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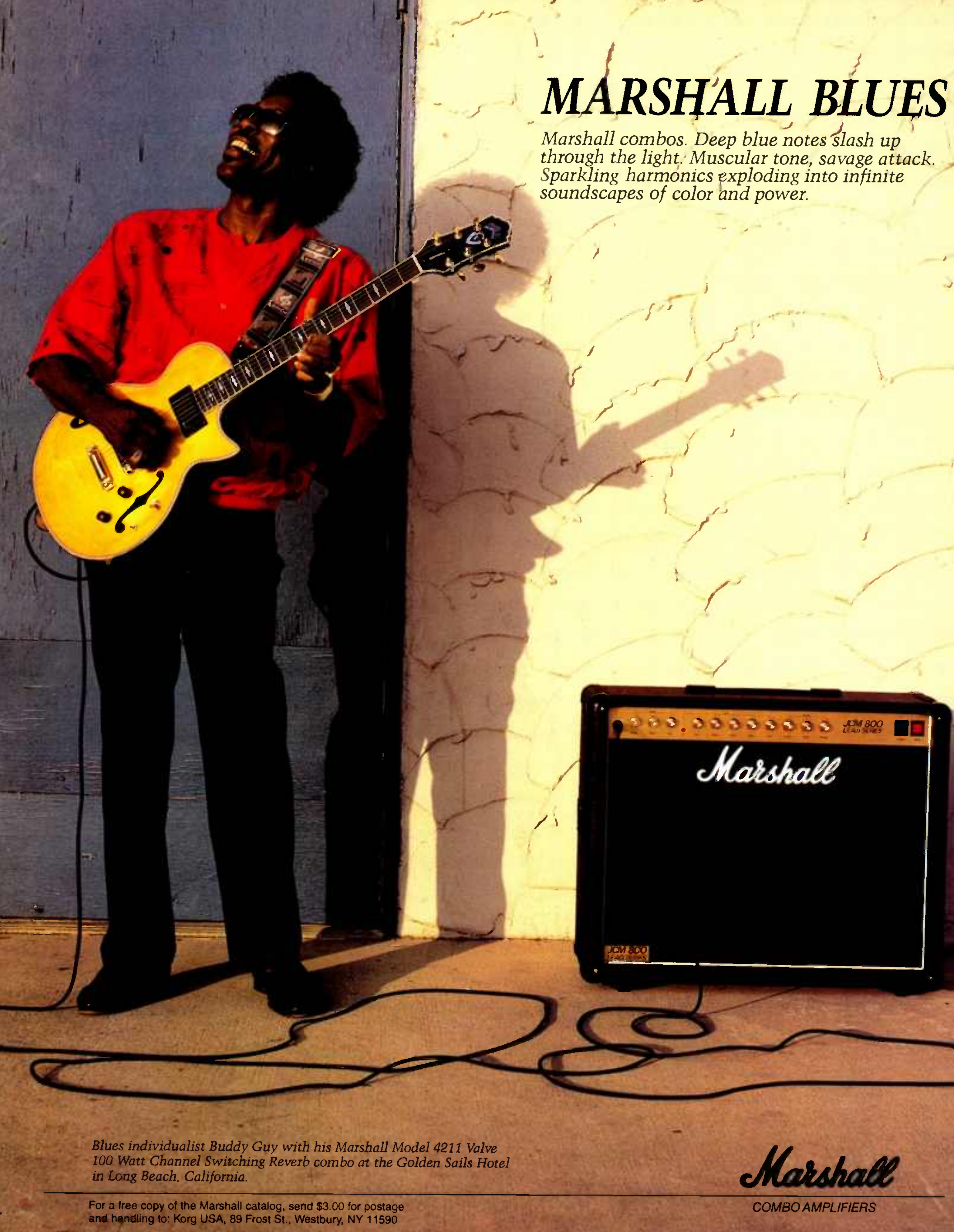

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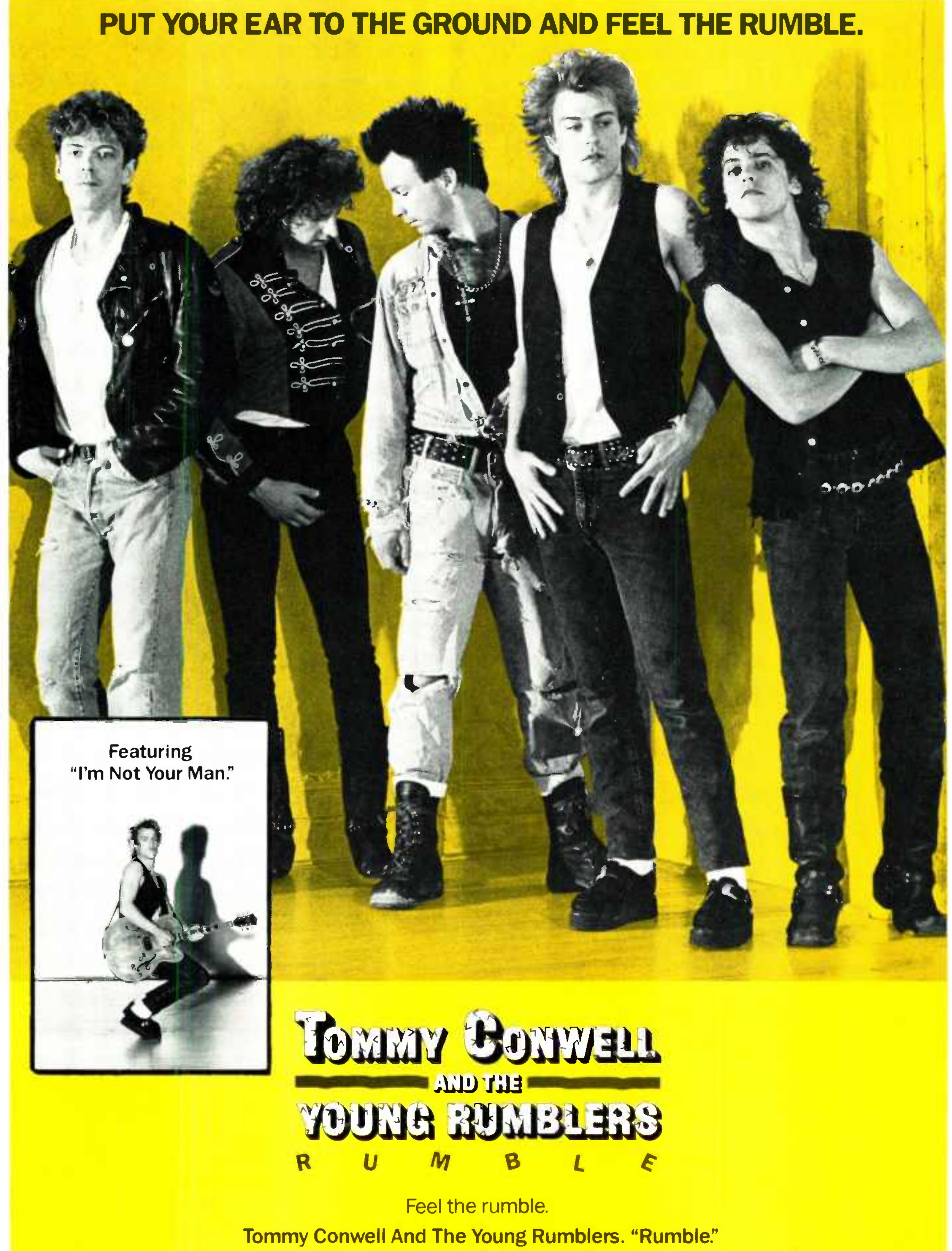

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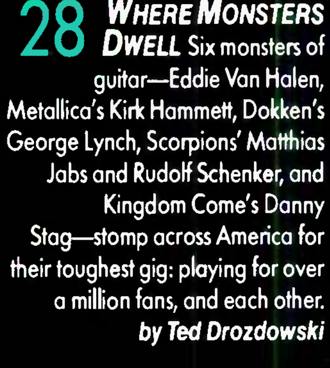

28 WHERE MONSTERS DWELL Six monsters of guitar—Eddie Van Halen, Metallica's Kirk Hammett, Dokken's George Lynch, Scorpions' Matthias Jabs and Rudolf Schenker, and Kingdom Come's Danny Stag—stomp across America for their toughest gig: playing for over a million fans, and each other. *by Ted Drozdowski*

92 CARLOS SANTANA & WAYNE SHORTER In which gutbucket heart and jazz intellect meet, fall in love and leave for a European fling. Double dating with the big boys. *by Jim Macnie*

82 LIVING COLOUR'S VERNON REID As avant-garde outsider, Reid could look down his nose at the marketplace. Now he's rock guitar's rising star, struggling to cross over...if anyone will let him. *by Steve Perry*

70 BLUES FOR BILLY GIBBONS Once ZZ Top were open-mouthed kids hanging around Muddy Waters. Now they've become rich and famous taking Muddy's style to outer space. Billy Gibbons talks about repaying old debts. *by Stanley Booth* **ALSO** All three ZZs pass down the lessons of kicking the drummer, palming the strings and playing the change when you wants to. *by Timothy White*

38 DAVID TORN *by John Diliberto*

44 FRANK ZAPPA *by Alan di Perna*

60 SONNY SHARROCK *by Ted Drozdowski*

54 GEORGIA SATELLITES *by Charles M. Young*

15 TEDDY PENDERGRASS *by Rory O'Connor*

20 WILLIE DIXON *by Peter Guralnick*

113 HIP INSIDERS CONTEST

Masthead 6
Letters 8
Faces 10
Developments 48
Record Reviews 108
Rock Shorts 116
Jazz Shorts 118
Classified 120
Ad Index 122

MUSICIAN

A Billboard Publication September 1988 No. 119

COVER: B. GIBBONS BY GEORGE CRAIG, VAN HALEN BY MARK WEISS/MWA, V. REID BY ANTHONY CUTAJAR

World Radio History

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Kenny Loggins Back to Avalon

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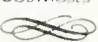

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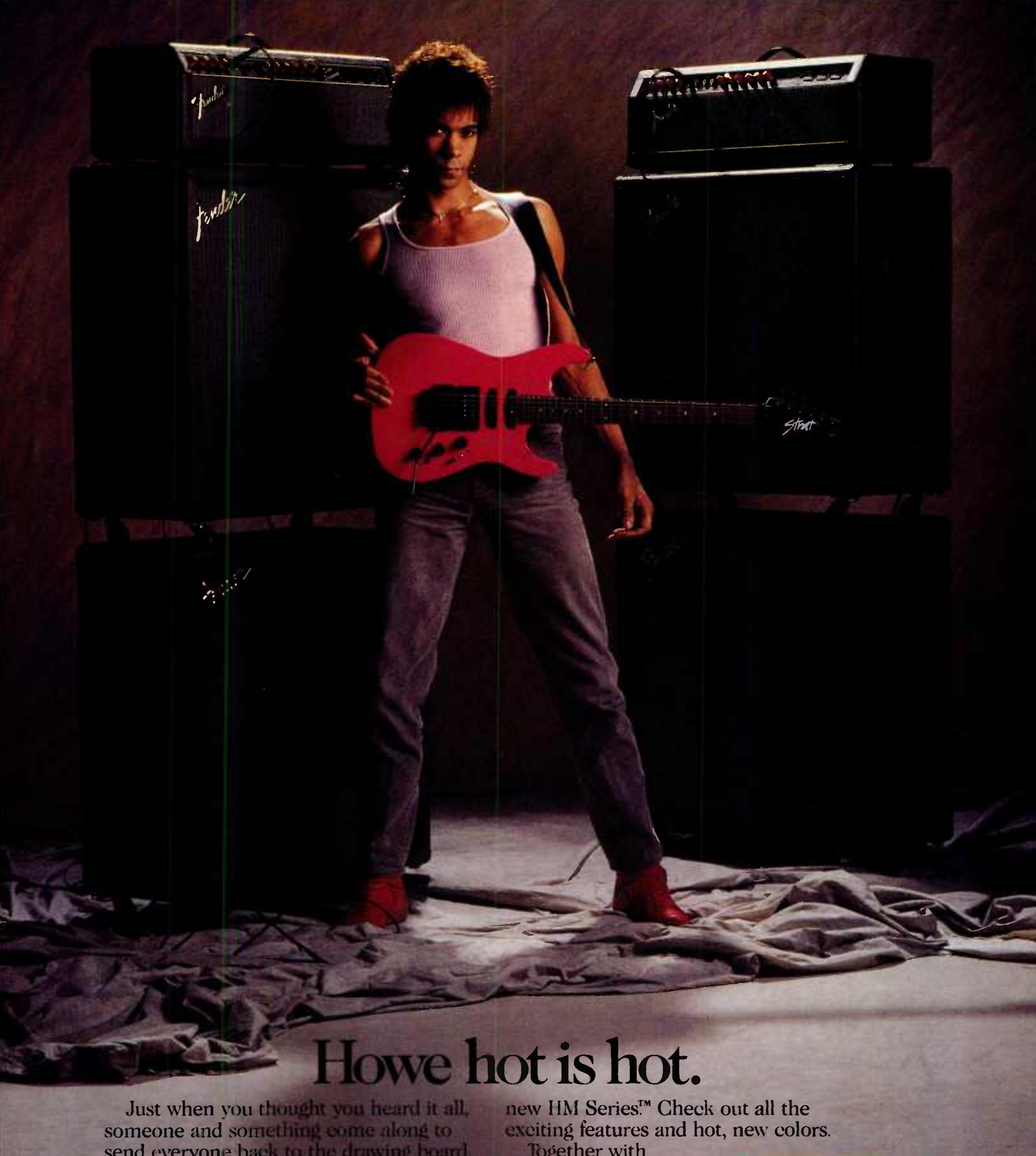

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RUDE GIRL

I ADMIRED SINÉAD O'CONNOR so much after buying her debut album that I was all ready to write her an adoring fan letter. Then I read the article in your June issue. What a disappointment. She's an immature phony who seems to feel the only way to appear cool is to use the word "fuck" in every other sentence. How original, Ms. O'Connor! On top of that she can't even give credit where it's due by naming some of her influences, which scream loud and clear from each song on her album. I know it must be annoying to be constantly compared to a million different female artists but that's no reason to put them down.

L. DiCerto
New York, NY

A SMALL AMOUNT OF THANKS for the Sinéad O'Connor cover story. Before that issue, a year's worth of covers included:

a) three ex-Beatles
b) two dead people
c) excerpts from a book any of your readers could pick up at their local library without shelling out $2.50.

In fact, 11 of the 16 folks in cover articles from the June '87 through May '88 issues were recording in the 1960s.

By recognizing O'Connor and a very few other new artists you have barely saved yourselves from being damned to a lifetime of listening to Tiffany cover versions and Deep Purple reunion albums, or, even worse, being bought out by *American Heritage*.

Charles Held, Jr.
Carrboro, NC

SO *MUCH* TO ADMIRE ABOUT Sinéad O'Connor! Where to begin? Perhaps with the way she is "amused" by heartfelt audience response? I think it's great that she says "real crude things onstage" to get back at all the "*stupid* idiot journalists" and (no doubt) the "stupid, jerk-off, bald-man record company shit." How can you help loving a woman who shaves her head for its obvious image value and then gets "soooo bored" with the attention it creates? Who insists that what she means in her songs is none of our business?

I guess the only dark cloud on O'Connor's horizon is her success: For a performer who is "not concerned with trying to sell records and trying to be a fucking pop star," 250,000 albums sold in the U.S. must be truly discouraging. So I, for one, have no intention of buying her records, attending her concerts, or in any way playing into the hands of the evil men and women who want to further her career.

Gardner Campbell
Charlottesville, VA

I ENJOYED SINÉAD O'CONNOR'S remarks and I found her to be quite an interesting character. But I had to reflect on the perennial problem with outspoken people: Sooner or later they say something really dumb.

For Sinéad to call Joni Mitchell's music "folk" and dismiss it as "wishy-washy" revealed that Sinéad is as ignorant as she is exuberant.

Jamie Michaels
Los Angeles, CA

SO SINÉAD O'CONNOR KNOWS how to use four-letter words. Big fucking deal.

J. Ahmad
Lancaster, CA

CHAPMAN REPORT

BEING A BLACK WOMAN WHO IS very fond of '60s folk music, I was more than a little interested in hearing the music of Tracy Chapman (June '88). I was not disappointed. I applaud not just her undeniable talent, but also her integrity and courage to make real music in these sad days of dipped-in-plastic junior high school anthems that clog up the Top 40 and make the undeserving rich.

Sarah Lawrence
Los Angeles, CA

SHOCKED ABSORBER

AFTER LISTENING TO THE *TEXAS CAMPFIRE TAPES* half a dozen times, seeing Michelle Shocked in a festival setting and at a recent solo performance, and reading your insightful article (June '88), I have this to say: Michelle, grow up. Get real. Smell the coffee. Face the music. Come down off your high horse. Read a book. Read a *history* book. Spare me.

Connie Kuhns
CFRO-FM
Vancouver, Canada

YOUNG AT HEART

NEIL YOUNG'S (JUNE '88) MUSIC is as clear as crystal, as warm as wool, soars as high as the heavens, and is as intense as sexual intercourse. The man is *real*, and there's no better than that.

George Koumantzelis
Lowell, MA

FRIESEN MELT

I HAVE JUST COMPLETED READING your interview with Gil Friesen, president of A&M Records (June '88). Although our relationship with A&M is fairly new, I can tell you from my perspective and first-hand contact that your representation of Mr. Friesen was at times over-dramatic (a reference to Mr. Friesen as the "Baron") and misrepresentative (there are some highly capable female executives at A&M) of the man and the company.

Craig Sussman
Cypress Records
Los Angeles, CA

I FOUND BUD SCOPPA'S CHARacterizations of Gil Friesen to be misleading and inaccurate. While it is indisputably true that Gil commands (and earns) a great deal of respect from his management team, the terms in which you paint them—"exclusively male, exclusively white" and participating in "coldblooded activities"—suggest a sinister conspiracy which I, for one, have utterly failed to detect.

Gil initiated the program through which I was hired, encouraged me through the ranks, and appointed me to a position in which I oversee a national staff of (mostly female) interns. His attention and concern for my development as an executive is not unusual, but is extended to all of us in lower and middle-management positions.

Yes, the music industry has a chronic shortage of female executives. That's not Gil Friesen's fault. He's doing everything he can to accelerate the careers of potential female executives at A&M. Look for your conspiracy elsewhere.

Karen Glauber
A&M Records
Los Angeles, CA

BAD SPELL

BEING A DRUMMER, I GREATLY appreciated your section "Give the Drummer Some" (June '88). However, in the future, if you do recognize the insightfulness and prowess of Rush's *Neil* Peart, please spell his fucking name correctly.

Peter Mills
San Antonio, TX

Please send letters to: *Musician*, 1515 Broadway, 39th floor, New York, NY 10036.

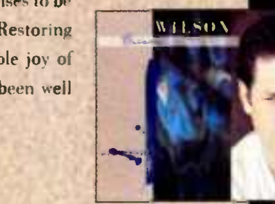
World Radio History

Good things come to those who wait, and for the millions of fans who have waited over twenty years to hear from one of modern music's authentic geniuses, the reward is at hand. The first ever solo album by Brian Wilson has arrived.

Despite tantalizing glimpses of Brian's extraordinary musical gift over the past two decades, nothing can quite prepare the listener for the scope, depth and range of the eleven songs comprising **Brian Wilson**, the album. From the prayerful sentiment of "Love And Mercy" to the cosmic perspective of "There's So Many;" from the exquisite harmonies of "One For The Boys" to the deeply personal "Melt Away;" from the wry wisdom of "Baby Let Your Hair Grow Long" to the multi-faceted musicality of the album's eight minute-plus centerpiece "Rio Grande," it is obvious that Brian Wilson is in tune with the times. And ahead of them.

But that should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with Brian Wilson's contribution to the lexicon of contemporary music. The creative focus of the Beach Boys, the most successful, innovative and influential American band in history, Brian singlehandedly fashioned the evocative "California Sound," a musical fantasy of sun, fun, cars and girls shared worldwide. "Surfin' U.S.A.," "I Get Around," "California Girls," "Fun, Fun, Fun," "In My Room," "God Only Knows," the epochal "Good Vibrations." From 1962 to 1966, Brian and the group created an astonishing body of work with 12 LPs and more than two dozen Top 40 hits, virtually all written, arranged and produced by Brian. "Brian *is* the Beach Boys," remarked the band's drummer, the late Dennis Wilson. "We're just his messengers."

And now the message of Brian Wilson is heard again in a dazzling return to form and the beginning of what promises to be a long and fruitful solo career. Restoring a generation's faith in the simple joy of music, **Brian Wilson** has been well worth the wait.



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FACES

TACKHEAD
Dribbling on Their Own

Everybody likes to go to the park and play basketball, but there's always someone who takes the ball home. What we want is our own ball—" "instead of being brought in to dribble someone else's."

That's guitarist Skip McDonald and drummer Keith LeBlanc, explaining why three of New York's hottest session musicians and one of Britain's hottest producers left their cozy—and lucrative—studios to

STEAL THIS RECORD

Together again: Elvis Presley, Dolly Parton, Count Basie and...Igor Stravinsky?? That startling line-up is why you can't buy *Plunderphonics*, an EP of "transformative appropriation." Compiler John Oswald has turned four commercial recordings (the Stravinsky is a section of "The Rite of Spring") inside-out through splicing, overdubbing, speed variation and other multi-track tricks. The results are funny, thought-provoking and—thanks to copyright laws—illegal to purchase.

"I don't necessarily want to make a living of this," says Oswald, who's a composer "90 percent of the time"; "I want to set an artistic example" with "blatant rather than covert use of other people's material." The limited-edition EP's cover states that the record and its "audible contents" are not to be bought or sold. However, copies are available at $5 shipping and handling for radio stations, libraries and critics. And who isn't a critic? Write to Mystery Laboratory, Box 727, Station F, Toronto M5S 2Z1, Canada.

– *Scott Isler*

STUMP
A Band at Lager Heads

Mick Lynch

World Radio History

create Tackhead, a clangorous, movable beast of a band.

With bassist Doug Wimbish, McDonald and LeBlanc formed the core of Sugar Hill Records' house band, the uncredited power behind the label's string of early-'80s rap hits. But the trio tired of being "plumbers," as McDonald puts it. "A lot of the things we do on our own stuff, you might get fired for if you did them in a session."

Although Tackhead was around back then (albeit as an R&B group), things didn't click until LeBlanc met producer Adrian Sherwood, best known for his dub work but with credits ranging from Simply Red to Einstürzende Neubauten. Sherwood's brand of active production—playing the faders like an instrument, building rhythm tracks from delay loops, intercutting samples and tapes—solidified the Tackhead sound.

NICK ELGAR/LFI

Surprisingly, the group recreates the sound live, seemingly unimpaired by small-club acoustics and leased equipment. Some vocals and effects are taped, but all of the "real" music is created onstage—subject, of course, to Sherwood's mangling. "We do it to prove a point," he says. "We cut records we're really proud of; we can deliver the goods live."

While LeBlanc fantasizes about a Miles Davis collaboration, musicians from Joe Satriani to Melle Mel have joined Tackhead onstage or in the studio. And individual band members can be found on scores of other projects; session gigs still pay Tackhead's bills. But no one said it would be easy to become a juggernaut. "We're always going to be pulsing," says Wimbish, "not like some folks, stuck on pause." – *W. Vann Hall*

Robert McKahey doesn't look too bad in a jacket way too small for him; the maître d' at the classy Indian restaurant insisted he put something over his sleeveless mesh top. But Mick Lynch got in with just a white T-shirt, well-worn blue jeans and his trademark stubble-length scalp with a Tintin quiff. Maybe the maître d' was afraid to ask Lynch anything.

And that's just the half of Stump, an Anglo-Irish quartet. Their first full-length album, *A Fierce Pancake*, is a frenetic explosion of musical and lyrical parts that add up to the most rewarding—if demanding—"pop" listening in some time. Singer Lynch and drummer McKahey, Stump's county Cork contingent, are in New York ("I've been told not to look up," McKahey says) to get some attention for a record you'll never hear on your shopping mall p.a.

Darlings of the British indie-band circuit, Stump came together in London in 1984 when McKahey auditioned for guitarist Chris Salmon and bassist Kev Hopper. "One half of me was saying, 'Run away, run away!'" the drummer remembers. "The other half was saying, 'You gotta check this out.'" McKahey enlisted as vocalist/lyricist his friend and compatriot Lynch, whose surprising imagery and Joycean (there, it's said) wordplay complements the band's rugged lines and rhythms. Stumpsongs lurch and quiver, rolling into mental corners like quicksilver, but always with pretzel logic.

"I write the best part of a song in an hour," Lynch says, "but then spend the next two weeks finding the rest of it." He laughs. "'Kubla Khan' kind of behavior." McKahey explains his partner's offbeat choice of subject matter as depending on "which brand of lager he's had." "We use anything if it works," Lynch says.

A Fierce Pancake certainly works; it's as uncompromising and as friendly as the title suggests. The Stumpsters deny that their manic originality might cost them listeners. "Ten years ago," Lynch argues, "if somebody had played you a hip-hop tape, you'd'a said, 'That's madness, nobody will ever go for that.' One thing about Stump is our own pigheadedness."

Don't wait until 1998.

– *Scott Isler*

TOM SHEEHAN/LFI

IRMA THOMAS

Radio or Not, She's Still Queen

"I've always been sort of pushy," Irma Thomas says, explaining how she, as a teenage mother in 1958, traded a job as a waitress for a career as a soul diva.

One night at New Orleans' Pimlico Club, Thomas put down her tray and jumped onstage with the Tommy Ridgley band, singing away. The club owners fired her. Ridgley hired her. And a series of hits—"Don't Mess with My Man," "Pain in My Heart," "Wish Someone Would Care," etc.—followed. Thirty years later she's still best known for 1964's "Time Is on My Side," which was copped by some limey band.

DAVID REDFERN/RETNA

"It wasn't my lifelong ambition to be in show business," Thomas explains, "but as a young parent I didn't have much choice. I had a talent that I could make a living with, which was fortunate."

But the hits stopped coming. Thomas left for Los Angeles and clerked in a Montgomery Ward to supplement her sparse bookings. She moved back to New Orleans in 1975. Since then, steady work, local recordings, stellar performances at the Jazz and Heritage Festival and a sweet, stormy voice that's only improved with time have earned her the appellation the Soul Queen of New Orleans and a deal with Rounder Records, which released its second fine Thomas album, *The Way I Feel*, earlier this year.

"I know that unless you're on a major label that's spending megabucks for promotion, you haven't got a snowball's chance in hell of getting a record played on radio," Thomas says stoically. "But I would like the public to know that I still have the ability to perform as a recording artist, so maybe they can hear my record and pass an opinion on it. People want to hear my old songs, so I don't object to doing them, but my records aren't oldies music."

– *Ted Drozdowski*

World Radio History

Spookie
From Skid Row to Broadway

He wears his hair in a six-inch pompadour. He's a street-corner musician who used to live on Skid Row. He's a soft-spoken mystery man who declines to give his real name.

If CBS Records' press department can't get some media play for Spookie, they ought to get out of the hype business. But serious, tough-minded music fan that *you* are, you demand to know if his music *deserves* media play. Well, put it like this: Spookie's sound is...interesting. And no, that's not a polite euphemism for terrible. Spookie's music just mixes so many ingredients: Broadway theatricality, Prince's falsetto, old rock and jazz rhythms...You'll love it to death. Or you'll hate it to pieces.

"That's sort of the way *I* am," Spookie says. "I'm not a middle-of-the-road type guy. It's either one way or the other."

Spookie's self-titled debut album is energetic, uneven, adventurous and occasionally disconcerting. One song alone—the single "Don't Walk Away"—alternately recalls the disparate likes of the late Van ("The Hustle") McCoy and Liza Minelli at her stagiest. "I try to dramatize things in my songs," Spookie says of the Minelli comparison. "I see my shows being a combination of acting and music. Not just a guy standing up there singing songs, but an actual story."

On the other hand, Spookie says nervous, rhythmic jumpers like "Cindy" and "Turn It Up" owe a debt to the likes of Elvis Presley and Cab Calloway. "I listened to that music and I read about those stars. I spent a lot of time in the library...The boogie-woogie that came out in the '40s and the bop beat—kick drum/snare. I combined them together. It's an irresistible feel. I call it the boogie-bop."

From Broadway excess and Van McCoy disco to "boogie-bop" and big band, Spookie's first album covers a lot of ground. "I'm not trying to satisfy a specific type of audience," he says. "I'm just talking about life the way I see it."

– *Leonard Pitts, Jr.*

Piggies

Test your Beatlemania: Wouldn't you pay $395 for *Songs by George Harrison*, a book of illustrated lyrics personally signed by artist Keith West and the Fab one himself? Sure you would—especially if you knew that it came with a recording of four previously unreleased Harrisongs. Genesis Publications Ltd. of Guildford, England even states that there will be no trade or paperback editions of the work. Wonder if they said the same when they published Harrison's autobiography for $428 in 1980—a year before Simon and Schuster reprinted it for $12.95. – *Scott Isler*

Semi-Twang
The Long, Long Entrance Ramp

Although Semi-Twang's Warner Bros. debut album, *Salty Tears*, has been in the record racks for two months, lead singer/guitarist/songwriter John Sieger doesn't feel like a major-label recording star. Drummer Bob Schneider is spending the day laying down concrete slabs, and last night an unscrupulous Minneapolis club owner pulled the plug on a scheduled gig. Topping it off, Sieger is still awaiting word as to whether the band will receive tour support. "There's all these ramps to get on the freeway," Sieger, 40, cracks caustically from his Milwaukee apartment, "but we can't seem to find them."

Given Sieger's background, it's hard to blame him for feeling a little antsy. Long before Firetown, the BoDeans and the Violent Femmes, there were the R&B Cadets, a Wisconsin soul-revival bar band that Sieger, raised in the factory town of Kenosha, co-founded in 1980. But after six years and one memorable album, Sieger grew restless. "It was a real good band, but I wasn't happy," he recalls. "It was still a revue, and I was getting frustrated. I had so much material."

Looking for an outlet for some of those "more country" songs, Sieger assembled an ad-hoc band (consisting of a few Cadets and EIEIO guitarist Michael Hoffman) for a demo and some one-off club dates. Stopping by one of those shows was fellow Wisconsinite and Talking Head Jerry Harrison, who liked the demo and passed it along to Warner Brothers. The result was a seven-record deal for the hastily named Semi-Twang, a friendship with Harrison (the two men would co-write "Rev It Up" on Harrison's *Casual Gods*) and the dissolution of the R&B Cadets.

Starting in late 1986, the band spent over a year on *Salty Tears*, working first with Chris Thomas, then Mitchell Froom (who produced the bulk of the record), and finally Harrison, who was hired by Warners to recapture the looser feel of the demos. ("The irony wasn't lost on me," Sieger notes dryly.) Though he worries that the album may sound a bit schizoid, Sieger feels comfortable with the finished product, which encompasses Fogertyesque ballads, rockabilly and grass-roots pop.

Despite the tour delays, studio nitpicking and other career snafus, Sieger says he is not a bitter man. "I obviously would have liked to have done this a little bit earlier, but I might have been the type of guy who would have blown it," he reflects. "I really do think things happen when they're supposed to."

– *David Browne*

PETER CUNNINGHAM GREG ALLEN

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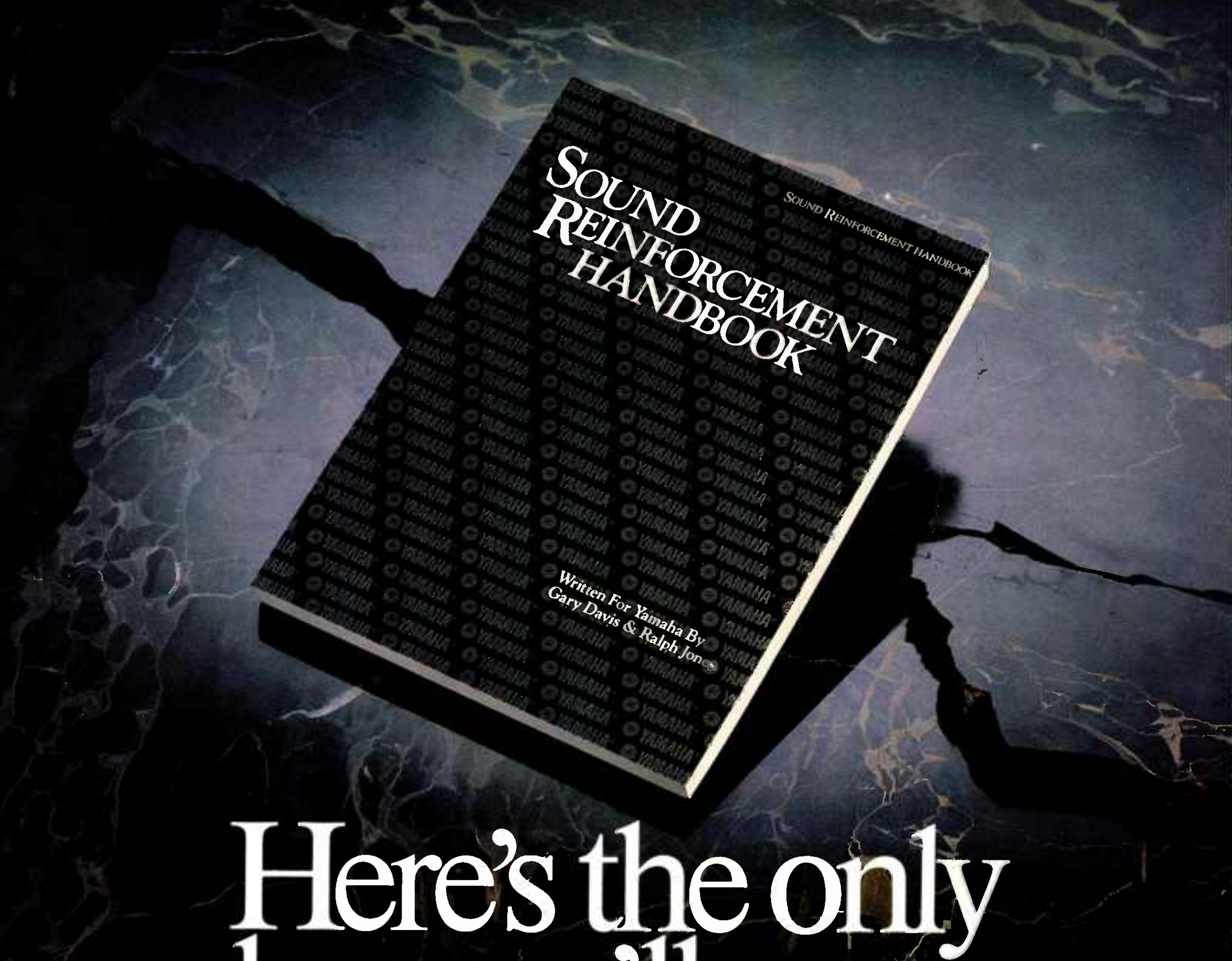

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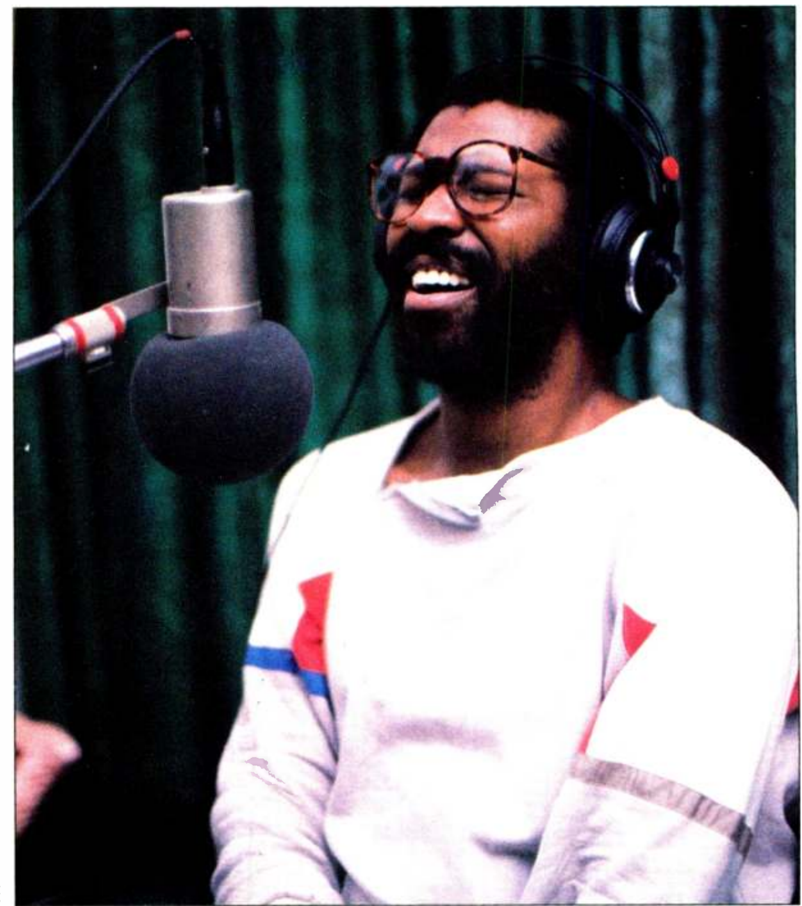
Teddy Pendergrass

by rory o'connor

Bringing the Human Touch to High-Tech Hits



SCOTT WEINER

W*ham!* Teddy Pendergrass whacks the side of his wheelchair with the palm of his left hand. "They only want to ask me about this!" he exclaims angrily, smashing once again against the unyielding stainless steel. His vehemence is convincing, but the sound of flesh meeting metal rings hollow and flat. "Like that damn Bryant Gumbel this morning," rails Pendergrass. "It's bad enough to get up to go on television at five o'clock...then they only want to ask about this thing! I want to talk about my *music*, and they want to ask about 'the accident,' and what it's like to live in a wheelchair and to be 'handicapped,'" he concludes with a final dismissive but still resounding slap at the chair.

Then, as if abruptly waking to my presence, Pendergrass' face softens. He welcomes me cordially to his Manhattan hotel suite, although an undercurrent of tension remains. When I announce that I'm intent on talking about music, Pendergrass brightens considerably. He's promoting *Joy*, his latest effort in a decade-long solo recording career that has taken him from the highs of three Grammy nominations and five successive platinum albums to the low of the crippling 1982 auto accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down and bound to the wheelchair he's been pounding since I arrived.

Once Teddy Pendergrass' moves were the focus, aided and abetted by his virile image as a macho-but-romantic leading man. His classic "For the Ladies Only" midnight shows were so hot that one "lady" actually shot another in a struggle for a towel the singer used to wipe sweat from his face. In addition to charisma by the carload, Pendergrass was blessed with a dusky, naturally smooth-and-sexy baritone that invited critical comparisons to such all-time greats as Otis Redding and Levi Stubbs.

Today, the moves are gone and the image is unclear. Only the voice remains—and the questions. As Pendergrass puts it, "There are no set rules to play by. The music hasn't changed, but the rules of how we play the game *have.*" Pendergrass has been playing the game since the mid-'60s, when he started out as a teenaged drummer backing up local Philadelphia doo-wop groups. That led to a stint in the rhythm section of a moderately successful soft-soul combo called Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes. By 1970, Pendergrass was asked to step out from behind his drum kit and to get up front as lead singer of the group. The next year, after the Blue Notes signed with Philadelphia International Records, the hits began coming fast, including such memorable million-sellers as "The Love I Lost" and "If You Don't Know Me by Now."

Pendergrass went solo with another million-seller, his 1977 debut album, and then made history by becoming the first black artist to score five straight platinum records. By the early '80s, he was America's number-one sexy soul man. But the 1982 accident, coupled with a second, less serious car crash in 1985, put both Pendergrass' career and his life on hold. Beyond the loss of the use of his legs, Pendergrass cannot raise his arms above chest level, and his hands cannot hold much weight.

Musically, he must become familiar with a new generation of players and technology, and personally, he must face up to the seemingly endless attention paid to his handicap. Of late, he has embraced both sets of challenges.

His most important musical breakthrough, he says, has been his growing knowledge and use of computerized MIDI technology, which Pendergrass credits with enabling him, despite his disability, to extend his musical control "from the highest highs to the deepest depths. MIDI is another language, and now I speak it. I was aware the technology was out there, but not that it could be adapted for me." A Pennsylvania state counselor named Dennis Turner showed Pendergrass how a relatively simple upgrading of his home computer could allow him to experiment with sound and composition. In an instant, Pendergrass was hooked.

"The music hasn't changed, but the rules of how we play the game have."

"MIDI gives me a greater, broader dimension for hands-on usage. It's be-

World Radio History

come a part of my life," he exults. "Now I can compete on a creative level with everyone else. MIDI is the way of the world in the recording studio today; at some point, MIDI must be part of your record. I use it both for creativity and to save money on recording costs."

For such ineffable extras as "personality," however, Pendergrass still relies on an old-fashioned, time-tested musical standby: humans.

"There's nothing like a human hand sliding down a fret, or a drummer playing a lick *just* off-center. It shows where the person behind the music is at. No *person* is perfect—I'm a prime example of that," he chuckles amiably. "But what you say and how you say it musically—the *feeling* you put into it—that's what makes an artist unique."

This insistent search for feeling and the human touch has been a hallmark of Teddy Pendergrass throughout his career, and there's ample evidence of it on *Joy*, which is bulleting its way up the charts. A more danceable, upbeat record than his last releases, *Working It Back* (1985) and *Love Language* (1984), *Joy* owes much of its success to the adroit combination of state-of-the-art studio techniques and "perfect" electronic dance grooves with the soulful sensitivity and sincerity of such "imperfect" humans as Pendergrass and his producers Reggie and Vincent Galloway and Miles Jaye.

"I think that I have an edge, frankly, because I can combine my natural creative side with the technical advantages of MIDI," Pendergrass explains. "Some people *only* have the technical side, but no creativity. That's why so much of today's music sounds like a computer."

In fact, for such an ardent MIDI convert, Pendergrass remains surprisingly wary of relying too much on technology. "The next generation might not even know where music comes from—the heart, not some computer chip," he warns, worrying that a healthy respect for "style, difference, your *signature*" can all too easily get lost in the mix of digital derring-do.

"Take sampling, for example. It's nice to be able to reproduce a sound as naturally as you can. It's not as stiff as a computer chip, because sampling means you can put a *real* sound into a computer and get it back. But artists are also getting ripped off by sampling. James Brown is on so many dance and rap records now, and he doesn't get any money for it! That's not 'appropriation'—that's *mis*-appropriation! There are more and more people in this business who don't have any creativity and talent—they just push buttons. They just write with a groove and a hook, to sell records. But I didn't get into this to play with computers. It shouldn't become the be-all and end-all. Now it's like you're only as good as the last sound you've 'appropriated.'"

On the other hand, he notes, "technology can also be the greatest thing in the world, if you can mix and balance talent and technique." He cites the work of Michael Jackson as a prime example. "It's the application that matters, not the technology. The objective is to take whatever technology is around and to make it work with whatever ability one has to create—and to make it work with respect. Technique can't *teach* you anything. Feeling can."

Gradually the conversation slips away from the recording side of the music business, and into performing. Once again, it's a subject fraught with tension for Pendergrass, for obvious reasons.

"Performing is an indescribable high," he begins. "It's also a craft, one that I worked at mastering for years. It goes beyond what you sing—to your mannerisms, the way you carry yourself,

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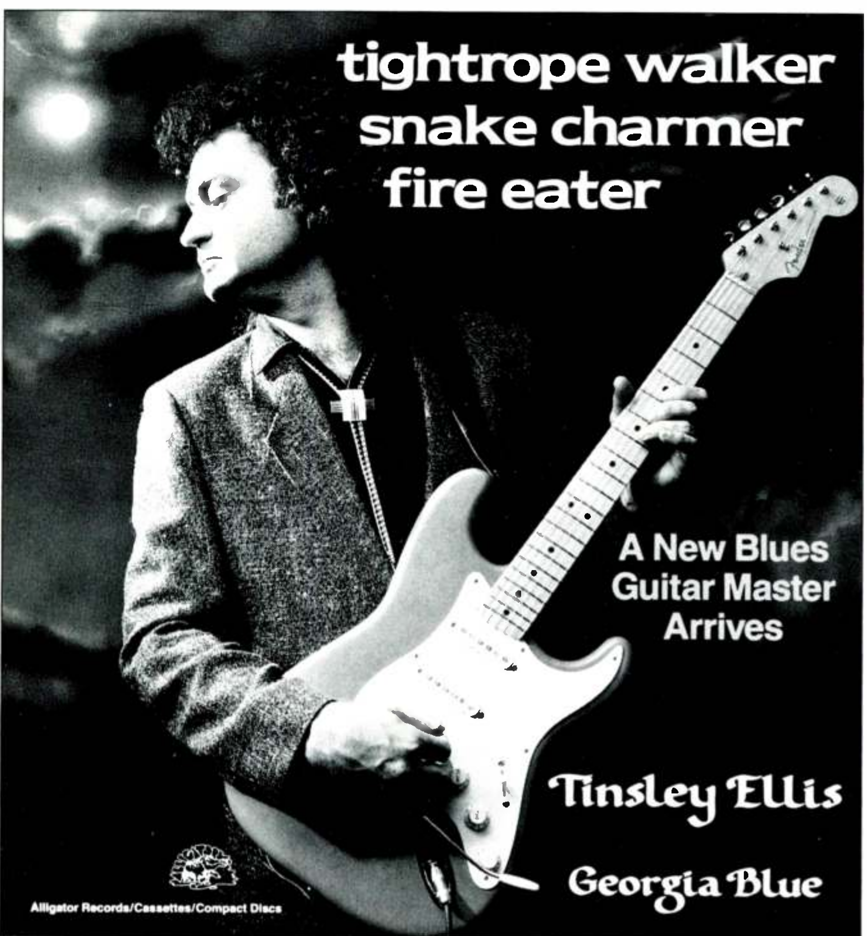

Kenny Neal is a child of the blues.

Raised in the laps of legends

The son of the blues harpist Raful Neal, Kenny grew up in the bayou country west of Baton Rouge. His playgrounds were the honky tonks his father played, his playmates men like Buddy Guy, Z.Z. Hill, Little Milton, Joe Simon and Lazy Lester.

He was given his first harmonica at the age of six by the legendary Slim Harpo.

As a youngster, he would climb to the piano during his dad's performances and do a James Brown act, sometimes going home with more money than members of the band. Often he'd wake up before the rest of the family, sneak out to the band's station wagon and teach himself guitar.

When he was 13, he began touring with his father's band. At 17, he joined Buddy Guy's band, playing with Guy for four years before returning to Baton Rouge to concentrate on a solo career.

Kenny Neal's debut album, "Big News From Baton Rouge!!," is available now on Alligator Records/Cassettes/Compact Discs.

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how you interpret a lyric, the way you move..."

That's why his return to performing after his accident was so traumatic. "I had nothing to go by," he recalls. "I just had a desire to find out exactly what the deal was going to be. To come back from a tragic incident like that? I felt like my whole life depended on it..."

Typically, Pendergrass decided to start again where he had left off—at the top. So in 1985 he returned to the stage—at Live-Aid. "I was so intense and keyed up, I felt like I had a basketball in my stomach," he says. "That whole day was Yes or No...How will you be perceived? Will you be accepted? It was a crucial moment...."

Having put himself to the test and passed, Pendergrass now feels paradoxically free to *not* perform onstage: "Now I don't have the pressure of not knowing." With *Joy* off to the fastest start of any record he's ever released, he may undertake a short tour under the right circumstances, or he may just head back to the studio. In the meantime, however, there's another public test he's volunteered for—that of advocate for the disabled. This year he's testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee for the handicapped and been profiled on "Nightline." Having first discussed his music, he's now prepared to address That Subject again—without anger, it seems, or pain: "Yes, I've gone public with my handicap this year. Because it's important—not just for me, but for so many others. Let's face it, I can do my thing, but the problem is much greater than me. I have money, but some people don't. And it's a disgrace that some people's minds are being wasted and their lives discarded, just because they *can't walk!* People want to put out bread to save fucking whales, but the country won't reinvest in *human* minds! So I did what I did to benefit all of us. We must make technology like the computer I use *accessible,* and not just available. So if I have the opportunity to use my celebrity in order to get some things done—and if that's all it takes—then put me out there every week!"

Pendergrass' nurse comes out to give him some soda through a straw, and says that it's time for his exercises. There are 37 million disabled people in America, 13 million of them severely disabled. I ask what he'd like to say to people who still look at him as a cripple. He replies evenly, "I think the real disability is in the mind and heart of anyone who views another human being as useless, simply because they're handicapped." M

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WILLIE DIXON

by peter guralnick

Producing a Legend: Lots of Ideas, Some of Them Good

CARL STUDNA

"Blues is the facts of life. Blues is the true facts of life—and they're expressed with words, inspiration, feeling, understanding, wisdom and knowledge. A poor man have no chance for justice, you know. That's why I write a lot of the kind of songs that I do: to explain the facts of life. All of my songs are actually message songs. 'I Just Want to Make Love to You'? Well, yeah, that's a message, too. That's a different kind of message, you see. Facts of life."

"Willie said one time if you've ever worked at something that's not going to happen, well then that's the blues, and that's true. Actually that's a pretty good description. In that sense I guess we've all experienced the blues."

The two speakers could not be more different. The first, blues composer Willie Dixon, garrulous, gargantuan, a man with the pure entrepreneurial spirit who has survived on his wits and his charm for 51 years now, since he first arrived in Chicago from Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1937 at the age of 21, will offer an opinion, or even a dissertation, at the drop of a hat. The second, 40-year-old Fort Worth native T-Bone Burnett, who has recently produced Elvis Costello, Los Lobos, the BoDeans and Roy Orbison, among others, is lean, lanky and almost consumed with self-consciousness. It seems almost painful sometimes for him to come out with what is really on his mind, and yet he does not lack a sure sense of himself, either. The two came together through the offices of Bug Music, a song-publishing firm which administers publishing for them both and which recently set up a label deal with Capitol Records, of which the new Willie Dixon album will be the first release. They are currently in their third day of recording, and there is some concern that things are not going altogether as they were intended.

P.T. Barnum of the blues: "a good, sweet, reasonable song is a different kind of thing."

Originally the idea was to record the session digitally, live to two-track with no overdubs in four working days. This was the way the blues was recorded in its heyday, and this, it was reasoned, was the way the blues was *meant* to be recorded, spontaneously capturing the moment. By the time that I arrive on the third day, that idea, like so many perfectly good theories throughout history (there may even be a blues about it), has been abandoned. Willie's voice is a little ragged, and he is going to have to overdub his vocals; the backing musicians, a seasoned and thoroughly empathetic group of professionals, are somewhat at musical odds, mostly because of the confusion arising from Willie's unending stream of new, and frequently contradictory, directives with regard to each song; the producer, whose manner suggests a thoroughly urban insecurity grafted onto the innocent aspect of a Hans Brinker with bangs, seems to be getting a little discouraged; and although the blues is often thought to be a simple music, the problems which these blues are creating have become exceedingly complex.

None of this, however, all of the participants hasten to assure each other, the crew from the "Today Show," plus assembled friends, family and visiting firemen, is to be taken as any cause for alarm. The situation is perfectly normal, it's just a little bit fucked up.

For Willie Dixon, who wrote, conducted, arranged, orchestrated and produced some of the biggest blues hits by singers like Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson and Willie Mabon at Chess Records' Chicago studios in the '50s and '60s, there certainly doesn't appear to be any reason to panic. Nothing seems to faze Willie, whose 300-plus pounds may have shrunk a little since a recent bout with

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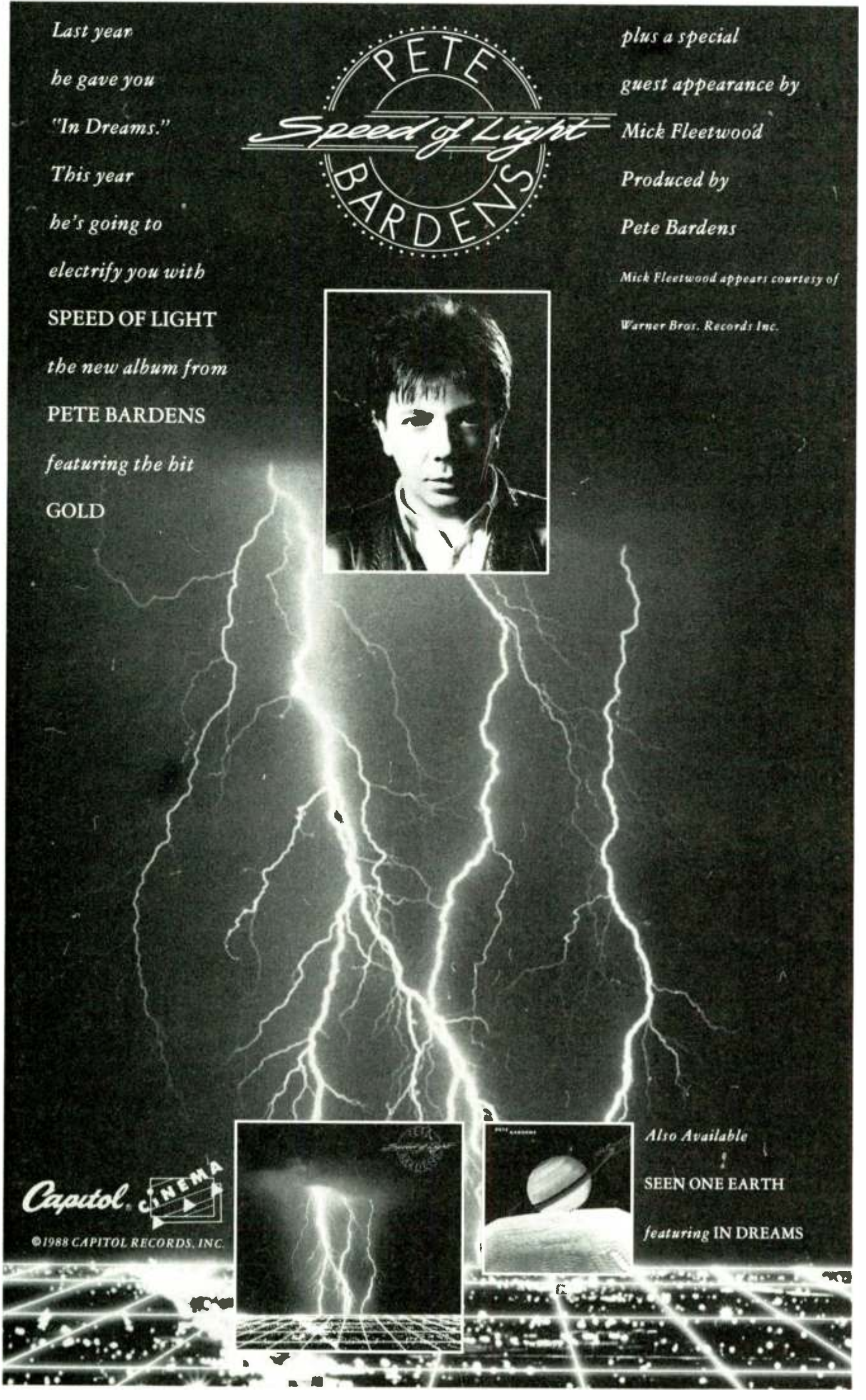
diabetes (his right leg has been amputated just below the knee, and he uses a cane to get around), but whose Barnum-like spirit is unquenchable. Never exactly a household name himself, Willie is more like a household product, with literally hundreds of his songs ("Hoochie Coochie Man," "Little Red Rooster," "Spoonful," "Seventh Son" and "I Can't Quit You, Baby," among others) familiar in one version or another by everyone from Otis Rush, Mose Allison and, of course, Muddy and Wolf to Cream, the Allman Brothers and Led Zeppelin. While he could never be described as self-effacing, Willie is not an impatient man either, and it has always been his contention that if it is your time it is your time—and if it is not, no one, and nothing, is going to force it.

T-Bone would probably subscribe to that philosophy. A conflicted Christian with a contemporary existential flair, he is a longtime admirer of Willie Dixon who once even started to write a song called "The Willie Dixon Story," which was intended to show how white America had ripped off its Afro-American heritage. The song never worked out, and I'm not sure that T-Bone would still subscribe to its simplistic, non-ironic premise (though he would never disavow the basic truth behind it), but the session eventually came about, not surprisingly, because Willie Dixon was as open to the idea of T-Bone Burnett, or someone *like* T-Bone Burnett, producing him (prior to the session, he was only passingly familiar with T-Bone's name, let alone his work) as T-Bone was to the idea of reclaiming a blues legend like Willie. In T-Bone's mind "this was an opportunity to do something a little bit different. I wanted to do some songs that we could really collaborate on and make something a little bit new." In Willie's mind this is what he has been doing all along. He has always tried to make blues with a difference, introducing three-part harmony and the popular song "bridge" to the blues, sometimes with success and sometimes with the effect of creating a novelty number that might sell. "People are always trying to brand blues as a 12-bar music. I was always against this because I felt, why should you brand something for one thing? In dealing with 12-bar music you could never get a chance to express everything or tell a complete story. And so I started putting introductions to these songs and also middles and changing ideas within it."

"Changing ideas within it" turned out to be the bugaboo of this particular session. As someone once said of Willie, "he has a lot of ideas, and some of them are good." The band which has been assembled for this session is admirably equipped to adapt, but even they express perplexity, albeit in respectful and somewhat muted fashion, at the fecundity of Willie's vision.

Three of the musicians come from one edition or another of Willie's last touring unit, the Chicago Blues All Stars. Guitarist Cash McCall, a 47-year-old native of Dundee, Mississippi, was a house musician at Chess in the '70s and is comfortable with everything from country and western to modern jazz. Harmonica player Sugar Blue, who was touted as the new hope of the blues not too long ago by the Rolling Stones and appeared on their 1978 album *Some Girls*, is at 38 the young Turk of the session, with his Jesse Jackson buttons, modified Afro and black beret. Finally, Lafayette Leake, one of the last surviving masters of the blues piano, who has been with Willie off and on ever since Willie first arrived at Chess in 1951, is absolutely imperturbable at the keyboard, fingering the keys even during playbacks as if he were imagining a counterpoint to his own lyrical solos, filling the big, high-ceilinged room with music at every break in the action. The rhythm section consists of transplanted New Orleans drummer



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Earl Palmer, who has anchored more sessions than anyone can count, from Little Richard's first Specialty sides to the 1985 Elvis Costello *King of America* sessions which T-Bone produced, and 71-year-old bassist Red Callender, another transplanted New Orleanean who arrived in L.A. with Eddie Heyward, Sr., on January 1, 1936 and had his first recording date with Louis Armstrong the following year.

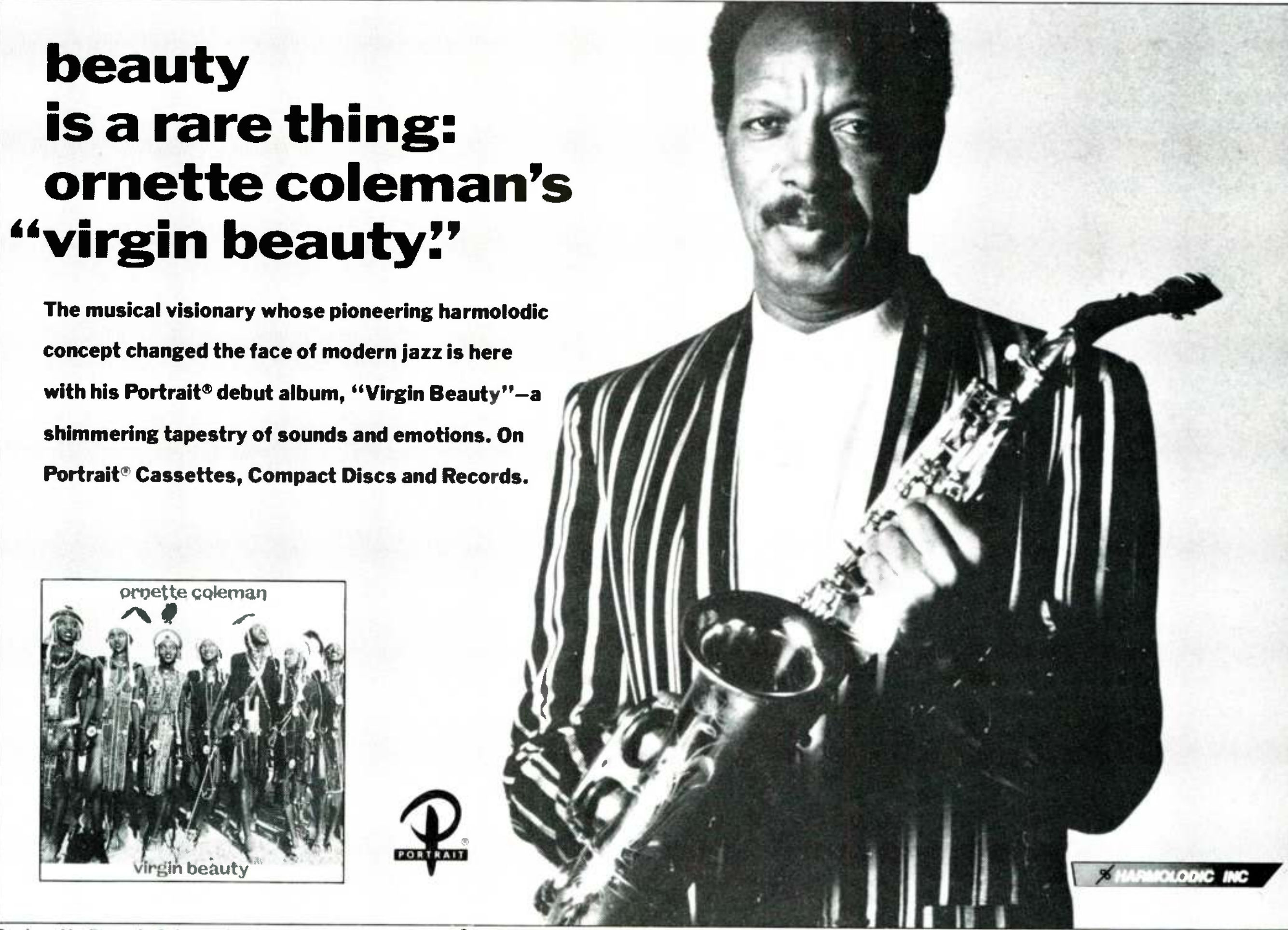
Although they have never played together as a unit, and each comes from a background considerably different from the others' (Earl Palmer started out as a six-year-old tap dancer on the black vaudeville circuit with his mother; Red Callender has played with the Honolulu Symphony as well as the NBC and CBS orchestras, while Sugar Blue grew up as James Whiting in Harlem and came up under the tutelage of the otherwise obscure Professor Six Million), they fall in with each other like old friends, perfectly fulfilling T-Bone's eclectic vision. They are patient with each other, and more than considerate of both artist and producer, but to a man they express their frustration in different ways. The talk is frequently of food and the environment, and the effect of each on the other; there are jokes to dispel the tension, and shared reminiscences of small-town black Southern life of another era. "People really cared back then," says Lafayette Leake in his quiet, confident voice, looking a little like a brown bespectacled Buddha in gray cap and earphones, grinning while everyone nods agreement. "Love is a caring, you know, but money eliminates caring." "That's right." "You can never go back to that time," declares Leake with finality.

"We just need to relax a little," T-Bone says more than once, sometimes conducting from the control room, sometimes joining in on a borrowed National steel guitar while bent over his headset in the studio. "It sounded a little nervous from time to time."

"You're even more laid back than the band," says the engineer, when everyone else is out of earshot.

"I don't consider that an indictment," says T-Bone, to whom the producer's principal role is "to support and encourage the artist, and to stay out of the way as much as possible." In fact, says T-Bone, listening intently to a playback and scratching his head, "I guess I consider it a badge of honor."

Finally, on the fourth day, it begins to come together. Some overdubs and a couple of tunes are quickly dispatched, and now at last, with everyone about to scatter in different directions (Earl Palmer has a couple more sessions scheduled before taking off for Brazil with Ray Conniff; T-Bone is just about to fly to Ireland to embark on Costello's new album) the feeling begins to seem right. From the first day of the sessions T-Bone has had it in mind to cut some sides informally, with just Willie and Lafayette Leake ("like two old running partners, you know") and perhaps Red Callender's bass joining them. That idea never quite comes together, but now for the first time it seems appropriate to try something along those lines, and Willie and T-Bone together come up with the idea of doing a new version of Willie's classic "Don't Mess with the Messer" with strictly acoustic instrumentation. Willie hoists himself up wearily on a stool beside the piano to rehearse, and Cash picks up the silver-bodied National guitar. Cash and Leake confer on a progression, and someone asks Willie how many verses the song has. "How many you want?" "All of 'em, Will." "Oh well, then, we could be here all week." As the song develops, it somehow trans-



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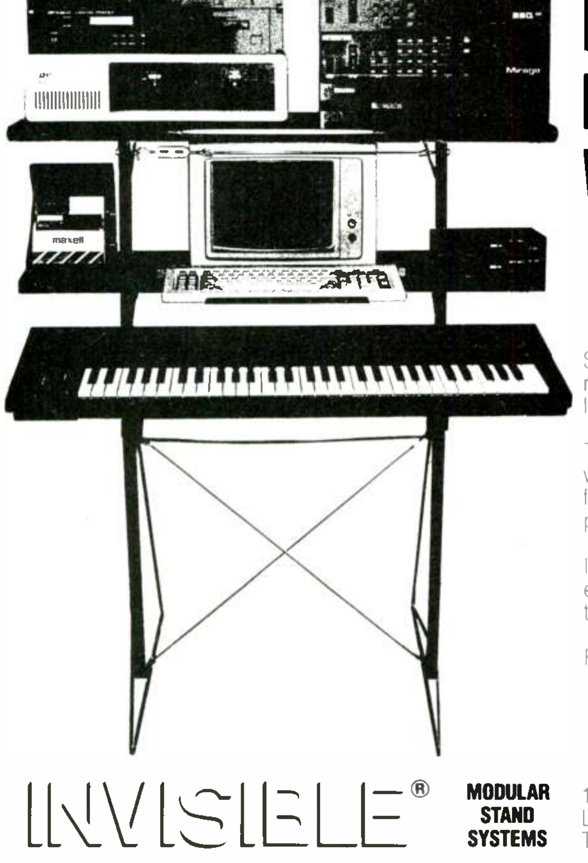

mutes into a kind of country blues, of the sort that Willie Dixon might have heard from black *or* white sources in Vicksburg, Mississippi, over 60 years ago. "That's beautiful, Leake," says Willie. "You playing harmony with it. Man, that's nice." "There's a lot of ways you can do it," says Leake, grinning shyly. "Hey, Will," says Cash, "Louis told me to ask you to do that whistle, you know, where you got two notes going at once." Willie pushes his black horn-rimmed glasses back on his head and does it, to everyone's gratification, while Leake keeps on playing. "We need more of that bass ambience," says Cash, pretending to be the kind of producer that T-Bone is not. "Red, listen to that chord," says Earl Palmer to his rhythm mate. "Don't that sound like Basie? You can tell that man's heard more than just the blues."

Finally Willie goes back into the isolation booth to try a take. The results are charming, but they could never be quite as charming as the informal scene that has developed like a grainy, slightly out-of-focus photograph. "Man, that's really country, Will," someone says, listening to the playback. "It's all country," mutters Willie, "one country or another." "I feel just like Minnie Pearl," says Cash. "I'm just so damn proud to be here."

Goodbyes are not much different than goodbyes ever are after something has been shared. Everyone exchanges phone numbers and addresses and promises to keep in touch. Leake meanwhile concentrates on his dinner, the same medium hamburger he has consumed at every other meal; he believes in "keeping up with a regular routine of meals," a statement which draws a good deal of teasing. There are still overdubs to do, and while no one ever really knows how a record is going to turn out, there is a good feeling in the air.

"I believe in writing songs that are different from what the average person who is writing or singing out there is doing," says Willie in an expansive mood. "Right now everybody has that push-push style, everybody has that thing in their mind that when you go up to sing, you've got to come up preaching, or hollering and screaming and all that kind of stuff. But a good sweet reasonable song is a different kind of thing. And I believe what the world is looking for today is a more understanding thing. I think the world would really appreciate something different."

"I had a very difficult upbringing," says T-Bone, in response to a question about something else, "which I think gave me in one sense the sensitivity

continued on page 115

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Backstage at the Summer's Loudest Crunchfest

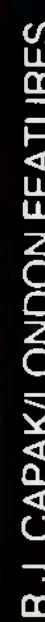
The Brain Machine is a little black box for the nirvana-bound. And Herman Rarebell, drummer for the Scorpions, has just bought one.

"This machine is really amazing, you guys. You have to try it," he bubbles as his fellow arachnids assemble in the Hilton's lobby to make today's gig, the first of two shows at the University of Akron's Rubber Bowl as part of Van Halen's Monsters of Rock tour. "All you do is put on these glasses and headphones, and you're tripping. No drugs or chemicals, and when you shut it off, that's it. It's over."

D.E. Gorges, the Brain Machine's portly, bearded inventor, steps in: "And it's completely safe and non-addictive. A lot of people have them. Sammy's got one, and Eddie, and Bobby Weir from the Grateful Dead. We're trying to get Nancy Reagan to do an endorsement."

Whoa there. Nancy Reagan? This is rock 'n' roll, right?

Sure. But rock 'n' roll—or at least its lifestyle—has changed. Ten years ago a hard-rock tour like this, Van Halen, the Scorpions, Dokken, Metallica and Kingdom Come plowing across America for two months in 30 cities, would have left dizzying tales of swashbuckling de-


R.J. CAPAK/LONDON FEATURES

by Ted Drozdowski

World Radio History

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Van Halen and Hagar: "We do what we want and screw everything else. That's why we got into this."

bauchery in its wake. But this is the '80s, baby. Eddie and Alex Van Halen are on the wagon. Scorpions lead guitarist Matthias Jabs jokes that "groupies are only accepted with AIDS tests being 45 minutes old." And nearly everyone, even rude-boy-savant Sammy Hagar, says they need their beauty sleep.

Hardly monstrous behavior, but as the 40,000-odd fans who come to Akron for the nine-hour show's two-day stay will see, these Monsters earn their fangs onstage. Like good vaudeville, there's something for everyone: Pure headbangers can submerge in the wallop of volume kicked out by the monolithic 250,000-watt p.a.; fans of tough pop can hear Van Halen, the Scorpions and Kingdom Come deliver their hits; and for guitar lovers, well, it's sort of like the Brain Machine—an electric nirvana of power licks and pyrotechnics, with no worse side-effect than a healthy ringing in the ears.

For the guitarists—the Scorpions' Jabs and Rudolf Schenker, Dokken's George Lynch, Metallica's Kirk Hammett and James Hetfield, Kingdom Come's Danny Stag and Rick Steier, and, of course, Eddie—it's one of the toughest gigs they'll ever play. Not only because they'll be performing for as many as 1.7 million demanding, sunburnt fans. But because they're also playing for each other.

"I really thrive on this," says Dokken's Lynch. "When we were coming up in L.A., there were all these great bands and great players. It gives you a kick in the butt to practice harder and play better. I like that competitive thing, and we've got that on this tour.

"Of course if I was dying out there I wouldn't think it was so great... Which for the first few shows I was, man. I was playing fine, but doing really stupid things: tripping over my cords and pulling them out. I went to change guitars and forgot to plug in—in front of 40,000 people. And when we went on in Miami, it rained only on us. It's like 90 degrees, right, and a big black cloud rolls over and drops the size of watermelons start falling all over the stage. There I am trailing 300 feet of cable, standing in a puddle playing. The stage hands came out and made me wear fishing waders. So I'm onstage with no shirt, my guitar and a pair of waders that go up to my chest."

Kingdom Come lead guitarist Danny Stag has had his own problems, which he relates to the Scorpions' Jabs late one night in the bar at the Hilton, where most of the bands are staying. Stag laments that he's traveling sans practice amp, and that "the guy from Marshall said he'd bring me one a week ago." He mentions that his new wireless system has been picking up airport control towers, and adds that the monitor mix is sometimes so thick that it's impossible to hear what's he's playing: "I just figure, this is the way I've done it 400 times before, so I just go for it." Jabs the elder statesman nods soberly, suggests shielding for the wireless and tisk-tisks over the lack of time for soundchecks. Stag compliments Jabs' lush guitar tone, Jabs graciously accepts, modestly ascribes much of the credit to guitar tech Dave Davies, and starts describing the virtues of his new, ultra-fast switching system. "You step on something and the sound is there in milliseconds. It's great. Before I'd have to wait, like, a half-second and then it was, 'Okay, I can start my solo now.'"

Pretty sedate compared to the Holiday Inn, where the bar's lined with roadies, a handful of groupies and a few wide-eyed businessmen who look as if they've just stepped into *The Wild One*. Two important distinctions between the afterhours behavior of players and roadies become apparent. The players do not take six-packs back to their rooms. They use room service. And the players are too smart, or maybe too scared, to sleep with groupies. The roadies, on the other hand, have instituted a sort of underground railway that carries women from the stadium via the crew buses, and smuggles them into the hotel through the parking garage and back entrance. Good luck in seven years, guys and gals. Other than that, the most potential for salacious activity on the tour is in a rumored rider in Van Halen's contract that requires a "fluffer" backstage at every venue. For the uninitiated, a fluffer is a young lady found on film sets whose duty is to keep male pornographic thespians well prepared for any on-camera situation that may arise. Now *that's* rock 'n' roll.

So if it's Thursday, this must be Akron, Ohio. The buildings are brown; the sky is gray. There's a heat wave and a drought. In short, Akron is the kind of place that lets Pittsburgh live up to its handle of America's Most Livable City. The scene for the next two days of guitar gladiatorials is the 48-year-old Rubber Bowl, a typically collegiate concrete and steel shell with peeling paint, too-few toilets and not enough shade. The Rubber

Metallica's Hammett: "We try locking into a groove and pushing it into everyone's faces."

RIK SINS EBET ROBERTS

World Radio History

Bowl's charms are exceeded only by those of its location—it's equidistant from the municipal airport, Derby Downs, the home of the Soapbox Derby, and the old Goodyear blimp hangar, a mammoth quonset hut large enough for 20 simultaneous football games that's blessed with its own rainforest climate. In a lavatory-sized locker room backstage at the Rubber Bowl, Lenny Wolf is pissed. The lead singer of Kingdom Come is getting ready for his band's opening set, and he's just been handed the July issue of *Musician*, in which Jimmy Page calls Wolf's group Kingdom Clone and disputes Danny Stag's reported claim that he's never heard Led Zeppelin.

"You know what really bothers me about this? That we keep justifying our album," he begins. "Why doesn't [Page] get his fucking messed-up head straightened out. Besides, he didn't invent the blues. So he should just really be cool about things. He should just remember that he got his ass sued [by Willie Dixon], so why doesn't he just cool his jets a little.

"Ah," Wolf shrugs, "I'm just starting to get a little pissed at these smart-asses, that's all." And apologizes for his tone.

And Danny Stag? He blames Page's remark on *Kerrang!*, the metal fanzine. "I told them he's not one of my bigger influences, and they quoted me as saying he's not even an influence. Sure he influenced me a bit, back when *Led Zeppelin I* and *II* were out. But I was way more into Hendrix. I wouldn't have mentioned Page and Hendrix in the same breath." Stag, who's 31 and hails from America's Most Livable City, also says that the Zep talk will stop after the band's next album.

"Whether it's Aerosmith having a Rolling Stones touch to their music, or us having a Led Zeppelin touch to ours, that's just the way it is," Wolf contends. "I didn't do the album to piss people off. I did it because that's what my musical taste is like. You can listen to the first Stone Fury album [on MCA] from five years ago, and I sound exactly like I sound today." (Those who appreciate irony, however, should note that Kingdom Come's tour publicist, Ginny Buckley, got her first job in the music business in Peter Grant's organization, working for Led Zeppelin.)

Wolf maintains that the toughest thing about the Monsters tour is Kingdom Come's 1:30 showtime. "It's very, very hard for me to sing at this time, because we have to get up at 10 a.m. instead of the usual 12 or 1 p.m., have breakfast and then come here and scream our brains out. It's, like, against our rules. My voice is just not loose before 5 or 6 o'clock. How can I explain it?"

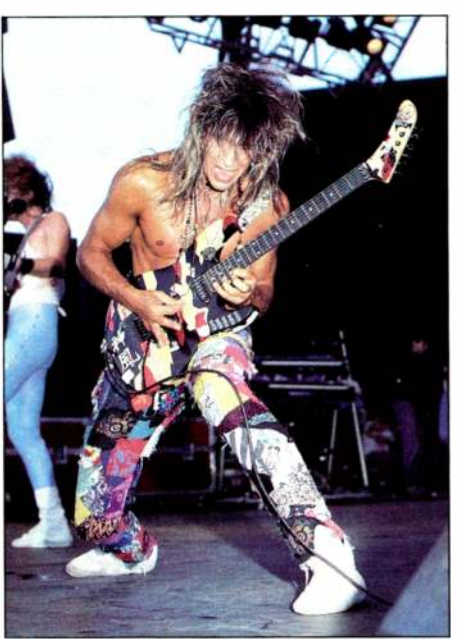
"Monster lag," Stag quips.

"So I have to sleep enough," Wolf continues. "Eight hours is the least. I stay away from air conditioning; it's the worst for you. I have lots of tea; fortunately I love tea. I don't drink, don't do drugs and don't smoke." Ah, these decadent rockers.

As the conversation continues, Wolf suddenly becomes irritated with the unamplified picking of Stag, who's warming up to his right. Wolf's hand shoots out to grab and silence Stag's Les Paul. Stag looks angry, then hurt, then starts picking again. Despite this, Wolf doesn't seem to be half the shit he's rumored to be. Yeah, he's got an ego. After all, he's 26 and he's the singer, songwriter, leader and frontman of a near-platinum-selling arena rock band. Ego's a job requirement. But he's also been under a lot of pressure, and not just from critics. After all, Kingdom Come played its first show just three months earlier, and now they're in front of 70,000 people on a good day.

Danny Stag feels the heat as well: "Actually, there's a little bit of pressure on me because I'm up there with these guys, like Matthias and Eddie. But I have my own style. Sometimes I wish I had more time, though, because my solos are the same length as they are on the album. I play rhythm and solo, rhythm and solo; whereas Eddie, for instance, really plays for two hours. By the end of those two hours, he's put the most difficult things in there and he's just burnin'. I'd like to have that kind of time to settle in and show what I could do, too."

Still, Stag proves he's a skillful player in Kingdom Come's set. It's all blues, and heavy blues at that. Which, along with his brittle arpeggios and phrasing on songs like "17," makes the Page comparisons unavoidable. But there's plenty of Hendrix in his tone, too, and he even tosses a brief quote from "Red House" into "What Love Can Be." Wolf's no Plant, though, despite his melismas and stuttering. Plant's captivating stage presence embodied the seductive mystery and majesty of Zeppelin's music, and Wolf's bouncy, fist-pumping good-timer's persona is like his songs, too. You can take 'em or leave 'em.



Dokken's Lynch: "My fingers just go for it."

Scorpions' Jabs: "Every little part I play is important."

MARK WEISS/MWA   RALPH P FITZGERALD/LGI

Not so with Metallica. One either embraces their music or is repulsed by it, and for the same reasons. They deliver hair-raising sets in Akron, second only to Van Halen's in power and unbeatable for their conviction. James Hetfield sings about chaos, destruction and the horrible consequences of misdeeds and unpardonable actions, looking like a lunatic mountain prophet who's stumbled down to civilization with his guitar and a gospel whose message is "THINK." Drummer Lars Ulrich and bassist Jason Newsted drive the band like a steam locomotive with mismatched gears—jerking, stopping, then lurching ahead sideways at frenetic speeds. And guitarist Kirk Hammett, who looks like yer typically long-haired, downhome S.F. Bay Area thrash-metal kid, simply burns. His chord choices enhance and challenge the rhythmic bedrock, his leads are fleet and melodic, yet never overplayed.

The audience reacts to Metallica with raised fists and cheers as electronic nirvana sets in. But then a sort of human volleyball game starts. People are randomly lifted above the

World Radio History

heads of the crowd and passed along to the front of the stage, where the point men try to shoot them over the security guards, who, in turn, toss them back. Nonetheless, Hammett is sure the real fans are hearing the message.

"I think we demand a certain amount of attention that appeals to a certain type of fan," Hammett says after the set. "For some reason, we tend to inspire real fanaticism. They really take us seriously. With our stuff, you either like it or hate it, but you'll always react to it. What we try to do is form one solid voice, one solid machine locking into a groove and pushing it over the edge into everyone's faces.

"Usually what I try to do is fit in harmonically and melodically. I'm not the kind of guitar player that wants to show off or see how many notes I can cram into 12 bars. I might play something really fast, but it still has to be really melodic. I mean, I can do the sweep arpeggios and hammer-ons and stuff until I turn blue," he chuckles, "but that doesn't fit in with what we're about."

When the Monsters tour started in late May, Hetfield and Ulrich were flying back to the studio between shows, finishing Metallica's new *...And Justice for All.* Hammett spent some of that time getting to know the tour's other players. "I really dig lots of other guitar players," he explains, "even though it wouldn't seem that I would. Everyone has something to offer as a guitar player, and I'm always looking for ways to improve. I stick my nose in a lot of magazines and try to pick things up here and there." He's also taken a handful of lessons from Bay Area neighbor Joe Satriani over the past five years.

Kingdom Come's Stag: "I wish I had more time to settle in and show what I could do."

Fortunately, Hammett hasn't picked up other metal guitarists' bad habits, which makes him a player to watch. "I prefer to use certain guitar techniques as effects, rather than an important facet of my playing," he says. "On the new album I use the whammy bar mostly as an effect. Many guitar players use it as a passing thing, for no real reason. Hammering, too. When I'm going to a wah-pedal, for example, I use a little hammering for the transition. The way I learned to approach techniques like that was from listening to an Ozzie album, I think it was *Diary of a Madman,* where keyboards were used, but only as an effect. I adapted my approach from that."

When Hammett emigrated from the Bay Area speed-rock band Exodus, he also had to adapt his playing to Hetfield's offbeat progressions. "That took me a while, because there are so many dynamics, a lot of stops and starts in the rhythm. It's still a challenge. On this new album I had some of my most difficult times with that sort of situation. Things like key changes that come at the same time you move into 5/8, or something like that. Although after you've done it so long, you learn how to approach it."

One of the guitar players Hammett's been hanging with is George Lynch. Coincidentally, Metallica and Dokken share the same management, and today they are sharing a dressing room that's usually the University of Akron team's locker room. Dokken is a strange band. They've managed to survive on the arena rock circuit for four years without a hit album or single. That's a real compliment to their hard road work, but it also draws attention to their one debilitating flaw: lousy songs.

Luckily, they have Lynch, a deft metalist whose instrumental solo, "Mr. Scary," has become an incendiary high of the Monsters shows. Lynch keeps 'em bangin' in the back of the stadium as he tears through a virtual textbook of speed runs, tonal gymnastics, overdriven sustain, whammy wiggling and sheer caterwaul, all built on a sinister riff. Lynch should be proud of "Mr. Scary." Playing this intoxicating could make the Brain Machine obsolete. But right now he's pissed, because he's been asked if Dokken's breaking up, a persistent rumor.

"It's a fucking old story, man," he bristles. "There's no problem. We get along as well as any other band. People who hang around with us for a day or two realize, after there aren't any fistfights or anything, how well we get along. I'm surprised that rumor's still around." Which means a two-record Dokken set cut live in Japan actually *will* be coming out in October. And means it's time to talk about something else, like guitar playing. Pronto.

Lynch explains that "Mr. Scary," which appears on *Back for the Attack,* evolved from jamming. "It was just a riff that we used to fuck around with at soundcheck that kind of evolved in the studio. The three of us"—Lynch, bassist Jeff Pilson and drummer Mick Brown—"decided to put some chords between this riff, and that's basically how it started. Then when it came time to add the guitars, I just sat down and put stuff on top of it. It's heavily layered." But live it's all Lynch, no Memorex. "I just rely on how it feels onstage. My fingers just go for it. There's no way to do harmonies or lay down the clean parts, but I think it works pretty well."

Is it hard for Lynch, who has a reputation for being a studio perfectionist, to perform without soundchecks? "Soundcheck?" he replies, chuckling. "What's that? Everybody got one the day before the first show and we've had one other since. The soundcheck is our show. Van Halen has different monitors, which they wheel back. But as long as I can hear the p.a., I don't care. If I'm hearing too much in the monitors, I step back. If I'm hearing too much from the back, I'll go to the side. I'll just find the spot where I'll hear enough ambience to play comfortably."

Lynch mentions that "the whole backstage scene has mellowed out considerably in the last year." He says the danger of AIDS, the subject of Dokken's song "Kiss of Death," has "really affected a lot of bands—all bands. Drugs, partying, all that stuff. It's cut way back, which is good for the music."

But he still knows how to get his kicks. When Dokken opened for Aerosmith in New Orleans this spring, he donned a halo and wings, suspended himself from a lighting truss, and dropped feathers on Steven Tyler's head while Aerosmith performed "Angel." "The thing is, I got stuck up there," he says. "For the first song, it was funny. Second song, it was like, alright... Third song. *Get me down!* I thought they'd left me up there on purpose. Turns out I'd twisted myself in the rope. I had to swing over to the truss, climb out of the harness, straighten the rope and get back in the harness—40 feet up. Then when I let go, the rope was at an angle. I started slammin' against this lighting pod. Scary."

So's the Akron heat. It's 97 in the belly of the Bowl, but 112 onstage when the Scorpions start to play—even hotter than it was in Buffalo three days before when a Flying V shot from Rudolf Schenker's sweat-lubed hands and split in two as it hit the stage. (That'll teach him to twirl the damn thing over his

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head.) The songs are predictable crowd-pleasers like "Big City Nights" and "Rhythm of Love," which, given the heat, the band blasts out with surprising authority and style. Matthias Jabs even exhumes an old talk box for one of his solos, and he and Schenker are sweating torrents as they go through their unison leaps and splay-legged guitar heroics.

Thick-necked security guards with names like Johnny, Mike and Boris keep a cool spray of water trained on the fans, who maintain fist-waving enthusiasm until a power glitch knocks out everything but the microphones. Meine, still reeling with the spirit of glasnost from the Scorps' recent Soviet tour, tries leading the masses in a Russian-language singalong of "Volga Boatmen." Booing starts, but the juice mercifully returns and Schenker's heavy chords reignite things.

The search for the ultimate hard pop buzz hasn't been easy for the Scorps, despite their '80s success. Their 1984 album *Love at First Sting* got yanked from Wal-Mart stores for its Helmut Newton cover shot of a greasy biker tattooing a woman's thigh. Lyrics like "The bitch is hungry/ She needs to tell/ So give her inches/ And feed her well" give the PMRC fits. And critics have slammed the West German band's live show—a polished whammy of note-perfect hits, flamboyant costumes and lighting, and aerobic moves that often culminate in a guitar-playing human pyramid—as arena rock Las Vegas-style. Bullshit, the Scorps reply. It's only rock 'n' roll, the way they like it.

Scorpions' Schenker: A Teutonic Tarzan who wants his buttons "pushed."

"When I go to concerts, I like it when my button is pushed. I like it when I see something exciting," says Schenker. "When I saw Bob Dylan in Hanover it was like a graveyard. He didn't even switch on the footlights because he didn't want to get too much light in his face. I didn't feel like he cared if we were there. After 20 minutes I said, 'Okay, let's go eat.'"

"The way the band moves onstage may look like choreography, and in a way it is," explains Jabs, the baby of the group at 31. "But originally every single move was done spontaneously. Certain things you keep, because people like them."

Singer Klaus Meine continues: "We do have the big lights, and obviously when you have the five of us guys doing a pyramid onstage, you have to have a plan for this stuff. But we're entertainers; we want to give people a good time."

Inevitably, the conversation drifts to sex and songwriting. "Sex and rock 'n' roll have always been very close together," says Meine the traditionalist. "Everything we describe, a big part of it is sexual. When you go onstage there's this kind of feeling for the kids and for the bands. There's a lot of sexual energy involved. This music is not played from the head, it's played from here [*touches his chest*] and here [*ditto his groin*].

"A lot of it has to do with our lifestyle on the road. Some of the stuff is pure fantasy. Some people write about fighting the dragons at the castle, and the moon and the rainbow. We write, well, the wolf is hungry and give the bitch whatever."

What about those album covers displaying women with stingers, tattoos, dobermans and bubble-gummed breasts? "We're only interested in the cover as art and how it goes with the music," says Meine. "Especially the *Love at First Sting* cover," adds Jabs. "It has sexuality, but also class and style."

Schenker, who resembles a Teutonic Tarzan, points out that "we're from Europe, and European people handle sexuality much more openly than here. But as a band, we don't think, 'Oh, let's go for some sex,' because sex won't sell the album. The songs will." And they do. With a number seven LP (*Savage Amusement*) at the time of the Akron shows, there's no denying their chart track record or their way with good strong hooks, memorable riffs and soaring melodies, all delivered with a, um, stinging twin-guitar attack.

The songs usually start with Schenker and a Flying V. When inspiration hits on the road, he'll open his Maxwell Smart guitar case, which conceals an axe, a Fostex four-track and a headphone amp. "When we hear Rudolf's new songs, it's usually just the basic structure," Jabs relates. "Sometimes a riff is there, but not always the one we'll play on the album. Always the singer has to be comfortable first. That's the main focus. But once the band has decided to rehearse these songs, we'll develop a selection of 20 when we're planning to put nine or 10 on an album. As we get ready to record them, new things are always coming up: riffs to add, melody lines, the leads. So we keep reworking the arrangements.

"I rehearse in general before we do an album, so I know that I can play any ideas I have. Before I play my parts I try to catch

So **Eddie**, what are you playing these days? "Same shit," he says, meaning his motley Kramer and a similarly painted Steinberger with a TransTrem whammy. His signal flies through a Sony wireless to a 100-watt Marshall head for starters. Then, via a Rane mixer, it rides dry or through any combination of two Roland SDE 3000s, a Lexicon PCM-70, a pair of Eventide Harmonizers and a Rocktron Exciter/Imager and compressor. Next it's on to an H&H V800 power amp and out to a bank of Marshall cabs with 30-watt Celestion speakers.

When **George Lynch** got to Akron, he "went into a rehearsal space and played catch-up with a lot of gear I hadn't had a chance to try for two years. I had this huge list of stuff, so I set it up in this big room and A-B'ed everything. And I ended up going back to one head, one cabinet and a Boss Overdrive pedal for leads. That's it." That head is an old 100-watt Marshall, modified and carrying KT 77 tubes. The cabinet? Also vintage Marshall.

Lynch plays custom ESPs, all Strat-styled, with Seymour Duncan pickups, jumbo frets and extra-large bodies of koa or heavy maple. But he's still got a crush on the instrument he made from a body Wayne Charvel sold him for $20. It has an ESP neck, a Floyd Rose stock tremolo, Duncan pickups and tiger stripes.

Metallica's **Kirk Hammett** collects old monster toys, and he's ready to make vintage guitars his next hobby. Until then, his most pampered axes are a '74 Gibson Flying V with EMG pickups and his beloved Hamstercaster, a personally-Frankensteined Fernandes Strat copy with EMGs, a custom neck and a locking tremolo. Onstage, he uses exact replicas of the V and Hamstercaster, which Fernandes made especially for him. He also uses a black Jackson. His effects, controlled by a MIDI-run pedal board, include a Yamaha SPX90, a Roland DEP-5, a dbx noisegate, an Ibanez Tube Screamer for leads and a Jim Dunlop Cry Baby. He packs that through Mesa Boogie power amps and amps (with 100 watts per head), and out two stacks of Mesa Boogie cabinets.

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the vibe of a song. Certain melodies are there because of vocal lines and the way chords change. Every little solo, every intro melody, every chord variation I do, to me, is very important. If somebody turns on the radio during my solo, I don't want them to go, 'Oh, whatever is this?'

"Our arrangements are well-structured, so there is not a lot of room to improvise," he continues, explaining why the Scorpions stick so closely to their platinum guns onstage. "I could change the leads a bit, but why should I change the melody in a song like 'No One Like You,' because everyone wants to hear the song they hear on the record. No band really takes too many chances nowadays, because you want to put on the best show that you can."

Well after the Scorpions have proven their metal onstage, Rudolf Schenker is still sweating profusely in his red leather pants and boots. "Hot. Hot. Unbelievable hot," he says, slurping Gatorade and toweling his forehead as well-wishers begin filing into the tepid dressing room. These include Jane Scott, a.k.a. The World's Oldest Teenager and the *Cleveland*

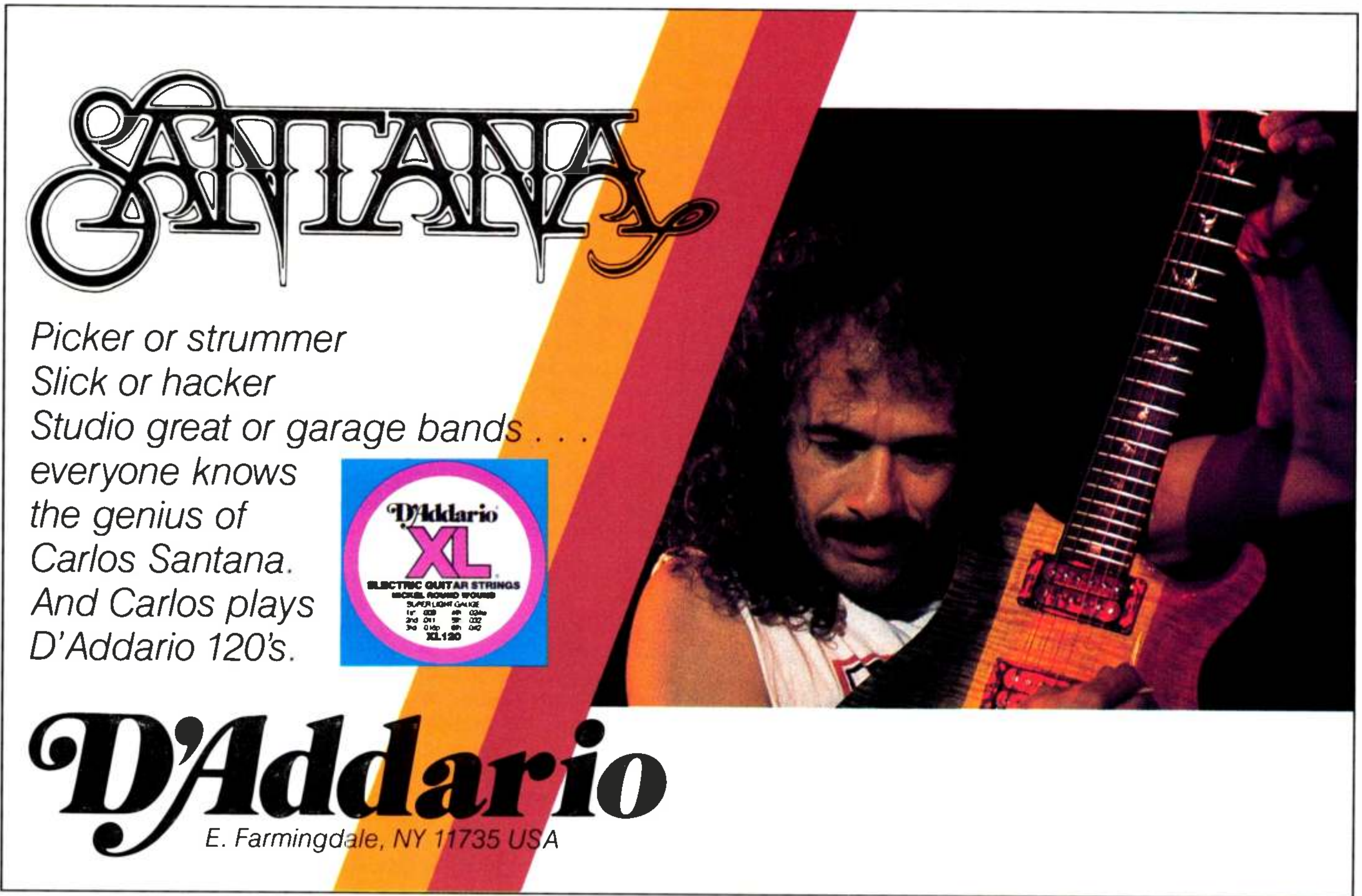
continued on page 66

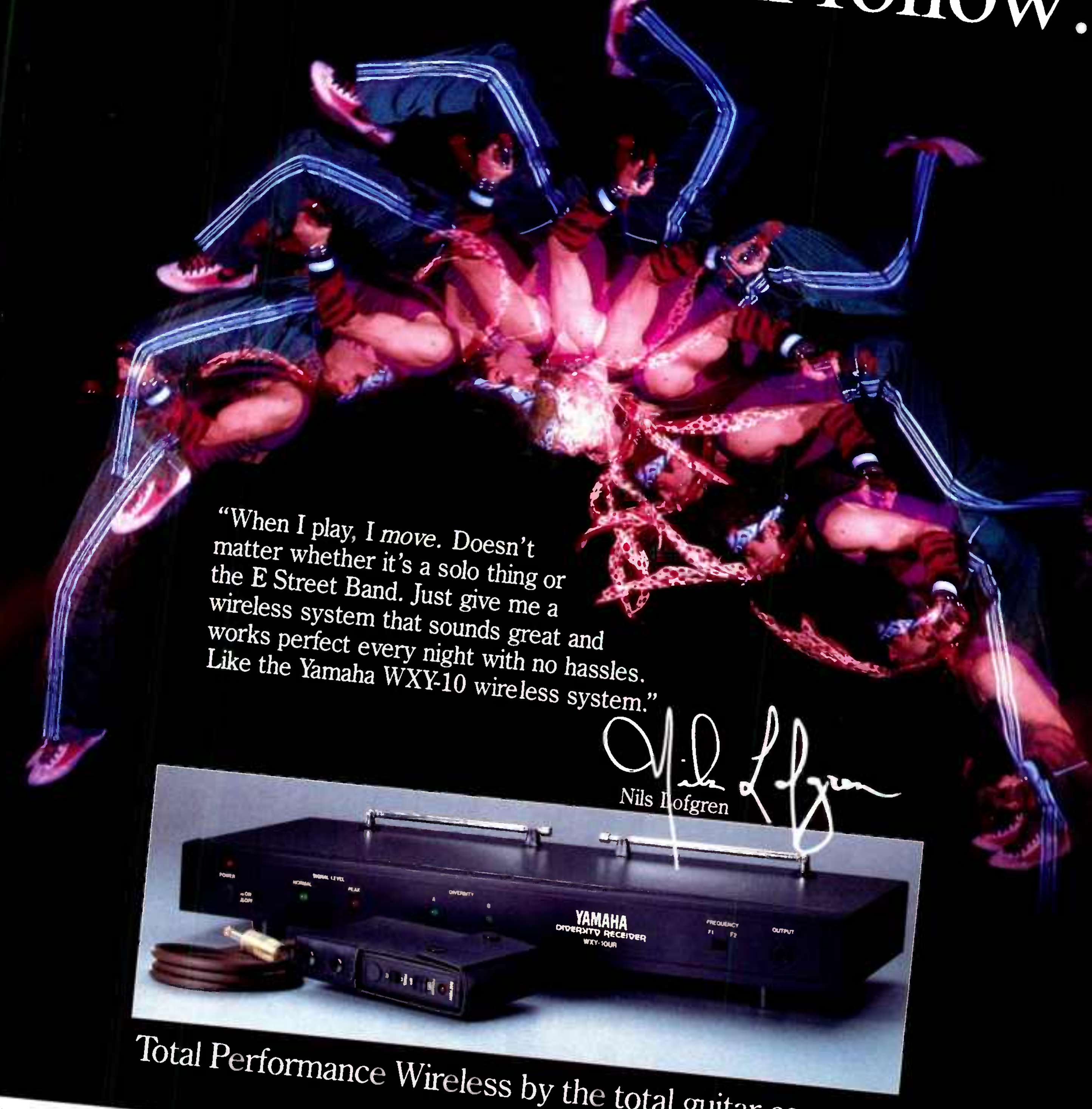
The Scorpions' **Matthias Jabs** and **Rudolf Schenker** prey at the altar of Gibson. Jabs has favored Explorers for 10 years, and this tour he's got a prototype of a model that will bear his signature. It's got a smaller body, 24 frets and, of course, the white and black paint job Jabs favors. He's also got an electric-acoustic EB-180, Gibson's remake of the Everly Brothers' axes. And there are Strats among his eight road guitars, including the '63 that only Matthias and his guitar tech, Dave Davies, are allowed to touch. It's got Schaller tuning pegs, a single humbucker and one of the first Floyd Rose tremolos, installed by Rose himself.

Until this tour, Jabs' guitars went essentially through a wah-wah and his Marshall stacks. But now he's demystifying a new set-up put together by Davies that includes four Marshall 50-watt heads (two are back-ups), two Soldano 100-watt heads (which really do turn up to 11), a Yamaha MV802 mixer, an MX-8 patchbay processor by Digital Music Corp., two Yamaha SPX90s, a t.c. electronics 2290 processor, a Korg DRV-3000 processor, two RSP Dynamic Gates, a Hush 2000, a Kittyhawk switching system and four Mesa Boogie Strategy heads.

Schenker loves Flying Vs—the shape, the sound, the feel, everything—and had seven with him until the Buffalo show. Gibson's also working on a model for him, with 24 frets, but his favorite's a '74. Hiding among the Vs are an EB-180 and a custom Gibson doubleneck V, 6 strings and 12 strings. He uses Rivera and Marshall amps, going into Marshall cabinets, and still prizes his Vox wah-wah.

Kingdom Come's **Danny Stag** and rhythm player **Rick Steier** get it on with Gibson and Paul Reed Smith guitars. Both play reissue Les Paul Jrs. and Rick's PRS has a slightly increased fretboard width. And they're expecting prototypes of Wayne Charvel's new Gibson line any day now. "It's a Strat-type guitar with a humbucking pickup on the bridge, two single-coils," Steier explains. "I ordered rosewood for the fingerboard, and an alder body instead of ash." But for his deep, bluesy solos, Stag says he uses his '62 Strat set on the neck pickup, a 50-watt Marshall head running through his 450-watt Carver power amps and a little bit of chorus. Both players use Carver's PM 310 power amps, 50-watt Marshall heads and Marshall cabinets—three stacks each. They use Samson's Broadcaster wireless, and in their racks each has a t.c. 2290 delay, a t.c. Special Expander (basically a chorus/flanger), parametric equalizers and Furman power conditioners. It's all wired to pedalboards with LEDs, "but you can't tell if they're blinking or not, or what number they're on," Stag notes, "because of the sun."





World Radio History

DAVID

TORN

"Arrogant Ambient Music" from a Guitarist Who's Not That Sure He's a Guitarist

by John Diliberto

The album credits and press bios say that David Torn plays guitar. And to further the illusion, they send out photos of him with a Steinberger slung around his neck. But the alien sounds, multi-layered textures and melodic choruses he emits couldn't be anything but the most agile array of synthesizers. Torn doesn't play guitar, he defines entire spaces. Even he is confused sometimes.

"I don't know what I am anymore," he says with gleeful resignation, flipping aside his tousled brown hair and exhaling a stream of cigarette smoke. "I don't try to play fast very often and I wonder if I still can, actually. But I had that period where I had to develop a certain amount of speed and facility. Once I had done it, I had done it.

"Playing guitar as a guitar isn't enough," he exclaims in the living room of his Bearsville, New York, ranch house on three wooded acres, where he's lived since 1983 with his wife Linda and two children. "There's too much available in the guitar with the mixture of a little electronics stuff to not explore the possibilities.

"In popular American guitar the thing is the massive amount of speed and technique one can develop doing the old thing. How much faster can you do Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix and Van Halen? So they're amplifying the old shit of the guitar, and that stuff's got to die. So let's find a new way. I'd rather go see Henry Kaiser play, definitely, and see what he's doing, or Bill Frisell. They'll go through 50 sounds in a few seconds and make some kind of sense out of it."

"I enjoy the conflict between stuff that's hypnotic and relaxing, and stuff that's like giant mosquitos from hell, just attacking."

Working with a combination of delays, reverbs, harmonizers, assorted guitar effects and MIDI controls, Torn transforms the guitar into an orchestrator of texture, layering streams of sound that can flow from ethereal gentleness to psychotic anger to lyrical ecstasy. He's played with the likes of Don Cherry, Jan Garbarek, Mark Nauseef, David Borden and virtually anywhere and everywhere with Mark Isham. On David Sylvian's *Secrets of the Beehive*, Torn insinuates himself with subtle grace into the vocalist's acoustic chamber works. In concert with his Cloud About Mercury group that includes drummer Bill Bruford, bassist Mick Karn (ex-Japan) and trumpeter Michael White, he drives the band with overlapping crescendos of sustained guitar that build like acid-banshees.

PAUL ROBICHEAU

He's coined his own definition for it: "arrogant ambient music." "The David Sylvian tour was arrogant ambience at its finest," he contends. "I don't think any band ever sounded like that before. Just layers and layers of texture, and then in comes screaming guitar or a burning jazz trumpet solo with weird guitar behind it. I still want that dichotomy. I still enjoy the conflict between stuff that's very atmospheric, hypnotic and relaxing and shit that's just all over your face. You try to wipe it off like a giant mosquito from hell, just attacking," he laughs.

The 35-year-old guitarist began hon-

World Radio History

ing his sound during the frenzied days of '60s psychedelia. He'd already given up the piano, which he started when he was six. With a guitar his parents bought for him with S&H Green Stamps, he began ingesting the music and other substances associated with the era, fronting rock bands with musicians 10 and 15 years older than him. By the time he was 17, he was fried and dropped out completely, traveling in India (an experience that lingers in his playing) and essentially realigning himself.

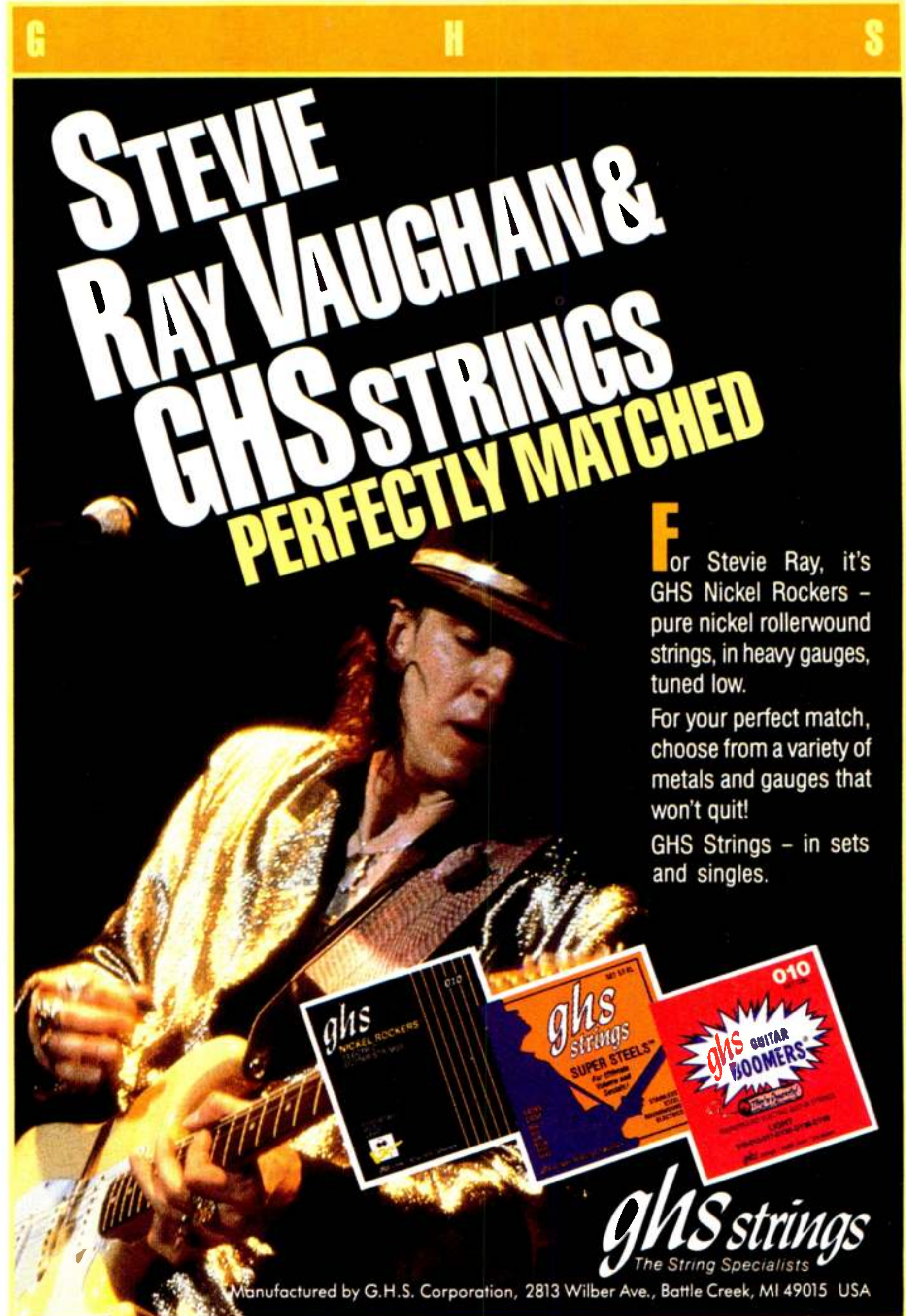
He came back in the early '70s, when fusion was going full-bore, and was inspired by the music of the Mahavishnu Orchestra and guitarist John McLaughlin. He went to Berklee, the monastery of mega-note guitarists, thinking he'd get his jazz chops down. "But I was a reject at Berklee," he confesses. "I didn't fit, and therefore I only stayed there for two months. I couldn't put my nose to the bop grindstone and transcribe solos and that whole routine. That just wasn't for me."

He shuffled around a variety of progressive rock groups, trying to find the handle between popularity and experimentation. His guitar style was already forming, with solos that twisted in feedback glissandos. "But around 1974," he says, "I can remember a couple of gigs where I was playing some solo routine thing in the middle of some bizarre rock tune and thinking, 'Ornette Coleman,' thinking of someone else further into the edge, into the noise realms. I thought, 'Saxophone players are allowed to overblow. It's been something happening in jazz for years. Well, why can't I get that effect of overblowing?' No great revelation, but I saw that out-of-control, distorted, feeding-back guitar sound, in combination with something physical on the guitar that feels like overblowing, was acceptable."

Torn began steadily refining his sound, experimenting with multiple distortion devices and volume pedals. In his head, he heard more sound than you could get out of a single processed guitar, and in 1975 he thought the answer was the ARP Avatar, one of the first guitar synthesizers. He was dazzled by a demonstration, plunked down a small inheritance, took it home and has regretted it ever since. "I realized it had to be tweaked because it glitched like crazy, and no one could tweak it," he woefully recalls. "I was at the height of my technical period and everything I played was so clean that it was impossible that I was doing anything wrong."

After countless phone calls and visits to the engineers, who shook their heads and said that's as good as it gets, he wrote it off. It turned him off completely to synthesizers in general, and guitar synthesizers in particular. Not that he needs them. Torn instead developed sounds from a routing system of effects and MIDI triggers that looked like a New York subway map. As part of his concept of orchestral guitar, he used digital looping and delay systems in real-time applications. He'd already heard the tape-loop processes of minimalist composer Terry Riley. "I was a Terry Riley fan from *In C*, *A Rainbow in Curved Air*, *Poppy Nogood and the Phantom Band*," admits Torn. "That's really all I knew about looping. But once you stack one chord and play over it with a long looping effect delay time, for me there was no turning back."

Torn uses the delays for shifting washes of sound, through which he glides solos that are in turn transmuted into new loops and atmospheres. With



World Radio History

the Yamaha MIDI Control Station, he taps the six delay lines of his Lexicon PCM 42 and the effects of the Lexicon PCM 70. The PCM 42 has been modified to give him up to 20 seconds of delay. "I use delays in a longer sense, or in a much more ambient sense," he explains, "just creating a space or atmosphere with the echoes. When you get into 15- and 20-second delays, there's not a whole lot you're going to do rhythmically unless you're running a click track constantly. It's quite hard."

So with his sound fully developed, a distinctive set-up of electronic processing and a residue of ARP Avatar bitterness informing all conversations about synthesizers, why is a Stepp DGX MIDI Guitar sitting in the corner of Torn's studio, next to a Mac, an E-max sampler and a Casio CZ-101? "From my perspective it says a lot about the Stepp that I wanted to jump for it," he says. "I'd tried the Roland guitar synthesizers and felt that the compromises I had to make in my playing weren't worthwhile. So when I saw the Stepp, and Steve Randall and Glyn Thomas playing it, it was happening.

"Of course, as soon as I got mine they went out of business and mine broke and they couldn't fix it because there was no company anymore," he relates with ironic resignation. Uh-oh, ARP déjà vu.

The Stepp overcame his prejudice against canned synthesizer sounds because he'd already spent the better part of a year creating his own sound samples with an E-Max. "I've built up a library of sounds that I feel are fairly unique," he claims. "Not only samples of non-guitar things, but my own library of guitar samples which are quite strange, and wouldn't really sound like anybody else since I did little performances with tape loops and then sampled them. It's an outgrowth of stuff I did with David Sylvian and stuff that's all over Mark Isham's record, *Castalia*. Both records have loops all over them, because I did the stuff on Sony F-1 digital tape, and I thought, 'Why don't I do that with my sampler, and when I get a controller that's working properly I'll mount it on the stand so I don't have to hold it all the time, and I'll be able to play the library of my samples. So I'll have two ways to play something that's really very personal."

In fact, his sounds are so personal that Torn had no compunction against simply leaving them with Isham, to place as he wished on *Castalia*. And they are all over it, providing a floating carpet of sound on which Isham drifts his delicate synthesizer melodies and trumpet improvisations. "He sampled it using his own sampler and chopped it up the way he liked it and used it all over *Castalia* and particularly over this Windham Hill video he did, *Tibet*," says Torn. "Boring video but the music is really good."

I suggest that he might not be exercising the proper proprietary interest in his sounds. After all, some people are suing over just this kind of sonic piracy. "I personally approved of it because of our friendship and working relationship," says Torn. "Same thing with David [Sylvian]. I even suggested that there might be times when he might want to use my stuff, and if it's credited I don't have any problem with that. With people that I trust, why not do that?"

For Torn, the sampler is part of the same sonic exploration he's been engaged with on the guitar. In fact, finding sounds is almost the best part. "You know what I do," he confesses, "if I have no inspiration to write anything or do anything creative, like structurally, I'll just get a sound to sample and spend hours perfecting a sound until it becomes something I can use."

Before he had the sampler he would fabricate instruments like The Thing, inspired by Don Cherry's dou'ssngouni.

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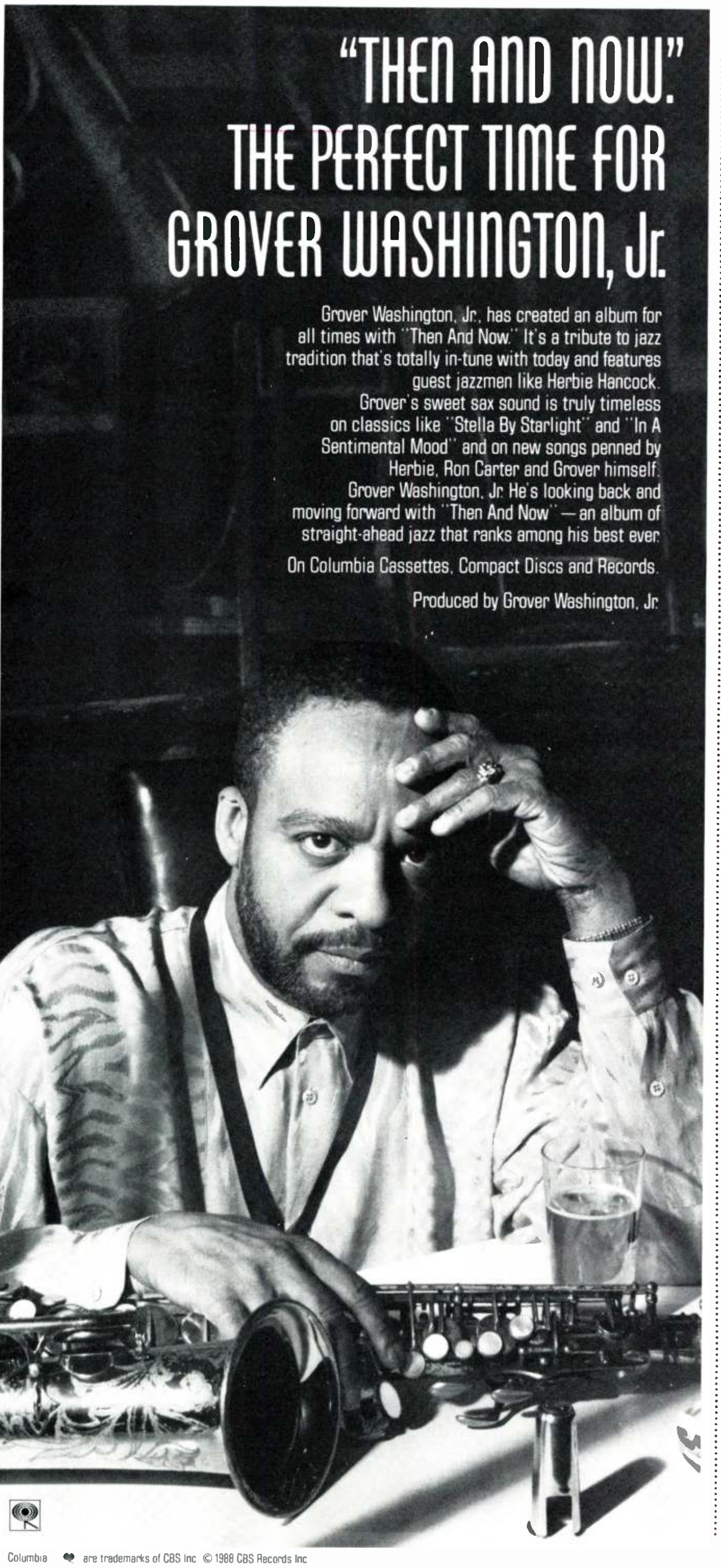

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Torn took a defenseless acoustic guitar, smashed a hole in the back, mounted it with koto bridges and stuck a pickup on it. It can be heard on "Snapping the Hollow Reed" from *Cloud About Mercury*, but has since been given to David Sylvian. "I had to," laughs Torn. "Never has anybody wanted a thing so badly."

Sonic exotica continue to inspire Torn. "Look at these things that Sylv gave me," he cries. Like a kid with new toys he grabs a jamisen and shamisen, two Chinese stringed instruments. "I haven't figured out what to do with this at all," he says, pointing to the shamisen, "but look at this 200-year-old snakeskin cover." He knocks the body of the jamisen, a

continued on page 115

TORN'S TRANS-FORMERS

David Torn's Steinberger GL2T guitar is fitted with a TransTrem bar and is run through t.c. sustain and phaser pedals and a Boss PV-1 volume pedal. A Pearce B1B two-channel amplifier boosts the signal into his effects, which include an Ibanez HD-1500 harmonizer and an ADA Pitchtraq harmonizer. An Ibanez signal is routed into his Lexicon PCM-42 digital delay. Another signal is routed into the Lexicon PCM-70 digital effects unit. His digital effects are controlled through three Roland EV-5 pedals and the Yamaha MCS2 MIDI Control Station. His outboard MIDI controls include a Yamaha FC7 pedal, two Roland momentary switch pedals and a Yamaha breath controller. Until recently, everything was mixed through a Rane SM26, but he's added a Yamaha MV802. His newest stuff: an Alesis Micro-Verb, Rocktron Hush 2C noise reduction and BBE Maxi.

In a bedroom he took over from his children, he's set up for film scoring with a Macintosh SE computer, 20 Meg C-Gate Harddrive and an Opcode Studio Plus Two MIDI interface. They drive his "favorite instrument," the E-mu E-Max, and he's not ashamed to place a Casio CZ-101 right next to it. "I program it and use it," he says. "It's brilliant. One of my friends, Andrew Schlesinger from Synthetic Productions in New York, is a brilliant programmer, and I have some of his stuff." He also uses a Yamaha TX81Z, "because it was cheap and offers some attack and good transients," and an Alesis HR-16 drum machine.

For software, he's using Mark of the Unicorn Performer 2.31 and a beta version of Doctor T's KCS for the Mac. "I've also got everything from Intelligent Music in Albany," he claims. "My favorite is M." For home monitoring he's got a TOA mono keyboard amp.

World Radio History

World Radio History

FRANK

ZAPPA

Hey Frank, Where You Goin' With That Guitar in Your Hand?

by Alan di Perna

What's the shortest book in the world? How about *The Directory of Hot Guitarists with Good Musical Taste*? Think about it. The title may be longer than the book. But one thing's certain: Frank Zappa's name would have to figure prominently in it. How many other acrobatic axemen have consistently sidestepped both metal overkill *and* fusion flatulence in their pursuit of the perfect extended solo? How many technically dazzling guitarists can you name who can even write all their own goddamn material—*good* material, mind you—much less produce it? Okay, okay; maybe there's a few besides Zappa. But not many.

Which is why it was such a pity when Frank put down his custom Strat in 1984 to dwell among the highly-programmable perfections of the Synclavier. But fans of the all-too-human guitar got a treat this year, when Zappa returned to his main instrument and embarked on his *Broadway the Hardway* tour. Don't salivate too much, though. Zappa—relaxing after the tour in the cluttered, comfortable video lounge at his home studio—has mixed feelings about his triumphant return to the six-stringed realm.

"At first, I was enjoying playing the guitar again. Then, at the end of the tour, this war broke out between the bass player and the drummer. They hated each other's guts. And so I just spent the last six weeks of the tour trying to wend my way through this garbage that was going on onstage. On a good night, the ideas I had for guitar solos came out. On a bad night, it was me versus the band. The audience didn't really know, but it was another example of the kind of thing that made me want to put the guitar down in the first place. I haven't touched the guitar since we came off the road. If I'm sitting around the house, I don't play it. I don't even think about it."

"When I'm playing a guitar solo, I'm doing the exact same thing I do as a composer. Only I don't have to write it on a piece of paper."

That's the bad news for fans of Zappa's

LYNN GOLDSMITH/LGI

guitar work. The good news is that the '88 tour has been immortalized on tape by Frank's mobile recording truck. Highlights should be released later this year as an installment of his projected six-volume live double-CD series, *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore*. Meanwhile, you can content yourselves with *Guitar*, an album of guitar solos culled from Zappa's 1979-1984 live work and the latest in his seemingly interminable parade of *Shut Up 'N' Play Yer Guitar* records.

The solos on *Guitar* were selected from several hundred hours' worth of concert tapes. Whenever Zappa found a concert with a number of good performances, he would mix the entire show. The best overall songs from these mix sessions generally ended up as part of *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore*. The bitchiest solos were pulled out and edited together to make *Guitar*.

You know what they say: waste not, want not. But you have to wonder whether there isn't something a little... well...*prurient* about yanking a bunch of guitar solos out of their original

World Radio History

contexts like that. Isn't it sort of like taking all the sex scenes out of a good novel or film and editing them all together just for pure slobber value?

"Well, in a way, yeah," Zappa acknowledges. "But I think that's what the marketplace wanted. That's what a guy who really likes guitar solos wants. And there have been enough customers for these albums over the years to prove that they exist out there. They don't want to wait around.... They don't need an *excuse* to have a guitar solo. And the solos themselves are constructed in such a way that they're like little set pieces. They have melodies of their own, development sections, recapitulations...just like compositions. I think that, for the most part, they do stand as tunes. So I don't find it especially objectionable to present them like that. In a way, it's niche marketing. For people who want that, I've constructed it and there it is."

Zappa himself is someone who has never needed an excuse to hear a guitar solo. Among his personal six-string epiphanies he lists "the first time I heard the guitar solo in 'Three Hours Past Midnight' by Johnny 'Guitar' Watson. That's probably one of the most important musical statements I ever heard in my life. And also the guitar solos on 'I Got Something for You' and 'The Story of My Blues' by Guitar Slim. And 'Lover Man' by Wes Montgomery."

Other inspirations came from more immediate sources: "There was this guy named Jim Gordon who used to be a drummer in one of my bands. He's in jail for murder right now. But he showed me how to do that thing [hammering] on the neck of the guitar with a guitar pick. And I certainly put that to good use for a number of years.

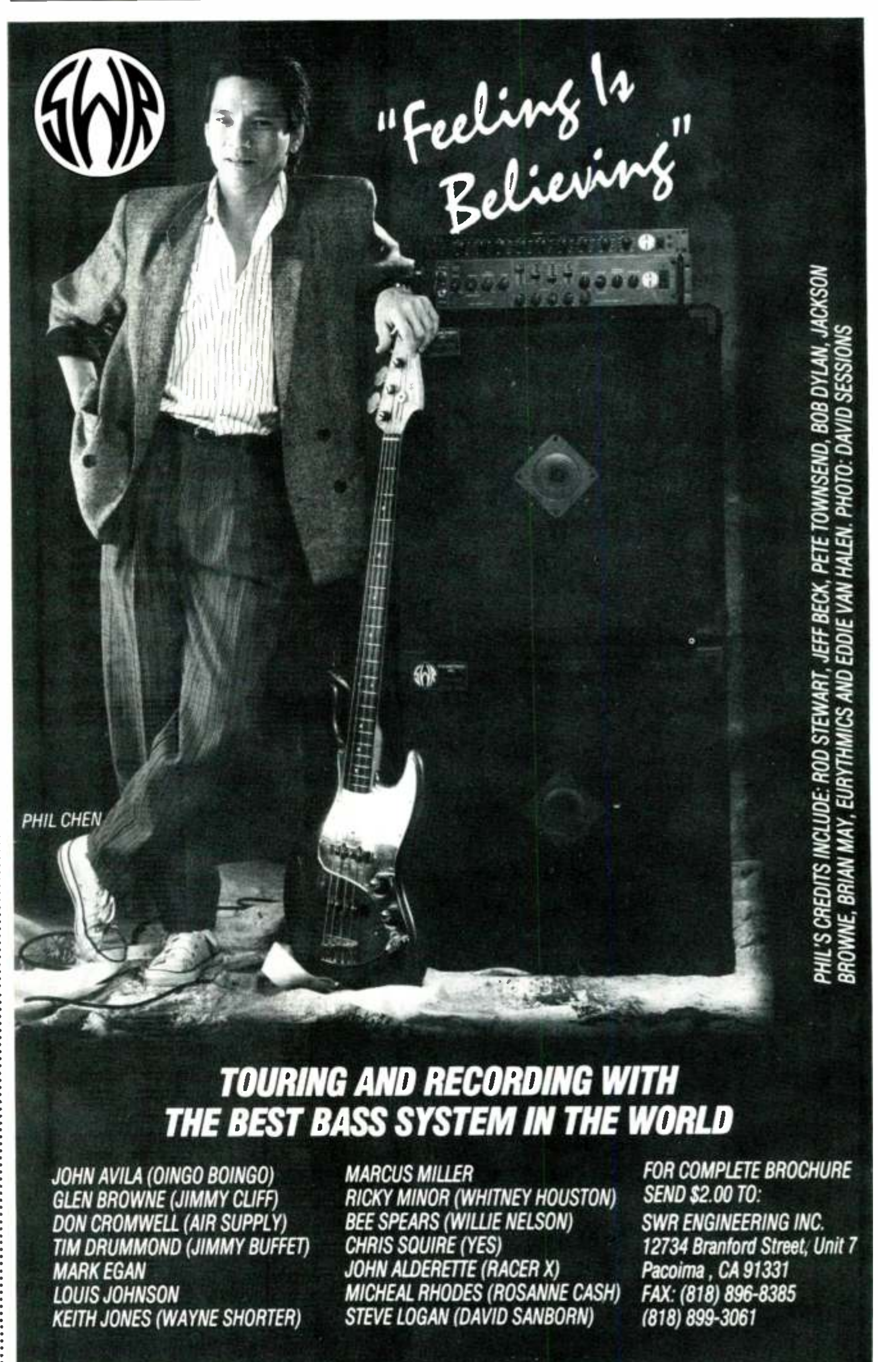
"At the time, I wasn't playing guitar with a whammy bar. So another important thing would be when I changed over and started using Strats instead of Gibsons. Before the Floyd Rose tailpiece came along, the old Strats were just so out of tune that I could never stand to listen to them. While the current piece of machinery is not perfect, the Floyd is certainly much better than the original Strat tailpiece, in terms of bringing your strings back into tune once you slack them off."

The Floyd Rose, in turn, helped foster another key Zappa technique: picking way up near—or directly over—the guitar neck. "If you rest your palm on the Floyd Rose," he explains, "it puts the strings out of tune. I like to have some support for my right hand, and the easiest way to get it is to move farther up toward the neck and rest it there. You get better intonation that way too. Picking closer to the bridge gives you the kind of tone that I don't like to use very often. It's like...twinkie. The tone's a little bit rounder the more you go toward the fingerboard."

Zappa's unmistakable gander-with-sinusitis tone and Svengali control of feedback are in ample evidence all over *Guitar*. His lifelong fascination with blues riffs anchors his explorations of Middle-Eastern, jazz and twentieth-century "serious music" intervals. And he's one of the few gonzo guitarists who has really exploited the harmonic potential of the low strings on the electric guitar.

"I think most guitarists have a tendency to play like they talk in some way. And since I'm not much of a squealer—I happen to be a baritone kind of guy—to play on the low strings is a little more in phase with my reality."

Not that Frank has total contempt for the "squealers" of the world. His current guitar faves include metal dive-bombers like Yngwie Malmsteen ("In



World Radio History

spite of the negative things that are said about him, I happen to think he really can play"), Eddie Van Halen and Ratt's Warren DiMartini. Zappa's own bands have long included a position called "stunt guitarist," which typically gets filled by metal-plated players like Steve Vai. The stunt guitarist's role, says Frank, is twofold: 1) "to enable me to write guitar parts that I could never play myself," and 2) "to reproduce guitar parts I've done on old records, because I can't sing and play lead guitar at the same time onstage. This year's stunt guitar player," Zappa adds, "is also a very excellent guy named Michael Keneally."

Indeed, it's the players and arrangements behind the solos that also help render *Guitar* enjoyable by people other than slavering guitar fanatics. In particular, Zappa's contrapuntal use of drums often sauces the thematic meat of his guitar riffs.

"My whole concept of what percussion should be is more melodic than the way most people think of rock drums," he observes. "I'm always looking for a drummer who can imagine time subdivided into other sizes and shapes. Someone who approaches the different instruments that make up a drum set as melody instruments, and plays things along with the guitar that make musical sense. You can force a drummer to play that way, but [Vinnie] Colaiuta was the first guy I ever ran into who could think that way instinctively. I also like the idea of drums playing exactly what the guitar line is. Some people would think of that as fusion. However, if you listen to much fusion stuff, you'll notice that the rhythm is pretty much straight up and down. It's all straight sixteenth and thirty-second notes and everybody just rattling away. But what I'm looking for are more odd phrasings. It's very easy for me to get this stuff with the Synclavier."

Which brings us to the crux of the matter. These days, Frank Zappa is much more inclined to get his rocks off on the Synclavier than on the electric guitar. There's always been a curious myopia in his outlook on his own work: a near-sightedness which stresses the

continued on page 52

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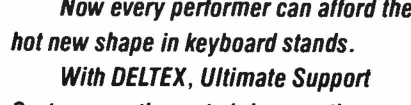

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SHUT UP 'N' LIST YER GUITARS

Frank Zappa played two custom Strats on the *Broadway the Hardway* tour. One was the blonde-finished instrument that also appears on much of the *Guitar* LP. It consists of a heavy Fender Stratocaster body, a custom neck made by Performance Guitar, a Floyd Rose tailpiece and Seymour Duncan pickups wound for an 8-k boost. Strings are Ernie Ball Stainless Steels.

Except for its lighter-weight body and dark brown finish, the other Strat is virtually the same. Both axes include a custom active electronics circuit developed right at Zappa's Utility Muffin Research Kitchen.

"It's got a gain stage and two parametric EQ circuits built into it," Frank explains. "The pots give you variable frequency selection and variable boost/cut at different frequencies. And then there's a screwdriver adjustment for the Q of the filter. That allows you to tune right into the feedback point of any room so you can really control what you're doing with feedback."

On tour, the guitars went through a pair of Carvin heads and a Roland GP-8 effects processor for Zappa's clean sound. His dirty sound was provided by four Marshall heads: 200 and 250W. Most of the speaker cabinets for these heads were placed and miked beneath the stage for better isolation. In addition, Zappa used a single 50W Marshall head and cabinet for onstage monitoring of his distorto sound.

World Radio History

33
The Clash
Ronald Shannon Jackson

36
Grateful Dead
Hard Pop, Miles Davis

99
Boston
Kinks, Year in Rock '86

84
John Cougar Mellencamp
Bryan Ferry, Maurice White

105
John Coltrane
Springsteen, Replacements

104
Springsteen
Progressive Percussion

109
George Harrison
Mick Jagger, Crazy Horse

71
Heavy Metal
Dream Syndicate, George Duke

110
Sting
Jaco Pastorius, Peter Tash

94
Jimi Hendrix
Prince, Let's Active

112
McCartney
Bass Special, Buster Poindexter

BACK ISSUES

21... **Brian Eno,** Reggae Festival, Weather Report
23... **Pete Townshend,** Sonny Rollins, Nick Lowe
24... **Bob Marley,** Sun Ra, Free Jazz/Punk
32... **Talking Heads,** Brian Eno, John Fogerty
33... **The Clash,** Ronald Shannon Jackson
34... **Tom Petty,** Carlos Santana, Dave Edmonds
36... **Grateful Dead,** Hard Pop, Miles Davis
37... **Reggae,** The Rolling Stones, Rickie Lee Jones
42... **Hall & Oates,** Zappa, Jaki Byard
44... **Nick Lowe,** Graham Parker, Lester Bowie
45... **Willie Nelson,** John McLaughlin, the Motels
53... **Tom Petty,** Culture Club, Thompson Twins
58... **The Kinks,** R.E.M., Marvin Gaye
61... **Jackson Browne,** Eurythmics, Keith Jarrett
64... **Stevie Wonder,** Reggae 1984, Ornette Coleman
67... **Thomas Dolby,** Chet Baker, Alarm, Marcus Miller
70... **Peter Wolf,** King Crimson, Bass/Drum Special
71... **Heavy Metal,** Dream Syndicate, George Duke
77... **John Fogerty,** Marsalis/Hancock, Los Lobos
79... **Jeff Beck,** Jimmy Page, Arthur Baker
80... **Phil Collins,** Joan Armatrading, Josef Zawinul
84... **John Cougar,** Bryan Ferry, Maurice White
86... **Joni Mitchell,** Simple Minds, Hall & Oates
90... **James Brown,** Tom Petty, Brian Setzer
93... **Peter Gabriel,** Steve Winwood, Lou Reed
94... **Jimi Hendrix,** Prince, 38 Special
96... **Tina Turner,** Paul McCartney, Frank Zappa
98... **The Pretenders,** the Clash, Mick Jones
99... **Boston,** Kinks, Year in Rock '86
101... **Psychedelic Furs,** Elton John, Miles Davis
102... **Robert Cray,** Los Lobos, Simply Red
104... **Springsteen,** Progressive Percussion
105... **Coltrane,** Springsteen, George Martin
106... **David Bowie,** Peter Wolf, Hüsker Dü
107... **Robbie Robertson,** Tom Petty, Big Guitar Special
108... **U2,** Tom Waits, Squeeze
109... **George Harrison,** Mick Jagger, Crazy Horse
110... **Sting,** Jaco Pastorius, Peter Tosh
111... **R.E.M.,** Year in Rock, 10,000 Maniacs
112... **McCartney,** Bass Special, Buster Poindexter
114... **John Lennon,** James Taylor, Robyn Hitchcock
115... **Stevie Wonder, Sonny Rollins, Joni Mitchell, Johnny Cash**
116... **Sinéad O'Connor,** Neil Young, Rhythm Special
117... **Jimmy Page,** Leonard Cohen, Lloyd Cole
118... **Pink Floyd,** New Order, Smithereens

86
Joni Mitchell
Simple Minds, Hall & Oates

114
John Lennon
James Taylor, Robyn Hitchcock

116
Sinéad O'Connor
Neil Young, Rhythm Special

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21 23 24 32
33 34 36 37
42 44 45 53
58 61 64 67
70 71 77 79
80 84 86 90
93 94 96 98
99 101 102 104
105 106 107 108
109 110 111 112
114 115 116 117
118

World Radio History

DEAD HEAT

The Big Crowds and Many Exhibitors Stayed Home, But NAMM Atlanta Wasn't a Total Loss.

by Jock Baird

Let's get this out of the way quickly: Summer NAMM was hot, and it was dead. Somewhere, somehow, it once seemed a good idea to hold the summer's biggest trade show in a Southern city every three years, although 1985's limp New Orleans show should've given someone pause. But with more and more manufacturers wondering about the value of exhibiting at NAMM's usual summer site, Chicago, it was absolutely foolhardy to insist on moving the show to humid, 100-degrees-plus Atlanta. Literally dozens of major manufacturers responded by dropping out in the last month, making Atlanta NAMM the most bereft of new products in a decade. If huge dealer orders were being written somewhere, it must have been at the airport. Many attendees departed using the word "disaster." Okay, we got that over with. What, you expect me to turn the knife and come up with one-liners to get you through the Hollywood writer's strike? "How dead was it? It was so dead the custodians were looking *forward* to the Democratic National Convention. It was so dead, Arlen Roth was the only guitarist who showed up for the Seymour Duncan jam...." Come on, it'd be like shooting fish in a barrel.

All right, so it wasn't like an Anaheim show, which resembles one of those aptitude tests you aren't supposed to be able to finish in the allotted time. You could see all the newsworthy products at Atlanta NAMM in a day and still have plenty of time in the late afternoon to sip mint juleps and see both halves of *Gone With the Wind*, which plays every day of the year here. But that doesn't mean there wasn't fun to be had. Amid the spreading calm, certain booths seemed to be islands of activity and excitement. Yamaha epitomized this, in striking contrast to last winter's flat Anaheim production, but the booths of Peavey, Alesis, Kawai, Fostex, Kurzweil and a few others also seemed fuller than most. Let's get to the meat of the matter—the top new products.

DICKIE BETTS, CALL YOUR ANSWERING SERVICE

—No difficulty picking this winner—it would stand out at any show. It's the Digitech IPS-33 Smart Shift, an affordable harmonizer that thinks diatonically. The classic harmonizer, as you know, generates a shifted pitch harmony, say a fifth apart. But what you'd really like a harmonizer to do is *harmonize*, and a dumb, fixed-interval shifter can't do things like

change the third from minor to major when you change scale degrees. Keen NAMM observers will note that the last update of the classic Eventide H3000 Harmonizer broke this barrier at the last NAMM show, but that unit cost $2500, not exactly subway change.

Now comes the Digitech variation on the same theme; it costs only $800, samples the input with the same 16-bit custom LSI chips that sounded great on their DSP-128, and spits back two extra voices in intervals of your own choosing. Playing with this device is instant Allman Brothers heaven, appropriate since their home of Macon is just southeast of Atlanta. But you can evoke many other musical colors using 41 different scales in its memory, everything from music-school standards like melodic minor and harmonic minor all the way to pentatonics, Lydian and Phrygian. Key and scale user programs can be changed via MIDI and a separate bypass footswitch can kill the effect if you're in over your head. I can't tell you what a blast it was playing with this, although it makes you wonder if more

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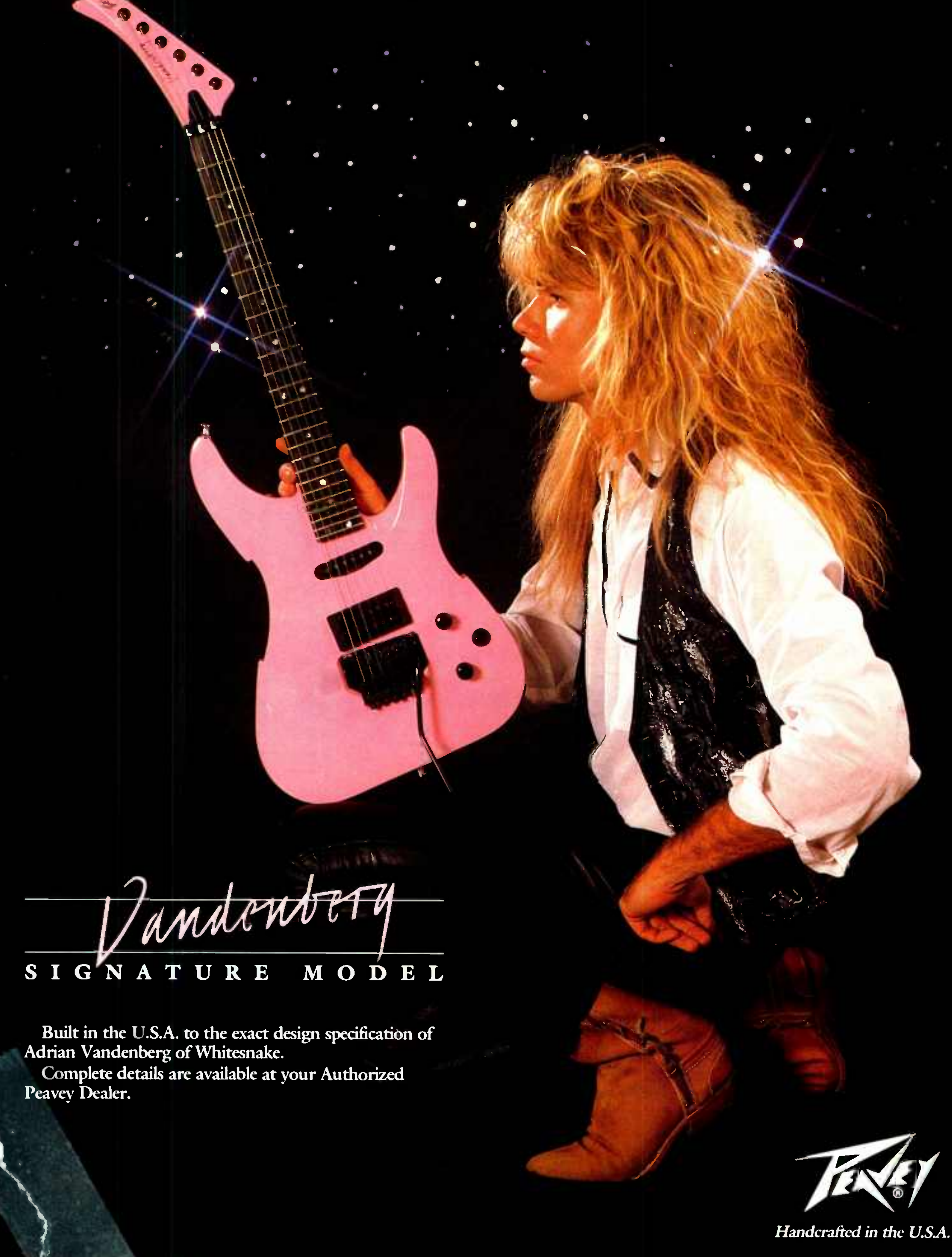


For a full color poster of Adrian Vandenberg and the new Vandenberg Signature Model guitar, send $2.00 to Peavey Electronics Corporation, 711 A Street, Meridian, MS 39301, Telephone (601) 483-5365 ©1988 Peavey Electronics Corp.

World Radio History

horn sections will be put out of business.

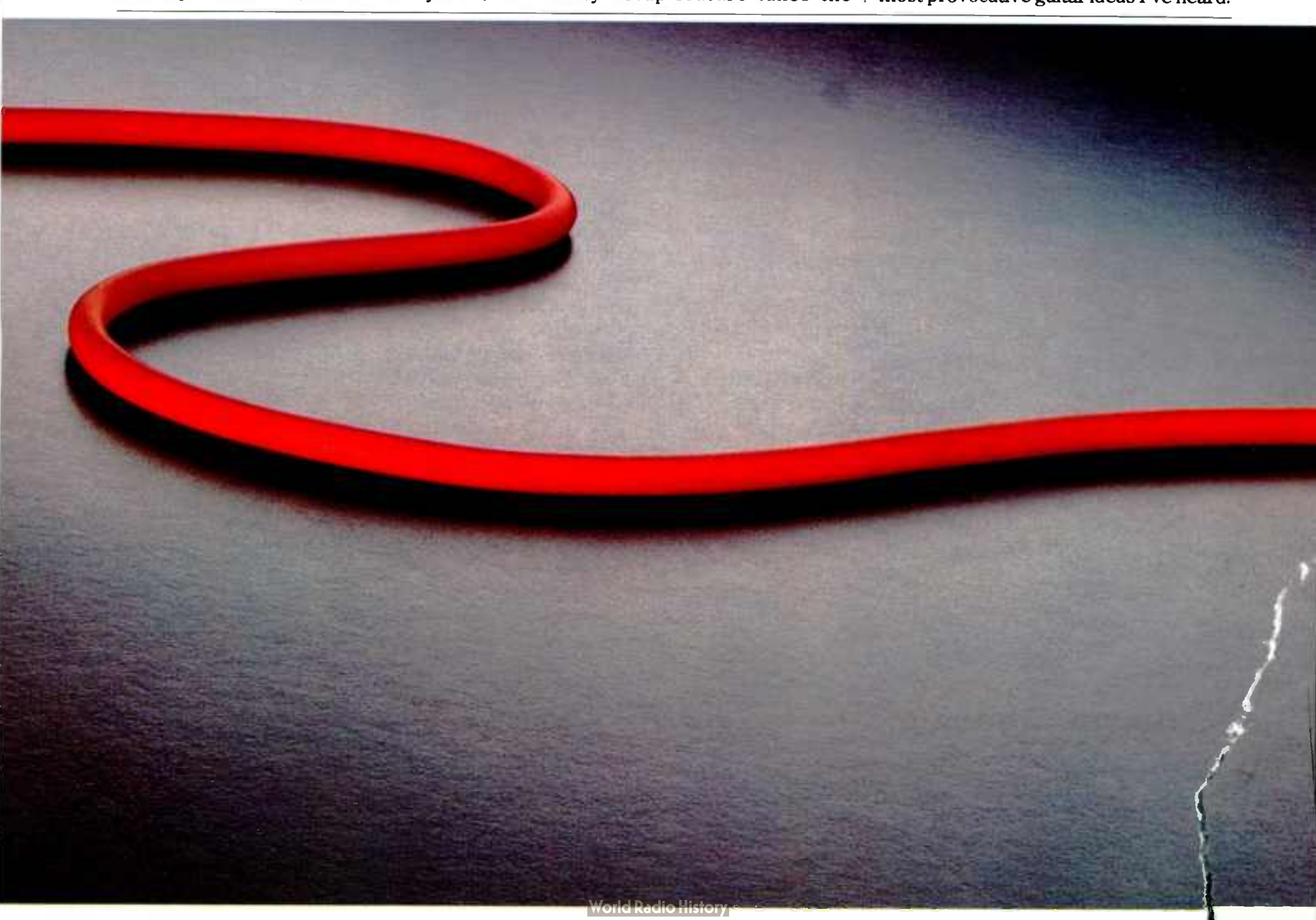
AS THE MIDI GUITAR TURNS—We all knew the Yamaha G10 MIDI guitar controller would be waiting for us, and we already knew what it looked like, but like salmon swimming upstream to spawn, we had to crowd around, play it and grudgingly admire it. The gist of the G10 is high-tech blowout. You got yer sonar for getting the pitch from the left hand, you got yer hexaphonic pickup on the right hand to detect velocity, and you got yer optical semi-mechanical sensors to sense string bends. That's right, three—three—*three* MIDI conversion systems in one instrument, each one matched to its best strength! You got your cute little LED display on the top right under your nose, and your MIDI volume control right next to yer little wheels, switches and whammy bar. No, seriously, this is an ad writer's dream, and an all-around superior design.

The G10 goes for $2500, so there's still no such thing as a free lunch, but in the wake of the Stepp's demise, it's the new de facto MIDI guitar standard. My only wonder about the G10 is its shape—the ultra-minimal, almost insect-like pod body imposes a strong aesthetic statement upon its owner, much the way the Roland G-707 did, and it might not be to everyone's taste (one wag dubbed it the "Mini-Vac" look). Another upscale MIDI guitar present was the latest version of the Passac Sentient Six, whose biggest claim to fame so far has been its ability to discern between upstrokes and downstrokes of the pick. Not only does the new version of the Passac have remarkable tracking for a pitch-to-MIDI system, but a decent MIDI sequencer has been added to the brain for the vast majority of guitarists who don't own a computer.

MIDI PERCUSSION FOR EVERYONE ELSE—By now most drummers who have MIDI percussion systems have cobbled together combos of different companies' hardware. Now, in a bold move to cut through the MIDI red tape, comes the Twixer from Simmons. This little $1400 unit combines—get this—a six-channel audio mixer, a full-service trigger-to-MIDI interface, sampled drum sounds (four kits and a card socket) and a digital reverb. You can either mike your present drums, affix trigger bugs or use pads. It'll mix the acoustic drums on each channel with the onboard drum samples, and even has effect returns to put reverb on your acoustic cymbals. An automatic sensitivity setup feature takes the headaches out of too-high or too-low trigger levels. Overall, breathtakingly direct.

THE INCREDIBLE EDIBLE MIDI MIKE—This is a $300 mono pitch-to-MIDI converter disguised as a microphone, and it seems to work pretty darn well. I mean, it's no Fairlight VoiceTracker, but.... Its formal name is the Digigram MIDIMIC, it's shaped like a big cigar with a thick credit card jammed in the end, has several input sensitivities and even a line-in so it can be used with lots of different monophonic sources (even guitar solos), and does pitch bends and octave shifts. Maybe if you put it through torture tests and millisecond measurements, the MIDIMIC would seem less impressive, but the five minutes I had with it were the most fun I had all weekend. The MIDIMIC, which was first seen at the Frankfurt Fair and hails from France, is the most visible new product of the revamped Imagine Music Group, formed from Ron Resnick's Santa Barbara-based Imagine and Glyn Thomas' Group Centre Innovations. The Imagine lineup has some other surprises I'll cover next month.

FLAT CAN BE BEAUTIFUL—This is one of the most provocative guitar ideas I've heard.



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Huh? Well, think about it this way. In the real world, a sound is best described and manipulated by its equalization curve. In the bizarro world of the guitarist, however, sound is described as parts of the guitar—PAF humbuckers, maple necks, alder bodies, etc. To change a sound, guitarists currently change guitars or pickups, an expensive and limited process. What if guitarists could be trained to think in terms of EQ instead of hardware, and then used one of the new generation of MIDI-programmable EQs from the likes of ART, t.c., Yamaha, etc. to exactly duplicate the tonal characteristics of the desired guitar. The difficulty comes when you have to first take *out* the pickup's characteristic tone before you build the new one, and thus arises the need for a reference, or flat pickup, introduced by a company called Ultrasonic.

All very theoretical, until you hear the concept demoed. Using only a programmable EQ, Ultrasonic ran through a dazzling array of famous guitar sounds, all done with the Reference Series pickups. These patches were devised in a replication process they call "Tone Cloning." A big gap in the Ultrasonic program is that the individual guitarist has to be trained to clone his or her own tones, since their guitars will always be a little unique. Fine for some, but I'm not sure I could do nearly the job they did; some suggested setups for specific equalizers and guitars will do a great deal to advance the concept. And I have reservations about how much marketing is involved here—lots of cute buzzwords: "Tone Cloning," "Audio Balanced Magnets," "TransTrak" string sensing, "Fine Line" winding and "Ultra-Pot" potentiometers supposedly developed for the B-1 bomber. But notwithstanding these reservations, the Ultrasonic Reference Series of pickups is the only genuinely original idea at Atlanta NAMM, and that alone should lead you to call MICO Trading at 818-785-2841 and ask some followup questions.

THE REDHEAD, THE CRUNCH AND THE WEDGE—Not as earth-shaking, but certainly as floor-shaking, were some new amplification wrinkles. SWR led the pack with a new portable bass amp that sets new standards in bandwidth: flat from 16k all the way down to 27 cycles. Dubbed the Red Head for its flashy paint job (remember, these are the same guys that named their equalizer Mr. Tone), this little 275-watt package not only has astounding bottom for just two 10-inch speakers, but has some terrific features. How about a side-chain for your tuner, so you can shut off your main output while tuning and don't have to run your signal through the tuner, robbing it of electronic zip? Or a blank rack space and an effects blender control? Or a balanced line out that gives you either the whole preamp stage or just a straight D.I. signal? Or a ground lift, or a speaker defeat switch. For $1400, this is all the bass amp you could ever ask for, especially for five- and six-string players.

Yamaha was also pushing amplifiers, specifically its VR series, four solid-state units that come in stereo or two-channel versions. These are loaded with plenty of extras like two parametric EQs, effects busses, headphone outs, spring reverbs (what are those?) and a new stereo chorus effect. One new idea in guitar blasting came from Peavey, in the form of wedge cabinet editions for their Special, TNT and Session amps. Why a wedge? If you're plugging into a whole reinforcement system, your onstage amp is just a monitor anyway—why not point it at your ears instead of out, where it can only murk up the main mix? And if

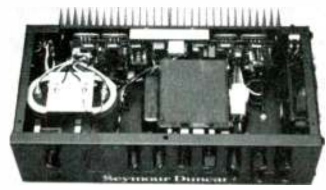
World Radio History

crunch is your game, you may be interested to know that Lee Jackson, Marshall rebuilder to the stars, now has a signature tube preamp rack available that slashes and burns with the best of them. Not cheap at $575, and not gimmicky, the six-stage Metaltronix G-1000 just delivers that primo Marshall-stack roar with a tad more punch (818-705-7523). The rumor mill had Paul Reed Smith readying a new amp design, but he didn't bring it to Atlanta.

The parade of guitar multi-effects boxes isn't slowing down—what does it mean when Yamaha comes out with two? One is an SPX90 modified to include compression and overdrive, renumbered the SPX50; the other is called the GEP50 and is a bit less programmable, but has most of the popular guitar effect staples. Yamaha also showed a nifty $300 reverb called the R100 that uses REV5 technology and sounds smooth indeed. Alesis promised something called a Quadraverb, but didn't have it running. Peavey had an UltraVerb, a more expensive and more programmable version of last show's AddVerb. Tom Scholz added a switching controller to run up to eight of his modules. And a guitar processor aimed squarely at the home recording market was a $225 little box from Tascam called a Guitar Amp Simulator that combines overdrive, basic EQ and a presence control.

What? We're out of time for this month? You mean I can't talk about the new Yamaha C1 laptop computer, billed as the ultimate IBM-compatible music machine? Or mention the DMP7 now comes with a standard AES/EBU interface instead of the "house" format and has a new baby brother, the DMP11? You're telling me the two new Oberheim Perf/X boxes, one a mapper, the other the last arpeggiator you'll ever need, will have to wait until October? No blurbs on the fancy Tascam MTS-1000 MIDIlizer, Tascam's new PCM² synthesis (coincidentally similar to the D-50 and SQ-80 scheme) or Kurzweil's sound expansion boards for their 1000 series? Eh, you're probably right. Most guitarists don't care about that stuff anyway. Well, till October, then.

Real Bass for the Real World.



Kyle Brock, bass player for Eric Johnson, is very selective about his gear. That's why he upgraded to the new Seymour Duncan Biamp 8000 bass amplifier.

Traditionally a tube amp user, Kyle found the solid state Biamp 8000 has "rich tone, like a tube amp with plenty of clean power. And the tone controls really do something."

It takes a lot of punch and stage volume to keep up with Eric Johnson's high velocity attack, and the Biamp 8000 gives Kyle power to spare. He runs 800 watts into Seymour Duncan cabinets – two 1x15's, two 2x10's and an 8x5 Array – and describes the sound as, "Fat City. This thing really feeds the big dog."

The new Biamp 8000 is the top of the line with 400 watts per side and seven band E.Q. The Bass 4000 has 400 watts of solid performance. Don't let the modest front panels fool you. Look inside these amps and you'll find massive 20 pound transformers and jumbo blue capacitors – the kind of ultra-rugged components that produce a thundering low end, night after night.

Designed for bass and nothing but bass, the 4000 and 8000 deliver the best sound you've ever heard. Visit your Seymour Duncan amp dealer for a real demonstration.

Seymour Duncan® Bass Amps

For more information, send $2.00 for a catalog to Seymour Duncan, 601 Pine Avenue, Santa Barbara, CA 93117. Check out Kyle Brock's live sound with Eric Johnson or on the fall release of the new Eric Johnson album on Capitol/Cinema Records.
Photos by H.P. Street and Jurgen Hillmer

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ZAPPA from page 46

intentional over the fortuitous, the notes on the page over the endearing accidents that sometimes happen as the notes get played by human musicians. The Synclavier—with its ability to play back compositions without those accidents—is a dream-come-true for someone with this kind of orientation.

It must be tough being a composer trapped inside a guitarist's body. But it's the composer within that makes Zappa worthy of inclusion in that ultra-slim volume, *The Directory of Hot Guitarists with Good Musical Taste.*

"When I'm playing a guitar solo I'm doing exactly the same thing that I do as a composer," he insists. "A solo is an instant composition. It's basically the same intellectual process that I would go through writing music on a piece of paper. Only I don't have to write it on a piece of paper. It gets done right away. With the Synclavier, on the other hand, it's a slow process. 'Cause I'm not a keyboard player and I don't type that fast."

The ideal situation, then, might be one that combines Zappa's guitar with the best aspects of his Synclavier work.

"You mean playing the guitar along with a Synclavier sequence? One of these days I'm going to try that. Because bands have become too incredibly expensive. And, especially after experiencing the War of the Rhythm Section on this last tour, I'm not all that enthusiastic about sticking another band together. So I may just try playing guitar along with some sequences before my calluses melt away."

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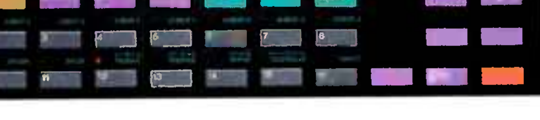
The DSR-2000 stores 60 preset and 40 user voices. All selected by the keypad you see here.



The on-board drum machine features 16 presets with 16 more you can build from scratch.

There's also an amazing rhythm section with 16 presets and room for 16 more you build yourself.

And every DSR-2000 comes with its very own portable recording studio.

Technically, it's been dubbed a sequencer recorder.

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THIRD ANNUAL BIG GUITAR ISSUE

GEORGIA SATELLITES

Six-String Guitars with No Whammy Bars, Big Amplifiers and the Desire to Get It Out

by Charles M. Young

The Georgia Satellites' second album, *Open All Night*, was almost titled *Love Songs for the Hearing Impaired.* And it was almost titled *Love Songs for the Morally Inept.* And it was almost titled *The Pungent Odor of Mendacity.*

"You're up on your Tennessee Williams, aren't you?" asks Dan Baird, predominant songwriter/singer/rhythm guitarist of the Georgia Satellites. "'Sister Woman, what's that I smell?'"

"'I don't smell anything, Big Daddy,'" responds Rick Richards, sometime songwriter/singer and predominant lead guitarist of the Georgia Satellites, in a not bad Southern belle falsetto.

"'I think that's the pungent odor of mendacity.'"

"'I don't even know what that word means, Big Daddy.'"

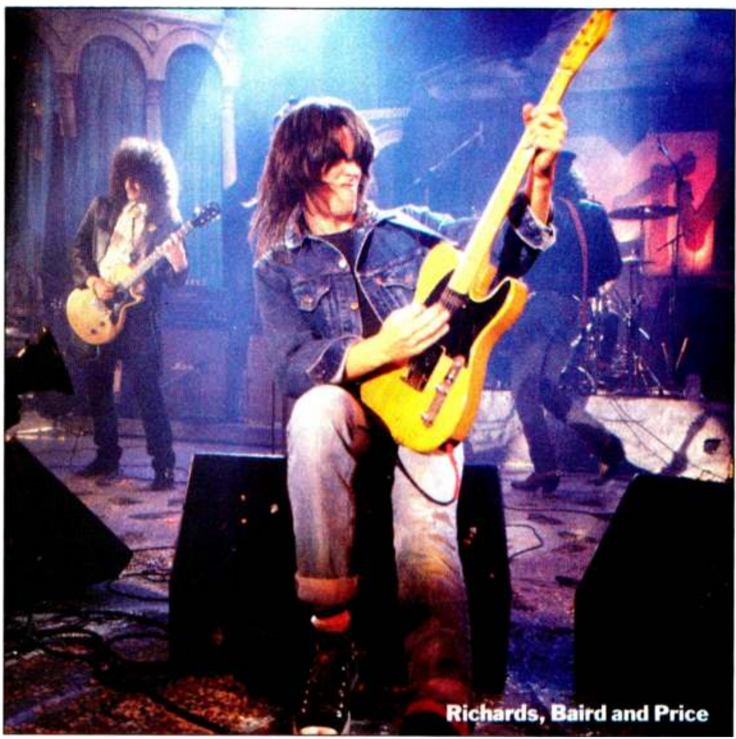
You know who else digs Tennessee Williams? I ask. John Cougar Mellencamp. "That guy, I really want to meet him," says Baird, clad in his usual T-shirt, jeans and black high-tops in the conference room of Elektra/Asylum. "He's got to be a cool fucker. I just couldn't imagine him being an asshole."

The above quote is quintessential Georgia Satellites. *Every* musician they have ever met—and over the years they have opened for a whole horde of bands—and every musician they haven't met, they describe as a nice guy. The typical anecdote starts, "Lynyrd Skynyrd (or R.E.M. or Guadalcanal Diary or Bruce or...) walked into our dressing room,

"I'm usually in the Johnny Winter/ Ron Wood mode of open tuning, where any string you hit is okay – the bash & trash school of slide."

and it was like finding long-lost friends, even though we'd never met." I figure the Georgia Satellites are living proof of the law of karma: The vibe you put out is the vibe you get back. Expect to meet a nice guy and you're going to meet him, because you're a nice guy. The Georgia Satellites create their own reality, and it includes *no assholes.*

Not that they have no critical sense. Like all great bands, they have absolute knowledge of who's cool and dish out large helpings of influence on their own platters. And it's not that they're innocent. All clock in at past 30 and are battle-scarred veterans of the southeastern bar circuit. What they have, particularly Baird, is a 12-year-old boy in their personality who somehow didn't get crushed by the horror of it all and is thus free to jump out, tear open any topic you care to bring up and exclaim on the wonder of it. In short, their charm is enthusiasm, and it's catchy as chicken pox in first grade. So are their songs, many of which occupy the perfect midpoint between Chuck Berry and AC/DC: funny short stories for lyrics, major chords at top volume, melodic leads and a human being deciding where the backbeat is.



Richards, Baird and Price

LARRY BUSACCA/RETNA

Being a rudimentary guitar player myself, I like the Georgia Satellites because they're not afraid to bash away on E-A-D. Indeed, Baird admits to knowing those three chords "real well," but Richards claims to have expanded his range to a fourth chord on the new album. Thus the Georgia

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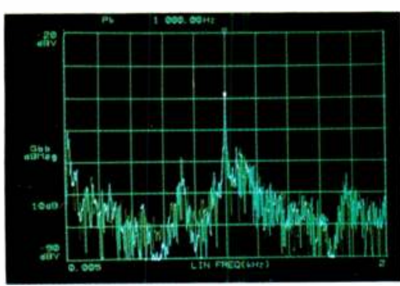
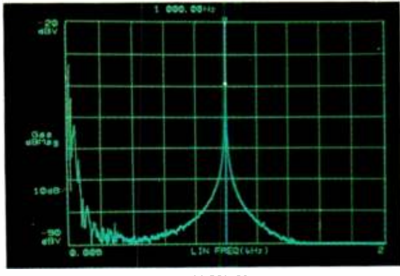
THE IDEA BEHIND OUR NEW CASSETTE DESIGN IS NO GREAT SHAKES.



OLD XLII



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Satellites are progressing, but they're still an inspiration for all whose hearts never left the garage.

"On both our albums, my rhythm guitar is the right channel, and Rick's the left channel," says Baird. "Reminds me of AC/DC about the time of *Powerage* and *If You Want Blood.* On 'Cool Inside' we just added a little echo, and 'Open All Night' has a bigger snare because the guitar parts are very simple. 'Mon Cherie' is just a free-for-all. It's real basic, like AC/DC. They were the best rock 'n' roll blues band they knew how to be, especially in the Bon Scott years. That guy was 100 percent. At first I thought they weren't the pure essence of rock 'n' roll, not Johnny Burnette and the Rock & Roll Trio. Well, I was wrong. They're as good as Johnny Burnette and the Rock & Roll Trio."

They also had some real disgusting album covers. "All their covers were disgusting," says Baird. "Aussie hicks—what a concept. The prison blood hasn't filtered after 200 years. Six-string guitars with no whammy bars, big amplifiers and the desire to get it out."

You guys see that Chuck Berry documentary with Keith Richards, *Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll*?

"I loved that movie," says Baird. "You know who the real star was? Joey Spampinato, the NRBQ bass player. They are my favorite band of all time. *NRBQ at Yankee Stadium* is my favorite album of all time. They did more things right on that one album than anybody ever did. Let's stop for reverence here. Al Anderson is a genius. [*Imitating a train conductor*] 'Reverence stop! Everyone out! Al Anderson worship around the corner!'

"The best thing about that argument between Chuck and Keith was Joey looking around like, 'Big deal. I gotta put up with Terry Adams every day of the year. You guys are small potatoes compared to that nut.'"

Uh, actually what I wanted to talk about was Chuck Berry and the Georgia Satellites...

"He wrote the blueprint. Between him and Dylan, that was it. Most of their great songs were stories. John Lennon always wrote a little story. I never wanted to paint pictures of the sunset with my songs. I just want to put out records with some personality. There's a whole lot of records with not that much personality. People have a lot of theories about why rock 'n' roll isn't as good as it was. Well, listen to the Coasters. They had so much personality. All the great bands had it: Velvet Underground, the Pistols, the Faces, the Stones, Tom Petty. All their records had a personality. Doesn't matter how many singers you got, so long as they got that one thing. That's what we aspire to—just write songs that are a nice framework to stretch some personality on."

For all the speechifying in rock 'n' roll about having the courage to be yourself, it's odd how few people succeed in doing just that.

"What's odd is how few people have a self to be. It's great to have the desire. But a lot of times people seem to get so hung up on what's cool that they're afraid to hang their ass out the window. That's the advantage of being an idiot, and I think everyone in this band would qualify. Nobody's scared here. Nobody's thinking, 'Well, if I do this, somebody's going to think I'm a dumb ass.'"

Would it be fair to say you guys were preoccupied with monogamy on the first album with songs like "Keep Your Hands to Yourself" and "Battleship Chains," and now you're more concerned with messing around, specifically "Mon Cherie"?

"Every now and then, a fella has to take a look around. 'That's when she sat herself down on a park bench/ Her skirt rolled up, I could see she was French/

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It takes a winning team to build a winning pedal.

The 1987 Music and Sound Award

The ballots are in. The DigiTech PDS 1002 has been voted 1987's most innovative foot-controlled, effects/signal processor product. That's how it was honored at the Music and Sound Awards, held recently at the 1987 NAMM Exposition.

Best in a tough field. Pretty impressive when you consider it was judged by music dealers across the country.

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My heart said, *Toujours l'amour avec mon amie.*' Somebody once asked me why I don't print the words on the album jacket. Well, this ain't poetry, folks. 'Mon Cherie' I wrote six months after 'Keep Your Hands to Yourself,' and I was in a definite Chuck Berry/Carl Perkins mode. Those guys were the real short story writers. They tell an hysterical story. The reason we didn't go with 'Mon Cherie' as the single was it was too close to 'Hands.' I didn't want to be pigeonholed. 'Open All Night' is different enough that it's not 'Keep Your Hands, Part Two.'"

I once asked George Thorogood why he didn't write more of his own songs, and he said, "Because Chuck Berry already wrote all the good ones."

"The reason is what we call songwriter royalties," says Baird. "That, and you really do want to learn to write like the people you admire."

So who's responsible for the covers of "Don't Pass Me By" and "Whole Lotta Shakin'"?

"That's my department," says Richards, who is a quiet introvert only in comparison with Baird. "'Don't Pass Me By' just came out one night at Hedgen's Rock 'n' Roll Tavern [in Atlanta]. I started playing the riff and it was like I was possessed by the spirit of Ringo Starr. You know, in my youth I went to a barber one day and I told him I wanted to look like Ringo Starr, so he took a brush and broke my nose. Anyway, we just started doing the song, it's been a staple for years. Nobody's ever discouraged us from doing covers. We could do a double album of our versions of old hits. We got a reggae version of Alice Cooper's '18.' We were going to give 'Whole Lotta Shakin'' away for a Tom Cruise soundtrack, but when we heard it, we decided to keep it and give them 'Hippy Hippy Shake' instead. Both are tunes that'll always sound like a car wreck if you do them right."

The slide playing on your song "Hand to Mouth" is real impressive.

"Thank you," says Richards. "I was trying to emulate my man Dave Lindley on that. I'm a big Dave Lindley fan. I never really played any slide like that before. I'm usually in the Johnny Winter/Ron Wood mode of open tuning where any string you happen to hit is okay."

"The bash and trash school of slide," adds Baird.

"I just thought it was cool to get a

continued on page 64

SATELLITE DISHES

Dan Baird gets his garage sound with an old Fender Esquire that he bought off Steve Marriott in 1983 for $500. The pickup coil has since split and has been replaced with an EMG, which Baird says "sounds great." Live he plays through a pair of HiWatt 100s with a pair of old, square Marshall cabinets. He also has a digital delay that he plans to "throw in the goddam river as soon as I find an Echoplex that works right."

Rick Richards' axe of choice is a '58 Les Paul Junior. He also likes his '59 Les Paul Special with Gibson P-90 pickups. He uses no effects "except volume" and thus plays straight through his HiWatt 50, HiWatt 100 and Marshall slant cabinets. For slide he prefers a Dan Armstrong Ampeg with a clear plastic body, which is "a little thin for an all-purpose guitar, but for slide it's got that real slicey edge." He recommends a big, heavy brass slide, as opposed to glass or aluminum. Both used D'Addario strings even before they started getting them for free.

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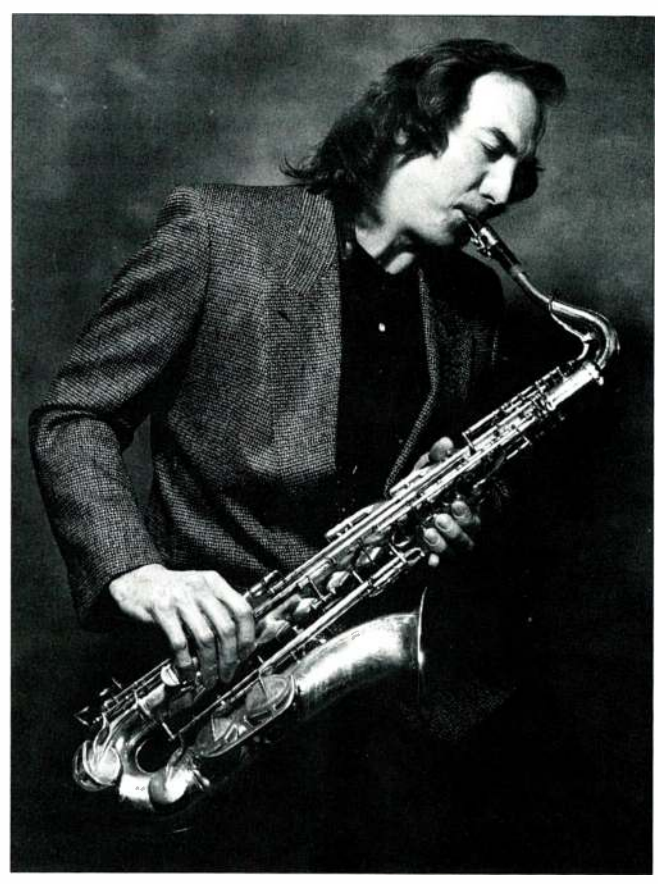

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SONNY SHARROCK

Learning to Win Friends *and* Alienate People with the Father of Free Guitar

by Ted Drozdowski

Sonny Sharrock's stubborn. Give him a melody and he's gotta mess with it. Ask him to play chords and he'll just say no. Invite him to a quiet jazz festival and he'll bring a stack of Marshalls.

To a concert in Italy last summer, he also brought fellow avant-guitar hero Henry Kaiser. "We followed the Modern Jazz Quartet, and the audience was like a tidal wave. We cleared the room instantly," Sharrock recounts. Then he chuckles. "It was beautiful. My wife, Nettie, cried, because she'd never seen that before. I said, 'C'mon. That's nothing. You want me to clear out the ushers, too?'"

For 20-odd years, Sharrock has been a living lesson in how to make music and alienate people—a lot of people. To fans and followers, though, he's a genius whose playing has the beauty, power and implacable momentum of a lava flow. He says he's "just a jazz guitarist," but it's not that simple, because Warren "Sonny" Sharrock is the man who brought free improvisation to the electric guitar. His playing on Pharoah Sanders' *Tahid* in 1967 sent a message to every frustrated plectrist looking to snap the shackles of convention. Forget about modes and changes. Just turn it up, feel the music and fly.

"I almost remember the very day I learned to play 'out,'" says Sharrock, munching on a bit of coconut-fried shrimp in a quietly trendy Boston bistro. "I was with Pharoah, in 1966, and Pharoah had this technique of overblowing the horn. It sounded like very fast tonguing, like a buzz saw. I tried to copy it by trilling on the guitar, and found that I could get a huge sound, but more human, like a voice. Then I tried to stretch it by pulling strings and bending notes, and that was the beginning."

"People used to get mad at me when I'd get hired for gigs. I'd say, 'I ain't gonna play chords. I'm a horn player.'"

Sharrock later worked his six-string voodoo for Herbie Mann, Cannonball Adderly, Don Cherry and Miles Davis, twisting the tonal guts out of his guitar. Dissonance, distortion, wild dynamics, clustered notes and skittering slide became his canon. He made two solo albums, *Black Woman* (Vortex, 1969) and *Monkey-Pockie-Boo* (BYG, 1970), before forming a band with his first wife Linda, a daring vocalist whom he'd met in Mann's group. They made another record, 1975's *Paradise* (Atco), but in 1978 the band dissolved, along with their marriage.

JOHN SOARES

"Even if we were successful it would have been difficult for Linda and me," says Sharrock. "One European writer called the time between 1975 and 1979 'the lost years,' but I wasn't lost. I was still trying but nobody was willing to deal with it, as far as recording or gigs. That gets heavy."

Sharrock sought refuge in Ossining, New York, his hometown. That's where, as a teenager, he'd gone into shivers over vocal groups like the Orioles and the Moonglows. "The greatest thing I'd seen until then was Red Rider and Little Beaver on their horses, but these groups were the hippest. They had matching suits, did coordinated steps and they sounded incredible." At 14 his baritone earned him a spot in a local

World Radio History

group, and he started singing in talent shows and in bars. "The other guys were older, but I'd just pencil in my moustache and go right on in."

Then jazz came knocking. "One night I was listening to Symphony Sid and he played Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*. That blew me out of my bed. I saw the band that summer, and I was gone from that moment on." When a few guys in his vocal group started a jazz band, Sharrock wanted to play sax or drums, "but I couldn't afford either. And I had asthma, so I *knew* I couldn't play the saxophone."

So in 1960, Sharrock got his first guitar. The next year, with more courage than chops, Sharrock left for Boston's Berklee College of Music. "There were 26 guitarists enrolled, and I was the twenty-fifth. Then the twenty-sixth guy quit to play sax, so I was at the very bottom." Today, at 47, he still swears that "I don't like guitars; I like drums and I like Coltrane. People used to get mad at me when I'd get hired for gigs. I'd say, 'I ain't gonna play chords. That's guitar. I'm a horn player.'"

At Berklee, Sharrock nailed the essentials of theory and got into a band—but briefly. "We worked just one night at a coffeehouse in Cambridge," he says, chuckling over what ensued. "Sam Rivers and Tony Williams were in town and decided to sit in, and they destroyed us. They played 'Milestones' at a tempo I had never realized."

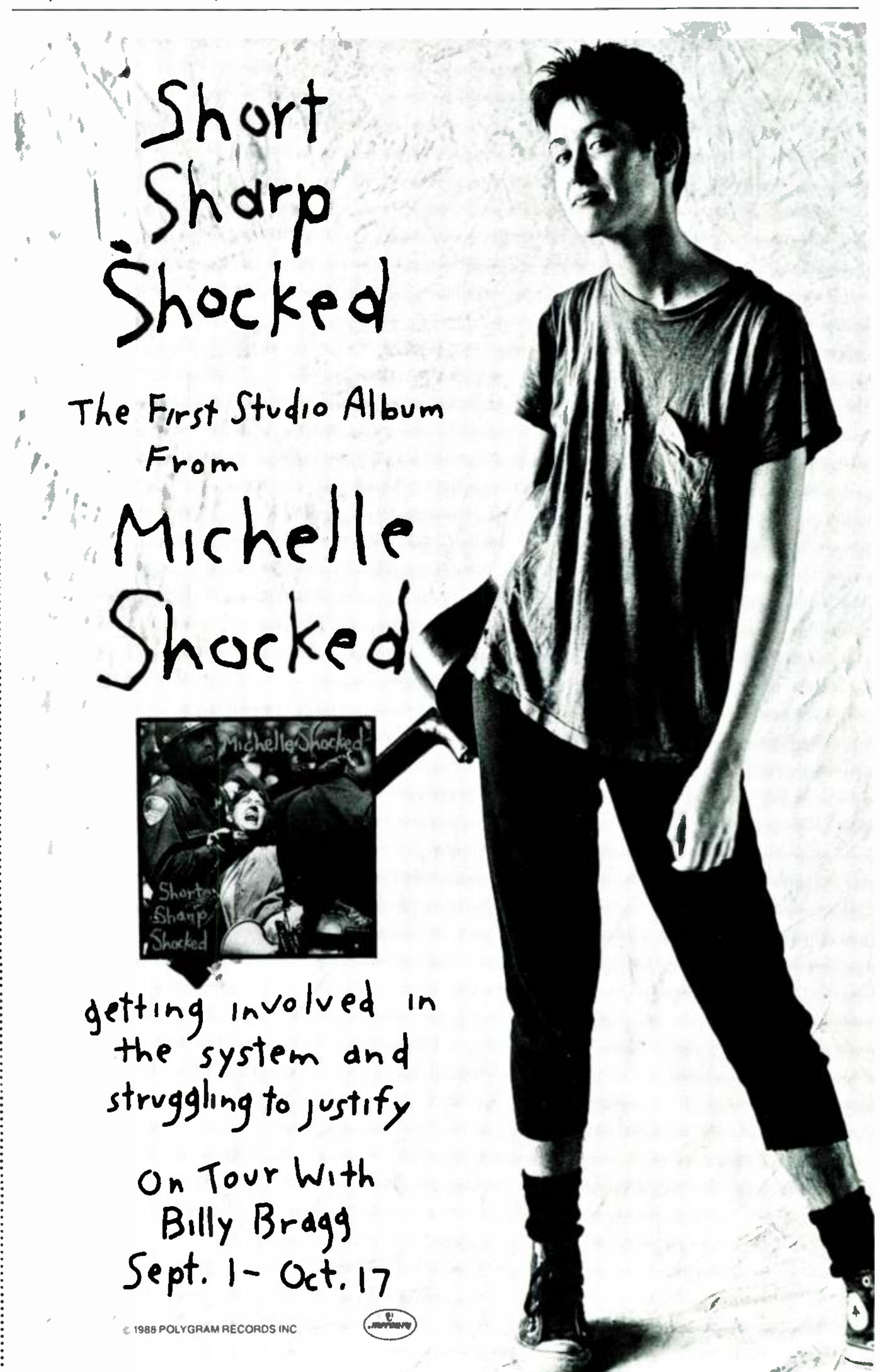
He split Berklee and headed to California in April '62, tangling around in the session scene and sleeping in a trailer with a slew of other hungry musicians. Then he moved to New York City. "When I first got there, I ran into Sun Ra on 125th Street and I asked to study with him," Sharrock recalls. "He said, 'Well, come by.' So I went to his place, and Pat Patrick, Marshall Allen and all these other heavies from his band were there. Sun Ra showed me two movies, and that was the lesson. Real weird. But while I was there, they got a call from Olatunji about a gig. I heard Pat saying, 'Yeah, I've got a guitar player here.' I said, 'He can't be talking about me.' That's how I ended up working with those guys. They were very nice to me, because I didn't know what the hell I was doing."

Practice, pick-up gigs and playing with Pharoah Sanders added polish, and Sharrock's distinctive style had emerged by the time Herbie Mann called in 1969. Mann is still delighted with the scrappy edges Sharrock put on his glossy jazz-pop. "It was quite a shock for my audience to hear Sonny Sharrock," the flutist/composer says. "At the time, I thought of Sonny as my John Coltrane, and I'd reached the point where I wanted to have some contrast in the band." Mann's audience had not. When Sharrock commenced to wail, Mann says, "the reaction was often hate, total hate."

Sharrock remembers one Florida jazz festival: "It was at a marina, and all these people came in yachts. In the middle of Herbie's set, Linda and I came out to do 'Black Woman' and they all sailed away." Sharrock played on Mann's *Live at the Whiskey A Go Go*, *Memphis Underground* and *Hold On, I'm Comin'* albums, Miles Davis' *Jack Johnson* and Don Cherry's *The Eternal Now* before embarking on the winding road that led back to Ossining in 1978.

Sharrock relaxed, remarried, and took day jobs. "I worked with disturbed kids for a while, which was very demanding. Then I got a job as a chauffeur. Not a bad gig," he says, smiling gently, "but not what I'm supposed to do."

As Bill Laswell will tell you, Sonny



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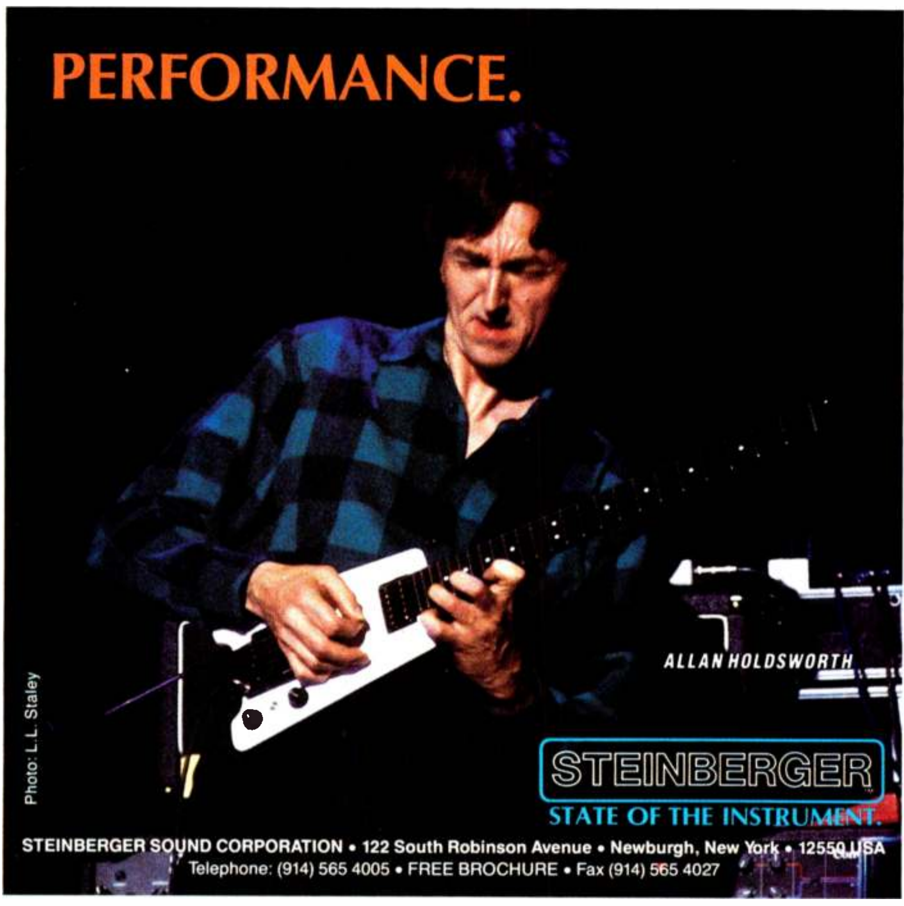

Sharrock *is* supposed to make music of uncommon stripe and unbridled passion. That's why the bassist/producer asked Sharrock to play on *Memory Serves*, his co-op band Material's 1979 album. A string of Material gigs around New York followed; then Sharrock was putting his own bands together again. Two years ago, he turned in his limousine keys.

These days the guitarist is doing double duty with Last Exit and with the Sonny Sharrock Band. The former gets in your face like a fast freight. When Laswell, drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson, saxist Peter Brotzmann and Sharrock took a Zurich stage in February 1986, "it was the first time we'd ever played a note together," he says with obvious glee. "We did our first record when we'd been together two weeks." For sheer force, freedom and audacity, the *Last Exit* LP may be unrivaled. "There's never been a rehearsal or discussion," Sharrock says of the band. "Last Exit just walks onstage and plays."

Laswell was also the catalyst for a Ginger Baker tour in '86 that featured Sharrock, and for Sharrock's first literally solo album, *Guitar.* Now there's the Sharrock Band's first album, *Seize the Rainbow,* which straddles jazz, rock and plain unearthly places. Like *Guitar* and Last Exit's three records, it's on the Laswell-supported Enemy label. Sharrock's players are young lions: bassist Melvin Gibbs, drummers Pheeroan Aklaff and Abe Speller. "They're killers, and I love 'em," says Sharrock, "but this band's not like Last Exit. I want my music to have direction. I would never tell anyone what to play, but I do tell them what a song's about and how we should approach it."

Unfortunately, Sharrock's band has only played once in the U.S. Even Last Exit, despite successful tours of Europe and Japan, has only performed three times in the States. It's the same old story: "I could take a lot of gigs, but these are great musicians and they deserve to be paid decently," Sharrock says. "There just seems to be more interest in this music overseas."

He serenely shrugs at the suggestion that the more rock-inclined, double-drum sound of his new band could bring wider acceptance at home. "I've never thought about that," he says. "I know my wife wishes I would, but I can't think about what's gonna make people get along with my music. They can stay the fuck home for all that I care. That's the only way I can feel about it. After all this, I can't turn my back on what I am, what I've been." M

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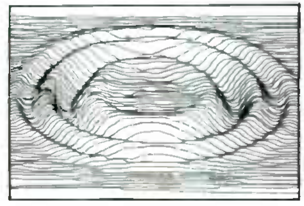

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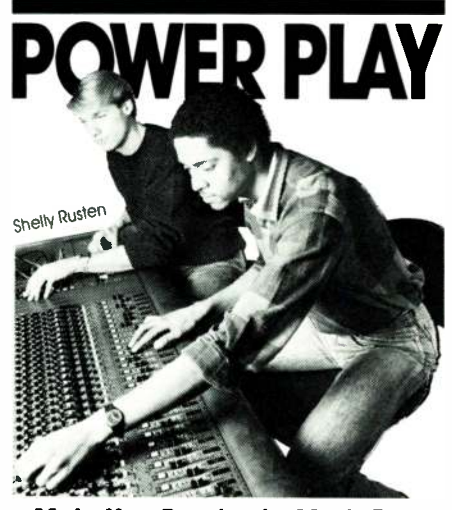
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SATELLITES

from page 58

ballad on the album, because we're not exactly known for our ballads. Ian MacLagan helped a lot on that one too."

MacLagan, the keyboard player with the late and much lamented Faces, is another one of those musicians whose introduction to the Satellites was "like meeting a long-lost brother." When the Satellites were recording overdubs in Austin, it just seemed to make sense for MacLagan to fly in to play piano, drink beer and visit Ronnie Lane, the Faces' bass player who now lives in Austin.

"The first night we went out and had a few drinks, went back to the studio and played Faces songs, just me and him, and his songs too," says Richards. "I was pretty familiar with his two solo records. He was amazed. I was playing stuff he'd forgotten. The next day we got down to business. I was at the control board and I had an ear-to-ear grin the whole time, because here was Ian MacLagan playing on my record. He did three songs in one day. Just killed."

Logically enough, the Georgia Satellites all come from Georgia. Baird's father was a scientist who worked on the Polaris submarine, divorced Baird's mother when Dan was three, went to work for Lockheed, then became a tennis pro in Austin. Now he's installing solar panels for missionaries in Zaire. His mom was basically a housewife.

Richards was born in north Georgia, but moved around a lot because his father was in the Army. When he was in second grade, the family moved to New Jersey, where he had the novel experience of going to school with black people. When his father was assigned to Vietnam in 1966 as an advisor, he took the opportunity to grow his hair long. It got short again when his father returned, but the damage had been done and young Rick was hooked on rock 'n' roll.

Baird and Richards first played together on December 8, 1980, the night John Lennon died. Utterly bummed, they decided the only thing to do was have a rock 'n' roll wake and, lo, they discovered some serious chemistry. They became Keith & the Satellites, then the Satellites, and had the good fortune to become more or less the house band at Hedgens Rock 'n' Roll Tavern, a legendary den of iniquity for renegade musicians who rebelled at playing the "nacho circuit" where you had to play Top 40 all night. The lineup

continued on page 114

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MONSTERS from page 36

Plain Dealer's sextagenarian rock critic, wearing a flowered dress and straw hat. Concerned for the band, she dispenses vital dietary advice as she drifts over the hospitality spread: "In this weather, don't eat meat or anything with mayonnaise. But you can eat cheese, because even if it goes bad, it doesn't matter. That's how it's supposed to be."

As these tips are considered, Eddie Van Halen and Sammy Hagar walk in to congratulate the Scorps on their survival. Sammy's a blur of pastels and California blonde; Eddie's wearing the same pair of doofy beach jams he'll wear onstage—and his beaten Kramer, which he plays the hell out of even while he slouches and engages Matthias Jabs in some serious gabbing. They soon leave to prepare for their set, and the sound of Eddie's unamplified strings recedes down the hall.

Suddenly that's replaced by the wailing of a wounded Sasquatch. No. It's coming from Van Halen's dressing room. Amplifiers are being tortured. Instruments beaten till they scream. No prisoners are being taken. And Eddie Van Halen, Sammy Hagar and Mike Anthony are having a little pre-show jam just inside the door. Sammy and Eddie decide to go for it, harmonizing into feedback as their fingers skitter up their guitars' necks, bending and pulling the same notes like Siamese twins. For "just fuckin' around," as Eddie puts it, their level of communication is pretty astounding.

But then it's showtime. Van Halen's set is brilliant entertainment. There's Comic Relief, as bassist Mike Anthony slips, drops to his butt and rolls to his feet without missing a note of "Summer Nights"; Action, as Sammy Hagar relentlessly races 'round, singing and playing his heathen heart out; *Spinal Tap* Excess, as Alex Van Halen's drum kit lifts, spins and starts discharging fireworks during his thunderous solo; Melodrama, as a pair of pyrotechnicians nearly tackle and drag a hapless security guard away from an explosive charge seconds before it would have mashed his eardrums to papaya; and Beauty, as Eddie fires through a breathtaking solo that begins with a flair of hammering, flows into delicate baroque counterpoint, becomes "Eruption"—the solo every 14-year-old guitarist *must* learn—and emerges as a fantasy for organ and harpsichord, all plucked from his fretboard. The songs run from current hits to Hagar's "I Can't Drive 55," way back to the first Van Halen album's "Running With the Devil," "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love" and "You Really Got Me." Before the encore—Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" and Led Zep's "Rock and Roll"—Hagar addresses the crowd: "It's been the hottest day of the Monsters tour, and you fucking people must really love goddamn rock 'n' roll to be here." So must Van Halen.

"It's quite a responsibility to close the show. More than I even thought it was gonna be, because of the heat factor," Sammy Hagar says afterwards.

"And the nine hours," adds Eddie Van Halen. "It's tough because the kids are so damned burnt. That's basically it. It doesn't matter what time we play. I always enjoy playing. But the kids are half-burnt by the time we get up there."

"They seem to stay to see us, and they're into it, but we know they really have to dig way down to do it," says Hagar. "And if we came out and did a bad show, it would show more than if it were indoors with just one opening act. There we could get away with a lot more."

"Yeah, if we get boring and just start fucking around, people

continued on page 122

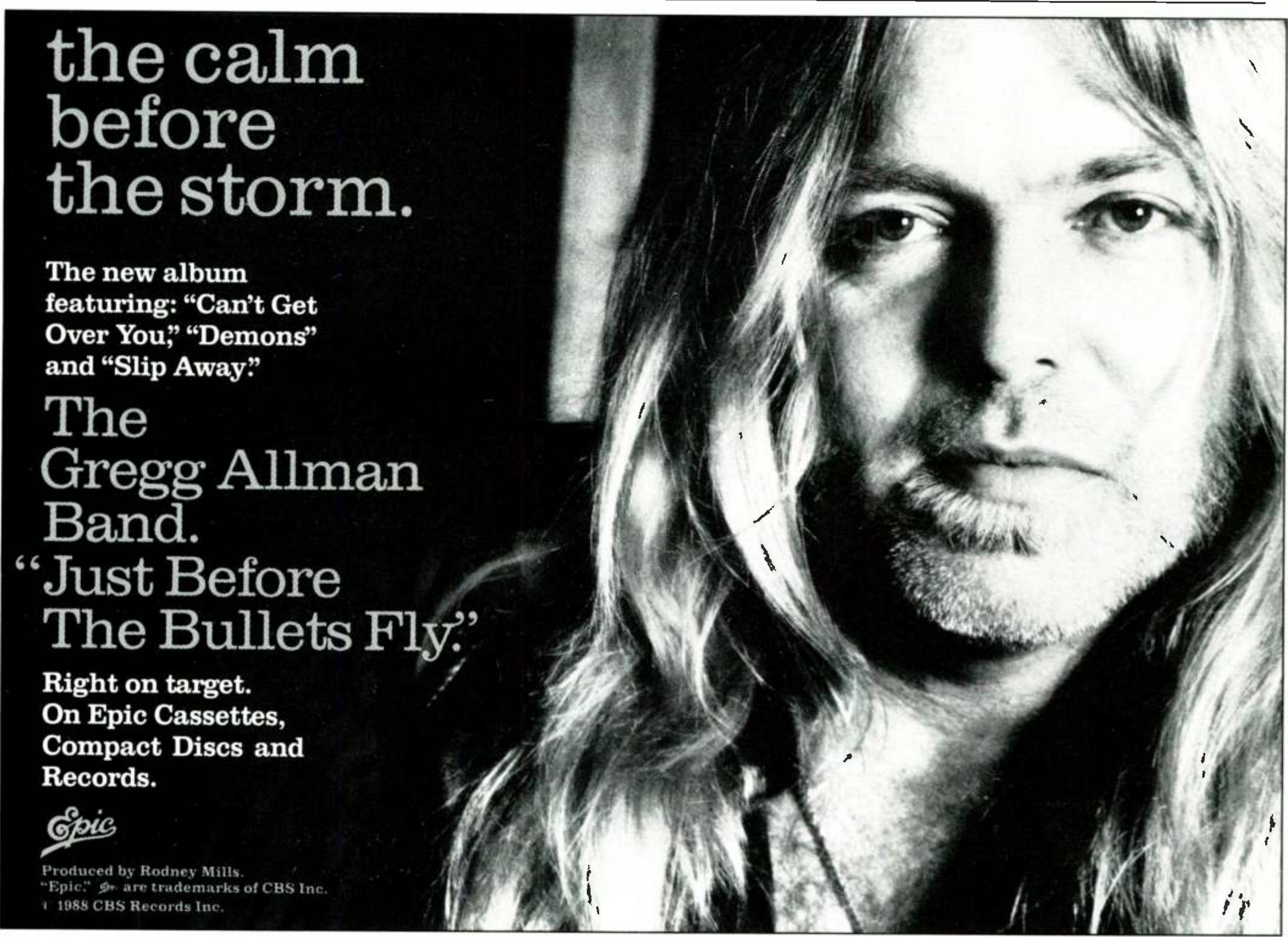

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PHOTO BY GEORGE DUBOSE/LFI

Bring Billy Gibbons His Burden

by Stanley Booth

The first time ZZ Top left Texas was to play at the 1971 Memphis Blues Festival. "We showed up the afternoon of the show," Billy Gibbons recalled, "and we wound up staying in the Linden Lodge there on Linden and Second, all huddled up in one room. [Manager Bill] Ham says, 'Let's take a walk; Beale Street's just a block up,' and I said okay. So here we were cuttin' down the sidewalk, he's talkin'—*foom*—a big dirt clod flies past. He says, 'Whoa, wait a minute.' There was this black guy and this woman screamin' at each other, throwin' dirt clods at one another. Ham kinda laughed, he said, 'Only in Memphis. Beale Street. I'm glad to see not too much has changed.' That night we're standin' in the wings waiting to go on, and Ham taps me on the shoulder, and he says, 'Man, are you seein' what I'm seein'?' The guy throwin' the dirt clods was onstage. It was Johnny Woods and his wife, and they were gettin' along famously."

I was at the Festival that night, and as I told Gibbons, I would regret having left without hearing this unknown band, ZZ Top, had I not gone with Furry Lewis to an East Memphis society party where we were thrown out. We ended up early the next morning drunk in a friend's kitchen. "I want to pick 'When I Lay My Burden Down,'" Furry announced. "My guitar's in the car—please bring me my burden."

"That says it. Bring it on," Gibbons said. "Walter Baldwin, my old Houston buddy who had moved to Tennessee, was responsible for taking ZZ Top's first album over to Steadman Mathews, a producer of the blues show. That was our first out-of-state gig. After that show I made friends with the Memphis faction of vintage guitar freaks. A Memphis guitarist backstage said, 'I see you're into the old shit, you

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got that old Fender amp and that old Gibson guitar. We locals need to meet you cats.' And that's what started the Memphis connection."

The acts from that Memphis Blues Festival, including Furry and ZZ, went a day or so later to New Orleans.

"We were playin'," Gibbons said, "and I noticed Dusty had this rather gleeful look—or maybe *worried*—'cause Furry Lewis was marching—he was doing a stagger-step toward Dusty, waving a white handkerchief, comin' from the wings, right out onstage. Here's these young white guys, y'know, gone do a *show*—Dusty says, 'Man, what next?'"

That day in New Orleans, ZZ Top (Gibbons, Dusty Hill and Frank Beard) had one album on the London label, made for about $12,000. Nearly 20 years later they are one of the most popular acts in the world and have sold more blues records than anyone ever. How did they go wrong?

Let us examine their lineage. Billy's father, Fred Gibbons, a transplanted New Yorker whose talents at keyboards and arranging made him a top Houston society bandleader and brought him work with film studios in Hollywood and big bands in Las Vegas, gave Billy a Gibson Melody Maker guitar and a Fender Champ amplifier for Christmas in 1963, 33 days after Jack Kennedy was killed in Dallas. Billy had become 14 on December 12. Unlike most blues players, from B.B. King on, who perfected their craft in the face of their families' insistence that they stop that racket and get a job, Billy had a father who encouraged him not to do something else, but to do what he wanted better. Fred Gibbons knew that a musician could make a good living. The Gibbons family lived in Tanglewood, which has been called "the second nicest neighborhood in Houston."

One thing they had no shortage of in Houston's better neighborhoods during the '50s and '60s was maids, black women who would come in to cook and clean. The maid at Billy's house was called Big Stella to distinguish her from her daughter, Little Stella, who took Billy and his younger sister Pam to see Little Richard.

"Everybody learned it from the yard man," Memphis record producer Jim Dickinson said, speaking of his southern white musical colleagues. It is true that many of the great ones, including Jimmy Rodgers, Hank Williams and Sam Phillips, have named specific black men of the laboring class who taught and inspired them. Gibbons may be the first lucky enough to have learned from the maid's daughter. "Little Stella was always buying the records and that's what we were listening to," he was quoted saying in Deborah Frost's book *ZZ Top: Bad & World Wide*. "All the Little Richard stuff, Larry Williams' 'Short Fat Fanny,' Jimmy Reed, T-Bone Walker, B.B. King, the usual line-up of R&B stars." The boogie disease dropped Billy like a shot. A classmate at Houston's Lee High School—Don Lampton, who went on to play rhythm guitar in Fever Tree—said, "I don't know too many people that at 14 can fall down on their knees in front of a bunch of other kids and do James Brown's 'Please Please Please' and pull it off."

High school found Billy in a band called the Moving Sidewalks, who had a regional hit with "99th Floor," a song Billy wrote in his eleventh grade math class. When the Sidewalks graduated they were playing regular club gigs in Texas and Louisiana. They opened for the Doors in Houston and played in Dallas, Houston and San Antonio on a show that starred Jimi Hendrix. Eric Clapton heard the band rehearsing at the Catacombs, a basement club in Houston, walked onstage and shook Gibbons' hand. None of these events brought overnight success. In time the Sidewalks became ZZ Top, changing personnel early on to settle into a trio format with Gibbons and two hardcore blues players, bassist Dusty Hill and drummer Frank Beard, Dallas high school dropouts who'd played with Dusty's brother Rocky in a band called American Blues. They also acquired what may have been a vital ingredient: their Svengali, Bill Ham.

CHARLYN ZLOTNIK

Ham, who could double for Kenny Rogers, had had a single on Dot Records, had done promotion work for the label, knew Pat Boone in Dallas, had worked with Huey Meaux. Gibbons: "We had crossed paths when Ham was in Houston, traveling with John Mayall. Mayall had come to town doin' a little one-

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What do ZZ Top and Muddy Waters have in common? "Three chords. To expound on that would be an injustice—to get too far beyond the scope of the original three chords."

man promo tour, the Bluesbreakers were startin' to happen—Mayall requested a jam session in Houston and we volunteered to fill the bill. After it was over we went back and made acquaintance with Ham, who was showin' Mayall around the city, acquaintin' him with what was happenin', and a few months later we approached Ham to accept a role in a management position. Here was a guy that had his priorities in the same place we did, a man that loved them blues. And it's been like that ever since. He writes with us, he'll get right down there and scratch with us."

Ham had done a study of Colonel Parker, that erratic Dutchman, and it is easy to see the Colonel's (I am unable to bring myself to refer to him simply as "Colonel," without the article, the way Priscilla does, as if he were named that, like a dog) method in much of Ham's madness. Ham has over the years severely limited access to ZZ Top—they still have not performed live on television—and having ZZ appear onstage with livestock is reminiscent of Parker's master stroke, the parade down the Las Vegas Strip by the Elvis Presley Midget Fan Club. But Ham, unlike the Colonel, cared about the music.

DAVID REDFERN/RETNA

ZZ Top's first winter was 1969, the time of Vietnam, Manson and Altamont, the season of the witch, when Dusty dropped and broke the wine he and Frank had bought with their last few coins. Two years later they were playing with the Memphis Blues Show with acts who did not make a living from music. It was not until 1974, when ZZ Top came to Ardent Studios in Memphis, that lightning struck. Terry Manning, an engineer at Ardent since the '60s, who had worked with Led Zeppelin and made one of the better Furry Lewis recordings, engineered and mixed *Tres Hombres*, and for the first time the band started receiving serious royalties. (Would that Manning had bestowed such riches on Furry.) Old Ardent hands say that for the first three years Ham would, for instance, tell Manning to turn up the guitar on a cassette tape, and Manning would twist a few useless controls to satisfy him. The important thing is, Ham and ZZ Top knew what they wanted to hear.

ZZ Top were playing 300 nights a year, a regular blues player's schedule, but with a difference. According to Frost, "On June 9, 1974, they broke Elvis' record at the Nashville State Fairgrounds. On September 23, 1974, they broke the Rolling Stones' record at the Long Beach Arena in California. On July 3, 1975, they outdrew Leon Russell in his Tulsa hometown, at the State Fairgrounds. On July 26, 1975, they broke Led Zeppelin's record at New Orleans' City Park Stadium."

Their next album, *Fandango!*, one side recorded live at the Warehouse in New Orleans, the other recorded the same way, it would appear, at Ardent—contained the classic "Tush," and Top graduated to another music-business weight class. They supported their 1976 album *Tejas* with a world tour that included, live and onstage, a buffalo, a Texas longhorn, a wolf, five buzzards and a nest of snakes that died of the vibes. No act had ever carried such a load—about 75 tons of equipment, not counting livestock—and after that tour, ZZ Top did not work for three years.

ZZ are part of an American tradition that links bluesmen like Robert Johnson to rock 'n' rollers like Chuck Berry and the Beach Boys: They sing about cars and girls. "One of the mainstays that my partners and I share," Gibbons told me, "is a love of fine cars and...I almost said fast women. We stumbled into the image and it solidified. But we've got a new car that's gonna stun you."

Irving Berlin said that the hardest thing about being a success is you have to keep on being a success. "Um, pretty scary," Billy said. "All of a sudden a little band from Texas ain't so little."

"This Texas boogie band enjoyed a vogue during 1975 and 1976, when its concerts broke attendance records set by the Beatles, among others. But on record, ZZ Top was never more than a poor man's Lynyrd Skynyrd—some rural feeling but mostly just numbing guitar drive. Rock 'n' roll can be mindless fun, but it never deserved to be this empty headed."

– Rolling Stone Record Guide

Few artists realize, when they pick up their crayons or their ukuleles, that when they grow up and go public they will be considered fair targets for personal insults. *"Deguello"*—a Mexican expression meaning "no quarter"—it was what Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie heard, waiting inside the Alamo—"was a turning point for me," Gibbons said. "That was the first release following that three-year disappearing act, and so much had changed on the music scene. Disco had come and gone, that scene in England had just wiped out everything as we knew it and left it with a really different stroke, and there was such a feeling going on at the time, I don't know if words could describe it; all I knew was I wanted a piece of it. Because music was getting fun again, and that's what came out of it. I shared that with my partners, and I knew that it was true when we got together and discussed it, not having seen each other for a year. They each felt it too.

"Old Lester Bangs, while he was alive, gave me a high compliment. He played the album for some of his younger pals, didn't tell them it was ZZ Top, and they liked it. That blindfold

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test says it. You can tell people, 'Dig this, it's the new so-and-so,' and if they happen to be happening at the moment, everybody says, 'Oh, yeah, it's great.' But that was a high compliment."

The albums that followed, *El Loco*, *Eliminator* and *Afterburner*—the last two multi-platinum megahits, their appeal supercharged by the clever videos of Randy Newman's cousin Tim—have given ZZ Top the power to bestow boons, and that is how we happened to meet. "Last summer, as time would have it," Gibbons recalled, "we were permitted to drive to Clarksdale [Mississippi] to pay a visit to Sid Graves at the Delta Blues Museum—and that particular afternoon he advised us that he was heading to Stovall Plantation, 12 miles up the road, to inspect the cabin of Muddy Waters, because the highway department had requested its being dismantled for safety reasons. It'd been recently hit by a tornado, and the Stovall family were quite concerned over the interest suddenly given the cabin. We did indeed drive down there and while we were there I was handed a log out of a stack of discarded roof timber that had caved in, and it was on the way back to Memphis the thought popped up to turn the log into a guitar. The Pyramid guitar company in Memphis accepted the commission to take this battered piece of cypress—which really held no promise for much of anything at that point—and transformed it into this rather appropriate symbol." ZZ Top then donated the guitar, white enamel with a representation of the Mississippi River down the neck, one of two Pyramid made from the piece of cabin wood, to the Museum, with civic ceremonies featuring Clarksdale's mayor, sheriff, chief of police and ZZ Top, before an audience including two battle-strength platoons of journalists.

The event's purpose was to launch the Blues Museum's million-dollar fund drive (tax-deductible donations may be sent to the Delta Blues Museum/Muddy Waters Memorial Fund, Carnegie Public Library, 114 Delta, Clarksdale, MS 38614) and to honor the memory of Waters, who had played a number of Texas dates on ZZ's Worldwide Texas Tour. "When we came down to do some home dates we were just wondering what flavorful addition we could include to really embrace the feeling that we were trying to give back to our home state," Gibbons told Timothy White. (See sidebar.) "The blues being such a big part not only of our music but of everybody's music in Texas, Muddy Waters seemed to be a logical choice. The band was tiptop. He was doing some of his best playing. It was really a very moving experience."

At the Clarksdale ceremony Gibbons said, "We've been fans of what goes on here in the Delta for a long, long time and it's with great respect we would like to make this official by presenting the guitar that was constructed out of Muddy Waters' house, as a focus of the spirit of the American art form we've known as the blues."

I'm glad I went to Clarksdale. I had never seen a southern community with the sense to increase its stature by recognizing its true nature. And later on, remembering Sam Phillips' story of how he campaigned to buy uniforms for his high school band, the civic scene seemed to make more sense.

"Our true intent," Gibbons told me a few weeks later, "was not to do anything more than a little illumination on what the museum stands for. As long as the originators are still around, the interpreters better fold their arms and be smilin', because they're very lucky. So many art forms die, and then it's a matter of guesswork and nobody can ever be sure if it's right."

These days Gibbons divides his time between Houston, Memphis and the rest of the world. I suspect that one reason he likes Memphis, besides hearing Rufus Thomas on the radio,

continued next page

How Tres Hombres Discovered the Electric Blues

by Timothy White

It's a balmy night in Memphis. Billy Gibbons, Dusty Hill and Frank Beard are spending the evening in Ardent Studios, recording site of so many ZZ Top albums—only this evening their minds are on the life and timeless repertoire of the Father of the Electric Blues, Muddy Waters.

Dressed in sharp serge suits and seated in a casual half-circle in one of the control rooms, the three gentlemen fondly reminisce about their initiation into the blues and their friendship with Muddy. All the while Billy picks and strums, for the very first time, on the gleaming Muddy Wood Instrument, just delivered from the nearby workshop of the Pyramid Guitar Company.

"Feels pretty good," comments Billy, meaning both the guitar and the commemorative gesture it represents.

MUSICIAN: From the beginning circa 1969, ZZ Top was a regular attraction on the southwest blues circuit, sharing bills with blues greats like Muddy Waters. How come?

BEARD: When we first got started we just got booked out on tours with so many of these people. We had cut our first record, which was *Salt Lick*, and the people putting this tour together obviously thought we were a black band. It was great; I mean, it was a poker game that traveled, and when it was your turn to go up and play you left the game, went up and did your 30 minutes, and came back down to the cards! [*laughter*] Everybody, Bukka White, Freddie King and the rest, each had a big wad of money and a gun.

GIBBONS: That was the first time we *met* Muddy Waters—in Burlington, Iowa. This was a show that was part of a regular

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is that he gets to hang out with the likes of Albert King, whom he had just left when we talked. "I gave him this guitar—his birthday was last month, and I had this guitar layin' around, and I took it over. He said, 'Strike me an E on that piano.' My next note was the proper, schoolbook way of tuning a guitar. He said, 'Man, that's all I need. I take it my own way from here.'"

Guitarists like King and Gibbons worked for years to get sounds now obtainable by any teenager with enough money to buy a Rockman amp, and I asked Gibbons how he felt about that. "The Rockman," he said, "was the missing bridge between those with and those without. And we are talking about Tone with a capital T. I think it has gone unheralded as just that. I think that with today's global marketing measures it's very easy to pigeonhole this thing and call it another fuzzbox. But you get the gamut using it, from serious jazzers to 16-year-old USA in the bedroom, just pluggin' in for the first time. It delivers—mammoth—on your doorstep: Tone."

"But that was something you got without the Rockman."

"Brother, I tell you, where was he when I needed him, right. But it's funny, that bridge—let's just call it what it is—it is a convenience, but the real test is not to rely on it and run the risk of becoming homogeneous. There's one saving grace, and I know you can connect with this. I'm a contrarian to the saying, 'You can have too much of a good thing.' I don't think you can."

Far from connecting, I was getting a bit lost. "So," I asked, "do you use a Rockman?"

"*Yeah*—in fact, I don't know how the manufacturer feels about it, but I may be one of the few guys that leapfrogs 'em, y'know, plugs one into the next one which goes into the next one, and so on and so forth. And you really can get way out."

But how far out will Billy Gibbons go? As far as the Fairlight?

"That's the Ferrari," Gibbons told me, "of modern computer musical instruments, the one instrument that contains enough sophistication to step beyond being shackled to it. This sucker is deep. I always figured if ZZ Top gets involved with synthesizers, or shall we say electronic music, I want to get my hands on the one that sounds like garbage cans. This thing is so damn deep that we can't get past it sounding like garbage."

Dusty Hill, Frank Beard and Billy Gibbons hold the Muddy Wood Instrument aloft.

JOHN PEDEN

I mentioned this to producer Jim Dickinson, whom Gibbons seems to regard as a shaman, and he said, "Billy's being modest. He may be naive about some of the things he's doing with the Fairlight, but his application is far from naive."

"What pisses me off," Gibbons said, "is I waited and waited and all the time—see, it's like anything else, in order to learn the big stuff you had to've started with the simple stuff. But that made too much damn sense. So we're playin' catch-up."

Thinking of being behind the times (my constant location), I asked Gibbons what he thought of the tendency for young players to play as fast as possible. "There is, of course, room for all of it," he said, "and what's encouraging is to finally run out of space—you know, you get so many notes between the lines on sheet music, and there's no more paper to write on, so

continued next page

blues itinerary we were booked on, but some of the other Delta bluesmen [on the Memphis Blues Caravan] had come to Burlington for an appearance that was college-sponsored at a time when blues was making its way across the country's campuses. This was in 1973.

We were driving ourselves and actually we were late arriving, and we hustled into the basement. Our fears of being late were instantly allayed because the card game was still in full swing and *nobody* was willing to stop the game to go up and start playing yet. When we got there Freddie King recognized us and stood up, quizzing us about where we'd been last. As we looked around and peered into the next room, we recognized Muddy Waters and his band, playing cards on a guitar case stretched across a coupla chairs.

BEARD: It was a Fender Bass case.

HILL: If you're gonna play poker backstage you *got* to play on a *bass* case, know what I mean?

GIBBONS: We were so excited because it was our first face-to-face meeting with Muddy Waters, and we asked Freddie King if he could introduce us 'cause we had a coupla records out that were doing okay and we were feeling pretty good about it. So Freddie—after showing them his wad of cash to let them know who was boss—he ushered us in and said, "Excuse me, Muddy, but these are several fellas who are on the show tonight. I'd like you to meet them. ZZ Top."

Muddy smiled for about half of a second, turned and said, "*Pleased to meet-cha*"...

HILL: ...And then he immediately went right back to the poker game—which was, after all, the business at hand. [*laughter*] That'll get your ego in proper perspective!

BEARD: Another interesting thing about that night's show was that we learned the Freddie King Method of Motivating a Drummer. We were standing beside the stage and Freddie had done his final song, which was a shuffle. He didn't feel that the drummer was pushing it quite hard enough, and after the curtain went down Freddie walked over and just kicked the bejesus out of him. So when the curtain came back up for the encore this guy was now cookin', he was *really* shuffling [*booming laughter*], and had certainly picked up a lot of tempo!

Me, I was just hoping that Billy hadn't been paying too much attention to this technique of Freddie's.

MUSICIAN: What was your original exposure to the blues?

HILL: Probably like a lot of people, when I was young I'd listen to radio, especially late at night. Some of the X stations out of Mexico reached all the way past Dallas, and they had a lot of

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where do you go, you have to go to *tone*—it may be the next frontier—because after the technical expertise code—shall we say—is cracked, the really impressive moments cease to be such. Let me see if I can unravel what I'm thinking: Guy walks in, plays a bunch of rapid passages. Two years later, 30 people have done it. Another year later, everybody does it, and it's like—ah, no big deal. Then you get a guy that does it with tone or taste or a little quirk. Give me one note or a hundred, as long as you dredge up emotions."

At this point I went off into a tirade about Whitesnake, whom I had seen in Jacksonville, Florida, "where," as the lead singer said, "all the women have big tits." After confessing to Gibbons that for the next week I had shouted, "Tipper Gore is right!" I observed that the Rolling Stones had never been like that. With the Stones, Gibbons said, "we're talking at least some semblance of restraint. Taste and Tone: Frank and Dusty, my partners, concur with this one hundred percent. That is one of the reasons we've stayed together for 20 years. At the bottom of all of it you've got a deep love of music and a robust sense of respect."

"But ZZ Top appeals to at least part of the same audience as some heavy-metal bands—how come?"

"I used to wonder, and an engineer came up to me—real analytical—and he said, 'You guys play eighth-note chugs slightly behind the beat. I listen to you guys do ballads, and they sound a hundred times heavier than if you played it right on top of the beat.' That's it. It's the weight. There was a time, keep in mind, the term heavy-metal was derogatory."

"Isn't it still? I intended it to be derogatory," I said. "What do ZZ Top and Muddy Waters have in common?" I asked then, because a Yankee editor had told me to, and I loves to serve.

"Three chords," Gibbons said, giving the question the proper amount of shrift. "To expound on that would be an injustice—to get too far beyond the scope of the original three chords. I have suddenly realized how much of an influence the Rolling Stones have been. On my music, on everybody's. I always kept in the back of my mind what they had done as a whole, but you get so used to hearing, 'influenced by the Rolling Stones,' it's like, you don't miss your water. Elvis left us, our kind-of-ground-breaking guide to what to do after 40—and now I'm sayin', 'Goddamn, please, Rollin' Stones, don't mess up, somebody gotta keep on, man.' I had always kept my admiration for Keith Richards from being verbalized, but it's quite evident that he is the musician here. He is a continual source of not only inspiration, but if the truth be known, I suspect that a lot more people draw from his insights as to interpreting this art form than will admit to it.

"He made a real apropros statement. He said, 'As long as I can just introduce some new twist to those same three chords, we'll stay in business.' He pointed out that Muddy Waters, Mississippi Fred McDowell, all these cats were doin' it till the day they died, and havin' a great time." M

blues shows with everybody. They played all the records you obviously couldn't hear on the Top 40 stations. It was an extremely strong influence on everybody that I knew who played rock with some blues in it. My brother Rocky and myself played a lot of it. The stations were very powerful, especially late at night when you're in bed and you're not supposed to be listening.

MUSICIAN: That's when the airwaves are real clear so the signal's coming in real strong, eh?

HILL: It came in like a sledgehammer! I mean, it was somewhere deep in Mexico and it was driven through your head so you didn't forget *anything*.

MUSICIAN: You guys came of age when the Texas music scene was wide open in the best sense. You got the blues influences both over the radio and in person-to-person connections.

HILL: Right. In the local Dallas bands, all the musicians gave each of the best blues songs different, distinctive treatments. That was a good environment to jam in and sharpen your playing. Then later on I had an opportunity to play with Jimmy Reed—I played bass and carried his bottle—and it was great. I also played for a good while with Freddie King.

MUSICIAN: Frank, what's the first Muddy Waters record that you heard and got a big kick from?

BEARD: Oh, it was probably "Hoochie Coochie Man." I guess I was three, four years old, crawling across the fields.

MUSICIAN: Muddy cut that song in the winter of 1954. Actually Willie Dixon wrote it and figured it'd be a good tune for Muddy.

GIBBONS: Willie Dixon served up a wealth of material for a lot of the Chess artists, and Muddy Waters certainly had a heyday while dipping into the bucket of blues tunes that Willie had. They're some of the most colorful poetry you could ask for, just to read them. Very inspirational.

We've done a number of his things, like "Mellow Down Easy" on *Fandango!* In fact we played *with* him; we opened a little club date for Willie in 1971 at Liberty Hall in Dallas.

MUSICIAN: Now, how did Muddy Waters come to open for you on a number of dates during your 1976 Worldwide Texas Tour?

GIBBONS: We had kept up a loose friendship through the years, and when Muddy would play at a place down on Rush Street in Chicago called Mr. Kelly's, we'd always take time to go and see him. It was a real uptown scene, a concert setting that was far removed from the Southside clubs. But we caught him a number of times because we'd work up the street...

So when we came down to Texas to do some home dates that year, we were just wondering what flavorful addition could we include to really embrace the feeling that we were trying to give back to our home state. And the blues being such a big part of not only our music but everybody's music in Texas, Muddy Waters seemed to be a logical choice.

MUSICIAN: Billy, was there an opportunity at any point to sit down with Muddy informally and have him show you a few things about his guitar style?

GIBBONS: There was always moments to catch, and back in those days it was thought to be questionable who could wear the badge of the blues. And I think the motivation for us was "Well, we're gonna get this thing but we better watch." So every chance you got you'd sneak a peek when you could. One of my favorite licks of Muddy's was on "Rollin' Stone"...

BEARD: ...And you can hear it on our "Brown Sugar," from our first album.

GIBBONS: That was our best stolen riff, directly out of the Muddy catalogue. See, not only was his singing the most powerful thing you could ask for, but he had a top-flight band at all times, and really employed the inventors of this stuff. Some of the inversions of his, like that famous reversed seventh chord [*he illustrates on the Muddy Wood Instrument*]—all of that was so definitive in his work.

MUSICIAN: Another contribution that Muddy made to the blues and rock 'n' roll was his brilliant slide guitar.

GIBBONS: The slide from the Delta had a number of faces. Muddy seemed to prefer a stinging approach. Later on, when the Telecaster was his main axe, he'd grind on the back pickup and just *sting* it. It was in direct contrast to Elmore James, who

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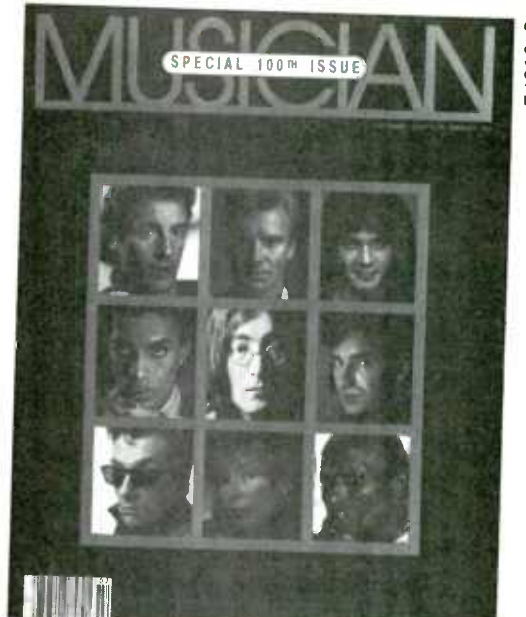

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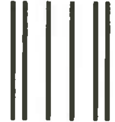

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had a rounder, fuller sound which was a little more mellow. The vibrato, that left-hand wiggle that Muddy Waters employed, was enough to make your blood run cold. It did just what he wanted it to do. Whether or not he invented it was beside the point. He had a thing that was definitely his and it worked. For those fortunate enough to have seen *The Last Waltz*, you can actually see him at work on "Mannish Boy," and all I can say is watch the left hand closely, because it's *fast*.

As for ZZ Top, the brief slide track on "Sharp-Dressed Man" is the flip side of Muddy's stinging bit. It's the slow, oozing quality the slide can give you. We have not only been fans of the blues for a long time, but we've really tried to study and deliver with some kind of forceful feeling. And then there's "Just Got Paid" [on *Rio Grande Mud*], which slides around considerably.

But Muddy had the pathbreaking gift, with his slide style and with his inversions. As simple as it all is, it gets you where it needs to, and causes your foot to start tapping.

MUSICIAN: Frank, did you have a favorite drummer that Muddy Waters played with, Francey Clay or somebody like that?

BEARD: More than Francey, it was probably Fred Below.

GIBBONS: Is that "Five Below Zero" Below?

BEARD: Oh yeah, and he's the most noted of Muddy's drummers. I think he did "Hoochie Coochie Man" and he also did "I Just Want to Make Love to You," which are the definitive Muddy songs. So I guess he'd be my favorite.

MUSICIAN: Dusty, how about a favorite bassist?

HILL: [*winking*] Well, since I wasn't playing with him, I'd say Willie Dixon. He played on "Just to Be With You," and it was pretty heavy.

GIBBONS: Johnny Winter certainly deserves mention in this conversation because he led the way for so many with his blues guitar interpretations, and certainly with what he was experiencing first-hand as well. We were immediately able to grasp the music through Johnny's performances in Beaumont and elsewhere. The way he did it was something; he ripped it up.

MUSICIAN: Of course, Johnny went on to make the *Hard Again* and *I'm Ready* albums with Muddy in 1977-78.

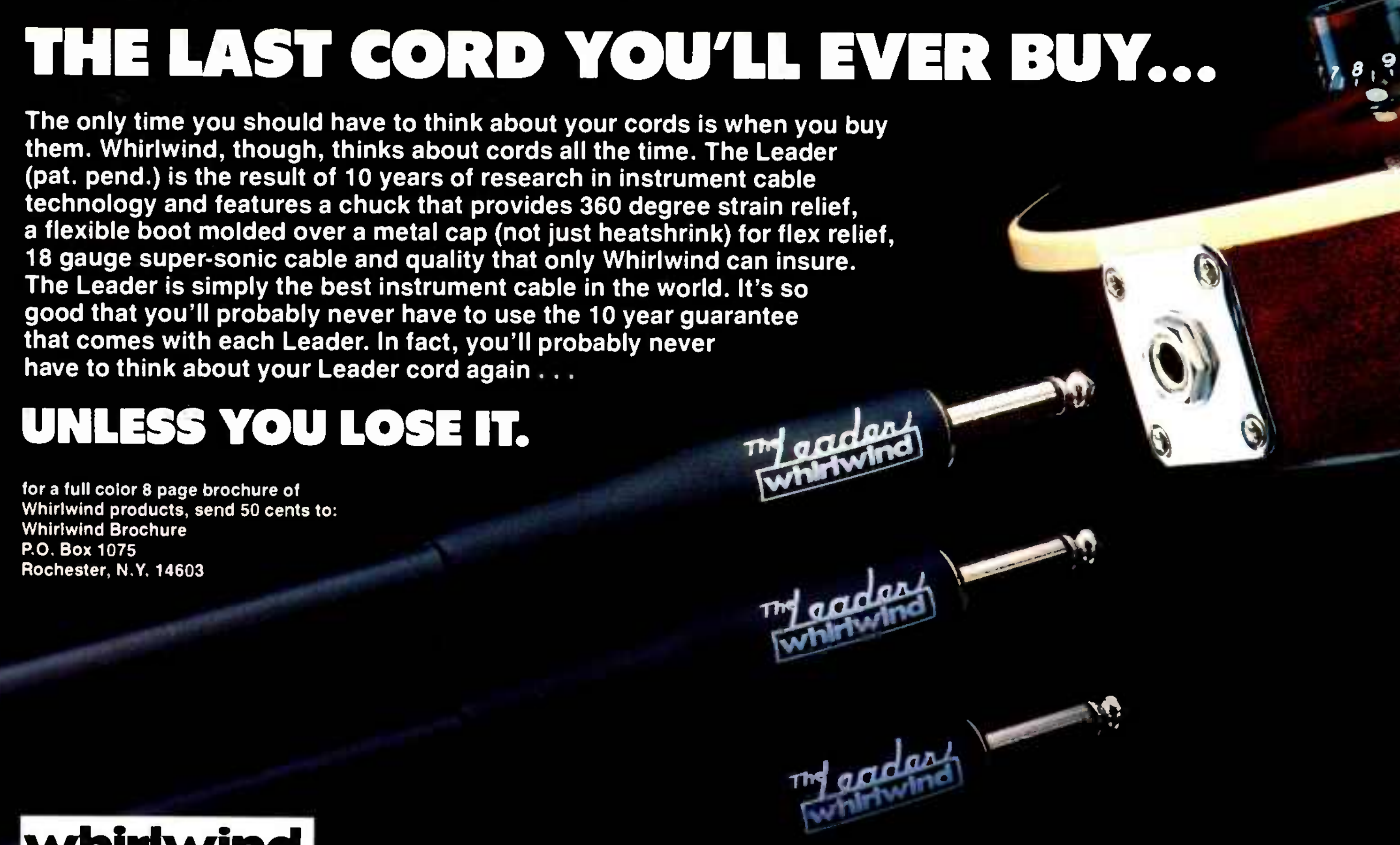
HILL: Great records. Johnny has always been a supportive guy. Johnny and also Edgar Winter jammed with Frank and me in Houston clubs way back when we had blue hair for our old band, American Blues. Between our blue hair and their white hair, it was a very visual thing.

BEARD: During that time there was a little folk club we went to a lot. Lightnin' Hopkins used to come in and Dusty and I would sit in with him. I kept trying to figure out how to play with Lightnin' and make it sound like I wanted it to. I never could, until I went to the store and bought a $30 set of toy Remco drums, and that night played those instead of a real drum set. For sticks, I used the rolled-up pieces of cardboard pulled from a drycleaner's hangers. Lightnin' loved it!

See, his drummer, Spider Kilpatrick, was one of my heroes. He invented the "fall-apart roll." It was like somebody walking down a set of stairs; they would make the first three stairs, and then fall and tumble down, and suddenly regain their feet and walk down the last three steps. That's how his rolls were—they'd start out on time, completely disintegrate, go to hell and back, and then come right in on time at the end. It was amazing how those two worked together.

HILL: The first time I sat in with Lightnin' I was intimidated. It was difficult to fall into the groove with him, even though I knew all his stuff; you needed to just feel it. I got through playing and I sat down at this table, and I didn't know Lightnin' was sitting right behind me. This guy asks, "How does it feel playing with Hopkins?" and I said, "It's great, but it doesn't seem like he's changing at the right points." Lightnin' tapped me on the

continued on page 121



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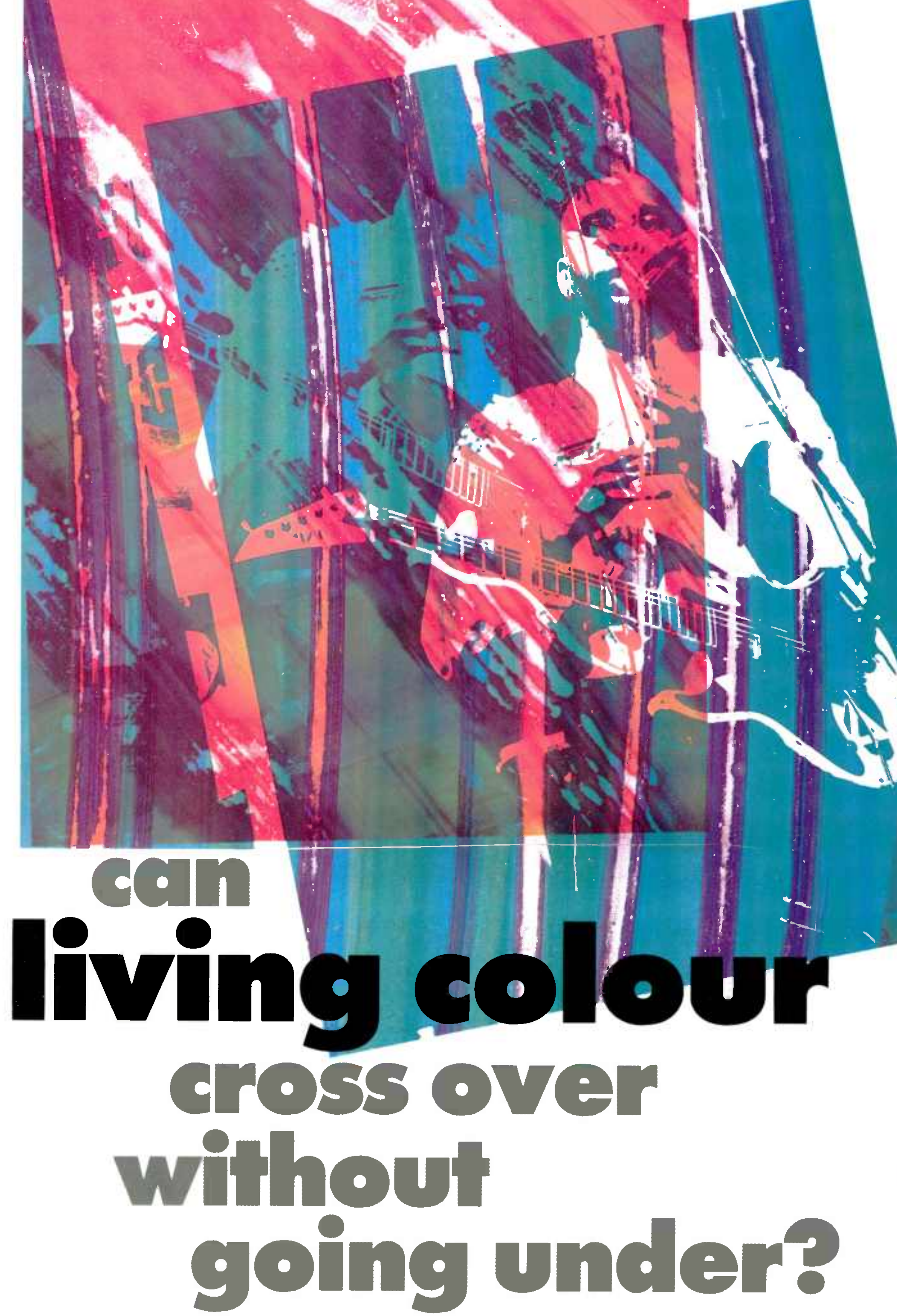

can living colour cross over without going under?

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Chicago's Cabaret Metro is one of the hipper bars in town. Located in a funky old theater on the near north side, it's part of a vanishing class of golden-era movie houses long since converted to other uses, allowed to fall into decrepitude, or both; in some neighborhoods it might be a landmark. The Metro sits across the street from Wrigley Field. It was there, in September 1953, that Ernie Banks became the first black Cub, ending one of the most tenacious holdouts against the crossing of baseball's color line. Now, across the street and 35 years later, a black hard-rock band called Living Colour is playing the Metro, doing its part to erase—or at least smudge—the color line that still plagues rock 'n' roll.

Advance ticket sales are light, *very* light—say about 50 or so—but that only befits a new band that's touring outside its New York-area stronghold for the first time. By 11 o'clock, the club starts to fill, and shortly before showtime there are five or six hundred people packed in. The crowd is very collegiate-looking, in some ways not so different from what you'd expect to see at a Cure show, except that this crowd includes a lot of blacks and racially mixed couples and groups of friends. Crowds like this may not exist in the music industry's conception of the rock 'n' roll audience, but here they are: At a table near me, a pair of friends sit watching Sinéad O'Connor's "I Want Your (Hands on Me)" video. The white guy seems unimpressed, but the black guy

by Steve Perry

GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA. ART: RACHEL ATLAS

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is way into it, leaning forward and beating on the tabletop in time with the music.

Margot Core isn't at this show, but the composition of the audience wouldn't surprise her a bit. She's one of the band's oldest boosters, a fan and friend of leader Vernon Reid since the days when she worked at Hannibal Records and he played in Defunkt. She was the person who took the Living Colour demo to Epic A&R man Michael Caplan; he was so impressed that he ended up hiring her to Epic's A&R staff in addition to signing Living Colour to the label. As for the racial barriers in the rock audience, Core says, "This sounds corny, but I can remember going to see *Purple Rain*. I'd never been inside the First Avenue club, and I thought, there's no club like that in America, where black people and white people can rock together. Well, that kind of thing *does* exist, and now it's happening so much that it's really a new phase.

"I feel like Vernon's name is gonna be synonymous with this stuff. It's all gonna roll out in front of him. It's not gonna happen necessarily with this record, or even necessarily with this band or this record company. But it's an irresistible force." It may or may not prove a portent of the future, but as symbolism goes, it's worth pointing out that Living Colour did indeed spring from CBGB, the New York club whose name has traditionally been associated with the whitest tangent rock 'n' roll ever produced: new wave.

"I want our audience to be like the audiences we get when we play CBGB," Reid told me back in January, three months before the band's debut, *Vivid*, came out. "Really mixed, all different types of people. Kids, older people. I think we're probably the New York band with the most mixed audience, and that's an important thing. I think the white college base is important. I also think there's a young black underground that's really into rock 'n' roll and hasn't had a chance to grab onto anything. They have to wait for Prince to put out his records, and maybe they're into Fishbone, too."

Upstairs before the Metro show, secreted away in a tiny dressing room that was once an office or a broom closet, Reid strums his guitar quietly and talks about his unusual position. Yeah, he says, this *is* different from tours he's done in the past. "When I went out with Ronald Shannon Jackson, I was playing his music, and I had to show up and do my job. It's different to travel with something that you're a leader of and a partner in. You live your whole life up to a point in order to be able to do certain things, and...here you are doin' 'em. It's worrisome and exhilarating."

New Yorkers have been describing Living Colour shows in quasi-religious terms for a couple of years now. "Black Zeppelin," they keep chanting in reference to Vernon Reid's guitar playing; "Black Zeppelin." I assume they're talking about the spirit of the thing, because Reid doesn't really sound that much like Jimmy Page. His professed influences run from Arthur Lane ("a guitarist in the John McLaughlin aesthetic") to Santana to Jimmy Nolen, an unsung hero who created the chicken-scratch guitar rhythm that helped define so many great James Brown records.

"things have gotten to the point where the idea of being black and being in rock 'n' roll is somehow odd. it's looked upon as strange."

Despite his considerable rep as a guitar hero, one of the qualities Reid most values is restraint. "It's important that your playing serve the song, serve the feeling, you know," says Reid. "There's an intense solo on 'Cult of Personality,' for instance, but that's because the song is about what happens to heroes of various kinds. The solo on 'Broken Hearts' is more about regret. The idea of the *song*, and what place the guitar has in it as a musical voice, is something that's almost passé to a lot of people. It's like, 'What are you talking about? I got my 10-finger technique; I'm killin'. Shit, I play sixty-fourth notes.' But somebody like Bill Frisell to me is so right. He always plays right in the moment."

Whatever the "Black Zeppelin" label means, one thing is certain: Seldom since Bruce Springsteen's days as a cult figure in the Northeast has any live act generated so many true believers. But the Cabaret Metro show, while imbued with its bracing moments, seems more reined-in than the ones I've heard about. In the hour-plus set, the band plays most of *Vivid*, and then return for a pair of encores that stake out the band's musical turf. The first is the Clash's "Should I Stay or Should I Go," which expresses the band's post-punk sympathies; the second, Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode," is no less than a manifesto, an assertion of rock 'n' roll's black roots.

"Things have gotten to the point where the idea of being black and being in rock 'n' roll is somehow odd," says Reid. "It's gone from being music primarily done by black musicians to something that, if a black musician does it, is looked upon as strange. If you ask a kid to draw a picture of what a rock 'n' roll band looks like, he might draw a stick figure with long blond hair. Black people, too, in a lot of ways see it as white music, and aren't really open to it. When Hendrix was around, there were people who thought he was tomming, who thought he was playing the music just for white people.

"What role should black rock 'n' roll play? To me, it's like Chuck Berry said in his movie. Rock 'n' roll is freedom. It's not so much a love affair with power; it's about freedom. It's a very cathartic thing to play rock 'n' roll. You release a lot of the frustrations and anxieties of dealing with this society day to day. Hopefully the audience joins in with you. That's really

Whose music is it anyway? Vernon Reid crunges, Corey Glover plunges for their art.

World Radio History

what it's about, more than hooks or anything else."

Before *Vivid* was released, Reid was apprehensive about the reaction of the rock press; he thought a black hard-rock album might be taken for a man-bites-dog novelty item, and thereby damned with faint praise. In fact, the reviews have been decidedly mixed. *Vivid* is fairly bursting with promise, both musically and lyrically, but by no means does it capture the qualities that led Muff Winwood (Stevie's brother, and the head of CBS' London operation) to cable Margot Core after the band's recent London showcase with the spectacular observation that Living Colour was CBS/America's most important signing *of the past 10 years.* "I still think it's the concerts," Core admits. "People see Vernon play, and they go for the record. It isn't the sort of thing you hear in the wash on the radio that makes you want to pull over in front of Tower Records and pull out your American Express card."

GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

Which is fine; it's a first album, after all. But expectations ran especially high for this debut, owing partly to the buzz about the live shows, and partly to Reid's high profile in recent years as the chief spokesperson for the New York-based Black Rock Coalition. Following his days as a sideman in such avant-jazz outfits as Ronald Shannon Jackson's Decoding Society and Defunkt, Reid became one of the BRC's co-founders in September 1985. From the beginning, the organization served two purposes. One was to publicize the lack of opportunity for black musicians interested in playing rock. "If you do progressive rock with a black base, a black identity," Reid observed at the time, "you're told the music is too aggressive, not happy enough, not R&B enough." The other function of the BRC was to bring such musicians together and get them acquainted with one another.

So the BRC attracted an eclectic following, ranging from frustrated musicians who couldn't find work to black nationalist ideologues who pointed in a separatist direction even as they decried the racial barriers in the industry. At the time Vernon Reid seemed a little of both, and he quickly became the BRC's point man, profiled in *Rolling Stone, Spin* and the whole pantheon of East Coast alternative weeklies. Today he possesses what may be the fattest clip file of any new artist in rock 'n' roll history.

Though they don't say so themselves, it's clear that the other members of Living Colour haven't always found it easy to accept Reid's notoriety and their relative anonymity. "It's important to emphasize that it's not just my show," Reid says. "There's been bits of conflict about me, who I am, and I'm such a public figure that people are already talking about me and people don't talk enough about them." All of them, Reid included, agree that sometimes they wish Living Colour could

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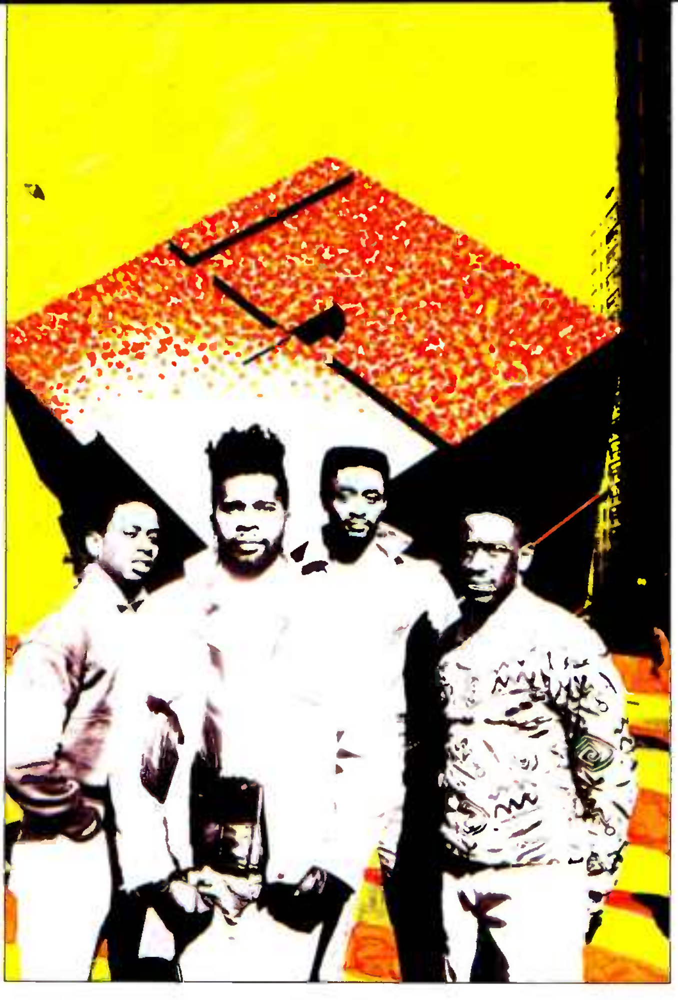
just be a band, and not the token of a cause as well. But that was never entirely in their control. As singer Corey Glover puts it, "I have to go out in the street every day. I have to walk out and be a black man in America—and I'm in a black band in America. I always have to do that; it's like putting on my socks, you know? When I walk into a department store, I have to know that I'll be watched because of who I am, and not what I do. That'll always be true, no matter how successful I am."

The BRC association may have earned Reid a degree of fame, but in the early days it didn't make it easier to hold his fledgling band together. Apart from Reid himself, none of the current members were in the original lineup. "The original Living Colour included Alex Mosley, who's now a member of Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam," Reid recalls. "He was the bass player. Greg Carter, who used to play drums with Jan Hammer, was the drummer. But since it was a black rock 'n' roll band, there weren't always a lot of gigs. Everybody loved the music, but they couldn't see how they could make a living playing it. After a certain amount of time, a lot of musicians just had to go on to something else. They had to eat."



Color them real (l.-r.): Corey Glover, Vernon Reid, Muzz Skillings, Will Calhoun.

Still more lineup changes ensued before the current band—Reid, Glover, drummer Will Calhoun and bassist Muzz Skillings—came together. Their collective résumés are nothing if not eclectic. Calhoun, whose older brother was also a drummer, attended Berklee in Boston for four years and played in touring bands behind Harry Belafonte and Lette Mbulu. Skillings attended Brooklyn Tech, the same high school as Reid, but didn't study music formally until he got to City College of New York. Later he played in "salsa bands, gospel choirs, jazz bands. I was a New York street musician for a year, which was a great experience, and I made a lot more money than the guys working in clubs." Glover is the only band member without a history of formal music training, and he's been taking singing lessons. (He's an actor, too; he appeared in *Platoon*.)

Each man has his own story about the trials and tribulations of being a black rocker. "I liked all kinds of music," Calhoun recalls of his days at Berklee, "but the only time I could play rock 'n' roll was with students. I'd go down to the jazz clubs on the weekend, and there would be guys who didn't want to let me sit in, because they'd seen me playing with guys who had eyeliner and makeup and long hair and Flying V guitars. I always just wanted to *play*."

"I grew up in St. Albans, Queens," says Skillings, "and my older brothers were always playing in the garage. They played rock 'n' roll as if there was nothing unnatural about it—they'd play Hendrix, Grand Funk Railroad. They'd take a song like 'Sex Machine' by Sly & the Family Stone and do rock solos over the long vamp. When I was 17 I formed a power trio with a guitar player named Cliff Monroe. He was really bent on playing rock, but by that point a lot of people were saying, 'You're not gonna get far with that.'"

The current lineup hadn't been in place long when Living Colour got its break. "We were showcasing," remembers Reid, "playing everywhere and building a local following. Eventually we did a demo deal with Elektra. The tracks were good, but the mix wasn't, and eventually they passed. We were at a real crossroads. Then a curious thing happened. I got a call from Roger Davies, who was working with Mick Jagger on his second solo record. Davies came down to CBGB and really liked the band. He asked if we were signed to a label, and we said no, we're available."

Then Jagger came down to see the band, and he really liked them, too. Reid ended up playing on Jagger's record, and Jagger ended up producing a two-song demo for Living Colour. That angered some elements in the BRC, who resented Jagger for the content of certain Rolling Stones songs ("Brown Sugar," "Some Girls"), and more generally "because of his whole relationship to black music as an appropriator," in the words of journalist and BRC co-founder Greg Tate. "Some people thought Jagger was a racist," concedes Reid. "I don't think it's true. The Rolling Stones always got a lot from black music, but they freely admitted that." The Jagger-produced demo helped stir up more attention for the band. Finally, at Michael Caplan's urging (and with the blessing of the new label chief Don Grierson), Epic signed them.

"What I most want this record to get across," says Reid, "is to talk about the interior lives of black Americans—that America's a curious place to be, and we're as curious as anybody. I think what would make this record a success in my eyes would be that it did well enough for us to continue to expand on what it started.

"And I'd like for it to confuse the issue of formats a little bit."

It will certainly do that. Apart from its lyrical concerns, apart from Reid's past activities, the mere existence of a black hard-rock album like *Vivid* puts the band on a collision course with entrenched racial lines in radio and record companies. And none of these problems are simple.

Consider the situation at radio. *Vivid* has attracted a fair amount of attention at college stations across the country; after years of fixation on artsy post-punk white rock, that format may be showing some renewed signs of progressivism.

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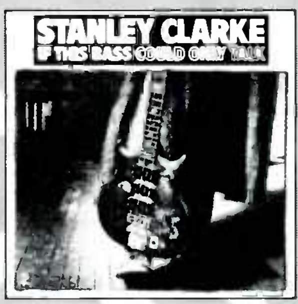

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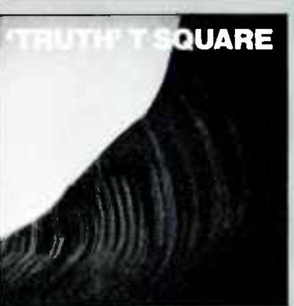

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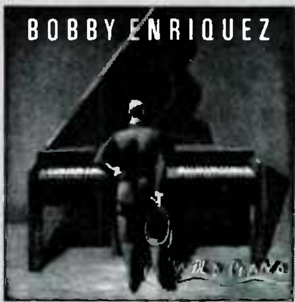

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But these stations also have fairly limited outreach. In terms of mainstream radio, Living Colour has been promoted exclusively at AOR, where it's squeezed both by racism and by the growing prevalence of "classic rock," which cuts down the number of slots available to new records of any stripe.

Vivid hasn't been promoted simultaneously at black radio—and can't be, because to promote a record at black radio is to stigmatize it past all repair in the eyes of AOR programmers. In fact, *any* involvement with black radio or artists perceived to have a black radio base is anathema. That's one reason Living Colour had to decline an offer to open on one leg of Jesse Johnson's tour, even though it would have brought together two of the premier black guitarists of the day and exposed the band to an audience they aren't currently reaching.

Segregated AOR playlists aren't the only barrier; racial politics within record companies figure in the picture, too. Black music divisions are almost always separate entities, and even when their relations with the rest of the company are good, the fact of their separateness remains. Keith LeBlanc recently finished a funky remix of "What's Your Favorite Color," the band's theme song, which Margot Core and Michael Caplan would like to push at black radio (now that it's clear AOR won't jump on the record, they have nothing to lose), but it's not that simple. "It's a great development," she says of Epic's black music division. "They've got a lot of muscle, and obviously I want to give them a 12-inch they can use. But they're kinda the law unto themselves. And they don't see me as their A&R source.

"I've already had one failure trying to push something through that system. I signed Erroll Moore, a reggae singer. He's got a black pop track which we just put on a 12-inch, 'Never Lock Me Out.' They're not working that record, because they don't dig reggae; there's a heavy thing between certain kinds of black guys and reggae guys. But I thought I'd made a really pop record, something that sounded like a Billy Ocean record. I thought they'd put that shit aside. Well, they didn't."

Which points up yet another racial complication in music industry politics: Many black radio stations and black promotion departments don't want to touch certain kinds of music even when the artists are black. The list includes reggae, hard rock, even rap. As David Fricke noted in his *Rolling Stone* profile of the BRC, manager Russell Simmons tried unsuccessfully to interest black music executives in Run-D.M.C. before he finally got a deal at Profile, a white-controlled label.

Part of this growing schism in black taste is tied up with class considerations, and Vernon Reid realizes that. Granted, the so-called black middle class is small, and not even middle class in the way that term is usually understood; often it just means, as Reid puts it, "The family owns its home, and both parents are working." That's a fair description of Reid's own home. His father is an air-traffic controller, his mother a bureaucrat in the Health and Hospital Workers' Union.

In many ways there's a growing polarity between this class and the mass of the black population, which is economically worse off in relation to the rest of society than it was 25 years ago. And one way the polarity is expressed is in musical taste. Put simply, many of the black bands who are popular on the college circuit (Living Colour, Fishbone, Bad Brains) just don't make it with the kids in the projects. However much these bands think they're addressing the concerns of the black underclass, the fact remains that much of the black under-

World Radio History

COLOURIZATION

Vernon Reid plays "primarily ESP guitars. For the record I used an ESP Custom. Also I play a Les Paul, and a Fender Strat. I use strings that are fairly heavy—.011 to .049. I used to always have tuning problems because I play hard, and I'd bang the guitar out of tune. I use a Dean Markley amplifier, and I run it into a Marshall. Also a Fender Showman."

Muzz Skillings favors ESP gear, too: "I have an ESP Horizon with active pickups, and an ESP 400 series, a Jazz copy. I have a G&L fretless that I play, and a B.C. Rich."

Will Calhoun? "How 'bout if I run through my cymbal gear, 'cause I don't have a drum endorsement, and I would hate to promo that...I'm just joking. From left to right, I use Zildjian A New Beat high-hats. I use two bottoms: an 18" crash, and a 20" swish cymbal. And a China Boy. Off to my right I have a heavy metal ride cymbal, and beneath that a 17" thin-crash, and above that an 18" crash ride."

class—like much of the white underclass—isn't as interested in hearing reflexive descriptions of grim social conditions as in rising above those conditions for a while; they use music as a soundtrack for dancing, for socializing with friends. The real revolutions have occurred when artists like Sly Stone and Marvin Gaye fused both those priorities.

If all this makes Living Colour's prospects sound pretty hopeless, they aren't. One of the distinguishing characteristics of rock 'n' roll through the years has been its ability to cross entrenched lines of race and class, and this is a band that's still coming into its own. Fortunately for them, CBS seems genuinely committed to the project. And if Margot Core's reading is correct, that's part of a changing operating philosophy at the record company. "The idea is to keep Vernon's career alive and building until the next record comes out. Which is not a common posture, even though you always hear that kind of lip service. To be going back and getting videos, remixes and tour support without being a big initial success at retail—this is the way the higher-ups express that yeah, this is a development band.

"When [new label president] Tommy Mottola came to CBS, he said we either sell 15,000 units or three million units, and nothing in between, and that's not good. I think that bringing me here and bringing Vernon here and giving Michael Caplan a long leash to sign the things he's signed is their way of saying we're not gonna do that anymore. We're gonna have a lot of middleweights, people who sell 50,000 or 100,000 records, and we're gonna go back in there and do it again. Selling 100,000 records is *not* gonna recoup this artist. But Don Grierson saw the band and he knew it was not Mantronix, or flavor of the week. [The label's commitment] is a real deal, and I think it has to do with changes at this company."

In his role as public voice of the BRC, Vernon Reid was great copy. He had a facility for rendering complex racial issues in the music business in dramatic, morally charged terms. Moreover, stories about him always featured Vernon-is-God testimonials; he clearly exerted a powerful influence on the people around him. So before we met last winter I assumed it would be the sort of interview in which you simply turn on the tape recorder and let the subject's ego take command.

Wrong. What I found instead was a quiet, often circumspect man who seemed to be working hard to assimilate heavy changes in his life and his career. "Vernon can be a pretty

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nervous guy," says one friend, and small wonder. He used to be one of the most outspoken critics of the music industry and of artists who made compromises in order to reach a broad audience; now he's a guy with a band struggling to make the most of the chance he's gotten. That doesn't mean he's abandoned his principles, but it does mean that he's faced with making constructive compromises based on certain 1988 realities of the record business—such as having his record promoted at AOR, the whitest of radio formats.

"There was one critic at a black publication," says Reid, "who said we were playing a racial variant of white metal music. Which is really...first of all, it implies that in order for me to be black, I can't be influenced by anything white at all. Which is kinda ridiculous."

But some people, including some of Reid's old friends, are going to cry *Sellout!*, and there's nothing he can do about that. "Sure, absolutely. This is the basis of the work a lot of people in the Coalition are trying to do, and the basis of a lot of the band's songs. There's an ambivalence, an attraction/repulsion thing. Part of what living and making art is about is working out those contradictions. Like in 'Which Way to America,' when I say 'I don't want to cross over, but I don't want to go under.'"

Well, there's no definitive answer to that question—

"Hey, I'm *dying* for an answer to that question." He laughs anxiously. So what's his provisional answer?

"My provisional answer is that I know I have this particular thing I need to say. Rock 'n' roll, doing it like I'm doing it, is something I have to do. At the same time I don't want to be alienated from who I am or where I've been. As a way to reconcile that, I've seized on rock's black roots. Even if the music is perceived as being white, the fact that it has black roots really helps me. Knowing that it's a black art form in its inception keeps that schism at bay. But in my everyday life, people are gonna think of it however they think of it."

It's ironic that the first track on *Vivid* is "Cult of Personality," a withering look at public figures who exploit public trust toward their own ends. Reid now finds himself on the other side of that looking glass in a certain sense, with a sizable cult of his own.

The suggestion seems genuinely discomfiting to him. "Yeah, I guess so. I tend not to see it that way, but I guess people project a certain kind of thing if you're a hero for them. The danger is that people want you to stay in a certain spot that they're comfortable with.

"There are times when it's difficult. It's a kick when you walk up the street and somebody recognizes you. You think about when you were a lonely kid, and you used to think you were nobody. When that turns around a little bit, that's good. But it's a lot of responsibility. Does it mean that every time you write something, every time you perform, you have to be that figure they see you as being?

"Some people felt betrayed because I worked with Mick Jagger, and I had to deal with that. The issues raised by the band and the Coalition are real issues. But whether I'm a living exemplar of those issues 24 hours a day shouldn't...*that's* the problem. You know the [disclosure] about Martin Luther King having slept with all these women? When somebody wrote about that, people were really appalled and hurt. What they didn't stop and realize was that Martin Luther King knew the FBI knew about his activities. And he went on and did speeches and made appearances anyway. That is guts of steel.

continued on page 121

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CARLOS SANTANA

Uncommon Differences

WAYNE SHORTER

"Right here, right here, man!" Carlos Santana hasn't even shut the door of the rental car and he wants to get his fave new cassette—by African bandleader Salif Keita—into the tape deck. Priorities. It's a pop tune rife with third-world rhythms, the kind of mix Santana knows something about. As the song kicks in, he starts doing the hipshake in the back seat. Though he can't move around like he wants—he's sitting on a couple of drum stands—the energy starts to build.

"Miles is gonna love it, man. Listen to this break." The groove sounds smart and soulful. "This should be number one in every country on every label," he gushes. "I hear all the tribes in here: Yoruba, Brazil, Cuba. Yeah, Miles will be into this!"

Santana won't have to wait long to find out. He's about 20 minutes away from the Saratoga Springs Music Complex, where Miles Davis, his good pal and constant inspiration, will take the stage with his current unit of vampmeisters. But this ride up to Jazz Fest North isn't just a trek to prove that Santana is a die-hard Davis fan; the 41-year-old guitarist is on the bill as well. The fact is, he still feels a bit intimidated about following his mentor.

Carlos shouldn't worry so much. Anyone who's spent much time following his career recognizes in Santana a distinctive solo voice and improvisational talent, the soul of a jazzman itching away in more tightly constricted pop/rock formats. This summer, he's decided to scratch that itch. But to do it right, he needed a guy with long fingernails. Someone incisive, inventive, musically compatible. Voilà: Enter the great jazz saxophonist Wayne Shorter.

BY JIM MACNIE

Shorter and Santana are spending a couple of months traipsing around together: East Coast, Europe, a swing through the Southern states. Along the way they hope to shake up a few minds, open a few hearts, rip apart a few preconceptions. Early on they headlined a New England show that could have been called "The Monsters of Fusion," or maybe more appropriately, "The Monstrosities of Fusion." Yes, the biggies were on *bored*: Chick Corea's Elektric Band and Herbie Hancock's Headhunters II did their best to keep their endorsements flowing, proving once again why fusion hasn't hit a meaningful note in 10 years. (Possibly because it favors sound over substance? Possibly because it kowtows to the trivial rituals of

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"The street has a different story to tell. That's what I'm looking for, that substance. The clean thing's not for me; I need the dirt, the essence."

show-biz?) After a few hours, the yawns were as predictable as the noodling.

The Santana/Shorter conglom contains many of the same accoutrements of fusionesque improv: a couple of keyboards (Patrice Rushen and Chester Thompson), a pair of hand-percussionists (Jose Chepito Areas and *the* Armondo Pereza) and a trad rhythm section (trap drummer Ndugu Chancler, bassist Alphonso Johnson), while the two leaders wax hard on their respective axes. But for Santana, that means gutsy, high-on-the-neck blues references, choked out like someone's holding tomorrow captive. For Shorter, it means his most rip-snorting tenor work in eons, stuff that slices up space and razors through complacency.

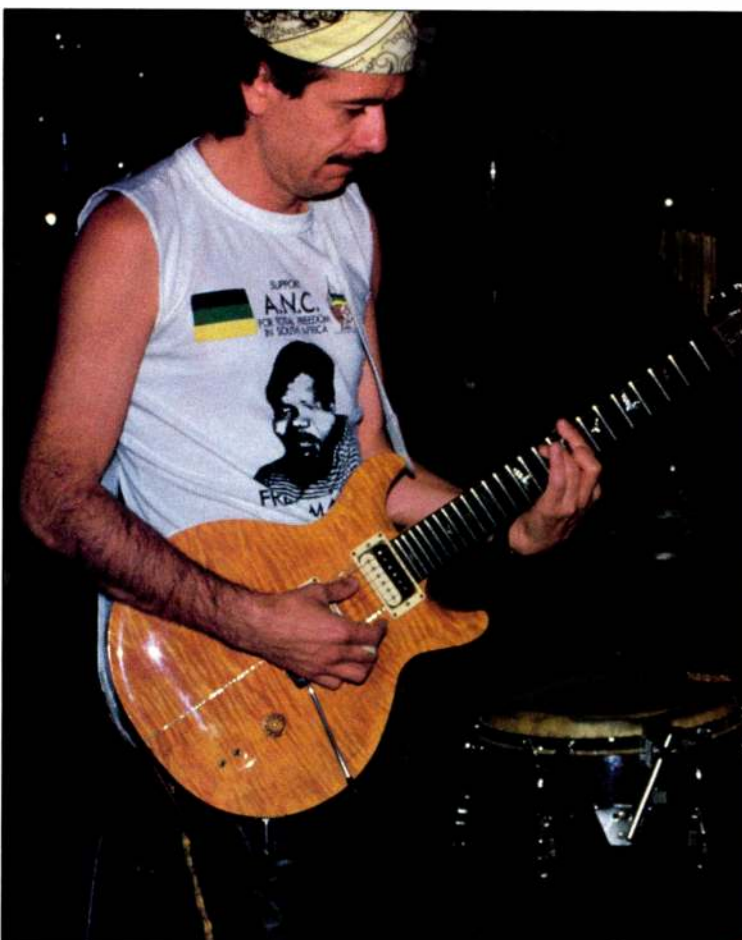
Therein lies the diff: With only a few rehearsals under the belt, the Santana/Shorter unit said more in one tune than Chick and Herbie did all evening. Thanks to the band's percussion-heavy composition, even the infrequent moments of coasting had an underpinning of accessible complexity; the overall approach suggests the grand sweep of an orchestra—at least one led by Miles. It's not jazz exactly (Santana readily admits the rhythmic twists of swing are slightly beyond him); the motifs are ethnically tempered versions of progressive rock. Yet there's plenty of open space and textured corners for both to toy with. That, according to Carlos, is what he's been waiting for.

This union comes at a time when both Santana and Shorter have laid past projects to rest. Santana the group is kaput, though an upcoming retrospective by CBS and an attendant "reunion" tour will remind us that they covered mucho ground. *Blues for Salvador*, Carlos' latest LP, recalls 1972's *Caravanserai*; it's an elaborate series of vignettes which hang together like a suite. This approach is smart, feigning expansiveness while avoiding the histrionic tedium that too much space can create. Judging from the oozy sustain, the curt flourishes and the heartfelt wail, Santana hasn't left his old guitar persona behind, either. Structurally, the record suffers from lightweight, clichéd compositions. Santana's still finding out what to do with his freedom.

Shorter, who turns 55 on August 25, knows what to do with his. Weather Report has been a memory for a couple years now, and Wayne currently presides over an everchanging ensemble whose best work has taken place on the stage. His studio prowess *is* becoming more focused. The new *Joy Ryder* is the most rewarding of his three post-WR offerings, with beguiling settings, feisty playing and house-of-mirrors writing. It seems Shorter's pen, once considered the most engaging in jazz, is hitting its stride again. His playing chops were never suspect.

Since the closing years of Weather Report, Shorter's been taking it on the chin from fans and crits for maintaining such a low-profile stance. He counters that "there are lots of other things I'm interested in besides being Wayne Shorter." For the moment he and Carlos are a team, one which looks at just about any option and says "Maybe..."

Backstage at Saratoga, Santana is leading a "We want Miles" encore chant. With help from Kenny Garrett's alto and flute, Davis' septet has laid down a sharp set. Miles tests the crowd's psyche for at least five minutes' worth of applause and howls. Finally he relents and starts stirring up a funk reprise. Santana splits for the tuning room, explaining to some friends how Muddy Waters and Little Walter are the Miles and Coltrane of the



blues. In conversation, he comes across as an unabashed fan, in love with music and any number of musical forebears.

As Shorter and the rest of the ensemble trickle in, it's obvious that "The Adventure Tour" enjoys an unusual amount of camaraderie. Watching them perform, their ease becomes infectious. Santana beams when Shorter solos; Shorter watches Rushen with piqued interest; everyone bears witness as the 75-year-old Peraza imbues complex patterns with a shrugged simplicity. On paper it looks like a one-off project; onstage it sounds like a band.

Catching up with the two leaders proves more difficult; they're leaving for Europe the next day. We talk in the tuning room, on the bus ride home from the gig, after trips to the mall for last-minute necessities, before tennis matches and during brunch. Not surprisingly, the topics of conversation are as varied as the settings; alone and together, Shorter and Santana discuss their perception of audiences, how to get an

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individual sound, the vileness of artistic constraints and the sickness of Muzak, how this particular partnership sprouted and why it seems so fruitful.

As he speaks, Santana is test-driving a Casio synth guitar. Tito Puente strolls in to say hello. A burning stick of incense sweetens the air.

MUSICIAN: *Would you ever use one of these synth guitars?*

SANTANA: Nah. I'm not old-fashioned, but to me the most beautiful sound is T-Bone Walker and Wes Montgomery, Django Reinhardt, Jimi Hendrix. Those four guys are the primary colors and everything else is derived from them. With T-Bone you've got all the Kings, B.B., Albert and Chuck Berry, everything. With Django you've got Jeff Beck. And Hendrix, well...

MUSICIAN: *But you keep up with technical advances?*

SANTANA: *They're* not keeping up, not to what we want to say. For example, [synth guitars] have a quick action but you're getting the same tone that everybody else has got, it's nothing. I'm in the business of tone. When they make guitars that, instead of DX7 sounds they put in acoustic 12s and nylon-string sounds like Bola Sete, chord voicings like Wes, a straight-ahead Telecaster sound like Albert Collins...then you can use the guitar, because you've sampled the right stuff. Emulate the James Brown horn section, man.

If I was to buy one of those Synclaviers—they cost something like $65,000—to get a sound like Wayne, well, I would rather give that money to Wayne, right? And have him play on my album. Because these things sound generic; it isn't the real deal. Cellos and pianos sound good; guitars always sound terrible. Even the new guitar players: They all get this box from Los Angeles, it sounds like Eric Clapton, Neil Schon. The tone is the same. Listen to Otis Rush or B.B. King now that he's back playing through Twin Reverbs. If you don't have the tone, you're not going anywhere.

I'll give you an example: A deer rubs itself all over with musk, and it runs everywhere trying to find out where the smell comes from. But it's coming from itself. That's what B.B. King taught me. It's a sound you're born with. It's good to pay attention to other guitarists, but the more you practice, the more you should shed yourself of people that you love.

Studio musicians resent when I talk like that, but there's really a big difference between studio and street musicians. Studio musicians sound stale, they sound uninspired and they sound like they're playing from the fingers on out. B.B., Albert, Jimi...when they finish playing this hurts [*grabs his foot*], this hurts [*grabs his heart*] and this hurts [*grabs his crotch*]. Because they're giving you something else. They're getting those extra tones, those overtones. And it's not volume, man; there's a big difference between projecting and volume. You can project while you whisper. Some people make the mistake of thinking that when you play soft, the intensity goes out.

MUSICIAN: *That's one thing that made you different on the bill the other night. You guys were the only ones using understatement.*

SANTANA: Well, Wayne, he's a master of that, him and Miles, that's what they teach you. Finesse is extremely important, but you should never lose the, excuse the expression, *cojones*, behind the music. Playing soft doesn't mean that you play half-heartedly.

I grew up in Tijuana, playing nightclubs from four o'clock in the afternoon until six o'clock in the morning. Prostitutes undressing everywhere. And you learn how to strip people with your guitar, and I don't mean the people who work there. A lady who just got married and just got to Tijuana and her old man got a little drunk and he's looking at this fine-looking prostitute, and she's a bit high herself, and it's tit for tat...you play some music and you can draw her to you. You can do all kinds of things with music. You can seduce people or you can inspire people.

I learned a lot of my music in the streets and I give the streets a lot of value, because there are a lot of street guys who

"You've got to grow up sometime and question why you're stretching out solos. Is it indulgence? Practicing? Using someone else's time? It's avarice; you get greedy."

MARK BRADY

World Radio History

can beat up a black belt. The street has a different story to tell; that's what I'm looking for, that substance. The clean thing's not for me; I need the dirt, the essence...from Africa or somewhere. If it don't have that it will lose my ear.

MUSICIAN: *How do you utilize the studio, like you obviously did on* Blues for Salvador, *and not come off sounding slick?*

SANTANA: The main thing is that you don't have a lot of producers and people from L.A. come in. It's true. They're more into the production than the vision. On *Blues for Salvador*, there really was no producer; it was one-take Johnsons, just do it. That appeals to me a lot.

MUSICIAN: *Was there a time you worried that you wouldn't get the tone you were looking for?*

SANTANA: No, not even in the early days. In Tijuana, one of the baddest guys was named Javiar Batiz. He had a beautiful tone like the guy who played with Bobby Bland in the early days—which is still T-Bone. When I started jamming with him, I was still a kid, and when I picked up the guitar I heard him say, 'What's that? Who's playing that guitar?' As raw as it was, I knew I had something different already; I wasn't aware of what until the tour I did with John McLaughlin. I was a bit afraid, the same way Eddie Van Halen might be afraid to go into a club and square off with Tony Williams, say. But I realized that after John said whatever he said—be it fast and loud, or soft and subtle—people responded. And it made me believe that music is like a huge garden, there's room for all the textures and aromas. As long as you play from your heart, your flower's not made out of plastic.

MUSICIAN: *Was that initial sound similar to the sound you get now? The wide tone?*

SANTANA: Yeah, but more crude, raw. I spent many nights with Charlie Christian, many nights with T-Bone, with John Lee Hooker. It was the essence of the street musicians. I didn't know what I was doing and I still don't. But I have more of an idea when to stand forward and when not to.

MUSICIAN: *When was the turning point for Santana's embrace of improvisation? When did it feel right to stretch pop structures?*

SANTANA: After I played with John McLaughlin. I tried with the first band, but it didn't work.

MUSICIAN: *Were you initially intimidated by your decision to change the music?*

SANTANA: Yeah, but I knew I had to do it. I was intimidated when I saw [Tony Williams'] Lifetime, definitely. The other time I was so intimidated that I couldn't play was with Larry Coryell. They were playing odd times that I didn't understand. With odd times you have to be like a cat, the rhythm is like a pendulum: Pick your spot when you want to claw it. Hahhh! Because if you count it sounds weird. The best part about guitarists who play odd times is when they make it 4/4, it's so fluid. Any time it sounds like you've got a guy with a wooden leg, I can't stand it.

MUSICIAN: *How about surprise, when the rhythm seems to be one thing, and it turns out to be something else? Would you avoid coming around corners like that?*

SANTANA: No, that's cool. That's what blues players do. They lay back so much that they come behind you. And if you're not ready for what you're doing, they'll laugh at you. They're not slowing down, they purposely stretch time. There's a lot of little tricks to make the music more alive.

MUSICIAN: *You seem to be making a political statement with the title of* Blues for Salvador. *Do you think music and politics should be intermixed?*

"Studio musicians sound stale. B.B., Albert, Jimi...when they finish playing, it hurts. They're giving you something else, those extra tones."

SANTANA: Nowadays they have to. If musicians didn't stand up like we stood up in Woodstock, we'd still be in Vietnam, we'd still have Nixon. [*Ed.: We still do.*] Music is what alleviates...I promise you the reason that people have bad days, grab a machine gun and start shooting is the damn ugly, atrocious music you hear in elevators. And in the shopping malls. It starts cancer, brain damage. But if you play the right music, it will transform negativity into positive possibilities.

People think I'm presuming too much when I say this. Bob Geldof said I was self-indulgent. But I'll tell you, if he plays in front of Macy's for a living, he will starve to death. He didn't create Live-Aid. Bill Graham and all the managers of the bands are the ones who raised that money. He didn't.

If music doesn't get involved with politics what's going to happen is the same thing that happened to the American Indian. Fifty years from now they're going to say Duke Ellington was white. It's true. Just like they think that Elvis Presley started rock 'n' roll. You have to get involved with the politics of the day—Hendrix doing "Machine Gun."

Actually Coltrane obliterated all that when he did *A Love Supreme.* Because politics is about segregating, dissecting, blowing up the concept of oneness, uniqueness and individu-

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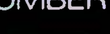

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"My mother used to remind me: 'Don't get so cool you can't communicate with anyone. Just remember, everybody's got to go to the toilet.'"

ality. *A Love Supreme* is about embracing and transforming.

MUSICIAN: *Are you worried that you're getting away from commercial music?*

SANTANA: Like the guy says to Dexter Gordon in *'Round Midnight*, "Man, those three notes you played changed my life." Music has that power, it gets you pregnant with a certain ideal and then you want to live up to it. Commerciality is not a bad word, though. The most commercial music in the world is "Mona Lisa" by Nat King Cole, or Dinah Washington singing "What a Diff'rence a Day Makes." That's good company.

MUSICIAN: *When you're putting together bands, do you want players who can create friction as well as coexist?*

SANTANA: Yeah, definitely. In this band Armando is the fuse, he sparks the house. He's 75 and he gets the drummer going, Chepito going. He never drags his butt. He's got tremendous dignity, just like Miles. I'm sure there are times when it's appropriate to shut the door to the hotel room and just collapse, but you'll never see that side of him. That's a standard to keep up with.

MUSICIAN: *Do you labor over what context you want to play in? How big the band should be, who's in it?*

SANTANA: No. I turn it over to the Lord. I just figure it out. I'm not going to go through names, but I've paid my dues as far as being a psychiatrist, baby-sitter, traffic cop, all that kind of thing. Now I just want to have fun. But it's like being a quarterback, deciding what pockets I want to stay in. When I see people flaunting something, I see a fall ahead. Onstage, everything falls apart: they can't hide ineptness. Whereas people who get up in the morning and thank the Creator, like Coltrane did, are making music for the generations. Einstein gave us a secret: "Imagination is infinitely more important than knowledge." If you can't hear it, you can't play it.

MUSICIAN: *You seem to be a rock star who hasn't bought into the notion of being a rock star.*

SANTANA: Since Tijuana I've known good musicians and weekend musicians. I could tell that guy playing behind Ricky Nelson [James Burton] could play. But terms like "rock star" aren't what we call ourselves: they're given to us by the industry. Like the term "groupies"; musicians don't say that, lawyers do. I always knew I was going to be a musician, whether I played on the sidewalk or in Madison Square Garden. My father's a musician. I knew. Real musicians don't subscribe to the philosophy that there's a sucker born every minute. That's not a musician, that's an opportunist.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think the line between pop and jazz is getting thinner? Was that a goal for Santana, to mesh improvisation and structure?*

SANTANA: I might have thought like that pre-'83, but from where I sit now, it had already happened. Lee Morgan's "Sidewinder" or Horace Silver's "Song for My Father" are pop tunes, I think. But I don't want to *sell* anything. I just want to play. Music is about upholding values and having fun. Teenagers don't want to hear a lot of things and the least they want to hear is that freedom comes from discipline.

MUSICIAN: *With the Santana retrospective coming out, it's a good time to see what those bands accomplished. What made you want to extend the pop format?*

SANTANA: Jimi, when he died. We were in Denver opening up for CSN and when I heard about it, I felt dizzy, I felt cheap, I felt like I was being raped

Miles Davis and Wayne Shorter

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by the system, by Phillip Morris, Coca-Cola. My guts hurt, I threw up. My soul said, "Learn from this, do something that he wanted to do." That's what I'm trying to do. Look at what I've been doing for the last two years, working with the Neville Brothers, the Caribbean All-Stars, John Lee Hooker, Eddie Palmieri, Gato Barbieri—there are very few cats who will go to these places and play with those people. South side of Chicago with Otis Rush, Buddy Guy, because you *are* going to get scratched. "Hi, nice to see you, screeeaaah!" "Thanks, I needed that, good to see you, too." That's part of the process, you know?

Jazz is like an ocean, rock music is like a swimming pool, and right now I'm swimming away from the pool, going toward the ocean. You get wet either way, so if you're going to get wet, plunge yourself.

MUSICIAN: *You were talking about odd meters and different rhythms before; have you thought about utilizing more overt swing into your sound?*

SANTANA: Yeah, but at the same time swing is still very evasive to my mind; it's like my brain's on 110 and bebop is on 220. Really. I need time to convert. Because the chord changes and structures and nuances and lifestyle are different. Charlie Parker, Charlie Christian, Jimi Hendrix—very few people will do what they did, which is stay up three days in a row, party, run the gamut of physical stimuli, then pick up the instrument at six in the morning on the third day, and sound like that. Jan Hammer can't sound like that.

I'm talking about latitude, that's all I'm talking about through this interview; latitude is your wings.

MUSICIAN: *Has playing with Wayne brought an aspect of swing closer to you?*

SANTANA: No, that's the last thing he wants to play, from what I understand. I want to learn, but it's not something I want to do unless I do it correctly. With all due respect to all the great bands in the world, I've yet to hear a band on the face of this planet swing as good as Sun Ra. Just straight-ahead swing. I mean, when Sun Ra played San Raphael, California, he went from Fletcher Henderson via Mars. I said,

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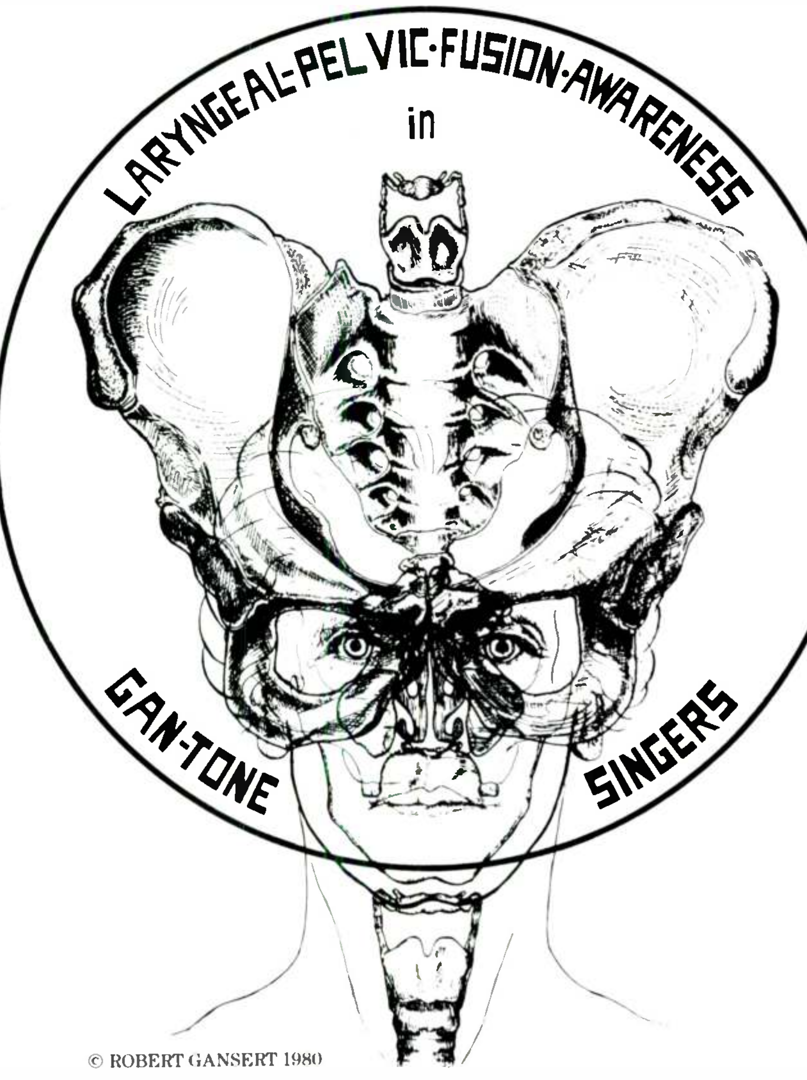

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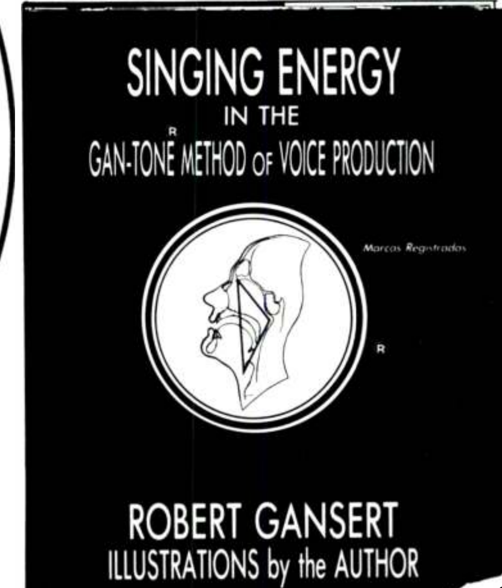

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"Jesus, this is like Lightnin' Hopkins, Jimmy Reed, Muddy Waters...everything I love, and it's *happening!*" It's the first time I understood that order of swing, and unless I'm going that way, I don't try it, because I don't want to pee on music. The reason I play with certain musicians is...I may not have a Ph.D. like they do, but I respect it enough to complement them when they say, "Tell your story."

It's about 94 degrees out. Carlos signals a break by grabbing a beer and washing his hair in a sink. Do you think there'll be a time when the blues won't inform your sound? He laughs: "The blues is the bone in the avocado, man, and you don't have an avocado without the bone."

The next day the co-leaders settle into a booth at the hotel's empty restaurant. Neither is exactly a motormouth, but when we do get rolling, these two West Coast residents (Santana, San Francisco; Shorter, L.A.) weave ethereal notions of chance, mysticism, fate and self-direction into their opinions on their music, past and present. I'm not Cali-bashing, but, speaking together, the conversation sometimes drifts into a place that recalls stoned afternoons in the park. Carlos speaks in a whisper, perhaps a method stemming from prayer. Wayne seems to absorb questions before he speaks; he wants to know where you're coming from. As forks mosey through spinach salads, we drift toward matters concrete.

MUSICIAN: *Is swing an ancient language?*

SHORTER: There's room for everybody. The danger is when someone tries to monopolize the past, using straight 4/4 time and A-B-A structure. There's room for nostalgia; the Blue Note kind of stuff is popular again, the Marsalis kind of stuff.

MUSICIAN: *Do you hear yourself in any of today's younger players?*

SHORTER: A little, attack-wise, you know, they jump into a solo the same way.

SANTANA: The greatest gift is your individuality. You've got to guard it, treasure it. I got this album from an African guitar player and one of the songs goes, "My wife said no, my daughter said no, my manager said no, my best friend said no; here it is anyway." [*laughter*]

MUSICIAN: *How did you guys get together?*

SHORTER: Back at an early-'70s gig, a bunch of guys from Santana were sitting onstage in Texas, checking out Weather Report. We thought that was nice, really human. Sometimes in jazz people get real stuck up: they're invited everywhere and they never go.

SANTANA: It was funny because Michael Shrieve and I were apologizing to Wayne and Joe because our audience didn't have the capacity to understand them. I have tapes of those concerts, where people were screaming *"Santana!"* in the middle of a Wayne statement, and I feel like killing the guy.

SHORTER: My mother used to remind me: "Don't get so cool that you can't communicate with anyone. I don't care if you become president of the U.S.A. or if you get all the Oscars in the world; just remember one thing, everybody's got to go to the toilet."

MUSICIAN: *Is the band much different from your initial conception?*

SHORTER: I like it because it reminds me of when I was a kid. Me and my brother would just sit around and make up movies, make up our own dialogue and plot.

SANTANA: Frustration always follows expectation. We got Armando and Ndugo and Alfonso and looked for what chemistry was there. Out of a 10, we were getting 7½, 8 consistency. So I said, "Maybe this band could accommodate Wayne's stuff." It's a challenge, because he doesn't write songs, he writes compositions. That's been the challenge for everybody, to relax with Wayne. Not because he's unfriendly, but because everybody's in awe of him. We needed to come out of the spell and start kicking.

SHORTER: Same thing from this side. I like to be in good company, and that has to do with all of human life. I want to play with someone who can perceive depth. When I worked with Milton Nascimento it was quick: I just knew I wanted to. I kind of knew it when I hooked up with Carlos, too.

MUSICIAN: *What turned you on to his sound?*

SHORTER: His openness. You might say he has a kind of drive and his guitar sound was like singing; that's a plus to me. He has a way of getting to the point without revving up, without using a lot of notes.

MUSICIAN: *Carlos, what about Wayne's sound?*

SANTANA: It's the commitment, you can hear it. MIDI's not going to give it to you. But Wayne's MIDIed to another world.

MUSICIAN: *I saw you really laughing, really getting off on one of his solos last night.*

SANTANA: I'm drinking from his well, man. A friend of mine said I'm playing with him just so I can have the cassettes of the performances. Other musicians stick around and watch the whole show, you know? With some bands, if you've heard the first three songs, you've heard it all. We're trying to bring a bouquet, mix it all up.

MUSICIAN: *You sound like you feel at home with Latin and South American rhythms, Wayne.*

SHORTER: We're trying to probe different areas. At our first gig, at the Fillmore, we tried to work on our *differences.* Wouldn't it be interesting to explore the *uncommonness* of people? And when you get to the bottom of it, give it everything you've got. You'd need 30 lifetimes for that.

MUSICIAN: *It seems that your two approaches* are *different. Carlos rides the groove, and Wayne throws punches into it.*

SANTANA: We've got a lot of help. Armando and Chepito create undertows and that keeps it moving. I try to tell the players certain things without offending anybody. The musicians have got to listen closely to their monitors. One thing we're learning is that Wayne has a tremendous sense of patience, and that's a real, real strength. He waits for ideas to peak, then goes right to the center of it.

SHORTER: You don't get upset about the rented instruments or not being able to hear yourself. The stage is an environment where quite often everything's not right. You'd have a stroke every day if you worried about it.

MUSICIAN: *Do you guys ever lose yourselves improvising?*

SANTANA: I like to get lost in a positive way, so that you play a note and you don't know whether you're in China or America or Mexico. You're just gone.

SHORTER: Many times you *do* become the experience. You're doing it in the same way a magician does: sleight of hand.

MUSICIAN: *Being so established, is it hard to break new ground? Sad to lay a band to rest?*

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Wayne Shorter looked puzzled when I asked him about his horns, but his curved-neck soprano (which sounded tougher onstage than it does on recent records) is a Yamaha, and the producer of those "subterranean" growls is a Selmer Mark VII tenor. Don't underestimate its power.

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SHORTER: Not for me. It's like when they were tearing down the old Met, and somebody asked an opera singer, "Are you going to miss it?" And he buzzed back, "Nó!" The same thing with Miles: He knows he had good times with Trane and the others, but last night he was just as happy to introduce me to his current players. If you're proud of your work, you're not going to be sad about it. Something that's sadder is putting a band to rest before it's had a chance to develop, to say anything itself.

SANTANA: Same here. I don't need to be bound to anything except the groove in my heart. I love my wife and kids, my mom, but the groove is what's happening.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever wonder who's listening to you?*

SHORTER: I just spoke to my wife on the phone and I'm still knocked out by this one: She was at a party a couple nights ago and Marlon Brando came up to her and said he dug *Nefertiti* and *Miles Smiles.* Wild. It's weird when word-of-mouth comes in from another field. I recently got a letter from a surgeon who said he listens to all kinds of music: ballet, opera, and that my stuff with Milton has inspired him to be a better surgeon in the operating room, better husband to his wife, father to his kids, citizen in the world.

MUSICIAN: *What's your reaction to that response?*

SHORTER: I better be cool. Take a look at myself and do what's right.

MUSICIAN: *Fusion seems to be a music of broad gestures. And all these big, showy moves substantiate the negative criticism. Do you think fusion brought a bad rap on itself?*

SHORTER: I've been listening to Chick since he's been on his own and his Elektric Band and all that. Sometimes I get the feeling that when they stand there in a line in the front of the stage, they're like warriors or something. I think he's trying to communicate a spirit; that's probably the essence. But the essence is missed by some of his grand gestures.

MUSICIAN: *Do you guys have to watch out for overstatement?*

SANTANA: See, overstatement, it's like burping in somebody's face. I saw Muddy Waters once go onstage with five guitar players. And he'd nod and one guy would take two steps out and sound like Bill Doggett's guitarist on "Honky Tonk." Then Muddy told him to go back. The next guy comes out and solos like Albert and B.B. They did it all until it was Muddy's turn and he turned up the slide and made everybody's hair stand up like cactus. So I can respect "warrior" and all that kind of stuff. But you have to balance your intellect with straight, gutbucket heart.

To a certain extent, that's what this band is testament to. We haven't recorded an album, we don't have a bunch of guys hyping us out. It's not pompous. Yet we have a certain admiration and oneness with great musicians every night.

MUSICIAN: *You do seem to avoid the showy aspects.*

SANTANA: When I go to the circus, I expect the bear to do tricks the other bears can't do. But it's not the same for a musician.

MUSICIAN: *Because you're all pals, a lot of fans wonder if you two will ever play with Miles. Could that happen?*

SANTANA: Us three? It's not impossible. He knows that Wayne and I have nothing but respect. We don't kiss his behind or talk behind his back.

SHORTER: Miles wants to communicate more with both of us. We've been getting together on the telephone in California. I can feel the wheels turning in his head. Like those kids: "Can you come out and play?" We were exchanging tapes with him last night and the mood was real good. Don't rule it out.

The bus is getting ready to leave for the airport as Wayne Shorter, seemingly nonchalant, doodles on a pad. His futuristic cartoons have graced his recent album covers and dust sleeves. He's a movie buff as well; on the bus, the rest of

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the band tests his memory of obscure movie plots, and he's stumped only by contemporary fare.

A conversation with Wayne is revealing: You can literally watch ideas spring into his head, or at least watch his reaction as they show up on his face. His countenance is at once wise and youthful. his remarks as candid as his solo on "Footprints." He's also prone to metaphor—Wayne loves to draw parallels—though not in an evasive way. He's sipping sparkling water; when offered some grapefruit juice, the man who helped combine the turfs of jazz and rock tells the waiter to bring them both. "I like to mix them up sometimes."

MUSICIAN: *You were in one place—Weather Report—for so long. Were you itchy to do more?*

SHORTER: Sort of. When you're off, when you're not playing, when you're doing hobbies and such, *that* becomes the time for you to realize that you're the same person, but there are always other interests.

MUSICIAN: *People always expect you to be Wayne Shorter. Did it feel good to let that role slide?*

SHORTER: Yeah, I even went back to drawing a bit. It's the same old business about boundaries. It's fun to play with Joni Mitchell—they don't even have a name for her stuff anymore. Richard Stoltzman does that: he's not playing classical all the time. He's involved with Ellington or Woody Herman. Same thing with Friedrich Gulda, the great Viennese pianist that Zawinul went on tour with. He gained the reputation of being a maverick or a gypsy, breaking away from the traditional classical concert circuit.

MUSICIAN: *When Jack DeJohnette wrote "Where or Wayne," did you feel loved, missed or think people were expecting too much from you?*

SHORTER: They wanted to hear more of a general everything: writing, playing, expression of compositions. Now I know the feeling. There's a writer I'm currently reading named Robert McCammon, who has only written two books, and I want to read more. I think, "What's he doing now?"

MUSICIAN: *You utilize the tenor sax more with the Santana band; with Weather Report you usually played soprano.*

SHORTER: There's a nice sound between the tenor and the guitar when we do ensemble pieces. The way keyboards are being handled, they don't drown out the tenor. Another thing that's good is that I'm on a remote control system now. I can walk around and that leaves you less tired than if you were standing still. You get like a rod of iron in your neck when you're standing in front of a microphone; the tension buildup after 25 years is tough.

MUSICIAN: *Carlos was giving you a compliment about the tenor sound the other day.*

SHORTER: He likes it because it's kind of vocal in a sense, and there's not a lot of affectation. Some people will play too much. Like Miles says: [*scratchy whisper*] "Don't get cute now." Cuteness covers up your real intentions. Sometimes I think you can only receive someone's real intentions when they play it straight. It's almost like baring your soul.

Miles plays like he sings. A lot of people never heard Miles sing. I heard him singing on the telephone. Some kind of flamenco thing. "You like Spanish music? Ddehhh, ddeehh, deehhh, deh; plunk plunk plunk, like that." Ha ha!

MUSICIAN: *So there's a different approach to soprano?*

SHORTER: Soprano feels more like I'm playing a trumpet. It's a fun instrument: like fish jumping around the top of the ocean. With tenor it's more subterranean, you know?

MUSICIAN: *How is it to interact with a guitarist in the front?*

SHORTER: It feels good, although it makes you want to add things to the limitations of your instrument, give it other colors, MIDI it up. But if you go without all that synthesizer stuff, you'll find out that you're pulling yourself by the bootstrap to complement the guitar, because the guitar's got

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MUSICIAN: *Have you enjoyed other guitar/sax pairings?*

SHORTER: The only other combination I liked was Trane and Wes Montgomery.

MUSICIAN: *Do you write with different instruments in mind?*

SHORTER: Only when it comes to the parts they're supposed to play. Lately I've been thinking in a whole spectrum of sound, that's why I'm carrying around score paper. I'm writing something for an orchestra. Part of it has already been played by the New Japan Orchestra in Tokyo.

MUSICIAN: *You seem to be returning to the more hyperactive approach you used to have on the tenor. You played some real rambunctious passages last night.*

SHORTER: You can do that when you have these one-hour-25-minute gigs, and we have quite a few of those in Europe. In Weather Report, we got to be masters at the 40-minute set.

MUSICIAN: *Is it tough to make a statement in that time?*

SHORTER: It can be if you're thinking about stretching out and you say, "I can't do it unless I stretch out," but you've got to grow up sometime and question why you're stretching. Is it indulgence? Practicing? Using someone else's time? It's avarice; you get greedy, spending other people's time.

MUSICIAN: *So being concise is a goal of yours?*

SHORTER: Yeah, saying something that's heard immediately and absorbed and lived immediately. Charlie Parker never took long solos.

MUSICIAN: *I saw the look on your face when you started to rip it up last night, though; you were getting off.*

SHORTER: It's just paying attention. With Chester and Patrice on keyboards, I have to make sure what I say works, stay away from opposing tone colors. It's like walking down a crowded street in New York and trying never to bump into someone. You could say it's another part of being in rhythm with the whole action of life. It seems clinical and academic, but you've got to remember, you don't want to bore people.

MUSICIAN: *Do you enjoy throwing caution to the wind?*

SHORTER: Yeah, if I can do it and not linger and linger and linger; if you do it right, the audience can actually go along with you. It's like a passenger enjoying a really good plane ride without knowing the mechanics, or how the pilot feels.

MUSICIAN: *Have there been times when you felt you were playing it too safe?*

SHORTER: Um, well, not playing it "safe." There's a whole bunch of more and a lot of lesses if you're on a tone that's really saying something. The tone takes over. You can just play one note from here to there; where you would ordinarily do some acrobatics and try to dazzle some people and say, "Look what I can do; isn't this fun?" A good tone inspires

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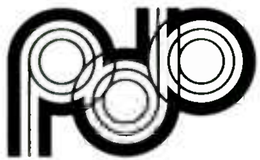

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you to do something that's even more acrobatic than usual. A bad tone would be like a child whining all the time: irritating and unpleasant.

MUSICIAN: *I read somewhere that you thought* Live at the Plugged Nickel *was the most adventurous you'd ever played.*

SHORTER: The whole group was doing it then. After that, there were some more recordings with Chick and Dave Holland which Jack DeJohnette gave to me on the Bullet train in Tokyo. Carlos has some of that now; he said, "You all sound crazy!"

MUSICIAN: *Are you proud of phases like that?*

SHORTER: It feels like a breakthrough. That's what Miles always talks about; he says, [*Milesian rasp*] "We covered a lot of ground, didn't we?" Breakthrough.

MUSICIAN: *Are there times when you surprise even yourself when you solo?*

SHORTER: Sometimes. But it's the context I want to hear, rather than just me. That's what Charlie Parker was getting at before he died. He wanted not only to play the alto sax, but to be involved with the orchestra, writing and playing music.

MUSICIAN: *What prompts a Wayne Shorter composition these days? Do you think they're as adventurous as they have been in the past?*

SHORTER: Yeah. They're adventurous in that the forms aren't simply A-B-A. It's like a tapestry or a cinematic style: microscopic waiting to become macroscopic. And the pieces which are coming up are going to be a real surprise.

MUSICIAN: *How would you compare your present compositional style with your Blue Note days?*

SHORTER: The Blue Notes are leaner, they've got an entrance—I mean a front, middle and tail. Then you reverse it; go back through the middle and close the door. There'd be a round of solos, people would express themselves and all that. What's happening now sort of cuts through that process: There are concertos, rondos. It touches all the forms without being one for any amount of time. And not being ruled by the rules, we find out that the rules evolve rather than prescribe.

MUSICIAN: *What instrument do you write on at home?*

SHORTER: A piano. Unless something comes into me as a whole, I use the piano to check certain parts out. Like "Nefertiti." That came in five seconds one night. I had a bunch of candles on in the apartment in New York, and all of a sudden I played the whole song without stopping. And I said, "Wow, what was that?" But I didn't write it down immediately; I thought if it was valuable, it would come back to me. So I waited a couple minutes and did it again, and it was written.

MUSICIAN: *Did you realize it would be such a lasting piece?*

SHORTER: I knew it was going to stick somewhere. When I brought it to Miles at a session, he just played the melody over and over, saying, "It's complete, don't need no solo."

MUSICIAN: *What's been the most fun part of this collaboration with Carlos?*

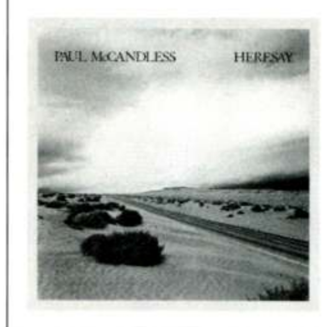
SHORTER: The fact that a so-called bandleader doesn't have to be tied to a band. Normally it was the other way around: five men tied to a contract for about 15,000 years. But now bandleaders are saying, "Can I step out of this thing for a second and do something else?" It's a way of saying to record companies and to people who hold die-hard ideas that we do have this freedom. M

PAUL McCANDLESS

Photo by Jim Marshall

His Debut
on Windham Hill

HERESAY



WH-1075

From the original Paul Winter Consort through his ongoing work with Oregon, Paul McCandless has spoken volumes through his horns. Now he steps out with a compelling new solo album featuring Art Lande, Steve Rodby, and Oregon's Trilok Gurtu.

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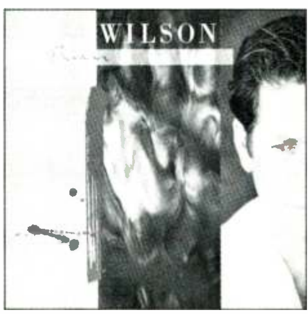

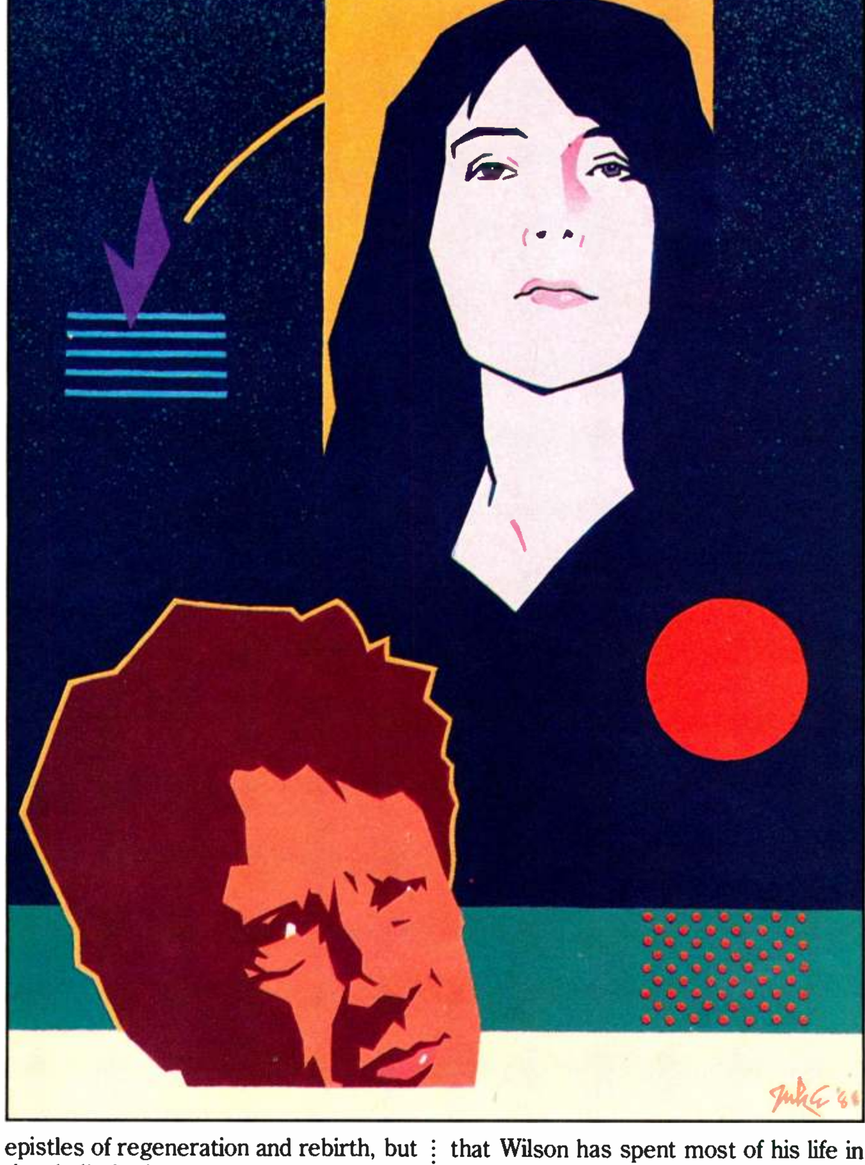

BRIAN WILSON
Brian Wilson
(Warner Bros.)

PATTI SMITH
Dream of Life
(Arista)

What a wonderful gift these records are. That Brian Wilson could return from the brink of the vegetable kingdom and turn out a record of such joy and hope can serve as an inspiration to all us beleaguered mortals. Here's a man whose well-publicized suffering looked as though it might never abate, yet nowhere does he raise his fist against the heavens and cry "why me?" So here's to you, Brian. That Patti Smith could vanish from the public eye for nine years and return, not only true to the beautiful ideas she worked so hard to promote during the first chapter of her career, but with even greater wisdom and generosity of spirit, is almost too good to be true.

Both of these albums are basically epistles of regeneration and rebirth, but the similarity between them ends there. Beset with his personal problems, Wilson hasn't exactly been monitoring the musical trends of the past two decades, and as might be expected, *Brian* is a recapitulation of the Spectoresque wall-of-sound that got the shy guy from Hawthorne shackled with the "genius" albatross back in the '60s. It's all there, from the jingling sleigh bells and barbershop quartet harmonies, to the giddy calliope and the celestial choir. While graying pop fans will no doubt rejoice at hearing the soundtrack of their youth resurrected from the nostalgia bin, it's a sound as foreign as Elizabethan English to kids weaned on the Beastie Boys and Depeche Mode. The painfully naked innocence that permeates every lyric seems equally out of time. Evoking a California dream of suntanned girls named Wendy and first kisses, *Brian*'s thematic content offers further proof that Wilson has spent most of his life in his room.

It's hardly a secret that Wilson needed a lot of help in returning to the studio (there's a lengthy list of credits and thanks). You can sense that while listening to this record, which feels put together with meticulous care—sort of like the skeleton of a dinosaur painstakingly reassembled from fragments of bone. The media campaign for *Brian* seems equally controlled and orchestrated; the brain trust that surrounds Wilson seems afraid to let this bewildered goose that might lay a golden egg out of their sight. Many are calling this effort a masterpiece. It's not. Its achievements *are* laudable, but *Brian* also stands as a reminder that time marches ruthlessly on, and if you try to go home again you'll find that all the girls named Wendy moved out of town.

Whereas Wilson's record is earthbound in the way it carefully watches its

ILLUSTRATION BY GUY JUKE

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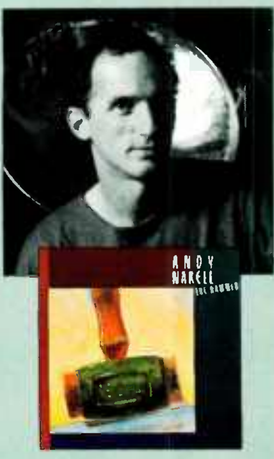
ANDY NARELL
The Hammer



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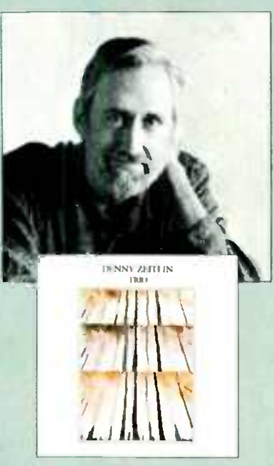
Trio



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Too Hot To Touch

WH-0108

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BILLY CHILDS
Take For Example This...

WH-0113

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footing, Patti Smith's *Dream of Life* is so naturally connected it can soar on the loftiest currents. A combination of poet, insurrectionist, rocker and spiritual midwife, punk's mother superior quit the biz nine years ago because she felt herself slipping into automatic pilot. Now 41 years old, she's a wife and mother, singing better than ever, and as always, burning like a flame.

Co-written by Smith and her husband Fred "Sonic" Smith, the album launches itself with the single "People Have the Power," a galvanizing call to arms exhorting people to wake up and assume responsibility for their lives. The battle cry continues with "Up There Down There," a crunchy rocker evocative of vintage Rolling Stones, which espouses a most un-Stones-like message of brotherhood. The various threads on the record weave together into a shimmering tapestry on "Paths That Cross," a graceful ballad which offers the thought that everyone we ever love remains with us always. (What a nice idea.) Basically a rock 'n' roll album about a successful marriage and happy family life, *Dream of Life* is a pledge of devotion built around sacred images of fire and water; one comes away from the record with a picture of Mr. and Mrs. Smith, hand in hand, fearlessly riding the wild current of life as it crests and ebbs.

The direct simplicity of the Smiths' new songs and the timelessness of their themes feel as true and familiar as the earth between your toes and the sun on your face. A celebration of faith, sharing, sacrifice and commitment, this is music to heal the soul. Some may call that sappy. It seems like the roots of rock 'n' roll to me. – **Kristine McKenna**

BETTY CARTER

Look What I Got!
(Verve/PolyGram)

Betty Carter is an acquired taste, a taste which many more listeners may acquire now that she finally has been recorded by a major label. Since 1961, for reasons that fall somewhere between Carter stubbornness and corporate idiocy, the singer has only released albums on her own Bet-Car label. Six years have passed since her last effort, the live double-disk, *The Audience with Betty Carter. Look What I Got!* is not measurably different or better than that or her other Bet-Car LPs (which will be reissued, starting this summer, by PolyGram), but it is a solid work and a fine introduction to a deeply personal stylist.

Betty is not Ella or Sarah; she's quirkier, less accessible than her contemporaries. Her voice is full of whisper and breath. She holds notes and phrases with the grace of a champion weightlifter. Balance is her strength: Poised between

traditional jazz elements and more daring vocal acrobatics, Carter is like a daredevil who always lands without a hitch.

Look What I Got! effectively samples her inestimable talents. Much of the record moves at a lover's pace—soft insistences of romance inform most of the grooves. "Go on and kiss him," she advises on "That Sunday, That Summer." Surely many women will be so inspired; Carter's quiet urgency has that sort of power. Whether she's interpreting others' material—as in the case of "The Man I Love" and "The Good Life"—or working with her own songs (three tracks), Carter supplies depth and, in the case of the covers, new meaning. Carter rearranges "The Good Life" as a bossa, giving one of several ensembles featured on the album a hearty workout while ruminating on the song's essential line, "And in case you wonder why/ Wake up and kiss the good life goodbye." I still prefer Tony Bennett's original of "The Good Life," but I'm not sure I'll ever hear the song again in the same way.

After more than 40 years in the singing business, the good life may be at Betty Carter's doorstep. Now it's time for those who haven't had the pleasure to wake up and take notice of one of jazz's classiest citizens. – **Steve Bloom**

BOB DYLAN

Down in the Groove
(Columbia)

It's always a mistake to worry about Bob Dylan's motives. Every time the guy does something new his fans say, "Gee, what if I like it and then it turns out he was pulling my leg?" Now here comes a modest Dylan album of mostly cover songs, and the rumors have swirled for months that it's no good, that CBS rejected the first version (CBS denies it), that it's been re-programmed several times: a lot of baggage. But the record slips right past my defenses. I've been playing it all the time. I really like it.

A few years ago Dylan told *Rolling Stone*'s Kurt Loder that he put out *Self-Portrait* knowing it was junk; he did it to kill the fan worship and get the adoring hippies off his lawn. I don't know anyone who believed that. However, hearing Dylan pull so much soul from these covers (and hearing his gorgeous version of "Pretty Boy Floyd" on the new Woody Guthrie tribute album) makes *Self-Portrait*'s covers of Paul Simon and Gordon Lightfoot songs seem a lot less forgivable. "Rank Strangers to Me"'s haunted authority and too-late-wise self-awareness fits Dylan's voice and vision as well as "My Back Pages" or "Tears of Rage." "Ninety Miles an Hour (Down a Dead End Street)" has an honest vulnerability Dylan almost never allows himself. Even *Down in the Groove*'s version of "Let's Stick Together" is a rocking blast, its demand for a straying

wife to honor the holy sanctity of the marriage vows cut from the same righteous cloth as "I Don't Believe You" and "Serve Somebody." For once Dylan's rhythm section snaps; they don't charge into the cattle stampede cadence that marred gallops like "Hurricane" and "When the Night Comes Falling." Imagine a Dylan record you can dance to.

Two songs written with Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter are likable but not earthshaking. If you're going to trade lines with the best wordsmith in rock, it's worth stretching a little—and "Silvio"'s about as strenuous as a badminton match. I hope the jazz police don't get mad about "Ugliest Girl in the World," but I also hope it doesn't become a novelty hit we have to hear for the next 10 years. Dylan's best lyricist is still Dylan, and the pure integrity of "Death

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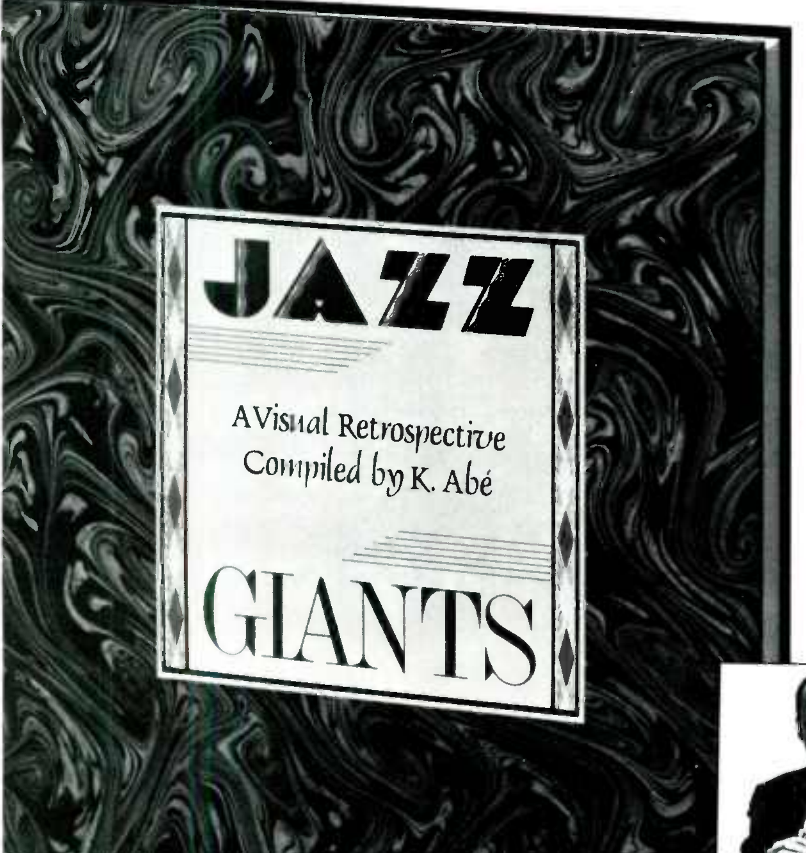

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Is Not the End" is as moving as it is startling; he's written a song worthy of the original Carter family.

In 1985 Dylan said that he'd always waited until he owed the record company an album, and then pulled it together overnight. He'd decided to change his M.O., to record little bits all the time, and when a record was due pull one song from this session, another from that. The first album he assembled that way, *Empire Burlesque*, was given a sort of surface cohesion by mixer Arthur Baker, but only made complete connection with one song, the solo acoustic "Dark Eyes." 1986's wildly inconsistent *Knocked Out Loaded* was a real garage sale, half terrific and half trivial. Although *Down in the Groove* is culled from sessions up to five years old, the stark arrangements built around Dylan's voice and guitar give the album real unity. The rockers are raw and the slow tunes are Bob, background singers and not much else. You sense that Dylan's been gradually stripping away the tinsel around his performances, working toward getting at the heart of every song.

You never know what B.D.'s going to do next, but the winnowing process of the last five years suggests it might be a '90s equivalent of *John Wesley Harding*. Hey, Helm and Danko are free.

– **Bill Flanagan**

ORNETTE COLEMAN & PRIME TIME

Virgin Beauty
(Portrait)

A couple of friends—one a public radio disc jockey, the other a jazz pianist—were kvetching recently about Ornette Coleman's *Virgin Beauty*. Both were highly suspicious of the album, the trailblazing altoist's first major-label release in over a decade. My DJ buddy went so far as to call the record "wallpaper music."

Argh. The song these guys are singing has a familiar elitist refrain; too often, a whiff of populism on the part of a challenging artist is viewed by critical types as a waltz down the yellow brick road to Selloutville. But hurling such accusations at Ornette, whose latter-day electric music with Prime Time evidenced the same kind of rigor displayed by his acoustic quartets 30 years ago, is merely bogus attitudinizing.

It's true that *Virgin Beauty* boasts a heavier rhythm pulse than previous Coleman endeavors; the double drumming of Ornette's son Denardo (who produced this album and last year's much-admired *In All Languages*) and Calvin Weston, rather than operating as an internal component of Prime Time's harmolodic improvisations, now states the direction of the musical current. But since when is a backbeat illegal? It's also true that Jerry Garcia, gray eminence of rock noodling, sits in on three tracks, but his presence shouldn't be seen as a sop to free-thinking Deadheads; rather, it adds a solo voice to the busy conversations of guitarists Bern Nix and Charlie Ellerbe. And while tracks like "3 Wishes," "Bourgeois Boogie" and "Desert Players" boast more bounce per ounce than Ornette's recent harmolodic forays, for each funk-cut composition there's a trademark Coleman curveball (hear the trumpet-based "Chanting" or the shifting rhythms of the title cut). Even the most cursory listen to *Virgin Beauty* should make it apparent to reasonable listeners that Ornette has not cut his version of a George Benson album.

Longtime Colemanites who blandly indict *Virgin Beauty* will ultimately miss out on Ornette's loveliest and (yes) most accessible record in many a year. The record combines the zesty, dance-trance power of *Dancing in Your Head* with a compositional simplicity that in no way compromises the group's improvisational interplay. If you want to turn your nose up at this album, it's your own considerable loss. – **Chris Morris**

HERBIE HANCOCK

Perfect Machine
(Columbia)

Hip-hop usually means circuitry instead of metal-crunch guitars, or vocal dance music that gleefully samples and cuts itself up. Since he began collaborating with producer/bassist Bill Laswell in 1983, Herbie Hancock has had other ideas.

Long interested in technology—at school, he studied electrical engineering as well as music—Hancock heard early Afrika Bambaataa singles such as "Looking for the Perfect Beat" as independent sites of new funk, an idiom he spent much of the '70s including in his jazz. Hancock's ears also perked up at the sound of hip-hop's scratches, the noisy, programmable, down-to-earth stuff of an '80s dance music that might reach out to the world. "Rockit" did exactly that. Hancock and Laswell added international

line-ups and rhythms on 1985's *Sound System*, and when Hancock collaborated with West African kora player Foday Musa Suso on *Village Life*, he harmonized the ancient, 21-string folk instrument with a brand-new Yamaha DX-1, retuning it to suit the kora. Now Hancock's back to funk and *Perfect Machine* is his leanest and subtlest album of the '80s.

Working with bassist Bootsy Collins, singer Sugarfoot of the Ohio Players, the singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Mico Wave (whose inventive 1987 debut *Cookin' from the Inside Out!!!* got overlooked), and veteran Laswell/Material players Nickey Skopelitis and Jeff Bova, Hancock unites the fast thinking of the street and the compositional tools of modern studios and instrumentations; "Perfect Machine" and "Vibe Alive" make the point with daring grace and surprising interpolations. On "Maiden Voyage/P. Bop," and here and there throughout these six workouts, the former Miles Davis pianist sets up stretches or zoomed-in moments of suspended bebop colorations. Bolstered by Sugarfoot's soulful candor, Hancock insists that computer-based funk is only as cold or removed as you make it.

Perfect Machine isn't the Hancock hip-hop album for new listeners—*Future Shock* or the spectacular *Sound System* are better starting places. But its message is perfectly clear: Hancock is one "jazz great" who plays it like he hears it, when he hears it, wherever he hears it. – **James Hunter**

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BRUCE HORNSBY & THE RANGE

Scenes from the Southside
(RCA)

On last year's double platinum *The Way It Is*, Bruce Hornsby crafted one of the more recognizable sounds on radio by marrying accordions, mandolins, wistful tales and, of all things, an acoustic piano. Next question: Would he grow within his music's pop constraints, or exile himself to re-hashing the same old chops in different songs?

Wisely, *Scenes from the Southside* casts Hornsby's jazz-based piano in a more evocative role, providing a voice that ties much of the album together. Whether it's the gently undulating chord progressions of "The Road Not Taken" or the rolling fills that color "The Valley Road," Hornsby sets the tone as much through his playing as through his lyrics, largely about life in the South today.

Coming across as a musical Flannery O'Connor, Hornsby sings about old Southern society "the way it is." In "The Valley Road," a song about love between a hired hand and the owner's daughter, he sings "Good enough to hire, but not good enough to marry," a succinct commentary on the unspoken caste system of the region. Equally effective are "Defenders of the Flag" and "Jacob's Ladder" (the latter a single for Huey Lewis in 1986), which take on both organized religion and government without resorting to mockery, thereby buttressing their impact.

Like many Southern writers, however, romance remains Hornsby's true muse; as he sings of longing and unrequited love on "The Show Goes On" and "I Will Walk with You," his piano rises and falls, almost sighing along with the vocals. It's unlikely Hornsby & the Range will ever make a record as ponderous/awe-inspiring as U2 or Prince; he's a man, as the western philosopher Clint Eastwood would say, who knows his limitations. But by integrating his points of view into a pop amalgam of country and rural blues, he paints these latest *Scenes from the Southside* with an ease and musical assurance few peers can muster. – **Holly Gleason**

TUCK AND PATTI

Tears of Joy
(Windham Hill)

I know what you're thinking: If it's on Windham Hill, it's new-age novocaine, probably unleashed on the world for a sinister ulterior purpose. Ordinarily, that would be true, of course (just kidding, I think). Not this time. Based in the San Francisco area, Tuck Andress and Patti Cathcart are a dynamic husband and wife duo responsible for some of the sweetest, most exhilarating teamwork since Fred and Ginger, or at least Mickey and Sylvia. He plays lyrical, darting guitar in the tradition of Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass; she trills like a songbird, inspired by Ella Fitzgerald and Miss Sarah Vaughan, with a dash of Tina Turner grit. Without any supporting players, T&P generate an elegant excitement sure to please anyone at home with both real jazz and smart pop. You know who you are.

Tears of Joy features fine songs ranging from Rodgers and Hart's glistening "My Romance" to nouveau standards like Wendy Waldman's "Mad Mad Me" and Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time." However, the big kick comes not from the generally impeccable material, but from basking in the good-natured enthusiasm the twosome brings to the task. It's her earthy tones that make "Take My Breath Away" an affecting lullabye, his nimble strokes that allow "I've Got Just About Everything" to take flight. (Her breezy, Ella-like performance doesn't hurt either.)

Since the liner notes insist there aren't overdubs, Tuck must have at least eight fingers per hand, judging how those digits span the frets on "Better Than Anything." He succumbs to the lure of technique for its own sake only once, in a solo turn on Montgomery's "Up and At It." Otherwise, Tuck joins Patti in a sophisticated dance that's a model of sympathetic interplay. Great chops, sharp tunes, including some peppy originals with Top 40 potential, garnished by the unpretentious joy of making music this immediate. Sound like fun? You'd better believe it. – **Jon Young**

DIXON from page 26

required to be a record producer. I think to produce records well you have to be sensitive and understanding of other people's narcissism and fear, which is something I'm rife with. The way I approach every project, every record, I don't even want to do it if I don't feel like the person really loves me and that I really love them—or at least that there's the possibility of love. There's only one time where I did a session where I felt that that didn't happen, and it was very debilitating. It was a horrible feeling."

"Hey, T-Bone," says Willie, with his lazy gold-toothed grin, "maybe I ought to produce *your* next album."

T-Bone, who has been bemoaning his own lack of success as a commercial artist with characteristic self-effacement, grins at the thought. "You know, Will," he says, "maybe that wouldn't be such a bad idea." M

SATELLITES from page 64

coalesced to Baird, Richards, Rick Price on bass and Mauro Magellan on drums, the latter two from the much-admired Brains.

Hooking up with producer Jeff Glixman (Kansas, Gary Moore), they made a demo that all the major labels ignored and they broke up in frustration. Glixman, however, wouldn't give up and convinced Making Waves, a British indie, to release the demo as a six-song EP titled *Keep the Faith* by the Georgia Satellites, to distinguish them from another band named the Satellites. The rave reviews convinced the musicians to give it another shot, and the resulting album on Elektra was the surprise hit of 1986. They've been touring ever since, making it as far as Japan when they'd never before played farther from Atlanta than North Carolina.

"Japan was real sane," recalls Richards. "They didn't have any Christianity or cocaine."

So tell me about the rhythm section.

"The rhythm tracks are all set up like we're playing live," says Richards. "Mauro played his ass off. No click track

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or anything. But he has this device called a Beat Bug that attaches to the snare drum. It tells you if you're speeding up."

"You listen to Hal Blaine's stuff [Blaine is the West Coast studio drummer who did Phil Spector's best stuff and innumerable other hits]," says Baird. "He couldn't keep time. He always sped up. But rock 'n' roll singles are supposed to."

"Certain songs just have to be pushed," says Richards. "It's inherent in rock 'n' roll."

"If you keep 'em dead down on it," says Baird, "it sounds really meepin'."

Meepin'?

"That's a Stan Lynch word," says Baird. "One of those onomatopoeia things. Meepin' would be a song like, 'Oh, I'm never gonna dance again...' That is the ultimate meeping song. It means just as sorry, just as y-chromosomeless as you can get."

Speaking of Stan Lynch, what was it like touring with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers?

"Just as much fun as you can have," says Baird. "It was right after Tom got his house torched. He was in a real good mood, considering. Meeting them was just like finding long-lost..." M

TORN from page 42

Chinese banjo, and plucks out a pentatonic blues.

David Torn is on the edges of contemporary music. His records have been on the jazz ECM label, but they're not really jazz. He's playing with art-pop musicians like David Sylvian, but he's improvising almost non-stop. We discuss his forthcoming project with ex-Santana drummer Michael Shrieve and synthesist Steve Roach, which Shrieve is calling a jazz record. But with people like Mark Isham and Andy Summers, Torn thinks it could take another direction. "There's no point in putting a boundary on anything anymore.

"I'm really trying to make it clear to myself what I am as a guitarist. It's getting clearer, and as it does, it's clear to me that it's pretty different. Whatever it is that I'm doing, I can look at it and say, yeah, this is real different from Holdsworth, and really different from Frisell and Hendrix, and it's not at all like Henry Kaiser and it's not like a guitar player at all. What is it? What the fuck is it? I can pull all these things away from what I'm doing and it becomes pretty clear that I'm an odd bird, and I do have to find a way to fit in with other musics, you know. And I can. Everything feels like a challenge to me." M

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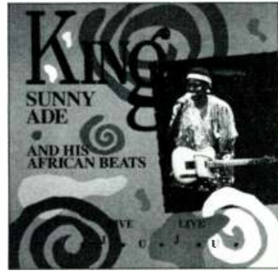

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BY J.D. CONSIDINE

Marti Jones
Used Guitars (A&M)

In a just world, the poor would always have food and shelter, the guilty would never go unpunished and this would be a Top 10 album. Wishful thinking? Maybe not, for *Used Guitars* is exactly what a pop album should be—musically rich, emotionally resonant and catchy as hell. Producer Don Dixon deserves credit for some of that, as his lean, lithe arrangements translate new-wave nonconformity into unrepentant commerciality. But Jones is clearly the star, singing so convincingly it's hard not to believe this is how pop music was meant to sound.

Van Halen
OU812 (Warner Bros.)

Even though the writing here ranks among the band's best, from the lush, harmonically complex balladry of "When It's Love" to the greasy, blues-based boogie of "Black and Blue"; even though the playing is astonishing, from the vise-lock pulse Mike Anthony and Alex Van Halen place behind "A.F.U. (Naturally Wired)" to Eddie Van Halen's Knopfler-esque picking on "Finish What Ya Started"; listening to *OU812* is like being in a Ferrari that's stuck in second. Frankly, I no more want to drive 55 than Sammy Hagar does.

Elton John
Reg Strikes Back (MCA)

This is Elton's fourth or fifth comeback album, depending upon how you keep score, but it's the first to show any sign of taking. How so? Because he's finally singing again like he means it, digging into everything from the catty condescension of "Poor Cow" to the snarling dismissal of "I Don't Wanna Go On with You Like That." Strike on, Reg.

Stanley Clarke
If This Bass Could Only Talk (Portrait)

Sure, Clarke shows off a little more than necessary—if you had his chops, wouldn't you? The best work here emphasizes musicality over virtuosity, whether it's a Weather Report-style "Goodbye Porkpie Hat" that finds him imitating Zawinul more than Pastorius, or the four-fingered pop of "Basically Taps." With playing like that, who needs talk?

Public Enemy
It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back (Def Jam/Columbia)

Rapper Chuck D.'s fondness for militant black-nationalist rhetoric may have limited appeal as politics, but it makes for great spectacle. An angry, rabble-rousing combination of social criticism and conspiracy theory, it's the verbal equivalent of P.E.'s dense, beat-intensive sonic assault. Think of P.E. as the rap MC5, and you're in the neighborhood; think of this as essential listening, and you're home.

Jimmy Page
Outrider (Geffen)

Page says this is a guitar album above all, and on that level it succeeds wondrously. Hell, who wouldn't be spellbound by the magic his guitar works within the limited framework of the blues? Still, this has an awful lot of bad singing for a guitar album. The Robert Plant number is a marvel, but John Miles is just David Coverdale with less ego—and Chris Farlow, on "Prison Blues," sounds like Bobby Bland as impersonated by Porky Pig.

Steve Winwood
Roll With It (Virgin)

After the hoopla over *Back in the High Life*, you may have forgotten that Winwood's albums have been uneven and glib far more often than soulful and transcendent. *Roll With It* returns us to the normal order of things. The title tune may offer a tasty (if tame) bit of Stax-style soul, but it's one of the few times Winwood's compositional conservatism rises above the level of cliché. As for the rest, you may as well wait for the beer commercial.

Andy Summers
Mysterious Barricades (Private Music)

Despite its dreamy textures, limpid melodies and pastel harmonies, this isn't the new-age album it seems to be. Forget background music; beneath its soothing soundscape lurk ideas and riffs that demand attention. The closer you listen, the more you want to hear.

Wire
A Bell Is a Cup Until It Is Struck (Enigma)

Obsessed with function (just look at the album title), Wire has nonetheless softened both its sound and its attitude. Instead of the brittle sarcasm of "Drill" or the sexual menace of "Ahead," we get empty ritual in "The Queen of Ur and the King of Um," and abstruse aphorisms throughout "Kidney Bingoes." Funnily enough, it's also the catchiest thing the band has ever done.

Rick James
Wonderful (Reprise)

Though the title overstates the case some, *Wonderful* is pretty good, at least as far as comeback albums go; it convincingly updates James' sound and maintains much of his sensibility. The love ballads are as corny as Iowa in July, the sex songs more salacious than anything this side of Blowfly.

Judas Priest
Ram It Down (Columbia)

More of the same? Not quite. Though most of this album is based upon pro forma power-riffs and lyrical boilerplate, the performances are passionate, powerful and—what's this?—almost pop in their devotion to melody. But the funniest thing about this disc (apart from a blitzkrieg rendition of "Johnny B. Goode") is the Priest's fondness for metal-plated funk; between "Love Zone" and "Love You to Death," the band almost sounds danceable. Now, *that's* scary.

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JAZZ SHORT TAKES

BY PETER WATROUS

ART PEPPER

The Complete Art Pepper Aladdin Recordings, Volumes 1-3 (Blue Note CD)

FORTY TRACKS OF WEST COAST BLISS. Pepper, who plays the greatest breaks this side of "A Night in Tunisia," was at his best on these dates, recorded in 1956 and 1957. Slick? I mean the guy was into style, and loaded with the jittery rhythms masked by relaxation that the best of the West Coast players—Hampton Hawes, the great pianist Carl Perkins—all had. As anybody who's read *Straight Life*, his autobiography, can figure out right quick, Pepper was a sick dog, but he created music without a lie. It's music that can be taken as an apology for a life of decay. Or a symbol of a life of risk: There isn't a complacent, coasting moment on these tracks.

JOHNNY HODGES, REX STEWART, BARNEY BIGARD

The Great Ellington Units (RCA/Bluebird CD)

THESE TRACKS, MADE IN 1940, ARE SIMPLY some of the finest small-group recordings produced during the swing era. For starters, the rhythm section on all 22 tracks is Jimmy Blanton and Sonny Greer. Harry Carney is on all the tracks. Duke Ellington, who wrote much of the material and helped arrange it, is on piano for most of it. So is Ben Webster, burly and muscular, at the height of his powers. And the music: concentrated Ellingtonia, chord progressions that capture an optimistic America about to become a world power. The improvisations, compressed to their essentials, are brilliant, solo after solo. The harmony of the arrangements, dense and filled with alley shadows one moment, open as a Kansas wheatfield the next, is majestic. And the rhythms: This is art music drawing on dance for its exhilaration and overabundant sense of life.

PAUL MOTIAN QUINTET

Misterioso (Soul Note/PSI)

HERE'S AN IDEA: HIRE TWO TENOR SAXOphonists, Jim Pepper and Joe Lovano, combine with guitarist Bill Frisell and bassist Ed Shuller, let them loose on a selection of Monk and melancholy, Bley-esque originals. The result is something wondrous: an album that lives up to the sum of its parts. Frisell, who's immaculate on the record, proves that he's taken guitar vocabulary and reinvented it. But it's Motian's cymbals, insistent, splashy, loose and swinging, whether in time or jelly-legged free, that give the albums its guts.

THE GOLDEN EAGLES

Lightning and Thunder (Rounder/Round-up)

FIRST: THE LINER NOTES BY MICHAEL P. Smith are worth the price of admission, explaining the genesis of the Indian tradition in New Orleans and providing more details about an often overlooked connection between black slave culture and Native American culture. Second: Have loads of fun, because this record, the first to capture an Indian performance without a back-up band, i.e. the way it's usually done, is staggeringly rhythmic, with great singing as well. The songs—"Two-Way-Pak-E-Way," "Indian Red," "Little Liza Jane"—are mostly standards, but who the hell wants to hear anything else? Monk Boudreaux, the lead singer, can really tear it up: he's got a great New Orleans voice. (Box 154, N. Cambridge, MA 02140.)

PAULO MOURA

Confusão Urbana, Subrana e Rural (Braziloid/Celluloid)

MOURA IS A BRAZILIAN SAXOPHONIST AND clarinetist whose tones will bring tears to the eyes of ex-cons. This is an American reissue of a famous album which works the territory between samba and Django-styled jazz; these acoustic pieces are like miniature instrumental narratives that build Brazilian moods.

CURLEW

Live in Berlin (Cuneiform)

THAT CURLEW HASN'T BEEN SIGNED BY ANY of the "adventuresome" major labels is one of those inexplicable minor miracles that I guess can be chalked up to a dislike of anything that happens in your own backyard. Curlew are from New York—this version of the band includes George Cartwright on saxophones, Tom Cora on cello, Pippin Barnett on drums, Davey Williams on guitar and Wayne Horvitz on keyboard bass and keyboards—and they get down in a weird New York-meets-Memphis-or-New Orleans way: a Southern band inside a New York sensibility. Off-balance riffing and deep grooves, noisy solos and country-esque melodies all mix it up. Cartwright, who does much of the composing, is a long-time New York improviser and he plays some wicked solos. And, yeah, this stuff is joyful; it'll make you feel good, which, as I recall, was one of the reasons for music in the first place. (Box 6517, Wheaton, MD 20906.)

CHARLES BRACKEEN

Bannar (Silkheart/Round-up)

DENNIS GONZALEZ

Namesake (Silkheart/Round-up)

THE DEBUT OF A NEW LABEL, EUROPEAN OF course, brings riches. Both of these records share personnel—Brackeen, Gonzales, Malachi Favors and Alvin Fielder—like the old Blue Note idea, where everyone gets accustomed to playing with each other in the studio. The result is two albums which feature Favors' immense sound and perfect time, plus swinging, open-ended writing which gives lots of room to the soloists. *Namesake* features a mini-big band, while *Bannar* is a quartet date; both are exceptional, and both are infused with the sort of folk melodies Ornette let into jazz when he opened the door in 1958.

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