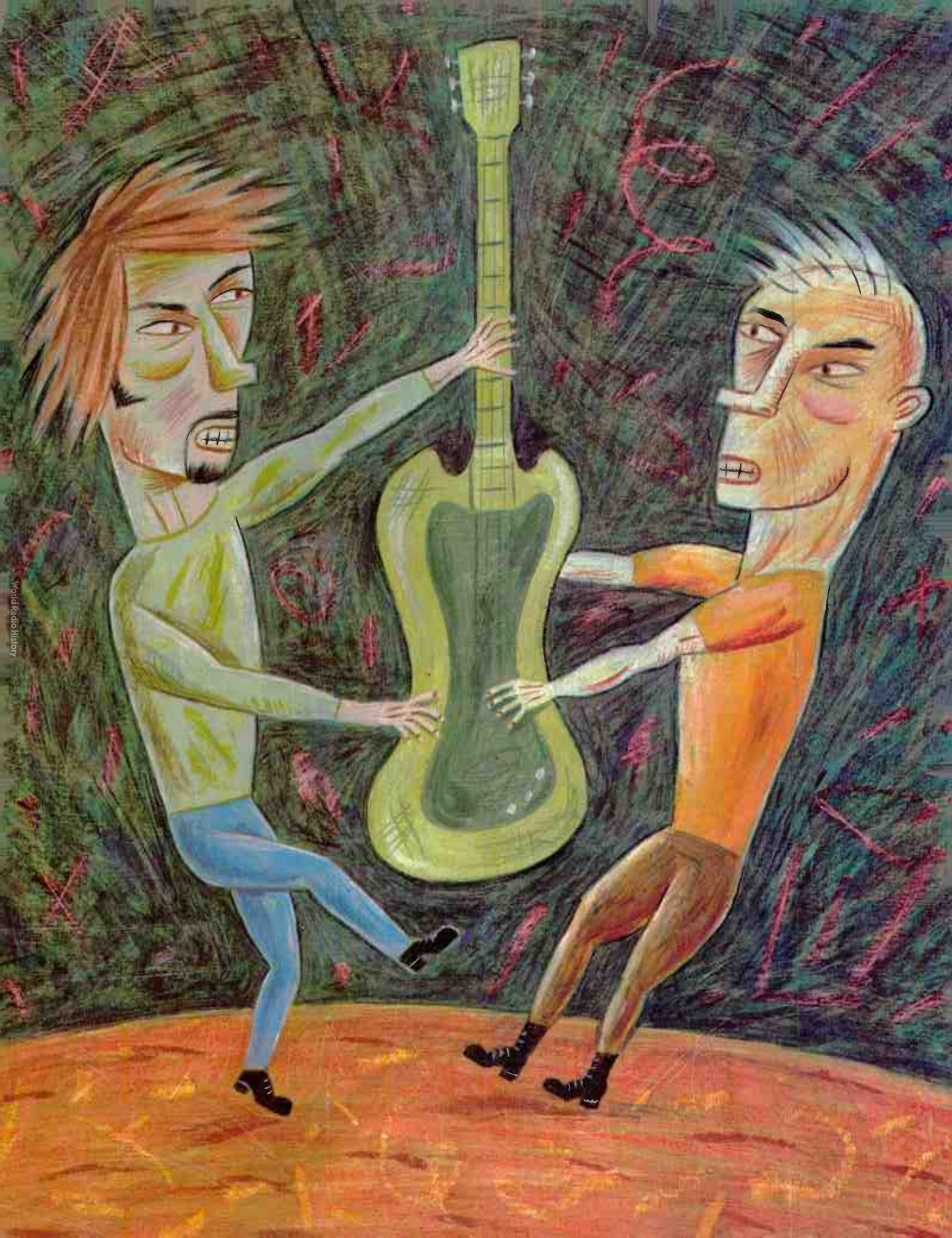

"GET IT IN WRITING & LEARN WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T"

— A Lawyer's Advice

Anthropologists reckon that man began to speak around twenty thousand years ago. One theory holds that language developed to help a pack of hunter/gatherers outmaneuver intelligent game on the African savanna. Lawyers know that language developed to help a pack of hunter/gatherers swindle each other with hokey, unenforceable verbal agreements. (Note how Adam promised not to eat the apple and then ate it anyway.) This is why whenever you establish a bargain with another party, be it consigning equipment to your local music store, buying your best friend's guitar, scheduling a show with a local club, or buying your first hilltop home, get the terms of the deal up front in writing. A good written agreement is more than a ticket to sue somebody. Most arguments erupt because somebody is honestly mistaken, or has genuinely forgotten the terms of the agreement. The mistake may be stupid, the memory lapse may seem extremely sleazy and self-serving, but most of the time, unless you truly run with the mag-

BY MARK CHEUVRONT ILLUSTRATION BY SUSAN SYNARSKI

the error is probably genuine—or at least partially so.

Because most people back down when they realize that you can prove what you say, the true value of an agreement may be its power to make people back down before a misunderstanding escalates into war. A good agreement, then, prevents conflict.

People who don't back down in the face of hard evidence are usually psychopaths. You can't reason with them, so a good written agreement will help you sue their pants off.

As you can see, written agreements are valuable—and, like most valuable things, they're hard to get. This is especially true in the music business, where the working musician often suffers from chronic weak bargaining position syndrome. This article will discuss ways to protect yourself when a written agreement simply cannot be extracted from the other side.

A final word of caution: The tactics discussed here are a poor substitute for a written agreement, which should be obtained whenever possible.

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Dear Mr. So-and-So:

This letter will confirm today's conversation where we agreed that [*the band will do the show on June 23, 1998,* or *you will sell me the equipment listed below,* or *I will consign my Gibson Les Paul guitar to your store,* etc.]

It is my understanding that I am to do the following: [*Indicate precisely what you understand your part of the bargain to be,* i.e., *The band will show up promptly at 7 p.m. on June 23, 1998; a three-hour show will commence promptly at 8 p.m.; two fifteen-minute breaks will be taken; the band will adhere to the general policies of the club as set forth in the flyer delivered to me this afternoon and attached to this correspondence for reference purposes.*]

It is my further understanding that you will do the following: [*Indicate precisely what you understand to be the other party's part of the bargain,* i.e., *The club will store the equipment in the locked room behind the stage; the club will be responsible for the equipment while in storage; adequate lights and electrical service will be made available; the band will be paid a sum of $1,000 following the show but prior to the close of business,* etc.]

Let me know as soon as possible if I have made a mistake in writing down our agreement.

Thank you and [*say something friendly and innocuous here so the other side doesn't feel you are setting them up for a lawsuit.*]

Sincerely,

Your Name

Ex 1: Confirmation of Agreement

ORAL AGREEMENTS

A contract arises when an offer for goods or services is made, the offer is accepted, and there is a plan to give some sort of consideration in exchange for those goods or services.

Consideration is the technical term for that which is exchanged in the bargain—*i.e.*, work for money or your old guitar for a stereo. One would say that work is done in consideration for money, or the guitar is given in consideration for the stereo.

The court will enforce the contract if the judge can determine: (1) who are the parties to the contract; (2) the subject matter of the contract—*i.e.*, the goods or services being exchanged for the consideration; (3) the general term of the contract; and (4) the amount nature of the consideration.

None of this means that the agreement must be in writing. An oral agreement, in a technical sense, is usually just as binding as a formal contract drawn up by an expensive lawyer and signed in blood. But while it is generally true that most contracts you will encounter as a musician need not be in writing, there are nit-picking exceptions. One involves the sale of goods—old guitars, cars, stereos, amps, drums, etc.—for more than $500. If you are buying or selling something for more than $500, and if the money doesn't change hands at the same time that the goods change hands (*i.e.*, if there is some sort of credit or time payment involved), then you must get this deal in writing. There is, of course, a whole stream of complex, cascading exceptions to the $500 sales exception. Still, just to be safe, get the terms of the sale in writing no matter how the payment is to be made.

As a rule, in the world of the average working musician, aside from the $500 sale exception, oral contracts are just as binding as written contracts. The problem is that when you don't have the agreement in writing, the average maggot will lie by: (1) denying that he is a party to the contract; (2) denying that the subject matter of the contract exists; (3) feigning total ignorance of the terms of the contract; and (4) maintaining that all of the consideration in the immediate vicinity belongs to him.

If an oral agreement has been made, and you have offered politely to memori-

On (date) _____ I (name) _____ served copies of the attached letter on interested parties. Service was made by placing true and correct copies of the letters in the United States mail in [*whatever town you mail it from*], in sealed envelopes, with postage affixed, addressed as follows:

[*Indicate the other party's name and address, and the "Business Office" name and address.*]

I swear under penalty of perjury and the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct. [*Signed and dated.*]

Ex. 2: Proof of Service

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-Emmylou Harris

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alize it in written form so that all parties involved may ascertain its terms in a fair and open manner, and the person with whom you are dealing begins to dance and seems reluctant to put the deal in writing, then you should immediately lay the groundwork to prove all the elements of the contract so that it can later be enforced.

"What if," you might ask, "I memorialize the deal by secretly recording the conversation?" The answer is simple: Don't do it, especially in California, where it's a criminal offense (California Penal Code Section 632). Even worse, if the D.A. there fails to prosecute you, there's an odd and nasty civil remedy embodied in Penal Code Section 637.2 that allows the party you secretly recorded to sue you either for $5,000 or three times his damages, whichever is more. (This remedy is provided because the D.A. is usually swamped with cases involving slashers and night stalkers and hasn't got the time to prosecute you and your silly tape recorder.)

Date

Dear Trusted Dealer:

I recently delivered my 1969 Kustom bass head and cabinet to your store for sale (serial number KK 69-212). The unit consists of a cabinet containing two 15" woofers and a separate head. The entire unit is covered in pink metal flake tuck-and-roll upholstery.

It is my understanding that you will try to sell the equipment for at least $300 and that you will keep 25 percent of the sale price as your commission. I agreed to be reasonable about my price, and you agreed to call me before lowering the sale price below $300.

It is my understanding that the equipment remains my property and that I can take it back at any time. I want to be sure that if something happens to you or the store, I can get this equipment back without a lot of problems.

_____

Signature

Ex. 3: Consignment Confirmation

To successfully sue you for $5,000, the person you surreptitiously record probably has to do no more than prove that you secretly taped his conversation without his permission. To add insult to injury, the judge will probably not allow you to use the tape in court. In other words, your tape will not only not help you; it could cost you five grand.

Beyond California's borders, the prohibition on secretly taping conversations is almost universal. At best, an otherwise incriminating tape won't help you. At worst, it can seriously harm you. Further, it will almost certainly convince the judge that you're a sneaky weasel and everything you say from that point forward is suspect.

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Art Thompson, Guitar Player Magazine, Dec 97

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A better course would be to memorialize the terms of an oral agreement in a confirmation letter, ***(see ex. 1, p. 48)***.

You should mail two copies of this letter, one to the other party and one to a "Business Office" noted at the bottom of the letter. This "Business Office" is some guy you send a copy of the letter to in order to prove it got mailed. Have this person save the letter unopened.

You may want to have a disinterested third party examine the letters prior to mailing, seal them in the envelopes, and then drop them in the mail for you. This person can then testify that two identical letters were mailed on the day in question, one to the "Business Office" and one to the other party to the contract. In California this person would testify by filling out a document called a *Proof of Service*. In ninety percent of the cases, the judge will accept this *Proof of Service* in lieu of having the actual person show up. Here's how it reads (***see ex. 2, p. 48***).

If things get serious, the party on the other side may deny having seen this letter or claim that the letter wasn't written until after the dispute had erupted. You counter this by bringing your *Proof of Service*, your Business Office person, and the unopened letter received by that person into court. Let the judge open the letter.

Note that there is nothing sacred about the name "Business Office." You can call it "Correspondence File," "Ghost of Elvis," or anything you want. If anyone asks, be honest and say that it's some guy you send copies of your important letters to so you can prove they got mailed. This is perfectly legitimate.

Unlike the *Proof of Service* person, the "Business Office" person *must* come physically into court to testify. They won't be able to do it with a sworn declaration. There's a thing called the hearsay rule that gives rise to this distinction, and there isn't room here to explain it.

Nothing here is cast in concrete. If you have a *Proof of Service* without a "Business Office," you still have a good case. Likewise, you can win with a credible "Business Office" but no *Proof of Service*. And if you have neither, you can still stand up in front of the judge and swear you mailed the letter when you said you did. Judges listen to people lie all day long; they're good at spotting liars. If it's just your word against that of some weasel, and you're telling the truth, there's a good chance you'll win.

Another way to prove that you delivered the letter to the other party is to fax the letter to the other party and *save the fax receipt*. (In California, for some reason, this doesn't seem to be as effective as a *Proof of Service*.) Registered letters are usually not a good idea, unless you are dealing in a situation where they are commonly used and expected. An unexpected registered letter can carry an implicit message: "I'm a contentious and paranoid nut who wants to entangle you in a messy fight."

Finally, sending a copy of the letter to yourself in the mail doesn't buy you much. This is an amateur's tactic that is almost always disregarded by the court. The court would rather have you swear under penalty of perjury that you mailed the letter when you said you did.

Although it's almost axiomatic that you would know and trust a store before delivering a valuable piece of equipment to them for sale, you should still make sure that the deal is carefully memorialized on paper.

Problems can arise from things beyond the store owner's control. For example, the store could file for bankruptcy, a receiver appointed by the IRS could swoop down and place a levy on the merchandise. In each of these cases, you will have a hard time getting the gear back without a paper trail proving that the equipment belongs to you and that you have to right to reclaim it. Beyond that, remember that decades of honest business dealings may count for nothing if the owner gets run over by a bus and his evil stepsister takes over the operation.

If a valuable piece of equipment is consigned to a trusted dealer on a handshake, a follow-up letter may be in order ***(see ex. 3, p. 50)***.

The important point is that the equipment remains your property, which you can come and get at any time. If you're clear about this, the bankruptcy court, the probate court, and the IRS will not have jurisdiction over the equipment and, in the event of some disaster, you should be able to retrieve it without much trouble.

If you aren't clearly on the record about all this, weird things can happen. For example, the bankruptcy court could view your consignment sales agreement as an executory contract and claim the benefit of the 25 percent sales commission for the bankruptcy estate. If the store owner files a Chapter 11 and a trustee is appointed, you could wait years for your equipment to either be sold or returned to you.

This is all just the tip of the iceberg. Next month we'll look at written agreements that offer less protection for the club-gig player than you think—and show what you can do to make them work in your favor.

Contributors: Mark Cheuvront is a music attorney based in Hollywood, California.

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DON'T SIGN ANYONE OVER 30

AGE ISN'T EVERYTHING IN THE RECORD BIZ—AS LONG AS YOU'RE IN YOUR TWENTIES

BY MARK ROWLAND
ILLUSTRATION BY TIM HUSSEY

With twenty years of experience as an A&R executive at several major labels, independent producer Jamie Cohen figured he knew the music business pretty well. But after spending four years putting together a tribute album to the great singer/songwriter Lowell George—a record that features performances by Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne, Randy Newman, Taj Mahal, Allen Toussaint, and the Meters, among others—he was surprised by the fact that none of the labels he'd worked for wanted to hear the results. "I got turned down by everybody," he says. Everybody? Even Mo Ostin and Lenny Waronker, the executives who once

signed Lowell George to Warner Bros. and who now helm Dreamworks? Cohen laughs ruefully: "I couldn't even get those guys to call me back."

Welcome to the new music business, which as Pete Townshend might point out, is really a lot like the old music business: Youth rules, middle age drools. Lately, musical youth has been getting even younger, as performers in their early teens—LeAnn Rimes, Hanson, Jonny Lang, Radish—sell millions of albums and bedazzle the media. Almost every label seems to be signing a young teen act—just coincidence, of course, executives assure, and they're all very, very talented—while older name artists are discovering new shades of meaning in the term "survivor." As for artists pushing thirty who are still waiting on that breakthrough showcase/signing/album, the consensus among industry observers seems to echo a line from Bob Dylan's latest—and, intriguingly, best-selling—album: "It's not dark yet, but it's gettin' there."

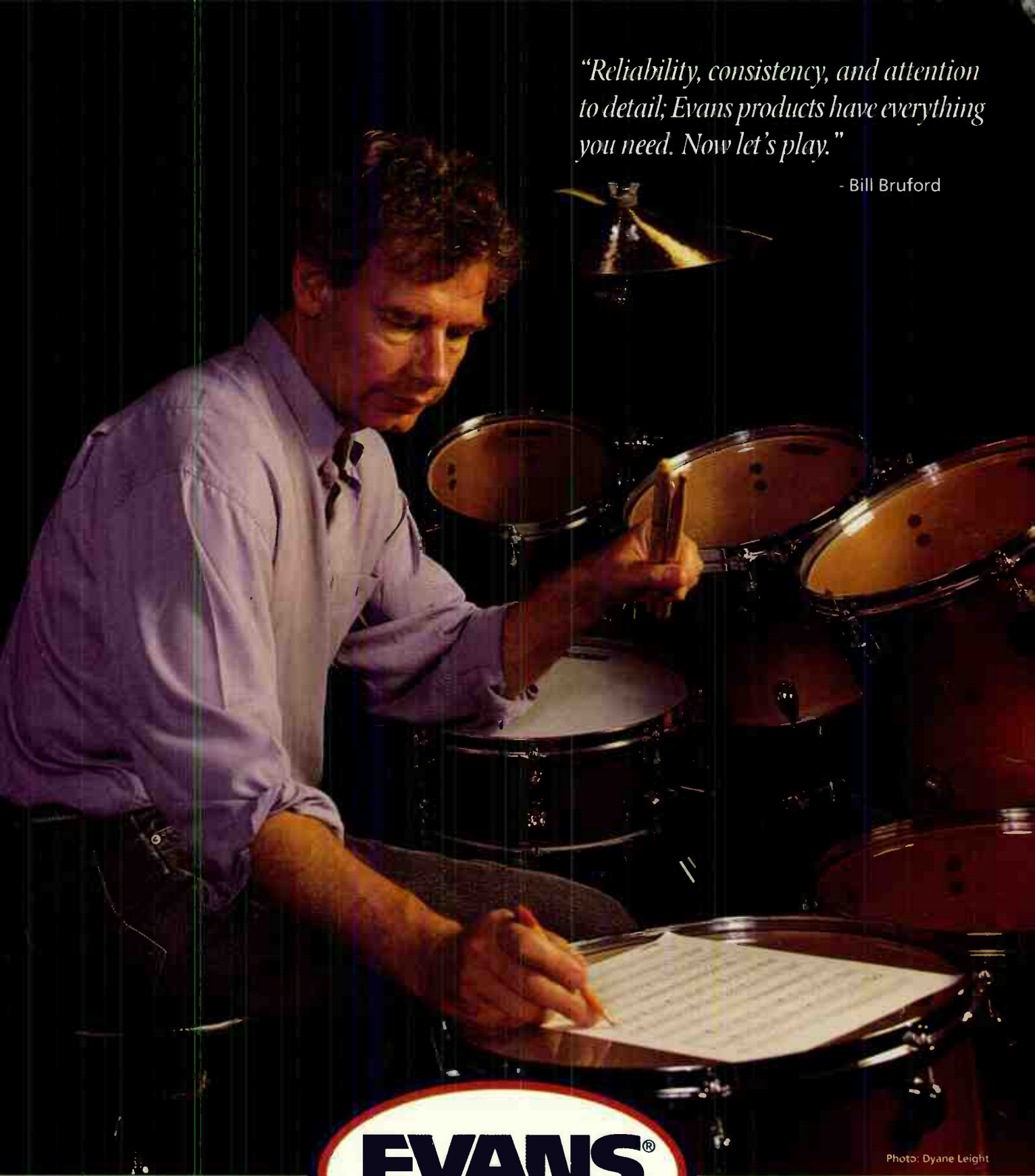
Cohen did successfully shop the George tribute album in Japan, where it sold twenty thousand copies in three weeks. There are still no nibbles in the States, however, a fact that he finds startling. "I learned so much," he says. "There are no guarantees for any of these people. There's a huge audience out there that lives and breathes this stuff, but I don't know if the labels can find them, because they're so youth-oriented. They have younger promotional staffs, and the money is going to the young band that's really hot. For this album they're like, 'This guy is dead and here are all these people who are plus-35'—you know, 'This is not Hanson.'"

The promo staffs have a point. Newman, Raitt, Toussaint, and Browne may all be legends, but they're hardly charting new pop territory these days. More disturbing, perhaps, is a scenario outlined by Frank Black, architect of groundbreaking punk/pop records with the Pixies and as a solo artist—and, at age 32, currently without a label. "In recent times I've made a record—really raw, live two-track sound—which, if I had turned it in at age 22, they'd have been bouncing off the ceiling," he relates. "But because I've been around for a while, it definitely rubs the record dudes the wrong way. It's *too* punky. They want to hear something more 'coming of age' from me, a slicker, more expensive record; they're more comfortable with that kind of spin. They never said it was because I was a thirtysomething guy, but I sensed that was what the problem was."

Black tells the story without rancor: "It's all about marketing now," he says simply. "I'm lucky. I don't struggle as much as some of my peers who are a little bit older than I am."

Besides, the first rule of the record business is that there are no rules—or, as Capitol marketing director Steve Rosenblatt puts it, "for every Hanson, there's a Dave Matthews."

"I would say it helps to be under thirty, but there are no absolutes," says Columbia VP of A&R Tim Devine, who recently inked a teenaged band called Flick—and once signed Bonnie Raitt to Capitol. "It might sound clichéd, but it comes back to songs. If Hanson had bad songs, it



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wouldn't matter how young they were. Anyone who signs artists based on a quota is making a big mistake: A bad band of the right age is no better than a bad band of any age."

But is a good young band more sellable than a good band that's older? When the prime audience of record buyers is between twelve and 22, it sure doesn't hurt, especially on video. "You don't have to be under thirty to get signed," says Julie Gordon, a former A&R rep who runs the music industry Internet gossip forum, the Velvet Rope. "But you sure don't want anybody who *looks* over thirty."

For women artists the stakes are higher. Several well-known female artists in their thirties have inconspicuously lopped a few years off their official press biographies. "That's part of celebrity-hood in general," says one major-label publicist. "Nobody wants to cop to how old they really are, and women have to be more cagey about it than men."

"That's the bad news about MTV," adds Rosenblatt. "I mean, Bonnie Raitt is one of the most beautiful women in the world, but they're looking for the Spice Girls because a major part of the buying audience is in its teen years."

"The seventeen-year reign of MTV has definitely changed how everyone does business," says manager Chris Jones. (Several phone calls to MTV representatives seeking comment for this article were not returned.) "It's not enough to be a great songwriter and make great records; you have to put it together visually. What if Jakob Dylan was fifty pounds heavier and losing his hair? You know, there's only one John Popper every generation, and that only works to a certain extent."

As it happens, major labels are becoming less inclined to make videos for new artists until they've already had a hit. ("MTV doesn't play videos because they're good," notes one marketing rep. "They play them because they're hits.") But that doesn't mean they won't factor in an artist's visual appeal.

"A lot of times I've been privy to conversations with managers and A&R people, where someone says, 'You know, you should see such-and-such a band,'" Jones recounts. "And the first question is not, 'What do they sound like?' It's, 'What does the singer look like?' After all," he adds dryly, "the first part of 'sex, drugs, and rock & roll' is sex."

"Right now, everybody's trying to get the next Hanson," says Julie Gordon, "just like years ago after Pearl Jam, when everybody was flying to Seattle."

Nothing too new under the sun there. But trends occur for a reason, and the current epidemic of barely teenaged sensations is no exception. Several industry insiders point to evidence of a generational sea change, with new acts coming forth to yank the torch from Eighties and Nineties standard-bearers like R.E.M. and U2. "It's a changing of the guard," suggests Red Ant A&R rep John Phillips, who recently signed a "poppy punk" band of seventeen-year-old Brits called Symposium. "There are real cheery, poppy singles driving the market now. Sometimes they don't have a lot of depth, but there's a new generation of kids who want a new set of musical heroes."

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YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE UNDER 30 TO GET SIGNED. BUT YOU'D BETTER LOOK UNDER 30.

"We're on the cusp of a new generation," says MCA president Jay Boberg, whose label's recent signings include a Minneapolis pop band called 4Ltr Word, "who have a rabid following of young kids." Another MCA band, Aqua, became a multi-platinum success in 1997 by appealing mostly to sub-teens. "They succeed totally with that age group of ten- to fifteen-year-olds, while people in college don't like them at all," Boberg observes. "Yet Aqua sold 2.3 million records. That's shocking. We weren't trying to follow any general trend with Aqua; we didn't think, 'Oh, a perfect example of a Generation Y band.' But pop music seems to be re-emerging with that audience. That feel-good, very catchy pop song that wasn't popular ten years ago now appears to be getting embraced by a younger demographic."

Call it the Spice Girls revolution. That hugely popular quintet that every critic loves to diss may have ignited the passions of an entire strata of pre-adolescents—children, really—who were previously unaware of or unconcerned with pop music culture. But betting on the short-term success of young acts who may be one-hit wonders, as opposed to the more expensive but potentially more rewarding process of developing artists over three or four albums, is also a potent lure to an industry in financial straits, one no longer cushioned by income from older fans who are re-upholstering their record collections from vinyl to CD.

"The industry is at the end of one of their revenue cycles," is how manager Steve Stewart puts it.

"If a band is signed today, it's not for development, for three or four records down the line," an industry executive adds. "That's not cool anymore."

Some observers suggest that the trend toward signing very young acts is actually compatible with long-term development. "I'm looking for real, raw talent," insists Red Ant's John Phillips. "If they're young, that's icing on the cake. That means there will be more years to develop their talent."

But others are less sanguine. "You have intelligent grown men fawning over thirteen-year-olds and having the audacity to say that they have any interest in long-term development," scoffs Chris Jones, whose most successful band, Blind Melon, didn't hit hard until their album's third single. "I don't know if we'd even get to the third single now. You see more of, 'The numbers aren't there; let's pull the plug.'"

Manager Tim Collins contends that the phenomenon of teenaged entertainers presents an ethical quandary that has yet to be addressed. "I know the effect of success on grown men," he says. "To even consider it for a twelve-year-old kid freaks me out. I can't imagine what the long-term effects will be. I mean, aren't there child labor laws?"

There are child labor laws, which is why acts like Hanson can't work more than six hours per day—hardly the kind of legal impediment to stop a label from signing a likely star. "The bottom line is that sales are so off that it's a scramble," says Chris Jones. "I'd be lying if I said I wouldn't take an act like Hanson, but I think some bands that could have long-term success are get-

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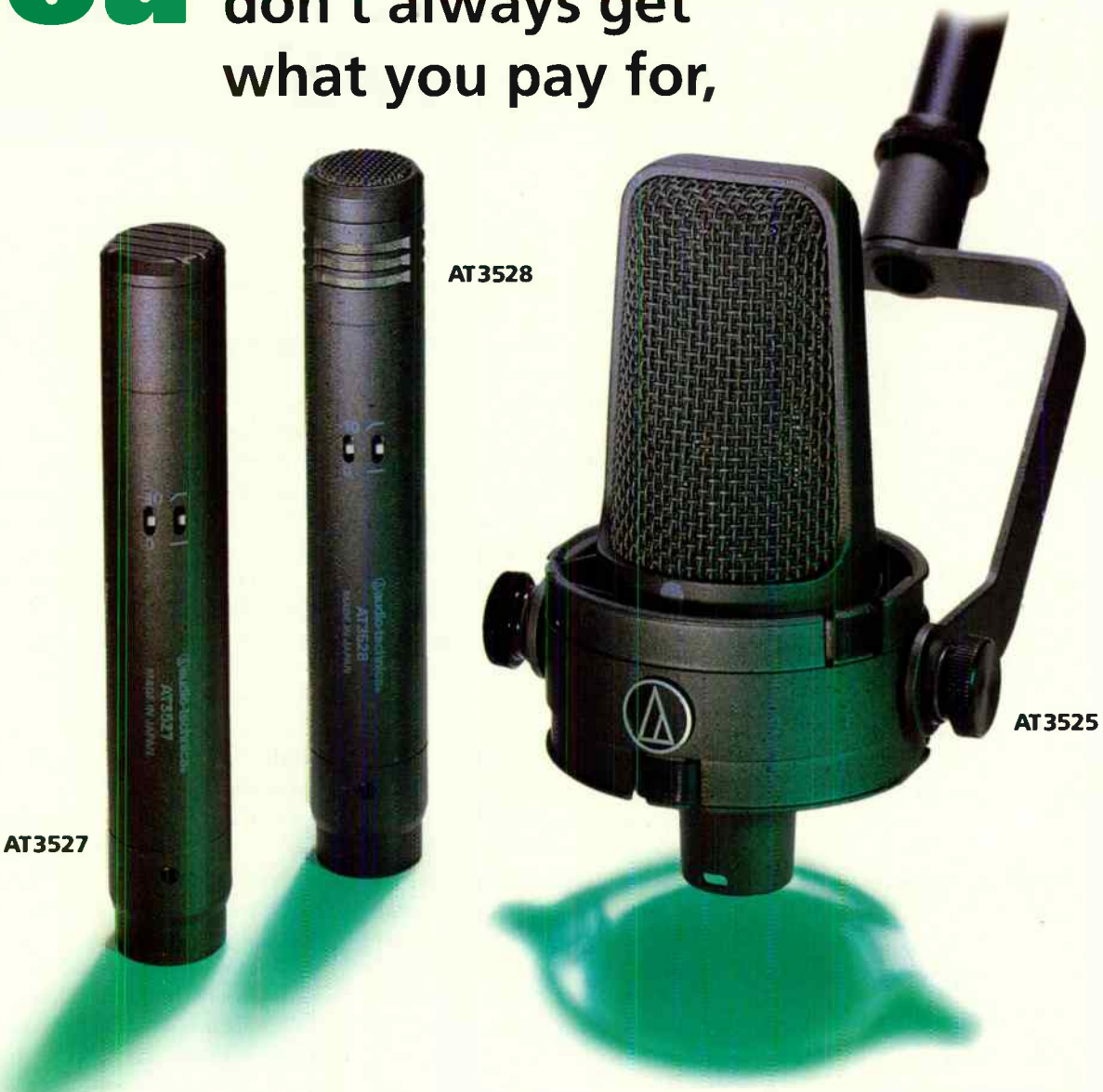

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ting overlooked. Acts like the Spice Girls have always been around—but, you know, that's three more minutes on MTV and radio that I can't get my act on."

Still, Columbia's Tim Devine refutes the notion that the industry has shifted its strategy from long- to short-term development. "The business has always been about both," he points out. "Record companies don't operate along one line. It would be silly to just chase one-hit wonders, because over time it's the artists who have the deep rich catalogs [that make profits over the long term].

"Certainly it's harder to get started as a performer as you get older," he concedes. "There's always an aging of demographics when you talk about musicians and their audiences. On the other side, if you delude yourself entirely with that thinking, you'll be blind-sided when Bob Dylan makes the best-selling record of his career."

For less epochal musicians, however, age is clearly a factor when plotting career strategy, and not just in alternative rock. Nashville, which once proudly venerated its traditions, has pretty much shunted aside all its older legends. "Garth took it over the top, and the business is bigger than ever," notes one song-publishing executive. "But it's death for the Waylons and Willies of the world. Nobody is interested in artists in their forties either, except maybe George Strait—and he's a glaring exception. Certainly not Emmylou Harris; nobody will touch that record. But I hear one company here is looking at a band of fourteen-year-olds from Russia called Siberian Heatwave."

Josh Leo, a Nashville producer and former A&R rep, suggests that as a musician "you have to keep reinventing yourself—otherwise, you'll be extinct. Session men have a longer life than frontmen, but I think of all the guys doing the major sessions when I got here ten years ago, and there aren't even too many of them left."

On the other hand, Nashville is full of songwriters of various ages, including the dean of writers, Harlan Howard, who is still active in his late sixties. Several other former frontmen and recording artists, including Steve Wariner, ex-NRBQ guitarist Al Anderson, and Nashville's own Sixties-era star Bill Anderson, have enjoyed enormous success in recent years penning hits for contemporary country singers. Says one producer bluntly, "In this town, when you start to get old, it's time to start writing."

When Leo moved to Nashville in the mid-Eighties, he recalls, "all my friends thought I was crazy because back then it wasn't cool. In fact, I got all that 'you giving up?' stuff. By now, though, so many people have moved here from L.A. and New York, they've begun to do business like the pop world."

Indeed, the unprecedented success of multiplatinum acts like Brooks, Rimes, and Shania Twain has raised the bar for everyone else. Artists in Nashville are being signed—and dropped—with ever-increasing rapidity. "Everyone is going for the bomb," Leo observes. "You either get a touchdown or you're out of the game. No one's doing first-and-tens anymore."

For his part, Leo has survived while segueing from guitar player to songwriter to producer to A&R man, and then back to playing and writing. "Every year I try to add a new hyphen to my title: songwriter, producer, guitarist, gardener," he laughs. "Maybe one of those things will get me some work."

There may indeed be an unofficial age cutoff for MTV-like rock stardom, but as the experience of Leo and others suggests, flexibility and perseverance ultimately have more to do with sustaining a career. "They make their money in a particular way," says Frank Black of the record industry, "and if you're an artist, you have to make money another way. My advice to all artists is: recoup, recoup, recoup. Don't spend money you don't think you can make back. Musicians get bad advice, and they want it so bad that they sign really stupid deals. You gotta think about commerce like their guys do. And if you're just starting out, keep as little as you can. Then you can move up if you do well."

Jamie Cohen says that he's reminded of the long odds against success for musicians of any age every time he walks into a record store. "There's way too much product out there," he sighs. "But, you know, some people really *need* to make records. My only advice to young artists is, you have to stick to it. And my only advice to older artists is, you have to stick to it."

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1 Ensoniq PARIS integrated recording system

It's hard to imagine that all the hardware and software you'd need to record, mix and process up to sixteen individual audio tracks on your PC or Mac could be so manageable, but Ensoniq's PARIS professional audio recording system (starting at $2,895) should improve the quality of your home recordings while allowing you to reclaim whatever space has been otherwise overrun with older home studio equipment. The basic system includes an EDS-1000 PCI card, a CD-ROM drive equipped with cross-platform MacOS and Windows 95 software, and a 16-channel "control surface." The PCI card delivers realtime access to each channel while providing four bands of fully parametric EQ as well as pan and fader controls; PARIS' software enables digital audio editing/mixing, signal routing, effect processing and recording/editing. ***Ensoniq, 155 Great Valley Pkwy., PA 19355; voice (610) 647-3930***

2 Drawmer MX40 noise gate

If you've ever stepped foot in a topnotch professional studio, you've likely encountered some of Drawmer's highly regarded outboard gear. You also probably thought that the day would never come when you'd be able to afford any of it. Well, that day has arrived. The MX-40 noise gate ($599) features four individual channels (linkable for a stereo operation), each of which employs Drawmer's proprietary peak punch circuitry to deliver up to 8 dB of transient dynamic expansion with close to zero attack time following the opening of the gate. Other features include controls for threshold release time, trigger frequency, LEDs to indicate gate status, and balanced inputs and outputs. ***Transamerica Audio Group, 2721 Calle Olivio, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360; voice (805) 241-4443***

3 Ibanez BN5 Black Noise distortion pedal

Most fans of over-the-top distorted guitars probably think that there's no such thing as bad distortion, but guess again—if you've ever blown out a speaker while in search of that intangible industrial sludge sound, you've know the pain of which we speak. But fear not, grunge boy, all is not lost. Ibanez—the same folks who brought you the Tube Screamer—has created the BN5 Black Noise pedal ($79) to give you all the screaming skronk you could ever ask for without ever having to destroy your speakers again. The BN5 features controls for overall output, tone, and distortion depth, 1/4" input/output jacks, and an on/off LED that dims when battery power is on the wane. ***Hoshino USA, 1726 Winchester Rd., Bensalem, PA, 19020; voice (215) 638-8670***

4 Sabian RADIA cymbals

If Sabian believed all those jokes about drummers being ignorant boneheads, they'd sell garbage can lids as cymbals and call it a living. But drummers (most of 'em, anyway) are far more intelligent and discerning than that, and it's for those players with the refined taste that Sabian developed the RADIA line ($135-$378)—with the help of drummer Terry Bozzio, no less. Drawing on Bozzio's interest in Far East drumming traditions, the entire RADIA line employs radial scorings techniques during manufacturing to imbue the cymbals with their distinctive appearance and sophisticated tonal characteristics. While the RADIA line consists of 35 cymbal in all, Sabian is currently focusing on cup chimes; (7", 8", 9"), crashes (16", 18") and Chinese models (18", 20"), but other sizes and models can be special ordered. ***Sabian Ltd., Meductic, New Brunswick, Canada EOH 1LO; voice (506) 272-2019***

5 Yamaha AES800 guitar

There's something to be said about the allure of quality vintage guitars, but one word that usually doesn't come to mind is "cheap." Thankfully, companies like Yamaha continue to build relatively inexpensive instruments that embrace that vintage aesthetic while keeping pace with all of today's technological advances. Their new AES800 guitar ($1,099) is just such a beauty: Constructed of a solid mahogany body matched with a recessed, four-bolt maple neck and a rosewood fingerboard, the AES800 features two DiMarzio Q-100 hum-canceling soap bar pickups, a five-position pickup selector, a Tune-O-Matic bridge, and controls for volume, tone, and continuously variable phase between the pickups. The AES800 is available in either brown sunburst or cherry red finishes. ***Yamaha Corporation of America, Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622-6600; voice (714) 522-9011***

6 Midiman Flying Calf D/A converter

Have you ever noticed how some of your digital recordings can sound harsh during playback? You could blame it on a lot of things, but more often than not, you can blame this all-too-common malady on inexpensive digital-to-analog converters in your equipment. If you're familiar with this sonic screachiness, you'll quickly become a believer in Midiman's new Flying Calf D/A ($149): the Flying Calf D/A converts any S/PDIF digital audio signal into a line-level stereo audio signal for all your smooth grooves. Measuring 1.2" x 5.2" x 3.2" (h/w/d), the stompbox-size Calf's chassis is constructed of steel and features an RCA S/PDIF digital input, dual 1/4" unbalanced audio outputs, and 128x oversampling. Frequency response is given as 20 Hz to 22kHz, dynamic range as 99 dB (A-weighted). ***Midiman, 45 East St. Joseph St., Arcadia, CA 91006-2861; voice (626) 445-2842***

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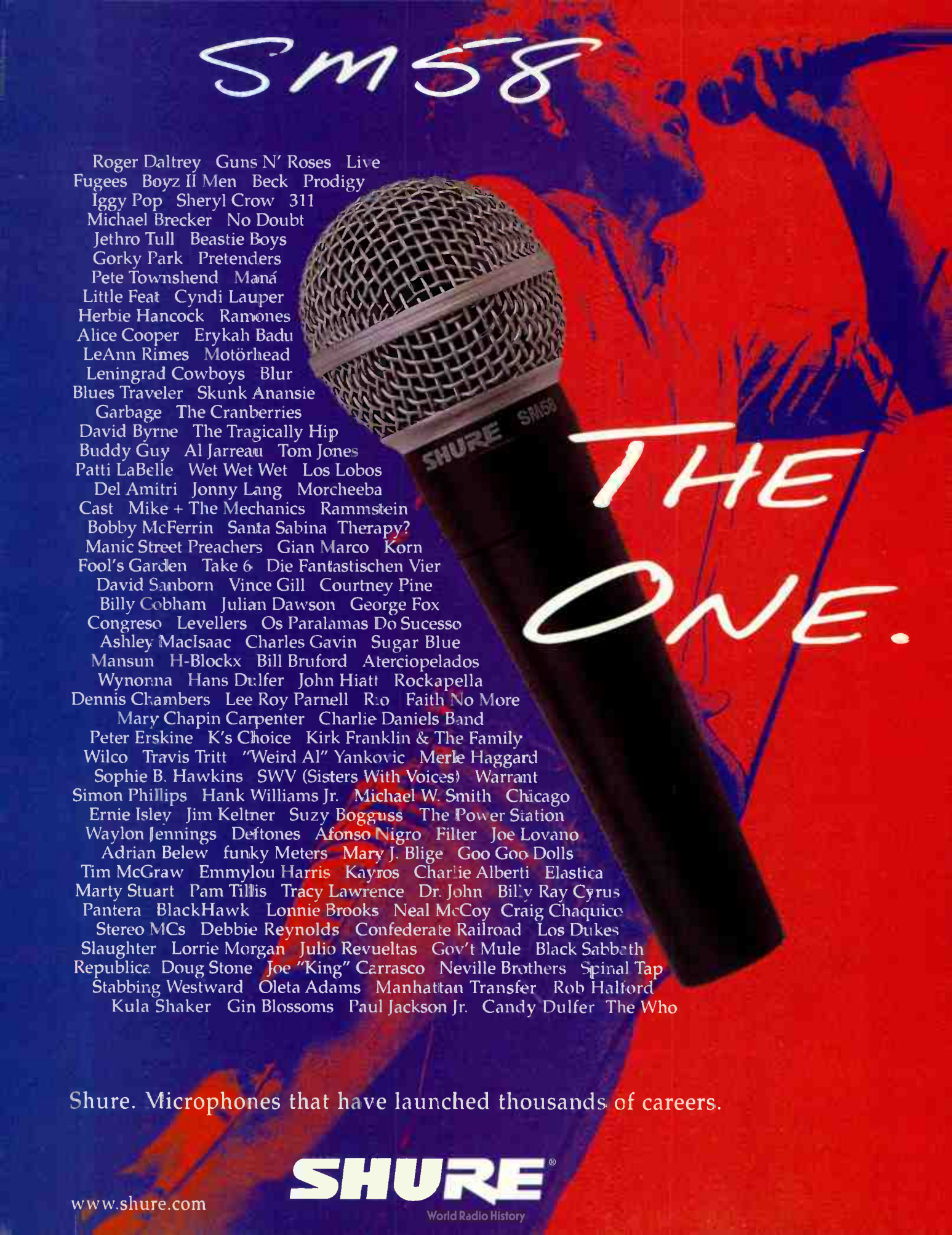

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editor's pick

Freedom from Click Tracks

by howard massey

Mark of the Unicorn's Freestyle 2.0

If Lennon and McCartney had used MIDI instruments and computers instead of acoustic guitars and pianos, would their songs have been any better? Would they have been written any faster? The answer, I dare say, is an emphatic no. That may seem like an odd position for a "technology editor" to take (and show some respect, for I have discovered that this title, along with one dollar and fifty cents in valid American currency, entitles me to a ride on any subway or bus in New York City), but I'm a realist. For all the benefits that today's technology provides, there's a backlash effect too: It can remove immediacy and sometimes even endanger that certain indefinable something known as "feel." And nowhere is this more prevalent than in the often labyrinthine, frequently intimidating world of computer MIDI sequencers.

The problem is that most software is designed by marketing people and written by software engineers—not by the kind of people who would actually use the program. Even specialized music applications are hardly ever written by musicians. As a result, all too many products are afflicted with what I call the "bells and whistles" syndrome (also known as *featuritis overkillus*), which goes something like

Mark of the Unicorn's FreeStyle 2.0 lets you take charge of your groove.

this: If you *can* include a feature, include it. Include it even if said feature will be used less than 0.00005 percent of the time by fewer than 0.00005 percent of your users. Include it even if said feature is so obtuse and obscure that it requires many mind-numbing hours of manual-searching to figure out. Include it even if said feature serves to confuse and obstruct the creative process of making music.

The sad truth is that most of today's music software packages—even the good ones—suffer from this affliction. That's why it's so refreshing to come across Mark of the Unicorn's FreeStyle 2.0, an affordable ($195) yet elegant Macintosh sequencing program (soon to be available for Windows systems) that provides only the essential features and at the same time moves in the healthy direction of freeing the musician from the tyranny of the computer.

The first giant leap for mankind was taken with the release of FreeStyle 1.0 a few years back. Instead of using technical jargon like TRACKS, CHANNELS, and PATCHES (as employed by most MIDI sequencers), the program simply allows you to create music through an ENSEMBLE of PLAYERS. As in a group of real musicians, each PLAYER contributes one particular sound. To overdub a new part, simply point to a different PLAYER and start recording. You can lay down as many takes as you like without ever stopping recording, and then audition your takes aurally and graphically, viewing them onscreen either on a graphic "piano roll" or in traditional notation. Once you've settled on the best takes, you can perform basic editing operations and even print out the dots-on-a-line for posterity. Best of all, you don't need to know anything about technical stuff like MIDI channel assignments or bank select/program change messages—all of that is done for you automatically, sight unseen.

But FreeStyle 1.0, like all other MIDI sequencers, still required you to play along with a metronomic click track if you wanted the program to accurately line up its bars and beats with your performance. (You can, of course, turn off the metronome in any sequencer and play freely, but the program won't have any way of mapping your musical input to bars and beats.) With version 2.0, however, a wonderful new feature called SENSE TEMPO liberates us from the oppressive click track now and forevermore. Comrades, *vive la revolution*!

Okay, so I'm going a little over the top. But there is something way cool about being able to plug in and freely play a piece of music from beginning to end without having to worry about keeping up with a dull, robotic click. SENSE TEMPO simply requires that you either tell it the rough tempo you're going to play in or provide two vital pieces of information: the meter you're initially using (you can insert meter changes later if necessary) and the beat separation between the first two notes you're gonna play. (*i.e.*, will they be quarter notes apart, dotted eighths, sixteenth triplets, etc.) Then just play away on your MIDI keyboard and the computer starts following *you*, instead of the other way around. This is a seriously difficult feat for a microprocessor (it's tough for us humans too, if you think about it), but FreeStyle 2.0 pulls it off big time. As long as you have a fairly good sense of rhythm, it does a remarkably good job of creating a complex tempo map that accurately tracks your feel, adjusting the tempo every beat if necessary to keep up with your *accelerandi* and *ritardi*. (That's Latin for "Yo! You're speeding up/slowing down, dude!") It's even okay to play in swing style, using lots of dotted eighth-notes followed by sixteenth-notes, since there's an option that lets the program follow along faithfully.

Of course, even if you have the steadiest sense of time, there are bound to be a few notes that don't quite line up. Happily, FreeStyle provides not just one but three ways of fixing things—and none of them alters your recorded performance in any way; only the bar/beat lines, not the notes themselves, move. The first and most unique of these is called ADJUST BEATS. This lets you go right in and manually shift the bar/beat lines with the mouse, dragging them so that they line up with particular notes. The second is called IDENTIFY BEATS. Here, you select one or more notes and simply tell FreeStyle where they are meant to fall. Using either of these two techniques, you then have the option of instructing the program to shift the barlines for all subsequent notes in an equivalent way. The last choice, called RECORD BEATS, gives you the ability to record a click track to the performance, instead of the other way around. FreeStyle then uses the information in that track to line up the barlines accordingly.

"FreeStyle provides all the essential editing operations you're ever likely to need."

There are several wonderful byproducts to this computer magic. One is that during playback you can instantly toggle between the feel you used for the performance and a steady tempo—you can even opt to substitute a steady tempo for certain bars only. There's also a cool feature called % VARIABLE TEMPO, which allows you to speed up or slow down the overall complex tempo map created by SENSE TEMPO while retaining all the relative tempo changes from beat to beat. In addi-

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tion, RECORD BEATS lets you record any number of tempo maps after the fact, so you can experiment with different feels, secure in the knowledge that your original performance remains unaltered. And if you're using a fast enough Power Mac, FreeStyle can even perform real-time transcription while SENSE TEMPO is operational. (Transcription is real-time for all Macs when playing to a metronome.) This is guaranteed to impress your friends; there is something truly mind-boggling about watching the dots-on-a-line of your performance appear on your screen even as you play!

And if you *do* want to play to FreeStyle's metronome, there's a very hip feature called RIFF METRONOME that makes the click track far more interesting. Instead of playing to a simple tick-tock, you can choose from a number of preprogrammed MIDI drum loops to use as your click. You can also create your own loops—either from within FreeStyle or imported as a standard MIDI file, and designate them for this duty. If you fall so in love with a loop that you actually want to use it in your song, a handy BECOME PLAYER option transforms it into one of the PLAYERS in your current ENSEMBLE; from there, you can edit the data and overdub fills to your heart's content.

FreeStyle provides all the essential editing operations you're ever likely to need, including cut/copy/paste, quantize, transpose, and velocity/duration change. In addition, version 2.0 can synchronize to SMPTE and MIDI Time Code—an important feature missing in the previous release—so it can work with tape decks, MDMs, or hard disk recorders. Other new features include sound layering (where one PLAYER can access two or more sounds at once), sound changes (where a PLAYER can switch sounds mid-take), support for QuickTime musical instruments (so you can play internal Mac voices instead of using a MIDI tone generator), and a handy MIDI Monitor (which allows you to view all the techno-MIDI stuff that's actually going on under the hood).

There are also REMOTE CONTROL options that allow you to issue a wide variety of commands to FreeStyle directly from your MIDI controller.

To be sure, there's room for improvement. As nifty as SENSE TEMPO is, it has a hard time dealing with meter changes and abrupt or radical variations in tempo. And FreeStyle doesn't provide event list editing, punch-in recording, a virtual mixing console, or many of the sometimes obscure editing options offered by more expensive sequencing software—though, in fairness, many users never need these kinds of features.

In MIDI sequencers, less can be more. FreeStyle's unique interface and feature set does a terrific job of allowing you to drive the car without forcing you to understand the theory of internal combustion engines. Whether you're just starting out in MIDI music or are a hardened veteran in search of a fresh approach, this lean, mean, music-making machine is highly recommended.

Special thanks to Jim Cooper.

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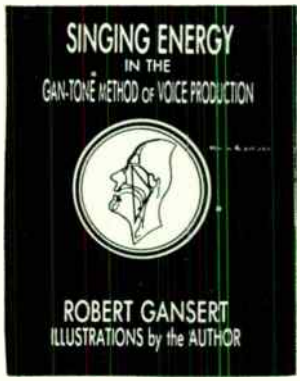

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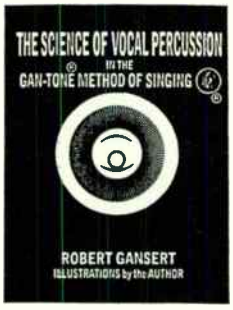

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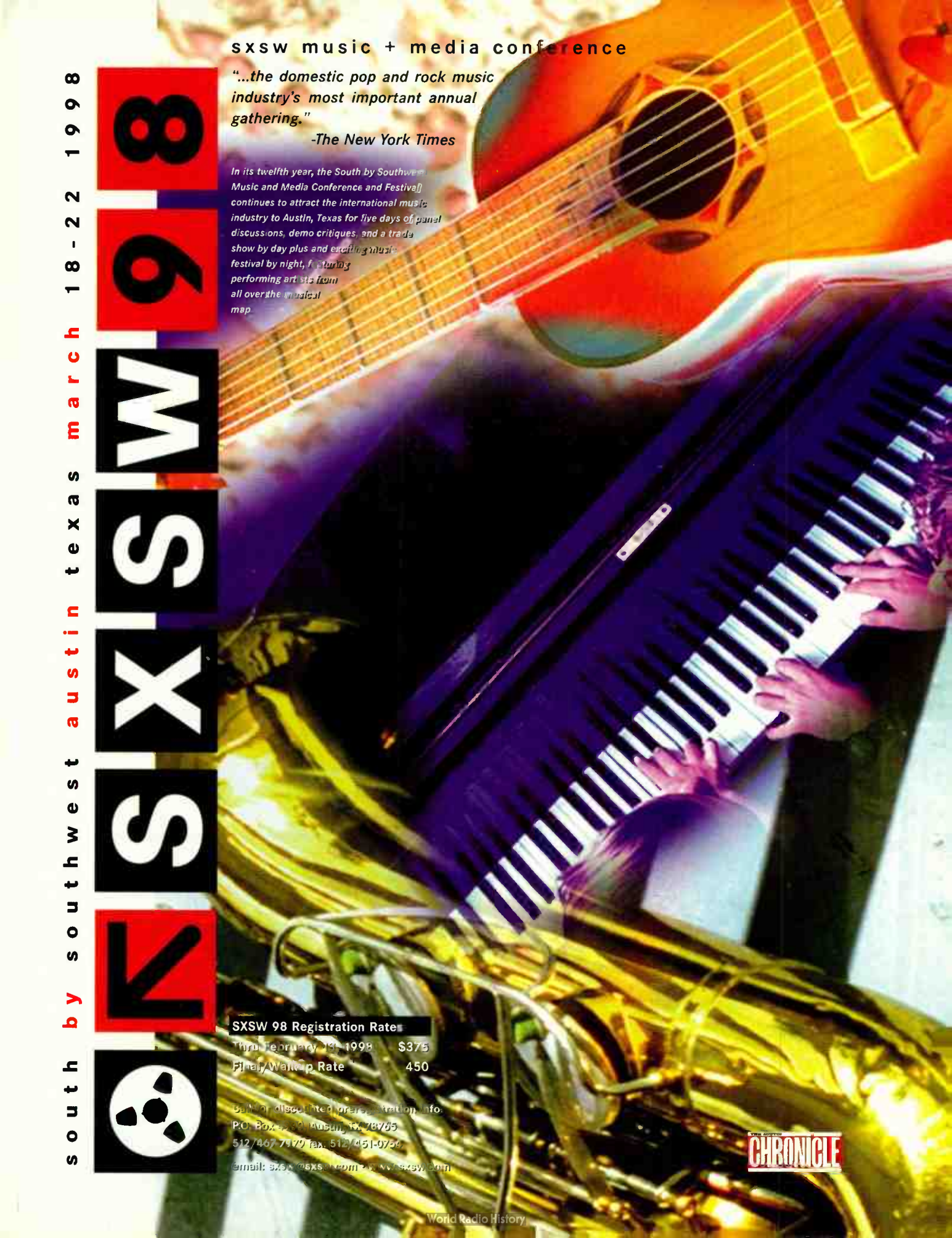

Secrets of Sampling Drums

There's more to the perfect percussion sample than sticks, heads, and mics.

by david weiss

Once they started replacing musicians with robots, drummers seemed to be the ideal victims.; as a true multitasking instrument on which players were often asked to perform with machine-like precision, drums were the perfect lamb to sacrifice on the altar of computer technology.

No wonder the drum machine took such a firm hold. What came out of the black box were beats in perfect time, with no messy mics to set up. From the project studio owner to the professional percussionist to the jingle producer, being able to control what comes out of a drum box can be a huge factor in getting the gig. Likewise, the drum samples that make up a machine's soundscapes are critical to the manufacturer and the user.

So how do those samples get in there? We asked brothers Tony and Frank Verderosa (respectively recording artist/producer/digital drumming guru and producer/ engineer/president of production company Planet V) and they had the answer. Why? Because they were there for the recording of every ping, pop, and pow that went into one of the best-selling electronic kits on the market: Yamaha's DTX electronic percussion system.

"The right sample is very much tied to the experience you have with the instrument," Tony points out. "It makes *all* the difference in the creative process."

"It's the same as if you sit down with a synthesizer and hear this really amazing sound that inspires you to play," Frank adds. "If you're playing cool sounds on the kit, suddenly you're in a different place."

To fashion the DTX into a drum set that could double as a one-man performance ensemble, complete with loops, piano parts, and string sections, the Verderosas started with the agenda of getting the best drum samples possible. Accomplishing that called for a holistic approach to recording drums.

"A lot of sampled drums end up sounding very two-dimensional, like 'freeze-dried' drums," says Frank. "In most sample sessions, you put a mic in front of the drum, which you then just hit. But as a drummer you sit *behind* the drum set. If you hit the snare drum, it's not the only sound happening. Toms are resonating, cymbals are vibrating, there's a room around it. So for these sessions, we left other mics open. We didn't just isolate each drum; we kept the full drum set."

Working with more than twenty different drum sets in New York's RPM Studio, the brothers miked a complete kit and room for every sample. A single snare hit could take up to eight chan-

Robert Pierpont

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MUSICIAN

Shortcut to Paradise

by david was

An anti-tech guide to the Korg Z1.

The code-and-algorithm boys at Korg have come up with a package so easy and versatile that even a digi-chump like myself can have a field day with it. The best thing about their new Z1 synthesizer is the real-time control afforded by the button-happy front panel. Aside from the mod wheel, there is an X-Y pad and a back-forty full of twistable knobs that control filter cutoff, resonance, filter EG, and amp EG without having to scroll through an Old Testament of pages in the LCD.

And while the dedicated filter and ADSR knobs serve the brunt of my tweaking needs, it is the five PERFORMANCE EDITOR knobs that prove the most helpful. I appreciate the fact that the original programmers set them up in this prefab fashion; they're always controlling an important part of the sound that I wouldn't have been able to find without a nerd on hand.

What I find most useful in a synth is its ability to be schizophonic, to have more than one aural identity. With the many different ways of making sound that the Z1 offers (12-voice polyphony and thirteen types of oscillator algorithms), I can't pigeonhole it into one general vibe. This box makes spooky space noise, grits-'n'-gravy organ stabs, and creamy strings with equal aplomb.

And given that I use most of my synths in the Studio Vision environment, the fact that the Z1 has four LFOs per voice and that they all can sync to MIDI has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for me. Rather than simply lock the old-school arpeggiator to a steady clock, like for dance music, I'm finding that synching the LFOs to MIDI and then varying my sequencer tempo is giving me a very cool and expressive sound that I never would have known how to program!

Even cooler, when the Z1 is set to its Internal Clock, the TEMPO knob for the arpeggiator also controls the LFO tempo. So, often I find that I can just grab that knob and move it in real time while recording and I can control the sound without changing my song's tempo.

I also like the idea that you can program new arpeggiated patterns, given that the factory presets are, well, factory funky. You can also modify parameters within the presets. Resolution, velocity, and duration of the arpeggio notes are all programmable.

In short, even those who operate from the dark side of the neocortex will be able to navigate the intuitive architecture of this sleek, silvery box. Take it from a guy who loves shortcuts, hates manuals (written in Japan, translated by monks into Sanskrit, then rendered into English), and was born to point and click: The Z1 is all that and then some. Ⓜ

Mitch Tobias

technology

Return of the ARCHTOPS

by e.d. menasché

Archtop guitars fascinate me: They're beautiful, functional objects you can understand and relate to, but they stand apart from our modern lifestyle, much like a suit your father saved from his youth—it's your size but doesn't fit who you are (although it might someday).

In the same way, archtops once seemed inaccessible as instruments to me; they were for older guys or jazz cats. I wanted an electric guitar; a solid piece of wood—without F-holes like some viola—that's almost impossible to break. (You really have to give Pete Townshend some credit for his perseverance.) Solid-body guitars are as far removed from all the old rules of music and decorum as you can get, so it's hard to imagine that they were considered to be curious, exotic instruments that were lumped into the same league as televisions and space travel. But times have changed, and solid-body guitars are now so ubiquitous that the archtop guitar seems fresh and innovative by comparison; the archtop is an electric guitar you can play unplugged. (What a concept!)

New archtops come in three main flavors: premium handmade instruments, American-made production reissues, and Japanese-built instruments. While the premium handmade instruments continue their traditional role as the pinnacle of American guitar manufacturing, they can cost anywhere from $10,000 to over $30,000. American-made production reissues like the Gibson ES-175 and the Guild Manhattan are more accessible (though produced on a limited basis) with many fine instruments available for under $4,000. Add Ibanez and Yamaha to this category, too. These Japanese built instruments can match the American-built models in quality and price. though their design is less beholden to tradition.

The real push may be coming from low-cost importers—led by Epiphone—who are dominating the market by making affordable, playable instruments widely available. According to New York guitar guru Matt Umanov, therein lies the archtop's higher profile. "People see an inexpensive archtop as a 'good change of pace' guitar," he explains. "Other models are harder to find new, and companies like Gibson have to compete with their past. There are tons of affordable Gibsons built through the Sixties readily available." But there's a demand for new instruments. Gibson reports that they sell every new ES-175 they build. and custom shops and independent luthiers seem to be thriving.

Epiphone's Emperor Regent

Whether the modern day archtop will ever re-establish itself as a major niche on the guitar scene remains to be seen. It's place in jazz is solid. especially as younger players forsake fusion and harken back to bop. If you play a solid-body, an archtop will make a good addition to your arsenal, but don't expect to play it the same way you would your Strat. Amplified flattops dominate the singer/songwriter set, but it's interesting to note that the first amplified acoustics were archtops with magnetic pickups. Plug one in and you'll find you have a lot of tonal options in a relatively simple package, with the fullness and depth of any good acoustic guitar. As I found out when I tried out a number of archtops. their appeal goes deeper than curiosity, cosmetics and nostalgia.

In my expectant mind, I was prepared for the elegance and vintage appeal of **GIBSON**'s **ES-175 REISSUE** ($3,839)—I thought of it as the archetypal archtop, with its dark, smoky sunburst finish, gold appointments, elegant trapeze tailpiece, and faux-ivory tuning machines. The two top-mounted Gibson '57 Classic humbuckers looked striking on the guitar, and the plastic top-hat control knobs blended in nicely with the wood.

First thing out of the case, I played a real "jazz" chord, with the front pickup on and the tone control rolled all the way back, but I soon realized I was missing the point; the ES-175 might have been my fantasy jazz guitar, but it's a lot more versatile and interesting than that. The solid mahogany neck (with its 20-fret rosewood fingerboard) seemed to guide me to the correct positions, no matter the genre (country, rockabilly, jazz, overdriven power chords, droning rock) I played.

The ES-175's top-mounted pickups sounded warm and smooth (although they cut and jangled when called upon); this pickup design cut down on acoustic resonance, meaning that the ES-175 is less fun when unplugged, but conversely, it's less prone to feedback than the models that use a floating-pickup design.

In the end, the ES-175's synergy left a lasting impression on me: it's something about how the neck and the tone and the heavier strings (wound third) and the tonal range all worked together to make the instrument hard to put down and easy to wish for.

The appeal of the archtop guitar goes deeper than curiosity, cosmetics, and nostalgia.

WASHBURN's honey-colored **ORLEANS J10TS** ($1,299) looks elegantly old-fashioned with its gentle curves, crown-shape inlays, black headstock, and gold Grover tuning machines, but don't be deceived—its sharp looks are only a part of the package.

The J10TS's maple neck and 20-fret rosewood fingerboard offer up comfortable proportions and low action, and it's bright, jangly tone really cuts, reminding me of an especially loud, light-stringed dreadnought, but with less midrange than a similarly sized flat top.

Depending on your perspective, the J10TS's electronics don't take full advantage of the guitar's inherent acoustic potential; the single Washburn floating mini-humbucking pickup is very bright and "acoustic" sounding (thanks to the arched spruce top and maple neck, back, and sides), offering lots of string detail. (If you want to compensate for this, you'll have to do so on your amp because the J10TS isn't equipped with a tone control knob—a rather interesting facet of this guitar's design.)

The J10TS responds well to dynamics; it'll make for a good strumming guitar as long as you're careful not to bang your hand into the volume knob, which is mounted onto a beautiful maple pickguard. I can imagine that singer-songwriter types will enjoy using the J10TS as a substitute for an amplified flat top. In fact, I was tempted to try it with bronze-wound strings.

As a player, Pat Metheny is well recognized for pushing the boundaries of jazz guitar, so it's appropriate that his double-cutaway **IBANEZ PAT METHENY SIGNATURE PM100** ($2,899) manages to break new ground while maintaining a feel and sound that suggests the performance of jazz.

My model came out of the case with medium gauge flat-wound strings, which I got used to in a hurry. It's almost impossible to misfret a chord on this guitar; voicings that require extra pressure on most other instruments seemed easy here. The PM100's one-piece mahogany neck and 22-fret ebony fingerboard join the body at the 17th fret, which is higher up the neck than normal and provides access to two extra frets. The Metheny's body, which is constructed of maple, is slightly smaller than other guitars tested and had a somewhat boxy sound when I played it unplugged, but the single, body-mounted IBZ Super 58 humbucker (fixed in the neck position) delivered a smooth and present amplified sound. If you're worried that one pickup might limit your creativity, think again; tonal colors came chiefly from my own technique. Playing the Metheny with a pick produces a sharp, very precise attack, while softly strumming the strings yields the guitar-equivalent of playing a snare drum with brushes. I hadn't played that style much before on electric guitar, but a bandmate said I sounded like Freddy Green. I knew I didn't, but smiled anyway.

Sure, **IBANEZ**'s **GEORGE BENSON SIGNATURE GB10JS** ($1,499) looks more like an overgrown Les Paul than a traditional archtop, but the little Benson has a deep, jazzy tone that moves easily between mellow and aggressive tones. Its spruce top and flaming maple back and sides help yield surprising projection from such a little box. A pair of rich-sounding floating IBZ GB Special mini-humbuckers proved versatile, though the fact that they were wired out of phase proved to be somewhat of an obstacle. If you combine the pickups at full strength, the bottom will drop out; to avoid this calamity, try setting each pickup to a slightly different volume. The three-piece maple neck—with 22 smooth frets and a bound rosewood fingerboard—is as fat as a baseball bat and takes some getting used to, especially up around the heel, where reaching the lower strings requires some serious stretching. Other than that, the Benson's attractive design, small profile, and solid rejection of feedback make it an interesting alternative.

Of all the guitars I tested, **GUILD**'s thinline **X170 MANHATTAN** ($1,999) seemed the most "electric" to me. Its acoustic sound was bright and rather quiet—perhaps a result of its maple top (laminat-

ed), neck, back, and sides—but I could hear a special jangle that would really emerge when I plugged it in.

The X170 proved itself practical for a bunch of reasons—size among them, requiring only a slight adjustment after a night with a solidbody. The X170 employs two top-mounted Guild humbuckers that offer a distinctively bright, jangling sound; the X170 rejects feedback well and cuts like an angry football coach when called upon.

I loved playing open chords on this guitar, especially through a slightly driven tube amp; it handled jazz well, too, though its longer scale, which contributes sharp attack and large-sounding chords, means you must stretch a little more to nail the tougher voicings. Even with tight medium-gauge strings, I liked playing blues on the X170, where the extra effort of bending was rewarded by the combination of sharp, articulate attack and full underbody tone.

The mid-depth **EPIPHONE EMPEROR REGENT** ($1,499) is an acoustic guitar in every sense. The combination of spruce top, laminated maple back and sides, and long-scale 25-1/2" three-piece maple neck with rosewood fingerboard gives the box a loud and brassy tone, with enough cut to hold its own comping in a mid-sized ensemble without amplification. While the Regent's construction details don't always compare to those of the more expensive instruments we auditioned (for example, the neck's heel was made of three separate pieces), our Regent looked way-pretty in its honey natural finish and was quite easy to play, offering low, silky action with nary a buzz. Intonation was consistent up and down the neck.

I found the electronics adequate but somewhat limited. A single floating OBL mini humbucker is mounted on the pickguard, which also carries the volume and tone controls. The pickup offered plenty of detail, but lacked body; rolling off the tone knob's response warmed up the sound, but seemed to rob the tone of richness and power.

EPIPHONE's HOWARD ROBERTS ($1,229) shares many characteristics with the Emperor Regent (including scale length, pickup, neck construction, and floating rosewood bridge) but still manages to differentiate itself. The Roberts eschews F-holes, opting instead for an oval soundhole reminiscent of Django Reinhardt's famous Selmer. The cherry-finished laminated curly maple top on the test guitar looked exquisite—even more refined in the finishing details than the more expensive Emperor. To my eyes, the volume and tone controls were oddly mounted on the body, but from a playing standpoint, the knobs were less obtrusive, especially when strumming. The Roberts has a distinctly mellow acoustic tone; chords sound balanced across the fretboard. Like the Regent, the action is very speedy up and down the neck. As with the Regent, I found the electronics adequate. Both of these wallet-friendly boxes offer a combination of playability and price that the more casual archtop seeker may find tough to resist.

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record

Goin' with the Flow

Come

Gently, Down the Stream (Matador)

Have you ever noticed how the music industry regularly champions its disposable waste but can't seem to hold faith in the staying power of its true talent? You know—that old "Ah, they'll never be this good again" caveat? Well, in the case of Come, it's time to abandon that pessimism and embrace their brooding, embroiling, and, yes, enduring beauty.

Come's songwriters Thalia Zedek and Chris Brokaw have changed rhythm sections more often than some people change underwear, but they've managed to deliver three provocative albums along the way. There's always been a special spark between Zedek and Brokaw, and now, with the addition of bassist Winston Bramen and drummer Daniel Coughlin, Come realizes their vision with the dark but blissful *Gently, Down the Stream*. Most of its songs engage you with the band's penchant for idiosyncratic meters and swollen dynamic transitions, but the overall effect is less disturbing and more hypnotic than you might expect. In fact, there's a certain comfort to all the disarray. Perhaps that's due to the sequencing of titles, which, as Brokaw says, "can dictate the effect that a record has, what the beginning of the story is." (In this case, it sprang from Zedek: "Thalia was particularly enamored with the idea of [the album] being connected with the line, 'Life is but a dream.'") Gathering with engineer Paul Kolderie at Fort Apache Studios in Cambridge, Massachusetts—virtually in the band's backyard, and within bike-riding distance from Brokaw's house—Come churned out *Stream* in a matter of weeks. "We didn't have much time," recalls Kolderie. "But sometimes having less time is more useful because it keeps things moving."

Move it does. From the opening feedback squall and pounding death-waltz dirge of "One Piece" through the cold-cocked deception of "Saints Around My Neck," the band fires with all pistons. That overt aggression is tempered by songs like "The Fade Outs" and "March," which recall *Marquee Moon*-era Television, with Zedek's and Brokaw's guitars joined in a delicate tangle of jagged melody.

Such intermingling wouldn't be so effective without Come's attention to sonic textures: For the *Stream* sessions, Zedek played a "swimming pool" Hagstrom—the one with the "cheese-grater" apparatus between the pick-ups—through a silver-face Fender Twin Reverb from the Seventies, while Brokaw alternated between a '67 Fender Jazzmaster and Kolderie's '58 Gretsch played through two Tokai distortion pedals into another Fender Twin Reverb or a Hiwatt 100-watt head and a custom-built 4x12 cabinet.

Throughout *Stream*, Zedek's and Brokaw's finely-crafted arrangements and careful chord voicings draw you in, but it's their rough-hewn vocals that complete the seduction. Zedek handles most of the singing; while Brokaw's voice complements the songs he sings, it can't carry the emotional suspense found in Zedek's gruff and remarkably androgynous timbre. But it doesn't really matter whether Zedek and Brokaw trade off vocals or leave them out altogether, as on the clarinet-riddled "The Former Model." All the more room to enjoy the thrall of Come's melancholy and menace.—***Michael Gelfand***

Jason & the Scorchers
Live and on edge

Warner Hodges is buggin'. His band, Jason & the Scorchers, is almost finished with a pre-recording soundcheck, but he's still "stressing out," *i.e.*, chain-smoking before, during, and after each song; it's not until the band starts teanng through "Last Time Around" that he finally relaxes. Grabbing the headstock of his Fender Telecaster with both hands, Hodges furiously thrusts the guitar under his right armpit. It's a maneuver that, for a split-second, seems ill-conceived, but as the guitar arches back over his left shoulder and dives toward the stage floor at breakneck speed, Hodges reaches out blindly and catches it in time to nail the downstroke. It's an exhilarating display of rock-&-roll bravado, but no one's paying attention; soundmen are scurrying around setting up mics and shouting into walkie-talkies while disinterested bartenders lifelessly unpack bottles of tequila at the back of the room.

The room in question is the Exit/Inn, which, depending upon who you ask, is regarded either as one of Nashville, Tennessee's worst dive bars or its premiere rock venue. Whatever way you choose to look at it, it's where Jason & the Scorchers first made a name for themselves, and it's also where they've chosen to record *Midnight Roads and Stages Seen*, their long-awaited live album for Mammoth Records.

"We've wanted to do this for a long time," Hodges explains between draws on a Marlboro Menthol. "It was just a question of us getting it together, being able to do it the way *we* wanted to do it—with a full-on, 24-track truck so we never have to *stop*. It's all analog, 'cos *we ain't digital dudes*. It comes down to us now: if everything's the way it's supposed to be, it's our job to deliver a decent show."

The Scorchers say they want *Midnight Roads* to be a major statement in the same way that *Alive* cemented Kiss' live reputation back in the mid-Seventies, so they left no room for falling short of that mark; Hodges (who's producing the record) and the rest of the band (singer Jason Ringenberg, drummer Perry Baggs and bassist Kenny Ames) chose to rent a mobile recording truck and a massive generator instead of setting up rented recording gear backstage and hoping that everything went off as planned. (Opting for the mobile truck immediately paid dividends, as it arrived with Yamaha NS-10s, two 24-track Otaris, and the very same custom-built '72 API console that was used to record *Frampton Comes Alive*.)

As preparations began for the recording, the band quickly realized that they wouldn't have enough time—to record—to every song they wanted; after agreeing to disagree, they whittled down a "must" list of forty songs to a more manageable master list of seventeen—including two new songs—creating two separate sets (for the ensuing performances on Friday and Saturday) with alternate takes to be recorded during soundchecks before each show and throughout the preparatory run-through on Thursday.

"The difference with a live record versus the studio animal is, we can't go, 'Hold on a minute.' You go with what you got, and I love being out on that limb," says Hodges. "The limb breaks or the limb holds. That's what Jason & the Scorchers has always been about. This band has always had the potential to be the best bar band in America on a given night, and we've been the worst, too. The potential's supposed to be there, and good rock & roll to me is supposed to be like, 'Aw shit, what's gonna happen next?'

"Everybody in this band has always been willing to fall on his face," says Hodges. "Hopefully you don't. When we do, it's a major fucking catastrophe, but that's okay. I know there's gonna be a few chords missed, and I know there's gonna be a few things said that shouldn't have been said, but if it's a good screw up, it's gonna be there [on the record]. I want this record to be as close as we can possibly make it to a sweaty night in Nashville with Jason & the Scorchers."

To ensure that the band's performance would be captured without any sacrifices, every mic and DI output onstage ran into a splitter box, enabling their performance to be sent simultaneously to the house's main mixer as well as the monitors and the mobile truck for independent mixes. (Associate producer Michael Janas pulled double duty, manning the house's mixing board while coordinating the efforts of monitor engineer Kyle Miller and mobile engineer Jeff Bakos.)

So as the band pounds it's way through the end of "Last Time Around," Ringenberg leaps from the stage and struts toward the back of room, pacing as he listens to the floor mix. "Best damn sounding room in the South," he shouts. The rest of the band is equally satisfied with their stage sound, but before they can start recording, Hodges wants to hear what's printing to tape. "I'll know tonight if I can leave here being just the guitar player in the band for the next two nights," says Hodges. "That's what I want. We'll get some stuff on tape, make sure the sounds are what we're looking for, and then I can put on the guitar player hat and say 'To hell with the producer thing' for the next two days."

As Hodges walks outside to the mobile truck, Ringenberg sits down and reflects on what's about to happen: "When you've been in the business for a long time, you really can't take anything for granted. It could all be gone tomorrow—really easily, you know? And to be together after all these years—sixteen years—and to do a live album, it's really a spiritual experience. It brings back all the memories of the band: the work we've done, and the thing we've built up—which ain't that big, but it's ours.

"It isn't because we've had a hit single or anything like that," he explains. "We've gained everything we've got the hard, hard way. The absolutely hardest way there is, from playing and basically being a punching bag; that's what it essentially boils down to. You've got to be able to take punishment to survive this long and not have hit records. You've got to be able to take lots of abuse, and we took it, but now we're on the other side of something and feeling real good about it."

Pushing himself up from his seat, Ringenberg wears a supremely confident look. "I don't have any doubts that we'll nail it," he says with a smile. "I just hope I remember all those words."—***Michael Goldand***

Marc Johnson's Bass Desires

The Sound of Summer Running (Verve)

In improvised music, the mere presence of "big names" doesn't guarantee anything in the way of rapport or divine moments. But with *The Sound of Summer Running*, bassist and composer Marc Johnson has crafted a remarkably personal outing that is an aural and emotional oasis in a desert storm of jazz scholasticism. In one sense, the record is a musical and geographical whistlestop tour through the rural outposts of Americana, equal parts jazz and folk, with an overlay of what may loosely be called country. And in teaming Bill Frisell with Pat Metheny, Johnson has fulfilled many a fan's vision of a collaboration between the two most important improvising guitarists of our generation. (Drummer Joey Baron rounds out the quartet.)

The chemistry between them is everything one could have anticipated, and then some. "It took us like all of thirty seconds to hook up like we'd been playing together for twenty years," Frisell enthuses. Metheny echoes his accolades: "From the first note it was like Bill and I had been playing together forever. We couldn't do anything wrong with each other. Weirdly, and not in a bad way, the music ends up sounding very much like my band in '77-'78, with Frisell substituting for Lyle [Mays]. Who would have thought it?"

Well, Marc Johnson, for one. "When I think about some of my favorite music, I have to say it's some of the first things Pat did. Subconsciously, maybe that's why it came out like that. Bill and Pat just played so well together, and you don't have to go too far to understand why, when you look at Bill's Americana roots and Pat's definite tradition in his music; when you go back to recordings such as *New Chautauqua*, they all have a strong folk element in them."

The Sound of Summer Running also benefits from a typically dynamic Joe Ferla recording, from the jangly acoustic quality he elicits from electric guitars, right down to the elusive subterranean presence of Johnson's bass. The music breaks down into two sections, roughly approximating celebration and reflection: Tunes 1-7 comprise something of an Americana pastiche, while tunes 8-10 close out with ballad moods, including a gorgeous Metheny tune, "For a Thousand Years," its lovely chordal harmonies underscoring Johnson's own Bill Evans connection. Elsewhere on the tour, Johnson's opening "Faith in You" and the title track reflect a melting pot of Southwestern rhythmic and melodic sources in the twin guitars' symmetry and the Baron/Johnson team's translucent swing.

Moving deeper into the backwoods, there's a bluesy shuffle ("Union Pacific") and a funky "With My Boots On," where the Baron/Johnson groove might best be characterized as a Motown Blues. (Shades of Benjamin and Jamerson on "Come See About Me"). "I don't know where that came from," Johnson laughs. "At first I thought the tune was going to be a real strident electric kind of thing. But it got more acoustic as it went along, and we settled into that Bayou kind of groove. The music was really put together in the rehearsals and the studio. I came in with some melodies and some basic structures to improvise on. But the formatting and the arranging was decided *en masse*, within the group, because I wasn't sure what was going to work, and a lot of editing got done in the rehearsal process, two days before the recording session. Two long eight-hour days."

Despite the presence of two guitar heroes, this is clearly Johnson's record, and the sound and substance of his bass playing holds much of it together. "My bass is a difficult instrument to record," he muses. "In a solo context, it sounds great. But as soon as you start adding other instruments, it starts to lose punch or clarity. Part of the reason is, I don't have a lot of punch in my attack; it doesn't project in that way. I like my action medium to low, but it's not real rubbery, because there's still some tension in the strings. I use the Tomastik Weich strings, which have a softer core, so they're a little more flexible. I like the sound; it's really rich, which is probably why I was attracted to it twenty years ago." Much could be same for this album, whose delicacy and durability are likely to attract listeners twenty years from now as well.—***Chip Stern***

Led Zeppelin

BBC Sessions (Atlantic)

Bootleg junkies and Those Who Were There will testify that for at least three or four years Led Zeppelin were probably the best live rock band on the planet. Until now, though, the official recorded evidence has been lacking: The band's one live album, *The Song Remains the Same*, scales more heights of self-indulgence than of excellence. But the long-awaited release of this collection of BBC Radio One recordings from LZ's live prime should be enough to silence the skeptics.

Here the mettle of the mighty Zep comes through loud and raw. The band recorded six times for the BBC, five sessions within a four-month period in 1969 and one session in April 1971. Most of the songs they cut are included here. Of the fourteen tracks from '69, only the final four feature a live audience. The others are studio recordings, complete with overdubbing—an extra guitar or organ here, some vocal double-tracking there—that's a bit unpolished. Still, this is fun stuff, particularly the ultra-heavy blues numbers and the first of three versions of "Communication Breakdown," which boasts a tension-building solo guitar intro from Page. Two previously unheard covers—Sleepy John Estes' "The Girl I Love" and Eddie Cochran's "Somethin' Else"—add little to the legacy, although Robert Plant's wailing on the former is pretty gripping.

But on the *real* live material, Zep unleashes its full power. A devastating June '69 performance from London's Playhouse Theatre, featuring a twelve-minute blowout on "How Many More Times," is merely a taster for Disc Two, which presents nearly all of an April '71 Paris Theatre show, including a stellar "Since I've Been Loving You" and top-notch renditions of "Black Dog," "Going to California," and "Stairway to Heaven"—probably the first time most of the audience had heard any of these titles. Considering how self-assured the band sounds, it's surprising to hear Page confess that at the time they were suffering from stage fright.

"Those BBC audiences were so quiet and polite," he recalls. "They were told to be, of course. But compared to the audience reaction we were used to, it was *nothing*. We felt a lot more pressure to boost the excitement level ourselves. Robert in particular was very nervous." Partly for this reason, Plant insisted that all his stage patter be edited out. Liberal use of Digidesign Pro Tools made this easy; it also hepled to cut down the medley at the end of "Whole Lotta Love," which otherwise would have been too long to fit on one CD.

board loops on "These Times" and the organic sparks that fly when nothing more complicated than bass, drums, and duo guitars coalesces around a killer riff. That, too, is a worthy revelation.—***Matt Ashare***

Denny Brown

Curious Dream (Avenue)

"Not fancy, but good," read the sign in a funky Italian restaurant I used to frequent, and that pretty much sums up Denny Brown. An old-fashioned troubadour in the Springsteen mold, he specializes in tales of sensitive tough guys (and gals) caught in desperate circumstances, with only a brave heart for defense. Not to say Brown's an imitator, nor do his romantic visions extent to the "crazy Billy and West Side Janie" excesses that once led the Boss into self-parody. But that's his tradition, and he serves it well on *Curious Dream*. Brown's two-plus decades of experience as a singer/songwriter show in his low-key confidence. Shaded with gentle accordion and violin, the leisurely "Stormful of Anger" depicts two people watching a terrifying storm from the security of indoors. The contrast between lazy tempo and ominous events makes the snapshot of a midnight sky in afternoon all the more vivid. "At Random" exploits the soulful rasp in his voice, adding a poignant edge to a story of mob brutality; Brown's sorrowful wail reveals someone who feels powerless to right a wrong. On a livelier note, he growls with persuasive defiance in "White Collar Crime," snarling, "Lost my conscience/And I feel fine" to a driving beat.

Curious Dream boasts a deft supporting cast, especially the eminent Booker T. Jones on organ, gospelly backing vocalist Arnie Stocking, and lead guitarist David Grissom, whose jagged fills boost the thrill quotient of the spooky title track. Brown's always center-stage, however, the way producer (and drummer) Erik Nielsen intends. "Denny's got a good voice that's gravelly and expressive," he notes. "The idea is to capture the vibe of his performance so that it's exciting to the listener." In short, Nielsen tries to be true to how Brown sounds in real life.

"When you record on half-inch analog tape and then shrink it down to CD, a lot of detail can be lost," says Nielsen. "Digital's not as cool a process as people think." To compensate for sonic deterioration, he tries to get as much stuff as possible on tape up front. "I have an AKG C12 microphone that's just unbelievable; I think it's the most opulent-sounding vocal mic ever made. I looked for two years before I found it. It's a large diaphragm condenser mic, so it captures more of the sound in the room; it takes a bigger picture."

Befitting his philosophy of "straight-up music with Nineties technology," Nielsen would rather pursue a strong take than piece together snippets of different performances. His organic approach pays off on "Jimmy Kid," a somber soliloquy reminiscent of Springsteen's *Nebraska*. Assuming the guise of a teenager doing reform-school time for causing a friend's death, Brown delivers an Oscar-worthy blend of remorse and denial, in one breath admitting guilt, in the next insisting the ill-fated Jimmy was "much too fragile." It's downright chilling to hear this hapless dude contemplate his bleak fate.

The song's grim power underscores the more modest dimensions of the other tunes. Though thoughtful and engaging, "Jenny's Ride" and "Gypsy Lane" seem overly restrained, with craftsmanship superseding the messier emotions that must have sparked them. Denny Brown commits no errors on *Curious Dream*, but the harrowing "Jimmy Kid" suggests he's capable of more than artful decorum.—***Jon Young***

DJ Krush

MiLight (Mowax/ffrr)

Like the Cecil B. De Mille of surreal hip-hop, Tokyo's DJ Krush draws on a sampled cast of thousands to create his sleek, artful epics. Krush's sparse beats, abstract melodic snippets, and insular atmospheres are a luminous surprise amid hip-hop's boastful gangstas and provocative female teasers. But as with any director re-imaging the talkie, some ambitious Krush scenes dazzle with noirish style, while others fade weakly to black. As spooky as Cali's DJ Shadow, yet as sentimental as Paris' DJ Cam (who guests here), Krush plies old-school hip-hop with the experimentalism of the British trip-hop clan. So while Japanese rapper Rino imitates and Brooklyn B-boys (Stash, Shawn J. Period, Finsta Bundy) prognosticate, the music eerily swells like a Satie funeral march. From typical "real niggas" storytelling ("Real") to minimalist jazz tableaux ("From DJ Cam" and "Le Temps"), Krush maintains hip-hop's repetitive beats while deftly adding weird twists.

"If you listen to each of the tracks, they're all different in their own way," Krush says. "If it sounds smooth, it's not a conscious effort on my part. I guess it's the color, the air, the smell, the texture, that runs throughout the album that gives it the feeling of wholeness."

Lest you think that Krush is purely a sampling Svengali, he also spins a wicked turntable. Alongside the standard Technics SL-1200 MKII, Krush uses a Vestax PMC mixer, an Akai S100 sampler, a Roland MC-50 sequencer, an E-mu SP-1200 drum machine, and a Roland VS-880 tape deck.

At 28 individual pieces and 75 minutes, though, *MiLight* could stand some editing. Hip-hop may have gone global, with its influence echoing across the range from Portishead to Black Grape, but do we really need more "yo yo" and "who's in the house" ("Hitotsu No Marai")? Such are *Milight*'s crimes when the record wears thin, but it's Krush's gift that the rapping never overshadows the music.

Using mystery as a main ingredient, Krush opens with a crackling spoken-word intro, which gives way to a Japanese rap over dissonant piano ("Shin-Sekai"). As urban philosophers vent their depressed world views, sweetly melancholic tracks surface like set pieces in a dream world. The sharp snare and simple piano figure of "Jugoya" underscores an enigmatic vocal chorus and a happily chirping bird; "Listen" drapes chimerical electric piano and pots-and-pans percussion over a slapping groove; "Jikan No Hashi 2" applies organ swells like a soothing balm. DJ Cam's brief appearance on "Le Temps" adds a dash of lightness to the blunted beats and worrisome raps. But except for "From Futura 2000" and Krush's turntable hijinx on "From DJ Krush," the rest of the album veers toward bleak fortune-telling and monotonous posturing.

One of the album's closing tracks has nothing to do with rap but does show off Krush's strength as an international alchemist. John Lennon's "Mind Games" is given a dutiful reading by Eri Ohno, who sounds like Della Reese copping Erykah Badu. Krush surrounds his timeless lyrics with an oozing chordal bed, a womb-like bass, and a reverberating drum kit, proving that the truly cerebral never goes out of style.—***Ken Micallef***

Charles Mingus

Passions of a Man: The Complete Atlantic Recordings 1956-1961 (Rhino/Atlantic Jazz)

Among the most vital items in the catalog of Charles Mingus, this well-assembled six-CD box follows in the footsteps of similar Rhino projects documenting the works of John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. The major qualifier of the title—"1956-1961"—indicates that we're only getting part of the story, which is sort of a good thing. Including Mingus' later (1973-79), less-inspired stint with Atlantic would have simultaneously jerked up the set's price and lowered its value.

Instead, we have the sessions that produced *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, *The Clown*, *Blues & Roots*, *Oh Yeah*, and *Tonight at Noon*, featuring a staggering array of saxophonists playing music that never, ever sounded like it was composed, orchestrated, and stomped upon by anybody but Mingus. Among the hornmen: Jackie McLean, Eric Dolphy, Roland Kirk, John Handy, Pepper Adams, J. R. Monterose, and the still-underrated tenor titan Booker Ervin. "Let's put it this way," recalls Mingus' recording engineer/producer Tom Dowd. "If Mingus was a film director, he'd have cast his pictures well."

The result is music that sounds as startling in this configuration as it will in the next millennium's. Dowd was recording engineer at every session here but one (the live set *Mingus at Antibes*); he remembers with wonder the methods by which he'd try to get down on tape the sound of the Wandering Mingus. "I had him fenced off from the obviously bad leakage problems that I would encounter, but he was free to walk around. And if he'd been playing and couldn't catch somebody's eye, or something was going on that was adverse to what he expected, he would promptly pick up the bass and start walking, playing while he got to where he wanted to get."

As history, this is invaluable stuff, though disc six, which contains a conversation between producer Nesuhi Ertegun and Mingus, will be considered enlightening by most people exactly once and then never played again. Still, this dialog does give a direct taste of Mingus as a person. It adds up to five CDs (including four previously unissued performances) that simply do not let up, and a sixth that will nearly put you in the same room as Charles Mingus. Written records and databases come and go, memories fade—but music like this can never lose its power or its passion.—***Dave DiMartino***

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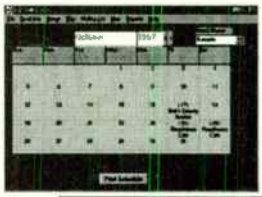

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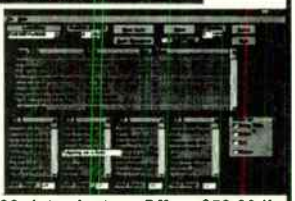

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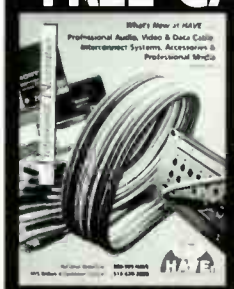

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product index

Here's our product guide which lists the equipment and page number where the players talk about the gear they use. Feel free to call or fax the manufacturers listed below for specific info on what the best players play.

ACOUSTIC SYSTEMS 415 E St. Elmo Rd., Austin, TX, 78745, (512) 444-1961: 360 preamp, **34**
AKAI 7010 Soquel Dr., Aptos, CA, 95003, (800) 433-5627: MPC 3000, **16**; S100 sampler, **90**
AKG 1449 Donelson Pike, Nashville, TN, 37217, (615) 399-2199: C414, **26**; D112, **75**; C12, **90**
ALESIS 3630 Holdredge Ave., Los Angeles, CA, 90016, (310) 558-4530: MicroLimiter, MicroGate, MicroVerb II, 3630 compressor, Quadraverb, **24**
AMPEG 1400 Ferguson Ave., St. Louis, MO, 63133, (314) 727-4512: B-18 60 watt Portaflex amp, SVP Pro Preamp, 300-watt SVT-1, B-15R 60/100 watt Portaflex, SVT-II Pro, **34**
AUDIX 29103 SW Kinsman, Wilsonville, OR, 97070, (800) 966-8261: OM-7 mic, **34**
AVEDIS ZILDJIAN CO. 22 Longwater Dr., Norwell, MA, 02061, (617) 871-2200: cymbals, **34**
BOSS 7200 Dominion Cir., Los Angeles, CA, 90040, (213) 685-5141: DM-2 delay, DD-3 digital delay, SYB-3 bass synth, CH-1 super chorus, **34**
CREST AUDIO 100 Eisenhower Dr., Paramus, NJ, 07652, (201) 909-8700: 6001 power amp, **34**
CROWN INT'L 1718 W Mishwaka Rd., Elkhart, IN, 46517, (219) 294-8000: power amp, **26**
dbx 8760 S Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT, 84070, (801) 568-7660: 166 compressor, **34**
DRAWMER Charlotte St., Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England, WF1 1UH, 44 019 24378669: MX40 noise gate, **64**
DRUM WORKSHOP 101 Bernoulli Cir., Oxnard, CA, 93030, (805) 485-6999: Turbo 5000 pedal, **34**
DUNLOP MFG 150 Industrial Way, P.O. Box 846, Benicia, CA, 94510, (800) 722-3434: 535 Crybaby wah, GCB-95 Crybaby wah, TS-1 tremolo, picks, Uni-Vibe, **34**
E-MU 1600 Green Hills Rd., Scotts Valley, CA, 95066, (408) 438-1921: SP-1200 drum machine, **90**
ENSONIQ 155 Great Valley Pkwy., Malvern, PA, 19355, (610) 647-3630: PARIS integrated recording system, **64**
EPIPHONE 1818 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN, 37210-3781, (615) 871-4500: Emperor Regent, Howard Roberts, **82**
FENDER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS 7975 N Hayden Rd., Scottsdale, AZ, 85258, (602) 596-9690: Reverb reissue, **24**; Strats and Teles, Champ, VibroChamp, '65 Deluxe, Sidekick 10, Pro Junior, **26**; '83 Tele, '59 Strat, '59 Strat reissue, '68 Tele w. Bigsby, 1959 Twin, '65 Spring Reverb, **34**; Twin reverb, '67 Jazzmaster, 85; Telecaster, **86**
FURMAN SOUND 30 Rich St., Greenbrae, CA, 94904, (415) 927-1225: VU-40 signal meter, **34**
GHS 2813 Wilber Ave., P.O. Box 136, Battle Creek, MI, 49015, (800) 388-4447: strings, **34**
GIBSON 641 Massman Dr., Nashville, TN, 37210, (800) 283-7135: '57 Les Paul Jr., BR-9 amp, **26**; '68 ES-375, '59 Les Paul Deluxe reissue, '60 Les Paul Classic reissue, '56 Les Paul w. Bigsby, '53 Les Paul Deluxe, '73 Les Paul deluxe, '80s Flying V, **34**; ES-175 reissue, **80**
GRETSCH P.O. Box 2468, Savannah, GA, 31402, (912) 748-1101: '91 Silver Jet reissue, **34**
GUILD 7975 N. Hayden Rd., Scottsdale, AZ, 85258, (602) 596-9690: F-30 acoustic, **26**; X170 Manhattan, **81**
HAMER GUITARS P.O. Box 507, Bloomfield, CT, 06002-0507, (860) 647-2244: Duo-tone acoustic/electric, eight-string bass, 12-string bass, **34**
HIWATT 16123 Valerio Street, Van Nuys, CA, 91406, (800) 318-8599:100-watt head, **85**
HOHNER 10223 Sycamore Dr., Ashland, VA, 23005, (804) 550-2700: Marine band harmonica in G, **34**
HOSHINO/IBANEZ 1726 Winchester Rd., Bensalem, PA, 19020-0086, (800) 669-8262: OT10 Octave, FL9 Flanger, TS9 Tube Screamer, **26**; '70s flying V, TS-9 tube screamer, **34**; BN5 Black Noise distortion pedal, **64**; Pat Metheny Signature PM100, George Benson Signature GB105s, **81**
JERRY JONES GUITARS 913 Church St., Nashville, TN, 37203, (615) 255-0088: electric sitar, **34**
KORG 316 S Service Rd., Melville, NY, 11747-3201, (516) 333-9100: M1, **26**; z1 keyboard, **79**
LEXICON 3 Oak Park Rd, Bedford, MA, 01730-1441, (617) 280-0300: Jam Man, **24**
LUDWIG & MUSSER INDUSTRIES P.O. Box 310, Elkhart, IN, 46515, (219) 522-1675: drums, **26**; Aerolite Snare, Black Beauty snare, Supra-Phonic snare, **34**
MACKIE DESIGNS 16220 Wood-Red Rd. NE, Woodinville, WA, 98072, (800) 258-6883: 24*8 console, **24**
MARK OF THE UNICORN 1280 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA, 02138, (617) 576-2760: Freestyle 2.0, **67**
MARSHALL AMPLIFIERS 316 S. Service Rd., Melville, NY, 11747-3201, (516)333-9100: Power Brake, JCM800 head, 1960B 4x12 cabinet, 50-watt JMP head, 100 watt Super Tremolo amp, **34**
MATCHLESS 9830 Alburtis Ave., Santa Fe Springs, CA, 90670, (310) 801-4840: 2x12 DC-30, **34**
MIDIMAN 236 W Mountain St., #108, Pasadena, CA, 91103-2967, (818) 449-8838: Flying Calf D/A converter, **64**
MODULUS GUITARS 575 Seventh St., San Francisco, CA, 94103, (415) 703-0500: basses, **34**
MORLEY 185 Detroit St., Cary, IL, 60013, (800) 284-5172: Analog Echo reverb, **24**
MUSIC MAN 151 Suburban Rd., P.O. Box 4117, San Luis Opispo, CA, 93403, (800) 543-2255: '65 Reverb head, **26**
MXR P.O. Box 846, Benicia, CA, 94510, (800) 722-3434: Phase 45, Dynacomp, **26**; Phase 90, Dynacomp compressor, **34**
ORANGE AMPLIFIERS 1818 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN, 37210-3781, (615) 871-4500: 2x12 cabinet, **34**
OTARI 378 Vintage Park Drive, Foster City, CA, 94404, (415) 341-5900: MX 5050 MKIII-8, **24**
PANASONIC/RAMSA 6550 Katella Ave., Cypress, CA, 90630, (714) 373-7277: Ramsa 18-channel board, desktop cassette recorder, **26**
PROMARK 10707 Craighead Dr., Houston, TX, 77025, (800) 822-1492: TX737SGW hickory drumsticks, **34**
REMO 28101 Industry Drive, Valencia, CA, 91355, (805)294-5600: Roto Toms, Ambassador and Emperor heads, **34**
ROLAND 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA, 90040, (213) 685-5141: RE-301 chorus/echo, 24; MC-50 sequencer, VS-880 recorder, **90**
SABIAN 1 Main St., Meductic, NB, E0H 1L0, Canada, (506) 272-2019: RADIA cymbals, **65**
SCHECTER GUITAR RESEARCH 6920 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, 90038, (213) 851-5230: Tele-style guitars, **34**
SENNHEISER 6 Vista Dr., P.O. Box 987, Old Lyme, CT, 06371, (203) 434-9190: MD-441, MD-421, **26**; MD421, **75**
SHURE BROTHERS 222 Hartrey Ave., Evanston, IL, 60202, (800) 257-4873: SM57, **26**
SLINGERLAND 741 Massman Dr., Nashville, TN, 37210, (615) 871-4500: drums, **34**
SONY ELECTRONICS 3 Paragon Dr., Montvale, NJ, 07645, (201) 930-1000: K717ES cassette deck, GX50ES stereo receiver, **26**; WRR-840A wireless, **34**
SWR ENGINEERING 12823 Foothill Blvd., Unit B, Sylmar, CA, 91342, (818) 898-3355: 2x10 cabinet, **34**
TASCAM 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA, 90640, (213) 726-0303: DA-30 DAT machine, **26**
TECH 21 1600 Broadway, New York, NY, 10019-7413, (212) 315-1116: SansAmp, SansAmp bass DI, **24**; Classic Distortion, **34**
TECHNICS 1 Panasonic Way 1C-8, Secaucus, NJ, 07094, (201) 392-6140: SL-1200 MKII turntables, **90**
VESTAX 2860 Cordelia Rd., Ste. 120, Fairfield, CA, 94585, (707) 427-1920: PMC mixer, **90**
WASHBURN INT'L 255 Corporate Woods Pkwy., Vernon Hills, IL, 60061-3109, (800) 877-6863: five-string banjo, **26**; Orleans J10TS, **81**
YAMAHA 6600 Orangethrope Blvd., Buena Park, CA, 90622, (714) 522-9011: PowerHoop rims, **34**; AES 800 guitar, 65DTX electronic percussion system, **73**; NS-10, **86**

ad index

Going for Baroque

Fugue this, Billy Joel!

I started out learning classical music from the age of four. Then, when I got to be thirteen, I had a passionate affair with rock & roll. But I'm 48 now and it's getting old. . . . I don't want to be a rock star. I want to be an artist."—Billy Joel

"Look, it was time for a change," says Johann Sebastian Bach of his recent decision to drop Baroque music for what he terms his "first love," rock & roll. "I'm 64, and Baroque is getting old."

Toweling off in the sacristy of Leipzig's St. Thomas' Church after a grueling seven-hour rehearsal of his new cantata, *Bach Around the Clock*, the composer/organist/guitarist takes a long drag on his Marlboro Light and explains why he has decided to drop the music that made him famous and, at least for the past decade or so, successful.

"Let's face it, there's only so much you can do with complex polyphony, counterpoint, figured bass, cadenzas, multimovement forms, and key modulations," he sighs. "Working with the same three chords over and over again is much more challenging."

The composer's last tour with his longtime choral group, the Thomanerchor—a series of gigs in Moravia to promote 1748's *Mass in B Minor*—suggests that Baroque simply wasn't working for Bach anymore. They often played to half-empty churches, with many congregants reportedly walking out before the Kyrie Eleison. More bad news came with the chart decline of Bach's "Ein Feste Burg" cantata, which many dioceses have dropped from heavy rotation.

On the personal side, Bach's detractors point to the strains of his breakup with clavichordist/ model Anna Magdalena Wilchen and the ugly custody battle over their twenty children.

Then there are the stories told by chorus insiders of screaming fights between Bach and his longtime lead violist Sigismund Dorfkopf. "*Das ist Bullscheife!*" Bach explodes. "Sigi and I are like brothers. We've known each other since *die Kindergarten*. As long as he wants to keep working with me, I'm there for him." (Through a spokesman, Dorfkopf responded, "I wish Jojo well and hope that we can record together as soon as recording is invented.")

"Das ist Bullscheife!" Bach explodes. "Sigi and I are like brothers.

Nonetheless, Bach does seem to be committed to his decision to become a rocker. He has swapped his silk waistcoats, knee breeches, and powdered wigs for T-shirts, leather pants, and hair extensions, and recently had a Berlin surgeon remove half his brain.

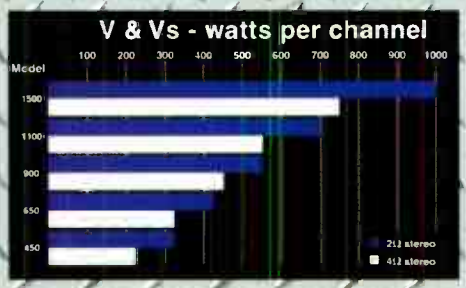
The erstwhile Baroquer appears energized and eager to launch his next tour with a stripped-down Thomanerchor. The centerpieces of their shows will be a radically revamped *Mass in B Minor* (tentatively retitled *Mass in A, D, and E: The Piña Colada Song)* and the eagerly-awaited "St. Matthew's Passion Makes Me Wanna Shoop."

But isn't Bach going to miss the nonscreaming crowds, the intelligent and cultivated listeners, the lack of groupies? "Nah," he says with a sly smile. "I don't want to be an artist. I want to be a rock star."

—Tom Conroy

Michaek Dougan

for those about to rock



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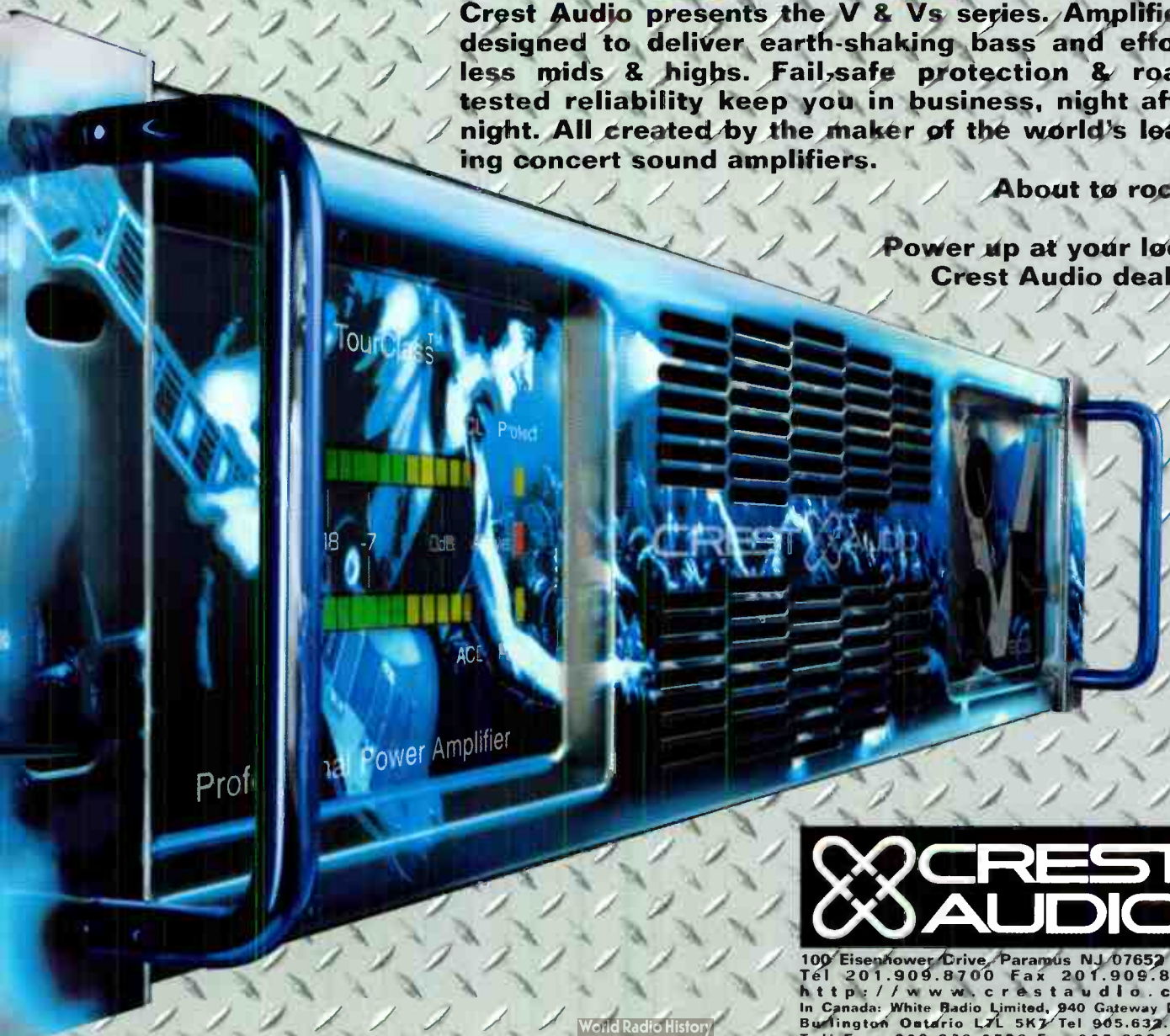

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