

SONGSTEALING: BEHIND THE LAWSUIT FEVER

MUSICIAN

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JEFF BECK GETS BACK

INTERVIEW BY DAVID FRICKE

ARTHUR BAKER MAKING THE GREAT SONGS BETTER

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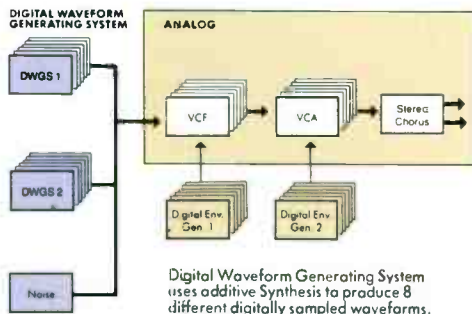
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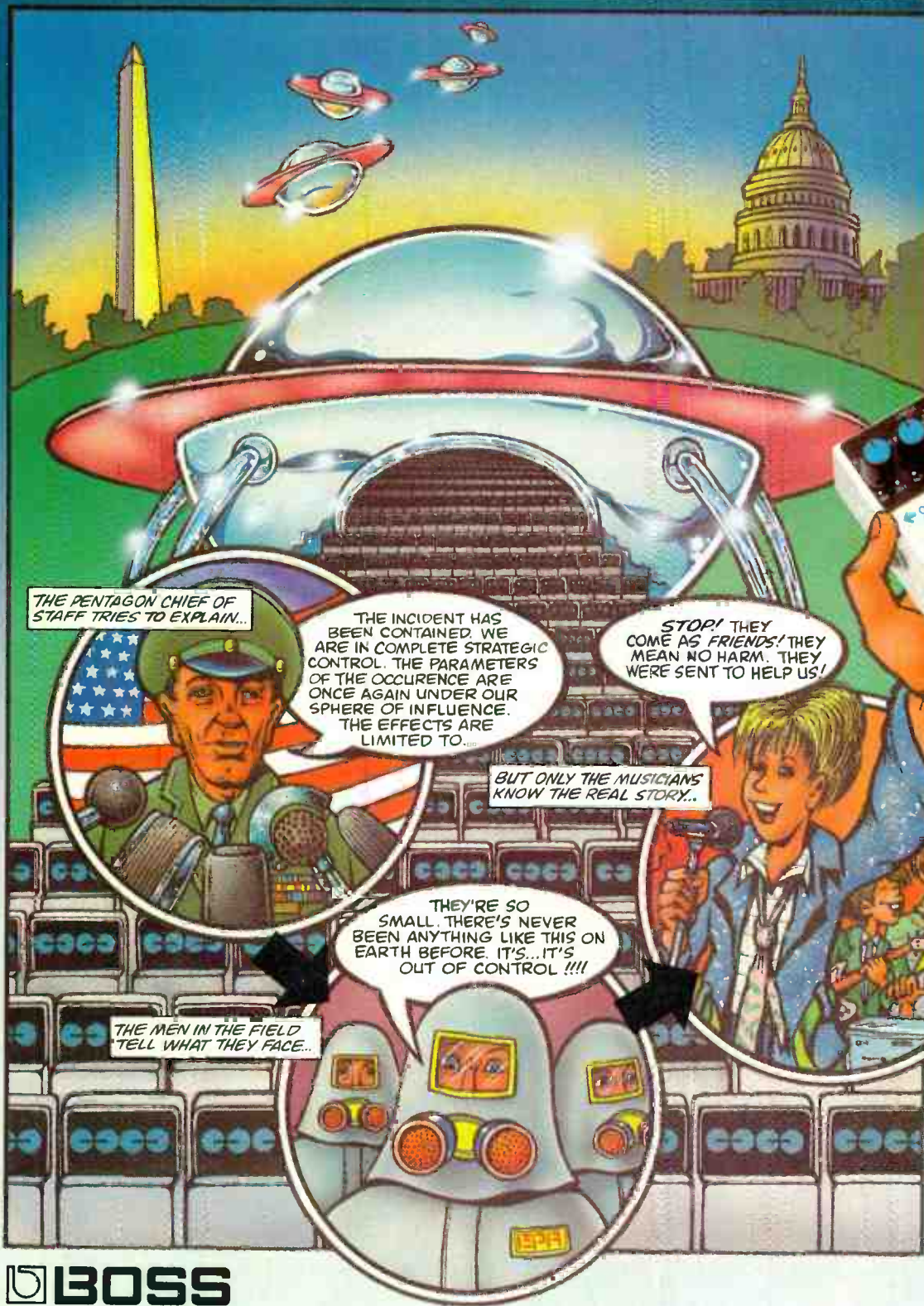
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JEFF BECK
Still the greatest guitarist to prefer axle grease to greasy axe, Beck has just cut his first album in five years. He crawls out from under to tell all—but not who does his suits.

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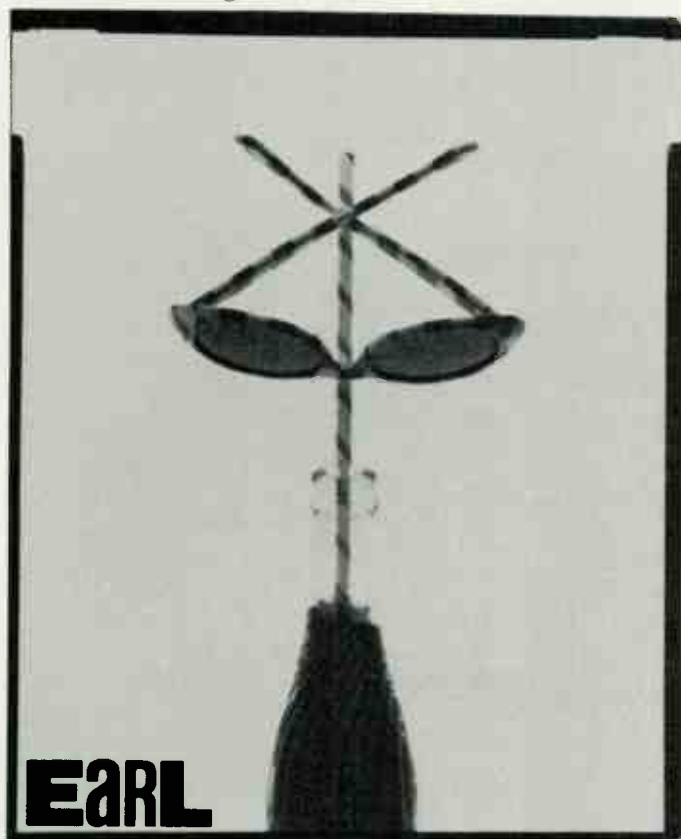
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soda fountain shuffle



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Mac Under the Knife

There's something disturbing about your Paul McCartney feature story by house analysts Vic Garbarini and Jock Baird. It would have been a fine service to your readers if they had simply provided a compilation of the best McCartney quotes from his recent media blitz. Instead, we get outrageous analysis and interpretation of each quote, as well as an arrogant prescription for how McCartney can improve his music. Who says it needs improving? I object to this team of prognosticators offering pat solutions for how to rekindle Paul's creative fire; this is hubris of the highest order. Off with their presumptuous heads.

Ryan Soleil
Seattle, WA



I was disappointed that two competent writers like Vic Garbarini and Jock Baird resorted to constructing a Frankenstein out of the parts of other people's work. Couldn't you have sent Mr. Garbarini (who proved in 1980 he can crash through McCartney's "wall of charm" relatively easily) over to London to drag McCartney out of his cozy, safe Replica Studio and press him to come up with some solution for rescuing his credibility? As a proverbial die-hard fan I'm hoping his next project will lift him out of what I call the Barry Manilow Syndrome—that is, whenever I mention McCartney is my favorite singer people act like I'm emitting acute body odor or something. So if you do decide to talk to Paul, please tell him to get with it, if not to save his own dignity, then to save mine.

Susan Ullenberg
Brown Deer, WI

I must admit I've been worried about Paul, but due to Garbarini and Baird's inscrutable research my faith is restored. No single interview could have pulled out so much introspection and confession, and I am very grateful that the authors went to so much trouble to compile a picture that those of us without access to so many sources couldn't have seen. It was truly a labor of love.

James McMaster Downing
Tulsa, OK

What Hype?

What Australian bands were you referring to under your "Hypes" heading in your "The Year in Rock" article? I've been trying to remember one band that was hyped this past year: Eurogliders? (Which were laughably included under your "Rookies of the Year" heading.) The Hoodoo Gurus? Hunters & Collectors? If they were hyped, I never saw it. Face it, *Musician*, you made light of something not to be taken lightly: an entire country's rock music. Some of the most stirring music last year came from Oz: Nick Cave, the Church, the Laughing Clowns, and the Triffids, among others.

In case you choose not to apologize, I would like to do so to the country of Australia and to its exciting, burgeoning music scene. Ignore *Musician*: we do want to hear from you.

Patrick Jennings
Hollywood Records
Mesa, AZ

Where do you get off putting a great video like "Desert Moon" on the "Worst Videos of 1984" list? It has a hell of a lot more class and aesthetic value than that piece of garbage, "Close To The Edit" by Art of Noise. But then I doubt if you guys would recognize real talent if it fell on your pointy heads.

Laura King
San Antonio, TX

Joyce Brothers?

Tim White's interview with the real "Bella Donna" of pop, Rickie Lee Jones, has renewed my faith in rock journalism. Steering clear of the common questions of drugs, alcohol, concerts, etc., Mr. White's gentle probing of Rickie Lee's enigmatic psyche marks a milestone in modern interviewing. Berets off to Rickie Lee, and to our talented Timothy White—the Joyce Brothers of rock 'n' roll.

Dee Hart
Boston, MA

A gleaming new Jaguar? A sensible lunch of tuna fish salad and diet soda? A house with a picnic table and a patio? Rickie Lee, we hardly knew you. But I guess it's true what they say; growing up is hard to do.

Steven Stark
Baltimore, MD

Tough on Toto

I agree with Jeff Porcaro of Toto that too many critics equate technical incompetence with artistry. However, I advise

Porcaro not to dismiss criticisms of his band too quickly. After all, many intelligent listeners dislike Toto, and not all of these listeners would say: "Hey, man, those guys are *crap* compared to the Butthole Surfers." No, some of us merely require more ambition and less compromise from our artists. Porcaro should put on some music he admires, then some his critics admire, and find the similarities. In these similarities lies the real artistic spirit that unites John Coltrane and the Sex Pistols and which Toto, alas, lacks.

The new album, to its credit, does not sound like a tangerine-orange leisure suit. It reminds me more of a standard gray flannel—impeccably tailored, but too conservative to attract any notice.

Andrew Walser
Champaign, IL

Jump for Van Dyke

One is hard pressed to find any information on Van Dyke Parks and his rich yet overlooked contribution to American musical form. *Jump!* is an absolute delight in its sweep and depth of mood. Despite all that could be said in its favor, one is challenged to find a spare copy in western New York. 1984 was the Year of the *Jump!* And Van Dyke Parks *Jumps* highest!

David Hawker
Ripley, NY

May I suggest a further initiative to those readers who enjoyed my Van Dyke Parks piece? I would encourage all those who've loved Parks' *Song Cycle* masterpiece, as well as serious music fans for whom the experience is currently problematic, to write to Warner Bros. Records requesting that the path-breaking LP be reissued, *post-haste!* The missives should be directed to Lenny Waronker, Warner Bros. Records, 3300 Warner Boulevard, Burbank, California 91410. So stop reading for two minutes, fill out a postcard, mail it, and strike a blow for pop invention in the marketplace of ideas.

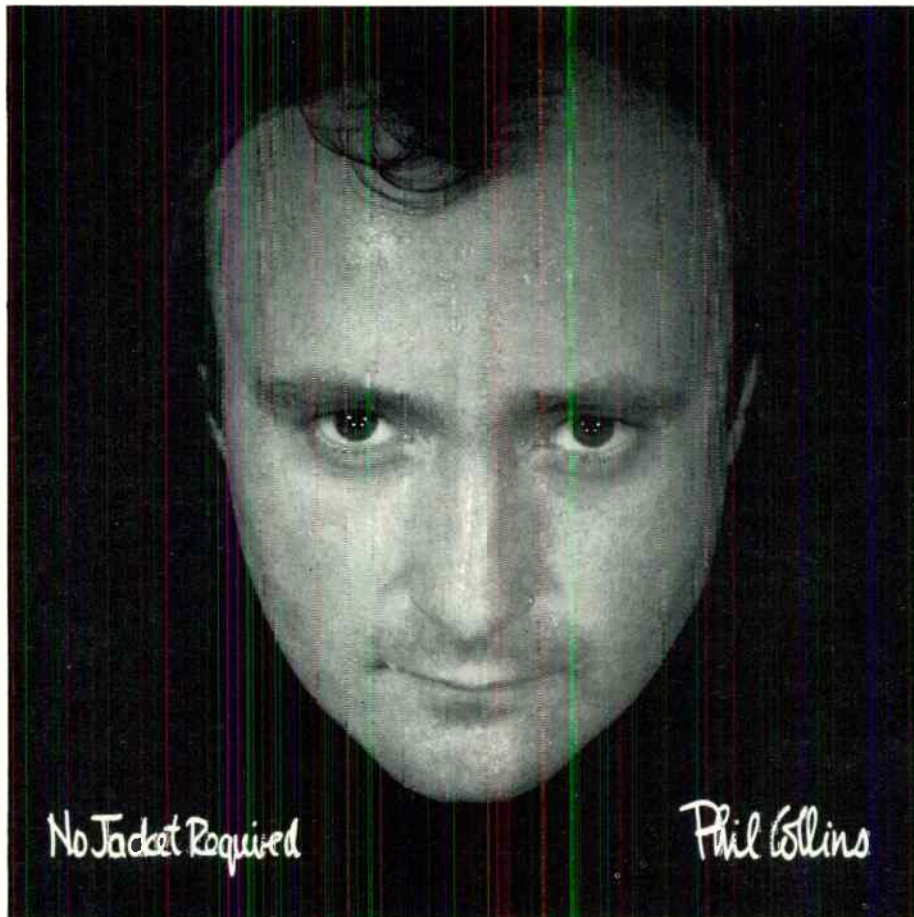
Timothy White
New York, NY

Erota

We hope Van Dyke Parks was not shocked to learn his father's name is Richard Hall (should've been Hill) Parks. However, the Eagles were definitely shocked to hear "Victim Of Love" called "Victim Of Hotel" in March's Don Henley piece. Is that someone who reads too much Arthur Hailey?

Phil  Collins

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SADE

*A Diamond
In the Slick*

How does an obscure London clothes designer become a pop star? "By accident," admits Sade (pronounced *sharDAY*) with a soft laugh. In any case, cool vocals and fashion-model looks have made the twenty-four-year-old a major star in the U.K., where her *Diamond Life* LP has been a chart fixture since mid-1984. (Portrait Records released

to buy cigarettes." In 1981 a friend offered her a job singing with a funk band called Pride. She accepted, despite having no previous interest in performing.

Pride fizzled, but Sade and bandmate Stuart Matthewman began writing songs together. One of them, "Your Love Is King," shot into the British top ten when released as a single last year, and suddenly the photogenic singer graced the covers of all the pop papers.

Sade and saxophonist/guitarist Matthewman are

trays careful study of Chris Connor, Astrud Gilberto, Julie London and other stylish chanteuses of bygone days. "I used to perform 'Cry Me A River' onstage," she confesses, "but that was because it's a great song, not because Julie London sang it."

Unlike musicians who just after fame for years, Sade takes a low-key approach to stardom. She says the nicest part of success isn't being recognized, which she dislikes, but acquiring the accessories of fine living, like



TSURENA

the album here recently.)

The offspring of a Nigerian father and British mother, Helen Folsade Adu was a struggling designer of men's clothes. However, she recalls, "I knew there was a limit to how long I'd be willing to dig in the couch for loose change whenever I wanted

fascinated (as are Everything But The Girl, Carmel and Paul Weller's Style Council) by the smoky jazz-pop that issued from America in the 50s and early 60s. Though she winces at the suggestion of nostalgia, the silky elegance of tunes like "Smooth Operator" be-

heated towel racks and a large-screen TV.

"I'll tell you the *best* thing," Sade remarks. "When my cousin wanted to visit her mother in Nigeria, I could afford to buy her a plane ticket right away. It's great to be able to do that for someone else." — Jon Young

*Fogerty Wars,
Continued*

By now you can't tell the **John Fogerty**/Fantasy Records lawsuits apart without a scorecard. In last month's *Faces* we left our hero beleaguered with a defamation suit for the song "Zanz Kant Danz," now known as "Vanz Kant Danz." Fantasy attorney Mal Burnstein says another song from Fogerty's *Centerfield* album, "Mr. Greed," is also involved in the defamation charge. "It seemed clear to us," Burnstein says, "that Fogerty was referring to Saul" Zaentz, Fantasy chairman, in that song—although the subject is mentioned only as "Mr. Greed."

Meanwhile, Fantasy has filed another case against Fogerty for copyright infringement and breach of contract, among other sins. The charges stem from Fogerty's "The Old Man Down The Road," which Burnstein says "copied, as near as we can tell," an earlier Fogerty composition, "Run Through The Jungle."

So what's the big deal if Fogerty rips off his own tune? Just that "Run Through The Jungle," like most Creedence Clearwater Revival songs, is owned by Fantasy. The label is asking for \$20 million on the breach charge alone, with another \$20 million in punitive damages.

"This is all baloney," an unrepentant Fogerty replies. "They literally sue me for breathing." He affirms that the legal hassles will not drive him back into the seclusion from which he only recently emerged. As for "Mr. Greed," Fogerty says Fantasy is "laying open that they have sensitivities in this area. It's a strange admission."

Will someone please make a daytime TV serial out of all this?

BILLY BRAGG

Punk Without the Trappings

When I go out there, I don't think I'm James Taylor; I think I'm the Clash. I try to make as much noise as the Ramones or the Jam." The speaker with the identity crisis and the heavy East End accent is one William Stewart Bragg, first of a dying breed. See, Billy Bragg isn't just trying to go it alone, gigging and recording without a band. He's trying to go it alone as a punk band—as a 1977 punk band.

Ludicrous as it may seem, no one ever disabused Bragg of the hopelessly idealistic notions that kept the original punks safe from the charts: the convictions that rock should be simple, honest, passionate and relevant. His unabashed political songs and unsweetened love songs recall the feel, if



EBET ROBERTS



LAURA LEVINE

THE BONGOS

Three-Chord Nirvana in a Corporate Cell

The room looks like a padded cell and the V-8 in the fridge is frozen solid. **Richard Barone** has other reservations, though, about interviews in the RCA New York "corporate headquarters."

"I like to speak as a musician," says the Bongos' chief songwriter/vocalist/guitarist, "and not so much as a corporate entity." Fans voiced similar concerns when Hoboken's favorite pop-rockers signed to RCA in 1983. Would a major label know what to do with the band's odd amalgam of pop energy and arty ideas? "Even if they didn't," Barone says, "we knew what to do, so all we had to do was convince them. At this point we have as much freedom as we ever had."

They're used to quite a bit. The Bongos' first album,

Drums Along The Hudson (PVC Records, 1982), cohered a few tracks at a time as the quirky quartet launched the New Jersey-based quest for three-chord nirvana. The next year Barone and Bongos guitarist James Mastro tossed off a "solo" album during a leisurely vacation at Mitch Easter's Drive-In Studio. Even the Bongos' first RCA release, *Numbers With Wings* (1983), devolved from an LP to an EP at the band's discretion. "We had five songs that really fit well together," Barone recalls, "and it would have made a nice side of an album. But then we thought, 'What do we put on the other side?'"

No such problems occurred with *Beat Hotel*, the Bongos' first (finally) premeditated LP in the major leagues. They pared twenty-eight new songs down to ten by weighing personal faves against audience response at their Hoboken birthplace-cum-stomping-ground, Max-

wells'.

Beat Hotel's guitar-dominated dreamscapes and Latin-tinged rhythms carry on the Bongos' big-beat pop. But there are new, richer textures courtesy of producer John Jansen (Television, Tom Verlaine, Lou Reed's last) and the group's own penchant for exotic atmospheres. "We do have a psychedelic subconscious sometimes," Barone admits, "but whatever we like ends up on the record." That could just as well include T. Rex, Bowie, Roxy Music, Let's Active, steel drums or William Burroughs.

Before Barone quits his "cell" he tracks down a copy of *Beat Hotel* to replace the reporter's advance cassette. Mission accomplished, he sheepishly removes the plastic-wrap sticker proclaiming "Bonus lyric sheet and these big hits!"

"Sometimes," he shakes his head, "record companies can be so uncool."

—Marianne Meyer

not the sound, of the uppity noise that once threatened the corporate music industry. Bragg's two spirited records—the 1983 EP *Life's A Riot With Spy Vs. Spy* and last year's *Brewing Up With Billy Bragg* album—are punk without the trappings.

But if Bragg still wears punk's idealism on his sleeve, he has at least shed some of its illusions. On "A New England," his finest song (and a U.K. hit for Kirsty MacColl), he admits, "I don't want to change the world." He hasn't got a platform. "I'm not into bashing people over the head with any particular message," he says. "I'm here as another point of view. Just because I don't have a specific plan to change the world, it doesn't mean I have no responsibilities to write about these [political] subjects."

Bragg's dissenting viewpoint extends to the monolithic music industry: "I try to cut out the pretension and the mammoth budgets in an attempt to be an alternative to Van Halen or Spandau Ballet. I've never made a video in my life, and I've been on MTV four times. It just goes to show that it doesn't have to be that way.

"I'd like to have some kid watch MTV and suddenly see me come on live, and say, 'I could do that.' There is no message, except for the echo of the original message of punk, which is: 'Do it yourself.'" — John Leland

Your Country, Right or Wrong

No, Nick Tosches' *Country* book is not about what you might think. The author of *Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll* and the Jerry Lee Lewis bio *Hellfire* sharpened his quill on this mythopoeic opus about sex, drugs and the folk tradition (and incidentally the record industry and the music you listen to). First published in 1977, *Country* will be reissued in May by Charles Scribner's Sons. It's as informative as it is scurrilous.



PHILIP BAILEY

Solo Success via a Different Drummer

Phil and Phil—a marriage made in pop heaven, right? But Philip Bailey confesses he wasn't that familiar with Phil Collins' work before the latter agreed to produce Bailey's second solo album. "I didn't own any Genesis records or any Phil Collins records," Earth, Wind & Fire's singer/percussionist says. "I knew who he was, and I remember thinking he was a nice guy, but that was it. I think that helped a lot, 'cause when we finally got together I had no preconceived notion of how the music should sound." Bailey met Genesis' singer/

drummer backstage at an EW&F concert in Los Angeles, and again at a Collins show in London. "I hadn't thought about asking him to produce; I was just going to ask him to write some ballads. But when the idea of producing came up I went for it. Phil has a genuine feel for funk and R&B. I knew I could work with him."

The result, *Chinese Wall*, spawned a #2 chart hit in "Easy Lover" and reached a vast new audience beyond Earth, Wind & Fire fans. It also enabled Bailey finally to break free of the Earth, Wind & Fire mini-empire, where he labored for thirteen years—and where, rumors had it, all was not well between leader

Maurice White and his most prominent singer. White reportedly viewed Bailey's increasing independence and solo aspirations as detracting from his concentration with the group. (Ironically, White himself just cut a solo LP.)

"I learned a lot from Maurice," Bailey says. "I've spent thirteen of my thirty-two years on this earth with him and I couldn't say anything bad about that experience. But I have to face it: The last few EW&F sessions were just business for me. It wasn't spontaneous and it wasn't as if I was able to express my own artistic feelings through the music."

He is quick to stress, however, that "I'm not quitting Earth, Wind & Fire. There are no real problems between me and Maurice right now. I'm still signed to his production company. I just needed something to rekindle my interest, which my association with Phil has done.

One musical interest of Bailey's that didn't need rekindling was his involvement with gospel music. He admits to "not having roots in the music like, say, Deniece Williams. I was raised Catholic (in Denver) so I didn't really hear a lot of that kind of church music till I was in my teens, though I always loved Mahalia Jackson." The turning point was his re-conversion to Christianity in 1975. He sees no conflict between sacred and secular recording careers: "Why should I? Lots of great musicians have done it. What I want to do is bring some more modern sounds to it. Gospel music has gotten too used to taking a back seat when it comes to production values; I intend to use the new freedom I have to help change that."

That freedom almost certainly means further solo projects. And Bailey doesn't rule out future collaborations with Collins, although he doesn't dwell on the subject either. "I think the press made more out of that than I did. We were just two guys who liked each other making music." — Allen Barra

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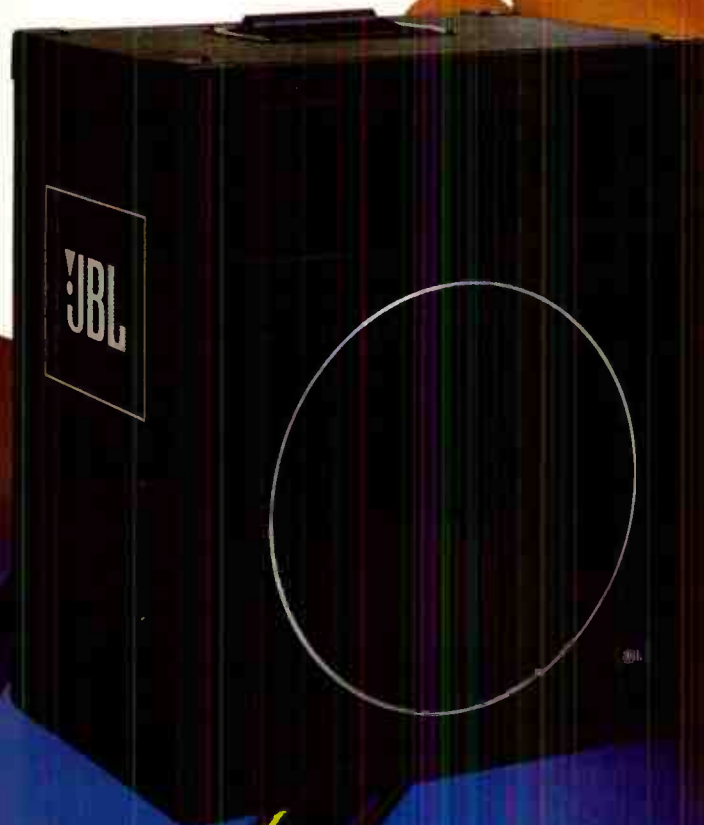
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SIMPLE MINDS

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The selection of an opening act for a major-league tour is generally a decision fraught with record-biz politics and backroom deal-making. So when the Pretenders invited Scotland's Simple Minds to open five weeks of an American trek last fall, wags were quick to suggest nepotism on the part of Chrissie Hynde, the May bride of Simple Minds' singer **Jim Kerr**. (The couple had their first child this March.) In fact, the tour had been arranged before the two became romantically involved.

"We were in Australia at the beginning of last year doing dates with the Pretenders, Talking Heads and Eurythmics," explains Kerr, at twenty-five an articulate and charming Glaswegian. "Chrissie came to see us and said the group wanted us to open for them in America. We wanted to play places we'd never been, and knew we'd have to open for someone. We'd much rather it be the Pretenders than, say, Styx."

Simple Minds' seventh and most recent LP, *Sparkle In The Rain*, topped the charts in England and much of Europe. The Pretenders tour helped popularize the

band in America. The trans-Atlantic success gap, Kerr says, "brought us right back to earth. It was a rude awakening, but we learned some things, and it was good for us."

He hopes a new single, "Don't You (Forget About Me)," will attract a wider audience. It appears on the soundtrack of *The Breakfast Club*, a film made by the band's American record label. The song, co-written and produced by Billy Idol mentor Keith Forsey, is only the second non-original Simple Minds has recorded. Forsey "got us on a day when we weren't feeling particularly precious about our art," Kerr notes ingenuously. "He gave us the skeleton of the song in demo form, and it sounded like something we might have done a couple of years ago." The resulting record is magnificent, but Kerr is concerned that people recognize it as a detour rather than the band's current musical direction. The next Simple Minds album is due in July, with a headlining U.S. tour to follow.

Will the Kerrs collaborate on songs in the future? "No, it's two different styles. There's as much chance of that happening as me writing with Boy George." He pauses. "Chrissie and I don't even talk about music when we're together."

— Ira Robbins

ARTHUR BLYTHE

What's So Bad About Selling Out?

With its swirling synthesizers, thumping backbeats (most of them computer-generated) and simple melodies, *Put Sunshine In It* is the album that a lot of Arthur Blythe's admirers hoped he'd never make. But the alto saxophonist insists the decision to challenge Grover Washington and David Sanborn on their own turf was his.

"I wanted to do something different," says Blythe, whose aggressive attack and eclectic approach have long endeared him to critics, fellow musicians and a small but loyal coterie of listeners. "I wanted to make a statement in a contemporary pop music context." (L.A. fusioner Todd Cochran and trumpeter Bruce Purse, who has both R&B and avant-garde credentials, produced, arranged and wrote most of the material.)

"I played dance music as a teenager. I played dance music when I was with Chico Hamilton. I grew up listening to Earl Bostic and Louis Jor-



DARRYL PITRE/RETNA

dan, and I loved what they did. This music is a direct descendant of the kind of rhythm & blues that those cats played."

There was another consideration involved: "It's about business, too. I wouldn't mind getting a wider listening audience. After all, there are no artist subsidies available to me. I am an artist and I like to do creative work, but I also have a family and I like to eat."

Not that Blythe doesn't consider his work on the album "creative"—although he admits he was working within a far more limited context than that of his two working bands, the bebop-oriented quartet In The Tradition and the tuba-cello-guitar-drums quintet with which he works most of the time. He plans to keep both those groups together, no matter what kind of noise *Put Sunshine In It* does or doesn't make.

"I couldn't work in just a pop situation," Blythe says. "I'm not planning on being out there like Herbie Hancock. I'm not going to abandon what I've done before." But, he adds, "What's wrong with being commercial in the sense of people hearing what you have to offer? I'm not interested in being an obscurity."

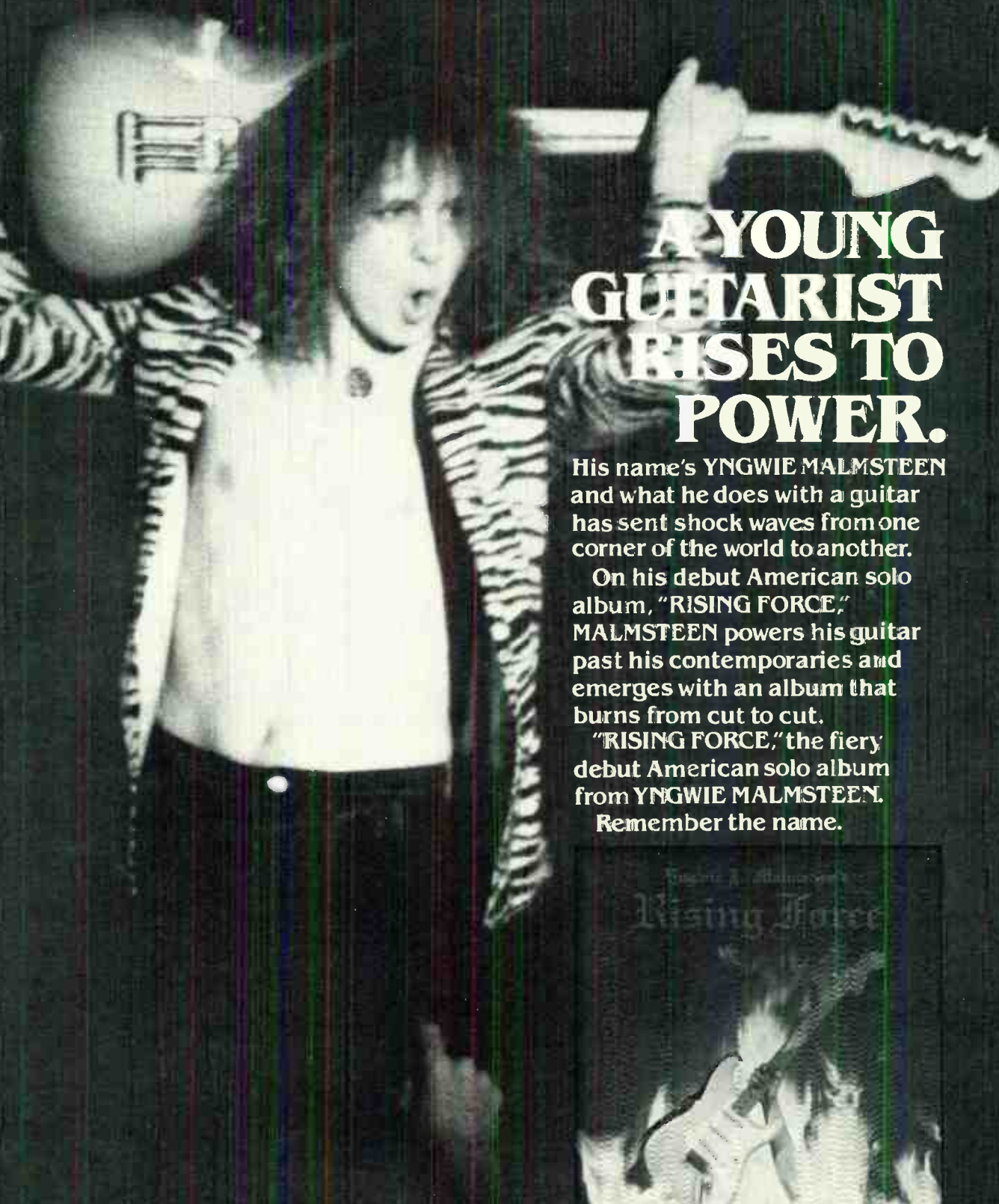
— Peter Keepnews

Chrysalis Bursts, Spandau Sputters

It's the end of an era at Chrysalis Records, one of the longer-lived (seventeen years) indie labels still around. In January co-founder Chris Wright bought out his partner (and other co-founder) Terry Ellis. The deal had been in the works since at least last fall; the Wright-Ellis partnership was said to be a rocky one. A Chrysalis statement placed the settlement at "several million dollars," a conservative estimate compared to reports of over \$22 million. Ellis will "pursue his own business interests" (that statement again), specifically with a new British record company.

Although unrelated to the above, we can't help mentioning here that Chrysalis is the object of an English breach-of-contract lawsuit brought by **Spandau Ballet**. The group charges the label with failing to provide stipulated "support and promotion." Sorry, there will be no cheap jokes at Spandau Ballet's expense despite this overwhelming provocation.

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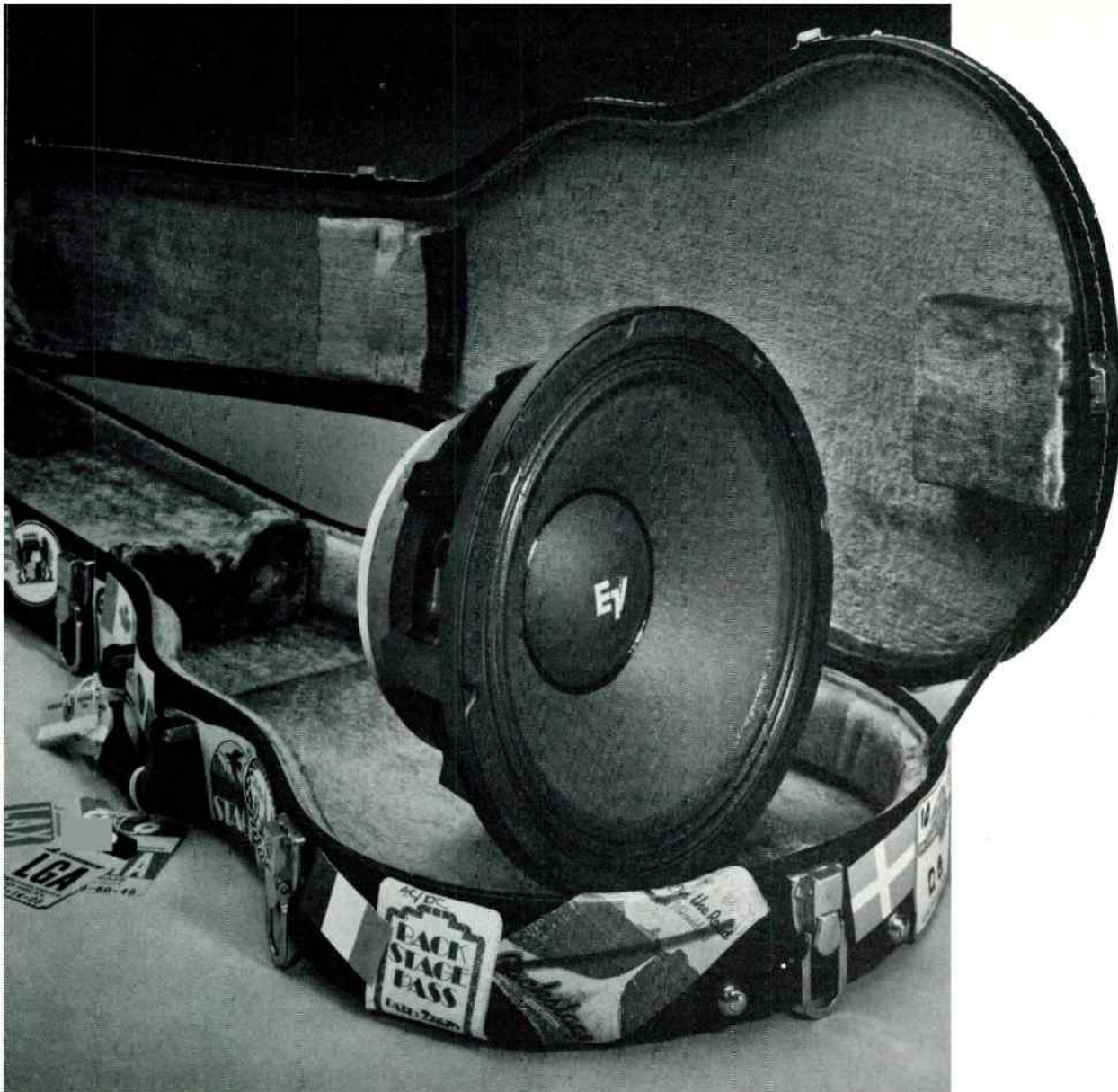
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ALISON MOYET



Iron-lunged vocalist Moyet, right, ponders another stylistic metamorphosis.

LAURA LEVINE

JON YOUNG

TWO YEARS AFTER YAZOO, THE GIRL NEXT DOOR COPES WITH SUCCESS

Maybe you've heard her big, authoritative voice before. As one half of England's Yaz (née Yazoo), Alison Moyet belted out tunes like "Only You" and "Situation" with a gutsy urgency that transcended their fragile roots in trendy synth-pop. When Moyet opens her mouth, out come large, soaring notes bursting with pain, pleasure and, above all, a sense that life is a Big Event.

What on earth, then, is Alison Moyet doing in the company of superslick producers Tony Swain and Steve Jolley, the wall-of-sound specialists best known for transforming Bananarama's puny pipes into a top forty commodity?

"A painter wouldn't want to paint only

horses all his life," Moyet says simply, "and I have the same attitude toward singing. I feel capable of performing all sorts of music, so why should I limit myself to one style?"

So far, there's no reason to dispute her logic. Moyet's solo debut, *Alf*, enjoyed an extended stay in the upper regions of the pop charts in England and Europe—a commercial triumph Columbia Records hopes to repeat here.

Alf is an artistic success as well. For all the layers of synthesizers, massive backing voices, and exploding melodies, she remains the center of attention. Unlike Phil Spector's singers, Moyet stands her ground against Swain and Jolley, at worst battling the grandiose twosome to a standstill. More often, though, megavoices and megaproduction interlock to create the kind of classic pop melodrama that brings a lump to the throat.

This unlikely matchup of talents didn't strike Moyet as odd beforehand. "I'd liked the records Bananarama made. They're not exactly singers, so what Tony and Steve had achieved was quite amazing. I thought combining their production approach with a strong voice

could be interesting."

Getting the record made, Moyet admits, did generate the conflicts you'd expect between a strong-willed belter and a crafty pair of studio wizards. "We all had very definite ideas about what was to be done. I like sparse-sounding things but they couldn't really understand that. It came down to a choice of achieving a big production or giving each song the treatment it needed to bring out the lyrics. Tony and Steve wanted everything to be a big production job, which is why it turned out to be just a one-album project."

Though *Alf* is spanking-new here, Moyet has already initiated her next venture, one that will take her closer to her roots. With blue-eyed soul man Pete Wingfield producing, she's cut a version of Billie Holiday's "That Ole Devil Called Love," complete with genuine brass section. Fans expecting the lush, swirling textures of *Alf*'s "Love Resurrection" may be shocked by the retro arrangement; as Moyet notes in defense of her stylistic shifts, "It's all a learning process."

You can say that again. Five years ago Moyet was a spirited but inexperi-

enced blues singer drifting from one British bar band to another. Things picked up in 1982 when she answered a music paper ad placed by synth ace Vince Clarke, a quirky character with some claim to being the Brian Wilson of the new wave. The former songwriter for Depeche Mode had retired first from live performing and then from the band entirely as his muse led him toward new creative horizons. He needed a singer to enliven a catchy, delicate tune he'd composed called "Only You"; what he got was Moyet, a blues purist with lungs of steel.

Somehow, the combination worked—for a while, anyway. The wispy Clarke and earthy Moyet christened themselves Yazoo, and became quite a viable little act. They cut two respectable albums of surprisingly vital (thanks to her) synth-pop, enjoyed a degree of success in the U.K., and at least tasted popularity here, where a prior claim to the name Yazoo forced them to become Yaz. (Carl Yastrzemski generously refrained from taking legal action.)

Yaz split the next year, Moyet says, "for lots of reasons. Basically, Vince just wanted to stay in the studio and have me go out on tour and do promotion by myself. That didn't seem fair to me, because Yaz was a two-piece band and should have been presented as such.

"Besides, we were having to compromise with each other too much. Vince liked lightweight pop and I wanted something with a bit more depth. That was okay on the first album, but after that we got stale. All the excitement was gone."

It didn't help that their personalities were as mismatched as their musical tastes. "I need to open up with people," Moyet says. "I can be very volatile, but when I get something off my chest, five minutes later I've forgotten about it. Vince would never express his feelings. He'd let things build up and bother him."

The ephemeral Yaz left behind a small but noteworthy musical legacy. "Only You" was subsequently a huge U.K. hit for the Flying Pickets, and now bids to become a standard of sorts: Judy Collins recorded the song on her last LP. It's certainly better than "Send In The Clowns."

The Yaz experience also left Moyet with a long-term contract that took a good year to dissolve. During that period of forced inactivity, dogged by insecurity and depression, Moyet drew strength from an old friend, Malcolm Lee. "We got married a couple of Novembers ago when I couldn't work and was getting fed up with the business."

When the legal logjam broke, Moyet

rushed back into action, signing with British CBS. Then, as always, the question was what musical direction to choose. Back to the blues? "I thought about that," she acknowledges, "and I considered working with a dance producer. But there are so many good soul and funk artists around already, why be a second-rate imitation? Besides, I wanted to retain some of the things I'd developed with Vince, rather than try to make myself completely American."

From a technical standpoint, working with Swain and Jolley was a radical departure rather than a continuation. "When I was with Vince, we under-produced, recording and mixing right away. Whereas Swain and Jolley produced me very glossily, almost to the point of overproduction." Tactful understatement.

For the moment, Moyet is limiting herself to a single. She's not planning to shift directions again, but more pressing matters—like a brand-new baby—are interceding. "That's what happens when you don't use contraceptives properly," she laughs.

"Actually, this is a good development," Moyet adds, growing serious, "because otherwise everyone will tend to see you as nothing more than a marketable product that brings in money. You need something that gives you

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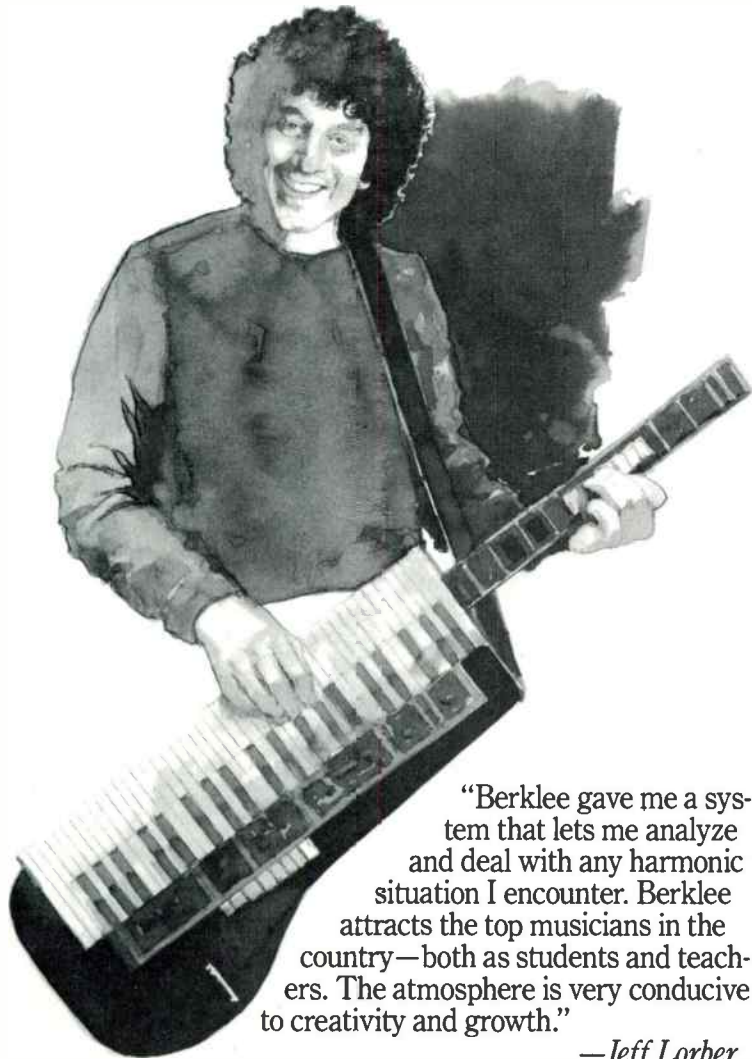
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more of a purpose in life. I've never been a maternal sort of person, but I need this to stabilize me and make me less selfish.”

At least there's a certain steadiness in her image: “I think people see me as the girl next door. They relate to the fact that I come from a working-class background. I didn't have a good education and I didn't have good job prospects when I left school, but I made something of myself.

“I don't particularly enjoy stardom. At times, it's quite embarrassing. I've just never gotten used to the idea of being a celebrity.” ☐

BETTER BY ALF

Meticulous producers Tony Swain and Steve Jolley played everything but drums on Alison Moyet's *Alf* album. Keyboards used were a Yamaha DX7 and acoustic piano, Prophet 5, Emulator and Synclavier; all were recorded by direct injection into the board. Swain says he used Boss chorus pedals “quite a lot,” and also a Boss overdrive pedal. The Emulator provided sample sounds and combinations; “the Kurzweil was not available at the time of recording, or we would have used that.”

The song “Invisible” includes an Ibanez electric guitar fitted with Rotosound strings and played through a Boss chorus pedal and Roland JC120 amplifier. Elsewhere on the record the “guitar” sound is the DX7 modified with an AMS delay unit to simulate a guitar's up- and down-stroke sound. The DX7 also supplied all bass lines.

Drummer Tim Goldsmith played a maple Gretsch kit consisting of a 20-inch bass drum, 8½-inch Rogers snare, and Power toms (10-, 12-, 13- and 16-inch floor toms). His cymbals, all Zildjian, were a 14-inch NewBeat hi-hat, two 16-inch thin crashes, and a 20-inch medium ride. Drum hardware was by Pearl. Goldsmith had Remo Pinstripe heads and clear Ambassador bottoms on the toms and snare. His drumsticks were Shaw 2S or 2Bs. On three of the album's nine cuts a LinnDrum triggered Goldsmith's sampled percussion. “We used up to three AMS (delay) storage units,” Swain says, “probably a bit over the top!”

Moyet recorded *Alf* at London's Odyssey Sound. The studio has an MCI 24-track deck and MCI desk; a Sony PCM-701 audio processor mixed the album digitally. Signal processors included AMS and Sony DRE-2000 digital reverb units, and a dbx de-esser. The recording tape was Ampex, at 30 ips and with Dolby; there was no external equalization. Swain and Jolley used Drawmer noise gates, dbx 160 compressors and Urei 1710 or 1711 limiters. Microphones were mostly by Shure, and also Neumann.

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FELÁ ANIKŪLAPO KUTI

ROB TANNENBAUM

NIGERIA'S FABLED "BLACK PRESIDENT" MAKES MUSIC HIS WEAPON

How can music contribute to political change?" Felá Kuti muses. "Well, you see, in Africa *everything* is music, from...a key chain," he observes, fingering the keys on a nearby table, "to having a baby. And in Africa now, I'm more important than the president. If I want something from an ordinary citizen in the street, I can get it. I enjoy all the things that a president enjoys."

A strange boast, coming from a musician, but then Felá Kuti, best known on these shores as the father of that ominous yet infectious dance music known as Afrobeat, and revered in his native Nigeria, where he is more typically referred to as the "Black President," is undoubtedly the most controversial, and quite possibly the most influential musician in the Western world. You can trace Felá's effect here through recordings

by, for instance, Stevie Wonder, Paul McCartney, George Clinton, Lester Bowie and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Marvin Gaye, Roy Ayers and James Brown—all of whom have visited Felá in Nigeria—along with such African-derived music as Talking Heads', and by scores of recordings by other pop bands who may not even know to whom they owe their debt. You can hear it even more powerfully on Felá's own recordings (he has over a hundred), many of which have recently inundated the American market, including two classic reissues on Capitol (*Black President* and *Original Sufferhead*) and a new album, *Army Arrangement* (Celluloid) recorded last summer in London and produced by Bill Laswell.

It is xenophobic to try to explain foreign phenomena in terms of the familiar. You *could* say that Sunny Adé is the Michael Jackson of Nigeria. But the circumstances surrounding Felá Kuti's emergence as a musical dissident, and his current stature in his homeland, simply have no cultural parallel here—even to describe Felá as some combination of Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen and Woody Guthrie falls short of explanation.

"In the game of politics," observes Roy Ayers—who recorded with Felá in 1979 and subsequently toured Nigeria with him—"it is almost impossible for one man to defeat a government," yet this is precisely what Felá has tried to do. And as a kind of ultimate accolade, the government of Nigeria has responded in kind. As of this writing, Felá Kuti—bandleader, rebel, popular hero—is currently residing in jail.

Felá, forty-seven years old, is a compact, muscular man who delights in his dual roles of notorious outlaw and respected spokesman. He carries himself with a regal demeanor befitting the adopted title "Black President," and he is accustomed to living and traveling in stylish comfort. These aristocrat-

ic pleasures are balanced by his populist self-image of a modern Griot, strolling along the streets and reciting tales of ancient truths. Felá has also given away a lot of his sizable fortune, both to the entourage of wives, musicians and friends he supports, and to hungry admirers he has barely met.

The reward for his generosity is adulation—when Felá travels the half-mile from his house in Lagos to his nightclub The Shrine, he is saluted by raised fist testimonials to his leadership. He settles any disputes among his entourage with unchallenged finality. And he speaks slowly and strongly, with the rambling pace of someone accustomed to preaching without interruption. Felá acts, in short, like an independent African chief within his own dissident republic. He is arrogant and proud, so convinced of the rectitude of his tribal ideology that he won't participate in any political movement he cannot control. When things in Africa get bad enough, Felá predicts, the government will come to him rather than at him.

Like most Africans, Felá was raised to respect and emulate European mannerisms. His family's affluence provided him with an education "in the style of the London upper classes"—an education, ironically, which would expose him to the principles of an Africanist ideology. Felá's father, the Reverend Ransome Kuti, was a respected minister; his mother, Funmilayo, was active in the movements for women's suffrage and national independence (which came in 1960). Two of Felá's brothers are doctors, and in the late 50s, Felá went to London to study medicine.

In England, Felá discovered American jazz. Captivated by Charlie Parker, he transferred to the London School of Music.

Felá: "I had a stereo, but I never bought any records. I had this single I was listening to all the time, Frank Sinatra's 'Mr. Success' (he hums a swinging horn chart). But the first guy who really got me was (drummer) Louis Prima. Then I went to hear Louis Armstrong at a ballroom club in London and he knocked me out. And then I got fed up with Louis Armstrong.

"I said, 'What can I listen to now that will bring me satisfaction?' And I went to a nightclub one day and I heard this record going 'Ba-duh...ba-da-duh...ba-dah-ba-dah-ba-dah-duh.' It was Miles Davis. After that I listened to Miles, Coltrane. After I became ideological, I found the reason why this music got me. Walking through the streets back home,



**Felá,
rebel, bandleader,
popular hero, prisoner**

guards burned an army motorcycle after an argument over a traffic violation. An estimated thousand army soldiers attacked Felá's house that night. They set Kalakuta on fire and turned away firemen who came to save it from burning to the ground. The women were stripped and taken naked to the police station (where, they later charged, they were raped). Felá was beaten unconscious; friends and bystanders were hospitalized from their beatings. Felá's mother was thrown from a second-story window. When her injuries killed her three months later, Felá carried her coffin to the doorstep of the country's president and left it there.

Lester Bowie: "I went to Nigeria in 1977 on a whim, on a dream, penniless. Felá sort of saved my life. Everyone that I spoke to said, 'You're a musician and you're broke, so you should go see Felá.' I said, 'Where does this guy live?' and they said, 'You just get in any cab and tell them to take you to Felá.'

"To me, that sounded really weird. That's like getting in a taxi cab in New York City and saying, 'Take me to Miles' house.'

"But I got in a cab and he took me right to the motel where I met Felá, who put on one of those Music Minus One records he likes to play jazz with; he doesn't get to play that much jazz in

Nigeria. We started playing a little bit and he said, 'Stop! Go get this guy's bags, he's moving in with me.' So I was Felá's guest of honor for the next three months."

The government bought Kalakuta from Felá for \$22 million naira, with the agreement that he leave the country. Felá traveled to Ghana, spent two weeks in "exile," and then returned to Nigeria when the civilian government of President Shagari took control from the military. In 1979, Felá ran for president of the country, forming the Movement of the People Party. The Federal Election Commission refused to register the party, Lester Bowie reckons, "because Felá would have won." That same year, soldiers beat Felá so badly that he is no longer able to hold a tenor sax for more than a few minutes.

The OPEC profits that Nigeria accrued in the early 70s have been consumed by corruption and mismanagement. Now an oil glut has staggered the economy. Three million people currently live in Lagos, five times the number twenty years ago. "If you are caught out at night in Lagos, you have to have a good reason," Felá sighs. "The city is like a cemetery. We have three violent groups at night: the police, the military and the armed robbers."

The military junta regained power in 1984, but has since done little to prosecute corrupt officials, and the few trials have been closed to the public. "Consequently, the popular mood is one of cynicism," *AfricaAsia* reports. "Corruption flourishes. And never before have ordinary Nigerians been hit so hard by shortages of basic foodstuffs."

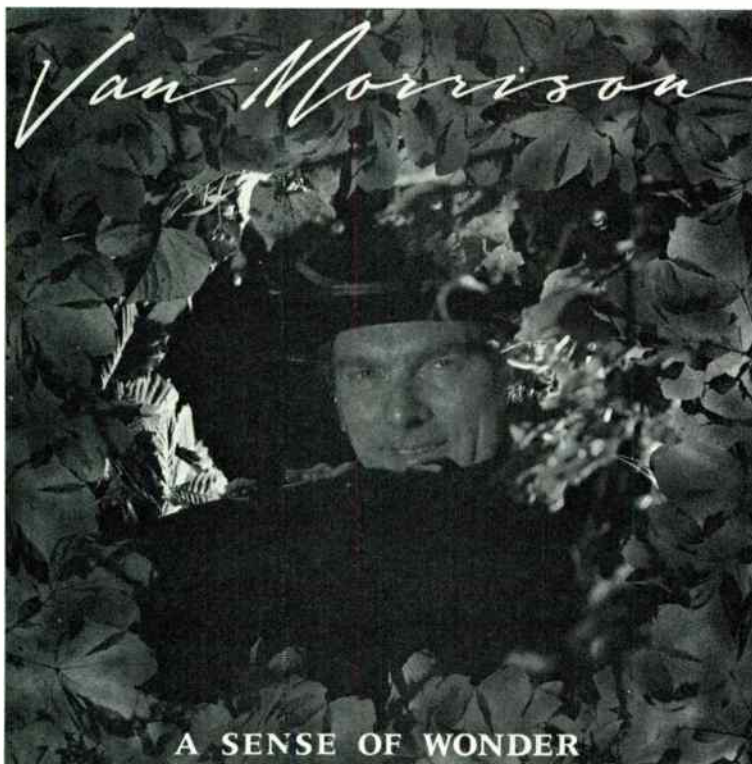
These shortages have done what no government could do—gag Felá. In 1983, he recorded several albums' worth of new material in London (including the three tracks on *Army Arrangement*). But although Nigeria is the second leading exporter of oil to the U.S., there is no longer enough oil-based polyvinyl chloride there to manufacture records. It isn't a simple case of the government trying to halt all music-making, Felá explains; "The government is killing everything."

Last summer, Felá Kuti and his band performed a series of concerts in England. Felá's manager, Pascal Imbert, invited me to ride along with the band to one show at the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament festival in Glastonbury.

As a huge entourage of wives (Felá has twelve), children and roadies straggled down to the hotel lobby in the early afternoon, a handful of locals gathered to gape at the colorful traveling parade, speaking with strange accents and wearing odd and revealing clothes. The bus which carried Felá, his family and his advisors was sedate, with small

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World Radio History

chatter and large joints. The bus which carried his band was a lot livelier, and most of the musicians sang along with Felá as a tape of a past performance roared from the bus loudspeakers.

Two-thirds of the way toward the back, a smiling face offered, "Hey man, sit here." This was Victor Tiekou, who plays guitar in Egypt 80. Victor gave me a lesson in African percussion by clapping out a 4/3 beat along with the tape, then offered me a Marlboro. I asked him about life in an African band.

Victor is twenty-six years old, and lives with his parents in Ghana. He would like to live alone, but can't afford to. The guitar he plays onstage belongs

to Felá; Victor has never been able to afford one of his own. He felt lucky to be working, but with Felá earned only thirty naira per week; it costs fifteen naira just to eat three meals a day, thirty-five naira to buy a pair of pants.

Victor would like to come to the States to start a funk band. He asked how much it would cost to fly from London to New York and was clearly disappointed by the answer. "Maybe you could save the money," I suggested hopefully. "Save? Shit, man, how can I save?" he snorted. We spent most of the rest of the trip staring at the winding British hillside.

At 10 p.m. Weather Report turned

over the stage to Egypt 80. The band warmed up with a short instrumental. Then Felá bounded onstage in a light blue suit with yellow and red stitching. The band trumpeted his arrival with a thundering, atonal clamor as Felá saluted the crowd with two clenched fists high above his head.

"We are going to start with a song called 'Just Like That,'" Felá announced. "Because that's how things happen in Nigeria—just like that." He clucked out a two-bar rhythm to the trap drummer and the rest of the rhythm section—two congas, two guitars, a bass, piano, maracas and sticks—entered on separate cues. The music built from several simple riffs into complex counter-rhythms which clashed together forcefully. The band responded to Felá like a well-rehearsed orchestra. He glared at Victor, who picked his staccato riff a bit lighter, urged on the drummer with beating fists, and waved the nine horns into a unison chart. Then Felá walked to center stage and embarked on a keening organ solo which wove between the horns and percussion like Booker T. trying to topple the walls of Jericho. Suddenly the horn section was back out front, dancing with the trumpeters' moody solo, then dropping out as the tenor sax offered some hard bop aggression.

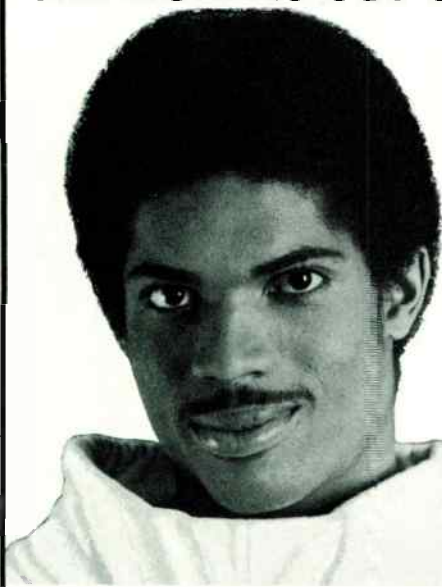
Afrobeat is not pretty like so much other African music. Its shrillness can be threatening, especially when augmented by Felá's coarse voice. But the music speaks volumes. "Felá isn't as technically proficient as, say, Charlie Parker," notes Lester Bowie. "But I judge a musician by his spirit and how he transmits that spirit into the music."

Felá returned to Nigeria from Europe last August with £1,600, which he claims he declared upon arriving. When his forty-two-person entourage arrived at Murtala Muhammed airport in Lagos on September 4 to make a flight to New York, he was still carrying the British money.

A customs official found the £1,600 but not the declaration Felá claims he signed. The government was contacted and, Imbert claims, "they jumped on the opportunity of stopping him." Each of Felá's previous cases had been thrown out of court for lack of evidence. ("And each time, Felá gets a very good beat-up," Imbert adds.) This time, the government took extra precautions—two customs officials willing to testify for Felá's defense were arrested before the trial. Felá was held in Alagbon Close for the two months between arrest and trial, and on November 8 was sentenced to two concurrent five-year terms at Kiri-Kiri prison for violating Nigeria's currency control laws.

"You could say anyone is asking for trouble," Lester Bowie reflects, "or is

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"But I decided to goad him into playing one more. 'Cause he didn't want to play anymore, he had played so many. I just said, 'I thought you were Jeff Beck. C'mon, don't let your fans down.'" Nor did he, for that last solo Baker conned him into turned out to be the hottest Jeff Beck in over a decade.

Which illustrates Baker's greatest talent—working with people. "Oh yeah, you have to know how to work with people, how to motivate them. With all the great records I've made, it was the people, the human element. On 'Planet Rock,' it was the human element of the rap that made the record."

After he finishes his solo album, which he hopes will be out in late May or

early June, Baker will begin work on albums with General Public, Daryl Hall and Tina B. That's not to mention the acts signed to his production company, like Brenda Starr, Cindy Mizelle and Andy B. Badd, much less the possibility of working with Dylan. The demanding schedule sometimes wears at him, but Baker can't resist the challenge.

"At this point in my life," he says, "for some reason I don't want to rest. It's like you get to a point where you can work with all these people, you have your own studio, it's all there for you. If you don't keep going with it, you're wasting something." He laughs: "But you could be wasting yourself."

Still, Arthur Baker keeps on hustling.

"Bruce has been recording some new songs," Baker says with a gleam in his eye. "Everyone said, 'Oh, Bruce won't do a record, he won't go into the studio for five years.' I think he's going to surprise people, because now he's got the bug.

"He was in recently, so I heard. I called up Jon Landau, his manager—also his producer," he adds, laughing, "which I forgot when I called him up—and I said, 'I'm here if you want me to work on some stuff from scratch.' I'd love to work with Bruce. I mean, the guy sold five million albums on this last one, so he doesn't need me, but still, I think some of the things I added could have made the record more interesting.

"See, the one last frontier Bruce has is obviously black people," Baker continues. "I heard someone say that he had more black people onstage than in the audience in New Jersey. It's not like these people will come out in droves and flocks and be into Bruce, but he should realize that all these people are missing what he has to say because they can't relate to the music. Prince and all these other acts that are black but are doing rock 'n' roll, they just know that they can relate to everybody. It isn't even a matter of selling more records, because once you're selling five million, what's the difference? It's just that it would be cool if black people knew Springsteen like white people know Prince.

"Obviously, they're going to come to me if they have a dance song. I mean, even Landau thinks in those terms: 'The dance record, we'll let you work on it.' But that's cool, because once my album comes out, they'll see I'm not into just making dance records." □



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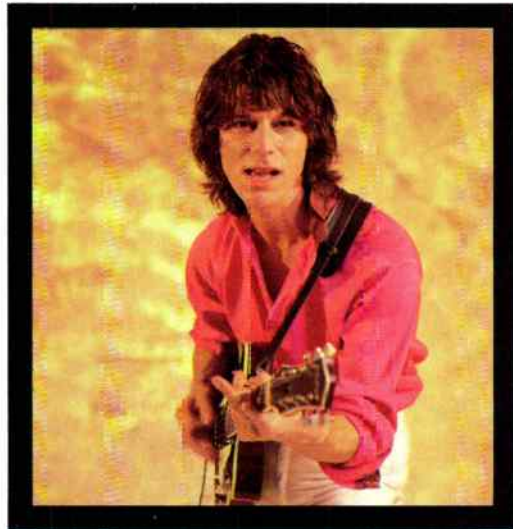


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I've weighed up the amount of guitar work that I've done in my life compared to cars and sport"—Jeff Beck pauses, a little sheepishly—"and it's probably outweighed ten to one against the guitar."

He waits a moment to let his math sink in. Beck chases down the lukewarm coffee in the posh dining room of London's Hotel Waldorf with a quick swig of brandy from a hip flask concealed in his leather jacket—just the thing to take the chill off this icy January afternoon. On the coldest day London has seen in twenty-five years, Beck has dug himself out of eighteen inches of snow blanketing his country estate and come to town for a rare marathon interview. Except he's not talking very much like a guitar player.



"I'm a mechanic more than a guitarist," shrugs Beck, forty. "I see all these guitars in my house and every once in a while I have to remind myself, 'Hey, I play these. I've got to learn how to play them again.'"

Beck's on-again/off-again romance with the guitar has been more off than on these last seven years.

With the exception of a brief return to the jazz fusion wars in 1980 with *There And Back*, he has been in hibernation since 1978, content with the oily grime and mechanical puzzles of antique auto repair, oblivious to recent upheavals in rock 'n' roll. In his absence, disco, punk, funk, psychedelia and the "new romantics" have come, gone and, in some cases, come back again.

Beck's utter disregard for music industry demands on his time and energy—he claims

JEFF BECK

Number One With A Slow Bullet:
Confessions Of A Reluctant Guitarist

By David Fricke

Photographs by Deborah Feingold



he's six albums behind on his Epic Records contract—should have been the death of him. Most of his guitar-hero contemporaries are either struggling to maintain a shred of dignified relevance in AOR-land or digging their heels deep into history, relying on faded laurels to camouflage a lack of ideas.

But Jeff Beck's casual defiance of ruling chart laws has, in a queer way, enhanced his standing as a guitar pioneer. When the British invasion was still weighted heavily in favor of teenage filly appeal, Beck was leading the Yardbirds into virgin raga territory and cutting up the band's mad pop-blues with feedback and chainsaw fuzz. The post-Yardbirds Jeff Beck Group's monster blues-rock, further distinguished by the electrifying crow of Rod Stewart in his prime, anticipated the stadium roar of 70s rock and Olympian success of Led Zeppelin.

Even Beck's failures—triggered by boredom, impatience or both—are worthy lessons in daring and integrity. He admits

I'm trying to get commercial in a reachable way. The tough job is to play decent, guitar pop.

that one of his biggest mistakes was breaking up his band with Stewart just before what might have been a breakthrough gig at Woodstock. "But in retrospect, maybe that was the best thing I ever did," he suggests in earnest, "because I would have been labeled forever as a 60s psychedelic act much like, I hate to say it, Ten Years After."

Beck's conversion to jazz fusion in the mid-70s with the hit albums *Blow By Blow* and *Wired* did wonders for his visibility and revitalized that depleted genre. Fusion's intermarriage of rock guts and open-ended jazz improvisation was a perfect setting for Beck's frenzied elasticity and the almost conversational—well, argumentative—quality of his distortion and feedback outbursts. Unfortunately, with *There And Back* he no longer bucked the mainstream but appeared to have willfully locked himself outside it. The rock world around him was rushing back to basics with a vengeance; *There And Back*, in spite of great playing and clever twists, sounded like the work of a recluse, not an outlaw.

Beck's return to action beginning with the 1983 ARMS concerts in London and America and a warm-up string of studio sessions (Tina Turner, the Honeydrippers) has been as puzzling as his disappearing act. For his new album, tentatively titled *Get Workin'*, Beck has allied himself with hot producer Nile Rodgers on five tracks and remix master Arthur Baker on three more. After years of stubbornly sticking by his gritty instincts, he is allowing himself to be molded for popular consumption, with all the dance-floor trimmings.

He didn't do it without a fight, though. Baker finished the album when Beck deemed three additional Rodgers tracks unsuitable. Beck also had some trouble adjusting to Baker's hit-factory style. Baker says Beck would gladly cut twenty or

thirty takes of a solo just to get it right. "But when I had him do the same riff over five times just to get a fat guitar sound, he'd get real bored."

The rigid pop-soul structures of Rodgers' songs and Baker's brisk hip-hop sound prove nevertheless to be good walls for Beck to bounce against. On the Rodgers cuts "Ambitious" and "Get Workin'" (with Beck on low throaty vocals), the guitarist attacks LinnDrum funk hammering with strafing licks and rubbery fuzz bends. He rides the New Order-like aggro-disco of "It Gets Us All In The End" (one of Baker's numbers) like a rodeo king with bursts of classic Beck frenzy. But Baker, like Rodgers, uses Beck's guitar as a decorative as well as upfront solo tool. This is not an album of linear solos; it's mined with deep frothing pools of violent guitar fury. The high-pitched yelp of (ex-Wet Willie) Jimmy Hall, that drum-machine slap and Baker's occasional Art of Noise gestures are the devious commercial glaze.

The LP has two surprising dark horse entries. One is a version of a theme song Beck recorded with Trevor Horn for the English music TV show *The Tube*: a mere minute-and-a-half of galloping electro-rock over which Beck solos with all the abandon he can squeeze in. The other is a gripping performance of Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready"; it reunites Beck with Stewart in a welcome demonstration of what Stewart's voice can still do with the right song and Beck edging him on with the diamond stab of his blues. In all, the new album is a striking portrait of the guitarist as mature adventurer—wise enough to make the most of a new setting but not afraid to test its limits.

Baker thinks this could be Beck's biggest-selling album ever. A return to the platinum ballpark would at least be good for Beck's tool rack in the garage: If this album sells, the first things he wants to buy with his earnings are a new lathe and a milling machine. But the record means a lot more to him than that.

"I was trying to come up with some guitar licks that would set me where I want to be again," he says between hits of that nice warm brandy, "so that every kid on every block with an electric guitar might hear that record and either be completely blown to bits and not even try to do it himself, or learn the first part of it, which would make him go out and want to learn a lot more. Because that's the way to reach kids, the world at large—with electric guitars."

Now you see him, now you don't, now you do again.

MUSICIAN: "*Get Workin'*" is an ironic title for someone who's been conspicuous mostly by his absence for the past seven years. Since 1978, you have put out only one other record, 1980's *There And Back*. What caused you to go back into hibernation after its release and the English tour that followed?

BECK: I did a stupid thing and let my group disband. I should have kept the morale up and maybe paid them a retainer when we weren't working. But that would have knocked a lot of funds out of my bank account. And knowing that I really didn't want to tour, it didn't make sense having the best English musicians hanging around drawing paychecks. They wanted to go out and experiment with other bands, which is what they did—so much so that I couldn't get them back again.

Also, *There And Back* got such a bad panning in the papers; everybody slaughtered it. And it's still a good record. It wasn't produced properly, but in essence the music content was there. I was a bit put out by that. But instead of fighting back and putting out another album on a different tangent, I just lost the players and lost the momentum. We also had three hot summers, three good summers in a row. And when that happens, I'm out in the garage.

MUSICIAN: *But the point of some of the There And Back reviews was that it had already been three years between records for you. After a break of that length, you were expected to take more drastic steps in your work. Instead, There And Back seemed to be a consolidation of jazz fusion ideas already laid out eloquently on the George Martin-produced albums Blow By Blow and Wired.*

BECK: If I had the knowledge about recording that I have now, it would not have sounded that way. I would have gone much more edgy. That's what frustrates me about that record. It's so beautifully recorded it sounds tame.

But if you look at the gigs we did to back up that album, they were all pretty good. I wanted people to walk out with their jaws on the floor and they did. I needed to back that up with another album, going more commercial and below the belt. But I didn't. I disappeared, prat that I am.

MUSICIAN: *How important were the ARMS benefit shows in inspiring your sudden burst of hyperactivity—the sessions, the brief fling with Rod Stewart, this new album?*

BECK: The ARMS thing was a great help to me. It was an opportunity to help Ronnie Lane and a cause of the magnitude of ARMS, and a great excuse to get back onstage again. What amazed me was that it was like a huge amateur band that had just been given a contract: "Be good boys, this will all do you good." And everybody behaved and played beautifully, certainly on the American tour. I think Eric said it and I'll say it again—we could have done the best show ever, if we'd had the time. It was all done so quickly. But what you had was all that talent onstage, everybody hanging their ass out of the window for the world to see, whether they were good, bad or indifferent.

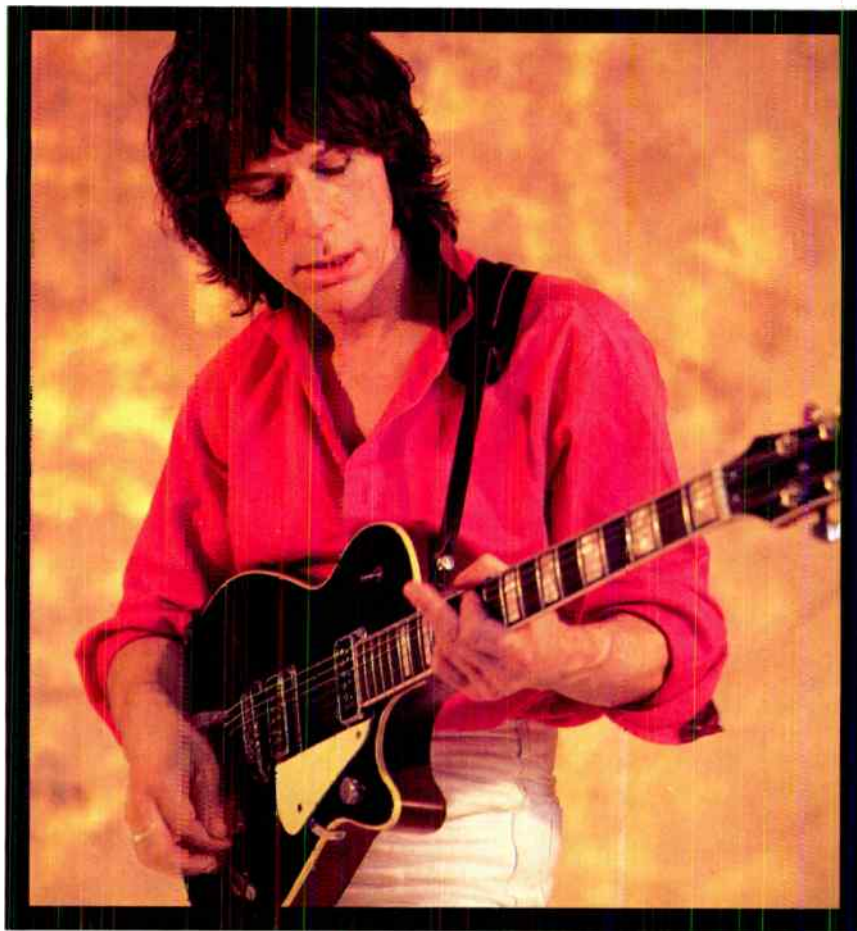
MUSICIAN: *The ARMS show will probably most be remembered for bringing the three guitarists from the Yardbirds—Eric Clapton, yourself, Jimmy Page—together onstage for the first time. It was also interesting to compare your separate sets. Clapton was still deep in his salty blues, Page at loose ends without Led Zeppelin, but you came out breathing fire, really attacking your guitar.*

BECK: First, it should be known that Jimmy hadn't touched a guitar for eighteen months before that. It was only our encouragement—Eric, myself, Ian Stewart, Glyn Johns—that got him out there. We made him an offer he couldn't refuse. It would have spoiled the whole thing if he had.

I had something in my back pocket: a great drummer (Simon Phillips) and Jan Hammer, who I think is still the world's greatest. I was playing to them—Jan, Simon, the other musicians—more than I was to the public. They hadn't heard me play in three years. I wanted them to know where I was coming from. I was showing off to them.

We had trouble, though, the three of us, mixing the styles. We couldn't find any common ground to play the songs all together. It wasn't until Joe (Cocker) came along that it made sense. A tune like "A Little Help From My Friends" is an ever-green. You can have ten famous guitarists and arrange them so they don't step on each other. And it's a great chord sequence to blow over.

MUSICIAN: *You did a lot of studio work after that, surprisingly*



Guitar students, please note Beck's unique fingering of an F chord.

eclectic sessions like Tina Turner's album, the Honeydrippers jam, the sort-of-Yardbirds reunion Box Of Frogs, and Mick Jagger's solo record.

BECK: I was determined that *someone* was going to hear me, no matter what it took. When Tina Turner's name came up, I would have bicycled to wherever she wanted me to play. A long time ago in an interview I was asked who would I like to play with most, and I said Ike and Tina Turner. Ever since "River Deep, Mountain High," that voice was haunting me, how my guitar could fit in with that.

MUSICIAN: *Box Of Frogs was your first "session" after the ARMS tour. But you declined to play at the Yardbirds reunion show at the Marquee club in London several months earlier. Why did you participate on the record but not the show?*

BECK: It sounds calculated, but I just love the guys. They're very bright and funny people and it's hard to say no, even if they're doing a "joke" record. I'm all ears when anyone's got something to play for me, just in case there's something interesting to be learned. When I heard the demos, I was pleasantly surprised by how hip (Yardbirds bassist) Paul Samwell-Smith had maintained himself through production. I figured the record didn't stand a chance, but what would be the harm in playing just to see the feel it might have?

I had doubts whether it would make it as a live thing, though. One of the curses I've got is when I go onstage I want the setting to be perfect, as good as I can get it. And jumping up onstage with guys who hadn't touched their instruments in eighteen years frightened me a bit.

MUSICIAN: *Considering the distance you've put between yourself and Rod Stewart since the original Jeff Beck Group in the late 60s, what prompted you to play on his Camouflage album and even try touring with his band?*

BECK: For some reason deep down, I thought if that guy uses

his voice the way he did on "People Get Ready" (on Beck's new album, cut prior to the ARMS tour), there's no reason on earth why we can't form a monster band. I thought, if this guy has any sense at all, he'll say "Why don't we do more like that?" I thought we'd get more soulful, bluesy, the way his voice sounded with my guitar in the early days.

He had half an album done with Michael Omartian, a guy I'd never heard of, but who was a fan of mine. I had decent tracks to play on and a producer who liked my playing. Then Rod didn't turn up at the sessions, which upset me, didn't even bother to come and listen to what I was doing. He said he had a date and had to sort out his kids. I can appreciate that [voice bristling with sarcasm], running around with women, hiding from wives and girlfriends. I finished my tracks and I said, "Rod, why don't you come down and just listen to what I've done? Just for ten minutes?" And he said, "Uh, I can't, I'm flying to Hawaii to write the rest of the lyrics."

MUSICIAN: After that experience, why did you even consider joining his tour?

BECK: What made me do it? Money, I think. He offered me a lot of money [laughs]. I forgot how completely locked up in his pop records and his band's lifestyle he really is. They're all close friends; it's a closed shop, the Rod Stewart Organization. I was foolish to think I could go in there and change it. As each day passed and I was out on the road with him, it was painfully obvious we weren't going to come remotely close to what I had in mind. I saw the rough repertoire list that he wrote up for the show and he was doing fifteen or twenty songs before I even came onstage. I was a sideshow. I thought when I



came on we were going to go places, blow up a few buildings. But he had no plans for that at all.

He had a new manager, too. This guy didn't want to hear about me at all, he didn't want to hear about Jeff Beck helping Rod Stewart, owning up that it was me who gave Rod the other leg up. In the early days, it was me who brought him to America and gave him his first exposure. Rod seems to forget that, though. It upsets me that whenever he refers to his first success, it's always the Faces. That's not what happened at all. It's only the half dozen guitarists in each town who have followed my career who can vouch that it was the Jeff Beck Group that really got him started.

MUSICIAN: Compared to that, working on Jagger's album must have been a breeze.

BECK: No one really knew what Mick wanted. I heard a tape and I couldn't really see me fitting on it too well. There were six songs on it, very bare bones. Not crude demos, they were

quite well put together. But I couldn't really see why he needed me. It seemed like he had fixed ideas. And Bill Laswell—I couldn't understand Laswell at all. It was as if the powers-that-be created this little episode, thrust us into this room down in Nassau and told us to get on with it.

Mick's a very moody guy. He would strum chords for about three hours to get into the mood. By that time, I was tired. There's this extra nervous condition I have when I'm not in there for my own stuff; I want to get in there and do it straight-away. I was thinking of his dollar, his time, trying to please him. And he wouldn't show any signs of appreciation or pleasure at what you were doing. "Oh, yeah, that was alright. Let's call it a day." You go home and you feel dejected. But that's the way he is. For two weeks, I just did my best and it appears to be alright.

The "black metal" getdown

MUSICIAN: One source in your camp described the new album as "black metal."

BECK: Yeah, there are one or two moments like that. It's a black influence in the rhythmic sense and there's my steely guitar on top. One track, "Ambitious," is a very black groove. Normally you'd have rhythm chips and maybe some horns on top. But this is wall-to-wall guitar solo, with complete disregard for anything other than going completely mad.

MUSICIAN: Was that the kind of sound Nile Rodgers had in mind when he started producing the album?

BECK: I don't really know. He sent me some pretty lame demos that were done at his house, I think—lame in that the song content wasn't really hot. But he reassured me over the phone several times: "You're gonna be a singer, you're gonna be playing sax through your guitar with this Synclavier link-up." That never happened. From the demos, I couldn't tell anything anyway.

What Nile and I should have done was to meet and sort out where we were going more than we did. We had a half-hour meeting at a hotel in Los Angeles. And of course, he had some pressing engagement and we didn't really get down to it. Not that I wanted a wrapped-up concept. But he was convinced that his songwriting and my guitar playing would be enough. It wasn't, though; eventually three of the tracks we cut really were not up to scratch.

MUSICIAN: After you finished with Rodgers, was Arthur Baker your next choice?

BECK: At first I had high hopes of covering one of Vangelis' tunes from *Chariots of Fire*, which is still in my opinion a perfect foil for me: a simple melody that sails over the top of effective but simple chords. We had one idea of doing a great production on it with synthesizers; it would have sounded like an orchestra of some kind. But I made a terrible mistake in trying to conduct four session guys as well as playing the lead part. My timing was so off that we found it impossible to overdub on it. So that was aborted.

I came back to England, met with Vangelis and he seemed keen to write me a different tune altogether, which pleased me no end. Then his studio blew up and he flew back to Greece, so that never came off. I was left with a three-quarters-finished album, if I was lucky. So I sat around and did nothing, waiting for some help.

Then I heard Arthur Baker's name mentioned. I had no idea what he'd done, who he was. Which is alright, I don't want to hear about what a guy's done before. It could throw me off course or put me off in some way. He had three songs which I loathed at first. But I'm an optimist [laughs], so I went to New York. And we came up with three really good songs.

MUSICIAN: Your manager was concerned that your working with someone like Baker, king of the dance remix, might be misconstrued as a sell-out.

I'd bicycle to play wherever Tina Turner wanted. Her voice was haunting me.

BECK: I make no pretenses about it. I'm trying to get commercial in a reachable way, something which is going to keep me *there*. I thought of doing another jazz-rock album, an all-instrumental album. I was advised against it by everybody, including my manager. The tough job is trying to play decent guitar on very pop-oriented stuff. I was looking for something I could put my trademark on. I was looking to reach a few more people.

Arthur Baker impressed me with the overall power of what was coming out of the studio. He doesn't have much vocabulary, but good producers don't need that. He sat there, with his huge frame, and whenever he felt a guitar part coming, he'd put his fist out. [Beck shoots his fist into the air like a torpedo.] This was before I even played a note.

MUSICIAN: At the risk of pitting one against the other, whose production do you prefer on the album: Rodgers' or Baker's?

BECK: Let's be cagy about it. With the two of them I have a better album than if I'd had just one, for no other reason than they're totally different people. Nile was more into white rock and Arthur was more the groove. Somewhere in that conglomeration of songs there has to be something that hits you, without going radically to the right or left.

To be fair to Nile, I was very lazy in the first sessions. He knew exactly what kind of notes he wanted me to play; I should have been a little more heavy-handed and straightened him out. He told me, "You won't have to do anything for the first two weeks because I'm gonna put it all down and you'll come in and play like an angel." I don't like to work like that. I like to be involved in the fabric of it, to be in on the chassis work.

But I was waiting to be molded by him when I should have been digging in my heels. The frustration built up from one thing to another and I just let loose. Maybe that's the way he wanted it. I got so frustrated I couldn't stand it and I just went crazy. I did that on a couple of tracks. [Smiles proudly] Doesn't sound too bad.

MUSICIAN: Given your insistence on the personal touch, the importance of "feel" in your guitar work, it's strange that you agreed to use a LinnDrum on all the Nile Rodgers tracks.

BECK: Drum machines, I loathe them. But you have to go with the mainstream for some things. Not having a resident drummer in my band—not even having a resident band—seemed a lot cheaper and more effective to use a good LinnDrum player. And we got one in Jimmy Bralower. When he first came in, I thought, "I'll soon stop this guy if he's no good." But he plays the Linn computer almost like a drum kit. He plays feasible drum fills, not ridiculous over-the-top too-fast stuff. And yet you have to be a really good drummer to do it.

MUSICIAN: This is also the first Jeff Beck album where you are credited with playing guitar synthesizer. For someone who has had a long-standing beef with most guitar special effects, what changed your mind about the guitar synthesizer?

BECK: I've always stayed clear of trick gadgets. Every day at the Power Station [where Beck cut the Nile Rodgers sessions] they were bringing in this, that and the other thing. And it was just shit, a whole plastic bag of junk from every guitar shop in the whole of New York. There were flangers, phase shifters, Tube Screemers. I was getting more scream without it. The only screaming going on there was me unplugging it.

But if a gadget is effective to the point where it's a real inspiration, I use it. And I got some exciting stuff with the MIDI hookup between the guitar and synthesizer. I used the Roland 707 guitar as the trigger on an Emulator. For the last six years, keyboards have had all the trick sounds. But this little baby can trigger all that. On one track, "Ecstasy," I dialed in this choir. And I had a DX7 synthesizer hooked up to it to get these tubular bells.

It was valid, though, because I still played it like a guitar. I let the sound influence me but only to the point where it was effective. Next, I want to sample Big Ben when it strikes one—BONG—put it on the Emulator and then bend *that* with a vibrato bar.

Over, under, sideways, out there

MUSICIAN: Let's go back to the very beginning. What were your first rock 'n' roll experiences?

BECK: I was lucky to be born in an era where this outrageous form of music called rock 'n' roll evolved. Having an older sister helped a lot. She introduced me to Elvis Presley and Bill Haley, all these people I would never have gotten into. I saw Buddy Holly at a gig in South London and I was so overawed by him. He played the Davis Theater in Croydon, I'll never forget it as long as I live. He came on with a little Fender amp, a Strat and his trio. That was it; all I had to hear was "That'll Be The Day" and I was floating for six weeks.

I was always fascinated by the older generation, moms and dads, older brothers and sisters, saying, "This record is great, but the guy whose name is on the record is not playing guitar. He can't really play." I made it a point to find out the name of the guy who was responsible for the guitar work. In those days, album info was nothing. You find me an early Elvis record that says Scotty Moore on guitar and Bill Black on bass. That upset me to the point of learning the guitar style, adopting it. And once I got over the first rung of the ladder, of learning a part of "Hound Dog," I realized I was better than Elvis because I was doing something he couldn't do.

MUSICIAN: Who are the guitarists who have been important influences on you, in the sense that you got something either technically or spiritually out of them?

BECK: Buddy Guy epitomized for me the artistry of electric blues guitar, especially Chicago style. It was the simplicity, the stabbing manic phrases that he came out with. It was *me*, that sound. I copied Hank Marvin of the Shadows in the early days, the Ventures too. It was irresistible if you were a learning guitarist.

MUSICIAN: A name you frequently mention as an influence is Cliff Gallup, guitarist with Gene Vincent & the Blue Caps.

BECK: Oh, yes [swoons]. I played some of his stuff the other day and it floored me. He's still incredible, proper rockabilly. He had no publicity at all, partly because most of the real Blue Caps stuff was recorded in June, July and August of '56. And that was it. Three months! And he's given me thirty years of enjoyment. What you're looking at with my style is a compilation of Buddy Guy and Cliff Gallup with all those other guys, like Scotty Moore. But not B.B. King; he didn't seem to go mad enough for me.

MUSICIAN: Some of your solos on the Yardbirds records have that intense Buddy Guy stabbing quality, a feeling like metal wires wrapped around your hand, slowly cutting into it.

BECK: That's exactly how it is, the transmission of a thought through those wires. The danger was in playing those numbers to kids who weren't ready for Chicago blues. So the Yardbirds were a springboard to get away from playing direct licks from Buddy Guy records.

MUSICIAN: Did you have any proper musical training? For a time, you sang in your local church choir.

BECK: I didn't enjoy it. But my mum wanted me to do something respectable. I don't know why she decided on the church choir. There was no money in it. You only got like half a buck on a Saturday for a wedding and then another half buck for a funeral.

I also had an uncle who loathed jazz. I remember he bought an MG sports car that had a radio in it. And after buying the car, before the engine was even cool, he ripped the radio out

When you want to beat the world up, the best thing is to get your guitar and beat hell out of it.

and threw it in the dustbin. But he was fanatical about classical music and he taught me how to play his cello because he caught me messing around with it one day. He showed me all the fingering, although I couldn't come to terms with the bow. So I started playing the upright bass and loved that.

But it wasn't until I built my first guitar that I made up my mind what I wanted to do. I built it out of plywood and aircraft wire. I had a model airplane with wires on it, the kind of model that flew around in circles. And after I got dizzy doing that for a few afternoons, I used the wire for guitar strings.

MUSICIAN: What was your first real guitar?

BECK: I had no money at all then. I had a Futurama guitar, which was disgusting. I don't know who made it; it looked like a Fender Strat. It had a lot of rocker switches on it that were useless. You'd strum one chord and they'd all go into the middle position and turn off. So you were standing there plunking away with no sound coming out. The vibrato arm was a disgrace to technology. It didn't go up or down; it was just rigid.

So I wandered around this guitar shop. I picked up this Stratocaster and that was it. I had to have one, but I couldn't afford it. So I conned the rhythm guitarist in this band I was in (the Del-Tones) and I filched it from him.

MUSICIAN: As soon as you joined the Yardbirds in March, 1965, you started working extensively with guitar distortion and tape echo effects. In a 1980 radio interview, you described the fuzz sound on "Heart Full Of Soul" as just a "farting" noise. But on that and subsequent Yardbird tracks, it seemed like you were using fuzz and tape effects to transform the sound of the guitar—for example, to a sitar on "Heart Full

Of Soul" and a violin on "Over Under Sideways Down."

BECK: I remember turning up for "Heart Full Of Soul"—I was always late for sessions—and they'd already got these two Indian guys playing sitar. But they couldn't understand the timing, which was 4/4. They were playing all over the place. When they'd gone, I had the riff going through my head and I just picked out the notes playing octaves on the middle G string. By bending the notes slightly off key, it sounded like a sitar. I used the fuzz just to dirty up the amp. I think the fuzz I used on "Heart Full Of Soul" was the first one ever made, a Tonebender.

I was into tape echo then, which was already passé mainly because the units got godawful distortion and they didn't travel well. All the heads would get moisture and condensation onstage and start making terrible noises. Also, the long mountainous echo didn't fit in at all with the raw edge of the blues stuff we were doing. So I got rid of that and just got two Vox AC30 amps and a fuzz box. That was it.

MUSICIAN: In the Yardbirds' daring cross-fertilization of blues, rock and progressive music styles, your tenure with the band—even compared to those of Clapton and Page—is considered to be the peak of their accomplishments. You were shooting for real extremes just in the pure nature of guitar sound—the washboard effect in "I'm A Man," the raga structure and overdub soloing in "Shapes Of Things." What inspired you to go out on those tangents?

BECK: Being elected lead guitarist of the Yardbirds, I had to earn my money. That's all. I couldn't bear the thought that I was a passenger in that band. I had to use what was laid out before me by the writers. I don't write; I still, to this day, can't write songs. The other members were really good writers but not that good at putting their points across musically. So I had to take those ideas and interpret what they were saying verbally and put it on the guitar.

MUSICIAN: That frantic washboard sound in "I'm A Man"—was that spontaneous?

BECK: It was supposed to be orgasmic music. If you listen to it in that sexual tone, you understand, the song was like reaching a whole climax. Each number was like that. In fact, before I joined, the Yardbirds had this reputation for doing climactic music, where it would start off soft, build up and go completely crazy, explode into rhythm. I loved doing that. It was so animal, and so simple. You could play like that even if your guitar was way out of tune. Just block off the strings and thump it. It was complete freedom. And at that age, when you just want to beat the world up, the best thing you can do is get a hold of your guitar and beat the hell out of it.

MUSICIAN: Was the solo in "Shapes Of Things" structured in any special way?

BECK: I was still under the Indian influence. But the guitar was frustrating because it wouldn't bend so far. So I was given this song with a break in the middle that changed rhythm completely and told to go mad with it. The thrill of being in a Chicago studio was enough ["Shapes Of Things"—along with "I'm A Man"—was cut at Chess Studios in Chicago in October, 1965]. But also the frustration of being there and not being able to play like Buddy Guy...I just went crazy. It was all done in two hours. That solo was all done on one string, the G. It was easy, just one string.

"Truth" and consequences: the Jeff Beck Groups

MUSICIAN: Your first solo efforts were, to say the least, contradictory. The original single release of "Beck's Bolero" with Jimmy Page and Keith Moon was a logical extension of your Yardbirds ideas into progressive heavy metal. Then for the A-side, you turned around and cut a bubblegum pop number, "Hi Ho Silver Lining," with a rather shaky vocal. How much influence did your producer Mickie Most have at that time?



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BECK: [Groans] All of it was Mickie Most. He tried to do a white Nile Rodgers on me. He said, "I know what you should be doing." He also had a very binding contract on me. I had

Beck Tech: The Hard Way

"I'm not into sissy guitars," declares **Jeff Beck**, who's played enough of them to be able to tell the difference. "I've often picked

screaming out all over the place. But we needed to work out how it was going to be done.

MUSICIAN: *This seems to be a recurring theme in the Jeff Beck story: bands with an overspill of talent, something going wrong business-wise.*

BECK: The problem with me is that I'm just not that much into music to see it through. I get very pissed off, very quickly, and that's something I'm trying to come to terms with now.

MUSICIAN: *How much did your frustration with these aborted rock projects influence your decision to dive into jazz fusion?*

BECK: When I first heard Jan Hammer on Billy Cobham's *Spectrum* album, I said, "That's it, hold everything." I had to listen to what was happening and face up to the fact that maybe electronic synthesizers were going to take over. At one point, I honestly felt like giving up.

MUSICIAN: *Why were you so awestruck by Jan Hammer? He's a keyboard player, not a guitarist.*

BECK: I'd heard enough guitar. I wasn't the slightest bit interested in John McLaughlin. I'm not being disrespectful; everything he did was incredible. But I knew Mahavishnu was a dead duck as far as reaching large audiences.

The texture of Jan's MiniMoog—I wanted to know all about that, because it was so pure. You couldn't bullshit like that like you could with a guitar because in those days the MiniMoog wasn't touch-sensitive. Jan was clean, every phrase was finished off. I learned a hell of a lot from him, to get down to the nuts and bolts of phrasing, hitting where it hurts most. When I found out that he had, in fact, learned a lot from me, our friendship got started.

MUSICIAN: *Probably the highpoint of that period was your cover of Stevie Wonder's "Cause We've Ended As Lovers." There was a lyrical quality to your soloing, a vivid summation*

of what you were trying to accomplish with fusion guitar.

BECK: It was a lyrical song. I soak in the vibe of a song and then lay on what fits best. I took quite a few stabs at that one. I remember being very frustrated with it. It was only when my manager's secretary walked in with this forty-inch bust that I was able to come out with this solo. That was very inspiring.

But really, what's disappointing to me is that for the last umpteen years most guitar players don't seem to reveal any depth or thought, great as they may be as technicians. It's the soul that's missing—or maybe not so much soul as color. There are so many sounds in the guitar, without using any effects. As I recall on that Stevie Wonder song, there are no bends in that solo that I didn't do just with my fingers. If I can't make the solo happen without the whammy bar, there's something wrong. But you have guitarists who have switches and pedals that go right from one side of the stage to the other. You have to be a tap dancer as well as a guitarist.

Talking broadly, away from the technical side, what the oyster people seem to be after now is the image. They don't seem to go for the music content. They go for the image and some kind of superficial vibe.

MUSICIAN: *Come on, that was just as important to the Yardbirds in the mid-60s.*

BECK: We realized we had to have an image. But it was self-contained in the music—just going crazy on the instrument without showing off. We had no put-on theatrics. They were real emotions. To do a double-up rhythm like "I'm A Man," you have to sweat or you won't come out alive.

Here today, gone tomorrow

MUSICIAN: *In the last eight years, you seem to have spent*

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more time working on your old Ford roadsters than you have playing guitar. What do you get out of cars that you don't get out of guitars?

BECK: That's an interesting question. Having driven a really good car that I've built is enough to keep me going in the same way a hit album in the music business would be an impetus for someone else. I know what it feels like to work on a fine rod; there's nothing quite like it. You break your fingers, you bruise, you cut yourself, all the elements get at you. It's also physical. You use up a lot of energy, whereas you can't with a guitar. You can jump around but you aren't actually doing anything that makes more music come out. Some of the wildest solos I've played have been while sitting in a chair. But with mechanics, you can kick things and swear and scream and go crazy, throw wrenches around.

MUSICIAN: Your guitar playing, at its most frenzied, has those same characteristics.

BECK: I'm immature in that way. I still haven't grown up.

MUSICIAN: You said in an interview some years back that the saddest part of working on a car was starting it up after you'd worked on it, as if something you loved was over. Do you feel the same way about playing a solo or cutting a record?

BECK: It's a psychological problem I have with music and life in general. When I see the net result appearing in front of me, I just want to run away from it unless something diverting happens to keep me interested. If that engine won't start, I have to keep going at it until it starts. I have to find out why it won't work. But once it does, that's it.

MUSICIAN: That might account for your apparent lack of interest in songwriting. The only Beck original on this new album is the short "Tube" theme. Is writing that much of a problem for you?

BECK: I just get a feasible guitar riff, put that on tape and then overdub the melody—if there is one. I can't play piano. If I had some knowledge of piano chords, I might be more prolific.

But I'm not looking for that. I'm not looking for my inner self. I'm looking for a band situation where the output is from more than one or two guys. I don't want to be dressed up in a suit out front saying, "Hey, boys, this is the way it goes." I want to be part of it, weaving and waving in between. But all the musicians I get assume that I'm going to be moody, heavy-fisted, straight to the point. And I'm not. I'm waiting. Being heavy is not always the way it should be done.

MUSICIAN: What do you hear on radio or records these days that interests you?

BECK: Not much. The radio is on in the kitchen all day because the lady that works there has it on. But I can't stand it most of the time. I can't stand mechanical drum-machine funk or rap records, I loathe them. I like things that are well-produced like Paul Young, nothing to do with guitars. Except ZZ Top. They're great, just bare bones rock 'n' roll. "Gimme All Your Lovin'" and "Sharp Dressed Man" are great pop songs, coming from a bunch of bearded geezers from the South.

MUSICIAN: Do you listen to jazz anymore?

BECK: Sometimes I want to hear a song and I thrash through my record collection. If I can't find it, I just go out into the garage and start working on a car. I don't want to disappoint you, but I'm not really that much interested in music.

MUSICIAN: What assurances do we have that at the end of 1985 you won't just pack up again and go back to your cars for another three years?

BECK: None, really. Get somebody to buy the album. Then maybe I'll find some kind of identity that is feasible on video and stage. And if I get that right, maybe you'll see me in 1986. ☐

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If you're thinking of building or expanding your studio, the Synclavier Digital Music System is a must. The Synclavier has been proven time and time again by top name artists and studios to be a tremendously creative and cost savings piece of equipment. In the best tradition of New England Digital, the following new Synclavier options prove once again why the Synclavier continues to lead in technological development.

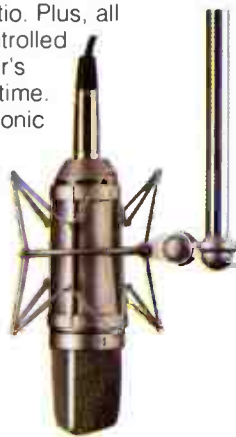
Polyphonic Sampling

(16-Bit/100 kHz)

Concert grand piano, rich string sections, sizzling brass and the ultimate drum timbres are just a few of the unbelievable possibilities with the Synclavier's new Polyphonic Sampling Option.



Believe us, these timbres don't sound like you've got cotton in your ears. The full dynamic range rings true. This capability is provided by offering full 16-bit resolution with a user-variable sampling frequency up to 100 kHz. Expandable from 8 to 32 fully polyphonic voices. In addition you can order up to 32 — that's right — 32 megabytes of sound sampling memory (in 1 megabyte boards)! All voices are stereo and offer 96 dB S/N ratio. Plus, all voices can be controlled from the Synclavier's front panel in real time. A library of polyphonic sampled timbres featuring grand piano, strings, brass, and percussion is provided.



Sounds hot! Believe us, and your ears, it is!

Multi-Channel Independent Outputs

Once you have that finished recording in your Synclavier, you can now very easily link the Synclavier recorder to any multi-track recorder using the new independent output option.

The Multi-Channel Output Option allows you to route each track of the Synclavier's 32-track Digital Memory Recorder to a selectable individual output channel. Each output channel can be equalized or processed to produce a 32-track master, as well as a standard stereo composite.

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76-Note Velocity/Pressure Keyboard

Designed for musicians, the Synclavier 76 note programmable velocity/pressure keyboard provides quick and easy access to all the different features of the system, such as: a 32-track Digital

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The first of its kind and still the leader has advanced another step with the refinement of additional software features. Complete scores, individual parts, piano scores and lead sheets are easily re-



produced with incredible results.

An editor is included which allows you to perform typing in of lyrics, changes to the actual music, or adding of commands which will produce correctly transcribed triplets, quintuplets, and other irregular rhythmic groupings.

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Pop your video monitor on top of your keyboard, lock up your Synclavier and video machine using the new SMPTE reader option and — presto! — compose the score with master-quality sounds and your music product is finished.

The SMPTE option allows you to position the master tape to any point. When the tape starts, the Synclavier will chase to the correct position. This avoids having to start the Synclavier and tape back to zero for each take.

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MIDI

Of course we're doing MIDI. MIDI will be available in June as a simple retrofit to any Synclavier system.

Improved "User-Friendly" Software

In order to facilitate the operation of the system, New England Digital's software

engineers have been busy restructuring the software interface to be very user-friendly. In addition, the system will feature a rhythm input page software routine for quick and precise entering of rhythm parts. Plus, an easy-to-follow set of menus which guide the user through any part of the system quickly.

Instructional Video Cassettes

If you're interested in relaxing at home and learning the basics of the Synclavier system, you can now purchase three video cassettes which guide the viewer through its basic features and operations. Send your check for \$175.00 per set (not sold separately) plus postage and handling. Complete printed documentation is also available for \$200 per set.



For more information or a personal demonstration, please call New England Digital or one of our authorized distributors:

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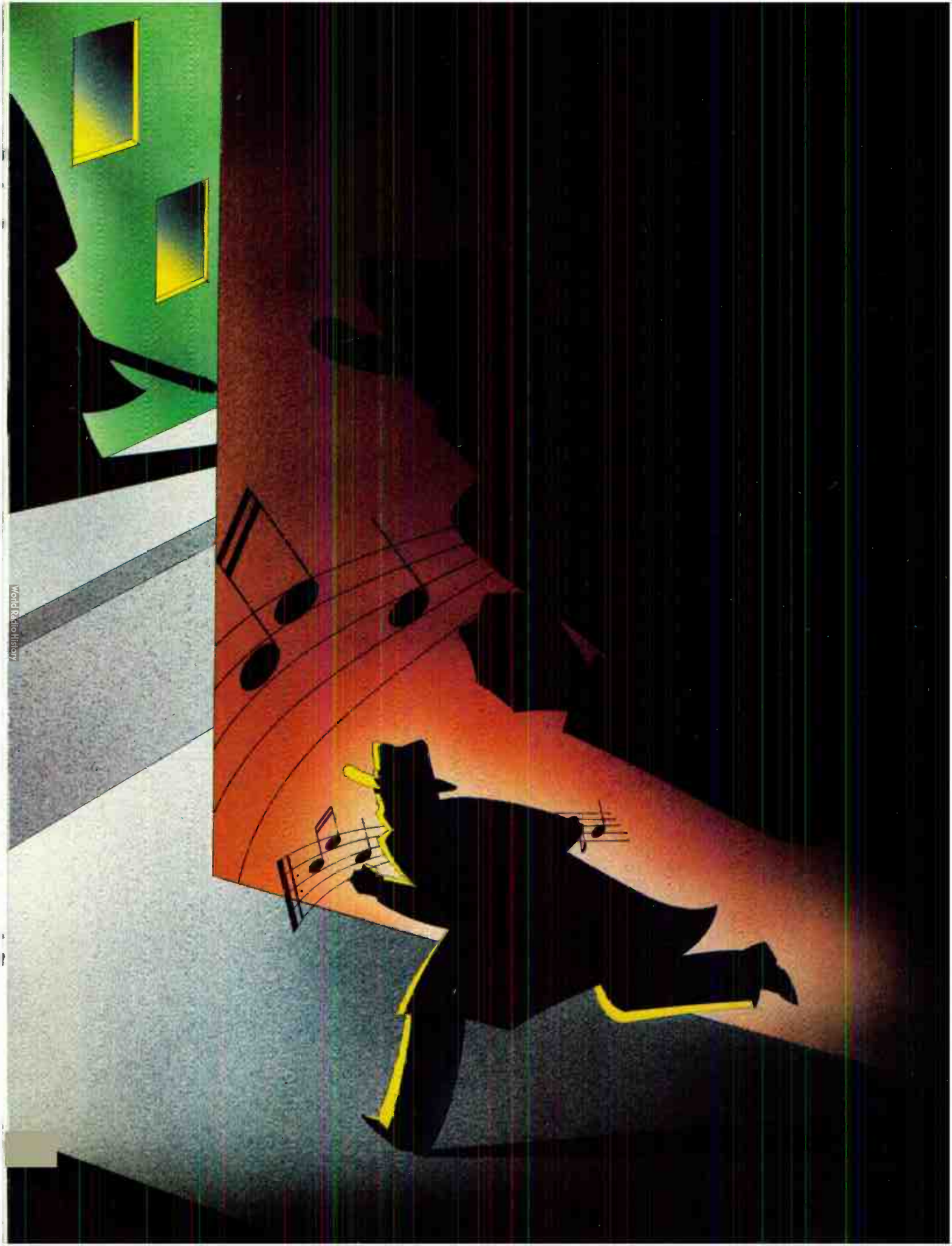
When Jack Killcommons, a songwriter/keyboardist based in Queens, New York, sent out a demo tape in 1981 of an original song recorded by his rock group the Yorkers, his hopes for snaring The Big Deal were running high. He mailed out copies of "Leaving Your Love—Ain't Love The Way It Seems" to agents, radio stations and record companies, keeping a diary of who received what when. But the only offer Killcommons and his group got was an invitation to play keyboards and guitars at a Long Island musical instruments show.

Then last year, Killcommons began getting phone calls from friends saying they'd heard a song on the radio by Huey Lewis & the News that sounded like the one they'd heard Killcommons rehearse at home in his basement. "I spun the dial until I found Lewis' 'If This Is It,'" Killcommons recalls. "And it *did* sound like 'Leaving Your Love.' I was shocked more than angry. I knew we were good songwriters, but until then we didn't have anything to prove it."

So Killcommons contacted attorney Dorothy Weber, a copyright specialist, who analyzed the two songs before filing an infringement action last November on behalf of Killcommons and co-songwriter Patrick McCarthy in Federal District Court in New York City. Named as defendants were Lewis, his songwriting partner Johnny Colla, Hulex Music and Chrysalis Records, Lewis' label. Killcommons and McCarthy charge in their complaint that the defendants "willfully and with wanton disregard of

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A NEW ONSLAUGHT OF SONG
STEALING CASES IS CHANGING THE
WAY WE DO BUSINESS. **BY STAN SOOCHER**
ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY ALLEN



plaintiffs' rights have reproduced and distributed said copyrighted work." They further claim that "a comparison of (the two works) shows that although the lyrics have been altered, the theme of the lyrics remains the same. In addition, the music and chords, bass lines, timing, guitar leads and harmonies are virtually identical." Killcommons wants an injunction to prevent any further publishing, selling, marketing or displaying of "If This Is It" as well as \$50,000 in statutory damages for willful infringement.

In their answer to the Killcommons complaint, the defendants deny all allegations of infringement, insisting that "If This Is It" was created independently and that there is "no substantial similarity in the ideas or manner in which (the two

on a crater in Hawaii fifteen years ago and I wrote these lyrics. Then my old lady split and took my book of poems. Next thing I know, she's living with George Harrison in London. George's ex-old lady probably walked in one day and took my book of poems over to Eric's. Then Eric wrote the song.' The caller had written music for his poem and the words didn't sound the same as Clapton's to me. I couldn't take the case."

Robert Besser, Huey Lewis' busy attorney, believes Killcommons is a plaintiff "in search of a deep pocket defendant. It's a nuisance suit, to go out and find someone big." Dorothy Weber responds, "We don't know now if anyone who received a copy of the 'Leaving Your Love' demo may have been affiliated with Lewis and Colla, and played it for them. We'll try

"The big cases have done more damage to aspiring acts than most people realize."

songs) are expressed, that any similarity is related to uncopyrightable elements." No trial date has been set and the discovery phase of gathering evidence only recently has begun.

This the cutting edge of copyright law, the front lines of songwriting's hottest, messiest issue, the Principle of Similarity. In the last few years, that crucial point of law has been tested and remolded with unprecedented intensity. What does this massing of legal armies really mean, what jockeying for position lies behind the legal phrasing of complaint and reply? And what awaits Jack Killcommons as he enters the long, tortuous gamut of discovery, testimony and final judgement? Does he have a real chance of success?

This growing climate of litigation paranoia is fundamentally changing the way songwriters, labels and publishers do business. Court actions involving the likes of Michael Jackson, the Bee Gees, Charlie Daniels, Led Zeppelin and even Buddy Holly have been waged or begun. And litigation continues over the court-ordered remedy in the suit first brought against George Harrison for "My Sweet Lord" in 1971. And Huey Lewis has filed his own copyright action for profits and five million dollars in punitive damages against soul pop tunesmith Ray Parker Jr., claiming that "Ghostbusters" infringes upon Lewis' "I Want A New Drug." What follows is a closer look at some of these cases and their implications for future songwriters.

Federal copyright law is constructed to give anyone with a colorable claim a fair hearing in court. Either the legal owner (usually the publishing company) or the beneficial owner (the songwriter) can file suit. Typically, an attorney consulted by a potential copyright plaintiff will listen to the two songs at issue for any musical similarities. Then the attorney will ask how the client's song was created, what was done with it and why the client thinks these particular defendants should be sued. Once the attorney is satisfied that the client and claim are credible, a musicologist will be brought in to analyze the elements of each song. If a close similarity is found between the two tunes, the attorney may file suit.

"I took Ronald Selle's case against the Bee Gees only after considering his personality and background," explains Chicago attorney Allen Engerman. "Selle was deeply religious, performed for charitable organizations, had an M.A. in music and had analyzed his song 'Let It End' to the point where he was convinced that its similarity to the Bee Gees' 'How Deep Is Your Love' was beyond coincidence."

Attorney Steven Massarsky, a former manager of the Allman Brothers Band who has formed a Manhattan law partnership with Bruce Gold, former senior legal counsel for Chappell Music, the Bee Gees' co-publisher, notes that infringement allegations also can border on the absurd. "I received a call from a guy not too long ago who told me he had written Eric Clapton's 'Lay Down Sally.' He said, 'I was sitting

to establish this link through discovery."

Establishing that link will be an important part of Killcommons and Weber's case, because there are two different legal conceptions of similarity, and without the link a tougher standard is applied. Killcommons must establish either that the songs are *substantially similar* and the defendants had access to "Leaving Your Love," or that the songs are so *strikingly similar* that access can be inferred from the surrounding circumstances. That difference between *substantially* and *strikingly* has made proof of access the deciding issue in most copyright suits brought against established acts.

The plaintiff typically uses expert testimony to establish the substantial or striking similarity of the melodies of the two songs at issue. There is no exact legal measure of what constitutes similarity. Song charts are brought into the courtroom for the judge or jury to inspect. Portions of the two songs may be played in isolation to emphasize the similarities. Harmonies, rhythms, arrangements and other elements are examined for their probative value. And the defendant can introduce songs written before either of the compositions in question to show they are both derived from a prior common source. To establish striking similarity in the suit brought against the Bee Gees, plaintiff Selle utilized Arrand Parsons, a professor of music at Northwestern University who had been an annotator for the Chicago Symphony and New Orleans Symphony Orchestra. Striking similarity became the operative test because Selle's song received little exposure.

Selle, an antique dealer, first composed "Let It End" while shaving and registered it for copyright in 1975. He performed it two or three times in the Chicago area and sent a tape of the song along with a lead sheet to eleven publishing and recording companies. All but three packages were returned. Then one day in 1978, Selle was working in his yard when he heard "How Deep Is Your Love" playing on a neighbor's stereo and thought it was his own song altered. Selle later filed suit against the Gibbs, Paramount Pictures Corp., Phonodisc Inc. and PolyGram Distribution Inc.

Settlements are an attractive option to minimize legal fees and publicity in lawsuits but, according to Bee Gees attorney Robert Osterberg, "This was the first time the group had been sued or even accused of stealing someone's song. They were so grossly offended that they were determined to prove themselves in a court of law." As a result, Barry, Robin and Maurice Gibb remained in the courtroom throughout the trial.

The legal definition of striking similarity requires the plaintiff to demonstrate that any similarities between the two songs are of a kind that only can be explained by copying, rather than by coincidence, independent creation or prior common source. In court, musicologist Parsons testified that in the first eight bars of both "Let It End" and "How Deep Is Your Love" twenty-four of the notes were identical in pitch and symmetri-

cal position. Thirty rhythmic impulses were found by the musicologist to be identical in both songs. Fourteen notes in pitch and eleven in rhythmic impulses were found to be identical in the last four bars of both songs.

One song chart was superimposed over the other for the jury to inspect and a piano was brought into the courtroom for a live comparison of portions of the two songs. At one point during this demonstration, Maurice Gibb mistakenly testified on the witness stand that he thought that Selle's song was the Bee Gees' song. As part of the defense argument, the Bee Gees showed that melodic portions of their song running with the words "I know your eyes in the morning sun" were similar to the "da-da-da-da-da-dun-dun-da" vocal introduction to the Beatles' "From Me To You." Barry then played a tape of two of his early compositions, "Play Down" and "I'd Like To Leave If I May" to prove that he had used the same melody years ago.

When the jury returned its verdict, though, it found the Bee Gees guilty of infringement. "I feel like I've somehow stepped into *The Twilight Zone*. It's been a nightmare," Barry told Robert Palmer of the *New York Times* shortly after the verdict was handed down. But several months later in July 1983, District Judge George N. Leighton granted the defendants' motion for a judgment notwithstanding the verdict, overturning the infringement finding on the ground that Selle had failed to contradict the Bee Gees' testimony of independent creation and to establish circumstances from which access could be inferred, regardless of how similar the two tunes might be. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit affirmed Judge Leighton's decision in July 1984.

"The piece of evidence that saved us was a work tape from the Chateau d'Herouville in France of 'How Deep Is Your Love' being created," says Osterberg. On the tape, Barry Gibb can be heard asking keyboardist Blue Weaver to "play me a beautiful chord." After a few tries, an acceptable chord is struck and the songwriting began with the ideas, lyrics and notes being pieced together over the course of the session. "The Bee Gees now keep work tapes of all the songs they write," Osterberg adds.

Engerman, Selle's attorney, admits, "There was no hard and fast evidence of access. But it's not unusual in the music industry for people to get hold of tapes and bring them to someone else to hear. The Bee Gees write with musicians in the room who have been around the industry. From that we saw a potential for access."

In its opinion, the Seventh Circuit noted that access could not be inferred from speculation and conjecture alone. It then emphasized that Parsons, who was better prepared to analyze classical than popular music, had not addressed the issue of prior common source or testified that the song similarities only could be explained by copying.

The suit brought over Michael Jackson's "The Girl Is Mine" from *Thriller* is in many ways a carbon copy of the Bee Gees suit in that it was brought by a plaintiff relatively unknown in the music business, took place in federal court in Chicago and was fought over the largest-selling album of all time. (The Bee Gees' *Saturday Night Fever* was the largest-selling album at the time that suit was brought.) A crucial distinction, however, is that in the Jackson case the jury found CBS innocent of infringement.

CBS did admit at trial that it had received a copy of plaintiff Fred Sanford's "Please Love Me Now" at one of its sales offices where it was given to a company executive by a promoter on behalf of Sanford, a lounge performer. Hotly contested was the actual time the tape was received.

The turning point in the trial apparently came when Jackson took the witness stand to testify on how he wrote "The Girl Is Mine." Jackson, a California resident, had not been named as a defendant in the suit because the court in Chicago did not have personal jurisdiction over him. According to John Branca, Jackson's Los Angeles-based legal advisor,

"Michael wanted to testify to show that he couldn't be intimidated. It was incredulous to think that an artist as successful as Michael who had forty or fifty songs he'd written but had not used would want to steal someone else's material."

At "The Girl Is Mine" trial, a gloveless Jackson arrived under tight security to face a packed courtroom for four hours of testimony. He testified that he woke up one morning in London in November 1981 and sang the melody and other parts of the song into a tape recorder. He said he was able to recall the time he composed the song because his driver had been looking for a Thanksgiving turkey. He played the tape for the jury to hear and then sang the melody over some of his other songs to show it was part of his repertoire. According to one eyewitness, before Jackson left the courthouse, trial judge Marvin E. Aspen brought the superstar into his chambers to sign autographs for the judge's children.

CBS attorneys introduced as evidence "Longer" by Dan Fogelberg and the themes from the television shows "Maverick" and "Cheers" to show prior common sources and independent creation. Gerald Jacover, the attorney for San-



ford, argued that, despite the fact that CBS claimed to have discarded the plaintiff's tune and broken the chain of custody, there was evidence from which it could be concluded that Sanford's song had been on the same floor in the same building in the same city at the same time as Jackson. But a musicologist testifying for Sanford admitted that, while the two songs were similar, they could have been created independently.

The jury deliberated for two-and-one-half days before finding in favor of CBS last December 14. When this story went to press, Sanford and Jacover had not decided yet whether they would appeal the jury's verdict. "One of the jurors called me after the verdict was reached, which is practically unheard of," reveals Jacover. "He said he had pangs of conscience, that he might have made a mistake and that he had told this to the judge. Initially, the jurors were in favor of Sanford four to two. Then it was three to three. In the last hours of deliberation, Sanford lost. In my opinion, the jury wasn't prepared to make a statement to the world that Jackson was a liar and a plagiarist. If anyone other than Jackson had been involved, Sanford would have prevailed."

CBS attorney James Klenk contends that the jury's decision could lead to a decline in the number of copyright suits

being brought against big name acts. "If the verdict had turned out the other way, you could attribute a tape given to a CBS secretary in one town to Julio Iglesias, who doesn't even live in the United States." The chances of that happening to CBS may be minimal now since, according to Robert Altschuler, vice-president of public affairs for CBS Records Group, following the Sanford suit a strict company-wide policy has been put into effect directing all employees not to accept any unsolicited material.

The comments by Sanford's attorney about the confusion in jury deliberations over "The Girl Is Mine" are part of an ongoing debate in which many copyright lawyers complain that jurors often are not equipped to properly assess the fine distinctions between songs and to understand the significance of any similarities. But the prevailing legal test under federal copyright law remains the impressions the two songs in dispute make upon the lay ear, with any expert testimony going to the weight of the evidence.

This legal test led to a controversial charge in the appellate briefs filed before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in New York in 1982 on behalf of George Harrison in the suit arising over "My Sweet Lord." Harrison had been found guilty by District Judge Richard Owen of infringing upon the copyright of the early 60s Chiffons hit "He's So Fine" in a three-day, non-jury trial held in federal District Court in Manhattan in 1976. In the appellate brief, attorneys for Harri-

son claimed that Owen, a classical musician and composer, had disregarded the expert testimony offered at trial, served as his own expert witness and, in doing so, had gone beyond the bounds of the lay listener test when he found largely on the basis of a grace note that Harrison had subconsciously infringed upon "He's So Fine." In 1983, the Second Circuit nevertheless affirmed the lower court on this point.

The Harrison case often is cited for its holding that a defendant may be found guilty of infringing upon another tune even if there is no deliberate awareness of what the song is that the defendant may have copied. But that precedent was derived from a 1924 case in which Jerome Kern was found guilty of subconsciously infringing upon the harmonic arrangement of another song with his South Sea idyll "Kalua," one of the rare instances where harmonies were found copyrightable. The Harrison case perhaps is more notable for the formula Judge Owen spelled out on assessing actual damages to the "He's So Fine" plaintiffs. In an unusual turn of events, by the time the damage trial took place, the plaintiff had become former Beatles business manager Allen Klein.

The infringement suit against Harrison originally was filed in February 1971 by Bright Tunes Music Corp., the legal holder of the copyright to "He's So Fine," written by the late Ronnie Mack. Settlement negotiations were held between the two parties, but the negotiations failed when Bright Tunes found Harrison's highest offer of \$148,000 to be too low.

At the trial, Harrison spent one-and-one-half days testifying on the witness stand, doing some skat singing, demonstrating on guitar how "My Sweet Lord" was written. Judge Owen handled much of the questioning himself while the attorneys for either side watched from their trial tables. Mack's mother sat in the front row each day of the trial. Harrison explained how he had slipped away from a backstage press conference after a show in Copenhagen on a solo tour in 1969 and went upstairs where he began improvising on the guitar, alternating between a Minor II and Major V chord, and singing "Hal-lelujah" and "Hare Krishna." He returned downstairs and played the riff for band members, who added harmonies to

the vocals. A week later, the group returned to London and entered a recording studio where band member Billy Preston took the tune for an album he was making. At this point, the actual structure of the song was completed during takes, with Harrison supervising. This version of "My Sweet Lord" was transcribed onto a lead sheet and filed for copyright registration. Harrison himself later recorded the tune, selling over one million copies in the first month of release in December 1970. Preston's rendition went largely unnoticed. Harrison claimed the original inspiration for the song was the gospel hit "Oh Happy Day" by the Edwin Hawkins Singers.

Harrison lawyer Joseph Santora recalls his client wasn't concerned with money when the suit was filed but with his reputation as an artist. "George was hurt, really hurt," Santora says. "He lamented in court how he had spent his whole life putting down ripoff artists and now he was being accused of being one." Ben Gerson, who wrote the lead review in *Rolling Stone* that drew attention to the similarities between "He's So Fine" and "My Sweet Lord," was asked to appear as a witness at the trial for the plaintiff, though he was never called to the stand. He remembers, "Harrison looked thin. I think he wore the same coat both days he testified. His complexion was pallid, his face hollow-cheeked. He was withdrawn, not at all charismatic. While he was testifying, a siren went off outside. Harrison said every sound has its own rhythm. He started

"This guy's a plaintiff in search of a deep pocket defendant. It's a nuisance suit."

clicking his tongue to prove his point."

Access was established on the basis of "He's So Fine" having been number twelve on the charts in Britain at the same time in 1963 that the Beatles occupied the number one slot. Judge Owen analyzed the songs by noting the substantial similarity between the two major musical motifs in each, emphasizing their near identical repetition and the placement of a grace note at the end of the second motif. The grace note appears only in Preston's version of the song, but Judge Owen concluded that this was enough to establish liability on Harrison's part, even if unintended. "His subconscious mind knew (the combination) had already worked in a song his conscious mind did not remember," the judge wrote in his opinion.

Harrison, however, was not disappointed by the verdict. "George was satisfied that he was vindicated from the charges of committing any intentional wrong," Santora declares. "Even after he finished testifying, he was spirited enough to come to my office, drink some brandy, and take song requests from the clerks and secretaries for two hours."

James Janowitz, an attorney for Bright Tunes, agrees that the subconscious infringement finding "was a way for the judge to pay homage to Harrison, a more palatable approach to finding a major star liable, although there was really no evidence one way or the other on this issue."

The significance of a finding of subconscious infringement is the effect it has on the damages a plaintiff can collect. For example, a subconsciously-infringing defendant may be able to deduct from the damage award the costs spent in the production and promotion of the infringing product.

In his 1981 damage trial opinion, Judge Owen considered the four major sources of income for a song copyright: mechanical royalties from record and tape sales, performance royalties generated largely from radio airplay, the sale of sheet music and the profits earned by Apple Records, the record company in which Harrison held an interest. The judge then determined that seventy percent of the sales of the *All*

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Things Must Pass album were attributable to "My Sweet Lord." Next, he concluded that three-fourths of the success of "My Sweet Lord" was due to the plagiarized tune and that the other quarter was attributable to factors such as the words and the popularity of George Harrison. Under this formula, Judge Owen assessed the damages owed the plaintiff by Harrison to be \$1,599,987.

After the liability trial, Allen Klein had purchased the rights from Bright Tunes for \$587,000 to collect the infringement damages from Harrison. Klein in fact had been in touch with the Bright Tunes plaintiffs as early as the pre-trial settlement negotiations between the parties, even offering Bright Tunes Harrison documents and negotiating tips on the value of its

bringing a guitar to the witness stand when he testified. As part of his presentation, he performed substantially similar songs to both "Bad News" and "Long-Haired Country Boy." A musicologist for the defense traced the melodic themes of the Loudermilk and Daniels songs to before the American Revolution. The trial judge ruled in Daniels' favor based on a finding of independent creation.

"There's no doubt that Charlie was a wonderful witness," admits Richard Frank, lawyer for Acuff-Rose. "His honesty and integrity in the writing process really came across. I've never had a stronger case. But when Charlie got through with his testimony, I knew we were in trouble. I knew Charlie before the trial, but I don't think it will be so easy to sit down and have

"I never had a stronger case, but when Charlie Daniels testified, we were in trouble."

claim. Judge Owen reduced Klein's recovery from \$1,599,987 to the \$587,000 figure on the ground that Klein had breached his obligation to Harrison as a business manager. The Second Circuit affirmed this holding, citing such factors as the fact that Klein had provided the attorneys that originally handled the suit on Harrison's behalf. Both the trial and appellate courts directed Klein to hold the Bright Tunes rights in constructive trust until Harrison paid Klein the costs of his acquisition, in effect making Harrison the owner of both "My Sweet Lord" and "He's So Fine."

Today, Klein only says about the case that "I never did believe that George set out to copy 'He's So Fine.'"

The emotional rollercoaster Harrison found himself on with Bright Tunes and later Klein is an integral, if unattractive, part of copyright litigation. But when the parties on either side of a suit are major music personalities in their own right, the emotional stakes are even higher. In the suit brought by Huey Lewis against Ray Parker, Jr. over "Ghostbusters," Lewis charges in the complaint filed last summer in Los Angeles federal court that Parker willfully infringed in the creation of a song substantially similar to Lewis' "I Want A New Drug." Lewis' attorney Robert Besser says that Lewis turned down an offer to write the theme song to the *Ghostbusters* film. "Then Parker accepted the offer to write the song. He attended a screening of a rough cut of the film, during which a work sound track that included 'I Want A New Drug' was played," claims Besser.

Parker denies the infringement allegations in his formal answer to the complaint. Both Parker and Donald Passman, Parker's attorney on the case, declined to comment on the case for this story. Depositions are now being taken as discovery proceeds. The trial date has not been set.

Though Parker's case looks bad, a lot of things can happen in court. One less visible copyright suit involving two well-known personalities in the tightly-knit Nashville music community resulted in a win for the defendant despite proof of access and substantial similarity. In that case publishing house Acuff-Rose filed an infringement action against Southern rocker Charlie Daniels and his Hat Band Music company. Acuff-Rose claimed that Daniels, while writing "Long-Haired Country Boy," had subconsciously infringed upon "Bad News," written by John D. Loudermilk, the composer of such classics as "Tobacco Road" and "Then You Can Tell Me Goodbye." Access was easily proven since numerous versions of "Bad News" had been recorded over the years, including one by Jimmy Hall, an artist managed by Daniels' Sound Seventy Productions. Substantial similarity was established by showing that sixteen out of twenty-four bars in the two songs essentially were the same.

Loudermilk did not appear at the non-jury trial. Daniels did,

a beer with him now."

Daniels may have won the court battle, but he lost ground on another front by falling victim to the prevailing industry fear of further copyright suits. Where Daniels and his Hat Band Music publishing company were supportive of new talent before, they no longer accept demo tapes sent on speculation. In fact, a form letter issued by Daniels' office states, "Due to recent court action, Mr. Daniels regrets he may no longer review unsolicited material."

"The big cases have done more damage to aspiring acts than most people realize, despite the fact that many of the defendants are winning," says James Klenk, an attorney for CBS in the Michael Jackson suit. "In most instances today, you only can get tapes heard if they are shopped by someone who's already known, like an established agent or manager. It's become a lot tougher to find someone to listen to unsolicited material."

"Music publishing houses and record companies definitely have become more gun-shy as a result of these cases. Most

PROTECT YOURSELF:

A Short Course In Copyright Registration

A plaintiff can recover statutory damages, costs and attorney fees under the Copyright Act of 1976 only if a work is registered with the Register of Copyright within three months after its first publication or, for unpublished works, before the infringing act takes place. The distribution of demo tapes to promote original material is not considered publication. The cost of filing for registration is ten dollars for each song. (Form PA for registering musical compositions and Circular R1, a pamphlet on copyright basics, can be obtained by writing to the Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20559, or calling (202) 287-9100 or (202) 287-8700.)

Regardless of registration, copyright protection under the 1976 Act begins the moment a song is fixed in a tangible medium of expression, such as on a tape recorder. Under the old Copyright Act enacted in 1909, federal copyright protection began from the moment a work was published or registered unpublished, and lasted for twenty-eight years, renewable by the copyright owner for another twenty-eight years. Under the 1976 Act, federal copyright protection for any songs previously unregistered or unpublished, or created on or after January 1, 1978, extends for the life of the last living writer, plus fifty years. Then the composition enters the public domain where anyone may use it anytime.

Songs registered or published before January 1, 1978, and in their first term now have a renewable second term of forty-seven years. Songs already in their second term on January 1, 1978, are given by the 1976 Act a copyright life of seventy-five years from the time the copyright first became effective. The statute of limitations for filing a copyright suit is three years from the last infringing act. Courts have held this to mean the last act of a continuing wrong, such as the last sale of an allegedly infringing song. While this extends the time for filing suit, problems of proof arise when a plaintiff waits too long.

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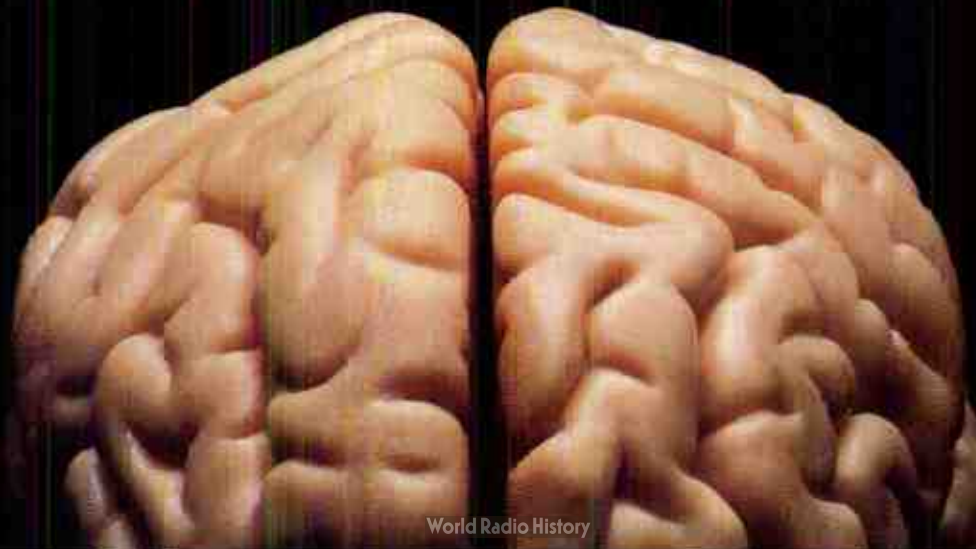


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general mailings are being returned unopened," agrees Bruce Gold. "I think we're experiencing an era in which the little guy is going after the big guy in copyright suits possibly because of the publicity the big cases generate. Bringing suit can make you an instant media star."

Just how long this industry-wide litigation paranoia will continue is open to question. Some music attorneys suggest that the senders and receivers of unsolicited materials institute careful logging procedures detailing dates and responses to minimize the chances of an unfair claim being brought. Other attorneys are not so sure this kind of evidence will be all that convincing in court. Steven Massarsky proposes the establishment of independent scouting services to find material for music publishers and record companies, and to eliminate unnecessary contact with unsolicited material.

These preventive strategies may make talent companies and established acts feel more secure, but a new round of even stickier lawsuits are on the way. One of the most intriguing involves three brothers from Kansas, Arthur, Al and Allaire Homburg who claimed to have copyrighted "That'll Be The Day" less than a month before Buddy Holly did in April of 1957, and to have performed it publicly six months before. The defendant in the Homburg's suit is Paul McCartney's MPL, which now owns Holly's songs. The three brothers are asking for assignment of the rights to "That'll Be The Day" and all past profits from its sale. One attorney for MPL calls this the "Rip Van Winkle case," and an important part of the defense will be the nearly thirty years it took the Homburgs to bring suit.

Another much delayed suit is Willie Dixon's claim that Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" was lifted from his 1962 song "You Need Love." The Brothers Gibb are also back in court

over the song Robin and Barry wrote for Barbra Streisand, "Woman In Love," although the case against them is not considered a strong one. And doubtless the most complex copyright suit of them all will be Fantasy Records' claim that John Fogerty stole from his own Creedence Clearwater catalog that Fantasy now owns.

It's still too early to tell whether Jack Killcommons will end up a hero or a villain in his suit against Huey Lewis. "I hope the big boys don't roll us over," Killcommons says. In light of the Bee Gees and Michael Jackson cases, the odds for winning seem to be stacked against Killcommons. But perhaps the "If This Is It" defendants will offer him a pretrial settlement: money in exchange for a stipulation that Lewis was guilty of no wrong. Win, lose or draw, there's a possibility that the act of simply bringing suit could make an aspiring songwriter like Killcommons an untouchable in the music business.

In the final analysis, the industry's ever-present need for new material must take precedence over its darker fears if the music industry is to survive and evolve. But for the moment, aspiring songwriters and artists will have to resort to more aggressive and better targeted tactics. Allen Klein, who is sometimes noted for his brashness, recalls that the Beatles had an open door demo policy when they started Apple Records. Now, he says, "You've got to do it the old-fashioned way. You've got to get your foot through the door, let the talent companies see you and get to know you. Bring them into the clubs to watch you perform. That's the only sure way to get your new music heard today."



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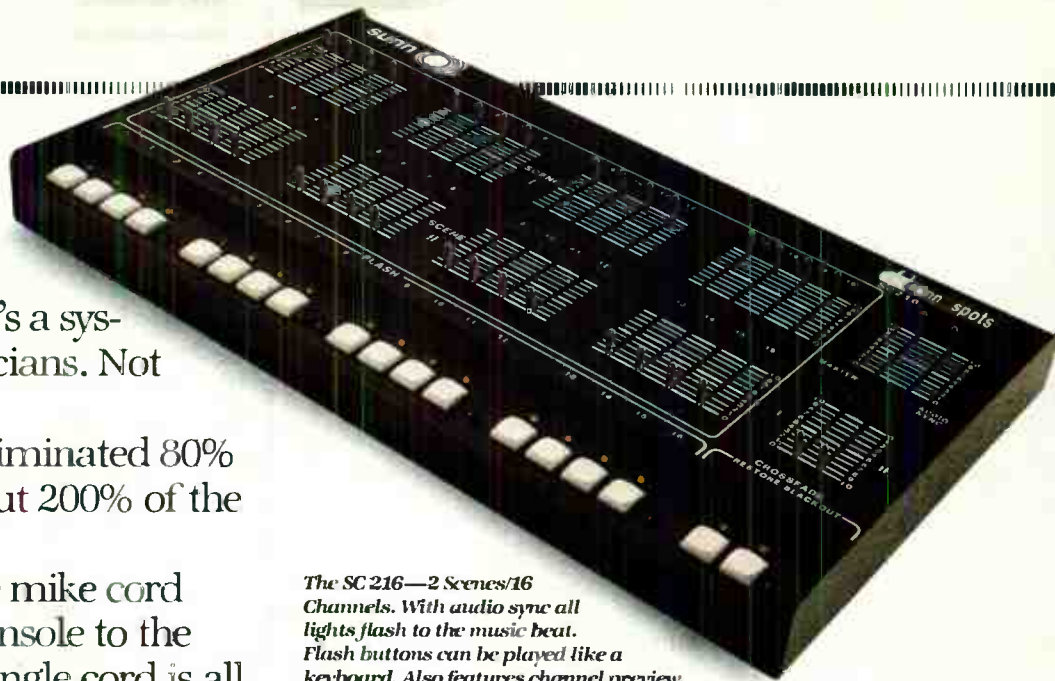
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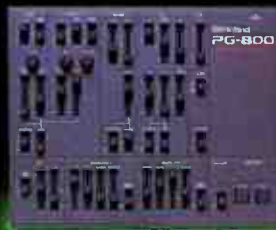
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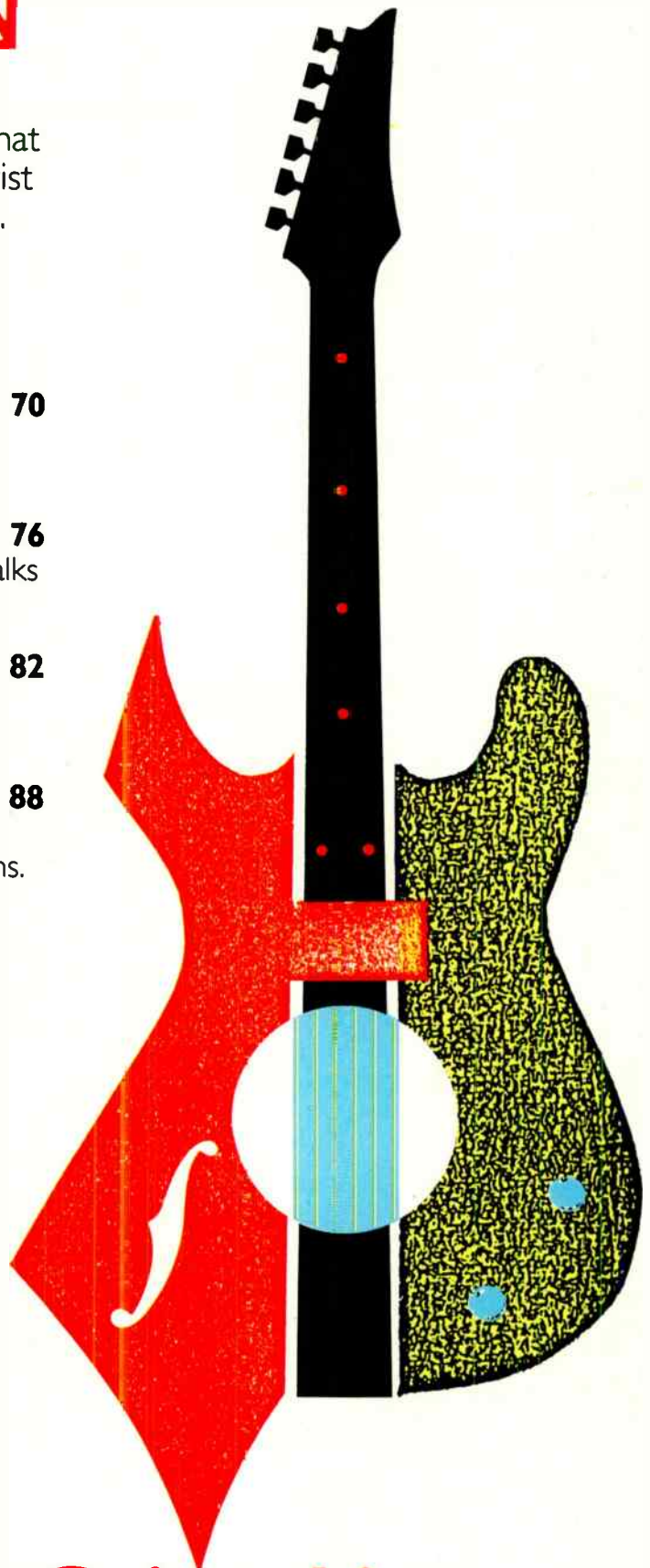
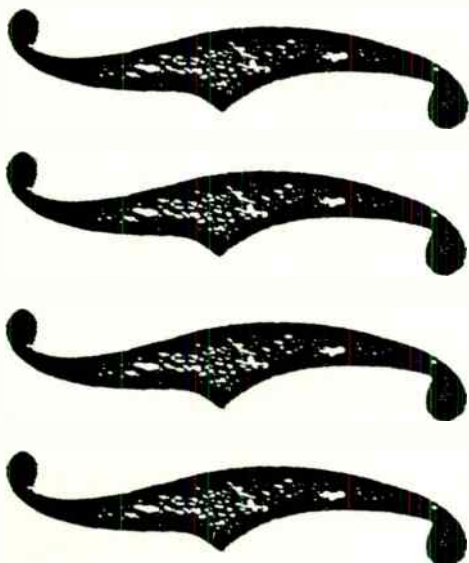
Funny how given the same six strings and twenty or so frets that the musical home every guitarist designs for himself can be so unique. This month, a profile of three highly personal guitar-built edifices, that of Saint, Soundtracker and Songwriter.

Jimmy Page 70
Back from premature retirement, the architect of heavy metal talks shop.

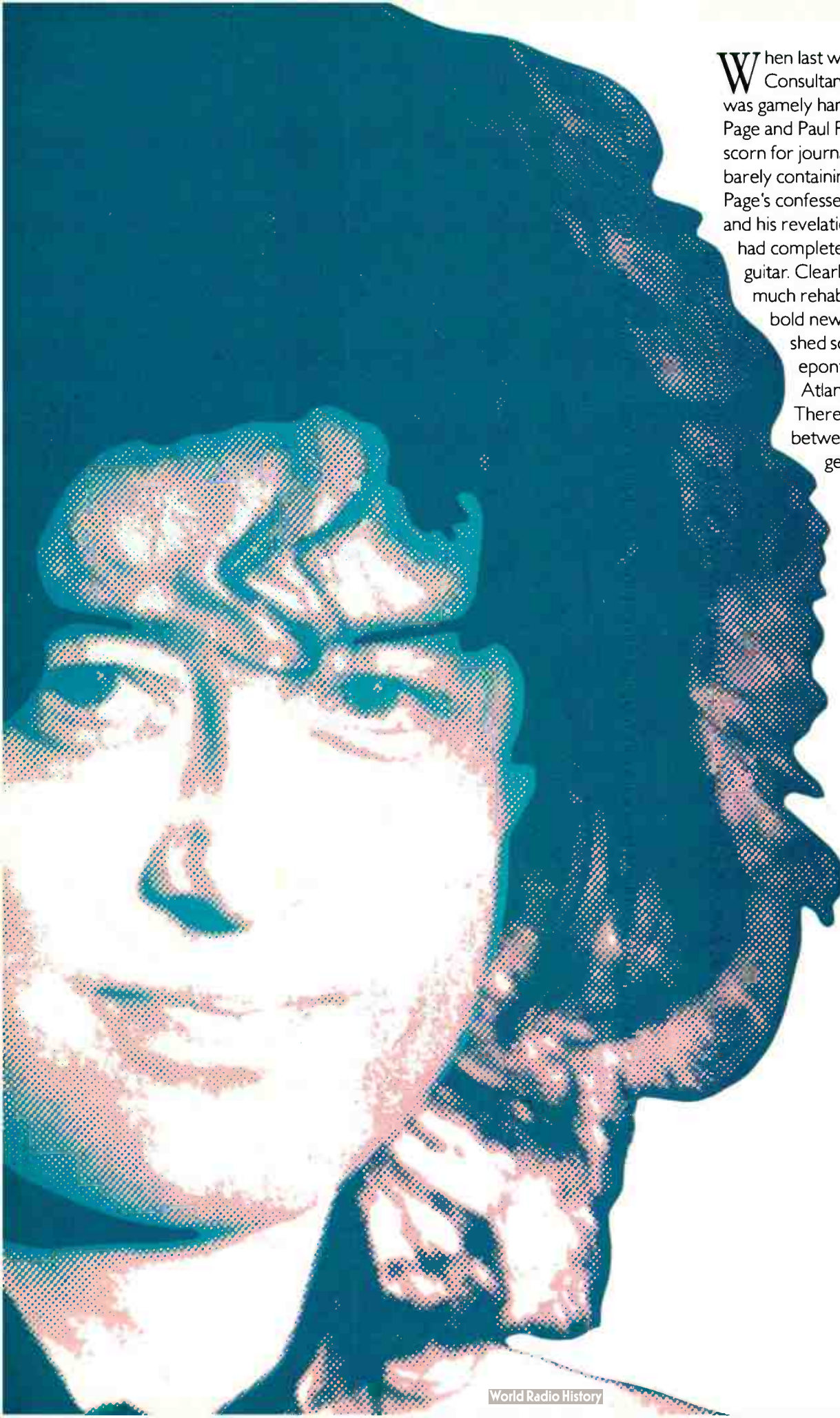
Ry Cooder 76
A time-proven environmental engineer talks the whys and hows of film scoring.

John Hiatt 82
America's most under-appreciated rock songwriter talks literary import.

Winter N.A.M.M. 88
Despite a dearth of sexy new techno-wonders, we talk good news for musicians.



Guitararchitecture



When last we saw Max Kay, Press Consultant to the World, he was gamely hanging in against Jimmy Page and Paul Rodgers' notorious scorn for journalists. Kay was still barely containing his amazement at Page's confessed musical insecurity and his revelation that for a time he had completely ceased to play guitar. Clearly the Firm was as much rehabilitation project as bold new venture, and this shed some light on their first eponymous album on Atlantic. There's a striking difference between the three Rodgers-penned songs on

the LP, (one of which is the first single, "Radioactive") and the five Page-Rodgers collaborations (about their cover of "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling," the less said, the better). The former have a more plodding, predictable bent, while the latter, especially "Someone To Love," "Closer" and the "Midnight Moonlight" have more of that old Zep excitement and inventiveness. Page solos very little on the album, holding his sonic assaults to well-chosen lines or short, simple fills. As he continues to recover his instrumental prowess and contributes more to the material, the Firm's possibilities seem brighter and their first recordings seem more progress prints than Ultimate Statements worthy of microscopic examination.

As the interview proceeded, Kay pursued a more musical tack, beginning with how some of the aforementioned material was written. Paul Rodgers handled that question.

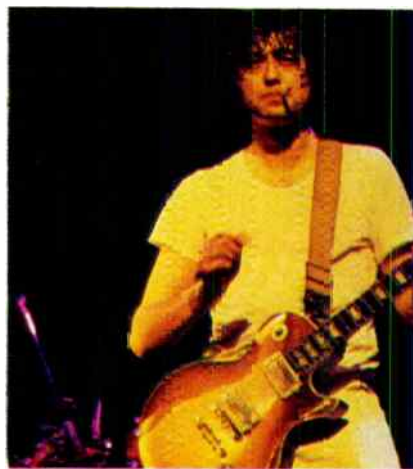
"Well, before there was a band in existence, Jimmy and I played about and—I wouldn't say 'wrote,' but we had a few songs between us. On the strength of that, we thought we would take it a step further and see

what those songs sounded like with a rhythm section. And it got strong, it got stronger, and now it's a fully-fledged band ready to go and...rock 'n' roll."

Page reaffirms the *ad hoc* character of the Firm's mission: "In all honesty, the two of us, Paul and I, just wanted to go out and have a go and play in front of people, and that's really what this whole thing is all about. I mean, whatever the Firm is at this point, obviously it can be misinterpreted...but that was the whole idea."

Are the Firm, even at this early stage, planning to cut another album? Page replies, "We're working on new material, but that's for the set.... Who knows?"

Does the Firm's personnel offer Page and Rodgers a wider sonic palette than such previous outfits as Free, Bad Company and Led Zeppelin? Rodgers ventures, "I think so,



yeah. Jimmy is a very versatile guitar player and he handles the role of lead guitar and rhythm very well, plus the fact that I'm playing a bit of rhythm and a bit of piano, and Tony (Franklin) is also doubling on synths gives us quite a wide variety of sounds available to us with a very basic format." The pair then add that an important ingredient they wanted was fretless bass, and reveal they first sought Paul Young's Pino Palladino before bringing in the impressive Tony Franklin to fill the bass chair.

Jimmy Page

A Retiring,
Firmly Resurgent
Guitar Great Talks Shop

By Max Kay



Page using the "TV aerial" for an ARMS concert rendition of "Stairway."

Rodgers retires, leaving Page to more guitaristic conversation. Does he think any of his 60s contemporaries stand up as viable artists today? "Ask Jeff Beck. Or listen to the music next door," Page snorts, indicating the brick wall of the rehearsal studio through which Beck can be heard rehearsing. Has Page's ex-bandmate improved over the years? "Oh, absolutely, but that's a phenomenon. I wouldn't be able to do the sort of thing that he's done, though I will play in all types of situations and some of those can be quite bizarre, like playing with Moroccan musicians."

One situation Page frequently plays in at home is a duo with his eleven-year-old daughter who plays piano. Dad admits that contrary to rumour he doesn't know everything, and that he still practices, "usually something I can't play." What was the most difficult aspect of learning to play the guitar? "It was all difficult...I still can't really play bar chords. Well, I can play them, but I tend to use my thumb. My fingers aren't really shaped in such a way as to be able to span right across the bar chord with one finger, especially on acoustic."

Knowing Page's penchant for playing guitar with a violin bow, has he ever studied or tried to play the violin? "Yeah, I tried to play the violin once, but.... I thought if I can do a bit of bowing on guitar, I must be able to do it on a violin...but I had my problems. It sounded awful!"

Would Page talk about the open tun-

ings he utilized so much with Led Zeppelin? "No...and they're not open tunings, at least the best tunings I use aren't based around open chords. I just moved the strings (tuning heads) around until it sounded right. Obviously I started off with open D tuning and went on from there."

How did Page write the FM classic, "Stairway To Heaven," and was he aware that the song employs the same chord sequence as "All Along The Watchtower" in places? "No, not consciously, to answer your second question first. I always thought it was more like 'Hit The Road Jack.' The tune came about just by playing the guitar and hoping that something would come out."

His knowledge of classic rock 'n' roll made him untypically timid when Page was granted a Zeppelin-era audience with the King, Elvis Presley: "We all went up to Presley's hotel room, I can't remember where it was. When he walked into the room, he had his shoulders kind of moving, like a nervous twitch or something [*here Page's impersonation puts me in mind of the Hunchback of Notre Dame*]. Did you ever see the movie in which an actor named Kurt Russell appeared as Presley? Well, his portrayal of Presley was absolutely amazing. When he walked into the room there were certain mannerisms that you could misinterpret, but in fact Elvis was very, very shy. He was introduced to us and we were in awe of the guy—there

were spaces between the conversation. Bonzo (John Bonham) said, 'Remember that hot rod you were driving in such and such a movie?' and Presley said, 'Yeah, it's a so and so,' and from that point on he was just one of the lads. Bonzo was the guy who broke the ice. Oh Presley was a lovely man...."

Speaking of legends, was it true that Page was once offered a job with the Stones? "Bill Wyman mentioned it to me once. He said that it was in the cards at some point way back but I don't know when that was. It wasn't at the time Ronnie Wood joined...I was amazed...I'd love to have played with the Stones."

Roadie Tim Marten, who looks after and attends to all of Page's guitars, sat in on the following discussion of Page's equipment, always at hand to supply the correct information if Jimmy's memory failed him. What are his main guitars? "Well, basically it's been the old faithfuls like my number one Gibson Les Paul Standard." This particular 1958 Les Paul Standard would disappoint most flametop freaks since it doesn't have the requisite amount of flame. (I'd personally give it four on a scale of ten, but then sometimes guitar snobbery just doesn't pay!) The rear of the headstock reveals no serial number (tut tut!), and changes have been made to the instrument. The back pickup cover is chrome as opposed to nickel, gold Grover heads replace the originals, and if you're really fussy, the selector switch cap has been replaced by a white one.

"The other guitar I like to use a lot is my Telecaster, because it's got the Parsons/White Stringbender," Page continues. (The Stringbender, most famously used by Clarence White, gives a pedal-steel-type alteration to the B-string.) "On the ARMS tour I decided the Les Paul does sound a hell of a lot better than the Tele and so I've sent one of my other Les Pauls over to Clarence White to have a Stringbender installed in it." But don't panic, enthusiasts out there in guitarland. Jimmy's not about to butcher either of his prized Pauls; besides, Tim wouldn't let him. They're sending a resprayed goldtop which Tim puts at about mid-70s. More likely than not, this guitar will wind up with P.A.F.'s on it.

Jim's passion for the Telecaster stretches back to his early days with the Yardbirds, and his favorite (he has two of them, both fitted with Stringbenders) has again been refinished, this time in a revolting shade I can only describe as Botswana Brown. What is it with these English? The neckplate on this guitar is not original and the three factory bridge saddles have been replaced by six far more useful separate saddles which give Page individual-string control of action and intonation. The knob on the



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selector switch is one of the old circular jockey style caps, and the hole-covering plate that Gene Parsons gives away free with every Stringbender conversion is numbered 0032, and dated 1976.

"The other guitars I'll be using on the Firm tour are my blue Fender Strat, the sunburst Strat which I use as a backup, and the Danelectro." Page's favorite Strat is a pre-CBS rosewood neck model in Lake Placid Blue; the standby is a Buddy Holly two-tone sunburst with maple neck. All of Page's guitars are fitted with straplocks to facilitate fast, easy changeovers between numbers.

"On the blue Strat, Tim's replaced the tremolo arm for a newer one and fixed the tremolo plate so that it sets directly onto the body, making it impossible to raise the pitch or the arm. Since I only use the tremolo to lower the pitch of the guitar, Tim tightened up the springs in the stringwell and fixed the tremolo plate so that it only works in one direction. The main advantage of this is that if I break a string onstage, the guitar won't go out of tune."

Page's Danelectro was assembled from a pair of Danelectro guitars by Tim Marten, who took the precaution of adding a Badass bridge to this concoction of compressed paper. In fact Tim's so good at mucking about with Page's in-

struments and discovering inadequacies in various departments, he's designed a bridge to his own specifications that should soon be available as standard hardware fitted to a certain U.S. manufacturer's instruments.

Page pretty much used this same selection of guitars to record the Firm's debut album, and no, despite its appearance in the "Radioactive" video, he didn't use the famous Gibson SG Doubleneck, fondly referred to by Marten as the TV aerial due to the alarming amount of interference it manages to pick up every time it's plugged in. Page may have been photographed with this guitar on many occasions but he's really only used it consistently for one number, the showstopping "Stairway To Heaven."


Page is also much enamored of his Roland GR-707 guitar synth: "Making a guitar synthesizer that works properly is very difficult and I don't think they've quite done it yet because the newer one doesn't track properly, but I do think that Roland holds the key to the future." Page's picks, in case you're wondering, are still the trusty Herco Flex 75 variety, and I notice a boxful on top of Jimmy's amp, speaking of which...

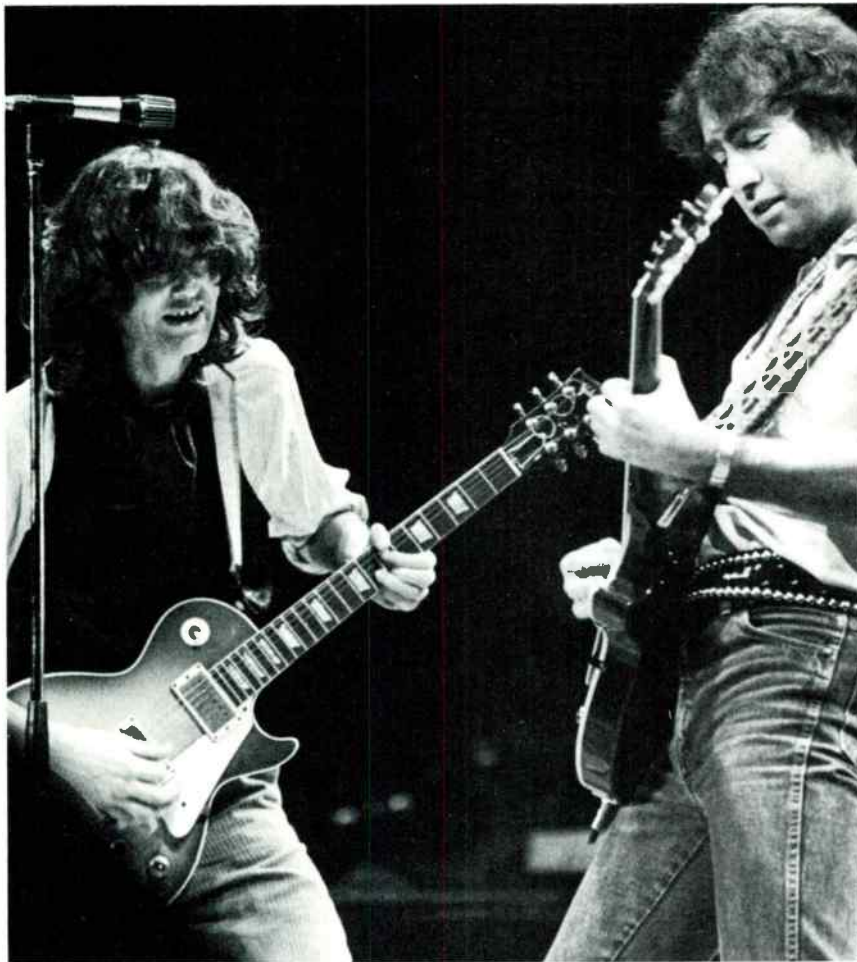
"In rehearsal I've been using a Hi-Watt top that was custom-made for me.

It's got a power booster switch incorporated into it. Sometimes I've been using one of the old Vox AC30s with the blue speakers. Onstage I have a pair of Marshall heads that have been boosted to 180 watts each. For rehearsal work they're just too loud. Somebody once told me that these Marshalls were the ones Hendrix used at the Isle of Wight Festival, now I don't know if that's true or not, but they are old. Onstage I'll use the two Marshall heads with three 4x-12 cabinets on my side of the stage, and another one on the other side near the drum riser, with the main amp driving the two inner cabinets at stage right. It's a very loud band and on some of the gigs the Firm did in Europe, the engineer told us there was very little guitar in the P.A. because it wasn't necessary due to the amount of level coming from the guitar amps up onstage, and that's quite loud when you're running a pair of 180-watt amplifiers at about seventy-five percent of maximum."

Though Page demonstrates a certain affection for pedals, his setup has not yet reached the proportions of a fully fledged rack-mounted system. (If Tim Marten has his way, that may change very soon.) "What have I got? A Roland Super Overdrive SD-1, CE-2 Chorus, a Cry Baby wah-wah pedal, and a Boss FV-100 volume pedal. I did try the Roland Heavy Metal Pedal but I prefer the SD-1. At the moment we're trying to take as much stuff off the floor as possible, and Tim's going to combine the wah-wah with the volume pedal all in one box. The overdrive isn't so necessary with the Les Paul, but the Telecaster doesn't have quite as much output which is why we're trying to get the Paul fitted up with a Stringbender. For echo I have an old faithful Echoplex. I wouldn't like to guess its age, it's been around but it's a bloody good machine. Despite all the modern technology we haven't found a machine that sounds as good. The Echoplex sounds especially good with the Vox AC30—it has a certain ring to it which is lovely."

What awaits the Firm in America? The critical reaction to their first album remains lukewarm at best, but as Tim Marten will testify, the hunger for Page's return is undiminished: "I remember walking out into the spotlight on the last gig of the ARMS tour at Madison Square Garden, to hand Jim his guitar, and was greeted with what was possibly the loudest noise I've ever heard. The power of that audience was completely staggering...quite incredible."

But the real incentive for Page's comeback may be the answer to my last question: can he yet play all the music he imagines? "That's the one thing I can't do," he smiles. "I can't play like that and I should be able to." 



EBET ROBERTS

Page & Rodgers: "We just wanted to play in front of people, be part of a band."

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RY COODER'S GLOBAL VILLAGE

An Unrepentant Eclectic Finds a Second Career in Soundtracks

By Don Snowden

A movie score is probably the last refuge of abstract music," remarks Ry Cooder in the spartan foyer of a Hollywood sound studio. "You can't make music like this on records unless you're Brian Eno, put it out yourself and sell it to the fans. I can't do that. I need an excuse."

The wiry Santa Monica native's latest excuse is unfolding a few feet away where director Louis Malle is supervising the final sound mix for *Alamo Bay*. Malle instructs three technicians seated at a massive console to blend three key pieces of Cooder's score—instrumental segments over the opening and closing credits, plus a straight country duet sung by John Hiatt and actress Amy Madigan—with the dialogue and sound effects. Sporting a *Paris, Texas* T-shirt depicting the Eiffel Tower as an oil derrick, Cooder occasionally ventures his opinion.

That opinion has become increasingly valued in cinematic circles since Cooder's playing on several Jack Nitzsche scores, including *Performance* and *Blue Collar*, gave him a foothold in cinematic circles. Walter Hill provided the first shot at composing movie music on his period-piece western *The Long Riders* four years ago. The eerie bayou blues of *Southern Comfort* and the plaintive, pungent slide guitar staking out the desolate physical and mental landscapes of *Paris, Texas* (the latter soundtrack now out on ECM) are two notable pieces of his handiwork. Toss in credits for *The Border*, *Streets of Fire* and the forthcoming remake of *Brewster's Folly* with Richard Pryor, and it's clear the silver screen has been dominating Cooder's creative attention for the last four years.

His substantial second career has followed a full first one. First seduced by the 50s R&B/R&R Specialty sound, nurtured on the early 60s folk boom and the rare blues 78s of a friend who grew up to be Dr. Demento, Ry Cooder was irrevocably conquered by Bobby Womack & the Valentinos. Brief mid-60s collaborations with Taj Mahal and Cap-

Cooder doing atmospheric testing for *Paris, Texas*.

tain Beefheart and a stretch as a bottleneck guitar/mandolin session specialist established his credentials. The 70s brought solo artichoke to Cooder, who embarked on a ten-LP exploration of American roots music. His eclectic ramblings through gut-wrenching Depression-era chestnuts, blues of all stripes, vintage jazz, classic gospel, Hawaiian music and the *norteño*/Tex-Mex sound eluded both critical censure and popular embrace.

Cooder hasn't traded in the bottleneck for a conductor's baton and sedate orchestral arrangements in the movie world, and chance still has its creative role—several key passages in *Paris, Texas* only came together after Cooder literally stumbled on a new tuning by knocking his ancient, 1920s-vintage Sovereign acoustic over. The same guitar and inadvertent tuning later became the starting point for the generic "Chinese cowboy" music Cooder fashioned for *Alamo Bay*. "I rely on accidents a lot because that will help you out of your rut," maintains Cooder. "Patterns just choke music. With the guitar, as primitive an instrument as it is, different tunings have always been the way into different ideas for me."

A willing and engaging conversationalist, Cooder delivers his analytical observations with the colorful, folksy ca-

dences of a practiced yarn-spinner. He waxes fairly scornful, as you might expect, on the style over substance school he terms "haircut music" but loathes the archivist/antiquarian image he's often saddled with. With good reason—you just don't figure Ry Cooder to be enamored of James Blood Ulmer's "Are You Glad To Be In America?" ("That record has a lot of power and it's very funny. It's regional and streetcorner, a fabulous piece of business") or to consider "Cold Sweat"-era James Brown to be the final word in rhythm trips ("That's it. There's nowhere else to go!")

His last non-soundtrack LP was released close to four years ago, but tours as sideman with Duane Eddy and John Hiatt ("Now there's a talent to reckon with") over the past eighteen months have left Cooder optimistic that the time may be right to test the waters with his own band again. "We did the Palace recently and hell's sake, you couldn't fit a razor in between those people. I thought, 'Well, I'll be damned. Here in L.A.'"

MUSICIAN: How do you approach an individual soundtrack?

COODER: I get the call from the director and we talk about what the music might be like. After a certain point, I get a sort of refined version on videotape and plot



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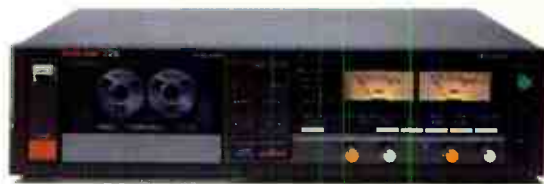
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out the music with the director, what they call spotting. You have a month or two, at worst a couple of weeks, to get familiar with the picture, plan out your music and organize your players.

MUSICIAN: Do you just reel off a stream of music or are you thinking, "I've got a 35-second spot to fill here...?"

COODER: I never do that. *High Noon* is a good example because the song in that film is a magical formula of elements. Even without the lyrics, the feeling of the song is telling you exactly what went on before, what's happening now and what's going to happen later in two or three bars. That's the trick for me. I'm looking for that one piece of music.



EBET ROBERTS

Ry on a rare electric night out.

If it's a good film, it's got a rhythm and tones in it. *Alamo Bay* had a key—all the buzzsaws, the boat motors, everything was about E or Eb. I didn't go looking for it but I began to hear it after a while. If I couldn't figure out what that emotional or narrative center is, I don't think I could write a score, because where do the notes come from? I don't know music at all, I'm not trained like a composer to resort to composition in that more abstract, theoretical way. I can do all that instinctively but I wouldn't know unless I saw it happening. *Paris, Texas* is a film that, if you push it the wrong way, you blow it out of the water. If you breathe on it wrong, it's gone. You have to place the musical thought here and there like glue.

I've been lucky because the films I've worked on have had these environmental qualities that suggested such things. But I figure the director better have a good idea of why he's calling me up—my attitude won't fit every picture. In *Paris, Texas*, the director (Wim Wenders) took this spooky bottleneck piece I'd recorded years ago ("Dark Is The Night" by Blind Willie Johnson) and put it in what they call a temp track to show

me the kind of thing he was thinking about.

Once you have an emotional climate in a story, you think about music that expresses that quality from different angles. It's like the spokes of a wheel. We'll get to the emotions here, then come at it from this direction and squeeze in a little bit of this business here. You use different players for that.

MUSICIAN: Who are the musicians you usually work with?

COODER: Jim Dickinson, the keyboard player, Jim Keltner and David Lindley have been on several of these things. I had Van Dyke Parks on this one here because he can play Chinese cowboy music on piano, which is amazing. I can't tell anybody what that sounds like but I have to know who's going to know.

This Japanese shakuhachi player, Kazu Matsui, came into *Southern Comfort* completely unaware of what the hell was going on. Bottleneck and shakuhachi, great. "What is this music?" he asked. "Blues." "Blues? What is blues?" he asked, in effect, but he found it immediately. It's a pentatonic feeling that goes across all cultures, a five-note scale that is really the musical core of everything, Oriental and Western. It's particularly true in movies because that is a spatial feel and primitive music is an outdoor, spatial music.

You find it over and over again, all this different music ties together. Once you find that out, it's very easy to put the finger on the imaginary ethnic music you're searching for and make up your own. It's like a toy. What's the ethnic thing and environment you want to reflect?

MUSICIAN: What inspired the shakuhachi in *Southern Comfort*? That's one of the last instruments I'd expect to drop into a Louisiana bayou.

COODER: It's the samurai aggression sound. When I saw that telescopic shot of the soldiers running around the corner, all I could think of was, "Here comes the forty-seven samurai." Why not? What are you going to blow them in with? Not a big piano chord out there in the swamps, so you use a flute.

That flute seems to find a natural sound and exaggerate it. If you overblow it, you get that burst of air and it becomes mournful at the end. It's a shriek but it's natural, plus the bottleneck, which is a bowing, back-and-forth sound, is very much like a shakuhachi note. It's a warble and you put 'em in unison and get this terrific harmonic rub that's hard to believe. At that point, you have made a new sound that seems to work on film. The loud electric guitar is what doesn't work. It's a peak and it's the big broad sounds that come through the screen. The orchestra is perfect for movies and the little group is

not. The trick then is how do you spread out the little group, divide it up and create a big sound? That's a quest.

MUSICIAN: What about the Turkish instruments in *Alamo Bay*?

COODER: Saz, yeah. Lindley's a Middle Eastern music guy and knows about these things. It's a gourd with a long neck and these little tiny strings and elephant-hair frets. He played Irish music on this Turkish instrument and that's about right. They're both a sad, mournful race and they play the greatest sad, mournful music. It makes you feel like you're somewhere. It's imaginary village music and that's a movable village. You've got to have your ensemble multi-racial, a time capsule you move around from place to place. If it hadn't been for these film scores, I wouldn't have that much of a chance to work on the idea. It's almost intolerable on a record. Nobody wants to be where they don't know where they are.

MUSICIAN: The opening sequence of *Paris, Texas* is particularly unusual.

COODER: Well, the instrumentation for that was swimming pool vacuum cleaner hoses which were twirled around microphones for that funny, weird tone quality that it starts with... "Oooohwoohwooh."

Then I added bass marimba, guitar, the bowed saz of Lindley and the pump organ of Dickinson. It's a missionary harmonium that's kind of broken—it wheezes. It's hard to handle, big old lengths of hoses and bass marimbas but it makes an interesting *Paris, Texas* kind of wobble without being too frontal. They have to hold on to a tone so the guitar can play its little statement. What do you hear when you're in a place like that? You hear the wind and it's not a well-modulated thing. It's just sound and that's what it had to sound like. If it takes vacuum cleaner hoses, let it be vacuum cleaner hoses.

MUSICIAN: What do you like to use when you're playing live?

COODER: I've been trying for a certain sound for years, a kind of low-level distortion where it sounds loud but it's not. I took the guts out of a Fender Stratocaster and put in this Hawaiian lap steel thing, a whole metal plate and the thing is magnetized on the top and bottom. The strings pass through it like a sandwich. It's harmonically very rich, big and raw sounding, but you can control it. Lap steel was made for sliding. You turn that thing up and it just screams and hollers. It's very rude.

MUSICIAN: I presume you use no effects or signal-processing?

COODER: The best treatment I've ever heard is when I put my amp in my bathroom and recorded it with a mike in the shower because that put a halo around the note. The note bounced off all the tile



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surfaces in the little tiny bathroom and really gave it a 3-D effect rather than note-echo. You don't feel that kind of through-the-wire, schematic feeling which I don't particularly like. I want to feel it's somehow natural, like we made this Hawaiian record in a house built out of lava stone. I'm interested in recording environments almost more than anything else. I've always read, trying to find out how things were done, what kind of microphone, what's the board.

MUSICIAN: Which, I presume, is one of the things that led you to make the first digitally recorded LP, *Bop Til You Drop*.

COODER: Well, the digital machine was there so we used it. It seemed like a

good idea at the time.

MUSICIAN: Why was it not a good idea?
COODER: Because it didn't sample enough. It didn't read ambience and the relationships between notes. It drops out, this machine. It's particularly true with a small group where the energy is in the space between the notes. The orchestra fills up all the space but if you've got five guys trying to be dynamic and create their own ambience, the digital goes to a point and then stops reading it. There's a big hole, like a black hole. It picks up a lot of high end and loses bass and that is the glue in our music. The feel is not something that digital can find. Your ear hears in a curve, analog

hears in a curve, digital hears in these impulses and combinations of zeroes and ones. The master tape is fine but to go to an analog format like disc means you obviously lose a tremendous amount of information.

I went two records that way and wondered why the first time and died a thousand deaths the second one. *Borderline* I thought was a good record—the master tape was pretty exciting and the record sounded like nothing at all. I was so disgusted and then I asked some questions and found out digital operates that way.

MUSICIAN: Any major differences between recording for soundtracks and regular recording?

COODER: A million differences. One thing is everybody these days goes for absolute isolation recording. The whole trend in pop music is to get louder and heighten the intensity of the thing. The closer to the mike, the more in-your-face that sound is until now it's all done totally direct. That makes it louder still but on the screen that makes it shrink. Coming up in a big screen your little direct sound tends to be isolated from everything else and you can't turn it up loud enough to compensate.

You need to find a way to get the feeling of size and volume. The old way is still the best and that's to back the mike up so it records the air the sound waves disturb. The first time I saw off-miking like that I thought it was crazy, but you need air and need to feel like you're in an environment for it to sound good.

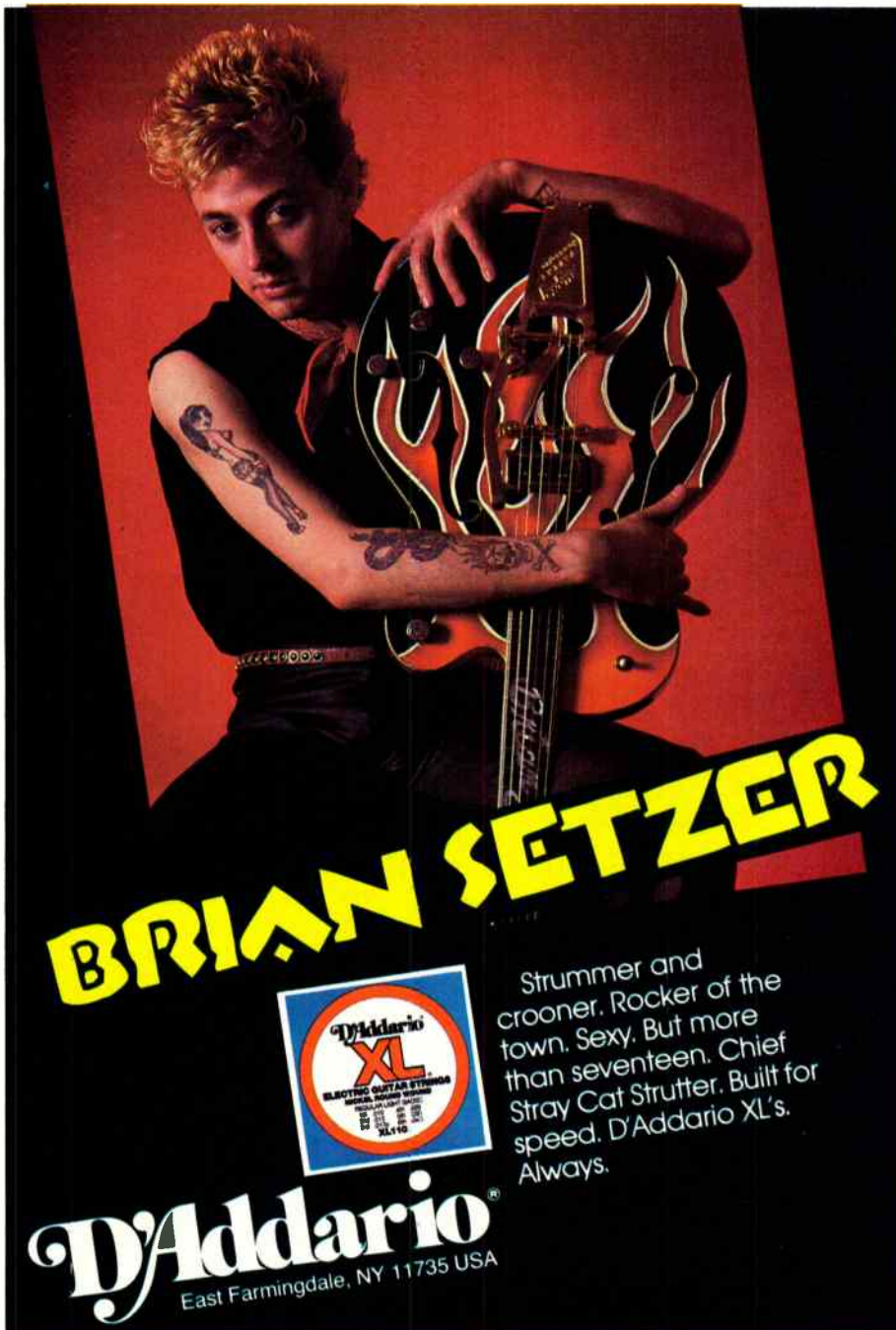
The Prince movie is the first time I've seen modern recording techniques used exclusively to make a picture. In the pop music era of today, you just turn everything up. I have a couple of tunes in this film that are real rocking tunes and if you move the fader up, Prince-

Continued on page 106

EXTRA PICKINGS


Cooder hasn't deserted his finger-picking folkie roots but that doesn't stop him from employing a harmonizer and a digital AMS delay, "if the music wants to be screwed up some way." Strings of choice are usually Ernie Ball roundwounds because of durability and wide distribution. Gauges vary but Cooder leans toward heavier strings because of his fondness for different tunings: "When you tune 'em open, they're probably below concert and the strings begin to have different tensions they're not designed to operate in. They won't hold pitch. I fret pretty hard and light strings will just crap out."

Cooder uses the modified lap steel Fender Strat for most of his studio work, and an old Supro tube amp he recently stumbled across has rapidly become his studio workhorse. "It's not the modern, fast response, high-tech, clean amplifier, which I don't sound good through. The little old amps crap out at a great point and you can really contour that.



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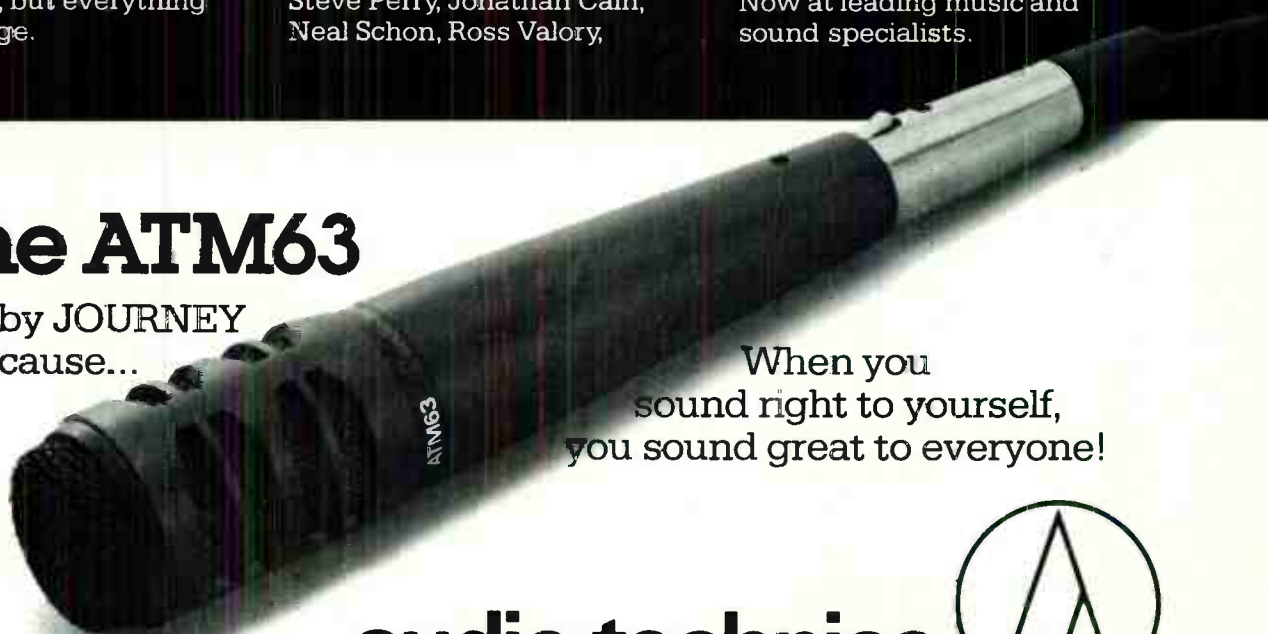
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JOHN HIATT'S SOUTHERN SONGCRAFT

Will a Different Kind of Angry Young Man Get Some Appreciation?

by Josef Woodard

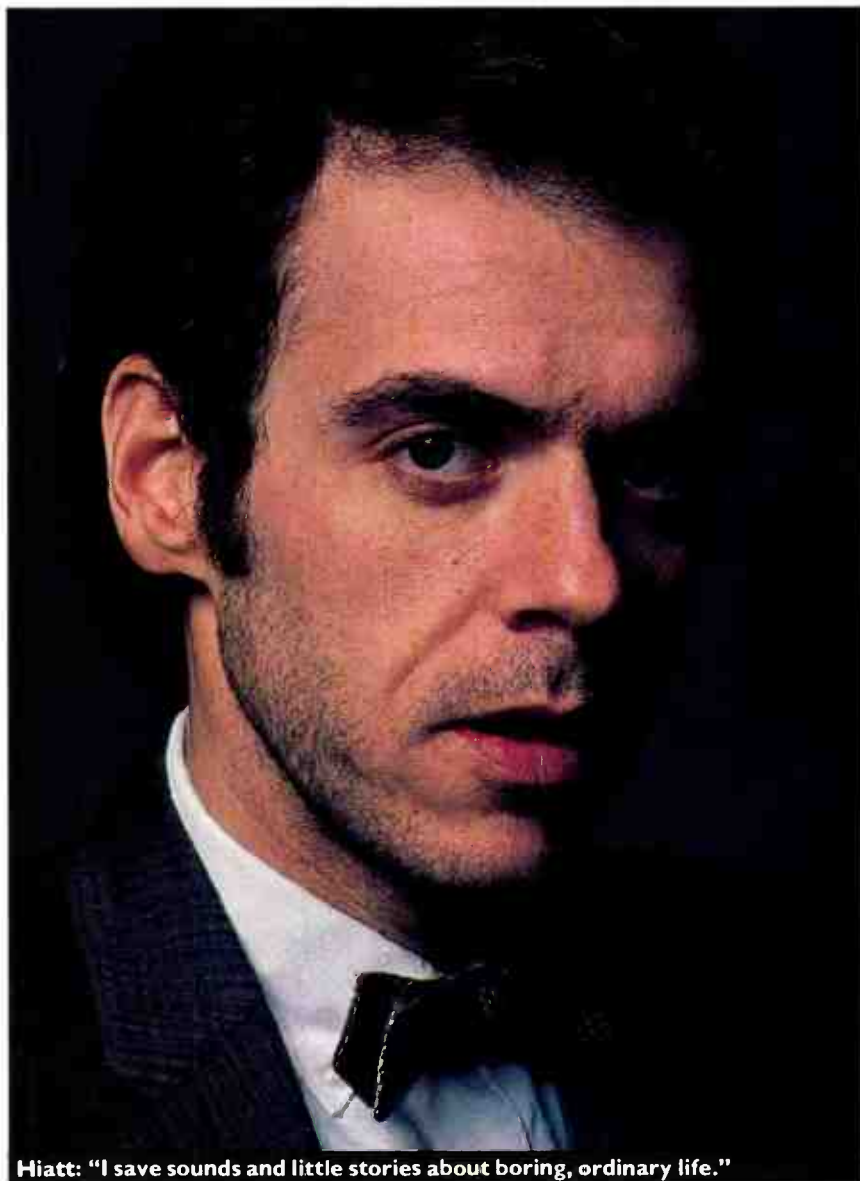
John Hiatt, one of pop music's brightest, most incisive and underappreciated stars, readily reveals some heroes: Elvis Presley, Curtis Mayfield, The Band, Ignatius J. Riley...*come again?*

A voracious reader with a soft spot for the Southern Grotesque, Hiatt struck a special identification with Ignatius, the alienated, imperious and bitterly funny protagonist of John Kennedy O'Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* (O'Toole, even more underappreciated than Hiatt, committed suicide a decade before his mother got his opus published to instant acclaim in 1980). Like Ignatius, Hiatt felt the social sting and ostracism that accompanies the precarious world of fat kids.

Growing up in Indianapolis, Hiatt's wonder years were rendered doubly tragic by his twenty-one-year-old brother's suicide when Johnny was nine. It was the Big Brother influence that steered young Hiatt towards music. "He was a big, big music fan," John recalls, "who would get a bunch of people together, rent a VFW hall and put on a dance with whoever was cool at the time—Joey Dee & the Starlighters or somebody. He was a really hip, slick and cool guy, and I wanted to be hip, slick and cool. I was extremely obese as a kid and anything *but* cool. I felt otherworldly, My childhood, for the most part, was an out-of-body experience."

Out of this adverse reality, however, Hiatt stumbled on the salvatory power of a guitar. Music saved his soul and his self-esteem. "It was not just a guitar; it was a way out, it was a way in, it was a weapon, it was a lot of things. It has some very obsessive qualities to it." That magnificent obsession set the course of Hiatt's life. Some twenty years after he got that first, talismanic guitar, Hiatt bears a closer resemblance to a lean young Donald Sutherland than Ignatius, though he hasn't forsaken the stubborn ideals of his fictional hero.

"I just wish I was as self-assured as Ignatius that he was right and the rest of the world is wrong," he smirks, talking



Hiatt: "I save sounds and little stories about boring, ordinary life."

shop and munching on a tuna melt in the wee hours of a Santa Barbara all-nighter. Still adrenalized after his show at a local hot spot, Hiatt pulls out a snapshot of his infant daughter before launching eagerly into the interview and his sandwich. Clearly this is not your standard-issue angry young man.

Although Hiatt can belt it out—his nutritive vocal fiber ranges from sensitive to sandpaper soul—his reputation is largely as a song craftsman. It was in that role that an eighteen-year-old John fled Indianapolis for the wiles of Nashville. The city wasn't all ears, however: "Nobody wanted me to play my songs," Hiatt grins, "but finally Tree Publishing gave in. I was literally calling out of a

phone booth in a Gulf station. I started at fifty bucks a week and was making ten times that five years later. Through almost a fluke, I made two albums for Epic, real quirky. I was strictly from the cornfields. I didn't know what this was about, why it was weird that I'd be in Nashville—I wasn't writing country—it was pop-goes-country."

Working his way to Los Angeles as a folksinger, Hiatt landed another staff writing stint with Leo Kottke's fledgling company there, before getting signed to MCA as a solo artist in his own right and later going over to Geffen in 1982. His characteristic amalgam of lippy rock, R&B steam and pointed lyrical aim has earned him the tag, "the American

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Elvis Costello." The only thing conspicuously absent from Hiatt's career at this advanced juncture is chart history: five albums, each generally lauded by critics and cultists, and where's the hit? *Warming Up To The Ice Age*, Hiatt's third Geffen effort and a meaty one at that, may have a symbolic title. Yet just when Hiatt is seemingly resigning himself to relative obscurity in the airplay ice age, his new album is actually doing some vibratory shimmying in the lower rungs of the charts. Could it be? Commercial land ahoy?

Hiatt, no martyr, wouldn't object to a wider audience: "There's always been enough people to keep me going, and if I didn't believe that lots more would like

what I do, I don't think I'd make records. What's the point? I think I'm a hit songwriter. I should be in your top ten."

An admitted aficionado of things southern, John calls Tennessee his second home, admires Walker Percy and Mark Twain, and closed his concert here with a rueful, a cappella version of a Confederate soldier song. Hiatt happily mates those cyclical genres that seem to flourish in the South, and *Warming Up To The Ice Age* reflects his typically saucy blend of soul, country and roots rock. "The Usual" and "Zero House" are big rave-ups just begging for Billy Gibbons solos; the soul nugget "Living A Little, Laughing A Little" is affixed to a rockish pulse; the title cut pos-

esses an apt, sinister lode; the ballad "When We Ran" evinces a pillowy, Band-like charm. In all, the new songs may not be quite as memorable as on past packages—especially *Two Bit Monsters* (MCA) or *All Of A Sudden*, his Geffen debut—but the album's emotional fabric holds from start to finish.

But then, the project began with a clear concept in mind—unlike Hiatt's usual from-the-hip tack to record making. After the fetching tunes and hurting sales of his previous album, *Riding With The King*, Hiatt was forced to carefully consider his next move—at the insistence of his own inner voice and the record company's white glove. "The story with me is that with each album comes a new producer because the previous album failed," he gamely concedes. "The first thing a company looks at is the producer, therefore...guilty by association, out you go, next!"

This year's model was a blast from the past; when serving his songwriter apprenticeship in Nashville in the mid-70s, Hiatt had cut a prescient demo with Norbert Putnam—illustrious session bass player whose credits include the Muscle Shoals scene and Elvis Presley's later work and who produced such artists as Dan Fogelberg, Jimmy Buffet and Joan Baez. But despite the folk tint of Putnam's rep as a producer, Hiatt "knew he could produce R&B because of this demo tape we'd cut. It sounded like a pre-disco record, before the Bee Gees screwed it all up. I listened to this tune and said, 'Holy shit, this is terrific.' Mostly what I've been listening to is current R&B—Shalamar, George Duke Projects, Prince, even Teena Marie.

"I thought it would be great to get a rhythm track that tough. These songs I'd been writing about a year ago were very riff-oriented, junky rock 'n' roll—what I do best. So I thought, 'Boy, the two of those concepts together would be terrific,' which is maybe not a new idea. But Jesse (Boyce, one decidedly funky bass player) just plays songs the way he hears them, and it works so well with that percussive undertow to the whole thing. I call it 'ZZ Top meets Parliament/Funkadelic at Big Pink with Barry White sitting in.'"

For all the undercurrents of twisted structure and clever maneuvers on Hiatt's albums, they never suffer from over-embellishment, a frequent indictment against the later work of the British Elvis Costello. Hiatt's is the age-old quest for inspired simplicity. "You've got all these silly sounds on synthesizer that people throw all over their records. I don't have anything against them, but the simpler the better, in my view. That's a crucial part of any creative endeavor, striving for simplicity, because it's about communication. To make a rock record, you have to think along similar lines to a

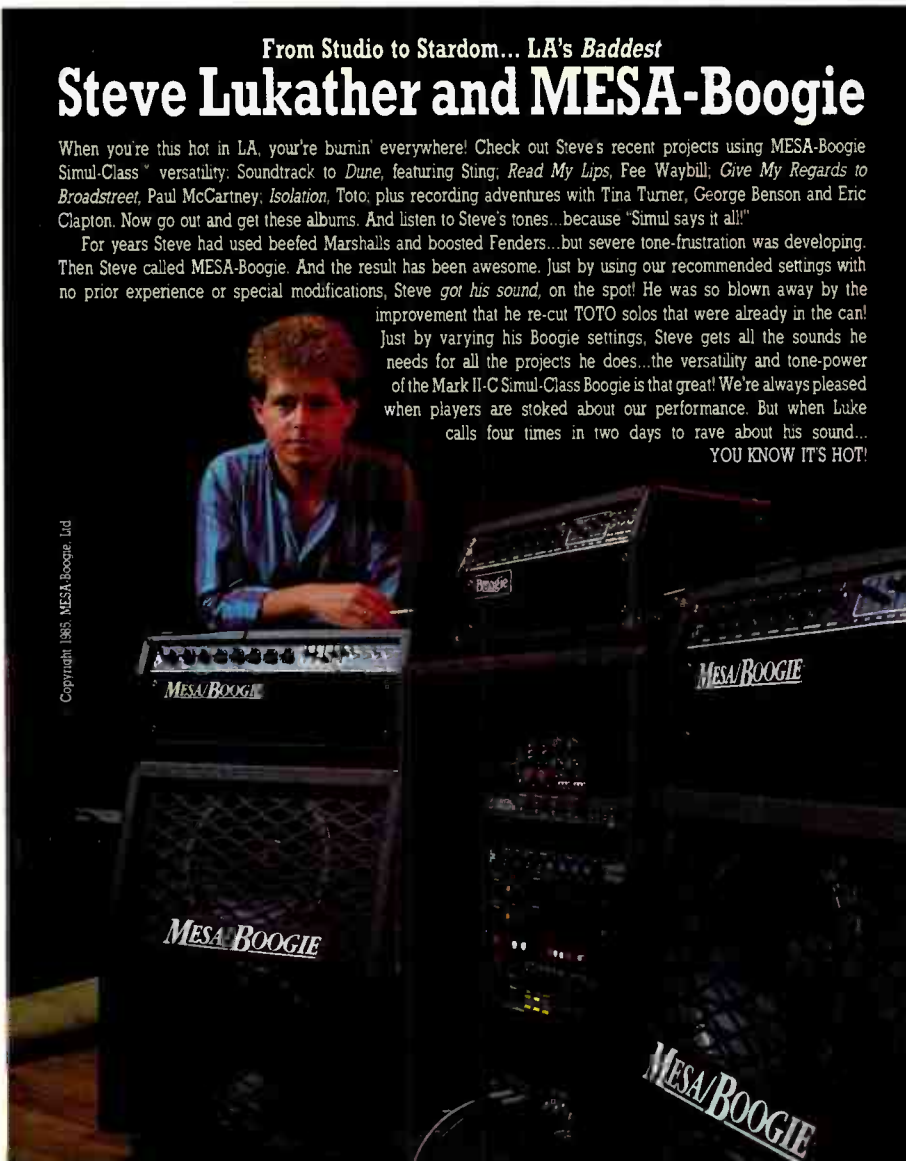
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rock show. You get the drums up, you get the bass up, you balance the vocals and then you stick all the other stuff in wherever there's room."

Hiatt's current band frequently gets caught in the crossfire between intuitive and technical poles since both Fred Stickley and Jesse Boyce read music (a first for a Hiatt band) and John doesn't. In his view, generating rock 'n' roll energy has, and always will, come down to a question of feel; it's not an exacting science. "You can say 'It's B over C in the fourth bar, pi r squared,' or however they talk. But then it's, 'By the way, now that you know it, here's how I want it to feel.' Rock 'n' roll is basically a misunderstanding. That's what seems to make it work, that seems to be where it came from—a bunch of people not quite knowing what they're up to. It just sort of happens. And the guy who reads is gonna say 'I am sorry, that is against the rules.' You're going to reply 'but it sounds great.'"

This same do-or-die-and-damn-the-grammar attitude fuels his songwriting. "I've always written songs, whether I was making records or not," Hiatt claims. "It serves a lot of purposes for me. I'm good working by myself; it's therapeutic. It's a means of focusing my world, my views and explaining some things to myself."

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It was in Nashville that Hiatt turned his creative jones into a craft: "I learned that we're not talking about something precious here. You can rewrite, throw things out and edit yourself. Things like that never dawned on me before; I figured you wrote it in twenty minutes and it was done, and if you couldn't do that, you didn't have a song. Although still, some of the best songs seem to be the ones you do write in twenty minutes. It's a paradox.

"Pop songwriting is not literature. It was never meant to be, I don't think." Yet some of Hiatt's material moves beyond simple pop rhetoric, delving into third-person tales and hints of black humor. "Death By Misadventure" from *Riding With The King*, recounts the whimsically sordid misdeeds of characters driven to the brink—a bit of dark, bent wit that would've done Flannery O'Connor (another Hiatt fave, she of "warped theology") proud. "That song is probably the part of me that wants to be the short story writer but doesn't have the guts," Hiatt admits. Another classic is "You May Already Be A Winner," which paints a poignant picture of lovers whose dire straits are visited by the simple hope of Ed McMahon's smiling face arriving in the mail. Of this one, Hiatt says the sub-text is, "If you think you've got it made, you do, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise."

Hiatt's tools of the trade have changed remarkably little over the years. "Up until about four months ago, I had a ghetto blaster and I'd write the song on guitar or piano, sing it, write it in my little notebook, rewrite it, sing it onto a cheap cassette. But I finally came out of my cave and bought a Fostex 4-track cassette deck, a little synthesizer and a drum machine. I was telling myself, 'I can get all this stuff and write those kinds of songs everybody else—Duran Duran or whoever—writes.' But of

Hiatt's Armed Forces

John Hiatt's main guitar is a custom Strat-style guitar made by L.A. luthier Steve Ripley; it features separate pan pots for all six strings, making it a true stereo guitar (Kramer will soon market a version). Pickups are Bartolinis, with a humbucker (next to the bridge) and two Strat-types. Hiatt also owns an old Gretsch, an older Strat, and a Gibson Trini Lopez semi-hollow-body with Red Rhodes velvet hammer pickups. His acoustic guitar is a Yamaha steel-string dreadnought, and his strings, which he changes every night due to hyperacidic sweat, are by G.H.S. He raves about his two new Fender tube amps, a Concert and a Princeton, but will use his Music Man in a pinch. He has a Roland SDE-1000 digital delay and a Scholz Rockman, which he loves for home recording with a Fostex 250 cassette 4-track and Roland Juno 106. His vocal mike is a Shure SM57 or SM58.

course I can't.

"I guess I'm from the old school in that respect, and I don't mind that. Prince, I think, is one of the current stars who actually writes songs. That's what I like about country music—they still like songs, not just grooves and studio trickery." He bites into his pickle, adding, "But then again, James Brown was basically a riff and an ideology, badly needed. 'Hot Pants' were going to save the world as far as he was concerned, and that song makes you believe it.

"To me, the idea behind a creative work is to elevate, not to keep an element in its place or to pander to it. There's a certain responsibility to working in a creative field. There are ele-

ments of manipulation involved, theater, performance—it's all done with mirrors in a way, but it's supposed to be done for a point, to be uplifting or informative or positive in some respect. What is it Flannery O'Connor said about 'the idea behind good fiction is not to pinpoint or focus, it's to widen the possibilities.' Or as Walker Percy said: 'the duty of fiction is to retrieve things from the commonplace.' Painters are running around saving fruit. I'm running around saving sounds and little stories about boring life. Ordinary life is extraordinary and I'm taking a little peek at it.

"It's just pop music, for god's sake. People make so much out of it. But it's nice work if you can get it." ☐

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(Shankar to *The Record*, 1982)

Inventor of the 10-string stereophonic double violin. L. Shankar has been a featured player with such diverse artists as Peter Gabriel, David Byrne, Phil Collins, Frank Zappa and John McLaughlin. Shankar now steps to the front of the stage with Song For Everyone, his new album with saxophonist Jan Garbarek.



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FEELING BLASÉ IN ANAHEIM

A Look at the Latest Equipment at Winter N.A.M.M.

By Freff & Jock Baird

You can't blame us. For three N.A.M.M. shows now we've been running around with our mouths open, either drooling with delight or scratching our heads in confusion, or both. Epochs seemed to be passing in a matter of months. What new mind-wrenching breakthroughs would await us when we came to Anaheim for Winter N.A.M.M. on February 1? Well, not that much was new. What can we say? We're jaded.

We wanted new action in guitar synths, rumored to be coming; we got zip besides a few updated Rolands here. We expected the flood of new mixing boards and P.A. systems to continue, but it finally came back to a more reasonable trickle. Surely there would be more of the Great Electronic Drum Profusion that afflicted Chicago last summer? No, it was frozen by **Simmons'** being granted a California trademark on the hexagonal drum-pad shape. A host of new electronic drum sets were never uncrated—expect some frantic re-designing. (**Simmons** also seemed more determined to expand the sales base of the single-pad SDS 1, signing a distribution deal with **Kaman**.) The only ongoing action was the keyboard-computer axis, burgeoning as ever, and even these companies, great and small, were more into refinement than discovery.

There's a good reason for this. Many manufacturers are discovering that they're getting too far ahead of many musicians, and are looking at consumer education as the next big hurdle—witness **Roland's** ambitious multi-city seminar program. **Roland**, **Yamaha** and **Sequential Circuits** all showed second and

third generation computer music systems, with Sequential getting its new MAX into the under-\$1000 synth market. **Roland** and **Korg** showed impressive but affordable analog-digital hybrids, the Roland JX-8P and the Korg DW-6000. **Casio** had CZ-101s all over the place and previewed some terrific new presets. **Yamaha** unveiled its incredibly potent TX816 Tone Generation Unit, the equivalent of eight DX7s, with programmable functions, in a single \$5000 rackmount. The TX816 is part of Yamaha's Computer Assisted Music System (CAMS), which stars a formidable new \$2800 disk-drive sequencer, the QX1. An interesting rumble came from the **Oberheim** Matrix-12, essentially two Xpanders packed together into a box and given a keyboard.



Kurzweil with Macintosh "MacAttach" library

The real action was in sampling, which was virtually explosive. **Kurzweil** announced expanded memory, more sounds, a vastly-improved sequencer, a Macintosh "library" package with the unfortunate name of MacAttach, and a March release for a sampling version of the Kurzweil 250. **E-Mu** showed an Emulator II souped-up with a hard disk, a finished sequencer, and a Macintosh package from the indie developers at **Digidesign** that pretty much makes an E2 perform on a par with a Fairlight (and in some respects better). They also showed a new Drumulator that will sample and have extremely high-fidelity, 12-bit drum sounds. Over at the **Ensoniq** booth the Mirage finally appeared, bringing sampling to the masses with

good quality for its (excellent) \$1700 pricetag. **Akai** unveiled an under-\$1000 rack-mounted 6-voice, 8-second polyphonic sampler (with 12-bit memory and optional disk storage), the S612, ably demonstrated by **Dio's Claude Schnell**. And everywhere you went you ran into the rumor that both Yamaha and Casio are working on samplers. All they'd do when asked was smile wicked smiles.

The greatest strides were visible in terms of music software. A year ago all

the garage guys were clumped around the IMA booth in the foyer; now three or four of them have become viable companies in their own right, with booths and suites and everything. **Mimetics, Inc.** was pushing a wide range of Apple II, Mac and PC software, including an upcoming MIDI version of MacroMind's Musicworks program and two slick DX7 accessory packages called Data 7 and Performance 7. **Cherry Lane Technologies** had Roger Powell's Textures for both the Apple IIE and IBM PC, an 8-track recording package called Connections, a DX7 pro grammer called DX Heaven and an upcoming CZ-101 programmer called CZ-Rider. **Hybrid Arts** was showing off not only new programs but brand-new Atari computers, not yet in the stores. **Passport Designs** was outflanking it on the low-end by extending their Apple packages and developing Commodore software with a Macintosh-style interface. And **Jim Miller**, the demon programmer of Seattle, Washington, surfaced with his Personal Composer program for the IBM PC. (Yamaha was going to distribute it, but for various reasons that fell through and Jim is out on his own now under the **Ameregan Bullycode** banner.)



Korg's digital-analog DW-6000



Akai's S612 MIDI sampler

MIDI, MIDI everywhere...pitch-to-MIDI converters from **Cherry Lane** (the Pitchrider 2000) and **Fairlight** (the Voicetracker); the first MIDI-controlled digital delays and reverbs, from **Yamaha** and **Roland**; and best of all, practical help for those of us who hate switching cables all day long. **Zaphod Electronics** had a \$250 rackmount MIDI switcher with connections for four possible sources (two of which can be separately active at one time) and up to eight destinations. **JL Cooper Electronics** went way out and built a microprocessor-controlled switching box with eight possible sources, sixteen possible destinations and memory for sixteen different patches at just over a grand. **TOA**, who had their 380SE synth speaker cabinets in over a dozen demonstrations, promised a \$500 MIDI-based Electronic Music Mixing System.

But the two biggest developments in the sync sweepstakes were from **Garfield Electronics** and **Synchronous Technologies** who both got on the SMPTE express. Garfield's \$2000 Master Beat is an open-ended code interface system that offers sync generation in a host of SMPTE/EBU formats (Garfield also fielded another Dr. Click variation and two 6-channel drum triggers). Synchronous' SMPL system added a \$1000 chase-lock and auto-locator, giving the overdubber and video assembler the first reasonably-priced alternative. The so-called SMPL-Lock also uses its MIDI buss to mix synchronizers, sequencers and drum machines. More SMPTE-based innovations are rumored.

The big guitar sell, as ever, was aimed at the younger, heavy metal contingent, and **Aria** was seen doing a less scanty version of the much-reviled-and-well-attended **Dean Goes Hollywood** campaign. A number of eyewitnesses gave **Kramer** guest **Eddie Van Halen** hands-down winner as the show's most zonked celebrity endorser—all right Eddie! We couldn't tell if **Ratt** and **Motley Crue** were there in force or whether it was hundreds of look-alikes—hairdressing must be a very lucrative career out here. **Adrian Belew** and **Steve Morse** were on hand for **Kahler** and **Ernie Ball** respectively. **Allan Holdsworth** went to **Ibanez** in a big way, endorsing the Sundown amp and putting his name on a great new light-wooded, single-pickup guitar. (Holdsworth, now working with a keyboardist, has a new record coming out on Enigma.) And **Neal Schon** went

back to his first love, **Gibson**.

Two rather unusual axes beckoned to the less conservative: the **Bond** guitar utilizes a stepped ebony fretboard instead of frets and had a very nice shape and active electronics setup, but still felt...well, kinda funny. Not nearly as strange, though, as the **Gittler**, as close to a minimalist sculpture as you could get—the whole fretboard is just the frets welded to a pipe! I dunno if I'm ready for this one yet, but maybe I could grow to love it. These made the new mid-priced guitars from **Steinberger**, which add just

Yamaha's Post-Strat Offensive

In the beginning was the Strat and the Strat reigned supreme over a dominion of guitar players across the land. And lo, as the mighty Strat prevailed on vinyl and onstage, there came to be grumblings among its subjects. Yes, we are humbled by the expressive capabilities and signature sounds in this mighty Strat, they said, but why must we so endure its foibles? Why must we indulge that nasty hum, that raspy harmonic spectrum, the intonation quease brought on with a mere yank of the royal whammy bar? And so they came forth with new ideas and products, seeking to perfect and embellish this revered musical sceptre.

Now Yamaha is heating up the guitar market, unveiling its new SE series at Anaheim. Girded with the apparatus deemed essential in the current discerning guitar atmosphere—locking-nut whammy bar system, clean pickups with phasing options, even fretboard action, vivid finishes—the SE series is a formidable stab at the post-Strat design scramble.

To flesh out the proposition, Yamaha has introduced a few variations on the SE theme, to suit taste and checkbook

a touch of Flying V style, seem positively old-fashioned. But the most pleasant guitar surprise was **Paul Reed Smith's** new line of Strat-Paul hybrid that J.D. Considine got so excited about in our July '84 issue. Nice job, Paul! (PRS Guitars, 301-263-2701). Guitarists with a taste for the authentic will be delighted to learn of the reappearance of **Vox** amps; those who hate changing strings

continued on next page



Kubicki Ex Factor 4 bass

status. The 200 and 300—listed at \$199 and \$295 respectively—appeal to those of more modest means, but the prizes of the line are the SE700E (E as in ebony fretboard) and the (SE)700HE (H as in two humbuckers), as opposed to the two single coil and bridge position humbucker of the E, at \$695 with hardshell case.

After having played a Candy Apple Red SE700E around town in various contexts, I'm left with a good impression; if there are any shortcomings, the output may need a bit more protein and the timbre was a bit on the transparent side, but otherwise it's a solid, reliable, player-friendly instrument with a highly manageable neck. It's even possible to match the Strat pickup configuration with a quick flick of the tone knob, which doubles as a coil-splitter for the humbucker. Further care has been taken in the pickup department; the diametrically reversed poles between pickups and the use of a Spinex magnet—from an unusual alloy—result in blessed noise cancellation and a sharp, clear tone. This is an axe that invites long hours spent noodling in front of your MTV, dreaming of a world in which Strats and post-Strats live in peace and harmony.—**Josef Woodard**

Yamaha SE700E guitar



N.A.M.M. from previous page will be delighted at the introduction of long-playing SPL strings from **Dean Markley**.

One of the biggest show splashes was the long-rumored, much-delayed appearance of the **Kubicki Ex Factor 4** bass; it lived up to its rave advanced billing. Very comfortable, very playable, nice features like the two-fret E-string extension and active electronics, nice price (\$1285). The Ex Factor 4 is now well into production, so you should be able to actually audition one soon. Two other fine American basses were **Sterling Ball's** mild revision of the **Music Man** and a simple workhorse bass from **KT Instruments**, both under a grand. The British headless **Status** also tempted a

few baser souls.

Best demo band was probably **Chuck Leavell** and **Don Muro's** for **Korg—Marshall** finally came out with a bass amp so Chuck could bring along a hot, hot rhythm section. Best duo demo—honorable mention for great dialogue—were the guys working the very impressive **Linn 9000** sequencer/digital drum, which was given the main sequencing tasks in **Herbie Hancock & his synth all-stars' Grammy** masterjam. **Al DiMeola** did a wonderfully focused four-song acoustic set at the **Musician-Ibanez** concert headlined by Holdsworth. The sheer weight of numbers went to **Electro-Voice**, who had so many demonstrators in the booth, it looked like a battle of the bands.

Perhaps most unusual was the extraordinary health of discrete rack-mounted power amps: **Crown** and **QSC** did a brisk business, **Cerwin-Vega** introduced a blue-chip mega-watt amp called the LPA-600, and perennial contenders **JBL/Urei** and **Peavey** offered new wrinkles. **Numark**, a veteran manufacturer of DJ equipment, opened a few eyes with a massive, affordable line of pre-amp mixers, equalizers, mikes, speakers, you name it.... Their VU displays were positively psychedelic. **Shure** demonstrated a new mini-condenser mike, the SM98, in a drum-miking configuration (Shure's also bringing back the Green Bullet harmonica mike). **AKG** brought out a new quality dynamic mike, the D321, and fine-tuned their headphone line.

There were a number of new entries in the low-end digital drum machine heat, including **Technics'** pulse code modulation-based, MIDI-equipped SY-DP50. **Roland's** working on a remake of their late-lamented TR-808, renamed the TR-727. But come on, manufacturers, even digital drums for the masses is no longer big news. Next time in New Orleans, let's stir up a gumbo of newer, neater gimmicks. N.A.M.M. should be the last place to get blasé. ☐

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RECORD REVIEWS

Graham Parker, brittle romantic, bounces back with a brawny, fiery new LP.



GRAHAM PARKER

Steady Nerves
(Elektra)

Anyone who has despaired about the waning fortunes of Graham Parker will find something to cheer them in *Steady Nerves*, the pint-sized English powderkeg's Elektra debut. While the new LP may not be as completely satisfying as Parker's uncontested 1979 masterwork *Squeezing Out Sparks*, it's a brawny, satisfyingly diverse collection that puts the singer back on an even keel.

Parker, who emerged from Britain's pub rock ferment in the mid-70s, was a prophetic figure whose hard, laceratingly bitter early works had a pronounced effect on singers and writers of the punk era (most notably Elvis Costello, who tore whole pages from the Parker songbook). But his career has been a veritable roller-coaster: Parker's first label, Mercury, never quite knew what to do with his angry, pungent music, and his post-*Sparks* albums on

Arista were maddeningly ill-produced and (in the case of 1983's *The Real Macaw*) musically dispirited.

But Parker has always been a pugacious sort, and *Steady Nerves* has plenty of fight. Though a couple of the eleven songs here hit the ears with a thud, there is true fire in the album's thick sound (produced by Parker and William Whitman); and Parker's writing, which reached its melodic and lyrical nadir on *The Real Macaw*, shows renewed self-assurance. On "Mighty Rivers," he invests the familiar imagery of Don Williams' "Til The Rivers All Run Dry" with a fresh majesty. "Wake Up (Next To You)" is a breathy Holland-Dozier-Holland tribute as sweet as anything this side of "Just My Imagination," "Black Lincoln Continental" a snarling record industry indictment in the manner of Parker's stinging single "Mercury Poisoning." And "The Weekend's Too


Short," a paean to Saturday night pleasures embellished with a lashing guitar solo, sounds like a radio classic on the basis of subject matter alone. The other numbers on *Nerves*, which take in themes as diverse as religious hypocrisy ("Break Them Down") and capital punishment ("Everyone's Hand Is On The Switch"), are less immediately satisfying, but no less interesting than the LP's most thoroughly realized tunes.

Parker always seemed staggered by the loss of his original band the Rumour (there's even a song on the new record, "Canned Laughter," which appears to allude to their separation), but his present group—basically the same one that played on *Macaw*—shows signs that they are growing comfortable with Parker's monolithic sound. Brinsley Schwarz, the sole hold-over from the Rumour, takes the lead here, delivering curt, roaring solos in the heat of battle.



EBET ROBERTS

Now that Parker's players have learned to focus their energies, they are forging a tougher collaborative approach to Parker's gritty writing, and it pays off throughout the album.

Long-time fans of Graham Parker should welcome this record—it affects an almost perfect balance between his brittle romanticism and his impassioned emotional skepticism. Alternately abrasive and tender, *Steady Nerves* marks a welcome re-introduction to a durable original. — **Chris Morris** 




GIDON KREMER, ET AL.

Arvo Pärt: Tabula Rasa
(ECM New Series)

Despite its staid reputation, the classical music world suffers its share of buzzwords and "next big things." Which means that you are soon likely to hear lively arguments between the minimalists and the neo-romantics as to the merits of Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. The minis will repeat that Pärt favors harmonic structures built around triads instead of complex chords, and note his fondness for pedal point drones; the neos will rant on about the moody flow and dramatic exposition of his pieces, and rhapsodize over his virtuoso string writing. You may indulge these factions their arguments, but don't believe a word of it. Arvo Pärt's music is in a class by itself.

The pieces collected here—"Tabula Rasa" for two violins, prepared piano and orchestra; "Cantus In Memory Of Benjamin Britten"; and two versions of "Fratres," one for violin and piano, the other for twelve 'celli—are less than ten years old, yet convey the resonant presence of music many decades older. Some of that lies in the way Pärt's scores echo the familiar, recalling the dense textures of Bartok in "Tabula Rasa" or elegiac grace of Nielsen in the "Cantus," but mostly it's because Pärt manages to evoke a sense of majesty and order that seems an almost ancestral memory. The themes he develops are simple yet haunting, and from the monastic cadences of "Fratres" (the 'cello version in particular), to the peal-

ing circularity of "Cantus," there's always a sense of narrative instead of the ceaselessly grinding logic so many contemporary composers exalt.

Which explains this album's purity of expression. Gidon Kremer, that sorely underrated violinist, plays with the sureness and fire of a young Nathan Milstein; the twelve 'celli of the Berlin Philharmonic exude warmth and harmony; Dennis Russell Davies, conducting the Staatsorchester Stuttgart, handles the "Cantus" with almost fanatic intensity. In all, there's barely a moment on this recording that won't elevate or entrance the listener, and that, theoretically to the contrary, is what music should be about. — **J.D. Considine** 



PHIL COLLINS

No Jacket Required
(Atlantic)

Almost anyone who listens to the radio realizes that Phil Collins is capable of having hits if he wants them. If, after all the airplay garnered by his work with Genesis, "Against All Odds" wasn't proof enough, "Easy Lover" was. Obviously, the man is hot.

When he *wants* to be, that is. *No Jacket Required*, however, is a different situation altogether. In the past, Collins' "hits" have largely emphasized vocal abilities; here he's structured songs so that singing and drumming serve as parallel axes. That's not an absolute rule, since the album's stand-out ballad, "One More Night," relies far more on the endearing anguish of Collins' voice than upon the regular percolation of his Roland drum machine. But where it does apply, Collins makes connections within songs that, without providing the instant uplift expected of hit-bound material, still kick in with surprising resilience.

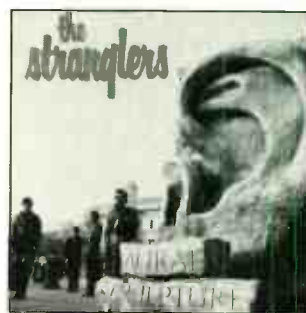
"Sussudio" starts things off with a tantalizing taste of what Collins' strategy proffers: a chipper and energetic melody complemented by matching drum mechanics and a sequenced synthesizer figure, to form a perfect bridge between melody and rhythm. Add a choppy, aggressive horn chart, and you've got a single that's all drive with-

out compromising its melodic instincts.

Nor is that the only song which intertwines tune and time. "Who Said I Would" works out a marvelous relationship between a kalimba figure, drum pulse and Collins' vocals; "Long Way To Go" uses the timbral variety of electronic percussion as a secondary melodic device; and "Doesn't Anybody Stay Together Anymore" plays the insistent throb of Collins' tom-toms as effective counterpoint against the anxious fret of the vocals.

The album isn't a complete success—"Only You And I Know" is so much in a Genesis vein that it seems out of place here, and both "I Don't Wanna Know" and "Don't Lose My Number" never quite fulfill their vocal potential—but this album's possibilities easily outweigh its shortcomings. Should Phil Collins pursue this course to its logical end, he'll doubtless be an unstoppable force on the charts; that alone should be reason to listen, and take note.

— **J.D. Considine** 



THE STRANGLERS

Aural Sculpture
(Epic)

It's been a long, strange trip for England's Stranglers. The quartet predated the British new wave revolution, then plugged into it to enjoy that movement's first hit album. Their musical outlook has changed since those vituperative days; with original personnel intact, however, the Stranglers play with the easy confidence of a well-oiled, professional unit.

Aural Sculpture continues in the deceptive vein of its predecessor, *Feline*, from two years ago. An almost unwavering mid-tempo pulse, spare but solid ensemble work, occasional melodic hooks and guitarist Hugh Cornwell's plaintive singing mask the lyrics' overweening cynicism. The album's one change-of-pace number, "Laughing," is not just an apostrophe to Marvin Gaye: Cornwell keens languorously about suicide scenarios and a father's killing a son while the music behind the juxtaposed images of innocence and despair is almost hopeful. It's state-of-

the-art Stranglers.

Not everything here is so gloomy (or effective). "Mad Hatter" recalls Donovan's "The Trip" (!) both musically and thematically. "Under The Name Of Spain" is a snappily syncopated tribute to that country. The driving "Ice Queen," with its melodramatic premise, could just be a romantic metaphor.

But "No Mercy," "Skin Deep" and even the apocalyptic "North Winds Blowing" are more typical Stranglers material. Dave Greenfield's keyboard-that-dares-to-sound-like-an-organ, Cornwell's tremolo-laden guitar punctuation, Jean Jacques Burnel's lumbering bass and Jet Black's no-nonsense drumming are all distinctive trademarks. *Aural Sculpture* is fairly consistent in its songwriting, sonic smoothness and—one Stranglers fixture—its ability to unsettle. — **Scott Isler** 📧



LUTHER VANDROSS

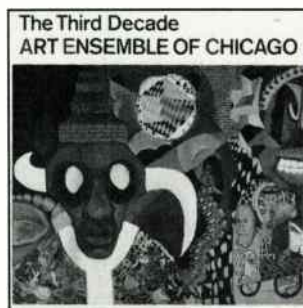
The Night I Fell In Love
(Epic)

Luther Vandross' fourth solo album, like his career, has the consistency of a comet, veering between spectacular flashes of inspiration and cold, gaseous burnout. Though not nearly so startling or effervescent as his precocious debut, (*Never Too Much*), *The Night I Fell In Love* is Luther's most satisfying and soulful effort since that time, partly because he's reined his ambitions and mostly because he's toned down the more rococo aspects of his arranging and vocal styles. After all, Vandross' problem has never seemed to be lack of ideas so much as a surfeit of them, and in the idiom of pop music, less usually works more than more.

The new record proves a good case in point: highlights include two lovely ballads, "If Only For One Night" and "Creepin'," in which Vandross wraps his sweetly burnished tenor around pristine melodies with a minimum of ornamentation, and the more uptempo, funk-flavored "It's All Over Now," a loping, danceable riff suggestive of "Jump To It" that's pushed along by a spare percussive rhythm. Here Vandross con-

veys heartfelt emotion with such masterful understatement that each textural twist heightens the drama; by contrast, the everything-plus-the-kitchen-sink bombast of "Till My Baby Comes Home" is about as graceful as a medley by Meatloaf. Overall, however, *Night* provides ample evidence that Vandross is learning to refine his musical personality without losing the spark that's made him so endearing in the first place. He still has a lot more in common with Halley's comet than Kohoutek's.

— **Mark Rowland**



ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO

The Third Decade
(ECM)

The *Third Decade* is an uneven, if evocative, milestone for the Art Ensemble of Chicago. In live performance, of course, the Ensemble's music has always relied on sophisticated and inventive theatrics—eye contact and costumery often communicated as much as their knotty group improvisations. But here they make more of an attempt to allow each composition to rise or fall on its musical merits. The result is an LP that's at once more accessible and less emblematic than previous efforts *Nice Guys* and *Urban Bushmen*. Excepting the title track, the selections here hew squeamishly close to pre-determined arrangements, and melodies are clearly delineated—but in the process, they've sacrificed some of the surprise and magic that graces the Art Ensemble at their best.

Still, one would be hard-pressed to imagine a more individual, creative and re-creative repertory group. *The Third Decade* bounds from Joseph Jarman's loping tribal procession, "Prayer For Jimbo Kwesi," to the 20s soft-shoe of Roscoe Mitchell's "Walking In The Moonlight," to a loving Jazz Messengers send-up by Lester Bowie, "Zero." Rather than reprising past musical styles, these agile musicians re-interpret them, imbuing vitality and otherworldly perspectives to everything they touch. You've probably heard the fat-back funk groove of "Funky AECO" be-

fore, but never with such ironic or guttural grace—chirping synthesizers and all.

The Third Decade is also a showcase for brassman Bowie and the colorful AEC percussion—as usual, the instrument list reads like an exotic music store catalog. On "Zero," Bowie crackles convincingly in his hard bop mode, with the support of a talkative Don Moye on traps, while the title track—a frayed free-jazz essay that catches the Ensemble in Me-decade pursuit of individual rather than collective climaxes—finds Bowie generating provocative and recurring themes while Jarman ignores him, pursuing instead drone-like saxophone explorations.

There is much cause to celebrate the Art Ensemble, and this record does a lot to document their intentions even as it provides only parts of a greater whole. *The Third Decade* is not what the Art Ensemble does best, but it's still a strong calling card. — **Tom Moon**



THE SMITHS

Meat Is Murder
(Sire)

Interesting and exasperating at once, *Meat Is Murder* finds the Smiths in no mood for commercial compromise; not for them the catchy choruses and fancy production that U2 and Big Country use for bait. Head Smith Morrissey and crew offer their grisly visions in bold relief, with only slight concessions to the marketplace.

In tiny nibbles, *Meat Is Murder* sure feels like pop; Johnny Marr's pretty, singsong melodies and clean guitar lines intertwine gracefully with Morrissey's suave-yet-intense vocals. But as the Smiths disdain the vulgarity of dynamics, so songs end pretty much where they begin: Verses melt into refrains, the rhythm section ticks like a clock, and Morrissey croons softly throughout, as if reciting a dark litany. After forty-six minutes, *Meat Is Murder* amounts to an elaborate, if agreeable, drone in rock disguise.

All the better to showcase Morrissey's brilliantly horrific ideas, which explode out of their bland context like Roman

BILL GIBSON

CYMBALS AT THE HEART OF ROCK & ROLL

"The kind of music we play has a lot of 'punches.' It's real visual when we play live. Huey likes to lead the band by 'accenting' with physical movements, so I'm looking for something that has an edge to it, some crispness. The cymbal sound has to stand up to the electronic stuff and not wash out, it still has to have that edge.

"Heart of Rock & Roll" is a sharp, punchy song with 8th notes on the Hi Hat all the way through and four sharp crashes halfway through the verse. For me, the whole song is those 'punches' right there. I use my K. 18" Dark Crash for that song and it's just a killer. It punches like crazy and it suits that part perfectly."

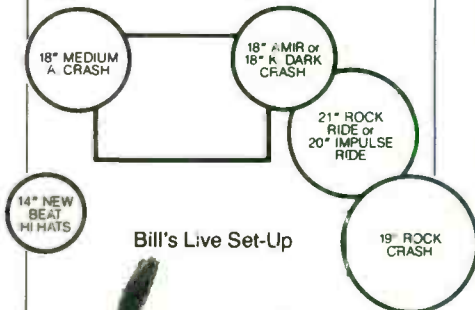
"For Crashes, I like a sharp attack. Something that's really gonna 'splash,' that isn't gonna sustain long. That's why I love my 18" Crashes. They speak quick. The Dark Crash is nice 'cause it'll 'rise' for a second. Which is good for when we end tunes. I'll just sustain on the cymbals and keep them going. They sustain real smooth straight through.

"I'll use my 21" Rock Ride when parts of the song open up, like in a solo section where I'll either be commenting on the beat or just counting straight four on the bell, like on 'Heart of Rock & Roll.' On other songs I use it for color. I also like that Impulse Ride because the overtones don't build up as much."

Gibson depends on Zildjians because they do more than just "cut." They give him the wide variety of tone colors and

textures he needs to expand far beyond strict timekeeping.

"Zildjians really are more durable. Don't ask me why, but just from the experience I've had, they last longer. I've played Zildjians forever. I was twelve years old when my old man gave me my first pair of sticks and he said 'There's only one cymbal, don't



Bill's Live Set-Up

let anybody tell you any different. Avedis Zildjian, that's it." When asked about his formula for success as a rock & roll drummer,

Bill's advice is typically straight

to the point:

"Don't play too much. Less is more. Keep it simple, make it mean something. Save the cymbals for those important accents during the song, so that when you hit those accents, they'll mean more. Make it work. Make it sound *dramatic*."

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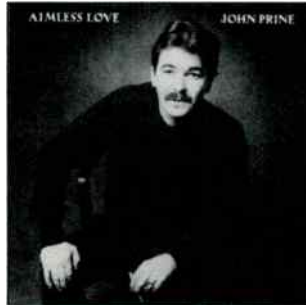
candles. Most of his characters suffer some form of spiritual death, either from lust ("Well I Wonder"), alienation ("That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore"), or physical abuse at the hands of the powers that be ("The Headmaster Ritual"). In short, the world according to Morrissey is a living hell. The chilling "Barbarism Begins At Home" puts it this way: "A crack in the head/ is what you get for not asking/ and a crack on the head/ is what you get for asking."

The confident, clear-headed precision of *Meat Is Murder* stands light-years apart from the self-doubt and confusion of many second albums. Still, the Smiths' self-control can be limiting—it's telling that the most compelling track, "How Soon Is Now?" also features the most conventional guitar tracks. Elsewhere, the lyric sheet has almost as much punch as the record itself. It's easy to respect *Meat Is Murder*, but mighty hard to warm to it.—**Jon Young**

break through—twice as heart-breaking.

Forgive me for devoting so much space to history, but I'm trying to overcome an image problem. Prine is so often viewed as one more left-over folkie; in fact, he's one of our greatest voices. And on *Aimless Love* Prine's long effort to reconcile a dark world with an optimistic spirit advances a couple more steps. On "Unwed Fathers," for instance, Rachel Peer-Prine duets with her husband in a half sexy/half childish voice a bit like Rickie Lee Jones'. Together they describe a teenage mother, abandoned by her boyfriend and riding on a bus with her baby. Rachel hums a lullaby and then whispers, "Your daddy never meant to hurt you ever/ He just don't live here/ But you got his eyes." It's the best song I've heard in months.

This record isn't sonic state-of-the-art; the mixes are occasionally out of whack and some range seems to have been lost in the mastering. But who notices after the second listen? *Aimless Love* is a record that starts out strong and gets better every time. (Oh-Boy Records, PO Box 67800-5333, Los Angeles, CA 90067) — **Bill Flanagan**



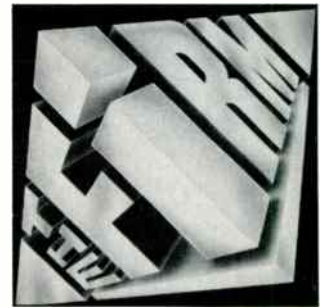
JOHN PRINE

Aimless Love
(Oh-Boy Records)

John Prine is a great singer/songwriter, sometimes in and sometimes out of the rock 'n' roll tradition. This album has no drums on it, so music cops will scream that it can't be rock 'n' roll. Okay, if it bothers you call it something else. But it's beautiful, uplifting music—and it's rock 'n' roll to me.

It's also Prine's first album in four years. On the records he made for Atlantic in the early 70s Prine worked in a country-folk style—some of his songs were funny, others poignant. In the mid-70s Prine moved to Asylum Records and expanded his range; the deadpan, self-deprecating humor became sharper, even as his stiff-lipped melancholy turned darker.

Understatement gives Prine's passion its power. His lyrics are often buried in snow—only after surveying the whole frozen landscape will he look up long enough to say, "Don't let your baby down," like a man who's learned the hard way. Prine never complains. He maintains a loopy optimism that makes the underlying sadness—when it does



THE FIRM

The Firm
(Atlantic)

This isn't the most arresting debut since, say, *Led Zeppelin*, but it's still refreshing to hear a new band whose sound has nothing to do with Motown, beatboxes or top forty balladry; in fact, The Firm sounds a lot like rock circa 1966 with the bass turned up. The LP's best hook obviously concerns the re-emergence of Jimmy Page, who obligingly contributes at least a few memorable moments: a slow, sinuous single-note melodic style on "Make Or Break" and "Someone To Love," and, on "Together," a more familiar grand chordal display that still manages to slip in enough sly phrasing and odd electronic effects to recall his roots in rock's more experimental, jazz-inflected past. And singer Paul Rodgers' smooth baritone certainly remains a cut

continues on page 106



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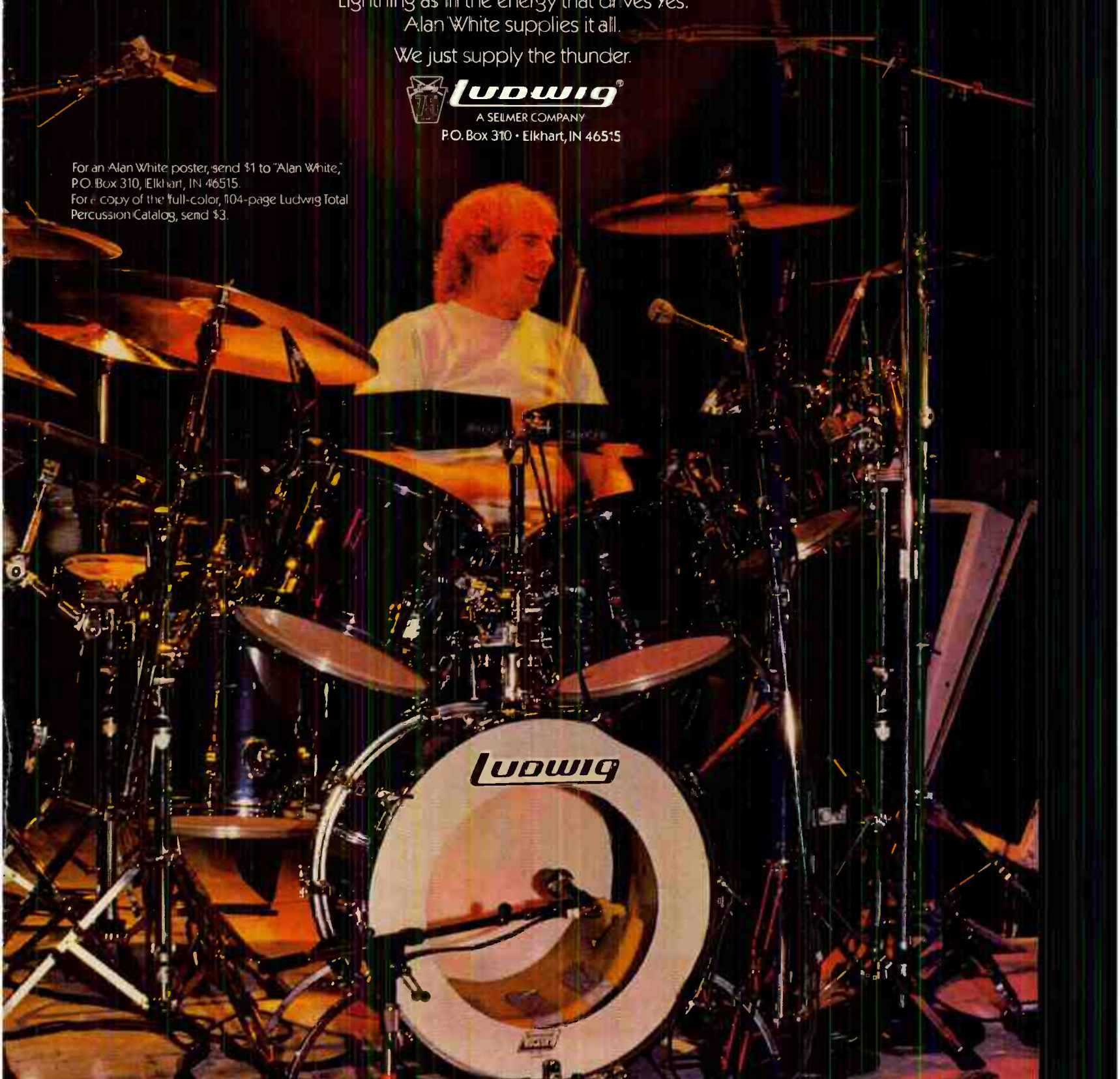


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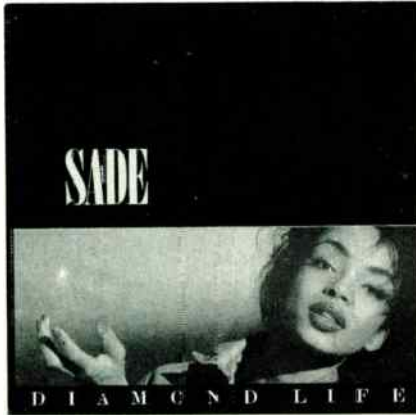
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ROCK

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



Sade — *Diamond Life* (Portrait). Sade Adu's voice isn't powerful in the way you'd expect—no gale-force melismas here—but what she lacks in technique she more than makes up in personality and style. Like Joan Armatrading, she understands the virtues of understatement, while, like Joni Mitchell, she's able to make her delivery seem almost conversationally intimate. Mostly, though, she makes you genuinely care about her songs, which is the goal of every great singer, and the ease she does it with will leave you breathless.

Accept — *Metal Heart* (Portrait). This is heavy metal the way it's supposed to be—hard, fast and hook-heavy. Producer Deiter Deirks managed to hone the band's melodic sense until they're as tuneful as the Scorpions, yet still let their guitars roar like big-barrel engines. It's no wonder *Metal Heart* is the best lease-breaker since *Highway To Hell*—you can't help but want to share its joys with the neighborhood.

Angel City — *Two Minute Warning* (MCA). What is it about life Down Under that leaves Australian bands so full of foreboding? This album—recorded, ironically enough, in Los Angeles—carries all the urgency of a band that knows the bells are about to toll, and translates that feeling into tough, adrenaline-pumping rockers that deliver the kick Midnight Oil only promised. Not that it's all doom-and-gloom mind you, but if you live for rock played as if every note counts, here's a band you can't afford to ignore.

Aswad — *Rebel Souls* (Mango). Not since Bob Marley's Wailers has there been a reggae group with a better shot at making it big in America than Aswad. It isn't that they've unlocked the reggae/

pop connection, although both "54-46 (Was My Number)," with its Police-like groove, and their soulful cover of "Mercy Mercy Me" come close. Rather, it's that Aswad play with the intensity of Black Uhuru or Burning Spear, yet manage mainstream accessibility in their writing and singing. Listen, and believe.

Solomon Burke — *This Is His Song* (Savoy). It shouldn't be any surprise to find the Bishop cutting gospel records, but what may surprise you about this one is the stone Philly groove he relies on. No Gamble & Huff gloss finish, either; Burke goes for the grit the way Teddy Pendergrass once did, which makes his singing earthy enough to be positively heavenly. Too bad the instrumental mix is less than divine. (P.O. Box 279, Elizabeth NJ 07207)

Jenny Burton — *Jenny Burton* (Atlantic). Unlike her debut, which said more about John Robie than Jenny Burton, this album finally allows the singer priority over the song. True, Burton still bends her delivery to the material, but at least this time it sounds like interpretive discretion. Particularly recommended: "Bad Habits," wherein Burton is as sassy and soulful as Patti Labelle at her best.

The Bongos — *Beat Hotel* (RCA). If the quirks in their sound were what attracted you most, this may strike you as a disappointment. But if you were waiting for the Bongos to fulfill their pop potential, especially on a rhythmic level, this album put them one step closer to the hits they've always coveted.

Andreas Vollenweider — *White Winds* (CBS). Don't call this "mood music," unless you consider sleep a mood.

Kim Wilde — *Teases & Dares* (MCA). There's not a whole lot of substance here, which is a drag after the brash bravado of her '81 American debut. But there's still an awful lot of power in Wilde's pop, both through what she sings and what brother Ricki and dad Marty write (this being a family business, see). And even if she does wander a bit into Sheena Easton territory, at least *Teases & Dares* offers more pleasure than guilt.

Whitney Houston — *Whitney Houston* (Arista). Given how the packaging plays up Houston's fashion-model good looks, it's almost a relief to hear how much Whitney has inherited from her mom, Cissy. But faced with the gloop she's left to sing, you'd hardly notice—unless, of course, you really wanted

another version of "The Greatest Love Of All."

Grandmaster Flash — *They Said It Couldn't Be Done* (Electra). They were right. About the only thing Flash's crew can do as well as Melle Mel is sing. Which isn't something to boast about.

Billy Bragg — *Brewing Up With Billy Bragg* (CD Presents). Imagine Ian Dury working in a format similar to Elvis Costello's solo forays, and you'll have a rough idea of how Billy Bragg sounds; cross Costello's wordplay with Dury's randy wit, and you're close to the way he thinks. And if that doesn't make you want to hear this guy, neither will anything else. (1230 Grant Ave., Suite 531, San Francisco CA 94133)

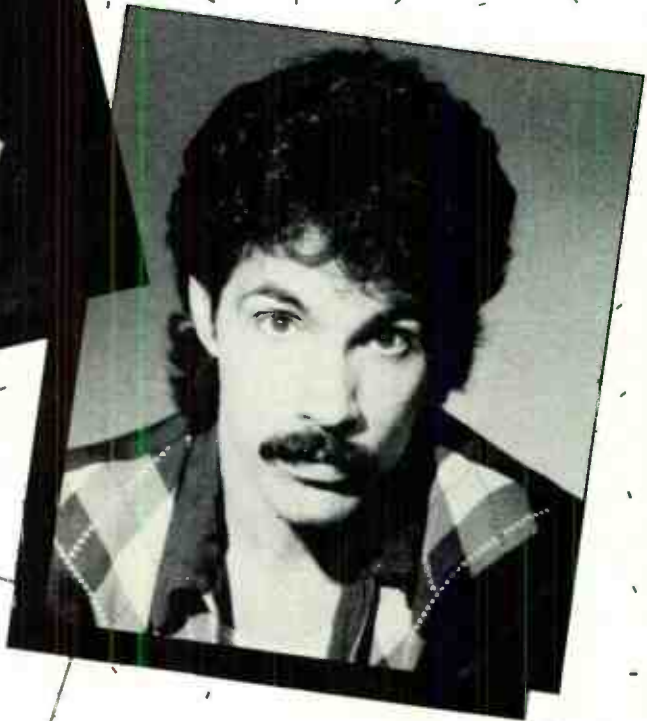
Ry Cooder — *Original Motion Picture Soundtrack: Paris, Texas* (Warner Bros.). As with a lot of Cooder's soundtrack work, the music disappears into the scenery because that's what it's supposed to do. Take the time to listen, though, and what you hear is as expressive and observant as a Peter Taylor short story. In fact, it's even better without the scenery.

Delay Tactics — *Any Questions?* (Multi-phase). This midwestern trio has developed a sound that captures all the quirky pop appeal of Brian Eno's early solo work, while maintaining a compositional rigor that would do Philip Glass proud. Which means that not only are the cuts texturally interesting, they're also delightfully tuneful. (Available through New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY.)

Pablo Moses — *Tension* (Alligator). Considering how fervently Pablo Moses warns against violence and strife, it's a pleasant surprise to hear "Bomb The Nation," in which he claims, "I'm going to bomb the nation/ With reggae nitro." Such a sense of humor, in conjunction with his political urgency, gives *Tension* much needed release. 'Course, Moses' first-rate band helps, too. (Box 60234, Chicago, IL 60660)

Chet Atkins — *Stay Tuned* (Columbia). The idea behind matching Atkins against the likes of George Benson, Larry Carlton, Earl Klugh, Mark Knopfler and Steve Lukather was doubtless to show how a country guitar player could hold his own against the city slickers. But given the results, maybe they just should have videotaped a master class—after all, who cares about chops when the music is this dull?

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JAZZ

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



Arthur Blythe — *Put Sunshine In It* (Columbia). The alto saxophonist's attempt to woo the Grover Washington Jr. crowd is a dismal failure even on its own lenient terms; his sound is far too hefty and wrinkled with character to dissolve into co-producer Todd Cochran's lacquered funk arrangements, the way the formula calls for. Let's hope it sells anyway, though, because if it doesn't, Blythe's days at CBS would seem to be numbered.

Leroy Jenkins' Sting — *Urban Blues* (Black Saint/PolyGram Special Imports). The doyen of free jazz violinists has formed a string-heavy sextet that combines the incremental dissonance and cellular thematic activity of post-serialist chamber music with the rhythmic crunch and sociability of hip hop. The group's eagerly awaited debut is a joy from start to finish, even if the live recording wants punch.

New Air — *Live At Montreal International Jazz Festival* (Black Saint/PSI); **Air** — *Air Raid* (India Navigation). With the restrained colorist Pheeroan Ak Laff replacing charter member Steve McCall on drums, the regrouped Air shows every sign of becoming as motile and disciplined a collective as the original model. The keys to the trio's identity remain saxophonist Henry Threadgill's quicksilver writing and the gravity and momentum of Fred Hopkins' sinewy bass lines. Meanwhile, the India Navigation is the first domestic issue of one of Air's earliest efforts, a 1976 Japanese import that offered a tantalizing preview of things to come and still sounds fresh and imaginative nearly a decade on.

Archie Shepp — *Down Home New York* (Soul Note/PSI). His last few records

have been as desultory as his live performances, but just when you're ready to write him off for good, he has a habit of delivering albums as brisk and exhilarating as this one, on which every cut qualifies as something of a tour de force, from the parched and oddly contoured reading of "Round Midnight" to the taunting, oversized riffing and street-corner sagacity of the title track.

Alvin Batiste — *Musique D'Afrique Nouvelle Orleans* (India Navigation). Overbaked writing betraying the most naive sort of cross-cultural eclecticism and sloppy execution on the part of the sidemen undermine the leadership debut of this veteran New Orleans clarinetist, though his solos remain zesty and forward-looking for all of that. But for a truer indication of Batiste's considerable abilities, hear his duet with Jimmy Hamilton on "Whispering" from last year's similarly uneven *Clarinet Summit* on the same label.

Charlie Rouse — *Social Call* (Uptown). The tenor saxophonist who more than held his own as the successor to Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane and Johnny Griffin in the Thelonious Monk Quartet twenty years ago is blowing even more forceably now, and the risible veteran trumpeter Red Rodney is just the man to keep up with him. The material is a rewarding mix of evergreen and mint, and the rhythm section (with bassist Cecil McBee, drummer Kenny Washington and the late pianist Albert Dailey) takes care of business and then some. Who could ask for anything more?

Joe Pass & J.J. Johnson — *We'll Be Together Again* (Pablo). Johnson—far and away the most influential trombonist in modern jazz history and arguably the most technically proficient—doesn't record that often these days, which is a pity because his playing, always enjoyable for its agility, is acquiring the deeper stuff of character with age. He has never sounded as convincing as on these kneading duets with Pass, a guitarist whose unassuming virtuosity seems tailor-made for this kind of intimate setting.

M'Boom — *Collage* (Soul Note/PSI). What distinguishes this ten-member percussion ensemble (spearheaded by producer Max Roach) from similar tribal gatherings is its attention to color and dynamics, its judicious balancing of academic leanings and street smarts,

its harmonic resonance and its cobalt-blue melodic stealth. Like the group's 1980 debut, this delayed follow-up is a triumphant vindication of a much-abused concept.

Charles Davis — *Super 80*; **Bill Saxton** — *Beneath The Surface* (both Nilva, available from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012). Adhering to the timeless virtues that established Blue Note as The Most Famous Name In Jazz (as well as The Name most taken in vain these days, if you follow my drift), drummer Alvin Queen's shoestring Nilva label continues to provide an open forum for worthy musicians like saxophonists Davis and Saxton, who might otherwise go unrecorded as leaders. The one complaint I might raise about the very fine Davis LP is that by limiting himself to tenor, Davis denies himself the opportunity to showcase the versatility that keeps him in demand as a sideman. Conversely, I wish Saxton had left his reedy soprano at home, though the solid mass and adamant cry of his tenor solos override that minor misgiving. Both of these quartet dates deliver the hard stuff with no unnecessary frills, and I don't have to tell you such albums are becoming increasingly rare.

James Drew — *Barrio Frances* (Maximus/N.M.D.S.). According to the notes, Drew is "an illusive [sic] figure, a legendary underground pianist who surfaces periodically in the company of giants." Illusion or no, I hope he's surfaced for good this time, because on the evidence of this release from New Orleans, he's a force to be reckoned with—a pianist and composer vaguely similar to mid-60s Andrew Hill in his melodic convolution, his layering of Latin rhythms and free meter, and his ability to light a fire under a band (in this case, bassist James Singleton, drummer Jeff Boudreaux and tenor saxophonist Rick Margitza, all of whom bear watching as well).

Paul Bley — *Sonar* (Soul Note/PSI). Turns out I was premature in recommending last year's solo effort *Tears*, because *Sonar* is superior in every respect, what with duet partner George Cross McDonald, a resourceful Canadian percussionist, rubbing the pianist lightly but producing enough friction to ignite implosions equal in intensity to Bley's paradigmatic work of the 1960s.

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VIDEO

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



EBET ROBERTS

Digital Dreams — *Digital Dreams* (Media Home Entertainment). This movie, "adapted from the computerized diaries of Bill Wyman," was never released here theatrically, and it's not hard to see why. Indulgent and self-consciously arty, it ends up making you care even less than you thought you could about how Bill and Astrid Wyman met and what they think of each other. Richard O'Brien (of *Rocky Horror Picture Show* fame) is a hysterical show-stealer as their bizarre butler, and there are a few too-brief glimpses of fab archival footage of the Stones onstage and the legendary *Beggar's Banquet* pie-fight. Good ol' Bill even takes his trademark deadpan cool to another level, acknowledging the contrived boredom of the proceedings quite openly. But that still doesn't excuse this tripe.

Australia Now — *Australia Now* (Media Home Entertainment). Seventeen bands on parade through this meagerly produced 1983 video missive from the Oz-Rock Chamber of Commerce. Highlights are few: Midnight Oil, Mental as Anything, Split Enz, and the only real discovery here, Angel City, who look like nu-wavers but play fractured-Foghat boogie with a saxophonist spitting atonally over the top. Really outstanding is the "Songs of the Bamyili Tribe" segment, with aboriginal dijeridoo music by face-painted natives, and abo reggae-rockers No Fixed Address. But, horribly, both segments get about fifteen seconds of screen time each. Hard to be-

lieve this uninspired, uninspiring document was directed by Peter Clifton, who shot some seminal music videos (Procol Harum's "Whiter Shade Of Pale," for instance), and Led Zeppelin's film *The Song Remains the Same*, which in many ways anticipated the subsequent course of rock video aesthetics.

Lionel Richie — *All Night Long* (RCA/Columbia MusicVision). The opening entry in the new MusicVision line looks like a surefire winner. At least it's just what Richie fans would like, and they are of course legion. The star, sitting at his piano, intros his vidclips, then intros some live footage of him and band doing "All Night Long" and "Runnin' With The Night." Thirty-five minutes of this for just \$14.95. Me, I find it all boring as batshit, but for Richie fans....

Go-Go's — *Prime Time* (RCA/Columbia MusicVision). Yer basic video compilation by yer basic original carefree punkettes. Worth special mention are two fine clips not overshadowed on MTV: the adorably pixilated "Get Up And Go," and the good-humored gender-fuck scenario "Turn To You." There's also a superbly art-directed and edited performance of "Head Over Heels"—great tune, great clip.

The Jam — *Trans-Global Unity Express* (Sony Video EP). Pa Weller introduces Paul and the boys at a British concert, and away we go with "A Town Called Malice." The energy level is unremitting (as you Jam fans remember); they really build up a head of steam near the climax with "Private Hell" and "Pretty Green." Recorded in 1982, these twenty-nine minutes are fairly riveting, and shot in a commendably straightforward manner.

Missing Persons — *Surrender Your Heart* (Sony Video 45). Miles Davis says he likes this band, so I figure either he's senile or they deserve another listen. Another listen later, I've decided Miles is senile. Anyway, "Right Now" is a marvelous video, gorgeously directed by Peter Heath in the lushly textured style of European TV commercials. Peter Max—yes, *that* Peter Max—directed the title cut, and it looks it, with layered psychedelic solarizations and computer-graphic animation. Both clips are highly enjoyable on a surface sensory level, but if you wanna shell out for what still boils down to one long, rather tiresome affair with Dale Bozzio's grotesque mug...you must have a case of

the Miles.

Rubber Rodeo — *Scenic Views* (Sony Video 45). Rubber Rodeo may play mutant, post-wave C&W-pop, but it's still rooted in the country's plainspoken bedrock of yearning and heartache. The three songs here are easily visualized, with strong, assured performances by lead singers Bob Holmes and Trish Milliken; the latter could have a big career as a gen-yoo-wine movie actress. Director David Greenberg parallels Rubber Rodeo's epic-twang guitar and weeping pedal steel with visual-correlative leitmotifs that evoke Americana-on-the-road. *Scenic Views*, nominated for a Grammy, deserves to be bought or rented by all of you reading this: after all, the band's records and videos have not exactly been overexposed. The low budget with which Second Story Television produced this makes it all the more remarkable.

Louie Bellson — *The Musical Drummer*; **Steve Gadd** — *In Session* (DCI Music Video, 541 Avenue of the Americas, New York City, NY 10011; \$79.95 each plus \$4 postage and handling). Once again the video wing of New York's Drummers Collective school does the right thing with instructional home music video. Bellson, one of the best big-band drummers, plays seven tunes, from bop to ballad to Latin, with a jazz quintet. He explains his playing, on its own terms and in relation to the rest of the band, and demonstrates exercises, also shown in an accompanying 64-page booklet.

The Gadd is DCI's second tape on one of the all-round great drummers of the day. Here he works out in a funk trio (with Richard Tee and Will Lee) and jazz/Latin trio (with Jorge Dalto and Eddie Gomez). Throughout he discusses what he plays and why, and demonstrates in-session studio work. There's a pamphlet with this one too. If you send away for these, ask for DCI's catalog listing outstanding tapes with John Scofield, Richard Tee, Ed Thigpen and Adrian Belew (with Jaco Pastorius coming up).

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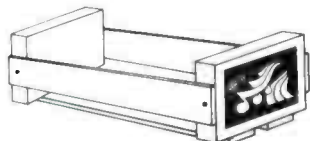
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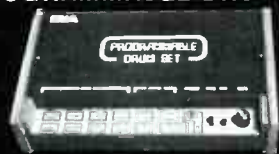
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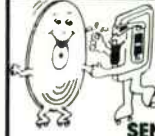
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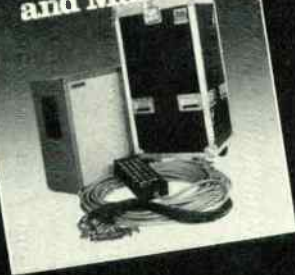
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Cooder from page 80

style, you'd have "Purple Rain." It's a matter of volume, it turns out.

MUSICIAN: You're a long-time champion of Tex-Mex, dating back to the band you had in the mid-70s with Flaco Jimenez. What got you into it?

COODER: Tex-Mex is still the music that has that basic power, is located in a place in the minds of people and in the community. You can go down to San Antonio and in the valley down there, go into a joint and that music will push you up against the wall just like Marley.

There's nobody playing it, probably, who is as interesting as Marley but, by God, I have seen nights in those places with bands alternating, fighting each other in music. It's some of the most intense instrumental improvising and absolutely flat-footed stomping grooves I've ever heard. The sky seemed to be the limit until I discovered myself on a tour bus out in the middle of winter with three black gospel singers, a bunch of Texas Mexicans, a crazed Hawaiian roadie, me and this freak bus driver and where were we going? What was happening? I was losing money every day, had to trade the bus in for rent-a-cars that stalled in the snow, the Mexicans had never been north....

You know, passing through Vicks-

burg, Mississippi, you're just not sure what to do next. I thought, "Well, this is a real one-way ticket to hell," but some of those shows were fabulous. Finally I'm saying to myself, "I'm plugged into this music. I really like this island I'm on now and I want to play this island music," but the audience didn't quite see themselves on that island with me. The thing I enjoy most is getting us all on an island somewhere for a minute. ☐

Record Reviews from page 96

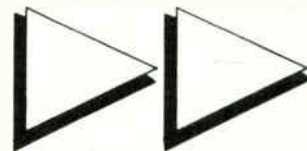
above the crude vocalese one typically associates with contemporary metal music.

Unfortunately, this album's best moments are homogenized with the worst by an incredibly careless and overbearing mix. And though Page and Rodgers co-produced, the result is far more suggestive of Rodgers' bent for barebones rock than Page's more exotic streak. Reports from the Firm's live tour indicate that Page is now beginning to assert a presence onstage more commensurate with his stature; but for a band that calls itself The Firm, this vinyl document feels surprisingly flabby.

— **Patty Rose** ☐

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The FX56 produces the ultimate in heavy metal sounds. Producing brilliant highs and fat lows, turning any amplifier into a heavy metal stack.

American Metal features an extra high gain and extended distortion range that will give any guitar the punch needed for heavy metal music. Suggested retail price: \$79.95 (USA).

DOD

DOD Electronics,
5639 South Riley Lane,
Salt Lake City, Utah 84107
Telephone (801) 268-8400

FOR THE NEXT STAGE IN YOUR CAREER.

The band has paid its dues. Played the garages, the dives, the schools. But now you're into some good-paying steady gigs. And ready to go for broke. Without going broke.

You're ready for a Yamaha MC mixing console. A full line of new consoles that have many legendary M-Series features and reliability. And are affordably priced.

There are three models in the line—the MC1204, MC1604 and MC2404.

Which one you choose depends on how many channels you need. The first two numbers after the MC tell you how many input channels that model has. The last, how many output channels.

Whichever MC mixer you choose, you get input channels that are modularly constructed in blocks of four for easy access.

Each channel has a pad switch and gain control with peak LED, three-band EQ with sweepable midrange, two pre-EQ and pre-fader

foldback sends, two post-EQ and post-fader echo sends, pan control, group 1-4 assignment switches, cue and channel on/off switches, and a 100-millimeter fader.

All are color-coded and logically grouped for easy operation.

With four group outputs that are assignable to the master stereo outputs. And two echo and two foldback sends.

There are even two MC monitor models, the MC1608M and MC2408M. They offer the additional capability of on-stage monitoring. So each member of the band can hear exactly what he or she needs to hear.

Now that we've set the stage, why not visit your Yamaha Combo dealer for a demo of the MC consoles. Or write: Yamaha International Corporation, Combo Products Division, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622. In Canada, Yamaha Canada Music Ltd., 135 Milner Ave., Scarborough, Ont. M1S 3R1.

