

**BOWIE
TALKS**

PLUS: STEVE MORSE • SHEILA E. • THE FIXX

MUSICIAN

\$2.25 NO. 74 DECEMBER 1984

DAVID BOWIE

*Under Pressure:
Ziggy and Iggy Defend Tonight.*
by David Fricke

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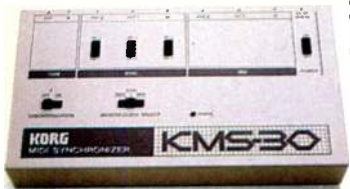
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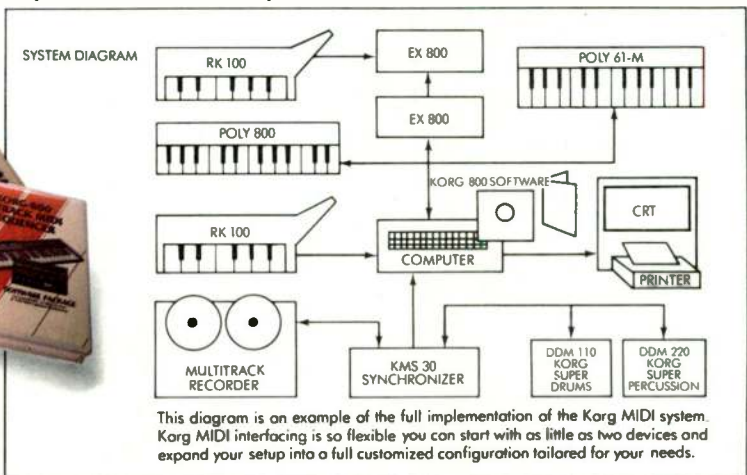
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SUMMERS/FRIPP

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DAVID BOWIE

He's back, folks, twisting again like he did last summer. But Bowie's new LP, *Tonight*, raises unsettling questions about how much time and energy he's devoting to his music lately. David Fricke talks to the Lovable Alien, and some of the musicians, producers and co-writers—including the legendary Iggy Pop—who helped make *Tonight*, to get a clearer perspective, and finds important clues in Bowie's Berlin past.

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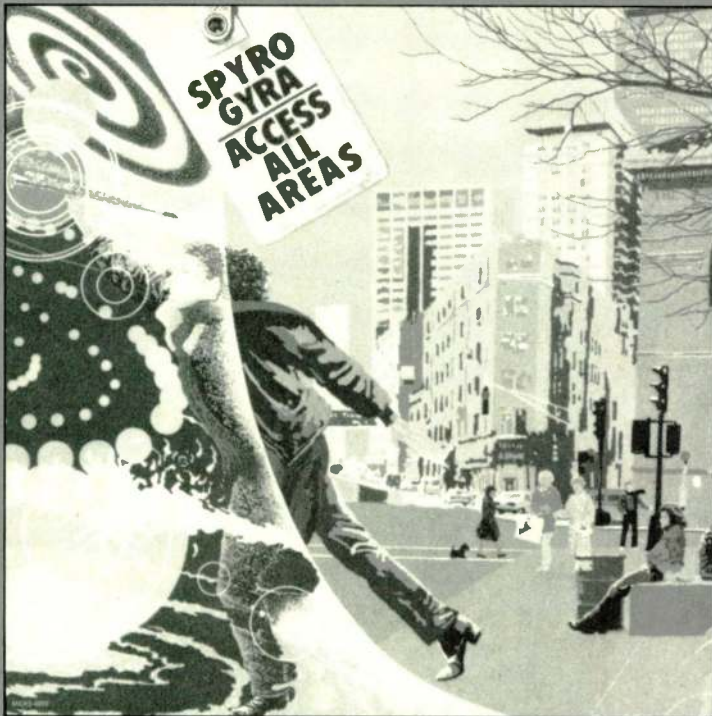
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Executive Editor

Vic Garbarini

Art Director

Gary Koepke

Managing Editor

Jock Baird

Promotion Director

Paul Sacksman

Staff Photographer

Deborah Feingold

Associate Editors

Mark Rowland Scott Isler

Contributing Editors

Nelson George David Fricke

Brian Cullman J.D. Considine

Timothy White Charles M. Young

Francis Davis Freff Rafi Zabor

Sales/Promotion

R. Bradford Lee J.R. Morse

Advertising Sales

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Pamela Ellis Hawkes

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Keith Powers

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Production

Will Hunt Ruth Maassen

Typography

Don Russell

Assistant to the Publisher

Cindy Amero

Office Manager

Michelle Nicastro

Administration

Paula Amato

Main Office/Production/Retail Sales

31 Commercial St., P.O. Box 701
Gloucester, MA 01930 (617) 281-3110

New York Advertising/Editorial

MUSICIAN, 1515 Broadway, 39 fl.
N.Y.C., NY 10036 (212) 764-7400

Group Publisher

Gerald S. Hobbs

Circulation Manager

Barbara Eskin

Subscriber Service

Gregory Thompson (212) 764-7536

Chairman and President: W.D. Littleford. **Executive**

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Letters

HEAVY RESPONSE



When the September issue of *Musician* hit the newsstands, I'm sure all sorts of loyal *Musician* fans brushed back their tiny rat tails and moaned, "Heavy metal? But darling, it's just not *mod*." No, luckily, it isn't.

I loathe heavy metal as much as any *mod*, and I was initially dismayed. However, I was relieved when I discovered the articles not only covered many of the psychological and social aspects of this unpleasant musical form, but were also entertaining and informative. After all, who would ever imagine that heavy metal bands actually pay people to design their clothes?

Young and *Musician* had the courage to cover a form which would obviously be unpopular with their loyal readers. Moreover, Young's objective view of heavy metal was refreshing since it avoided the usual teen barrage of information on what make-up Twisted Sister wears, who does Wendy O. Williams' hair, and how many people David Lee Roth has slept with in the last fifteen minutes. Young and *Musician* gave heavy metal a close and valuable look.

Marly Carpenter
Washington, DC

It's about time you printed a section on heavy metal; too bad you totally blew it. I think your wimpy little writers better go back to groups like R.E.M., Toto and ABC. When I subscribed to your so-called "rock" magazine, I thought I was going to read about rock groups, not about a bunch of geeks. Heavy metal will live forever!!

Kory Menken
Rapid City, SD

Shocking. Quite shocking. I open my mailbox, and am startled to see a copy of *Creem* magazine, a publication which I find amusing, but not enough so to subscribe. But, wait! Could it be? No!

It's actually the latest issue of *Musician*! I'm crushed. Could they have possibly sold out? I look it over. My, my. They actually call Twisted Sister dirtbags—on the cover, even. There's more here than meets the eye. I read through it. Ah, sweet relief. It's a joke. At least, it's quite tongue-in-cheek. And not only that, there's actually an article on Conlon Nancarrow! Well, I guess it figures. Gotta put those Van Halen and Judas Priest types on the cover every now and then to get the kids to plop down that old buck ninety-five. But there is a danger in this . . . they may not realize that you're joking.

A. J. Pantuso
WLYX-FM
Memphis, TN

Having been through the "first" heavy metal wave with the likes of Black Sabbath, Steppenwolf, Iron Butterfly and Deep Purple, Charles M. Young's report on this wave has me scared. Since my oldest girl is only five, I think there is still hope that by the time she is old enough to lick whipped cream off some leather-clad guitar banger's body, fifties music (and morals) will be on its upteenth revival and we can all dance together.

Until then, with God's help, I'll try to understand when my three-year-old dances around the house singing "We're Not Gonna Take It" . . . Thanks for the insight.

Dave Price
Wayzata, MN

Thanks for not being timorous about the resurgence of Heavy Metal. Of course, your coverage sounded more like a peremptory attempt to assure "the others" that they need not worry, for HM is nothing more than a teenage travesty; but then no true fan of HM expects you folks on the right to ever handle the situation any differently.

Phyllis Knight
Queens Village, NY

Being that your publication is primarily devoted to rock, I was surprised to see you insult heavy metal as a genre. Your cheap shots are reminiscent of the 1950's when people insulted rock 'n' roll because they didn't appreciate it. Such attitudes are no less arrogant now than they were thirty years ago.

Moshe I. Whinston
Jamaica, NY

I'm twenty-eight years old, and went to high school during the early seventies. I grew up listening to Heavy Metal, and I still enjoy it today. It's one of the very few forms of rock music that still embodies the true spirit of rock 'n' roll. The minute that rock stops offending parents and

authority figures it will have outlived its purpose. It's also nice to see that Heavy Metal is steadily gaining a larger female audience.

Rock Hard, Ride Free!

Martin Murray
Niagara Falls, Ontario

You sure caused quite a stir around my house with the arrival of the September issue. The mailman giggled as he handed it to me, my wife wanted to know why I had spent good money on a subscription to a heavy metal magazine, and my thirteen-year-old neighbor Ozzy thinks we're on the same wavelength.

I don't need this. If you're going to continue this adolescent journalism, count me out. If you do, you might send my buddy Ozzy a subscription offer.

Maybe that's your intention.

John Guion
Anderson, IN

I just want to say three cheers for Charles M. Young, back from wherever he was. Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!

Jeffrey Krulik
Bowie, MD

I am extremely offended by this trash you publish, and the disgusting four-letter language and expressions printed in your magazine.

Before you make false accusations or ill-natured remarks about teen-agers, take into consideration the attitude you "adults" take toward us. I only speak for myself, and anyone else who doesn't consider themselves a "dirtbag and worthless pud."

Anyway, I feel I made myself quite clear, considering that I did not use any abusive language like some unnamed "adults."

Michelle Pellegrino
Bridgewater, NJ

If these groups have nothing more to offer than the leather, metal studs, screaming teenagers and breasts that your articles portray, they belong back in the teenage circus from which they appear to have come.

Bobby V
Plattsburgh, NY

As a longtime fan and collector of comic books I consider it an insult to the entire comics industry.

Gary Kimber
Downsview, ONT

What a cover! I guess if I jerked off as much as Robbie Baby, my left arm would be as green, too.

Algonquin Magistrate
Carrboro, NC
continued on next page

A NIGHT LIKE NO OTHER . . .

TONIGHT

David
&
Bowie



FEATURES "BLUE JEAN," "LOVING THE ALIEN," AND "TONIGHT" WITH TINA TURNER



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Letters from previous page

I once read a line from Michael Bloomfield, "The music you listen to is the soundtrack of your life." Based on this line, Heavy Metal maniacs must live a violent and repetitious life.

*Tom Bayes
Melbourne, FL*

What is heavy metal? Judas Priest. Forget Joan Jett. Accept and the Scorpions. Never could be the Jefferson Starship. AC/DC, Saxon, Dio, Black Sabbath and names of bands you might not dare print such as W.A.S.P., Bitch, Grim Reaper, Nazerath, Talas, Whitesnake, Helix, Ratt, Lita Ford, Rock Goddess, The Rods, Metallics, She, Loudness, and it continues.

*T. Dio Hearts
San Antonio, TX*

Just because I like heavy metal, that doesn't necessarily mean I'm "a worthless pud" or a "dirtbag."

*Scott Massine
Jamestown, ND*

If the Heavy Metal sound is made by a group of worthless puds and dirtbags—I'm Bullwinkle the Moose.

Why all the put-downs? Embarrassed [sic] because Heavy Metal bands have a larger following than your so-called magazine? As for his implication that all Heavy Metal fans are wierdos[sic]—I've been a listener of bands like Blue Cheer, Judas Priest and Black Sabbath as long as I can remember.

Please don't tell me that I'm a useless wierdo[sic]—I'll be grabbing my Ph.D. in English soon. Maybe I'll be the one replacing Mr. Young.

Does that surprize [sic] you, Mr. Young, to find that all Heavy Metal [sic] fans are not complete idiots?

*Sally Huskaitis
No. Easton, MA*

OK, time's up! Hold everything! You guys can stop digging now . . . you have now hit bottom! I should have expected this . . . Van Halen (June '84) followed by Michael Jackson (July '84). I tried to ignore it. I did my best to make it go away. Nonetheless, *Musician* is now on a veritable sell-out binge. What's next? A swimsuit issue? Maybe a Vanessa Williams layout! Probably an *annual* heavy metal issue. No doubt you've set a sales record this time around. Gets addicting, don't it? Has there been a merger with MTV yet? Maybe you just have a lust for mail. I hate to say this, but someone pointed Mark David Chapman in the wrong direction.

*Rod Stouch
York, PA*

The winner of the Winna Guita Gilmour contest is Flint, Texas' Russ Ragsdale, who takes home a Fender Vintage Telecaster. The producer of Paul Simon's Hearts And Bones was in fact Roy Halee. Congratulations and apologies to both.



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PEABO BRYSON

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He's a bona fide sex symbol who's also something of a feminist. Peabo Bryson doesn't find the two categories mutually exclusive.

"I think the kind of sensitivity that's required of a man to deal with women on a fair basis is a representation of strength in man," he says, "not necessarily women's rights."

Quite a mouthful. It seems pretty obvious, though, that the vast majority of Bryson's constituency is female.

"What I do is promote romance," Bryson admits. "I don't care how you look at it, that's a masculine feature.

Women don't give a damn about what Alan Alda's ass looks like. Think about it. Or Phil Donahue's—no one thinks he has a cute ass."

On the other hand, women "absolutely" think of *him* in those terms, Bryson says. As for his own tush, well, "When I turn around to direct the band, there's oohs and ahs out there!" [*Must we? — Ed.*]

Obviously, Bryson prides himself on being a "real man" in the 80s mold. "I don't like quiche," he confirms with a little laugh. "I'm a gourmet and, being a cook, I've *tried* quiche, but that was before I knew men weren't supposed to eat quiche. Of course, I tore up my recipe and discarded all the evidence after that."

Of course. — **Leonard Pitts, Jr.**

ROMEO VOID

Relaxed and Composed

I might like you better if we slept together," Deborah Iyall spat out on Romeo Void's debut EP. Two albums later, Iyall is married, happier, and working a new demographic: "I want to appeal to teenage girls and mothers!"

The band's new *Instincts* might not be quite that ingenuous, but it tries. "I'm not pushing people away in songs so much now," lyricist Iyall explains. "For this record I *liked* people more, I trusted them more. I think *Instincts* is a lot more relaxed. I do have that coldness that people have heard in our music; it's a part of me that has a hard time coming out in real life, so a lot of the poison inside comes out in songs. Language has been my salvation."

So has Columbia Records, who allowed Romeo Void a sophomore slump brought on by what Iyall describes as cockiness, inexperience and heavy follow-up pressures. "Around the time of the *Never Say Never* EP and *Benefactor*, we didn't get cynical so much as we got lazy. We thought all we needed was a great rhythm track to make it go. Aside from 'SOS' I think most of *Benefactor* is boring. *Instincts* is more a collection of compositions, really composed music."

— **Laura Fissinger**

BOX OF FROGS

Jumping to the Beat

The one thing I didn't want to do was tarnish the Yardbirds legend," Paul Samwell-Smith says of his



reunion with two old friends to start a new band. He needn't have worried. **Box of Frogs**, comprised of ex-Yardbirds bassist Samwell-Smith, drummer Jim McCarty and guitarist Chris Dreja, plus veteran shouter John Fiddler, is off to a flying start. Besides recapturing the free-wheeling spirit of the British blues era, the



Romeo Void's Deborah Iyall

group's self-titled debut LP jumped (!) into the upper regions of the American charts like it was 1968 all over again.

"About three years ago, Chris, Jim and I went to Jeff Beck's house for a get-together and a rehearsal," Samwell-Smith recalls. "We hadn't played with each other in something like fourteen years, but it was such fun that we toyed with the idea of reforming the Yardbirds." Since they didn't want to reprise Yardbirds oldies, they chose the name Box of Frogs (as in the insult, "You're so ugly you look like a...").

Beck didn't want to commit

to the Frogs full-time, and they never did get around to asking anyone else. Result: the lead parts on the LP are played by a variety of cool guests, including Beck and Rory Gallagher.

Buoyed by the favorable response, Box of Frogs are planning a second long-player, with more guest stars. "Jimmy Page says he very much wants to play with us," says Samwell-Smith, who also produced the band's first album.

So Box of Frogs are a band with a future as well as a past. "I'd be heartbroken," Samwell-Smith says, "if we could only make two or three albums." — **Jon Young**

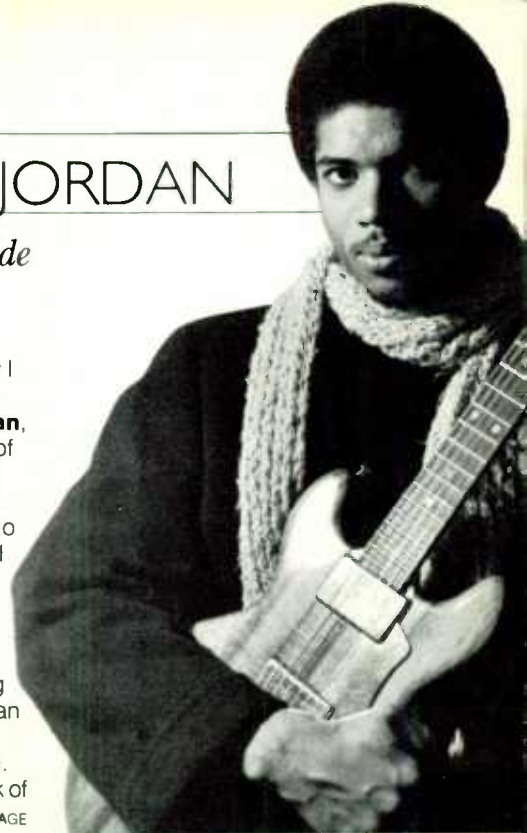
STANLEY JORDAN

Talking out the Side of His Neck

I've been playing the way I play now since I was sixteen," says **Stanley Jordan**, who at twenty-five is a lot of people's pick as Next Big Thing on jazz guitar. "But I didn't really feel I wanted to seek recognition for what I was doing until recently. I wanted to wait until I got to where I said, 'People have got to hear this.'"

Now that they're hearing it, they're saying that Jordan plays guitar in a way it's never been played before. Concentrating on the neck of

TO NEXT PAGE



MTV faces lawsuits, competition

MTV's first three years haven't exactly been placid ones, riddled as they are with charges of racist and sexist programming. But that's kid stuff compared with recent developments. The network is facing competition from two other cable operations, a lawsuit from one of those two, and a U.S. Justice Department investigation of its controversial exclusivity arrangements with record companies.

The Los Angeles-based Discovery Music Network will debut in December. Its twenty-four-hours-a-day programming will include country, pop and black music clips—formats MTV

By **Scott Isler**

has done a good job of ignoring. In late August, however, MTV announced the creation of VH1, a second channel catering to decrepit but financially powerful twenty-five- to forty-nine-year-olds. This new network, set to air January 1, should provide airtime for middle-of-the-road artists currently excluded from MTV's teenybop orientation.

Then there's the Music Video Network from the Turner Broadcasting System. This is yet another full-time operation, with a top forty slant. MVN lifted off October 26, getting the jump on Discovery and VH1. Ted Turner announced his intentions last August, and even advanced the on-air date by over a month once MTV announced its new channel. MTV, in turn, acknowledges accelerating the debut of VH1 ("Video Hits") in response to Turner.

The lawsuit, brought by Discovery, claims that MTV's deals with CBS, Elektra/Asylum, Geffen, MCA and RCA Records—all named as co-conspirators—violate antitrust laws. (PolyGram Records consequently signed for exclusivity with MTV as well.) The suit also charges MTV with restraint

of trade and unfair competition. MTV has issued a statement calling the complaint "totally without merit" and its exclusivity agreements "appropriate and valid, exclusivity being a common and acceptable feature of entertainment industry contracts."

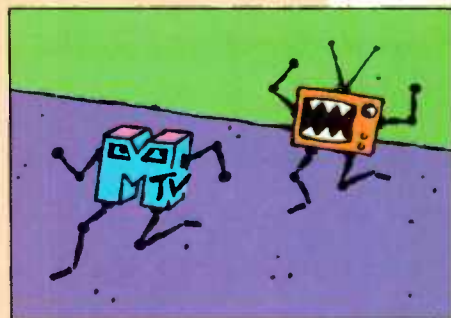
"It's all a question of scope and scale," comments Morton Nasatir, executive director of the Association of Music Video Broadcasters. "You're not going to prevent record companies from giving exclusivity on products. But that's a far cry from having a trend where the basic top releases by top artists on the six or seven top companies are embraced by one organization."

The AMVB represents yet another development in music video: UHF stations devoting at least half their programming to promo clips. Nasatir says there are eleven such stations scattered across the country, with three more due by year's end. These channels, of course, have the advantage over cable of not requiring external hook-ups for reception.

"The record companies made deals without realizing what was happening," Nasatir says. "MTV is not the

only game in town." MTV may have realized this, however. Michael Bogner, director of broadcast operations at all-music video Channel 59 in Plainview, New York, says of MTV's exclusivity arrangements, "They basically did it to stop the Turners and Discoveries."

Whatever the reason, only time—and perhaps the Justice Department investigation, which Nasatir calls "far more important" than



BRUCE CROCKER

Discovery's action—will tell. MTV employees certainly won't, even those who know about the lawsuit. "It has been thoroughly ingrained in us not to make comments on things like this," says one MTV associate producer who hadn't heard about the case. Another associate found out by watching *Entertainment Tonight*.

JONATHAN POSTAL/RETNA

ANN SUMMA/RETNA

the instrument, he has developed a way to play counterpoint by using each hand independently to hit the strings against the frets rather than picking or strumming—although he does pick or strum occasionally for rhythmic effect. Performing unaccompanied, his dazzling array of sounds creates the pleasant impression that he is duetting with himself.

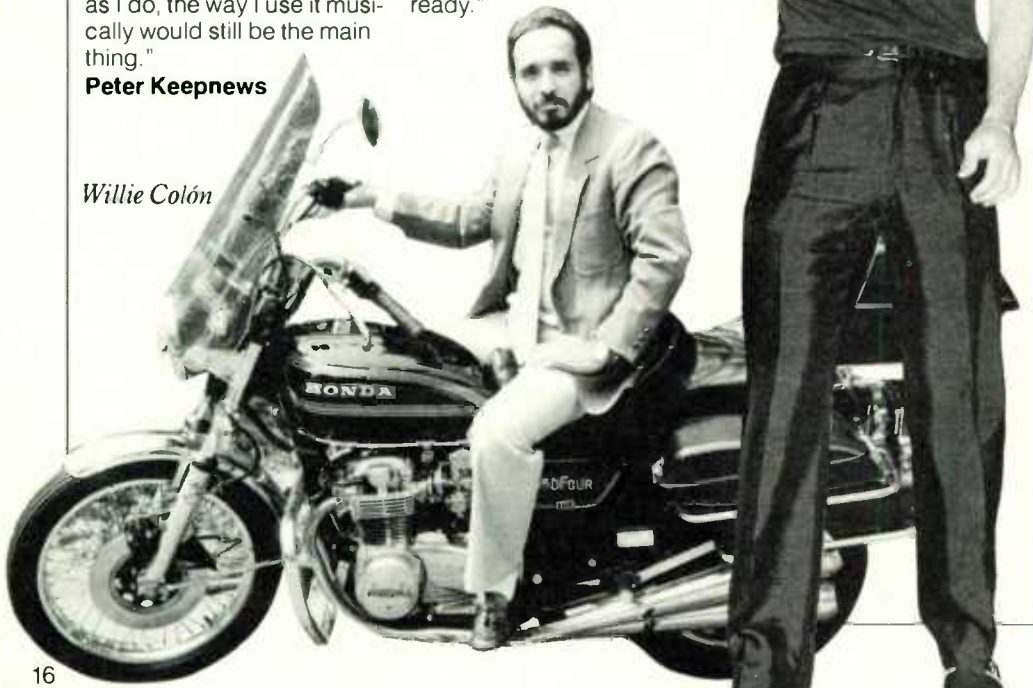
Jordan is a 1981 graduate of Princeton, where he studied composition and electronic music as well as guitar. He released one album on his own label but was virtually unknown when he appeared unbilled at a Kool Jazz Festival concert in New York this summer and wowed crowd and critics with a fifteen-minute solo set. Now he's signed to the newly reactivated Blue Note label, with an album due in January.

Jordan acknowledges his guitar neck-playing is not unique—Eddie Van Halen, he notes, uses a similar approach—but he maintains that no other guitarist uses it as extensively as he does. And he makes another point:

"Musically, I think I'm an original player. It doesn't just have to do with the technique; it's the music that got me interested in developing the technique. Even if somebody understood the technique ten times as well as I do, the way I use it musically would still be the main thing."

Peter Keepnews

Willie Colón



RUBÉN BLADES AND WILLIE COLÓN

The Beat Goes North

We have twenty million people here. You can no longer ignore the Latin presence in this country." So says Panamanian singer/songwriter **Rubén Blades**, whose Elektra Records debut, *Buscando América* (*Looking For America*), may be the first step by a major label toward recognizing Latin pop music.

Blades' former collaborator, **Willie Colón**, may represent the second step. Colón just released *Criollo*, his debut album for RCA.

"A lot of the major labels are looking at salsa now," Colón explains. "The numbers look interesting to them." Interesting indeed. Colón, "el Malo," came to RCA with impressive South American sales figures, including one platinum and nine gold albums. But the majors also want to build an Anglo audience for salsa. "It's been permeating jingles," Colón continues. "All of the rock bands have congas and Latin percussion. It's been seeping in slowly, but the American non-Spanish-speaking public is ready."

For Bruce Lundvall, the former Elektra president who signed Blades, *Buscando América* "was a test case, but the results so far are commendable." Although the album initially shipped under 10,000 copies, it has sold over 70,000, Lundvall says. More importantly, Elektra's dive into the Latin market reflects Lundvall's belief in Blades as a major artist irrespective of style. Now president of Capitol-distributed Manhattan Records—where he expects to sign other Latin artists—Lundvall admits Latin music is "a very specialized market for a general rock 'n' roll/black music (record) company....It'll take time before a company like that will really know the Latin market."

Latin artists seem eager to
Rubén Blades

leave the *barrio* of Fania Records, which until now has held a virtual monopoly on salsa artists. "Fania is a *bodega* acting like a record company," Blades says. "It's a contradiction: North American labels will be the ones to

TO NEXT PAGE



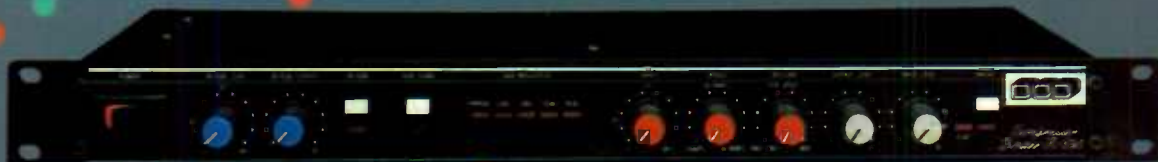
Audiophile But Not Compact

Chances are someone on your Christmas shopping list will appreciate **The Rolling Stones**, the latest coffee-table boxed LP set from Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab. This "Limited Edition Library of Original Master Recordings" houses eleven Stones albums recorded between 1963 and 1969; two of those discs form a compilation album, half of which reprises material from the other records. And it's all yours for \$250.

Now that the laser-read compact disc has established itself as *the* audiophile medium, one might question Mobile Fidelity's continuing commitment to analog records. Senior vice president Mark Wexler admits the CD has challenged conventional audiophile records for sonic excellence. (Mobile Fidelity markets CDs themselves, but the company wasn't licensed to release the Stones set in that format.) He argues, however, that "a lot of our selections aren't available on compact disc at this point." Also, there's the investment factor: Mobile Fidelity's similar boxed set on the Beatles, issued two years ago, has been known to change paws for upwards of twice its original price. Can the Franklin Mint make such a claim?

GOOD NEWS

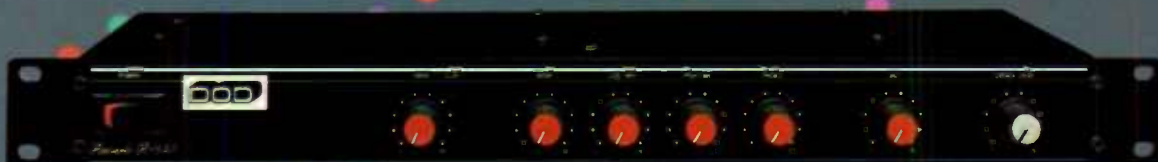
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keep Latin music alive."

It makes sense for Blades and Colón to lead the way in expanding the audience for Latin music. Both have broken away from traditional, folkloric salsa, which has remained static since it was first handed down by the Cubans in the 1940s. "I was born here," says Colón, a native of the Bronx. "I grew up on rock and the Beatles. I use all of the different sounds around me."

Like Bob Marley, the man who popularized reggae in the U.S., Blades and Colón are social as well as musical figures. Colón describes their ground-breaking 1979 collaboration, *Siembra*, as "a unification message to Latin America." Yet Blades insists he is not a political singer: "A political singer sings to an ideology. I write city songs about people whose lives are affected by political circumstances."

What's in store for Latin music in this country? Colón, whose first language is English, foresees salsa with English lyrics. Blades is indeed planning an album in English, possibly to be produced by influential fan Joe Jackson. Currently, though, Blades is getting a master's degree in international law at Harvard. He intends eventually to return to Panama to seek political office. And for Colón? "Maybe an album with Michael Jackson, some duets with Willie Nelson," he jokes.

Stranger things have happened. — **John Leland**



Those Oldies But Goodies

The **Flying Lizards**, who did a swell demo (as in "demolition") job on "Money" five years ago, are back with a vengeance. On *Top Ten* the group—David Cunningham with vocalist Sally—deconstructs "Sex Machine," "Tutti Frutti," "Purple Haze," "What's New Pussycat" and six other biggies. Great for parties, especially when you want to end one.



No, it couldn't be... could it? But it is: Lou Reed smiles. He may look like he's hosting a TV quiz show, but the occasion was a poetry reading in Toronto. Jim Carroll, who shared the lectern, convinced his friend and idol to mumble song lyrics indifferently. Reed's last reading, also with Carroll, was in 1974. The line forms now for the Doomy Duo in 1994.

JIMMY JAM & TERRY LEWIS

It's (Almost) Jam-Up Time

If Prince is the focus of Minneapolis' musical earthquake, keyboard player "**Jimmy Jam**" Harris and bassist **Terry Lewis** must be near the epicenter. Since leaving the Time last year, the two have become pervasive producers, working with Klymaxx, the S.O.S. Band, Change, Cheryl Lynn and Cherrelle. Recently they were in Los Angeles to finish two projects: Thelma Houston's next album, and Minneapolis buddy Alexander O'Neal's first.

"We always figured that we'd start producing when we got older," Harris says during a mixdown break. But he and Lewis haven't abandoned the other side of the studio. After helping out former Time-mate Morris Day with his first solo recording and writing the tunes for the second Cherrelle album, the dynamic duo will finally

finish their own LP.

"Our own stuff is top secret," Harris remarks. "It'll be more off the wall than what we're doing with other people, but it'll still be commercial, 'cause hearing your records on the radio is what it's all about. We've been slowly laying down tracks over the past few years, 'cause we know people are gonna compare it to the things we did when we were in the Time. That was a great band and we don't want to let anybody down, least of all ourselves."

What can we expect? Harris isn't giving anything away, but he reveals that he and Lewis usually start with a melody, adding lyrics (mostly by Lewis) and percussive doodads later in the mix.

"Rhythm is important," Harris says, "but lots of the records out these days wouldn't be much if you took away all the drum effects. I may be old-fashioned but I like a melody you can hum." — **j. pfunk**

Obscene And Not Heard

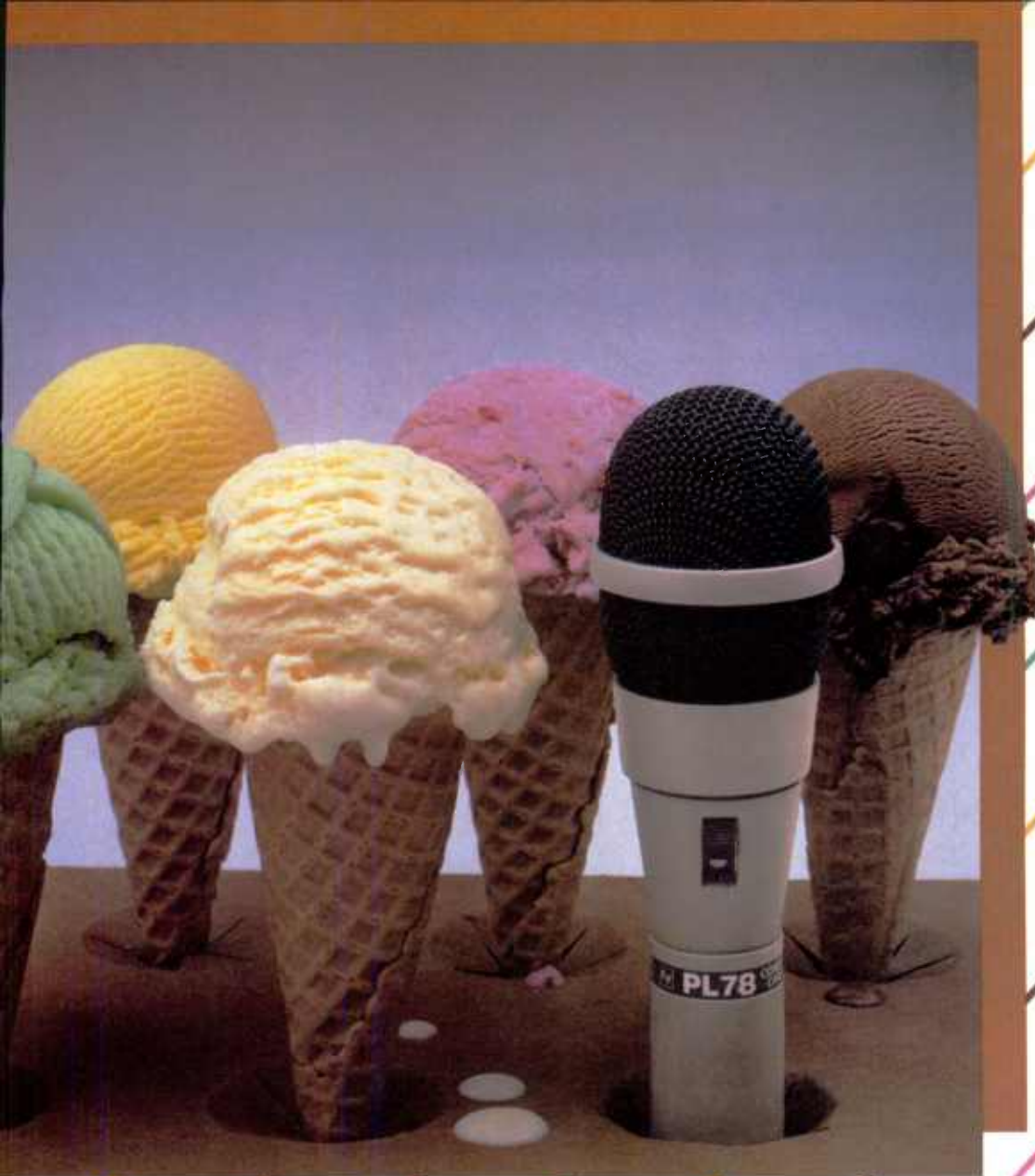
For Graham Cheadle, England swings more like a noose than a pendulum. In early September, police, acting on an obscenity complaint, raided his record store in Northwich, Cheshire, and seized albums by the Dead Kennedys, Crass, MDC and Icons of Filth, among others. Cheadle forfeited stock of seventeen titles and had to pay court costs when a judge ruled the records were obscene. He is appealing the verdict.

Crass Records, who provided legal assistance to Cheadle, feel that politics, not four-letter words, are upsetting the authorities. Cheadle argued in his defense that the police passed over records by Iron Maiden and Frankie Goes To Hollywood that could be considered equally "obscene." Record retailers throughout the U.K. are understandably upset, fearing they could be next to lose their supplies. The British Phonographic Industry was asked to investigate the case.

But don't worry; it can't happen here



Now here's a comeback: **Mamie van Doren**, the B-movies' answer to Marilyn Monroe. Mamie's 1950s experience with rock 'n' roll in B-movie masterpieces like *Untamed Youth* and *Vice Raid* has led to a return to recording activity with a twelve-inch dance single, "State Of Turmoil," and an album to follow. The stuff of oedipal fantasies at age fifty-one, Mamie is riding the 50s nostalgia wave that aided **Ronald Reagan's** career.



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IRA ROBBINS

AMERICA FIRST; SOME SEASONED NATIVE SONS FOLLOW THEIR OWN MUSE

There's nothing wrong with honest American music," says Peter Holsapple, guitarist, keyboard player and main songwriter of the dB's. He goes on to cite Elvis Presley, John Fogerty, Jeffrey Lee Pierce, Bruce Springsteen and R.E.M. as evidence. I don't think people are as interested in emulating the British anymore, because they see we can do it just as well in America." He sounds proud, but not chauvinist.

If this be the New Jingoism, at least it marks a return of self-esteem. American bands are no longer reluctant to embrace native musical traditions; these days it seems every corner of the country is producing excellent, innovative groups with roots in country, blues, R&B, 60s punk or psychedelia rather than Merseybeat or electro-disco. Formerly typecast as Beatlesque power poppers, the dB's aren't as downhome as Rank & File or the Leroi Brothers. But their new album, *Like This*, supports their claim as honest American rockers more concerned with memorable songs than a gimmicky sound or image.

Although based in New York, the dB's spent their formative years in countless bands in and around Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Holsapple (Connecticut-born), guitarist Gene Holder (a Philadelphia native) and drummer Will Rigby, as well as former dB guitarist Chris Stamey and Let's Active leader/R.E.M. producer Mitch Easter, followed their own muse; they refused to enter the top forty morass in which most working musicians outside New York and Los Angeles lose themselves.

"I got booted off the stage in Winston-Salem at the age of sixteen for playing a Kinks song," Holsapple recalls. "They wouldn't get up and dance until you played 'Brown Sugar.'" Playing original



New jingoists Rick Wagner, Peter Holsapple, Will Rigby and Gene Holder.

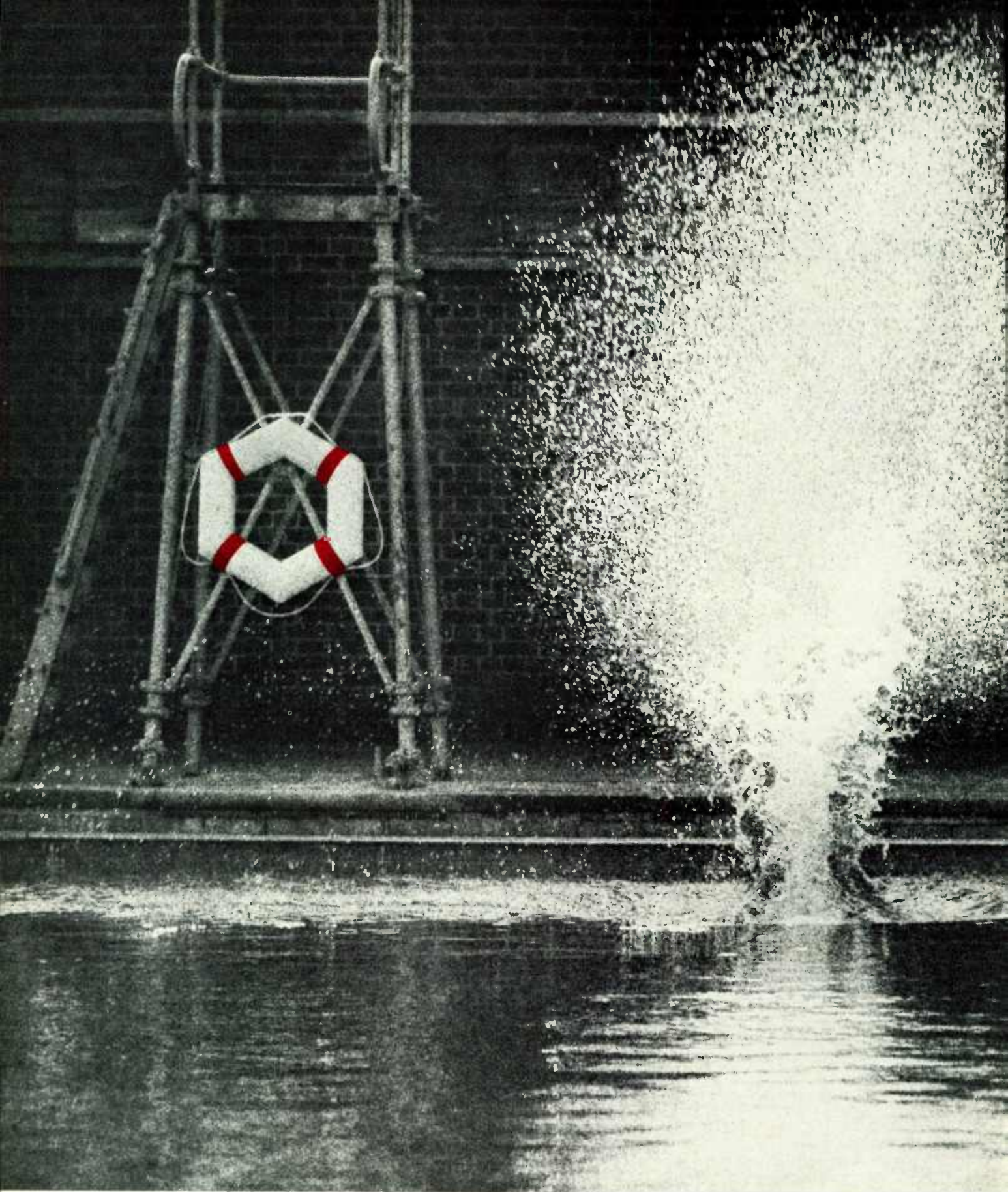
material in a non-commercial vein can be a dispiriting life for a young musician. "You wonder for a while if what you're doing is right, but then you realize that this is what you do," Holsapple says.

Inspired by the likes of Big Star (a legendary Memphis group led by one-time Box Top Alex Chilton), the local talent began making records on their own. There was a 1973 album by Rittenhouse Square, comprised of Holsapple, Stamey and Easter. A 1976 EP by Sneakers—Stamey and Rigby's quartet—got good New York press, so Stamey went north for a look-see. He relocated to the Big Apple the next year, and became bassist in Chilton's band. In 1978 Stamey persuaded Rigby to move to New York; Holder soon followed. Within a few weeks, the dB's were born as a trio augmented with a saxophone player.

By this time Stamey had launched a record label, Car, and released a single by Chris Stamey and the dB's, as well as a single by Peter Holsapple, who joined the dB's upon arriving in New York. The quartet became local favorites as a "quirky power pop" combo, terms they wholeheartedly rejected. They issued a

single on Alan Betrock's Shake! Records in 1980, appeared on a major-label compilation (with a scratch mix not meant for public consumption), and wound up signed to a British company, Albion Records. Their debut album, *Stands For DeciBels*, reaped critical acclaim and light sales.

After a disastrous trip to England the dB's recorded *Repercussion*, their second English-only album. Once again they were praised by critics and ignored by U.S. record companies. "American labels didn't know what to do with the dB's," Holder says, "and we didn't have anyone telling them what they could do with us." Following another unsuccessful U.K. tour supporting Dave Edmunds in 1982, the foursome decided to pursue individual projects—just as Bearsville Records began scouting the group. Stamey recorded a solo album. Holder joined New York's Individuals and Raybeats, and co-produced Pylon's *Chomp* with Stamey. Rigby did carpentry, formed a countryish band, the Wolfenannys, and guested with a group called Never Never. Holsapple, the band's other principal songwriter besides Stamey, slung



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an acoustic guitar over his shoulder and played solo "hard rocking folk" as the opening act on an R.E.M. tour.

By 1983, when the dB's finally signed with Bearsville, Stamey was having second thoughts. While the band contacted potential producers, from Tony Visconti to Lindsey Buckingham, he opted for a solo career. "I wanted to be less collaborative," Stamey recalls. "I had a different line on things rhythmically; the sound was not appealing to me." Holsapple and Holder cite Stamey's desire to have full control over the playing of his songs, which runs against the band's "democratic" approach. "Chris said he felt it was time for someone to leave the band and he was

the only volunteer," Holder says. The four remain friends. Stamey has since released a mini-album, *Instant Excitement*, on Hoboken independent Coyote Records.

The dB's decided to co-produce themselves with ex-Waitress head Chris Butler. Holsapple says Butler was "really instrumental in getting the basic tracks together. He was really good at cutting and pasting, rebuilding the songs." They recorded *Like This* at Woodstock last winter. With Stamey gone, Holsapple supplied all the songs and lead vocals, and Holder slid over to guitar. When Bearsville's Todd Rundgren suggested the record needed a remix, Rigby and Holsapple selected

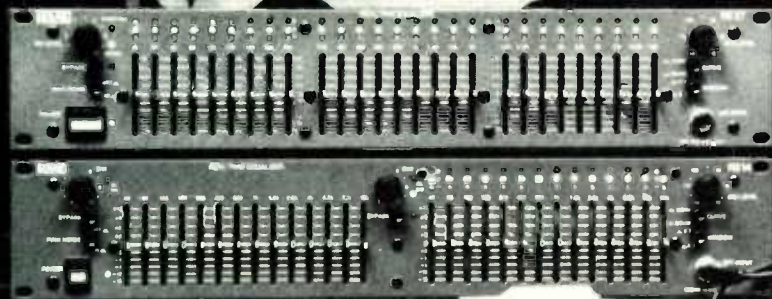
Pennsylvanian Rick Wagner as new dB bassist. The band has just finished a tour supporting R.E.M., and plans to record another LP at the end of the year.

Like This includes "Amplifier," an odd song about romantic abandonment and suicide that appeared on *Repercussion*. "We had an offer from a friend, Walter Williams—the creator of Mr. Bill—to do a video," Holsapple explains. "He had a storyboard for 'Amplifier.' We're a pretty impulsive bunch of guys, so we said okay"—even though the song was on an out-of-date record. Regardless, the dB's made the video (without Stamey, whose status was already uncertain), loved it, showed it to Bearsville, and ultimately decided to remix the song for the new album.

The future finally seems bright for the talented bunch of nice guys known as the dB's. *Like This* is their most commercial release yet, retaining the band's likable roughness while trimming their excesses. Holder emerges as an original

continued on page 114

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dB's OUTPUT

Gene Holder plays a 1961 Fender Stratocaster and a 1966 Fender Telecaster through a Hi-Watt combo amp and a Marshall combo amp with two 12-inch speakers. He uses Dean Markley strings, an Ibanez overdrive and "occasionally" a Roland DM2 echo.

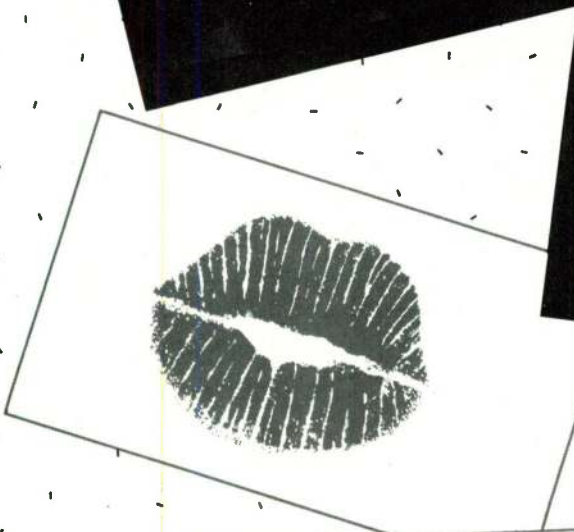
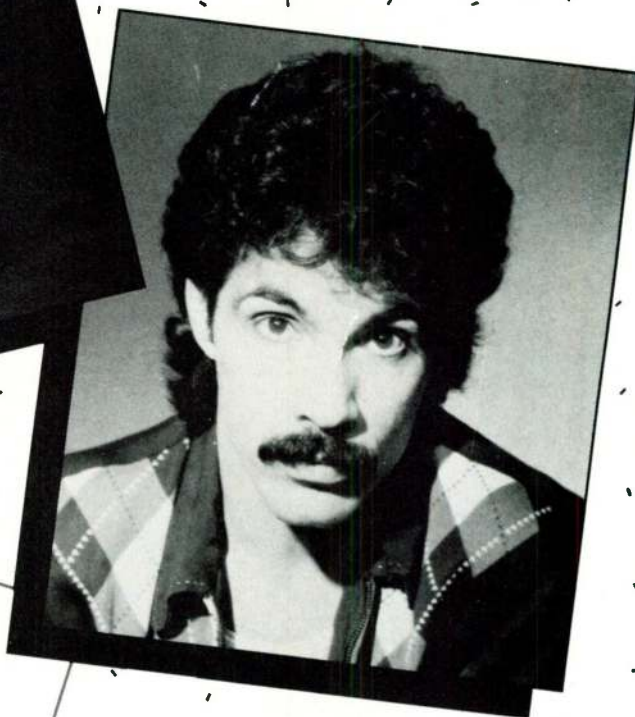
Peter Holsapple has two mid-60s Fender Stratocasters, modified with a 5-way pickup switch. He uses an Ampeg VT40 amp, Dean Markley strings, Ibanez stereo chorus and Electro-Harmonix Small Clone. For the album he also used a Sigma acoustic with a d'Armond pickup, a Harmony mandolin and an autoharp played with a drumstick. His keyboards are a Fender Contempo organ and an Ondioline. For the album, he used a Bösendorfer grand piano with extra bass keys.

Will Rigby's kit includes a 24-inch mahogany-finish Ludwig bass drum with Remo Power Dot head and a DW5000 pedal. The basic kit is a 1971 pre-CBS Rodgers, with 6-inch metal snare, 12x10 and 14x12 rack toms, and a 20x20 floor tom which he plays single-headed. He uses Remo Ambassador heads. His high-hat is a mismatched Zildjian New Beat, medium on top, light on bottom. His cymbals are a 16-inch Zildjian China Boy, a 20-inch Zildjian medium ride, and two 18-inch crashes, one Paiste and the other Zildjian. He uses Powersonic Rock sticks, alternating between wood and nylon tips. On the album he used 12-inch and 14-inch Roto-toms.

Rick Wagner has Hamer Cruise and Fender Precision basses. He uses Rotosound strings and plays through an Acoustic top and an Electro-Voice cabinet with one 15-inch speaker.

The band doesn't own a P.A., relying on venues to provide amplification. They do have microphones, though, favoring Shure SM58s.

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ALLAN ARKUSH

VIDEO

MARY ANNA FECZO

MUSIC VIDEO BEASTS AND A FILM DIRECTOR'S BURDEN

Since it's so easy to stereotype, it's no wonder that many film directors are picked for clips that resemble their celluloid successes. Billy Idol's "Dancing With Myself" is the ghoul-ridden offspring of director Tobe Hooper's *Poltergeist*. Michael Jackson's guy-with-a-secret "Thriller" is a chip off John Landis' *American Werewolf in London*. William Friedkin's *Exorcist* follow-up, "Self Control," shows Laura Branigan spread-eagled after a trek through the city's underbelly on Reynolds Wrap asphalt.

The exceptions aren't necessarily superior. Bob Rafelson, the brilliant orchestrator of *Five Easy Pieces*, came up with a contrived party atmosphere for Lionel Richie's "All Night Long." Jonathan (*Heart Like a Wheel*) Kaplan directed a tedious, Hitchcock-stylized "Infatuation" for Rod Stewart.

In the burgeoning video field, a string of heavily rotated clips can give a director a shot at a feature film. So why are established auteurs' confrontations with five-minute videos so lackluster? Director Allan Arkush's video clips may very well hold the answer: the music.

Arkush, thirty-six, has his cinema papers. While at New York University Film School, where he studied with Martin Scorsese, he won second prize in a national student film competition with "Septuagenarian Substitute Ball," about a rock star's three-day rise and fall. He shot part of the film at the legendary Fillmore East theater, where he worked weekends showing people to their seats. He rapidly graduated to the Fillmore's lighting crew, becoming involved with abstract imagery projected behind the bands.

Arkush went professional in the early 70s, working for Roger Corman. While co-directing *Hollywood Boulevard* with

Joe Dante, Arkush supervised a musical sequence with Commander Cody & his Lost Planet Airmen.

"I was amazed how naturally it worked," he recalls. His own *Rock 'N' Roll High School* (1979) established his facility with music visuals; *Get Crazy*, which came and quickly disappeared last summer, consolidated his reputation.

Get Crazy's controlled bedlam bred the condensed lunacy of Arkush's second vidclip, Bette Midler and Mick Jagger's "Beast Of Burden." (In 1983 he directed a concept video for Dokken.) For all its primal vitality, "Beast Of Burden" is a "premeditated" work, Arkush says. He suggested Midler rehearse in front of a mirror "to get her lip sync down and to know what she'd look like every moment of the song." Toni Basil choreographed; the crowd was told to react off Midler.

"I told Bette, 'Don't let Mick have one inch. Whatever he does, try to outdo him,'" Arkush says. "But I never told

did—then the best place to watch the action is the place you should put the camera."

Nor was audio overlooked. Arkush used layered tracks: He ran the original through loudspeakers on the set, then remixed the results, which included the crowd's coached cheering, stomping and yelling. That second mix was further augmented in the studio with even more pointed audience participation—"clean yells," as Arkush puts it.

In the end, the only authentically spontaneous shot was of Midler grabbing Jagger as he's lifted onto the crowd's shoulders. "The audience just assumed the action *happened* that way—that it was live. They're paying me the ultimate compliment because I made it look easy and it wasn't. My one goal was to make the viewer believe that when those two got together, sparks flew."

Arkush subsequently directed clips for Christine McVie ("Love Will Show Us



A face in the crowd: director Allan Arkush, Bette Midler and Mick Jagger.

Mick it was Bette's ballgame." Arkush knew the lead Stone would try to take advantage.

"I took the George Cukor approach. Cukor's a great director of actresses and sometimes it's best to be sort of invisible. If the chemistry happens between these two, and if I can coax the chemistry out of them—which is what I

How") and Elvis Costello ("The Only Flame In Town," with Daryl Hall). He recently directed several episodes of the television series *Fame*. But he's afraid his expertise with busy crowd scenes will pigeon-hole him. "I don't want to be considered a director who just does live-looking concert pieces. I have a lot
continued on page 33

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BOB MOSES

CLIFF TINDER

A FEARLESS DRUMMER CREATES HIS OWN MUSICAL UNIVERSE

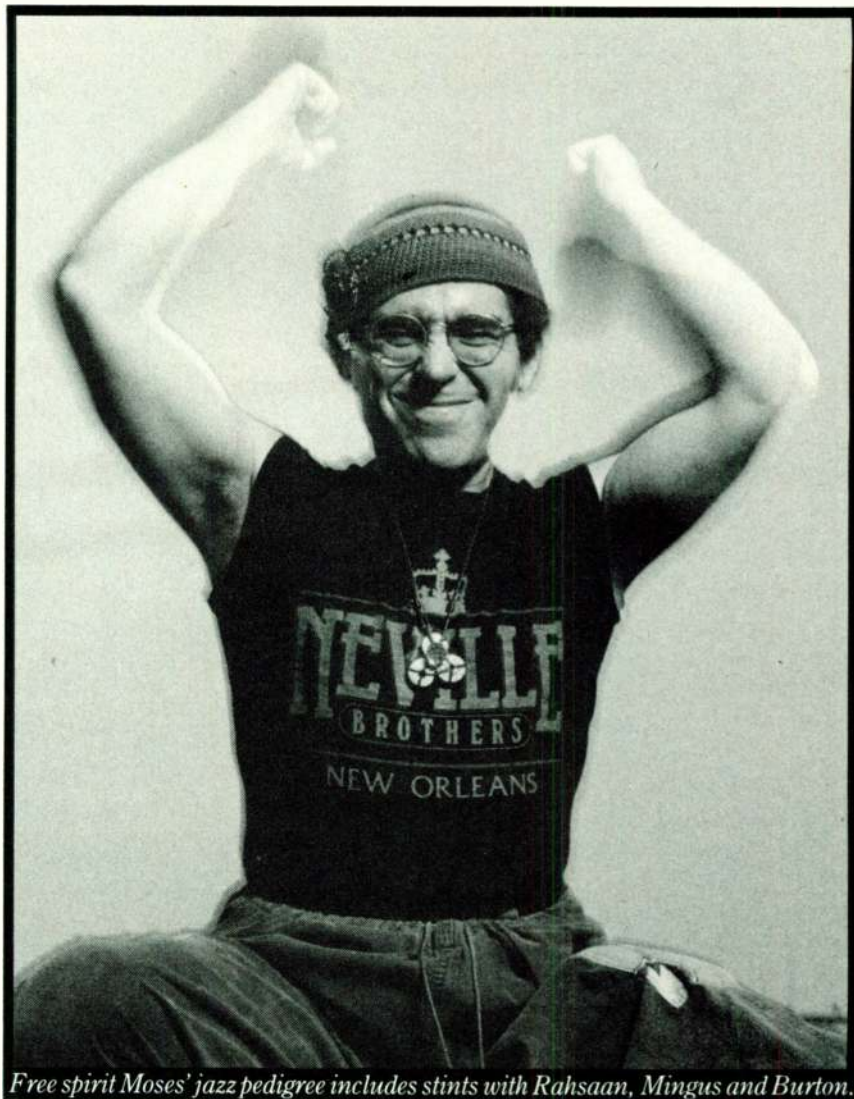
We enter the crowded recording booth of Gramavision Studios just in time to witness Bob Moses leap into the air, hang suspended for a fraction of a second and throw a front kick to illustrate the crucial accent of a bass line he's feverishly chanting. He drops to his feet still singing the syncopated vamp, punching and kicking the air as part of an amazingly coordinated dance of rhythmic elucidation.

The verve suddenly dissipates as he turns to his bass player, "Think you can play that?" He pivots to direct his comments to guitarist Bill Frisell, "And Bill, I don't want to hear any Wes Montgomery at all. I want you to play like...like, *ritual mass suicide*." The control room fills with hysterical laughter. That's *Rahboat*, I say to my companion, who nods her head vigorously.

Like his mentors, Charles Mingus and Rahsaan Roland Kirk, *Rahboat* (suffice to say it sounds like "Robert" and we'll skip the cosmological etymology) is imbued with a blistering energy and lust for life that flows from a deep, refreshing creative well.

"He's an incredibly unique cat," Pat Metheny, musical collaborator and producer of Moses' album *When Elephants Dream Of Music* (Gramavision), insists. "He's literally done something that very few musicians ever do: he's created his own musical world. It's got his stamp on it. The other thing is that he's also a great, great drummer, but very underrated. He's not for the tame to play with, he's fearless and you've got to be ready to get in there and tussle around."

With four solo records under his belt (though one of the best, *Bittersweet In The Ozone*, is sadly out of print) and vast sideman credits—including Metheny, Gary Burton, Compōst (with Jack



Free spirit Moses' jazz pedigree includes stints with Rahsaan, Mingus and Burton.

DeJohnette) and, what is now generally accepted as the first jazz-rock band, the Free Spirits (with Larry Coryell)—Moses is only just beginning to receive the critical and mass attention he deserves. But Mingus and Rahsaan were quick to recognize the creative sparks and deep-rooted feel for black music in the teenage Moses.

Growing up in an amazingly rich musical environment didn't hurt either. His father worked as a publicist for Mingus, Rahsaan, Billy Holiday, Ellington and Stan Kenton, and the Moses household was a jazz hangout. "Hell, the building I grew up in, at one time, housed Art Blakey, Max Roach, Abbey Lincoln, Rahsaan and Elvin Jones, and Ellington lived around the corner," Moses emphasizes. And by the time he was old enough to be bar mitzvahed, he had already entered into a sort of manhood few musicians can equal. "Yeah, I was

already playing with Mingus and Eric Dolphy, and was a very good friend of Rahsaan. I was only fourteen when we recorded *Rip, Rig And Panic* and later I played vibes on *I Talk To The Spirits*." He also served a six-month stint with Kirk's working band.

"Man, do you want to hear a really funny story about Elvin on *Rip, Rig And Panic*?" Moses interjects with a typical burst of uninhibited laughter. "You have to picture this: We're at Rudy Van Gelder's studio. Now Rudy is clean, like anal retentive to the point of wearing white gloves. And my job on this record is to break a bottle at a certain point. So the challenge is to get the sound of breaking glass without making a mess. After much deliberation, Rudy finally rigs up a waste paper basket with a big stone at the bottom to break the bottle on. But for some reason they didn't like the first take—I don't think it had any-

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thing to do with my bottle breaking—and we realized there wasn't another bottle anywhere around. I mean, what was I to do? Was this already the end of my career? Elvin just sort of looks at me, whips out a fifth of scotch about three-quarters full. 'So you need another bottle?' (imitating Jones' raspy voice) He turns up the bottle, and in one gulp, aaaaaagggggggg, zzooommm, it's empty. He motions to me and says, 'Here's your bottle.'"

In Moses' music you can still hear the direct, honest emotional projection associated with Rahsaan, and much of Mingus' fire and writing techniques. Moses tunes like "Black Orchid," "Everybody Knows You When You're Up And In" and "Deepest Blue" reflect Mingus' bittersweet horn voicings (via Ellington), with such dense textures from so few instruments; Mingus-like skittering themes, tempos and meters; and the Mingus penchant for bringing you to the precipice of anarchy, then masterfully resolving the churning counterpoints and polyrhythms.

"And one thing I really love about Mingus and Rahsaan, and something I think is in my music also, is that the whole history of the music is always present. It's not about current events," Moses states even though he has no qualms about infusing rock, funk, third-world and electronic influences into his creations.

"It's funny, a lot of people think of me as being a very free musician, but my music has so many restrictions and rules. My tastes are definitely old school. In the older music there were certain sociological restrictions built in. Like, for one thing, they tended not to be virtuosic. And that fact forced them to really play something from their hearts, to really tell a story. They couldn't dazzle you with fancy foot work like these kids the colleges are whipping out these days; they had to dazzle you with a true, deep, inner statement.

"As a kid, I used to practice with Mingus and he'd be yelling at me, 'Hey, stop playing that technical crap! Play sloppy.' And I'd sit there and actually argue with Mingus—all the time," the very brave Moses recalls. "That's why he liked me. Even then I had a lot of strength. I'd argue, but he'd be right about most stuff."

As a leader who squeezed twenty-nine musicians onto his last record, the excellent *Visit With The Great Spirit* (Gramavision), Moses still sees Mingus as his model, "but the one thing I try not to emulate is the abusive part. I don't care about the *precious feelings* of the musicians I'm working with; I care about the people out there listening to us," Moses says only half joking. "Now I'm really starting to pop as a leader because I can get people to play their in-

struments the way I would play them." Sound familiar? "I'm very good at shaping the music and getting maximum performance out of people. I insist that they play from the heart and originally. And they appreciate working with me because I draw things out of them."

And in order to get heart-felt music instead of glib virtuosity, Moses has developed an impressive arsenal of techniques for coaxing creativity from his players. "I'll do things like not showing the horn players the chord symbols for their solos. I'll say things like, 'Imagine that you've never heard bebop, that you're a roadside musician who only knows three chords. Now give me some *primitive shit*.' I also like to have fixed landscapes and then allow the freer players to wander through it child-like with minimal restrictions. I like a designated anarchist."

As with his painting, drumming and poetry, Moses has no formal training as a composer or arranger. "When I first met him," Metheny comments, "he didn't know details about harmony. He had a feel for it, but in the last ten years he's literally taught himself arranging. When he played me the tapes he had written for *When Elephants Dream Of Music*, they were just unbelievable. I just said, 'Let's go do it and figure out the finances afterwards.'"

Elephants popped up on more than

one critic's list of the year's best jazz releases and even on a few rock and pop tabulations. A stunning melodist, Moses knows just when to use what he calls "surprise notes"—notes that fall outside of the scales suggested by the underlying chords—and how to keep his melodies interesting and accessible. The narrative quality of his music seeps into the listener's subconscious or what Bob calls your "dream plane."

"I love layered things, I like having the rhythm section in one time signature and the horns in another. It's the way people are. If you go out on the street, you hear it all at once, it all blends. And when I went to Brazil last year, I didn't really hear any samba until I heard the crickets up in the mountains. Then I heard where the samba came from; it was the *meanest* samba I ever heard," Moses chuckles.

"When you're a composer or painter you're playing God, you're the master—I'm very good at that. When you're being a drummer you're the servant," Moses quips. "It took me a long time to get my drumming to the point where I liked it, it didn't come naturally." But ironically, Moses is best known as a drummer. His every movement, every word he speaks seem to be guided by an intrinsic rhythmic center deep within the man. He may not play with all the refined technique of a Tony Williams, but his

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Moses from previous page
time is flawless, and most importantly, he plays with a composer's sensitivity to structure and texture—he actually maintains the form of the composition in his solos. It's something Moses attributes to a technique he terms "inner hearing": "If I'm playing 'Stella By Starlight,' instead of internalizing the vamp, I internalize the melody. Then you can superimpose anything over that once you've mastered internal hearing. I can play 'Stella' while thinking about an avalanche or sparrows or kids rolling around in the grass—any organic motion. But you have to internalize some sort of grid first."

Coming from a jazz background, Moses finds himself increasingly attracted to the raw power and precision of rock drummers like Bill Bruford or Stewart Copeland. "Now I'll play with the same rock power, but I'll make it more circular, I'll play more rounded eighth notes than the rock guys. I guess it's because the black thing is where I really come from. Circles are very important to me, I love circles and I love women with big butts and I love to watch Elvin play."

Like rock drummers, Moses has also recently gotten away from the jazz addiction to playing time on the cymbals. "I love good cymbals"—his set consists of two 22-inch and two 20-inch rides and high-hat. Though generally using a mixture of old and new Zildjian Ks, he recently purchased a set of Zildjian Impulse cymbals that he's very impressed with. "But I use the cymbals for punctuation or as a harmonic cushion, not to play time on. I love the sound of the drums too much. That's why I relate to African and Latin music and older jazz."

Ostensibly endorsing Pearl Drums, he admits to only using their hardware: "It's great hardware. But what I actually use is Eames drums. The shells were made to my specifications. I have a set made out of spruce, a 14-inch, 15-ply snare drum and two 12-ply 24-inch and 22-inch bass drums, a 14-inch and 16-inch floor tom, and 11-inch, 12-inch and 13-inch rack toms. They are beautiful drums, loud and solid. They're the king's drum. I also practice with Yamaha sets at the Drummers' Collective and they always sound great. I also find that I keep on going back to the (Remo) Ambassador heads; I like the sound of the deader rock heads."

Currently intrigued with the potential of electronic instruments, Moses has begun experimenting with synthesizers and drum machines for his forthcoming releases. "I think that the synthesizer is the great goddess, they are the female deity. And I'm totally sold on drum machines. I don't want to use them by themselves, but in addition to real drummers they are great. The trick is to let the

machines do the dirty work for you; freeing up the humans to do what they do best, which is to react spontaneously."

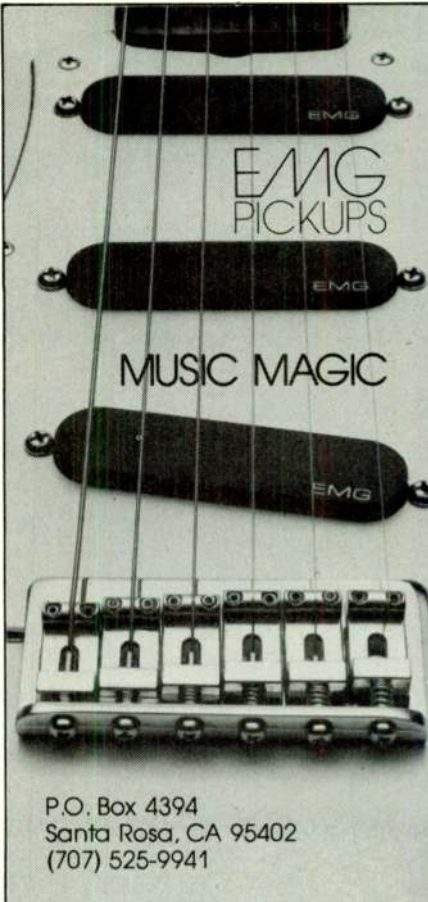
Back in the studio, Bob walks into the control booth and begins to sing out a convoluted Latin rhythm to the Oberheim DMX programmer. As he continues, it becomes obvious that there's no way the drum machine can handle the assignment. "Bob, I don't think we can do that," the programmer laughs. "That's why we have you on the drums, man. You're the only one who can do that." ☐

Arkush from page 27

of other interests I'd like to explore that I can't get to do in features." One of these is abstract work—"videos that look like Rauschenberg paintings—use a lot more matting processes, as well as multiple layers of images with the images interpreting the song while being filtered through the performing artist."

One not-so-abstract Arkush image is the Fillmore East T-shirt worn by a lanky guy with dark, curly hair in both *Rock 'N' Roll High School* and *Get Crazy*. It's Arkush himself, implying one of music video's primo lessons: The best visuals start in the eardrums.

It's a lesson other big-time film directors taking the plunge into rock music would do well to heed. ☐



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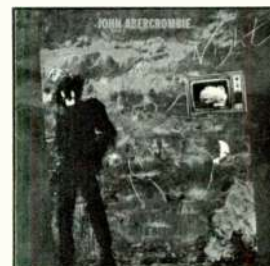
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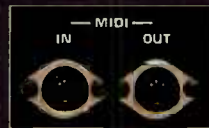
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"When I heard you play that solo, Robert, I was shivering, trembling, crying..."

An Odd Couple
Takes Sanctuary

SUMMERS Fripp

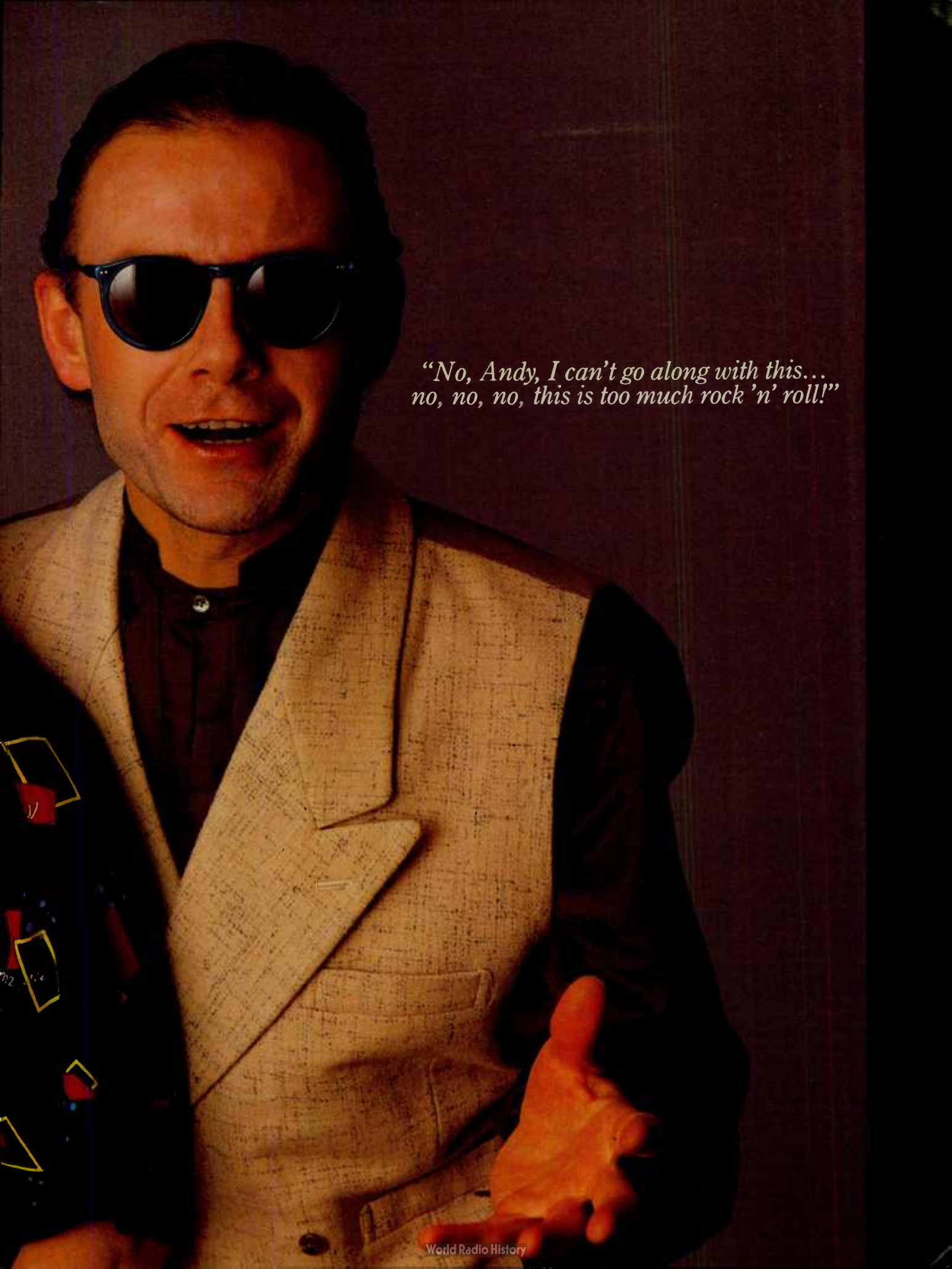
By Vic Garbarini

A few years ago, after a long recording session in Berlin, David Bowie turned to Robert Fripp and asked, "Robert, what do you really want?"

Fripp just smiled.

Today, Fripp is just about done signing the last of a hundred posters depicting the cover of *Bewitched*, his second album of guitar duets with Police guitarist Andy Summers. It's been an exhausting seven years since that summoning call from Bowie and Eno prompted Robert to re-enter the musical mainstream after disbanding King Crimson in 1975. Now, after a tumultuous three-year run, Fripp is ready to lay the latest Crimson aggregation to rest. It's no secret that lately he's been frustrated and unhappy with "the Crims." Al-

Photograph by Deborah Feingold

A man with dark hair, wearing dark sunglasses and a light-colored, textured blazer over a dark shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is gesturing with his right hand, palm up, as if speaking. The background is a dark, textured wall.

*“No, Andy, I can’t go along with this...
no, no, no, this is too much rock ‘n’ roll!”*

though there's a live album scheduled to be mixed this coming February, Fripp insists that he has "...no plans to work in a band format in the foreseeable future." In fact, as soon as he finishes this interview (and signs all these damn posters), Fripp will have fulfilled the last of the responsibilities he took on seven years ago.

"This isn't what I expected success to be like," quips the Fripp as he scribbles away. "I think the folks out there may not understand what it means to be a professional musician. I didn't think it meant sitting around signing posters. I thought you could practice eight to twelve hours a day," he concludes. "Sounds like purgatory," counters Andy Summers, peering over Fripp's shoulder. Summers, in white T-shirt and modified black kimono, could pass for an Aryan Zen monk, while Fripp sports the new wave commando look, complete with combat fatigues, paratrooper boots, and severe crew-

F: "I FIND IT UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE TO PLAY IN CRIMSON. WHERE YOU GET EGOTISM, EVERYTHING BREAKS DOWN."

cut. (Look out, Joe Strummer.) Finally, the last poster is done. Fripp is a free man—free to do what he *really* wants. He looks up at Summers, smiles beatifically, then announces: "I'm off to clean latrines in West Virginia!"

Somebody call David Bowie.

"I'm just going into retreat like I did in 1974," laughs Fripp. "I worked in the music industry for seven years, and now it's time for another retreat. So I'm off to Claymont, the late J.G. Bennett's school near Washington, D.C., for a three-month course." And after that? "After that," smiles Fripp, "I shall let the future present itself."

While Fripp withdraws to recharge his batteries Andy Summers is moving in the opposite direction. He's expanding his activities to include involvement in two or three film projects as an actor and writer, as well as a composer. Then in December it's off to Montserrat to help put together a live Police album. And sometime next year he hopes to nail down those long planned sessions with jazz drummer Jack DeJohnette. "I think Jack's getting a little frustrated," confesses Summers, "because I haven't been able to get to it. But I'd love to work with him and I have some very good tunes that I think would work well for us."

Maybe these two should exchange costumes. Fripp the Monk and Andy the Commando might be more on the mark.

S: "BUT ALL THE BEST GROUPS ARE RIFE WITH EGOTISM. YOU FEEL TRAPPED, WANT TO BE KNOWN FOR OTHER THINGS."

While Summers seems to thrive on the hustle and adrenalin of the pop star game, Fripp finds all the "artificial excitement" a distraction that keeps things skimming along the surface instead of revealing their deeper potential. At first glance it might seem unlikely that this odd-couple alliance could work at all, but work it does. On 1982's *I Advance Masked*, and now on *Bewitched*, Summers and Fripp have established a musical sanctuary—a shared world free of the conflicts and pressures that attach to their more commercial personas. It's sort of Twilight Zone where rock, jazz and avant-garde meet, and where the performers' more subtle sensibilities can come to the fore. *Bewitched* is looser and more playful than its predecessor, and less tied to a strict duet format. Side one is an exercise in minimalist Zen dance music, if you will, while side two offers a more fluid, dream-like ambience. "The studio was really used as a tool this time," says Summers. "I was altering and editing tunes almost into the mastering stage; even in mixing, I'd add things if I thought it was appropriate or necessary. The result is a more fully realized and satisfying piece of work, a fact that eluded me at first." "Where's the emotional beef?" I wondered. True to his Zen-minimalist heritage, Summers enlightened me over lunch with just two simple words:

"Grow up!" he snapped, zinging a breadstick at my head. "You've got to work at getting this stuff. You can't just listen to Van Halen all day...." Not wanting to get stuck with the check, I conceded the point.

Oddly enough, he was right. I soon realized that the new record was concerned with, if you'll excuse the expression, the ebb and flow of consciousness. This was music to buff-shine the mind and soul; music that aimed at clarifying one's awareness. Kinda cosmic. It may not be overtly emotional, but it certainly could elicit real feeling.

If these two guys can blend their energy so well, could they really be such temperamental opposites? Well, yes and no. Extrovert Andy has his reflective side, as evidenced by his passions for ECM jazz, twentieth century classical music, the avant-garde in music and art, photography, and his devotion to the love of his life—his angelic six-year-old daughter, Leia.

As for Fripp, when I mentioned to a music business friend that I'd just interviewed him, she confessed that, "I'd always figured him to be a dry stuffed-shirt, but God, was I wrong. He's one of the warmest, most considerate artists I'd ever met—and what a sense of humor!"

Fripp, funny?

Judge for yourself. When people finish seven-year commitments, they tend to open up a bit. In any case, the boys assure me that, unlikely as it seems, everything you're about to read is literally true. It must be. Nobody would—or could—make this stuff up. Derek and Clive, watch out.

FRIPP: Did you find the magazine with the article "Sex and The Rock 'n' Roll Star" in which you're, may I say, "heavily" featured?

SUMMERS: Thank you for striking this low note at the beginning of the interview, Robert. Yes, I did.

FRIPP: What was your reaction to that comment in the article about you?

SUMMERS: Pride.

MUSICIAN: Andy, the Carmelite Order of nuns is a tough group. Is this why were you ousted from the novitiate?

SUMMERS: No, it was because I didn't know the answer to, "What do you get when you throw a piano down a coal mine?"

MUSICIAN: Okay, what do you get?

SUMMERS: A flat minor.

FRIPP: OHHHH, that's bad, that really is...

MUSICIAN: But seriously, why would two people with such obvious problems want to work together?

FRIPP: (In heavy Dorset accent) I jes' coud'nt find no 'un else that would let me woik with 'em, see? So I sez to my mate Andy, "Let's go down ta Arrnnnyy's Hut an' make us a record."

MUSICIAN: Andy, what was it about Robert's playing that made you reach out for him, as they say in the Mafia, when you decided to do these duet albums?

SUMMERS: Well, I heard his marvelous, heart rending solo on the Roches "Hammond Song," and that suddenly lit me up to him. I also enjoyed what he did with David Bowie. At the time I was looking for something to do outside the Police that would be musically rewarding and a completely different kettle of fish in terms of commercial pressures. So I wrote a letter to Robert from the Munich Hilton and he responded with some enthusiasm. And that was the start of this Laurel & Hardy career we've pursued since.

MUSICIAN: How do you divide up responsibilities in terms of who plays what? Do you each fall into particular roles?



Andy Summers tempts the camera while Robert Fripp files his nails and prepares to clean latrines in West Virginia.

SUMMERS: To make an analogy of sorts...if you have a body which is composed of flesh and bones, then maybe you can say that Robert provides the bones and I provide the flesh. Robert will come up with a lot of single line polyrhythmic riffs and I'll supply the harmonies around them. That's not true on every track, but it's a fair comment on how we generally do it.

MUSICIAN: "Macquillage" on *Bewitched*, for instance, has almost a Spanish/Moorish feel. I assume that's Robert playing that slow, stately arpeggio and Andy providing the fluid improvisation?

FRIPP: I'm doing a slow part, yes. That's my new standard guitar tuning there. It came to me when Crimson were working in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. I was staying at the University Inn where their happy hour provides drinks *entirely* free for guests between five and seven. The pina colodas were wonderful—all ice cream, no rum. I went to bed for a snooze at the beginning of the afternoon....

SUMMERS: This is how music is born, ladies and gentlemen....

FRIPP: It is! And I really wanted to go to sleep but suddenly zap! there it was...(long pause)...No, it wasn't at all. That was when what became the guitar part for "Model Man" came. The new tuning came one morning—I woke up and I knew what it was. It's a more rational tuning that extends the range of the instrument. I'd been after it a while because the standard guitar tuning is really pretty feeble.

SUMMERS: Robert was playing it and I was trying to construct a melody over it. What he did in the studio, which was pretty nifty, was to remove a note, putting it into 7/4, which made it a lot more interesting. Actually, most of *Bewitched* was made up in the studio.

MUSICIAN: Your accent reminds me that you both grew up in the same part of England, near Bournemouth. Did you ever

interlock as musicians or in any other strange way in those days?

FRIPP: Andy was working in Minn's, a music shop in Bournemouth, since bankrupt by the most appallingly dinosauric policy. They had a whole pile of redundant, really awful, feeble, cheap organs . . .

SUMMERS: Well, we're all cursed with this, aren't we?

FRIPP: . . . and they used to do a lot of good business selling them to the middle class of Bournemouth. Anyway, when Andy was working there I went in and asked him a question and he was rude to me . . . insouciant!

SUMMERS: This story continues to haunt me through the years. But to pick up the story, I was working at the Majestic Hotel in the guitar seat for the Hebrew Fraternity of Bournemouth. When I finally vacated to go to London, who should take my place but young Mr. Fripp.

MUSICIAN: I've always been curious. What tunes were you playing in those days?

SUMMERS: We used to do "Perfidia," the Jewish National Anthem, and "Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen." Those were the three I knew the chords of. The rest I had a red face on.

FRIPP: I used to do all the Jolson—the fast and slow ones. Hava Nagilah; all the wedding songs. And if you were doing a bar mitzvah then obviously the music was a bit different. But I was responsible for what the band called the "twists." Have you got any "twists," Bob? they used to say to me. And every now and then I'd go out and buy sheet music for a new "twist" and write it out for them.

SUMMERS: Stunning.

FRIPP: I still have nightmares about it. I was eighteen. Cyril, the band leader, was in his sixties, playing bass. The other three musicians were really, really good. But they were very cruel to me.

SUMMERS: They were cruel to me as well, Robert.

FRIPP: We'd turn up at 8:30 and they would have bingo for an hour. So the other lads would go out and drink beer, lots of it, and they would eat beans as well. And they would come back and do awful, awful things between tunes.

MUSICIAN: *Ambient kinds of things, shall we say?*

FRIPP: Yes, let's say ambient. Once we finished at twelve o'clock and I was packing up my music by the music stand. A very elderly Jewish lady was walking by very slowly and Alan,

S: "IF YOU HAVE A BODY COMPOSED OF FLESH AND BONES, ROBERT PROVIDES THE BONES AND I PROVIDE THE FLESH."

the saxophone player, made an appallingly embarrassing noise and then leapt behind a pillar, leaving me—innocent and eighteen—to face this elderly lady who turned and saw no one but me.

MUSICIAN: *Is this the real reason why you haven't played "Schizoid Man" for over ten years?*

FRIPP: No, but there is a reason for that. King Crimson was going to play it on the last tour, but I wasn't happy with how we played it so it went no further.

SUMMERS: No doubt the elderly Jewish ladies objected . . .

MUSICIAN: *Robert, your particular style of arpeggiation, playing the notes of the chord in sequence—has been referred to as Western gamelan music. Why did you adopt that way of playing?*

FRIPP: You have your own theories on this, so let's hear them. Commit yourself.

MUSICIAN: *You mean my insulting personal theories? Okay, it's that you're being overly modest. I always felt it came out of your relationship to Crimson where you felt responsible for anchoring the sound. So you worked out a way of playing lead that was also anchoring and rhythmic device at the same time, to hold the center of the band together. It was a sacrifice, in a sense.*

FRIPP: You're right.

MUSICIAN: *I am? Okay. Both of you are using the new Roland guitar synthesizers quite a bit. How are they for compos-*

ing and improvisation? What are their strengths and limitations?

SUMMERS: Certainly the previous Roland, the 303, was a great instrument to solo on. You could really riff on it because it followed very fast. A guitar synthesizer, like a regular guitar, should play so if you strike a note the note plays when you hit it. The current one is not so responsive . . .

FRIPP: It tracks about 1/10 of a second late. So you're always a note and a tickle behind where you really are.

SUMMERS: Yeah, you have to more or less compose on the newer one, play slower passages. It's really much more orchestral. As far as soloing with synthesizers goes, I think you're really better off with a keyboard. I do like the new one very much. But if that's state-of-the-art for guitar synthesizers, I don't think it's going to go any further.

MUSICIAN: *The track that I thought was a really beautiful use of guitar synthesizer was "Tea In The Sahara," on Synchronicity. But it turns out that wasn't a guitar synth at all.*

SUMMERS: No, actually it's not. It was all done with a Stratocaster and an Echoplex. The three of us were all in different rooms so I was able to turn up extremely loud. It was on the brink of feeding back, starting to wobble, not quite sure which way to go. It literally depends on whether you turn to face the amplifier. It's very crucial to stand in the right spot in the room and play loud, using the volume pedal. And literally, the way I held my hands on the string and shifted the chord position right at the moment when it was about to start feeding back was critical. I aged ten years doing that track.

"Forgotten Steps" on the new album is similar in feel, but I obtained it in an entirely different way. I tracked a lot of instruments, then edited each track to the bits that I liked the most. Then I did some things with an Echoplex and Stratocaster over a backdrop of the Roland and the Jupiter 6 synthesizer. In a way, the song is typical of the whole album. It's a matter of covering the canvas with a lot of paint, then scraping off what you don't need.

F: "IN THE ROLE OF MASTER OF THE HOUSE, I WAS IMMOVABLE AND DEADPAN. ANDY THE BUTLER TRIED TO PROVOKE ME."



MUSICIAN: *When you say you all recorded in different rooms, was that because of personal hygiene problems in the band?*

SUMMERS: Physical and mental, yes. No, to be honest, in Montserrat the best sounding room for the drums is the dining room because it's a great long wooden space that's good for getting a live sound. So Stewart had his drums in there; Sting likes to play through the board, and I was able to just line up my six amplifiers against one wall and blast forth.

MUSICIAN: *Since the two of you started working together, I think some of Robert's work has become more fluid, while Andy has started working in some odd time signatures a la Fripp. "Mother," on Synchronicity, for instance.*

SUMMERS: Yeah, there is a little in-joke there that never offended Robert, I hope.

FRIPP: Not at all, not at all . . .

SUMMERS: The riff, as it's in seven, does sound rather Frippish, but the solo on that track was quite difficult to play because the chords changed and it was in 7/4 time. It starts out as an imitation of a solo Robert plays on *Another Green World*. "Fire Island," isn't it, Robert?

FRIPP: (Shrugs) Eno's titles always used to throw me . . .

SUMMERS: So there's a nice little in-joke there for the cognoscenti.

MUSICIAN: *And if I'm not mistaken—and I know I'm not 'cause you told me this once before—the guitar figure in*

"Every Breath You Take" came out of something you were working on during the early Fripp/Summers sessions.

SUMMERS: Yeah, I was thinking about doing another album with Robert and we were just about to go in to record *Synchronicity*. I was playing into my tape recorder in my kitchen, working on this Bartok-like riff we'd done on the first album, "Painting And Dance," and it worked well on almost any position on the guitar. So when I was invited to go and make "Every Breath" my own, I put that on it and it worked perfectly.

FRIPP: Do you mean I can put in for publishing royalties on "Every Breath You Take"? At least an arrangement percentage?

MUSICIAN: You've done two videos. One for the last album and...

FRIPP: ...one for this album. Can I tell you about this video? It was hilarious. It was filmed in the Holloway Sanitarium, which was built in 1877 for the curably insane middle class of England....

MUSICIAN: How apt.

FRIPP: One of the intriguing things as you walk in through the entrance hall is the paintings done by the London School of Art, I believe, in 1900. Although I don't think they realized what they were doing, they painted a whole scene of demons all over the walls. It's really horrible and profanely disturbing,



S: "IT'S A MATTER OF COVERING THE CANVAS WITH A LOT OF PAINT, THEN SCRAPING OFF WHAT YOU DON'T NEED."

and anyone with any sensitivity at all—let alone someone who's having a little bit of difficulty with their mental life—finds it utterly unnerving. However, you go on from there into the hall where we had a long table set up. Myself in the role of master of the house was immovable and unprovokable and deadpan, while Andrew the butler tried to provoke me. There was one particular scene where Andrew is bringing me my tea, past the monkey riding on the donkey, past Gene October in the role of the junkie slumped in a large chair with a stuffed black bear hovering over him and a live sheep tied to his chair....

SUMMERS: Defecating...

FRIPP: Oh, the poor animal was nervous, depositing stuff all over the floor. And there was also a goat on the table eating the *Times*, and when it finished the *Times* they gave it the *Guardian*. The animal handlers were holding the animals and as the camera approached they would let them go and run to get out of the shot. Of course, the animals would do things animals do, like open their bowels a little more. And the monkeys would do *unbelievable* things with themselves, and so on. I was also given tarantula crackers to eat. Fortunately, the tarantulas were dead. However, they were very real tarantulas and they were placed on cream cheese on crackers. One thing I didn't know was that the hairs from the legs of tarantulas fall off, and they fell into the cream cheese.

SUMMERS: Well, that's show business.

MUSICIAN: Sounds like you were trying to construct a microcosm of the music business....

SUMMERS: I think we made a statement.

FRIPP: The monkey did, too! When he had enough of riding the donkey they put him on the table and tied the sheep to my chair. The sheep, after the first hour or two, calmed down and grew to like me, and would only just dribble on my tux trousers. But the monkey would go "TCH TCH TCH TCH" and then empty itself on the table and then go "HUH HUH HUH HUH"....

MUSICIAN: Do the animals get residuals?

SUMMERS: They left residuals. And the fox fell asleep at midnight.

FRIPP: Oh, oh, the saddest part was that we had a baby pig that lay there waiting all night to come on. At about four o'clock in the morning the message came through—the pig is

dying! (Much moaning and wailing by Robert and Andy)

SUMMERS: But the pig—who was only five weeks old—made it. We're very happy about that.

MUSICIAN: Me too.

FRIPP: There was also a very heavy "boilage" factor....

SUMMERS: This, in American parlance, is known as "tart."

FRIPP: No, I can't go along with this . . . No, no, no, this is too much "rock 'n' roll." There was a heavy "boilage" factor. As we all know, if you wish to have your video exhibited on TV you have to have either motor cars or a heavy boilage factor, or both—hence the success of ZZ Tops' "Legs." If you have major problems dealing with the exploitation of women in order to further your career, this provides some very difficult problems.

MUSICIAN: Well, there's always bestiality. Actually, Robert, didn't you make a facetious remark about what the "I Advance Masked" video needed which then came to pass?

FRIPP: Yes, I'd phoned Andy who said we had to have a video. So I said, "How about half a dozen Oriental dancing girls?" with my tongue firmly planted in my cheek. And Andy said, "What a great idea!" And sure enough I turned up in London to film the video and there they were. But these are the only two videos I've ever done that I'm remotely interested in. The others I've done embarrass and humiliate me generally. I'm not sure that I'd be very good in films. I'm very good at playing myself as in the new video. Andy has a background as an actor, so he can use that.

SUMMERS: I expect a nomination for this. After all, I'm already a film star—in my mother's eyes, anyway.

FRIPP: Whereas I have a background as...a real estate agent! (general laughter) It's true, folks in America. I was brought up to take over my father's firm of estate agents and auctioneers. And I bring all that experience to bear in whatever role I'm cast, like Lord of the manor in this case. Let's look at this a little more seriously: There was Robert finding a point of stillness within all the confusion and chaos surrounding him, with Andrew playing tempter.

MUSICIAN: Tell us Andy, does Robert still sit on a stool when the two of you record like he did with *Crimson*?

SUMMERS: No, and that's a good point because it has to do with the psychology of working in this situation in our home town. He stood up and let fly some absolute corkers on this

album and on some of the out-takes that didn't make it on the album.

FRIPP: What?! So all my best playing is not on the album?

SUMMERS: No, Robert, it is! When I heard you play that one solo I was shivering, trembling, crying and assuming the fetal position—breathtaking stuff.

MUSICIAN: Robert, do you really feel more comfortable, more able to let fly, as Andy said, when you're working on a project outside of King Crimson, a band you feel responsible for?

FRIPP: I find it utterly impossible to play well in Crimson.

S: "I EXPECT A NOMINATION FOR THIS. AFTER ALL, I'M ALREADY A FILM STAR—IN MY MOTHER'S EYES, ANYWAY."

SUMMERS: You mean the current incarnation?

FRIPP: It's always been the same.

MUSICIAN: And why is that?

FRIPP: What I've always tried to do within Crimson is to have a band, a group, that is not really just a reflection of the four individuals. It simply has an identity all its own. I think Crimson in '81 came close to that idea, though not fully. It was there as a possibility, though, but then after '81 there were elements within the group that found this frustrating and wished for a higher level of self expression. Within that situation the individuals were going for themselves, so it wasn't really a group.

SUMMERS: I think it's the same in any group, really. You tend not to embrace the group but to revile it and yet carry on at the

F: "WHEREAS I HAVE A BACKGROUND AS A REAL ESTATE AGENT! IT'S TRUE, FOLKS IN AMERICA."

same time. You to some extent feel trapped and want to be known for other things.

MUSICIAN: So a certain amount of creative friction is useful, but it can cross a certain invisible line....

FRIPP: It's called egotism, where you get egotism, everything breaks down.

SUMMERS: But all the best groups are rife with egotism . . .

MUSICIAN: Well, the Police is certainly a very volatile group. You and Stewart have a lot to do with arranging Sting's songs, which I know causes at least some friction. I'm sure you could think of examples yourself.

SUMMERS: Yeah, like with "When The World Is Running Down" on *Zenyatta*. Although Sting's lyrics were great, it originally was nothing like what we came up with—it was a sort of disco song with different chords, and I remember there was quite some friction in the studio with that particular piece. Without bragging overly....

FRIPP: If you wish to brag overly, you can go ahead.

SUMMERS: Well, I will. If I hadn't put those chords on it and that characteristic guitar sound it wouldn't be anything like it is now.

MUSICIAN: I remember talking with Sting about the controversy over "Roxanne"—how it was originally a bossanova like in *The Secret Policeman's Ball*. What's your version of how it got turned around?

SUMMERS: This was in the early, early days when we were rehearsing in a gay hairdresser's basement up in Finchley. I remember a very damp, cold, mildewed basement in the depths of winter. And the guy liked Stewart, I remember that. Anyway, we started to play around with "Roxanne." Sting just had the verse and . . . well, Sting always denies this, but I remember Stewart kind of teaching him where to put the bass lines because Stewart was more into reggae at that point. I mean, this is not to belittle Sting, who's a fantastic musician and songwriter, for God's sake! It's all about being in a group. I think any group that really gets along has to be suspect.

FRIPP: But you need to share. If the group is going to work you have to have the same aim. Otherwise, you're looking at

mechanics. Mike Giles, the first King Crimson drummer, always used to say there's three things which keep a group together: the social life between the members; the money they make; and the quality of the music. And any two of them will keep the band together. If you share the same aim within a group it's possible to overcome almost anything. But if there's a difference in aim, then even the smallest issues become really serious. If the white wine afterwards isn't quite cold enough...and how can you really drink it out of plastic glasses? These become very, very weighty issues. For example, if your aim is to have a group spirit and maybe another

member of the group's interest is to have a vehicle for themselves, you're going to run into problems.

MUSICIAN: Do the two of you run into these same problems working as a duo?

FRIPP: Well, I was only at the sessions for this album for two and a half weeks and then had to leave for a Crimson tour. So that's the easy answer. (Laughs) It's only fair to say that this album is a lot more Andrew than me.

MUSICIAN: Well, there was the first album, too.

FRIPP: Oh, I stayed for that one.

SUMMERS: I think we both liked the idea of working together because maybe we would be free of all those traumas that have nothing to do with creativity...what am I saying?

FRIPP: You just contradicted yourself.

SUMMERS: I just contradicted myself...well, we're happy to be working together after coming from those situations we just talked about because there's this kind of freedom that goes with that, hopefully.

MUSICIAN: Right. Freedom to fool around, be silly, and expect people to spend their hard-earned money on this....

SUMMERS: Yeah, being completely indulgent. We do have a laugh recording. We had a very nice little routine of meeting in the morning and having coffee and talking about what we'd done the day before and sketching out the new arrangements. Then we'd go to the salad bar and have our health food lunch. Then to the Antiquarian bookshop to mull for an hour and then back to carry on recording. See how simple and uncomplicated we are?

FRIPP: Oh, one more thing we have to say. In the morning I'd go across to the little homemade cake shop and bring back a bright, livid green cake with cream in the middle....

SUMMERS: Loaded with white sugar, I might add.

FRIPP: Andy, it's changed ownership.

SUMMERS: Oh my God!

FRIPP: And the new people don't make livid, luminous, lime green cakes.

SUMMERS: (firmly) Well, in that case I don't think we'll be recording any more albums.

MUSICIAN: Come on, guys, there are lots of possibilities. Maybe that baker will come back into business....

FRIPP: (shakes head) No, they've gone. They retired. It's all over...and they were so cheap—only nineteen p apiece, Ohhhhhhhh!

*"...all the sweet green icing flowing down
Someone left the cake out in the rain
I don't think that I can take it
'Cause it took so long to bake it
And I'll never have that recipe again
Oh, noooooooooooooooooooooo!"*

— Jimmy Webb

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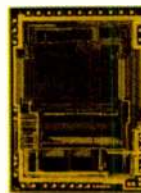
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DAVID BOWIE

by David Fricke

*He's the consummate professional actor and pop star, but is his new album, **Tonight**, a full-time commitment or is it just some serious moonlighting?*

"Ziggy played guitar, David Bowie plays the field." — Some Smartass Critic, 1984

The Bowie album has been on the streets a week and the juries are coming in. "It swings," cries one, happy to dance again like they did last summer. "It sucks," laments another, made up at least at this early date of grossly disappointed Ziggyologists and members of the rock critic typing pool. "Ah, it's product," rejoices a third, most of that promo brigade wearing record company baseball jackets and desperately hailing taxis to their assigned radio stations.

Indeed, *Tonight* is all three and, paradoxically, all for the same reasons. Its glossy professional shine and flashes of uptown come-hither charm suggest both lots of studio elbow grease and a glib dismissal of great statement, sort of "Look, Ma, no art!" The glaring lack of original new material—only four new Bowie copyrights out of the album's eleven songs, and two of those with frequent collaborator Iggy Pop—is at once a bow to the stubborn quality of the '77 Iggy nuggets unearthed here and an admission that he's been

too busy with film roles and other Renaissance Man commitments to match that quality himself this year. And the album's casual upbeat mood swings, like the sophisticated disco sass of last year's *Let's Dance*, are Bowie's way of finding out if the party always *has* to go out of bounds.

The optimistic pop glow of *Let's Dance* (the first album under his new \$17 million EMI deal) and *Tonight* is, in part, cumulative. One unlikely source is the 1981 single "Under Pressure" that Bowie cut with Queen, whose love of pomp and lack of circumstance was basically just a stunted Ziggy act even at that late date. But the sparse brittle jump of the song and desperate tone of the lyrics, together with the surprising lack of operatic pretension in Freddie Mercury's chirp, spurred Bowie on to one of his most earnest vocal performances in years. Following the low-key, dramatically blunt series of Berlin- and Brian Eno-inspired records he'd made in the late 70s—*Low*, *Heroes*, even the iffy *Lodger* and *Scary Monsters*—"Under Pressure" was a surpris-



GREG GORMAN

ing affirmation of the positive streak in Bowie's work as he emerged from the collapse of his alien Ziggy-glitter masques.

In an exclusive exchange with *Musician*, Bowie admits to that streak in a typically cagey way. "Ultimately any positive perceptions I may have discovered relate primarily to myself. We are very aware now, because of spoofs, comedy sketches and"—note the little dig here—"of course interviews like this, of the indescribable depth of insecurity inherent in the majority of rock stars' psychological makeup. 'Will they like my song, is one ear really that much higher than the other, why can't I just go out and make lots of friends like "ordinary" people, are my songs really as bad as I think they are? Why is it that I can make money with my hobby instead of really working like in a coal mine?' It's the last question that I always found hard to come to terms with until I understood that as I enjoyed the way that I earned a living, then my life was being enriched.

"Lots of kids in England now realize that forming a rock band is a marvelous alternative lifestyle and the rudiments of

ramatic croon that Padgham kiddingly calls "his Scott Walker impersonation bit." Framed by the astute selection of the songs "Tonight" and "Neighborhood Threat" from Iggy's hot-blooded '77 *Lust For Life* album, those covers are boldly indulgent, from the hubba-hubba depths of the bassy vocal in "God Only Knows" right up to the drippy heights of its Arif Mardin-arranged strings. "It's a totally different version than the original in the sense that it is quite a bit more understated," Padgham says in that particular song's defense. "It rests more on his vocal than on any tremendous big backing." But he confesses that he was "a bit iffy" about the song after mixing. "Possibly with a bit more time, I would have liked to investigate how I could have made the song a little bigger. When you do covers, you have to do them equally as well as the original—or better."

When asked why he chose to cover these two songs, Bowie's response is polite but curt. "I liked the songs." But he is more expansive on the passionate nature of his collaborative relationship with Iggy Pop (real name: James Osterberg,

"As I enjoyed the way I earned a living, my life was being enriched."

the craft are relatively easy to pick up. Even if one is not popularly acclaimed, it is far more rewarding than working in a tomato-sorting factory and it's even quite a respectable profession now. Once upon a time, I would be the token rock star at, say, an attorney's party. Now it's the other way around.

"I suppose this train of thought leads to the conclusion that nobody should have to work at something they despise or find boring. This is a terrific concept, but I'm afraid it won't get many tomatoes sorted."

But *Tonight* will certainly shift a lot of lettuce and, according to Bowie's guitarist Carlos Alomar, it is in great part due to his perception of classy pop entertainment as no less of a challenge than probing the rock star psyche. Besides, he's obviously picked up a lot of business tips at parties from token accountants.

"The *Let's Dance* album and tour brought out all these new people, a new audience, for Bowie and they had this new regard for him, the sound and the production," Alomar suggests. "So consequently, when he came to do this album, we were very conscious of the fact that David wanted to get the same response for this album that *Let's Dance* had. It was made to keep him in that same sophisticated pop-rock regard."

Does this imply that Bowie was not entirely applying himself to those last few RCA records, that the gray abrasive musical tone of *Lodger* and *Scary Monsters* was an expression of impatience and frustration with his business impasse? In part, yes. "David was not about to throw his career away," Alomar insists. "But he figured, 'I'm not going to be with this company next year. Why should I give them a hit?' It was politics. We did this whole long tour last year and most of the material we played on it belongs to RCA."

It is ironic then that most of the material on *Tonight* doesn't really belong to Bowie at all. But to those who worked on the sessions for the album, it is not surprising. Hugh Padgham, who co-produced the LP with Bowie and a young English R&B studio wiz named Derek Bramble, remembers being impressed by the number of private cassettes Bowie carried around with him. "He takes 'round loads of these cassettes, with millions of songs he's recorded from the 60s, just his favorite songs. It's a very big repertoire. I wasn't surprised then that he wanted to cover a few."

Bowie's choices were peculiar—Chuck Jackson's 1962 R&B stormer "I Keep Forgetting," which retains its frisky gallop and replaces the original brass section break with a thin skittery guitar solo, and the Beach Boys' tenderly majestic "God Only Knows," which features Bowie in a low melod-

occupation: radical rock dramatist and punk hellion), which led him to re-record and drastically modify some of Iggy's most potent numbers.

"Jim is my friend. Also he is my American friend. At times in our conversations, he encapsulates the elements of Bukowski, Sal Paradise, Sam Shepard and the kid brought up in a trailer park outside of Detroit. Although opposite sides of the same coin, we've gone through a lot of the same problems in relation to our craft."

In fact, Bowie had only recently recovered from his own long bout of L.A. death-wish partying and real-life Ziggy excess in the mid-70s when he was paying Iggy visits in the crosstown sanitarium where the ravaged former Stooges singer was kicking serious drug and booze habits. Just as there was already a lot of Iggy in Bowie's glitter stage creations—the dizzy amphetamine energy, Ziggy's arrogant sexual crossfire, the "Search And Destroy" apocalypse of *Diamond Dogs*—Iggy aspired to Bowie's cool theatrical command, to make a spectacle of his art, not just himself. As Hugh Padgham noted of the Iggy songs appearing on *Tonight*, "Bowie doing Iggy is very much like Bowie doing Bowie." Strangely, both Bowie and Iggy were treated like pop circus freaks exactly when they were making their most extreme art, including their respective Berlin works.

"We also both share the same affection for long stretches of solitude in foreign climes," Bowie continues, which certainly applies to that Berlin hibernation of 1976 and '77. "But what makes our friendship so durable and, in the final analysis, so humorous is the insurmountable differences between us. He's red and I'm blue."

The heat between them can get pretty white. The sullen minimalist piano Bowie played on Iggy's U.S. *Idiot* tour in 1977 egged the Pop on just as much as the fuzzbusting guitar and migraine drums behind them. Their songwriting together, especially on *Tonight*'s "Dancing With The Big Boys," is often a rowdy game of poet's oneupsmanship with the two of them batting lines and spontaneous revisions back and forth. In fact, the nature of their partnership, a freewheeling give-and-take uninhibited by the commercial parameters of either one's career obligations, summarizes the best aspects of most Bowie collaborations through the years.

As far back as the Spiders from Mars, Bowie had an essential sidekick in guitarist Mick Ronson, whose knockout punch guitar distortion and outburst of fingernails-down-blackboard solo screech were the musical metaphor for Ziggy's caustic ego and violent sexual strength. As an album, *Tonight* does not have that nervy edge because it is mostly a collaboration



not with intuitive artists like Iggy but with practiced craftsmen. Carlos Alomar has never received high critical regard in Bowie's employ compared to the fire-eating exploits of Ronson and, even for his brief stay, Stevie Ray Vaughan on *Let's Dance*. He is instead a team player and Bowie values him for that. Derek Bramble, whose production experience barely goes back a year, specializes in dance records with nary a note or beat out of place, pumped up and brassy but always on the money.

Instead, when *Tonight* cooks, it is when a vocal flourish or piece of arrangement blows somebody's emotional fuse. In the title song, originally cut by Iggy with Bowie as a spiritual hyper-punk rant in the face of a friend's impending death, Bowie enlists R&B tigress Tina Turner to turn a low but serious

logic adjustment."

What they traded was just as crucial. "Eno showed me how to use a studio as an instrument and how to work without anguish," Bowie continues, something that certainly shows on both *Let's Dance* and *Tonight*. Actually, the latter is an interesting example of how he used people as instruments, delegating almost total responsibility to others for the record. Bowie chose all the songs but left nearly all of the arrangement and mixing duties to others. Nor did he play any instruments on the album. Little work, no anguish?

In turn, Bowie taught Eno "how to make music funky and because of my own travels in places like Africa, Russia and the Far East, I was able to lead him into an area of pan-global music references which gave birth to his David Byrne collaboration *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. My *Lodger* album is interesting in this respect.

"The gains of that period?" he asks rhetorically. "A riveting urge to play R&B."

On parts of *Tonight*, that R stands for reggae. Like the title song, "Don't Look Down," rescued by Bowie from Iggy Pop's highly underrated 1979 *New Values* album, is actually treated like a Waiters cover, with its melancholy Caribbean shuffle and hints in the vocal of put-on patois. Carlos Alomar said Bowie wanted him to loosen up the frantic complicated swing of "Tumble And Twirl," a new Iggy-Bowie song based on the pair's surreal visit to a shipping magnate's house in Java, with a few Latin inflections. And the most linear custom-funk groove on the album, "Loving The Alien," has a serious air tempered by the spooky evocation of religious and Holy War references in the lyric with its implications of political as well as spiritual oppression. Bowie would not comment further on the song other than to say "I long ago stopped attempting to 'explain' my songs. I much prefer to hear other people do that. I'd rather sort tomatoes."

The dancers, of course, could care less. "The other night I went to a club here in London," Derek Bramble explains, somewhat awed, "and they were playing 'Loving The Alien.' It was being played to death. You can't go anywhere without hearing something from the album—'Don't Look Down,' 'Dancing With The Big Boys,' 'Alien,' the Tina track. It seems the R&B feeling is changing, here anyway, getting a lot more musical. The old Sister Sledge records that Nile Rodgers did in 1979 are going top five here again. There is an ageless quality to that sound, which I get from the *Tonight* album. It could have been done ten years ago."

Andy McCluskey doesn't think so. One half of Liverpool electro-duo *Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark*, McCluskey was reviewing the week's singles releases for an English music weekly recently and "Blue Jean," *Tonight's* flagship single, was one of them. He gave it a good panning. "As an eighteen-year-old in a disco, I'd always request 'Fame' or 'Golden Years,'" he reminisced, "and it used to worry me because I thought he didn't care; now I don't think it matters whether he cares or not."

Which is something you could also say about sorting tomatoes.

How About a Hand for the Band?

Carlos Alomar's association with David Bowie goes back ten years to the psycho-glitz of the Diamond Dogs shows and white tuxedo funk of *Young Americans*, with bizarre detours through the Germanic abstracts *Low* and *Heroes* and last year's Mr. Entertainment world tour. So there is not much about Bowie or his methods that still surprises him. Bowie does have this one annoying habit, though.

"Whenever it's time for him to do a record," Alomar explains with a bemused chuckle, "he'll call me up just before it's time to actually go into the studio. David always calls me two



MARK WEISS

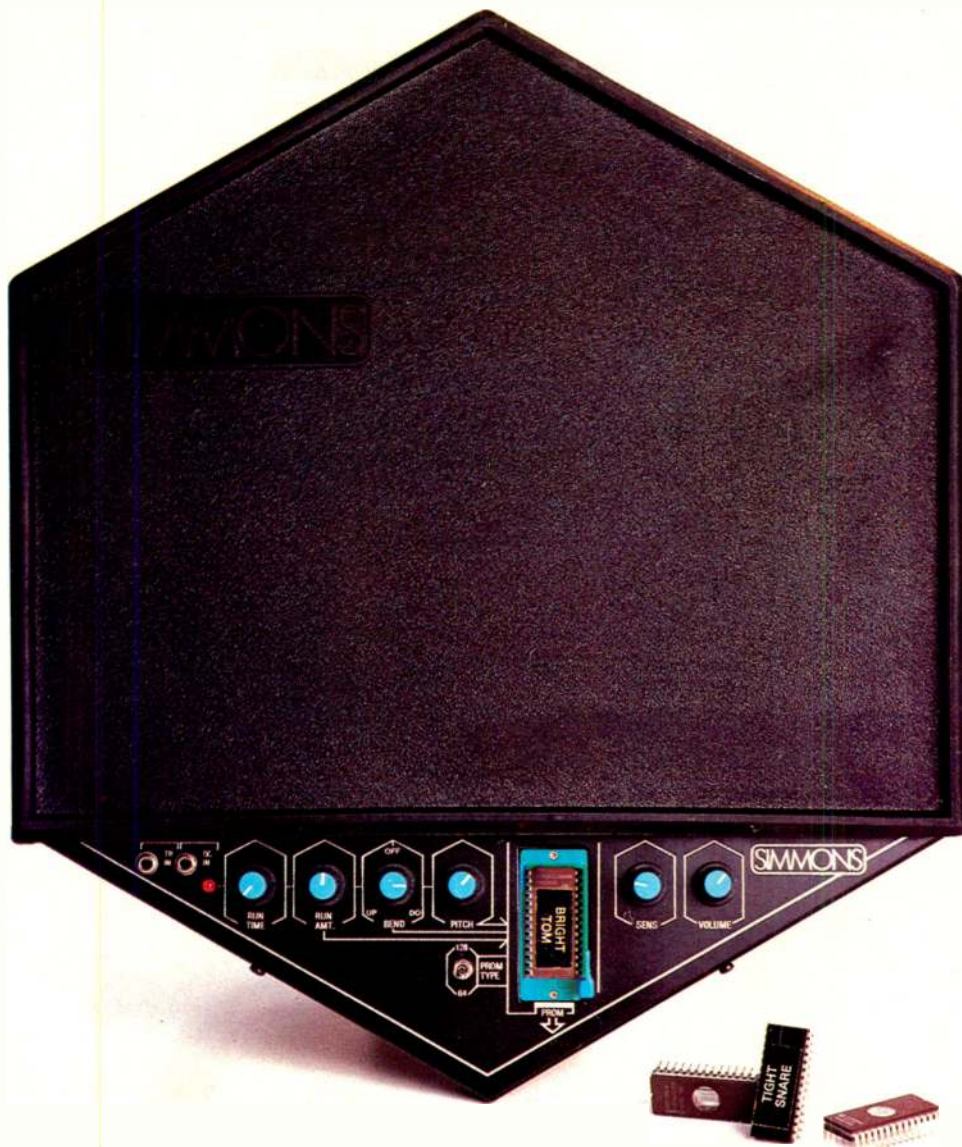
Tonight show host Bowie pours on the charm.

heat under his drastic rearrangement of the song into strolling reggae. It is Bowie's best, most unaffected vocal on the album because the subtle sandpaper rub of Turner's erotic growl challenges him to do better. He succeeds—with only a little cheating. "They did the duet facing each other in the studio, with a mike each," Hugh Padgham recalls. "Although David went back and recorded the first verse again because it was originally sung in a lower octave and he decided it was a bit low-key."

When talking about his relationship with David Bowie, Iggy spends more time talking about what he's learned from him instead of vice versa. "It's like, you are who you research. And I've got big eyes and rabbit ears." He talks about Bowie's "organization"—"Those sessions were 10 a.m. to midnight, hard work every day, with a dinner break, then in again for another three or four hours"—and his passion for jotting everything down in handy little notebooks, a habit Iggy picked up quite quickly. "That I think he got from Brian Eno, because there was this one period, I remember Brian was writing everything down—he has beautiful handwriting anyway—and David was very impressed how many ideas you can save up if you just start writing them down."

Iggy is referring to Berlin again, when Bowie was under the spell and intuitive studio guidance of Eno, a period which freed him from the leaden obligations of character-acting in pop. "My own work had always been moving more and more into the area of abstraction and juxtaposition," Bowie insists now. "Both Eno and myself had always been interested in the Burroughsian concept—I should really include Brion Gysin here—of 'another world' created from accident and severe

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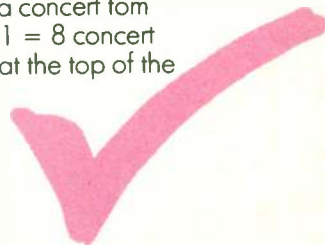
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behalf of increasingly spotty albums like *Soldier* and *Party*, he is in one of what he calls his strategic "periods of removal," like the rehab year he spent with Bowie in Berlin before cutting *The Idiot*. "Most of my best work has been done after I sit back for a couple of years and gather some input. When I went to Berlin, nobody knew Pop from Schmop. I like going to strange places where nobody speaks English, or living with somebody who speaks very little (like Suchi). I try to put myself in very removed situations for long periods of time."

This is, he admits, a kind of spring training for his next assault on pop audiences, an '85 solo album to be produced by Bowie. Sparked by performances of Sam Shepard's *True West* and the Broadway play *Hurly Burly* he's seen in recent months, Iggy has been auditioning for theater roles. One typical part he tried out for was the role of a "homicidal paparazzo" in a play called *Fatal Attraction*. He is also writing poetry, prose and song lyric nuggets like a fiend, often lugging his typewriter over to nearby Washington Square Park,

"Iggy and I have gone through a lot of the same problems in our craft."

weather permitting, where he scans the strange parade of grubby hippies, preppy students, shifty drug dealers and bag ladies for inspiration.

But he got a good workout on the *Tonight* album as well, more than most people will ever know. "I worked extensively on that album. There's a lot more work there than is reflected in just the simple co-writing credit for two songs and some of the old stuff."

Much of that work is simply the accumulative effect of Bowie and Pop's years together, first as patron and protégé, later as drinking buddies and team players, sharing road experiences and editing their private poetry into public and, in Iggy's case, often threatening song. They have at once encouraged and curbed each other's most erratic creative urges.

Bowie pulled Iggy out of his last kamikaze dive following the '74 flameout of the Stooges. Iggy now says he was so down and out at the time that he even took a high-intensity EST-like "success" weekend training course in San Diego to help break his fall. Yet it was Bowie, more the blood brother than the obsessed nanny, escorting his charge along the 1976 *Station To Station* tour before settling him in the recuperative anonymity of Berlin-by-the-Wall, who gave Iggy back his confidence tenfold.

"We got to know each other pretty well," Iggy recalls, "a lot of traveling, a lot of long nights. And he got my confidence to the point where he would say to me, 'Now, Jim, would you deal with this theme?' 'Dum-Dum Boys' (on *The Idiot*) was his idea. I had this simple little music and I showed it to him on the piano. He said 'I want you to write a song about your broken-up band.' And that was a very challenging thing to ask me to do, to write about the Stooges. It was almost too legendary."

Bowie's enduring friendship with and admiration for Iggy and his freakish combative genius seems reason enough for him to resurrect some forgotten favorites from those Berlin recordings for the *Tonight* record. In a sense, Hugh Padgham's *Pinups* comparison is very true. That working Berlin vacation with Iggy was crucial to the work Bowie concurrently did with Eno and Fripp on *Low* and *Heroes*, as important to the brute honesty and nerve of those experiments as the British mod and psych sounds he saluted on *Pinups* were to Ziggy and the Diamond Dogs.

Iggy will not try to second-guess why Bowie recut "Tonight," "Neighborhood Threat" and, from the later *New Values*, "Don't Look Down" for his own record. "I think he just wanted the songs heard more."

Surprisingly, Iggy is quite taken with the liberties Bowie in turn has taken with those songs. In "Tonight," Bowie not only

braked the tempo from an impatient shuffle to a romantic reggae stroll; he left off Iggy's original tortured breast-beating eulogy—"I saw my baby she was turning blue/I knew that soon her young life was through"—and, in adding Tina Turner on vocal, turned the song from a deathbed prayer into a lover's coo. "One of the things I think he was trying to do with this album was to have a bit of big band swing but at the same time keep things a bit simple, to get a sort of group swing that kept things together."

Whatever Bowiephiles and pen-pushing malcontents may say about *Tonight*'s swing or lack thereof, it does provide a telling look into the physical as well as emotional give-and-take of the Bowie-Pop tag team. "Dancing With The Big Boys," one of the densest but most propulsive tracks on the entire album, benefits greatly from Iggy's goading vocal presence. Written and recorded in the studio in one exhilarating eight-hour rush, it features Bowie and Iggy zigzagging in and out of the mix practically oblivious to rhythm and rhyme

scheme, like two impatient drivers busting their way out of crosstown traffic. Bowie, grumbling from within the thick jelly echo like the devil crooning from forty floors below, egged Iggy to take the song that much higher, "to get intense, get intense," Iggy laughs, "and scream that one."

Hugh Padgham remembers that session all too well. Iggy, he says, "was really quite laid back during most of the sessions. He was like a silent presence." Then Bowie decided to cut "Dancing With The Big Boys," until that point just a rhythm track with no words, one night with Iggy, to write words and record them as they went along. "We'd already done a day's recording. Then at ten o'clock, they went in with a few bottles of beer and would virtually bellow out anything that came into their heads. And I just recorded it all."

Bowie and Iggy would listen to their bits piecemeal, change words, recut and then keep it as a kind of growing patchwork screamfest. The concept was Bowie's, a takeoff on oppressive corporate structures and the way they crush the little guy. But many of the individual lines were Iggy's, culled from his backlog of unused lyric one-liners and then inserted or modified in their editorial exchanges.

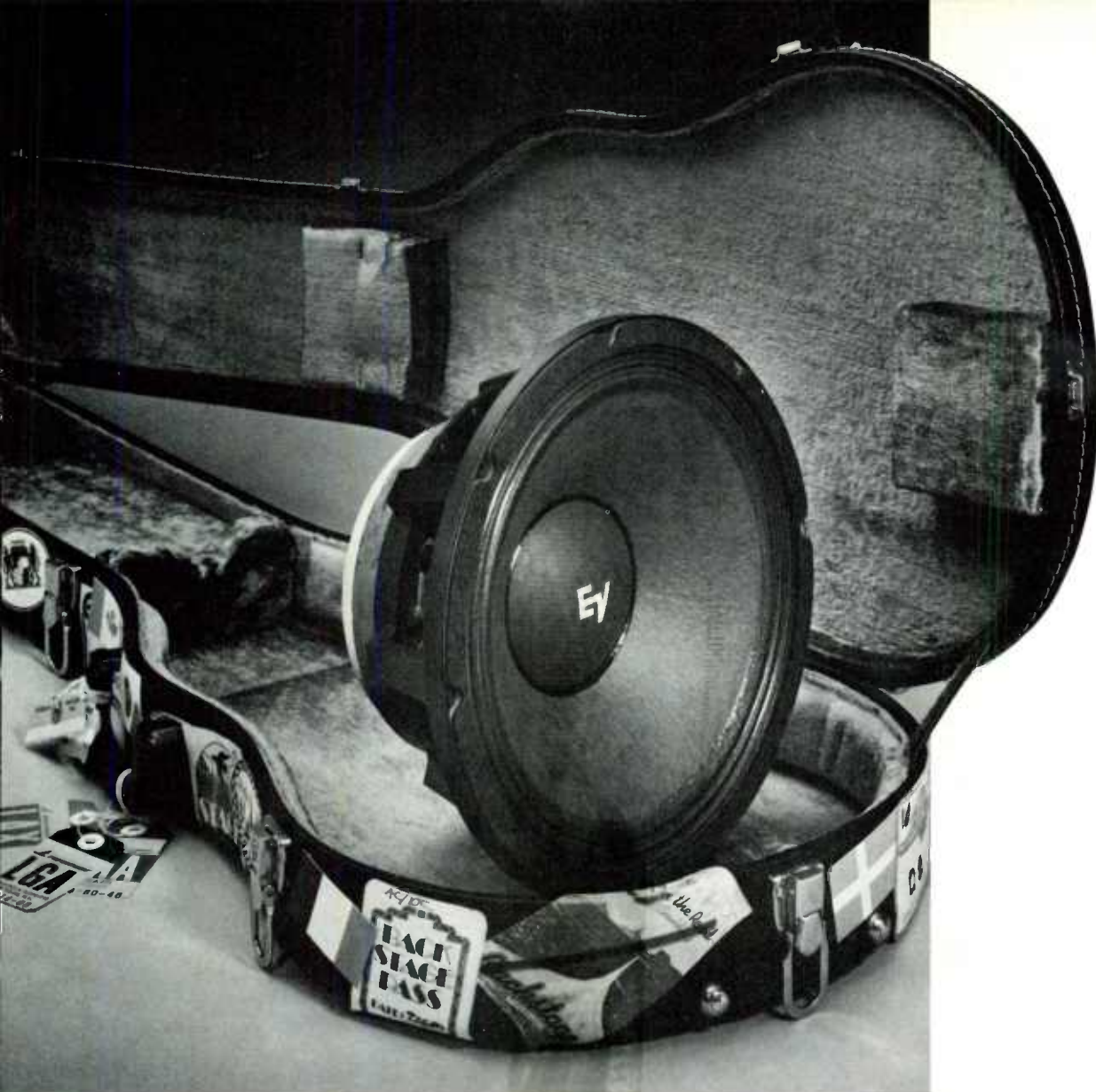
"David had the idea," Iggy agrees, "and then I'd think 'Oh, I've written something on a page somewhere that applies to that.'" One line, "This dot marks your location" came from a poem he'd written during his lengthy irritating stay at the Gramercy Park Hotel in New York. He saw the line on a map of fire escapes in the hotel. "Your family is a football team" refers to the Indian and Korean families in New York operating delis and vegetable stands, "where they don't have too many resources in a capitalist society, they just get the whole family to work together for survival." One interesting change Bowie made was in the line "There are too many people, too much belief."

"What I had written was 'too many people, too little belief.' But he had the idea of people with too much belief, that everybody's got their own beliefs, their own religion."

"I can get pretty mundane, too. Like 'people are splitting like a cheap pair of pants,' really bad," Iggy cracks an embarrassed smile. "Actually, that was one of our lines."

So, Until Tomorrow....

The most significant thing about *Tonight* is that of Bowie's twenty official albums—not counting specialty imports and RCA's continuing series of not-so-greatest hits collections—it signifies the least. Although *Let's Dance* was a serious step down the middle of the road, it was a carefully considered statement of new intentions and dapper style, an aggressive



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if somewhat glib attempt to connect with a new young audience that, through punk and its plastic half-brother New Wave, knew him only by reference. "I feel like a sailboat/Adrift on the sea," he confessed in "Shake It," a fair admission of his musical statement on muddled releases like *Lodger* and *Scary Monsters*. "It's a brand new day," he added, though, "So when you gonna phone me?"

Except *Tonight*—in spite of quiet surprises like "Tonight," "Dancing With The Big Boys"'s boisterous attack and the slow snowballing appeal of "Loving The Alien"'s atmospheric groove—sounds like a phone message machine. Bowie isn't in right now, or at least a lot of him is out making films and raising his son. But there is more to the long-distance attitude characterizing this record. *Tonight* is an album about taking care of business, making that deadline for Christmas shopping. It is also about taking care of your friends, like Iggy Pop.

"But it's one thing for David to say 'Yeah, I can do R&B, I can do the chameleon trip.' It's another to say you can actually deliver on call, on demand a hit pop right-on-the-line album," declares Carlos Alomar, whose early pop and R&B session experiences taught him the virtues of being on time and on-the-one. "He left RCA, a company he had been ducking, not really doing great things for and they didn't do anything for him. So he gets the new EMI deal last year, they say 'We want you to deliver.' He does deliver and now he delivers again. He's just applying himself and being professional. And he sees that it works."

It is hard, in that light, to deny Bowie his triumph or belittle his methods. It's just that making deadlines and making provocative (that doesn't necessarily mean unconventional) music of hopeful permanence and at least lasting challenge are two different things. *Tonight* has its moments but compared to its good intentions—and his direct assault on strangled rock video intelligence in his twenty-minute long-form video for "Blue Jean"—that's all they are. At least today.

"I can't look back very comprehensively on my past because I really don't believe in 'positions' or 'beliefs,'" Bowie sniffs in answer to a query about the way he personally reconciled the schizo possibilities of his dual role as Vic the hopeless nerd and diamond dog Screamin' Lord Byron in the "Blue Jean" video. "I didn't find it hard to relate to both those guys and it wasn't a big deal to externalize those aspects of my own character. I'm an actor. It's my job." □

On David Bowie's *Tonight* album Carlos Alomar ran through his guitar arsenal: an Alembic stereo (with Dean Markley .009 strings), Stratocaster, Kramer and prototype Steinberger. The Alembic goes through two JC-120 Roland Jazz Chorus amps. Alomar also uses two Ibanez UE-300 effect units, two Yamaha E1010 delays and twin Electro-Harmonix 203 guitar synthesizers. Alomar's acoustic guitars are a Martin 12-string and "an old Guild" six-string. On "Tumble And Twirl" he strummed a gut-string *cuarto* guitar.

Co-producer Derek Bramble used an assortment of synthesizers: Oberheim OB-Xa, Jupiter 8, DX7, PPG, Fairlight and Roland 6-707 guitar synthesizer. He also played a Steinway piano and a Music Man Cutlass bass with a graphite neck. Carmine Rojas played a Fender Precision bass and two ESP custom basses, with Rotosound strings through a Boss effects box and Yamaha 215's.

Drummer Omar Hakim used a Gretsch set: one 22-inch bass drum, two rack tom-toms (12-inch and 13-inch), two floor tom-toms (16-inch and 18-inch), one 14-inch snare, five cymbal stands and one high-hat. Drumskins, all by Remo, were pinstripes on top, clear Ambassador on bottom, and white-coated on the snare. Simmons SDS-5 electronic drums helped on overdubs.

Quebec's Le Studio, where Bowie recorded *Tonight*, has an SSL mixing/recording console. AKG 414 mikes were used. Two interlocked Studers (an A800 and A80) provided 48 tracks, which were mixed down via a JVC BP-90 digital system onto Ampex tape. Le Studio has Urei 813 monitors; for reference listening, co-producer Hugh Padgham liked Acoustic Research 18s. — **Scott Isler**

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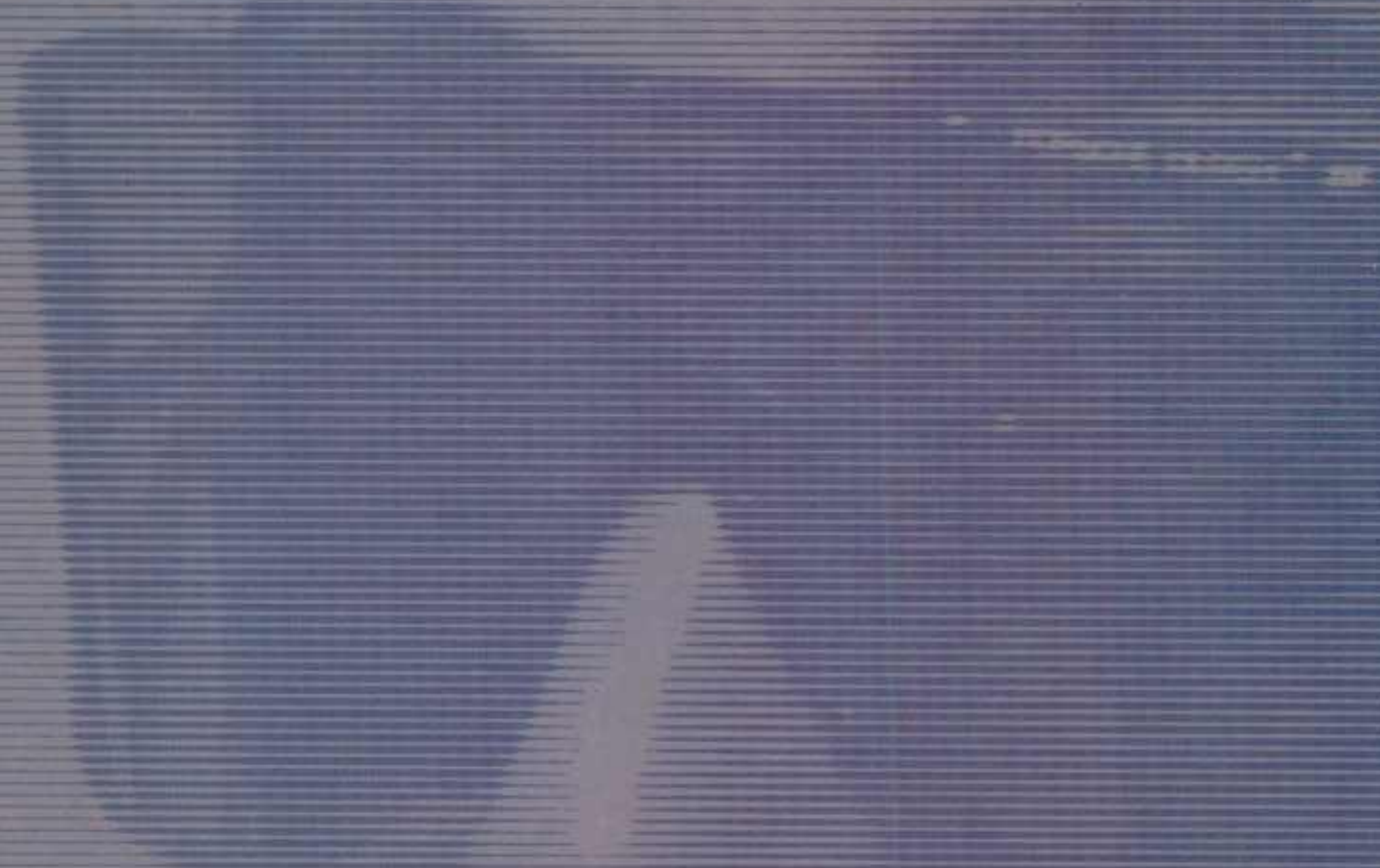
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YOKO ONO'S.....



..SWEET VINDICATION



Once Yoko Ono was the most unjustly maligned figure in popular music; now that some measure of public sympathy has swung to her side, she merely remains the most controversial, and I suspect, misunderstood. I never took the “dragon lady” caricatures seriously, but before arriving at the Dakota for our interview my impressions of Yoko were still that of a grave and rather intimidating woman. The Yoko Ono I met turned out to be, well, someone else. Her manner felt genuinely warm, and she smiled and laughed easily. Her laugh was girlish, almost giggly and she emanated softness and vulnerability along with a pixieish charm. At the same time, she spoke frankly about the effects of her recent ordeal without rancor or self-pity. Yoko believes that her husband’s assassination and its often macabre aftermath exposed her own naïveté; my guess is that the revelations gleaned from those ordeals also strengthened and deepened her character and furthered her capacity to embrace life.

Those changes have also left indelible impressions in her art. The Yoko Ono of the 60s and early 70s was very much a “revolutionary” artist who forced audiences to challenge their preconceptions about music (at one point she sang with Ornette Coleman), about the limits of cultural liberation, and certainly not least, about their own feelings toward a woman who refused to play the role of submissive wife to a popular hero. So much of Yoko’s art from that time needed some public reaction just to validate its existence. Her recent albums, while every bit as emotional, are more introspective in theme and tone. Yoko doesn’t have anything to prove now and her work has become much more of a personal search for growth and discovery. Ironically, the resonances from that search make her new music far more accessible than before.

Every Man Needs A Woman (PolyGram) is a good case in point. A collection of Yoko’s best songs recorded in various contexts by such figures as Elvis Costello, Eddie Money, Harry Nilsson and Roberta Flack, the LP fleshes out

BY MARK ROWLAND

fore we decided to separate, so it expresses more of that mood; "Look, you're the only one who can really see me. But still, what are you going to do about this sort of strange thirst that's hovering in the air?"

MUSICIAN: "Woman Is The Nigger Of The World."

YOKO: I think John was proud that that was the first feminist song written by a man. We didn't write together very often; maybe we were both strong characters, but it didn't seem to work. One of us would write fast and then the other would feel, "aren't I participating too?" Anyway, I don't think "Woman" is lyrically artistic, it was just a message. I did witness women listening to it and crying. It did have some effect.

MUSICIAN: *Being with John there must have been times when you felt like a second-class citizen yourself. Not from him necessarily but...*

YOKO: I have two minds about that. I remember the later John who was very very sweet and kind and gentle and, you know, he was feeling guilty about the early days. He almost tried to overcompensate in a way. In the beginning he was only acting what he knew to be normal. So he had a big surprise—and I had a big surprise (laughs). In Japan, you see, women were very strong in my family, so I never felt that oppression. I was a Japanese princess. Then in New York I was having my way, relatively. Only when we got together and he was taking the role of husband was I surprised. Up 'til then he was a nice person, you know. But then you wake up in the morning, and he wants to take the newspaper first.

MUSICIAN: *Does much of your song imagery come from dreams?*

YOKO: Well, daydreaming. Like "Walking On Thin Ice," the afternoon we were going to the session I was lying down trying to unwind; and I had this image of a huge lake, all ice, and a woman walking on it. I still didn't have the tag line to the

song, and while the tape was reeling off that day I just wrote it, scribbled it by hand. That comes from images.

MUSICIAN: *Which reminds me—did Sean do his "raps" on "It's Alright" spontaneously?*

YOKO: Yes, and if you just compare it with my singing on "It's Alright," he shines so much that you can't listen to my singing again. And the words are incredible. It must be his true feelings, you know. It's a diary.

MUSICIAN: "You're The One"?

YOKO: That was amazing. I was in Cold Spring Harbor and all night long it was a thundering like crazy. It's right on the water and it was a bit scary. When I woke up the next morning I wrote the song, and on the way to the studio I was thinking about the storm, thinking, "That's the sound I want to re-create." I am always basically specific about sounds I want, even on a synthesizer. There's a sound in there that's like the air from beginning to end, and I suppose that's the result in my mind of the thunder and the morning after.

MUSICIAN: *People have different attitudes about dealing with emotions like pain. You seem to want to face it head on.*

YOKO: I have to. In a way sharing it with the world makes it easier for me. I wouldn't say I'd be paralyzed if I didn't but maybe I would not have been able to keep my equilibrium...that's the feeling that I have. Music kept me going.

MUSICIAN: *You said a couple of years back that you felt the 80s would be a great time. Do you still believe that?*

YOKO: Yes, I still do. Only because we don't have very much choice but to think that. Because we are the beings who make it possible for life to go on and life has to go on. I think that positive thinking is like breathing, it's a necessity. If there is a gloomday concept, then certainly there should be a lot of positive dreaming. We need that to create the future for our children. ☐



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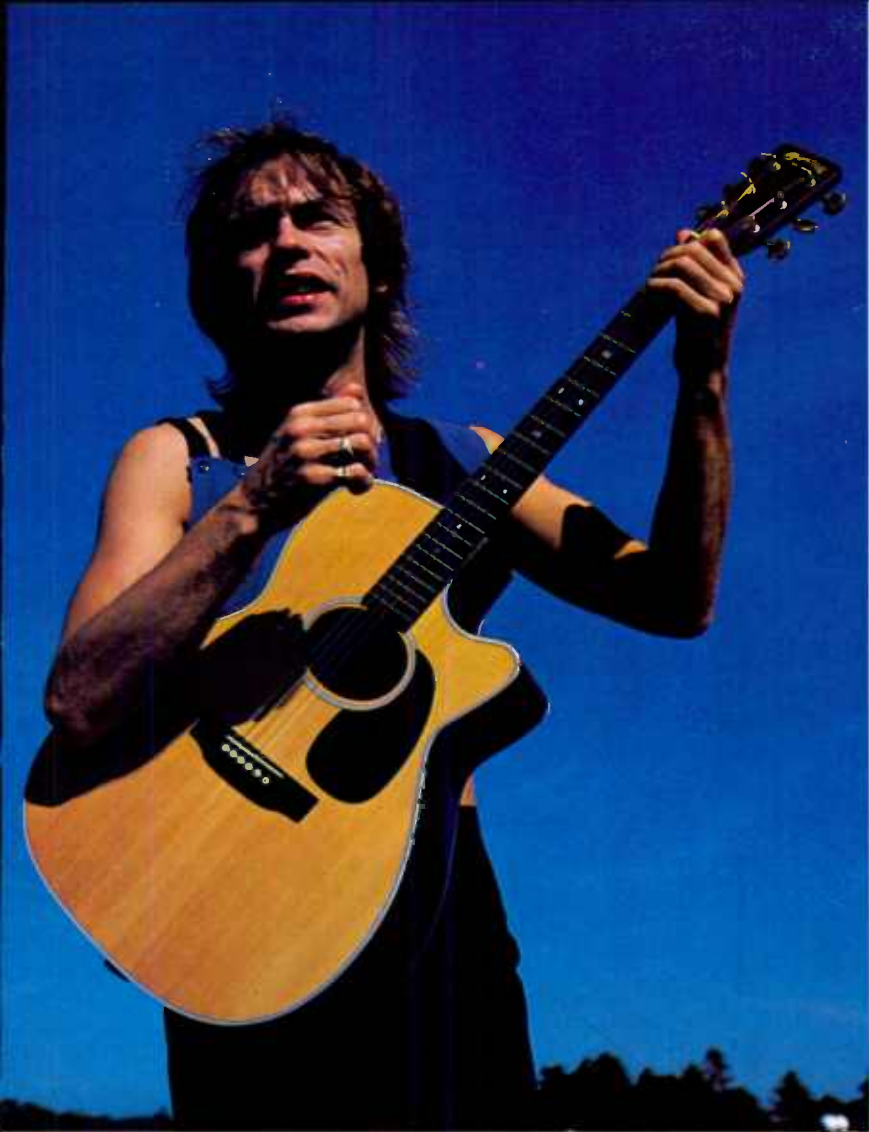


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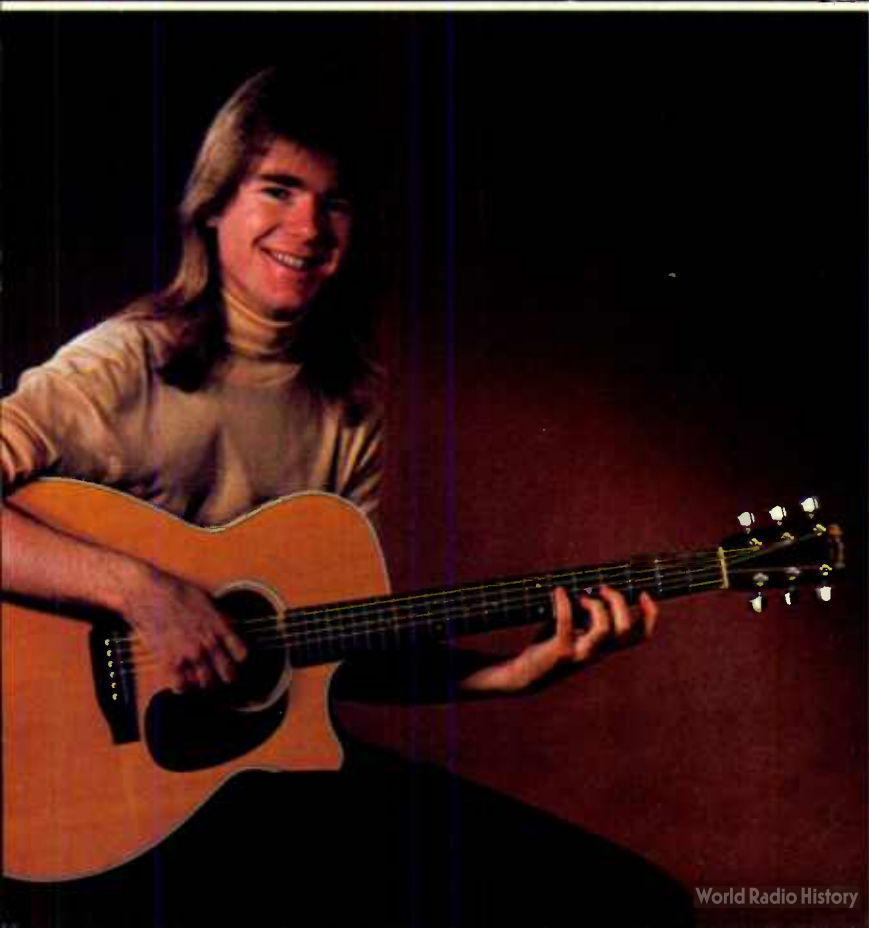


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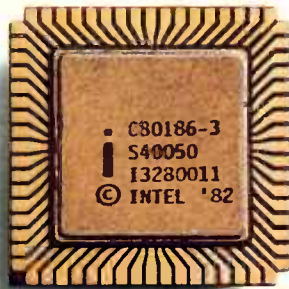
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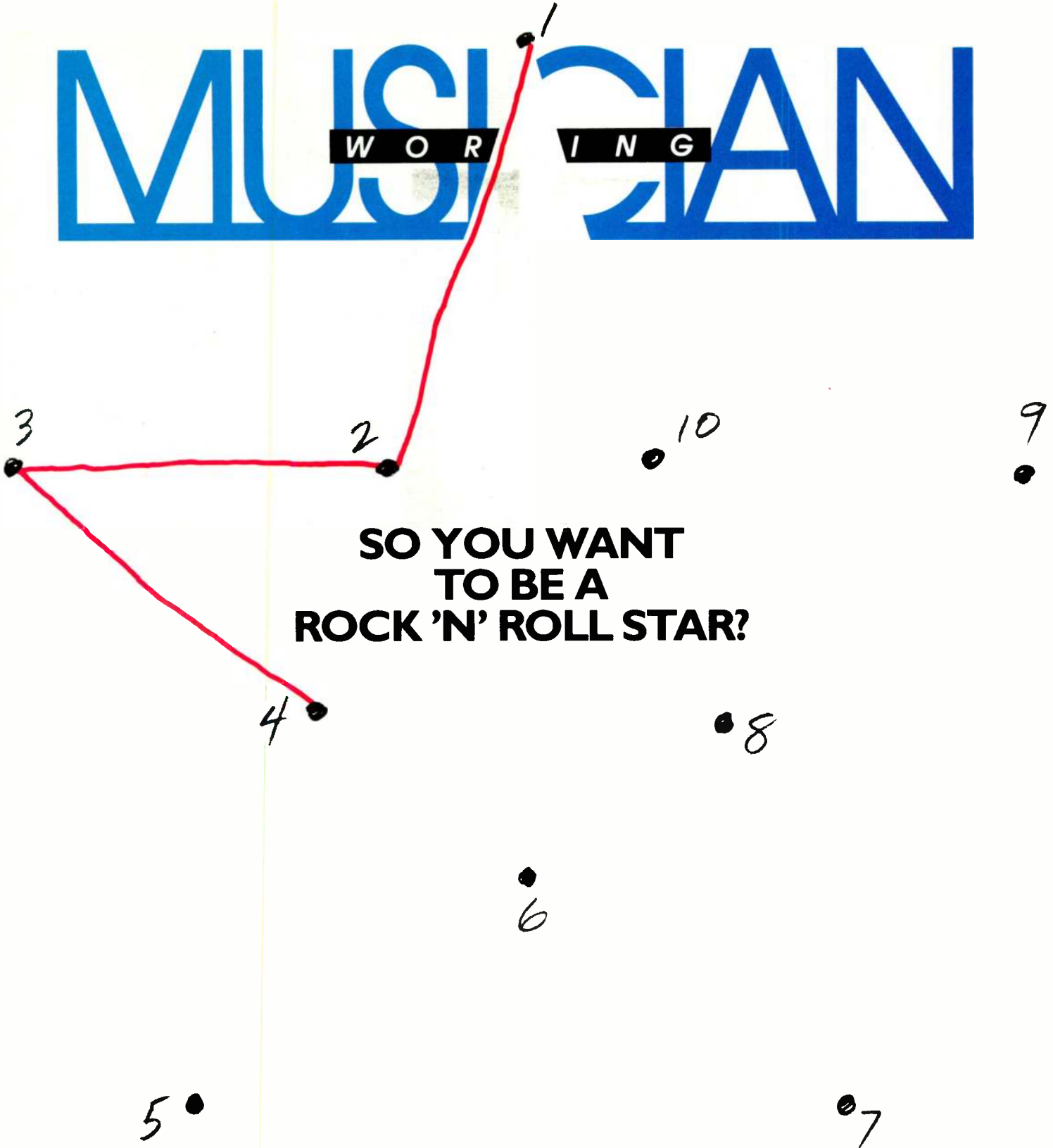
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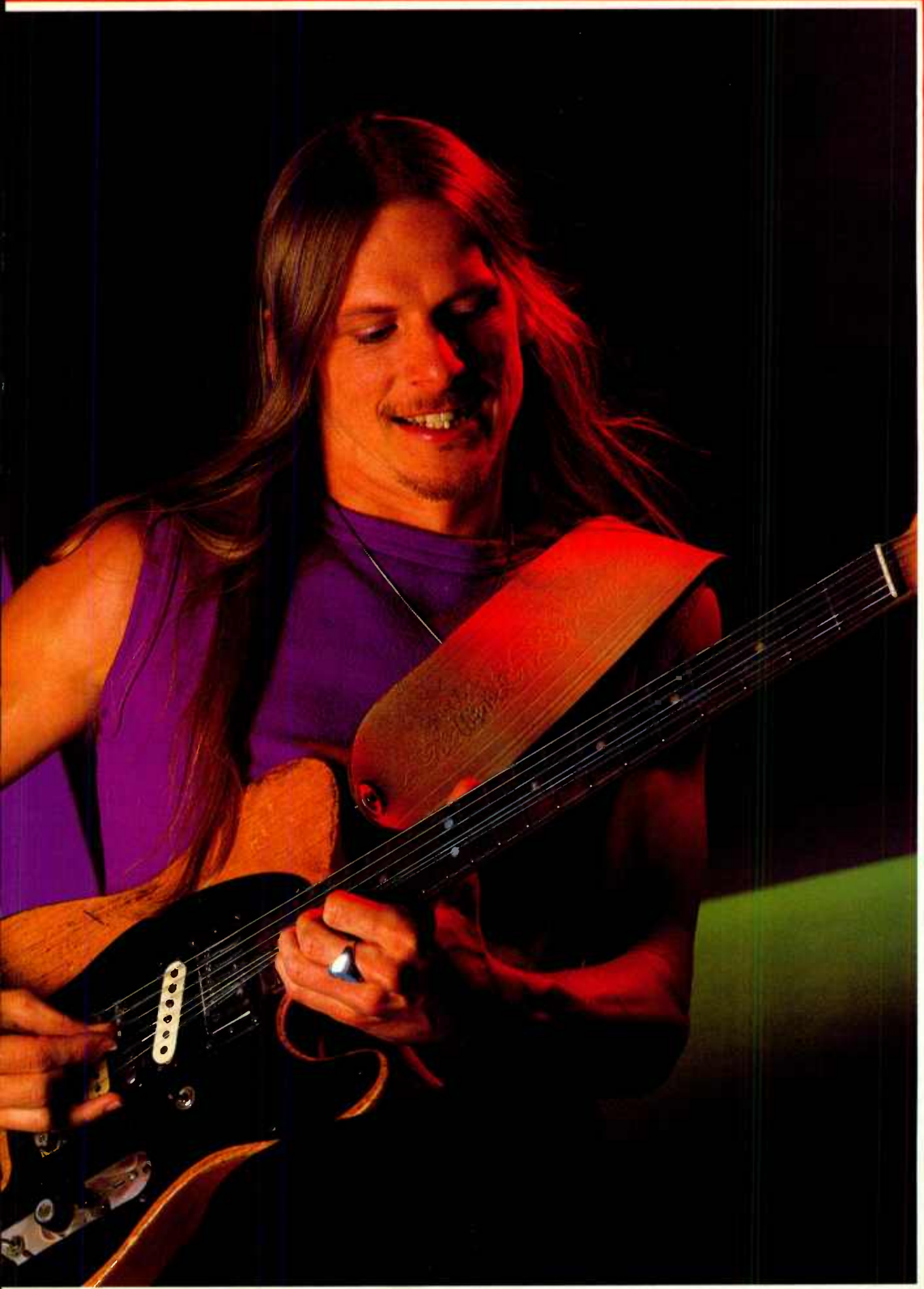
WILL HE
EVER
LIGHTEN
UP?

LET'S HOPE NOT
BY JOCK BAIRD

Steve Morse huffs up to the stage door of the Salem Theater, and he can see it's going to be one of those days. He's had to carry his guitar case, his bookbag and a rather heavy ditty box from the hotel to the gig he was told was "right down the street"—nearly a mile in the wilting August heat. Steve's nursing a cold, hasn't even had time to wash his signature waist-length blond hair, and sound-check is nearly ninety minutes behind schedule. Plugging in, he seems unable to shake an annoying buzz in his setup. Engineer Chuck Allen vaults to the stage and attempts to squelch it, but to no avail. "It's not important," says Steve, approaching his mike; then he abruptly turns back. "No, it is important." At last Chuck banishes the buzz, and the Steve Morse Band launches into the solo section of "The Introduction," the title track of Morse's new album (debuting that week at a surprising #167 on the LP charts). Playing for the first time that day, Steve works through the church-bell melodies of the solo's beginning, then begins peeling off high-velocity rounds of guitar metal, frowning even as a smattering of spectators' jaws drop. After a few minutes of indistinct bashing, the trio ceases and Morse rubs an index finger in his ear, asking eternally good-natured bassist Jerry Peek to turn down a bit. Then he requests a different monitor mix. The band plays a few passages of his "Huron River Blues," including a slower section Steve feels was rushed at last night's Ritz show in Manhattan. He exaggeratedly retards a section to make ace drummer Rod Morgenstein lay back a bit. "Hey, weren't there four beats

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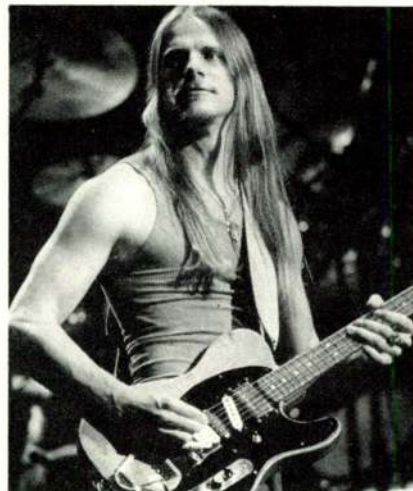
there, rather than three and a half?" Definitely going to be one of *those* days, which, when compounded with a usual Steve Morse day, is a day that no one should have to have.

At last he can stand it no longer. Morse steps to the mike. "It all started when I was an hour and a half late for soundcheck..." he explains seriously. "My cords melted...both people that bought the record returned it...I started stealing guitar licks..."

For Steve Morse, Guitar Hero, stealing licks is akin to driving a truck bomb into an American embassy, mugging grannies and hawking heroin to elementary schoolers. Sure, when he began playing guitar well over fifteen years ago, he may've copied every Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, Duane Allman, Jeff Beck, John McLaughlin and Jimi Hendrix riff he could get on his turntable, and a bit later he might've analyzed an occasional Steve Howe or Pat Metheny track for the fun of it. But that was mostly back in Augusta, Georgia, when he refused to cut his hair in high school, back when he made the decision to pick every note he played, with no hammer-ons or pull-offs. This, combined with his pronounced lefthandedness (though he plays righthanded), gave young Steve's single-note adventures a weight and precision that still instantly identifies his playing.

Of course, that was all before he saw classical guitarist great Juan Mercader perform and followed him to the University of Miami as a jazz major and classical guitar specialist. With a faculty that included Mercader, Metheny, Jaco Pastorius and Narada Michael Walden, UM at the dawn of the 70s was a hotbed of musical creativity. Morse hooked up with high school bass pal Andy West, Rod Morgenstein and fiddler Allen Sloan to form New South fusion kings, the Dixie Dregs. By the time Morse & the

guitar forefretters. And let's not minimize what this means to a whole generation of baby boomers. It may be buried in your subconscious because you haven't heard a bonafide Guitar Hero in years; with a few obvious exceptions, it's mostly been pretenders, non-contenders, and retirees. But four minutes of pure Morse clicks on a set of genetically implanted responses, turning even the most reprogrammed real estate or computer careerists into salivating, kneeling worshippers. Electric rock 'n' roll guitar that has tasteful virtuosity, ambition and a powerful musical vision behind it can still move multitudes and mountains, and that's why



"I am crazy, obsessive, neurotic..."

Steve Morse is driving himself and everyone else around him about as hard as he can. In a mature, battlescarred way, he really does believe in living up to the title, Guitar Hero.

Although he lives in a trailer on his own farm near Atlanta, Georgia, the thirty-year-old Morse bears no resemblance whatever to a good ol' boy.

me the music comes first. I won't decide what I *think* the audience will want to hear, second-guess them, and then say, 'Well, I don't really like it, but I'll do it anyway.' That's the approach of a lot of mass-media music. I *don't* break my music down for mass consumption, but the fact is, I really do like simple chords. I like very *tonal* music, even though it may be hard to play. Hey, I finally have something going for me," Morse chuckles. "I like tonal music! So yes, what we're doing now with this band *is* a little more rock-based than the things we used to do in the Dregs."

Is the Steve Morse Band more a continuation of or a reaction to the Dregs? "There's a lot of similarities between this band and the Dregs, which are inevitable," Morse shrugs. "I'm still writing the music, so it'll sound real similar, and we *tend* toward the same ideals. Thematically, it's a little bit different because I don't write three or four parts anymore. The central ideas come through better, because there's less interference, less thickness. But we're also trying to learn from the business mistakes we made in the Dregs, to keep things a *little* simpler in the organization, a little more rigidly defined job roles. We were very frustrated. We had every kind of problem a band could have—including death. [A reference to Twigg Lyndon Jr., former road manager/compadre of the Allman Brothers Band and later the Dregs] The last tour we went on, the agent stole \$9000. That's *profit*, the tiny little slice of pizza that almost doesn't exist, it's so small. The record company (Arista) wanted to make some more changes—our relationship was not one of mutual eagerness. We had also had personal problems, and it was not fun playing a few gigs in the last days. When you're trying to do your own stuff and make a stand each night, how you feel is important. I really hate to disappoint the

"I REALLY DO LIKE SIMPLE CHORDS, VERY TONAL MUSIC."

boys had landed their deals with Capricorn (later Arista), settled on keyboardist T Lavitz and replaced Sloan with Mark O'Connor, they were dashing madly from Mahavishnu infernos to chicken-scratch corn pone, from heavy metal to classical, tossing 32nd-note solo turns around like a hot potato. Steve's uncanny versatility—there is literally no guitar style he doesn't excel in—is still intact, but the number of notes he uses per tune has been steadily declining.

Today Steve Morse has picked up the crumpled mantle of Electric Guitar Hero; night after night, he's wearing it brilliantly, with both originality and deep, celebratory reverence for his

His accent is more Michigan, where he spent his boyhood, and he is incisive, clearly intelligent, and possessed of a deft, subtle wit. There's also a very muted cynicism about him, a suspicion (often justified) that the music world will pass him by because he's not trendy or hip; one song title on *The Introduction* is "V.H.F.," or "Vertical Hair Factor," and Morse's hair goes noticeably the other way. He could unquestionably be wealthy beyond his wildest dreams if he got a lead singer, some tight leather pants and played 16th-note triplets over three powerchords all night, but he hasn't and he won't. "That's just because I have *baggy* leather pants and play 16th-note triplets *half* the night," he laughs. "No, to

people who come to our shows, which is what I feel happens when I don't have a good time. I *hate* to be a failure, and I *refuse* to be a failure three times in a row. Everything was building to a climax. I just went home and said, 'This is the *end of the line*.'"

What did Steve imagine for his musical life-after-Dregs? "I didn't imagine anything. I went to the unemployment line and tried to imagine what it'd be like to not be in a band. And for six months," he laughs, "I imagined that very well, 'cause I tried it. I was doing odd jobs, only playing guitar a couple of hours a day. And then I really got to like playing guitar again. I thought, 'Do I really want to go through with this?' I saw all the

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problems, all the mistakes, but I did want to do it, even if it meant getting that Dregs truck that hadn't been started in three years, fixing cords, just starting from the beginning."

Morse had a secret weapon that gave him a head start in his new offensive: a telephone number. It belonged to bassist Jerry Peek, who some time before had opened a Dregs show with Three P.M., a fusion band from Raleigh, North Carolina. "He was the star of the show, and I got his number to get him a gig with someone else. I kept it around after quitting the band." Steve called up Peek, who said, "Great, but I have this nine-to-five job." Steve replied, "Well, see if you can quit."

Peek was the find of the year. An N.C. State design major then working in the heart of America's furniture district, he helped design the ideal fireplace setting for Morse's music. Despite his conservative looks and aw-gee manner, Peek loved Black Sabbath, Ted Nugent and Van Halen as well as Jaco Pastorius, Larry Graham and Louis Johnson (he's also partial to British dance music). Interestingly, he was not a real Dixie Dregs fan. Peek became the perfect Sancho for Steve's Don Quixote, linking Morse's pyrotechnical fusoid side with his screaming heavy metal half and adding a dash of modern. The only trouble was, he lived 400 hundred miles away. So Steve began driving up for concentrated rehearsals, called up Rod Morgenstein, who said, "Well, here we go again..." and the Steve Morse Band was born.

Rod occupied a unique place in the Dregs. While virtually every other part was written by Steve, Morgenstein was the Designated Flailer. A direct spiritual descendent of Mitch Mitchell, Morgenstein powers the band in a roiling, head-first charge, mouth ecstatically open and sweat profusely pouring. "I like hav-

A, not E.'" Peek rose to the challenge.

The last band "member" was Chuck Allen, who began doing sound at the first gig and was finally persuaded to give up his post as engineer and operations manager at Eddy Offord Studios. As the months went by and one of the world's most intelligent power trios began to feel like a band, Steve began recording the album that would become *The Introduction* at Tampa's Morrisound studios—at his own expense. Morse produced, and Allen engineered. By the time Boston agent/manager Ted Kurland had arranged a meeting with then-Elektra prez Bruce Lundvall, the album was already finished. In the wake



Morse, Jerry Peek & Rod Morgenstein.

of Lundvall's departure, much uncertainty has gripped the Elektra/Musician roster, but Morse has been told he's welcome to come aboard the mother ship, particularly since the LP has climbed to #103. Who says a great instrumental album has to bomb?

The Introduction is focused primarily on Morse's compositions—well, they're too much fun to be called compositions,

metal workout of "On The Pipe"? "It's riding a dirt bike in a long race, going through woods, then out in the clear, over bumpy sections, flying over jumps. It's always pushing, always pounding." And the neo-Bach concerto of "The Whistle"? "Celeste [Morse's eight-year companion] used to whistle the theme from *Bridge Over The River Kwai* every day as she walked down to the barn, but she couldn't hit the high note, so she asked me to write her an easier tune to whistle." Morse laughs ruefully: "I guess it got a little out of control. But it's still Celeste's little march. I do love Bach. His music is rhythmic, driving, powerful and beautifully crafted. You couldn't ask for more."

But why call the record *The Introduction* when Morse has been in the public eye for years, in fact winning the *Guitar Player* readers poll two straight years as overall guitarist? "It's still an introduction to a lot of people. Nobody's heard Jerry; nobody's heard the band. And a lot of people are eyeing us suspiciously—even Dregs fans, because how many solo projects aren't just rip-offs of the original bands? A lot of people have me pigeonholed, especially coming from the Dregs—you know, Southern rock, boogie, redneck, whatever the connotation. Our image closed the door for a lot of people before they heard the music. For instance, the Dregs were never listed on the Jazz charts. Isn't that interesting? Never been on a Jazz chart. So we were definitely ostracized. Not being the Dregs again may be more of a risk, but anytime you get some certainty, you lose the element of adventure." Morse chuckles ruefully. "But we're *definitely* in that adventure phase now, so we're having a good time."

By the time the Salem concert is to begin, the turnout has been dismal—two hundred at best. The audience is

"WE'RE DEFINITELY IN THAT ADVENTURE PHASE NOW!"

ing a wild drummer who's under control," Steve smiles admiringly. "He plays the drums like it's *music*. You want Rod to play differently every night, but at the same time, you want him to do a few things right with you—you try and make a balance."

Morse once said that one of his faults was a tendency to be too attached to the parts that he wrote for the Dregs, and not let the bandmembers develop their own. "There you go," he grunts. "That's a good insight into the end of the Dregs. It was a bad habit of mine, always trying to have everything worked out. I'm starting to give Jerry more choice. Like on "Cruise Missile," I said, 'Do one of your funk things, but do it in

but too finely constructed to be called songs. "Huron River Blues" is one of his most evocative tracks; opening with a Hendrixian chime, it moves to a fantastic Jimmy Page psychotic slow grind and thence to a tight little wah-wah workout and into a pedal steel whine. What would Steve's "video" of that tune look like? "It's about a polluted river where little kids want to swim but are told their skin will disintegrate because of the pollutants. It's a childhood memory, catching a fish and getting all excited and then realizing, 'Hey, you can't eat it!' Just one of those sad tales about a waterway becoming a toilet for industry."

How about the exuberant, heavy

mostly male and probably mostly guitarists. The band hits the stage with everything blasting, but the small, devoted crowd's applause at tune's end echoes embarrassingly through the large, empty theater. It has to be a let-down for Steve, who is fighting not only his cold but some abbreviated-sound-check-related finger stiffness. This is fascinating to the writer, who has seen the Morse band three times and never seen any signs of mortality, not even a seam between sections. To see Steve in the extremely rare moments he's not a hundred percent is to see how central "confidence," an oft-used part of his vocabulary, is to his music, just as an outfielder going up for the ball can't think



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about the wall. And, wonder of wonders, Morse actually plays a wrong note! In the past, he's been known to stare venomously at the back wall of the stage and curse himself, but tonight he catches Jerry's startled look and grins. He is learning to roll, ever so slightly, ever so rarely, with the punches.

In fact, he intentionally slows down the pace by launching into multi-minute monologues, turning the fizzled playoff game into an enjoyable exhibition match. And some of Steve's monologues are *really* out there; in one, he recites his endorsement for Lexicon in a robotlike voice ("Lexicon...is...an...integral...part...of...my...sound") and then

hits his head, as if skipping a record. In another he does an extended satire of the industry's anti-home taping stance. Bringing out his electric classical guitar for a few precious solo numbers (there's still talk of an all-acoustic solo LP for Steve), he seems absolutely fixated on a new B-string he put on earlier; three separate times he shares his fears that it will probably slip, didn't slip, might still slip. Morgenstein is cryptically described as "always right." Although some of the house probably doesn't know what to make of Morse's bizarre deadpan humor, the date becomes a satisfying, intimate—if occasionally odd—evening with Steve Morse.

The following night is the flip side of

the concert coin. Taking the stage as opening act for Bobby & the Midnights at Boston's cavernous Orpheum Theater even as the customers are still filing in, the Morse Band receives a deafening ovation. Steve & Co. kick into the chordal slabs of "The Introduction"; when he gets to the second section of the tune, a cascading waterfall of arpeggiated color bounced through two digital delays into an orchestral splendor, another wild cheer goes up—hey, Lexicon really *is* an integral part of Steve's sound. The next number is "On The Pipe," and Morse and Peek execute their nightly ZZ Top maneuver: on a particularly nasty, chainsaw part that kicks off the solo, they momentarily turn their backs on the audience, reappear wearing sunglasses, and then do some synchronized rock 'n' roll dance steps to a sustained roar from the ecstatic crowd.

This performance is a sample of what could ultimately give Morse the stardom he deserves: he can open every kind of show, from jazz to heavy metal, and ignite the unwary. Morse beams beatifically during his solos, his long, thin limbs bent like a spider's. Just as the pandemonium level has been reached,

continued on page 96

MORSE CODE

Steve Morse's electric guitar is a Fender Strat neck he's had for seventeen years bolted to a Telecaster body. It has five pickups, and Steve uses them all: closest to the neck is a Gibson humbucker, then a stock Strat, a cylindrical Tele, and a DiMarzio-modified Fender humbucking pickup. There's also a hex pickup from 360 Systems for their Slavedriver interface into a Minimoog; he also uses the hex to tune up onstage. The bridge is a Gibson Tun-o-matic, the trapeze tailpiece is a pawnshop special. His strings are .010 Ernie Ball. Steve also uses a Gibson Chet Atkins electric classical, which he strings with Ernesto Palla (Ernie Ball, get it?) strings, and an Ovation electric-acoustic steel-string. His effects are Lexicon Prime Time and PCM-41 digital delays, a Cry Baby wah, a rebuilt Boss chorus, and an Ernie Ball volume pedal. No direct signal actually goes through any effect. His amps are Ampeg V-4s and V-9s, with Celestion and JBL speakers.

Jerry Peek plays a Guild Pilot SB602 bass through an Ampeg SVT and Guild Hartke cabinets (with high-tech aluminum coned speakers). He has an Ibanez chorus at home, but he fears for its safety on the road, so he uses two multi-effects pedals by t.c. electronics. Rod Morgenstein pounds Premier drums with Duraline heads, and crashes Paiste cymbals; he mikes his kit with the Aquarian system. Rod also plays a Sequential Circuits Six-Trak amped through an Ampeg V-7 for "V.H.F." and "The Whistle." Chuck Allen also mixed some LP parts onto a Tascam 234 4-track cassette deck for those tunes. Stage mikes are Audio-Technica ATM31rs, 63s and 41as.

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SHEILA E.'S SECRET IDENTITY

A Prince Protégée
with a Primo
Percussive Pedigree

By Josef Woodard

Things can happen in mysterious, transforming ways when you're in the eye of the pop music hurricane. This year's case in point is the overnight makeover sensation of percussion lioness Sheila Escovedo into voluptuous R&B diva Sheila E.

At the beginning of the year, Sheila was still very much the gifted yearling of the illustrious Bay Area Escovedo percussion clan (her father is Pete, her uncle Coke), who helped bring the idea of white hot Latin percussion before the public ear in bands like Azteca and Santana. Young Sheila was in the grips of an escalating career as a side musician that had most recently landed her a hot spot on the Lionel Richie tour.

It was *that* Sheila—she of sterling musical lineage and the New Generation of Latin percussion—that *Musician* wanted to talk to back in the early spring. But the initial stabs at an interview were met with strange aloofness and vague references to "something big in the works." Little did we know about her metamorphosis into Sheila E.; nobody likes to talk when they're busy shedding their cocoon.

And it all stemmed from the day her Prince had come.

Prince, a long-standing friend of Sheila's, had called her in to do some projects between legs of the Richie tour (she sings with Prince on "Erotic City," the flipside of the "Let's Go Crazy" single, and plays trap drums on the Apollonia 6 record). Impressed with her musical fire and her bag of original tunes, Prince wrangled her a deal with Warner Bros. and a few weeks later, Sheila E. was born. "I couldn't break it to anyone," she recalls. "My family didn't even know what was going on. I told them after it was done. They said, 'What? Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you let me play on the album?'"

Burrowing into Hollywood's Sunset Sound studio, singing and playing virtually every instrument (with production aid from Prince's satellite Starr Company), Sheila forged the steaming tracks of *The Glamorous Life*—six



New Celibacy be damned, this woman and her timbales are out to titillate!

songs that add another layer on the post-Prince musical mystique. "I went in there and five days later it was done. It was great, like magic," says E. "I just never got a chance to express anything like this before."

E's sturdy, headstrong attitudes reflect an upbringing full of family musical ties and barrier-razing. Her muscular pursuits began early; she began pounding on father Pete's drums when she was knee-high and actually played on the stage of Oakland's Sands Ballroom at the age of five. But she wound up immersing herself in track and soccer in her formative years. "I was really into sports and all of a sudden music just hit me, and I got into a band playing trap drums," she claims. "They wanted me to change over to congas because there was a drummer in town that had a P.A. system and we didn't have one. It was cold-blooded, but that's the breaks."

Her own musical turning point—or, should I say, the first of many—came when she filled in for an absentee drummer in her father's then-thriving Azteca at the age of fourteen. There was an omen in the air of the San Francisco Civic Center. "We played in front of 8,000 people and that was a lot to me in those days. After I played and got the applause after I took a solo, I got off-stage and said to my father, 'This is what I want to do, this is it. I'm going to quit school and tour with you.' He said, 'You're crazy.' But that's what I did."

As she circulated in the music scene as a bonafide Escovedo prodigy, Sheila encountered both enthusiasm on musical terms and skepticism on grounds of gender. Girls just want to have fun, the stereotype reads, not build smoking Latin grooves. That's Man's Work. "The women were always behind me and a lot of men were too, but the men that

continued on page 93



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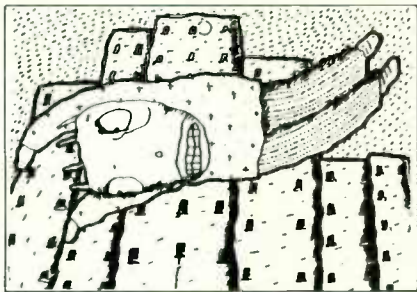
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LINSEY LOCH

SOFTWARE CITY

By John Amaral

MusicData's All Star Patches

Did you know that most synthesizers returned to the factory for one reason or another still contain the unmodified factory presets? "It's very disappointing," says Sequential Circuits' Dave Smith, "because it means that they're using only a fraction of the machine's capabilities."

Jerry Antonelli of E. U. Wurlitzer's Boston store says, "Players have been afraid that if they load in new presets from tape, they'll lose the factory patches. The full complex of factory patches won't do anymore."

Enter Ron Wilkerson with a bright

idea: why not provide supplementary patches which are programmed by expert musicians for various synths? Out of this idea was born MusicData (213) 655-3580, which markets collections of patches by Jeff Baxter, Nicky Hopkins, Craig Anderton, Ray Manzarek and others, for all the popular synthesizers on cassettes and ROM packs. They also have a series of cassettes for the LinnDrum and Roland TR-909 drum box which are not really patches, but rhythm sequences for assembling your own complete tunes, and an "Accompaniment Series" which provides drum backgrounds for complete pop tunes. I convened a little panel to audition a cross-section of the synth patch tapes, and I hope to have a chance to describe the drum data tapes for you in the very near future.

Assisting me were Dave Mash, who coordinates Performance Synthesis at the Berklee College of Music, and Jerry Antonelli and Keith Barnhart of Wurlitzer's in Boston. Here is what we found:

The stamp of Wilkerson Advertising's usual meticulous attention to detail is all over this product. (Wilkerson is known throughout the industry for his successful Roland campaigns.) The MusicData packaging is tasteful and the tapes are high quality, metal-reel cassettes. The instructional copy is complete and accurate (you don't need to be afraid of

losing your factory patches because the instructions guide you step by step), and there were no faults with the digital data on the eight cassettes we loaded.

The general consensus was that you will find some useful patches on each tape, but that not all will be useful or "better" sounding than a similar factory version. You should definitely audition before buying. Said Keith, "What I've noticed, is that there is a big variation in what people think is a good sound. What one person thinks is a good piano sound, another can't stand."

Jerry was enthusiastic: "A pro can get an idea of what other pros are doing, and an amateur gets incentive to develop his own patches." Dave wished for more patches on some of the tapes, and we all thought that a most helpful addition would be a short recording of the author *using* each patch, so that the sound could be heard in at least one proper perspective.

Another issue, which I will be taking up in future columns, is the whole question of music software protection. How can a publisher be assured that no unauthorized copies of software will be distributed? It's a serious problem that requires the cooperation of everyone, especially the music store and us end user-musicians. ☐

John Amaral is a music software evangelist and a professor at the Berklee College of Music in Boston.

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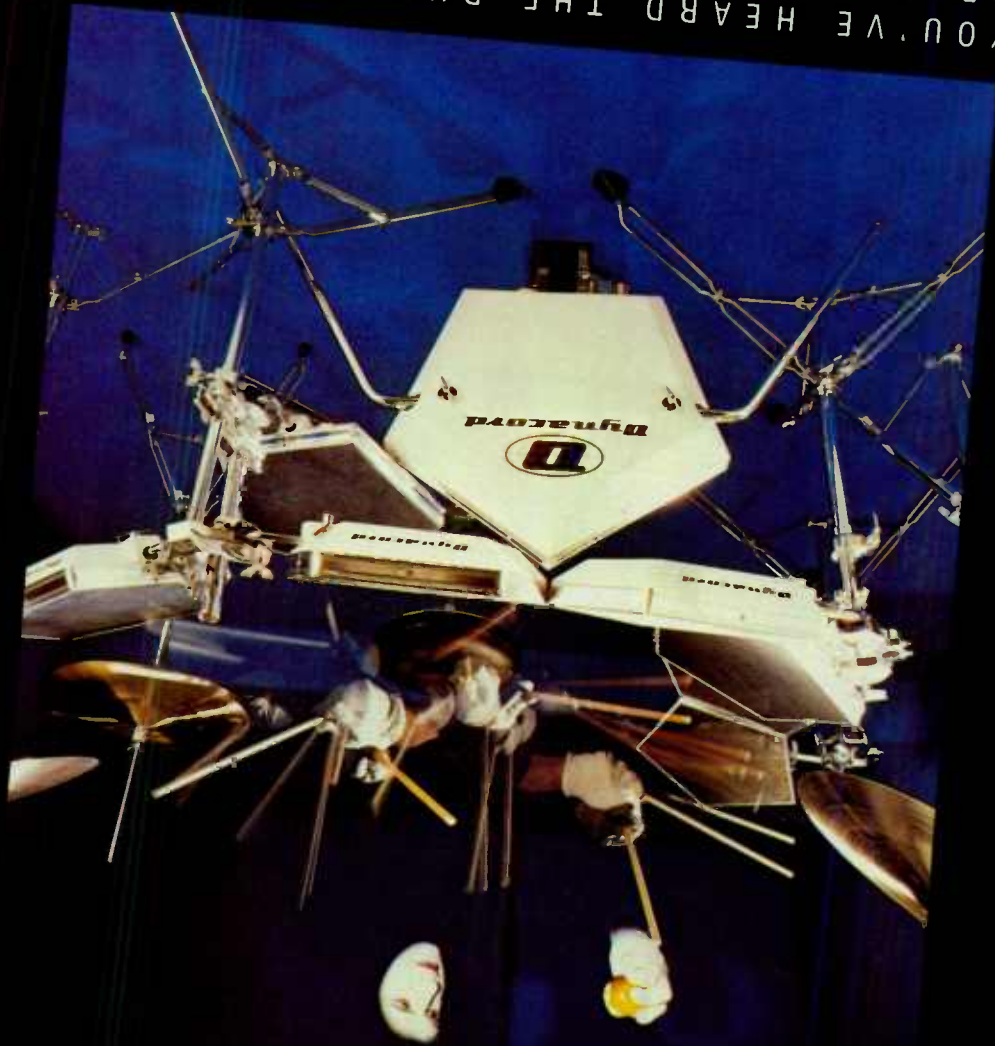
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THE FIXX: QUESTIONS OF BALANCE



The Fixx: Danny Brown, Rupert Greenall, Adam Woods, and point men Cy Curnin and Jamie West-Oram.

Above Average White Band or the Revenge of the Jesuits?

By Jock Baird

Questioning is a useful thing. We want more people asking stiffer questions of those who will end up making the decisions for them," says the Fixx's Cy Curnin. Well, I've got a few questions. What is the balance between musical medium and socio-philosophical message? How much should a pop band be expected—or allowed—to accomplish, and when does it go too far? And why, oh why, is a musically accomplished, nailed-down, genuinely interesting pop group called the Fixx still unable to convince critics their top ten stardom is justified?

To reduce some of this uncertainty, may I suggest dealing with the Fixx in

two passes: first their music, and only afterward the political, theological and dramatic portions of the Fixx's program. Let's just put on a few tracks. Here's "Stand Or Fall," an MTV classic. Listen to that shimmering two-chord guitar figure, with synth pastels flooding in at key moments, ferocious bass-drum simplicity demanding decision. The lead singer travels from husky braying bass deliveries to a high keening release, vaguely reminiscent of U2's Bono Vox; his melody lines are consistently well crafted and, unlike most British popsters, consistently in tune. Now here's "Saved By Zero"; yeah, you picked right up on that rubbery funk guitar hook, didn't you. Again, nice lead vocal line, nice backup singing, too. No, I'm not sure what the song's about either. Let me just put on "One Thing Leads To Another"...oh, you always liked this one? Have you noticed how the synths pace this tune, turn a one-vamp idea into a continuous story—although Lord knows what it means. For a dance tune, the rhythm doesn't quite

sound like anything else in the club rock universe. I know, what's not to like?

Actually, the Fixx's singles are by no means their best songs. Their 1982 debut LP, *Shattered Rooms*, was packed with picks like "Lost Planes," "Red Skies At Night" and the unforgettable "Cameras In Paris." Last year's brooding, sprawlily funky follow-up, *Reach The Beach*, uncorked gems like "Sign Of The Fire," "I Can See Myself Running" and "Outside," with its breathtaking modern-war guitar coda. There's also "Deeper And Deeper," a quicko soundtrack hit from *Streets of Fire*. Already we're talking major-league songwriting catalog. Now here comes part three, *Phantoms*, with its appetizing if unepic hors d'oeuvre, "Are We Ourselves," and more nourishing entrees like the urban contemporary rubble of "Less Cities, More Moving People," the sprightly stride of "Sunshine In The Shade," and some other dark horse favorites I'll let you discover on your own. Am I getting through to you at all? Good.



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**BASS
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by
Tom Scholz



Although moderate to good instrumentalists individually, the real virtuosity of the Fixx is the way the parts intuitively meld into grooves and textures. The band is collectively an instrument, set to further one unified goal. "The band's sound just sort of comes through letting go of our own personal tastes," notes lead singer Cy Curnin. "It's not from compromising; it's just from a respect of each other's past."

Pianist Curnin and drummer Adam Woods met nine years ago at a British drama school and, in addition to a theatrical partnership (Woods directed, Curnin acted), began dabbling with rock 'n' roll. A few years later, after acquiring keysman Rupert Greenall, the band made a few New Romantic-era singles as Portraits. Not comfortable with the

companion/collaborator. Cy recalls, "Jeanette walked into the room whilst Rupert was playing 'Lost Planes.' The day before the tape had come, her best friend had just died, and the mood the song put her in made her feel quite good about something."

The group knew early on what it would settle for in a record deal: "We weren't in the mood to write singles anymore. English record companies just use England to find the bands, make a single or two, and then if it's a hit, make the album and bring 'em over to America to make money—or not make money," Cy laughs. Although awfully particular for a band still so inconsistent live, the Fixx auditioned for MCA at a university where "they'd had a sit-in and nobody'd been in or out. The whole atmosphere was quite rebellious," which was the perfect forum for the band's anti-nuke, anti-conformity stance. MCA gave them what they wanted and *Shattered Room* was made. "That first album was a watershed," says Cy, explaining the extraordinary number of good tunes. "You record the best songs you've got up to the deal." The album garnered moderate American airplay and much favorable press.

A serious problem presented itself when the band began its second LP in early 1983—bassist Charlie Barrett quit. As Rupert Hine reports, this was transformed into an opportunity: "The freedom of not having a bass line proved to be a very exciting period. We had tracks with no bass lines at all, tracks with synth bass, and others played by session men. *Reach The Beach* is really the album that most reflects the differences in bass concept." These experiments made the once song-centered Fixx more atmospheric and groove-centered, and fortified their originality, but the need to get the live show to the level of the records became paramount as an American tour loomed. "It did get a little panicky," notes Cy, "cause we were still a bit inexperienced live. We needed somebody with real expertise to re-titillate our interest in bass." Enter Danny Brown. "He had a very positive effect on Adam," understates Hine. "He was the first sign of dry land we saw," overstates Curnin. Although officially not a band member, Brown will keep the bass chair as long as he wants it.

The post-*Reach The Beach* American tour proved unexpectedly lucrative, with the LP going top eight and a warm-up spot for the Police extending well into the fall. The band turned their attention to their third album; Hine reports, "The goal for the new record was twelve tracks. Seriously, twelve tracks—to get to the point where we were being very concise, with no padding or wastage, no long fade-outs or codas, no un-

necessary instrumental sections if they weren't going to add precisely to the mood or atmosphere." This was impeccable strategy for an album that would be intensely scrutinized by the legions of skeptical critics that continue to characterize the Fixx as new wave Benedict Arnolds, "lightweight refried disco" and "college freshman existentialists." *Phantoms* withstands that by fielding a more consistent song lineup—though the climate of enforced discipline does constrict the wide-open, experimental feel of *Reach* a bit. Just when it seems the band might have gone too far into groove-based upbeat tunes like "Questions" and "In Suspense," it uncovers a cache of finely tooled ballads like "Facing The Wind," "Wish" and "I Will," and the menacing shuffle of "Women On A Train."

Cy Curnin and Jamie West-Oram co-wrote most of this material either together in demo studios or by exchanging homemade (Tascam) Portastudio cassette tapes. Both are capable of knocking out parts on piano, guitars, drums and synth-bass, and try everything and anything. "We just throw ideas at the wall" shrugs the soft-spoken Jamie, who along with Cy has recently doubled his MTV airtime by playing on Tina Turner's new Rupert Hine-produced treat, "Better Be Good To Me." "We mostly work by instinct. The end result might be a bit of a mess, but at least it gives you some scope. You can pick out the good stuff, chop it down, and end up with something more defined."

"Another thing we like to do," adds Curnin, "is for me to write songs on piano and work up the melodies and background harmonies, and then take the piano off and give Jamie the tape with just the vocals. He'll have no conception of how I'm hearing it, which is good, because I sometimes doubt my own musical settings."

Some of the writing goes on with five members present, but as Jamie notes, "it can get pretty chaotic with everyone there. Five people with very strong ideas...but a lot of good ideas. 'One Thing Leads To Another' seemed to come out of nowhere one day at a full-band jam. But getting the groove's only the first part. Then you have to stand back and get a bird's eye view of what you've got, planning the groove into a song and still keeping the feel."

West-Oram's ringing chordal structures are breathtaking in their efficiency. "Well, that's what we're all aiming at, anyway," he modestly laughs. "No, I don't think technique is what it's about. My style has changed a lot over the last couple of years since I joined the Fixx. I did go through a period of trying to fit as many notes in as possible, but then I started realizing that's not



Jamie West-Oram, efficiency expert.

demands of trendy pop fashion, the band laid low for a year or so, picking up London session player Jamie West-Oram in 1980 and writing the songs that would become their first album. "If there was a theme to that record, it was that we had absolutely no money," laughs Cy. "We had only enough to pay for our rehearsal space and petrol to drive to rehearsal and back every day. All we could do afterwards was go back to our bed-sits and watch TV. But we got a real buzz out of it, just writing songs and going out to see bands."

Feeling themselves ready for a producer, "we sent a cassette out to a few we felt might be interested. Rupert Hine came back to us." Hine was actually convinced by Jeanette Obstj, film editor, video director, lyricist, and Hine's



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HOME RECORDING: THE RULES OF THE GAME

Fundamentals of Low-Tech Glory By Freff

The following is a consumer warning from our sponsor.

Millionaire rock stars, oil magnates, and others of the fiscally over-endowed (defined for the purposes of this notice as anyone holding the philosophy "It's easier to buy it than to be it") will find little of interest in this article. It is suggested that they waste their time somewhere else. As for the rest of the readership—dive right in!

Thank you.

It takes four things to bring a recording together: a place to work, tools to work with, something to record, and enough knowledge/sweat/imagination to make up for any deficiencies in the first three. That's the equation, whether you're Mick Jagger or Mick Nobody, and never forget it, because The Absolute Law of Recording is that when listeners hear your playback they don't know what you did. They only know what it *sounds* like you did.

Clutch that thought to your heart like a beacon...or, at the very least, like an antidote for feelings of technological inadequacy. You can't afford the latest microdigital wondergoodie? So what! Fake it. Be a magician. Fool them all.

It's very satisfying, really it is.

BUT—and this is an important "but," compadre—to pull it off you're going to have to put some effort into it. Nobody becomes a magician before they've learned how to do the tricks. (Better yet, three or four different ways to finagle each one.) So you're going to have to study, and experiment, and try a thousand crazy things. Above all, you're going to have to know what you're doing. There are a ton of good books out there: Robert Runstein's *Modern*



Want to record cheap? Learn how to deal with tape noise.

Recording Techniques, John Woram's *The Recording Studio Handbook*, Teac's *Multitrack Primer*, Craig Anderson's *Home Recording for Musicians*...these and lots more, from the very simple to the very technical. Find them. Read them. (Especially read the passages with equipment photos that are vastly out of date; some of that gear is available real cheap in the used or surplus markets. You'll also find a lot of older techniques ideally suited to the low-tech, low-budget approach.) And while you're reading, apply what you've read. Reading can only be preparation. To learn how to make magic, you've got to do it, getting it wrong as many times as it takes to figure out how to get it right.

There's no reason you can't start trying to take over the world with your Walkman right now, before reading any of the books mentioned just above. But there are a few bottom-line things about tape and tape recorders you need to know, because they set the limitations your imagination will have to work within—and in most cases, around.

HOW TAPE RECORDING WORKS

Rust. Rust and electrons. That's the big trick. Recording tape of all kinds, from audio cassette to video tape, is made of a thin, even coating of some kind of metal oxide on a mylar backing. The backing has nothing to do with the actual recording. It just keeps the metal oxide particles up front and available. These particles are magnetic, and their molecules contain many small permanent magnetic fields called "domains," each with its own north pole and south pole (just like the bigger magnet in a compass).

Now, while tape fresh out of the pack is covered in magnetic particles, it isn't yet magnetized. All those little particles are aligned lengthwise on the tape during manufacturing, but the poles of the magnetic domains aren't affected by that, and since there are just as many south poles pointing one way down the tape as there are north poles, the net magnetism is zip. They cancel each other out.

Until the tape crosses over the record head, that is. That's where electrical currents caused by the music you're recording create a strong magnetic field, which flows right through the tape passing by, rearranging the north/south orientation of the domains.

Net result: in any given area of the tape the poles of the domains are no longer randomized, and therefore don't cancel out. The tape now has a measurable magnetic field, which varies down the length of the tape depending on how the strength of the record head's signal changed. That's your music. Or, rather, it's a code for your music that can

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be translated back into audible sound with the appropriate machinery.

But of course it isn't really that simple. Magic rarely is.

PROBLEMS

Recording tape doesn't respond the way our ears do. If we scaled the strength of the signal at the playback head to the sounds we can hear, in a one-to-one ratio, it wouldn't be strong enough to make the tape record the soft sounds. And it would be so strong at only moderate sound volumes that the recording capacity of the tape would be pushed to the max. All the domains would be lined up together. After that, there isn't any further the tape can go.

Not even into distortion (it would already have been there for a while). When a tape is as magnetized as it can get—"saturated" is the engineering term—it's an absolute wall.

Another problem is the "signal-to-noise" ratio. This is a standard audio term because it's a standard audio problem, at every level of signal-handling. Visualize the entire recording process as a problem in plumbing, with pipes routing water from place to place instead of wires routing electricity, and it's easy to understand. Say you've got a 4" wide pipe—and you've got to have one that wide, to handle your highest water pressure (read: loudest audio signal)—well, when that pipe is only half full

of water then it also has to be half full of air. Similarly, a tape has a certain amount of recording capacity. What we don't fill with our musical signal we are inevitably going to hear, on playback, as noise.

And how about "print-through"? Ever notice how some records have this little tiny ghost-echo in the groove, just before the music begins? The commonest cause of this glitch is print-through. The mylar backing that holds the oxide particles together isn't opaque to magnetism. It just passes right through...which means that when you've got your freshly-recorded tape stashed away on its reel, all those newly-aligned domains are happily stamping their own magnetic footprint on the layers of tape around them, creating pre-and-post echoes that you never intended to record.

Those are just three problems. There are lots of others, but luckily most of them aren't really relevant until you're into big-bucks gear. So we'll move on to...

SOLUTIONS!

Well, sort of. The nature of the game is compromise.

To deal with the first problem, the non-linearity of tape response, the engineering guys came up with something called "bias." You've seen the word on cassette decks; there's a bias circuit in every tape recorder, in one form or another, although it's not always under your control. Bias is a whacking great high-amplitude, high-frequency signal, typically 150,000 to 180,000 cycles per second, that gets applied to the tape along with the music you're recording. That's way out of the hearing range (of human beings, anyway, though you might hear it brought down to a mere high-pitched squeak if you slowly rock a piece of recorded tape back and forth over the playback head), and the trick of it is that...well, to remove the technical jargon, what bias does is beat the hell out of the tape. No kidding. The magnetic domains have a certain resistance to change. Audio frequencies at their normal range of recording volumes either have too little or—quite suddenly—too much impact on the domains, a little like what happens when you push and push at a stuck door and suddenly it flies open with a bang. The bias current, on the other hand, is so high and so hard and so fast that the domains are kept in a constant state of magnetic agitation (way up in that frequency level we can't hear), and their resistance to change is considerably lessened, making it possible to put signal levels onto the tape in a way which makes musical sense.

Solving one problem often creates another, or at least leaves you in a posi-

continued on page 94

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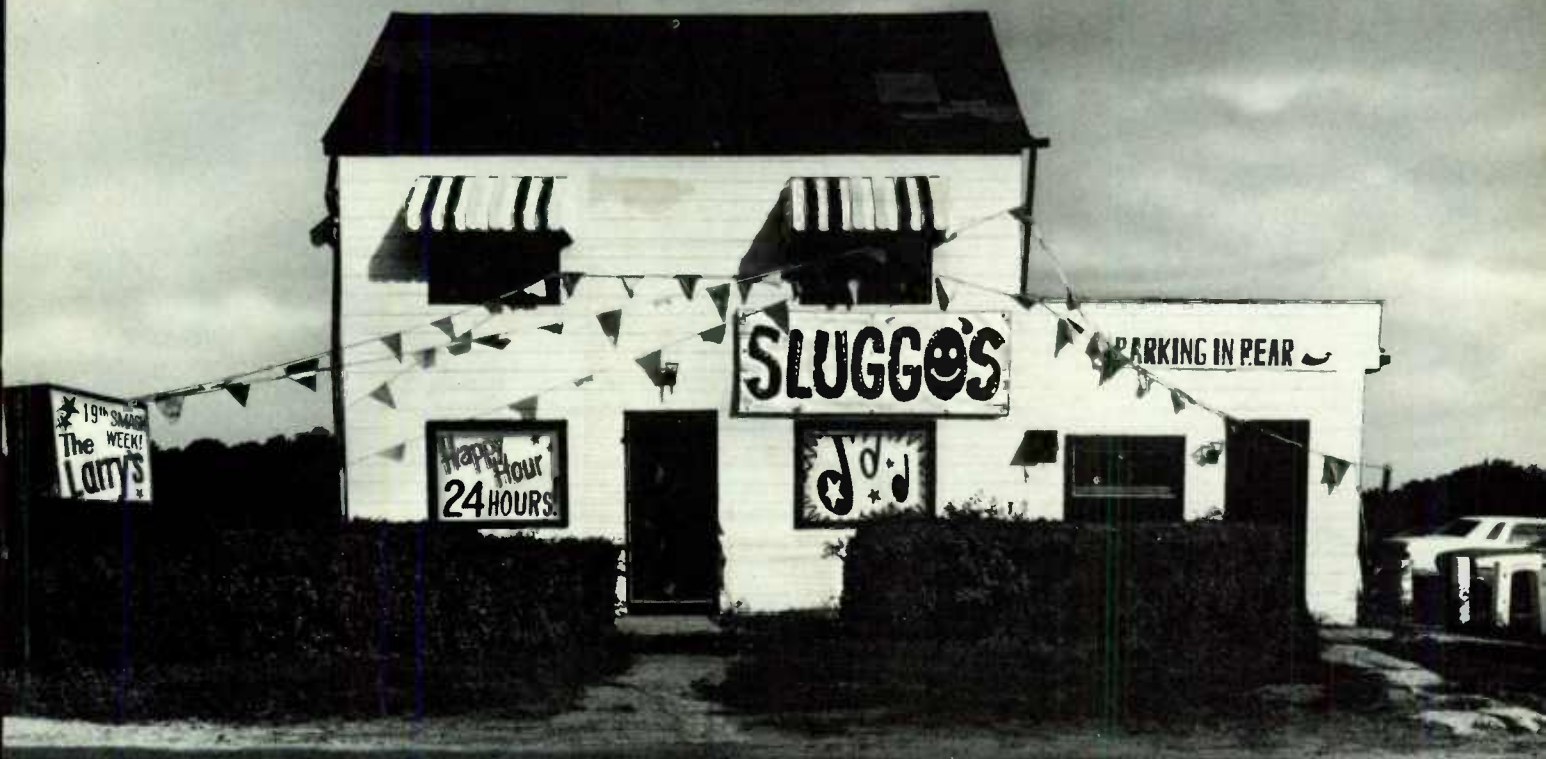
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DEVELOPMENTS

Who says turnabout isn't fair play? Not Tascam and Fostex, that's for sure. A few years ago,

Tascam literally invented cassette multi-track recording with their Portastudio and created an industry storm.

Fostex took a good look at that first prototype, corrected a few bugs, most notably its inability to record all four tracks simultaneously, and brought out a competitive unit. Tascam responded by updating the original, now called the 244. Then Fostex astounded everyone last year by making a book-sized four-track cassette recorder for under \$500, the X-15. Now that Tascam has had a little time to react, here comes their new version of the miniature affordable cassette 4-track, the Ministudio Porta One, and it surmounts a few problems in the X15.

Most important is the Porta One's ability to record all four tracks at once (sound familiar?). Another improvement is a more conventional 4-track mixing console, which puts bass and treble controls and volume sliders on all four tracks, not just two at a time. A mute

control aids track isolation, and three volume controls (the slider, a trim and a tape cue) to the Fostex's two aid tricky patches. Another impressive improvement was a pitch control and an LED to warn of low battery off-speed recording. RECORD/MATRIX switches guard against accidental erasures. There's also a light—nice touch. Noise reduction is a switchable dbx system. The deck's motor is FG servo controlled.

Yes, the Porta One does cost a hundred bucks more, checking in at about \$600, but you can kind of see why. Now, would you be surprised if Fostex has something to say in a few months? Get more input about the Porta One from Tascam Professional Products, 7733 Telegraph Rd., Montebello, CA 90640, (213-726-0303).

Speaking of taking a good idea and making more simplified units for substantially less money, let's talk about

Tascam Ministudio Porta One



Garfield Electronics. At the beginning of 1984 they reduced their ubiquitous Dr. Click synchronizer to the \$600 Mini Doc; now they're letting the new Nano Doc rhythm controller out on the streets for \$250. Not only does it provide simultaneous synchronization of virtually all drum machines and sequencers, but it also records a clock tone onto tape for synchronized multi-tracking. Goodness, does that mean there'll be an Embryo Doc, and what will it be able to do? From Garfield Electronics, Box 1941, Burbank, CA 91507, (818-840-8939).

If we told you there would soon be product from Jagger and Townshend with Bill Wyman playing a supporting role, you might get excited, but don't run down to your record store yet. The Jagger is brother Chris, the Townshend is guitar designer Pat Townshend (no relation) and the product is a high tech interchangeable-neck guitar and bass,

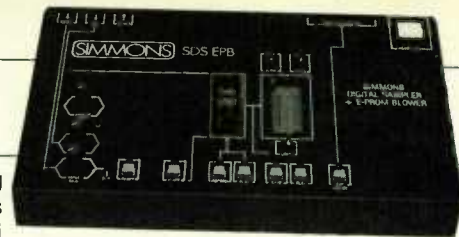


Staccato bass

the **Staccato**. Not that the Stones aren't involved. Wyman was so impressed with Townshend's prototype, he invested money himself and even got Mick to kick in. Staccato guitars and basses were field-tested by the likes of Ron Wood, David Gilmour and Sting and the stars' suggestions were incorporated into the final version.

The Staccato's principal feature is its interchangeable one-piece magnesium neck (with ebony fretboard and illuminated side dot markers!), which is spring-loaded into a fiberglass body. The neck receiver is lined with magnesium and Delrin self-lube plastic. The pickups are Kent Armstrong humbuckers, the nut and bridge are also magnesium, and the electronics feature a digital readout on a touch-sensitive volume control. The complete bass and guitars go for about \$1250, with each neck alone going for about \$750. Contact Staccato Guitars, 14 Woodland Rise, London N.10. 3NG (01-883-6667).

Got a **Simmons** SDS 7 and want to load in your own drum samples? Simmons debuts its SDS EPB (as in Erasable Read Only Memory Blower), which samples sounds and loads them into standard E-Prom chips that can be loaded into the ROM port of an SDS 7 or



Simmons SDS EPB E-Prom blower

the soon-to-come single-pad SDS 1. Simply plug the blank E-Prom (available from Simmons dealers) into the "Zif" (Zero Insertion Force) socket on the front panel, store your sample into the EPB's RAM memory for reviewing and checking, adjust the variable sample speed control and when it's exactly what you want, blow it into the E-Prom. You can also loop the sound for continuous controlled-cycle playback. The EPB throws in a computer interface for unloading data and manipulation of samples and an input external trigger to trigger the sound in either the RAM or the E-Prom—take it away for \$795. Talk to the folks at Simmons

In other sampling developments, **Decillionix**, an upwardly mobile software company from California, has brought out an impressive sampling system for Apple computers, the DX-1. It does quite an impressive number of tasks: samples sounds, saves them on disc, plays back the sound over five octaves (the plug-in circuit board has a line output and a 2-watt amp), tunes the samples to scale tones and converts the Apple keyboard to a musical keyboard, does real-time recording to disc, turns the Apple into a rhythm machine with twelve preset patterns (you can also program your own), and allows you to trigger and sync with external instruments and sequencers. You also get twenty-two pre-recorded samples and eight demo sound-producing selections which help further manipulate your samples and parts. For \$349, this stuff will keep you and your Apple busy for quite a while. If you're a Syntauri or Passport owner, the DX-1 will directly interface. Give Decillionix a call at 408-732-7758 or write to P.O. Box 70985, Sunnyvale, CA 94086.

Personality parade: Was that really **Brian Eno** seen purchasing a **Suzuki** Omnichord at Manny's last month? Sure enough, the wizard of ambience took a liking to the new Omnichord System Two, which is an electronic version of an autoharp, complete with an electronic "strumplate," eighty-four chord combinations and walking bass and rhythm machine accompaniment patterns, all for \$250. And **G. Leblanc's** president, **Vito Pascucci** again won a place on the Men's Fashion Guild of America's Ten Best Dressed Men list. Eat your heart out, David Bowie. —**Jock Baird**

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Sheila E. from page 76

were in the business sometimes gave me a hard time," she comments. "I think it was a jealousy thing. I'm not going to mention any names, but they were really famous drummers. When I started getting a lot of attention, it was being taken away from them, it kind of hurt their egos. I would hear things like, 'You're only getting what you're getting now because you're a girl.' Which might be true in a way. There are some guys who do play better than I do who don't get the recognition. I think I am lucky being a girl who can actually, really play."

One of the first musicians to recognize this fact was Billy Cobham, who employed Sheila and later produced two late-70s albums with Sheila and Pete on Fantasy. *Happy Together* and *Solo Two* are Latin fusion productions at their peak when the conga/timbale assault is ushered in—like father, like daughter, and watch the sparks fly. More importantly, the next step was a long affiliation with George Duke, who helped ease Sheila into the realm of pop, the realm of Marvin Gaye, Jeffrey Osborne, Diana Ross and Lionel Richie.

"The only thing I regret about this whole Sheila E. thing is that Lionel Richie and his wife and organization were really important to me—they were like a mother and father away from home. When I told him about the album, he couldn't have been any happier, but he sort of wished I could have done it with him. Actually, Lionel and I have written some things together and we're going to try to record some things; we really enjoy each other's company."

Much of the groundwork for *The Glamorous Life* was unwittingly laid during a tour Escovedo did last year with Marvin Gaye—the last before his death. She remembers Marvin's magnetism clearly: "A lot of times when he was singing onstage, we'd just get mesmerized and even miss cues. I'd get goose bumps and think, 'This man is incredible.'" Songwriting became her off-hour vice; "We did a bus tour and I carried around a little portable four-track and some synthesizers. In the back of the bus, there was room for me to set up and on those long journeys—sometimes twenty-four hours—I was back there recording."

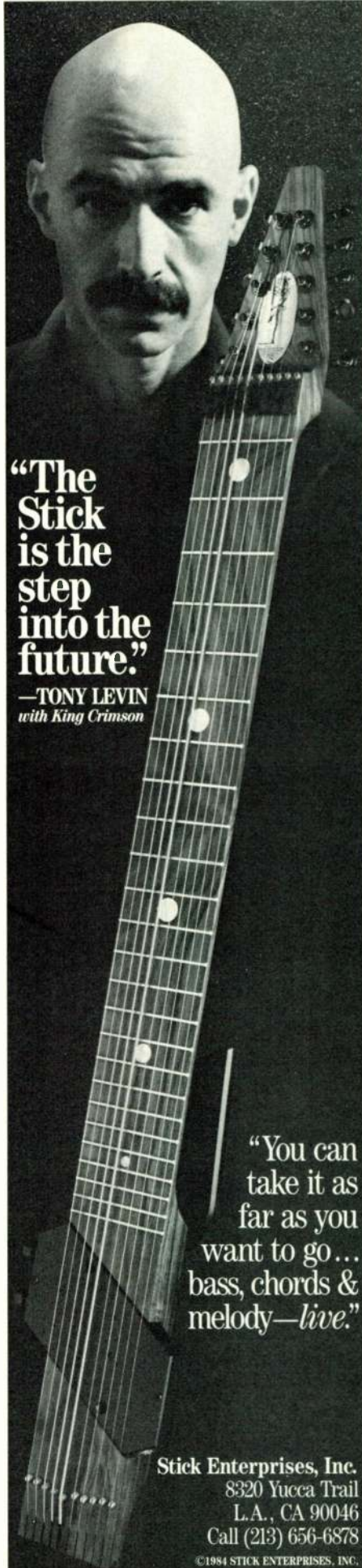
When opportunity knocked, it was an unconditional, Prince-ordained one, in which the artist can call as many of the shots as she sees fit. "It was scary in a sense, because I had never done production before, and I didn't know if my ideas would actually work or not, till we started doing them. After that, forget it, you couldn't stop me." Rhythm being an essential ingredient, she set down the drums first—square one—and the various heated percussion last—the crowning touch. "In the studio, I used a Linn

Drum instead of actually setting up a drum set and getting a sound, getting that 'stock L.A. sound. I like the Linn machine because on that tour, you couldn't record with a drum set on the bus (laughs). On all of the songs that I wrote, I was so used to listening to a Linn machine that I ended up using it. It's what I felt comfortable with. Actually, a lot of the arrangements I just went and started playing and putting things on top of other things, and when I listened to the tune, that was basically what it was, without editing or anything. That is probably one reason there are only six songs on the album. A couple of them are pretty long, but it felt so good I didn't want to stop. It was really exciting to me."

The Glamorous Life is simultaneously exacting and experimental. The title cut and the deceptive ingenuousness of "Oliver's House" are sassy dance-invokers given a manic edge by Larry Williams' splayed sax work on the former and, on the latter, David Coleman's truly sardonic (not to mention cross-tonal) cello line that crawls up like a worm in the tapioca. The foundation of spare synth parts kicking along the groove are a base for sudden, combustible timbale flailing. And then there is the mock *Sgt. Pepper's*-like grandeur of "Next Time Wipe The Lipstick Off Your Collar," replete with Nick DeCaro's blue accordion. Needless to say, Sheila E. has more on her mind than singing soul songs. "You have to shock people so they don't get bored," says Sheila E. "I just picked up weird instruments, instead of using the whole orchestra and things like everybody else does. Everybody else goes right, I go left."

Adrenalized by the associative clout of Prince's commercial reign and the chart motion of the album's title cut, E came out onstage at the Palace in Los Angeles and gave an SRO crowd a proud, triumphant performance. Live, the Prince parallel is uncanny. Like his band, the Revolution, the Sheila E. group (made up of "young, I should say struggling musicians from the Bay Area," she reports) is poly-racial, poly-gender and—here's the crucial distinction—polyrhythmic. While Price generally trues his tunes to a solid, licentious lockstep, the E band is nothing if not rhythmically adroit. Sheila takes command from behind her centerstage timbales and directs the odd, syncopated punches that give her synth funk a Latin lean. Another percussionist and a stand-up drummer—who triggers a Simmons kick drum with one of the toms—follow the hair-trigger rhythmic cues and her high-stepping, high-heeled choreography.

Sexually speaking, Sheila E. is, again like her mentor, a livewire anomaly. The roles are shifted: a leggy female star



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A: *This.*



What can you, Joe Zawinul, Keith Emerson, Carla Bley and Chuck Leavell have in common?


Sheila E. from previous page with the sexual bravado of James Brown and the chops of Pete Escovedo. But, unlike the fragile androgyny of the Prince/Michael Jackson network, E is a taunting seductress with near-burlesque antics ("Want to play with my timbales?" she teases the crowd, and later enacts a seduction of a hapless audience volunteer). Onstage she's out of control, intoxicated by the spotlight she's spent so long outside of.

The obligatory question at last slips out: what, exactly, is this celebrated enigma called Prince truly about, from the privileged inside view? Sheila E. pauses. "I guess you have to get to know him (laughs). He's a great person,

a really strong person who knows what he wants. He gets a lot done. If he says he's going to do something, he does it. Because he knows what he wants, I think that's why he's in the position he is now. He'll write songs on the spot, in five minutes."

Sheila E., in her figurative embryo stage as that persona, may not know exactly what she wants just yet. But the intensity of that raw, sensuous *wanting* is the fuel for one of the meanest, most musical vehicles to have come out of the Prince team. *The Glamorous Life*, judging from her musical signals sent out so far, could also encompass the adjectives amorous and clamorous; there is much more to Sheila E. than

meets the eye or the libido.

One of the more unusual angles of her rise to fame is the deep musical core beneath the manicured, come-hither surface. She hasn't disowned her jazz past. "I'd like to do a jazz fusion album a couple of years down the line and do a tour playing trap drums, because I still enjoy Latin jazz—all kinds of music. I think I'm going to want to do that later on. I know I'm just going to have to do a jazz album, just to be able to sit down and play—just go nuts." That is the Sheila *Musician* originally set out to cover. But Sheila E. is sounding better by each spin of the disc. 

SHEILA-BOPS

Sheila Escovedo is a committed Latin Percussion user, working out on 14-inch and 15-inch Tito Puente timbales, A Go-Go bells, wood blocks and Petato model congas. The congas' indestructible fiberglass construction comes in particularly handy at the end of her shows, when she kicks them into the crowd in a musical demolition derby and is carried offstage. Baby, please don't go!

Low-Tech from page 88

tion to notice it. The various games involved in designing the proper combination of tape, track width, tape speed, record head gap, record level, bias level, bias frequency, and playback head (not to mention a few other technicalities) all result in a slight treble loss in the signal going onto the tape. Or at least they would, if they weren't compensated for by an exactly balanced "pre-emphasis"—an EQ boost—to the treble end of the audio signal.

You have to be aware of these things on the low-tech end because all recorders have their own characteristic ways of handling bias and emphasis, and all tapes have settings for same which are considered optimum. As you work with differing tapes and gear, you'll run into situations where these differences could have a big impact on your sound, unless you know how to adjust the machines or your approach to them.

Signal-to-Noise is trickier to deal with. The most obvious solution, you would think, would be to pack in a real hot signal and simply leave no room for noise. But that's bad. First, it means recording things at a continual risk of distortion. Second, it screws up the capacity to record the full range of volumes, from soft to loud, that we fought the whole battle of bias over. Third, but not last by any means, the hotter the signal the more severe the print-through problem. Oops! So what's to do?

Well, you do try to make the signal peaks in your music as hot as the tape will take without distorting. But only the peaks, mind you. And you try and limit the number of generations involved in your recording, because every time you bounce a track in or transfer your music

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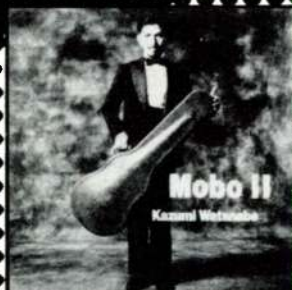


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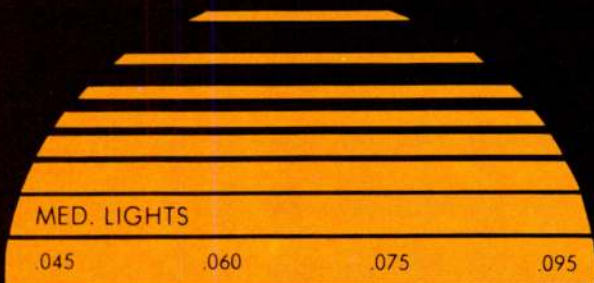
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to another deck you are upping the amount of noise in the S/N ratio. For the rest, you have to try out noise reduction schemes such as those made by Dolby Labs, dbx, and the less-expensive newcomer, Rocktron. Those may all be too steep for a lowtech budget, though, so the game is to make certain your equipment's S/N ratio is as low as as you can manage to get it, and that you watch your levels and bouncing carefully. (But maybe not too carefully...some of the wall in the Phil Spector Wall Of Sound was just accumulated track noise, and those recordings certainly didn't suffer for it!)

Print-through has a simple mechanical fix, if not actual cure. Since it will occur more strongly on the outer wrap of the tape, simply keep all your tapes stored "tails out." That is, don't rewind the tape at the end of a session: instead, fast-forward it until it runs off onto the takeup reel. Stored that way, the heaviest print-through will be a very faint echo following the music, instead of preceding it, and the music itself will mask the effect. It also helps to keep your tapes stored at a steady 60-70 degrees, since heat can make print-through worse.

HARDWARE

The ultimate limitations are always in hardware.

Let's face it, you can record four tracks more cleanly on a four-track machine than you can by using a couple of two-tracks and some bouncing. And if you only have one cassette deck and a guitar, you can't make like you were Quincy Jones, Todd Rundgren, and George Martin rolled into one. Those are barriers built of numbers, manufacturing constraints, and the bottom-line of physics. Imagination won't change them.

Which is good. To pull off a trick, a magician has to know the rules aren't going to abruptly shift.

—Remember that we're worried more about people's reaction to the music than we are to the technical finesse. Great music will be weakened, but not killed, by poor recording. Poor music, on the other hand, is poor no matter how you slice it (and there's years of pop music to prove it).

—Remember that the definition of "good recording equipment" is highly variable. A decent but not fancy four-track machine, bought today, has better specs than any of the four-tracks that were dream machines in the late 60's. Your musical mind shouldn't be wasted in lusting after the latest bells & whistles. Instead, use it to do the best you can with what you've got. Tools have a way of coming around when you're ready for them...so make yourself ready. ☐

Morse from page 74

Steve cuts short his solo on the Dregs classic, "Cruise Control," and ends the set after a mere thirty-four minutes. Before Rod Morgenstein can even get off the stage, the house lights are up and the P.A. is blasting music—Morse will not be allowed to steal the show with one of his steamy encores. ("There's some politics involved there.")

Back in the dressing room, Steve is critiquing the performance with Jerry and Rod. He's pleased, but chides them for overcompensating for last night's rushing. Other than a satisfaction with overall tightness, he seems oblivious to the adoration of the crowd. In fact, he's listening to someone else: "I have a coach inside me, whipping me, regardless of what people say," he says later. "It's like an athlete at the Olympics; he's won the gold medal, and the crowd is roaring, but then he turns around and looks at his time and his face drops. Sure he's won a medal, but he and his coach know how he really did."

What is it with Steve Morse? Why is he so *driven*? Why doesn't he lighten up? "Bad genes, I guess," he shrugs. "I blame my parents for that. I *am* crazy, obsessive, neurotic. I just feel as long as you're alive, you've got to live. I try to live every dream. That's the way it is in my personal life. It means, 'This is the time. Don't waste it.' Everything about my life I try to look at that way, from flying the plane to driving a car to mowing hay back on the farm. That's why Twiggs Lyndon Jr. was important to me. He was that kind of guy, and everything we did together was that way. When he'd go to fix the pedalboard, he'd use some kind of overkill, and I'd ask him why. He'd say, 'Because in the long run, this will *work* and keep working.' And that's his truck out there with the sleeper, that he built for the band. That's why I went through great time and expense to rebuild it and keep it on the road—as a tribute to him, to say, 'I believe in everything you've done, Twiggs. I'm going to keep this thing alive.' That's the kind of person I want to be around, the kind of person who changes your thinking from 'everything's beautiful the way it is' to 'how can I improve it?' There's no time to be wasted. This is it."

It is a few minutes before Bobby & the Midnights are to go on. Fellow talented guitarist Bobby Cochrane, one of the nicest people in the business, comes up to say hi. While chatting with Steve and Jerry, he says, "I'm sorry we didn't have more time to get together on this tour. One of the things I miss is getting together with the other guitarists, staying up late and stealing licks from each other." Peek's eyes widen slightly, but Steve cheerfully if dishonestly agrees.

Imagine! Steve Morse stealing licks! ☐

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RECORD REVIEWS

Learning to love the Alien: Bowie haunts a calculated, kaleidoscopic seance.



DAVID BOWIE

Tonight
(EMI America)

First of all, *Let's Dance* was no mirage or dazzling deception—it truly was the exhilarating R&B-based romp everyone took it for. The album was Bowie at his absolute best—the wise, playful, agitated appreciator. When he chooses to work with popular rock idioms, I've always preferred efforts like *Let's Dance* or *Pin Ups*, to a freakish Brechtian fashion show like 1974's *Diamond Dogs*.

Naturally all the elements in Bowie's records are reference fragments and inspired borrowings, and even his strangled saxophone of a voice is too mercurial in tone and texture to be called distinctive. He treats American popular music as if it were one of those vast Southern California supermarkets so renowned for their gleaming displays of muchness, the singer haunting the store's intercom system to announce specials and markdowns in the various

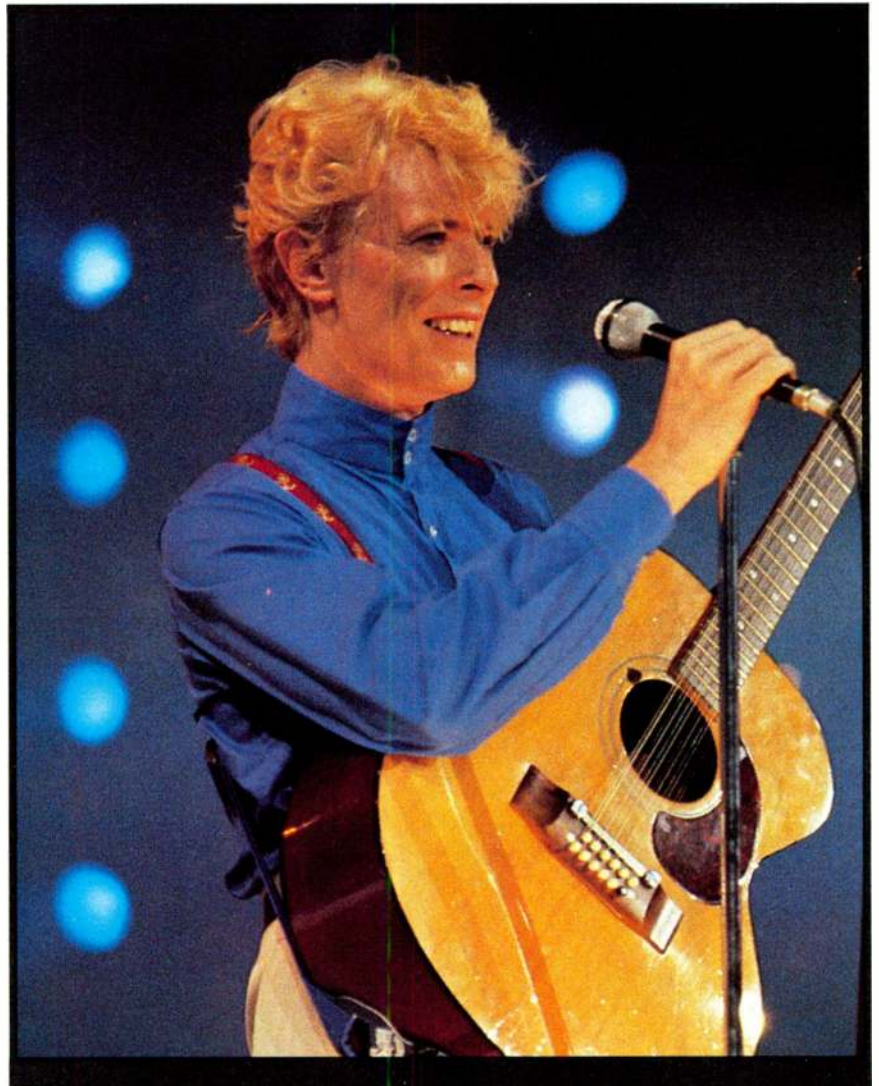
departments. For all his leaps in invention, David Bowie remains a rootless phantom, part puckish commentator, part insatiable incubus, always good for a tingle, a knowing tip, and a shadowy thrill.

On first listen, *Tonight* sounded calculated, derivative and soulless (what ridiculous criticisms to level at the Bogeyman of Rock!), but after recalling who was in charge here, I slowly came to admire and then delight in this latest kaleidoscopic seance. The mood is nicely set with the opening track, "Loving The Alien," a frosty occult ballad, delivered with Bowie's best audioanimatronic Sinatra pose. From there, the record erupts in all directions. "Neighborhood Threat," one of several songs co-written (dating back to 1976) with Iggy Pop, is an absolutely sensational dance track, snarling and incantatory, Omar Hakim's torrential drum-

ming miked to sound like ominous funhouse clangor. "Tumble And Twirl" is a nutty reverie in which Vegas-tinged Beach Boys harmonies collide with salsa time signatures; the whole rollicking melange works beautifully.

"Don't Look Down" is a reggae-pop elegy to an unquiet graveyard that combines direct steals from Bob Marley (including a credible imitation of Bob's timeless yodel) by way of the Police and Steel Pulse. Ditto for "Tonight," which has the added screwball feature of guest vocals by Tina Turner that sound exactly like Bowie's! Weirder still is a winningly bizarre cover of Brian Wilson and Terry Asher's plaintive gem, "God Only Knows." Here, it comes off like a dirge served up by Doc Severinsen for a Jerry Lewis telethon.

"Blue Jean" and "Dancing With The Big Boys" are two more nicely hellish R&B rug-cutters (the former copping its



cool vocal ironies and stop-start rhythms from the Cars) that rank with the best of the bunch on *Let's Dance*. The album's stroke of brilliance, however, is a marvelous, martial remake of Leiber & Stoller's "I Keep Forgetting," propelled by more of Hakim's rib-rumbling drumming, tart horn charts by the "Borneo Horns" and Beatlesque hotwire guitar from Carlos Alomar. Part of the enormous power of *Tonight* lies in Bowie's decision to allow his band to be spotlighted throughout, and veteran sidekick Alomar, for one, has never played better or more alluringly. Indeed, once this sweeping, apparitional soundscape of an album gets under your skin, it's gonna rule your darkest and deepest fits of ballroom delirium for years to come. — **Timothy White**



WYNTON MARSALIS

Hot House Flowers
(Columbia)

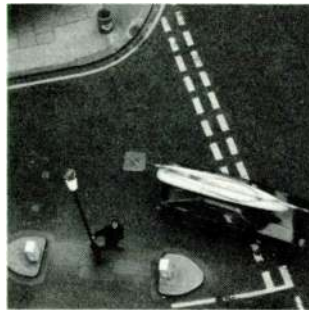
On *Hot House Flowers*, Wynton Marsalis and his backing quartet swing forcefully with a chamber group, composed of string section and selected winds: flute, tuba, bassoon, French horn, and oboe/English horn. Though jazz 'n' strings productions have often proved disappointing, Marsalis' is a delicate labor of love, and each of his factions are integrated into the larger whole. The result is a delightfully balanced session, rich in both creeping orchestral crescendos and contemplative moments of improvisation. For its stylistic innovations alone, *Flowers* is a breakthrough record.

We have already come to expect that sort of thing from Marsalis, a budding performer who, in spite of potentially crippling critical tags of "genius" and massive hoopla, has developed into a firebrand with nearly infallible command of his instrument. This is to say nothing of his range; the release of *Flowers* was paired with the issue of his second classical disc, a baroque outing featuring soprano Edita Gruberova in a chamber orchestra setting, and, in that regard, the LP further chronicles his musical maturation. Marsalis has often cited Clifford Brown as an influence—"I

learned every solo on *Clifford Brown With Strings* like my name," he said in a recent interview—and it's no fluke that the wizardry of last year's *Think Of One* is here overshadowed by a searching, Brown-like lyricism. Note "Stardust," which finds Marsalis jousting with the verse before launching a restrained but no less playful rendition of the familiar chorus; in the manner of a sportsman, he paws each phrase with gentle stir as he releases it from captivity. This is no hot-headed young lion—Wynton Marsalis can play.

Those who figured it all along may be more surprised by the rest of his quartet's remarkably keen performance. The team of pianist Kenny Kirkland, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Jeffery Watts provides a multi-layered rhythmic backing that reinforces but never overpowers the strings, while supplying joyful nudges for the soloists. Kirkland takes top honors for tact: he obviously studied Robert Freedman's understated charts beforehand, and his effortless accompaniment binds every ensemble color. He masters the sleepy swing of "For All We Know" with well-placed, texturally perfect padding, then dons gloves for an aggressive round of implied double-time for the blowing section.

Marsalis and his ensemble tackled some admirable challenges with this session, most notably John Lewis' suite-like "Django" and the demanding rubato "Lazy Afternoon." A spry version of "When You Wish Upon A Star" is marred by Branford Marsalis' incoherent tenor saxophone solo, and flautist Kent Jordan is an unnecessary addition to the stop-and-start play of the title track. Still, *Hot House Flowers* finds Marsalis carrying the classic jazz torch in a superlative manner; one hopes this lushly interactive date will inspire a wave of similarly spirited endeavors. — **Tom Moon**



TOM VERLAINE

Cover
(Warner Bros.)

With so much mindless rubbish perpetrated in pop, it's always tempting to exalt anyone who's thought out

and mastered a role. Never mind whether the character is a plausible one; a strong persona is the sign of superior art, right?

A dangerous assumption, as witness Tom Verlaine's fourth solo LP. Like its predecessors, the finely-crafted *Cover* casts him as a dizzy, guitar-wielding, romantic poet. Verlaine's expert performance is impressive but ultimately unsatisfying; his trembling confessions of passion are so ethereal they frequently border on the abstract. The chorus of "Swim," a chanted "I could swim in your love," has a Jonathan Richman-like callowness. That and other genteel sentiments ("Five Miles Of You") play off the earthier "Miss Emily" (Dickinson?) wherein the protagonist offers to work around the house as a handyman—an old-fashioned carnal come-on!

When Verlaine fronted Television, the rest of the band supplied the flesh to his spirit, making for a magical mix. On his own, nothing prevents dreamy Tom from heading for the ozone. His visceral playing, once as sizzling as Neil Young's, is now mere filler. The mildly funky "Rotation," for example, cries out for a flamethrower solo. Instead, Verlaine takes the minimal route with a few stray licks that amount to zilch.

"I'm unravelled to the core," Verlaine shivers at one point, implying that *Cover* is about the loss of defenses. Maybe so, but he never quite materializes. He is Out There, somewhere, artfully contemplating his navel. Call home when you get a chance, Tom. — **Jon Young**



THE RAMONES

Too Tough To Die
(Sire)

You can dress 'em up in Phil Spector grandeur, snappy 10cc pop and sassy Joan Jett metal—God, how producers have tried. And after ten years, you still can't take the Ramones anywhere on the charts. *Too Tough To Die* may not change that. But now that they've got that wishful A&R thinking out of their system, the Ramones are back rolling around in the heavy fuzz guitar grime and rolling subway thunder of their original CBGB attitude.

Marking the welcome return of original drummer Tommy Erdelyi as producer, *Too Tough To Die* gives you a lot of apocalypse for your money. In just fifty-five seconds, the instrumental snatch "Durango 95" whips up the same Mad Max - meets - Ventures frenzy of *Ramones* and *Leave Home*, Dee Dee and new drummer Richie Beau's railroad beat plowing through the cinderblock chunks of Johnny's guitar. With a shredded marine-sergeant bawl that sounds like he eats rock salt for breakfast, Dee Dee leads two violent hardcore assaults on "Endless Vacation" and "Wart Hog," Richie zipping the band through those hairpin turns with a biker's flair and a truckdriver's authority. Joey exploits the lone wolf fears of "Danger Zone" with a gritty snarl ("They say you're an awkward kid/ You've flipped your lid") and in "Mama's Boy," a Cramps-like caveman stomp, works up a primal bark serrated with the same manic energy as Johnny's voodoo distortion.

But if noble failures like *End Of The Century* and *Subterranean Jungle* taught the Ramones anything, it was that heavy slam should lift you up as often as it pins you to the wall. The bratty top forty swingers "Chasin' The Night" and "Howling At The Moon" (the latter co-produced by Dave Stewart of Eurythmics), succeed on both counts, the band's outlaw roar tarted up with strategic la-la choruses and delightfully mangy synth runs. And when they go out with "No Go," it's with a little Stray Cats spring in their step, not so much a concession to current happy pop as it is a wily subversion of it.

That the Ramones never gave up is reason enough for you never to give up on them. Like the rest of their atomic oeuvre, *Too Tough To Die* is probably too raw to chart, too punk to pop. But it is still too genuine to ignore. Do so at your peril. — **David Fricke**



PAT METHENY

First Circle
(ECM)

It had to happen; Pat Metheny, that guitar wunderkind associated with his own school of vital, often sweet jazz

composition, has become formulaic. Certainly his level of output—eleven albums in eight years, five with the "group," three in similar configurations—makes some repetition inevitable, though Metheny's music had largely escaped that fate, by virtue of soaring melody and smart orchestration. But on *First Circle*, the guitarist falls prey to his once-sharp instincts, creating for the first time a body of work that looks backward.

The unerringly romantic themes of vintage Metheny—the kind you could sing if you had the range to make the frequent octave jumps—are gone on this date, replaced by quick-fix, seemingly incomplete melodies. The *First Circle* lines are still lyrical, but they travel too close to the paths of his earlier work. If compositions like "The Epic" (from *American Garage*) were suite-like exercises in crafty construction, *Circle's* corresponding entries are boxed in by obsessive attention to song form and unnecessary repetition. Check the title track or "End Of The Game" to witness Metheny attempting to recapture the flow of his best longer works with only compositional fragments and misguided interludes. This segmentation allows less room for the group's trademark slow-burn development sections: the ever-intensifying dynamic contrast of Metheny's classic "Phase Dance" becomes the abruptly condensed, too-rapid climax of "The First Circle."

Indeed, there are enough direct quotes from Metheny's past to make a musical anagram. The plodding "End Of The Game" is a rewrite of *Offramp's* "Are You Going With Me?" (the same guitar synthesizer sounds, but minus the nifty unprepared modulations); "Yolanda, You Learn" echoes the bright rock of "American Garage," and the title track makes use of a recorder-esque synth sound first heard on "The Search." "If I Could" is Pat's acoustic guitar mood-piece entry, and its winding melodic terrain is interchangeable with such previous offerings as "Farmer's Trust."

Know that there are some good moments on *First Circle*. "Tell It All" is a fine blowing vehicle as Metheny's guitar (sans tricks) slides fitfully over the slippery bossa nova, and Mays offers breathing room with a round of thoroughly developed ideas. A rallying ensemble phrase punctuates the solos, which reveal bebop influence as well as passing harmonic reference to the jam session favorite "Blue Bossa."

Metheny has always drawn on Brazilian forms (he's reportedly working on a collaborative project with Milton Nascimento), so it's not surprising that the Brazilian tint of "Tell It All" turns up in other places—notably "Mas Alla

(Beyond)," sung in Portuguese by new percussionist Pedro Aznar. The vocal role in the Metheny group has been expanded to mixed advantage on this record, but Aznar, who follows the thread-like melody in lone-voice solitude, emerges at once victorious and vulnerable. The remainder of *First Circle*, however, only offers Metheny stepping sideways and pleasing by pattern; his previous work has led us to expect more. —

Tom Moon



JOAN JETT & THE BLACKHEARTS

Glorious Results Of A Misspent Youth
(Blackheart/MCA)

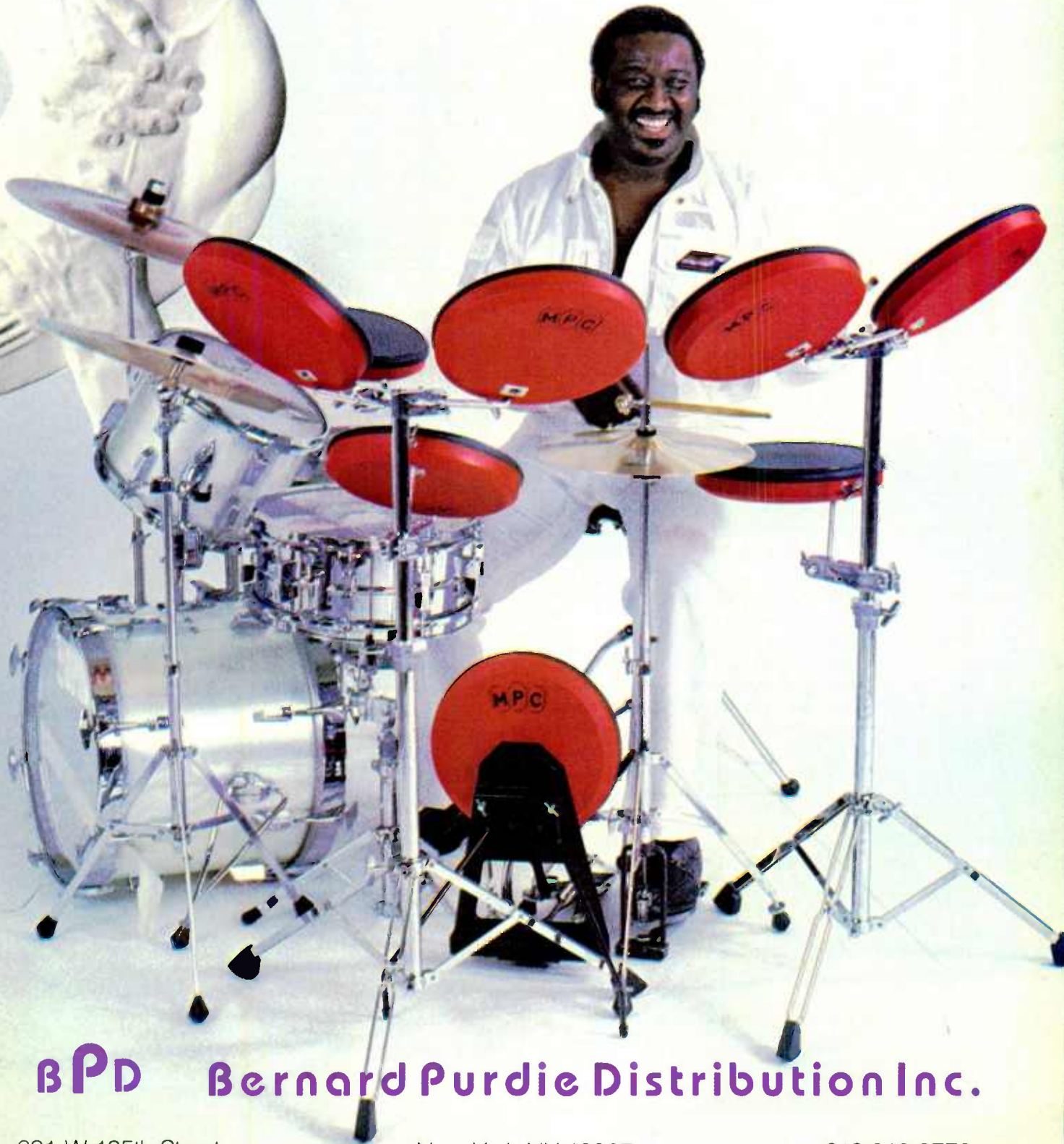
It's loud. It's obnoxious. My mother becomes visibly ill whenever she hears it. The hair on my cat's back shoots up in horror whenever I play it. I love it. *Glorious Results Of A Misspent Youth* ain't no classic, but Joan Jett & the Blackhearts' fourth and best album is just what its title promises: years of bad taste, bad habits and bad attitude brought together to build a roaring machine so overpowering and ecstatic as to make much of the rest of today's raunch sound insipid.

What distinguishes *Glorious Results* from every other heavy metal band (and anything else this band ever recorded) is the Blackhearts' sense of tradition and, even more, their newfound proficiency. Bassist Gary Ryan and drummer Lee Crystal provide a steady, surging bottom over which Jett and lead guitarist Ricky Byrd can wail to their heart's content. For most hard rockers, rock history only goes back to *Led Zepelin II*, but the Blackhearts, both in their series of uproarious covers (the best being this album's reverent trashing of Gary U.S. Bonds' "New Orleans") and their attitude, betray a deeply felt love for and commitment to rock 'n' roll's past. And beneath that tough exterior, Jett can be surprisingly tender. "Hold Me" is far prettier a plea for love than one would suspect of her, and "I Got No Answers" an articulate acceptance of the world's inconsistencies.

But let's not go overboard with the serious stuff: this is a party record. The



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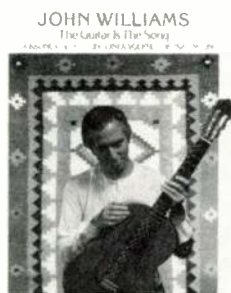
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Blackhearts have integrated brass into their sound in such an effectively low-key manner that they've trained the saxes to sound like guitars. "Long Time" is a speedpunk farewell to a philandering lover that almost makes heartbreak feel good, the remake of the Runaways' "Cherry Bomb" is both an attack on and a celebration of Jett's public image, and "Someday," the least subtle kiss-off ever written, features a hilarious rap by Jett while she and Byrd churn chainsaw noises from their guitars.

Like Chrissie Hynde, Jett leads a band that plays in a traditionally male-identified rock genre and the results are, well, glorious. What will the Scorpions say when they learn that the best heavy metal band around is fronted by a woman? — **Jimmy Guterman**



JOHN WILLIAMS

The Guitar Is The Song
(CBS)

John Williams is indisputably one of the world's great virtuosos of the classical guitar. So why is he making music like this, in which his incredibly pure tone and almost inhumanly precise technique are just another voice in a band that, ignoring the classical repertoire, explores folk melodies from around the world? One answer might be found in an interview in which Williams defined classical music as "acoustic, live music," and posited it as an antidote to "this absurd consumer valuation of culture." In this context, *The Guitar Is The Song* can be seen as one man's blueprint for the music of a new world.

Williams' is a friendly, gregarious vision, in which melody passes from guitar to tin whistle to clarinet to cello, while third world cousins of the guitar like the charanga and cuatro strum along, and hand percussion of sundry origins bumps and thumps an energetic groove. Constantly changing textures maintain interest in the simple repetition of some very simple melodies, the product of carefully thought-out arrangements (they really should be called orchestrations) by Brian Gascoigne. It is these arrangements, and the not-so-small matter of performance style, that

really sets *Song* apart from the acoustic strummings of ordinary folks, though it's at first strange to hear tunes like "Scarborough Fair" and the Irish jig "St. Patrick's Day" played with this much precision. And while the hybrid of classical discipline with folk's abandoned energy works most of the time, folk's vocal inflections are missed—especially in the livelier dance tunes, which tend to be a little too polite.

What this record presents superbly, though, besides folkloric melodies many of us who aren't familiar with Venezuela, Ethiopia or Naples will not have heard, is the power of simplicity. I'd thought that such melodies and harmonies were played out by years of safe and soupy pop music. But Williams and Gascoigne's version of folk music, by bringing the classical musician's discipline of discovering and interpreting the composer's original intention to bear on total chestnuts like "Shenandoah" or "So We'll Go No More A-Roving," proves that such music is really timeless, and can, in the process, help us get back in touch with our very human roots. — **Chris Doering**

The J. Geils Band

THE J. GEILS BAND

You're Gettin' Even While I'm Gettin' Odd
(EMI America)

Peter Wolf got the first hit and all the sympathy. But this daredevil comeback record shows that, even without Wolf's spirited yap, the J. Geils Band still has what it takes to punch your lights out. Breaking the guilty silence that followed their sudden divorce from Wolf, they have the element of surprise on their side and, led by keysman Seth Justman (who assumes all the writing and most of the vocal duties) they use it to fullest advantage.

A lot of what goes on here—the brooding electronics of "Tell 'Em Jonesy," Justman's frenzied John Cage-meets-Jerry Lee Lewis piano string plucking on the title track—sounds like it belongs on three or four different albums, including the band's '82 platinum breakthrough *Freeze Frame*. "Eenie, Meenie, Minie, Moe" is more typical Geils fare, as if the old nur-

sery rhyme were being ground under Mitch Ryder's Detroit Wheels—except that its houseparty strut is blasted through galactic phasing and punctuated by sassy Stax/Volt horn breaks and gospel yahoos until it finally fades out with a "Penny Lane" trumpet flourish played on one of Justman's 101 Synths.

This isn't just clutter, though; it's good strategy. You don't wonder what Wolf's bark might have meant to a dizzy beer blast like "Concealed Weapon"; the fierce gargle of J. Geils' underwater guitar and sonic boom of Stephen Jo Bladd's drums—no, that's *not* the police banging down your front door—are already halfway up your head. Any reservations you have about hot dog/jellyroll bedroom innuendoes peppering lyrics don't stand a chance against the dub speed-rock whirl of, ahem, "Californicating," or the heavy metal python glide of J. Geils' fuzz guitar and serrated growl of Magic Dick's harp in the slow, mean blues "The Bite From Inside." And as singers, what Justman and Bladd (featured on three songs) may lack in Wolf's finger-poppin' sass is zapped with witty production dazzle.

None of this makes you feel any better about the split. But it is apparent from the gritty urban bounce of Wolf's album and techno-Spector ambitions on *You're Gettin' Even* that the Geils band was on a collision course anyway. This way at least they can share the wealth. —

David Fricke



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This Is What You Want... This Is What You Get
(Elektra)

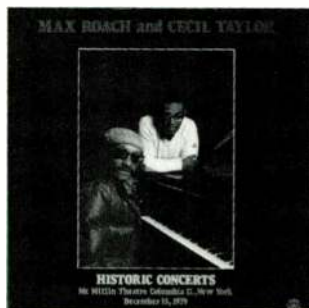
What do you want from a Public Image Ltd. album? By now PiL führer John Lydon has succeeded in scaring off all but the most tolerant, or masochistic, of fans who remember when he was Johnny Rotten. At first PiL compensated for the too-populist Sex Pistols with deliberately aggravating noise. Recently, though, the "band"—reduced to singer Lydon, drummer Martin Atkins and occasional hired hands—has veered into discoid dance rhythms and banal harmonies.

Lydon's distinctive vocals supply the horseradish; his nasal wail, if played loud enough, should attract some strange fauna to your neighborhood. The often minimal accompaniment allows no escape from his sometimes indecipherable braying, which exerts the fascination—and charm—of a cobra's stare.

As usual, Lydon's lyrics are blackly humorous at best, merely petulant at worst. "Tie Me To The Length Of That" consists of a baby's (or adult's?) muttered reminiscences of childbirth—"Why'd you let him hit me...I knew you didn't love me"—set to a stompy beat and sinister bass-keyboard line. That's a humorous song. "Where Are You" is more typical and less hilarious, with Lydon keening ("You're never here when you're needed") Beckett-like over scraping violin and an ostinato bass.

If you find Lydon's querulousness worth the trouble, PiL repays attention with semi-outrageous vocal acrobatics and off-the-wall lyrics. Unlike earlier editions of the group (and Lydon alone is plastered over the album jacket), this PiL is technically competent and not too inspired. Then again, Lydon would probably sack musicians who tried to assert themselves. "Concept" is the key factor here; *This Is What You Want's* most listenable track is "The Order Of Death" (the overseas title of Lydon's screen acting debut), on which a tape loop endlessly repeats the album's title phrases against a stately keyboard instrumental with guitar ornamentation.

You could dance to it. — Scott Isler

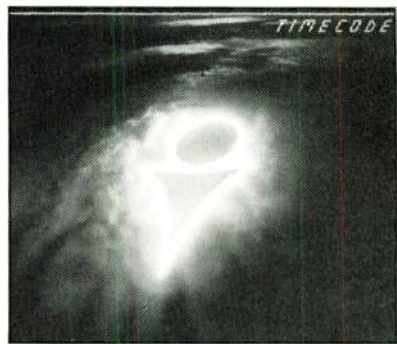


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Robert Christgau, *Village Voice*

the most potent musical experiences of my life. Now Soul Note has finally released these 1979 performances under the appropriate banner, *Historic Concerts*.

Opening with Roach's ringing gong and Taylor's seminal rhythmic arpeggios—which intoned the thematic tenor of the performance—the dialogue between Cecil's percussive piano and Max's melodic drums was simply breathtaking. Roach immediately deciphered Taylor's densely complex formal structures and so completely assimilated Taylor's rhythmic-melodies that in the second performance he constructed a marvelous solo based on material Taylor had only seconds before introduced. Using the bass drum to define pulse, Roach wove polyrhythmic webs with his snare, tom toms and high hat, relegating the larger cymbals to the role of punctuation. Meanwhile, Taylor's piano roared, danced and incanted, as his hands battled and flurried like two spring blue jays.

As potent as the first set was, the second is the glory of this two-record package; here Roach and Taylor work intuitively, their dynamic range widens, and their moods are more variegated. Less eager to simply stake out their territory, they are able to furrow larger tracts for

delicate delineation. Roach paints subtle textures with various percussion instruments and at times Taylor even waxes romantic; yet the way they examine ideas from every angle is almost cubistic. Africa, the Delta, 52nd Street, Unit Structures; it's all here. I'm still dancing around my living room in stocking feet because this music is so great. — **Cliff Tinder**

The Fixx from page 84 lyrics would be hers.

Onstage, former actor Cy throws himself into the role of the saintly, solitary main character of the Fixx's liturgical drama. "He's locked in a vacuum, this character—even we're third party to this chap now. He's constantly examining himself, like when you're on your own in front of the bathroom mirror. Now the chap's realized that doubt and insecurity are the only things he'll ever have. They're his tools, his wizard's pouch."

Isn't there an awful lot of subliminal religious activity going on here? Reverend Cy leading the lost, shuttered souls to the beach, making a zero sign with his thumb and forefinger and literally "slapping zero" with the front rows? "It's very easy to go out and make people believe if they're lacking in something. Providing frightened human beings with some



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false answer is easy. What we're saying is, 'Don't look to us for answers. Judge yourself a lot harder than you're doing at the moment, and don't use religion as your saviour.'

A little college psychology is a dangerous thing, but there is this business of Cy being educated by the Jesuits? "One thing about the Jesuits," Curnin offers, "they may have an image of being very conservative, but inside they open up, they show you the trick: if you're going to get up on a platform, make sure you break down. Don't put up a facade. They're the people who draw the potential out of you, if you have it, to get up on a box; they want you to."

So despite that whole escape from society's conventions, isn't Cy doing exactly what the Jesuits trained him to do? "I sometimes wonder," he smiles. "All those Jesuits...they're pounding on my brain now worse than ever! I admit it!! There's no way I can escape it."

Well, by now I'm getting a little confused too. I've read so much negative press on the Fixx that talks about this guy Curnin that I'm wondering whether I have the only press copy of *Phantoms* with music on it. And after long study, I'm still not sure if the Fixx's albums are getting better or worse—they'll have to make one that isn't excellent before an accurate measurement can be made. For now, it's time to shut up and dance. ☑



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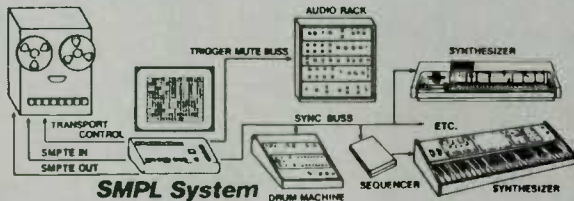
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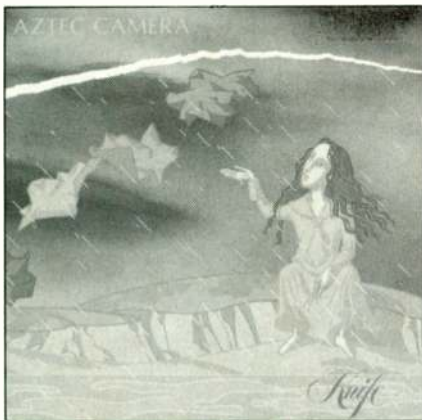
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Aztec Camera – *Knife* (Sire). Roddy Frame still carries himself like the sensitive prodigy he doubtless is, but where the first time around he emphasized his hookish good nature, this second album demonstrates both his depth and ambition. At times, the latter threatens to get the best of him—listen to him force a cadence out of “On every whisper that welcomes the inconceivable/ And the birth of the true”—but never does, which is a good sign. Far more encouraging, though, is the resonance and staying power of these songs, each of which seems to get better with every listening. Did I say “prodigy”? Maybe I meant “genius.”

Let's Active – *Cypress* (IRS). Amazing growth from this trio. Mitch Easter's songs are as catchy as ever, but more idiosyncratic as his influences become subsumed by the band's identity. Better still, he's also learned to write melodies that make the most of his limited voice, leaning on the fragmented guitar lines and episodic arrangements for mutual reinforcement. As a result, *Cypress* goes steadily from strength to strength, mixing sprawling melodic lines with dense, Beatlesque harmony to intoxicating effect.

Fela Anikulapo Kuti – *Black President* (Capitol). Because it's three years old already, many hardcore Fela fans will have already bought this on import (along with the even feistier *Original Sufferhead*). But that's no reason for the rest of you to slack off, especially if you've never heard where Talking Heads stole most of their Africanisms from, or have ever wondered what kind of band could bring Paul McCartney to tears. And with the advantage of a mid-line price, you've got even less excuse.

Dave Edmunds – *Riff Raff* (Columbia). Although the new ELO—the Edmunds/Lynne Organization—isn't as annoying as the old one, it hardly counts as an improvement. Granted, Edmunds sings more expressively than Lynne or any of his cohorts ever could, and that tends to give these songs some semblance of life. His voice to the contrary, though, Dave Edmunds has always been a stiff performer in the studio, and when he's been constrained by Lynne's production ideas, it sounds like rigor mortis is already setting in.

The Replacements – *Let It Be* (Twin Tone). These guys, by contrast, are about as loose as you can get without falling over. But underneath their carefully cultivated lack of discipline beats the heart of a truly great rock 'n' roll band, and that's what you hear here. “I Will Dare” is a true stunner, with an amiable shuffle pushing an irresistible melody that makes it sound like a genuine hit. Nor is the rest of the album, from the touching “Androgynous” to the wacky “Gary's Got A Boner,” anything to sniff at. The indie album of the year? (445 Oliver Avenue South, Minneapolis)

Barry Gibb – *Now Voyager* (MCA). Okay, so the guy still has a tendency to sound like a squirrel when he gets funky—we can't all be Daryl Hall, y'know. But Gibb has an unerring ear for production values, which, thanks to a canny sense for dance rhythms, makes *Now Voyager* an impressive pop package. Now if only he had some great songs to stick in that package...

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack – *The Wild Life* (MCA). The usual grab bag approach, featuring some names you'll know—Bananarama, Andy Summers, Edward Van Halen—and a lot more you won't. But there are three excellent reasons for checking this out: Edward Van Halen's “Donut City,” a slyly understated instrumental that does just what you don't expect it to; Summers' “Human Shout,” which is as good-natured as his typical Police tunes; and “No Trespassing,” in which Louise Goffin and Charlotte Caffey go-go for broke.

The Fixx – *Phantoms* (MCA). They got angst in their pants and expect us to dance?

Jocelyn Brown – *Somebody Else's Guy* (Vinyl Dreams). Thanks to Brown's vocal fireworks, which pack the punch of Jennifer Holliday but without the ex-

cess, the title song from the album was the best reason to listen to R&B radio over the summer. Although nothing here quite equals that (“I'm Caught Up” comes closest), the other songs don't make it seem like a fluke, either. And including Frederick Linton's rap reply record in the package was a masterstroke. **Diana Ross** – *Swept Away* (RCA). Ross keeps showing more vocal power with each self-produced album, and then goes on to squander it on overblown emotionalism, like that cluttering “Forever Young” or the Julio Iglesias duet, “All Of You.” If she wants to be Barbra Streisand that badly, I suppose it's her own business, but somebody needs to remind her that Streisand could never cut a version of “Rescue Me” as sharp as the one here.

Donna Summer – *Cats Without Claws* (Geffen). As was the case with *She Works Hard For The Money*, Michael Omartian's production brings out the best in Summer's voice, but because the songs here are forgettable at best, it's all for naught.

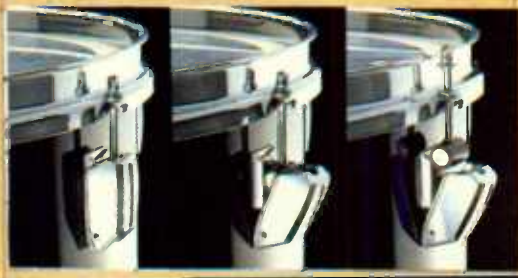
Stephanie Mills – *I've Got The Cure* (Casablanca). George Duke takes the production credit, but it's David “Hawk” Wolinski who carries the album. Wolinski's “The Medicine Song” is not only the best single Mills has ever recorded, it's also Wolinski's best effort since the heyday of Rufus. And though Duke does exploit the same combination of tough synthesizers and throaty singing, he never quite generates the same electricity.

Steve Morse Band – *The Introduction* (Elektra/Musician). There's no denying Morse's chops, nor those of his equally fleet-fingered bassist, Jerry Peek. But though Morse seems closer to understanding the purpose of melody, his prolix pieces all-too-frequently leave the listener with little to do but sit in open-mouthed amazement, thinking, “Golly, he plays fast.” And, frankly, a lot of us want more than that from our music.

Grandmaster Melle Mel & the Furious Five – *Grandmaster Melle Mel & the Furious Five* (Sugarhill). People, it's bad, and I don't mean good. While “Hustlers Convention” makes some good, if obvious points, and “The Truth” plays a good game of catch-up with Run-D.M.C., the fact that Melle Mel thinks he can, much less should, sing cannot be taken as a good sign.

J.D. Considine

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Charles Mingus — *Music Written For Monterey, 1965. Not Heard... Performed In Its Entirety, At UCLA (East Coasting)*. A reissue with a history as curious and protracted as its title. In 1965, Mingus journeyed to the Monterey Jazz Festival with what was essentially a brass band (three trumpets, tuba, French horn, Charles McPherson's alto, Danny Richmond's drums, and the leader's bass and piano), armed with new scores which he felt exploited the full potential of that unusual instrumentation and which he intended to record for release on his own mail order label—well over an hour's music in all. Allotted only ten minutes at Monterey, the smarting Mingus instead recorded his UCLA concert a week later, issuing the results on a double album that never went beyond its initial pressing of a few hundred copies. The masters were destroyed when Mingus failed to reclaim them from the pressing plant, thus *Music Written For Monterey* became one of the rarest and most competitively sought after of jazz collectors' items. Through the efforts of rare record dealer Fred Cohen, miracle worker engineer Jack Towers, and Mingus' widow, Susan Graham, a limited facsimile edition of the UCLA concert is now available (with a 45 RPM record of the brief Monterey performance and reproductions of Mingus' colorful Down Beat and Village Voice ads for his record company as bonuses). The music proves to be everything one might have hoped for. Mingus' sidemen were obviously not yet fully conversant with the ambitious, intricate scores he wrote for their California sojourn. There are numerous false starts and breakdowns,

and at one point the irate Mingus banishes half the band to the wings to rehearse while the core group of Mingus, Richmond, McPherson, and Lonnie Hillyer fly through a collage-like medley of bebop standards. Yet far from diminishing the appeal of this music, these snafus only enhance its vitality, for they demonstrate that jazz composition can be as chancy in nature as jazz improvisation, a point Mingus seemed suicidally intent on proving throughout his career. And once the pieces fall into place, these performances are magnificent, striking that tension between crudity and discretion that was Mingus' signature in the turbulent sixties. *Music Written For Monterey* is a compelling document for any number of reasons—it shines some light on the late Hobart Dotson, a tantalizingly obscure trumpeter whose soulful commiseration with Mingus' arco bass on "Meditations For Inner Peace" and whose clarion lead on "The Arts of Art Tatum and Frederick Webster" nominate him as the most unjustly neglected figure in modern jazz since Herbie Nichols; it witnesses the premieres of "Don't Be Afraid, The Clown's Afraid, Too" and "Once There Was A Holding Company Called Old America" (a.k.a. "The Shoes Of The Fisherman's Wife"), both later rerecorded on the celebrated *Let My Children Hear Music*; it contains the only legitimate recorded performances of "They Violate The Land Of The Sacred Sioux" (two takes, one from Monterey) and the burst of righteous indignation called "Don't Let It Happen Here," as well as a surprisingly affectionate "Muskrat Ramble." But this music is emotionally gripping as well as historically enlightening, and that's the best reason of all for getting it while the getting is once again good (\$25, plus \$3.50 postage and handling, from East Coasting Records, P.O. Box 866, Ansonia Station, NY, NY 10023).

Elsewhere on the reissue scene.... If their first batch of releases is any indication, look for great things from DRG's new affiliate Swing. Leasing its material from a variety of European labels, this NY-based independent is doing the missionary work the majors ought to be doing, in terms of retrieving timeless music from the 20s and 30s from the oblivion of the vaults. Included

in Swing's first release are three single albums: *Satchmo Style* (Armstrong and big band on one side, the little known Jack Purvis—one of the earliest of the Armstrong followers, and one of the best—on the flip), *The Chocolate Dandies 1928-33* (big bands and small groups under the defacto leadership of Benny Carter and/or Don Redman), and *Harlem Comes To London* (a delightful potpourri of singers, tap dancers, and big bands) and three doubles: *Fats Waller In London* (with the wistful "London Suite"), *Fletcher Henderson & The Dixie Stompers 1925-1928* (not as definitive as the long out-of-print CBS four-record box *A Study In Frustration*, but an agreeable substitute—beware the inaccurate personnel listings, though), and *Ridin' In Rhythm* (another anthology, with Ellington, Henderson, and glorious Coleman Hawkins in every conceivable setting).

Because the ferment of the jazz avant-garde coincided with the emergence of Europe as a recording center, some of the pivotal records of the '60s are as difficult to track down as those from the more distant 20s and 30s. PolyGram has just issued Japanese pressings of six mid-60s Dutch Fontana albums never before available in the U.S., all of which fill in gaps (and they have the advantage of being better recorded than the ESP Disks of the same period, no small consideration given the instrumental egalitarianism essential to free music): *Rufus* by **Archie Shepp** and **John Tchicai**; *Consequences* by the New York Contemporary 5 (with Shepp, Tchicai, and Don Cherry); *Juba Lee* by **Marion Brown**; *Jazz Realities* with **Carla Bley**, **Steve Lacy** and **Michael Mantler**; *Communications* (a prefiguration of the **Jazz Composer's Orchestra** with Shepp, Lacy, and Milford Graves among the featured soloists) and *Mohawk* by the **New York Art Quartet** (Tchicai, Graves, Roswell Rudd and Reggie Workman).... From earlier in the decade comes **Sun Ra's** *We Are In The Future* (Savoy), a reissue of *The Futuristic Worlds Of Sun Ra*, recorded just after the Arkestra's emigration to New York, as they stood on the cusp of their most influential period.

Finally, a tip of the cap to Fantasy for daring to include in their Original Jazz

continued on page 114

Francis Davis

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dB's from page 24

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Jazz Shorts from page 110

Classics series artists who never ascended to the ranks (or sales potential) of the Mileses, Parkers, and Monks, but played their parts in the evolution of modern jazz all the same. Recommended from the latest batch of OJCs (and unavailable in any other format); *Kenny Dorham Quintet*, *Paul Desmond Quartet Featuring Don Elliott*, *The Elliott Lawrence Orchestra Plays Gerry Mulligan Arrangements*, *The Brew Moore Quintet*, *Soprano Saxophone* by **Steve Lacy**, and *West Coast Blues* by **Harold Land** with Wes Montgomery. The most intriguing OJC of them all, however, might be *Autobiography In Jazz*, a sampler of 45s and unissued album takes from Debut, the label Charles Mingus owned in the mid-50s. Featuring performances by, among others, Max Roach, Bud Powell, Lee Konitz, Paul Bley and Thad Jones, all produced by Mingus, it makes a compelling case for Mingus as Auteur.

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